



TOWN OF BETHLEHEM HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION  
1003 RIVER ROAD, SELKIRK, NEW YORK 12158

## BETHLEHEM HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

JANUARY, 2000

### New Era

The Town of Bethlehem Historical Association ended the nineties with an outstanding Holiday Silver Tea Party that encompassed three days of events. The museum was decorated in a Victorian theme that was presented in an understated elegant manner. The ambiance was well received by the membership and public. The December Silver Tea capped a summer and fall season that demonstrated to the public that the Association is a valuable asset to the Town of Bethlehem and the surrounding communities. The accrued benefits of these programs are that our membership has increased over past years and that our fundraisers are now more successful.

However, the message of the true value of our museum is not fully appreciated by the local media. We know that the general public understands to a great extent that museums are serving them broadly, that we are different from what we were 20 years ago, that we are more interactive, that we are helping the schools in new ways. But some research also shows that state and local media and often senior public policy makers have not taken the time to appreciate a new movement by the public who wish to learn more about their roots and the history of the communities in which they reside. This communication and education responsibility is a high priority for the Association in the year 2000.

### Purposes

The Historical Association has four purposes that support the operating philosophy of the organization. Each of the four purposes was addressed over the last six months of 1999 as we contributed to the betterment of the Town.

- 1) The Association stimulated an appreciation of the historical heritage of the Town through hosting special tours of students from the Bethlehem Central School District, and Boy and Girl Scout Troops; and provided an opportunity for members of the public to visit the Schoolhouse during the three summer months; and extended invitations to the public regarding our monthly membership meetings. Also, the Association awarded honorary memberships to the families of Assemblyman John Faso, Senator Neil Breslin, and Assemblyman John McEneny. The families of County Executive Michael Breslin, Supervisor Fuller, Town Council member Doris Davis and former member Robert Johnson are members of the Association.
- 2) The Association re-evaluated the theme and purpose of many artifacts stored in-house and have decided to accept gifts in the future based primarily on their past interaction with the Town of Bethlehem. As a special note, the Association did receive recently a beautiful 46 piece Flow China set from the Winifred I. Meyer family. The China set was on display during the Silver Tea.
- 3) The Association played a role in enhancing the welfare of the Pieter Winne house located on Creble Road just off of 9W. Members of the Association were given permission to secure the house during the fall of 1999 in preparation for winter as a means to minimize further deterioration of the facility. An individual purchased the house in January 2000 that appears interested in restoring the building. We believe that sections of the Pieter Winne House may have been constructed in 1720 making it one of the oldest buildings in Bethlehem. One of the benefits that the Association can provide the private sector is our ability to receive grants from State and Federal agencies. The funds in turn can help accelerate the restoration and preservation of historic sites. The quid pro obligation for receipt of the funds enables the public on occasion to visit the historic resources in our community.
- 4) The Association has developed a new Brochure that notes materials that are available to those interested in learning more about the history of the Town of Bethlehem. Various tapes, slides and written materials can be loaned to assist in the study of our history. We have installed an answering machine at the museum to aid in our information transfer responsibilities.

#### Recent Events

The fall card party was held on October 23 at the Normanside Country Club and was well attended by members and guests. Those in attendance were provided background music from the piano and our country store was a profitable operation. The "Bethlehem Throw" and the "Mr. & Mrs. Santa Claus" dolls were presented as future raffle items that were awarded at the Silver Tea.

An evening presentation by John Mc Eneny on October 21 regarding "Gathering & Writing on Historical Data" was a most interesting collection of stories and information. The audience kept Mr. Mc Eneny under a barrage of questions for some two hours.

Assemblyman John Faso attended an afternoon meeting on September 15 where he presented the Association with a new State Flag. The Assembler presented the Flag to Supervisor Fuller who represented the Town and Parker Mathusa who represented the Association. Also, the Assemblyman expressed an interest in assisting the Association to secure funds for a computer system that would be used for inventory control and other business functions of the museum. We are working on that opportunity.

Dr. Charles Semowich a well recognized expert in Printmaking described on November 18 how this medium has captured our history and has enabled many of us to have unique works of art in our homes.

### Calender of Meetings

January 20, 2000 at 2:00 p.m. "The State of the Town" by The Honorable Sheila Fuller, Supervisor, Town of Bethlehem.

February 17, 2000 at 2:00 p.m. "Area Archaeological Diggings" Dr. Edward V. Curtin, Archaeological Consultant.

March 16, 2000 at 2:00 p.m. "Searching for Family-Past and Present" Peter and Florence Christoph, Genealogists & BHA Members.

April 20, 2000 at 7:30 p.m. "Researching Industrial History-Potters and Pottery, Capitol Region" William Bouch & Warren Broderick, NYS Archives.

May 18, 2000 at 7:30 p.m., Annual Meeting. Plans are underway for a Bar-b-que at the museum beginning at 5:00 p.m. preceding the 7:30 p.m. meeting.

Executive Committee Meetings at 7:00 p.m. on February 24 and June 22, 2000.

### In Memoriam

Mr. Charles Crangle, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, offered a prayer for our friends and colleagues who past over the past year: Mr. Charles E. Alford; Mr. Douglas Bridge; Mrs. Delaphine Brower; Mr. Donald Gillespie; Miss Hannah E. Grant; Mrs. Jean Lyons; Mrs. Katherine Nolan; Mrs. Alice Sniffen; Mr. Heinz Strassner; Mrs. Helen Strassner; Ms. Mary Ann Twardowsky; and Ltc. Alexander J. Woehrle.

### Special Thanks

The Association enjoyed great support from the Town of Bethlehem during 1999 by the way of the careful maintance of the grounds. The lawns were always cut, the trees trimmed, garbarge removed, leaves raked, lights replaced and a new American Flag was raised—Thank you Supervisor Sheila Fuller and Superintendent Gregg Sagendorph.

Also, we owe special thanks for Betty Van Oostenbrugge for her contributions in managing the summer programs and leading the presentations to the various school groups and visiting organizations.

The success of the Christmas Silver Tea was based on the efforts of some fifty members who willingly give of their time and hard work, but we must highlight the special efforts of Ann VanDervort, Marion Davis and Susan Leath—thank you all.

In addition, we are indebted to Howard Gmelch for his insight and knowledge in creating the highly informative programs presented at the membership meetings.

Season Greetings

On behalf of the officers and committee chairs, I wish the membership and the residents of the the Town of Bethlehem a healthy and prosperous new year.

Respectfully submitted,

*Parker D. Mathusa*  
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President

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