



**The Stone House Museum
20 Maple Street P.O. Box 1211
Belchertown, Massachusetts 01007**

April 2020

Dear Friends,

Spring may have “sprung,” but doesn’t this still feel like the “winter of our discontent?” The world seems like a different place than it was just a few short weeks ago; we have learned strange new terms like “sheltering in place” and “social distancing,” and we struggle to conceive of a post-pandemic future—individually, and as members of social groups and organizations. We just don’t know how this will affect our lives, our incomes, or our plans, hopes, and dreams. Adapting to these new circumstances, this mailing is replacing the usually separate Spring newsletter and Membership letter.

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 Belchertown Historical Association. We pause now to look back on all the important work members have been doing during the long winter months, and to consider the current state of our Association.

In the fall, after the Belchertown Fair, we had our annual Living History Day: *Bringing the House to Life: Harvest and Fall Activities in the 19th century New England Home*, during which we provided activities relevant to Belchertown’s history. Live reënactors, some dressed in period costumes, demonstrated and discussed many of the fall and harvest activities that might have occupied residents of a house such as the Stone House in 19th century New England. Demonstrations and Lecture topics included Herb Gardening; Historic Farm Implements; Quilting; Spinning; Preserving Herbs, Vegetables and Fruits; and other seasonal activities. The Stone House was open with a display of our nineteenth century farm equipment, our re-creation 19th century garden and house tours from 10 to 2. This was a truly wonderful event: it was interesting, informative, entertaining, and very pertinent to our mission. We appreciate everyone’s support and hope more families will note the first Saturday in October 2020, for a new installment of this quality event.

On the first Saturday of November we held our annual Yuletide, and many kudos are due to **Sally Shattuck, Denise Smith, Maureen Austin, Becki Smith**, and the whole committee for bringing off this event—including our first-ever “Room of Wreaths”—so beautifully. Our many elegant baskets, wreaths, home-made food items and traditional crafts were the talk of the town. Thanks to all who attended!

Since then, much work has been done by the Museum Fundraising Committee members, all of whom have worked tirelessly in their respective areas to make sure that the museum will be on a firm footing for the 2020 season. We are very grateful for the income from the Edward & Eleanor Schmidt Trust that has enabled us to acquire some really fascinating Belchertown artifacts and continue our restoration of the Schoolhouse. We are planning on a full report at our Annual Meeting, on May 3rd.

Concerning the Washington District Schoolhouse, the authentic, cedar shake roof is almost completed, and the siding has been repaired, so the next steps are the painting of that siding (thanks to funds from Community

Preservation Grants!) and installing of the granite steps (from the Belchertown State School grounds) to finish the outside! Then, work can commence on the interior of the building! This whole process is extremely complicated, and we owe much gratitude to **Bill Austin** for all his help and guidance. The restoration work continues, and we are appreciative that **Rob Hislop** is helping to guide us in various aspects of that complex undertaking. We also continue to need **help with fundraising**, as none of us is an expert in this. To date, fewer than 100 people have contributed toward this project, and we estimate that the whole project will cost about \$150,000. Please let us know if you have any suggestions on how to boost fundraising efforts for the Schoolhouse.

We are very pleased to announce the publication of our **third** annual program booklet, a copy of which is included with this mailing. With guidance from **Mary Knight**, we have produced another very attractive booklet that describes our museum and annual events, with brief articles about new acquisitions and the resources at the Stone House. We are both excited and humbled by the support of the many local businesses that have supported us in this endeavor by purchasing ads in our program. These programs will be available around town and at all of our events. **PLEASE** let our sponsors know that you appreciate their support of our local museum!

Of course, we have made time for a little fun this winter too. A wonderful time was had at the Annual Mystery Dinner Theater held at the Villa Rose Restaurant in Ludlow, with the actors from BUCC's Playhouse performing this year's mystery.

It's always a great time to be engaged in local history, and the trustees and museum committee have been involved in too many projects to fully mention here. We hope that, when it is safe to be out and about again, we will see an increase in attendance at the museum—and please don't forget that we are always looking for cleaners, dusters, house-sitters and docents during the summer months. If you have time during the week or on Saturdays, and an interest in becoming more involved with our museum, please contact me at (413) 323-7452.

As spring progresses, we hope to be able to resume some of our traditional springtime activities at the Stone House. We are hoping for a good turn-out at our first-ever Virtual Annual Meeting on May 3rd (details below). Although we had to postpone our **Opening Day** event, plans are underway for our **Members Only Cocktail Party** in June, and the annual fall **Living History Day** in October that will celebrate harvest-time activities and traditional New England crafting. Please mark your calendars and plan on attending these events!

Sincerely,



Thomas Stockton, President
323-7452 or tstockton@earthlink.net

CALL TO ANNUAL MEETING!

The Annual Meeting of The Belchertown Historical Association will be held on Sunday, May 3rd at 5:00. Due to the current pandemic, the meeting will, for the first time ever, be held “virtually” (on the internet) using Zoom and Facebook live. Please note that there is nothing prohibiting this in our bylaws, and although a physical meeting with our customary desserts would be preferable, we must adapt to our current realities in order to have our legally-required Annual Meeting. If you would like to participate, contact us for the meeting link at info@stonehousemuseum.org, or call me at 413.323.7452 for further details.