

## Franklin Historical Society May 2020

With the May meeting falling within the parameters of the new governmental guidelines of social distancing to avoid the spread of Covid-19, and the April meeting already cancelled, there will unfortunately be no May gathering of the Society either, further postponing the official beginning of the 2020 season. The Society can only take a “wait and see” approach, with no alternative than to formulate plans and come to critical decisions on a month-to-month basis. However, that is not to say that the Society is dormant. Members are still mailing in their dues, although it is quite a challenge to solicit *new* memberships. With the cancellation of Franklin’s Community Day, persuading those of the public who might be inclined to join without the advantage face-to-face contact is that much more difficult. Interacting with the curious has always been the Society’s prime motivation to participate in this event. As that will not be possible in May, when the new societal norm is eventually reached in the weeks ahead, the public will again be able to visit the museum and be impressed by the diversity of our displays.

Regardless of the obstacles, the Society, and Franklin as a city, is destined to emerge from this global crisis stronger, and even more resolute to carry on.

Because most of the work of cataloging, organizing, and creating new exhibits tends to be quite solitary, that work continues unabated. Despite the advisory to self-isolate, some articles have still found their way to the Society, for which the officers and board are most grateful. From **Steve and Mary Foley** came more lawn ornaments, gardening tools, and decorative pots and plant containers to add to our Annual Plant Sale (for either this year, if possible, or next), with an incredible trove of collectibles including: a copy of “The Life and Times of Daniel Webster” by Lyman and published in 1860 (which is, strangely, the exact book but with a different title that was donated by our retired lawyer benefactor from MA!), a biscuit tin of pin-back buttons from Franklin events (Winter Carnivals, Frontier Days, the Sesquicentennial), a FSB pencil holder which is now doing just that on the office desk, a Franklin mini pennant featuring the head of an Indian Chieftain, a clipped vintage newspaper ad for DeWitt’s Pills promoting the Main Street Pharmacy, an empty “Holland Gin” bottle from the Woodward Pharmacy, a blank 1900 invoice form from F.A. Felch Carpenter, a 1937 City Directory (one that the Society did not have, but in perilous condition, sadly), a card with a typed quote from Daniel Webster from a speech in 1840 in which he referenced his humble beginnings, a Franklin National Bank Christmas card, a well used 1981 “Kids in the Kitchen” cookbook from the Franklin Jr. Women’s Club and distributed by the Franklin Regional Hospital, a c.1950 catalog from the Albert Garneau Co., a family photo album (with a belief that those pictured are members of the Sylvester family) with snapshots dating from 1919 to 1924, and lastly a wonderfully large framed and matted birds-eye view of Franklin in the 1890’s; and from **John Benham**, a wonderful oversized black and white photo of the Franklin High School class of 1916 on a field trip (made possible by the generosity of Lucie Odell), posed in front of George Washington’s home at Mt. Vernon.

Even though, with so much time to fill, the current gifts have been properly inventoried, there are still boxes in storage filled with photos and documents that were described in less detail than would be ideal (for purposes of expediency) when the Society first moved into its permanent home at Webster

Place. In going over these holdings to more adequately note and preserve the contents, some surprises have emerged. Such as a large manila envelope simply labeled “Deeds of the Kelley-Wheeler family” which contained documents from as far back as the Civil War era! Or another envelope containing “NH Realty (of Concord) papers 1929-1950” which were listing descriptions of properties for sale in Franklin, such as the 1940 listing for the Aiken Manor on Webster Lake, with a hand drawn 1927 site plot! Also included in this trove were listings of the Gateway Inn (with correspondence, including a relatively rare 1951 postcard—see below) and the Granite State Inn on South Main Street (both properties now multi-families, but during the early to mid 20th century, took advantage of the heavy tourist traffic traveling to and from the White Mountains along Route 3, by offering overnight lodging). Every day can be considered ripe for new discoveries, with never a boring moment.

The Society extends its heartfelt wishes that all make the most informed decisions to stay safe while protecting those around them. Despite the dire headlines appearing every day, this is an opportunity to display common *community* sense and courtesy. Protecting family and loved ones is of the highest order, but keeping strangers safe is proper, humane, and simply the right thing to do. It is of paramount importance that we do understand that we really are all in this together.

*[This month's image is the 1951 artist's depiction of the Gateway Inn, used on the business's promotional postcard]*

