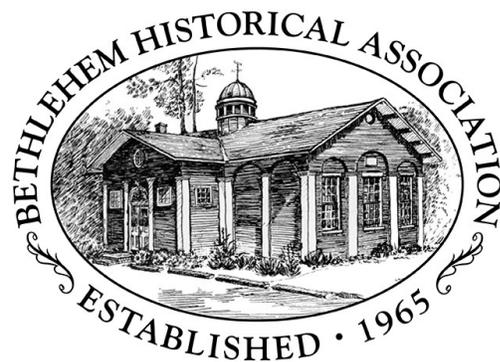


Bethlehem Historical Association

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2019



The Bethlehem Historical Association

Cedar Hill Schoolhouse Museum
1003 River Road
P.O. Box 263
Selkirk, NY 12158
(518) 767-9432
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BethlehemHistorical.org

OFFICERS

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Recording Secretary:
Sue Gutman
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Karen Beck, Faith Fuller
& Susan Leath



*Live for Today
Dream for Tomorrow
Learn from Yesterday*

6 Degrees of You and Me

Connecting to History on Wemple Road & Elsmere Avenue

By Bill Ketzer

Nothing shatters the illusion of separateness more than history. Last year, in fact, almost every single piece of research I chased down through the ages – no matter how obscure and far removed from the constellation of my own life experiences – circled right back around to... well... me.

I think this reflects what modern mystics like Richard Rohr mean when they talk about immersion in “deep time.” Connecting to deep time nourishes because without it, most of us tend to separate ourselves from the general dance of life and death.

We pretend we’re never going to die. “Living in such deep time, connected to past and future, prepares us for necessary suffering, keeps us from despair about our own failures and loss, and ironically offers us a way through it all,” Rohr says. “We are merely joining the great parade of humanity that has walked ahead of us and will follow after us.”

I am reminded of this whenever I drive past Gilbert Wemple’s Mid-1800s farmhouse in Glenmont, a hamlet formerly known as both Babcock’s Corners and, not surprisingly, Wemple. Perched on a high and long-abandoned hill along lower Wemple Road, this resilient Greek Revival home and its outbuildings sit on 112 acres of overgrown pasture and wetlands. See it while you can; the property was sold in December 2018 for a paltry \$250,000, so I expect that soon this majestic but badly dilapidated and unsafe ruin is not too long for this world (in fact, bulldozers are clearing the dense brush around the house as I write).

In the 1860’s, Gilbert’s son William worked the farm with him, while his other son John (who served as Bethlehem supervisor from 1875-1876) lived just down the hill toward River Road. By the time John took office, William left home and started farming elsewhere in the town, where his 24-year old housekeeper Jane Louisa Barkhoff resided with his family. She never married, but as a teen gave birth to her only child Leila, who also lived with the Wemples but vanishes from the public record after 1875 (curious but not uncommon in the 19th Century).

In 1917, an aging Louisa bought a large parcel of sandy farmland



Continued on page 3.



Our museum is considering a big facelift! In 1970, the five-year-old Bethlehem Historical Association, in consultation with the New York State Museum, designed and remodeled the back classroom to become the Town Museum. A well intentioned, smart project at the time, the room shows its age today.

The plan is to remove the drop ceiling, the soffits and the dark wall covering. Both rooms will once again have the same ceiling height and the windows will be completely revealed. The result will restore the room to its original setting, providing a lighter, more cheerful space in which to display more of our collections.

We look forward to sprucing up the place, perhaps starting in April.

Although the back room will be of limited use during the restoration, we do not anticipate any interruption in our schedule. Barring unforeseen circumstances, the museum will be open on Sundays from 2 to 4, starting May 5.



TOP: Visitors study the one room school exhibit.

ABOVE: Bill Seyler and David Coe discussing restoration plans.

RIGHT: Nancy Newkirk and Sharon Sestak giving the Big Wall a facelift.

Help Wanted

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.

Here are some ideas to get you thinking:

Greet and guide at the museum or Farmers' Market, Design and/or put together exhibits, Work on newsletter, Help with refreshment table, Design flyers, Do research, Care for collections, Plan activities for children, Do outreach to seniors, Conduct oral histories, Help with the business sponsorship program, Work on an event, Take photos, Do light carpentry or other manual skills.....



ABOVE: Have you noticed our record breaking crowds for our programs? Our January lecture featuring noted historian and translator Charles Gehring had over 220 attendees! Thank you Delmar Reformed Church for hosting us. We plan to hold more programs there in 2019-2020.

New Exhibits at the Schoolhouse

The Cedar Hill Schoolhouse Museum opens May 5.

All in a Days Work: 19th Century Makers and Creators looks at Bethlehem's blacksmiths, shoe makers, wheelwrights, carpenters, and more!

You and Me continued...

along Shunpike Road (now Elsmere Avenue) from her elderly aunt Emma Bender, whose husband Cyrus was the grandson of Revolutionary War sergeant Christian Bender. Cyrus himself fought for the Union during the Civil War and farmed my property on Elsmere Avenue until his rather gruesome death in the spring of 1898. A successful farmer by news and census accounts, he was en route to Albany with a large amount of produce and either lost control of his horses or tried to beat the No. 2 train from Binghamton across the D & H tracks at Elsmere, which was an even-grade crossing until the 1930s. Either way, his fateful decision to stay aboard the coach that day yielded nasty results for poor Cyrus, and it is here the modern history of our home at 116 Elsmere Avenue begins.

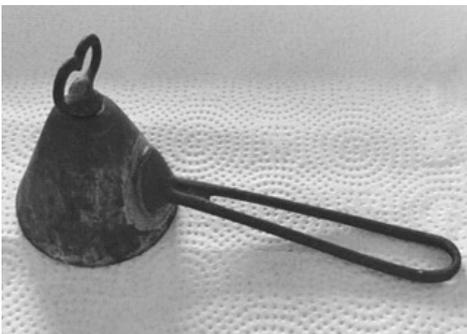
Louisa never lived here; she resided and worked in Albany by then and subdivided the parcel soon after she bought it, conveying a large chunk to her brother William, who leased portions of it to Albany Sand and Supply Company for molding sand until the onset of the Great Depression. As a young man, he worked in the icehouses on the Hudson River and later in life as a florist and caretaker for Bethlehem Cemetery, where he would return to rest forever in 1944*. Today, his family home at 110 Elsmere remains exactly as it looked at the time of his death.

As mentioned in a previous BHA article on my home, Louisa retained title to both properties, so they returned to her estate for probate when she died. Helen Kipp Wemple – the daughter-in-law of her farm employer William Wemple from decades before – was named as her executor CTA to the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church of Albany. It was the trustees of this parish that sold these lands together to Elsmere Fire Commissioner Carl Wehrle, and it was this man whose brother-in-law would build the home we live in today.

Knowing this history, and being lucky enough to unpack it, not only enriches the experience of living here beyond measure, but it connects me to Rohr's deep time, reminds me that I am just a steward and that, ultimately, I don't own anything except my actions. On the deathbed, it will all pass freely away from me, simply, as the seeds from a spent dandelion into the summer breeze. Though it may seem paradoxical, learning and internalizing the known history of the land – which requires diligent reflection on the past initially – can improve one's capacity for living well in the present moment.

This, my friends, is why history is important.

**William Barkhuff, Carl Wehrle and Christian Bender – all directly tied to my land – are buried in Bethlehem Cemetery, within less than 300 feet of each other.*



Wat is er? *

As Linda Schacht and I uncover items in BHA's collection to insure they are properly recorded and wrapped for storage, we come across artifacts that are no longer part of our everyday lives. It is laughable what theories we devise, only later to be astounded by their true identity. Here is one that we thought was a simple candle snuffer with a charming heart-shaped finial. Right? No, we were so mistaken. What would you guess the purpose of this object? Look for the answer in this issue! *Sue Gutman*

** Dutch for What is it?*

News & Notes

Out and About

New York State Museum Rotterdam Warehouse
Friday, April 12 10 AM

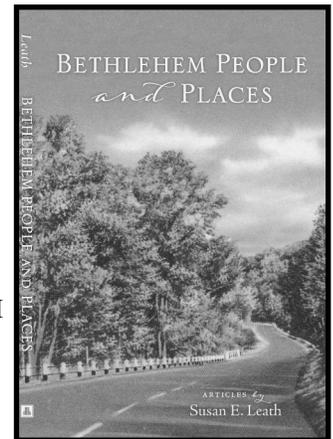
This is a great opportunity to see the vast, fascinating collections stored in the State Museum's 90,000 square foot warehouse. The tour will take about an hour and a half and will include some Bethlehem items. Wear good walking shoes and prepare to be amazed. Contact Vicki Folger to register: vhf49@yahoo.com or call 518 439 -1824

New Bethlehem History Book

Town historian Susan Leath's new book, *Bethlehem People and Places*, explores Bethlehem, New York's unique history through 33 illustrated articles.

Available NOW at I Love Books in Delmar, Bethlehem Town Hall, Tattered Pages in Glenmont, The Book House of Stuyvesant Plaza, Market Block Books in Troy and online at TroyBookMakers.com and Amazon.com.

Meet the author and **book signing** on Saturday, March 23 from 10 AM until noon at I Love Books in Delmar.



COOK BOOK NEWS

The Ways and Means Committee is beginning plans to prepare a sequel to "Past Perfect" our successful cookbook.

Our thought this time is to look for "then and now" type recipes – such as starting from scratch and how similar recipes today can be started from a boxed mix. Or recipes showing how microwaves, blenders and insta-pots have changed methods of preparing food and meals.

We'd also like to include some funny kitchen mishaps and stories of how things were done in the past as opposed to today.

Please send your entries and ideas to Linda Schacht, liberty3prodigy.net or mail them to BHA Cookbook, P.O. Box 263, Selkirk, NY 12158.

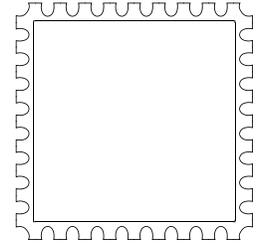


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Cedar Hill School House Museum

P.O. Box 263

Selkirk, NY 12158



A Spring Afternoon Tea

A fundraising event featuring



Fashion Hats and Bonnets

*By Phyllis Chapman of Vintage Visitors Productions
Followed by a selection of tea sandwiches and fancies.*

Saturday, April 13 at 1 PM

At the schoolhouse, 1003 River Road, Selkirk

Please RSVP by March 29 as seating is limited to 50.

For information, Contact Barbara Castle

email bbcastle08@gmail.com or call 518-439-4351



*Mail your \$20 per person check to
Bethlehem Historical Association
c/o Barbara Castle
161 Adams Street
Delmar, NY 12054*

*"A perfect time to
show off one of your favorite hats!"*

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Saturday, April 13 1 PM
Spring Afternoon Tea Fundraiser
RSVP Required

Thursday, April 18 7 PM
Location: Cedar Hill School House Museum
Skeleton Stories from Colonial Albany
Presented by Lisa Anderson

Sunday May 5
Museum open Sunday afternoons from 2 to 4 pm
through October.

Thursday May 16
Annual Meeting and Dinner
More details soon!

Monday, May 27
Memorial Day Parade—won't you join us?
For information Email bethhist1965@gmail.com or
call Karen 518 439 9260

Sunday, June 9
Annual Ice Cream Social



Follow us on Facebook

What is er?
It is an ice cream scoop!