

## **HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE TOWN OF HAMPDEN**

The Historical Society of the Town of Hampden's most exciting event in 2003 was the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of Hampden separating from Wilbraham and becoming a new town. The Board of Directors of our society provided the momentum for this event, which was co-sponsored by the Monson Savings Bank. It took place at the Town House in the morning on March 28<sup>th</sup>; exactly 125 years after the day Hampden became a town on March 28, 1878.

This celebration required the work of many people. Tom Flynn and the Board of Directors of our society scheduled the affair and Tom did the publicity. Wilbur Jenkins provided the loudspeaker system and Elva Jenkins provided the cloth to cover the speaker's podium.

The celebration began with music. Soloist Kim Ayers of St. Mary's Church sang our national anthem and combined her voice with those of members of the choir of the Federated Community Church in singing, "Let There Be Peace on Earth," as well as the song about Hampden written by Gertrude Bump.

Richard Patullo introduced the speakers. Dignitaries, Congressman Richard E. Neal, State Representative Mary S. Rogeness, and State Senator Brian P. Lees, commended the town on its anniversary. Evelyn Schoolcraft spoke for the society, giving an idea of the many attempts made by our forefathers to become a town and the defeats they endured until success came that March day 125 years ago. A representative of the Massachusetts Archives was present and brought the original petition so that all might see the actual signatures of townspeople who helped to bring about the separation.

Marge Kehoe donated a marvelous model of Academy Hall, which she had made to scale entirely of chocolate. Dunkin' Donuts contributed donuts and coffee for the event. We also provided punch. The hall was thronged with so many that some in the audience had to stand. We also sold colorful sun-catchers of Academy Hall and the Hampden book at this event.

Our annual dinner was held at Annie's Restaurant in April where we enjoyed good food and fellowship.

During subsequent meetings of our society, John O'Connor, of the Connecticut Valley Historical Museum, enlightened us on the proper way to do genealogical research with his program on research and on "Shaking Your Family Tree." Some society members have already done extensive research on their own families. For those from out-of-town searching for their Hampden ancestors, our books on the town often provide the facts they need.

Joyce Libby, a member of the staff at Sturbridge Village, briefed us on Anti-Slavery

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Society Meetings. Dressed in the clothing of that time, she made history come alive. Art Bonneau has an extensive collection of antique medical supplies and equipment, enough to fill a museum. He fascinated us with many unusual devices and answered our questions about medical treatment, at the same time permitting us to touch the old-time instruments and be thankful we live in a modern age.

When St. Mary's Church acquired a new organ, Carol Schneider Brufee purchased the original. Later she sold it to an individual. Eventually it went to other families, winding up on Martha's Vineyard. Now we are proud to have it back, gracing our meeting room. Carol presented a spectacular organ recital on the old instrument this past November, concluding with a sing-a-long for those present. The event was such a success that we plan to present this again yearly.

The museum has been opened to the public at specific times, clothing has been changed on our floor models and we have updated our files. We keep busy, even during times when the museum is closed to the public. The "Hampden" book is still selling well. Arcadia, the publisher, has fewer than fifty left, so we suggest that it might be prudent for anyone who has not yet acquired the book to purchase one before we are sold out.

Anyone is welcome to attend our meetings, whether we are having an ice cream social or a specific speaker. If you are interested in the history of our town and of our nation, please come. We meet on the fourth Tuesday of each month, from March through November.

Respectfully submitted:

Linda Krawiec, President