
Town of Bethlehem Historical Association

NEWSLETTER

Old Cedar Hill School House

Spring 1993

Selkirk, New York 12158

President's Letter

As our meeting year draws to a close, we anticipate summer's arrival with its myriad of activities. Many of you will be traveling, and we hope that you will have some delightful experiences. For those of you entertaining guests, we hope that they will enjoy the area as much as we do. Be sure to bring them to visit our Museum on Sunday afternoons.

Lois Dillon and Charles Crangle have finalized the House Tour as part of the Bethlehem Bicentennial Celebration. Their expertise and enthusiasm are certain to produce a much enjoyed event.

Jeanne Brown's Bicentennial calendar was a big success. Our latest project is underway. The Christmas ornaments depicting our Museum have arrived.

The Fall Card Party and the Christmas Tea were once again very successful and enjoyed by all who attended. The Bethlehem Garden Club always does such a magnificent job on decorating the Museum for the holidays. Many thanks to them and to our hard-working volunteers, who devoted their time and energy to both events.

Marjorie and Charles Crangle, program chairmen, once again have provided entertaining, enthusiastic experts to speak to us each month.

Thanks to Edna Strumpf, we have an excellent slate of officers and board members for the coming year.

I would like to express my gratitude for the wonderful cooperation and dedication which so many of you have demonstrated during my tenure as president.

I know you will join me in offering our support to the new officers, to ensure that the **Town of Bethlehem Historical Association and Museum** continue to survive.

Sheila Giordano

Bicentennial Book

Bethlehem Revisited - A Bicentennial Story 1793-1993 is available from the Town clerk at the Town Hall. Please pick up your book if you ordered a copy. The book can also be purchased at Friar Tuck Book Store. The lovely hard-copy book is now \$29.00.

Learn about the archeological digs, Indian life in prehistoric Bethlehem, the early Dutch settlers, tobacco growing in 1638, fur trading, and life in Bethlehem throughout its 200 years. The story of the Bethlehem Historical Association includes a picture of Jean Lyons and Mary Elizabeth Van Oostenbrugge. Most of the 500 pages have excellent and informative black and white photographs.

The book's editor, Floyd Brewer, and assistant editor, Peter Christoph, are members of the Bethlehem Historical Association.

Floyd Brewer



School Children Visit the Museum

Every year school children take field trips to visit our "little red school house." One-hundred seventyfive fourth graders from Hamagrael Elementary will come to the museum June 4, 1993. Mary E. Van Oostenbrugge will speak to them about the exhibits. Allison Bennett will visit the Becker School and speak to the students about the museum and the history of Bethlehem.

Summer at the Museum

The museum will be open every Sunday afternoon from 2:00 to 5:00 during June, July, and August. The special exhibits will be photographs and artifacts from selected historic sites and homes of Bethlehem's early settlers. The beautiful silver tea set and sandwich plates donated by Tawasentha Chapter of DAR, the Salisbury doll house of 1910, exhibits of school, farm, and river can be seen. The Toll Gate House displays collections of early farm and ice harvesting equipment.

Jan Satin

Volunteers Needed

Due to conflicting schedules and time constraints, many members are unable to attend the monthly meeting. It is at these meetings where we ask for volunteers for various projects. If you are one of those who are unable to attend, but would be willing to help out just once in the year, please send me your name, address and phone number to Sheila Giordano, 1003 River Road, Selkirk, N.Y. 12158. As an example, occasionally in the winter we have had to cancel a board or regular meeting. If we had someone to make 5 or 10 phone calls alerting members of the cancellation, it would be greatly appreciated.

More about Bethlehem

The following is from the Albany County Tricentennial Commission's booklet Albany--Three Centuries a County by C.R. Roseberry. Bethlehem enjoys the longest Hudson River frontage in Albany County. The Half Moon anchored off the mouth of the Normans Kill, not in Albany.

The earliest known European name of the area now called Bethlehem was Bylaers Dael. The first appearance of the name Bethlehem in print is a 1649 court deposition. While some think it has a spiritual origin, the village of Bethlehem existed in Flanders. Many of the early settlers came from what we now know as Belgium.

House Tour

Saturday, May 22 is the day our association makes its contribution to the Town of Bethlehem's Two Hundredth Anniversary. We have put together a Drive-Yourself Tour of some of our Town's historic houses and sites. The Tour will start at the Historical Association at 10:30 A.M. and continue until 5 P.M. We will need members to help greet, give out the Tours, serve refreshments, and show people around our Museum and grounds.

Leaving the Historical Association the Tour will go down to the River, up Clapper Road, over to Slingerlands, Delaware Ave., Rt. 9W, back down to Van Wie's Point, and conclude back at the Association where light refreshments will be served. Please volunteer your help for part of this day. We want the public to see our Building and Museum at it's best and we cannot continue to expect the same people to always do those jobs! We are depending on you to take pride in our newly-restored building and tell our President Sheila Giordano 767-2247 or Lois Dillon 439-3302 that you will help that day - thank you.

Bethlehem Christmas Ornament Available

A limited edition, Christmas Ornament, is now available for our town. It depicts the Bethlehem Historical Association Museum on one side. The other side has the date of the founding of the town of Bethlehem 1793. It is a white matte finished glass ball with the illustration and writing in red. It is individually boxed. The ornament is \$5.00.

It is a wonderful bicentennial memento, as well as a perfect hostess gift. It is also a treasured keepsake for friends and loved ones, who have moved away and will serve as a lasting memory of their home town.

It will be available at the museum during the House Tour, at museum meetings, and Sunday afternoons during the summer.

Sheila Giordano

Academia in Colonial America

After the Revolution and in the early nineteenth century, when Americans were trying in many ways to improve the lot of the common man, they begin to turn their attention to free schools for all the people.

At the opening of the nineteenth century rich people usually sent their children to private schools. Those who were not rich sent their children (when the children went at all) to schools supported by taxes. These public schools were very poor institutions compared with the schools of today.

The schoolmaster was generally a student who sought by the scanty profits derived from a winter's teaching to cover the expenses of his study at Harvard or at Yale. His pay was small, yet he was never called upon to levy out any portion of it for his keep. If the district was thickly settled and wealthy a little sum was annually set apart for his board, and he was placed with the farmer who would for that amount, board and lodge him for the longest time. But this was far too expensive a method for many of the districts and the master was, therefore, expected to live with the parents of his pupils, regulating the length of his stay by the number of boys in the family attending his school. It happened in the course of his teaching that he came to live at sometime in nearly every house in the district and was seldom forced to walk five miles in the worst of weather, over the worst roads to his school. It would be a great mistake to suppose that he was not always a welcome guest. He slept in the best room, sat in the warmest nook by the fire, and had the best food set before him at the table. In the long winter evenings he helped the boys with their lessons, held yarn for the daughters or went with them to spinning matches. In return for his miserable pay and his board the young student taught what would now be considered as the beginnings of an education. His daily labors were confined to teaching his scholars to read with a moderate degree of ease, to write, to spell and to know as much of numbers as would enable them to figure the interest on a debt, to keep the family accounts and to make change in a shop.

In addition to the role of the schoolmaster, the furniture and teaching methods used were unique in Colonial America. An example would be the schoolmaster desk. This was a form on four straight legs. On the top it had a lid which opened upward. This style was used by the Dutch of New York.

The Bethlehem Historical Society has received a reproduction as a gift of the schoolmaster desk made by James Wiedemann, an outstanding preservationist craftsman, to be used as a "podium" by our society. It is made from maple and oak wood. This piece of furniture made for our schoolhouse room is a classic for all to view. The society is deeply appreciative of such a useful gift from Jim and Eleanor Wiedemann.

*Submitted by
Julia S. Kelley*

Report of Nominating Committee

President: Julie Kelley

First Vice President: June Milburn

Second Vice President: William Le Med

Recording Secretary: Eleanor Wiedemann

Corresponding Secretary: Marjorie Crangle

Treasurer: Richard Spaulding

New Members of the Board of Trustees

Lois Dillon

Sheila Giordano

Edna Strumph

Nominating Chairperson

Trustees

Mary Ann Twardowsky '94

Jean Lyon '94

Charles Crangle '95

John Scharff '95

Richard Thayer '95

Editor's Corner

More about Blacksmithing

When the American Museum of Natural History was refurbishing its dinosaur exhibit, they found need for the expertise of a blacksmith. The stone fossil skeletons needed forged armatures to support them. While a lot of new information has been gained about dinosaurs, a lot of old information about smithing has been lost.

The artisans who had the most knowledge of smithing were sculptures, who do those big forged metal sculptures. They contacted John Little in Nova Scotia, who's a legendary blacksmith. He forges anchors for fishermen, stone drills for masons, and ornamental and sculptural ironwork. He was flown down to New York. Little gave a seminar in tool forging. He explained how blacksmiths work in the dark. What is crucial to the craft of smithing is a Whistlerian sensitivity to fine nuances of color. "You can't do black smithing outdoors." Little reached into the forge with his tongs and picked out the steel rod, which turned yellow. "Now this is'nt any oily yellow," he said. "It's a plain yellow. Oily yellow is too hot for tooled steel." He quickly brought the rod to his anvil and began hammering. With four or five strokes with a heavy hammer, he had turned the rod into a perfect, symmetrical awl. He let it cool and returned it

to the forge. "Now it's red," he said taking it out again. "The red has turned the steel non-magnetic." He then dipped it in water to harden the steel. It turned a bronze color.

The information was taken from the May 11, 1992 The New Yorker.

Lynn Mather

Historical Markers Albany County Town of Bethlehem

Turnpike

Albany and Delaware

Chartered March 2, 1805.

6000 Shares at \$25.

Extensively Traveled Albany to Otego.

Abandoned 1868

(NYS 43, W. of Albany city line)

Earlier Adamsville and Adamsville Station

Nathaniel Adams Located here in 1836

and built a Hotel in 1838.

(NYS 43, at Delmar)

Agricultural Fair

First Annual Fair of Albany County Agricultural Society held at Bethlehem Center

October 4-6, 1853

(NYS 32, 100 yds. W. of U.S. 9W)

Van Wie's Point

Hendrick Gerritse Van Wie

Dutch Colonist in Fort Orange 1664

Built House here in 1679
(Town rd., at Van Wie's Point)

Van Wie's Point

Built by Hendrick Van Wie in 1732.

The home of six generations of this Dutch Colonial Family

Settlers at Fort Orange, in 1664

(Town rd., nr. Wm. Gibson's Rd. at Van Wie's Point)

Van Wie's Dock

Site of Dock owned by

Peter G. & Henry Van Wie

and leased February 23, 1835

To Hudson River Steamboat Co.

for Albany Terminal

(Town rd. at Van Wie's Pt.)

Tannery

Built about 1825

on farm of Isaac and John Coffin.

Operated for many years by

Robert Carhart.

Burned 1883

(Willowbrook Ave., in S. Bethlehem)

Baker Farm

Settled by Joab Baker

of Connecticut in 1791

(NYS 144, .5 mi. N. of Selkirk)

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Selkirk, New York 12158

NON-PROFIT
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12159
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