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# Brimfield Historical Commission

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## *A Message From the BHC*

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We hope everyone has been enjoying our Historical Commission newsletters. This month we want to feature the “Welcome” kiosk on the Common. Colorful and informative, it captures Brimfield’s history in a number of short vignettes. We also want to share with you a rare achievement accomplished by a life long resident over 25 years ago. The first 2 issues were only available on the Historical Commission website and FB pages. However, in order to reach a larger audience, we will now also be providing hard copies which will be available at Hitchcock Academy.

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## *Members*

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Sue DeBruin, Chairperson  
Adrienne Bachand  
Roseann Bergdoll  
Robert Corry  
John Curtis  
Michael DeFalco  
Sue Overbey  
Mark Conners, Associate Member

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## *Brimfield “Welcome” Kiosk*

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There is a small rural town remarkably like Brimfield, located just steps from the Catskill Park in New York State. It has a single traffic light, a historic town center, and a welcome kiosk that is mysteriously similar to the one that now stands on the Brimfield common. This is not a coincidence, but the result of a chance encounter nearly two years ago and the effort of community members to bring it here.

In the summer of 2021, Brimfield Historical Commission board member Sue DeBruin traveled to Margaretville, NY at the invitation of the Historical

Society of Middletown. While visiting the town, she walked along Main Street and a handsome kiosk on a small patch of village green caught her attention. She went out of her way to cross the street and take a closer look at the sign. A “Welcome to Margaretville” greeting adorned the top of the kiosk. A condensed history of the town, artistically woven with old photographs appeared on one panel. Community events were broadcast on a cork bulletin board on another panel. Sue was immediately impressed. She photographed the sign extensively and upon her return to Brimfield presented the concept to the BHC. The idea was overwhelmingly supported by the board members, but a lack of funds meant the project was temporarily on hold. During the planning of the gazebo project in the early months of 2022, funds became available for promoting travel and tourism in the state of Massachusetts. The concept of a welcome kiosk fit beautifully under this umbrella and the project was approved to go forward.





Brimfield's double-sided sign was designed to meet several purposes. On one side, a corkboard behind plexiglass with lockable aluminum housing, suitable for posting and promoting community events. The opposite side would display a full color 38x38 vinyl panel using digital images illustrating Brimfield's unique history. The work of compiling Brimfield's history and selecting photographs to represent its past began in the spring of 2022. Like the Margaretville kiosk, New Kingston's Lisa Tait (Silvertop Graphics) designed it, and Timely Signs in Kingston NY fabricated it. The images and narrative history were provided by the BHC members in collaboration with local resources.



We, the Brimfield Historical Commission, would like to thank the community for embracing this kiosk. We would like to thank Rusty and Kate Corriveau, as well as Laurie Prescott and the family of Gordon Reed Sr., for their contributions to the historical panel regarding Auction Acres. We would like to thank a local company, Landscape Evolution, for donating the use of their commercial vehicle. This allowed BHC board member Bob Corry to pick up the sign in Kingston, saving expensive shipping costs. Thanks to the community members and historical specialists who previewed the history side of the panel and provided feedback. Thank you to our highway department who immediately pruned trees around the sign allowing for greater visibility.

Please visit the kiosk if you have not had the opportunity to do so already. Community events for 2023 have been posted. Contact Sue DeBruin or Mike DeFalco through the town website regarding posting a future community event on the bulletin board. Thank you and enjoy your "Welcome to Brimfield" historical and community kiosk!

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*Jim Adams on the  
Appalachian Trail*

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For a small town, Brimfield is filled with people who have achieved amazing things. Take Jim Adams, for example. I'm sure most residents don't know that he is one of the select few to hike the entire Appalachian Trail. [Ed. Note: Since 1936, a little over 20,000 individuals are on record as having accomplished this feat.] The following article by Susan E. Bosman in the October 10, 1995 edition of the Springfield Union-News tells the story.

By his own admission Jim Adams is not a tough guy.

A bad case of giardia and a tooth infection almost kept him from attaining his nine-year goal.

Almost.

But on Sept. 2 [1995], the 67-year old Brimfield native and retired Air Force pilot walked off Maine's Mount Katahdin to meet his son, Duane, and family, elated but tired.

He had completed hiking the full length of the 2,158-mile Appalachian Trail, which runs from Springer Mountain, Ga. to Maine's highest peak in Baxter State Park.

"It had been a long day," Adams said recently. "At 4:23 a.m., I awoke in my tent and knew we had to get an early start.

He was to hike 12.7 miles that day, over the high peak which is the trail's northern terminus.

"I was challenged, physically and mentally," Adams recalled recently, sitting with his ever-present water bottle in his backyard overlooking a cattail swamp and a field of wild purple aster.

A pilot for 22 years, during which he flew with a helicopter unit in Vietnam, Adams took up hiking the famed footpath for the challenge.

"I was bored, I guess," Adams said recently. "I needed a challenge."

He decided to attempt the hike after reading about it in National Geographic and a magazine for retired officers. Retired for 18 years, he has served on the Board of Selectmen and the Finance committee.

Adams, who grew up on Adams Road and entered the armed forces in the late 1940s, said his experiences before going into combat in Vietnam may have made the hiking experience that much more satisfying.

"The way I feel up on a summit where I can see forever, where you are overwhelmed by the beauty, I feel closer to my creator," he explained. "That feeling was heightened by one of loneliness you could feel (before) going into a combat mission."

By finishing the trail in sections, Adams joins an elite group of about 3,300 who have hiked the entire trail – in one season or in sections – since the first through-hiker earned his patch in 1936.

Hikers who register their accomplishment with the Appalachian Trail Conference in Harpers Ferry, W. Va., receive a certificate and a round sleeve patch with a little "rocker" to sew beneath it.

According to Jean Cashin, 215 registered with the ATC last year. About one fifth of those were, like Jim Adams, "section hikers."

Adams, who is of ruddy complexion and rugged build, did not start out a seasoned hiker.

"I was a real novice, but a regular walker," he said.

He did 450 miles the first year, as far as Damascus, Va., but cut back to shorter annual hikes because of health problems for his wife and himself.

"I guess the infirmities of age got me. I got lazy," Adams recalled.

He hiked mostly alone, but was joined during the last three years by his friend, Hank Barton, 57, of Springfield, a professor at American International College.

He revealed his trail name, which most long-distance hikers choose. Adams took the name "Pony" from his combat outfit, the "Pony Express."

"I wanted to tie to a previous unit that was a good outfit, and not want to disgrace them by quitting on the trail. I figured this would encourage me to hang in there better."

He talked about the people who made his trip possible, and those he met on the trail.

"I was lucky to be able to do it because of the other people who help you," he said. "The ones who maintain the trail. Those who maintain the shelters. The family support."

He cited the West Brimfield couple, Bill and Ruth Roberts, who made his "drop-offs" of supplies.

Adams said that on a few occasions he feared for his life.

In the southern Appalachians, it was the moonshiners.

"I was wary in the South. Had been warned about the moonshiners attacking you for your valuables.

In the rugged stretches through New Hampshire and Maine, Adams was worried about falling and serious injury."

While many much younger men – and women – use a through hike as a way to find their true identity, or to deal with a life crisis, Adams has decades of life experience behind him. But he still learned things about himself on the trail.

Back home now, Adams has more missions ahead. He serves as a corridor monitor for a section of the trail in Western Massachusetts – keeping in touch with property owners and ensuring that boundaries are observed.

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### *South Brick School*

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In the mid 1700s, there were 10 school districts in Brimfield, each with its own schoolhouse. The following picture shows the school for District #1. It was located at Danielson Hill (probably named for John Danielson, one of Brimfield's original proprietors) which later became known as Paige Hill. Originally West Brick School, by the early 1900s it was called South Brick School. Over the years, several factors led to the schools starting to close down, the chief one being a huge decrease in the rural school population. By 1907, South Brick had only 1 student and shortly thereafter it became a residential house. Unfortunately, the building burned down in 1925 while occupied by Ben and Hester Sherman.



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### *Digital Commonwealth*

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Interested in doing research on Brimfield or looking for ancestors who once lived in town or just reading about the history of our community, check out the following website - <https://archive.org/search?query=brimfield>. Both the Library and the Town Clerk have taken advantage of the free state program Digital Commonwealth, administered through the Boston Public Library, to scan thousands of pages of historical documents. You can peruse vital records, registers of the Brimfield Hotel, Congregational Church records and much more.