

Berlin Historical Society Minutes of June 26, 2007

The monthly meeting of the Berlin Historical Society opened at 7:00 PM on June 26 at the Berlin Town Office Building. Those in attendance were: Norbert Rhinerson, Lynn McManus, Mary Wells, Walter Wells,

1. Bruce McDonald and Richard Turner.

The minutes of the April and May meetings were approved as written and previously distributed to the members. The Treasurer's Report showing our total assets to be \$45,497.41 was given by Mary Wells and approved as reported.

Norbert mentioned that we have two new members, Lewis Neil from Montpelier and Robert Bailey of Rockford, Illinois and welcomed them to our society.

Recent inquiries include Anne Barbour looking for proof that Prudence Hubbard was a daughter of Eleazar and Abigail Hubbard, Leslie Adams is looking for information about Halsey House and Sylvia Parker for information about Bela Bartok spending a summer at a cottage on Crosstown Road. Lynn sent Leslie Adams pictures from the East Road Cemetery. Jim Sumner is to meet with us within the week to show pictures and relate stories of the cottage on Crosstown Road. His mother grew up in the same vicinity and knew the Dressers who owned the property before Bela spent the summer there in 1941. Agatha Isles was the owner when Bela was there.

We had previously checked a stereo picture of a house that Dick Petit of Fayston thought might be in Berlin. The house was similar to the Chenette house on East Road that is now owned by Dr. Lorimar Holm but it proved not to be that house. We also have checked it against a picture of the old Woodbury house that used to be at the top of N---- Hill (now Belnap Road) but a comparison here too could not be positively made.

Norb, Vern and I met with Howard Coffrin recently to discuss a new book about the Civil War that he is starting research on. This new book will feature Vermonters who served and the homes and farms they lived on. He plans to visit all the towns in the state and he was interested in Richard Crandall who lived in Berlin for part of his childhood. He also was interested in the four members of the Turner family who served. They originally came from Duxbury and one of them, Harrison, moved to Berlin in 1884.

Last winter a story about Bill Nye, an early Berlin resident, was brought out at one of our meetings. He had led an interesting life first as a sailor on the high seas for three years and then as a guide in the Adirondacks in New York State. He came back to Berlin in his late years and lived with his sister Sarah Pratt and her husband on the west side of Berlin Pond. He died tragically in a fire that burned the Pratt house to the ground in 1893. We have the complete set of Vermont Watchman newspapers for 1893 so I searched and found the account of the fire. The Adirondack magazine with the story and a copy of the newspaper account of the fire are in the Nye folder in the Berlin Families drawer. Bill Nye was related to Richard Nye in some way and the Adirondack magazine with his story came to us as part of the Nye collection.

Lynn McMannis has photographed the headstones in the East Road, Black, Colby and Dewey-Wright Cemeteries. This is part of a project to correct the information that we had previously collected on all our cemeteries. Greg Dubois has mapped these four cemeteries and our corrected data will now be integrated with his maps to allow anyone to easily find the headstone they are looking for.

Norb and I recently went looking for more of our old schoolhouses. We found one on Hersey Road just off the Barre-Montpelier Road and one on Cox Brook Road. We had an old picture of the one on Hersey Road and now have before and after pictures. We will write to Mark Jenkinson, the absentee owner of the Cox Brook schoolhouse, to see if he has pictures when it was a schoolhouse and to ask permission to photograph the structure as it appears now. The renter who lives in the schoolhouse was reluctant to let us photograph it.

We also checked out another house that originally was next to the lower Berlin Pond across from the house where Tom Willard now lives. We heard that it was moved when the lot was purchased by the City of Montpelier to the Selina lot at the foot of Scott Hill. Then when the city purchased that lot it was moved again. Judging from a picture we have of it in its original location, we believe it was moved further south along Paine Turnpike South and is the house that the Brighams owned next to the Berlin Upper Pond.

Our thanks go out to Nancy Tripp who is taking care of the Veterans Memorial planter. She has added plantings and there are a number of different flowers there now.

We have purchased a new scrapbook that is comprised of pages that are pockets of see through plastic. Our plan is to refurbish some of the old Nye scrapbooks that are falling apart. The best way we can find to do this is to remove the old pages and insert them into the pockets where both sides of them can be seen. We will then number each scrapbook and number the pages. This will allow us to list all of the material by its page and scrapbook number on our computer. Then researchers can run a find on any subject and if there is material on that subject can immediately locate it. Members at the meeting authorized us to purchase more of these scrapbooks and filler pages as needed.

In reading our old minutes I came across where in 1984 our society declined to keep an old Civil War flag that was part of the Nye estate. By declining it, it reverted to the Vermont Historical Society. I checked with the VHS and found that the flag was a Vermont State Flag that was believed to have been brought to the statehouse after the war was over. Nothing else was known about it and even that much could not be verified. It had no known connection to Berlin so would have been of little value to us. It was in quite poor shape, ripped and full of insect nests. The VHS has done nothing to restore it but has it wrapped up to keep it preserved.

I brought out the originals of the three items I purchased for the society last winter. They were a stereo view of Brown's Mills on the Dog River, George Bosworth's photo postcard of Berlin Pond with his handwritten message to a friend on it and another of his photo postcards of the Nye (then Dustin) house at Berlin Corner with a note written by Ellen Dustin.

We still have to remove the rest of our collection that has been stored in Joe Howard's barn. There isn't much of any real value except the stove.

The meeting adjourned about 8:30.

Respectfully Submitted,

Richard Turner, Secretary