

THE SHIRETOWN CONSERVER

The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 4 Number 1

Spring 2000

Furnace Fails At Observer Museum

"The old furnace at the Observer building museum finally gave up the ghost," said Jim Annis, the Society's treasurer. "We weren't prepared for such an expense, but fortunately, we had the money in the treasury to pay for a new one. The old one was way beyond repair and with the suggestion of Gil Glover, one of the directors of the Society, a new furnace was in order," Jim continued.

"This has really hurt our treasury and many plans we had upcoming for the museum will have to be delayed," Jim said. "Because the furnace has three zones to heat, we had to purchase a furnace capable of maintaining the heat for a building of that size," he said. "\$4,700.00 is a lot of money for an organization that depends on contributions and fund raising," Jim said. "Under the direction of Mary Annis, we've come a long way," he continued. "And we don't intend to let this disaster keep us from the goal of the finest museum in the area. It's just going to take us longer to get there," he said.

"I'd like to thank the folks at A.E. Robinson for the way they reacted to our problem. The installation was certainly done professionally and, obviously, concern for the museum and the new carpeting was uppermost in their minds. You'd never know that a dirty, old furnace was taken up a narrow stairway and out of the building and a new furnace put in its place unless you went into the cellar and saw that nice, new, gleaming furnace," Jim said. "We knew that a replacement furnace was needed, but we were in hopes that we could get a few more years out of the old one," he said. "Well, at least that's over with and we won't have to worry about the furnace anymore," he continued. "I suppose that's one consolation. It's just that I'm very Scottish and parting with money is very difficult for me," he joked.

Calendar Sales Off This Year

"It's too bad, but I don't think it'll be worthwhile publishing a calendar next year," said Jim Annis, treasurer of the Society. "Printing the calendars cost us \$622.00 this year and sales, so far, have only realized \$525.00. With most people in possession of a 2000 calendar, I don't see us making up the \$97.00 we need just to meet expenses," he lamented. "The calendar is supposed to be a fund raising project and I can't, in all good conscience, go to the membership and support a losing product. It's really too bad because the calendar reflected the times and scenes of years past and present. The calendar committee had a good time putting it together and were proud of their accomplishments," Jim said.

Jim continued, "I'd like to thank those of you who supported our efforts by purchasing an Historical Society calendar. We thought it made a really nice addition to a home and was a nice gift too. I guess it's back to the drawing board to come up with another fund raiser."

Know Your Officers

By Jim Annis

In the coming issues of the *Conserver*, I will try to give those of you who may not have been able to meet your officers a run down on who they are, where they came from, why they're interested in Dover-Foxcroft's history and some of their accomplishments while members of the Society.

Your president is Mary Ives Annis and she resides at 10 Orchard Road in Dover-Foxcroft. She has been your president for four years.

Mary was born and raised in Wallingford, Connecticut, a town settled by her ancestors in 1670. She graduated from Lyman Hall High School in 1960 and attended Middlesex Community College where she majored in marketing. Perhaps some of you have experienced Mary's marketing skills after having visited Dave's World here in Dover where she works in the office and in sales. I feel certain you came away pleased with your purchase.

Before coming to Maine with her husband Jim, Mary was president of the Wallingford Historical Society for eight years. During that time she also chaired the town's Historic District Study Committee. Wallingford's history goes back 330 years and she wanted to see the beauty of Main Street preserved. Her interest in history is infinite and the history of Dover-Foxcroft has opened up a whole new aspect of history for her. She has read just about every book dealing with the area. Historically, your town is in good and dedicated hands.

Since Mary has become president of the Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society, membership has swelled to nearly 200. That's quite a feat for a town of 4,800 people. Of course, many members are living in other parts of the country, but they still want to be informed of their hometown. The Society is now in possession of two of the town's very historic buildings - the Observer building and the Blacksmith Shop Museum out on Dawes Road. Currently, the Observer building is Mary's main concern because of it's many needs. Most Wednesday evenings you will find a work party putting final touches to displays of the Society's many fine artifacts. I can tell you from experience, don't stand around with your hands in your pockets - she'll put you to work! As a result of these efforts, the Observer building was opened to the public on Sunday afternoons from July through mid-September and can be opened by special request.

Mary's efforts have resulted in the Observer building being placed on the National Register of Historic Places, membership in the Maine Historical Society and membership in the Mid-Maine Historical Societies, a group of local societies that gather several times a year to swap ideas and artifacts.

Your vice president is Helen Kelly and she lives at 30 West Main Street in Dover-Foxcroft. Helen comes to Dover-Foxcroft from Cape Cod, Massachusetts where she and her husband Brian lived for 22 years. Helen was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota and spent her younger years in Kansas City and Overland Park, Kansas. Her junior high years were spent in Houston, Texas. Her father was employed by a large insurance corporation and was involved in setting up satellite offices which required the family's constant relocation. When Helen was a sophomore in high school, her family moved to New York City where she attended and graduated from Packer Collegiate Institute in Brooklyn Heights, New York. She attended Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois and where she earned a degree in Journalism. Currently, she is employed by the Piscataquis Observer as a reporter.

Helen says that many of her family's happiest vacations were spent in Maine. When her husband went back to school to study surveying, Maine seemed a logical choice for resettlement. She joined the Historical Society at the same time as Mary Annis and has held the offices of director and vice president.

Helen brings many talents to us of which we have made use. She has managed public relations for the Museum of the City of New York and has been an insulation contractor and operations manager for a building construction company. While living in Dover-Foxcroft, she commuted to Boston for five years working as a document specialist and direct marketing manager.

While living on Cape Cod, Helen and her husband were given an old house by the Town of Brewster. They tore it down piece by piece, moved it to another location and rebuilt it. Protecting the house from the elements found Helen cedar shingling the roof while seven months pregnant! Sounds like she's more like an early colonist to me! Helen has made several presentations to the Society on various styles of buildings found in the area and their construction.

We in the Society had been using Helen's talents as a journalist to provide us with a quarterly *Shiretown Conserver*. As you have noticed, it is a remarkable piece of work and we are proud of her accomplishments and the professionalism of the *Conserver*. It's one of the best in the area. However, time constraints have interfered with her labor of love and she has had to put aside responsibility for its publishing. We can only hope her successor can live up to her standards in future publications.

In the next quarter's *Conserver* we will take a look at the Society's secretary and treasurer.

The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society's annual dues are still \$3.00 per person per year. We are still holding the line despite a U.S. Postal Service increase in Third Class Non-Profit mail rates. Every membership household will receive a copy of *The Shiretown Conserver*, our newsletter, mailed four times each year. Any amount tendered above the three dollar membership fee will be considered a donation and is tax deductible. Please accept our thanks!

My check, payable to *The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society, Inc.* in the amount of \$_____ is enclosed.

MEMBER'S NAME _____

MAILING ADDRESS _____

CITY/STATE _____ ZIP CODE _____

Please mail to: Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society, Inc.
c/o Madelyn Betts
11 Harrison Avenue
Dover-Foxcroft, Maine 04426

Recollections

The Second In A Series
by William G. Glover Sr.

Although I personally had very little experience in the lumber camps, I've had contact and conversations with many who did. I have also examined many abandoned lumber operations in various states of disrepair so have some knowlege as to their structure, though few remain today.

My experiences working with Dad and Uncle George in the woods on logging operations gave me some insight into the cold and financially unrewarding life in the woods camps. Pay scales varied from job to job and operator to operator, but the pecking order was generally the same. It was a base daily wage plus board and room. Probably the overall job boss, scaler or paymaster got the best wages, better than the common worker.

Among common workers at the top of the wage scale were the cooks and teamsters with their own teams of horses at perhaps \$2.00 per day. Next came the choppers, axe and saw men, who cut the timber at \$1.50 per day. The swamper who cut the road and did the limbing for the choppers came next at maybe \$1.25 per day. Low man on the totem pole was the "bull cook," cookee or pot whalloper who did all the menial tasks in the kitchen.

The cookee cut and supplied the firewood for the kitchen stoves, lugged water, waited on tables, washed dishes, washed pots and pans and served as general "gofer" for the cook. He might get \$.75 or \$1.00 per day for his efforts. These wages prevailed with variations throughout the 1930s.

I didn't work in the Maine woods in the winter very long before I was certain where I would apply for a job in the lumber camp. It didn't take an Einstein to figure out that none of the workers would ever rival John D. Rockefeller, so I, not being skilled with the axe or owning a pair of horses, would have chosen to be a camp cookee. To me that would be far preferable to freezing your buns in knee-deep snow at subzero temperatures all day. Spending most of the time in the relative warmth of the camp kitchen with a bit of time working up wood and filling the wood boxes seemed the far best option to me. Competition for jobs at the low end wasn't as great either.

At the same time, with a bit of observation plus help from the cook, one could learn a valuable trade which might, in time, lead to a job as cook. A good cook was the premium an operator could offer hard working men. The "board" part of the workmen's bargain was very important. The cook provided hearty meals and plenty of desserts like pies, cakes, cookies and doughnuts. Baked beans, soups, stews, meats, potatoes, turnips, beets, carrots and cabbage were staples necessary for men to work hard and keep warm in the cold.

In some cases, the cook had to improvise with whatever the wood operator supplied. In which case, the boss probably had trouble keeping either the cook or his crew of men. Most operators gave the cook pretty much free rein to order whatever supplies he needed to put on good meals for the crew.

I do believe the smartest and most successful woods operators went out and hired the best cooks they could find and gave them a free rein to buy supplies. This assured them of a well-fed, happy and productive crew of men. It probably paid off in the long run.

I've been in northern Maine lumber camps during the days when pies, cakes and cookies came out of the oven. What wonderful odors and delicious tastes they were too. Sitting at the tables with the men was an experience all it's own. There was little talk. Everyone was busy stowing away all the grub he could handle.

Dwight D. Eisenhower's quote in the mess halls in Europe is the sign I've seen in Maine lumber camps, "Take all you want, but eat all you take." A waste of food did not fit in with Yankee thrift!

Most of the camp buildings were made of logs cut on the site. The logs were chinked with moss, old rags or newspapers to seal out drafts. They were roofed with shakes, shingles or tarred paper. There were usually three main buildings; a cookhouse and dining room, a bunk house, a horse hovel, plus an outdoor privy or outhouse. Sometimes the bunkhouse and kitchen/dining room faced each other and were connected an open but roofed passage way. This area contained dry wood for the stoves and was called the "dingle." I don't know the origin or meaning of that word. The bunk room was where the men spent any free time playing cards, mending or washing clothes and sleeping.

It was a hard life in the remote camps. Men worked from daylight to dark six days a week. Sundays off did not give them time to get home from Fall until Spring. Personal cleanliness was a problem in the cold camps. Sometimes the men went all Winter without a change of underwear. I remember one man telling me that his mother met him at the door when he came out of the woods in the Spring and made him take a bath in the washtub on the back porch while she burned his clothes. She knew he would be covered with lice, so she wouldn't let him in the house until she had inspected him and he put on clean clothes.

That hard life began well before daylight each day for the cook preparing breakfast for the teasmsters with horses to be fed, watered and harnessed so they could eat while the drivers did and still be ready to go to work at daylight. At noon the horses were watered and given a feed bag of oats and a bit of hay while the men ate their dinner. At the end of the day, after the horses were bedded down, the crew well fed and the dishes done, it didn't take long for all activity to cease because everyone was in bed and asleep.

WARM, WINTER COVERLETS

While Supplies Last!!

These handsome coverlets feature historic portraits in fiber
of the Shiretown's most notable architecture including
*Foxcroft Academy * The Blethen House * The Congregational Church*
*Central Hall * Low's Covered Bridge * and other landmarks*

Woven in Foxcroft Academy colors red/maroon and cream

A coverlet in your home will boast of your hometown in a keepsake
that will provide years of service and will become a family heirloom.

The cost is \$38.00 each. Please add \$5.00 for shipping
Place your order with: **Jim Annis, 10 Orchard Road Dover-Foxcroft, ME 03326-3706**
Or if you're in town, they can be purchased at: **Dave's World on North Street**

The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society, Inc.

10 Orchard Road

Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426-3706

MESSAGE FROM MARY

Dear Members,

We look forward to another year at the Historical Society. We will soon begin work on the back room of the Observer Building with a display set up in honor of the Piscataquis Observer along with other exhibits. We would like to have everything in place for our Summer hours. Our meeting schedule is listed below this message. We try to make our programs varied and interesting. Your attendance is our feedback and it is important to us. Please let us know if you have a particular interest for a program. See you all this Summer!

All meetings (except September) start promptly at 7:00 PM and are held at the Community Meeting Building at Thayer Parkway on Park Street. Bring a friend or two with you!

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| April 5, 2000 | Annual Meeting - bring a story |
| May 10, 2000 | Victoria Eastman talks about vintage clothing |
| June 7, 2000 | Lou Stevens tells us "How to write a history book" |
| September 6, 2000 | Meeting at South Dover Cemetary at 6:00PM - Lou Stevens |
| October 4, 2000 | 18th Century program - Jim Annis |