

Franklin NH Historical Society News

February 2017

Every time new donations arrive at the Society, the potential exists for an exciting, stimulating and educational journey into discovery. A never-before-seen vintage photograph can shed light on a piece of the bygone past, a newspaper clipping can solve an enduring mystery, or a document may cause more questions to arise than it answers. It is all part of the process of appropriately cataloging, storing, and considering each new acquisition for fresh or expanded displays or ongoing projects. As an example, an 1852 letter by Daniel Webster to Monica McCarty, a one-time slave for whom Webster paid to have her become a free woman and his paid cook, thus beginning a lengthy association (after Webster's death, President Franklin Pierce sought her services--and she refused), recently fell into the Society's hands. This particular missive is Webster's own recipe for fish chowder, which will now be included in the upcoming Franklin Historical Society's cookbook.

Other recent gifts were, from Carlton Ham, an unused J J Newberry's employee pencil, and an H.L. Young thermometer, probably taken from a promotional calendar, and from Dr. Misty Batchelder, three tags from Stevens Mill bundles of wool, plus a 1908 Franklin High School graduation program, with which she was reticent to part, but most thankfully did. As always, the Society is deeply grateful for these thoughtful additions to its ever-growing collections.

As mentioned in a previous article, the inventorying of the vast amount of Shepard family material gifted by Rosamond Shepard continues, as a never-ending source of wonder. In just the last two weeks, more treasures have been revealed, including the typed remarks made by Alice Shepard at the 1932 dedication ceremony of the Webster bust in front of the Congregational-Christian Church; an 1874 Franklin town directory (the predecessor of the modern phone book) with an added surprise—two 1942 letters tucked inside the cover, one from Richard Sulloway with a requested address of the original printer of the directory, and a letter from the printer himself, then probably in his late 80's, explaining how he came to Franklin and published the book! Some items present interesting challenges. Eighty year old black and white snapshots of a c. 1925 trip to Europe taken by John S. Shepard Jr. had curled into tight rolls. After a little research for a proper technique to treat the pictures, each one was covered with a damp cloth face down, and ironed with low heat. This restored enough moisture to flatten them, without effecting the image. Now the photos can once again be stored correctly, to be enjoyed and appreciated.

But perhaps the piece d' resistance, was a small photo album, with handwritten descriptions of each entry, and an explanation of the reason behind the album's creation. In 1856, when images were mass produced from artists' etchings because the technology did not exist to replicate photos in print, an H.P. Moore of Concord created three drawn "maps" of buildings in Franklin, in Paper Mill Village, and in Franklin Mill Village (the Society has a framed copy of this rendering in the upstairs classroom exhibit). This album was an attempt to photograph those houses and businesses that still existed circa 1930 when the album was created. In other words, it was a very early "then and now" book. Some of the many structures pictured included the Paper Mill barn, the James Clark farm, the Howe boarding house, an 1827 one room schoolhouse (see this month's photo), the 1852 Old Stone Mill counting house, and the 1858 Lyceum (another early school), which later became the Sleeper Sash and Blind Company and at the time the picture was snapped, was home to the Hebert Manufacturing Company. The creator's identity is not known, but the neatness of the penmanship at first left the impression that the author was a woman (perhaps Alice Shepard). However, in the text appears the phrase "when I was a boy", so the historian may have been John S. Shepard Jr.

The wonders never cease, and hopefully never will, as the joy of rediscovering the past continues to feed the passions of those who truly believe that the past is worth remembering, and honoring.

Stay safe and warm, and if you are looking for a great Valentine's gift, how about a membership in the Society? Inquiries are always welcome at the Society's website, www.franklinnhistoricalociety.org, or by calling Leigh Webb at 934-8222. Have a great February!

[This month's photo from your Franklin Historical Society: first used as a red one-room schoolhouse in 1827, when this image graced a photographic plate around 1930 this small building at 375 Central Street was Ernest Melendy's tire repair, gas stop (the pump is partially hidden by the horse, which had little use for the fuel it dispensed), and motorcycle shop. Trophy cups found by Kathy Fuller at the Veteran's Memorial Ski Area and donated to the Society a couple years back, proclaimed Mr. Melendy winner in motorcycle uphill climbing competitions, so he not only fixed motorcycles, but rode them with consummate skill and daring. Connections to previous acquisitions are always enlightening...and fun!]

