



STEPHENTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

January—2019

BATTLE'S OVER

November 11, 2018, marked 100 years since the end of the First World War. Nationwide commemorative events paid tribute to the millions killed or wounded in battle, and to those on the home front who struggled as well to help ensure that freedom would prevail. Individual pipers across the United Kingdom and countries all over the world commenced the day's events at 6:00 am with the traditional Scottish lament played at the end of battle – “Battle’s O’er”. One of Stephantown’s own, Paul Raider, is an accomplished piper and played in tribute at the Veteran’s Park to a crowd of appreciative residents. Later, at 7:05 am, in churches across the country and beyond, bells were rung 11 times in celebration of peace.



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? Watch the mail—we’ll soon be sending a notice to renew. Or—Not a member? — why not consider joining.

Thank you for your support!!



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!

KEEPERS OF OUR PAST.....by David Flint

A major stated purpose of the Stephentown Historical Society is to “endeavor to learn more about our past and preserve evidence of that past.” A big part of that endeavor has always been to strive to protect and preserve some 80 cemeteries and burial grounds scattered about the town. A new Cemeteries Committee was appointed in 2008. So what have they accomplished? The answer is, quite a bit. The Committee included Linda Sullivan, David Cummings, Marilyn Osgood, Dale Riggs and Pat Flint. They were initially charged with coordinating a survey of conditions in 50 of the town’s burial grounds. Letters were also sent out to the five active town cemetery associations inquiring about their needs. A number of these surveys were completed and returned by various Historical Society members but the bulk of the work was done by Cummings, Sullivan and Osgood who logged many many miles on back roads and trails on Dave’s ATV surveying and documenting each site, photographing stones, obtaining GPS coordinates and installing metal name signs at the cemeteries. In their travels they have also discovered at least three more graveyards that had not been accounted for earlier.

The Committee worked to form partnerships with Boy Scout troops to restore two cemeteries containing the remains of Revolutionary War soldiers, the Denison in North Stephentown and the Stephentown Center Baptist Cemetery on Calvin Cole Road. The latter was also the site of several subsequent cleanups and stone cleaning and repair workshops done in conjunction with the Rensselaer Land Trust and with the expert assistance of Joseph Ferrannini of Gravestone Matters. Ferrannini’s expertise was relied on often, notably in directing gravestone repair work at the Garfield Cemetery and in conducting repair and cleaning workshops at the Presbyterian burial ground on Presbyterian Hill Road where George Holcomb and his family members are buried.

Cummings led two projects that restored two important gravestones to their owners’ resting places after they had sort of gone missing for years. One was the gravestone of blacksmith Isaac Tinley, patriarch of one of the very few early black families in Stephentown. The stone, notable for its lengthy Bible passage, “Hast thou an arm like God...” (Job 40:9-14) on the reverse side, had been placed in the care of the Stephentown Historical Society for safekeeping and it lay on the floor of the Heritage Center for years before the Committee cleaned it and restored it to the spruced up Tinley burial ground. The other missing stone, the beautiful Benjamin Greenman stone with Noah’s Ark etched on it, had for some reason been placed with the Rensselaer County Historical Society and forgotten. Cummings and his team discovered it there, retrieved it and returned the stone of this Revolutionary War soldier to its rightful place in the Greenman Hill Cemetery on Greenman Hill Road. That cemetery was also the site of at least two major cleanup days as it had become overgrown with brush.

Another forgotten cemetery across the road from Greenman, the Tift Cemetery had also become overgrown with the stones barely visible. The local Cub Scouts pitched in to help with this one and two full cleanup days made the burial ground recognizable again.

Again with the aid of the Cub Scouts, and using a heavy duty tripod lifting device designed and built by Cummings, the Committee did major restoration work at the Arnold Cemetery in North Stephentown, including the discovery and restoration of a number of gravestones that had been completely buried in the ground.

Cummings recruited the Cub Scouts yet again to help in the restoration of the monument of Revolutionary War Captain William Douglas in the Stephentown Cemetery on Cemetery Hill Road. The 3 1/2 foot high octagonal spire had years ago toppled from its base and the finial top had broken off. The Scouts carefully cleaned the stone and Cummings expertly reset the base, repaired the monument and reset the spire using his tripod and other special equipment.

The Committee sponsored and led cleanups of a number of other graveyards including the Cranston Cemetery at the top of Cranston Hill Road, the Root Cemetery off of Tayer Road, the two Huntington cemeteries on Garfield Road, the Greenman burial ground on Madden Road and the Wilcox graveyard up on a hillside off of Black River Road. Cummings, Sullivan and Osgood also spent many days working in the Berry Cemetery in North Stephentown by the Berlin town line. For this work, landowners Carol and Jack Fitzgerald made a sizable donation to the Historical Society.

Many of the graveyard and gravestone photos taken by Committee members were at one time on the Society’s website. Many of them can now be found on Find-A-Grave.

The Society is now seeking volunteers to continue the work of caring for the Town’s historical heritage found in these final resting places.



TOWN HISTORIAN'S CORNER

Patricia Flint

In February 1856 a newspaper reported that a daughter of George W. Johnson living in W. Stephentown, was playing outside and fell into a well 22 feet deep. An older sister Julia Elvira saw the accident happen. She alerted her mother and 13 year old brother to what happened. The brother (George W Johnson) 1842-1909 went down the well and recovered his slightly injured 6 year old sister (**Arvilla M Johnson**).

When **Arvilla Miranda Johnson** grew up she became the wife of George Henry Coon from Crooked Lake, NY.

Their children were: William Henry 1872-1942, Dewitt 1873-1879,
Charles A 1874-1909, **David Burton 1876-1914**,
Sarah A 1877-1887

Arvilla - 1850 - 1878 Uterine Cancer. After her death, George married Julia Elvira Johnson 1844 - 1930

David Burton married Ella Davis Smart 1876-1933

David (called Burt or Bertie) along with his two brothers William and Charles, formed Coon Brothers Shirt and Collar Company at the turn of the 20th century, an industry for which Troy, New York, was famous. Unfortunately, with Charles's death in 1909 and the change in shirt styles not requiring removable collars, Coon Bros. was not able to survive.



Ella Coon with daughter
Helen Burton Coon
1906—2002



David Burton (Bertie)
Coon
B. 1876
D. 1914

SCHEDULED PROGRAMS FEBRUARY — JULY 2019

Sunday, February 3 @ 2 PM— Walter Wheeler— Magical Dwelling: Protective Rituals & Practices in Buildings in the Hudson Valley

Sunday, March 3 @ 2 PM — Bob Moore—Murder in Sand Lake—Who Killed Hazel Drew?

Sunday, April 7 @ 2 PM — Don Lindsay—Invermark College of Piping in Petersburg

Monday, May 6 @ 7:30 PM— TBD

****Please Note: we return to first Monday evening meetings**

Monday, June 3 @ 7:30 PM—Amy Bracewell—Saratoga Battlefield Experience

Monday, July 1 @ 6:00 PM—Annual Picnic at the Firemen's Pavilion

(Please bring side dish or dessert to share. Hotdogs, Hamburgers & Drinks Provided)

LOOKING AHEAD IN 2019

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

- ♦ **FRONT DOORS**— This project was first put on hold due to issues with the quality of the white oak, and then due to cold weather, but once spring is here it will be completed.
- ♦ **GLASS PLATES**—We'll have the second batch (there are 48 more!) of glass plate negatives processed and printed, so watch for more on that!
- ♦ **ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**— Trustee Paul Raider is spearheading this exciting project that promises to help preserve our town's history in audio form. Paul plans to meet with Stephentown's Veterans in the very near future. Trustee Alex Haley has completed research into a reliable, affordable wireless portable system to assist Paul in this project.
- ♦ **HISTORICAL SOCIETY WEBSITE**— www.stephentown-historical.org. Have you visited our website lately? If not, check it out! Trustee Alex Haley has spent a lot of time updating the site and making it really user-friendly. If you have suggestions of what you would like to see on the site, or how to make it better, please let us know.
- ♦ **FACEBOOK**— Trustee Paul Raider is the new gatekeeper for the Historical Society Facebook page. Check it out—there's a lot going on these days. Paul is open to suggestion, so if you have ideas, let him 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 would be chock-full of items to help a new family assimilate into the community and deal with everyday happenings. We would like to resurrect this tradition in Stephentown and are working on how to make it happen. If you would like to be involved in this project or have suggestions or ideas, please let us know.

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 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 stephentown-historical.org. You'll be glad you did.

DID YOU KNOW....?

Tinley Road—was named after Isaac Tinley (1819-1887), a prominent black man who owned 33 acres and had his own blacksmith business. "This black family was greatly respected in the community. At one time, someone had been stealing from the Tinleys. A law suit ensued and the white members of the community rallied around the Tinleys. They won the suit but no one remembers what happened to the burglar."

FOUNDING MEMBER



Thank goodness for people with vision, people who cared and were inspired, who realized that unless they stepped up and spoke up, that important, irreplaceable history could be lost forever. Janet Atwater is one of those people. Janet was instrumental in forming the Stephentown Historical Society back in 1973 because she realized that our town's history and artifacts could be in jeopardy. As a result, Janet is a founding member of SHS and was recently honored with a certificate of appreciation at a General Meeting. Janet is always ready to lend a hand, and quick with a story about "back when". Due to her roots here in Stephentown, she is a wealth of information and is always willing to share it. THANK YOU Janet! We truly appreciate you!

BABY, IT'S WARM INSIDE!!

Back in October of 2018, a routine service check of the furnace revealed a HUGE crack in the fire box! Technicians indicated that the building should not be occupied until it was replaced, so thanks to the generosity of members and donors, we are now the proud owners of a new furnace! It was a big expense, but as Bill Z. said: "Better to be notified by Larabee than the fire department!" Amen to that Bill!

CELEBRATE STEPHENTOWN

August of 2018 marked the second year of a town-wide celebration of all things "Stephentown". Thanks in large part to Jennifer and Scott from the Stephentown Memorial Library, this year included 40 events at 21 separate locations. SHS was happy to participate with their "Vintage Children's Games" on Saturday, August 18th from 10 to 12. Featured games included jacks, egg toss, and everyone's favorite—sack races! As you can see from the action shot at right, everyone got into the spirit and had a great time.



COMING IN APRIL—"STEPHENTOWN REVISITED"

Inspired by a gift of Stephentown photographs from 1907 to 1908 taken by photographer Howard Gillette, SHS will sponsor an exhibit of **current** photos of Stephentown. This exhibit will be held on April 13 & 14, so you have plenty of time to take some great pictures! Subject matter must be of Stephentown, such as scenic vistas, buildings, people gathered, etc. It would be interesting to see current photos that mimic Gillette's 100 years later. Photographers do not have to live in Stephentown; entries can be in color or black & white but must not exceed 24" x 36"; they must be display ready and have 2 labels—one for the back and one to place by the photo on display. For more detailed information, please contact the SHS at 518-733-6070 or email us at Stephentown-historical.org

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