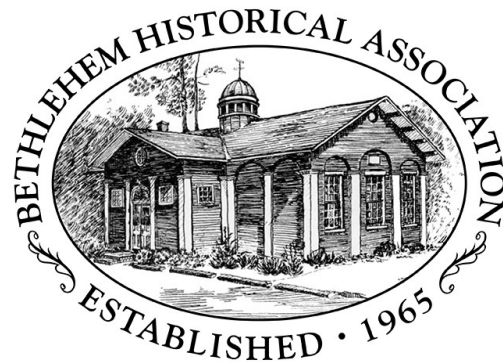


Bethlehem Historical Association

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2018



The Bethlehem Historical Association

Cedar Hill Schoolhouse Museum
1003 River Road
P.O. Box 263
Selkirk, NY 12158
(518) 767-9432
bethhist1965@gmail.com
BethlehemHistorical.org

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Vice President: Wendy Bradow
Recording Secretary:
Sue Gutman
Corresponding Secretary:
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Beth Anderson, Karen Beck,
Faith Fuller & Susan Leath



*Live for Today
Dream for Tomorrow
Learn from Yesterday*

Extended Museum Hours for 2018

Open Sundays May 6 thru October 28

Have you visited your town museum lately? We are happy to announce that you will have more opportunities to do that, as this year our "Open Hours" will start earlier than ever! Starting May 6 right through October 28, our doors will be open every Sunday from 2 to 4. As always, there is no admission charge. If you have not yet been there, the museum is located in the Cedar Hill Schoolhouse, 1003 River Road in Selkirk.

You will find a beautiful display of historic wedding gowns and other related items. In many cases we have information about who wore the dresses.

With the assistance of the local Tribal Presentation Office, the lives of the Mohican Indians and their Bethlehem connections will be displayed.

At a time long ago, the town was dotted with one room schoolhouses. Stop by to see where they were located and what they looked like. A few are still here but can be hard to recognize. You might enjoy looking at our school class photos. In fact, maybe you would be able to add to that collection!

Also in the works is a series of pop-up events and activities. Learn the history of your old coins or stamps. Learn to spin wool or write with a quill. Play a game of "Stump the Historian". Look to our website and Facebook page as these events "pop-up" on Sunday afternoons!

The annual Ice Cream Social and official Opening Day will take place on June 10 with extended hours, from 1 to 4. This year's event will be extra special as we recognize our 225th anniversary as a town. The Town of Bethlehem was officially created on March 12, 1793. Please plan to be part of the fun as we celebrate this historic event!

With all this activity, we need your help. Greet visitors, share ideas for pop-ups – your thoughts and help are always welcome and needed! Contact Karen Beck, and she will be happy to put you to work! Call her at 518-439-9260 or e-mail bethhist1965@gmail.com.



Faith Fuller and Nancy Newkirk work on a display.

Delmar High Becomes Bethlehem High

By Beth Anderson

As the decade of the 1920's waned, the population of Bethlehem was up almost 62% from the 1920 Census. The antiquated common-school method of education (one-room schoolhouses) was no longer able to handle the growing numbers of people moving to the open-air areas outside of the cities. In 1926, the building housing Delmar High was constructed to relieve District #10's overcrowding at their four-room schoolhouse on the corner of Kenwood Ave. and Adams St. It wasn't enough.

In April 1930, the Board of Education devised a plan in which seven of the town's original fifteen common schools merged into one district called Bethlehem Central School District No. 6. Total enrollment was close to 900 students. The district absorbed the following common schools: Delmar, Slingerlands, Elsmere, Houcks Corners, Bethlehem Center, Normansville, and Van Wies Point.

Students could now be transported to a central location by buses. By this time, the district was already out-growing the new high school building constructed on the corner of Delaware and Borthwick Aves. In answer to the increasing number of residents, the district was able to pass a bond for \$317,000 to build a new high school. An initial proposal of over \$400,000 had been voted down the previous year.

With the construction of the new school building the opportunity arose to expand the curriculum to match the advances in science and technology. Languages such as Latin and French were offered, along with art, music, and physical education. These courses joined the traditional English, History-Civics, science and mathematics. Toward the end of the 1930's courses in business and agriculture were added.

Over the decades of the 1930's and 40's, population continued to increase: 36.6% by 1940, and 33.6% by 1950. Bethlehem's educational reputation was growing and people sought to live in the Town of Bethlehem so their children could attend the well-run schools. The "new" school building on Kenwood Ave., housing grades 7-12, was running double sessions and voters decided in 1951 to build a new high school.

The school at 700 Delaware Avenue opened in January 1954. It contained a modern infrastructure, expanded recreational facilities, enhanced science labs, and a large library. Teachers were encouraged to seek opportunities for grants, fellowships, and exchange teaching. The academic reputation continued to grow, as did the physical plant. Over the years, many additions have been made. As of 2010 the town's population was just over 33,000, almost eight times the number in 1920.

Bethlehem Central High School, which opened with an enrollment of 418 students in grades 10-12, now administers to slightly more than 1600 students in grades 9-12. The school district maintains an excellent reputation. According to the high school's website, "In August of 2015, Bethlehem Central High School was named one of the Top 500 high schools in the nation by Newsweek coming in at #247." In 2017, the school district was ranked #5 among 600 upstate New York high schools and ranked #1 in the Albany area by the Albany Business Review. It's certain the early Board of Education members would be very proud.



The "new" high school, today's middle school, is seen shortly after it was built. In 1932.

News and Notes

Once again, we will have a contingent in the annual **Memorial Day Parade**. Won't you consider joining us this year? It is not just great fun but a spirited and uplifting experience to be a part of this traditional community event. If you are interested, contact Nancy Newkirk (518 - 767-3182) for more information.



Volunteers! Volunteers! Maintaining our presence in the community is only possible with the help of volunteers. Manning a table at the Farmers Market, putting together the newsletter, creating displays, caring for collections, baking, planning events, fund raising... these are a few of the many ways volunteers keep BHA active and running smoothly. Those who participate will tell you that we have a good time working together. Please consider joining us? To discuss how you might find something that suits you and your schedule, call Karen (518 - 439 - 9260)

Save the Date! Our **annual dinner** will take place on May 17 at the Blanchard Post on Poplar Drive. Look for info in the mail soon.

THANK YOU The hospitality committee, Dawn Pratt and Kathy Newkirk, thank all those who helped with the **Silver Tea**. We had wonderful bakers who provided goodies and great volunteers who poured tea and coffee. A special thanks to Carrie Van Apeldoorn and Jessica Hogan for their help with serving and working in the kitchen.

The Accidental Time Capsule:

The Industrial Evangelist of Roweland Avenue

By Bill Ketzer

Like many young homeowners in Olde Delmar, David and Lori Bosworth discovered their 1925 side-hall Colonial at 4 Roweland Avenue came with challenges. The couple recently replaced its original clay water main, and a tenacious wasp colony occupied the walls and window frames of their upstairs bedroom last summer. One day David ventured into the attic hoping to locate their hives, but he came away with a history lesson instead.

"I had peered into the attic before, but since it's just a crawlspace I never fully investigated," said Bosworth. "Once I got up there with a flashlight, I realized that a previous family had left some things behind, including a beat-up leather suitcase."

This was no ordinary suitcase, however. This was a time capsule, rife with the Depression-era keepsakes of Reverend Richard Charles Smith. A child of the home's first owners, Richard graduated from Delmar High School in 1933 and attended Hope College in Michigan. He would meet his future wife Beatrice Boot there, and we witness their early courtship in a packet of Kodak negatives from Harry Waltermire's Delmar Pharmacy. Redeveloping them, Bosworth brought young Dick Smith back to life, lakeside with Beatrice and documenting the lush rural landscapes surrounding Hope College, but Bosworth's favorite is a shot of the Smith family in front of their Delmar home.



Richard Smith's high school graduation photo

"I noticed there was originally a privet hedge in front of the porch, but when we moved in that space was bare," Bosworth explains. "It didn't look right to me, so I planted a privet hedge there, not knowing I had recreated that 1930's look... I feel like that connects me to the original owners."

Though the suitcase itself is in poor condition, it readily protected the negatives and many other treasures that foreshadow both Smith's romance with Beatrice and the nationally-acclaimed calling he would pursue until his death in 1998. We get to know the man who would arrive back home in 1937 with the love of his life and toss his travelling case in the attic, where it would sit untouched for 80 years.

The 1933 Delmar High School yearbook tells us class president Dick Smith was a leader, top student and nature lover, all confirmed by his suitcase's contents. We find meticulously hand-drawn diagrams of plant cells, botanical drawings, souvenirs hand-carved in white pine, a scrapbook with pressings of flora from rural Michigan meadows. There are hand-written German study guides, navigational maps of the Hudson River and several high school newspapers from



Smith's senior year at DHS, which provide brilliant narratives of teenage life in the 1930's.

The yearbook also notes Smith's desire to be a statesman, but he instead became a renowned missionary who rebuilt communities in poor industrial towns worldwide. We see this calling develop in his term papers and essays, where topics address basic theological dilemmas but soon focus on missionary strategies and how faith is shared and promoted. Also interesting are his mixed feelings on FDR's New Deal; he clearly saw the need for social programs but was not convinced they should be delivered by government or institutional learning.

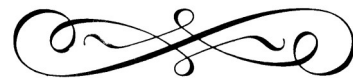
What caused this new direction? What fanned the flames of the preacher's dissatisfaction with what he deemed "ready-made congregations and lead him from Princeton Seminary in 1941 to West Virginia's coalfields, where he hand-built churches and fed mining families for over a decade? What compelled him to construct a shared-race recreational facility that exists to this day, drawing public praise and sponsorship from Eleanor Roosevelt and the attentions of Time and Life magazines?

Look no further perhaps than Beatrice, the child of Dutch missionaries working in China. Her family worked hard, traveled far, and their missionary history reads like a world atlas. Richard had a front-row seat since no less than four Boot siblings attended Hope during Smith's time there. Together, they would venture into the coal mines of Europe and South America through the 1960s and ultimately to the San Francisco Presbyterian Seminary, where they worked in the fields with longshoremen and migrant workers well into old age.

Meanwhile back on Roweland Avenue, and far from old age, the Bosworths are still unsure about the wasps as spring approaches, but they are sure of one thing. "I like knowing the (suitcase owner) was a good person and not a serial killer," wife Lori jokes. "Owning an old home can be hard, but knowing the history makes it special."



Beatrice Boot and Richard Smith c1935



On Saturday, April 14 at 1:30 PM you are invited to an **Afternoon Tea** featuring Connie Frisbee Houde's talk **Wedding Dresses and Their Stories** followed by tea sandwiches and fancies. Tickets are \$20 each.

Reservations requested.

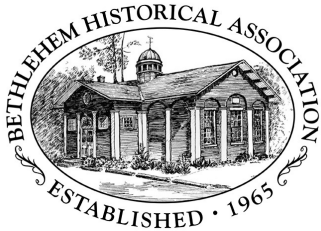
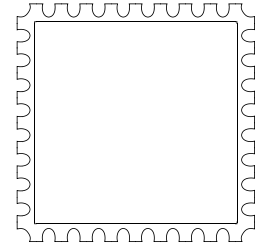
Please call Wendy at

518-767-0716 .



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P.O. Box 263
Selkirk, NY 12158



Out and About has a trip planned to Schuyler Mansion on April 13 at 11 am and one planned to the historic Johnson Hall in Johnstown on Wednesday, June 6 at 1 pm. Johnson Hall was important in Indian affairs, dating back to pre-Revolutionary times. It is a state historic site in a park setting and promises to be a lovely outing. As always, contact Vicki Folger: Vhf49@yahoo.com or 518 439 - 1824



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

(All take place at the Cedar Hill Schoolhouse Museum, 1003 River Road, Selkirk except where noted.)

Friday, April 13

Out and About to Schuyler Mansion

Saturday afternoon April 14

Afternoon Tea Fundraiser featuring an illustrated talk by Cornelia Frisbee Houde called "Wedding Dresses and Their Stories" Call Wendy at 767-0716 to RSVP.

Thursday April 19, 7 PM

Marilyn Sassi presents
Images of Childhood - 400 years Through Time

Sunday, May 6, 2 to 4 PM

Cedar Hill Schoolhouse Opens for Season

Thursday evening, May 17

Annual Dinner to be held at the Blanchard Post

Wednesday, June 6

Out and About to Johnson Hall.

Sunday, June 10, 2 to 4 PM

Ice Cream Social and Town Birthday Party



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