



STEPHENTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

August—2019

A “NEW” PORTAL TO OUR PAST SHS Has A New Entryway

The Stephentown Historical Society’s Heritage Center has a new look! After many years, the front doors (quite possibly the original ones from 1870), had to be replaced due to serious cracks in the panels and warping over the years. In fact, they nearly blew completely off the building in a wind gust last fall—the hinges broke in half! The new doors are simply beautiful, made from very old growth white oak—from a 200 year old tree that came from the Pachaug Forest in CT, near the RI border. The only reason the magnificent tree was cut down was that it showed signs of dying. It is believed that it was the last known 8/4” x 12 quarter white oak stock in the New England area. The Society feels privileged to have obtained such a unique treasure to welcome visitors to the almost 200-year-old church meetinghouse.



MEMBERSHIP

As you are probably aware, the Historical Society is a non-profit entity, completely dependent on its wonderful group of volunteers and supporters. We rely almost entirely on membership dues and donations to “keep the lights on”, pay our bills and continue with our monthly informative programs and events. Is your membership current? **Or—Not a member? — why not consider joining?** In fact, we have an unexpected open Trustee position on the board that might be right up your alley!



We’re on Facebook!
Visit our page and
give us a “Like”!
See what’s going on
from week to week!
We’re “under new
management” so
check it out—you’ll
be glad you did!

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AMAZON SMILE

DID YOU KNOW..? That you can earn money for SHS simply by shopping on Amazon.com? Through the Amazon Smile Program, Amazon will donate a percentage of your purchase to SHS if you designate the Historical Society as your charity of choice. Just go to www.smile.amazon.com, sign in with your regular account information, choose SHS to support, then continue shopping as you normally would. It’s that easy!

Genealogy buff?

If so, check out-
www.stephentowngenealogy.com.
This site is maintained
by Jeanette Otis and
contains a lot of interesting
information!

HAVE SOME TIME ON YOUR HANDS?

Why not volunteer at the Historical Society? The "work" is easy and interesting, and we could sure use the help. We're open on Fridays from 1 to 4 pm and just recently began opening every first Saturday of the month from 10 am to 2 pm, and by appointment. Give us a call and we'll fill you in on what needs to be done and what projects need a helping hand. Call us at 518-733-6070 or drop us a line at shs@fairpoint.net. You'll be glad you did. Here's a sample of what we could use help with:

- We need a scrap-booker! Someone to help us catch up with all of the newspaper articles, photos and other memorabilia that has been collecting.
- The kitchen is in dire need of a new coat of paint!
- We have family files that were donated that must be combined with our existing files.
- The SHS Accessions' Spreadsheet needs updating
- Fragile newspaper articles, photos and other collectibles need encapsulation.
- Newspaper articles need to be copied

And that's just what we haven't been able to get to! But please don't be discouraged or worried that you won't know what to do. We'll be so happy to show you! We guarantee "on the job training"!

STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL 2019

Sunday, June 23rd, was the date of the 38th Annual Strawberry Festival, and what a day it was! Once again the event was held at Gardner's, and once again, everything was just wonderful. Volunteers met the Friday prior to the festival to hull and slice 200 lbs. of berries and then everyone pitched in to pull it all together. The festival is one of our two main fundraisers, and this year's was the best ever—the crowds were amazing and the weather was fantastic. We sold out of pies in the first 2 hours (as usual) and this year we even had to get more vanilla ice cream! A big Thank You to all the volunteers who helped—we absolutely couldn't do it without you—and a special Thanks to Neil and Susan Gardner for their kindness and assistance in so many ways. As you can see in the photo to the right, little 2-year-old Evalée Crouch, who lives right here in Stephentown, sure enjoyed her visit!



TOWN HISTORIAN'S CORNER

Patricia Flint

SNIPPETS FROM THE PAST

The following are excerpts from the Hartford Courant and reflect life in the late 1700's:

On October 26, 1795 it was reported:

STOLEN from subscriber in Stephentown, State of New York, last Wednesday night, a bay STALLION, with a star in his forehead about as large as a dollar, when rode without a curb bitt carries his nose out, has been kicked on his right knee, natural trotter and throws out his fore feet a little, shod all round. *Whoever will take up with horse and horse thief and secure them, and deliver them to Nathaniel Jones, in Hartford, or the subscriber in Stephentown, shall have Twenty-four dollars reward, or Twelve for the Horse only, and necessary charges paid, by*

WILLIAM DOUGLAS

Stephentown, Oct. 10, 1795

On September 30, 1799—reported:

STOLEN from the pasture of the subscriber on the night of the 11th of Sept., two MARES, one chestnut sorrel, four years old, no white except a streak of white hairs on both sides of her head, caused by wearing a neck yoke. The other a dark bay of brown, three years old, three white feet, a white stripe in her face part of the way down her nose, the biggest part of the white is on the right side of her forehead. Both said mares are trotters.

Whoever will take up said mares and return them to the subscriber, shall have five Dollars reward for each mare, and for capturing the thief or thieves, five Dollars each, and all necessary charges paid by

JOSEPH ROGERS, jun.

Stephentown, State of New York, Sept 16

Also, stolen the same night as above, from the subscriber, two SADDLES, one with a light colored velvet houfing the other with a mail pillow. Whoever, will return the saddles to the subscriber, shall have two Dollars, and for securing the thieves for that they be brought to justice, shall receive two Dollars reward.

WILLIAM DOUGLASS.

Stephentown, Sept. 16, 1799

ADDITIONAL VISITING HOURS ANNOUNCED

The Stephentown Historical Society has announced that the Stephentown Heritage Center will welcome visitors on the first Saturday of each month from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. These Saturday hours began July 6, and are in addition to the regular weekly Friday hours of 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. These weekend open hours will offer more Stephentown residents and visitors the opportunity to explore what the Society offers in genealogy research and local history. The other Saturdays are August 3, September 7, October 5 and November 2. The Center is closed during the month of December. The Heritage Center is the former Stephentown Methodist Church at 4 Staples Road at the corner of Garfield Road. It is free and handicapped accessible.

LOOKING AHEAD

2019 is turning out to be a very busy year indeed. We're still working on some "old business", but we also have some new ideas in the works:

- ♦ **GLASS PLATES**—the second batch (48 more!) of glass plate negatives were processed and printed! All have been uploaded to our website—be sure to check them out! (www.stephentown-historical.org.) The pictures are also available for viewing (and purchase!) at the Heritage Center. Ask us for more information if interested.
- ♦ **Speaking of the HISTORICAL SOCIETY WEBSITE** — Have you visited our website lately? If not, check it out! Alex Haley has spent a lot of time updating the site and making it really user-friendly. In addition to the 1907 Gillett photos, all of our newsletters are on there from 1974 to the present! If you have suggestions of what you would like to see on the site, or ideas on how to make it better, please let us know.
- ♦ **ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**— This project is still very much in the works but unfortunately had to be put on hold while we work out some bugs. We very much want to continue—preserving stories of Stephentown is so very important. If you would like to be involved, please let us know. We would love to start with our Veterans.
- ♦ **FACEBOOK**— Arlene Longo is working on the Historical Society Facebook page and would love some help! Check it out—there's a lot going on these days, and we are working hard to keep it current. Arlene is open to suggestion, so if you have ideas, let her know! When you visit our page, be sure to give us a "like"!
- ♦ **WELCOME BASKETS**—Remember when new folks in town would be presented with a "Welcome Basket"? It was full of items to help a new family assimilate into the community and deal with everyday life. We want to bring this tradition back to Stephentown and are working to make it happen. We are currently working in tandem with representatives from the Stephentown Memorial Library. We'll be visiting local businesses, the Town Hall, and other entities to get this project completed. If you are a business owner and would like to have a flyer, coupon, or business card included, please let us know. You can email us at shs@fairpoint.net or call us at 518-733-6070. Thanks!

DID YOU KNOW....?

That the first murder of a law enforcement officer was in Stephentown, NY? **Darius Quimby**, who was performing duties as a deputy constable under Constable Martin of Stephentown, had been attempting to arrest Whiting Sweeting on a warrant charging him with trespassing. Constable Martin formed a posse, including Quimby, deputizing them as constables to arrest Sweeting. In the course of the arrest, which Sweeting resisted, he struck out with a knife and wounded Quimby twice, the latter succumbing to his wounds. Sweeting was arrested, and on August 6, 1791, convicted and sentenced to die on the gallows. The execution of the death penalty brought about much discussion in the local press, some of whom felt the sentence too severe. The topic, of course, remains heatedly discussed to this day.

SCHEDULED PROGRAMS

AUGUST—DECEMBER 2019

- Monday, August 5 @ 7 PM - A Trio of Classic Cars -
 (The venue for this program will be the Firemen's Pavilion)
 Presented by their Owners
- Monday, September 9 @ 7 PM - The History of Making Charcoal
 (Note: 2nd Monday in September)
 Presented by Frank Kehn
- Monday, October 7 @ 7 PM- A First Person Historical
 Program featuring Ben Franklin
 Presented by Paul Stillman
- Sunday, November 3 @ 2 PM - "Chilly Willy's Winter Eve"
 (Please note meetings return to Sundays)
 The early Dutch settlers' winter preparations.
 Presented by Shelby Mattice of the Bronx Museum
- Sunday, December 1 @ 2 PM - Annual potluck Holiday Dinner -
 Holiday Music by Bev Westfall and the Stephentown Federated Church choir.

CELEBRATE STEPHENTOWN

August 2019 will mark the third year of our town-wide celebration of all things "Stephentown". Celebrate Stephentown is a grassroots festival celebrating our vibrant rural community. This year's theme is "This Is Home. Stephentown, NY". Local residents will share some of their favorite recollections and family stories of life in "The Only Stephentown on Earth". The Historical Society is happy to host this event which will take place on Sunday, August 18th from 2:00 to 4:00 pm and is organized by Norma Lasch.



"STEPHENTOWN REVISITED"

Inspired by a gift of Stephentown photographs from 1907 to 1908 taken by photographer Howard Gillett, SHS sponsored an exhibit of **current** photos of Stephentown. The response and the turnout were fantastic. We received photos of all kinds—some were scenic shots of old Stephentown and its inhabitants, and some were more modern, showing those same areas or buildings as they appear now. Over & over we heard "I remember that" or "I knew them", etc.



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