

Franklin NH Historical Society News

May 2018

The beginning of April was predictably as unpredictable as the winter months that preceded it, producing a “faux spring” to tease us all. But with consistently warmer temperatures comes the inevitable breakthrough of blooms, and the greening of the trees and bushes that survived the earlier frosty nights. So much can change in almost a blink (okay, several blinks) of an eye. Despite the chill in the air, April’s program was a very well attended and successful presentation of old films (thank you Porter Young) and a slideshow of recently discovered images of 1890’s Franklin by Omar Towne (thank you Chris Lewis!). It will be followed this month by a fascinating talk featuring renowned railroad historian Ken Cushing. On Thursday, May 3rd at 7 pm, Mr. Cushing will discuss the evolution and importance of the Northern Railroad to Franklin’s development and economic impact as industrial center. An efficient rail service was essential in the horse and buggy era, allowing ease of travel both north to Canada and south to Boston, and facilitating an exchange of goods in both directions. The presentation will be at the Society’s Webster/Tay House at 21 Holy Cross Road, Webster Place (directions available at franklinnhhistoricalsociety.org). “Everything you always wanted to know about the Northern RR but were afraid to ask” will be offered free of charge and open to all. Light refreshments will follow the program and precede the regular business meeting, to which all are also cordially invited to attend.

The Society is excited to once again have a booth at Franklin’s Community Day, Saturday May 12th, from 10 am to 3 pm at Odell Park. Stop by to chat, buy Society books or merchandise, or pick up a membership application. Our volunteers will graciously try to answer any question you have, and anyone joining that day (it is only \$10 a year) will receive a small token of our appreciation.

As part of its mission, the Society is involved in seeking out historic structures, images, and items outside its ownership worthy of preservation. Being able to scan vintage photographs for which the original may not be obtainable at least allows a digital record to be kept, if those pictures are in other institutions, or retained as valued family memories. Last month two kind folks consented to the scanning of articles they wanted to keep (for the time being at least), but wished to share with the Society: a booklet tracing the the lineage of the Dudley Ladd House (from Jim Prew), and treasured family photos of the 1936 and ‘38 floods (Linda Pauwels, taken from a photo album of her mother’s, Hilda Mayor Geiler, who at that time was working at The Webster Place Tea Room on Route 3). This has now become a regular occurrence, for which the Society is extremely grateful.

In the vein of seeking out “one off” items worthy of saving, it came to the Society’s attention that hand painted theatrical backdrops from the 1920’s still existed in a vintage Franklin entertainment venue, now in private hands. Heretofore undocumented, the Society was given access to photograph and investigate the possibility of restoring these wonderful and literal works of art. Thanks go to Paul and Beth Morrissette for allowing this process to move forward, hopefully culminating in a joint effort of interested groups to preserve these remarkable views into our collective pasts.

Segueing into more “thank you’s” owed, the Society once again wishes to acknowledge the incredible generosity of donors to its collections in the past month: John Fink, from Ellsworth Maine, for a signed copy (by Alice M. Shepard) of the 1928 Pageant booklet, given to his wife’s grandparents, now on display at the Society; Joyce Reeves of

Woodstock, NY, for two Mojalaki Champion trophies, awarded to Eugene V. Reeves (an avid golfer who owned a Shell gas station on Central Street) in 1926 and 1930—both may be loaned to be on display at Mojalaki this season; Chris Lewis, for thirty four original glass negatives shot by Omar Towne in the late 1890's, and printer's blocks of three maps, published in the same time period, and photos and newspaper articles mounted for display by Richard Lewis, documenting segregation in the deep south in 1956; Steve Reale and Chief Kevin LaChapelle for a 40 x 70 inch aerial photo of Franklin, also from 1956, now above the fireplace in the Society's meeting room; Glenn Morrill, a 1940's era wheelchair, now on display as part of the tribute to our veteran heroes; Linda Pauwels for various Franklin business memorabilia (such as a Holmes and Nelson matchbook and an Insulfab calendar cover), photos from the FHS class of 1935, and various recent newspaper articles and obituaries, remembering those with Franklin connections; Rita Norander, adding further to Franklin business promotional material from Giles Dairy, the Log Cabin, FSB, Aiken Manor, and original 1929 clapboards from her house stamped "Franklin Park Lumber" and "Russell and Foster", and a Mileage Coupon booklet for the Boston and Maine Railroad, 1914!; Annette Cain, a Rotary Club coffee mug, an 8 mm film of "Fire Training", and a copy of the Franklin 1971 Zoning Ordinance; and lastly, a newspaper article featuring the donor, Janet Jurta in 1991. I hope the mention of these generous contributors can help to adequately convey the deep appreciation the Society holds for their gifts.

Besides offering educational programs and collecting and preserving Franklin related artifacts, the Society also maintains a museum, putting those items acquired to good use. The museum will be open to the public every Saturday from 10 am to 2 pm beginning at the end of this month (Memorial Day weekend) to September (Labor Day Weekend). Knowledgeable docents will conduct tours fleshing out the exhibits with fascinating facts about many of the items on display. For thirsty or hungry users of the Rail Trail, snacks and beverages are also available for a nominal charge, with all proceeds benefiting the Society.

Throughout the spring and summer, refresh both the spirit and the body at the Franklin Historical Society!



[In keeping with the May program, this month's scan is from Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, 1856, of early steam locomotives pushing a giant plow clearing the tracks in Franklin of heavy snow along the Northern Railroad line]