

# TOWN OF BETHLEHEM HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

*Old Cedar Hill School House, Selkirk, New York 12158*

*Fall, 2011*



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### *Dear Members and Friends:*

Fall means back to school for many. It also signals the commencement of our regular program meetings. Welcome to the new 2011 - 2012 season of new programs and exhibits at the Cedar Hill Schoolhouse.

The Annual Meeting and dinner of the Town of Bethlehem Historical Association was conducted to a full house on May 26, 2011 at the Cedar Hill Schoolhouse Museum. The Nominating Committee proposed the following slate of Officers and Trustees who were subsequently elected. They include: President, George Lenhardt; Vice President, Kathy Newkirk; Recording Secretary, Christine Ford; Corresponding Secretary, Karen Beck; Treasurer, Wendy Brandow. New Trustees elected to serve until 2014 are Galen Ritchie, and Valerie Thompson. Outgoing Trustees Robert Mulligan and Art Young were thanked for their service and commitment. The dinner was catered by our very own hospitality committee and enjoyed by everyone prior to the meeting. Many thanks to all who helped to make this event a success. Robert Mulligan then presented a brief historical program on "Civil War Letters".

Our Ice Cream Social and opening of the summer exhibit occurred on June 19, 2011. The ice cream and fixings were once again provided courtesy of Stewart's Shops. The exhibit, "Civil War Remembered" in commemoration of the beginning of the Civil War 150 years ago, featured displays as well as a number of area speakers. The Museum extended its hours until the end of September and was host to 315 visitors. The attendance was very good considering unforeseen closings as a result of power outages and tropical storms. Thanks to Dawn Pratt and her team

of volunteers. I would also like to thank Robert Mulligan, Valerie Thompson, Ann VanDervort, and their committee for an outstanding display of Civil War memorabilia and presentations focused on the Civil War period.

As your new President, one of my goals is to increase our membership. The current trend in membership renewals and applications does not bode well for our association. In an effort to attract younger members we have added a \$5 Student membership category. In addition, Rita Hoffman, Membership Chair, has composed a letter that members may use as a template or "as is" to send to friends and relatives encouraging them to become members. Please contact Rita for copies of the letter. We would also appreciate any ideas to help our cause. Susan Leath is updating our website and we are attempting to use social media such as Facebook to advance our objective. Janet Brown, Publicity Chair, is diligently working to let everyone know what BHA is about and where we are located. We will be using the Bethlehem Public Library to showcase BHA with a display case in the lobby during

the month of February and brochures at the information desk all year. Please contact Janet with any additional ideas you may have.

Robert Mulligan summarized this year's goal into three main themes: Recruitment, Publicity, and Storage. We are currently researching ideas to provide safe and secure locations to store display items and possibly new, more comfortable, chairs.

If you have any suggestions on how to promote the work of BHA, please contact me.

*George Lenhardt.*





## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Recently Keith Bennett, one of our Trustees, said to me, "Next year will be the 200th Anniversary of the War of 1812 – did you know that?" I had not thought of it. However, for this Newsletter I decided to write something about what I did know and what I would find when I did some research. By the way, I still look things up in books!

To many people it is a lesser known War – 1812 through 1815. However, many memorable events and quotations came out of that War. It was the War when the British troops came into Washington, DC and occupied our White House (Then called the President's Mansion), sending President James Madison fleeing to avoid being captured.

It was the War that our First Lady Dolley Madison, escaping from the White House, took with her several famous paintings for safety. After burning Washington, there was a very bad storm that prevented the British from leaving, so the British commanders sat down and ate the supper that had been prepared for the President before they set fire to the President's Mansion and left. The President and First Lady returned, and she put the paintings back on the walls.

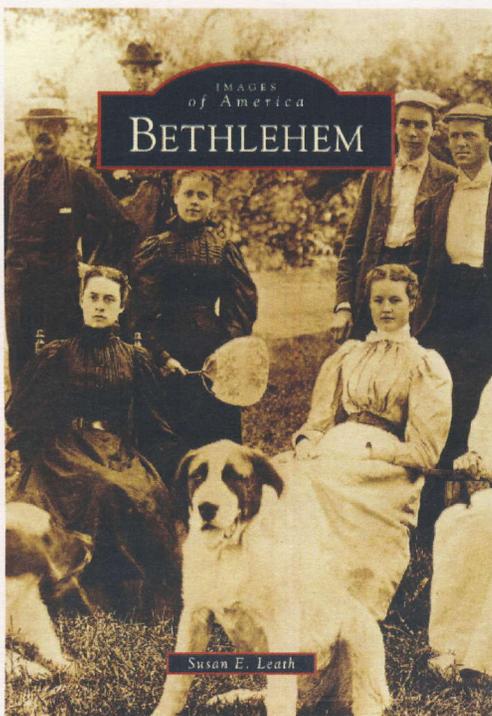
It was only for a day, but everyone remembers when the British came to our Capital city and took over the President's Mansion!

The cause of this War? Events were happening on the high seas with our Navy and the British Royal Navy even as the war continued between Britain and France. There were trade restrictions for us, and impressments of American Merchant sailors into the British Navy, the capturing of cargo from our ships - and the support of American Indian tribes against American expansion. Many Americans felt that all these things were insults to our honor. The southern States especially urged the President to go to war against the British. That happened on June 1, 1812 when the President sent a message to Congress about our grievances against the British. After his message, by a close vote the House of Representatives voted (79-49) a declaration of war. The Senate agreed (19-13). This was the first time that the United States declared war on another nation. The war was fought North to Canada, South to New Orleans, and on the High Seas. Out of this war came many remembered events, quotations and people. Such as: the Shaunee Indian Leader Tecumseh, General Wm. Henry Harrison, Captain Oliver Perry's message to Harrison after the Battle of Lake Erie beginning with "We have met the enemy and they are ours!"

*(Continued on the back panel)*

## BHA PHOTOS FEATURED IN NEW BETHLEHEM HISTORY BOOK

BHA member and town historian Susan Leath's new book Bethlehem comes out in November. A part of Arcadia



Publishing's Images of America Series, Bethlehem features 221 historic photographs and postcards including 49 from BHA's collection. "The Historical Association's photos are particularly good in the Glenmont-Cedar Hill-Selkirk area of town," said Leath. "It was a pleasure combing through the files and finding many hidden gems I had never seen before."

Bethlehem will be available for sale at BHA's November 17 meeting. You may also purchase them at the Town Clerk's office at Town Hall, I Love Books and other local and on-line retailers. All of Leath's author royalties will be donated to the Bethlehem Historical Association. Questions? Feel free to contact Leath at 439-4955 x1160 or sleath@townofbethlehem.org.

The book is framed around Bethlehem's hamlets including Bethlehem Center, Cedar Hill, Delmar, Elsmere, Glenmont, Normansville, North Bethlehem, Selkirk, Slingerlands, and South Bethlehem are represented with images from the 1880s to the 1960s. The majority of the images are from the town's photo archives plus other's from area residents.

Leath hopes that readers will enjoy a trip down memory lane and develop a deeper appreciation for our town's history and the historic buildings that are all around us.

## GENEALOGY REPORT

In my genealogy report at our regular membership meetings I have suggested several times that proper research to find your ancestors will require some hard work on your part in visits to churches, cemeteries, city and town clerks offices, county clerks offices, probate courts, etc. In other words you cannot fully rely on web site information obtained on your computer. Having said that, I would like to give you some help on web sites from which you may find a great deal of information, as long as you keep in mind the rules about documents necessary to support web site data, you just cannot find a date or place or name on the computer and take it as a proven fact, even though the information may well lead you to its place of origin.

Keeping that in mind one of your best web sites is [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org). This is a service provided by the Mormon religion through the Church Of Latter Day Saints. A part of the Mormon belief is helping people to connect with their ancestors. They believe that families are meant to be central in our lives and those family relationships, both past and future, share an enduring bond that reaches across the generations. In addition to the web page they have over 4500 family history centers in 70 countries, including the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, which houses the largest collection of vital records in the world.

Another large web site resource is [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com), which contains billions of data items, but unlike the above L.D.S. files, Ancestry does have a membership charge of about \$365.00 per year. However, there is no limit on the number of inquiries per month that you may make and they do have a monthly fee of about \$30.00. So you can just store up your requests and buy their service for a month at a time or as you need it.

Cyndi's List is a directory to sites about genealogy, it is a comprehensive cross reference that point to genealogy research on line. Try [www.cyndislist.com](http://www.cyndislist.com) it has links to over 300,000 websites.

[www.mocavo.com](http://www.mocavo.com) is a search engine that searches only genealogy sites. It provides a quick search and should be used with quotation marks around the name.

Try Google at [www.google.com/imghp?tbm=isch&source+og&sa=N&hl+eb&tab=ni](http://www.google.com/imghp?tbm=isch&source+og&sa=N&hl+eb&tab=ni) this allows you to search for pictures of people and places where your ancestors may have lived.

Google has many vast information resources. Just try this, put your ancestor that you are seeking, first and last name in quotes and add family, and hit enter. For example "Art Young Family" then if you get nothing just try "Young family" or "young family" + "New York" etc. You may be surprised at the results.

On a more local note, you might try the Albany County Hall of Records. It is at 95 Tivoli Street, Albany, telephone 518/436-3663, hours are Mon.-Fri. 9AM - 4PM. The archivist is Craig Carlson and he or his staff will try to help you in person or by mail. Most of their information will be about Albany or Albany County

At our September membership meeting I provided everyone with a very simple personal family chart. All that you need to start your genealogy in the event that you are not already started, is to put yourself at the bottom of the chart and add the ancestor information that you know just from family member knowledge and then use some of the above to help advance your family knowledge. Good luck with your research, it is a lot of work but you will find a great satisfaction as you build your family history.

*Art Young, Chariman, Genealogy*

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## FLOOD DAMAGE

The Bethlehem Historical Association escaped the ravages of tropical storm Irene, in the wake of tropical storm Lee on September 7, a storm that sat over our area and dumped record amounts of rain, we were not so fortunate. The basement was inundated with over 6 inches of water and the Town of Bethlehem had 2 sump pumps working overtime while water continued to bubble up from the basement floor.

After my talk on Mary Edwards Walker, Dawn Pratt and I went downstairs to assess the situation. Several inches of water still covered the floor and we found 4 or 5 cardboard boxes on a shelf that had been below the water mark. We removed ceramic items, dried them and removed them to a higher shelf. Several boxes with small dolls and some fur stoles were sodden with water. We placed them in plastic bins and I brought them home. After several days in a shady place with a light breeze we ended up with only slight damage to 1 of the stoles.

George Lenhardt and I discussed the situation and determined lower shelve items should be housed in plastic containers to avoid this problem in the future and we will work to provide a safer environment for our holdings given the uncertainty of our weather patterns. This project will be addressed in the coming weeks.

*Valerie J. Thompson, Trustee*

Our Members Annual Holiday Tea given for the Town and friends will be Sunday, December 4, at 1 to 4 p.m. at the Museum. This year the theme of the decorations will be "An Adirondack Christmas". If you cannot make Sunday's tea, the Association's doors will remain open to visitors Monday, December 5 from 1 to 4 p.m.



Members and Friends attend our Annual Ice Cream Social in June, 2011

*(LOOKING TO THE FUTURE, cont.)*

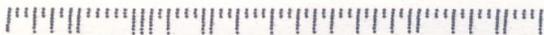
In 1812 our ship the USS Constitution's attack on the English Frigate Guerriere earned her the name "Old Ironsides".

In the British attack on Baltimore at Fort McHenry with the cannons booming illuminating the American Flag, Francis Scott Key was inspired to write the poem that became our "Star-Spangled Banner". Gen. Andrew Jackson's victory over the British in New Orleans making him a National Hero and propelling him towards the presidency. And, Captain Stephen Decatur's famous toast "In her intercourse with foreign nations may she always be in the right: but our country, right or wrong!"

I am sure you will hear a lot about this war next year.

*Lois Dillon, Chairman, Historic Resources*

*Newsletter - Lois Dillon & Kathy Newkirk*



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