

Huntington Historical Society History

Throughout Huntington's history, there has always been a continual small number of residents who have been interested in recording its history as well as saving artifacts, documents, pictures, paintings and maps that would prove invaluable to future generations in reviewing Huntington's past. As with many small towns, because of communication and transportation issues, no specific organized group came together to collect and store town treasures. Interesting and important items were kept within families and passed down through generations. Some of these were donated to town government and existing organizations to be stored in public locations such as early businesses, the town hall, the library, schools and churches. As can be expected, many families began keeping scrapbooks containing letters, documents and pictures. The storage technology of any given period limited accumulating and saving these paper treasures as well as larger artifacts in a central location.

Norwich Bridge School todayAs Huntington approached its Centennial Celebration as an incorporated town in 1955, a number of residents compiled an abridged version of town history and events. This brief history was published within the Centennial Celebration Historical Program. The Centennial Committee created an early focal point collecting and preserving historically worthy documents, pictures and artifacts – these materials were stored in the town hall and library, as well with interested families. The Centennial Celebration of 1955 served to stir town residents' realization that something must be done to collect and save Huntington's history and important documents. The question was where to store them and by whom.

In 1971, as a result of concerns about the town having to decide what to do with the Norwich Bridge Schoolhouse in its dilapidated condition, a group of interested citizens convened at a town meeting with the idea of forming a historical society whose first project would be the saving and restoration of the schoolhouse. A grant for restoration was obtained in 1976. Some structural and weatherization related projects were completed. For varied reasons, including disappointing funding and the demands of everyday life upon volunteers, restoration impetus waned for several years.

Historical Society signIn the spring of 1981, with the intent of preserving the documents, artifacts and genealogical history of the town, another group of citizens founded the Huntington Historical Society, including the Norwich Bridge Schoolhouse which served as its museum. Beverly Marotte was its first president; William Gaitenby, vice-president; and Grace Wheeler, secretary-treasurer. This new group continued on with numerous other town residents serving as officers and general members until today.

Throughout these years, the Huntington Historical Society focused on continued restoration and upgrading of its museum as well as working with the town's Historical Commission to research

and identify older Huntington homes, performing genealogical searches, collecting and storing pictures, documents, maps, and artifacts. The group was active in regular monthly meetings, providing townspeople with open houses, fund raising, reunions, providing historical programs, parade planning and participation, and serving as a historical resource for the community.