

Bethlehem Historical Association

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2023



1940s Bethlehem

A New Exhibit at the Cedar Hill Schoolhouse Museum

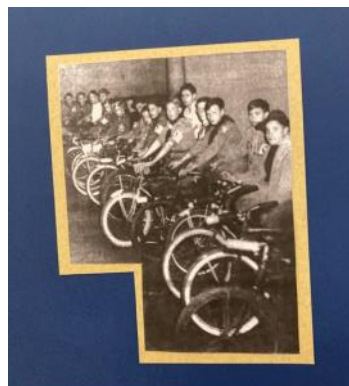
In December 1941, when the United States became fully engaged in the war, Americans wholeheartedly rallied to the call for much needed support. They sold bonds, organized scrap drives, and planted victory gardens. They willingly accepted the rationing, shortages, blackouts, and other sacrifices.

Taught by their parents and schools to be responsible, children were also swept up in the effort to do "their patriotic duty". In this newsletter we share some ways young people in Bethlehem were personally engaged in the war effort - and some ways they enjoyed life here after the war ended.

Also Inside: News about our **Annual Meeting, Slate of Officers and By-Laws Revision**

Boy Scout Air Raid Squad

The Bethlehem War Council enlisted 24 Boy Scouts messengers, all equipped with bicycles and blackout lights, and trained in emergency communication methods to carry messages should normal communications fail during air-raid alerts. They completed a six-week communications course and made their own equipment. "Good communications represent the life blood which ties all other wartime civilian services together. It is up to you," Gardener Bump told the members of the group as they graduated.



Members of the Council instructed the boys. R.W. Rolston of the War Council explained the civilian defense organization. Charles Crannell handled procedures for air-raid warden-messenger cooperation. Howard Paddock, who was in charge of the emergency police, assigned some of the older Scouts to assist during the day. Bradford Banfill instructed duties in the event of bombing from the air. Henry Betts taught first-aid.

(Albany Times Union, November 18, 1942)



The above scout photo was recently donated by Henry Betts' grandson. Henry Betts is the adult leader in the dark uniform on the left.

Clarksville School

By Beth Anderson

Mr. Hamilton Bookhout, supervising principal of Bethlehem Central Schools, began his tenure just before the decade of the 1940s. It would prove fruitful for the residents within the Bethlehem Central School District. Wait a moment. Isn't Clarksville in the town of New Scotland? Yes, it is. Then why was Clarksville Elementary School part of the Bethlehem Central School District? Read on!

Part of Mr. Hamilton Bookhout's success was his ability to plan for the future. That included buying useful tracts of land when they were available rather than when there was a need. One land purchase fulfilled a very definitive need. Mr. George Teeling, a new member of the BCSD Board of Education, was a heating engineer who sold a sizable amount of property to both the towns of Bethlehem and New Scotland. In addition, Mr. Teeling advocated for a new school to be built utilizing a modern plan. He even recommended an architect for the job, Mr. Henry Blatner.

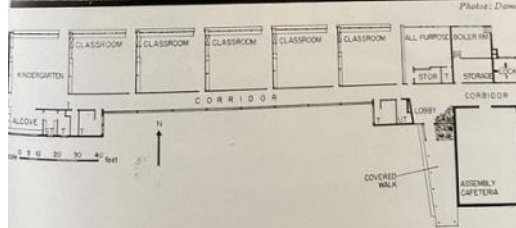
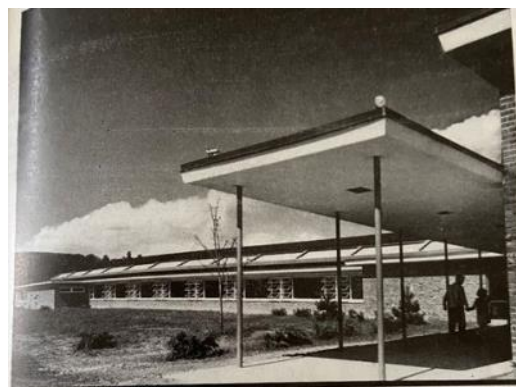
Why was a new school necessary in Clarksville? There were a handful of key reasons. Clarksville's student population was served by five schoolhouses: Clarksville, Unionville, Stony Hill, Onesquethaw, and Woodside; all were located within the town of New Scotland. In 1942, Clarksville School, which the majority of students attended, experienced major issues with a defective pot-belly stove. Many students became ill due to coal gas and the school was closed. Its pupils were divided between Bethlehem and Voorheesville.

It was necessary to build a new school, but the town of New Scotland did not have enough of a revenue stream at that time to support the construction of a new school. The residents of Clarksville, with its population increasing, voted to join the Bethlehem Central School District. The BCSD had built a new high school during the Depression at the cost of \$317,000. And Bethlehem residents raised the funds in the early 1940s to build a new elementary school in Slingerlands for \$120,000.

The concept of a modern and functional school, utilizing the natural beauty of the Clarksville setting, was carried through by the architect, Mr. Henry Blatner. Mr. Blatner was a BCSD resident and, though he had yet to design a public building, he had a great interest in integrating his lighting research into a new concept of elementary school design.

The architectural style of Clarksville Elementary's original building best fits the Modern Movement. This style is characterized by lack of ornamentation, sleek and angular design, and use of experimentation in design and in newly created construction materials. No longer were builders restricted to wood, bricks, and mortar. With all of this, and more, in mind, Mr. Blatner utilized a rectangular design for the building. This would allow for ease of future additions.

A major component of Mr. Blatner's design focused on the use of bilateral lighting. He had studied this concept during his graduate course work at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. On a simple level, the idea is to provide an even amount of lighting in a room by using light from the room's opposite ends. Studies showed students benefitted from an even light source. Too much natural light or too much artificial light proved to have negative effects on students' eyesight and affected their learning in a negative way. Therefore, Mr. Blatner drafted his plans to include lots of natural light but also with the ability for it to be supplemented by electric lighting. This was made possible by large windows, use of



clerestories, and louvers.

The school was designed to have six classrooms in addition to a kindergarten classroom. Each classroom had a door opening onto a courtyard with property that stretched for 14 acres. The building itself was revolutionary because it was oriented in a north-south fashion, rather than the traditional east-west. It is believed to be the first of its type in New York State. An orientation of this type allowed for better control of the natural light.

The school's design was featured as a case study in the October 1949 issue of *Architectural Forum: Magazine for Building*. The article states, "The free hand given the architect in a suburban rural school district which had never seen anything but traditional schools before is due to a remarkably progressive attitude on the part of the school board, supervising principal, and state education officials."

Classrooms had color-coded doors and were painted in colors like coral, light green, and yellow. From the classrooms the students could look out large windows at the nearby Helderbergs. Recess was a step away through a classroom door to the outside courtyard. The students could play in a 14-acre schoolyard. One first grader remarked, "It's almost nicer than home."

Clarksville Elementary remained a one-story school though additions were added over the years. It was an integral part of the community as many community events, in addition to school events, took place at the school. The great poet Robert Frost once wrote, "Nothing gold can stay." He might have been talking about Clarksville Elementary. Due to waning student population, the school closed after the 2010-2011 school year.

The innovative lighting design stood the test of time. The original part of the school building is listed on the U.S. Register of Historic Places (2008). The building is now owned and used by the Albany County Sheriff's Department.



Bethlehem Historical Association
ANNUAL MEETING
Delmar Reformed Church
Thursday May 18, 7:00 PM

- * Installation of New Officers * Vote on By-Laws Revision *
- * Featuring a performance by the **Lost Radio Rounders** *
- * Refreshments and Social Time *

All BHA members are encouraged to attend. Your guests are welcome!

For planning purposes please R.S.V.P. by May 11
Email or call Susan at SusanLeath2011@gmail.com or 518-209-5855.
Just give your name and number of those planning to attend.
\$10 per person suggested donation at the door.
We are looking forward to seeing everyone!

From the Nominating Committee

The nominating committee is pleased to present the 2023 slate of officers and trustees. On behalf of Bethlehem Historical Association, we extend our thanks to those who are stepping down and those who are taking on new responsibilities. BHA runs on volunteer power. We couldn't do it without you! Many thanks to President Karen Beck (our longest serving president!) and Recording Secretary Sue Peters; Trustees Chris Philippo and Debbie Croscup. Bill Ketzner, newly appointed Bethlehem Town Historian, is also stepping down as Trustee.

2023 Slate of Trustees

Tim Beebe (term ending in 2026)

Timothy is a lifelong resident of the Town of Bethlehem, Army veteran, Bethlehem Police Officer for over 30 years (12 years as Deputy Chief of Police), former board member of the Bethlehem Chamber of Commerce (and Treasurer), active member of the Bethlehem Historical Association (former Trustee and Treasurer), Historic Cherry Hill, Albany Institute of History and Art, Historic Albany Foundation, Mohawk-Hudson Land Conservancy, National Trust for Historic Preservation, American Chestnut Foundation.

Linda Davies (term ending 2026)

Linda is a retired educator who enjoys being part of BHA. She is a trustee and, along with Debbie Croscup, comprises the Young Historians committee. They used to go into all the 4th grades at Bethlehem Central but since the pandemic have provided kits with pictures, artifacts, books, and information to 2nd and 4th graders centering on local history. She has worn several hats while in BHA and thoroughly enjoys being a part of such an amazing organization.

Mary Kelle (term ending in 2026)

Mary has been a resident of the Town of Bethlehem for 47 years. She became interested in its history while advocating for historic preservation after learning of Slingerland's designation as a National Historic District and researching the background of that family. Since retiring as a Registered Nurse, Mary became more active in BHA. As chair of the Speaker Series for the last few years she was instrumental in BHA's new partnership with the Bethlehem Public Library.

Karen Beck (term ending in 2025, to be appointed by Trustees to fulfill an unexpired term as allowed in the bylaws.)

Karen has been a volunteer at Historic Albany Foundation, the NYS Cultural Education Center, and Five Rivers. She served on the Board at the Schuylar Mansion. After retiring from teaching in 2008, she became an active member of BHA. Now completing her 8th year as BHA president, Karen plans to continue delving into her interests in history and gardening

Continuing Trustees are Andrew Reilly (2024), John Smolinsky (2024) and Vicki Fiolger (2025)

2023 Slate of Officers

President: Susan Leath

Susan has been an active member of BHA since moving to the area with her family in 1995. She is currently doing exhibits, publicity, and the newsletter. Susan recently retired as Bethlehem's Town Historian. When not enjoying local history, Susan serves as treasurer for Delmar Reformed Church, does genealogy research, creates quilts, and writes fiction.

Recording Secretary: Debbie Croscup

Debbie is a retired teacher from the Voorheesville CSD who as lived almost all of her life in the Town of Bethlehem. She has always loved history and has been a member of BHA for several years. Debbie has served as a Trustee as well as a co-chair of the Young Historians Committee which initiated a program that brings local history into the elementary schools. She has found volunteering with BHA to be a very interesting, educational, and enjoyable experience.

Continuing officers are Vice Pres. Vicki Folger, Corresponding Secretary Jan Cornell and Treasurer Mary Ann Shubert.

By-Laws Revision

The Trustees have approved a by-laws revision that brings our bylaws up to our current practices. Use the QR code to go to our website to review.



BethlehemHistorical.org

School Pupils for Farm Work

In the 1940s Bethlehem was still very much an agricultural town. The war effort put a strain on local farmers.

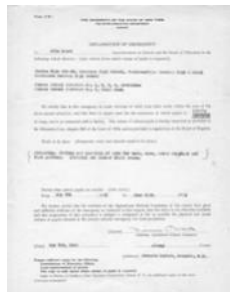
In the spring of 1943 Olin Bouck, Superintendent of Schools and the Board of Education in area districts, received a Declaration of Emergency that included Bethlehem Central High School, Ravena High School, and various Commons School Districts. The document states:

We certify that in this emergency an acute shortage of adult farm labor exists within the area of the above named school(s) and that there is urgent need for the assistance of school pupils in planting of crops, not in or connected with a factory. The release of school pupils is here by requested. Work to be done: Preparing, fitting and planting of land for oats, corn, other roughage and farm gardens. Spraying and care of fruit trees.

School teacher Marie Wiedeman also received a copy of the Declaration of Emergency with a cover letter dated May 5, 1943. The letter details the need for youth labor:

With defense plants in adjoining territory calling for help and paying wages that the farmer cannot compete with, and the call of men to the military services, farm help is seriously needed in order to plant this year's crops. Any cooperation on your part that can be given to meet this situation by excusing pupils from school for necessary farm work will be appreciated.

Signed by H. B. Davis
Agricultural Defense Committee



War Garden Tour Planned

Inspection of the more than 400 Junior Victory gardens in the Bethlehem Central School District will be started next week.

Donald Terhune, teacher of vocational agriculture at BCHS and chair of the Bethlehem Victory Garden committee, announced last night.

Herbert Steinke, supervisor of art in the Albany public schools and chairman of the Albany County Victory Garden committee will inspect the gardens and present awards to the children who have outstanding gardens.

The children were enrolled by Mr. Terhune as Junior Victory gardeners early in May. A number of the children will have exhibits at the Altamont Fair next month.

Members of the Victory Garden committee, in addition to Mr. Terhune, include Rev. Leroy Brandt, representing the Kiwanis club, Mrs. T. Loeschner of the Progress club, and Mrs. VANDerbilt of the Grange. (*Tri-Village News, August 10, 1944*)

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A Glider Class for the War Effort

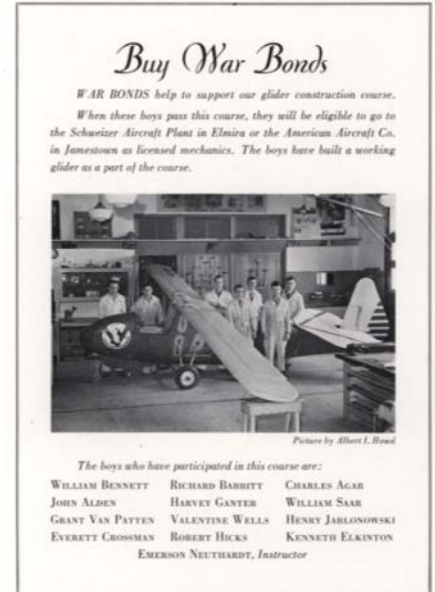
By Beth Anderson

The decade of the 1940s dawned upon the Town of Bethlehem prospering despite the Great Depression. A brand-new high school building had opened in 1934 and houses were being built at a steady rate. The population was up almost 30% from 1930. The school district, centralized in 1930, continued to grow. In 1938 the school district hired a full-time agriculture teacher and in 1940 came a new instructor for industrial arts.

Mr. Emerson Neuthardt arrived at the beginning of the 1939-1940 school year. He brought his specific interest in using aviation and aeronautics as part of the Industrial Arts curriculum. Mr. Neuthardt received his bachelor's degree from the State Normal School, now SUNY, at Oswego. He then took advantage of many opportunities to study the integration of aviation with the Industrial Arts curriculum.

During the summer of 1941, Mr. Neuthardt took part in glider flying instruction at Cornell University. In May of 1942 he was granted a leave of absence for the remainder of the school year to design aviation courses for secondary schools at Columbia University. His course studies resulted in an aviation course offering at BCHS in the fall of 1942. The class built their own glider as pictured in the 1943 Oriole yearbook. This course work also qualified them to work as mechanics in a glider factory.

Mr. Neuthardt left BCHS after the 1945-1946 school year for a position at Buffalo State University. He went on to receive a master's degree in Supervision and Administration, as well as a doctorate degree in Administration and Higher Education. He remained at Buffalo State until his retirement in 1979. Dr. Neuthardt also wrote and co-wrote books on the inclusion of aviation courses in the field of Industrial Arts.



[69]



The **Schools at War** program was designed to coordinate the desire of school children to do their part. Organized by the U.S. treasury Department, over 30 million school children participated

Its motto was *Save, Serve, Conserve*. Children *saved* and raised over two billion dollars selling bonds and stamps for the war effort. They *served* by learning first aid and plane spotting, and by doing childcare. They *conserved* by saving scrap metal, string, and rubber, and by repairing and reusing their toys and clothing

The program was inaugurated on September 25, 1942 with a parade in Washington, D. C. in which four thousand children marched and were greeted by Eleanor Roosevelt.



Wat is er?

What is this strange shaped thing pictured on the left? Find the answer on page 7.

Softball Revived in the 1946 Season

The *Town Talk* magazine in conjunction with local merchants announced the following prizes for the softball season reviving after the close of the war.

For every Home Run: \$1 in gasoline

To the player with higher batting average: Parker Pen Value \$12.50

Individual batting prize: 1,000 pounds of ice, delivered.

To individual members of team winning first half of season and then to members of team winning second half of season: One carton of cigarettes.

Grand Prize to members of the championship team: Genuine leather wallets, gold engraved with player's name.

Announcing Victory

Originally published by Susan Leath in her blog
BethlehemNYHistory on June 13, 2019

Having just celebrated Memorial Day, and the remembrance of D Day having been in the news lately, my thoughts have turned to Bethlehem during World War II. I have written about the Army Observation Posts that were active here during the war (the article is in my book *Historic Tales of Bethlehem.*) *Bethlehem Revisited* lists over 1,200 men and women from Bethlehem who served including 30 that were killed in action.

Which brings me to a story I just heard. Karen B. was down at the Cedar Hill Schoolhouse (home of the Bethlehem Historical Association) and two older men stopped by. It turns out they had gone to school there in the 1940s. As they reminisced about where their desks were and the games they played, they shared the memory of when WWII ended. The superintendent made regular visits to the different schools in the district and stopped by Cedar Hill in May of 1945. He spoke with the teacher, and then dismissed school early - the students were thrilled of course to get out early. This is what he told the youngsters - (as remembered by



May 11, 1945 *Altamont Enterprise*

the two oldsters and paraphrased by me) Today Germany surrendered - the war is over. As you go home stop at every house and knock on every door and tell the news.

Think about that for minute. No tv, no internet, no twitter. Kid power delivering the news door to door. Of course it would be all over the radio and newspapers. Victory in Europe Day, or V-E Day, would be celebrated on May 8 for years and years.

Now, I did paraphrase. The oldsters didn't say it was May, but V-E day is May 8, 1945. The Japanese didn't surrender until August, and Gen. MacArthur didn't formally accept the Japanese surrender until Sept 2. So I am thinking the kids would have been out of school for the summer then, so it had to be the May European event. Anyway, it is a nice little snippet of WWII era Bethlehem.



Cedar Hill Students in 1938. John Therien (back row, 2nd from right) and Francis Myers (second row from back, 3rd from left) were killed in action during World War II. Carl Henry (back row, first on right) died from wounds he received while serving.

Fun and Games in 1940s Delmar

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[9]

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MONDAY and TUESDAY JULY 8 - 9
JOHN FRINGS and GLORIA DICKSON in
"King of the Lumberjacks"
"JACQUELINE WELLS and BRUCE CARNEY" in
"MY SON IS GUILTY"
No Club Nights After Monday and Tuesday

WEDNESDAY and THURSDAY JULY 10-11
ANN SHERIDAN and JEFFERY LYNN in
"It All Came True"

ADDED FEATURETTE - Ray Whitley - "GORMALLING A SCHOOLMARM"

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TUESDAY JULY 16

2 Performances
3 P.M. & 8 P.M.

WILD ANIMAL SHOW

Wat is er? It is a Miser's Purse!

The long and narrow shape of the Miser's Purse is said to have originated from the medieval practice of carrying coins in the toe of a stocking. They were very popular in the Victorian era and were one of the most common types of purse carried by both men and women.

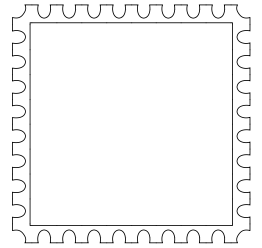
There is a narrow slit in the mid-section of fabric that let the carrier drop coins into either end of the tube. It was closed by moving two rings, or sliders toward the ends gathering in the fabric snugly around the contents.

The name is said to come from the fact that the opening in the middle is small and only disgorges one coin, or very few coins, at a time.



Bethlehem Historical Association

Cedar Hill Schoolhouse Museum
P.O. Box 263
Selkirk, NY 12158



Follow us on Facebook

The Bethlehem Historical Association

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bethhist1965@gmail.com
BethlehemHistorical.org

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John Smolinsky

Newsletter Editors
Karen Beck & Susan Leath

EVENTS Calendar

Wednesday April 12, 7 PM
Steamboat Navigation on the Hudson
A talk presented by Mark Peckham
Please pre-register with the Bethlehem Public Library
<https://bethlehem.librarycalendar.com/>

Saturday, April 22, 1 PM
Afternoon Tea on the Titanic
A fundraiser for BHA. Tickets Required.
Please call Barbara for info: 439-4351

Thursday, May 18, 7 PM
BHA **Annual Meeting** and performance by
Lost Radio Rounders
See inside for details.

Monday, May 29
Memorial Day Parade
Call Susan at 518-209-5855 to sign up to represent
BHA at the parade.

Sunday, June 11, 1 to 4 PM
Annual Ice Cream Social
At the Cedar Hill School House

*BHA's Cedar Hill Schoolhouse Museum is open Sunday afternoons
from 2 to 4 PM through October 27.
1003 River Road, Selkirk*

Local History at its finest!