

Franklin Historical Society, February, 2024

February. Possibly the shortest month of the year because, as being roughly in the middle of winter, people are anxious to get to spring and are thankful that the month won't tarry too long to be over. For the Society, it is a time of "catching up", in making sure that the archives inventory is up to date, and a time for the board and officers to have their off-season meeting to discuss strategies for improvement, financial considerations, make program suggestions, and most importantly, confirm commitments to serving the Society in their various capacities. This year, as in the recent past, the meeting will be held in (comfortably heated) **Thompson Hall, on Thursday evening February 22nd at 6 pm** [NOTE: not 7 pm]. If a snow day is needed, a notice will be sent out the day before to all members, as even though the official purpose is to gather the board, anyone is welcome to attend. Especially anyone interested in taking the additional step of getting involved at the leadership level of the Society. If anyone has thoughts on what would make an interesting monthly presentation, please either attend, or jot down your ideas in a reply to this newsletter. All will be considered.

Updating the new boiler: a baseline of fuel consumption is still being determined, as temperatures have varied in the intervening month and a half since installation. Knowing the potential cost will be useful in being financially prepared for next winter. The really good news was that Huckleberry volunteered (in the category of "above and beyond") to apply to a rebate program in the Society's name, and we were the recipient of a \$750 check because of that additional effort! At around \$600 for a complete fill (around 180 gallons split between two tanks), that was close to a month's propane. Thank you Huckleberry!

Follow-up on a recent donation to the archives: the handwritten book by C.L. Hunt, upon further reading and investigation, was inspired by discussions by Clarence's family as he was growing up regarding exploits of his relatives. C.L. was the *grandson* of Major Royal Jackman, who fought in the war of 1812 and the *nephew* of Capt. Lyman Jackman, whose service in the NH 6th Regiment was extensive and worthy of a hero's title. This work should really be published, but would be a herculean task to transcribe, and a considerable expense to print. However, this can be subject to further discussion...

As to this month's gifts to the Society, heartfelt "thank you's" are extended to the following for their thoughtfulness and support:

to **Linda Pauwels** for her usual contribution of enlightening newspaper articles and obituaries of those with Franklin ties;

to **the City of Franklin** for an original clerk's cabinet from before Franklin became a city, that had been lingering in the Soldiers Memorial/City Hall attic tower for decades (a century or more?);

to **Olivia Zink** for a 1958 city annual report (and was informed should she come across any city directories, we are missing the years between 1902 and 1917, 1917 to 1929, and 1929 to 1939); and to **Alan Larter** and **Dean Laughy** for allowing the Society to copy photos (see below) from their personal collections, to expand the digital photo archive of important images not owned by the Society.

Saving these pictures and items is absolutely vital to perform the Society's main missions of preserving and educating. All of our donors understand that, for which the Society is immensely grateful.

As the result of a casual encounter in front of the Post Office, a research project was launched, knowing that there is so much more to learn every day about the history that surrounds us. The question posed was about what she thought was a turn-of-the-century stone building she came across while exploring a dirt road in the woods near Gile Pond Road along Salmon Brook. She had no idea what purpose this structure served, and was hopeful for some answers. Never shy about accepting a challenge, the Society investigated, and found the answer. The building in question was, and is, a hydroelectric generation plant, built in 1904 by Franklin Light and Power. Today it is leased by Alan Larter, who was very generous in sharing the information to clear up this "mystery". Once discovered and photographed, the edifice looked vaguely familiar, and with additional research, the circa 1910 image below was discovered hiding in plain sight in the Society's digital file, one of the postcards from the Franklin Public Library. Originally thought to be part of the city's water service, it is now known to have been a private enterprise, still serving its purpose 120 years later.



Today, with the power lines buried, and the brush overgrown, a "now" photo is almost impossible to take from the same angle, and its purpose is more difficult to discern, even with the constant hum of the turbines within. With the torrential rains that have become more commonplace, the Pemigewasset can flood to the point of engulfing this facility, so the (more modern) machinery within can actually continue to function underwater! From a different perspective, this is what the stone and brick building looks like today.



Many are familiar with the cannon in front of the old (soon to be razed) Elks Club. The cannon is not in jeopardy, as it sits on a small triangle of land that belongs to the city. Next to it, and to bring attention to it, is a signpost containing an explanation of why this small piece of land is important.



This is William A. Fenlason Square, representing the second soldier from Franklin to die in WWI (the first was Arthur E. Shaw, for whom the local American Legion Post was named). This Post upheld the tradition of former servicemen and women meeting in the G.A.R. Hall, and used that space until its numbers dwindled and it merged with the Post in Tilton in the 1980's. The area had at one time been called Paper Mill Square, but by 1929, the surrounding buildings no longer reflected that predominant use. It was then that Lt. Leslie Buchanan (whose Purple Heart, awarded for his service in WWI, is on display at the Society) approached the city council as a member of the local American Legion Post, and requested that the name be

changed to honor Pvt. Fenlason. On November 11, 1929, after a parade to honor all vets, the corner of West Bow and Central streets was dedicated William A. Fenlason Square.



Pvt. William A. Fenlason, photo courtesy of Dean Laughy. A framed enlargement of this photo now hangs in the Society's exhibit honoring all those who have served from Franklin. The next time you go by this corner, take a minute to remember the sacrifices of local service personnel in every American conflict. Always honor, by never forgetting.

Stay warm, stay well, and see you either on the 22nd, or at the first regular meeting in April. Or both.