

NEWTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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2013 RETROSPECTIVE

2013 was another successful year for the Historical Society. The following is a retrospective of our activities, accomplishments, etc... over the past year.

The society celebrated the 42nd anniversary of its founding in 1971. The society was officially incorporated two years later in 1973.

MEMBERSHIP:

Two new members joined the society in 2013, Louise Collins and Robert Desmelyk. They are the 130th and 131st members in the society's 42 year history.

HIGHLIGHTS:

✿ MUSEUM OPENINGS:

Our two museums, the Village Primary School Museum and the Marshall House, were opened to the public in June and again in September. The small turnout at the openings was very disappointing. These two museums contain many artifacts, documents and photos that tell the story of Newton's History and are well worth visiting.

In 2014 the plan is to try to combine the museum openings with other town events in the hope that that strategy will improve attendance.

The museums can be opened by appointment for groups and organizations. Contact us at the e-mail address above.



✿ ACCESSIONING / CATALOGING:

The major project of accessioning / cataloging our documents and artifacts continued. Karen O'Malley and Barbara DiBartolomeo, with help from former society President Mary Marshall completed most of the accessioning of the contents of the Primary Village School Museum.

2013 RETROSPECTIVE (CONT.)

The accessioning process is complex and time consuming. The process entails documenting full descriptions of what the items are and their dimensions, color, who donated them, where they are currently located and other pertinent information. All this information is entered by hand into the computer. Then, photos or scans of the items are taken and attached to the accession information in the specialized computer program. In some instances, multiple photos or scans are required for a single item.

When the initial project is completed, all items should be accessible on the computer and lookups will be possible by object category and object name. All data being entered is also backed up on a standalone hard drive. This includes photos as well as documents and data. Obviously, this is an ongoing process as we continually receive new donations of artifacts, documents and photos.

❁ *FALL FESTIVAL:*

Our annual Fall Festival was again held in mid October, on a lovely fall evening, hosted and sponsored by the Merrimac Savings Bank. It was held in the bank lobby of the Newton Branch office on South Main Street. This was our 7th Festival.

The efforts of Kathy Meserve and her committee and John Meserve's networking and fund raising skills again made the event a complete social and financial success. It was a fun evening of socializing for all. This was our most financially successful festival to date. This is basically our only fund raising event that benefits the society.

The building was filled to capacity, just under sixty attendees, and everyone enjoyed not only the wine, non-alcoholic beverages and cheese and finger food selections, but also the many documents, albums and artifacts on display and slide presentations. Fifteen drawing prizes were awarded. As has become the custom the past few years, folks arrived early and stayed until the end, or even a little later.

Again, this year's attendance saw a good representation of residents, society sponsors and town and state elected officials. In attendance were members of the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Trust Fund Trustees, Gale Library Trustees, Cemetery Trustees, Town Administration, Conservation Commission, Police Dept. and State Representatives. There were also a number of new Newton residents in attendance this year including folks from the Sargent Woods 55+ Community.

A big thank you to this year's festival sponsors: *Route 108 General Store, 1st Payroll Inc., Acio's Family Takeout, Acorn Recording Solutions, Avon Prods. / Tess Moulaison, Bump and Grind Auto Body, Clean-Right Janitorial Svcs., Desjardins Landscaping, Doggett Jewelry, Dingo Creative, Estabrook's Garage, Father & Son Construction, Fiorello & Migliori, Folsom Promotions, Ganz Law Offices, Gibbs Construction, Hamel Law Firm, Haverhill Bank, Healey/Deshaies/Gagliardi & Woefel, Highland Family Dental, ICBA Securities, James F. Mullen Co., Journey Insurance, Koch Architects, LPO Marketing Communications, Lisa's Prime Painting, Lowell Five Cents Savings, McDougal and Duval, McInnis Auctions, Merrill / Bartlett Group, Merrimac Savings Bank, Merrimac Family Chiropractic, Moulaison Auto Repair, New Bama Steel, Newburyport Five Cent Savings, Newton Greenhouse, Newton Glass & Garage Door, Northern Essex Fuel Corp., Pentucket Bank, Regnante, Serio & Osborne LLP, S & R, Stark & Cronk Heating, Atty. Sumner Kalman, Trish & Bill McCarthy and Victory Fuel.*

Also, a special thanks to the employees of the Merrimac Bank for donating their time to manage the distribution of the beverages. They are a terrific group of ladies.

2013 RETROSPECTIVE (CONT.)

✿ TOWN STAGE CURTAINS:

In 2010 the society was contacted by a group called “Curtains without Borders” who is associated with the NH Preservation Alliance. We participated in a survey they were conducting to locate and identify all the “Stage Curtains” in New Hampshire. Newton has three curtains, two owned by the town and located on the second floor stage of the Town Hall and one owned by the Newton Grange 149 and located at their headquarters in Newton Junction.

In the spring of 2012 we were contacted by Chris Hadsell, the Director of Curtains without Borders, regarding our curtains. Bill Landry met with her to view and discuss the curtains. The advertising curtain at the town hall was painted circa 1938 and displays ads for Newton businesses, as well as surrounding towns, that were operating at that time. The second curtain, which hangs beneath the advertising curtain, is a painting of the “Chain Bridge” located on the Amesbury / Newburyport line spanning the Merrimack River and was painted in 1891.

The two town curtains are in “fair” but in need of restoration. Because the cost of the restoration would be in the range of several thousand dollars, which neither the town nor the society could cover, Chris and Bill discussed the possibility of procuring a grant from the state of NH for the restoration. Chris advised that there were grants available for exactly this type of restoration.

In April of 2013 the society with the help of Ms. Hadsell put together a 25 page grant application. Before applying for the grant, the society wanted to take steps to ensure that the two town curtains would remain in Newton. Therefore, the society approached the Board of Selectmen to have ownership of the two town curtains turned over to the society. The B. O. S., all of whom are Life Members of the society, realized the importance of keeping the curtains in Newton and conveyed ownership to the society with the stipulation that the curtains remain in Newton in perpetuity.

The grant application was completed and submitted to the NH Preservation Alliance. Sadly the application was denied. Even sadder is that the reason given for rejecting the application was the fact that the curtains were owned by a private organization and not the Town of Newton. We shot ourselves in the foot by taking ownership of them in an effort to ensure they remain in Newton.

The ownership of the curtains will be returned to the town in 2014 and the society will resubmit the grant request.

✿ CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING:

For the third year the society conducted a Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony. The event took place on Sunday Dec. 8 at the Primary School Museum. A large turnout of adults and children enjoyed cookies and hot chocolate. Santa Claus was also there with his favorite Elf Tina to talk to the children and hear what they wanted for Christmas. Hopefully they all got what they asked for. S. Main Street was lit up with luminaries from the Museum to the Gale Library. Again this year, our friend Sue Mears coordinated the making of tree decorations through the Gale Library. The Newton Police Dept. was on hand to manage the traffic.

2013 RETROSPECTIVE (CONT.)

⊗ HISTORICAL PRESENTATIONS:

Three presentations were held at the town hall. A musical, “Night with Two Old Friends”, “That Reminds Me of a Story”, funny anecdotes with author Rebecca Rule and finally an in depth discussion on the Lizzie Borden murders entitled, “Lizzie Borden Took an Axe, or Did She”? As usual, all were excellently presented and well attended.

Society Programs Chairperson Sally Woodman has continued our association with the New Hampshire Humanities Council. The Council provides connections with various persons and groups who offer the types of historical presentations we wish to make available to the residents of Newton. They also help us with the cost of these presentations by providing us with “Grant Funds”. Three presentations have already been booked for 2014. As always, they are open to the public and admission is free.

Three new presentations have been booked for the Spring, Summer & Fall of 2014. Scheduled are: Fiddle Contests in NH & New England, Abraham & Mary Todd Lincoln and finally, Winning the War (Civil) and Shaping the peace.

⊗ RESEARCH REQUESTS:

Again this year, the society was approached by individuals looking for information on various people and places in town. One request dealt with a gentleman doing a paper on the connection of J. G. Whittier and Hannah Chase. Hannah is buried in the Chase Family Cemetery on Williamine Drive and it is believed she was the inspiration for Whittier’s poem, Suicide Pond. Another request was from author Mark Bragdon who wrote and published a book entitled, “Newton, NH’s Horrifying Halloween”. A copy of this book is at the Gale Library.

⊗ PUBLICITY:

To keep the public apprised of our events, we have become fairly adept at advertising. We use the Eagle Tribune and Carriage Towne News via “Letters to the Editor” or “Press Releases”. We put posters on Newton’s local TV station Channel 20, post items on the town web site as well as the society’s web page, post on the Newton, NH Community and Friends Facebook page, place posters around town in all the major buildings and businesses and send emails.

Our thanks to the Newton Cable Committee and Town Web Master, Mary Winglass, for their continued support.

⊗ After a conversation with the Newton Tree Warden, it was decided we needed to remove a large, half dead, Maple tree that was overhanging and threatening our Headquarters / Museum building on S. Main St.

⊗ Our friend Richard Stevens retired from mowing the lawn at the Headquarters/ Museum. However, we were very fortunate that Bill Gallant, a neighbor to the headquarters building stepped right in and picked up where Richard left off. Our sincere thanks to both these generous gentlemen for donating their time and efforts to the society.

⊗ This year we continued our donations to the Newton Food Pantry with proceeds, which we match, from our three presentations and our usual Christmas donation.

2013 RETROSPECTIVE (CONT.)

- ⊗ At the end of the year we began to look into setting up our own web site on the internet. We hope to have it up and running by summer. Our plan is to move the information we currently have on our town web page to the new site, as well as adding information, photos etc... about our organization and the town of Newton.
- ⊗ We converted over 15 VCR tapes to DVDs so that we can show them on Newton's Channel 20 TV station. Some of these tapes go back 25 years. We will work with the Cable Committee to set up specific times each week when we could run these tapes. We also have DVDs of some of the presentations we have made available to the residents that could be shown; as well as slide shows of our Fall Festivals over the years.
- ⊗ This fall we discovered a serious issue with the barn at the Marshall House property. A large number of the pine siding boards have rotted and need to be replaced. A sill plate has rotted and the second floor of the building is sagging and needs to be supported. We have removed all the items we had stored in the barn, including our three historic carriages. The carriages have been temporarily moved to a building on the 8 Merrimac Road property. For safety reasons the building is closed until we get it repaired.

The barn is the property of the town and we are working with the Board of Selectmen to have it repaired in 2014 so we can move our artifacts back.

OFFICERS ELECTED FOR 2014 - CURATORS & COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS:

President:	Bill Landry	Curator(s):	Ron and Cheryl Saunders
Vice President:	Kathy Meserve	Historian:	Courtney Jason
Secretary:	Mary Riordan	Archivist:	Karen O'Malley
Treasurer:	Bill Landry	Programs and Publicity:	Sally Woodman
		Fall Festival:	Kathy Meserve

EXECUTIVE BOARD:

The Executive Board consists of the society officers plus Diane Morin and Ron Saunders.

SOCIETY FOCUS FOR 2014:

Our three primary areas of focus in 2014 will be to; continue the electronic accessioning / archiving of all the society's artifacts, documents and photos. To continue offering, in conjunction with the New Hampshire Humanities Council (NHHC), historical presentations that will be of interest, not only to the society, but to the students and residents of Newton. We will continue to work on the aforementioned web site.

Thank you all, for your continued support of the Historical Society!

"History is what you make it"

2013 Historical Society

Annette Holba – Lizzie Borden Took and Axe.

E. Hutchins / Jim Prendergast – 2 Old Friends

"LIZZIE BORDEN TOOK AN AXE, OR DID SHE?"

PRESENTED BY THE
NEWTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
AND THE NH HUMANITIES COUNCIL

Wed. Sept. 18th – 7:00 PM
Newton Town Hall
Admission Free – Public invited
(All donations matched & given
to the Newton Food Pantry)

Cast of characters

- Lizzie Borden 1860 - 1927
- Andrew Borden 1822 - 1892
- Abby Borden 1829 - 1892
- Erina Borden 1851 - 1927 (Lizzie's sister)
- Bridget Sullivan 1866 - 1948 (The Family Maid)

Murder weapon

Abby's murder scene

Andrew's murder scene



Rebecca Rule – That Reminds Me of a Story



Christmas tree lighting – 12/8/2014



NEWTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

7TH ANNUAL FALL FESTIVAL

WINE, SODA, WATER & CHEESE, CRACKERS, FINGER FOOD, PRIZE DRAWINGS

AVOID THE LINES. GET YOUR TICKETS NOW!

SATURDAY OCT. 19 – 4:30 TO 6:30 PM AT THE MERRIMAC SAVINGS BANK

Tickets: \$15.00 ea. or two for \$25.00
Available at the Town Clerk's Office, Gale Library or Merrimac Bank

NEWTON TOWN CLERK