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# Town Of Bethlehem Historical Association

# NEWSLETTER

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Old Cedar Hill School House

Selkirk, New York 12158

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## President's Letter

Greetings and welcome back from summer's travels and activities!

Hasn't this been a glorious summer, filled with sparkling weather that was perfect for whatever you wanted to do?

As usual, September rolls around more quickly than we expect, but here it is and it brings the pleasures of getting back into familiar routines, of seeing good friends and neighbors we may have been away from over the summer, and of catching up on all the summer news.

So it is with us. The Sunday afternoon "open hours" at the museum have come to an end already, as has the delightful exhibit of Victorian costumes, furniture and accessories that the Museum Committee arranged so authentically and attractively. If you missed seeing it, you are truly unfortunate.

And now it's time for the schedule of Fall and Winter programs to begin! Charles and Marjorie Crangle have arranged for an excellent and intriguing set of monthly programs, starting on September 21 with Anneke Bull bringing us up-to-date on the progress of the construction of the "Half Moon". I'm sure you all have heard of the tragedy that befell the project back in May, resulting in a major set-back. Since there has been virtually no publicity or information available over the summer, this will be a unique opportunity to hear "the inside story"! (For details, see announcement elsewhere in this Newsletter.)

Another member who's been busy over the summer is Jean Lyon who has been preparing our new program brochure. It contains the complete program for the 1989-90 year as well as a directory of officers, committees, new members and other information. If you need additional copies, please contact Jean - and be sure to compliment her for this job well done!

With the brochure in hand, it would be a good time to mark your calendars so that you won't accidentally miss one of the excellent programs!

It would also be a great time to decide which of our committee you'd like to help on (if you haven't already volunteered). All the committees could use help - as much or as limited as you can give - especially the Museum Committee which arranges the exhibits that coordinate with and compliment our programs.

If you're not sure where you might best "fit in" just call me and let's talk! This should be fun!

If you have not been in the School House for a while, you have a big surprise awaiting you! Many improvements have been made, but I'm not going to describe them because I am urging you to come and see for yourself. You'll be impressed and proud! And again - many thanks are due to those who were willing to pitch in and see these projects through to completion!

With the Bethlehem Bicentennial approaching (in 1993), our Association will be discussing and planning possible projects that we could undertake to tie in with this historic milestone. If you have ideas, come to the meetings and present them. Or come to help discuss the suggestions that others put forth. The more the better!

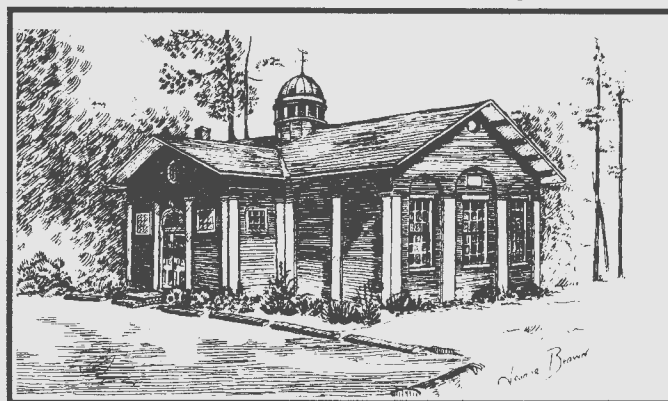
In fact, if you have any ideas or suggestions or questions about any subject of historic interest or about any potential project appropriate for our Association, you know you are welcome to come and present them at any meeting. This is a "participatory organization" which depends upon active, interested members!

Before I close, I would like to express great and sincere appreciation to Lois Dillon, President during 1988-89, for her enthusiastic and dedicated efforts on behalf of the Historical Association, for her marvelous leadership and organizational skills by which she led us through an amazing year, and especially for her much-needed guidance to me personally! Thanks, Lois! And three cheers from all of us!

Although Lois Dillon is admittedly a "tough act to follow," I am looking forward with enthusiasm and anticipation to an interesting and active year! With the help of Association members, I'm sure it can be a successful one!

Looking forward to seeing you in the School House!

*Cynthia Wilson*



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# The Village Blacksmith

Under a spreading chestnut-tree  
The village smithy stands;  
The smith, a mighty man is he,  
With large and sinewy hands;  
And the muscles of his brawny arms  
Are strong as iron bands.

His hair is crisp, and black, and long,  
His face is like the tan;  
His brow is wet with honest sweat,  
He earns whate'er he can,  
And looks the whole world in the face,  
For he owes not any man.

Week in, week out, from morn till night,  
You can hear his bellows blow;  
You can hear him swing his heavy sledge  
With measured beat and slow,  
Like a sexton ringing the village bell,  
When the evening sun is low.

And the children coming home from school  
Look in the open door;  
They love to see the flaming forge,  
And hear the bellows roar,  
And catch the burning sparks that fly  
Like chaff from a threshing-floor.

He goes on Sunday to the church,  
And sits among his boys;  
He hears the parson pray and preach,  
He hears his daughter's voice,  
Singing in the village choir,  
And it makes his heart rejoice.

It sounds to him like her mother's voice,  
Singing in Paradise!  
He needs must think of her once more,  
How in the grave she lies;  
And with his hard, rough hand he wipes  
A tear out of his eyes.

Toiling, — rejoicing,— sorrowing,  
Onward through life he goes;  
Each morning sees some task begin,  
Each evening sees it close;  
Something attempted, something done,  
Has earned a night's repose.

Thanks, thanks to thee, my worthy friend,  
For the lesson thou hast taught!  
Thus at the flaming forge of life  
Our fortunes must be wrought;  
Thus on its sounding anvil shaped  
Each burning deed and thought!

— *Henry Wodsworth Longfellow*

# Blacksmithing

“A working smith all other trades excels”

anonymous *Ode on Smithery* 1960

Not every Bethlehem hamlet has a spreading chestnut tree but almost every small community in our area had its own smithy as did many large farms.

Smithing is an old trade which came into being some 2500 to 3000 years ago with the discovery that iron was a workable metal. By colonial days blacksmithing was an established and respected trade. It is said that in early America there were more smiths than horses. Despite the disproportionate number of horses which needed new shoes only several times a year, the smith was a busy man. His services were in constant demand. He fashioned nails, hinges, and latches for the settler's cabin; he hammered plows; axes, and other tools into shape for the farmers; he made guns and traps for the hunter; he supplied the housewife with kitchenware and cooking utensils, he was there to mend the broken wagon spring or supply a new wheel. In his spare time he might make a surprise toy for a child or a fanciful ornament for his wife. It is no wonder the smith has been called the most important man on the frontier.

The blacksmith's work called for a rapid survey of the ever changing situation at hand, quick decisions, skill, imagination and in many cases a degree of creativity. He had the freedom and satisfaction of providing a unique personal touch to his work.

Experience taught him when the metal was at the proper malleable point and what tools would best serve his needs. He was his own master and could exercise his ingenuity and whatever artistry he possessed.

Not surprisingly, blacksmithing held a fascination for European nobility. Richard the Lion-Hearted is said to have worked in his Armorer's smithy as did Maximillian the Great who is responsible for much of the extremely artistic armor of his period. Charles V personally worked on guns used by his army. French Lois XV had his own shop where he made gunlocks and doorlocks. It was an honored profession throughout the ages.

More recent personalities with connections to the art of blacksmithing are: Winston Churchill who descended from blacksmiths on both sides of his family, President Eisenhower whose name translated means “iron hewer”, Richard Sears, founder of Sears Roebuck who was the son of a blacksmith. Both George Washington and Thomas Jefferson had smithies on their estates.

Cedar Hill, Babcock's Corners, and South Bethlehem no longer can boast a local smithy as they did in the not so distant past. The smithy of recent memory has vanished from the village scene.

Fortunately, the ancient and mighty craft of blacksmithing is being kept alive in parts of our nation by men who love the glow of the forge and the clang of the hammer on the anvil.

*Marie Wiedeman*

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## Museum

Visitors and members enjoyed the summer exhibit on "Victoriana" put together by Museum Chairman Betty Van Oostenbrugge and her committee. Furniture, paintings, china, glassware, and pretty and unique objects were displayed along with beautifully-gowned mannequins.

## The Endowment Fund

The Endowment Fund of our Association was established to receive and manage money received from donations. Contributions may be made to the Fund in memory of a specific person or just as a general donation. Such contributions are tax-deductible.

The Fund provides money, from earned interest, to support major museum projects such as restorations, repairs or improvements.

Any person, organization, group or business firm is welcome to make a donation at anytime. We welcome them all and appreciate them!!

In addition to soliciting gifts, bequests or memorials, the Endowment Committee is also responsible for obtaining Life Memberships. At \$75.00, these are great "bargains" and could also be given as gifts!

The Bethlehem Historical Association depends entirely upon its members and friends for the income and financial support. Recognized as a unique and priceless part of our Town's heritage, the School House is a visible symbol of our pride in our history.

Won't you send a contribution today to Town of Bethlehem Historical Association, Cedar Hill School House, Selkirk, N.Y. 12158  
*Julie Kelley*

## From The Editor

If a former school marm returned to the Little Red School House, she would be pleased at the new wooden blinds, the modern "toilet room" and kitchen. Come and see it for yourself.

We hope you will join us at our meetings and our special Christmas Tea, when Bethlehem Garden Club decorates the museum. Arrive early so you can visit the Toll Gate Museums' blacksmith & ice harvesting exhibit and the herb garden maintained by Phyllis Howell.

*Lynn Mather*  
Editor

## RECORDS OF THE PEOPLE OF THE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM, ALBANY COUNTY, NEW YORK 1698-1880

1982. Edited by Florence Christoph  
and Peter R. Christoph

Hardcover, 8 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 11 inches, 465 pages.  
Illustrated and indexed.

\$25.00 plus \$1.50 postage & handling.

LIMITED COPIES AVAILABLE

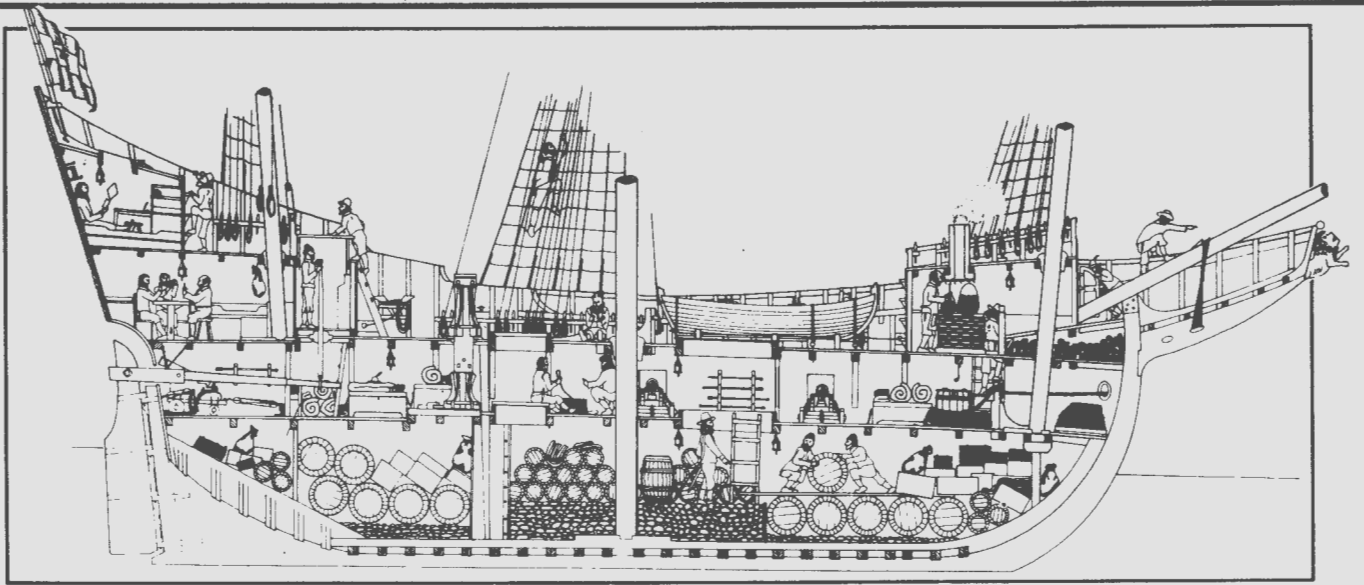
Write **Bethlehem Historical Association**  
**Clapper Road**  
**Selkirk, NY 12158**

This book received very good reviews from the Connecticut Society of Genealogy, the New England Historical Genealogical Society and the New York Gen. and Bio. Record. It also received very a good review in the September-October 1982 issue of *The Genealogical Helper* (See review below).

**446-5**

**RECORDS OF THE PEOPLE OF THE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM, ALBANY COUNTY, NEW YORK 1698-1880.** 1982. Edited by Florence and Peter R. **CHRISTOPH**. Published by Bethlehem Historical Association, Clapper Road, Selkirk, NY 12158. Hardcover, 8 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 11 inches, 465 pages, illustrated, indexed, \$26.50.

The Town of Bethlehem Historical Association was organized in 1965 to stimulate an appreciation of the town's heritage by disseminating information on the community and its residents, exhibiting artifacts, and encouraging the preservation of historic sites. A genealogy committee was formed in 1975 to gather information relating to local families, and encourage the development of genealogical research skills. The publication of this volume is the result of the association's efforts and purposes. This excellent historical record contains: a brief history of the Town of Bethlehem; Bethlehem Reformed Church records - baptisms 1794-1871, marriages 1797-1871, deaths 1865-1870, members 1795-1873; cemetery records; road records 1794-1885; Book of Strays and Cattle Marks 1794-1894; maps - Rensselaerswyck 1767, Bethlehem 1866; Census records - Colonial Rensselaerswyck 1690 and 1720, U.S. Census Town of Bethlehem 1800-1840; and school records. A sprinkling of photographs and a complete index add to the value and interest of this record.



*This cutaway section of the Half Moon's 85-foot length was prepared by Nicholas Benton, designer of the Rigging Gang, making use of the original plans for the vessel built 380 years ago.*

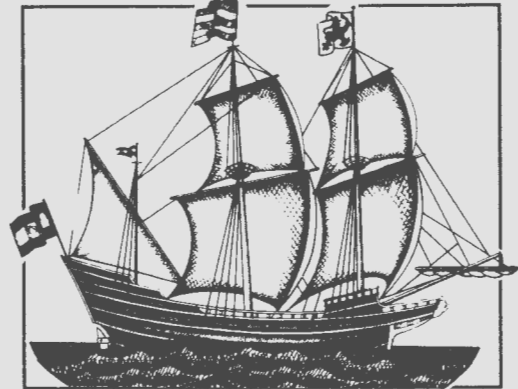
## September Program

"The Re-Building of the Half Moon" by Anneke Bull, Member of the Board of Directors of the New Netherlands Festival

Thursday, September 21, 1989 - 8:00 P.M.

Cedar Hill School House, Route 144 and Clapper Road

The public and guests are welcome.



*Half Moon*

## Tollgate Museum

Historic Resources Committee Chairman Lois Dillon reports, "Showing visitors around our new little building this summer, we referred to it as our TOLLGATE MUSEUM. Some interesting Tollgate material is on display. Not having a photo of how our Tollgate looked, we included a blow-up photo of the Ravena Tollgate which was the closest we could come to showing how our building was part of a Tollgate. We moved the big Bobsled out there to make more room in our main building. The big ice-harvesting tools are displayed in one corner along with photos and material about cutting ice in the Hudson River. Another display is of our Cedar Hill Blacksmith's equipment. In another corner we are placing Farming tools. Jim Wiedemann, Allison Bennett, Betty Van Oostenbrugge, and Marie Wiedemann have all helped in bringing this all together."

blinds. Willing museum members spent Saturdays cleaning the windows and floors. We had the inside windows puttied and painted. Mary Ann Twardowsky, who provides the delicious refreshments at our meetings, has her new kitchen which she designed. The Town has renovated the rest room and painted the dome on the roof. The Toll Gate Museum has been wired for electricity, and this fall we hope to scrape and paint the outside of that building. Thanks to Julie and John Scharff, we have replaced several railroad ties which are used as curbing in our parking area. All of the above has been accomplished because of many enthusiastic people, especially Lois Dillon, Julie Kelle, Maril Spaulding, Betty Van Oostenbrugge, Marie Wiedemann and Jim Mc Carthy (Mac).

*James Wiedemann*

## Building & Grounds

After the Town put a new roof on the building making it secure and dry, the Board decided we should go ahead with some much needed renovations. We now have sparkling clean windows with custom made