



MEETINGHOUSE NEWS

Bell Hill Meetinghouse Association

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Vice President-Callie Zilinsky
Secretary-Ann Johnstone
Treasurer-Bobbie Polland

Directors-Ken Bartow,
Beth Calhoun
Mark Grover, John Skolfield,
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Connie Sasser

Adam Bartow-editor
December 2024

From the President

We close out 2024 with our steeple restoration nearly complete and our fund raising goal nearly met. The repairs to the bell tower were more extensive than originally thought, but thanks to our expert restoration team, these critical repairs are now complete. The only remaining task is repair to the holes in the plaster ceiling that were necessary in order to place the structural staging. As the main tie beam at bent two was installed while still green, our timber framer, Lee Hoagland, recommended that the beam be supported by the structural staging as it continued to cure in order to prevent possible sagging. The staging will be removed in March and the ceiling repairs completed in April. Our project was funded by five grants, in-kind donations, generous member donations, and a loan of \$40,000.00. We have repaid half of the loan and expect to retire the remainder within 18 months. The support of our members has been critical to the success of this project and we thank you!. As we close the year, we know that you have many choices for where to make your charitable donations. We hope you will consider making the Bell Hill Meetinghouse Association part of your holiday giving. Thank you and Happy Holidays!

New Officers and Trustees

At the annual business meeting on September 9, we elected new members to the board. Returning for another year as officers are Polly Bartow-President, Callie Zilinsky-Vice President, and Ann Johnstone-Secretary. Bobbie Polland was elected as Treasurer. Bobbie brings many years of professional financial experience to the job. Joining Trustees Ken Bartow, Mark Grover, Connie Sasser, and Mike Thorne are newly elected Trustees John Skolfield, Seth Skolfield, and Beth Calhoun. John just retired from a successful career as a highly skilled carpenter and he has worked on our buildings previously. John's son, Seth is an all-around handyman who brings managerial and building skills to the table. Beth is a lawyer with deep roots in Otisfield and a love of historic preservation. Welcome to our newest board members!

Retiring from the board after 3 years of dedicated service as our treasurer is Chris Conde. Chris managed our funds beautifully through our bell tower restoration project as well as serving as membership chairman and handling printing and mailing duties. Sincerest thanks to Chris for taking on a tough job!

What's Been Happening



Our summer season kicked off with the annual Strawberry Festival on July 7, a collaboration between the Otisfield Historical Society and the Bell Hill Meetinghouse Association. Over 200 folks enjoyed strawberry shortcake on the Common before taking a tour of the Bell Hill Schoolhouse and stepping inside the Meetinghouse for a look at the creative artwork of Otisfield resident Anna Gregoire. The strawberry shortcake sales benefit the Otisfield Historical Society, not the Meetinghouse Association,



but we are thrilled to host this annual event that is now looked forward to by residents and summer visitors alike. Plan to join us next year!

Keep reading on Page 2 to learn about more exciting events that have been taking place!



We welcomed special guest Ron Joseph as our speaker for the Annual Program, always held on the last Sunday in July. Mr Joseph is a retired Maine wildlife biologist and his stories were sometimes hilarious, sometimes nostalgic, and always engaging. The afternoon was rounded out by our Famous Ice Cream Social on the Common and an open house in the Schoolhouse.

We were also pleased to welcome members of Jim and Anita Washburn's family. Jim was a longtime dedicated trustee who quietly "did what needed doing" without expectation of thanks or reward. Anita pitched in with a helping hand frequently. The family gave a moving tribute to these lived ones and presented a check in their memory to the Association



Local favorites The Cobblestones were back for a concert on August 18th. Their blend of songs from a variety of artists such as Fleetwood Mac, Jackson Brown, Mary Chapin Carpenter, and Bonnie Raitt are always crowd pleasers. Did the structural staging in the rear of the building stop us from dancing?! Of course not!

Mark your calendar



Annual Strawberry Festival – Sunday, July 6, 2025, 4pm until 6pm at the Meetinghouse. Benefits the Otisfield Historical Society, but hosted by the Meetinghouse Association. The Schoolhouse will be open and staffed by our Trustees for tours and old-time games for children. The Meetinghouse will once again host a one-person art show. This is a fun family event you won't want to miss!

Annual Program – Sunday, July 27, 4pm until 6pm. We will depart from our usual program with a speaker to present a family-friendly Open House at the Meetinghouse. Come for a short visit or stay for the entire event as we celebrate the completion of the bell tower restoration and the installation of the new carpet. Ice cream sundaes with homemade cookies will be the featured attraction on the Common. The Schoolhouse will be open with games and displays. Inside the Meetinghouse is still a secret, but we promise something fun for kids of all ages. Please plan to join us as we branch out with something new.

Concert – We are still working on plans, but the tentative date is Sunday, August 17 at 6pm. Stay tuned!



Bell Tower Restoration in Photos



Carpet is Ready!

Thistle Hill Weavers completed the reproduction of our original 1839 ingrain carpet and in August, Ken and Polly Bartow made the trip to Cherry Valley, NY to pick up the beautiful new carpets. The original carpet had an unusually large repeat pattern which proved prohibitively costly to replicate and so master weaver Rabbit Goody, owner of Thistle Hill Weavers, selected a representative section of the original design for our new textile. The colors are bright, but soft maroons, creams, tans, and sages much like the original hues. We expect the carpet to be installed in April or May just in time for our first event of the season. Our resident textile expert, Trustee Connie Sasser has designed a safe method to display a section of the original carpet. Please make plans to attend our Open House on Sunday, July 27 from 4-6 to see the carpet and enjoy the interesting and fun things we are planning for the day.

A Parting Picture

The date of this picture is unknown

