

STEPHENTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

APRIL TO OCTOBER 1979

"FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK":

It's nearly winter, nevertheless, I hope you all had a good summer and fall. Let's look back at some important events of the past year and give you some idea of what lies ahead.

First, many thanks from all of us to Jayne Sawin for her diligence in program planning. We're especially grateful to see so many members enjoying the speakers, films, discussions and exhibits. There's no doubt that the one dollar membership dues are the biggest bargain around. So, help us with the membership drive. Ask a friend to join SHS. There are many more Stephentown residents who would not only enjoy our meetings, but would be glad to pool their special interests and talents to help realize the rich potential of the historical society in Stephentown.

Secondly, my personal gratitude and that of the Executive Board, is expressed, that small, vital group of members who really get things going. They make our fund raising projects successful. I won't list their names here; we all know who they are. More important than a listing is their own awareness of a job well done in contributing to our growing enterprise.

I'm glad to report that there was a good turnout for those annual events, the Antique Sale, Talvac and the Firemen's Muster. Album sales have gone well. We still have a few left, though.

Because winter conditions snarl traffic in January and February, the Board of Trustees and the Executive Board will continue to hold work meetings in preparation for the new year, but we shall discontinue the regular monthly meetings those two months. The next fiscal year runs from April 1980 through March 1981.

In closing, let me encourage all members of SHS to continue working together. Next year looks like the best yet.

Anna Bayba

CONTEST FOR SHS FMBLEM

The first custom designed and handwrough sterling silver SHS emblem will go to the person who comes up with the best idea or design which symbolizes the Stephentown Historical Society. Try it. You might win.

ALBUMS AND CALENDARS - a thoughtful Christmas gift.

Can be purchased at Sykes Store, from Eva Mayer, Realtor, from the Town Clerk's Office and from the Officers and Trustees of SHS.

Album #1 (1977) \$4.50

Album #2(1979) \$4.50

Calendar (1976) \$1.00

The three items, two albums and a calendar, cost \$9.00. If you wish to worker by mail, add one dollar for mailing costs and send your check and order to the Stephentown Historical Socociety, Box 39, Stephentown, New York 12168.

SUMMER SURPRISE, STEPHENTOWN (Interview with Henry Zwack)

The care or neglect given to local historical monuments reflects a community's self-image. For years a venerable hotel* in the heart of town had been falling apart. By Spring 1979 it had become a real eyesore. The porch pillars teetered on loose brick bases. Clapboards and windows scarred and broken, there it stood, a dreary contrast to Stephentown's newly beautified entrance.** Visitors and residents often commented on the fine proportions of the Vanderbilt house. In a declining economy few were optimistic about rescuing the building. Suddenly, early this summer, the old house rose like a phoenix out of the ashes. This interview with the President of the Stephentown Volunteer Fire Department is presented to inform some of you who wondered how it all happened. It also wishes to convey appreciation to Fire Department for their careful planning, their energy and thoroughness. A happy surprise for the town. Good job. Thank you SVFD from SHS.

Interviewer: Place looks great. Structurally and color scheme too. Whose idea?

Zwack: Well, the house always reminded us of a doll house with all that Victorian ornamental detail so instead of the original brown shown on an old photo, we opted for cream with white trim and silver grey doors. We had some fun for a while with one of your SHS members. Told her we were going to paint the place crazy red!

Interviewer: Who was the carpenter?

Zwack: Gary Sharp from Canaan. He did a farm house restoration for Senator John Dunne. A real good job. We couldn't get bids on restoration. Most carpenters only wanted to build a new structure. Gary made the same old style windows where needed. A nice compromise between practical and aesthetic considerations all around.

Interviewer: I saw Phyllis Hoffman painting the outside...

Zwack: Yes, she and Charlie put many days into that painting. We never could have done this renewal job without the contributions made in time and labor. Our annual Roast Beef Dinner provides a large percent of the building fund. By the way, we were real pleased when Al Silvernail stopped by and complimented us on the house.

Interviewer: How did SVFD acquire the Vanderbuilt House?

Zwack: In 1947 the tavern keeper, who was feeling no pain, made a bet which he lost. That very night \$2000.00 changed hands and the deed was signed. By the way since we fixed the place up, a lady from Virginia stopped and asked if the building was for sale! She had an eye for good looking old buildings and admired this one.

Interviewer: How did you decide to restore?

Zwack: Board of Directors... that's Rick McClave, Kirk Atwater, Sy Close, Frank Zwack and Charlie Hoffman. They figured the following.
One, let it rot. Two, take off the second floor and roof the rest. Three, make a reasonable plan for renewal. And avoid the possible hangups and red tape sometimes involved with grants. We did it ourselves and we're glad the town likes it. It's used by the town 275 days in the year.

*Reputed to have been built in 1874 as a railroad way station.

** Bicentennial Beautification Committee by Ulysses Swearer.

SHS OFFICERS 1979

President: ANNA BAYBA
Vice Pres: WILLIAM JENNINGS
Rec. Sec'y: SYLVIA LEIBENSPERGER
Cor. Sec'y: INI PRIOR
Treasurer: ELIZABETH McClave

TRUSTEES

KENNETH KNOBLOCK 1982
BERTHA RATHBUN 1980
HAZEL BARRETT 1981
ELLEN SMITH 1981
JAYNE SAWIN 1982

TOWN HISTORIAN (to be appointed by the Town Board)

Membership: Elizabeth McClave Programming: Jayne Sawin
Hospitality: Sylvia Leibensperger and Committee

TO: STEPHENTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. Box 39, Stephentown, N. Y. 12168

CATEGORY	ANNUAL DUES
INDIVIDUAL Member, Adult	\$1.00
INDIVIDUAL Member, Minor)	.50 (up to age 17)
CONTRIBUTING MEMBER	5.00
SUSTAINING MEMBER	15.00
LIFE MEMBER	100.00 (One time payment)
BUSINESS OR ORGANIZATION	15.00

Name _____
Mailing Address _____
Phone _____

PROGRAMS November 2 OLD BUILDINGS Shirley Dunn
 December 3 OLD BUTTONS Velma Bushell

1980 Program Subjects include:
Covered Bridges Scrimshaw Antique Silver
Antique Clocks Calligraphy Quilting
Early Tools Decoys Easter Egg Deco Techniques
Stamps & Coins Shaker Crafts Martin Van Buren Rest.

LAST MINUTE NOTES

October 27 SHS President Bayba met with the Federation of Historical Services in Guilderland. The topic was "Opportunities for Adults" with emphasis on education for adults and school aged children.

October 31 SHS Trustees and Board met with Pati Drumm Laskovski, Curator of the Shaker Museum in Old Chatham, in the home of Anna Bayba. Mrs. Laskovski discussed cataloguing and storage of artifacts, the availability of grants for professional aids in planning and the need for a clear "game plan" if SHS really wants to develop.