

Brookside

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exhibits that bring farm life to families and young people, the Museum has been there for our youth.

Adult programs – presentations, discussions and workshops – are available throughout the year with the support of the Saratoga County History Roundtable. The museum has partnered with Heritage Hunters of Saratoga County to maintain and expand a library and research center to support the growing interest in discovering our roots through genealogy.

The expansion and growth of all of these programs, and the creation of new methods to connect all of us with our heritage is of vital importance. The purpose is not just to preserve our past, but to protect our future. A nation, a state, a county that loses these connections is at a disadvantage. The presentation of history puts our daily lives, struggles and achievements in the context of the past. In what ways have we as a community changed over the years? What experiences that we share today are timeless? Living history experiences such as Old Sturbridge Village and Colonial Williamsburg, National Historic Parks and Battlefields, historical societies and museums are all part of this. Brookside Museum is one of our local opportunities to satisfy our desire to enrich our lives by learning about our past.

After fifty years of service to the residents of Saratoga County, the Museum is faced with a significant challenge to remain open to continue this legacy. Always struggling financially to be able to maintain its collections, exhibits and research library, conduct programs, and maintain the historically significant 1792 structure, SCHS has seen their resources continue to shrink in recent years. Declines in revenue from state and local governments, the scarcity of private and corporate support, and rising costs have all contributed to the current situation where the prospect of closure is a real possibility.

When this situation was first publicly announced in mid-October, members of the Museum Board of Directors led by Ervin Murray, and Executive Director Michelle Arthur joined with the Saratoga County History Roundtable represented by Jim Richmond, and other community leaders to spearhead a campaign to “Save Brookside Museum” with the announced goal of receiving \$100,000 by March 2020. A core team has been formed under the direction of board member Sander Bonvell to direct this effort. The community has rallied around the museum. History buffs throughout the county and beyond have responded with donations big and small. Local governments, recognizing the importance of the museum to their community, have stepped up to offer support. Local businesses are contributing as well. As of this writing (early November) the campaign has received over \$50,000 in gifts and commitments – halfway to our announced goal!



All signs point to the success of this funding program. So where do we go from here? How do we ensure that Brookside Museum is placed on a secure footing for years into the future? Beyond the Funding Campaign, two groups are forming to address this important question. First, a Restructuring Team led by Ballston Spa village historian John Cromie is focusing on the organizational structure of the museum, its Board of Directors and the current by-laws under which it operates. This team, consisting mostly of non-board members, will make recommendations to the Board to ensure that museum leadership includes stronger member and community involvement from towns and villages throughout the county.

Second, a Revisioning Team will be created to develop a business plan for the museum. This team will seek input from other area history museums to uncover best practices that Brookside can adapt to our own needs and mission statement. It will explore grant opportunities and fund-raising ideas to enhance our ability to secure additional funding to supplement our ongoing programs. The business plan will include a sustainable budget, that includes the staffing requirements and income needed to maintain our museum headquarters in our historic building. This team will also include both board members and other community leaders and will present their recommendations to the full Board for approval during 2020.

Another important element in the successful operation of any museum is its cadre of volunteers, who provide support with their time and talent. Brookside Museum has taken steps to grow and enhance this team with the appointment of Roy Arnold as Volunteer Coordinator. Roy will act as a volunteer himself in this role, working to draw on the skills of those who have a passion for serving the museum and its mission.

The future of preserving Saratoga County History is bright. Supporters of the Saratoga County Historical Society are determined to ensure that Brookside Museum remains an important part of that future.

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Editor:
Paul Perreault, Town of Malta Historian, perreault@juno.com

Editorial Board members:
Jim Richmond, SCHR Coordinator, jrichmo1@nycap.rr.com
Anne Clothier, Brookside Museum Education Director,
aclothier@brooksidemuseum.org
Lauren Roberts, Saratoga County Historian,
lroberts@saratogacountyny.gov
Charles Hogan, PhD., charleshogan@nycap.rr.com