

The Brentwood Historical Society Newsletter

Summer 2023

Hello to the members of the Brentwood Historical Society! This issue will take us back over the events and highlights of the first few months of 2023.



Cristina Ashjian and Karen Ellis

April 20th brought us a speaker from the New Hampshire Humanities to Go programs, Cristina Ashjian, who talked about three New Hampshire attractions that were originally simple farms. There was a period when many “simple farms” were not providing a decent living for their owners. The land was abandoned as farm families moved west. The land lay fallow for years. Eventually it was purchased in large parcels by other buyers, many from cities to the south who had different visions for how it could be useful. Developed as country estates for summer residents, the former farms contributed to the growing tourist industry. Ms. Ashjian spoke about three of the estates that have become major tourist attractions: The Fells on Lake Sunapee, the Rocks in Bethlehem, and Saint Gaudens National Historic Site in Cornish.

Life on Liberty Island

The May program was probably the highlight of the spring season. David and Debra Luchsinger have retired and live in this area. He was the Superintendent of the Statue of Liberty as well as



David and Debra Luchsinger

Monument and Ellis Island for some sixteen years. They were also the last residents of Liberty Island, which has since been converted to automatic light and energy. Both were relaxed and entertaining speakers. Their stories and descriptions were fascinating. To those who have not visited Lady Liberty and the island, the slides they shared revealed a larger and better landscaped site than might have been expected. Despite their accounts of hurricanes and major repairs that were done, they left us with a deep sense of the reverence the statue imparts all over the world.

Mini-Split System Installed

This is the first year that members and visitors can notice that they are warm in the winter and cool in the summer when they are in the museum building. The mini-split units are working perfectly. You can be anywhere in the building now and be comfortable. Thanks to the Town for the funding and installation of the units which have improved the comfort level any time.

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Second Floor Grange Room Again a Favorite for Audiences

A question that has often been asked -- "What's upstairs?" -- has been fully answered. The Flanders Hall/Keeneborough Grange room has reappeared as a venue for public gatherings, just as it was for 130 years. Repairs to the windows, to the plaster ceiling of the stage, the cleaning and repair of the stage backdrop curtain, new lighting, and the installation of a mini-split unit, have restored its appeal to audiences. In addition, the Congregational Church gave us four deacon's benches and the library gave us two. Combined with the benches remaining in the room, being entertained or educated now in that room is nostalgic, memorable, and comfortable. Respectfully, the annual range of Historical Society displays, programs and projects fulfill the mission of the BHS to bring people together in history, especially the history of Brentwood. The continued support of and by our members in the BHS help to make our mission relevant for all.

Dexter Swasey, President

Capital Improvements Plan

Our president Dexter has presented the Budget Comm. and the Planning Board with proposals for a well, a septic system/bathroom modification, and paving the parking lot at the museum. At present it is not known when or whether any of these projects will be undertaken by the Town.

Report on Yard Sale in June

The Yard Sale in June was a great fundraising success, through old fashioned wheeling and dealing, and the use of the internet for postings.

Skip Belanger Honored by the Town



Albert E. "Skip" Belanger, who is the Historical Society's Research Correspondent, was honored in March when it was revealed at a Select Board meeting that the latest Town Report had been dedicated to him. The photo above was taken just minutes after he was surprised by the announcement, when members of his family, who had kept out of sight, also surprised him to help celebrate this well-deserved recognition.

The Historical Society knows very well how much it has benefitted from Skip's talents. He has a particularly strong ability to make appropriate notes on every path of research until it's clear that there's nothing more to learn in that direction. When someone contacts the BHS for genealogy information, they are apt to receive much more than expected from a society of this size, thanks to Skip's generous searching skills.

He also has the patience to scan hundreds of pages of useful documents, making digital versions of fragile records that can be seen and used by many.

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Cleaning and Conserving the Stage Backdrop Curtain

After writing so many details and descriptions for the grant application, we wondered what it would look like when the work was actually being done on the stage curtain. Finally the two work days arrived, right at the end of July and the first day of August. Immediately we saw that there was nothing fancy about any of it. First there were twelve 8-foot tables to set up – borrowed from the Recreation Center. Then the three women arrived. Hair pulled out of the way, hot weather shorts or jeans, unloading simple, basic tools and supplies you could get at any big hardware store. Probably a few particular paints, adhesives or tapes that served best in the conservation steps.

First the tables were covered with sheets of soft polyester foam, then with lengths of sturdy white paper, which provided a smooth but giving working surface. They accessed each side of the curtain by continually rolling it on a metal pipe and working just on the canvas that lay on the surface of the pipe. The conservator and her assistant first cleaned the canvas, working next to each other with two small electric vacuum cleaners, each with a very mild pull. Because the curtain had been made for a different stage, it was too wide for our stage, and the sides had to be gently folded in and taped to the backing. Dexter and Skip were often called on for help.



Ironing tape with gently warm iron.



Skip and Dexter bring the long white gutter.



Careful measuring before taping.



More measuring and taping.

Fourth of July

Thanks to Brad Stevens for the use of his Model A auto as a BHS prop and pace setter.

Visitation Totals

Programs	120+
Open Houses	70+

Historical Society trip	15
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Overall	205
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Public Meetings Still to Come

Sunday, Nov. 12

Annual Meeting	2:00 pm
Speaker Erin Moulton	2:30 pm

**“History & Mystery: A Genealogy
Starter Guide”**

Sunday, Dec. 3	2:00 pm
Christmas Party	

Linda Rousseau, Editor



New sign replacing weather-battered one.

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