

# *Stephentown Historical Society Newsletter*

Vol V, Issue III

February 2004

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## **A LEGEND IS GONE**

Betty Feathers has been described as a doer, a dynamo, a whirling dervish, and many other terms that denote action. It is hard to recall Betty in a seated position, except possibly chairing a board or committee meeting or making something at a table or workbench. Betty was always moving, always doing something. Much of the work in establishing, renovating, and maintaining the Stephentown Heritage Center was accomplished through Betty's leadership, often with her own hands. A detailed planner, a micromanager, a stickler for accuracy, a perfectionist, Betty always got the job done, and it was always done well. Betty got the best efforts from other people too, often more than they thought themselves capable of.

There aren't enough pages in a book, let alone this newsletter, to chronicle Betty's accomplishments in home economics, dietetics, guidance and placement, 4-H, Girl Scouting, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and food preservation. Oh, and while she was doing all of this, she was also raising two intelligent and accomplished children. After "retirement," Betty served on committees and in officerships for the Unitarian Universalist Church, the Women's Club of New Lebanon, and Kimball Farms. In the Stephentown Historical Society Betty served as President, Secretary, and Trustee. She was also co-chair of the Stephentown Bicentennial, chair of the Strawberry Festival, CraftFest, and several exhibits and is responsible for several dioramas and grants at the Heritage Center.

Betty Feathers left us October 25, 2003. She left a hole in many lives. But, in addition to her many accomplishments and perhaps more importantly, she left us an outstanding model of how we should all live our lives. Thank you, Betty.

## 2003 ANNUAL REPORT

### 2003 Officers:

William Zimmerman	President
Sylvia Leibensperger	Vice-President
Bonnie Buddenhagen	Recording Secretary
Neil Krebs	Treasurer
Isabel Krebs	Corresponding Secretary

### 2003 Trustees:

Patricia Flint	William Jennings
Beverly Liebenow	Dale Riggs
Judith Pierson	Beverley McClave

2003 was another interesting year, as a new President and Treasurer took office. Sylvia Leibensperger filled out Donna Mullet's term as Vice-President, and Judith Pierson, Beverley McClave, and Bob Gorman joined the Board.

Moments of silence were all too common as we observed the passing of Maynard Watts, Thelma Tomlinson, Beverly Liebenow, Erich Strobl, and Betty Feathers.

Membership included 3 businesses, 12 contributors, 41 individuals, 80 life members, and 5 honorary members, a total of 141 members.

The Vanderbilt House sign that the Haley's had restored and reinforced was hung on the front of the balcony by Bob Gorman, Bill Jennings, Tom Morelli, and Bill Zimmerman. The 1787 Indenture donated to the Society by Lillie and Stephen Van Rensselaer V was encapsulated in UV-protective Plexiglas. Bob Tibbetts and Rik McClave framed the assembly in tiger maple and mounted it for display. A spinning group began using the Heritage Center as a meeting/working location. A Landscape Committee was established to begin work on the grounds around the Heritage Center. An outside tap was installed to provide water for plants and other outdoor projects. Architectural Conservation began to restore the windows and shutters, doing the south side this year and the remainder in 2004. Michael Brown helped us with grant applications to offset the cost of the window and shutter restoration. A look at our insurance

## **CORPORATE THANK YOU**

The Society would like to thank the following Stephentown businesses that contributed to our annual fund drive in 2003

**Atlantis Equipment**

**Taconic Telephone Corporation**

**The Berry Patch of Stonewall Hill Farm**

**Taconic Technology**

### **2003 ANNUAL REPORT (Continued)**

policy indicated that we are most likely underinsured. A committee is evaluating our insurance coverage before next May's renewal. Our furnace firebox developed a hole in October and must be replaced.

Our newsletter was reformatted from 8-1/2 by 11 to 5-1/2 by 8-1/2, and color was added to the outside pages. With today's technology we can print in color and copy in-house at substantial savings.

A Bylaw Committee was established to evaluate and revise the Constitution and Bylaws as necessary. A few changes and clarifications are needed, and they will be done next year. Generally, our governing documents are in pretty good shape.

Pat Bowman, Meredith Rhindress, and Isabel Krebs continued to educate and entertain us with another year of outstanding programs. Twelve regular programs, two covered dish suppers, a tour of Pease Farm, and a program and tour of cemeteries drew about 385 people.

The Strawberry Festival continued to grow at The Berry Patch. Between 125 and 140 quarts (188 pounds) of strawberries plus strawberry pies and ala mode increased sales by 29 percent over a very successful 2002. The Strawberry Festival is becoming our biggest fundraiser, netting \$909.

The Craftfest continued to be our biggest fundraiser at \$1080. However, sales continued to decline, so in November the Board voted to stop sponsoring the Craftfest after 14 successful years. We shall miss the income from this event, the high-quality merchandise,

(Continued on Page 4)

## 2003 ANNUAL REPORT (Continued)

and the camaraderie of highly skilled crafters. It is the end of an era. Hopefully we shall find another event to replace it.

The Tag Sale improved its performance over prior years due to some more expensive and higher quality donations. The town recycling facility accepted the leftovers, which solved our biggest problem. The Tag Sale netted \$884.

The Rutland Railroad Corkscrew Division has a very interesting history. "Never should have been built," said Colonel Vanderbilt, and history proved him nearly correct. Don Bowman, a former conductor, put his expertise to work to prepare an interesting, educational, and entertaining exhibit on the Corkscrew Division. Historical photos, newspaper writeups, a Stephentown depot layout, waybills, track, oil cans, rails, telegraph crossarms, and models helped explain why the Corkscrew Division lasted less than a century. Fortunately some of the anecdotes have survived along with the memorabilia, and Don utilized them to entertain as well as to educate. His "Railroad Lingo" was the highlight of the exhibit's opening reception. Ninety people visited the exhibit.

Bev McClave took on the task of standardizing and consolidating our collection of Secretary's books.

The Heritage Center hosted several visitors for genealogical research. We had visitors from California, Oregon, Washington, Illinois, Wisconsin, New Mexico, and Virginia. Email requests for genealogical information have inundated us. Eric Shyer continues to peck away at entering our 31,000 Living Gravestone index cards in Family Tree Maker. This area desperately needs manpower. Genealogical research can be a substantial source of income if we can apply personnel to it. One highlight in the genealogy area was our receipt of an electronic copy of the statistical section of *The George Holcomb Diary*. That file saves about a half hour per inquiry. Our Family Tree Maker file is currently at 13,400 entries, including many imported names. Pat Flint continues to transcribe cemetery information onto a database.

## 2003 ANNUAL REPORT (Continued)

Our finances underwent some shakeups this year. The Board became dissatisfied with the lack of service from Quick & Reilly. We closed the larger of our two Fidelity Fund accounts and moved that money into a Wachovia Securities fund that invests in other mutual funds. We are better protected by double fund management and a diligent brokerage team in Pittsfield. Since we made the change on August 12, we are up by about 11.5 percent. Of course the market has also risen this year, but we are now able to get information and answers from our new broker. We also moved our savings accounts from Fleet Bank to Greylock Federal Credit Union because of a substantial difference in interest rates. Our annual fund drive for 2003 ran well below our goal of \$5000. This shortfall was offset by increases in income from membership dues, store sales, and, unfortunately, memorial donations. The Board voted to increase membership dues effective January 1, 2004 (later changed to April 1). Rates are: individual (\$10), family (\$25), supporting (\$50 or more), and life (\$200). This is the first increase in many years and brings dues into line with those of other comparable organizations. The Town of Stephentown is contributing an extra \$5000 in 2004, a one-shot grant to help with the window and shutter restoration.

As in society in general, a small core of people carries most of the load in the SHS. We need more busy people to get involved and get things done. Whether you're interested in mowing, gardening, painting, maintenance, keyboarding/typing, cataloging, filing, sorting, cleaning, writing, programming, recording, teaching, planning, marketing, or researching, whether you're interested in administration, liaison, or execution, we can find a job for you. I learned a lot more railroad history while working on this year's exhibit than could possibly be presented in the exhibit itself. The same holds true in most of our other projects. I've learned more than I've taught and received more than I've given in my first year as President. I'm sure that will continue, as I still have a lot to learn, but it's a lot of fun doing it.

Respectfully submitted,

William B. Zimmerman, President

## WHAT A DIFFERENCE A CENTURY MAKES

Here are some US statistics for 1903. . . .

The average life expectancy in the US was 47.

Only 14% of the homes in the US had a BATHTUB.

Only 8% of the homes had a TELEPHONE.

A 3-minute call from Denver to New York City cost \$11.

There were only 8000 CARS in the US and only 144 miles of paved ROADS.

The maximum speed limit in most cities was 10 mph.

Alabama, Mississippi, Iowa, and Tennessee were each more heavily populated than California. With a mere 1.4 million residents, California was only the 21st most populous state in the Union.

The tallest structure in the world was the Eiffel Tower.

The average wage in the US was \$0.22 per hour.

The average US worker made between \$200 and \$400 per year.

A competent accountant could expect to earn \$2000 per year, a dentist \$2,500, a veterinarian between \$1,500 and \$4,000, and a mechanical engineer about \$5,000.

More than 95% of all BIRTHS in the US took place at HOME.

90% of all US physicians had NO COLLEGE education. Instead, they attended medical schools, many of which were condemned in the press and by the government as "substandard."

Sugar cost \$0.04 per pound. Eggs were \$0.14 per dozen. Coffee cost \$0.15 per pound.

Most women only washed their HAIR once a month and used BORAX or EGG YOLKS for shampoo.

Canada passed a law prohibiting POOR people from entering the country for any reason.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Program Chairperson **Pat Bowman** continues to inspire us with outstanding programs in a wide variety of historical fields. **Meredith Rhindress** and **Isabel Krebs** help Pat in her continuing searches for outstanding talent in our own and neighboring towns. All programs and events are held at the Stephentown Heritage Center on the first Monday of the month and begin at **7:30 pm** unless otherwise specified.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Program</u>	<u>Provider</u>
February 2	Laugh-In: Funny Stories From the Past	Audience Participation
March 1	Shaker Life	Sharon Koomler
April 5	The Moffit Family	Barbara Urban
May 3	The Van Rensselaers and Their Tenants	Sung Bok Kim
June 7	The Eberle Brothers	Alfred Eberle
July 12 6:30 pm	Summer Potluck Supper Youth Commission	Bring Dish to Share Norma Shaw, Kay Potter

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### SPECIAL EVENTS THIS YEAR

**June 27** 23rd Annual Strawberry Festival –  
The Berry Patch of Stone Wall Hill Farm  
Route 22 12 – 4 pm

Strawberry shortcake, ice cream, good company, and more

**August 7** Tag Sale –  
(Rain Date August 8) Gardner's Field  
Route 22 9 am – 3 pm

Clean out your garage and basement this summer. Exchange your castoffs for someone else's treasures – or vice versa

**September 19** 1st Annual Fall Festival –  
The Berry Patch of Stone Wall Hill Farm  
Route 22 12 – 4 pm

A new activity, autumn foods, etc. Get a jump on fall foliage

- \*\* No Exhibit This Year - Come see us in March 2005  
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<p><b>Stephentown Heritage Center Hours</b> Friday, 1 – 4 pm and by Appointment 733-6070</p>
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## DUES INCREASE IN 2004

At the November Board of Directors meeting a lengthy discussion was held to address the Society's dues structure. In 1973 individual dues were set at \$3 for an individual membership. Not long thereafter they were raised to \$5, where they have remained for many years. The Board examined the dues structures of neighboring organizations and found them to be generally higher than ours. Considering the number of programs and other assets available to members of our Society, the Board felt that an increase was in order. In addition, the Board voted to restructure the membership categories. Individual membership remains as previously defined. Business membership has been combined with Contributing membership to form a new Supporting membership. A Family membership was created to encourage the participation of children and young adults (those still living under their parents' roof or attending college). Life membership remains as previously defined. The new dues structure and rates were scheduled to take effect January 1, 2004.

Although we announced the new dues structure and rates at the November and the December meetings, it would have required a separate mailing to inform everyone in time to take advantage of the old rates before the end of 2003. Being frugal, we decided to avoid such a mailing. However, dues from some people are now coming in at the old rate. Rather than create possible hard feelings over notification of the increase, the Board voted at its January meeting to extend the implementation date for the new rates to April 1. Therefore the Membership Chair will be accepting dues at the old rates until April 1.

The new structure and rates, effective **April 1, 2004**, are:

<b>Individual Member</b>	<b>\$ 10.00</b>
<b>Family</b>	<b>25.00</b>
<b>Supporting Member</b>	<b>50.00</b>
<b>Life Member</b>	<b>200.00</b>

Individual memberships will remain at \$5 through March 31. If you were considering becoming a Life member, you can still do it at the old rate of \$100 through March 31. That's quite a bargain.

## SCHEDULE CHANGES FOR 2004

With the demise of the Craftfest there is a void of over 2 months in our summer activities between the Strawberry Festival and the Labor Day weekend Community Tag Sale. In addition, several years ago we moved the annual exhibit to the fall in hopes of attracting more student visitors. Budget cuts have severely reduced field trips and hence autumn student visitors. At the January Board meeting there was a lengthy discussion of these activities and a replacement event for the Craftfest. The result was a tentative rescheduling of all events except the Strawberry Festival. The following schedule is somewhat tentative, but the Board felt that the following new approach might work better for most of the people concerned.

- |                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| Strawberry Festival | Last Sunday in June (unchanged)   |
| Community Tag Sale  | Second Saturday in August (warm but less conflict with Labor Day plans and fills midsummer void)  |
| Fall Festival       | Third Sunday in September (replaces Craftfest as a fundraiser (less labor intensive) and celebrates the beginning of the harvest season)          |
| Exhibit             | March (to provide a winter activity and perhaps allow time to coordinate with the schools (no exhibit in 2004 but resume exhibits in March 2005)) |

Mark your calendar. Hopefully this new schedule will spread the load, replace the Craftfest, and fit better with your activities.

\* \* \* *In Memoriam* \* \* \*

*Erich Strobl*  
1906 – 2003

*Betty Feathers*  
1917 – 2003

\* \* \* \* \*

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### Officers:

President	Bill Zimmerman	794-8430
Vice-President	Judith Pierson	733-0196
Recording Secretary	Patricia Flint	733-5871
Corresponding Secretary	Isabel Krebs	733-5935
Treasurer	Neil Krebs	733-5935

### Trustees:

Bill Jennings	733-5923
Dale Riggs	733-6772
Beverley McClave	733-5170
Robert Gorman	733-9661
Caroline White	733-5250
Sandy Hamer	733-0196

### Committee Chairpersons:

Cemeteries	<b>Help Wanted</b>	
Collections	Bev McClave (Need Help)	733-5170
Fundraising	Caroline White	733-5250
Genealogy	Virginia Atwater (Need Help)	733-5136
Heritage Center	Bev McClave	733-5170
Historic Buildings	Sylvia Leibensperger	733-5716
Landscaping	Dale Riggs	733-6772
Membership	Judith Pierson	733-0196
Nominating	Caroline White	733-5250
Newsletter	Sandy Hamer	733-0196
Program	Pat Bowman	(413) 738-5420
Youth Coordinator	<b>Help Wanted</b>	
Refreshments	Alice Mather,	733-5668

## MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

### New Membership Categories and Dues (January 1 - December 31):

#### *New Rates Effective April 1, 2004*

Individual Member	\$ 10.00
Family	25.00
Supporting Member	50.00
Life Member	200.00

*Please remember that Supporting and Life memberships, like Individual memberships, are for individuals, not couples.*

Please join us this year. Make your tax-deductible check payable to:

**Stephentown Historical Society**  
**P.O. Box 11**  
**Stephentown, NY 12168**

## WHAT A DIFFERENCE A CENTURY MAKES (Continued)

The five leading causes of death in the US were:

1. Pneumonia and influenza
2. Tuberculosis
3. Diarrhea
4. Heart disease
5. Stroke

The American flag had 45 stars. Arizona, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Hawaii and Alaska hadn't been admitted to the Union yet.

The population of Las Vegas, Nevada, was 30.

Crossword puzzles, canned beer, and iced tea hadn't been invented.

There was no Mother's Day or Father's Day.

One in 10 US adults couldn't read or write. Only 6% of all Americans had graduated from HIGH SCHOOL.

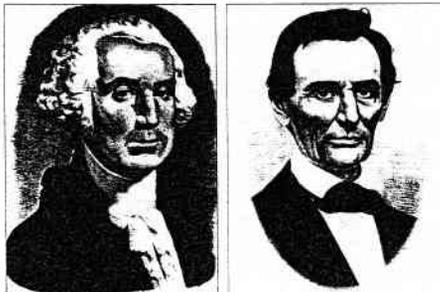
Coca Cola contained cocaine. Marijuana, heroin and morphine were all available over the counter at corner drugstores. According to one pharmacist, "Heroin clears the complexion, gives buoyancy to the mind, regulates the stomach and the bowels, and is, in fact, a perfect guardian of health."

18% of households in the US had at least one full-time SERVANT or domestic.

There were only about 230 reported MURDERS in the entire US.

Just think what it will be like in another 100 years.

- Bill Dawson



## 2003 ANNUAL REPORT (Continued)

Our finances underwent some shakeups this year. The Board became dissatisfied with the lack of service from Quick & Reilly. We closed the larger of our two Fidelity Fund accounts and moved that money into a Wachovia Securities fund that invests in other mutual funds. We are better protected by double fund management and a diligent brokerage team in Pittsfield. Since we made the change on August 12, we are up by about 11.5 percent. Of course the market has also risen this year, but we are now able to get information and answers from our new broker. We also moved our savings accounts from Fleet Bank to Greylock Federal Credit Union because of a substantial difference in interest rates. Our annual fund drive for 2003 ran well below our goal of \$5000. This shortfall was offset by increases in income from membership dues, store sales, and, unfortunately, memorial donations. The Board voted to increase membership dues effective January 1, 2004 (later changed to April 1). Rates are: individual (\$10), family (\$25), supporting (\$50 or more), and life (\$200). This is the first increase in many years and brings dues into line with those of other comparable organizations. The Town of Stephentown is contributing an extra \$5000 in 2004, a one-shot grant to help with the window and shutter restoration.

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Respectfully submitted,

William B. Zimmerman, President

## RECENT PROGRAMS (Continued)

### September 8 – Railroads Then and Now

As a prelude to this year's exhibit, Dale Flansburg, a retired railroader, described the colorful history of the Rutland Railroad Chatham Division. A route for north country milk was needed, but the Adirondacks stood in the way along the Hudson River. In 1851 a New York to Bennington route was proposed, and in 1852 the Lebanon Springs Railroad was completed from Chatham. It took another 17 years before the line was completed to Bennington. The Chatham Division was aptly nicknamed the "Corkscrew Division" because of the turns in the Little Hoosick River near Bennington. Like many small railroads, the Corkscrew Division was plagued with debt, floods, competition, and bankruptcies. The Stephentown Station closed in 1935, and the last rail was removed August 7, 1951.

### October 6 - Troy's Irish History

Jack Casey's interest in Troy politics is genetic. Irish politicians run in his family, and he is State Senate parliamentarian and Rensselaer County Republican Chairman. The potato famine and the Erie Canal fueled Irish immigration, commerce and manufacturing in upstate New York. Troy's "Bloody Thirteenth" Ward was a hotbed of political unrest in 1894. When industrialist Robert Ross tried to prevent illicit voting, a riot ensued, and Ross was shot in the ensuing riot. Bat Shea was railroaded by the establishment for Ross' murder. Even though the case was riddled with inconsistencies and perjury and the real killer confessed, Shea was executed. He became a folk hero, albeit a dead one, to be celebrated in song and story by authors and balladeers like Jack Casey in *The Trial of Bat Shea*.

### November 3 – Restoring Old Glass, Ceramics, and Metal

As a Conservator of Decorative Arts, **Heidi Miksch** restores all kinds of objects. She shared some of her expertise with us in various fields. Here are a few Hints from Heidi. Glass and ceramic are the most stable, but ceramic stains. Use water, not strong detergent, to clean. Use pure epoxy to repair. Don't handle or polish gold. It doesn't stick well. Metals are more susceptible to humidity and dust,

(Continued on Page 14)

## RECENT PROGRAMS (Continued)

and fingerprints eventually etch. Handle with gloves. Metal stays clean when not handled. Use alcohol for oil and grease. Use mild acid for mineral deposits. Don't overclean. Use a limited amount of polish. Wax protects metal against tarnishing. Light is an enemy of organics. It alters their color and makes them brittle. Feathers can't be cleaned. Don't wet leather, and don't store things inside leather. Don't wax baskets.

### December 1 – **Kitty Hawk Centennial – Airplane Stories**

Following a delicious covered dish supper, Pat Bowman led a discussion of flying experiences of members of the audience in celebration of the Wright Brothers' first flight on December 17, 1903. As early as Greek mythology, man had dreamed of flying, and a few brave souls had tried and failed, most with fatal results. Balloons and even gliders had been used in the Nineteenth Century and before, but no one had combined the principles of lift with the internal combustion engine. Wilbur and Orville achieved a straight flight of 59 seconds in 1903. It took another two years for them to develop mechanisms to control pitch, roll, and yaw, that is, to be able to turn the plane. Mechanical wizards without any patent, the two bicycle makers essentially went broke in the commercial aircraft manufacturing market. Today we take for granted the more than 200 flights that overfly our area daily. Bob Gorman, who was stationed aboard an aircraft carrier, recounted several failed carrier landings, some on the deck, some in the ocean. Helen Koepp recalled a flight aboard Royal Thai Airlines from Bangkok via Calcutta. Dean Herrick described the shooting of a woman who ignored the security around a downed military aircraft. From external wiring to takeoff departure stalls, flight has been and continues to be one of the ultimate highs of mankind.

### January 5 – **A History of Nursing at Albany Medical Center, 1897 – 2003**

Albany Hospital opened in 1854, the first school of nursing opened in 1897, and Mary French became a nurse in 1954. Mary described

## RECENT PROGRAMS (Continued)

the early days of nursing, the long dresses with detachable sleeves, the wards, the manual labor performed by nurses, the horse-drawn ambulances and other primitive treatments even in such advanced hospitals as Albany Hospital. Since Albany Hospital, which became Albany Medical Center in 1967, was and is on the cutting edge of technology, its nurses participated in many firsts in the state. AMC had one of the first fresh air TB facilities. During World War I, AMC was equipped to handle 3000 wounded GIs. In 1950 AMC was one of only five hospitals to have an artificial kidney machine. In 1957 Albany Hospital was the second hospital in the state to perform open heart surgery. In 1966 Med Flight cut transport times over a much larger area from 90 minutes to 38. In 1981 AMC began using specially trained anesthetists. In 2000 AMC and the Nursing Alumnae Association established a permanent nursing exhibit. In May look for *The Legacy of Nursing at Albany Medical Center*, by Mary French and Elsie Whiting. It is part of the Images of America series by Arcadia Publishing.

23rd ANNUAL

### STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL

*The Berry Patch of  
Stone Wall Hill Farm*

*Route 22  
Stephentown*

**Sunday, June 27**  
**Noon – 4 p.m.**