



"THE STONE HOUSE MUSEUM"

Belchertown Historical Association  
Belchertown, Massachusetts  
1903—2008

January 2008

Volume 8, Issue 1

# MEMBER NEWSLETTER

DEDICATED TO THE MANY INDIVIDUALS WHO SUPPORT THE ASSOCIATION'S MISSION

## 2008 Calendar

Save the dates and share them with family, friends, neighbors!

### Stone House Museum

Open May through October

Wed. & Saturday, 2 to 5 p.m.

Admission: \$4 for adults, \$2 for children;

FREE for Members.

### Marry Me Medieval Dinner Theater

Villa Rose Restaurant, February 2 at 6p.m.

\$38 for members | \$40 Non-members

### Bus Trip to the Boston Flower Show

and historic Quincy Market

Tuesday, March 11

\$45 Members | \$50 Non-members

Reservations: call Mary Avery 323-5176

### Bodices, Bonnets and Brass Buttons:

New Research Findings by UMass Public

History students at the Stone

House Museum

Wednesday, March 26 at 6:30 p.m.

### Annual Membership Meeting

April

### Opening Day and Plant Sale

at the Stone House Museum

May 10

### Living History Days/Garden Tour

July 12<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup>

**Volunteers Needed!** We have LOTS of opportunities to use your skills! Please consider volunteering your time and talents. We will work with your schedule and your interests!

For additional information on volunteering or questions about any of our events, contact the Stone House at 323-6573 or visit our website: [www.stonehousemuseum.org](http://www.stonehousemuseum.org).

### Tents available to BHA members.

Contact Owen @ 323-5974 or Diane @ 283-6334

## Many Volunteers Lighten the Load!



**TOM STOCKTON,  
PRESIDENT**

What a busy and event-filled fall it has been! The Stone House is truly a busy place, filled with momentum

and activity in all aspects of our mission and it is exciting to be part of such a vibrant organization! A lot has been happening with regards to the maintenance and preservation of our Museum, our finances, and of course, the social life of the Association.

Since our last newsletter we have had several fun-filled events and our volunteers have done much important work to secure the future of our Museum and Association. We enjoyed seeing many old friends and making some new ones at the Belchertown Fair, where many visitors to the Belchertown Historic District Commission's booth signed our "Wall of History". It was a great opportunity for us to advertise our mission and upcoming events, including the very successful **Halloween 'n' History** Mount Hope Cemetery tours on October 28<sup>th</sup>. Many thanks to Cliff McCarthy who organized this wonderful event that included presentations in the Old Town Hall, walking tours of the Mount Hope Cemetery with live reenactors, and magician Fran Ferry, courtesy of McCarthy's Pub. Many people commented that this was a wonderful evening for the whole family.

Then, the very next weekend, it was time for our annual **Yuletide Event**, and many kudos are due to Carol Mierzewski and her committee for bringing off this event so beautifully. Our many elegant baskets, wreaths, and crafts were the talk of the town and all who attended the many bazaars that weekend. The Yuletide Event culminated with the drawing of

our Second Annual **Cash Raffle**. We owe so many thanks to all those who supported our raffle so cheerfully, and to all who gave of their time selling tickets. I am pleased to announce that this was a very successful raffle for us. Our prizewinners were **Charles Rogers** (1<sup>st</sup> prize), **Jill Shaw** (2<sup>nd</sup> prize) and **Elinor Hazen** (3<sup>rd</sup> prize). Thanks again to all who donated their time, talents, and treasures to make these last major events of 2007 a success.

Before and after the Yuletide Event Mike Madore, I, and many other volunteers had occasion to spend many hours at the Stone House while the **Window Project** was carried out, and the new windows are already showing their worth to the interior of the building as well as enhancing and restoring the appearance of the exterior. We continue to be grateful for the Community Preservation Grant that made this work possible, and will be relieved when the promised funds are actually released to us. We also continue to be grateful for the gift to the Association by Dwight and Sue Mason, which we hope to use in part to continue to care for the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Dwight Survey Maps, and the Museum and Archives that preserve them.

Less glamorous but vitally important are our new **Oil Tank and water pipes**. We should all be grateful that the dilapidated state of our old tank was discovered before any leakage occurred. We can likewise give thanks that the frozen water pipe in the kitchen was discovered before the rising water in the basement damaged any of our artifacts. Finally, let us also be grateful to all our kind donors and benefactors without whose generosity we would not have been able to meet these unexpected challenges.

*Continued on Page 2*

## Join Us for a Medieval Farce



Mayhem and madness will rule when Brickyard Productions presents *Marry Me Medieval*, **Saturday, Feb. 2, 2008** at the Villa Rose Restaurant, Route 21, in Ludlow. The dinner theater evening is an annual fundraiser for the Belchertown Historical Association.

This raucous comedy won't quite be Romeo and Juliet as a princess, a prince and a jester enamored with the princess form a goofy love triangle. The audience will be transported to a time of kings and queens, swords and jousting, with shades of *Spamalot*.

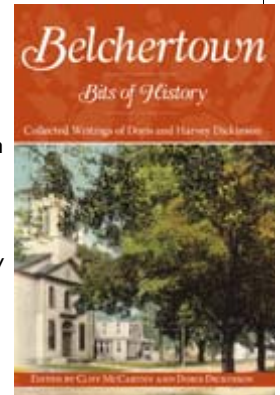
Tickets, which are \$38 for members of the Belchertown Historical Association and \$40 for non-members, include a three-course dinner and the show. Tickets can be purchased at the Villa Rose Restaurant and the Belchertown Copy Center, or from any board member or by calling Lisa at 413-323-6320. This annual event sells out quickly so you are advised to buy tickets early. Doors open at 6 p.m. and tickets must be purchase in advance.

Brickroad Productions, based in Chicopee, has presented quality, interactive entertainment throughout western New England and New York State.

## Belchertown: "Bits of History"

Edited by Cliff McCarthy and Doris Dickinson

The fifty stories in this charming collection mark the events, places and people that have made Belchertown special. Drawn from the writings of beloved local fixtures **Doris and Harvey Dickinson**, these tales show how Belchertown holds firm to its New England Yankee traditions in the heart of the Pioneer Valley of Western Massachusetts.



Profits from the sale of this book are being donated to the Belchertown Historical Society. Get an autographed copy at many of our events. Also available at the Stone House Museum, Clapp Memorial Library, Lawrence Memorial Hall in the Town Clerk's office, Belchertown Copy Center and Collective Copies.

### President message continued from page 1

Although these events have strained our checkbook balance, what would we have done had we not had the funds to respond to these emergencies?

Other exciting projects underway relate to the redecoration of the Museum interior and exploring grants (including Community Preservation Grants) to help preserve our historic buildings. Much work remains to be done this winter and spring.

And speaking of winter and spring, it is not too early to mark your calendar for two upcoming fun fundraising events. First, our third annual **Dinner Theater** will be held on our (now) traditional date of the First Saturday in February (Feb. 2<sup>nd</sup>). Tickets are available, and we hope for a good turnout again this year, as this fundraiser helps get us through the dark dreary months of winter. The ticket price is \$38.00 for members and includes dinner and the show at the Villa Rose Restaurant in Ludlow.

Second, our third annual **Bus Trip to the Boston Flower Show** and historic Quincy Market will be held on Tuesday, March 11<sup>th</sup>. Tickets will be \$45.00 for BHA members and \$50.00 for non-members. Call Mary Avery at 413 3232 5176 to save your seat. This trip sold out quickly last year, so get your reservations in quickly.

You will also want to save the date of March 26<sup>th</sup> for **Bodices, Bonnets and Brass Buttons**. UMass Public History Students will present their recent research on the museum's textile collection, focusing on women's bodices and bonnets from the mid-to-late 19<sup>th</sup> century and men's uniforms and evening wear from the Civil War to the late 1900s.

Finally, planning is already underway for our **Annual Meeting** in April, our annual **Opening Day Event** and plant sale, (to be held on the second Saturday of May), and our fifth annual **Living History Days/Garden Tour July 12<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup>**. Volunteers and plant donations will be gratefully accepted this spring.

As winter progresses we continue to be active in working to promote our mission even though the museum is not open for regularly scheduled hours. We hope many of our members and friends will take advantage of the fun and educational activities in our upcoming calendar.

## Curator's Corner

By Starr M. Florio



### **Bodices, Bonnets and Brass Buttons: Selected Textiles From Our Permanent Collection.**

The Stone House Museum

Special Opening lecture and reception for all members:  
Wednesday, March 26, 2008

One of the new exhibits planned for this coming year is titled *Bodices, Bonnets and Brass Buttons*, an exhibit highlighting an important part of our extensive clothing collection. The exhibit is the result of a study conducted by our UMass graduate student interns from the fall semester.

For those not aware of the program, our Director, Laura Quinn contacted UMass History professor, Marla Miller who teaches a graduate course on public history and is interested in having her students experience first hand, working in the field. Keep in mind that the idea of having graduate students participate in a hands-on project at the Stone House Museum benefits both the museum as well as the students.

We were delighted to be assigned three students who would come to embrace the project we had in mind: that of sorting, cataloging and reporting on our extensive clothing collection. It became obvious during the first week that the collection was far too large for a one-semester project. Consequently, the students decided to concentrate on a single area each. Under my supervision, **Jennifer Kleinman** choose bodices, dating from the 1830's to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. **Chanika Mitchell** selected bonnets and found several beautiful ones to examine mostly from the 1840-50's. And **William Allen** lit up when he saw the military uniforms, especially those belonging to Myron Walker, Belchertown's own beloved Civil War drummer boy.

The students met at the museum once a week for several weeks and researched using the archives as well as outside sources, to examine and catalogue the objects. Our own resident clothing expert, **Patricia Warner**, professor emeritus in the history of

costume at the University of Mass, treated them to a full afternoon's lecture. Prof. Warner donated her time and invaluable expertise to each student. They in turn responded with enthusiasm and renewed energy where before they might have felt a little overwhelmed by the scope and magnitude of the collection. None of the students has had any previous work in textiles. By the end of the semester, we all realized that the students had just hit the tip of the textile iceberg, but we had enough information and objects to mount a very interesting exhibit.

We are looking forward to having you visit this year. Keep in mind that most of these objects have never been on display before and cannot be exposed to the light of day for long. Once this season ends, the delicate objects must return to the dark safety of their museum boxes for other generations to study and enjoy.

So save the date of the lecture where you will meet our hard working interns and be prepared to see some interesting Belchertown owned clothing from times past in our summer exhibit.

Thank you for being a part of the Stone House Museum and I personally wish you all the best for the coming year.



### **Volunteers wanted to assist the curator with several projects**

Come join in the fun of finding out how our ancestors lived life in the days before electricity, computers and television! You will get to handle objects, examine them, maybe do some research or help plan exhibits. You may also want to try out your guiding skills as a docent or help to design a brochure. Hours are flexible and you can do as little as a couple of hours a session. Starr M. Florio, Curator of the Stone House Museum, can be reached by email at [curator@stonehousemuseum.org](mailto:curator@stonehousemuseum.org), or at the museum on Wednesday or Saturday afternoon.

## Membership Update

Carol Mierzewski, Chair

Our membership base continues to grow. We are getting many first time members, which tells us that as the town grows, newcomers to the town recognize our mission and want to support us. We thank all present members for their continued support and welcome new ones. Rising fuel and maintenance costs along with maintaining our archives and programs makes us even more dependent on community support. I will be sending out Membership renewals in March. I ask that you invite a friend

or neighbor to join our community effort. It does take a village to preserve our community's heritage. Member benefits include unlimited visits to the Stone House Museum complex (excluding special events) during the membership year, subscription to the Association Newsletter, and discounted admission to museum events and special member privileges when announced. Upcoming events include the Medieval Dinner, Feb 2 at the Villa Rose, which was a sellout last year and our bus trip to the Boston Flower Show in March, and Opening Day May 10<sup>th</sup>. The committee already has some fun ideas for our annual Cocktail Party in June.

## NYC Bus Trip was Great Fun!



A happy group boarded the bus to New York City December 8<sup>th</sup> for a day-long excursion to the Big Apple. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the tree at Rockefeller Center and the Channel Gardens, the window displays at Macys, Saks and Bloomingdale's, a Broadway show, restaurants and more - there was plenty to see and experience.

Everyone had a great time and cannot wait until next year.

Save the date: **Saturday, December 6, 2008**, the BHA will run another trip.

Watch for the information and sign up early. We guarantee it will be a sell out.



## Yuletide 2007 at the Stone House a Huge Success

This year's Yuletide Fundraiser was one of the most successful ever. We thank our members for their contributions of baskets, baked goods, crafted items and volunteer hours. The beautifully decorated Stone House welcomed visitors and overloaded their senses with the aroma of orange and cinnamon, the smell of just baked pies and cookies in the kitchen. The many different themed baskets in the Chinese Auction and Silent Auction rooms were put together by **Diane Madore, Carol Mierzewski, and Joy McCarron.**



The sales and craft room was the best ever. We had a great response from our local crafters who offered beautiful knit shawls, scarves, hats, felted bags, jewelry, hand crafted greeting cards, scented items, gifts to go, handmade soaps, painted wood candles, Christmas wreaths, ornaments and much more. Also new this year, were the many cement painted birdbaths for table and garden crafted by **Cheryl Dutton** and her elves. They proved to be quite popular.



Thanks also to the business and artist community for their support.

**Brian, Kathleen & Dan Fitzpatrick of Anytime Fitness, The Mariettos of Apollo Restaurant and The Grapevine Grill, Austin**

**Brothers Valley Farm, Fred, Carol & Mike Fabbo of the Belchertown Garden Center, Jim Phaneuf of Bell and Hudson Insurance Agency, Big Y, Mario & Sandra Sotolotto of Cold Spring Wine and Spirits and The Common Italian, Tom Pelissier of Collective Copies, Crystal Car Care, Checkers Market Place, Joanne & David Privett of Davinci Digital Re-Imaging, Denise Smith Photography of Longmeadow, Tom & Sally Shattuck of Devon Lane Power Equipment, Juan R. Narvaez of Dunkin Donuts-State Street, Gary Ewing of Great Threads, Hawley's Restaurant, Healthy Alternatives, Janise Fitzpatrick of Jones Baypath Realty, Kristina Weibel of Kristina's Kafe & Bakery, Looks to Kill, Cathy Mellin-Burton of Making Waves, Janice McCarthy of McCarthy's Pub, Pamela-Jeans Tailoring and More, George Taylor of Quabbin Quality Pet Supplies, R & R Sports Shop, Gail Holt of Rannsaka, The Roadhouse, Tom & Sandy McRea of The Sports Shed, Springfield Museums, Stop and Shop, Summersault Soaps, Subway, The Stables Restaurant, UMass-Cold Spring Orchard, and Wong Garden.**



The following local artisans were also very giving, their donations added an interesting and diverse facet to our event: **Gretchen Holesovsky, Dale Gardener-Fox of Mountain to Seas Knits, Steve and Meg Lanphear of Sentinel Farms, Anne Maziarz of The Other Side Jewelry Design, and Sandy Wright-Lebel.** Local photographers **Les Campbell, Jim Gambaro and Elaine Darr-Morton** made generous donations of their work as well.



Last but not least, we would like to thank **Louise Butler and her 4-H group The Incredible Clovers**, who practice true community spirit and giving every year when they donate a fun and interesting basket.

We hope you will acknowledge support by these merchants and artists when you have the opportunity.

They exemplify community spirit and make it possible for us to keep history alive in Belchertown.



## From the (Virtual) Director's Desk

By Laura Quinn

Greetings, BHA members! It's a pleasure to be able to share good news with you about the many activities currently going on at the Stone House Museum.



But I must first make a confession. The "Director's Desk" doesn't really exist—but the Director certainly does! As many of you know, over the fall and recent winter months—thanks to the tireless work of curator Starr Florio and a band of relentless volunteers—we've been busy protecting the collection while the window replacement project was underway. In turn, we reconfigured spaces to accommodate our ongoing work with the collection, the archives and administration of the museum. Thus the "desk" exists as a growing collection of files, meeting schedules and, thanks to a laptop computer, the weightlessness of electronic communication! More importantly, a virtual desk allows more space for the people, artifacts and outreach that are at the heart of our mission to engage the community in the work of the BHA and the Stone House.

A wonderful example of this is an exciting collaboration with the Public History Program at UMass, directed by Professor Marla Miller, and the work of three outstanding students who have undertaken projects to inventory aspects of our collection. Thanks to the work of UMass graduate students Bill Allen, Jen Kleinman and Chanika Mitchell—and the invaluable expertise of our own Professor Pat Warner—research, condition reports and inventory documentation was completed (in various spaces throughout the museum) on artifacts focusing on our collection of bonnets, bodices and menswear. As their final project, the students presented their work on December 7<sup>th</sup> at UMass and have generously agreed to share their findings with the BHA membership at the Stone House on March 26!

This project—irresistibly entitled "Bodices, Bonnets and Brass Buttons"—is now the focus of a Research Inventory Grant application with the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities with the hope of installing a new exhibition elaborating on the "B" theme (more on that in the next issue).

Progress is likewise being made on our application for a Community Preservation Act grant focusing on the structural and historical integrity of the house itself. It's been ten years since the last evaluation and recommendations were made (e.g. pointing, framing, interior and exterior maintenance) and some critical issues need to be addressed. We'll be working with Mike Schaffer of Huntley/Schaffer Associates who is doing a structural assessment of the house with projected cost estimates this month. Priorities identified in the assessment and final report will provide an up-to-date analysis of what we can expect in the future and support this year's grant application for the most immediate needs. Thanks to the exceptional project management of Mike Madore and Jim Boyko's help at a moment's notice, the window replacement project was a great success! From the inside and outside, the effect is spectacular and we continue to receive wonderful feedback from the community.

Throughout the winter months, a new reception area with retail space to accommodate more visitors and new exhibitions are in preparation for Opening Day. A new programming series focusing on "New Findings" about the collection and special programs tapping into the local expertise of the community are being scheduled for the new year.

Although the museum is officially "closed," don't be surprised to see cars in the parking lot and lights on as on-site work continues. And even when the lights are off, I always welcome your suggestions or comments at my virtual desk (e-mail: [laural.quinn@gmail.com](mailto:laural.quinn@gmail.com)). I look forward to seeing many of you in the upcoming months and, of course, when we all celebrate together at Opening Day this spring. Wishing you all a healthy and successful 2008!

### Please welcome our newest members:

**Susan & Manuel Andrade**  
**Lindsay Hoadley**  
**Cindy-Lee Jenks**  
**Dwight & Sue Mason**  
**Gretchen Neggars**

**Julie Rehm**  
**Mr. & Mrs. David Privett**  
 DaVinci Digital Reimaging  
**Herbert & Mary Scranton**  
**Doreen Tolpa**  
**Nancy Walker**

We also received a membership donation in Honor of **Doris Dickinson**

**Reminder:** Membership information and forms are available at our website: [www.stonehousemuseum.org](http://www.stonehousemuseum.org)

**BELCHERTOWN HISTORICAL  
ASSOCIATION P.O. BOX 1211  
BELCHERTOWN, MA 01007**

Visit us at the Stone House, view us at [www.stonehousemuseum.org](http://www.stonehousemuseum.org), or call us at 413 323-6573

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Curator: **Starr M. Florio**  
Assistant Curator: **Shirley Bock**  
Archivist: **Doris Dickinson**  
Assistant Archivist: **Cliff McCarthy**

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**MEMBERS NEWSLETTER —**

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## From the Archives

*Doris M. Dickinson*, Archivist.

December 12, 2007 is a date that should be remembered, circled with a big red marker on the calendar, or maybe a few rockets should be fired. But the message must be clear; a milestone was reached in the history of the Stone House Museum.

Three years ago, after retiring from the Assessors Office in Town Hall, Gretchen Martin volunteered at the Stone House Museum. Using her computer skills, she started putting the artifacts in the museum into the Past Perfect Program. She used the handwritten cards on which other volunteers had been recording detailed information of the collection since 1991.

Rarely missing a Tuesday afternoon in the archives, she has contributed over 500 hours over the past three years. Last Tuesday after rechecking all the information she had recorded, she brought this important addition to the records of the museum to a close. Credit should also go to the many volunteers, who, over the years, have given untold hours in recording the artifacts on the cards.

This is an ongoing process. Every article given to the Belchertown Historical Association for the Stone House Museum is first registered on a card and then recorded on the computer.

A new project is contemplated with Gretchen for the coming year in the archives. Many thanks for the good work and the good company, Gretchen.

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