

Bethlehem Historical Association

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2019



The Bethlehem Historical Association

Cedar Hill Schoolhouse Museum
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OFFICERS

President: Karen Beck
Vice President: Sharon Sestak
Recording Secretary:
Nancy Newkirk
Corresponding Secretary:
Jan Cornell
Treasurer: Mary Ann Shubert

TRUSTEES

Tim Beebe
Debbie Croscup
Vicki Folger
Carl Gutman
Chris Philippo
Dawn Pratt
Bill Seyler

Newsletter Editors
Karen Beck, Faith Fuller
& Susan Leath



*Live for Today
Dream for Tomorrow
Learn from Yesterday*

President's Annual Review

*Talk presented by **President Karen Beck** at the Membership Dinner Meeting on May 16, 2019.*

Reflecting on the past year, what stands out are some significant signs of growth and some adjustments we are making as a result. By "we" I mean the wonderful group of people who work together to make the Bethlehem Historical Association stronger and better.

As you might know, the Cedar Hill Schoolhouse is the only historic building owned by the Town of Bethlehem. Despite the challenges that come with trying to run a museum in a structure that has primarily been standing since 1859, the building is charming and its open interior is well suited for a small local museum. It has been home to the Bethlehem Historical Association since it organized in 1965.

But, but....getting there it has proven to be difficult for residents farther north, particularly at night and most especially for seniors, which if you look around, is pretty much all of us. Also, our fire code sets the building's capacity at 60, which is no longer sufficient. The parking lot holds just 15 cars. It has become apparent that we have been asking too much of the old schoolhouse.



Phyllis Chapman (left) & her assistant at the Spring Afternoon Tea.

And so, we have been gradually moving our programs to the Delmar Reformed Church, which is of course is not just centrally located, but is a much larger facility with more commodious parking. This year our speaker series attracted an average audience of 74, notably breaking a record in January when 215 people poured into the church's fellowship hall to hear Dr. Gehring. If we had any doubts about the need to move the talks out of the schoolhouse, they ended that day.

Next year, all of our lectures will take place at that location, and in an effort to do the impossible, keep everyone happy, half of the talks are scheduled to take place in the afternoon and the other half will be held in the evening.

By eliminating the need to set up chairs and transform the Schoolhouse into an auditorium each month, we are able to use the space for additional exhibits, which we are determined will result in a more comprehensive, engaging museum. As we move more of our collections out of the cellar and into exhibits, the amount of needed storage space lessens, which has been another ongoing concern.

Continuing to put emphasis on the museum, for the third year in a row, we extended the Open Hours. It is now open every Sunday afternoon for six months, May through October, 14 weeks longer than a few years ago. Yet, that is still just half the year. Our challenge is how to manage increasing the accessibility while still being dependent on volunteers to get it done.

Throughout the year we kept up our traditional

Continued on next page.



Our new sign!

schedule of events. The annual Ice Cream Social took place in June when we also celebrated the Town's 225th birthday. The traditional Silver Tea Week was enhanced by wonderful displays related to "Over the River and Through the Woods".

We again held two successful fundraisers: Beer and Pretzels took place on an evening in early October, chaired by Susan and John Leath. And the Afternoon Tea took place in April on a warm sunshiny day, chaired by Helen Warner. Both were well attended.

Continuing community outreach, we again had a contingent in the Memorial Day parade and continued to be a presence at the Saturday Farmers Market, both indoors and out.

In the past year, we welcomed over 1200 visitors. That includes those who attended our programs at the church, special events or stopped by the museum. In the past four years, our membership list has increased from 139 to 193. As a family membership equates as two, this translates to 267 members. We are proud of this progress but know that the Town of Bethlehem has great potential so our effort continues.

Continuing the steady effort to improve the buildings and grounds, we recently took a giant step forward. After years of discussion and investigation concerning our desire to restore the back room of the museum, two weeks ago the 1970 drop ceiling, the soffits and dark wall covering came down. Saving the organization much money, the work was done by three skilled, hale and hardy members. I ask them to stand right now. Thank you, Charlie Fuller, Don Newkirk and Bill Seyler!

In particular, I want to single out Don for taking the lead with his expert carpentry skills and the generous use of his specialized tools which I understand include just about every one ever made.

We also are indebted to member David Brooks Coe, historic preservation and restoration architect, for his ongoing consultations. The knowledge and enthusiasm he brings to this process has been invaluable.

This is a process. It will take a while. Stop by and see the progress! And while you are there, check out the long awaited new landscaping in front of the building, largely funded by a gift from the Garden Club and planted by the town highway department. Also we expect that our new sign and flag pole will soon be in place.

I do want to recognize some others who give so much so willingly. I am going to ask them to stand as I call each name.

Although Charlie Fuller officially remains on leave, as his time allows, he willingly comes by to deal with problems that pop up – often related to the confounding security system.

Over a year ago, Bill Seyler stepped up and assumed the responsibilities for both Buildings and Grounds and the Finance Committee. This could not have happened at a busier time. He deserves a great deal of credit for the improvements that



Karen Beck & Carol Carnes at the indoor farmers market.

have taken place.

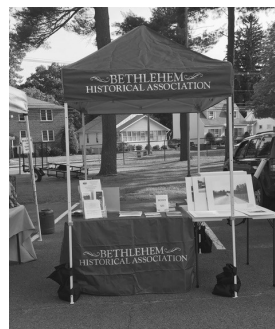
Wendy Brandow and Linda Schacht handle the fundraising which this year centered on the sale of cookbooks and hand-made ornaments as well as baked goods at their successful traditional Election Day bake sale. Their efforts support much of what we can do.

You might recognize Dawn Pratt if you can find her tucked away in the tiny kitchen during events. Or when she isn't on the phone lining up help for the museum on Sundays. Thank you, Dawn.

It is Sharon Sestak who does such a meticulous job keeping track of whether you paid your dues or not. Renewals go out very soon. She is recovering from surgery so let's help her out and send our checks promptly!

If Sue Gutman and Linda Schacht look a little paler than the rest of us it is because they have spent so many Mondays in the basement trying to document our collections. It is a huge job that is soon to enter its 5th year. Thank you, Girls.

Nancy Newkirk and Faith Fuller are responsible for organizing much of what we see in the museum. Nancy is coordinator of the exhibits, which as I mentioned, is now in high gear. She is a very willing helper and gives a great deal of time to the museum. Faith Fuller brings her creative talents to decorative displays as well as enhancing special events, such as the beautiful table decorations tonight. Thank you both.



Our setup at the outdoor market.

Susan Leath takes time from her Town Historian duties to handle the layout and manage the nuts and bolts of getting the newsletter and Yearbook out. For content, she depends on contributions and input from others such as Bill Ketzer. You have probably been reading Bill's articles in recent newsletters. Bill is also handling the requests for research from residents who are curious about their home's history.

Many attend our programs because they read about them in print, such as the Times Union. Again, it is Susan that makes that happen.

Mary Kelle has assumed the coordination of the speaker series this year. She is giving it her all and has a great schedule for the upcoming season. And we thank Galen Richie for his heartfelt introductions of the speakers.

Vicki Folger organizes all of our wonderful Out and About trips. She has one coming up in June to Hancock Shaker Village. Let's all sign up. Thank you, Vicki.

And last, but only because this is an alphabetical list, are the teachers who handle the Young Historians program, Linda Davies and Debbie Croscup. They brought local history to over 335 fourth graders this year.

I want to acknowledge how much we appreciate and depend on our partnership with the Town. We greatly benefit from the terrific support of the Supervisor's office, the Public Works Department and most especially the Highway Department that maintains and repairs the buildings and grounds. Thank you, Guys!

And of course you, our members and friends. It is a time worn statement but truer words cannot be spoken. We could not do it without you! Thank you, Everyone!



Bill Seyler, Chris Philipppo, Karen Beck, Vicki Folger, Mary Ann Schubert and Nancy Newkirk at the Annual Meeting.



BHA members and retired teachers Debbie Croscup and Linda Davies bring history to life for Bethlehem school children. Pictured here are students from Hama-grael Elementary School comparing items from long ago to items used today. On the desk at the front of the picture is a long handled bed warmer. BHA's Education Committee went to all Bethlehem Central 4th

News & Notes

Do you know that the Bethlehem Historical Association is totally dependent on **VOLUNTEERS**? Do you know that It would quickly disappear without the generosity of good people who run the day to day operations, create the exhibits, plan the programs and organize the events? Won't you consider becoming active in this important Bethlehem institution? We are a friendly, welcoming group of neighbors and friends. Think about your skills, talents and interests. Think about your schedule. To talk about possibilities, call Karen, 518 439 9260.

Can you help us share the history of Bethlehem?

Do you have old photos or other memorabilia related to the schools, businesses, organizations, churches - or just about anything related to the town's history?

If you do, and you might interested in donating such items, please let us know. We are always eager to consider additions to our collections. (Good copies of photos are fine if you want to keep your originals.)

Wat is er? *

BHA has lots of strange looking objects in our collection. What would you guess this is? Look for the answer in this issue!

** Dutch for What is it?*



Transitions

We welcome new officers and trustees to our Executive Committee.

Our new trustees are Vicki Folger and Chris Philipppo. Bill Seyler has been elected to serve a second term. Charlie Fuller and Norma June leave the Board, each having served two terms as trustees. We appreciate the time given to such an important position.

Sharon Sestak moves from corresponding secretary to vice president.

Wendy Brandow graciously served as vice president for two terms and we thank her giving what is now over 50 years of service to BHA.

Janet Cornell is our new corresponding secretary. Sharon juggled that job with her demanding work as membership chair, which she continues.

Nancy Newkirk assumes the office of recording secretary from Sue Gutman who handled the task for 4 years. That translates to over 32 meetings of listening intently in order to take notes for her reports!

We welcome Mary Ann Shubert who is now taking on the big responsibility of being our treasurer. Tim Beebe has done a fine job of taking good care of our finances as well as always maintaining his calm demeanor while working with all of us.

Thank You!

The **Town Highway Department** mows the lawn and plows the snow at the Schoolhouse. You probably knew that, and probably expected it as well.

Since they installed the new steps and railings a year ago, we have depended on that department on several occasions.

They came with a truck and helped us clear the Carriage House shed of large items that were no longer wanted. In April during the demolition work they supplied us with

a dumpster and hauled away the debris.

This spring a very special crew headed by Mike Bylsma went above and beyond to install our new shrubs in front of the building. That started by Mike going to Karen's house to pick up all the plants and then caring for them at the highway garage for a few days to keep them safe.

They handled the planting which included preparation of the site, incorporation of a large truckload of top soil and later a second truck of mulch to complete the job. The shrubs were carefully placed in accordance with our plan but with some friendly collaborative adjustments. "Do you think you could move that one just a little to the right, please?" "Sure, what else can we do?" It was a pleasure to work with those "guys" who obviously enjoy their work and take pride in it.

Thank you, John Anastasi, Gregg Sagendorph and the crews that take such good care of us year-round.



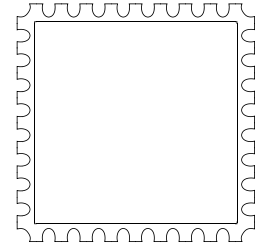


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Cedar Hill School House Museum

P.O. Box 263

Selkirk, NY 12158



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

The Cedar Hill Schoolhouse Museum is open Sunday afternoons between 2 and 4 PM until October 27.

2019-2020 Speaker Schedule

ALL presentations take place at

Delmar Reformed Church, 386 Delaware Avenue, Delmar

Please note that days of the week and times are different from years past. Mark your calendars!

Fall Speaker Series

Thursday, September 19 at 2 PM
Nineteenth Century Business Women
presented by Susan Lewis

Thursday, October 17 at 2 PM
Hudson River Day Boats
presented by Dick Brooks

Thursday November 21 at 2 PM
The Irish Bridget
presented by Margaret Lynch-Brennan

Spring Speaker Series

Wednesday, February 19 at 7 PM
Native American Site Along the Dowers Kill
presented by Adam Luscier,
Hartgen Archaeological Associates

Wednesday, March 18 at 7 PM
American Folk Art
presented by Marilyn Sassi

Wednesday, April 15 at 7 PM
Washington Park: The Moral High Ground in Albany
presented by Dr. John Pipkin

Stay tuned for other events to be announced including *Beer and Pretzels - Fall fundraiser, Annual Election Day Bake Sale, Silver Tea and Open Houses, Afternoon Tea - Spring fundraiser, Ice Cream Social, and Out and About* visits to local sites of historical interest for members

What is er? It is a circa 1864 wooden, adjustable hat form from a shop in Albany.