

# Squire's Tavern Quarterly

Barkhamsted Historical Society Newsletter

web site - barkhamstedhistory.us

June 2021

## Our New Photo Exhibit

by Paul Hart

Volunteers at Squire's Tavern have been working on several new exhibits and one of them is a display of old photos of Barkhamsted. The photo below is one example, a shot of Pleasant Valley circa 1920 taken from Woodruff Mountain and looking south toward New Hartford.

The Farmington River is a major feature of this view. But why is the river so wide down toward New Hartford? The river was dammed in New Hartford to form Greenwood Pond and the water backed up toward Pleasant Valley to just past what is now the drive-in theater. The dam washed out in 1936 and was not rebuilt, so the pond is now gone.

Currently, a prominent feature of Pleasant Valley is the general store on the corner, which was built about 1959. But in this early photo, that corner at the far left of the photo is vacant. The Methodist Church and Riverside Cemetery can be seen at about the center, with many fewer graves. The current elementary school is of course missing from this photo. In 1920 students were still going to the one room school located across from the church.

We hope you can visit Squire's Tavern and see this photo and many others showing old scenes in Barkhamsted. ☚



## The 2020 COVID Pandemic: Personal Reflections



Starting with the last issue of this newsletter we began a series of articles describing personal experiences with the COVID-19 pandemic. Probably that is the last thing you want to be reading about now... we are all sick of this COVID, but we want to take this opportunity to preserve these experiences for future readers 50 or 100 years

from now. How COVID impacted our lives may not be news to us but later generations may find these experiences informative and interesting.

We want to share the stories of what we went through over the last year. We have two articles in this issue: the first starts on the top of page 2 and the second starts on the bottom of page 2. Thanks to all who contributed. ☚

## A Barkhamsted COVID Story

by Barbara McQueen

My husband, Roger Behrens, and I were in Virginia when the Corona virus started to register in our minds. We were at our daughter's home on our way back from a Florida road trip visiting friends and family along the way. This new virus sounded serious and we began to listen to the news. We arrived home on March 12th, 2020.

After being away for three weeks we were glad to be back in Barkhamsted and ready to hunker down for a bit. Little did we know what was coming. Shortly after our return we heard that two of our good friends in Southwick were hospitalized with COVID. They both died of the virus nine days apart. It was shocking and depressing. Even their children, like so many others, were not allowed to say goodbye.



After that, we became even more concerned about how the future would look. But spring came anyway. During this frightening time when the virus seemed to be taking control of the world, daffodils were

popping up and the sun was warm. Being retired, we were mostly home and occasionally saw a few friends and family as long as we stayed outside.

So we celebrated a retirement, birthdays, Mother's Day and Father's Day with small picnics on our deck or in our yard. The 4th of July Parade took on a new form as a drive-through around the town! FALPS sponsored some outdoor activities and we enjoyed learning about the beautiful area we call home. Days passed and then weeks. We hiked new trails, went bird watching by the river and enjoyed our Barkhamsted summer even though Stanclift Cove was closed.

All of a sudden it was colder. Our socialization was cut back. Winter was here. I sewed masks. Roger worked in his wood shop. Thanksgiving and Christmas was just the two of us. We decided to remodel a bathroom. I painted some rooms, cleaned out closets, organized books. I went

through our "media" cabinet and got rid of things we haven't looked at in years: old VCRs and LPs.

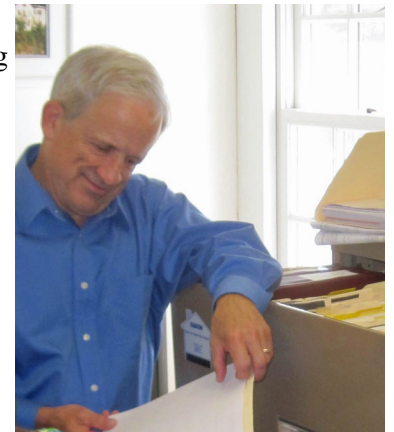
I tackled *The Photo Shelf!* - a truly terrifying project - piles of photos from when our girls were little. Whew! On days that were not too cold, dear Barkhamsted friends with fire pits made us hot soup and provided sweet companionship. We had Zoom meetings and Happy Hours! We went snowshoeing and watched too much TV, including the sad events of January 6th when it seemed that our world was falling apart (January 6, 2020: an incursion into the Washington, DC Capitol building by conservatives protesting the November election outcome.)

We listened to Dr. Fauci explain that COVID deaths were at a staggering number. On February 8th, we were out shoveling snow. When I came in there was a message from Don Stein asking us if we wanted the vaccine. Wait! What? I was so excited!

When I called Town Hall, Debbie Brydon made immediate appointments for us! Wow! I thought, What a great town! Where else does the First Selectman take such good care of his residents? I am so thankful and appreciative!

Spring is here again.

Looking back over this strange year, we wonder how previous generations dealt with times of illness and stress with no modern conveniences, communications or comforts. Today we have so very much and yet we still long for friendly faces and hugs and laughter. Living in this little town of Barkhamsted during the pandemic has taught me that perhaps we don't need quite as much as we thought we did. And much of what we need is right here. ☘



Don Stein, Barkhamsted First Selectman.

## COVID and A Barkhamsted Family

by Kristi Napolitano

It was late February 2020. It was a crisp cold winter evening and I had just picked up my 2 girls from their pre-school. As we headed back home to join my 6 year old son Nicholas and my husband Joel, I listened to an NPR news

report about a disease outbreak in China. I distinctly remember not being concerned that it would come to our section of the world. Three weeks later, unaware that I was enjoying my last week of normalcy, I listened as my friend

*Continued from page 2...*

Robin, a Pediatrician, said “COVID is coming and it’s coming to a town near you. The good news is that your kids won’t die; surprisingly, we haven’t seen kids being affected that badly. But you might die, Joel might die, and be very concerned about your parents and older people”.

The next week, things escalated quickly. News reports were growing more concerning, and some people were scrambling to get N95 masks, protective gear and disinfectants, hoarding food and panicking. Other people kept saying that COVID-19 was no worse than the flu. Shutdowns were announced on a daily basis that week. On Thursday, my office announced its shutdown; the very next day would be an optional last day in the office. People who had the ability to work remotely were to do so until further notice. Eve’s ballet class and Nicholas’ Ninja warrior class were canceled, along with dentist appointments, hair appointments and everything a person might have had scheduled during the next few weeks. During a Center Cemetery board meeting Thursday night, every parent in attendance received a simultaneous alert to their phones notifying us that school was shutting down. A two week quarantine was being recommended to every business, school and person.

Friday, a handful of us reported to the office rather than working remote. An anxious unease hung in the air. My manager commented that he hadn’t felt like this since September 11. The “work from home until further notice” mandate had me combing the office for unused monitors, cables, keyboards, mice, headsets, etc. to supply coworkers who lacked the equipment to do so. The office shutdown had really taken all of us by surprise: We’d heard rumors at the beginning of the week but had virtually no time to prepare. While rummaging through a drawer with my director for a headset, we came across antibacterial wipes with the company logo; I joked that we should sell them on eBay, since hand sanitizer, wipes, Lysol and virtually every other cleaning supply had been cleared off store shelves and was going for sky high prices online.

As I left the office that day, I told my coworkers “see you in two weeks” and did the same at the girls’ preschool during pickup. My daughter Eve also said a quick goodbye to her friends; she loved all of her preschool friends and the

staff there so much. In only a few months she’d have her big “graduation” before moving on to kindergarten in the fall. But Eve would never get her preschool graduation. In fact, she didn’t get to see her preschool friends again. And to date, more than a year later, I have not been back to my office. I suppose if we had thought about it logically then, two weeks would never be enough time to resolve a pandemic spreading all over the world and get us back to “normal.”

The country went quiet after that week of initial shutdown. Highways were empty, businesses closed, and images of an abandoned Times Square were shown on TV. There was a large outbreak in Manhattan and southern Connecticut. We watched with sadness as reports from Italy showed hospitals overwhelmed and death tolls mounting. The US did not want to repeat what Italy had gone through.

Honestly, the first few weeks of the shutdown were a welcome break for the family. Hurried mornings of rushed hair brushing, getting kids dressed, packing lunches and snacks for the day and moving out the door laden like a pack mule with bags, usually with some sort of portable breakfast in hand, gave way to sleeping in and an easier, slower daily pace. Evenings that normally involved rushing out of the office, preschool pickup and scrambling to get dinner on the table, baths and bedtime stories done on time gave way to playing outside for an hour before dinner, a game of Go Fish or some kite flying, a later dinner and a later night. The kids took to having “sleepovers” in each other’s rooms or on the floor of our bedroom.

Pre-COVID, it was rare to have a weekend free of engagements; routine events included Saturday morning ballet class followed by a visit with my grandmother at an assisted living facility near the ballet studio, grocery shopping, errands and best efforts to make Church Sunday morning. Joel is one of 11 siblings, and we both have close knit extended families, so hosting or attending family gatherings was another fairly regular occurrence. I’d become quite skilled at slinging together a buffet for what was usually well over 30 people, and the kids had grown up with a “big family party” being a regular occurrence, so two weekends in a row of being able to be home was kind of exciting.

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## A blast from the past...

### Marriages.

At Colebrook, (Pleasant Valley) June 9th, in the first Baptist Church, by the Rev. Mr. Atwell, Edwin C. Stillman, son of Dea. Ches. Stillman of Colebrook, and Sarah M. Doolittle, daughter of Seth Doolittle, Esq., of the former place.

From the Hartford  
Courant - July 10, 1846.  
This could very well be the  
wedding associated with our  
1846 signature quilt on  
display at Squire’s Tavern.

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I worked remote full time while Joel stopped work completely to watch the kids and quarantine. Thankfully he is self-employed so the only ramification of his not working was loss of income. But the 2-week shutdown became three weeks, then four. Barkhamsted Elementary began online learning after 2 weeks. Of course, online learning with a kindergartener takes a parent right there, keeping them on track as we struggled to navigate through the applications and muttering naughty words under our breath. Nicholas had a morning meeting with his class, then had certain classes and activities to complete during the rest of the day. Everyone was out of their element: Teachers were learning right along with the parents and kids, finding educational applications and learning how to use them and apply them to a classroom curriculum. Thankfully my parents live within walking distance next door, and my mother gave us a tremendous amount of help. The kids spending time at my parents' home gave everyone some much-needed breaks: When the girls were there, Joel could concentrate on school work with Nicholas, then Nicholas would run over for a break from his sisters. Many of Nicholas' morning school meetings included a sister or two floating around in the background or slowly nudging him out of view of the camera as they pushed in to see what was going on.



Later in spring, Joel began to work a few days a week. Those days I would take the reins of remote schooling Nicholas. Juggling my morning work meeting at the same time as Nicholas' morning school meeting and

the girls' activities was not easy, but we all made it through.

Everyone was so understanding of the situation we all now found ourselves in. I work as an auto insurance bodily injury claims adjuster. One day I was in heated negotiations with an attorney for settlement of a case when my middle daughter burst into my office, incredibly upset: "Nicky threw sand in my hair!" To my surprise, the attorney let out a chuckle. We had a 20 minute conversation about the woes of remote working with kids in the house. He had kids the same age as mine and shared tales of arguments erupting during Zoom depositions. He'd started to work half his day at night after his kids were in bed. We met in the middle on that case: neither of us had the heart to argue anymore. We were all in the same boat, and in countless meetings or phone calls we'd hear kids in the background or spouses also in meetings. The professional expectation of never hearing or seeing any at-home distractions, especially kids, evaporated overnight.

Easter that year was sad. The year before, we'd made it to



two church services, had over 30 people to the house for Easter dinner and had a giant Easter egg hunt with around 150 eggs. This year churches were still closed. We had a Zoom chat with Joel's family and my parents came for an Easter meal. We still did an Easter egg hunt for the kids, but it certainly wasn't the same with just your siblings. The kids were missing their family, and we were missing our family.

Soon after COVID hit our area, my aunt, who lives nearby, contracted the virus and had to be hospitalized. Reports back to the family were that things were not going well. She was at a critical time when patients either begin to rebound or begin to lose the battle. The thought that my uncle had to drop her off at the hospital not knowing if he would see her alive again still brings tears to my eyes. Visitors were out of the question. My brother stopped by our house that morning and we stood outside, 10 feet apart, talking about the grave situation my aunt was in and how critical the next 48 hours would be. My son Nicholas came running around the corner, ready to give a flying hug to my brother and I literally had to catch him out of the air, telling him Uncle Alex couldn't be touched since it wasn't safe. At that point Alex was at the highest level of "unsafe" since his wife worked as a CNA at Torrington hospital on the floor dedicated to COVID patients.

Surprisingly, the kids adapted to these new rules and regulations fairly easily, and Nicholas ran off accepting the fact that he couldn't touch Alex. I, however, went back inside and cried. I wanted so badly to hug my brother for comfort but I could not, and having to catch my son out of the air from an Uncle Alex hug added insult to injury. I remember confiding in a coworker later that day about my aunt and about my brother's visit. He put it the best: "COVID robs us of some of the most basic things that make us human".

Thankfully my aunt recovered, but she was in the hospital for a long time. My sister in law Jenny also contracted COVID from her work at the hospital, and brought it home to my brother soon after. They fared well, and though I didn't realize it at the time, it was a blessing in disguise: Alex and Jenifer, after beating the virus, were now safe. We could touch them, we could see them without a mask, and my kids could resume their flying air hugs to Uncle Alex.

Alex and Jenifer live a short drive up the road from us. They have a barn with turkeys, pigs, sheep and chickens. Once they were "safe", we visited them at the barn. My son particularly took to the farm and was very upset when we had to leave at dinner time. We got an incubator and the kids hatched chicks from eggs. Pre-COVID, this was something that would never have crossed my mind to do, nor would

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we have had time to do it, but it brought immense excitement and was a great learning experience for the kids.

Nicholas, on top of becoming a beginner farmer, also became an avid bird watcher. During April and May I discovered how much bird travel we got at our feeder and suet. For a glorious 3 days we had the trifecta: a pair of Baltimore orioles, a scarlet tanager and, for the grand finale, an indigo bunting visiting our feeders as they passed through. Had we not been home during the school and work week, we would have missed these sightings.

Summer arrived, and thankfully the swimming area at Stanclift Cove opened. We now knew that gathering outside with reasonable precautions was fairly safe, especially with dipping COVID numbers. On July 4<sup>th</sup> we had our first family gathering in 5 months, celebrating 4<sup>th</sup> of July, Eve's birthday and my niece Anna's birthday. Anxiety hung in the air, but the amazing feeling of seeing the kids running with their cousins while we sat at a table talking with family members you hadn't seen in months was utter happiness. We lingered well into a beautiful summer dusk watching the moon rise as the kids chased lightning bugs. We continued to cautiously enjoy small outdoor gatherings through the summer, and while it wasn't the pre-COVID norm, it was something.

The school announced they were going to try in person learning come fall. No one had any idea how school would go, but area preschools and daycares which were open during the summer had surprisingly few cases of COVID. Aside from toilet paper being the most wanted item of 2020, I think the biggest surprise of COVID was that preschools and daycares, normally the epicenters of any sort of contagion, proved to not be on the top 10 list of venues spreading COVID, but were in fact at the bottom of the list. We had the option to have our kids learn remotely, but with Eve starting kindergarten and Nicholas 1<sup>st</sup> grade, this would require Joel to be home 100% of the time. Also, I simply couldn't deprive Eve of the kindergarten experience. We enrolled my youngest back in preschool 3 days a week. Until we knew how school would turn out, I didn't feel it was safe to see my parents for at least the month of September.

Emotional COVID moments hit at different times, sometimes without warning, I'm sure for all of us. When Joel returned home after Lilly's first day of preschool in September, he brought back everything the girls left there in March, when we thought we'd be returning in 2 weeks. I have to admit I shed a-few tears when sorting through the bag: Lilly's clothes and diapers that no longer fit, the last craft Eve did, and, what really got me, Eve's sparkle Unicorn winter boots caked in March mud, from a time where she was running happily on the playscape with her preschool friends, without a mask, able to touch everyone, play tag, share snacks and hug people without sanitizing her hands every hour.

The excitement of school starting and being in person was intense. For the first time in seven months, the kids would be around others their own age (aside from their cousins). Granted masks needed to be worn, and school as Nicholas knew it was very different from pre-COVID, but it was still school. Eve was so excited she could hardly stand it. We collected all the back to school necessities: beautiful new backpacks, lunch bags, thermoses, and a new item: face masks. Lots of face masks. Designer face masks sporting unicorns, Elsa, Disney princesses, action heroes...

I realized a-few weeks before school started the couple of masks we had for the kids would not cut it for full time school. It surprised me how well the kids adapted to masks.



Prior to school starting jokes abounded that they'd trade masks, wouldn't be able to wear them, would use them as sling shots, Kleenex, knee bands or hats. However, they adapted so well, that when getting them off the bus I would need to remind them they could take their mask off. Nicholas' favorite

part of first grade is that they now get 3 recesses (AKA a-few outdoor mask breaks and recess). Eve's favorite is getting hot lunch and making girlfriends again, just like she had at preschool. And the teachers made every effort to be outside or have windows open.

In the beginning, many people I talked to didn't think school would last past Columbus Day, and I have to admit I didn't think there was any realistic possibility we'd make it through the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. But in person school kept chugging along with only one COVID case that I know of. There were a-few hiccups: any runny nose or other possible symptom warrants staying home (siblings, too) and testing; as I'm writing this, there was a positive case in my daughter's class, so both kids will have remote learning for the quarantine period. But overall, the school and I feel the parents have adapted so well that it has not been a chaotic stressful situation or difficult transition. We did pull my daughter out of preschool after Thanksgiving out of an abundance of caution to make it through the winter with as little impact from sickness as possible.

News reports, so sad, scary, and unnerving just a year ago, are now turning a tide as the vaccine is distributed. I think it



will take years for us to fully digest the effects this has had on us. I hope to never take for granted the ability to hug our family members and the quarantine lessons of slowing down, bird watching and visiting the farm even when we've returning to our "normal lives."

And although there have been hardships, I'm grateful for the time I've been given with my children during this year. ☘

## Historical Society News



**Tag Sale at Merrill Tavern:** the photo at left shows the May 15 Historical Society tag sale held at Merrill Tavern. This event raised funds for our projects and was held here to draw attention to our preservation effort on this 1816 building. We gave tours of the building during the sale. Our tag sale items have been stored in outbuildings at this location and it was very easy for our limited number of volunteers to set this up here. Come to the June 12 tag sale here!

**Squire's Tavern Exhibits:** As mentioned on page 1 of this newsletter the Historical Society is making changes to the exhibits at Squire's Tavern. Some exhibits have been relocated and updated while others are new. Exhibits include Barkhamsted artist Vito Covelli, Barkhamsted Lighthouse, the Ullmann family (last farming family to occupy Squire's Tavern), the farm exhibit and selected old photos of Barkhamsted.

If you have not been to Squire's Tavern in awhile please stop in and see what's new. Squire's Tavern is located at 100 East River Road and is open Sundays from 1:00 to 4:00 pm and on Wednesdays from 9:00 am to noon.



*Photos above: volunteers working on the Ullmann family exhibit (left) and a portion of the old Barkhamsted photos exhibit (right).*

**Bluebirds in residence at Squire's Tavern:** The Historical Society maintains two bird houses in back of Squire's Tavern and we are happy to report that bluebirds are raising a family in one of them. Four eggs were coming along just fine and hatched sometime in mid-May (see photos below). The second bird house has a tree swallow family.



## Historical Society Calendar



Squire's Tavern is open now for our regular hours:

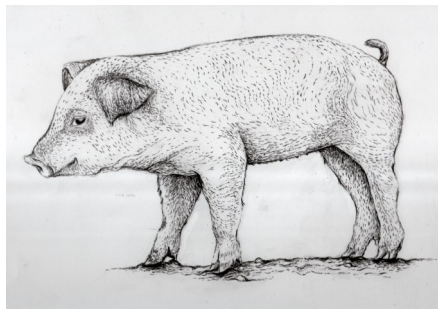
Sundays from 1:00 to 4:00 pm and  
Wednesdays from 9:00 am to noon.

- ① **Saturday, June 12 - 9:00 to 3:00 pm** - Our FINAL tag sale. Come to 5 Old Town Hall Road in Barkhamsted Center (Merrill Tavern, located next to the Center Schoolhouse). You can also tours Merrill Tavern. We expect this to be the last Historical Society tag sale. Thanks to all who have donated to us over the years— we will no longer be accepting tag sale donations now.
- ② **Sunday, May 30, June 27, July 25, August 29 and September 26** - (last Sundays of the month from May to September) Center School House open from 1:00 to 4:00. Exhibits, photos and a restored one room school classroom to bring you back to another era.
- ③ **Saturday, August 21, 2021** - Our pig roast is back! (see below for details).
- ④ **Saturday, September 11** - Historical Society annual meeting and SPECIAL PROGRAM celebrating the 20th anniversary of our lease on Squire's Tavern. More details to follow in our next newsletter.
- ⑤ **Saturday, November 6, 2021** - Tavern Night starting at 7:00 pm at Squire's Tavern. Music, old time tavern food and dancing. Tickets are \$20.

### THE RETURN OF THE PIG ROAST!

We are glad to say our pig roast is ON for Saturday, August 21 at Squire's Tavern from 4:00 to 6:00 pm.

We do have a limit on attendance. If we do not sell out you can buy tickets "at the door" but if you want to be safe, buy your tickets ahead of time at Squire's Tavern during our regular hours Wednesdays 9:00 to noon and Sundays 1:00 to 4:00. Tickets will also be sold at Town Hall and at the Winsted Diner.



Live music with the return of the Travelin' Trout band will also add to your enjoyment. Let's celebrate getting back to something close to normal after COVID. We hope to see you there.

Tickets are \$25 per person. BYOB. Kids under 12 free.

### Barkhamsted Historical Society

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 Vice President - Paul Hart  
 Secretary - Kristina Napolitano  
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E-mail- [bhs@barkhamstedhistory.us](mailto:bhs@barkhamstedhistory.us)

Web site- [barkhamstedhistory.us](http://barkhamstedhistory.us)

Squire's Tavern is located at 100 East River Road in Barkhamsted, one mile north of the Pleasant Valley bridge.

Squire's Tavern is open to the public on  
 Wednesdays 9:00 am to noon and  
 Sundays 1:00 to 4:00 pm

Barkhamsted Historical Society Membership:  
 Seniors \$12, Individuals \$15, Family \$25

Mail to Sharon Lynes, BHS Membership,  
 P.O. Box 94, Pleasant Valley, CT 06063  
 or sign up and pay through our web site.

The Barkhamsted Historical Society is dedicated to preserving Barkhamsted history, helping people connect with past traditions and inspiring appreciation for our heritage to enrich lives and strengthen community.

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Barkhamsted Historical Society  
P.O. Box 94  
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*Illustration, L. Landgraf*

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