

# Costik marks 20 years at Bradford Landmark Society

By AMANDA NICHOLS

Era Reporter

a.nichols@bradfordera.com

With 20 years at the Bradford Landmark Society, curator Sally Costik has reached an historical milestone of her own and says she sees a bright future for the study of the past.

Costik, who started at the organization on Dec. 12, 1994, said her passion for history has not waned with the years, and she is continually inspired by the growing interest local folks have for Bradford's past.

"It's like a story that you just keep reading and you never know the ending," Costik said. "The best thing about Bradford is you never run out of stories. For a small town, bounded by the creek and the hills around it, it's a wonder how many interesting people have lived here, are living here, and the amazing things that have happened here."

She said 20 years have gone by fast — but isn't that always the case when you're having fun?

"It's amazing to think I've been walking into (The Herbig Bakery) building for 20 years. And, I can't wait to get there every day," Costik said. "I go in even on the weekends, sometimes just to run in and look something up."

In those two decades, she has learned a lot about the local area and the people that have and continue to inhabit it.

"I think the most surprising thing I've learned is how sentimental people are about their history and about the past," Costik said. "Whether their great-grandfather opened a store, their grandma was a bootlegger or their ancestors were early settlers — the railroads, the streets and how they got their name, you name it — there are average people who are making it their mission to learn everything they can about Bradford."

For a career devoted to delving into the past, Costik said the job comes with a lot of surprises as new information comes in almost every day.

"Another thing that keeps surprising me is how much is still in those attics out there waiting to be uncovered," she said. "We wonder if they'll ever run out of pictures of Bradford from the early days. People want to tell us everything. They just walk in and bring us their treasures, ask what to do with it and we say we want it, so desperately."

"We keep track of everything," Costik continued, relating that since she started she and others at the Landmark Society have been working to identify and catalogue the vast amount of data, photographs and



Sally Costik

more that have been collected.

"(My predecessor) Jane Stack remembered everything. I'm not blessed with a perfect memory. I have to file things in perfect order so we are able to find things," she said. "We've been doing this for 20 years and it's still ongoing. Twenty years and I'm still finding things I never knew we had!"

Costik attributed their success in organizing to the

(See COSTIK, Page 12)

## Costik

advent of the computer and the Internet, which have enabled the group to keep things in a digital file to be sent to anyone who submits a request for a photograph or newspaper article.

"We started indexing the old newspapers — our *Bradford Era* article file, the 'Barticle File' has 8,000 entries now, so when people ask when something happened, we can look it up," she said. "We can find all kinds of tidbits, and that's a project that probably never ends because the years keep rolling by and the newspaper keeps being printed."

Costik said it was an advertisement in *The Era* that led her to the job in the first place. A Bradford native, she and her husband and young children moved back after she finished graduate school at Penn State University in Middletown with a degree in American studies, she said. Costik had also worked as a national park ranger at the Eisenhower Farm outside of Gettysburg, and when she returned to her hometown

was looking for a way to "get back into something historical."

"When I saw the ad, I thought, 'this will be perfect,'" and, so far, it has been a wonderful fit — for Costik and the community she serves.

Bradford Landmark Society president Harrijane Hannon Moore had a great deal of praise for Costik and the many initiatives she has undertaken during her time with the organization.

"Sally has contributed so much over the 20-year period. The initiatives that she has taken has added so much to the understanding people have of the area," Moore said. "With her writing so many books, people have an opportunity to read what transpired here in earlier times. She's giving us an insight into the history of the area that we might not have been afforded otherwise."

Moore also has a great deal of faith in Costik's abilities, saying, "if anybody can uncover it, Sally can."

"She just delves in and

writes and gives," Moore continued. "What she does is phenomenal and she has been a tremendous asset. Any request that people have about history, she always does it so willingly and enthusiastically. Which to me says a lot — she views it as an opportunity to engender interest and build knowledge."

"We're so blessed to have her with her background and her knowledge — it's not easy to find someone like that today," she added. "She's been just a dynamic individual for the landmark and we have benefited from her over and over and over."

Bradford Landmark Society treasurer Judy Yorks agreed, calling Costik "Johnny-on-the-spot" when it comes to finding information.

"She's always thinking of new things to do and ways to engage the community," Yorks said of Costik. "She's not only our curator, but she's also our secretary for our board of directors. She's a very vital part of our historical society."

She has a big love for the local history."

That may be an understatement, as Costik has immersed herself in knowledge about nearly every aspect of the local community dating back to its settlement in 1823.

"The history is amazing, and there is so much of it in our tiny little community," Costik exclaimed. "Here we are tucked away — as an old historian told it — in the 'seven hills just like Rome'."

She expressed her admiration for that historian, Rufus Barrett Stone, who she said made that statement in the 1920s.

"He wasn't just a historian, though, he was a lawyer and helped found the hospital and the McKean County Historical Society, which was in Bradford in the early part of the 20th century," Costik related, listing the man's many accomplishments.

"He was Bradford's first legendary historian. Maybe I'll be the second," she said, laughing, "but I'm cheating, using the 'Barticle File'."