



LEBANON VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY SUMMER 2011 NEWSLETTER

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Vice-President: (vacant)

Treasurer: Joanne Amlaw

Secretary: Doug Banker

Directors: Robert Allard

Chris Dreyfus

Kevin Fuerst

Deb Gordon

Sharon Koomler

Collections: Jeannine Tonetti

Submit candidates for the 2012 Board of Directors to Peggy Hawkins, Chair of the Nominating Committee, at 518-794-9380.

Dear Friends of the Lebanon Valley Historical Society,

As the damp summer draws to a close, it is a good time to update you on the Society's programs and projects. It has been a busy year so far, with many noteworthy accomplishments and one sad outcome.

PROGRAMS

The **September 19th** program was to have been a talk by Arthur Robinson, a descendant of the Torrey family, who located Jesse Torrey's burial site in Montezuma, NY. Unfortunately, Art has some health problems that prevent him from making the trip to New Lebanon. We are working with Art to get a copy of his research, including photos of the Torrey gravestone.

Board member **Robert Allard** has stepped up to fill this void. He will do a program to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the beginning of the **Civil War**. He will show a short section of the Ken Burns Civil War documentary and then present some information on New Lebanon Civil War soldiers. This will be a joint program with the New Lebanon Library.

September 19, 7:00 PM at the New Lebanon Library.

October 17 – 7:00 PM at the Mount Lebanon Shaker Village Meetinghouse (Darrow School Library). Joint Program with the **Shaker Museum & Library and the Taconic Valley Historical Society** (Berlin, NY). **David Stocks** will present "*Organizing Utopia: The Shaker Landscape at Mount Lebanon*" about the effect of the Shakers on their environment. Come meet some of our neighbors to the north!

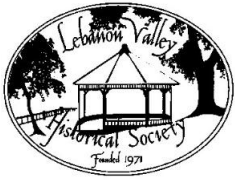
November 21 (Annual Meeting) – 6:30 PM at Friendship Hall, The Church of Our Saviour. Potluck dinner followed by elections and a presentation by Dr. Ann-Eliza Lewis, Director of the Columbia County Historical Society.

PROJECTS

The Tilden Project – In 2010, the Society received a grant of \$3485.00 from the NYS Documentary Heritage Program for Phase 1 of a project to document the demise of the Tilden Company in New Lebanon. From 1824 into the 1960s, Tilden & Company, the oldest pharmaceutical company in the U.S., was a major commercial feature of New Lebanon. The purchase and eventual closing of the Company had a significant impact on New Lebanon, which was not well-documented at the time. The Tilden Project seeks to discover and document the impact of this de-industrialization on the economy, landscape and citizens of the town.



Jeannine Tonetti, Steve Oberon, and professional archivist Jim Corsaro completed all of the Phase 1 planning work. With the help of a number of volunteers, oral history interviews have been conducted with people who worked at the Tilden Company or had relatives and friends who worked there. Most are in their 90s now, but all have provided helpful clues to the project team. One volunteer, Shelley Salem, researched articles in *The Echo* newspaper about the Company (many thanks to the Berkshire Athenaeum for their microfilm viewing facilities!). The grant application for the Phase 2 funding (\$4582) has been submitted to NYSDHP, and an award notice is expected in October.



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The Archives Project – As an extension of Jim Corsaro's work on archival standards for the Tilden project, the board has accepted a proposal from Jim to plan and implement a re-organization of the collection. Volunteers will do the work of moving and properly storing items in the collection under Jim's direction. When this work is complete, the entire collection will reside in the Lucretia Koepp room in the Town Hall (the "museum") and the other room will be solely used as the joint administrative office of both LVHS and Town Historian Kevin Fuerst. With the collection in one space, we can then work on installing environmental controls to help better preserve the artifacts.

The other ongoing aspect of the Archives Project is the acquisition of computer hardware and software to enable better collection management and to support digitization of documents and photos of our holdings and of items pertinent to Valley history held by others. Thanks to the generosity of the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation, we acquired an excellent computer and backup device in 2010. This year BTCF awarded us an additional grant for one-half the cost of collection management database software. Doug Banker will acquire and install the software this fall, train volunteers in its use, and oversee the work to populate the database with records for the collection, including photos of objects and document scans. In 2012, the LVHS archives will be fully cataloged, searchable, and capable of "virtual exhibits" that can be made available to the public. [If you would like to help with any aspect of the Archives Project, contact Jeannine Tonetti at 518-794-9177.](#)

Lebanon Springs Union Free School – Two years of dedicated effort by the LSUFS preservation committee have passed, during which multiple grant applications were submitted and a variety of potential uses were explored. Much of this work was to no avail, since granting organizations wanted applications with solidly established uses, and potential users were afraid to partner with LVHS and the school district unless they could be sure that funding would be available. About two months ago, the New Lebanon Town Board decided to evaluate the UFS as a possible Town Hall, after Deb Gordon informed them that Environmental Protection Fund grants are available from the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation that would cover 75% of the cost of renovation and re-purposing. Unfortunately, the Board of Education felt that enough time had already been given to the community and, citing their ongoing concern about liability, voted on August 31st to proceed with bidding for the demolition. Barring a miracle, the Union Free School will not be standing in its 100th year in 2013.

Collaboration Among Columbia County Historical Societies – You may recall that CCHS Director Ann-Eliza Lewis proposed at the 2009 LVHS Annual Meeting that steps be taken to improve collaboration among all of the historical societies across Columbia County. In 2010, Ann-Eliza met with some of the LVHS Board members to discuss this idea, but no actions ensued due to other priorities. On May 4, 2011, representatives of 18 historical groups convened at the Hillsdale Library hosted by Gail Cashen of the Austerlitz Historical Society. After a bit of socializing, there was an open discussion of the proposed collaboration. With strong support, a consensus quickly formed around the potential rewards of such collaboration:

- Improved communication and coordination of all groups' events and programs
- Sharing of resources and knowledge
- Increased use of technology serving membership and governance
- Savings on administrative costs, such as insurance, through group purchasing
- Capability for projects too large for any individual society to tackle

There have already been some tangible results from the collaboration. First, a name for the group was selected – The **Columbia Local History Collaborative** (CLHC). Representatives Ashley Hopkins-Benton and Geoff Benton created a Facebook page for news and events. You can



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visit this page at <http://www.facebook.com/columbialHC>. If you have a Facebook account and "Like" the page, you will be able to comment, post your thoughts, and get updates. CLHC has also obtained information on insurance pooling opportunities from Council Services Plus, provider for the NY Council of Non-Profits. Lastly, CLHC began work on fundraising for a Columbia County Heritage Driving Map. The initiative arose when Ann-Eliza described the map, a joint project of CCHS and Columbia County Tourism, and said that the project was stalled because a grant application to the National Trust for Historic Preservation received no award due to lack of funds. NTHP really liked the project, and told CCHS/CCT to re-apply next February. The CLHC representatives decided to take on the fundraising themselves within the County.

The map will show specific sites around the county of interest to the heritage tourist. A picture will accompany a brief description of each site and its historic character. The map has the potential to be of great value to the many county towns and villages that hope to attract visitors to their rich historic assets. It will be a great boon to New Lebanon's effort to realize the vision of "Good History is Good Business". [Watch for more details on this endeavor in the next few weeks.](#)

Proposed Re-Dedication of the Warm Springs Fountain – New Lebanon Historian Kevin Fuerst has proposed to the LVHS and Town boards that the "Indian Blessing Fountain" on Route 22 near the Town Hall be re-dedicated as the "Mohican Blessing Fountain", to better recognize the native tribes who helped early Valley settlers greatly. As a part of this effort, Kevin is designing a descriptive panel that will tell fountain visitors its history, including the Mohican "gift", the heyday of the Lebanon Springs Spa, the memorial created by the Lebanon Valley Garden Club, and the contribution of sculptor H. H. Kitson. The panel will be housed in a simple weatherproof box and be placed near the fountain. When complete, this history marker could be the first of many on a heritage trail through the town. There will be more on this wonderful project as the work proceeds.

Your Generosity Abounds Even in This Economy – All of the projects described above have benefited from the membership's remarkable financial support this year. In addition to \$750 in dues, which are used for operating costs, you gave donations of:

- \$1150 to the Tilden Project
- \$200 to the Archives Project for the software purchase
- \$25 to defray the cost of re-printing the 1976 Historical Album
- \$925 (late-2010) for the UFS Preservation Project
- \$530 in unrestricted donations

The Board of Directors thanks you all for your continuing help in achieving the Society's goals.

Help Us Improve – The Board of Directors would like to hear your thoughts on any subject pertinent to our Society. Are there ways communication to you should be improved? Are there programs you'd like to see developed? Do you have an idea for a project the Society should undertake? Would you like the minutes of Board meetings sent to you?

To present your thoughts to the board, you may send them in an

email to info@lebanonvalleyhistoricalsociety.org or by

postal mail to LVHS, PO Box 363, New Lebanon, NY or

telephone the Secretary at 518-794-9764 or go to our new

Facebook page by searching for Lebanon Valley Historical Society from your Facebook account. Many thanks to Robert Allard for setting up the page. If you "Like" the page, you will be able to post comments and questions there. Try it out!