

# TOWN OF BETHLEHEM HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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

*Spring, 2011*



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members and Friends,

The Holiday Silver Tea was held on December 5, 2010 with over 83 persons attending. Ann Vandervort, Marian Davis and their committee made the Museum sparkle with their decorations around a theme of "Reflections in Silver and Gold". Hospitality Chairs Dawn Pratt and Kathy Newkirk arranged for contributions of sumptuous desserts and savories enjoyed by all.

WMHT has introduced a series of videos, called "Our Town" featuring people, places and events in the Capital District viewing area. The Bethlehem Historical Association was represented by our President in the production of "Our Town, Bethlehem". I'm pleased to report that as well as a verbal sequence, the opening of the film featured a rendition of "The Little Red Schoolhouse". If you missed the program on public television, copies of the video are available through the WMHT website. Janet Vine has donated a copy to the Museum and we plan to use this during the summer when the Museum is open to visitors. Thank you, Janet!

At our March 17, 2011 program meeting, Dawn Pratt arranged for former students of the Cedar Hill Schoolhouse to share their experiences and memories of what it was like to attend school there. Melinda Burns presented the Museum with a painting of the Cedar Hill Schoolhouse, Herbert June presented a picture of the last class (1961-62), and Gail Drobner presented a school book used during that time period. Over 50 attendees shared in the evening's stories and tape recordings were made as well as many photographs taken for our archives.

As part of our ongoing effort to involve the youngsters in our community, the BHA during spring break, hosted our first ever tea party for young ladies and their dolls. Kathy Newkirk has an article in the newsletter reporting on this event which was an outstanding success.

Due to torrential spring rains and the tremendous snow pack melt, we did experience some flooding in the basement

of the Museum. This was ably handled by George Lenhardt and Gregg Sagendorph with no damage to the Museum holdings. The Town has replaced the rotting wooden doors leading to the basement and installed a new staircase from the front landing to the basement. The narrow stairs and irregular risers have been a safety concern and we are grateful to Gregg and his crew for correcting this problem. George Lenhardt has replaced the front door locks and worked with Hart Security to rearm the front, side and basement doors. The Museum maintains regular pest control and annual fire extinguisher inspection.

The Annual Meeting and Election of new officers and trustees will be held on May 26, 2011 at the Museum. Last year's dinner prior to the meeting, catered by BHA Members, was deemed a success and will be repeated this year. Flyers will be sent out shortly with more details and reservation forms.

Looking Ahead: BHA will be represented at the Living History Day at Ten Broeck Mansion on May 15, 2011. On June 19, 2011 we'll have our ice cream social and the opening of the summer exhibit on the Civil War with emphasis on the Town of Bethlehem. Possible summer events

include a boat trip to Hudson and a drive-it-yourself tour.

My many thanks for all those who work so faithfully to make our Historical Association a presence in the community.

*Valerie J. Thompson, President*

## **NEW BOOK ON OUR TOWN**

Susan Leath, Bethlehem's Town Historian and BHA Member, is completing her book "Bethlehem" to be published as part of Arcadia Publishing's Images of America series. The book, to come out this fall, features old photographs and post cards from all of Bethlehem's hamlets. Many of the images are from the Association's collection.



## TEA PARTY – April 20, 2011

Chairman Karen Beck and her committee -- Ann Vandevort, Valerie Thompson, Connie Mulligan and Kathy Newkirk -- welcomed 23 girls and 15 adults to a Tea Party for girls 6 to 11 years of age and their dolls. A variety of style was exhibited along with some beautiful hats worn by both mothers and daughters.

A program by Mrs. Ursula Mertz pertaining to her collection of dolls and the changes through the years was enjoyed by all. She noted women decided that porcelain dolls were beautiful but a child could not really play with the dolls because they were stiff and fragile. Therefore, the new style doll was meant to be played with. She had a 1918 doll which was the first "Mama" doll. She noted the dolls were made child size and children used to pretend they were their children to play house. She showed girls dolls from composition to walking dolls in various sizes and shapes. She had a Madam Alexander doll with a full wardrobe which included a pants outfit. She noted this was the first time a doll had a pants outfit since only skirts and dresses were worn by girls and women. The thought being these were worn for



recreation or perhaps to the beach.

Mrs. Mertz has an extensive collection and has written 2 books about the history of dolls. She also showed an advertisement from an Oakland, CA newspaper encouraging girls to earn a free doll by bringing in 2 new subscriptions to the newspaper. Mrs. Mertz exhibited pictures of girls and their dolls done by a professional photographer which was popular to do in the early 1900's.

Glass dish sets and tea service sets were on display for the girls to see. These preceded the plastic doll sets that came into popularity later.

Decorations included beautifully decorated straw hats at each table for the girls to take home for their dolls along with a "castle" place card with the girl's name and her doll's name. Refreshments served included delicate sandwiches, cookies and cake. Cinnamon Apple tea and pink lemonade were served for beverages.



## SUMMER EXHIBIT *By: Robert Mulligan*

It is April 12, 2011 as I sit at my computer, writing this. I am wearing my Civil War uniform. I have returned from the opening ceremonies of the sesquicentennial of the Civil War. There will be a lot more commemorations, more cannon shots, more speeches and newspaper feature articles, before the end on April 9th, 2015, the anniversary of Lee's surrender. Or perhaps April 14th, 2015 the anniversary of the day Lincoln was shot.

This summer the Bethlehem Historical Association will mount its own exhibition about the Civil War. Without a collection of artifacts to display, the exhibit must be largely copies of documents, photos of artifacts, reproductions and hopefully, loans from the membership. This need not be a handicap. If you have something you think would be interesting and willing to loan, please call Valerie Thompson at 439-6795.

The exhibit must then, be idiosyncratic, a collection of those odds and ends which we do have, and can exhibit. Again, this is not a drawback. It is impossible for our small museum to treat in its entirety, such a long and many-faceted topic as the Civil War. But in the Civil War there are many stories to be told - interesting stories, provocative of reflection, and hopefully, further research on the part of the museum visitor.

As much as possible, we want to include what was happening in the Town of Bethlehem, and what was happening to Bethlehem's sons in the war. Since this has never been researched in depth, this will be ground breaking, and perhaps impossible to do fully. It is our intent to document the Civil War histories of the soldiers and sailors who served from the Town of Bethlehem, as well as their gravesites if buried in the town. It is possible, using records now online and on microfilm in the State Archives, to discover much about these men and their families at home. This information will include cemetery maps and will be compiled into a booklet to become part of the Historical Association's records. This won't be done, unless we get some volunteer members to research in the town records, local church archives, and the State Archives for information. This research need not be onerous, nor time consuming, nor does it require training, and in fact, I find such seeking to be perfectly delightful. Perhaps you will also. I am happy to speak with interested persons who think they might want to volunteer. Call me, Robert Mulligan, at 439-3802.

Taking advantage of the anniversary and the exhibit, and to increase visitation and knowledge of our museum among Bethlehem's citizens, we will also sponsor a series of "Summer Sundays." Beginning on June 19th, the date of our Ice Cream Social for the townspeople, we will offer demonstrations, displays and presentations by local experts on Civil War topics. These will be continued throughout the summer. Look for announcements in the Spotlight.

## GENEALOGY REPORT – ART YOUNG, COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

*Tonight's title is KNIGHTS, of the British Islands – some real and some not so real, maybe.*

In 2002 Clearfield publishing compiled a reprint and update of a book entitled "The Knights of England", authored by William A. Shaw and compiled by G.D. Butchaell which was composed of a complete record from the earliest time to the present day of the knights of all the Orders of Chivalry in England, Scotland and Ireland, and Knights Bachelors.

The 1st Knight Bachelor was Henry Plantagenet, 2nd son of Richard, Earl of Cornwall, on 18 May 1257, who was knighted on the day of his father's coronation as King of the Romans. That listing is followed by 430 pages in

date order of ALL the knights through 19 Dec. 1904.

This is followed by a 253 page index, by surname. If you are successful in finding an ancestor in the index, you will in most cases find additional information as when and where he lived and something about why and where he was knighted. You often may find who his parents were or who other relatives were.

There is a copy of this book in the Bethlehem Library, the New York State Library, also I have a copy and would be pleased to offer assistance.

### Now on to some knight legends - sprinkled with some history.

Was there a King Arthur? Well maybe yes maybe no – history has little written records of those medieval times – however we do know that there was a Round Table that created the concept of all seated at the table as equals and we know that the twelve principle Knights were historic people – The Knights were men of courage, honor, dignity, courtesy, and nobleness. They protected ladies and damsels, honored and fought for kings, and undertook dangerous quests and following is the list.

**Sir Lancelot Du Lac (Launcelot)** - Lancelot was the son of King Ban of Benwick and Queen Elaine. He was the First Knight of the Round Table, and he never failed in gentleness, courtesy, or courage. Legend tells us that as a child, Lancelot was left by the shore of the lake, where he was found by Vivien, the Lady of the Lake. She fostered and raised him, and in time Lancelot became one of history's greatest knights.

**Sir Gawain** - Gawain is generally said to be the nephew of Arthur. His parents were Lot of Orkney and Morgause (though his mother is said to be Anna in Geoffrey of Monmouth). Upon the death of Lot, he became the head of the Orkney clan, which includes in many sources his brothers Agravain, Gaheris, and Gareth, and his half-brother Mordred.

**Sir Geraint** - The eldest son of King Erbin of Dumnonia who was a Knight of Devon. After the death of his his wife, Prince Geraint spent much time at King Arthur's Court, looking for action and adventure. It was during this period that he encountered the Sparrow Hawk Knight and came to marry Lady Enid of Caer-Teim (Cardiff), a story told in the ancient tales of "Erec (alias Geraint) & Enid" and "Geraint mab Erbin". Sir Geraint restored Sir Yniol all of his possessions and then married his beautiful daughter, Lady Enid. Later Geraint heard Enid bewailing his sloth as a knight; he was stung with shame and mistakenly believed Enid to be unfaithful to him. He took her on a journey through a series of trials until she convinced him of her constancy. They returned and lived in happiness for the remainder of their lives.

**Sir Gareth** - Gareth was the youngest brother of Sir Gawain and the son of Lot and Morgause of Orkney. He played a significant role in Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*. Malory's "Tale of Sir Gareth" was apparently created by Malory. It presents Gareth as an exemplar of chivalry who is knighted by and devoted to Sir Lancelot and who acts chivalrously towards Lynette despite her abuse of him.

**Sir Gaheris** - Gaheris was the son of King Lot of Orkney and his wife Morgause, sister of King Arthur, before being knighted he was squire to his elder brother Gawaine. Sir Gaheris married Lynette on the day his brother Gareth married hersister, Dame Lionesse, of the Castle Perilous.

The two brothers were slain in the struggle following the rescue of Queen Guinevere from the fire, though this was by accident as Sir Lancelot did not recognise them in the crowd. Sir Gawaine for a long time held Sir Lancelot in bitter hatred.

**Sir Bedivere** - Bedivere was a trusty supporter of King Arthur from the beginning of his reign, and one of the first knights to join the fellowship of the Round Table. He helped Arthur fight the Giant of Mont St. Michel, and later he was made Duke of Neustria. Bedivere had only one hand later in life, having lost one of his hands in a battle. He had a son called Amren and a daughter named Eneuavc.

**Sir Galahad** - Galahad was the natural son of Launcelot. His name may be of Welsh origin or come from the place name Gilead in Palestine. His mother was Elaine, and he was placed in a nunnery as a child, being that the abbess there was his great aunt. One day a sword in a stone was seen in a river by Arthur's knights, and it was said that only the world's best knight could pull out the sword. Galahad was led into Arthur's court where he sat in the Siege Perilous and then drew the sword out. It was later on when the Grail appeared in a vision at Arthur's court that Galahad was one of the three knights chosen to undertake the Quest for the Holy Grail. He was given a white shield, made by Evelake, with a red cross which Joseph of Arimathea had drawn in blood. In the course of the Quest he joined up with Percivale, Bors, and Percivale's sister. On board Solomon's ship, Galahad obtained the Sword of David, and after the death of Percivale's sister the trio split up for a while and Galahad traveled with his father, Launcelot.

Other Noteable Knights....**Sir Kay, Sir Bors de Ganis, Sir Lamorak, Sir Tristan, Sir Percivale.**

*(Continued on last page)*

## FROM OUR HISTORIC SITES FILE

Coming from Albany on Route 9W at the intersection of 9W and Route 32 to Delmar, continuing on 9W you will see a big white house on the right side – all alone. This is a house built by one of the Haswell Family in the early 1800's. It became a popular Tavern on the Albany-Bethlehem Plank Road. When Mr. Haswell owned the house he let Indians camp in the fields. Later many arrow heads were found there.

During the Civil War the fields were used as training grounds for the Union soldiers. They called Kenwood Avenue "the Kitchen Road" because it led down to the training grounds where the soldiers were fed. If you would like to read more about this house, you will find it on Page 18 called "Barracks Barroom" in Allison Bennett's book, *Times Remembered*.



*Knights, cont.*

**So who was that person that was the leader of those noble knights? Was his name Arthur?**

The name Arthur may be a form of Artorius, a Roman gens name, but, it is possibly of Celtic origin, coming from artos viros (bear man) - see Welsh arth gwyr (T. R. Davies).

The hero's life, is given by Geoffrey of Monmouth (twelfth century) in *Historia Regum Britannie* - History of the Kings of Britain. Just how much of this life was Geoffrey's invention and how much was culled from traditional material is uncertain. He tells us that King Arthur was the son of Uther and defeated the barbarians in a dozen battles. Subsequently, he conquered a wide empire and eventually went to war with the Romans. He returned home on learning that his nephew Mordred had raised the standard of rebellion and taken Guinevere, the queen. After landing, his final battle took place.

*Newsletter - Lois Dillon & Kathy Newkirk*

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Town of Bethlehem Historical Association  
Cedar Hill Schoolhouse  
1003 River Road  
Selkirk, New York 12158