



STEPHENTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

January 2023



Stephentown Band. Front Row: Irving Hunt, George Coutant, Harry Reynolds; standing: Caleb Moffitt, Ernest Wemple, Haynes Atwater, Rev. Wager, Calvin Atwater, Lewis Wager, Ed Gallup, George Edward, Henry Lapp.



This beautiful house was built by Dr. G. H. Dickinson, one of the very well liked physicians in the 1840's. He named it "Breezy Nook". The house was later owned by Calvin H. Atwater who operated his lumbermill here until his death in 1947; now owned by Georgian Beebe.

ALBUMS

Our featured album this month is #1, titled simply "**Stephentown Historical Album**". It opens with a short history of the town, authored by Janet Atwater. What follows is a gathering of pictures from the earliest years of photography right up to 1977 when the album was published. Photos include streets scenes, homes, farms, countryside panoramas, as well as commercial establishments, the railroad, automobiles of the day, and horses pulling all kinds of equipment. You'll see one-room schoolhouses and their classes, and terrible floods. This album is a great snapshot of "the way it was back when". We think you'll recognize a lot and will say "I remember that!" or "whatever happened to that?" more than once. This album, like all of our historic publications has been line-priced at \$10.00 and is available for purchase either at the Heritage Center, or on our website (www.stephentown-historical.org) under the "More" tab— "Books & Gifts" and then at the bottom of the page "Click Here for Online Ordering". Here are a couple pictures from the album.

INSIDE

- President's Annual Report — Pg 2
- Maintenance & Repair — Pg 3
- New Account At Meisner's -- Pg 3
- Town Historian's Corner — Pg 4
- Appreciation Pin Presentations —Pg 4
- Monthly Programs—Pg 5
- In Memoriam—Pg 5 and Pg 6
- SHS Happenings —Pg 6
- SHS Board of Directors—Pg 7
- Looking Ahead and YouTube —Pg 7
- Support SHS—Become A Member! - Pg 8



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**2022 ANNUAL REPORT**

The Board of Directors for the year 2022 were as follows:

President – Arlene Longo
Treasurer – Alan Stuart

Vice President – Kat Deen
Recording Secretary – Ellen Jennings

Josie Madison
Joe Hogan
Sara Demick Ewen

Alex Haley
Isabel Krebs
Jean Bolen

COVID continued to be a concern early on, so it was deemed wise to reschedule programs for the first quarter, resuming in April when numbers declined and mandates were lifted. Programs have been extremely well attended, a testament to the quality of our speakers thanks to our Program Committee, as well as the strong interest in our history from the community. AND – thanks to the donation of a camera - we are now recording our speakers and posting the videos on YouTube for those unable to attend in person.

This year was a busy one for the Historical Society. In January, thanks to tech advisor Brad McClave we migrated to **Microsoft 365's free software for nonprofits**, improving communication among the board's officers, and allowing for cancellation of our Zoom subscription (we now use **Teams**, a savings of \$149.00 annually). **Appreciation Pins** were designed and ordered – a program spearheaded by Pat Flint, Town Historian, as a small means to show our gratitude to volunteers. **Lighting** at the Heritage Center was updated and **plastic sheeting** replaced on the steeple, both much-needed capital improvements, along with a new **lawn mower**. March saw a change in our financial reporting and accounting as we moved to **Quickbooks Online**, which gives us an improved picture of SHS activities and economics. Another improvement was the purchase of a "**Square**" **credit card reader**, which eases cash flow issues and helps to improve inventory/sales reports. It has been linked to the website, dramatically increasing the sale of online items such as albums, and has provided another means for donations and membership renewals. Additional storage for archived items was achieved thanks to shelving donations of by two local residents, and the Center's **alarm system** was upgraded at a substantial annual cost savings. A new line of **T-Shirts** was designed and purchased, proclaiming our town to be once again "The Only Stephentown on Earth" – both online and in house sales have been quite brisk. The **Strawberry Festival** enjoyed its most profitable year ever – perhaps due in part to strong support from local vendors, making it possible to purchase new signage and banners, increasing awareness and participation in this event. The same went for the **Annual Car Wash** – a catchy new banner and signage helped to get the word out there. The Summer Picnic featured a **BBQ** this year – a great idea from the Program Committee with chicken donated by **Dave's Market**. For the first time, the event was held under our own tent at the Heritage Center. Attendance was phenomenal, the day was grand and Appreciation Pins were awarded. In July, in conjunction with the library, we participated in a first-ever **Welcome Reception** for new residents who were presented with an SHS Welcome Package. At our **Annual Holiday Luncheon** in December, special holiday gift bags containing albums and note cards were given to attendees to everyone's delight, ours included.

Also of note: a donation of 200 gallons of fuel oil by a member; sales of donated items at Meissner's Auction House; and sales of SHS items at both Dave's Market and Braveheart Books.

On the less-than-positive side, in October, routine painting turned into major sill/foundation repairs on the south side of the building. Looking on the bright side, it was caught in time and restored before irreparable damage could be done.

Looking forward to a happy, healthy, and prosperous 2023!

Respectfully submitted
Arlene Longo, President, Stephentown Historical Society

MAINTENANCE (AND REPAIR!)

As is our usual practice, in order to keep up with the seemingly never-ending maintenance of the Heritage Center, we made plans to paint the south side and addition on the back of the building. Simple, right? WRONG! To make a long story short, when workers began, they soon found more than they bargained for. Serious issues were found with the sill, foundation, and insulation (see the “before picture”). After over 140 years in existence, all kinds of weather, and powder post beetles, the boards and foundation were a dry, crumbling mess—they had to use a crow bar in places to pry out the old beams, and they had to actually jack up the building in some places! The outside of the sill was caulked with foam and finished with metal (2 clapboards were removed and the metal now extends down over the sill). Kirk Mitchell and his crew did a fantastic job and we appreciate them. See the “after” photo. While it certainly was an unexpected and costly expense (thank goodness for our generous fund drive donors!), we are grateful that it was caught in time and restored before irreparable damage could be done. We’ll check the other sides in the spring, but we don’t expect to find damage to the same extent, simply because they don’t get direct sun or constant motion.



ACCOUNT WITH MEISSNER’S AUCTION HOUSE

A big thank you is in order to Vice President Kat Deen, who has been working with Meissner’s Auction House in New Lebanon to sell miscellaneous “treasures” that various members donated throughout the year. 2022 saw revenue of almost \$500 from SODI (sale of donated items). Now we have our own consignment account! Any items accepted will bring 80% of the sale price to the Stephentown Historical Society. So check the basement, clean out the attic, scrounge the garage and see what you have that is in good saleable condition that you don’t want any more. **An appointment is necessary** and can be made by calling Meissner’s at (518) 766-5002. Their business hours are Wed—Friday from 8 am to 4 pm and Sundays from 9 am to 12 noon. Saturday auctions only—no on-hand consignments accepted. Our contact is Bob Meissner and our account number is 5821. If you have any questions, email the expert, Kat Deen, at vicepresident@stephentown-historical.org. And thank you!

MEISSNER'S
AUCTION SERVICE & ANTIQUE CENTER, LLC

(518) 766-5002 FAX: (518) 794-8073
Email: info@meissnersauction.com www.meissnersauction.com

Sayings & Customs from a much simpler time:

The Wedding Bouquet:

Most people got married in June because they took their yearly bath in May, and still smelled pretty good by June. However, since they were starting to smell, brides carried a bouquet of flowers to hid the body odor.

Hence, the custom today of carrying a bouquet when getting married.

Raining Cats and Dogs:

Houses had thatched roofs with thick straw piled high and no wood underneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm, so all the cats and other small animals (mice, bugs) lived in the roof. When it rained, it became slippery and sometimes the animals would slip and fall off the roof.

Hence the saying: "It's raining cats and dogs".

Canopy Bed:

There was nothing to stop things from falling into the house. This posed a real problem in the bedroom where bugs and other droppings could mess up your nice clean bed. That's how canopy beds came into existence.

Hence: a bed with big posts and a sheet hung over the top afforded some protection.

Thresh Hold:

Only the wealthy had something other than a dirt floor. They had slate floors that would get slippery in the winter when wet, so they spread thresh (straw) on the floor to help keep their footing. As winter wore on, they added more thresh until when you opened the door, it would all start slipping outside. A piece of wood was placed in the entrance-way.

Hence, A Thresh Hold

Pease Porridge Hot, Pease Porridge Cold and Chew the Fat:

In those old days, people cooked in the kitchen with a big kettle that always hung over the fire. Every day they lit the fire and added things to the pot. They ate mostly vegetables and didn't get much meat. They would eat the stew for dinner, leaving leftovers in the pot to get cold overnight and then start over again the next day. Sometimes stew had food in it that had been there for quite some time.

Hence, The Rhyme—Pease porridge hot, pease porridge cold, pease porridge in the pot nine days old.

Sometimes they could obtain pork, which made them feel quite special. When visitors came over, they would hang up their bacon to show off. It was a sign of wealth that a man could bring home the bacon—They would cut off a little to share with guests, and would all sit around and **"Chew the fat"**.

Upper Crusted:

Bread was divided according to status. Workers got the burnt bottom of the loaf, the family got the middle, and guests got the top, or the **"Upper Crust"**.

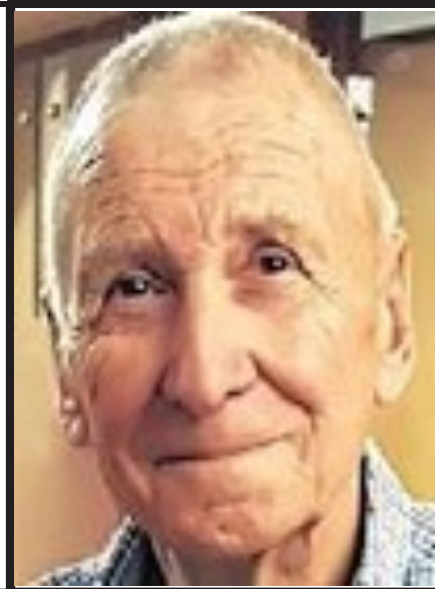
FEBRUARY TO JULY — 2023

All Meetings Begin at 2 PM and are held at the Heritage Center

Sunday, February 5, 2023	Freedom Riders Gerry Robinson
Sunday, March 5, 2023	"What Shall We Do With the Dead, Sir?" Mortuary Practices During the American Civil War—Robert Shuey
Sunday, April 2, 2023	The Berlin Explosion—60th Anniversary Sharon Klein
Sunday, May 7, 2023	For the Cause: Women of the Civil War Phyllis Chapman
Sunday, June 4, 2023	Antique Clocks—Paul Borst
Sunday, July 9, 2023	Annual Picnic at the Heritage Center

**IN MEMORIAM
CALVIN JOSEPH KENYON**

In August of this year we lost not only a dear friend but also a Charter and Life member, Cal Kenyon. Cal was a wonderful man. He led a life filled with friends, family and antiques. After the army, he worked for a time at Ceramaseal and then for 30 years at NYSEG. Upon retiring, Cal and his wife Suzanne spent many years travelling and volunteering. As a Charter member, he was one of the small group responsible for the Historical Society's existence. As late as 2019, Cal visited SHS, shared "Stories of Stephentown" with an appreciative audience and was given a plaque,
We shall miss you Cal — Rest in peace.



**DO WE HAVE YOUR EMAIL
ADDRESS?**

The easiest and quickest way for us to reach out to our members is by email. If you are a member, have an email address and have not been receiving the SHS newsletters in your inbox, please consider providing us with your information. We promise not to inundate you with a lot of annoying emails— and you can opt out any time you want. We'll be able to keep you up to date on our monthly programs as well, and we can notify you as to cancellations or postponements. **And, by the way, OUR email address has changed—it is now info@stephentown-historical.org.** Thank You!

HOLIDAY SALE WITH SML

On November 30th, 2022, SHS was invited to participate in a holiday sale with the Stephentown Memorial Library. It was a great opportunity and perfect timing for us to showcase our new line of T-shirts (modeled here by board members Kat Deen, Alan Stuart, and Joe Hogan). Sales were brisk, not only of T-Shirts, but albums and other items as well.



“Only Stephentown on Earth” T-Shirts are available in cherry red, Irish green and blue dusk in sizes from small to XL (\$20) as well as 2XL and 3XL (\$25). You can order online, pay by credit card and have your order delivered, or pick it up at the Heritage Center. Or call us at 518-733-6070.



ANNUAL CAR WASH!

This year’s car wash was a great success. We shared the day with the SonShiners group from the Stephentown Federated Church. Folks were able to get their car washed and then stop by the SonShiners Garden and Bake Sale and load up on fresh veggies and home baked goodies! Volunteers from the historical society washed cars and sold memorabilia. This is a collaboration that we’ll repeat for sure! See the photo below—we were privileged to wash Jim Rodda from Hancock’s 1932 Ford.



Check out the Post Office Displays!



IN MEMORIAM — ANNA ESPOSITO

So many folks in town knew Anna Esposito and will surely miss her. She was a lifelong resident of Stephentown and active in local organizations. We saw her quite often at the Heritage Center at monthly programs and various events. At one of those events, she took a chance on a raffle for a patriotic afghan and won! (See picture at right). Anna then turned around and donated it to the Veterans, who held their own raffle. The winner of that raffle donated it back to us! It has come full circle. Rest in peace, Anna. Rest in peace Anna, we will miss you.



LOOKING AHEAD TO THE REST OF THE YEAR

Our plans for 2023 include (in addition to our monthly meetings):

- *HOLIDAY POTLUCK DINNER
- *MONTHLY PROGRAMS ON YOUTUBE
- *ANTIQUES APPRAISAL
- *POST OFFICE DISPLAYS
- *NEW DISPLAYS @ SHS
- *STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL & CAR WASH

Hope to see you there!

Stephentown Historical Society

4 Staples Road—PO Box 11
Stephentown, NY 12168

Email: info@stephentown-historical.org
Website: www.stephentown-historical.org

Phone: 518-733-6070

Fridays 1pm—4 pm

Board of Directors

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Arlene Longo

Vice President

Kat Deen

Treasurer

Alan Stuart

Recording Secretary

Ellen Jennings

Corresponding Secretary

Diana Clark

Trustees

Laurenne Teachout

Sara Demick Ewen

Alex Haley

Jean Bolen

Joe Hogan

Josie Madison

Town Historian

Pat Flint

Curator—Bev McClave

Genealogist—Bill Zimmerman

**STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL
AND CAR WASH SPONSORS
THANK YOU!**

Please Support Our Sponsors!

- Gardner’s Coffee Shoppe
- Scrub Board Laundromat & Car Wash
- Stewart’s Shops
- Averill Park Septic Service LLC
- Four Fat Fowl
- Kinderhook Creek Farm
- Breezy Nook Crematory
- Norte Azul Cantina
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- Darcy Construction Corporation
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- John Senter Gravel
- Berkshire Mountain House
- The Eastwick Press
- KTL & H Tax Prep
- Patrick’s Quality Painting & Remodeling Inc.
- Hannaford

WE’RE ON YOUTUBE!

We have been recording our monthly programs (with the speakers’ permission of course) and posting them on YouTube. So if you are unable to attend in person, you can still enjoy our programs. You can access the site from our webpage—www.stephentown-historical.org or go directly to YouTube and search “Stephentown-historical”. We are a work in progress and the quality is improving with each recording, so please give us a look and be patient while we improve!

Darcy Construction Corporation



Did you know that we’re on Facebook? Check us out! You’ll see what’s new at the Heritage Center and hear about the latest events, programs and other happenings. Let us know what you like and what you would like to see. Be sure to give us a “like” and we don’t mind if you “share”.



Stephentown Historical Society
Membership

(If you are a current member, a renewal notice will be sent to you.)

NEW MEMBERS

Please complete the form below and return it to:

(Check made out to:)

Stephentown Historical Society
PO Box 11
Stephentown, NY 12168

OR—go to www.stephentown-historical.org membership tab and renew online!

Membership Categories

Please check one:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual Member — \$10.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting Member — \$50.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Membership — \$25.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime (Individual) — \$200.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business/Corporate — \$60.00 | |

(Annual Membership is January—December)

Dues enclosed _____

Tax Deductible Donation _____ [501(c)(3) Organization]

I'd like to volunteer—please contact me: YES []

