



"THE STONE HOUSE MUSEUM"

Belchertown Historical Association
Belchertown, Massachusetts
1903—2021

April 2021

Volume 21, Issue 1

MEMBER NEWSLETTER

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

SPRING HAS "SPRUNG"

Dear Friends,

Spring has "sprung," and we pause, quickened by the hope of new life, and a slow return to whatever our new "normal" will be. The excitement of the new season is tempered by the stunning realization that this pandemic has now lasted more than an entire year, and we struggle to conceive of a post-pandemic future—individually, and as members of social groups and organizations. We still don't know how this will affect our lives, our incomes, or our plans, hopes, and dreams.

It would be all-too-easy to be glum as we reflect on all that we **couldn't** do in the past year, BUT, 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, and 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.

ALAS! Our wonderful, almost-monthly events that make a rhythm that our Association lives couldn't happen, from the cocktail party, to the Fair, the Living History—we've missed these annual milestones in our lives, and we've missed the personal contacts that go along with them. We were able, with respect to our local guidelines, to have our Halloween Event in the Mt.

Hope Cemetery, which made life seem a little more "normal," but the lack of normalcy was especially apparent around the time of our Yuletide (non-) event. **HOWEVER, WE ADAPTED**, and many thanks are due to trustees **Erica Morrison-Brazitis** and **Sally Shattuck**, and to Mary Knight for giving us a virtual Yuletide presence with our first-ever Facebook Yuletide auction. This was a fun and successful event, which may become a regular feature in our calendar.

Over the winter much work has been done by the Museum and Fundraising Committees, all of whom have worked tirelessly in their respective areas to make sure that the museum will be on a firm footing for the coming season. As we are necessarily closed, the Museum Committee is devoting an incredible amount of energy and work to restoring the interior of the house, and to give it a much-needed facelift in time for our Anniversary next year.

Period-appropriate wallpapers and repairing plaster are only the beginnings of the work that has been going on, and it's very exciting to see this amount of energy in the house. And thanks are due to Treasurer **Maureen Austin** for her invaluable help in preparing a working budget for the Association, which we need to apply for certain types of grants. We also continue to be grateful for the income from the Edward & Eleanor Schmidt Trust that has enabled us to acquire some really



Stories from the Pandemic

We are collecting stories and pictures to share and archive as documentation of COVID 19 experiences in Belchertown. See page 4.

fascinating Belchertown artifacts and continue our restoration of the Schoolhouse. We are planning on a full report at our **Annual Meeting, via Zoom, on Sunday April 25th**.

Speaking of the Washington District Schoolhouse, the authentic, cedar shake roof is completed, and the siding has been repaired and painted, so the next "step" is installing the steps and stonework to finish the outside! Then, work can commence on the interior of the building! This whole process is extremely complicated, and we continue to be extremely grateful to **Bill Austin** for all his help and guidance. The restoration work continues, and we are grateful that **Rob Hislop** is helping to guide us in various aspects of that complicated job.

Continued on page 3

Staying Busy During COVID

Museum Workroom

The Museum Committee started a project to put all the hanging clothes in chronological order starting with a grant we received which enabled us to hire **Pat Warner**, one of our own members, who is an expert in Fashion/Costume design, and a UMASS Professor Emerita, to help us date and catalogue all our hanging clothing. The hanging clothes were still in a random order which made setting up special exhibits very difficult. Three members of both the Board of Trustees and the Museum Committee (**Erica Morrison-Brazitis, Sally Shattuck and Randi Shenkman**) worked masked during this winter to put all the hanging clothes in chronological order by decade. We also started recataloging the clothing in the acid free boxes and we have placed all the paintings which were in the workroom into the closet where the hats had been kept, while putting hats where mannequins are dressed...in the workroom. There is still more to do, but these are huge steps forward.



And Then There is the Dining Room

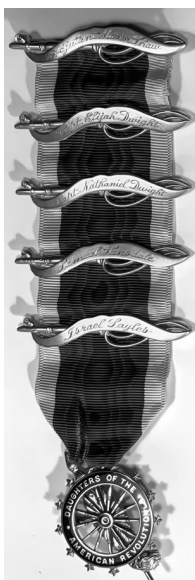
Paint one thing and see what's wrong with everything else. **Sally Shattuck** decided that the floors in the entrance hall, dining room and kitchen really needed painting. She started and when done, the floors looked great, but the new floor paint made the trim, chair rails and molding look really dirty, so she decided to repaint all of them. While up on the ladder, wearing latex gloves, she steadied herself by putting her hand on the wallpapered walls. She then noticed her gloves were filthy from the wallpaper.



We already knew there were many cracks in the walls which split the wallpaper and that there were also cracks in the ceiling. The Board of Trustees gave us permission to strip the wallpaper. Erica Morrison-Brazitis and Randi Shenkman joined Sally and stripped off the paper and discovered the walls were not sound. In addition to the cracks which turned out to be bigger than we thought, there were places where it took no effort to depress the walls with one finger. The walls needed more preparation than we could handle. After interviewing some painters to have them prep the walls, one of them was hired and did a great job.

Now it was time to look for new, historically correct wallpaper. This literally took us two months. We are almost ready to put our choices to a vote of the board. Then, Erica and Sally, with Randi as the helper, will put up the new wallpaper.

The next room to tackle is the best parlor!



D.A.R. Brooch

Sometimes you can find historic papers and objects on Ebay. Because this is sometimes true, both **Tom Stockton** and **Randi Shenkman** give a gander there every once in awhile (Tom more diligently than Randi). We have found many important papers. Last year we found that wonderful crazy quilt we wrote about in a previous newsletter, that you will be able to see on the bed in the master bedroom when we reopen. For this year's find, the gentleman who sold us the large batch of ephemera last year contacted Randi to give her a tip that a gentleman in Arizona had a D.A.R. medal with smaller medals attached that came from Belchertown. Randi called him, spent months negotiating with him, and finally purchased the medals from him.

The primary medal has **Gertrude Wood Shaw Hasbrouck** engraved on the back. The individual names on the smaller pins, have the mostly historically familiar names: **Adjutant Mason Shaw, Captain Elijah Dwight, Captain Nathaniel Dwight, Samuel Hinsdale, Israel Sayles.** Even though the Daughters of the American Revolution was not founded until 1890, the soldiers named here are well known to Belchertown historians.

Washington District School Progress

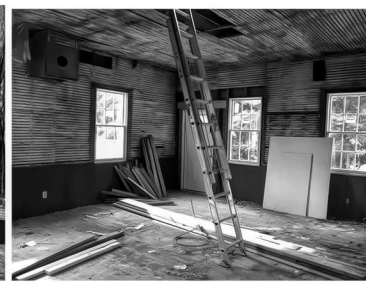
Since acquiring the schoolhouse in 2016 we have made steady progress on its restoration. A foundation was poured, the building was moved, and work on the outside began. A new chimney was constructed, siding was repaired and replaced, and roof repairs were started. Inside brickwork and a hearth for a working stove were installed. Underground work necessary to connect to town water and sewer is partially complete. New doors and windows and a transom have been installed. The school has been painted its original color and has a new wood-shingle roof. The front door is green. The foundation will soon be faced with stones similar to those on the Stone House. Granite steps once used at the Belchertown State School will be installed at the entrance to the schoolhouse. Our next challenge is the work to be done on the inside. Without grants from the Community Preservation Committee and countless donations, we would not have been able to undertake this important project. We are extremely grateful for this support. If the schoolhouse looks almost done when you drive by the museum, it is getting closer compared to the way it started. But, if you look at the picture of the interior photo, you'll see we are a long way off. We are still looking for/accepting donations to this project.



In the beginning



The exterior getting close

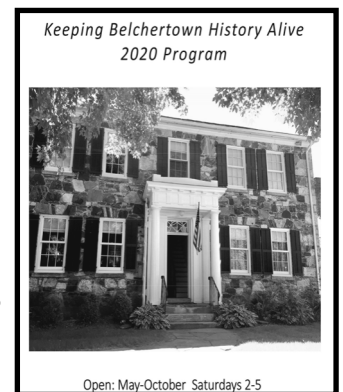


The interior not close

President's Message continued from page 1

We continue to need **help with fundraising**, as none of us is an expert in this. We are so grateful for the more than 100 people who have contributed to this project, but we still estimate that the whole project will cost about \$150,000 more than we have raised. We have spent the funds from the **Community Preservation Grants**, which have enabled us to finish the painting of the exterior.

In terms of special fundraising, we are not printing a new program book this year, but will continue to proudly distribute our beautiful **third** annual program booklet, which we published last year. Remember that, with guidance from Mary Knight, we produced a 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 excited and humbled by the support of the many local businesses that supported us in this endeavor by purchasing ads in our program, and sponsored our events, but we do not feel we can ask our hard-pressed businesses for donations this year, especially considering that the events they have sponsored were largely cancelled! However, the programs still represent our Museum and our annual events, when they can take place, and we will make them available to the public when it is safe to do so. These brochures will be available around town and will be available at all of our events. **PLEASE let our local sponsors know that you appreciate their support of our local museum!**



It's always a great year to be involved 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 second (can you believe it?) Virtual Annual Meeting on April 25th. Please watch for future updates; as outdoor activities become safe, we certainly hope to see you all around the grounds of the Museum!

Tom Stockton President, Belchertown Historical Association

Stories from the Pandemic

How has the COVID-19 Pandemic affected you?
We're interested in hearing your story!

We are collecting stories from members about how this past year's pandemic has affected them. What were your challenges, frustrations, joys or sorrows? What coping strategies did you use? What ingenious ideas have you implemented this past year? Did you do something that you've been wanting to do but didn't have the time to do it? What are your thoughts about what a "new normal" may be for us after the pandemic? Or perhaps, you know someone who was a "Hero in Action".

We can accept paper or emailed stories, photos or artwork (that you own), and audio or video recordings. If you live in the Belchertown area, someone from the Board could assist in the electronic recordings. **ALL submissions must include your name, address, phone number, e-mail AND your signature** giving us permission to print/show your story in our local newspaper, in our members' newsletter, and on our website or Facebook page.

In addition to sharing your stories and pictures now, they will be archived for future generations. What messages might be of interest to researchers and students in 2121 as they study this period in history?

FORMAT

Name:

Address:

Phone:

E:-mail:

Your story (Poems and pictures with captions are welcome as well.)

Would like someone to contact you to audio or video you? Yes _____ No _____

Signature: _____ Permission to use this submission in all publications.

Send to: Belchertown Historical Association, P.O. Box # 1211, Belchertown, Ma. 01007

OR email to info@stonehousemuseum.org with PANDEMIC in subject line.



At the onset of the Pandemic of 1918, mask ordinances were put in place in Massachusetts and most people complied – especially in part due to the patriotic duty angle of wearing masks.

In Memoriam

2020 will be a year that many of us will never forget because of the friends and family that we lost during this world-wide pandemic. While the historical association didn't lose anyone to the pandemic, we did lose three members that were truly dedicated to our museum. **Amelia (Millie) Harrington** passed away in January of 2020 at the age of 97; **Rachel Collard** passed on March 20, 2020 at the age of 100; and on September 24th, we lost **Les Campbell** at the age of 95. Rachel, Millie and Les gave freely of their time, talents and support. We will remember their generosity for many years to come. It is because of members and volunteers, like them, that our museum and historical association have succeeded for so long in our endeavor to preserve Belchertown's history.



Save us postage! Send in your dues and donations today!

Membership Form Belchertown Historical Association

The BHA, a nonprofit organization, exists primarily on income from membership, event admissions, contributions and bequests. Members enjoy unlimited visits to the museum, subscription to our newsletter, discounted admission to special events, and deep satisfaction in knowing they are preserving the past for generations to come.

Check one:

New Membership Renewal Membership Life Member (Donation only)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

If this is a gift membership, provide giver's name:

Member Categories

- \$5 Student (under 18)
 \$10 Senior ((65+)
 \$20 Individual
 \$35 Family (children <18)
 \$50 Friend
 \$100 Patron

- \$250 Individual Life Member
 \$400 Couple Life Member
 Life Member = no annual renewal

Corporate Matching Program

Double your tax-deductible donation by attaching a matching gift form from your employer.

Member Dues enclosed:

\$ _____

Please check off categories on left

Donation \$ _____ Direct this gift to

School House renovation

Other: _____

Specify In Honor or In Memory of:

Annual Membership and Spring 2021 Fundraising Drive

While the membership dues are low, we depend on this revenue stream to help with administrative costs.

We also invite donations to help us renovate the School House and as honor/memorial gifts. Each will be recognized as directed.

Please also invite relatives, neighbors, friends and colleagues to be part of our mission:

"The Belchertown Historical Association exists to preserve historical artifacts pertaining to the Town of Belchertown; to maintain the Stone House Museum; and to foster knowledge of and interest in the history of Belchertown by opening the Museum to the public and by offering educational programs, lectures and events."

Thank you for all you do. Our important work would be impossible to accomplish without your support.

Send completed form and tax-deductible donation payable to the Belchertown Historical Association to:

**The Belchertown Historical Association
PO Box 1211
Belchertown MA 01007-1211**



BELCHERTOWN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
 20 MAPLE STREET, PO BOX 1211
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 VISIT US AT THE STONE HOUSE,
 CALL US AT 413 323-6573 OR
 EMAIL [INFO@STONEHOUSEMUSEUM.ORG](mailto:info@stonehousemuseum.org)

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MEMBERS NEWSLETTER AND MUSEUM
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MFKNIGHT@CROCKER.COM

CALL TO ANNUAL MEETING!

The Annual Meeting of The Belchertown Historical Association will be held on **Sunday, April 25th at 4:00**. Due to the current pandemic, the meeting will again be held “virtually” (on the internet) using Zoom. The annual meeting is an opportunity for the trustees of the museum to update the membership on fundraising events, projects, new additions to the museum and archives and any changes to the board of trustees. We value your suggestions and thoughts concerning our growing collection of museum buildings and look forward to seeing your faces on the screen, even though we can’t be meeting in person.



We appreciate your support as we adapt to our current realities in order to have our legally-required Annual Meeting in a manner that is safe for all. The Zoom link will be published on the museum Facebook and Website pages on 4/21. To be added to an invitation /reminder email, contact us at info@stonehousemuseum.org, or call Tom at 413.323.7452. **A quorum is required for this meeting.**

**Annual Membership Renewal and
 Spring Fundraising Form inside**

BELCHERTOWN HISTORICAL
 ASSOCIATION
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