

Berlin Historical Society

March 25, 2008

The monthly meeting of the Berlin Historical Society opened at 7:10 PM on March 25 at the Berlin Town Office Building. Those in attendance were: Norbert Rhinerson, Vernon Turner, Lynn McManus, Nancy Tripp, and Jim Sumner.

The minutes of the January 22nd meeting were approved as written, including two corrections by Lynn McManus: the spelling of the names Abigail and Azariah (Grant). There was no February meeting because it was cancelled due to bad weather. No treasurer's report was read, as Mary Wells was away on a trip.

Norbert reported on progress to date on our coming exhibit at the Vermont History Expo on June 21 and 22, which will be about the life and works of Mary Greene Nye, "Berlin's Historian". We have been assigned a space in the Commercial Pavilion, designated Space C-35 which will be 8' by 8' and will be enclosed by 3' high curtains on each side and an 8' high curtain in the rear. Norbert and Lynn McManus have made two trips to the Vermont historical archives collection at the Secretary of State's office in the Redstone building where they found quite a lot of interesting documents and artifacts relating to Mary Nye's work there from 1927 to 1950. They were assisted there by Gregory Sanford and Christie Carter who were very helpful in finding material suitable for our exhibit. They found several very good photos of Mary including one of her with her students when she was teaching at the East Road School in Berlin. They still had her chair and typewriter that she used while she worked for the State, and they will loan them to us for the exhibit. Norbert took several pictures there including one of the file card cabinets holding the Nye Index, the preparation of which was a big part of Mary's work as Editor of the State Papers. At first they couldn't find the plaque honoring Mary, which used to be on display at the Statehouse, but later they located it and gave us permission to use that for our exhibit as well. There are also materials at the Vermont Historical Society pertaining to Mary, which have not been looked at yet. Norbert has written a draft of a "Letter to Mary Nye" as a sequel to the one which was written for the book "A Place to Pass Through" and has drafted a time-line of the events of her life. Norbert repeated again that we need volunteers now and especially during the Expo to help make this an interesting and informative exhibit. We need suggestions from everyone as to what other information may be available about Mary Nye, and how best to display it. He also wants to find a place in Berlin to set up the display afterward, so that people who don't get to the Expo will be able to see the exhibit.

Jim Sumner has been communicating with Abby Smith, the daughter of George Smith who was the owner of Lotus Lodge on Crosstown Road in Riverton. She has an interest in the history of the lodge. Jim brought in a copy of a four-page document sent to George Smith, which he obtained from Abby Smith. It was a proposal, written in 1929 by Herbert Welsh, to raise money to buy a 100 acre Berlin property, which he called "Cedar Lodge Farm" as a memorial to three notable people (Gen. Robert E. Lee, Charles Adams, and John Welsh) and as a summer meeting place for a proposed organization. Nothing resulted from the proposal but it is of historical interest because of the connection to Lotus Lodge. Abby Smith is planning to visit Berlin this summer and will be invited to attend one of our meetings.

(picture of Lotus Lodge to go here)

Richard Turner found two Berlin pictures on e-Bay. One was a stereo of Benjamin Falls which he was able to purchase.



Benjamin Falls
by
L. O. Churchill

The other, for which he was outbid, was a picture of Berlin Pond as seen from a point close to the northern end of the old Black Cemetery Road. He was able to download a pretty good copy of it from e-bay. It has a house in the foreground which is probably either the L. Black or the S. Pratt house as shown in the Beers atlas.



Berlin Pond
by
Frank F. Currier

Richard is continuing his work on our scrapbooks in Florida and Maudeen Neil will continue her scrapbooking when she returns from Texas. Andrea Chandler has nearly completed transcribing the history of Berlin written by Sylvanus Nye for the Hemenway Gazetteer. Norbert has transcribed the short history of Berlin written by Rev. James Hobart, Berlin's first ordained minister. Norbert is planning to put both these histories on our web page and also post all the pictures of Benjamin Falls that have been collected.

Norbert photographed a broadside belonging to Alvah Newhall, dated May 1, 1900. It advertises a court-ordered auction for a farm then known as the Lorenzo Black farm consisting of a house and barn and about 100 acres with a shoreline on the pond. The ad says "It is a good opportunity for the purchaser to dispose of lots for summer cottages at a good price; also a good opportunity for letting boats for fishing on the Berlin Pond." (The house is marked L. Black in the Beers atlas and probably is the same one shown in the picture that Richard found.)

We had an inquiry about the Temperance Sloan sampler from a Lynn Anderson of Fall Creek, Oregon, who has an interest in Vermont samplers, and had found out about it from our web site. We also provided her pictures of two other samplers; one we own, made by

Sally Knapp, which is mounted in a frame; and another one made by Polly House which is owned by a Berlin resident.

Another inquiry was from a Marguerite Jenkins who asked what we knew about the Elisha Reynolds family who, she said, moved to Berlin from New York in 1813. I replied to her request, saying that there were no Berlin vital or cemetery records of Elisha, but that Mary Nye's history has a reference to his being on a Berlin committee in 1829 and Hemenway's History of Montpelier says that he died there in 1838, age 52.

It was on the agenda to discuss purchasing needed items for our office: a faster, more up-to-date computer, a copier suitable for scanning books, and a projector for computer presentations. However, due to the low attendance at the meeting it was decided to table the discussion until a later meeting.

Looking ahead: Our next meeting will be on April 22. Our May Potluck/Program meeting will be on May 13 with Howard Coffin being our featured speaker. THIS IS A CHANGE OF DATE due to Howard's conflict on May 20th. Walter Wells has confirmed the changed date for use of the Congregational Church Parish Hall. We will be exhibiting at the 9th annual Vermont History Expo at the Tunbridge World's Fairground on June 21 and 2

The meeting adjourned at about 9:00

Respectfully Submitted,
Vernon Turner, Acting Secretary