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Chesterfield Historical Society Newsletter

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YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN US AT OUR ANNUAL MEETING

We invite you to come to the Annual Meeting of the Chesterfield Historical Society on Wednesday, October 15th at 6:30 P.M. Please bring a dish to share (casserole or dessert) and a small item for our Chinese Auction. Our Town Hall Booklet is ready! It will be available for sale. Photos that appear in the booklet will also be on display. Purchase a booklet and find out why the town hall was built of stone. Learn how the hearst house and old jail were recycled. Find out what prominent former Boston retail institution was founded by a son of Chesterfield. These and other fascinating facts are in the Town Hall Booklet.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The 2015 calendar is currently being developed. Chesterfield's former Postmaster Jim Madigan has sent articles about Chesterfield that appeared in the weekly newspaper, Vermont Phoenix from 1837. He copies these articles from the Library of Congress – Humanities. Many are about marriages and deaths, others tell of fires, auctions and court cases. Of particular interest is the court case The State vs. Ira Wetherbee accused of burning his farm in 1846. Some of these gems will appear in the 2015 calendar. Here is one article sent to us by Jim:

CHESTERFIELD (from the Vermont Phoenix, April 23, 1846)

By some means a very strong prejudice has been excited against this town throughout the county of Cheshire; and when religion, morals, good order, or anything that should gain the favor of the virtuous is spoken of in connection with the place, people are prompted to enquire – “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” They talk as if the town was inhabited by a race of monsters, wholly unlike the men and women who are found elsewhere. It is the Texas of the county. The name is spoken with a sneer, and with an evident feeling of pride that the speaker is located where the state of society is better than it is there.

Mr. Editor, I have a word to say in favor of Chesterfield. I believe that there is a prejudice against the town which ought not to exist, and which does not exist except in the minds of these who are not very well acquainted with the state of morals there. Chesterfield is taking the lead of the orderly village of Keene in several important reforms.

In the first place, there is no person, I understand in any case. Please set this down to the credit of the place, and ask yourself whether the example is not worthy of being copied by some of the more respectable towns in the county. Furthermore, although there is a new bowling alley in the centre village, the moral feeling of the people against all such nuisances is so strong that it was shut up very soon after it was made, and has not been allowed to go into operation since. The reader will weigh this fact and draw his own inferences. Once more; the youth and young men of the place appear to act as if some restraint was laid upon them. They make

no disturbance – they are not seen prowling about the streets at unseasonable hours, or in any way violating the rules of propriety. I am told by those who are better acquainted with the people there than I am, that there is not a single young man in the town who is decidedly corrupt in morals, and who seems to have lost all self-respect. This is remarkable.

Chesterfield is not free from bad citizens; and pray tell me where you will find a place that is? But it is not so corrupt that it deserves to be made the subject of ridicule. Other towns would do well to pattern after Chesterfield in many respects. And above all “they who live in glass houses should never throw stones.” - Simon

PROGRAM HELD ABOUT MADAME SHERRI

On Wednesday, August 6th Lynne Borofsky, a member of the Chesterfield Conservation Commission, spoke to 40 spellbound attendees about the life and forest castle of the infamous Madame Antoinette Sherri. The presentation began at the picnic table area of the Madame Sherri Forest and included a walk to the nearby “castle” to view the remains of the elegant spiral staircase (the only remains of the original home which burned in the 1960s).

Lynne has done extensive research to correct misconceptions surrounding Madam Sherri’s life and noted that the castle was in fact not a castle and not her home...but a comfortable house built for entertaining her myriad of friends. Photos and comments that Lynne shared during her presentation can be viewed at the Chesterfield Historical Society where Lynne has developed a photo display. Blueberry and cranberry wine and Hershey chocolate (two Madame’s favorite treats) were available along with other refreshments.

On Saturday, September 25th Lynne will be speaking at the dedication of the new kiosk and bridge at Madame Sherri’s.



VOLUNTEER PROFILE

RAE EGAN was originally from California. She came to Keene in 1964 and worked in Elliot Community Hospital (now Cheshire Medical Center) for 32 years. She worked in an operating room setting until 2014. Rae married Ray Egan in 2000. Rae's family has a lot of history with the town. Her family name was Farr. Her forefathers settled in Chesterfield (one of which was Moses Smith, the founder of Chesterfield). Her great grandparents are buried across the street from her house on Poor Road. Rae's volunteer work at the Historical Society includes copying photos and doing vital statistics. She has been volunteering at the Society for several years and is also a member of the Historical Society's Board of Directors.

FROM CHESTERFIELD TO STONEHENGE

A newly cataloged volume from the Philesian Society Library Collection at the Chesterfield Historical Society caught the attention of Neil Jenness as she was planning a trip to England with her daughters. Printed in 1813, it was written by a doctor at Yale telling of his travels in 1803 through England, Scotland and Holland. Opening the book randomly she found a tale of travel by horse and mule north from Cornwall, stopping at Stonehenge on his way to London. He described the many passage graves and burial sites visible surrounding the Stonehenge site. He counted as many as 74 from his vantage point. Presently, very few are visible. He included two fold-out maps of Stonehenge. Planning a visit to the site and thinking that the staff at the site might be interested in his tale of many visible sites, they brought the volume with them.

In touring the time-line exhibit of mentions of Stonehenge at the new visitors' center, Neil and Stephanie realized that the book, or anything from the early 1800s, were included. Needless to say, the director and staff were **very** excited to see the book and the maps. Neil offered to leave it with them so that they could read and copy it. But realizing just how interested they all were, and with a nod from Stephanie, she made an executive decision and offered to donate the book to the English Heritage, who care for the Stonehenge site, from the Chesterfield NH Historical Society. The donation was gratefully accepted and photos were taken to commemorate the occasion.

