



Belfast Historical Society & Museum

October 2011 Newsletter

Dear Members,

It has been a banner year!! The Museum opened for the season on June 18, with summer interns Sierra Ventura and Emma Bonneville holding down the fort. As always, it is our wonderful interns, so generously supported by you, our membership, who make it possible to keep the Museum open five days each week through the summer. Sierra and Emma greeted visitors, gave tours, conserved and catalogued collections and generally assisted with all aspects of Museum operations. When the Museum officially closed for the season on October 8, 890 visitors from 37 states and 8 foreign countries had signed the guest register and donated over \$1000 to our education fund. Many visitors were from the American Cruise Line ships and enjoyed walking tours led by Megan Pinette, Brenda Bonneville, David Loxterkamp, and Lindsay McGuire.

On June 14, Flag Day, the 1864 Belfast Civil War quilt was on display in the Abbott Room of the Belfast Free Library. Over 200 people attended and about 75 stayed for a brief talk given by Pam Weeks, curator of the New England Textile Museum in Lowell, Mass. By now, all of you have probably heard how the quilt was sent to the Armory Square Hospital in Washington, D.C. and then disappeared until returned to Belfast this past spring by Mary Rickl in Montana. The great mystery was how the quilt got to Montana, and we thought we would never find out. Then, in August, we received a wonderful letter from Diana Milburn Brady of Winnett, Montana. It seems her great-great-grandfather was Dr. D.W. Bliss, chief surgeon at Armory Square Hospital. When the Hospital closed, the quilt was acquired by Dr. Bliss's daughter Eugenie who married a young lawyer by the name of George R. Milburn in 1875. In 1882, Milburn was appointed Special Indian Agent to the Dakota and Montana Territories and subsequently moved his family, along with the quilt, to Miles City, Montana. Mrs. Brady, a direct descendant of the Milburn/Bliss union, went on to provide much information about her family, including a photo of Dr. Bliss and how the quilt came into the possession of Mary Rickl. The provenance of the Belfast Civil War quilt is now complete! Steps have been taken to choose a qualified textile conservator to evaluate the quilt and recommend treatment.

Thanks to generous local business support and a grant from the Hut Foundation, up-dated and reformatted self-guided walking tour brochures of the Downtown and Residential Historic Districts were completed this summer. The tours have been expanded to include more sites and additional historical and architectural information. Brochures are free and available at the Chamber of Commerce and the Museum.

Next time you visit the Museum, take notice of the new signage. From Post Office Square, you will see a large "Museum" sign. In front of the building, facing Market Street, is the *new* sign reading "Belfast Historical Society/Museum/Est.1955". We attribute some of the increase in the number of visitors this season to the improved signage.

Surely you all took notice of the beautiful gardens at the Museum. We have Harmony Joseph to thank for that! Harmony worked tirelessly all summer weeding and dead-heading and making sure everything was perfect. We are very grateful for all her good work! And thanks to the Garden Club for providing a weekly bouquet for display in the Museum.

In August, for the third year, volunteers manned a booth about Belfast's maritime history at the Belfast Harbor Fest. The exhibits and information attracted much attention. Megan spoke at the Rotary luncheon that month, as well, up-dating everybody about Society and Museum activities. She was assisted by Museum intern Emma Bonneville.

On Friday, October 7, the entire Social Studies faculty from RSU 20 middle and high schools visited the Belfast Museum. Organized by BAHS teacher Molly Ross, the visit was designed to inform teachers about resources available at the Museum. Megan and George were present to answer questions, and both termed the visit successful. The 14 teachers stayed for about an hour and seemed quite interested in what the Museum offered. Hopefully some valuable collaborative programs will result. Stay tuned.

Thanks to the efforts of the Buildings and Grounds Chairman, Dan Clarke, we can report that the physical plant is in excellent condition. As you know the Museum's brick was fully pointed and repaired and the trim painted last year. The driveway and walkways have been sealed, vents added in the apartment bathrooms, and final work is being completed in the lower level of the barn.

"Window on History," our new televised version of our monthly, public Programs at the Belfast Free Library, has enjoyed a solid first year. Viewers have tuned in to BC-TV2, viewed the programs on our website, borrowed DVDs from the Library, and have purchased DVDs of the programs for their own pleasure at home. Indeed, Season I has been so well received that Season II is being expanded to ten months -- three "Winter Season" programs and seven "Live at the Library" programs. For those who missed a program or want to see one again, consider buying a DVD for your own collection. The cost is \$7. for Members and \$8. for Non-Members. What a great holiday gift!

We've won an award! As recipient of the "Preservation Leadership Award," the Belfast Historical Society and Museum will be honored at the Belfast Area Chamber of Commerce's 51st Annual Awards ceremony. We thank all of our friends and Members who took the time to let the Chamber know of our contribution to Belfast and our work to preserve its history.

Although we are officially closed for the season, somebody is usually at the Museum most mornings. Visitors are welcome to drop in or call 338-9229 to make an appointment. Our website is updated regularly, so please visit www.belfastmuseum.org for special events, programs, and updates. And, be sure to check out our other gift items at the Museum, including the 1843 High Street Lithograph and David Hurley's drawing-montage, "Old Buildings of Belfast."

Sincerely,

The Board of Directors