

Dummerston Historical Society
Minutes of Annual Meeting
January 22, 2023
(In person at the Schoolhouse)

Welcome President Muriel Taylor welcomed the attendees, saying what a pleasure it was after the Covid restrictions to meet again in person. (Covid is still with us, of course, and everyone was masked.)

Abbreviated Minutes of January 2022 Annual Meeting Sara Ryan read the abbreviated minutes, touching on the main events of 2021.

Recap of 2022 Events Muriel spoke of our successful Zoom meetings: Glenn Annis on the West River Railroad, Lynn Levine on the natural features of a section of Black Mountain. Muriel mentioned the significant forthcoming improvements to the Schoolhouse, thanks to ARPA funds distributed generously by the Selectboard: more insulation overhead, insulation and moisture control in the crawl space, exterior washing and painting, and a new back door. We give up the current door with regret, for it is an antique and was opened by generations of pupils over the years. Its fate is uncertain, but it will not be trashed. With these improvements plus recent repairs the building is in its best shape ever and should be good for many years to come. Looking forward, we hope to welcome a small group of volunteers to work on special projects such as organizing our genealogy material, inventorying, and entering information on the DHS website for easy access.

Treasurer's Report for 2022 Ruth Hoffman reported that as of January 1, 2023, we had about \$9,800 in the operating fund and \$6,000 in the capital fund for a total of \$15,937.54. The directors have adopted a budget for the current year of approximately \$5,000. Ruth explained some of the details of our finances and thanked our donors for their crucial support.

Presentation of Slate of Officers and Directors Sallie May presented the nominations: for President Muriel Taylor, Vice President Charles Fish, Secretary Sara Ryan (all terms expire January 2024). Continuing: Treasurer Ruth Hoffman (term expires January 2026), Directors Gail Sorenson (term expires January 2026) and Jody Normandeau (term expires January 2024). There were no nominations from the floor. A motion was made, seconded, and approved to have the secretary cast one ballot for the slate.

Special Presentation At this point an event occurred that was not on the agenda. Sallie May was asked to step forward, and Jody read from a ribbon-bedecked scroll a proclamation from the directors honoring Sallie for her many years of faithful service and declaring January 22, 2023, SALLIE MAY DAY. She was presented with a DHS life membership and a gift certificate to the 99 Restaurant. Loud applause followed. Sallie thanked the board and said she intended to still help out as her busy schedule allowed. [The proclamation is appended to these minutes.]

Adjournment There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned and Muriel opened the program.

Dummerston Schools: Memories Past and Present

School days, school days
Dear old Golden Rule Days
Reading and 'riting and 'rithmetic
Taught to the tune of the hick'ry stick
You were my queen in calico
I was your bashful barefoot beau
And you wrote on my slate "I love you, Joe"
When we were a couple of kids

Muriel introduced the program with a short history of the Schoolhouse drawn from the "green book," *Dummerston: An "Equivalent Lands" Town 1753-1986*, tracing the various uses, alterations, and locations of the building over its long life. She then introduced Chuck Fish as moderator of the discussion.

There were twenty-eight people present, at least three of whom attended this school before classes were divided between West Dummerston (now the Community Center) and the new consolidated school (the original part of the present building on Schoolhouse Road). Of the three Paul Miller of Vernon spoke first. He attended first and second grades and part of third when his father ran the Bunker Farm. At various times his grandmother and mother had taught here. Cassandra Hickin Freese and Ken Emery also started school in this building and, like Paul, told us much about their experiences and the configuration of the building. Pupils entered through what is now the back door. This section of the building was divided from the big room by a wall and contained the indoor outhouse, a luxury that contributed to the building's designation as a Superior School. In the main room, the blackboard was on this wall. The teacher's desk was nearby in the southeast corner of the room with the pupils seated facing her.

There were too many eager speakers and too many interesting memories to be mentioned in detail without leaving somebody out. The one teacher who spoke was Bill Holiday, a much loved and admired teacher in Dummerston and Brattleboro. Topics of greatest general interest included school bus routes and drivers, the virtues and peculiarities of teachers, the shifting from one school to another as buildings closed or opened, outhouse and indoor toilets, recreation from sliding down the ledges behind the Schoolhouse to conventional playground equipment, the uneasy relations between East and West Dummerston and how it eased as pupils from one side attended school in the other. Little mention was made of reading, writing, and arithmetic and no mention at all of the hickory stick. Olive Evans was remembered fondly, however, as encouraging reading, and Bill Holiday was praised for his integrated approach to learning with a variety of materials including films and practical experiences. Pupils dressed in period costumes came to the Schoolhouse where they became for a day persons of an earlier time and even cooked their lunch on the wood stove. (At some point in modern education "pupils" became "students"; they are pupils here in memory of early times.)

Near the end of the discussion, Catie Berg described the statewide effort to promote "Inclusion" and the local effort to put such a measure on the warning for our upcoming Australian ballot in lieu of town meeting in person. Four o'clock approached, but many people lingered to talk, even without the attraction of refreshments (a deliberate omission because of Covid). The directors were delighted that despite the storm past and the storm to come, people came out, eager to talk and to meet with their neighbors.

Attendance

(Thanks to Sue Miller for the list.)

Muriel Taylor
Ruth Hoffman
Chuck Fish
Sara Ryan
Sallie May
Mary and Paul Miller
Cassandra (Hickin) Freese
Charles Ranney
Phyllis and Ken Emery
Jody Normandeau
Ruth & Merrill Barton
Cindy Wilcox
Dawn (Bessette) and Ron Hubbard, Carol Lee (Bessette) Wood
Lyle and Bill Holiday
Bess Richardson
Catie and Bruce Berg
Sue Miller
Deborah Stanford
Jeffrey Kendrick
Jean and Harold Newell

Proclamation

Whereas Sallie May has served as a director of the Dummerston Historical Society for many years, and

Whereas she has always been ready to lend a hand, and

Whereas she has often seen the better way with the wisdom of long experience, and

Whereas her memory of all things Dummerston has enriched our conversation and planning, and

Whereas in the words of a colleague she has often brought us down to earth by telling it like it is, and

Whereas she will continue to help out as she can so that we will continue to have the pleasure of her company, the Dummerston Historical Society Board of Directors hereby designates January 22, 2023,

Sallie May Day

And with that I lay down my pen and take up my camera.

Chuck Fish
Former Secretary