

Brentwood Historical Society Newsletter Winter 2018-19



Hello to the Members of the Historical Society

Welcome to the winter newsletter of the Brentwood Historical Society. The first thing to do is to update you on the current officers and board of the Society.

The Annual General Meeting took place on Sunday, November 18, 2018, attended by about forty members. The slate of the Nominating Committee was presented by Phyllis Thompson, committee chair. The following officers and directors were elected:

President	Rebecca Dunham
Vice-President	Linda Rousseau
Research Correspondent	Albert Belanger
Treasurer	Frank Northrup
Recording Secretary	Suzanne Austin
Curator	Rebecca Davis
Director	Richard Chamberlain
Director	Karen Ellis
Director	Robert Gilbert
Director	Dexter Swasey
Director	Phyllis Thompson
Director	Alma Vahey

The membership also voted to approve the adoption of a revised set of Bylaws which had been carefully re-worked for several months by an ad hoc committee. Any member who would like to have a copy may leave a message on the Historical Society phone, 603-642-8944, or leave a message via the Contact page on our website, www.brentwoodnhhistory.org.

Letter from the President

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year to everyone! I hope all of you are well and staying warm in this cold and unusually dry winter. It is a good opportunity to do some work inside and the directors of the Society are doing just that.

The construction, done by Peter Goodrich, is complete. The furnace wall meets fire and safety codes as does the new set of stairs. Just a couple of days ago, Frank Northrup, Dexter Swasey, and Skip Belanger did hours of heavy lifting, putting the

furnishings and materials back into place. The stairway made an important contribution to that work as objects were carried upstairs to the storage area. The next phase of our renovations is the electrical work.

Becky Davis, Karen Ellis, and I will be beginning the inventory and classification process of the collection. Thanks to Nick Wrighton for installing the software that was funded by the Whitney Community Preservation grant, managed by Historic New England.

We are in need of a new or used desk for the office. The existing desk has seen better days. A large, main desk up to 72" wide with a left handed "wing" (making it "L-shaped") would fit and be helpful as we focus on work with the collection. Of course, the donation would be tax deductible as we are a 501(c)3 charitable organization. Please contact me if you would like to help us with this acquisition.

January is Membership Renewal Month and thanks to our supportive membership, we have accomplished a great deal this year and have plans to be as productive in 2019. This issue of the Society's newsletter highlights some of our accomplishments and projects. I hope you enjoy reading it. Many thanks to Linda Rousseau, our Editor.

Rebecca Dunham, President

Gary Farnham Steps Aside as Director

The Historical Society expresses its appreciation to Gary Farnham for his four years as a Director, and for his years as a hard-working volunteer member before being named a Director. One of the many ways he helped in recent years was in building the bookcase that is the basis of our library corner. We hope and expect that he will continue to be a

valuable volunteer, just not in the months he spends at his family camp.

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The Fall Programs

In the summer issue we reported on the April, June and July programs. Next came three Summer Open Houses on the first Saturday of the summer months from 10 – 1. Attendance is usually light at these events, but those who come get the grand tour and often stay for a long time browsing and chatting.



On **Saturday, October 20**, we arranged for our members to tour the **Poplin Meetinghouse and Cemetery in Fremont**, guided by Matthew “Sandy” Thomas, president of the Fremont Historical Society, who gave us a fascinating tour. One of the highlights of the morning was a good look at the beautiful old Fremont Town Hearse. We all helped Sandy roll it out of the shed next to the Meetinghouse.



The old shed is as basic and utilitarian as it can be. The hearse fits in there just so. Every piece has its place. After we got everything back in place, we posed for a picture.



From left: Matthew Thomas, Holly Gilbert, Phyllis Thompson, Bob Gilbert, Suzanne Austin, Linda Cowie, Doug Cowie, Linda Rousseau, Laurel Abusamra, Albert Belanger. Thanks to David Abusamra for taking the picture.

The final fall program was presented after the annual business meeting on **November 18**. After explaining that the Society was interested in learning more about the careers many residents have or did have before choosing the quiet life in Brentwood, Linda Rousseau spoke about her **life as a singer**, in a program entitled “**Strauss, Satin and Song**.”



On display were several gowns that had been custom made for her, including the accessories and jewelry, binders with programs from some 300 solo appearances, and photos. The program ended with a detailed description of her performance with Arthur Fiedler and the Boston Pops, and a recording of her song that night, Richard Strauss’ “Im Abendroth,” which was a first performance in Boston.

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Update on the Construction

We really must stop and talk about “the construction.” It has been almost twenty years since there was anything like construction happening inside the old Grange building. The Grange sold it to the Town in 1990 for \$1.00, and the Town arranged with the Historical Society that the Society would maintain the interior. After a great deal of cleaning and planning, one of the first construction projects for the hard-working volunteer members was to cover the old walls of the office and the two first-floor rooms with pine paneling.

What a difference that must have made! How much cleaner and lighter it must have seemed. Then Bob Almon found and brought in nineteen glass and wood display cases – which can’t be called actual construction, but heavy and solid enough that they totally defined the dimensions of the two rooms. The Society members then concentrated on filling the display cases with exhibits – which is harder and takes longer than it might seem. It’s natural to think they probably sat back for a while to enjoy the fruits of their labors.

In the next few years a furnace was installed, and a bathroom. The building had never had more than an outhouse, and more than one type of self-contained toilet has been used. We currently operate with an Incinolet style, which is working quite well.

In the last 10-15 years several topics/prospective projects had been heard over and over: there wasn’t enough room to seat the kind of audiences we were having; that problem would be eased if we could move those display cases back against the wall. Because the cases were so incredibly heavy and did not slide or roll, we felt forced into one kind of configuration for the displays, whereas if they rolled easily, we could have various set-ups and more effective displays. For many years it seemed like too big a job for too few people.

Other nagging problems: because there was only one stairway to the second floor, we couldn’t use the upstairs for programs – and that was the one room that was built specifically for public programs. There had been a second stairway for years, on the out-

side of the building, but it was torn down. Furthermore, the one stairway we do have is not accessible for the handicapped, and today that is a major issue. Another major issue these days, we learned, is that the furnace must be totally enclosed in its own little “house.”

So those are the things that have occupied your officers and board in the past year. We got to know the fire inspector and the building inspector well, and worked to put priorities on the tasks that would bring us up to code.

The officers asked the Selectmen, and received, financial support for two construction projects to bring the building up to code in those areas. The housing has been built around the furnace. A second stairway has finally been constructed to the second floor. We’ll wait until these areas have been cleaned up before we put a picture in this newsletter, but any time you’re in the building we’ll be glad to show you.

In one more huge accomplishment, each of the display cases was emptied, laid down on the floor, and had heavy duty rubber casters installed. The cases can now be placed flush against the walls and rolled forward when needed. Those who came to the November 18 annual meeting saw what a difference it made in our use of the room.

The can-do spirit that has made these achievements possible has arisen from the awareness that all of you in the membership are there, supporting the Society with your interest and participation. As Becky Dunham says, there are more projects lined up waiting to be done. We look forward to being able to bring you the next reports.

Linda Rousseau, Vice-President

Recent Donations

From Karen and Nate Ellis: *Cruising New Hampshire History: A Guide to New Hampshire’s Roadside Historical Markers*, by Michael Bruno

From Becky and Randy Davis: tool box and tools

From Becky and Bill Dunham: *Old Home Week, Lee, New Hampshire, August 23, 1916* by John Scales

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Introducing the 2019 Programs

The Program Committee is having a grand time planning the year's programs. The titles may change as the program develops, but this is the basic plan.

April Dolls...Trucks...Bears...Your Favorite!
Add your toy to the evening's display and take your turn telling about it. Go back with us to the good old days when toys were simpler and more personal.

June Michael Bruno, speaking on his new book, *Cruising New Hampshire History: A Guide to New Hampshire's Roadside Historical Markers*

September Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Lunar Landing

October Cemetery Walk and Talk

Program Committee:

Linda Rousseau, Chair
Rebecca Davis
Rebecca Dunham
Karen Ellis
Robin Wrighton

Only in Brentwood

Robert Schroeder, a long time, well-loved teacher at Swasey Central School, took his students out for an archeological dig on the school grounds in 1987, when excavating was going on before the construction of a new wing for the school. The school property was the former site of the Sanborn family, who had been here in 1742 when the town was incorporated. The last Sanborn resident was Mary Abbie Sanborn, author of the Sanborn Diaries, which provide us with so much town history.

Mr. Schroeder's students found many artifacts. They knew just where the farmhouse had been located. Mr. Schroeder wanted to have the site preserved, and he did all he could to prevent it from being paved over by the parking lot. His idea did not prevail, however. The parking lot went in as planned. As a kind of protest, Mr. Schroeder appropriated the first parking slot in the row, and woe unto anyone else who takes that spot. The teaching staff does not question his right to it, even though his old black pickup truck is not the fanciest of the faculty's vehicles. So when you drive by the school and see the black pickup truck, you can know that you're driving by Mary Abbie's kitchen.

(As told to Linda Rousseau by Robert Schroeder, 2015)

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Do you have a vintage toy to tell us about at the April program?

