



ANNUAL REPORT 2023

BELLINGHAM HISTORICAL COMMISSION



ESTABLISHED 1973

PUBLISHER OF THE CRIMPVILLE COMMENTS

EXPANDING SERVICES & ACCESS

Leadership

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. Other members in 2023 were Marjorie Turner Hollman, Jeffrey Prescott, Jennifer Russo and Franco Tocchi.



2023 Accomplishments

Published 2 editions of the Crimpville Comments! These issues covered the following topics: The introduction of the Mass. Memories Road Show online photo archive; the closing of iconic Bellingham restaurant Pete's Bluebird; the keystone bridges of Bellingham; the history of Assumption Parish, 1927-2004; the history of Marie's Restaurant; Governor Bellingham and the founding of the town; Charles Rhodes and the connection of Bellingham to Plymouth, England; Information on cemeteries, and more!

We also started publishing an article in each issue of the Senior Center newsletter "The Spirit of Bellingham," called Historical Bellingham.

Facility Upgrades

With funding from the Bellingham Commission on Disability, a new railing was installed on the concrete steps that lead to the museum. These steps greatly enhance the building's accessibility. The building also has an accessible ramp on the side of the building for disability access!

In addition to a new "OPEN" sign facing the town center to notify those passing by that the museum is open, a new sign was also installed on that side of the building to let people know the building is the town's museum. We often hear people say they don't know Bellingham has a museum and had no idea that the former library building housed our historical collections!

Museum Projects and Services

Bridgewater State University student and Bellingham resident Lindsay Sezen, reviewed the properties listed in the state MACRIS database as historic properties and helped us identify properties eligible to be added to the list. This project led to the discovery of a lost cemetery that was located in a field between South Main & North Streets. Commission members spent one Saturday in December exploring the area and found the structure in the photo to the right on the site.



Bernadette Rivard updated the Museum Guidebook so that visitors can do a self-guided tour of the museum, which welcomed nearly 200 visitors in 2023.

The Mass. Memories Road Show online archive of photos submitted by Bellingham are now available online at: <http://tinyurl.com/hr4z9fn6>

John Murphrey, who has been working at the museum under the town's Senior Tax Work Off Program, has spent untold hours organizing and documenting the items that are in the basement of the museum, most of which were not in the museum inventory. We have been able to return dozens of items and documents that are not tied to Bellingham to the town or person where they belong.

Planning and Organizing for the Future

In 2023 we continued planning and organizing for the future. In addition to the work of organizing the basement, our other Senior Tax Work Off staff, Marjorie Turner Hollman and Lauren Hummel, continue to work on organizing documents and photographs. We continue to expand 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 to our over 200 subscribers and our Facebook page has 667 followers. As we complete more of the basement organization, we are hopeful that we will be able to swap out displays to highlight new documents and ephemera of Bellingham History.



2023 Events

History Discussion Group Meetings

In January we hosted our first History Discussion Group Meeting. The topic discussed was an overview of Bellingham history, using the book that was published in 2020 by the library: Bellingham Now and Then: Celebrating the 300th Anniversary of Bellingham MA as the beginning point of the discussion.

In April, Marjorie Turner Hollman and Rick Marcoux hosted the second Discussion Group covering the topics of Silver Lake and the Bellingham Fire Department.



Memorial Day Parade & Events

Commission members were joined by a World War II reenactment group to march in the town's Annual Memorial Day Parade. After the Parade the reenactment group hosted a display on the museum grounds and the museum hosted a scavenger hunt for visitors.

Hours

As the museum is staffed by volunteers, our hours vary based on their availability. We aim to be open most Tuesdays and at least one Saturday a month from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm.

Coming in 2024

- In February, the Commission will co-host a program on Genealogy in partnership with the Bellingham Library.
- In March and April the Commission will host tours of the museum as part of the Bellingham Library's "Bellingham History for Homeschoolers" Program.
- At the November 2023 town meeting funding was approved to update fire and security alarm systems in the building. This project will be done in early 2024.

Updated museum hours are on the website and Facebook page

Website: <https://www.bellinghamma.org/historical-commission>

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/BellinghamHistoricalCommissionMA>

Email: history@bellinghamma.org