



ANNUAL REPORT 2020

BELLINGHAM HISTORICAL COMMISSION



ESTABLISHED 1973

PUBLISHER OF THE CRIMPVILLE COMMENTS

A YEAR OF CHANGE

For the Historical Commission 2020 was a year of change.

Leadership

The year began with the resignation of long-time Chair, Marcia Crooks, due to failing health. Marcia and the Crooks family have a legacy in Bellingham that will live on for the ages. Marcia passed away in July.

In the spring the Board of Selectmen appointed Rick Marcoux, Steve Joanis and Bernadette Rivard to the Commission.

At the May meeting of the Commission, which was held on Zoom, the commission members voted in new officers. Rick Marcoux was voted Chair, Steve Joanis, Vice-Chair and Bernadette Rivard, Secretary. In late spring, Pamela Johnson was added as the 7th member of the Commission. The other three members are Franco Tocchi, Priscilla Compton, and Bob Donahue.

The Commission members committed to developing a mission statement to guide their work in the coming years.

Former Commission member Margaret Maxwell assisted in working on an inventory of the museum collections.

Projects

Rick Marcoux arranged for a 1930 fire truck owned by the Commission, to be moved from an unheated, insecure garage on Pearl Street, to a dry, heated space on Williams Way. The Commission's goal is to restore this truck so it can be used at parades and other town events.

Renovation of Museum

Town Administrator Denis Fraine approached the Commission about using the time the museum was closed to the public due to the pandemic as an opportunity to give the Historical Museum a well-deserved face-lift. With the assistance of a cadre of volunteers, including some very strong BHS football players, the collections were boxed, furniture was moved and the project began.



Marcia Crooks
October 4, 1933-July 3, 2020



**Bellingham's First
Fire Engine in better days!**

**Before****After**

Over the summer, new flooring was installed, the walls were painted, and new window treatments were installed. In addition, we are awaiting the installation of new lighting as well as a mini-split heating/air conditioning system to complete the physical renovation.

The Commission members will be working during the spring and summer of 2021 reorganizing the collections in order to make browsing the museum an easy and pleasant experience. There will be sections on public safety and the military; municipal departments

and schools; sports and recreation; and farming and home. The main entrance will have a display case of a timeline of important events and people in Bellingham history. A grand reopening of the museum will be held as soon as pandemic restrictions are lifted.

Restoration

The Commission has arranged for a professional restoration of the 1767 RS Mile Marker that was originally located on Hartford Avenue marking the miles to Boston. In the future, the Commission will be looking to create a replica of this centuries-old piece of Bellingham history, to place in the location of the original. The original will remain at the museum.

Massachusetts has a total of 129 known surviving milestones. This particular stone marked roughly 31 miles to Boston. The markers probably measured distance to the Old State House. The stories surrounding these milestones that suggest Ben Franklin ordered them are unproven and very likely fabrications. Bellingham's was likely commissioned by a private citizen.



**Restored RS
Mile Marker**

Community Engagement

In October of 2020, the Commission launched a new, online newsletter to share news and information with the Bellingham community. It currently has 187 subscribers.

In addition, the mailing list for the Crimpville Comments was reviewed and updated. In November, we published our only issue of the Crimpville Comments for 2020. The issue focused on Bellingham veterans. We hope to publish 2 issues in 2021, and then return to a quarterly publication in 2022.

In July, the Commission offered two programs on the Zoom platform to the Bellingham community. On July 7th, "A Potpourri of Bellingham History" was presented to a group from the Bellingham Senior Center. On July 20th, Steve Joanis presented "The French Neutrals," the history of Nova Scotians who were sent to the colonies (including the Bellingham area) during the French and Indian War.

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