

FALLS VILLAGE - CANAAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

April 2021



Editor: Dick Heinz

Great Losses

By Judy Jacobs

The Community suffered some great losses this past year and the Society will greatly miss the following men who made a great impact on the Historical Society and beyond.

We lost Edward Kirby this year. Ed was teacher, principal and coach at Housatonic Valley Regional High School, but those of us in the history world will remember him more for his tremendous knowledge of local history, especially of the iron industry. Past president of the Sharon Historical Society, Ed was also instrumental in the restoration of local iron furnaces. Most notably was the Beckley Furnace. Ed was one of the founders of the Friends of the Beckley Furnace. He worked closely with the State of Connecticut in the restoration of this monument and with others in the interpretation of the history of the furnace. He was an author of several books on local history and a frequent speaker for many organizations, including our Historical Society. He was the one I went to for information on the iron industry. I will miss his sense of humor, his kindness and his encouragement. The community lost a legend when Ed passed away.

We also lost Ian McCunn this year. Ian was a longtime board member of the Historical Society, and a board member of the Friends of the Beckley Furnace. Ian loved to tinker and fix many of the items in our

collection. He was on our building committee and oversaw many of our projects. Ian was extremely generous and was always there whenever I called on him for help. Our museum is named for him and his wonderful wife Dorothy. We will truly miss Ian and will remember him fondly.

Ron Jones, past president of the Historical Society, founding member of the
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Friends of the Beckley Furnace in 2014. Seated left to right: Ian McCunn, Ed Kirby, and Ron Jones. Standing: Walt Michaels, Dick Paddock, Geoff Brown, Christian Allyn and Bob Anderson

Annual Dinner and Meeting

We will have our Annual Meeting at the Falls Village Emergency Services Center on Rte. 7 on May 20th, at 4:30 PM. Unfortunately, we are still unable to have our annual dinner, but the meeting with election of officers taking place is open to all members.

(Great Losses continued.)

Friends of the Beckley Furnace and instrumental in getting the upper Housatonic Valley designated as a National Heritage Area also passed away this year. I will remember him as a kind, gentle man who quietly organized our Society's legalities, bylaws and paperwork and brought us up to speed. He was a huge help in obtaining our grants and purchasing the Falls Village Depot. We will always be indebted to his professionalism and dedication to the history of this area and the organizations in which he was involved.

We also lost past board member Roland Chinatti. Roland was always so helpful in many ways, with a

wealth of knowledge of antiques, especially old bottles. His enthusiasm and dedication was greatly appreciated and he will missed by all.

Also lost this year were two men who I always went to with questions on our area. Bill Dickinson and Dick Fife were both longtime Falls Villagers and they were a wealth of information. They had fantastic memories and it was so enjoyable and educational talking to them. With so few elderly locals left to ask questions of, I am thankful for what they have shared with us; a lifetime of memories.

1st Tuesday at 7

At the time of this publication, there are no plans for 1st Tuesday, but depending on the status of the coronavirus pandemic, this public offering may be resurrected for the end of the summer. Keep an ear out for updates.

THE BEEBE HILL SCHOOLHOUSE

By Sally Greco



It's official! The Beebe Hill Schoolhouse is about to have a facelift. A group of volunteers will be painting the exterior of the building. The Town, which owns the building, will provide the painting materials for the project.

It's no wonder that the building looks like it needs a fresh coat of paint. It was last painted in 1998 by HVRHS students as part of a Local History unit with history teachers Mike DeMazza and Pete Vermilyea.

Sporting its freshly painted exterior, the Schoolhouse will once again open its doors to visitors on Saturdays from 10a.m. – 12 during the months of July and August.

**Tentative date for the Peddlers Flea Market is September 18!
Check our website or follow us on Facebook for updates!**

President's Report

By Judy Jacobs

2020 was indeed a challenging year for everyone, some more so than others. The Historical Society was spared much of the hardships that others went through, thankfully, but Covid still affected us as it did most nonprofits. We lost our major fundraisers and laid low_during Covid, losing major sources of our income. We only had in person meetings during the summer where we could socially distance ourselves at the South Canaan Meetinghouse or at the Falls Village Firehouse when the season turned and it was too cold in the Meetinghouse. For several months, we did not meet in person at all.

But we did carry on as much as we could. Our curator and archivist, Midge Cortesi, along with other volunteers, was very busy at the Depot helping others with research and genealogy, organizing the files and countless other tasks. Our museum committee continued its work on the museum displays and our building committee oversaw the painting of two sides of the Meetinghouse by Valley Restorations. The painting came out so beautifully, we have hired the contractor to do the other two sides this summer. We will also be working with the Town of Canaan (Falls Village) on painting the Beebe Hill Schoolhouse this spring.

With the threat of Covid easing up, we are hopeful to have our Peddlers Flea Market and we hope to participate once again in the Heritage Walks in September. If things are looking safe in the later months of the summer, we may be able to have a couple of First Tuesday at 7 talks at the South Canaan Meetinghouse. We will keep everyone updated on these events on our Facebook page and websites.



We are thrilled that volunteers Dave Jacobs, left, and Perry Gardner, in the back, are working with Peter McLachlan on scanning thousands of railroad slides that Peter has taken over the past 60 years while he worked as a conductor, engineer and other positions on the local railroad lines. Pete is legendary for his stories and the fantastic pictures he took from Danbury to Pittsfield, Mass., and on the line to Lakeville from Canaan. While Perry scans the slides, Dave edits them and then interviews Pete as he recounts the story behind each picture. His memory is amazing and we are honored that he has chosen us to share his collection with. We look forward to sharing it with the public when the project is complete.

As always, we appreciate our many volunteers and the support we receive from our members. We can always use more volunteers so please don't hesitate to reach out to us if you are interested in getting involved. You can reach us by phone at 860-824-8226, email fvchs@gmail.com or find the Falls Village-Canaan Historical Society on Facebook.

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The Falls Village Depot Museum

By Midge Cortesi

This certainly has been an unusual year for us at the Depot. Having to close our doors for a few months because of the quarantine orders meant that we were unable to welcome and enjoy visitors who were interested in perusing our files for historical information. We certainly missed our visits from the Kellogg school children. Despite the closing, we still kept busy fielding many e-mail requests for genealogical information. It seems that those people who found themselves confined to their homes during the lockdown were spending their time delving into family history and looking for answers. Midge Cortesi and Kay Blass, along with volunteers Belle Becker and Liz Germon, have been far from idle as we have spent our Tuesdays doing filing, filing, filing, and MORE filing of the large amount of valuable donated material from the Connecticut Room at the Hunt Library. We have also received some very nice donations from members of our community which will be of great value in our museum exhibits. The quarantine did slow down the progress in our museum but we are back to work and our exhibits are coming along nicely. Judy Jacobs has done an outstanding job on the exhibits in our train room. Even though our work is not complete we are proud of what we have done so far and welcome anyone to come visit us and enjoy the progress we have made in the museum. We are open every Tuesday from 9-12 or by appointment. We are also open during the Falls Village Car and Motorcycle Show which hopefully will be held this year. We would love to have you come in, sit down and browse through our treasury of photos and files. There is always something new you can discover about our two little towns.

