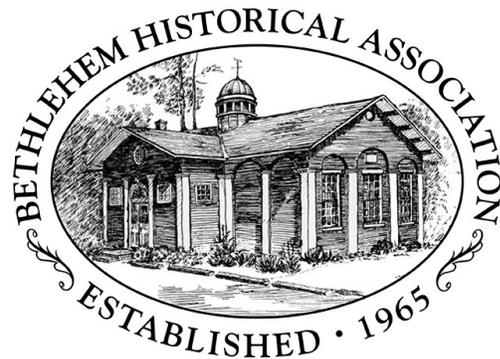


# Bethlehem Historical Association

## NEWSLETTER

Fall 2017



### The Bethlehem Historical Association

Cedar Hill Schoolhouse Museum  
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#### OFFICERS

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Charles Fuller  
Carl Gutman  
Norma June  
Dawn Pratt  
Bill Seyler

#### Newsletter Editors

Beth Anderson, Karen Beck,  
Faith Fuller & Susan Leath



*Live for Today  
Dream for Tomorrow  
Learn from Yesterday*

## The Original Delmar High School

by Beth Anderson

In September of 1917, a new type of school opened in Delmar. It was an experimental high school, based on a national push for farmers to have access to the best methods of scientific farming. The end result would be increased farm production and raised awareness for the general public about the profits of farming. The school was the only one of its type in Albany County and children in the Town of Bethlehem could attend for free. Any other child wishing to attend from within Albany County paid a small tuition fee.

There was concern about children not being able to take traditional school classes so the curriculum was combined in a way for children to study traditional core subjects in addition to: agriculture, domestic science, and mechanical arts. The idea was to integrate the new courses into



the current seventh and eighth grade curriculums and then create two further years of study that would mimic the first two years of high school. The use of a private home, owned by Dr. Thomas Holmes who was serving in World War I, was set aside as the base of operations.

Why was this so revolutionary an idea? It's quite simple. Any children in the Town of Bethlehem who wished to attend high school had to travel to Albany and attended either Albany High or Milne. Those living in the southern part of the town took the train to Ravena High School. Taking the train was the most efficient method of travel to points outside

*Continued on page 2.*

## Delmar High School continued from page 1

of the town's boundaries in those days. Bus service to Albany would begin in 1918 on roads that were limited at best.

However, the experimental high school lasted only one year. It was created from the passage of the Township School Act, signed into law by Governor Whitman. In the winter of 1918, the legislature repealed the Act and the funds were no longer



available. Sadly no school board minutes exist from this time as the clerk never fulfilled his job requirement. What little is known has been gleaned from newspaper articles. There wouldn't be another high school until 1926.

After World War I more and more professionals moved to the Albany area to fill a variety of positions. They wanted to live in areas where there was space and fresh air. Delmar's population began to increase. At the time, schools were called common schools and each town, or jurisdiction, was charged with running them. District No. 10, encompassing Delmar; filed to become a union-free school district enabling them to develop a high school curriculum. On December 31, 1923, District No. 10 became Union Free School District No. 10. This designation, as a Union Free district, allowed for the development of a(n) "Academic or High School Department."

The Board of Education realized that some of the common schools, particularly in Delmar, were bursting at the seams. Their plans would include building two new and larger schools: Delmar School and Elsmere School. After many meetings, and discussion of a few venues, the Board decided to have a new school built at the corners of Delaware Avenue and Borthwick Place. It would be the Delmar High School and house grades 7-12. The vote, a close one of 124-119, to build on the Borthwick Avenue site was finalized in April 1925.

Beginning in 1926 with a 9<sup>th</sup> grade class, each successive year contained a new grade level class

until Delmar High graduated its first class in 1929. After centralization in 1930, the town of Bethlehem incorporated several of its common schools into a unified district called Bethlehem Central. Delmar High existed until 1934 when the new junior/senior high school (present day middle school) opened on Kenwood Avenue. The original high school building transitioned into a K-6 elementary school called Delmar School. This school closed after the 1976 school year and, in 1980, reopened as the Bethlehem Town Hall.

The formation of the Bethlehem Central School District is a story for another day so stay tuned and look for it in a future edition of the BHA Newsletter!



Images on this page are undated photos of Delmar School teachers.

## Help Needed!

**Museum Collection Committee** - Review items for possible inclusion in our collections, handle their proper storage, keep inventory records up to date.

**Publicity Committee** - Create an occasional flyer, postcard or sign for events.

**Program Committee** - Speaker Liaison to manage the confirmation forms and obtain information for publicity

**Business Sponsors** - Coordinator to organize the contacting of potential local businesses and corporations.

Cannot commit to a committee, but able to help now and then? Have an area of expertise and willing to be consulted as needed? Have a skill or interest to share? Contact Karen Beck 518 439 9260 or [bethhist1965@gmail.com](mailto:bethhist1965@gmail.com)

## Always Seeking Donations

When you decide to clean out that closet, barn or attic, please think about us. We are always happy to hear of possible relevant additions to our collections. Some examples of items we seek are vintage photographs of residents, events or locations in town, business memorabilia, class photos, twentieth century clothing and accessories. Guided by the criteria in our Collection Management Policy, our Collection Committee will happily meet with you to consider whether we are able to accept your donation. Contact: Linda Schacht 518 767-2924 or [liberty3@prodigy.net](mailto:liberty3@prodigy.net)

# Silver Tea 2017

## Help us create a *Night Before Christmas*

The display committee is making its list and checking it twice as we prepare for the December Open House. We invite you to be a part of it. Do you have a holiday tradition? Perhaps you recall a scrumptious dessert or a favorite toy that you received. Was there a special person with whom you celebrated the holiday? How did you spend your Christmas Eve and days? We will have cards at the museum for you to jot down your memory. You can also email it to Nancy Newkirk [dnewkirk1@nycap.rr.com](mailto:dnewkirk1@nycap.rr.com). It will be displayed on a memory tree.

In addition to your memories, we are hoping to fill our display cases with favorite Christmas decorations. Perhaps you have a special ornament, or collection, or even a serving dish. There is a funny story about the wife who made rutabaga for her husband every year because his mother served it every Christmas dinner. Let us know what you would like to loan us by Monday November 20<sup>th</sup>. We will need it from Monday November 27 to Sunday December 10<sup>th</sup> at 4pm. It will be safely displayed in the glass cabinets.

Last, we invite you to help decorate. It will be a festive time. We need all skill levels and we welcome the chance to work with and become better acquainted with our members.

We start removing the current display on Friday, November 3. November 20-22 and 27-30 and December 1 we will have fun putting together *Twas the Night before Christmas*.

*Twas the Night before Christmas*

### *Annual Silver Tea*

*Sunday afternoon, December 3 from 1 to 4 p.m.*

### *Open House*

*Monday evening, December 4 from 4 to 8 p.m.*

*And*

*Sunday afternoon, December 10 from 1 to 4 p.m.*

Volunteers needed! To help pour or provide refreshments, call Dawn Pratt 518 767 2285.



Above: Faith Fuller gets ready to decorate in a photo from 2016.

## Out and About

On October 10, thirteen BHA members enjoyed a visit to Lindenwald, the Kinderhook home of our seventh president, Martin Van Buren. After an excellent tour by our enthusiastic, knowledgeable guide, we could not resist stopping at the Golden Harvest where we filled the cars with apples, cider and donuts.

The next scheduled trip will be to the **Pruyn House on December 12 at 10:30 AM**. Won't you join us? Call Vicki Folger 518 439 – 1824 or [vhf49@yahoo.com](mailto:vhf49@yahoo.com).

### They're back! A word about boxelder bugs.

If you have visited the museum on sunny days from October to March you have probably met the Boxelder bug. Armies of them can be seen outside and even inside the building. Although very annoying and a constant housekeeping problem, this insect is quite harmless and is not considered a threat to the environment. After feeding on boxelder trees all summer, they congregate in large groups and seek warm places to overwinter.

If there was a vacation brochure for boxelder bugs, our south facing brick wall would be on the cover!



## A House History on the Old Shunpike:

### 116 Elsmere Avenue

By Bill Ketzer

Built in 1948 on over five acres of cleared farmland, I'm awestruck at how little our home at 116 Elsmere has changed since that time. Bordered on one side by an unnamed tributary that appears on the earliest maps of Bethlehem, every concrete and iron survey marker remains intact, and telltale work of past landowners abound – from plantings and landscaping to old dumping grounds – and the home itself was only renovated significantly one time, in 1957.

The secrets and wonders we have uncovered on this property from census data, deed records, maps, town directories, probate documents and a host of other information are far too extensive for this article, but hopefully this brief timeline reveals how much can be learned about the history of a home with a little digging, and about Bethlehem generally as it grew from a completely rural landscape into bustling suburban communities!

As with most property histories in Bethlehem, the tale probably begins with a feudal agreement between a Dutch patroon and a tenant farmer (after the Mahicans). Currently however the first name associated with our land is likely Revolutionary War veteran Lt. John Leonard, a German immigrant who served in the 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the Albany County Militia. His surname appears in William K. Bender's 1852 will, where the "Old Leonard Farm" is bequeathed to his son Cyrus. Leonard is buried in the vicinity of Hamagrael Elementary School.

William's father was Sgt. Christian Bender, who hailed from the same part of Germany as the lieutenant and served in the same regiment during the war, so the timelines match generationally for John to be the farm owner referenced in the will. William and wife Candace were buried in a small family plot somewhere near the south side of our property, as was Candace's brother Solomon Russell. Russell also served in the Continental Army (though his roots were in New England), making him the third soldier of the Revolution tied to the land. The Bender plot was relocated to Bethlehem Cemetery in 1935.

After his father's death, Cyrus farmed the 35-

acre parcel until his own passing in 1897, when his second wife Emma inherited the land. In 1917 she sold it to her 65-year-old niece J. Louisa Barkhoff. As a longtime domestic servant, Louisa spent her 20's at William Wemple's Greek Revival farmhouse, which still stands abandoned on the lower portion of Wemple Road in Glenmont. Over time, Louisa subdivided the Leonard/Bender farm into many small parcels, until a few were reconstituted to create the current acreage. This includes part of tract she conveyed in 1919 to her brother William P. Barkhoff (who farmed to a degree but also leased portions of it for molding sand) and a small-



er, adjacent parcel conveyed just before her death in 1935 to German immigrant William Gall, who is elusive in the public record.

By a curious stipulation in the deeds, Louisa retained title to these properties, so both returned to her estate for probate. Helen Kipp Wemple – a daughter-in-law of William Wemple – was named as executor but unfortunately died before the estate was dissolved. The Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church of Albany, New York was named as executor, and the church's trustees sold both the



Barkhoff and Gall parcels together to Delmar resident Carl L. Wehrle, who commissioned his broth-

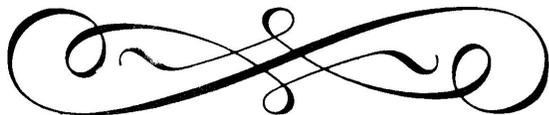
the Barkhuff and Gall parcels together to Delmar resident Carl L. Wehrle, who commissioned his brother-in-law J. R. Tibbits to build the home we live in today.

Carl and wife Gwendolen lived just up the road at 23 Elsmere for much of their lives before moving here in October 1948. Carl was an office manager at the Ramsey Chain Company, and unfortunately was only able to enjoy his beautiful new home for a few years – he died suddenly just a few days before Christmas in 1954. Gwendolen would marry again much later, to well-known Adams Hardware owner Earl C. Adams, but shortly after Carl's death the widow sold the residence to G. Howard Goold, the Executive Secretary to the NYS Teachers Association.

Howard converted the home's spacious attic into bedrooms for his three young daughters and moved in with wife Charlotte on February 15, 1957. Active in the community, Howard served as an elder of Delmar Presbyterian Church, chairing the building committee that oversaw the construction of its first house of worship near Cherry Avenue in 1961. He owned our home until his death in 1977, when it was sold to Louis and Brenda Unright.

Lou worked in sales at the 3M Company and sold 116 Elsmere to us in 2013. Almost anyone who comes down the drive – contractors, salesmen, town employees, mailmen – all know Lou Unright. He must have sensed my interest in the property's history, because he took the time to walk it with me, answer questions and show me all the quirks of the old house. He graduated from BCHS in 1953, excelled at basketball at Siena College and was extremely active in the Adams-Blanchard American Legion Post 1040. Every once and a while, I'll see him at the Delmar Farmer's Market and smile.

I feel like knowing your land in this manner bonds you to it in a way that nothing else can. It is visceral, intimate, and perhaps most importantly serves as an ever-present reminder that we are only here for an incredibly short time. It also provides an opportunity to use the land in a manner that honors its past owners, their successes, their struggles and their unique place in town history. I hope you'll consider learning more about who came before you in Bethlehem!



## Deaccession:

### What Is It and Why Do We Do It?

Deaccession is the process of removing an object from the collection of a museum. It is a standard practice for all chartered museums and is in the best interest of a museum and the public it serves.

The Collection Committee of the Bethlehem Historical Association considers deaccessioning an object for these reasons: lack of relevance to the Town, poor condition, duplication, or inability to properly store. The action must also be approved by the Board of Trustees.

Every effort is made to donate deaccessioned objects to another non-profit public institution for which it has relevance. The rest are sold at public auction, or if beyond repair, destroyed. All profits from sales of deaccessioned objects are reserved for purchase of new acquisitions and the care of our collections.

### Silent Auction News

After conducting a careful assessment of the sizable collection of ephemera that had accumulated over the years, we were faced with many items to deaccession. Arrangements for some things were made with a respected local antique dealer and auction house. Items of significance to other non-profit historic societies were donated and happily received. We then decided to hold a two-day silent auction for remaining lots. It was a great success. People enjoyed looking and buying. We will use the profits to maintain what is now a manageable inventory meaningful to the Town of Bethlehem.



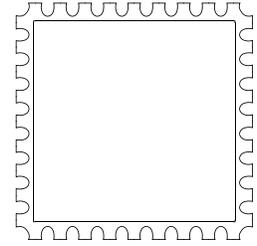
One of the tables at the Silent Auction

# Bethlehem Historical Association

Cedar Hill School House Museum

P.O. Box 263

Selkirk, NY 12158



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Above: Work underway on the new cement floor of the Carriage Barn. A new door will be added this fall as we improve this storage and potential exhibit space on the museum grounds.

## BETHLEHEM HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

### Upcoming Lectures

Thursday November 16, 2017 7 PM  
LOCATION: Cedar Hill Schoolhouse Museum  
**Mapping David Vaughan's New York**  
Presenter: Craig Williams

Thursday, January 18, 2018 2 PM  
LOCATION: Delmar Reformed Church  
**David Lithgow - Albany Artist**  
Presenters: Bob Mulligan and Randy Patten

Thursday, February 15, 2018 2 PM  
LOCATION: Delmar Reformed Church  
**Aconite and Agony**  
**A Tale of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Medicine in Bethlehem**  
Presenter: Stuart Lehman

### Our Business Sponsors

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