



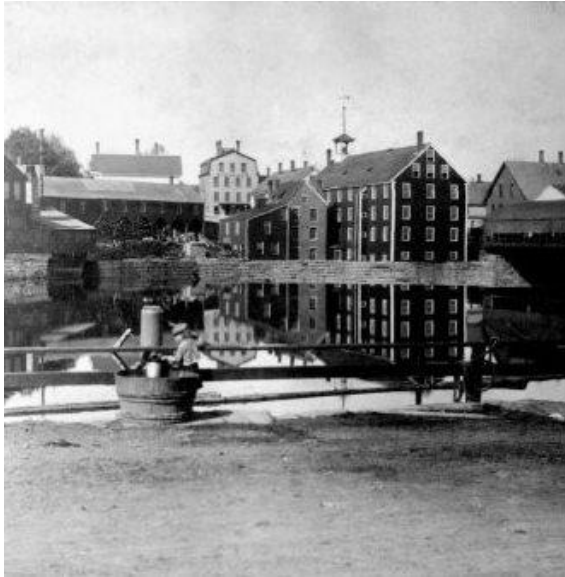
# The SHIRETOWN CONSERVER

The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society

Volume 18, Number 1

Spring 2015

## Mayo's Mill – The Early Years



Mayo's Mill c1870

### Inside This Issue

Mayo's Mill – The Early Years	1
Poetry – by Anna Boynton Averill	2
The Growth of The Mill	3
Views of the Mill	7
Owning the Mill	8
The Mayo Family	8
Message From Mary	11
Our Sponsors	11
Items Available	11

Sometime in the spring of this year the new Riverfront Redevelopment Project will open its doors as a mixed use facility offering residential, commercial, dining and hotel facilities. This promises to be a great boon to the community. It is at least the fifth different use for this property. As we all celebrate the opening of the new facility, it may be helpful to look back on the long history of this property – and remember the folks who developed the property in its early years. So it is fitting that this entire issue is devoted to “Mayo's Mill – The early Years”.

We in the Historical Society spend time with the history classes at the Academy sharing the early history of the town. One of the first questions we ask is “In 1800, surrounded by trackless forest, why would anyone choose to settle at this particular spot?”. The answer, of course, is that it is located on a river – providing water to drink and transportation (no roads then!). More importantly, this particular spot was valuable because there were two falls in the river. Those falls provided power for the first two things that any settlement would ask for – a grist mill to grind corn for the farmers, and a sawmill to prepare lumber for buildings. This spot on the river provided all of these facilities. As early as 1810 we find records of saw mills and grist mills here in Dover-Foxcroft (one of the many gristmills is still with us – Bob's Hardware, once owned by Augustus Gilman. One of the early sawmills, owned by his brother Reuben Gilman, was on the site of the present Center Theatre). The mill site that is now the Riverfront Redevelopment property had the very first saw mill and gristmill in the community. They remained on that property, in one form or another for almost 100 years.

(continued on Page 3)

## The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society

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Visit us on-line at  
[www.dover-foxcrofthistoricalsociety.org](http://www.dover-foxcrofthistoricalsociety.org)  
and on Facebook

### Further reading on the Mill and the Mayos

Lou Stevens' books "*Dover-Foxcroft: A History*", and "*200 Years of Dover-Foxcroft History*" are, by far, the best sources for the overall history of the town.

The Historical Society also has an electronic copy of a Masters Theses by George Ainsworth in 1954 entitle "*Impact of the Closing of a Textile Mill on the Labor Force of Dover-Foxcroft, Maine*". It contains a lot of interesting history of the mill and its work force. (The original is in the Fogler Library at the University of Maine in Orono)



## By Anna Boynton Averill

### A March Evening

The waters are bursting and Waking  
From the silence long and deep,  
And the stiffened sod is breaking  
From its frozen trance of sleep.  
The robin trills in the shadows  
And the brook on the brink of night  
Sings down to the darkening meadows  
"In the morn there shall be light."

O hearts that are weak with sorrow,  
The birds and the waters sing  
A song of the soul's to-morrow,  
A song of eternal spring.  
For the darkness of earthly sorrow  
Endureth but for a night.  
The dayspring gilds the morrow,  
"In the morn there shall be light."

### Going to Sleep (A children's poem)

Cuddle close Golden Head,  
Hide your light Starry Eyes,  
Soft is your snowy bed,  
Low are your lullabies,  
Nestle deep rosy limbs  
While the drowsy, golden moon  
Floods the dusk – Vesper hymns  
Mingle with the lulling croon  
Floating o'er your pillow warm,  
Falling sweet, dropping low,  
Sinking slowly, losing form  
Sound and sense as you go  
On beyond to Wonder world  
With your dream wings all unfurled.

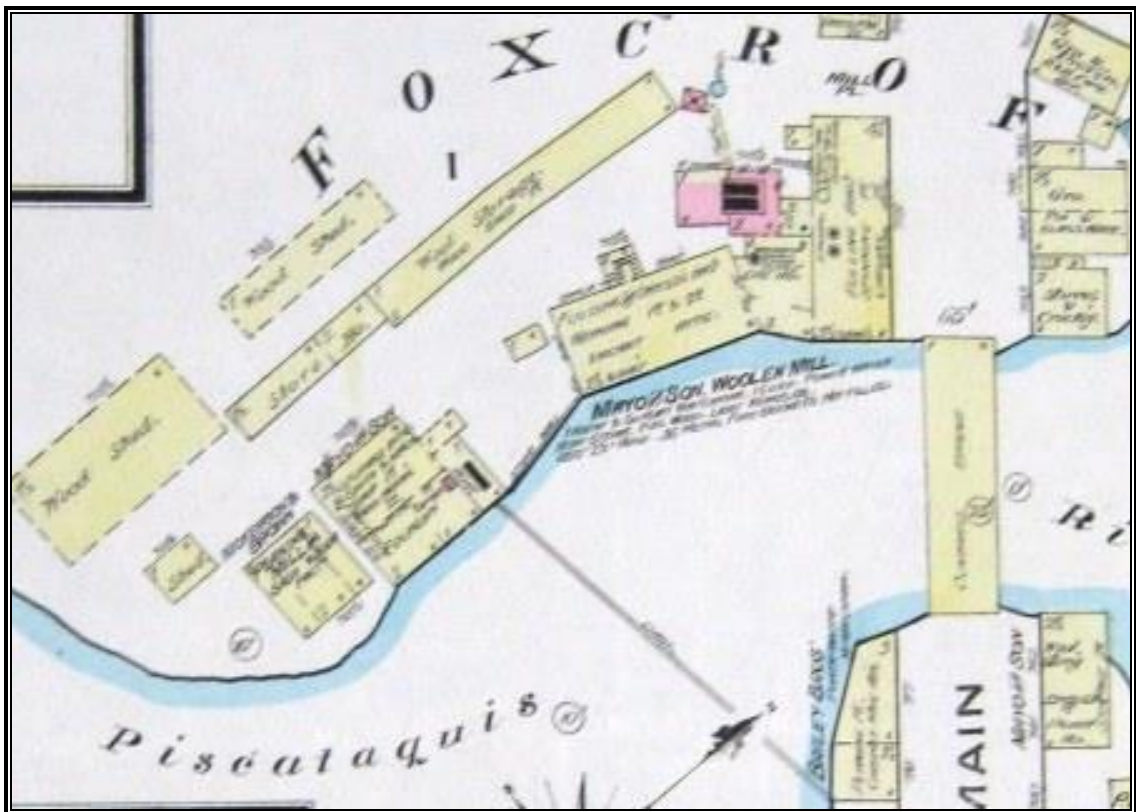
Both from "Birch Stream and other Poems", 1908

## The Growth of the Mill

The first mention of the mill in the public records is a deed in November, 1844 (book 12, pages 63 and 64) from Ansel Vaughan and Benjamin Buck to John G. Mayo and James Bush for the property that would become the original mill. Messers Vaughan and Buck owned a grist mill on the site. They describe the property (the property closest to the bridge). They also conveyed “a right and privilege of using one half part of the water which we have a right to draw from the north side of said River to be used for any purpose whatsoever except for a grist or flour Mill”. In other words, they owned the grist mill – and sold off enough land to start what would later become the woolen mill, together with enough of the water rights to power the mill.

Later, Mayo and company bought of Vaughan and Buck’s interest in the grist mill – and its water rights, thus owning all of the water rights to the river.

In the historical society’s archives we have copies of insurance maps published by the Sanborn company. Every property insurance company, then as now, worries about fire. In the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Sanborn company contracted with local insurance agents in hundreds of towns and cities to create maps of their communities showing the buildings, their construction (bricks, frame, etc.) and availability of water lines, night watchmen and sprinkler systems. George Howard was, in 1884 the owner of the Howard Insurance Agency (still in business today!). He and others worked for about 50 years creating and updating these maps every few years. We have copies of the maps for 1884, 1889, 1894, 1900, 1906, 1911, 1923 and 1931. Together they give us a good record of the growth of the physical plant during those years. On the first page of this issue is a picture of the mill as it appeared in approximately 1870. All of those buildings are now gone.



The map above shows the mill as it appeared in 1884. (Note the Foxcroft Bridge crossing the river. Just outside the top of the picture is Monument square.).

(Continued on page 4)

The Mayo's owned almost all of the land in this map, including the small building in the lower right (today, the antique shop just on the Dover-Side of the bridge). That small building was then the Picker house for the mill. The building at the lower left, right next to the river was a planning mill, the last hint of the saw mill that was on the land in 1810. Next to on the river, between the planning mill and Mayo's woolen mill, you see Mayo & Son's foundary. Both of these buildings would, of course, be replaced by the concrete structure that we see today.



The "New" 1883 addition, looking up river to the Mayo & Son Foundary.

The advertisement to the right, printed in the Observer in 1868, describes a list of the metal items that were produced in the Foundary.

**Piscataquis Foundry**  
**MANUFACTURING COMP'Y.**  
(Successors to Chandlers, Brown & Co.)

---

HEREBY inform the Public that we shall continue to manufacture the well known Chandlers, Brown & Co:

**Plow, Cooking Stoves, Cylinders and Box Stoves, Cultivators, Jack Screws, All kinds Mill Gear, Bolts, &c., &c.**

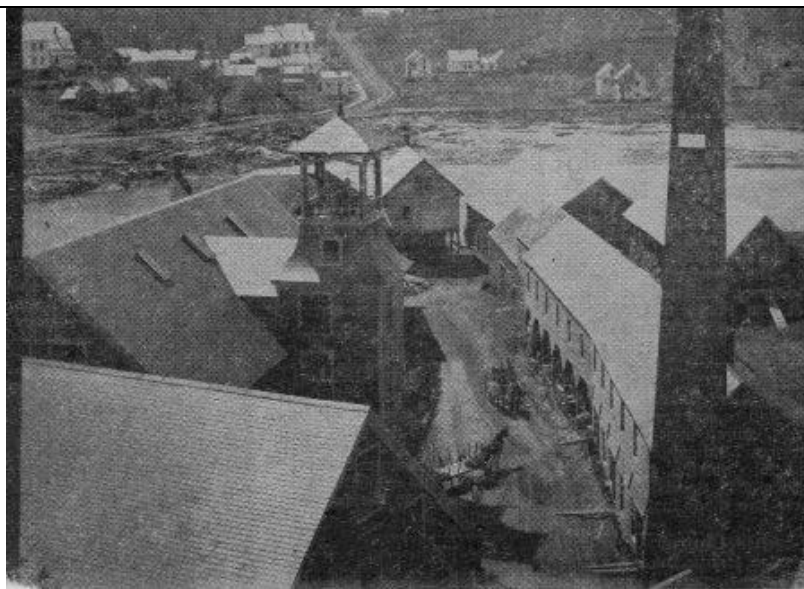
With such articles usually made in such Shops.

**JOB WORK**

Of arious kinds executed with fidelity and dispatch.

J. G. MAYO,	JOHN MORGAN,
J. B. MAYO,	WM. N. THOMPSON,
B. B. VAUGHAN & Co.,	EDWIN BROWN,
J. M. CURTIS,	J. B. MAYO, <i>Treasurer.</i>

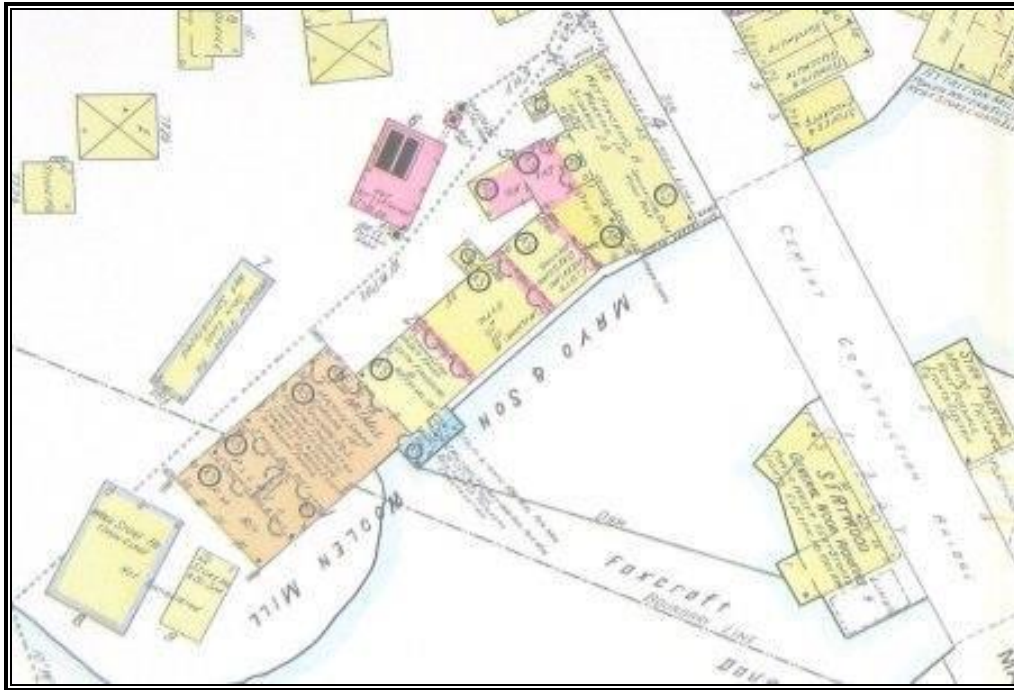
Exeter, May 21, 1868. 33



Notice on the map all of the sheds needed to store the wool and wood needed to run the mill. In this photo (taken from the roof of the Opera House shortly after 1893) you are looking across Main Street, at the mill. In the left foreground, you see the roof of the original mill. Just behind, the 1883 addition with its striking bell tower. In the distance you can see the planning mill. To the right you see the original square chimney, and behind that, long sheds for storing wool and wood. Across the river in the far distance, you see South Street wending its way towards Dexter. Note the absence of trees.

(The Growth of Mayo's Mill, Continued from Page 4)

By 1900 most of the storage sheds were gone. On the 1911 map, we see the first part of the new concrete building. We also can see the new concrete bridge across Main Street. Also, the small picker house just on the Dover side of the bridge has become the original Star Theatre.



Digging the foundations for the new concrete addition in 1908. Note the workmen with shovels and wheelbarrows. All this work was done by hand! You can see the 1883 addition with its bell tower in the background. The river is just off to the right of the picture. In the far distance you can see the Opera House right at the corner of Monument Square.

At this time the 1883 building and the shed like structure in front of it were used for weaving, dressing and finishing the woolen fabric. With the addition of the concrete structures the physical layout of the mill was altered to take almost the shape that it would keep until the mill was finally shuttered in 1953 (the original mill, right on Main Street, was replaced by the present brown block structure in 1941).

(Continued on Page 6)

(The Growth of the Mill, Continued from Page 5)



In this 1931 map we see the buildings almost as we know them today. The concrete addition was built in two parts. The first in 1908 and the second in 1916. Note Monument Square at the top of the map. In the upper left corner we see a bit of Foxcroft Academy. To the right, across Main street, we see the Opera House (burned New Year's Eve, 1935-36). Across the street from the Opera House we see the "Hale Block". Built in 1853 by Judge Elias Hale, it housed, at various times, a printer, restaurants, a millinery shop and the Foxcroft Post Office. Behind the Hale Block is the fine home of Josiah Mayo. If he looked out his front windows he had a fine few down West Main Street. Note in the lower left corner the small carriage house, still there today.



The interior of the mill (about 1935).

In its final configuration, the raw wool started its journey in the newer concrete additions for Carding and spinning. The 1883 building was used for weaving and some finishing. The short passageway between the 1883 building and the original mill (right on Main Street) was the Dye house. Finally in the original mill, the basement was used for wet finishing, the first floor saw weaving and the top floors were used for storage of the final product.

## Views of the Mill



Sometime between 1893 (Opera House built) and 1911 (covered bridge replaced)



Sometime between 1908 (1<sup>st</sup> part of the concrete addition) and 1916 (2<sup>nd</sup> part of addition)



In the 1920's

## Owning and running the Mill

We noted that the site for the mill was purchased in 1844 by John G Mayo and James Bush (grandfather of Harry Bush).

In 1853 Mr. Mayo bought out the shares of Mr. Bush and set himself up in business with his son Josiah B. Mayo ("J.B.") as Mayo & Son. They ran the mill together until John's death in 1879. After that Josiah and his son Edward ran the mill until they sold it in 1914 to the American Woolen Company. That firm had already purchased, in 1899 the ownership of the other woolen mill in town – the Brown Mill, owned and operated, first by Samuel P. Brown and, after his death, by his son Samuel Orman Brown.

The American Woolen Company was one of the first of the modern conglomerates – buying up dozens of similar woolen mills in New England. They operated the mill until its closure in 1953

<b>Dissolution of Copartnership.</b>	
THE copartnership heretofore existing between the subscribers, is this day dissolved by mutual consent. All persons indebted to said firm are requested to make immediate payment to John G. & Josiah B. Mayo, who are duly authorized to settle the same.	
J. G. MAYO, JAMES BUSH, J. B. MAYO.	
Foxcroft, May 24, 1853.	
<b>Copartnership Formed.</b>	
	THE subscribers have this day formed a copartnership under the name of MAYO & SON. Cash and the highest prices paid for WOOL.
The subscribers have on hand a good assortment of all wool & cotton & wool CLOTHS which they wish to exchange for WOOL.	
Custom Carding and Cloth Dressing done in a workmanlike manner, at their Factory.	
JOHN G. MAYO, J. B. MAYO.	
Foxcroft, May 24, 1853.	14

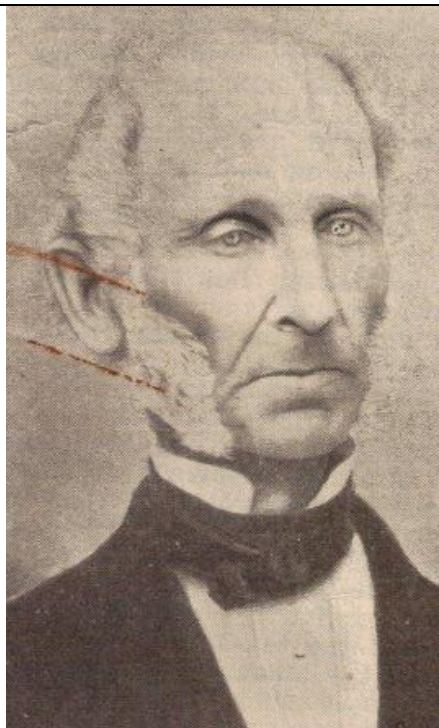
## The Mayo Family

Most of us today know the name Mayo because of the hospital and Mayo Street. They were both named after members of the Mayo Family. The first Mayo was John Gould Mayo ("Deacon" Mayo – 1799-1879. He and his wife Joan Bacon Mayo (1805-1867), had two sons and a daughter. The oldest son, Josiah (1826-1918) was active with his father John, in owning and running the mill. The second son, John G, Jr. (1828-1916) played a small part in running the mill but, like his father and brothers, played a large part in the civic and charitable affairs in the community. The daughter, Mary Elizabeth (1840-1907), married Dr. James Thompson.

Josiah's had four children, two of whom lived to adulthood. Josiah's son Edward (1864-1935) worked with his father to run the mill until its sale in 1914. (When Edward died in 1935, under the terms of his will, his home on West Main Street passed to the town as a Hospital – hence the name "Mayo Regional Hospital")

(Continued on Page 9)

The second son, confusingly enough, also named John Gould Mayo (but, thankfully, “Jr.”) also had four children, three of whom lived to adulthood. The most prominent of them was Walter Mayo (1873-1963). Many people in town still remember him. He was the only one of the Mayo clan to serve in the military (Captain in the army in WWI).



Deacon John Mayo (1799-1879)



Josiah Mayo (1926-1918)



John G. Mayo Jr. (1828-1916)  
And his wife  
Delia A. (Libby)  
1835-1894

As befits the wealthiest people in town, they all lived in fine houses. John Sr. originally lived on East Main Street (where Varney Insurance is now, next to the Rite Aid store). He owned a farm on all of the land behind his house, now High Street, Mayo Street and Lawrence Street (now you know why we have a Mayo Street!). In 1875, John Sr. Built a fine new house on West Main Street – two doors up from the Congregational Church (of which he was a long time supporter). The home cost \$13,000 – a fortune in 1875. Even more amazingly, he installed gas lighting (at an additional charge of \$1,000). The Observer at the time was effusive in its amazement:

“The new house built by Mr. Mayo on Main street, will be lighted by gas, the apparatus having been obtained at an expense of about \$1,000. Every portion of the house, and the ell and stable, will be furnished with jets, and also two lamp-posts at the entrance of the premises, will be lighted with gas”. (They are still there – in front of Jim and Barbara Austin’s home!).

In December of 1875, we read:

“Quite a crowd of people were attracted to the new dwelling of Mr. May, Friday evening, to witness a country residence illuminated by gas – a novel sight to be sure. Every room, from cellar to garret, the ell, stable and two lamp-posts at the entrance, shone resplendent with gas. These gas works, as we previously stated, cost nearly \$1,000. The tank is situated within a few rods of the building, in the ground and contains a sufficient amount of gas to last the household a year. The mill of Messrs. Mayo is to be lighted in this manner, next year”

John’s son Josiah, built his magnificent new home in Monument Square (right next to the mill), in 1872.

“The residence of Mr. J.B. Mayo of Foxcroft, is completed and makes a beautiful dwelling. It is said to be the most convenient and most richly furnished of any house in the county.”

(Continued on Page 10)

## Annual Dues

Many thanks to all those who have sent in their Historical Society dues for 2015. We really appreciate having you as a member. If you haven't sent in your dues yet, please do so now so you can continue to enjoy all of the benefits of membership in the Historical Society, including receiving copies of the *Conserver*.

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### The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society – Membership Application Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_ City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Annual dues are \$10 per person and \$7.00 for senior memberships. Please make checks payable to: Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society, 874 West Main Street, Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426. Dues cover January to December. If you are giving a gift membership, please include the name and address and we'll gladly notify the recipient of your gift.

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(The Mayo Family, Continued from Page 9)



Josiah Mayo's house in Foxcroft Square. Situated next to the mill, it was an easy commute for Mr. Mayo.

Over the years, the house has had other uses, including a restaurant and the current dentist's office.

Deacon John's other son John G. Jr. built and lived in the home further out on West Main Street that is now known as the Cabot House (Second in from the corner of Green Street).

Josiah's son Edward owned first the house on the corner of West Main and Winter Street (Dr. McDermott's) and later, of course, the home that eventually became first Mayo Hospital.

John Jr.'s son Walter lived first in his grandfather's

home, and later, after his marriage to Annie Cushing in her father's home on Lincoln Street.

The Mayos were known for their generosity. They were benefactors of the Congregational Church, donating, among other things, the funds to build the chapel in 1875, and the next year, the funds to build the new steeple in the church and the town clock. In 1904, when the Dover high school students moved to Foxcroft Academy, the Mayo's paid for the cost of the addition to the building required to accommodate the new students as well as all of the equipment for the new chemistry classroom and laboratory.

### **Message from Mary**

Well, hopefully, spring is on its way! We have received plenty of snow and very frigid temperatures, but through it all we have been at the Observer Building regularly on Thursdays. We are fortunate to have a very dedicated group of volunteers. We welcome aboard Phyllis Lyford who recently retired from the County Commissioners office. Many items have come to the Society over the winter. Al Buck who lives in Washington State has sent box after box of Buck family treasures. We cherish them all!

We will soon begin the project of archiving the items connected to Foxcroft Academy. This collection will include items located at Foxcroft Academy, the Thompson Free Library and the Historical Society. Physically they will remain where they are now located, but will be part of a “collection” eventually on line for researchers.

We begin to make plans for the coming summer. Once again it is shaping up to be a busy one. Hopefully you can stop by to see us at the Blacksmith Shop or at the Observer Building.

### **Our Corporate Sponsors**

A grateful thank you to the following businesses whose funds support the Society and its efforts to preserve our history. When you shop or see these folks, please tell them ‘thank you’ for their support!

Ellen Anderson, D.P.M.  
Family Eyecare  
Green Door Gallery  
Lary Funeral Home  
Maine Highlands Federal C/U  
Mallett Real Estate  
Pleasant River Lumber  
Rowell's Garage  
Steinke and Caruso  
Mark Stitham, M. D  
Sean Stitham, M.D.

**Thank you all!**

### **Items Available**

We thank Bob’s Home and Garden on Lincoln Street for stocking our ornaments and DVD’s. Please stop by their store and support this local business.

Glass Christmas ornaments: \$6.00 each (add \$4.00 for shipping)

2008 – Blacksmith Shop  
2009 – Observer Building  
2010 – Central Hall  
2011 – Thompson Free Library  
2012 – Foxcroft Academy  
2013 – The Blethen House  
2014 – Pleasant Street School

DVD’s :

Glimpses of Dover and Foxcroft - \$10.00 (add \$3.00 for shipping)

Memories of Central Hall/Lou Stevens - \$15.00 (add \$3.00 for shipping)

Dover-Foxcroft throws: \$40.00 (add \$8.00 for shipping)

### **Work Day at the Historical Society**

Thursdays are almost always work days at the Historical Society. We generally start work at about 10:00 and work from two to four or five hours. If you are interested in joining us for an interesting and enjoyable day working with good friends, contact Mary for more information.

**The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society, Inc.**  
**28 Orchard Road**  
**Dover-Foxcroft, ME**  
**04426-3706**

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The Original Mill  
(Exchange Hotel and Foxcroft Square in the distance)