



The Little Bethel Ark

The kids newsletter of the Bethel Historical Society

History...Without it you don't exist!



Kids' Tours

Published from the 2nd Meeting House, Bethel, CT

2013

P.T. Barnum Needs Your Help for His 203rd Birthday!

Once Again on July 5th He'll Celebrate with a Crazy-Hat Contest & Prizes for the Best

What do you do with a top hat? Well, wear it on your head, of course! But, what if those top hats are actually cookies and cakes? Well, eat them, of course! And that is what was done with aplomb last year at P.T. Barnum's 202nd Birthday Party out on the lawn at The Bethel Public Library.

While yes, there was certainly lots of lemonade and snacks to go around, and a rousing rendition of Happy Birthday sung by the seventy-five or so merry revelers who attended, what better way to honor the man who is rarely illustrated without his infamous top hat, than to celebrate him as well as the history of hattery in Bethel all rolled into one fantastic felted fedora and start up the tradition of having a Crazy-Beautiful-Awesome-Spectacular Humbug Hat Contest each July 5th?

Thus with much ado (for even if one cannot be Barnumsonian or Barnumzilla each time, one must honor the fact that were Barnum himself to show up, one would not wish to let him down), banners were hung, tents set up, jugglers appeared from out of nowhere, photographers clicked and snapped, and revelers gathered in hats of all shapes, sizes, colors, heights, widths, brimmed and not, topped and not, full of fruit and copper, pom-poms and fish.

So again this year we are asking all of the adventurous hatmakers and hatbakers out there to join us with caps and babushkas, bowls and bowlers, berets and coronets, beanies and bonnets, homburgs and head scarves, derby and fez, crash helmets and mortarboards, panamas and mitres, trilby and topi. Prizes will be given for Most Outlandish, Silliest, Most Creative.

The only thing that could make the day better would be if Barnum himself, appears from behind the curtain, to hand out each and every award, and most certainly to amaze and beguile with a speech of astounding proportions. And as we all know, one could never quite put something like that past the Master Showman himself...

While it would seem fitting that Barnum might have been born but hours earlier to share in his birthday with the country that gave him the freedom to create some of the greatest happenstances on earth - in some way, who would Barnum be to share in such a date when July 5th can be had all to himself? And so, as Bethel is not in the occasion of having its own July 4th celebrations, and with



At the end of the day, the colorful pom-pom covered chapeau was given by P.T. to one of the contestants in the Crazy Hat Contest. P.T. you see does tend to prefer his trusty topper.

the fact that the hatmakers of Bethel are obviously still alive and well and the hatmaking tradition is still in the air (for the range and plethora of hats for the 202nd were astounding and apropos beyond all expectations for such a celebration) we ask that you join us, with hungry belly (there must be no top hat cookies remaining at the end of the event or this writer will have himself a belly-ache!) and with

a most imaginative, here-to-fore unseen, colorful, exuberant, exciting, and most importantly your own, designed in whatever manner your very own mind's eye has always dreamed of wearing.

P.T. Barnum's 203rd Birthday Party is a free event and will take place at 5:00pm on Friday July 5th, 2013 on the Bethel Public Library lawn by the great bronze Barnum.



Top hat cakes ready for the candles...and with a huff and puff the celebration begins!



A balancing chapeau of fruit won a special prize - and received Barnum's hat (above)!

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Liked what you saw at the Bethel Museum? Bring your family, siblings, and friends. Free admission!
Open from 2:00pm - 4:00pm on Saturday July 20th, Sunday August 18th & Saturday September 14th
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The Bethel Lark

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The Bethel Historical Society
40 Main St Bethel CT 06801
info@bethelhistoricalsociety.com
facebook.com/bethelhistoricalsociety

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Founded in the 1950's

The Bethel Historical Society is an independent, non-profit organization made up of a group of people dedicated to preserving Bethel's history through acquisitions and conservation of property, artifacts and stories.

The Society is dedicated to the education of the people of Bethel and surrounding communities.

Monthly programs are presented on varied historical subjects. Also offered are programs geared toward the education of children such as monthly historical craft classes, Walking Tours of Bethel and a Child's Victorian Christmas Tea.



The Bethel Lark

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A Little Bit About P.T. Barnum

Entertainer, Politician, Showman, Humanitarian

Phineas Taylor "P.T." Barnum was born in Bethel, CT on July 5, 1810 to Philo F. Barnum, a farmer and storekeeper, and Irena (Taylor) Barnum.

Barnum's first job was as a clerk in his father's country store. As a teenager Barnum would also run a general store. In 1829 he married Charity Hallett and they would have four children. In 1831 Barnum began a newspaper the Herald of Freedom.

In 1834 moved to New York City where he would eventually open Barnum's American Museum, which became famous because of interesting curiosities such as the "Feejee" mermaid and General Tom Thumb. Barnum would open many museums in his life and built the first aquarium in America.

By 1870 Barnum had assembled a traveling show that contained all sorts of exciting events - a caravan, a menagerie, hippodrome, and circus. The first performance had so many people attend (10,000 - which was a huge number of people in 1870) that Barnum then expanded into a two-ring circus, the "Great Traveling World's Fair." This show was so popular that within ten years the Barnum and Bailey Circus was born with the familiar motto of "The Greatest Show on Earth!" Probably the most famous performer of this show, was the great elephant Jumbo (do you know where

a picture of Jumbo is painted in downtown Bethel?).

Even though he traveled all around the world, P.T. Barnum never forgot his hometown of Bethel and in 1881, donated a beautiful bronze fountain that flowed in what we now know as P.T. Barnum square. The fountain was there until it was left running one winter and the ice broke the pipes.

Barnum did many exciting things in his life, he was a philanthropist and donated money to many good causes, he was an author and publisher, and even worked in the state legislature where he was against all forms of slavery. Barnum wrote, "The noblest art is that of making others happy, honesty, sobriety, industry, economy, education, good habits, perseverance, cheerfulness, love to God and good will toward men. These are the preeminent requisites for securing Health, Independence, or a Happy Life, the respect of Mankind and the special favor of our Father in Heaven."

But, he said of himself, "I am a showman by profession...and all the gilding shall make nothing else of me" which means his favorite past-time was to entertain - which he did better than maybe anybody before or since. For all of these reasons and many more we'll always remember P.T. Barnum here in his hometown.

Kids' Colonial Summer Camp

A week-long experience of crafts, games, farms and more...



One of the numerous activities for the week was learning how to do needlepoint.



BHS President Patricia Rist assists Lucian-Archer Heydt-Moorash at Holbrook Farm.

What was it like to be a kid in 18th century Colonial Bethel? To have played games as colonial children did? To have made toys and books? To have prepared food as a colonial family? Come spend five mornings with us and find out! You'll get to experience activities reminiscent of life in the 1700s, including craft projects such as needlepoint and bookbinding, old-time games, and butter making. We'll have a visit inside Plumtrees School House to learn what school was like years ago and a trip to Holbrook Farm to learn hands-on about what types of things occur when working on a farm. Everyone is also encouraged (but it is not required) to come dressed in historic clothes!

Camp this year is from August 19th to August 23rd. For more information please email info@bethelhistoricalsociety.com or call Mary Ferri at 203 730 2726

Cut out your P.T. Barnum and glue him onto a piece of cardboard. Fold at the feet and make a stand. Make a stand for the stage around him. Then, pick a hat or three for him to wear!

Bring your decorated P.T. Barnum to Barnum's 203rd Birthday Party on Friday July 5th and get a special Barnum button! And don't forget to make a wonderful hat for the hat contest, too!



What does the Historical Society Do for Bethel?



All creatures are all smiles every year for the Kids' Christmas Victorian Tea Party.

Victorian Tea Party

Ever dream of an afternoon when there is an endless teapot full of hot chocolate and nearby there might just happen to be a pile of cupcakes and cookies that taste most perfectly together? And then, you get to spend that afternoon with your bestest of both human friends and doll and stuffed animal companions? Well, that's what happens one Sunday in each and every December when we take the Meeting House back to the time of fancy china tea cups, winter-time crafts full of sparkle, glitter and shine, and spend a cozy day dressed in all of our fancies, from top hats to bonnets, braids to bells, and wish each other fine tidings for the festives and to each and every a happy new year.

This year's Tea Party will take place on Saturday December 7th.



Laura Ingalls Wilder

Each year we also journey out to the fields of wheat and log-cabin living to celebrate the life and stories of Laura Ingalls Wilder - famed author of the Little House on the Prairie books. From making old fashioned lemonade, to stitching corn cob dolls, to learning dances that would have been common in the 1880s...to having another reason (as if we need one) to get dressed up in branyans to breeches, cloaks to cravats, capes to caps, gowns to brunswicks, and maybe even someone in a skeleton suit and pudding cap...an afternoon is pleasantly spent snacking and crafting and hearing a story or two about what life was like back in the times of yore. One of these years we'll even get snow for this day of the Second Meeting House on the Prairie and make some historic sugar snow. Will it be next year?



Lemonade wasn't always as easy as a walk to a store or in setting up a stand out on the front lawn.



Pin the tail on the scared-y black cat is a far more yowling endeavor than when a donkey is stuck.

Vintage Halloween

Dressed as cats, bats, and in top hats, as princesses, clowns and pumpkins, too, the children danced and sugared (but of course, for this is the season to be candy) their way through an afternoon of pin the tail on the cat, leaping for powdered donuts which, we are told, while not only an opposite to the ever popular bobbing for apples (and on this day these fine youngins learned it is far more difficult than one would imagine and nearly impossible to get their chompers on a Macintosh without getting a nose full of water). Further, the afternoon ended with a rollicking stick swinging, pumpkin smashing, pinata, which ended with a rainbow of treats flung across the room. And while this writer doth prefer his pumpkin seeds roasted and salted over a nearby fire, whose to say that candy is not, indeed, more dandy?