

# NEWTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## 2014 RETROSPECTIVE

2014 was a very successful year for the Historical Society. We completed two major projects. The following is a retrospective of our activities, accomplishments, etc... over the past year.

The society celebrated the 43rd anniversary of its founding in 1971. The society was officially incorporated in the state of New Hampshire two years later in 1973.

### MEMBERSHIP:

Two new Life members joined the society in 2014, Roger and Jane Hamel. They are the 132nd and 133rd members in the society's 43 year history.

### HIGHLIGHTS:

#### ☼ TOWN HALL STAGE CURTAIN RESTORATION PROJECT:

The society completed one of its most significant projects in the past several years; the restoration and repair of the two historic stage curtains that hang on the second floor stage of the Newton Town Hall.

The project turned out to be a two year odyssey. We submitted a 25 page grant application to the NH State Council on the Arts (NHSCA) in 2013, which was rejected by the council. We re-applied in 2014 and were successful. The final restoration cost was just under \$8,000.00

In November we began the restoration, with the help of four conservators from the Curtains Without Borders Group of VT (CWOB) and fifteen volunteers representing the historical society. The restoration process consisted of the arduous chore of hand cleaning each of the curtains, four square inches at a time. Each curtain is approximately 10' X 20'. The next step for the conservators was to patch the many small holes in each curtain and then paint the patches on the face of the curtains to match the different colors of the scene depicted.

The conservators then tackled the job of trying to paint over the many water stains and blemishes in each curtain so that they were nearly invisible. This is very difficult, if not impossible to do because of the age of the curtains. The "Advertising" curtain, which is familiar to most of you, is 75 years old having been painted in 1939; the painting depicting the "Chain Bridge" that spans the Merrimac River from Amesbury to Newburyport, MA, which most of you have never seen, was painted in 1891, 123 years ago.

Once the repairs were completed, which took approximately 100 man/women hours of work, the curtains were re-hung on the stage. The "Chain Bridge" curtain was permanently mounted to the stage wall and the "Advertising" curtain was hung on pulleys so it can be raised and lowered. The plan is to alternate display of the curtains on a regular basis. The "Chain Bridge" is currently on display and will remain there until after the first of year, 2015, when the "Advertising" curtain will be lowered and left on display for a period of time. On the wall to the right of the curtains there is a write ups giving brief information on each curtain as well as the names of the people who worked on the project.

## **2014 RETROSPECTIVE (CONT.)**

Here are photos of the restored stage curtains.



### ✿ **MARSHALL HOUSE BARN REPAIR PROJECT:**

We replaced the bottom 4 ft. of rotted boards on the two sides and back walls with boards similar to the boards currently on the building. “Batten” boards were installed to cover seams on vertical boards on side and back walls. The rotted floor sill plate and vertical beam on back, left side of barn were also replaced/repaired.

A 6” X 10” beam was installed under the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor and jacked up to level the second floor. The beam was secured with steel brackets installed at each end. The rotted sill on the second floor window and the rotted overhang over the barn doors on the front wall were replaced. Thanks to Pete Kinnon of NewBama Steel for donating the brackets.



### ✿ **ACCESSIONING / CATALOGING:**

The major effort of accessioning / cataloging our documents, photos and artifacts reached the point that we are now up-to-date. Karen O’Malley and Barbara DiBartolomeo have done a great job. Of course, accessioning is an ongoing process as we continue to receive various artifacts from the public.

### ✿ **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 8<sup>th</sup> 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 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.

This year, in addition to the usual slide show with photos of the previous year's festival, we had a show that compared some of today's buildings and locations with photos of what they looked like or what was in their place 75 or 100 years ago. We did the same with some of our town officials and residents; showing photos of them as youngsters and allowing attendees time to try to figure out who they are.

Sixteen 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., Emergency Mgmt. and State Representatives.

This was the first festival were a wine glass was broken. We won't mention who broke it.

For the first time since our 2008 festival, we took a group photo of all attendees who are elected officials, town employees and members of the town's various committees, commissions etc... Handsome group isn't it.



A big thank you to this year's festival sponsors: First Payroll Inc. - Acio's Family Takeout - Acorn Recording Solutions - Merrill Bartlett Group Inc. - Clean-Right Janitorial Svc. - Desjardins Landscaping - Dingo Creative - Doggett Jewelry - Dunn's Plumbing - Estabrook's Garage - Fitzgerald Family Trust- Fiorello & Migliori - Folsom Promotions - Foy Insurance - Ganz Law Office - Garrison Electric - Gibbs Construction -Haverhill Bank - Healey, Deshaies, Gagliardi & Woefel - Highland Family Dental -James F. Mullen Co. - Journey Insurance -Vining Sparks - Koch Architects - LaFlamme, Barron & Chabot -Lisa's Prime Painting - LPO Marketing Communications- Lobster Boat Restaurant - McDougall & Duval - McInnis Auctions - Merrill / Bartlett Group -Merrimac Family Chiropractic - NewBama Steel - Newburyport Five Cent Savings

## **2014 RETROSPECTIVE (CONT.)**

### **☼ FALL FESTIVAL (Cont.):**

Newton Greenhouse – Northern Essex Fuel Corp. – Northshore Bank – North Wind Prod. - Pentucket Bank – Pinnacle Physical Therapy - Regnante, Serio & Osborne LLP – Rhythm Café - Stark & Cronk Heating –Atty. Sumner Kalman – Trish McCarthy – Victory Fuel & State Representative Mary Allen.

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.

### **☼ CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING:**

For the fourth year the society conducted a Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony. The event took place on Sunday Dec. 7 at the Primary School Museum. A poor turnout of children, only 3. (It was only 29 degs. that night) However, the 18 adults, mostly society members, enjoyed the cookies and hot chocolate. The Newton Police Dept. was on hand to manage the traffic. Photos of the kids with Santa were taken and given to the parents by our resident photographer Rick Fortin.

### **☼ HISTORICAL PRESENTATIONS:**

Four historical presentations were held at the town hall. “Old times will prevail”, about fiddle contests; “Spirits of the Granite State”; Abe & Mary Todd Lincoln: The long and short of it” and “Winning the war and shaping the peace after the Civil War”. All were very entertaining and very 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 2015. As always, they are open to the public and admission is free.

### **☼ RESEARCH REQUESTS:**

Again this year, the society was approached by a number of individuals looking for information on various people and places in town. The society records, in conjunction with the Newton Cemetery Dept. records, provided much relevant information in answering these requests.

### **☼ 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 for their continued support.

✿ WEB SITE:

Mary Riordan completed her project to set up a society stand-alone web site. The site can be accessed at [newtonhistoricalsociety.org](http://newtonhistoricalsociety.org). The site contains vast amounts of information regarding the society and our activities. There are several slide shows that show the activities we have been involved in over the years. The site will continue to grow as we load more data into it.

✿ MISCELLANEOUS:

- For the second consecutive year we were very fortunate that Bill Gallant, a neighbor to the headquarters building, has continued to take care of the lawn at the building. Our sincere thanks to Bill for donating his time and efforts to the society. It is greatly appreciated.
- This year we continued our donations to the Newton Food Pantry with proceeds, which we match, from our four presentations and our usual Christmas donation.

**OFFICERS ELECTED FOR 2015 - 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 Barb DiBartolomeo and Ron Saunders.

**SOCIETY FOCUS FOR 2015:**

Our primary areas of focus in 2015 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.

Our next major project will be to look at replacing the deteriorated front porch on the Primary School Museum, which will include a handicap accessible ramp.

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

***"History is what you make it***

Primary School



Marshall House

