

BRADFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

BHS, 162 East Main St, Bradford NH 03221

Volume 9 Issue 2 March, 2023

Hello everyone, welcome to spring, March 20 (though it hardly feels like it!) This year there will be plenty of room for volunteers, from hosting our Saturday open sessions to escorting guests through the Tin Shop, Smithy Shop and Post Office during those sessions, to working on the upgrading of all three facilities.

I look forward to working with all of our volunteers to make the BHS a more accessible and informative place than ever before.

Harry Wright, President: 603-938-2203, handswright2203@gmail.com, or at the BHS site, bradfordnhhistorical.org.

Our Town Hall has a great history, I thought it might be interesting to you. The following is excerpted from the Bradford Bridge, July, 2009.

Built in 1797 and '98 in the geographical center of Bradford on Rowe Mountain Road, the Town Hall was a Meeting House, built with two porches. The different religious denominations paid a portion of the support according to the valuations and membership. A door handle made by early settler Richard Cressy was embossed with two angels and the inscription "While Truth and Benevolence reign within, the angels keep the door." This is still in the Cressy family. A drawing of the door handle is available from Ann Eldridge.



When the Baptists built their church in 1830 and the Congregationalists in 1838, the building reverted to town use. By the early 1820's improved roads were connecting Bradford to other towns, mills were being built along the Warner River, and the railroad worked its way through the more level part of town. Several years of discussion about moving the Meeting House to the growing business area concluded in 1863 by dismantling the building and moving it to its present location on land donated by Esquire Mason Tappan.

It was rebuilt as two stories, the lower floor for classrooms and the upstairs as the town hall. The classrooms were used until 1937 and as a kindergarten and pre-school until the Community Center was refinished.

The upstairs saw many years of town meetings and entertainment of all types: plays, lectures, club meetings, movies, dances, dance lessons, basketball. Through the years, each town report lists monies appropriated to improve or refurbish the building. In 1916, a porte cochere was added to the front entrance and removed in the 1950's. In 1873 the town voted to build a gallery on the north end, in 1906 an addition including the stage area, in 1911 seats to be purchased for 200 people. In 1920, the selectmen's room was enlarged, in 1945 a basement was built. The Town Hall was placed on the National Historic Register in 1980 and in 1997 a 200th birthday party as held, attended by teachers, students, municipal officials, and citizens.

Over the years, efforts by the town, many individuals, and at least three town hall restoration committees have valiantly tried to keep the 200+ years old building up to code, comfort, and convenience, resulting in the current \$2.6M restoration project.

Many people have worked very hard to keep our historic building standing. We owe many "Thank you's" for all the work and money that has gone into this wonderful building. Once again, thank you for all your work and money.

As you can see, the restoration project is in full swing. Follow the project with the regular monthly updates in the Bridge.

Help needed! Please volunteer. We are hoping to have all three of our buildings open this year on Saturday mornings from 10-12am. I understand that it might be intimidating to have to show people around. Tracey has volunteered to walk us through the buildings so we are more familiar with what we are showing our guests. Tracey is working on adding to our Information Sheets. These are great tools for answering some of the questions that might be asked.

We will be having a meeting on April 4 (Tuesday) at 1:00pm. Please try to attend, it will be great to see you.

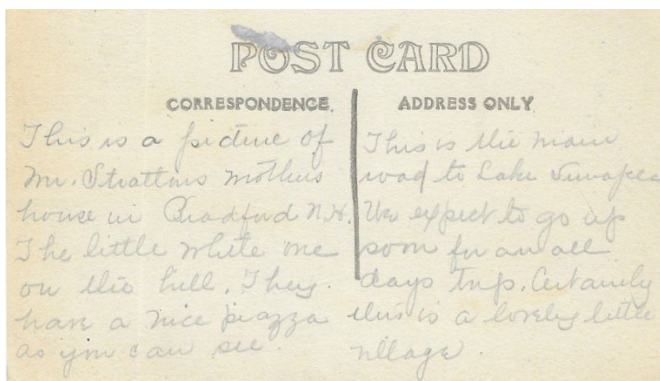
In keeping with the same line of requests, the Friends of the Brown Memorial Library (FOBML) need members. Not much time is needed and you will be helping our library with some of their fun projects. Call Harry or Sandra Wright, 603-938-2203 or email to handswright2203@gmail.com

From the Archives:

Recently, BHS received a parcel containing numerous photos and postcards from someone sorting through their mother's belongings. It always amazes me how in such a grouping, one or two pieces turn out to be items we don't have in the collection.

The two examples below, I have not come across in our collection yet. A new view of the old post office and the other houses and a garage at the bridge on West Main and High Street. It is always exciting when notations on the back of the item give it even more history!

SO, while you are getting ready for Spring cleaning, think of us if you come across any Bradford items that you think we should preserve as part of Bradford's history here at BHS. Contact us at bradfordhistoricalsociety@gmail.com if we can help.



Bradford Historical Society Membership Form

Name: _____

Address/City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____

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Membership Type: _____ Senior/Student (\$15) _____ Adult (\$20) _____ Family (\$30)

_____ Life Member (\$200) _____ Life Couple (\$300) Additional Donation Welcomed: _____ Please write checks to

Bradford Historical Society, mail to: BHS, 162 East Main St. Bradford, NH 03221

Your dues cover your membership for the current calendar year. Your dues are due in January of that year. Please renew now (if you haven't) for 2023. Thank you for your support.