

Franklin NH Historical Society News

April 2018

Early March held such great promise for an early spring, only for those hopes to be dashed by three nor'easters in a row, with the threat of a fourth! However, these storms only serve as a reminder that Mother Nature is still in charge, lest anyone forget the adage of knowledgeable New Englanders "to never plant before Memorial Day"!

To begin the new season of Society monthly meetings, on Thursday, April 5th, at 7 pm, at the Webster Place museum, 21 Holy Cross Road, President Leigh Webb will present a compilation of rare photographic images acquired over the winter break (see one below), the photos Jim Prew graciously consented to be taken of the Dudley Ladd House and barn last year, and the newly digitized 16mm films of Red Young of activities at Odell Park, not viewed since they were committed to celluloid in 1928 and 1941 respectively. Light refreshments will be served after the slide show and before 2018's first business meeting of the Society. All are welcome and there is never an admission charge. Directions to the Society's building can be found at franklinnhhistoricalsociety.org along with a listing of all the year's speakers and events.

April is also the month that Hannaford's in Franklin is offering to donate to the Franklin Historical Society one dollar for every "Hannaford's Helps Reusable Bag" sold during the month. So with one small purchase, you can support a local company and your Society. Also in the "giving" column, unused Franklin Savings Bank "Buzzpoints" may now be donated to the Society as well.

Often an interesting journey into the past begins with a simple phone call. Gail Lyman, Director of the Community Action Program (CAP) in Franklin, contacted the Society's president with a suggestion that a photographic record be made of the building at 82 Elkins Street, slated for demolition. What specifically prompted the request were scribbles of names and dates on the basement supports (such as "Skinny", "Chi Chi" and "Pudge", from the 60's and 70's), ostensibly from former workers who toiled in that space. The age of the beams then poised the question of what businesses over time may have occupied the structure, so a mission to research its history began. Despite the dowdy and simplistic exterior appearances, as it turns out, the building did indeed have a fascinating past, which held treasured memories for some former employees still around to share their stories, with maybe an "urban legend" or two (thank you Fern Morency and Richard Brewster). According to the city's assessing records, the L shaped building first came into being c. 1900. By looking at a Sanborn Insurance map of 1911, it housed at that time the Glines and Stevens Company, makers of "home finishings and wooden boxes". Because existing records and directories have considerable gaps, a complete record would be difficult to create, but a patch-work history started to form. Although vacant in 1939, and possibly for several years because of The Great Depression, Textron, Inc., a company founded by Royal Little in Connecticut, may have occupied the space during WWII (possibly known as Atlantic Rayon then) and certainly was there in 1947. Famous in part for making parachutes (Mr. Little held patents for improvements on canopies that helped stabilize their oscillations upon descent) and introducing nylon in their manufacture to replace the silk that had come from the

Orient, there had been talk that some of these life-saving devices may have been made in Franklin. By 1952, Otis Dufresne of Manchester, an agent of White Owl cigars, was in possession of the building, offering tobacco products and candy as a confectionery wholesaler. Branching later into over-the-counter medicines (such as aspirin and Bromo Seltzer), Dufresne's expanded into appliances and became the first real catalog warehouse store. Morphing into the Be Rite Company in the 1970's, it eventually was bought out by Service Merchandise only to be sold and closed in 1979, being acquired by the city in 1980. The moral of this story? That every building has a tale to tell, if we are willing to listen...and learn.

An impressive list of donations arrived at the Society in the last month, with a sampling listed here with the donor, for which the Society is exceedingly grateful: what could be called a mimeographed "Memory Booklet" compiled by Ruth Emerson, a teacher at the Nesmith school just prior to its closing, with snapshots of Ms. Emerson and her students and bios of her charges (James Thompson, who was one of those pupils); a framed still life oil on canvas by Elaine Salt, plus some FRH "Smile" booklets from the Franklin Banks, a Human Services Directory, a postcard of St. Paul's (new) interior, a Choose Franklin map, and a keychain of her father's (Moise Mercier) when he was president of the Franklin Senior Citizens (Annette Mercier Cain); negatives of family photos, a 1946 deed, a legal cover sheet, and a J.P. Stevens Mills Group Insurance Plan booklet, all found in a desk in the residence on S. Main Street formerly owned by the Chapley family, and a Stevens Mill fabric tag (Gail Lyman); a Boy Scouts leader's uniform worn by John Pikor, framed photo of the Louis and Marie Proulx family c. 1900, Franklin Outing Club memorabilia, 4H pins, a Franklin Jr. High pin, fragments and relics from the USS Massachusetts, political items, a collection of Franklin High School patches and letters, and baby moccasins and a wooden shoe form from a Gilchrist family trunk (Kathy Fuller); and lastly—a rubber stamp of G. A. Cushing, Postal Clerk, a 1910 sewing kit courtesy of Shaw Optometry, a 1947 calendar from Franklin Frozen Food and Lockers, newspaper copy of an 1890 map of Webster Lake, Seawill Needle Company unused stationery sheets, First Day Covers from notable events and a 1969 Moon Landing commemorative card, an 1879 booklet on Mount Kearsage, an album of Franklin, other NH, MA, and other area postcards—all from c. 1905, and all in a canvas bag from the Griffin Hacksaw Mill, and amazingly, photo albums rescued from being thrown away, documenting trips made by Marguerite Daniell Barnes with family and friends hiking the Presidential Mountains, camping at Moosehead Lake, and visiting the Isles of Shoals from 1917-1923 (John Benham). The variety and wealth of these donations is astounding, and will certainly keep the president busy in sorting, cataloging, and preserving for some time to come! The last items mentioned in particular come as a cautionary tale, that irreplaceable "one offs" may be lost forever if vigilance is not maintained, and an understanding of the value of such finds is not acquired. Your Franklin family's history is always welcome at your Historical Society.

[This month's image is from the rescued albums lovingly compiled by Marguerite Barnes. It appears to be of an ice castle, made from blocks of ice, probably harvested from a nearby lake, but as it was not labeled the location is unknown. Any guesses as to where this might have been, around 100 years ago?]

