

WATCHUNG HISTORICAL COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT 2013

2013 was a banner year in the history of the Historical Committee with the establishment and grand opening of The Texier House as a Museum for the Borough of Watchung. More than ten years of work trying to find a home for the historic collection, renovating the Texier House, moving all of the museum cases and materials from the Library and member's homes and sorting and organizing materials into exhibits culminated in the Grand Opening held on October 5, 2013. This event was deemed a huge success and was extremely well attended by residents. A ribbon cutting ceremony officially opened the Museum for tours throughout the day. A Civil War Re-enactment took place simultaneously on the Village Green and the Boy Scouts served refreshments and the Girl Scouts did craft activities for children. The proclaimed "History Day in Watchung" was a celebration of the proud history of this community. Many groups donated exhibits for outside the Museum including a restored antique tractor, model farm animals and the antique fire truck. There were numerous newspaper articles printed about the activities.

From January through October, the Committee worked tirelessly to set up exhibits, sort and organize material and prepare for the opening. The Committee applied for and received a grant from the CAPES organization and the evaluation visit took place in July. Their report documents the procedures needed to assure the preservation of the collection of historic items.

There were many noteworthy milestones throughout the year. An anonymous donor came forward to restore the stained glass window from the Castle which is a treasure for the community to have. Mary Ciccolello and Phyliss Juette worked all year to restore the Watchung Diorama, originally prepared by the Historical Committee in the 1960's. Katherine Wilmerding Rule donated her carving of the Castle along with many other artifacts from the Castle which were incorporated into the displays. The Eaton Family generously gifted us with more material about the family and Dr. Charles Eaton.

The Committee was active in supporting Walter Pennett's Eagle Scout project which culminated in an outstanding display in the Museum of sports in the Borough.

Chris Vander Fliet and Bob Adams, two local college students studying film making started developing a video documenting life in early Watchung through interviewing longtime residents and officials. This project is not complete, but well on its way.

The Committee conducted tours for the entire third grade student body of Bayberry on December 9 including a history of various aspects of the Borough.

Outstanding cooperation was given to the Historical Committee from all of the Borough's Departments.

THE FOLLOWING GOALS FROM THE 2013 STRATEGIC PLAN WERE COMPLETED:

Establish the Texier House as a local museum containing all artifacts and material pertaining to the history of the Borough of Watchung displayed for the community to enjoy.

- **Complete the Application for a CAPE's Survey with the goal of getting guidance for organizing and displaying items in our local museum. (January, February, 2013)**
- **Continue to sort and organize all historical materials that have been moved to the Texier House. (January – June, 2013)**
 - Continue to refine the groupings in sub-categories as appropriate.
 - File printed materials that will not be used immediately in files in conference room.
- **Decide how the space in the Texier House shall be utilized and develop a floor plan of where items can be placed. (January – June, 2013)**
 - Concentrate efforts on one category and plan to fill one or two cases with a display.
 - Review and modify plans for placement of materials as necessary.
 - Assemble museum cases, determine how many we will use and place on first floor.
 - Make changes as necessary in the plan once the actual size of the collection can be seen in the spaces originally allocated.
 - Refine the organization and cataloging of all materials as they are placed in position.
- **Oversee the Eagle Scout Project of developing a display depicting the history of sports in The Borough of Watchung.**
 - Provide resources and information from our files and collection.
 - Assist with selection, preservation, and cataloging material.
 - Monitor progress as materials are developed for display.
 - Coordinate project with Scout Project Advisor.

- **Begin process of cataloging items in the collection, starting with largest pieces, working down to printed pieces with a goal of cataloging all items in the collection. . (March – December, 2013)**
 - Utilize a computer program to list, organize, and track all items in the collections
 - Maintain the program as items are added to the list.
- **Prepare conference room for use as a work room and temporary storage room for the Committee's materials.**
 - Utilize file cabinets to store printed material that will not be used right away.
 - Organize the Committee's Minutes, Correspondence, Documents, Budgets, etc. into the files in the conference room.
 - Develop forms necessary to the operation of the museum.
- **Assess progress to determine if an Open House is possible in the near future. Begin thinking about hours that the museum will be open and staffing.**
- **Plan at least one program for the community once the move is complete.**
- **Utilize the experience and expertise of others in the community to assist in this planning and implementing.**

THE FOLLOWING GOALS WERE PARTIALLY COMPLETED:

- **Plan for future video of the history of Watchung**
(A video documenting life in early Watchung according to the reflections of many long-time residents is in progress.)
- **Contact colleges to determine if there are students in library science or other majors that could assist us in setting up the museum and organizing the material. (Jan – March 2013)**
- **Continue to meet with other Historical Committees from other towns to get ideas about showcasing and organizing the collection. (January – June, 2013)**

➤ **Recreate the narrative to the program on the history of Watchung**

Use the CD of the pictures to develop a Power Point presentation about the history of Watchung.

THE FOLLOWING GOALS ARE ONGOING AND/OR LONG TERM AND ALL WERE COMPLETED OR CONSIDERED IN THE PROGRAM OF WORK:

As items are added to the collection, maintain the catalog.

- **Collect and organize newspaper and magazine clippings, record events that occur in Watchung in 2012 and create a scrapbook of such material. An introductory page of the year's Highlights will be developed. This goal shall be included in each year's program of work.**
- **Continue to sell note cards and Watchung books as a fund-raising project.**
- **Attend Historical Workshops sponsored by the state and county historical organizations to gain information to improve the functions of the Committee.**
- **Continue to photograph appropriate events in the Borough.**
- **Continue to collect any and all information pertaining to the History of Watchung. Monitor on-line sources for historical material.**
- **Examine the fiscal needs of the Historic Committee in view of the occupancy of the Texier House and the establishment of a Borough Museum.**
 - **Determine ways to manage costs and increase revenue**
 - **Examine external support for government and corporate grants**
 - **Monitor the budget and establish a history for expenses.**
 - **Determine budget needs for 2014.**

LONGER-TERM GOALS

- **Develop a Web-site for the Historical Committee**
- **Continue to plan for a sculpture/monument describing the history of Watchung Lake as an ice industry.**

- **Collect material and plan for a project titled, *Reflections of Watchung*. This material will be used to publish pamphlets, booklets, videos, CD's, and eventually a book containing historical information about Watchung. Record appropriate events particularly changes of buildings and property. Record information from residents and other sources to capture the color and flavor of the community to assure that critical pieces of history are not forgotten.**
- Historical Committee will together ride through all the streets of the Borough, recording what is known now about that area. Document the origins of the names of the streets in the Borough.
 - Utilize technology, both visual and sound to preserve information gathered from long-time residents about the history of the Borough
 - Utilize information gathered to regularly publish and disseminate articles about Watchung, including anecdotes and "Did you Know" type articles.
 - Pursue other publishers for a book titled "*Watchung, Past and Present.*" This project would include photographs already in the collection plus recent photographs taken throughout the Borough.
 - Explore programs to increase visibility and the image of the Historic Committee, i.e. Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, other community groups.
 - Explore fund-raising projects for the future.

Approved at the April 15, 2014 Historical Committee Meeting.