

Franklin NH Historical Society News

November 2015

The leaves are colorful in the fall tradition, at least those which have not fallen or blown off the trees...raking is in full progress, and owners of historic homes and buildings are questioning whether their weatherization attempts will pay off in reduced heating bills (or are turning down the thermostats in little-used rooms). The seasonal change to inevitably cold temperatures is reminding all of us that winter is ahead. For the Franklin

Historical Society that means just one more regular monthly meeting and the ever-popular Christmas pot-luck dinner in December before the winter hiatus (running through to next April). The final speaker in 2015 was supposed to be Dick Batchelder talking about "Restoring the Isles of Shoals (White Island) Lighthouse", but alas, due to unforeseen circumstances, he will not be able to appear. So instead, we shall present "Library Scans, Part III, and other Interesting Images". The meeting will be at our Webster Place building, 21 Holy Cross Rd. at Webster Place (directions available at the Society's website, www.franklinnhhistoricalsociety.org) on Thursday night, November 5th, at 7 pm. All are welcome, with no admission charge, and light refreshments offered between the presentation and the always illuminating business meeting for members and guests. Come reminisce, add insight, or simply appreciate what once was....

Taking advantage of the good weather offered at the end of summer, more of the improperly installed vinyl siding was removed from the Webster portion of the Webster/Tay, and the rotted window sills and clapboard were replaced. The work requiring expert carpenter skills was contracted to local George LaBonte and his crew (Ron and Pam), with the unskilled labor accomplished by a volunteer to help control costs. Slowly, but invariably, steady progress will be made each year until all of the vinyl material is banished and the ubiquitous damage it caused is corrected. Next summer will be more challenging (and expensive) as the upper floors are targeted. Restoring the building to its pre-twentieth century appearance (including black shutters for the windows) is the ultimate goal, with the help of dedicated volunteers and financial donations. For additional information, please feel free to contact president Leigh Webb at 934-8222.

More and more donations to the Society's collections keep pouring in! Extensive and heart-felt "thank you's" go out to: Kathy Fuller, for a FHS sweater worn by Mary Thibodeau McKeage, a FHS jacket worn by Chris McKeage, an "NH" baseball jersey (from? see photo below), a Rolls Razor used by her grandfather, and booklets "Flood Waters 1936" and "Freak Winds 1938"; Betsy Davison for a 1930's bookcase from the Robert Leach home on Webster Lake; Charlotte Cook, for an 1895 city directory, a postcard of "The Odell" hotel, promotional ashtrays from the Jean Shaw and Velma Smith insurance agencies (for whom she worked), and a wooden ruler (remember those?) from the Avery Co.; Beverly Chapman, for a most interesting tiny straw doll, sold at the Webster Inn (!), two medicine bottles from the F.H. Chapman Pharmacy, c. 1890, (and as a side note, the original occupant of the house now owned by the Society's president), a draw-string cloth bag touting

the Acme Knitting Machine & Needle Co., a Franklin National Bank wallet, a Christmas songbook from the Franklin Savings Co-op, and three vintage Franklin postcards; Linda Pauwels (a member and frequent contributor to the collections) for giving up her beloved 1950's roller skates, complete with key and a newspaper photo of her using them; Carlton Ham (the Society's treasurer) for several city directories, two of which, 1951 and 1953, were needed to replace those damaged by water and mold before being donated to the Society by John Shepard, III; and finally, Roger K. Smith, of Athol, MA, for sending over one hundred receipts in a three ring binder for purchases made by Jonas Aiken from roughly 1863 to 1902, many signed by the proprietors who accepted his payment, comprising virtually a "Who's Who" of businesses in turn of the century Franklin! Lest we ever forget anyone's contribution, there have been several "late arrivals" not yet fully inventoried which will be acknowledged in next month's newsletter.

Switching now to a completely different topic, the Society has a request for those who may have an accurate memory of the Chapman Chapel in the Franklin Cemetery. Some years ago, the stained glass window was removed and sold to party or parties unknown (at least to anyone with whom the Society has spoken). Kris Meinhold, the current Cemetery Superintendent, has been working tirelessly to restore this early 1900's building, but its heart, that window, is now just a piece of plywood. Steve Rayno described the window as being surrounded by colored squares (quite common for that era) and with a dominating central cross. Does anyone have any other details? Such as if there was any writing on the window, the color of the cross, or whether there were other decorative items present? Better still, does anyone possess a photo of the window that they might be willing to share? With such information, it might be possible to create a replica, and thus restore the central icon of this wonderful chapel. You may contact Leigh Webb at the phone number above or by writing to email address franklin_pride@yahoo.com (there is an underscore between words). Thank you in advance for any light which might be shed on this important Franklin story.

Lastly, from the author of these articles, a most sincere thank you to all those who have taken the time to say how much they enjoy and look forward to reading these few paragraphs every month. It is indeed gratifying that one person's passion for the history of this proud city can be acknowledged, appreciated, and most importantly, echoed by those who care just as much. Until next month, stay safe, stay warm, and continue to kindle those fires which ignite the spirit of preservation in all of us.

[This month's photo from the Franklin Historical Society is of the unidentified baseball jersey found in the Gilchrist family closet. Can anyone identify the school and year from which this jersey came? New Hampton? UNH?]

