

Franklin NH Historical Society News

December 2016

The last get-together of the Society in the calendar year, the traditional pot-luck Christmas dinner, will take place on Sunday, December 11th, and all members and friends of the Society are all welcome to attend. We shall assemble to set up and socialize at 4 pm at Thompson Hall (next to the Congregational-Christian Church) and begin eating around 5 pm. The turkeys are provided, and we have commitments for garlic mashed potatoes, punch and a “shrimp ring”, so such essentials as vegetables, dressing, gravy, rolls and butter, additional appetizers, and desserts would be welcome. Also, as has been the Society’s tradition, donations of non-perishable food are encouraged to be given to the local food bank.

And speaking of Christmas, the Society offers wonderful merchandise to consider for gifts of the season. Along with the usual books, T-shirts, and magnets, are the the more rare and original 1931 1st editions of Alice Shepard’s “He Still Lives”, a printed tribute to Daniel Webster (\$15 each), ceramic plates commemorating the 1978 sesquicentennial of the city of Franklin (\$25 each), and surplus copies of Franklin City Annual Reports (years 1895-1980, \$2-5 each, depending on condition). Have a relative or friend born in Franklin? Pick up an Annual Report from their birth year and see what was happening during that momentous time! For information regarding any of the Society’s merchandise, or questions about the pot-luck, you may call Leigh Webb at 934-8222.

The attendees to the Society’s last official meeting of 2016 enjoyed an active interchange of information, humor, and anecdotes in identifying almost all of the real thirty-plus real photo postcards of Franklin street scenes dating to c. 1910. Although buildings have been added in the intervening one hundred-plus years, and some have been altered, there were enough clues to firmly establish just where in Franklin these photos were taken. The joy of solving “mysteries” such as these never gets old. In the “Do you know what this is?” portion of the presentation, there were inventory photos of some recently donated, very odd artifacts, that surprisingly elicited accurate responses (see this month’s photo below). One object stumped everyone, but with Internet research, it’s usage was revealed to be a “meat juicer”, invented in the 1800’s to tenderize meat for those with delicate digestive tracts. In the first part of the show, scans of some Franklin Library photos of Franklin High School clubs in the 1940’s even revealed the presence of relatives of some in attendance! All in all, a great time was had by all, and considering its popularity, more such slide shows with audience participation will certainly be part of the Society’s future.

Last month, as has been occurring in the last few years, the Society’s president gave a talk to the Franklin fourth graders on Daniel Webster, to inspire pride in living in the city where such a historic and important figure was born. Middle School teacher Briana VanDell coordinated the event, for which the Society is in her debt.

October and November were very active months for significant contributions to the Society’s collections. Clyde and Shirley Currier of Andover donated a Franklin centennial medal from 1928, collapsible fans from the 1950’s advertising the Velma Smith Agency, seventeen vintage Franklin postcards, and a snapshot, taken from the same spot as an RPPC identified in the November meeting, of flooded homes on River Street in 1936! Lorraine Belliveau gave a framed panoramic group shot of the September 6th 1941 outing for the M.T. Stevens mill, delivered to the Society by Andy Nadeau; Alan Larter dropped off a stove manufactured by the Franklin foundry of James Taylor c. 1885; Maureen Taylor (no relation) sent a photo of a cobbler’s shop on W. Bow Street, which unfortunately remains to be identified; and Linda Chessman of Massachusetts mailed an envelope of Barg family photos (owners of Franklin Furniture), with more promised. Although sincere thanks never seems enough, the Society is eternally grateful for this continuous flow of incredible Franklin items of incalculable historic importance. Every day their value comes to light in helping to weave together the intricate tapestry that will forever continue to tell the stories of the people and industry of Franklin. The Society would be remiss, however, if it did not specifically single out those donors whose contributions have been of enormous proportions. John S. Shepard III, some years ago, donated sixteen cardboard boxes filled with the

material used by his father, John S. Shepard, Jr. (FHS 1919) and his grandmother, Alice M. Shepard, in compiling their monumental work, "The History of Franklin", published in 1996 (copies available through the Society). When John passed away recently, his sister Rosamond, coming up from her home in Texas, then donated almost the same volume of material, much of it related to the Shepard family itself. Although too voluminous to mention in detail now (it is still being inventoried), this treasure trove will certainly be referenced in future articles, will become the subject of a revolving exhibit in our museum, and be the basis of future meeting-night presentations. In the same vein, Kathy and David Fuller, who have been such incredibly generous donors in the past, have done it again, by bestowing on the Society military uniforms, paraphernalia, and awards from both sides of their respective their families, covering a span from WWI through the Vietnam conflict. This extensive donation will also serve as the basis of an exhibit honoring all veterans who called Franklin their home. Look for these new displays at the Society coming in Spring of 2017.

There is a new sign on Route 3 (sharing the pole with the Webster Place Cemetery sign, courtesy of the Cemetery Association) indicating the presence of the Historical Society at Webster Place. Kay Judkins Spratt's daughter Kristine was responsible for donating the lettering, for which the Society is extremely grateful. We will soon be replacing the large sign on the front lawn, as it was never constructed to withstand 24/7 conditions, with a more weather-friendly design, built along the lines of the Route 3 sign. This too is a 2017 project.

It has been a memorable and successful 2016, and the Society looks forward to an even better, brighter and exciting new year.

Have a safe, warm, giving, and loving, Holiday Season!

[This month's photo: from Rosamond Shepard, an approximately 18 inch-long device used in the Shepard Brothers store to cut chewing tobacco plugs to size for their customers, back when the health risks of tobacco use were unknown, and brass cuspidors were common]

