



Sharon Historical Society
P.O. Box 363
Sharon Springs, NY 13459

Museum Open Daily
1:00 - 4:00 p.m.
July 1 - Labor Day
Dorcas Comrie, Curator

March 2014

From the President

Dear Members:

The year 2013 was good to the Historical Society. As you begin to turn the pages of this annual newsletter, you will see photos, articles, and plenty of information that makes our Historical Society an exciting and unique organization. Our Program Committee makes every attempt to obtain interesting, educational and historical programs throughout the year. This could not happen without the energy and willingness of others to give of their time to share their information with us. Special thanks go out to our presenters for providing us a very exciting and historical year to remember.

The Officers and Directors met regularly throughout the year and made some definite plans for expansion with new exhibits, a new barn building to display our mail carriage, and participation in the Festivals throughout the year.

How great to see thousands of visitors once again in the Village during the May Garden Party, the September Harvest Festival, and the December Victorian Holiday Celebration. The days were chock full of things to do: vendors and the shops offering unique gift suggestions and music to entertain the strollers. There was plenty to keep people busy with tours explaining the history of our small Village and presentations about the Victorian past of Sharon Springs, holiday Italian cookies, children's choir and dance performances - a list too long to include everything.

Sharon Springs Inc., (the spa investors), recently made presentations to the Village Board and Town Board. showing the plans for renovation of the famous Imperial Baths property into a modern day Spa. The discussion provided us with a ray of "hope" that someday soon this project may seriously happen in our Historic Village.

We welcome the D. Landreth Seed Company, owned by Barbara & Peter Melera, located on Route 20 in the Village. This seed company is the oldest seed company in America. Peter and Barbara Melera relocated their business here from New Freedom, PA and are members of the Historical Society.

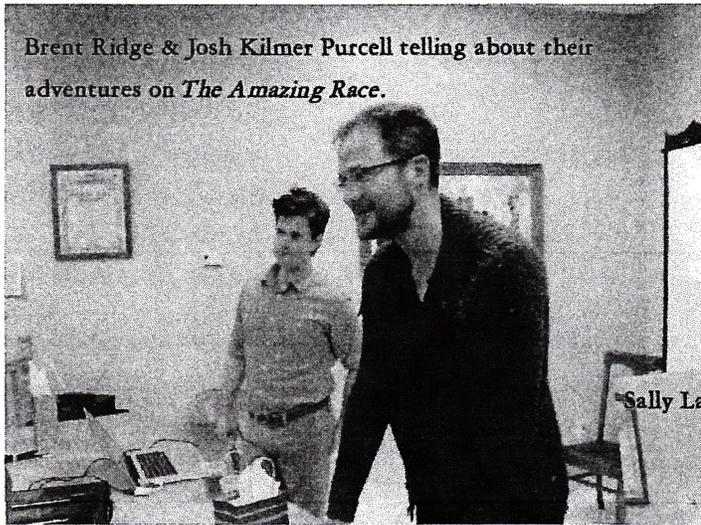
As we start a new year let's make a Resolution to become more active in our local Historical Society. Active members provide the organization with new and exciting ideas. We hope you will continue your membership and if you wish to become a member, we are ready to welcome you.

Special thanks to the Officers, Directors, and members for your help, support, and continued dedication in keeping the history of Sharon Springs alive as we embark on new and exciting changes coming to Sharon Springs.

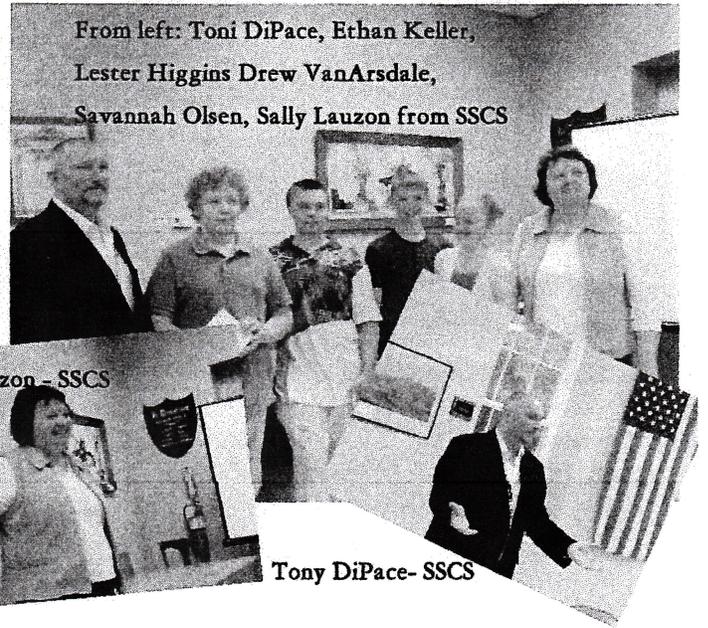
Sincerely, Mary Ann Larkin-President

Sharon Historical Society

Brent Ridge & Josh Kilmer Purcell telling about their adventures on *The Amazing Race*.



From left: Toni DiPace, Ethan Keller, Lester Higgins Drew VanArsdale, Savannah Olsen, Sally Lauzon from SSCS



Sally Lauzon - SSCS

Tony DiPace- SSCS

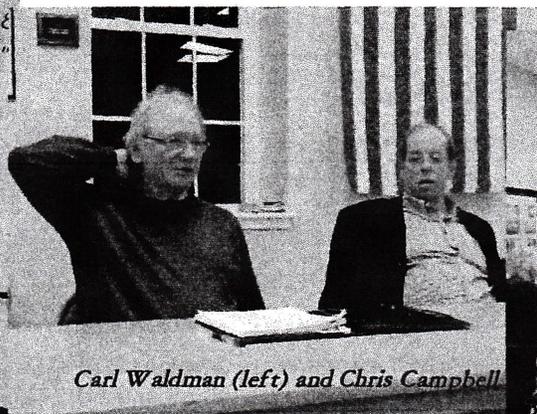
Looking Back at 2013

A snow storm on March 18, 2013 caused the first meeting and program to be cancelled. The year officially started on April 15th with approximately 40 people in attendance to hear the Fabulous Beekman Boys who shared "amazing" adventures from "The Amazing Race." Although we watched the weekly series for months on TV to finally learn the outcome, the race was actually run and filmed in 3 1/2 weeks. Brent Ridge and Josh Kilmer Purcell told how the bus windows were covered when they were transported so the challengers couldn't see where they were going. They were sequestered in their rooms so none of the contestants could talk to each other or compare notes. They were only allotted a certain sum of money each day for food, water, and transportation. They couldn't waste money on food and drink because of needing it for transportation fares. A lack of time and money forced them to eat table scraps from other diners' tables! It was a tiring and stressful time for them and it wasn't the relaxed paid vacation we all envisioned. However, now that the race is won, their memories will never be forgotten. From June to December of 2012, they kept it a secret that they had won. Josh and Brent claim it's the first time a secret has ever been kept in the history of Sharon Springs. They're probably right! Thank you for an entertaining evening.

On May 20, 2013, 4 students from Sharon Springs Central School, along with Tony DiPace-Business Manager and Sally Lauzon-Science Teacher, gave a great presentation about the new i-Pads which students in grades 7 through 12 use as recipients of a grant. The students gave demonstrations of videos which they had created. Miss Lauzon explained the advantages of the i-Pad in the classroom. These students have the opportunity of learning with cutting edge technology well beyond their years. Other larger schools are looking to Sharon Springs for advice and assistance for a similar curriculum. Congratulations to the Administration for securing the financial support and making Sharon Springs Central the envy of nearby schools.

Rosemary Sibbern told members about items from the Thaw Collection of Native American Art at the June 17th meeting. She also told the group about trips she and her husband have made across the USA to various Native American sites. It's great when members share knowledge of personal interest and their areas of expertise. Thank you.

Karen Cuccinello, Summit Historian & author of "Murders and Funky Stuff."



Carl Waldman (left) and Chris Campbell

Kathy Venette & Dave Cross



2013 (Continued)

A joint meeting was held with the Carlisle Historical Society on September 16, 2013 with presenter Karen Cuccinello, Summit Historian. Karen gave a Power Point presentation and told us about her recently completed book *Murders and Funky Stuff in Schoharie County*. The book describes murders throughout Schoharie County from the late-1800s through 1974. The killings ranged from house burnings, hangings, beatings, electrocutions, bludgeoning, being run over by a car, to being thrown off a bridge or beaten with an axe. The book describes one of "our" own murders in Argusville when Daniel Smullen was accused and acquitted of killing Peter Conrad on St. Patrick's Day in 1905. Both men were intoxicated from too much "hard" cider. The last item in the book tells of the murder of Katherine Kolodziej, the SUNY Cobleskill student whose murder in 1974 was never solved. Karen previously published a book about schoolhouses in Schoharie County. Nice job, Karen. Hope you keep documenting the County's history.

On October 21, 2013, guest speakers, Carl Waldman and Chris Campbell gave us a "quick" recap of the past 12,000 years when the glacier receded and formed the waters of Lake Otsego, the Finger Lakes, and Glacier Lake by the Albany area. They told how General George Washington visited Cherry Valley after the Revolutionary War on October 21, 1783, exactly 230 years prior to the date of this presentation. Sharon Springs and Cherry Valley share the same history with the Cherry Valley Branch of the railroad and we enjoyed their stories. They reiterated some of Sharon's history about the turnpikes, hops era, and when the mineral waters first began to attract visitors to the area. Their research and historical information is provided on the Beekman1802.com website. Carl is the author of *The Atlas of the North American Indians*.

On November 18, 2013, Dave Cross told members about thrills and spills of the Sharon Raceway. Located in Leesville on Stone House Road (now Lynk Rd.), the racetrack opened in 1952. The 1/4 mile dirt track attracted racing buffs on Friday nights for miles around. Stock certificates, signed by officers Malcolm Lynk and Sylvia Ryder, were sold for start-up money of \$10,000. Car owners took coupes, cut the fenders off, removed the windows, chained the doors shut, added a roll bar and they were ready to go! Dave had great photos showing drivers with their cars in pile-ups and the dust flying! Kathy Venette showed a video of July 17, 1971 when the Village of Sharon Springs was honored to host the United States Marine Corps Band in celebration of the Village's Centennial. The video showed some familiar faces and it was fun to reminisce about the "good old days."

The "historical" year came to a close on December 9th as members shared food, gifts, and goodwill at the annual holiday party. Bad weather on Saturday night Dec 7th caused the festivities to be postponed for a couple of days. However, 13 people joined in the spirit of the holiday and a good time was had by all.

Statistics and Comments

Our Treasurer, Bernadetta Vrooman, gathered information from the guest book to give us a "snapshot" of the previous 2013 summer season. Visitors came from more than 50 different locations in New York State including Saratoga Springs, Staten Island, NYC, Clinton, Little Falls, Queensbury, Rochester, and Cooperstown. Others were from 16 different States and Canada i.e. New Hampshire, Maine, Nebraska, California, Wisconsin, Hawaii, Georgia. Their comments in the book ranged from "Wow", "Interested in the Battle of Sharon", "Great Place - So Interesting" to "Wanting a mineral bath." Sales this summer totaled \$454.50 from books, magnets, postcards, and notecards. Total donations were \$99.50. Thanks Bernadetta.

Harvest Festival Sept 2013

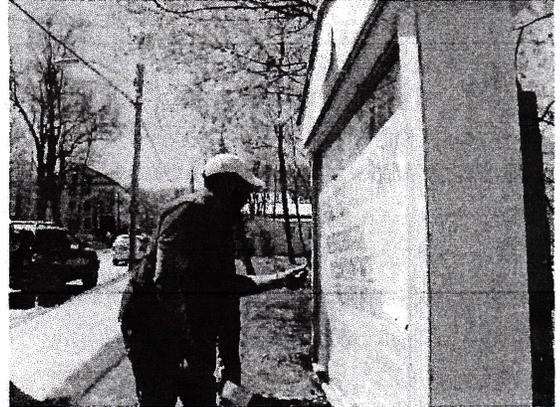
"Thousands" of people came to the small downtown Village of Sharon Springs for the Annual Harvest Festival on September 14th & 15th. How many thousand you ask? A guess would be 10,000 over the two days. Parking was at a premium with cars lining both sides of every street and road in the lower Village. Buses ran continuously bringing people from the parking lots at SSCS and Sunnycrest Orchards. Approximately 100 vendors sold their wares occupying Chalybeate Park, the American Hotel grounds, Roseboro properties, and along Main Street.

The Museum was open for people to see and learn about the unique history of our small community. Sales included books, plates, magnets, and post cards. People are especially infatuated with the history of the bathhouse and the treatments and asked lots of questions. The weather was darn near perfect and it was a grand and successful weekend for all who participated.

Chalybeate Park

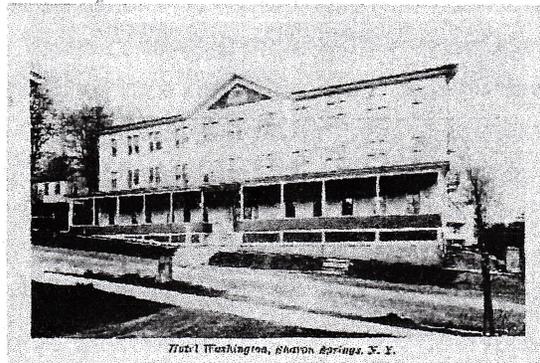
May 4, 2013 was the second annual "I Love My Park Day," a statewide event to polish our treasured natural gems. Historic sites are a source of enjoyment and help draw tourists to our area. Approximately 60 volunteers showed up to scrape, paint, rake, dig, cut down, and trim, as well as draw away leaves and debris. The old broken pipes were uncovered which once brought the Chalybeate water from the hillside to the Temple grounds.

Austin Jetton is shown scraping paint from the Chalybeate Park sign which announces events in the park.



When volunteers were scraping paint from the columns of Chalybeate Temple, they found "McFee" of McFee Lumber, Sharon Springs NY stamped on the columns. Briggs Lumber bought out McFee Lumber April 1, 1925.

Washington Hotel Demolished



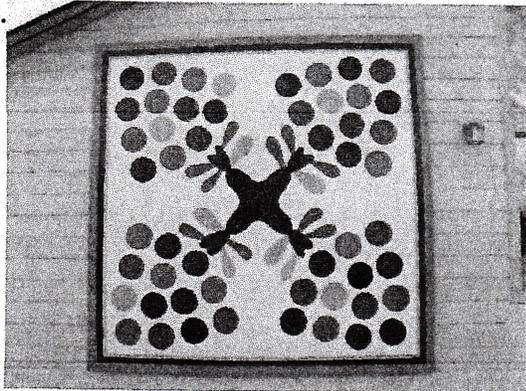
The Washington Hotel was torn down in September 2013 by Sharon Springs Inc., the investors who purchased this hotel along with other spa properties in 2005. Although sad to see it go, the century-old building was beyond repair and had become an eyesore. In February of 2003, a heavy load of snow crashed through the roof severely damaging the central and rear portions. The Washington Hotel was one of 180 buildings in the lower Village listed on the NYS Register of Historic Places and also the National Register.

Schoharie County Quilt Trail

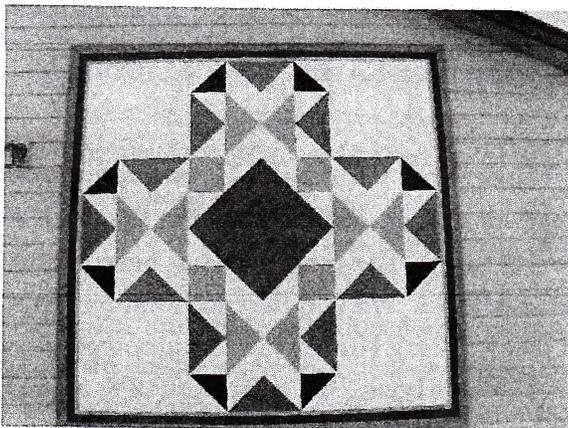
A Tribute to Marguerite MacFarlane

If you haven't noticed, quilt blocks have appeared throughout Schoharie County on the sides of barns and other buildings. Last count, there were 46, with 1 in Central Bridge, 1 in Carlisle, 1 in Esperance, 1 in Gilboa, 1 in Huntersland, 8 in Richmondville, 4 in Gallupville, 7 in Schoharie, 2 in Sharon, 2 in Summit, 7 in Middleburgh, 1 in Blenheim, 1 in Jefferson, and 9 in Cobleskill. The Schoharie County Quilt Barn Trail emerged as an outcome of the devastating floods of August 2011 caused by Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee. It celebrates the unexpectedness of art on a building or wall instead of a gallery. The quilt blocks are honest, authentic, spirited, creative and most of all accessible. People relate to the quilting of ancestors, relatives, friends and themselves.

This project was started to create artistic and historical interest and further beautify Schoharie County.

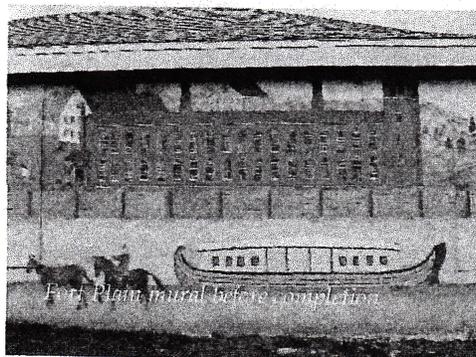


These two quilt blocks are on the side of the Apple Barrel Restaurant & Gift Shop on Route 30A in Schoharie. The block above is titled "Swedish Apple Orchard." Below is "Country Farm".



Marguerite MacFarlane, a member and friend of the Historical Society, died July 26, 2013. How privileged we are to have known her. Marguerite was a renowned painter, faux finisher, muralist and decorative artist. A few years ago, she and her partner, Peter Cozzolino opened Chartwell Studio (the old Shockley's Drug Store) on Route 20. The studio handled all aspects of fine and decorative arts, including teaching.

She was an avid supporter of the community, whether it was helping students at SSCS prepare background for a play, helping the Sharon Springs Library raise funds for a community building, or support the Sharon Springs Chamber of Commerce. She willingly gave of her time. A recent project which was near and dear to Marguerite was a mural completed on a Fort Plain factory which portrayed the Erie Canal and buildings of the time period. Marguerite loved doing the research for projects



such as this. For the past several years, Marguerite and Peter graciously opened their studio to members of the Sharon

Historical Society for refreshments, holiday cheer, and a place to hold their holiday gift exchange and potluck dinner. Marguerite brought charm and artistry to our community. She is greatly missed.

Spelling Bee

The 29th Annual Scripps-Howard Spelling Bee, sponsored by the Sharon Historical Society, was held Tuesday, January 14, 2014. Thank you to Chair-Barbara Cousineau and Karen Cookson who coordinated the project for the Society along with Jennifer Field from Sharon Springs Central School. It took 26 rounds, but fifth-grader Xander Olsen outlasted sixth-grade contender Aidan Witham with "talisman" to become the winner. Xander went on to regional competition at Proctor's Theater in Schenectady. Congratulations to Xander Olsen, Aidan Witham, and third-place contender, Brendan Burke. Other contestants include: Emma Olsen, Sasha Ward, Abrianna Reynolds, Owen Rohac, Chelsea Stetin, Sebastian Boyles, and Andrew Crewell. Thank you to Bunker Hill Farm, NBT Bank, Cindy Howell, and James MacFadden & Sons, Inc. who contributed toward prizes and congratulations to all the students who participated.

New Building on Museum Grounds

A few years ago, Doris Ciperley gave a mail carriage to the Museum, once driven by Stanley Ciperley on his mail route. The carriage has been stored in the barn for several years but hardly anyone gets an opportunity to see it. This year, the directors made a decision to have a small building built on the museum grounds to display the carriage. Walt Manko and Wes Ullman designed, measured and drew up plans. Later this spring, they will draw in some fill and have Andy Olsen build it according to their drawing. They envision a large barn door and large window for easy visibility. Hopefully, the Museum barn can then be cleaned out and used for additional exhibits. We look forward to seeing the progress.

Water Cooler Comes Home

After more than 80 years, the water cooler once used in the one-room Chestnut Street School came home to its resting place. This school was originally located off Chestnut Street on Scopeletti Road, Otsego County. Although located in the Town of Cherry Valley, it was listed on Sharon's roster of one-room schoolhouses. It was open until 1931 when the schools were consolidated and the district became part of the Sharon Springs Central School. On September 18, 1989, the schoolhouse was moved from Scopeletti Road to the Museum grounds.

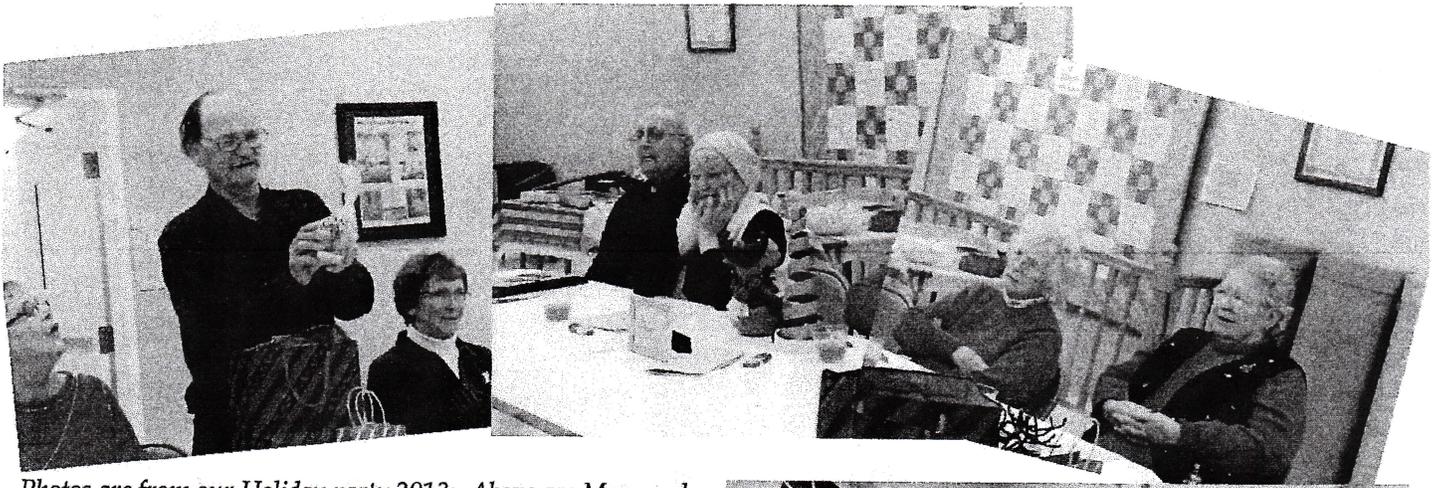
Sylvia Somers (Lane) attended school here and was also the last teacher to conduct classes. The Collins "boys," Lovillo and Eugene, also attended this school as youngsters. It's their family who had the water cooler in their possession and gave it to the Sharon Historical Society for placement in the schoolhouse.



The Collins family presented the water cooler to the Sharon Historical Society on a beautiful summer day in August. From left: Phyllis Duffy, Harriett Geywoits, Jim Duffy, and Albertina Miller.

Preservation Awards

The ceremony for annual Preservation Awards sponsored by Otsego 2000 was held in the fall for the past several years. The ceremony has been changed to the Spring of 2014. We had two nominations from the Sharon area - Spring House Spa for adaptive re-use and Tony Daou's book "A Celebration of & a Guide To Sharon Springs."



Photos are from our Holiday party 2013: Above are Mary and Robert Speidell. Norma Ullman at right. 2nd photo-Omer and Barb Cousineau. 3rd photo-Jean Bakkom and Bernadetta Vrooman. 4th photo shows members concentrating on a Christmas Quiz to test their knowledge of the Christmas season. From left-Kathy Venette, Mary and Robert Speidell & Norma Ullman.



American Legion and Historical Society to Honor Patriots

The Battle of Sharon took place between the forces of Patriot leader Colonel Willett, headquartered at Fort Plain, and Captain Dockstader a Tory, at the head of Tories and Indians. This was the only battle fought within the Town of Sharon.

Although there were other skirmishes in the county during this time frame, the Battle of Sharon on July 10, 1781 was the last large engagement to take place within Schoahrie County during the Revolutionary War. Five men were killed at the Battle of Sharon: Captain Robert McKean, John Caspar Lerhri, Adam Kittle, Frederick Bellinger, and Ebenezer McMicle.

Memorials in front of Sharon Springs Central School honor those killed in World War I, World War II, and the Korean Conflict. It is only fitting that the men who fought and died at the Battle of Sharon need to be recognized and honored also. A large rock with an engraved bronze plaque will be placed at Bowmaker's Pond to honor the five men who died.

Board of Directors



Board of Directors at their October 2013 meeting. From left: Walter Manko, Omer Cousineau, Barb Cousineau-Sec., Mary Ann Larkin-Pres., Bernadetta Vrooman-Treas., Jean Bakkom, and Norma Ullman. Missing from the photo are Sandra Manko, Peter Cozzolino, Denise Leinbach, and Lori Nolfo.



9/11 Flag in Sharon Springs



On May 12, 2013, the National 9/11 Flag, recovered from the rubble at Ground Zero after the 2001 attack on the World Trade Center, made an appearance at the Sharon Springs Central School. The 9/11 flag's journey to Sharon Springs is an unusual one. Frank Tucker, an AmeriCorps/VISTA volunteer was living in Sharon. He is a former Freeport, Long Island firefighter who responded to the World Trade Center with a heavy rescue truck and spent two days there after 9/11. Mr. Tucker knew 23 of the volunteers who died there. The 23 are immortalized on a flag hanging inside the Sharon Springs Firehouse. The 20 ft by 40 ft flag has gone cross-country since 9/11. Tattered and torn, it's been stitched back together by volunteers, "much like our country has been stitched back together," Mr. Tucker said. About 200 people attended the ceremony. The Sharon community feels very honored to have been able to take part in this ceremony.

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Yes! Please sign me up as a 2014 member of the Sharon Historical Society.

For only \$10.00, I am entitled to all the benefits of membership in one of the most active and friendly organizations in Sharon, dedicated to the preservation of the history of the region.

Name _____

Address _____

(Street)

(City)

(State)

Zip Code)

Telephone _____ **e-mail address** _____

(Please return to Sharon Historical Society, P.O. Box 363, Sharon Springs, NY 13459 or bring to Treasurer at the next meeting.)