

Franklin NH Historical Society News

November 2017

The holiday season begins in earnest at the end of this month, with families gathering around a Thanksgiving feast to meaningfully re-engage with all family members, immediate and distant, from near and far, while welcoming old friends as well. There is the inevitable fall/winter nip in the air, and raking leaves, gathering them in giant bundles and transporting them to the transfer station, has become the afternoon's household chore. The Society wishes to extend to all its members and friends, the most cordial, warm, and heartfelt greetings that the season can offer, while inviting all to come to its final 2017 meeting Thursday night, 7 pm, November 2nd at the Society's building at Webster Place (21 Holy Cross Road, directions on the Society's website, franklinnhhistoricalsociety.org). The subject of the evening's presentation will be "Hands at Work" (the Industrial Revolution in NH), skillfully interpreted by Mary Morris, a representative of the NH Historical Society. As Franklin was a bustling and contributing industrial center from the early 19th to the late 20th centuries, this program offers an insight into the forces which shaped society in that formative, growing, and massively influential era. If it were not for the confluence of the rivers and the prime conditions for the construction and operation of various mills in this setting, Franklin would never have come into existence. Recognized for its importance as an industrial location in the early 1800's, Franklin took sections of four neighboring towns to be officially recognized as its own entity in 1828. Learn about how Franklin fit into the context of this global, national, and regional phenomenon of mechanized growth while developing its own identity and persona first as a town, and then as the smallest city in NH. All are welcome, there is never an admission charge, and light refreshments will be served after the talk and before the regular business meeting. Come join the "revolution" to learn about, and be proud of, the grand legacy of Franklin.

During the September meeting, an opportunity presented itself in the form of the current owner of the Dudley Ladd House, who offered a rare glimpse inside the home which was a temporary hiding place for Southern slaves enroute to Canada on the famous "Underground Railroad" (there are at least two homes in Franklin with the reputation of being "stations"). The president of the Society will be able to take photos, perhaps to be used as a potential basis for a future program, to document the architecture of and role the Ladd House played in expediting slaves to the lives of free men and women in the Civil War era.

Another unexpected delight coming from a past meeting was the acquaintance made of the president of the Alton Historical Society, Martin Cornelissen, who donated a vintage poster for a fire department dance, but then offered to share scans of negatives to which he had gained access. These circa 1940 shots were compiled by the NH DOT ostensibly to catalog bridges in Franklin and have been preserved, as historic documents, in the State Archives. Looking at these images opens a portal to Franklin 70+ years ago, and a vision not often seen. Because of a willingness to share a discovery by another Historical Society, or open an historic home to digital documentation, the Franklin Society has been truly enriched by these kind, thoughtful, and generous individuals. In that vein of being thankful for gifts bestowed, the Society wishes to acknowledge the following individuals for their contributions this past month to our archives: Susan Grzelak Winters, for school desks and Polish textbooks from the Polish Home (in the building now housing the May Garden restaurant on West Bow Street), where children of Polish immigrants were taught to keep their culture alive, two dolls dressed in colorful traditional Polish garb, ephemera from the Polish Home, her grandfather's 1916 copy of the Stanislaus Society's constitution, a FHS Football Booster stadium cushion, and local newspapers with historic content; and Carol Hodgdon, for a

combination VHS VCR and DVD player, so that the Society can view material in these formats for the foreseeable future.

Seemingly every day an exciting, magical, even mysterious discovery is made about our past, inspiring more research, more digging, to create a total and understandable picture of what made us the city, the community, the society we are today. Join the Franklin Historical Society in that never-ending quest for answers to satisfy that innate curiosity which resides in all of us...

[This month's photo, to emphasize the intensity of the industrial age, shows Franklin mill employees in their work milieu, circa 1890: an environment fraught with danger, when expansion and productivity outweighed a concern for workers' safety, and massive machines filled every inch of available space.]

