Helen Corser Fox lived most of her life in Bristol and became the town historian in 1995. She served in that capacity for nineteen years in which she amassed so much knowledge and gathered so many artifacts and transcripts that she became an honored mentor to resident genealogists and many other local historians. "She was witty, with a great sense of humor," said Deputy Town Clerk Patricia Sanford. Her lively demeanor, love of conversation, and passion for local history and genealogy was contagious. Helen's presence was almost a constant at the Bristol Town Hall and Town Clerk Sharon Miller said, "The job was her life, she loved it and inherited that from her dad. She came to work every day to help others in their search for descendants and history. She was a delightful companion." It is certainly fitting that she will be remembered on Bristol Fun Day, June 14th at the Bristol Town Park named in honor of her father, Levi Corser. She would have deferred the praise in favor of honoring him.

Her fame for expertise in her field went far beyond the borders of Bristol. Ray Henry, Canandaigua historian, remarked, "I would call her first whenever I had a question about genealogy in Ontario County and she invariably had the answer in her head. She even knew genealogy in colonial Massachusetts." I heard this same comment from public historians all over the state at the recent Public Historians' Conference in Corning and I have received letters from as far away as England asking Helen for genealogy advice.

Helen was also admired by Babette Huber, Town and Village of Victor Historian, who credits Helen with her indoctrination into the job and for inspiring her to write two historic guides to Victor. Mark Allen Campbell wrote Life in the Bristol Hills and dedicated a "Special Thanks" page to Helen in honor of her guidance, good natured encouragement, and help with photographs of local sites and people. Helen could have written volumes about Bristol, yet her humility, even self-deprecating comments to others prevented her from ever sending her legacy to the printer. What remains is a veritable museum of maps, and photographs, and antiques carefully labeled in her own handwriting. Impressively, she was also very technologically savvy and had five computers full of correspondence, family trees, and pictures. Tiny scraps of paper in every file reveal names connected by lines of descent scribbled in pencil, evidence of the lively mind that was envisioning the pioneers of the beautiful Bristol Valley she treasured. Fellow Harmony Circle member and travelling companion, Joan Hall said, "Helen was absolutely the most driven person to pursue genealogy. She found connections between us all, in even the most mundane things like road signs." Anne Rogers, another Harmony Circle friend riding in the car would stop Helen mid-reminiscence to ask, "Now wait Helen...which century are we in?" Patricia Sanford marveled, "...all that history in her head and she was ALWAYS willing to share it. She had all kinds of ideas and vision."

Perhaps the image we should keep of her in our minds, is a Helen dressed in her long skirted costume complete with a lace shawl and an antique hat, the woman with the girlish enthusiasm for life who sewed precious teddy bears and wooly stuffed sheep and whose secret desire was to prove that each and every one of us is related.