

# *Stephentown Historical Society Newsletter*

Vol V, Issue I

February 2003

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## 2002 ANNUAL REPORT

This year's officers were:

Beverley McClave	President
Donna Mullet	Vice-President
Bonnie Buddenhagen	Recording Secretary
Caroline White	Treasurer
Isabel Krebs	Corresponding Secretary

The trustees were:

Alvin Berry	Helen Koepp
Patricia Flint	Beverly Liebenow
William Jennings	Dale Riggs

It was a quiet but exciting year with programs and events. We were finally recognized by New York State with a new blue sign at the intersection of Route, 43 and Garfield Road indicating our location.

Since both the Stephentown Memorial Library and the Society have internet connections, we allowed the library to link to our website to forward inquiries anyone might have into genealogy or any other related question. The internet is a large source of information and inquiries from the general public.

We were saddened to learn of the death of Lillie Van Rensselaer in December 2001. She was the wife of the late Stephen Van Rensselaer V, and together they were our Grand Marshals in the Bicentennial Parade. Quite surprisingly this year we were notified of a bequest on her behalf. After several months of discussions with

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## 2002 ANNUAL REPORT (Continued)

lawyers and bankers, with accompanying forms, we became the proud recipients of four Van Rensselaer treasures: (1) a gold-framed 1787 Indenture signed by Stephen Van Rensselaer for a land lease to Aaron Ostrander; (2) a pair of gold-trimmed plates with the Van Rensselaer crest in the middle; (3) a book, *Albany Chronicles*; and (4) a miniature portrait of Stephen I. The indenture has now been reframed in its original frame but with UV-protected Plexiglas and acid-free mounting. It was nice to find a handwritten note from Lillie or Stephen stating to whom it was being given. That was also left intact. It will be placed inside another moveable frame that will allow one to read both sides of the document.

After determining the age of the fuel oil tank and its location underground, the Board decided to replace it with a new 500-gallon tank-within-a-tank, thus avoiding any possible environmental problem that could occur with leakage. The price of \$4000 for this project determined that it would be our sole capital expenditure this year. Another smaller project for the year was to install a water filter, removing odor from the drinking water.

The July covered dish supper provided the opportunity for a long overdue tribute to Betty Feathers for her 21 years of dedicated service to the Society. The surprise was successful and came to an emotional conclusion when Betty realized the packed house, including her son Ken and his family from Connecticut, were all there to honor her. It has been a distinct pleasure to have Betty's expertise and knowledge leading the way for us newcomers.

The Board's decision to move the exhibit to the fall to enable elementary school students' attendance proved fruitless. This year's school budget cutbacks prohibited any extra field trips, and curriculum guidelines mandate appropriateness to the current year's subject matter. However, the Stephentown Churches Exhibit did see 64 visitors. The highlights of the exhibit were the beautiful scale models of all of our churches, painstakingly assembled by Betty Feathers and Bill Zimmerman and the original boards that lined the

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## CORPORATE THANK YOU

The Society would like to thank the following Stephentown businesses that contributed to our annual fund drive in 2002:

**Atlantis Equipment**

**Berkshire Mountain House**

**Taconic Telephone Corporation**

**The Berry Patch**

**Zema's Nursery**

### 2002 ANNUAL REPORT (Continued)

bell tower in the West Stephentown Baptist Church marking the number of times the bell tolled and for whom. The exhibit was put together by representatives of all six churches (including our building) and forced them to realize how important it is to preserve and protect the artifacts from their (our) past. It was wonderful for all of us to see their collections and share histories.

The annual Strawberry Festival is growing, as is our income from it; we doubled our sales this year. The Berry Patch seems to be an ideal location, and the beautiful red and white rented tent again provided the much needed shade for a comfortable and relaxing afternoon.

The Craftfest is holding its own. Our table did very well in sales, but the vendors still need more purchasing public, not just lookers. Everyone needs to think of Christmas presents in August and financially support our vendors to ensure their return next year.

The Tag Sale continues to be a fun community event although we did not do as well this year. We had fewer **GOOD** saleable items, and refuse at the end is becoming a major problem. The Board will have to rethink this event to come up with alternative solutions.

Our fund drive mailing was again successful with a total of \$5,049.84. Our sincere thanks to everyone who supports us.

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## 2002 ANNUAL REPORT (Continued)

The very interesting array of programs for the year brought in 367 people. Continued credit and thanks go to Pat Bowman, Program Chairman and her committee. We also saw a continued influx of parents and children visiting the Center to do research for a school project. It is reassuring to see the parents discovering something new (really historic) about their town that they never knew before. We were also fortunate to have a student volunteer from the high school choose our organization to do her 30 hours of community service work. What a boon for me to catch up on much-needed paperwork.

True to what seems to be the trend in most organizations, a small core group of people is carrying the major load. As the adage says, ask a busy person to do a job and it will get done. Those few enjoy the work, but we still need to continue reaching out to get more members and residents involved in our work. As you will see in our Newsletter there are many positions still needing to be filled. In order to continue our mission we must not give the hungry person a fish to eat but instead teach him how to fish. It has been my distinct pleasure to serve as your President for the past four years, but I did not encourage many fishermen. Please help by instilling a sense of enthusiasm for our town and its history among your friends and neighbors. In that personal way I hope we can encourage more participation and greater accomplishments in the future.

Respectfully submitted,

Beverley B. McClave, President

\* \* \* *In Memoriam* \* \* \*

**Oliver Hyatt**  
1916 – 2002

**Alan White**  
1934 – 2002

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Program Chairperson **Pat Bowman** continues to inspire us with outstanding programs in a wide variety of historical fields. **Meredith Rhindress** and **Isabel Krebs** help Pat in her continuing searches for outstanding talent in our own and neighboring towns. All programs and events are held at the Stephentown Heritage Center on the first Monday of the month and begin at **7:30 pm** unless otherwise specified.

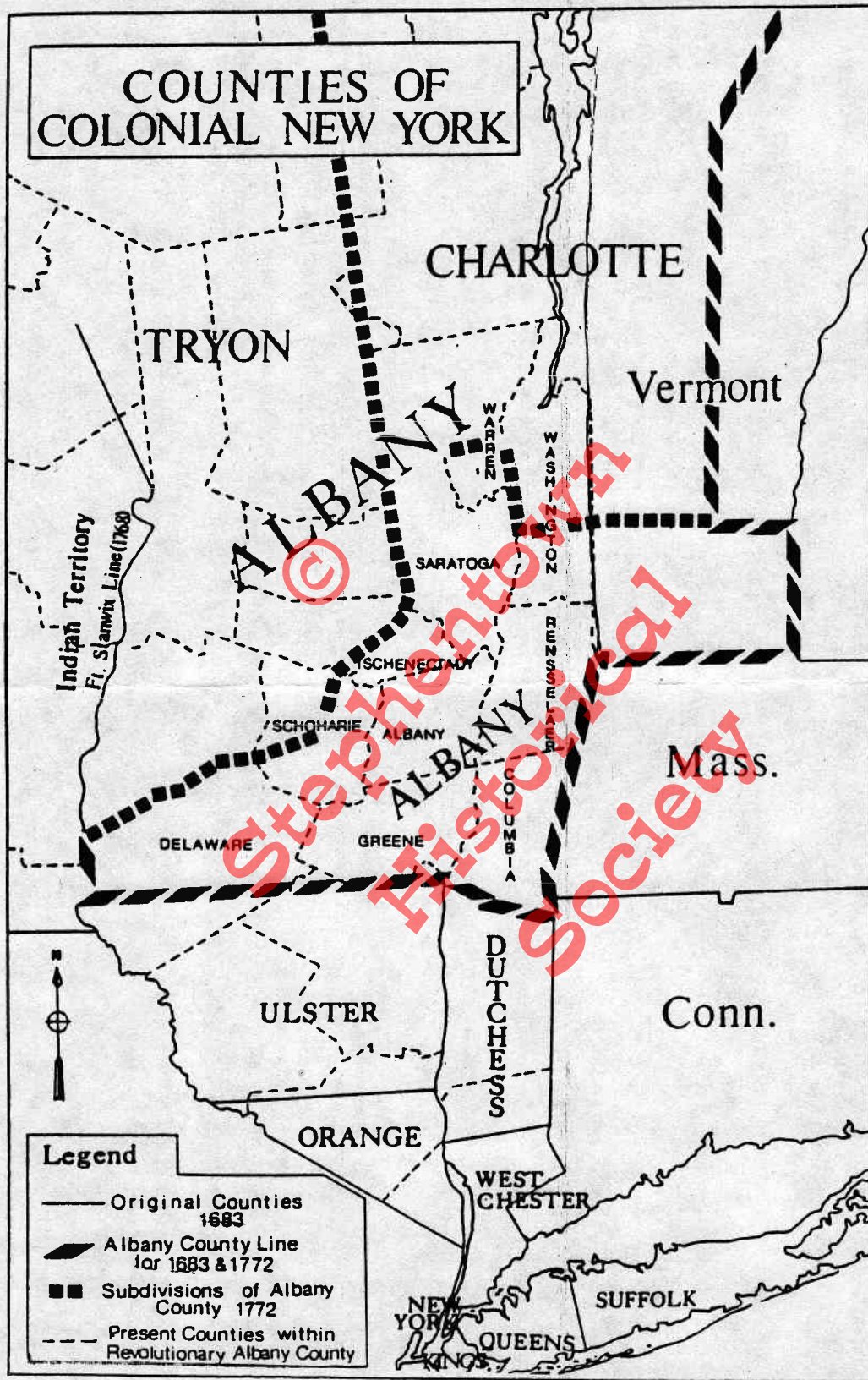
<u>Date</u>	<u>Program</u>	<u>Provider</u>
February 3	Guess Who	Bring a Childhood Picture
March 3	Glass Bottles	David Buddenhagen
April 7	Beads and Furs	Ken Kullman
May 5	Bent and Broken Rocks with Dirt on Top	Reinhard "Bud" Wobus
June 2	Ropemaking in America	Mike Speranza
July 7	Summer Potluck Supper	Bring a Dish to Share
6:30 pm	Shaker Music	Christian Goodwillie

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### SPECIAL EVENTS THIS YEAR

- June 29**      **22nd Annual Strawberry Festival –**  
                                 **The Berry Patch of Stone Wall Hill Farm**  
                                 **Route 22**                         **12 – 4 pm**  
 Shortcake, ice cream, good company, and more
- August 2**      **14th Annual Juried Craftfest –**  
                                 **Fire Department Muster Field & Pavilion**  
                                 **Grange Hall Road**                         **10 am – 4 pm**  
 High-quality craftspersons and discriminating shoppers make the Craftfest a special event Shop early for Christmas
- Aug 30**      **Tag Sale –**  
 (Rain Date                                  **Gardner's Field**  
 Sept 1)                                        **Route 22**                                        **9 am – 3 pm**  
 Start the weekend off right. Exchange your castoffs for someone else's treasures – or vice versa
- Fri & Sat -**      **Exhibit –**  
**9/20 – 10/25**                                **Heritage Center**  
     **Garfield & Staples Road**                         **1 – 4 pm**

# COUNTIES OF COLONIAL NEW YORK



## Legend

- Original Counties 1683
- ▬ Albany County Line for 1683 & 1772
- ▬▬ Subdivisions of Albany County 1772
- ⋯ Present Counties within Revolutionary Albany County

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### Officers:

President	Bill Zimmerman	794-8430
Vice-President	Sylvia Leibensperger	733-5716
Recording Secretary	Bonnie Buddenhagen	733-9295
Corresponding Secretary	Isabel Krebs	733-5935
Treasurer	Neil Krebs	733-5935

### Trustees:

Patricia Flint	733-5871
Bill Jennings	733-5923
Beverly Liebenow	733-5517
Beverley McClave	733-5170
Judith Pierson	733-0196
Dale Riggs	733-6772

### Committee Chairpersons:

Cemeteries	<b>Help Wanted</b>	
Collections	<b>Help Still Needed</b>	
Fundraising	Help Wanted	
Genealogy	Virginia Atwater	733-5136
Heritage Center	Beverley McClave	733-5170
Landscaping	Millie Smith	658-2605
Membership	Sylvia Leibensperger	733-5716
Nominating	Help Wanted	
Newsletter	Bill Zimmerman	794-8430
Program	Pat Bowman	(413) 738-5420
Refreshments	Alice Mather,	733-5668
	Ruth Leab	733-6562

## MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

### Membership categories and dues (January 1 - December 31):

Individual Member	\$ 5.00
Contributing Member	15.00
Business/Organizational Member	25.00
Life Member	100.00

*Please remember that Contributing and Life memberships, like Individual memberships, are for individuals, not couples.*

Please join us this year. Make your tax-deductible check payable to:

**Stephentown Historical Society**  
**P.O. Box 11**  
**Stephentown, NY 12168**

## RECENT PROGRAMS

### August 5 – **The Battle of Saratoga**

Stuart Murray, author of *The Honor of Command* and 21 other historical books and resident of Berlin, described the people and events surrounding the Battle of Saratoga on October 17, 1777. Most established settlers opposed change, but the British failed to cultivate Loyalist and Indian feelings, so General Burgoyne encountered harassing maneuvers by retreating rebels as he marched south. Although they were forced to retreat, the rebels' guerilla tactics slowed Burgoyne's southward progress. Burgoyne was 2 months behind schedule enroute to Albany. Rebel General Benedict Arnold was a key commander at Saratoga but received no credit. Against advice, Burgoyne sent to Bennington for horses. Eight hundred mostly German troops were captured and massacred by the rebels. Knowing that he had been abandoned by General Howe, Burgoyne still chose to "devote" his army to save Howe. Had he retreated, Burgoyne could have saved his army.

### August 21 – **Lindenwald, Van Alen House Tours**

Martin Van Buren (1782 – 1862) was apprenticed to a lawyer in 1796, became one in 1802, and became President in 1837. Lindenwald was built in 1797 and expanded several times. The family's extravagant tastes included a 44x18 dining room with an accordion table, a coffeemaker, a flushable toilet, a copper bathtub, and a four-story staircase. No wonder Van Buren was known as the Red Fox of Kinderhook and the Magician.

Just north of Lindenwald is an older Dutch colonial home built in 1737 by Luykas Van Alen, a prosperous Dutch trader. Once set on 20,000 Livingston Land Pact acres, the Van Alen House now occupies 33.5 acres under the auspices of the Columbia County Historical Society. The Van Alen House features several architectural innovations, such as its H beams with corbels, non-weightbearing brick walls, and an unjambed (no wall) fireplace. Items in the Van Alen House include a senility cradle for incapacitated elders, a foldup bed, a flax breaker, and a weasel to measure skeins of yarn. Hence the term "Pop goes the weasel." Katrina Van Tassel of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* was reputedly one of the Van Alen girls.

### September 9 – **Stephentown Churches**

As a prelude to this year's exhibit, Pat and Don Bowman presented a slide show of the town's churches. The Evangelical Community Church began in 1795 on Cemetery Hill Road as the Stephentown Baptist Church.

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## RECENT PROGRAMS (Continued)

Its upper part was moved to the present location in 1848, and a basement was added in 1908.

St. Joseph's Catholic Church was built in Lebanon Springs in 1852 and later moved to Stephentown. It celebrated its 150th anniversary this year. The stained glass windows depict the 14 Stations of the Cross.

The Methodist Episcopal Church was built in 1870. Tin walls and ceiling were added circa 1930, along with the balcony used for church suppers. It became the Stephentown Heritage Center after purchase by the Historical Society in 1988.

The Presbyterian Church was moved from Presbyterian Hill to its present location. It burned Christmas Eve, 1868, and was rebuilt in 1869. In 1940 it informally merged with the Methodist Episcopal Church. It legally became the Federated Church in 1948, utilizing Presbyterian and later Methodist ministers.

The West Stephentown Baptist Church was built in 1829 and remodeled in 1879. The balcony was removed and the sanctuary reversed. The building was extended and the double aisle became a center aisle. Stained glass windows were installed in 1919.

The First Free Will Baptist Church was built in Black River in 1783. It was moved to Stephentown Center in 1828 and renovated in 1858. It was closed a few years ago, and its congregation moved to the West Stephentown Baptist Church.

### October 7 – Local Genealogy Files

Eric Shyer introduced us to automated genealogy. Eric has researched his wife's family history and is applying some of that expertise to our Living Gravestone file by entering its extensive collection of names and data into Family Tree Maker, a software program that not only tracks entries and relationships but also provides detailed reports and family trees at the click of a mouse. Eric walked us through several examples of local residents and showed us how to cross check and expand our data from genealogical website data bases like Ancestry.com, Genealogy.com, and Rootsweb.com.

### November 4 – Meneely Bells

Eugene Burns has tracked bronze Meneely bells to all 50 states, New Zealand, Burma, China, India, Guyana, Bermuda, and many other countries. Meneely bells were used in churches (e.g., the Hancock Baptist Church), chimes, carillons, schools, fire stations, Grand Central Station, and aboard ships. The Meneely foundry began in 1808 in Gibbonsville

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## RECENT PROGRAMS (Continued)

(Watervliet). In 1826 a rift between brothers gave rise to a competing Foundry in West Troy. The Watervliet foundry produced 85,000 bells, the Troy facility 25,000. The Senior Center in Watervliet holds the oldest known Meneely bell (1832). The heaviest, 66,000 pounds, is in Kentucky. The last facility closed in 1950. Now US bells are cast in Holland.

### December 2 – Sinterklaas

Following our Christmas Pot Luck Supper, a tall man appeared in a mitre, stole, cloak, cinch, beard, wig, slippers, and crosier. Richard Walsh of the Albany Institute of History and Art described St. Nicholas (271 – 343), a bishop in Asia Minor. The legend of St. Nicholas grew from a man who allegedly restored three murdered boys to life, paid the dowries of poor girls, and calmed the seas for sailors. December 6, the Feast Day of St. Nicholas, commemorates the death of this patron saint of seamen. The tradition of St. Nicholas migrated across Europe to Spain and Holland, and St. Nicholas became Sinterklaas, who dispensed gifts to good little boys and girls.

22<sup>nd</sup> ANNUAL

## STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL

*The Berry Patch of  
Stone Wall Hill Farm*

*Route 22  
Stephentown*

**Sunday, June 29  
Noon – 4 p.m.**