

The Historian

BURRILLVILLE HISTORICAL & PRESERVATION SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

DEC 2004

Bell Ringing 3rd Annual Open House

The 3rd Annual Open House featured a gigantic yard sale, bell tower restoration slide show and bell ringing event. It was a busy day as people poured in early looking for bargains at the yard sale. At 2:00 pm Betty Mencucci gave a talk on the bell tower restoration along with a slideshow to a packed audience. Old pieces of the bell tower were on display and there were many photos to view. After the slideshow, the bell rang often as guests pulled on the rope and listened to the ring of the newly installed bell. Many



**ROSE MCCARTHY AND
BUDDY PATTERSON
RING THE BELL !**

former students of the Bridgeton School came to visit and rang the bell including Rose McCarthy, a former student and teacher at the Bridgeton School. The bell could be heard almost one half mile away. A big thank you to Ken Hopkins of Affordable Tent Rental for donating a tent and numerous tables that day.



**EARLY MORNING ACTIVITY
AT THE YARD SALE**

Statewide Historic Sites Open House

On October 24 the Society opened its doors again as part of the Statewide Historic Sites Open House. The Bridgeton School was one of over 100 historic sites open to the public that day. We were visited by people from all over the state and as far away as Newport and North Kingstown.

President's Message

2005 promises to be an exciting year for the Society. There will be a lot of activity this summer while the exterior of the Bridgeton School is restored. This will be a major step in the continual restoration of our headquarters back to 1897.

In December I met with the Historic Collaborative of

Bristol to discuss the next phase of our preservation plan. One of the next projects will be to restore the two front porches back to their appearance in 1897. We are also looking at the option of putting in dry wells to get rid of water pumped out of the basement and runoff from the gutters.

I would also like to remind everyone to keep saving their IGA and Dino's receipts. The money from this fundraiser is being used to print our scanned

photos and to purchase preservation products for our archives. Ask your friends to save their slips. Please mail them if you can't attend meetings.

Happy New Year !

Upcoming Meetings

- January 25 - Virginia Parkin McGrath will perform a dramatic narrative of the life of Deborah Sampson, female soldier in the Continental Army
- February 22 - Burrillville Farms
- March 22 - First hour of Episode 2 of Senetchonet to Manville by Betty and Carlo Mencucci

Grants for the Bridgeton School

The Burrillville Historical & Preservation Society has received grants totaling \$105,000 to do restoration work on the exterior of the Bridgeton School in Pascoag. The Society was recently awarded a State Preservation Grant of \$40,000 and a Champlin Foundations grant of \$40,000. Early this year the Society received a \$25,000 grant from the Levy Foundation to initiate the project.

The project includes restoration of the large ornate attic windows, restoration of the two front doors, replacing cracked or rotted clapboards, corner boards and moldings as well as scraping and painting the entire exterior. The flashing on the 6 roof returns will be replaced with lead coated copper. Rotted roof trim will be repaired and a new gutter system will be designed and installed. The project should start this spring and be completed sometime in the fall of 2005.

On Tuesday November 30th a ceremony was held at Slater Mill in Pawtucket for all state preservation grant recipients.

Governor Carcieri handed out certificates to the grant recipients and spoke to the group on the importance of preserving our historic treasures. Also speaking to the group was State Representative Paul Crowley and Mayor Doyle of Pawtucket. Betty Mencucci, President accepted the award on behalf of the Society.



Paul Crowley, Governor Carcieri,
Betty Mencucci

Burrillville Farms

At the February meeting we will be featuring Burrillville Farms. If you have old photos, articles or histories or have any information on any of the old farms, please bring them or call Betty Mencucci 568-8449. The Society would like to scan your photos and add them to our archives.

BH&PS visits the Glocester Heritage Society

About a dozen members toured three historic sites with the Glocester Heritage Society on October 17, 2004. Edna Kent gave the group an in-depth tour of the Reuben Mason House to see the restoration work being done. Harry Anderson gave a tour of the Evans Schoolhouse and restored outhouse. And finally we toured the Job Armstrong Store with Rose Lavoie.

In November members were invited by the Friends of Harmony Village to see the *Harmony Chapel* located on Route 44. It was originally built (circa 1828) to serve as a schoolhouse. By 1870 it was being used as a chapel. It is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Victorian Holiday Bazaar

Our Victorian Holiday Bazaar was held on November 13th but unfortunately that was the date of the first big snowstorm of the season. About 8 inches of snow fell during the night continuing into the morning of our bazaar. We did little business in the morning but by afternoon, things picked up and by the end of the day, we did quite well. The Society would like to thank all the great volunteers who helped make this event a success.

Past Meetings

October - JoAnn and James Libby presented research they have done on their historic house on Round Top Road. Members attending were given a thick booklet of written and photographed documentation of their research.

December 7 - A potluck supper was held at 6:00 pm followed by a short meeting and gift exchange. Twenty-six members were present.

School Children Visit the Bridgeton School

On December 13, two groups of fifth graders visited the Bridgeton school to learn about Burrillville history. A slideshow was presented followed by a question and answer period and then a tour of the building. On December 15, a group of first graders visited as part of a class project.

Building News

Thanks to the work of Basement Technology there is no more flooding in the basement. They installed 75 feet of water trek system and a pump on the west side of the building. There is still water coming in near the water meter and that will have to be addressed with a separate system. If anybody plans on putting a water trek system by Basement Technology in their own house, the Society will receive a \$100 donation. Ask Betty Mencucci for

Donations

Raymond Stephenson - WWII army uniform

Maria Pounders - Spelling blank (double ruled)

Joyce McKenna - 1875 cold water pitcher
*"Presented by Pascoag Grammar School
 Mar 02 75"*

Carpenters Grist Mill in Wakefield - 1950 Carnival
 raffle tickets to benefit Harrisville Hose Co. No. 1

"Greeting from Pascoag" - Christmas, 1899 by Elizabeth Morin

Gentle Reader,

It is snowing as I write this letter, making the landscape here just like a Christmas card. The Bridgeton School across the road has been nicely decorated by the students - paper snowflakes in the windows and pine garlands lining the railings. The horse fountain has been trimmed in evergreen and holly, adding to the picturesque scene. There has been much hustle and bustle about town as the stores decorate and prepare for the holiday, shoppers flock to the town in search of the perfect gift and horse and carriage travel briskly to deliver their charges to the many social events of the season.

In my own hunt for Christmas gifts for family and friends, I needed to search no further than the delightful and well-stocked businesses in downtown Pascoag. I found numerous handsome and useful objects for the male members of the family at Potter and Salisbury's - such as smoking sets, shaving cases, and watches. A line of toys calculated to make the hearts of children jump with joy was spread on the counters.

At Whitely and Luther I purchased a Christmas card album to collect and preserve the beautiful cards we have received from friends and acquaintances.

A trip to town would not be complete without a visit to Rosemond Steere's Millinery and Dressmaker. There I purchased handkerchiefs for mother and gloves for my sister.

In anticipation of the parties and gatherings I would be attending and giving, I ordered a blue silk dress and a hat in the latest style. As I passed Harry Emsley's jewelers in the Odd Fellow's Block, I thought I caught a glimpse of my husband gazing into the display case!

A stop was made to Mr. Buxton's Florists to choose flower arrangements for the Christmas dinner table and a sitting at Mr. Briggs Gallery for a fine photo for my husband rounded out my shopping trip.

When I returned home, Katie, the housekeeper, brought me a hot cup of tea and some delicious scones and jam after which I proceeded to wrap my purchases and place them under the eleven-foot sparkling and fragrant tree in the front hall. We also placed tabletop trees in the music room and dining room. These trees were delivered by sleigh from Mr. Peterson's Farm in Chepachet.

Our tree is a wonderful sight indeed - it reaches all the way to the ceiling. However, the most exciting part is the lights - they are electric! With a flick of a switch the whole tree lights up like magic. I don't know that this idea of electric Christmas lights will catch on, but it sure is a spectacular sight to see.

The ladies of the town have been busily preparing baskets for the less fortunate - they are filled with oranges, apples, mittens, cookies, scarves, socks, small dolls, and stuffed bears. On Christmas Eve the baskets are loaded into wagons or sleighs and delivered in time for the holiday.

Tomorrow being Boxing Day, the Ladies Universalist Aid Society will be holding their annual Christmas Festival for the benefit of the Sunday School children and their friends. A bountiful supper of oysters, cakes, ice cream, fruit and confectionery will be provided free for all. Christmas presents will be distributed to the scholars.

There has been an abundance of receptions and gatherings this holiday season and everyone is looking forward to the New Year's Eve Ball at the Mason's Hall next week.

I wish you all a wonderful holiday season and look forward to reporting the latest happenings in Pascoag at winters' end.

*The above story is a fictional account based on
 real places in Pascoag in 1899.*

Ebenezer Howard House of Round Top by JoAnn Libby

The Ebenezer Howard House of Round Top has been the home of individuals who have significantly shaped the history of Burrillville and Rhode Island. The proprietor of the home (Ebenezer Howard) was a member of the "Home Guard", a military company formed by Quakers to protect their families from Indian attacks, in the northern part of Rhode Island. Thomas Lapham, an owner of the home, was a notable Quaker of the period and a member of the "Home Guard". He was instrumental in establishing the free school system for Quaker children in 1777; this system later became a model for public schools in America. Lapham's children and grandchildren who resided in the Home benefited from the Quaker schools for "worthy" children. The home also served as residence for several Admitted Freeman of the 1700's. The Home remained in the Lapham-Wilcox family for 127 years (1761-1888).

Gilbert F. Robbins, son of Abel and grandson of Thomas (both owners) was born and raised at the Home. He was proprietor of the G. Robbins Hotel, (located across the street) and owner of Mowry, Robbins & Co. clothing store in Providence. He was a General Assembly Senator from 1880-1882 and the Mayor of Providence from 1886-1889.

Another notable family of the late 1800's, George B. Richardson, owned the home for many years. He constructed the saloon/hotel addition to the home to cater to travelers. This hotel would later play a role in a controversial location in the town. Richardson, like his brother-in-law served as a RI Senator/General Assembly from 1884-1885.

The home was owned by Peter and Malvina Germain (1890-1935) who ran the Round Top Hotel and tavern, catered to the wants of a changing demographic, which included mill workers during the industrial era.

The Ebenezer Howard Home, circa 1720, is an original Georgian Colonial style home built using hand hewn heavy timber framing, wood pegs and hand forged "rose head" nails. The 16"+ wide chestnut floorboards are present throughout the house making it truly significant of the period. The Home has seen many changes over the last 284 years; its character and integrity has been shaped by those who dwelled within. Each of the 25+ families that owned the home has a story to tell. Today it stands as a historic home treasured and preserved by the Libby family who recognized its significance. The Libby's have presented the Burrillville Historical and Preservation Society a compilation of the Howard Home history and are presently seeking historical recognition with the State and National Registers.



Home of JoAnn and Jim Libby - 2004

BHPS 2005 Historic Calendars - \$15.00

It's still not too late to get a copy of our 2005 calendar. The photos include, turn-of-the-century Main Street, Pascoag; Blizzard of '78; Harrisville Grammar School; Tinkham House; Burrill Monument Dedication; Camp Dixie early 1900s; Ross Farm, Bridgeton; Peck's Farm; 1938 Hurricane; Horse Fountains; Wallum Lake Train Station; Harrisville Waterfall.

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