



MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

We are astounded by the support of our community over the past year! Thanks to our committed members, we have been able to make updates to the Archives that allow for more space for visitors, continue a variety of programs for the community, and maintain our expanding collection documenting Otisfield's history.

Your continued support in the coming year can help us to revive the front entrance to our historic headquarters and ensure the safety of all who come to the Town House throughout the year.

A YEAR FOR THE RECORDS

Our year kicked off in May, drawing one of our largest audiences for a program to date -- leaving us standing room only at the old town house. The talk, eloquently presented by long-time historical society archivist Jean Hankins, delved into the "Origins of Otisfield", shedding light on the earliest settlers of our town. This presentation not only connected us with our roots but also set a high bar for the programs to follow.

In June, we were entertained by Derek Dorr's insightful talk on local inventor Glenn Henry. Dorr skillfully intertwined Henry's inventive journey with the broader narrative of the US Patent Process and its pivotal role in driving innovation. This session was a tribute to the inventive spirit that shapes our community and country.

July marked our most successful Strawberry Festival yet, with record-breaking attendance. Hosted by our friends at Bell Hill Meetinghouse, the society raised over \$1500 from the largest crowd we've had the pleasure of serving, though the overwhelming turnout meant we ran out of shortcake sooner than anticipated! As always, this event was a delightful reminder of the strong bonds within our community.

August brought a unique experience as friend of the society and local blacksmith, Ryan Adams, enthralled attendees with a live blacksmithing demonstration. Adam's mastery of this ancient craft offered a tangible connection to historical practices, leaving the audience in awe.



Ryan Adams of Bell Hill Forge, works a piece of hot steel at his live demonstration in August

As we turn the page to another year, we extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed to making 2023 a remarkable year for our society. We eagerly anticipate joining the community in exploring our history in 2024. And we'll work hard to make sure we don't run out of shortcake in July!

THE CLEVELAND COLLECTION

This summer OHS was fortunate to receive an outstanding gift from Sid Gordon of Norway, a collection of some 35 glass negatives with pristine paper prints to match, most involving the Cornelius Cleaveland family who lived for many years on Scribner Hill Road. Most of the photos were probably taken about 1900. These are the first glass negatives in our collection, and we soon found they require special treatment, namely, a cardboard holder custom made for each glass negatives. The negatives were of different sizes and, we soon discovered, tricky things to work with. It took months to complete the project.

After considering various ways to store the large collection, we decided to display the black and white prints in a three-ring binder that make it easy to look at the photos and also to store them. Several of the photos, we discovered, are of houses still standing today on Scribner Hill. Others were of homes of various Cleaveland family members in Waterford, Casco, and other nearby towns. Jean Hankins, who did most of the archival work involved, was delighted to find a negative and print of her home at 202 Scribner Hill Road, taken in 1901.

FAREWELL TO OUR FOUNDER



Ethel Bean Turner, founder of the Otisfield Historical Society

Ethel Bean Turner, founder of the Otisfield Historical Society and its long term leading spirit, died on October 8th, 2023, after a life of 76 years.

Born in Rumford, she graduated from Gould Academy and Colby Sawyer College. After two or three years as a microbiologist in Boston, she married Stephen Bean, and became not only a mother of four but also a partner in running The Cape, the Otisfield resort bequeathed by its original owners, the Elliots, to Stephen's father, Arthur Bean. Stephen Bean's death after only 11 years of marriage left Ethel both as mother of four young children and as owner and caretaker of the 20-some cottages that once made up The Cape. Ethel's second marriage was to Craig Turner, a local attorney, who survives her. Though not a native of Otisfield, Ethel embraced her adopted town enthusiastically.

The momentum for the founding of OHS in 1981 was, she later recalled, the survey organized by Bethel historian Randall Bennett of all the important old houses in Oxford County. Ethel led a large group of citizen-surveyors to report on and photograph the many distinguished buildings in town. This project led not just to Otisfield's inclusion in Randall's book surveying architecture in Oxford County, but also to starting the thriving historical society which exists today.

Calendar For 2024

May 16th - Revisiting Forrest Edwards - Old Town House 7pm

July 7th - Strawberry Festival - Bell Hill Meetinghouse 4pm-6pm

August 10th - Katherine Rhoda presents Vintage Grange Songs

October 12th - Cemetery Tour

THE YEAR AHEAD

Join our President Derek Dorr on May 16th as he regales us with tales from the life of Forrest Edwards. Once one of the largest apple producers in the entire state, what other stories may his life hold?

Our annual Strawberry Festival will continue to be held at the Bell Hill Meetinghouse and run concurrently with an art show inside the Meetinghouse. The historic Bell Hill Schoolhouse will be open for tours and a whipped cream station will be on hand, allowing guests to try their hand at making whipped cream the old fashioned way! We'll bring the shortcake, you bring the appetite!

On Saturday, August 10th, Katherine Rhoda, an accomplished musician who has previously played at the Bell Hill Meetinghouse, will entertain us with Vintage Grange Songs. A short history of the Granges of Otisfield will precede the concert.

You've asked and we have listened! Coming back for another year is our increasingly popular Cemetery Tour! Gather with us in October to learn more about the life and times of past members of our community.



The history of the Spurr's Corner Grange will be part of our August program, a concert featuring musician Katherine Rhoda

Make sure to check us out online

www.otisfield.org

Facebook.com/OtisfieldHistoricalSociety

YouTube.com/otisfieldhistorical

Instagram.com/otisfieldhistorical

CURRENT OHS OFFICERS

President - Derek Dorr

Vice-President - Callie Zilinsky

Secretary - Jessica Dorr

Treasurer - Mike Thorne

Archivist - Maureen Mooney-Howard

Assistant Archivist - Jean Hankins

Directors - Alan Douglass and Jean Hankins