

The Brentwood Historical Society Newsletter

Winter of 2021-22

New Year's greetings to the members of the Historical Society! There is so much happening for the Society these days, we really feel the need to keep you up to date. More and more people are asking for history-related information. If questions come your way and you can tell people where to turn for answers, you're adding support to the Society in a very important way.

Newly Elected Officers and Directors

One question you might hear is "Who is leading the Historical Society these days?" The annual meeting was Sunday afternoon, November 14. Thanks to those of you who were able to come. The members elected these officers and directors for the coming year:

Newly Elected Officers

Dexter Swasey	President
Linda Rousseau	Vice President
Karen Ellis	Secretary
David Menter	Treasurer
Albert "Skip" Belanger,	Research Correspondent
Rebecca Davis	Curator

Directors

Alma Vahey	Lifetime Adviser
Suzanne Austin	
Richard Chamberlain	
Rebecca Dunham	
Robert Gilbert	
Dawn Higley	
Frank Northrup	

Swasey School's 70th Anniversary

The Historical Society did a great deal this past year to join Swasey Central School in observing its 70th anniversary. The Historical Society displayed multiple early school objects at Swasey from October 8 to 29. Lisa Swasey used her expertise to create a looped tape of photographs of Swasey's construction, which ran during the "New Hampshire's Rural One-Room Schools" public program.

The Historical Society set up its own "classroom area" in the Museum, with student desks, tall teachers' desks and original Marshall's Corner School large chalkboard slate. Thanks to Russell Swasey for making the frame around the slate.



Albert Belanger with Swasey 5th graders at the Museum discussing the Sanborn Cemetery.

The teachers and students began to be involved. Rebecca Dunham and Dexter Swasey were invited to visit the 2nd graders. They talked about the early schools and their lack of modern facilities, and the building of Swasey, while the students enjoyed the experience of sitting at the double seated desks.

The 5th grade teachers and students got interested in the Sanborn Cemetery. On October 28 the three 5th grade teachers, Amy Gentile, Scott Fowler, and Lindsey Hubble, each walked with their classes at separate times from the school to the Historical Society Museum. Albert "Skip" Belanger "came out of retirement" as a teacher and conducted three consecutive sessions of about twenty students each, discussing who would have been buried in private cemeteries like the Sanborn Cemetery, the meaning of engravings on stones, and much more. The students sat in the Museum's "classroom area" and took notes from Skip's topics on the chalkboard.

Two or three years ago one of our members suggested more coordination between the museum and the school. This project was a superb way to do it!

Restoration of the Sanborn Cemetery

The collaboration didn't stop there. Skip told the students that Mary Abbie Sanborn wrote in her diaries that 28 people were buried in the cemetery, but only 13 gravestones are showing now. The

Cemetery Superintendent, Joyce Keegal, invited any particularly interested students to take part in a preliminary search for possible buried headstones which might have fallen over and been covered by turf – a situation not infrequent in old graveyards. On November 20 four youngsters – Eli Jones, Anna Lu Kelly, Charlotte (Chark) Kelly, and Brayden Lanchoney – with their mothers joined Keegal and a cemetery trustee and, after being instructed in the proper probing technique, they did locate, along the east wall a few inches below the surface, a line of six unlettered fieldstones. As it was not uncommon for infants' graves to have uninscribed gravestones, these quite possibly might be markers for some of the infants and youngsters. Further searches will be scheduled for the springtime. (See photo on p. 4)

New Use of Binders to Organize Data

As our Research Correspondent, Albert Belanger has experienced what a time-consuming thing it can be to provide a proper response to many of the requests that come in. After preparing the talk about the Sanborn Cemetery, he decided to create a binder that was related just to the Cemetery. It includes a photo of each headstone, the Sanborn Family Genealogy, entries from the Sanborn Diaries where Mary Abbie lists the names of those buried there and how much each gravestone cost and the cost of the gate, an outline of Albert's talk to the 5th graders, and some photos of the dig for missing headstones. He made four sets of materials and assembled four binders, for the Historical Society, Swasey Central School, the Town, and the Cemetery Trustees.

In addition, after this year of researching school information, he created a binder with several sections, all related to "Schools in Brentwood," from the following sources in the Historical Society's files:

- Early Selectmen's meetings 1745-1809
- Sanborn Diaries 1836-1902
- Town Reports 1850-1926
- Loose Papers in BHS Files

He distributed a copy of the binder to the Historical Society, the Library, the School and the Town Office. It is very helpful to the Society for members to know, and pass on to others, that we have become organized enough that it is now feasible to create a binder for some of the subjects that are most requested, naming the publications and other resources we have, complete with page numbers, that contain any

mention of the subject at hand. That can save a great deal of time for a visitor who is traveling and has limited hours to study. Five years ago we couldn't have imagined we could do this. While only a few binders have been created so far, it is a sign of the Society's growth and its aim to be of service to those who need our information.

Other Activity This Fall

The Yard Sale

The Historical Society had a Yard Sale on Saturday, September 11. Sincere thanks to those who contributed items to be sold for the benefit of the Society, and to those who came and purchased a few treasures! Approximately \$400.00 was added to the treasury when it was over.

Display at the Peach Project

The Society joined in the support of the Peach Project Winter Stroll on December 10-11 by adding a visual display to other organizations' displays along the trail at the Recreation Center. (See photo, p. 4)

The Reminiscence Gathering

Members were invited to an informal get-together on October 26 that was presented as a Reminiscence Gathering, upstairs in the Grange Room. In a casual seating arrangement two Brentwood natives, born, raised, and lived most of their lives here – Barbara Swasey-Keir and Brenda Swasey Flanders – shared memories about their childhoods, schooling, family homes and life in Brentwood some years ago. The conversation was recorded for archiving. We hope to do more of these. (See photo on p. 4).

New Town History Donated from Kingston

The Kingston Historical Society watched as we developed the Brentwood 275th Anniversary book three years ago and asked for our advice as they struggled to produce their 300th Anniversary book in 2021. On September 20 two members of the Kingston Historical Society, Leslie Hume and Walt Ray, brought a copy of their book to our board meeting and donated it with sincere gratitude for our help. The officers and board of the Brentwood society gave them a copy of the Brentwood book and the recently published supplement as a token of the friendship between the two towns. (See photo, p. 4)

1857 Wall Map Returns to Brentwood

One special factor for those who work with museums is the extreme fragility of some of the artifacts. One example is a large wall map of Rockingham County, just recently hung in the main museum room. Be sure to look at it when you come to the museum and see why we are so proud of its good condition after the care and planning it took to transport it to its resting place here. You may have read the story recently in the January issue of the Brentwood Newsletter.



Dexter Swasey and Dawn Higley with the 1857 Rockingham County map.

The map was printed in 1857, 164 years ago. It is very large – 56" x 56," longer than the human hand can reach, therefore requiring two people to hold it while moving it. Each town on the map is hand-colored, with photos from several towns surrounding the colorful layout. One of its most valuable aspects is that it shows the names and locations of the homes of the residents of the towns in 1857 as well as the schools, stores and churches. It was purchased by the Smith family of Maplecroft Farm, 241 Route 125, and stayed there for 131 years. Then it was moved to Lexington, Mass. to the home of a Smith family member, Eleanor Smith Butler and her husband John, and remained there for 33 years. As the Butlers aged into their nineties, they decided the map should return to Brentwood, and who better to arrange that than their niece Dawn Smith Higley, who is now on

the board of the Historical Society. The map had to travel from Lexington to Brentwood lying flat. It could not be rolled because the paint would crack. After much measuring and testing, it developed that Dawn's son Alex had a covered pickup truck in which the bed could perfectly accommodate the flat map, prepared with a soft layer of support. The one-hour drive was carefully done. The slow move to the museum wall was also managed, and several people began to breathe comfortably again. The story will actually continue as we devise a way to protect the fragile paper from the attention of many people and the changeable atmosphere in the room. Thanks to Alex for the use of his truck. More about the map later.

Next Programs at the Museum

April 14, 7 pm: Dan Szczesny on the White Mountains. A long-time journalist, author and speaker. Google the name to read up on him.

September 22, 7 pm: David and Debra Luchsinger of Greenland, who were caretakers at the Statue of Liberty.

October 13, 7 pm: J. Dennis Robinson on the Smuttynose Murders at the Isles of Shoals.

Open Hours Will Begin in April

The Historical Society's Open Hours at the Museum will again be on the first Saturday of the following months, from 10 am to 1 pm. You'll be hearing more about them.

April 2 June 4 August 6 October 1
May 7 July 2 September 3

Two Public Programs This Past Fall

On September 30 the Society presented a public program by Steve Taylor, speaker, on New Hampshire's Rural One-room Schools, which was supported by New Hampshire Humanities.

At the Historical Society's Annual Meeting on November 14, the featured program was presented by Steve and Sharon Woods, historical re-enactors, who portrayed Abraham Lincoln and Sarah Josepha Hale. They told the story of Pres. Lincoln's signing of a proclamation naming the first nation-wide day of Thanksgiving, which Mrs. Hale had championed for thirty years. Supported by a grant from New Hampshire Humanities.

Recent Photos



Barbara Swasey-Keir and Brenda Swasey Flanders speak about their early years in Brentwood at the Oct. 26 Reminiscence Gathering. Dexter and Lisa Swasey in the foreground.



Leslie Hume donated a copy of the new Kingston town history to the BHS. Dexter accepted the book for Brentwood.



Eli Jones, Charlotte (Chark) Kelly, Braydon Lanchoney and Anna Lu Kelly stand with four probable unmarked headstones they helped dig up at the Sanborn Cemetery. Six stones were found and dug up that day.



Dexter Swasey talks with second graders at Swasey Central School.



Historical Society display at the Peach Project walking trail at the Brentwood Recreation Center on Dec. 10-11, 2021.

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