

STEPHENTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER
October 1977

REPORT FROM THE PRESIDENT:

A big "Thank You" to all the volunteers and contributors for their support, encouragement and enthusiasm in making all our summer projects such a success: our flea market, the booth at the TALVAC Bazaar in New Lebanon, and our "Sweet Shoppe" at the Stephentown Fireman's Muster.

Thanks to our volunteers, Lynn Goodhue, Bertha Rathbun, Jayne Sawin, Rosemary Lind, and Sally Fox who gave so much of their time, and to Susan Cooper who made the lovely signs for these affairs; also to Gene Sawin who was always handy with a tarpaulin to keep the sun and rain off of the ladies who were working.

More volunteers are needed to work on other projects. Won't you volunteer to give at least one hour a month to help out?

Our goal for the future is to acquire a small building to turn into a museum where students and visitors would browse and learn about our town's past and present. We'd maintain photos and tapes of interest, catalogs of cemeteries, house surveys, publications on the history of our town and county, booklets published by our own and other historical societies, and artifacts donated to us or loaned by private owners.

With fall just around the corner it's time to get going and find the missing cemeteries. Look around your property--you may find an old cemetery hidden by brush and trees. We are one of the few towns that have not completed

this project yet. So please help us find these places for our records. They are used as references by genealogists in search of their family trees.

We will keep you informed of all the things that we are doing to make the Historical Society a great success with the cooperation of all our members.

Anna Bayba,
President

Mrs. Susan Cooper has resigned as vice president and as chairman of the cemetery committee. With her (more than) full-time job at Jiminy Peak she is finding it increasingly difficult to do these jobs well. Mrs. Cooper has been active in the society since its beginnings and she has given much of her time and energy over the years. We will miss her active involvement but hope she'll be able to attend our monthly meetings even if she has to come late!

ESSAY CONTEST

The Historical Society is sponsoring a history composition contest for area students. The compositions are to be on any aspect of the history of Stephentown. There will be a first prize and two runners up in each of 3 grade categories as follows: Grades 9-12, \$15 & \$10; grades 7&8, \$10 & \$5; grades 5&6, \$10 & \$5. In addition to the monetary prizes, the best composition in each group will be published in the next historical album.

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Essay contest - cont.

Participants must be residents of Stephentown. The Deadline is December 2 and prizes will be awarded before Christmas. Copies of the rules will be distributed to Berlin Central, New Lebanon Central, and Averill Park High Schools, and to the appropriate middle and grade schools. Students in other schools may get the list of rules by writing to the Historical Society or by calling Mrs. Bayba, 733-5017.

PROGRAMS

This past summer we had some very interesting programs, from the June meeting when Mrs. Stevens from Hoosick Falls talked about the plans for the August celebration of the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Bennington, to the July talk on Shaker ironware by William Senseney, a Lanesboro blacksmith, and the well-attended talk by Paul Sykes on the History of the Stephentown Volunteer Fire Dept. This fall we have heard Phil Lord speak on the clothing and equipment of the Revolutionary War Soldier, and Robert F.W. Meader talk about Shaker Religious Concepts.

On Nov. 3 (Thursday), Donald Fisher, who runs the O.K. Rock Shop in Kinderhook, will talk about "Rocks, Minerals, Fossils, and the Art of Lapidary (cutting, grinding & polishing of stone)".

Art Dell Jr. of the Rensselaer Co. Antique Bottle Assoc. is tentatively scheduled to speak on Monday, Dec. 5. Bring any old bottles you have for him to look at and discuss.

The Historical Society meetings are always held at the Stephentown Town Hall on Grange Hall Rd. at 8 pm. They are usually scheduled for the 1st Monday of the month, but if there is a scheduling problem, look for us on the first Tuesday or the second Thursday. Meetings are always announced in advance in the Echo and other area newspapers.

We are looking for someone to take over the programming for our meetings. Mrs. Goodhue will be glad to help you get started. It really is not difficult and involves only a few hours each month. If you have some terrific ideas for programs for us, now is your chance to act on them!

Our HISTORICAL ALBUM has been a great success. We are down to our last few books, so if you haven't bought yours yet, get it soon before they are all sold out. There will be no second printing of this book.

A new book will hopefully be published next year. If you have any photos, other than those already in print, hang on to them and watch the Echo for our announcement as to when we will be gathering them together.

TALVAC BAZAAR J. Sawin

On August 6 the Historical Society participated in the activities sponsored by the Taconic and Lebanon Valley Assoc. of Churches by having a booth in the Flea (cont.)

Bazaar - cont.

Market at the grounds of Quick's Camera Hut on Rt. 20. May we express our thanks to the Boy Scouts of New Lebanon Troop 123 for the use of their tarps for this event and also providing our shelter for the booth at the Fireman's Muster. This troop has taken a very active interest in town history by helping to clean up cemeteries and by watching for and saving books of interest to local history donated to their paper drives. They recently donated a collection of early medical encyclopedias to the Canaan Historical Society; these were signed by one of that town's early doctors. It is important that historical societies recognize and encourage such civic minded activity of our younger members and friends. The future of our history lies in their hands.

Our booth made over \$40 for the day at the TALVAC Sale, which is not bad considering that many items were left over from our historical society booth at our own flea market in July. A few new things were contributed, including some hand-made items. The largest number of sales by far were in used books. Considering the stiff competition in collectables and hand-made items, our profits for the day were clean and it was a worthwhile venture. Had the weather been better there is no doubt that business from out-of-town travelers would hve increased, but we were not unhappy with the day's gain, since every little bit helps us preserve a little more history.

FIREMAN'S MUSTER (9/18) S. Fox

The Stephentown Historical Society "Sweet Shoppe" was a popular and

profitable booth at the Fireman's Muster Sunday Sept. 18th. Many thanks are due to all of our members who cooked, sold, bought and ate. Thanks to all of your efforts we cleared \$64.07, and had a pleasant afternoon in addition. The runaway best sellers were candied apples and fudge, followed closely by popcorn balls, maple candy and peanut brittle. Straws filled with flavored sugar were also greatly in demand. The fact that they obviously were not homemade did not seem to bother our young customers a bit!

A little research has raised the question of the historical authenticity of more than the sugar filled straws! According to a book by Caroline Piercy on Shaker cooking, white sugar, selling at \$2.75 per pound, was considered so valuable in the 18th century that it was kept under lock and key. Small pieces were chipped off the loaf and held in the mouth when drinking tea -- presumably to avoid leaving any of the precious sweet in the bottom of the cup. It's unlikely that early Stephen-town children were able to satisfy their cravings for a candy with fudge as did their descendants at the Muster. The goodies available then were probably made with honey, maple syrup and molasses. The ingredients that do not seem to change with the years are sweet teeth!

MUNICIPAL HISTORIANS MEETING

The Historical Society was invited to send a representative to the Annual Meeting of the Municipal Historians Assoc. of NY State on Sept. 9&10. The Board of Trustees elected to send Jacob Bakker as our representative. He reported that altho there were the usual number of SNAFU's, the lectures

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Historians' meeting - cont.

on Vital Statistics Records and The Future of Historic Preservation were very interesting, as was the tour of the State Museum at the Empire State Plaza (South Mall). He highly recommends a visit to the museum as it is not too far from Stephentown.

Interesting tidbits: The Bureau of Vital Records reported a surge in the number of requests for genealogical information from 1500 in 1970 to 10,000 last year! And 20 years ago there were only 2 or 3 hundred local historical societies in the state and now there are over 600. (Our own historical society is just 4 years old now.)

Mr. Bakker brought his copy of the Stephentown Historical Album and sold it at lunch! We hope he has since obtained another copy for himself!

Mrs. Judy Rowe of the Sand Lake Historical Society has been researching the Glass Works on Glass Lake, and also the underground railroad in this area during the Civil War. There are 2 houses in Dunham Hollow that have tunnels in them, and she would like to know of any other houses, barns or caves in the area where runaway slaves were hid. She would also like to know where the drivers of the sand wagons which carried sand to the glass works (1806-1853) might have stayed in their travels. If you have any information about either of the above topics, Mrs. Rowe would love to hear from you. You may get in touch with her through Gifford's Market in Glass Lake.

TOPO MAPS

Topographical maps have been purchased and distributed to some of the older Valley residents, including some who hunted and roamed the lands in their youth, so that they can mark places of business, old cemeteries, homesteads and other landmarks as they remember them. The maps will become part of the Historical Society's permanent collection.

HVCC MINI COURSES

Among the community interest courses being offered this fall at Hudson Valley Community College are two dealing with the preservation of old houses. Mini-course #1, "Country & Village Houses", will meet Oct. 18&25; and Mini-course #2, "Troy City Houses", will meet Nov. 1&8. Both meet from 7:30-9:30 pm, and the fee for each is only \$10. For further information contact the Office of Continuing Ed. at HVCC, 80 Vanderburgh Ave, Troy 12180, or call the office at 283-0568.

Mrs. Bayba received a letter and pictures from Mr. John Papp from Schenectady. The letter reads:

"Dear Anna,
While camping in your very historical town I bought one of your Historical Albums. We then drove around photographing the exciting buildings and homes that were in your book. I thought you might enjoy having a copy of the pictures I took. Sincerely,
John Papp"

He enclosed 20 lovely pictures which have been placed in an album and can be seen at the next Historical Society meeting.

MEMBERSHIP

1977 has been a year of growth for the Stephentown Historical Society. We have 17 new members so far this year (1 new contributing member) for a total of 87 adult (5 contributing) and 8 minor members. There are still some of you who have not yet paid your 1977 dues. Why not take a minute and send in the form below right now! Dues are only \$1 a year. If you are not sure whether or not you have paid, call Mrs. Goodhue at 733-5598. If you have paid already, why not tear off the form below and give it to a friend? New members are always welcome!

To: Stephentown Historical Society
P.O. Box 39, Stephentown NY 12168

<u>Category</u>	<u>Annual Dues</u>
___ Individual Member - Adult	\$1.00
___ Individual Member - Minor (age 17 or under)	.50
___ Contributing Member	5.00
___ Sustaining Member	15.00
___ Life Member	\$100.00, one time payment
___ Business or Organization	\$15.00

NAME: _____

MAILING ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____