



NEWSLETTER

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Committee Chairpersons

Cemeteries

Dale Riggs 733-6772

Pat Flint 733-5871

Collections & Heritage Center

Bev McClave 733-5170

Fundraising

Bill Zimmerman 794-8430

Membership

Claudette LeFebvre 733-0491

Nominating

David Flint 733-5871

Newsletter

Sandy Hamer 733-0196

Program

Pat Bowman 413-738-5420

Refreshments

Alice Mather 733-5668



Members of Sand Lake Scout Troop #525

cleaned up the Stephentown Center Baptist cemetery on Calvin Cole Road this fall: (l. to r.) William DeFreest, Chris Mullen, Phyllis DeFreest, Evan Moore, Andy White, Tj Mullen, Project Leader Tim Mullen, John DeFreest, and troop leader Jim Farrington. Full story on page 2.

Plans Under Way for Stephentown's 225th Anniversary Celebration

Webster may have no complicated adjective such as "sesquicentennial" or "tercentennial" to designate the celebration of a 225th anniversary, but that won't stop Stephentown from commemorating its March 29, 1784 founding date in 2009.

March 29th Event Plus summer Activities in the Works

The public is invited to the first event, a ceremonial presentation of the Stephentown Charter, at 2 p.m., Sunday, March 29, 2009 at Stephentown Elementary School.

The 225th Anniversary Committee, comprised of Town Board Member Larry Eckhardt and SHS members Pat Flint, Isabel Krebs, and Bev McClave, is also planning a town-wide celebration and chicken barbecue this summer when the maximum number of organizations and citizens are available to participate.

Displays, Historic Photo Contest in the Works

In addition to the chicken barbecue, summer events will also include a display of historic photos and the sale of an anniversary t-shirt and 2010 photo calendar. Start rummaging through your old photos now to locate suitable pictures to submit to the photo calendar contest. Each of the twelve winning historic photographs, entered in categories such as family photos, town buildings, veterans, etc., will represent a month of a 2010 calendar. More details about the photo contest and all upcoming events will be provided later.

For more information about the committee, which will next meet again at 1 p.m. on February 16 at the Stephentown Heritage Center, contact Patricia Flint at 733-5871 or any member of the 225th Anniversary Committee.

Cemetery Emerges from Weeds, Debris and Twenty Years of Neglect

Thanks to TJ Mullen and the members of West Sand Lake Boy Scout Troop #525, the Stephentown Center Baptist Cemetery on Calvin Cole Road has been cleared of unsightly trees, brush and weeds that accumulated over the past 20 years.

"I've always been interested in history," TJ explained, "and this cleanup job seemed appropriate for my Eagle Scout project." To prepare for the task, TJ and his father, Tim, attended a day-long seminar on cemetery preservation at the Grafton Historical Society. There, "I learned the most important thing is to do no damage in your efforts to clean up and restore things in the cemetery."

Next, TJ recruited friends, family and fellow Boy Scouts, many of whom live in Stephentown, to help with the cleanup. The group spent two weekends removing trees and shrubs, dragging tarps loaded with debris, and uncovering fallen gravestones that had nearly disappeared into the earth.

Scoutmaster Jim Farrington explained that the members of his troop previously worked on a cleanup project with other troops on an island in the Hudson River, but he noted that "after a few years the place was so clean the guys were fighting for little scraps of paper. This project is a much more meaningful community service project right here in Stephentown", he concluded.



Eagle Scout TJ Mullen, center, discusses Stephentown Baptist Cemetery cleanup progress with his father, Tim (l.) and Scout Master Jim Farrington (r.)



Scouts Tour Heritage Center

Members of Stephentown Girl Scout Troop #1174 (l. to r.) Laura Ryder, Hope Brown, Maggie Gordon, Lyndsey Miller, Emma Wooley and Theresa Mateer view one of the many educational displays at the Stephentown Heritage Center this fall. The scouts visited with their leader Margaret Miller (not pictured) as part of their work on a Local Lore badge. Former Historical Society President Bev McClave talked about how the community has changed over the years, oriented them to some of the antique maps, offered refreshments and conducted a tour of the displays.

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Cemetery Survey at Halfway Point

Efforts to survey the restoration and maintenance needs of 50 of Stephentown's 70 cemeteries are under way and results for half of those surveys have been returned to the Heritage Center. Preliminary results indicate considerable pruning, weeding and debris removal are needed, along with major restoration at a number of selected sites.

If you haven't yet completed your survey, a good time to do it is when the snow melts early this spring. If you haven't yet volunteered to conduct a survey, now is a good time to call Pat Flint (733-5871) or Dale Riggs (733-6772) to sign up. We need your help and our cemeteries are too precious to ignore.

In Memoriam

Hazel Barrett (Life Member)

1918 - 2008

STEPHENTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2008 ANNUAL REPORT**OFFICERS:**

Patricia Flint, President
Claudette Lefebvre, Vice-President
Isabel Krebs, Recording Secretary
Caroline White, Treasurer
Beverley McClave, Corresponding Secretary

TRUSTEES:

Robert Gorman
Sandy Hamer
Fred Haley
Judith Pierson
Patricia Coon
Dale Riggs

Finances: The Society closed the year in a relatively good position. Although expenses were almost \$1,000 over the \$11,681 budgeted, this was offset by income that exceeded the amount budgeted by almost \$2,000. Most expense categories were either under-spent or close to what were budgeted. But with the cost of heating fuel skyrocketing, the cost to heat the building for the year came to over \$5,000, about \$2,200 more than was anticipated.

There was no fund drive and the October History Challenge was cancelled for lack of interest but income exceeded expectations. Memorial and miscellaneous donations were up by more than \$1,000. The 27th Annual Strawberry Festival raised \$1,400, the August Community Tag Sale earned \$1,350 and the recycling project averaged \$100 per month.

The Stephentown Town Board was again generous, allocating a total of \$8,800 to the Society in its 2009 budget, that included a one-time grant of \$2,300 to help defray the cost of restoring the Heritage Center's exterior storm windows.

Maintenance & Repairs: Advance Energy Panels of Hoosick Falls installed thermal insulating clear panels over the inside of the existing windows of the Heritage Center in March. The cost was covered by an additional grant from the Town of Stephentown in their 2008 Budget.

In July Ronald Babcock of Old Time Timber Framing completed repair work on the steeple, installing new galvanized shingles, patching some bullet holes in the ball below the spire and propping up one side of the steeple that was leaning. The cost of this project was covered by an additional grant from the Town. Babcock has informed us that we will need a new roof sooner than we had thought.

A new "OPEN" Friday sign was attached to the Heritage Center sign in May. Montauk Signs provided it at no cost.

Bill Zimmerman and Bob Gorman spent several days scraping paint on the siding of the Center, re-painting and replacing some siding.

Bruce Hankle began work on restoring the outside storm windows on the south side of the building. He is also doing some repair work on the sills.

New Chairs: An anonymous donation of \$1,000 in memory of Jake and Lillian Houghtling was used to purchase 40 new padded chairs that arrived in April.

Display Case: A beautiful display case, built by Rick Gillespie, was installed in the Stephentown Post Office in July. Bev McClave and others have been changing the displays periodically.

Constitution & By-Laws: A committee, comprised of Judith Pierson, Bev McClave and Bill Zimmerman, started meeting this past fall to consider updating the Society's Constitution and By-Laws.

Historical Albums: Pat Flint arranged with Troy Bookmakers to reprint Historical Albums # 1 and #3. The digital versions will be archived so that additional copies can hereafter be printed as needed. The new printings have been proofed and the finished versions will be ready in early 2009.

Programs: The Program Committee did their usual outstanding job in providing us throughout the year with informative, entertaining and fascinating speakers on a broad variety of topics:

In January, Pat Bowman led the membership in sharing reminiscences of the ways Stephentown has changed; in February, Terry Lamphere presented a program on old stonewalls; in March, David Larkin educated us about the art and architectural accomplishments of the Works Progress Administration; in April, Charlie Ballard gave a presentation on the Model T Ford rigged up as a snowmobile; in May, we celebrated the 20th anniversary of the purchase of the building with Meredith and Dick Rhindress' slide show of the restoration work; in June, Kathy Sheehan from the Rensselaer County Historical Society discussed historic State markers in the county; in July, Jennifer Fanander presented a program on "Bread Through the Ages"; in September, Wally Stock entertained us with "Music From Yesteryear" played on his 1905 Edison Standard Phonograph; in October, Dr. Stephan Sell spoke about his experiences growing up in Nazi Germany and his father's remarkable compassion and courage in helping to rescue a few Jews from death; in November, American Indian Heritage Month, Lisa "Little Wolf" Ballatyne presented authentic Native American cuisine and spoke of contemporary Native American customs and culture; and the Rensselaer County Historical Society's Kathy Sheehan returned in December to join our Holiday party and discuss the history of Christmas decorations.

Field Trip: In September, we visited the Berkshire Carousel Project workshop in Pittsfield, MA, and toured the Mission House in Stockbridge, MA, built for missionary John Sergeant who worked among the Stockbridge Mohican Indians. The trip ended at Friendly's in Lenox.

Holcomb Diary: Bill Zimmerman has made good progress on creating a digital version of the Holcomb Diary that will eventually be available on a CD.

Cemeteries Project: A committee was formed in March to coordinate a survey of conditions in 50 of the burial grounds scattered around town. Volunteers have completed about half of the surveys. Stephentown Center Baptist cemetery on Calvin Cole Road was the beneficiary of considerable restoration work thanks to T.J. Mullen of East Nassau who took it on as an Eagle Scout project

Cemetery Database: In December Pat Flint completed a three-year-long project of transcribing over 10,000 records of Stephentown obituaries, marriage dates, births, etc. from the Living Gravestone card file into a computer database. It will be used as another finding tool for anyone tracing their roots.

Stephentown 225th Anniversary: Bev McClave and Pat Flint appeared before the Town Board in December to solicit the Town Board's support for plans to celebrate the Town's 225th Anniversary in 2009.

Acquisitions: Helen Hyatt donated her first contract for teaching at Berlin Central School in 1936. Her salary was \$23; David and Patricia Flint donated a \$200 gift certificate to Troy Bookmakers and an 1819 teacher contract; other acquisitions included tools and part of an old barn beam from Arthur Koepp; a map of Albany and Rensselaer County from the Stephentown Volunteer Fire Department; a lard squeezer and household items from Ruth Hazen, whose mother lived in Stephentown for more than 50 years; a book, "American Journeys" from Mona Berg; and 39 post cards from Margaret Lemuth.

Elections: Election of Officers and Trustees for 2009 were held in December. Pat Flint was elected to a second term as President. Bill Zimmerman was elected Treasurer and Linda Sullivan Corresponding Secretary. Pat Coon and Dale Riggs were both elected to a second term as Trustees.

In closing, I would like to thank all of you for your continued support. Without you, Stephentown Historical Society would not be possible. Many people come here to benefit from the Treasure Trove, which we house in this building. We should all be very proud.

Respectfully submitted,
Patricia A. Flint, President
January 5, 2009

Acquisitions Include Teacher Contracts, Post Cards

Thanks to many generous friends, some interesting donations have recently been made to the Historical Society. Helen Lamphier Hyatt donated her 1936 teacher contract and Patricia Flint donated an 1819 contract between 17 local residents and teacher Ira Hand, which read in part:

"We the subscribers whose names are hereunto annexed understanding the trustees have hired Ira Hand to teach a school in district number 4 in Stephentown the winter ensuing to commence the 22nd of this instant and to continue until the full expiration of four months at the rate of eleven dollars and fifty cents per month; Said Hand is to teach reading, writing, arithmetic and English Grammar. We therefore do agree that we will pay our proportionate part of the said teacher's wages according to what we sign, and bear our proportionate part of washing for and boarding said teacher, also in finding good and suitable wood cut fit for the stove and delivered at the school house in said district. Stephentown November 17, 1819".

Other acquisitions included tools and part of an old barn beam from Arthur Koepp; a map of Albany and Rensselaer County from the Stephentown Volunteer Fire Department; a lard squeezer and household items from Ruth Hazen, whose mother lived in Stephentown for more than 50 years; a book, "American Journeys" from Mona Berg; and 39 post cards from Margaret Lemuth.



This lard squeezer, above, was among a number of items donated by Ruth Hazen.

Join Now and Enjoy a

The Stephentown Historical Society's membership year begins on January 1, so get in at the beginning. The fee is a bargain compared to most other organizations' dues. Join now so you won't miss the many interesting meetings and good fellowship while you simultaneously support our efforts to maintain the Heritage Center and Stephentown's history for the benefit of future generations. Membership categories and annual fees are:

Individual	\$ 10
Family	\$ 25
Supporting	\$ 50
Life	\$ 200

Please make your check payable to:
Stephentown Historical Society and mail it to us at PO Box 11, Stephentown, NY 12168.

Winter/Spring Program Topics

February 2 - "What Is It? - From an Expert"
presented by Tom Carpentier

March 2 - "Salem Massachusetts of 1692"
presented by M. E. Kemp

April 6 - "17th Century Dutch Clothing"
presented by Erika Nuckles

May 4 - "Colonial Physician"
presented by Stuart Lehman

June 1 - "Filming Taking Woodstock"
Audience Participation

July 6 - Annual Potluck Supper at 6:30 p.m. & "225th Anniversary of Stephentown"
presented by Lorri Parisi

Meetings are held on the first Monday of each month, are free and begin at 7:30 p.m. after a brief business meeting. The public is always welcome at meetings.



A Birthday Treasure!

Kyle Kidney, (r.) celebrated his tenth birthday at the Historical Society's August Tag Sale with a beautiful blue Ford truck, thanks to the generosity of his grandmother Victoria Kidney (l.)

Transcription of Holcomb Diaries Nears Completion

The diaries of George Holcomb, written between his 13th birthday in 1805 and his death in 1856, provide a unique perspective on Stephentown nearly 200 years ago. They're so popular today that they're serialized in the weekly editions of *The Eastwick Press*.

Originally transcribed by the Society's Betty McClave into four typewritten binders, Holcomb's detailed 56 year record of his day-to-day life have now been scanned and Bill Zimmerman has nearly finished the tedious task of proofreading the digitized copies. Soon the diaries will be transferred to CD, making them much more accessible and easier to read by researchers, members of the community and students of Stephentown history.



The Heritage Center is open from 1 to 4 p.m. on Fridays and by appointment.

It will be closed on the following dates in 2009: President's Day February 20, Good Friday April 10, Easter Week April 17, Memorial Day May 22, Independence Day July 3, Labor Day September 4, Thanksgiving November 27, Christmas December 25 and New Year's Day January 1, 2010.



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Stephentown
Historical
Society