

**ORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
MEETING MINUTES  
Tuesday September 19, 2023 at 6:00pm  
Orwell Free Library**

ATTENDING: Jim Rowe, Kathy Buxton, Joe Taparauskas, Page Nolker, Martha Hill, Danielle Rougeau.

\*\* This meeting was held in the OHS museum, and was intended as a progress presentation and board walkthrough of the new layout. Protocol was not maintained.

There were no Citizens' Comments.

Due to the mobile nature of this meeting, Kathy Buxton did not present the Treasurer's Report. Martha Hill submitted her \$25 dues to officially join the OHS membership.

Danielle walked our group through the museum room-by-room. She reported that the Gagnons did a fabulous job moving and staging museum overflow in the basement. Eventually those items need to be reviewed for cataloging or deaccessioning..

Danielle shared her excitement that the collections at Middlebury are willing to give us ten-plus archival exhibit frames, with a donation value exceeding \$1,000. We will be able to use these for our own future exhibits, facilitating the ability to easily change and display content.

As she walked us through each room, Danielle narrated new discoveries, including the incredibly rich history of the merino industry in Orwell. As well as hidden troves of the Orwell Citizen, 1900-1941, a tall pile of bound ledgers from the EM Wright and Company Dry Good Store (this needs to be confirmed), and a box of Grand Lists from the 19th century. She introduced the five new items from the Phelps estate, presented to the museum by Mark Young on behalf of Elizabeth Marshall, daughter of Sally Phelps Marshall, that same day.

In the new textile room. Danielle showed us the work in progress to preserve our clothing collection. She informed the group that she had purchased and assembled 3, plus 1 remaining to assemble, clothing racks with padded hangers, and demonstrated Arlene's muslim cover design. Jim Rowe had brought with him a plywood base on castors for moving the racks. Danielle explained the new window inserts for light and insulation that she and Martha constructed. Purchasing soft, archival polyethylene foam for storing hats and accessories is next on the list.

In the future research room, Danielle explained her vision to hire JoAnn Hornbeck to paint the room "Simply White." Ideally, we will remove the ill-fitting "parlor" door prop with a proper, locking door. The group discussed possibilities for closing off and securing the collections. The research room, which Martha proposed naming the "Marshall Research Room," will display a collection of framed Orwell portraits and hold cabinets with paper archives.

The one-room school house exhibit will move to the former Military Room and expand to include a more robust presentation of the ten Orwell school houses. Martha proposed naming our exhibit room the “Kordra Exhibit Room” to acknowledge and honor all of Sandy’s hard work and dedication.

There was a further acknowledgement of the sheer quantity of work that needs to be done cataloging our inventory and matching it against Sally Marshall’s lists. Information from Sandy, suggests that checking for accessions against a complete set of the annual town report is another way to track down provenance. However, before cataloging can even begin, our space and systems need to be prepared.

The possibility of launching informal history conversations and story sharing as an ongoing social event at the library, with the option of recording these, was discussed. This could be an interim step toward our long-term vision of conducting and archiving official oral histories. Danielle shared that Mark Young has three cassettes of recorded conversations with his grandfather that he has not listened to.

Finally, there was a discussion to differentiate and clarify the relationship between the museum and the society, which acts as the governing body. Kathy is going to ask Rusty Young to look into the legal status of the museum for us. The question is whether we currently do or could fall under the town’s jurisdiction? The current understanding is that the Orwell Historical Museum is registered with the state of Vermont, but does NOT have the Federal 501-C3 status we need to make financial donations more appealing. Filing for tax-free status is cumbersome, and if we can piggy-back on the town’s status, this would be ideal.

The meeting ended an hour over with much enthusiasm and much more to discuss.

#### **NEXT STEPS:**

Continue to inventory and archivally secure collection.

Danielle and Page still need to meet to discuss and finalize OHS oral history kit.

Kate has requested that the OHS update our exhibit in the library Vermont Room—let’s plan to discuss next meeting.

**Next Meeting:** Tuesday, October 17, 2023, 6PM, OFL

Adjourned at 8:20 PM.

Submitted by Page Nolker