

ORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY
MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday October 17, 2023 at 6:00pm
Orwell Free Library

ATTENDING: Kathy Buxton, Joe Taparauskas, Martha Hill, Danielle Rougeau, Arlene Batschelet; Page Nolker by Zoom

Meeting was called to order at 6pm

There were no Citizens' Comments.

The meeting opened with Martha's presentation of her Wright Memorial Library/Clark House exhibit created for the Vermont Room. This will be printed on foam core by Eagle Printing and the original file will be cataloged and saved electronically in the OHS system.

Martha's exhibit is designed to answer the question: "Before the library was a library and museum, who lived here?" Following a trail of land records at the Town Office as well as recorded deaths and wills online, Martha traced lineages and made fantastic discoveries that became the content for the exhibit along with scanned images. Her exhibit will go on display in the Vermont Room immediately, as well as serving as a template for future exhibits.

(Lots of ooo-ing and ah-ing and discussion of her exciting discoveries and great work!)

BUSINESS:

Kathy shared that our current balance is \$6,025.96 – minus two reimbursed expenses, \$99.63 and \$128.11, to Danielle for supplies.

Danielle has two additional bills to submit for archival shelving material.

Kathy informed Martha that OHS will reimburse her for Eagle Printing to produce her exhibit.

Compliance. Kathy queried the board whether we intend to be in compliance with Vermont Open Meeting Law. We are not currently compliant. Compliance involves posting meeting agendas and notes in a specific number of days in three locations. Danielle spoke for herself and Page that compliance in a timely fashion is in fact an onerous request. Kathy agreed to look into the specifics of the law and what we need to understand.

MUSEUM UPDATE:

- Use of research room in the near future
- Heat pump

Danielle acknowledged that she is thinking big picture with this request, but ultimately resolving the extreme variation in temperatures is of critical importance to the collection, as well as our ability to work through the winter.

- WMB punch list

Danielle shared that the WMB requested our wish list.

Our list includes: additional window inserts; rehanging existing doors as well as providing replacement doors that lock where needed; an electrical upgrade; and heat pump. Danielle walked the group through each item and its benefit to the museum, as well as Wright Memorial Building in terms of energy, efficiency and safety.

Kate Hunter joined the meeting briefly to explain how the ARPA money works, and that the WMB request for improvements is part of their standard annual procedure.

This precipitated a conversation regarding OHS financials and Wright Board money versus town funding. Kathy clarified that soliciting town funds would create an onerous amount of work for whoever serves as treasurer, as it involves submitting all our documentation for regular town audits.

- Textile room
- Window inserts

SEPTEMBER MINUTES:

- Ledgers in exhibit room closet

These are believed to be documentation from the former Wright-French business.

- Grand lists: property of the Town, moved to Town Clerk's Office
- Correspondence with Elizabeth Marshall (Accessions 2023.005-009)

Danielle reported that she has been in conversation with Sally Phelps Marshall's daughter, Elizabeth Marshall. Elizabeth currently resides in Modesto, California. She is scanning photos and records in her possession to help Danielle identify the subjects in the framed portraits Mark Young presented to the museum last month after he settled the Phelps Estate. The group photograph of women high school graduates includes Sally's grandmother.

- School exhibit

The school exhibit is on hold. The room is currently being used for staging as we continue to shuffle realia.

Walter Phelps alerted Martha to the existence of an 1823 account book for the Stone School.

- Accession information in annual town reports

Martha reported that the town reports do not provide sufficient detail to assist with recreating an accurate accession inventory. However, Sally Marshall's accession reports, provided by Mark Young, are proving invaluable.

- Joanne Hornbeck painting

Danielle reported that she needs to connect with Joanne to finalize and schedule the painting of the museum research room.

- Yellen parlor stove

Danielle reported that she spoke with Nancy Yellen and confirmed that the cylindrical parlor stove was donated as a prop, and has no historical connection to Orwell.

Danielle acknowledged that OHS needs to approve and finalize its own accession and deaccession policies.

ACCESSIONS + DEACCESSIONS:

- Clock from the school that was on Young Road (2023.004). Gift of Ed Martel estate.
- Eagle Inn dinner poster and plate (2023.002-003). Gift of Warren Palmer

Arlene brought a 1960 and 1955 calendar from the Smith's IGA that stood where the Orwell bank addition currently exists. Arlene shared her personal memories of shopping at Smith's, which sold everything from food, to clothing, boots, stationary, and hardware. She recalled the well-oiled wood floors and the life-sized statue of the United Fruit Company's Chiquita Banana icon. The IGA burned in 1971.

MEMBERSHIP:

Arlene Batschelet submitted dues to join OHS.

FUTURE GOALS:

- Inventory/catalog/processing projects

Danielle, with assistance, will continue the slow work to inventory the museum collection, checking each item against Sally's accession lists, and assigning unique identifiers.

Most of the critical preservation work to stabilize the collection has been completed, thanks to Martha and Danielle's combined efforts cleaning, clearing and reorganizing. There are still some structural changes to the building that need to occur. (See notes under Museum Update.)

As Danielle develops her system and feels ready, she will define some very clear project outlines we can use to solicit volunteer involvement.

There was a general acknowledgement of the amount of work and time involved in cataloging the museum inventory and that there is no true urgency. This work is foundational and must happen first, regardless of how long it takes.

- Exhibits

There was a discussion of using Martha's Clark House exhibit as a template for future exhibits, both online and for display in the Vermont room. Martha and Danielle agreed that there is no shortage of interesting material available for future exhibits.

- Interviews

Martha and Kathy added Mead Murphy, Vera Blakely, and Norton Latourelle to our list of prospective oral history subjects.

OHS Website: Page agreed to look into what it would require to post meeting notes, agendas and online exhibits on our OrwellHistoricalSociety.org WordPress site. Danielle agreed to share Martha's powerpoint exhibit with the group.

OTHER BUSINESS:

- Naming of research room and exhibit room

The board revisited Martha's suggestion from our September meeting that we consider naming the research and exhibit rooms to honor the service and contributions of Sally Marshall and Sandy Korda. There was a discussion of whether we had sufficient board members present to vote. Page queried the pros and cons of the suggestion, which raised the acknowledgement that there are a number of OHS past members whose service contributions are deserving of recognition. We agreed that there is more to consider, including soliciting additional recommendations. Doris Bishop's name was also proposed. Danielle agreed to reach out to Sandy to ask his feelings about being recognized in this way.

Kathy reminded Danielle that we need to submit the OHS annual report for the Orwell Town Meeting report by January 2024.

There was a discussion to fill Jane Reidel's vacated director's seat on the OHS board to maintain a proper quorum. Danielle also agreed to check in with John Wurzbacher whose term expires January 2024.

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, November 14, 2023, 6PM, OFL

Adjourned at 7 PM.

Submitted by Page Nolker