
Town of Bethlehem Historical Association

NEWSLETTER

Old Cedar Hill School House

SUMMER 1994

Selkirk, New York 12158

President's Letter

Dear Members,

After a long winter it's a pleasure to welcome summer to the museum. The annual events are: the opening of the summer exhibit to stimulate an appreciation of our historical heritage of the Town of Bethlehem. The fall will bring our annual card party and the beautiful silver tea with holiday decorations by the Bethlehem Garden Club.

The Museum has seen much activity this year, thanks to all the effort of excellent volunteers. Our goal is to have one program each month. The members and visitors are enlightened by exceptional programs.

We have been working for an arrangement for an extension to the toll gate building for storage and displaying our farm and ice equipment collection and other activities.

A thank you is due to our membership who give willing of their time. As we begin to plan for 1994-95 we welcome your input and comments. Thank you again for your support. Hope to see you soon.

*Julie S. Kelley, President
Bethlehem Historical Association*

An Invitation

To our members and their guests.

*To attend a **GATHERING** at the*

**BETHLEHEM HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION MUSEUM**

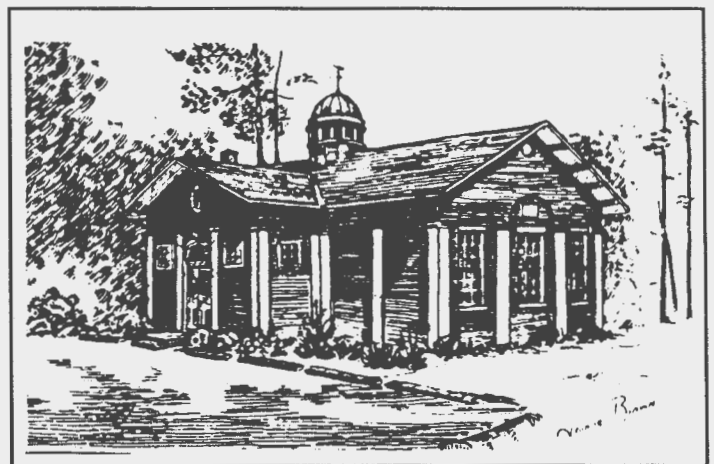
on Sunday, July 10, 1994 at 3 P.M.

*to visit with friends, partake of some
light refreshments. **AND** - to view our*

Summer Exhibit entitled "The 1920's."

*You will also see the Wedding Gown
presented to the Association by Mrs. Merrick.*

See you there!



**1994 - 1995 PROGRAM
BETHLEHEM
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION**

- Sept. 15 • 8 p.m.** "Genility in the Victorian Dining Room"
Dr. Kenneth Ames, Chief of History, N.Y.S. Museum
- Oct. 20 • 8 p.m.** "Things I Discovered While Researching Something Else Experiences in Geneological Research"
Florence Cristoph, Certified Genealogist
- Nov. 17 • 8 p.m.** "Where Did the Iroquots Come From?"
Dr. Dean Snow, Professor of Anthropology, SUNY, Albany
- December** Silver Tea
- Jan. 19 • 2 p.m.** "Dutch Houses in Albany Area"
Shirley Dunn, Historic Preservation Consultant
- Feb. 16 • 2 p.m.** "The State Capitol Restoration A Report in Progress"
Andrea Lazarski, Executive Director, State Commission of the Restoration of the Capitol
- March 16 • 8 p.m.** "Native Woodland Spring Flowers"
Anita Sanchez, Senior Environmental Educator, Five Rivers Environmental Education Center
- April 20 • 8 p.m.** "Albany's Ornamental Ironwork"
Diana S. Waite, Architectural Historian and President, Mt. Ida Press
- May 18 • 8 p.m.** To be announced

Historic Features

Lois Dillon, Historic Resources Committee Chairman reports that much of our Town's historic land is disappearing. Where Indians and Colonial soldiers once camped there are now many large houses being built. Our cows have mostly disappeared, and now our small country roads will disappear also as they turn into highways for the increased traffic. Some people say that there are fewer birds than there used to be. However, others complain that the numerous Crows are ruining their lawns and eating their grubs. If the Crows could talk they would tell us that when their ancestors lived on this land instead of grubs there were plenty of good crops for them to eat - or vandalize. However you view this problem!

She also notes that six of our Historic Houses have been for sale this year! We are happy to see that the Schoonmaker-Waldbilling House on Wemple Road that has been vacant for several years has been bought by Mr. & Mrs. George Hartman who are having the house and grounds restored and plan to live there. A pleasure to see!

Methodists of South Bethlehem Have A Handsome New Building An Interesting Story of the Process of Methodism From One Hundred Years



The First Methodist Episcopal Church of Bethlehem (So. Bethlehem Methodist Church), built in 1896, and located in the village of South Bethlehem on what was then known as Church Street, now Willowbrook Avenue.

Eleanor Turner provided this excerpt from the January 17, 1886 Albany Evening Journal with the above headline.

"The reopening of the Methodist Church here yesterday marks a new epoch of history of Methodism in this vicinity.

Few, perhaps as they admired the building as remodeled and listened with rapt attention to Chaplain McCabe thought to contrast the present degree of civilization with the condition of that of one hundred years ago.

At that time this beautiful and busy region was mostly a waste, howling wilderness. Indians were not strangers, and slaves were the chattels of inhabitants.

In those days, the present road was known as the "old colonial or king's road" and about three miles below this place was built in the year of our Lord 1702 "the old stone church" of which the present church is branch.

The old church has been remodeled and an addition put on so that now the edifice has a pretty appearance and the interior is furnished in the most modern pattern. The society starts out clear of debt and a new era of prosperity seems to have opened for the church....The Reverend W. H. Moser is to be congratulated upon his successful pastorate here."

If you wish to read this entire fascinating article contact Eleanor Turner or Lynn Mather.

Fourth Graders Visit Our Museum

For the past eight years the fourth graders from the Hamagrael School have had a field trip to the Bethlehem Town Hall, the old Bethlehem Cemetery by the Nicoll-Sill House, and the Bethlehem Historical Association Museum, ending with a picnic at the Henry Hudson Park. On June 3, 1994 as the fourth graders entered the museum, the school bell rang. Betty Van Ostenbrugge told the 104 children about the history of the Cedar Hill School. In 1859 the one room school was built for grades one through eight. The children walked, came by sleigh, bicycle, or horseback. In 1907 the school was enlarged to two rooms by the noted architect, Marcus Reynolds. In 1960 the little red school house was closed. In 1965 it became the home of the Bethlehem Historical Association.

Mrs. Van Ostenbrugge told them about the large fish net made by a local man in the late 1880's, the medicinal cabinet belonging to the horse and buggy doctor, John Babcock, the many school artifacts, and the doll house built for the Salisbury daughters in 1910. The house - model for their doll house-still stands near the Normanside Country Club.

Before they visited the old Bethlehem Cemetery, they learned about Caesar, a black slave, who served the Nichol-Sill family for three generations. He was born in 1737 and died in 1852. He is buried in the cemetery near the house. Several years ago fourth graders noticed this grave was unmarked. They purchased a head-stone for him.

They also visited the herb garden and the Toll Gate House to see blacksmithing, farming, and ice harvesting equipment.

Notes

Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, students from Elsmere School, Slingerland School and Glenmont School visit our museum throughout the year.

The Town of Bethlehem has made our museum handicapped accessible by widening the walkway and the fire door to the north.

When you visit the museum this summer, you might want to purchase a small school bell, a Christmas ornament and stationery decorated with a picture of our building.

Members of Bethlehem Historical Association and their friends are visiting the Rockefeller family's Hudson Valley estate, Kykuit, on Wednesday August 24, 1994. The 40 room Beaux-Arts mansion was designed in 1906 by Delano and Aldrich. Nelson Rockefeller gave it to the National Trust for Historic Preservation. They will visit the house, the carriage house, the Italianate Gardens, the Japanese Garden, and rose garden. From every view modern sculpture can be seen. The art gallery has works of Picasso, Alexander Calder, and Andy Warhol.

The cost is \$57 which includes the bus, the tour of Kykuit and the Union Church in Pocantico Hills, Westchester County. The church is famous for its Chagall stained glass windows. Lunch is at the Chart House in Dobbs Ferry.

The bus will leave from the Bethlehem Historical Association Museum at 7:30 A.M. The bus is filled at this time. You might want to be put on a waiting list, in case there is a cancellation. Call William La Med at 767-9057.

Summer at the Museum

The Cedar Hill School House Museum will be open every Sunday June - August from 2:00 to 5:00. If you are willing to be host or hostess, call Mary E. Van Ostenbrugge at 767-9919 during the day.



Besides the permanent collection, there is a special exhibit, "The 1920's," showing memorabilia of the Twenties, political posters and pictures, clippings and signs from magazines, movie magazines, sheet music, books, household appliances, miniature cars, women's and men's clothing and hats and much more.

The Museum committee, Marian Davis, chairman Cynthia Walsh, Jean Lyon, Maryl and Rick Spaulding, John Scharff, Evie Drake, Lois Dillon, Jan and Josh Satin, Jim Weidemann and Lynn Mather had fun mounting this show

with artifacts from private collections as well as objects from the Bethlehem Historical Associations vast and varied collections in storage.

If any members have a collection of Bethlehem artifacts you would like displayed in the future, please call Marian Davis at 439-4298.

Gowns from 1890 to 1920 belonging to the museum have been photographed on models, Cynthia Walsh and Marilyn Davis, to create a permanent record of the Association's clothing and a future slide show.



Editor's Corner



Back in the days when heavy metal referred to horseshoes, the blacksmith was the most important craftsman in town. He not only produced but also repaired all the metal implements needed around the farm and home, from wagon wheels, firearms to household utensils. He forged them by hand using a process and tools that hadn't changed in a thousand years.

In past eras the talents of the blacksmith virtually defined their civilization. Smiths dined at the tables of kings, with poets and priests, and were the father-artisan who made all the artisans tools, not to mention the hoes, the hinges, bits and buckles, traces and tires, nails and knives, lamps and latches, gates and grills, arms and armor without which no society could call itself civilized.

It once took three years to seven years as an apprentice and then eight to ten years of journeyman practice to attain master blacksmith status.

The advent of machinery starting in the mid-nineteenth century gradually put most blacksmiths out of business.

Like the work of many artisans indispensable to our ancestors' lives, that of the blacksmith is kept alive by dedicated American craftsmen. The majestic pair of gates for the Smithsonian's Renwick Gallery in Washington, D.C. was completed in 1974 by Albert Paley from Rochester, N.Y. The gates sinuously curving bars, use of the contrasting materials iron and brass, and elegant finish clearly reflected both the early 20th century's Art Nouveau style and Paley's experiments in jewelry.

The metal called "wrought iron" has been around for thousands of years, much prized for its ability to be shaped into curves and scrolls. It can be manipulated like bread dough because it contains iron silicate, glass-like slag fibers that allow the metal to absorb stress as well as resist corrosion. Wrought iron ceased to be manufactured in this country in 1969 because it became so costly to produce. But even though this kind of metal is no longer available, the process of hammering, twisting, and bending metal into ornamental shapes is still very much alive.

This information was taken from Orvis News May/June 1994 and the Smithsonian May 1993.

Marilyn Mather

Museum Collection

Mrs. Alton Merrick recently moved to the Beverwyck Retirement Community from her long time home in Delmar. At that time she donated several pieces of clothing dating from 1880 to the 1920's including a slipper satin and lace wedding gown first worn in 1885 by Amy Chester a relative of Mrs. Merrick's, and then again in the 1930's by Mrs. Merrick herself.

Judge Chester and his wife sailed on a cruise ship for England where they had an audience with England's Queen Mary, and the dress worn by Mrs. Chester is among those donated to the Bethlehem Historical Association along with a Top Hat purchased by Judge Chester in Piccadilly, London.

The collection includes several dresses, jackets and blouses, mens and women's hats, fur muffs and other accessories. Also included is an assortment of baby and children's clothing and carriage robes and a wooden doll. In all, about 70 items.

Some of the clothes will be exhibited in this summer's exhibit. The exhibit will feature clothing and memorabilia of the 1920's with a special section for the 1885 wedding dress.

Marion Davis

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Town of Bethlehem Historical Association

Old Cedar Hill School House

Selkirk, New York 12128

Non-Profit Organization

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