

**A Message from:
Watchung Historical Committee
2/15/2018**

2017 was certainly the “Year of the Mural” for The Watchung Historical Committee and it appears that 2018 will also be dominated by activities surrounding the Mural. When we learned that the pending demolition of the Sears building could be as early as October 2017, all our efforts turned towards saving the beloved painting. We are happy to report the “Legend of Watchung” mural was safely removed from the Sears Building in September 2017 by Materials Conservation, and is currently being stored in a climate-controlled facility until funds can be raised for its cleaning, restoration and re-installation.

Early estimates for the complete removal, cleaning, restoration, and re-installation of the mural were anticipated at \$40,000. Approximately \$15,000 has already been raised through a Go-Fund-Me page as well as private donations. This has been used for the removal of the painting. An additional \$26,000 is needed to complete the project, but we are consulting other professionals for additional estimates. No tax payer money is being used for this effort, and solely relies on private donations.

The cleaning, restoration and re-installation of the painting will remove dust and dirt built up on the canvas from pollution. The restoration will include color enhancement, as well as touch-ups on the painting to bring it as close to original quality as possible. The re-installation will ensure it can more easily be removed from its new home if required.

The Watchung Historical Committee is seeking donations, large or small to help ensure that this beloved mural finds a new home. While the Mural's new home is yet to be determined, we are looking at different locations. Its ultimate home will likely be a public, well visited location to ensure common visibility and protection from any type of vandalism. **We are open to ideas from the public!**

Below is the link to the Go-Fund-Me page for the mural if you are interested in donating:

<https://www.gofundme.com/removal-and-conservation-of-mural>

Another option is to donate directly to the Watchung Community Foundation, and please designate in the memo portion that it is for the “Sears Mural.” You can send/deliver the check to Watchung Borough Hall, 15 Mountain Boulevard Watchung, NJ 07069.

We much appreciate your donation, large or small!

Although the Mural remains our highest priority, the other work of the Committee has to go on. We completed a lengthy application for a Somerset County History Partnership Grant and were pleased that we were awarded \$4000 toward the restoration of the Mural. We have to match \$4000, and all of this will go toward the Mural project! Some of the required matching funds can be offset by volunteer hours, of which we have many!

Since the opening of the Museum, the work of the Committee has greatly increased and we welcomed Tim Logan, Chris Blackadar and Seth Alexander as new members, which left one vacancy. Unfortunately we accepted the resignation of Lynn Stahl and Lynn Franklin due to their increased responsibilities in another organization. Rick Stomber also had to resign due to a promotion and a long commute into the city each day. All three of these members will continue to help us when they can and we are grateful for that.

So, recruiting and training four new members is another high priority for 2018. If anyone is interested, please complete the “**Volunteers Needed**” form in this newsletter and submit it to Borough Hall. Or, call or email as below for more information.

2017 was the 100th anniversary of the United States engaging into WW I and all the museums in NJ were encouraged to have exhibits. We featured our priceless WW I posters that we found upstairs. Thanks to Rick Stomber who researched the posters and developed the exhibit. Two other interesting WW I artifacts were also donated and added to our collection. Please visit the Texier House if you have not seen this exhibit!

Another work in progress in a new school exhibit and we are seeking artifacts for that. The video, “Reflections of Watchung,” is close to completion and we think everyone will be pleased with this project. Thanks to Chris Vander Fliet for his hours and hours of work on this. We hope to have a “movie night” soon so that the whole town can see what we have been doing to preserve what life was like in the early days of Watchung.

We continue to accrue more material. We received some priceless film of Camp Endeavor from the nineteen forties which Chris Vander Fliet is working on. I attended the auction at the closing of the Colorado Café and obtained some good artifacts. Former residents have gifted us much material and our newly developed Accession, Deed of Gift and Loan Agreement forms will be in use.

Some of the Valley Players, who still reside close by, are interested in helping us develop the material we have on all the plays and programs they did. We met with them several times.

The Texier House is now freshly painted and all the rotting trim, gutters, etc. were replaced and the overgrown shrubbery was removed. The Museum is now another jewel on the circle! We look forward to the completion of the tile ceilings to go along with the replaced lighting that now no longer threatens to fade our exhibits.

We continue to open the Texier Museum on the first and third Sundays of each month. We also participated in the Somerset County Weekend Journey to the Past in October and will participate in this again in 2018. Attendance was excellent and our Museum is very well received. We had visitors from out of county and out of state. We decorated a tree for the Somerset County Environmental Center’s Festival of Trees and this was well received. We served refreshments and offered tours of the Museum after the Veteran’s Day Ceremony. We continue to maintain clippings and scrapbooks of current

Watchung and to photograph important events and changes in Watchung, thanks to Betse Titus and Betty Jean Aldrich.

Committee members attended one workshop on Strategic Planning and another on Social Media Marketing for Cultural Institutions to increase our skills and knowledge of maintaining a Museum and an efficient and effective Historical Committee. Both of these workshops were sponsored by Somerset County.

The Committee also worked with Matt King on his Eagle Scout project and he completed his project early this year. Matt has identified two Revolutionary War grave sites in the cemetery next to *Water and Wine*, and has researched them and marked those graves with special markers. We plan to have a ceremony and some more information about this in the spring. The Committee also worked with Alexandra Benc for her Girl Scout Gold Award. She refurbished the outhouse in the back of the Museum. Also, as part of her project, she developed Historical Walking and Driving tours of Watchung. This will also be completed in 2018 and will be available at the Museum soon.

The Watchung Historical Committee is proud of its accomplishments but hopes to do even more once we have a full complement of members. We thank the Mayor and Council for their support and especially for the leadership of our Liaison, Dave Mobus!

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Current Historic Members
Betty Jean Aldrich, Co-Chair
Seth Alexander
Chris Blackadar, Secretary
Tim Logan
Betse Titus
Chris Vander Fliet