

Franklin Historical Society, Newsletter, February 2026

Brrrrrrrr.

Okay, that's enough of *that*.

In February, little occurs except monitoring the Webster/Tay, completing the inventory of past donations, and other usual off-season responsibilities. As the Society does not hold monthly meetings where business items can be discussed during the winter, February is also deemed a “catch-up and prepare” month for the Directors and Officers. Therefore, there is an annual get-together to determine a slate of elected positions to be presented to the membership in May, as well as discussions on fundraisers, potential programs and events, and other matters related to the sustainability of the Society. With the help of Glenn Morrill, arrangements are secured to hold the meeting at Thompson Hall, which is much warmer than the Webster/Tay, which is heated only enough to keep the pipes from freezing and the building from suffering cold related damage. This year the meeting has been scheduled for **Thursday, February 12, at 6 pm**, with a weather date of the 19th. Everyone is welcome to attend, especially those wishing to get more involved in an elected capacity, or simply to be part of any deliberations. Only members can vote, but open discussions are always encouraged.

General news from the Society: Due to the heavy snowfall recently, it was thought to clear the porch roofs so as to minimize additional weight and stress on the porch supports. The front porch amount roof only consisted of a few inches, which was a bit surprising, but perhaps because the wind had kept the accumulation to a minimum, and it did not receive any additional loading from above. Unlike the rear porch, which is below the upper pitched roof from which snow descends, had a load ranging from 18 inches near the building, to 8-10 inches near the edge. Accessing from a window, and armed with a shovel, the mass of snow and ice was dispatched below, culminating in large piles between the porch and the parking lot. Because of the intense cold, the propane tank levels have been closely watched, with a recent close call of perhaps running short effectively avoided with the immediate response of the Society’s delivery service, Huckleberry Propane in Boscawen. Having a local and responsive provider is definitely a plus.

As an update to the Abigail Webster House, the “ell” (that part of the house that connected it to the barns, that were lost to the fire) has been completely removed, affecting the back corner of the main house where it was attached (see photos below). As the house itself is still mostly intact, it is the hope that Easterseals (now the owner of the property) will preserve this 1805 structure with the important name of “Webster” attached, and its associated local history.



The Opera House valence also has an update. Having hung above the stage in Soldiers Memorial Hall for more than 100 years, with the help of Dan Darling, it was lowered and removed from its suspension cables and ropes. After careful disassembling (the sandwiched boards were nailed together and the fabric of the valence tacked between the pieces), and with Annette Andreozzi's knowledgeable guidance (in her capacity of Society Curator and textile expert), it was rolled up with muslin and removed from the building, along with the wooden edging to which it was attached for hanging. The valence and the wood pieces are now being stored at Annette and Leigh's house, with a future hopefully back at the Opera House after the renovations are completed, where it can serve as a tribute to this venue's glorious past.

There is, unfortunately, some sad news to impart this month. Leigh Liberatore, wife of David Liberatore, who has been a staunch supporter of the Society in so many ways, has passed away. The Society as a whole extends its most heartfelt condolences to David, as we share his loss.

The Curator's Corner: Not a lot of activity in this area as the Society is closed for the season, but what was received was most welcome—and intriguing! Thanks to **Kathy Fuller** for these wonderful gifts:

A Mason's coin, dated 1881, from **Cheryl Elliott**, possibly either from her father Roger Elliott or his father, a Penny from the St. Omer Chapter 22, R.A.M. (Royal Arch Masons) of Franklin. This was a separate order of the Masons from Meridians Lodge 60, but seemingly met in the latter part of the 19th century in the same place (on different nights), in Buell's Block. The penny proved membership in the Order and was usually inscribed with the individual member's "mark" inside the keystone. This one is blank, however. The initials inside the circle (starting at the top) may stand for "Hiram The Widow's Son Sent To King Solomon", and represents the mark of the Ancient Grand Master, associated with King Solomon's Temple. Fascinating stuff!



Also involving Kathy, is the donation of half of the ribbon cut to officially open the skating rink in Odell Park on December 30th, 2025, accompanied by photos by **Jessica Gardner**, now on display at the Society with a photo from the original ice skating area in 1915.

Kathy also sent by email newspaper images of JFK and John Glenn when canvassing in Franklin during their political campaigns. Kathy's mother is in that of JFK in the Opera House, and Kathy herself is featured with Scott Glenn. Thank you again Kathy.

On a final note, Leigh and Annette helped our new city manager clean out the vault outside his (now former) office. The vault is slated for demolition, so all its contents had to be moved to a secure location. In sorting the material, some interesting articles were discovered, that hopefully the city might consider unnecessary to keep, and offer to the Society. One was a ledger titled "District 1", which seemed to document schooling in the area before Franklin became a town! Other items were a myriad of color slides and some snapshots, possibly from the 1995 Centennial celebration (there was no time to explore the images and still complete the task at hand). The Society's archives would be so much richer for their addition... So.... February wasn't so "usual" after all.