

Historic
Harrisville

2022 Annual Report

It Takes A Village: 2022 at the Harrisville General Store

Since 1838, the Harrisville General Store has been serving the community, providing a place to share and hear local news, get food and supplies, and so much more. Historic Harrisville has owned the General Store building since 2000 and operated the store business since 2008. With changes in the economy and staffing, and simply learning as we go, there have been several ups and downs over the years. But by all measures, 2022 was a particularly challenging year for the store.

The store adapted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and was able to survive when many businesses couldn't. And we were fortunate to receive significant financial subsidies from government programs in 2020 and 2021, in addition to support from our customers and donors, to help support the business in these challenging times. As a result, the store had its best year ever, financially, in 2021! Unfortunately, this subsidized success and modified business model made it hard to see some trends that were emerging as we moved out of the pandemic.

Payroll was creeping up, food costs were increasing significantly, and our equipment was aging. As a result, our margins were shrinking, and we were unable to meet our budget. In May, the Store Committee met and decided that we needed to do some fundraising to support the store and try to minimize the financial losses that were imminent.

They sprung into action, creating The Friends of the General Store, and raising over \$35,000 by the end of the year to assist this essential nonprofit business. We were truly impressed by this showing of support, and reminded just how much the store means to the people in our community.

In August, Store Manager Samantha Rule, who had been leading the business since 2015, left the business to pursue an irresistible career opportunity as Executive Chef at a local restaurant. Fortunately, Sam had built an incredible team

of employees with diverse skills and strengths. They all agreed to step up, taking on additional responsibilities. Molly and Teresa took charge of the weekly menu and food ordering. Max became the expert on the grocery/retail side of the business, and Raymond took over the beer and wine selection and ordering. Maddy picked up communication and social media activities, and everyone worked especially hard to keep the store running strong.



In the early fall, the Store Committee hired Laura Carden, who had previously managed the store from 2008 to 2015 to return and resume a leadership role at the store in October.

Laura is working hard with Store Committee chairman Lenny Matczynski to "tighten the belt" at the store, and try to restore a pre-pandemic balance of sales and expenses. You'll undoubtedly notice some changes at the store, but we remain committed to keeping it open and operating as the place we all know and love, while making improvements to ensure its long-term viability.

If you aren't already a Friend of the Harrisville General Store, please stay tuned! We'll be reaching out again soon to kick off this annual campaign.

Friends of Harrisville General Store

Together these Friends donated \$36,469 in support of the store in 2022:

James Allan and Anne Bridge
Peter and Susan Allen
Laurie and Ken Appel
Rusty Bastedo
Beate Becker
Ed and Ellen Bernard
David Blair
Ray and Kathy Bollerud
Bruce and Kathleen Brennan
Eleanor Briggs
Warren and Cathy Buffum
Michael and Lillian Carter
Daniel and Cynthia Cheshire
Chick and Pat Colony
George and Ann Colony
Jeff Enright and Beth Smith
John and Peggy Evans
Jeffrey and Patricia Forts
Tom and Kathy Hamon
Tom and Anne Havill
Hermit Thrush Foundation
Susan Holland
Ned Hulbert and Mary Day Mordecai
Jan Jackson
Willard and Carol Jost
Karl and Roxanne Karter
Sarah Kendall
Les LaMois and Andrea Hodson
Ruth Lemay
Bradford and Christina Lingham
Shane Long
David and Susan Lord
Louis and Cathy Lovas
Andrew Maneval and MaryLou DePietro
Lenny Matczynski
Paul Merrill
Eleanor Myers
Carol Nelson
John Newman and Rebecca Lyford
David and Susan Odland
Fred and Susan Putnam
Jim and Judy Putnam
Amy Radin
Louis Salza
Gary Skantze and Judith Grant
Pat Spalding
Charlotte Stanley
Betsy Street
Henry Taves
Doug Walker and Andrea Polizos
Terry and Barb Watkins
Larry and Wendy White
M'Lue Zahner

The Harris Boarding House: Then and Now



The demand for housing in Harrisville has almost always been high. Housing workers in the village was a big concern for the mill owners. The number of millworkers in the village increased from 40 in 1850 to 115 in 1860. Most of the people employed in Harrisville's mills were single men and women. To accommodate this growth and efficiently house these single workers, both mill companies in Harrisville built a large boarding house by the early 1850s.

Before 1852, Milan Harris built a large brick house between his own house and his mill that served as a boarding house. Owned by the Milan Harris Woolen Company, the boarding house provided accommodation and meals for employees, who were paid by the day while they resided there.

Typically, boarding houses were run by a married couple, often with children. They generally employed a few young women to help with the domestic chores. But in 1860, the Harris Boarding House was run by a 43-year-old single woman named Lura Barker, with the help of Mary Brooks, age 25, and Dorothy Wilder, age 27. Together, these three women provided room and board for 11 women, ages 15 to 53, and 14 men, ages 14 to 29. In 1860, Milan Harris & Co. employed 60 people, including 30 men and 30 women, with 25 of them living in the Harris Boarding House. Women were paid less for their work in the mills, but also paid less for room and board in the company boarding house. Although the housing was quite crowded relative to what

we're used to today, the mills in Harrisville were known for providing their workers with decent housing at a fair rent.

Milan Harris posted the rules and regulations of his boarding houses on the wall: smoking was prohibited, boarders were not permitted to have visitors in their rooms without permission from the boarding-house master, and both male and female boarders had to keep to their respective ends of the boarding house after 9 pm.

The Milan Harris Woolen Company failed in 1874, and by 1887, the Cheshire Mills Company had acquired all their desirable assets, including the Harris Boarding House. At that time, they employed 108 people, and typical rents were \$5 per month for each of their 18 tenements, or \$15 per month for room and board in a boardinghouse. By 1892, the Harris Boarding House building was identified as a "tenement" rather than a boarding house, indicating that it had been converted into apartments by this time, and the space was rented to employees without board (meals) being provided. By 1902, the Cheshire Mills Company employed 154 people, and had increased their number of rental tenements to 28 dwellings, two of which were in the Harris Boarding-House building.

HHI acquired the Harris Boarding House in the early 1970s and did work to improve the apartments. To that point, the building's residents had been using an outhouse in a shed behind the building. The outhouse was removed, and the building's first septic system was installed. A couple of former boarding rooms were reconfigured at the core of the building so that four bathrooms could be added, two on each level to serve the three apartments. A new well and three-zone heating system were installed, the attic was insulated, and storm windows were installed. On the southern end of the building, two apartments were created where there had been one. Their kitchens were updated, and the layout

changed slightly to be more suitable for modern living. Little work was done to improve the unit at the northern end of the building, because the King family, who had moved in in 1961, was still residing in the apartment. Amazingly, the unit is still occupied by Paula King today in 2023!

As part of its mission-driven work, Historic Harrisville provides affordable rental housing. Three of its twelve residential units are in the Harris Boarding House.



One of the historic features uncovered during the recent rehabilitation project is spilt lath, also known as riven or accordion lath. To make this early wood lath, thin boards were cut from logs of a foot or more in width using an up-and-down saw, which was common before the popularization of circular saws in saw mills in the 1850s. Then a hatchet was used to cut splits in the board at alternating ends, so that the board could be stretched or expanded into lath. The lath was nailed to the wooden building frame, and then plaster was applied, squishing through the irregular, slightly angled crevasses to form the plaster keys that hold the plaster to the wall or ceiling. This detail supports the notion that the building could be older than the 1850 -1852 construction date commonly given the building.

Refreshing the Harris Boarding House

In 2022, the tenant in Apartment 2 of the Harris Boarding House moved out. This vacancy provided a rare opportunity to Historic Harrisville to update the apartment. When that apartment was done, the tenant from Apartment 3, below, moved into the refreshed space, allowing us to rehabilitate another residential unit.

The work to rehabilitate Apartments 2 and 3 was fairly extensive. Because we have been fortunate to have long-term tenants, other than basic maintenance and repairs, HHI has not done much work in these apartments over the past few decades. So we took advantage of this opportunity to bring them up to date, while preserving their historic character. The renovations included updating the wiring and electric service in both apartments, and making plumbing repairs and replacing the fixtures in both bathrooms. Insulation was added and improved wherever possible,

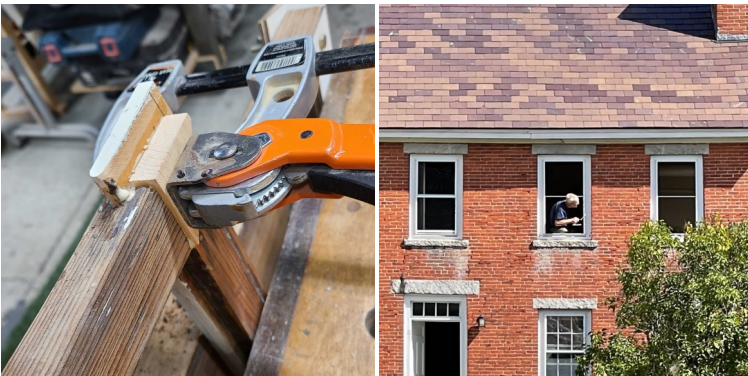
with a special focus on the kitchen of Apartment 3, which has a history of being so cold that the pipes freeze every winter; additional heat was added in this space. The kitchens were thoroughly cleaned, and cabinets painted. The wood floors were repaired and refinished as needed. The historic wood sash windows were removed to the workshop, where they were repaired, reglazed, and repainted before being reinstalled in freshly painted surrounds. Selective repointing was done around the window and door openings. The exterior doors were repaired, weatherized, and repainted, and new locks were installed. And all of the interior walls and trim were repainted. Today, the apartments look fresh and clean, yet retain the historic character of their circa 1850 construction and subsequent modifications. Both of the units are being re-rented as part of HHI's affordable housing program.

Improving Wood Windows and Doors

After 168 years of housing people, the boarding house apartments were showing more than a bit of wear and tear. Fortunately, HHI's staff has the ability to address these problems. Fred and Kat used their carpentry skills to repair damaged window sashes, replace the wood where door catches had worn the surfaces down and hardware had pulled out, and add custom strips to accommodate settlement over time and reseal doors in their openings, among other things. With exterior storm windows already in place, and fresh paint on the trim, these windows and doors should last another 100 years or more with limited periodic maintenance.

Repairing the Tin Ceiling

Apartment #3 in the Harris Boarding House has a decorative tin ceiling that is uncommon in Harrisville. Tin ceilings like this were first introduced in the 1870s, and became very popular during the Victorian era, falling out of favor before 1930. Although the ceiling is not original to the building, and was deteriorating notably, HHI opted to repair this unique historic feature. To do so, Fred and Kat scraped and cleaned the rusty painted metal, then glued bonding paper to the surface, which molded to the textured surface around it. Fred then repainted the entire surface, and the patches essentially disappeared on the finished ceiling.



Board of Trustees 2022

Deborah Abbott
 Michelle Aldredge* *Chair*
 Peter Allen*
 Lisa Anderson
 Laurie Appel* *Vice Chair*
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 Cathy Buffum*
 Russ Cobb
 John J. Colony III*
 Nick Colony
 Katrina Farmer*
 Doug Gline
 Colin Kennard
 Bryanne Kingsbury*
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 Les LaMois
 Drew Landry* *Treasurer*
 Dan Langille*
 Shane Long*
 Leonard Matczynski
 Deirdre Oliver,* *Secretary*
 Kathy Scott
 Sarah Tibbetts
 Alison Weber
 Larry White

**Executive Committee*

Historic Harrisville Staff

Katy Burchett, *Archives Coordinator*
 Becca DeFusco, *Property Manager*
 Hope Duggan, *Archives Assistant*
 Erin Hammerstedt, *Executive Director*
 Karena Karo, *Custodian*
 Kat O'Brien, *Project Assistant*
 Frederick O'Connor, *Project Manager*

Harrisville General Store

These employees worked at HGS at 2022 year-end:

Madison Brumaghim
 Laura Carden, *Store Manager*
 Katlyn Jesse
 Molly Manson
 Robert Manson
 Teresa Morris
 Raymond Robaina
 Max Roy
 Roman Sergi
 Noah VonDette

2022 Statement of Operations** Historic Harrisville, Inc.

	2022	2021
Operating Income***		
Rental Income	\$561,744	\$540,311
Other Operating Income	\$ 62,128	\$ 27,955
Annual Appeal (Unrestricted)	\$ 98,985	\$ 86,847
Other Unrestricted Donations	\$ 15,325	\$ 34,885
Total Operating Income	\$738,182	\$689,998
Operating Expenses		
Office Expenses	\$ 54,648	\$ 41,478
Committee Expenses	\$ 50,638	\$ 13,848
Payroll Expenses	\$221,489	\$216,802
Property Expenses		
Property Tax	\$102,983	\$ 97,485
Heating Fuel	\$ 82,053	\$ 69,669
Property Insurance	\$ 56,357	\$ 44,796
Repairs (Contractors)	\$ 48,855	\$ 45,393
Interest Expense	\$ 27,119	\$ 32,915
Electricity	\$ 26,500	\$ 28,293
Plowing/Sanding	\$ 10,665	\$ 17,363
Materials (Repairs by Staff)	\$ 8,558	\$ 16,836
Other Property Expenses	\$ 32,696	\$ 27,578
Total Property Expense****	\$395,786	\$381,328
Total Expense	\$722,561	\$653,456
HHI Net Income	\$ 15,621	\$ 36,542

** Unaudited *** Excludes restricted fundraising **** Excludes depreciation expense

Harrisville General Store

	2022	2021
Operating Income		
Sales	\$660,457	\$598,156
Donations and Grants	\$ 40,591	\$ 88,802
Total Income	\$701,048	\$686,958
Operating Expenses		
Cost of Goods Sold	\$394,543	\$378,461
Payroll Expenses	\$289,489	\$254,349
Other Operating Expenses	\$ 33,175	\$ 23,414
Total Expense	\$717,207	\$656,224
HGS Net Income	\$ -16,159	\$ 30,734
Overall Net Income	\$ -538	\$ 67,276

2022 Financial Overview

In 2022, HHI's program income increased by \$55,000, or nearly 10%, for an overall increase in operating income of about 6.5%. Unfortunately, operating expenses were up almost \$70,000, or more than 10%. As a result, HHI's Net income was just \$15,000, down more than \$20,000 from 2021.

As discussed on page 1 of this report, it was a particularly challenging year at the Harrisville General Store. Although sales continued to increase, rising over \$60,000 or just over 10%, expenses also increased by the same amount, significantly impacting the businesses margins. And while the generous support of the Friends of the General Store helped tremendously, without the COVID subsidy received in 2021, the store had a net loss of just over \$16,000 for the year. As a result, in essence, HHI invested its small annual profit back into the store, resulting in a small overall operating loss for 2022.

In addition to the operating income shown above, HHI raised \$61,644 in funds for specific projects, including finishing the book *Out of Date and Ahead of Its Time*, seeding a capital reserve fund, and other small initiatives.