

Franklin NH Historical Society Newsletter

May 2019

If attendance at the April meeting was any indication, the Society is off to an enthusiastic and well supported 2019 season! John Benham educated the audience about a 130 year old pump made by the local company Clark and Haynes (c. 1872-1891) that was designed to pump water not just into the kitchen sink, but also upstairs via an attached hose into a holding tank, so “modern amenities” could be used above the first floor (this was in 1880!) Two 8 x 10’s, donated by Janet Jurta, of musical shows performed around 1962 at the Opera House, offered surprises. One featured a young Mary Fredette (Foley), and the other, a long forgotten hand painted valence, hanging below the proscenium arch in the photo, that still exists today, hidden high in the shadows and deep in the rear of the Opera House stage.

To keep that excitement of discovery going, the May program will offer John A. Hodgson talking about the man for whom Potter Place in Andover was named. **“Richard Potter: America’s First Black Celebrity” will be discussed in the Society’s meeting room at Webster Place, 21 Holy Cross Road, on Thursday, May 2nd at 7 pm.** Mr. Hodgson, in his own words, “...taught English and American literature at Yale University, the University of Georgia, and Harvard University before serving twenty years as the Dean of Forbes College at Princeton University until his retirement in August 2014. He is the author of books on Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley, and on the Sherlock Holmes stories. Recently he contributed an article on Holmes for the Blackwell *Companion to Crime Fiction*. He now lives in Andover, New Hampshire, where he serves on the board of the Andover Historical Society, and where the subject of his most recent book (printed by the University of Virginia Press, 2018), lived for many years” and is buried. For those wishing to learn more about the life of Richard Potter, Mr. Hodgson’s book will be available for purchase.

The presentation is free and open to all. Light refreshments will be offered between the talk and the annual meeting, during which election for officers and the board will be one of several business matters on which members (and guests) input will be sought. Monthly meetings, now commenced, are always a source of more donations to the Society’s collections. April, being no exception, brought to light the following: from Mary Foley, four 1922 snapshots of a Merrimack Farmers’ meeting at the Webster Birthplace, and a 1967 program from the NH High School Basketball Tournament, in which Franklin participated with a championship team; from Rita Norander, a Franklin High School class of 1929 Invitation to the Commencement Exercises, sent by her mother to her husband-to-be’s parents; from John Benham, long-time Franklin teacher Helen Holmes hand school bell, suitably enscribed (now on display); and from Annette Cain memorabilia from St. Paul’s, memorial cards for Chief James C. “Tink” Nowell, and photos of and a newspaper article about Frank Poblentz, many of whose FHS negatives covering the span of decades are carefully stored at the Society and are scanned for the entertainment of

high school reunion groups visiting the Society's museum. Prior to the meeting, Carlton Ham had given a box cover filled with over 100 postcards, booklets (1894 biographies of Webster, Penn, and William Cullen Bryant, and a c. 1900 picture book about the Odell and other important Franklin structures), two Granite Monthly's (both for March, one 1895, the other 1900), a book entitled "NH Town Names", political and business memorabilia, and locally published pamphlets of historic interest; and Susan Blair, Principal of the Paul Smith School, gifted three quilts done by students and teachers that once adorned the halls of the school, and now have found a permanent home at the Society. After the meeting, by chance encounter at Chubbles Restaurant, Elwyn Eastwood contributed a vintage postcard of the (then) new (1939) High School, a venerable "F" cloth athletic achievement letter, and a small Franklin pennant, actually made in NH (not any more!). To all these kind and thoughtful donors, the Society extends its heartfelt thanks. The Society was also recently able to acquire two dozen 19th century stereocards of White Mountain and Cog Railway trackside views. Coupled with a stereopticon viewing device, these cards represented an attractive form of parlor entertainment in the later 19th and early 20th centuries, creating a true stereo effect, much as the View Master and disks which were all the rage in the 1950's. Also gifted to the Society was an autograph album from 1858-1860, with signatures collected by George F. Sweat while attending the Boscawen and Franklin Academies prior to enlisting and going off to war in 1862. Mortally wounded at Antietam, George succumbed to his wounds and became the first casualty from Franklin in the Civil War. The G.A.R. Hall on the 2nd floor of Memorial, or now City Hall, was first home to G.A.R. Post 38 when the building opened, named for this same George F. Sweat. A scan of the first three pages of the album, in George's handwriting and signed by him, is now displayed in the Hall, with the actual album part of the exhibit of early Franklin documents in the Society's museum.

In a constant attempt to keep the collections accessible by updating descriptions of items already inventoried, some items are "rediscovered" within the archives. Some time ago, Chris Lewis donated "printers blocks" from the O.A. Towne print shop, and a desire arose to see the images they produced. As it turns out, one was for the city map of Franklin included as a fold-out in the 1895 directory, one was of the 1884 hand drawn "birds' eye view" of the city (see below), and the last, and 1880 map of Webster Lake, which originally had been published in the Merrimack Journal! These particular "finds" would never have come to light without the assistance of Concord Photo Engraving, Max Otto owner, which created positive images from the plates, and for whose contributions the Society owes a debt it can never repay.

Please consider coming to the next meeting of the Society. Discover the adventure of delving into Franklin's past!

[This month's image is from the 6 x 8 copper printer's plate, using the old fashioned "letterpress" type of printing, to produce a positive from what is in essence a negative engraving. Although the surface had endured some scratches over the last 135 years, the result was still quite stunning.]

