



# ANNUAL REPORT 2021

## BELLINGHAM HISTORICAL COMMISSION



ESTABLISHED 1973

PUBLISHER OF THE CRIMPVILLE COMMENTS

### A YEAR OF CHANGE

For the Historical Commission 2021 was a year of growth and change.

#### Leadership

In February the Bob Donahue, a member of the Commission passed away. Bob was very active in Bellingham, in addition to his work on the Historical Commission he was on the School Committee, a founder of Bellingham Friends of Music and on the School Building Committees. This year also saw the resignation of long-serving Commission member Priscilla Compton.

At the May meeting of the Commission, the commission members voted in officers. Rick Marcoux was voted Chair, Steve Joanis, Vice-Chair and Bernadette Rivard, Secretary. In the spring the Select Board appointed Marjorie Turner Hollman to fill an open seat on the Commission, joining other members Pam Johnson and Franco Tocchi.

The Commission is in the process of renovating the Bellingham Historical Museum. The museum is a repository for artifacts, documents, photographs and personal collections that help others to envision and understand the lifestyle and concerns of the citizens of Bellingham since the incorporation in 1719.

We hope to reopen the newly renovated and reorganized museum by mid-2022.

#### Planning and Organizing for the Future

2020 was a year of planning and organizing for the future. A mini-split heating/air conditioning unit was added to the museum building for the comfort of visitors and maintenance of collections.

We have expanded our online presence. Board meeting agendas and minutes are posted on the Historical Commission's page on the town website. We have an electronic newsletter where we share periodic Commission news and in 2021 we published two issues of the Crimpville Comments. The Summer issue focuses on identifying Bellingham's Historical Cultural Assets and memories of Bellingham in summers past. The Winter issue focused on Bellingham in Winter's past, with stories of the winters of 1940, 1921 and 1978 as well as the history of the Bellingham Lion's Club "Santa Sleigh Ride". To the right is one of our favorite photos that we discovered in 2021. It is a photo of the 1921 ice storm. The trees in this photo are the view from the home of Hilda Thayer (on the corner of 126 and 140 - Mechanic and South Main Streets) looking out onto Route 140. Just outside the fence were trolley tracks of the Milford and Woonsocket Street Railway.



The Commission members are working on reorganizing the collections for display. We identified some of our top tier historical assets. The include:

### **Community Engagement**

Last year the Commission launched a new, online newsletter to share news and information with the Bellingham community. It currently has 203 subscribers, 20% more than last year!

This year we launched an application process for community members to apply to donate artifacts and materials to the museum. We approved our first application at our December 2021 meeting. We accepted Diane Slopak's dollhouse replica of her grandparents (Alcide 'John' and Anna Bruneau) 1820 Cape Cod style home at 156 Mechanic Street. It will be on display when the museum opens!



The Commission members look forward to expanding access to the museum, learning more about our collections and role in the community, and being the resource that community members look to when researching Bellingham history.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bernadette Rivard

Secretary, Bellingham Historical Commission