

## MUSEUM MARKS 40<sup>TH</sup> YEAR

### At Blacksmith Shop Site

The Community Historical Museum concept was presented by Edna Mae DesJardins at a dinner party in 1968 and a group of residents began working to make the idea a reality. When they learned that one of Belmont's earliest buildings was for sale, they decided to obtain it to create a home for the Museum.



*Early photo of blacksmith and blacksmith shop*

The W. H. White Blacksmith Shop had also been used as a casket shop, tea room, and children's playhouse. In 1968, the building was owned by the family of J. Warner Edminster, one of the last traveling "druggists" in Vermont who had conducted his compounding and printing operations in the small building.

On Sept. 10, 1968, 21 people met at Lakeview, the home of Edna Mae DesJardins to discuss the possibility of forming a Historical Society using the Edminster property as a museum. Acting chairman, Randolph Smith presided and enlisted the help of Mr. and Mrs. John Hurd from the Weathersfield Historical Society. One week later the group met again and elected Milton Unterman, Chair, L. L. Dudley and K. Laumann, Vice Chair, Edna Mae DesJardins, Secretary/Treasurer and Harriet Parmenter, Historian. The following were elected as Directors: Miriam Bone, William and Florence Clark, James and Virginia Clifford, Ken and Iris Cully, Flossie Dana, Allen and Hazel Devereux, Maude Devereux, Lee and Edna Greenwood, Evelyn Leino, Jud and Peg Lyon, Herb and Liz Morse, Orrin and Ruth Priest, Earl and Helen Ramsden, Miles Richards, Randolph and Grace Smith, Drs. Charles and Rebecca Solomon, Sid and Dorothy Solomon, Rose Valpreda. The group adopted a constitution and by-laws and set up standing committees and membership categories.

The new members agreed to clean out and sell the contents of the building. As remembered by Liz Morse in July 1977, the building was "jam packed from floor to roof – with just narrow aisles to walk through the rooms. In the attic we even found boxes carefully tied up with string and labeled 'Empty Boxes.'" After weeks of hard, dirty work, the sale took place on a July weekend. The group earned over \$600 for the Edminster family and also set aside many Edminster artifacts as a start for the Museum collection.

The building needed much work to evolve into an appropriate exhibition area to house the growing numbers of donations of local historical items. The materials and labor costs for the work came to \$2400. Board members gathered courage and took out a bank loan for \$1500 and used

many volunteer hours and membership dues to round out the necessary figure. The bank loan was paid off several years later.

On Columbus Day, 1969, a pre-opening tea and reception was held. Four hundred artifacts were listed, 350 people attended and viewed a complete blacksmith shop, a cheese making exhibit, and a demonstration of antique apple peelers. An Edminister exhibit included a vast array of compounds, his printing press, labels and a collection of his post cards advertising his wares. Many of these items remain on display in the Blacksmith Shop site today.

The following year, the schedule of summer week-end activities began and an annual potluck supper was held each July. Kitty Laumann, Jan Bamforth's mother, became the first curator of the Museum. Over the past two years, the White family, under the leadership of Allan and Jan Bamforth, have contributed generously toward the ongoing upkeep of the Blacksmith Shop site which will continue to serve as an important center for Mount Holly's historical treasures. The Museum Board is grateful for the many contributions of the White family which help us continue our mission of educating the public about the history of Mount Holly.