

Franklin Historical Society

June 2020

In the “year that never was” (or people wish never happened), nothing is normal, and the “new normal” is anything but. Up close and personal social interaction has all but faded from the landscape and meetings, the mainstay of community connectivity, have been cancelled or pushed to an indeterminate date. All of the monthly gatherings of the Society, including now the June meeting, have been cancelled out of respect and consideration for our membership. Lost opportunities to “show off” the progress the Society has made in its museum and building to a new audience occurred with the cancellation of the Business and Professional Women's dinner, and the annual LCHIP board meeting, both scheduled originally to convene at the Society's facility.

The only event that is still being planned, with appropriate social distancing, masks, disinfecting and other proper restrictions, is the **Annual Plant Sale on Sunday, June 28th on the front lawn of the Society's Webster/Tay building at 21 Holy Cross Road**. The sale will be **from 10 am to 2 pm**, with off-pavement parking (unless designated parking areas around the building are available) and will observe strict health protocols. For updates on all planned activities, please check the Society's website, at franklinhhistoricalociety.org.

In the void created by “stay at home” dictates, all have tried various and sundry pastimes to fill the yawning chasm of potential inactivity with productive behavior. At the Society, that meant solitary chores like inventorying, testing the alarm system, tidying up the gardens, clearing the path to the Stevenstown Fort plaque, and of course, looking to remove the last bit of damaging vinyl siding from the Webster building, and repair/paint what is underneath. The really good news is that all recent donations to the Society's collections have now been cataloged, with some already on display! The table in the upstairs office is clear for the first time in months, and ready to accept future gifts. Many new donations revealed most interesting finds, resulting in research and the discovery of fascinating tie-ins. **Barbara and Scott Burns** contributed boxes of correspondence, Franklin memorabilia (such as a 1905 booklet promoting the private hospital at Sanborn Hall), documents, books, and photos (some with the original negatives) from the Ralph family, the previous owners of the Burns' home on Ridgewood Street (Railroad Street, when the Ralphs lived there). One particular find was handwritten sheets detailing some of the Ralph family genealogy, with a note on the bottom requesting that either Katharine or Ruth Ralph type the notes for presentation to “Mrs. Shepperd” (Alice Shepard) for her History of Franklin. In one of the boxes of research material the Shepards used in writing their book was found the very notebook Alice Shepard used to jot down notes from her interview of William Ralph! Although the notes never made it into the published version (genealogies of prominent families of Franklin were never completed), that the tie-in could be found was amazing. Other donations, for which the Society again is at a loss to fully express its gratitude, came from **Steve and Mary Foley** for the photo included in this article; from **Linda Pauwels** more obituaries of Franklin personalities and newspaper clippings of significant local happenings; from **Tom Caldwell** came video tapes of city meetings from 2002-2004; from **Dan Darling** an early 1920's ticket to a “Concert and Dance” at the Opera House, a rare 1906 view of Central Street featuring the Bank Block, and an 1888 “Practical Cook-Book” from Hill filled with ads for Franklin businesses; from **Janet Jurta** a color snapshot of the flood control dam and the obituary of Dr. Robert Morin; from **Glenn Laramie** his grandmother's 1910 Singer

Sewing Machine (now ensconced in the front parlor of the Society); from **Donna Gilbreth**, an array of mid-twentieth century hats owned and worn by Helen Hird, a local artist whose works are on display at the Society; and finally, from **Karen Burnett-Kurie** (by mail) of Wolfeboro, eight vintage postcards of the Webster Birthplace and various views of Franklin (one scarce image of a dam in West Franklin with the Bristol Branch trestle in the background), and the original program and invitation card announcing the ceremonies at the rededication of the Webster Birthplace on August 28, 1913. Obviously, even with self-imposed isolation, the Society has not been idle. If anyone is at a loss for something to do at home, the Society has some entertaining and informative reading matter for sale. Contact President Leigh Webb at 934-8222 to arrange a meet and purchase of any of the books the Society proudly offers for sale.

[This month's image was labeled as being of Franklin, but is unfamiliar, and the donation was a scan of a stereoview that, unfortunately, was not of high enough resolution to read the signs adorning the businesses pictured. Can anyone identify the building, and exactly where it was located?]

