

Franklin NH Historical Society News

July 2016

In 2004, Society meetings were a mere shadow of the gatherings that had been enthusiastically attended in the eighties and nineties. The speaker program had all but disappeared, energy to pursue new avenues of interest had flagged, and only a few stalwart members were still attending in donated venues. However, by fortuitous coincidence, the Sisters of Holy Cross property was still for sale that year, and the Society got involved in saving this venerable farmland from being developed into house lots and forever and irrevocably changed. Along with the acreage were 70,000 square feet of buildings, dating from c. 1795 to 1925, with various pedigrees of historic significance, which the developer had said publicly would be constructively utilized. Considering the money needed to effectively rehab the complex, and therefore fearing that the buildings which had housed orphans for almost 90 years were in jeopardy, a campaign was launched to preserve the structures and conserve the lands in perpetuity. Because the Society played an active role through its principal officer, as the effort evolved, the final victory was (for the Society) the acquisition of the Webster/Tay House (arguably the most important building still extant in Franklin) for the Society's permanent home for meetings, displays, and as repository for its ever-growing collection of treasures.

The Society has come a long way in just over ten years time. Just this past weekend, the Society hosted its first annual plant sale, with several members donating not only plants but their time to sell them, resulting in a very successful showing. More than three hundred dollars was collected, but even more importantly, new memberships were received and tours were conducted of the museum, hopefully inspiring additional memberships in the near future and possibly even donations to our collections. A decade ago we had no building to call our home, and now we are able to mount intellectually and visually stimulating exhibits while offering monthly programs in the Society's seasonal calendar. June's program was welcomed by a full house, and in July, that tradition will continue with Richard Batchelder presenting "The White Island Walkway Restoration" at 7 pm, Thursday the 7th, at Webster Place (directions to the Society are on the website, www.franklinnhhistoricalsociety.org). As someone intimately involved with this amazing project started by the efforts of the "Lighthouse Kids", Mr. Batchelder is eminently qualified to discuss the hopes, frustrations, and ultimate success story in considerable detail. Light refreshments will be offered after the presentation and, as always, the program is free and open to all. The Society's regular business meeting will immediately follow, to which all members and visitors are encouraged to attend, in particular to discuss the pending field trip in August (location and date), which must be determined so plans can be made.

No article would be complete without the Society's curator extending undying thanks to those who continue to contribute to the museum's collections. Thank you's go to: Sarah Stanley, for a wooden sesquicentennial celebration "grave marker" used in a beard growing competition in 1978; Andy Nadeau, for WWII photos and a bio for Leo Nadeau and an E.J. Keegan yardstick; Annette Cain, for Franklin business matchbooks, a FFD rescue squad patch (already added to the Fire Department display to encourage folks to visit the Franklin Firefighters' museum), a small box which once contained needles from the Franklin Needle Company, and framed certificates, dating to 1928 and 1931, given to her parents in their productive youths.

The Society's participation in Community Day, made possible through the efforts of member volunteers Ken Ackerson, Elizabeth Jewell, Dan Cerat, and Annette Andreozzi, was a brilliant success, dispensing information while selling books and memberships.

It is with a great sense of loss that the Society must note the passing of two members who offered their home for years as the location of the August pot-luck dinner (which has only recently been replaced by the yearly field trip). As a loving couple completely devoted to each other, it was not surprising that their deaths came very close together in time. Diane and Albert Pessa will be remembered and their contributions to the Society deeply prized. May they be in each others arms, dancing together, for all eternity.

[This month's image, in the form of a vintage postcard courtesy of the "Lighthouse Kids" website, is of the White Island Lighthouse and its distinctive walkway connecting the keeper's house to the light, whose restoration is the subject of July's presentation.]

