



# The Brentwood Historical Society Newsletter

Summer 2024

Hello to the members of the Historical Society! This newsletter comes to help you browse over the early months of 2024 to catch up on what the Historical Society has been doing.



## Lunch and Flowers by the Sea

This was the summer we combined a lunch at Wentworth by the Sea with a self-guided tour afterward at Fuller Gardens. It was planned especially for Historical Society members, with all costs paid by the Society. Many thanks to Robin Wrighton of the Board of Directors and the Program Committee for organizing the event and preparing historical background information for everyone. Twenty-four members attended the event.

## Hay Fork Donated to the Museum

A fine hay fork was donated to the museum by Joe Falzone. This will be something many people have not seen. It was in use for years at the Wilson farm on Mill Road. Please note that the fork is hung several inches away from the wall, in front of the chart behind it.



*Two members who do a great deal to set up and clean up the bake sales are Dexter Swasey, president, and Karen Ellis, registrar.*

## Bake Sales in March and September

The Society's election day bake sales are part of our major fund raising activities each year.

Some 14-17 people bake each time, and 6-8 people take shifts keeping the table stocked and selling the items. We are very grateful for the help. We also enjoy greeting all our Brentwood friends.

## Behind the Scenes

It's easy to think of the Historical Society activity as a delightful succession of exhibits and events. However, plenty of work behind the scenes also claims the time and attention of the president, the officers, directors, and other volunteers.

- Many people don't realize that the Historical Society had never had access to the internet. The question was: how much time did we actually need that access? Early in the year president Dexter worked with Curt Rousseau on a bare bones method of checking how much time we used in one year. When that project ended, Dexter had better information to take to the Selectboard to ask for help.

- The Society's website needs steady checkups and updates. The president and secretary take the time to do that, and Nick Wrighton uses his expertise to make it look good and be easily available.
- A major project this year has been transforming the second floor Grange dining room into a more attractive dining area as well as giving it more useful exhibit space. This involved creating some storage space in the third-floor attic, which had not been used for decades. Then some of the dining room shelf units were moved up the narrow stairs – a major project that required more than one man to get them up the stairs and then get them properly secured so they could continue being useful storage space.

This work created yet another room for public use, two on the first floor and two on the second.



*Brad Stevens and his neighbor Rick Nichols work on the dining room wall after moving the shelf units to the third floor.*

### **Beyea Recognition Wall at MEB Library**

George Beyea was a modest, hard working person who had a great regard for the Mary E. Bartlett Memorial Library. He left a large sum of money to the library, which was a major aid in the work of transforming it from a one-room school to the structure it is today. In the library is a wall which is known as the George Beyea Recognition Wall. Albert "Skip" Belanger worked with Ralph Murphy to organize and enhance the wall. Look for it when you are at the library.

### **Willie Nelson Concert Presentation at Nursing Home's Assisted Living Program**



*Presenter Linda Rousseau*

In September the Historical Society was invited to present a program at the Rockingham County's Assisted Living Community, as part of national Assisted Living Week. It was decided to prepare a large assortment of news clippings, posters, and pictures about the July 24, 1987 concert by Willie Nelson at Epping's Star Speedway. The materials had recently been donated to the Society by Leanne Sessler Ouimette. Leanne and Linda Rousseau were co-chairs of the concert, whose purpose was to raise money for finishing the building of the Brentwood Recreation Center.

The news clippings, etc. were beautifully installed in a large, handsome scrapbook by Karen Ellis. At least two items were framed, a red souvenir scarf, and a governor's proclamation of Willie Nelson Day referring to the singer's first concert in New Hampshire. Linda presented a spoken summary of the months of planning for the concert, while Dexter moved the big scrapbook around so that more people could see it. It was a novelty for the audience to hear about the event from a co-chair who had been there, thirty-seven years before. The program was filmed and recorded by Karen and is available at the Historical Society Museum.

### **Willie Nelson & Family Concert**

*On July 24, 1987, at Star Speedway, 8,700 concert-goers gathered to hear Willie Nelson and other artists perform to benefit the Brentwood Recreation Center.*

*The core planning committee included Paul Bailey, Jim Wiesman, Gregg Sessler, Dick Olson, Cleo Castonguay, Linda Rousseau, and Leanne Sessler.*

## A.E. Belanger's Special Talent That Helps with Museum Inquiries

A museum of the modest size of this one can count itself lucky to have a volunteer officer with the special talent of Albert Edward "Skip" Belanger. In addition to being a fine writer, he has the ability to see the importance of organizing a subject by indexing all the sources that mention that subject and how to find them most quickly. Or preparing introductory pages to a book explaining how the pages are organized and what the reader will find and where. Or preparing an introductory binder for a particular series of books or papers. Call it indexing skill, it requires great patience, an ability to slow down and visualize all the ways the subject might be researched and then write it all out.

Indexing often gets "put off until later." When our big town history was published in 2017, a sincere, but quick, job of indexing was done but had to be stopped to meet the printing deadline. Skip Belanger persevered, and everyone on the book committee agreed we should publish a "Supplemental Material" addition to the big book in the very next year. It included a Comprehensive Index, six new articles, many photos that were not in the main book, and a section of Errata corrections. If you have purchased one of these (for \$10) and stored it on the shelf beside your big book, you have as complete a picture of Brentwood as possible at the time of the 2017 publication.

Skip's title at the Historical Society is Research Correspondent. People who want to know more about their family ancestors or maybe more about their house and the owners before them usually end up talking or writing to him. The work he's done on indexing often helps him provide the best possible information to the person who's asking. This is one way we know that we are growing and improving as a museum.

Albert E. "Skip" Belanger



## 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration for Linda Rousseau



Linda celebrated with cake and conversation as friends stopped in to wish her a Happy Birthday!

Linda Rousseau, who is currently the vice-president of the Historical Society, moved to Brentwood with her husband and two young sons in 1971. She was a stay-at-home mom until the 1980s, but she always found time to slip in some volunteer work. One volunteer activity was the creation of the Brentwood Newsletter in 1977. Other volunteer efforts were Cub Scouts, Monte Carlo nights, Variety Shows, auctions, the committee to renumber the town, Brentwood Gardeners, Recreation, and Historical Society. In 2019 a series of health issues kept her in hospital and rehab for two years. When she was recovering, she moved to assisted living in Webster at Rye. Her son Curtis and his wife Marjo moved into the Brentwood house.

As Linda approached her 90th birthday, her sons and families planned a large celebration at the Community Center. Anyone in the town of Brentwood, plus members of her church, the Fan Association of North America, and the P.E.O. Sisterhood, were welcome to attend. Several members of the Historical Society were asked to help, and they were of enormous help. There were large pictures and posters on the walls, souvenirs and mementos on a display table, and five different speakers who talked about various aspects of Linda's time in town. There was a Citation regarding Linda's contributions to the town from Governor Christopher Sununu. The attendees sat at tables, served with plates of hearty hors d'oeuvres, birthday cake, wine and other beverages. Afterward they commented on how well the event was planned and presented. For Linda it was an event she will always remember with deep gratitude and delight.

## John Dudley Donates a Fowling Gun



*Lifelong resident John Dudley donates unique piece of Brentwood history, with Dexter Swasey accepting.*

The Society was grateful and fascinated when John Dudley made an appointment to donate his great-grandfather's fowling gun to the museum. His great-grandfather, Arthur W. Dudley, 1846-1921, had the gun custom-made by William Read in Boston in 1871, when Arthur was 25. A musket used for hunting fowl, it is a 50 caliber muzzle loader, with the barrel several inches longer than one on a standard gun. The length of the gun brought with it a new challenge. It needs to be protected in a proper display case. There are no standard cases that accommodate this gun.

The Society is arranging to have one made for the heirloom. Highland Hardwoods has donated the wood that is being used to make the custom size display case.

John Dudley is the 11th generation of the Brentwood Dudleys. His great-grandfather Arthur lived his entire life in the Dudley homestead on Pickpocket Road.



*Staff members at Highland Hardwoods, with Dexter Swasey, show the musket for which they donated the wood for the extra-length display case. From left, Dexter, James MacKey, Elle McNaughton, Brent Rheinhardt, and Frank Durgin.*

The Historical Society sees a steady growth in people's awareness of the earlier days in our town and an understanding of how the past has led to the life we know today. It always delights us when you, the members, and other friends of the town, bring us pictures, documents, clothing or other items that tell something more about Brentwood life in the old days.

Linda Rousseau, Editor



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