

# ***THE SHIRETOWN CONSERVER***

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*The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society Newsletter*

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*Volume 4 Number 2*

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## ***Springtime Means Spruceup Time***

"The old building is really getting a workover, or is it we who're getting the workover?" commented Jim Annis, treasurer of the Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society. May 6 found many members of the Society tearing down old shelving left over from the time of the Observer newspaper ownership. Cleaning and sweeping of many years of dust and debris provided a focus of effort for other workers too. "If it weren't for the volunteers, none of this work would have been accomplished," he said. "It's a great sight to see all of us working toward the goal of a really fine museum," he added.

"After some scraping and painting, this room will rival the others in beauty," said Mary Annis, president of the Society. "But first, we have to decide what to keep of this mess and what to throw away," she said referring to the barrels of bits and pieces. "Possibly, I could make musket balls out of some of the lead," said Jim, "But it's not the right kind of lead, I've been told," he lamented.

"The next workday is scheduled for May 27th and, hopefully, we'll get most of the cleanup done and then, sometime in June, we can get started on the painting and the patching of the walls and the flooring," Mary said. "I'd really like to finish off the revamping of this third and last room on the first floor this year and then we could display all the Dover and Foxcroft artifacts we have stored away waiting to be shown to visitors to the Museum," Mary added. "So little time and so much to do," Mary said. "And to ask working people to give up so many Saturdays to work in the Museum isn't my favorite thing to do," she said thoughtfully. "But we will get this done. It just takes time and a lot of patience," she said wistfully.

## ***Annual Meeting A Success***

The annual meeting of the Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society found Mary Annis reelected as President for another year along with Helen Kelly as Vice President, Madelyn Betts as Secretary, Jim Annis as Treasurer, Dave Lockwood as Curator and Joe Champeon, Gilman Glover, Bob Ladd, Lou Stevens and Jim Brown as Directors.

The meeting was held at the Meeting Room in Thayer Parkway on Park Street in Dover-Foxcroft on April 5, 2000. The treasurer's annual report showed that, despite the many unplanned expenses in the past year, the Society was capable of meeting expenses for the coming year with a treasury of \$7,848.19 in savings and \$57.53 in checking. "I don't like to keep a lot of money in the checking account," reported Jim Annis, treasurer. "The interest isn't as good as in savings and it's a small matter to make a transfer when you have to pay bills," he assured the membership.

The program for the evening was "Childhood Memories" as related by the membership and was attended by 16 members.

## ***Know Your Officers***

*By Jim Annis*

In the last issue of the *Conserver*, we learned about our president and vice president and their backgrounds. This time we will examine the lives of our treasurer and secretary. It's interesting to learn about the people who make our Society work and their reasons for being officers.

Jim Annis is the son of Sue and Lou Annis. Lou grew up in Milo and Sue grew up in Dover-Foxcroft. Lou passed away in 1989, but Sue still lives on West Main Street in Dover-Foxcroft.

Jim grew up in Bath, Maine. He graduated from Morse High School in Bath in 1956. He attended the University of Maine for awhile before entering the Army in 1959. He was in the Army Security Agency and served in Korea and the National Security Agency in Maryland. After leaving the Army, he was employed at Pratt & Whitney in the engineering department designing jet engines. Later on, he received a degree in Computer Technology from DeVry Institute of Technology and was transferred to Experimental Test at Pratt & Whitney. Jim was employed constantly with Pratt for 30 years, finally ending up at the Customer Training School in Wethersfield, Connecticut as a Senior Technical Illustrator before retiring from Pratt in 1992.

In 1994, Jim and Mary moved to Dover-Foxcroft after having sold their home in Wallingford, Connecticut. They built a house on the Orchard Road on land they had purchased 10 years earlier. Soon after arriving in town, it was learned that Mary had been president of the Historical Society in Wallingford for 8 years and the current officers of the Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society quickly implored Mary to take over the reins of the Society. Jim's experience as treasurer of his reenactment group, treasurer of Wallingford Grange and Finance Chairman of the Wallingford Board of Education found him in charge of the Society's accounts.

"There wasn't much to start with," Jim says, "but an excited board of directors, a new set of bylaws, incorporation papers in hand and a 501(c)(3) tax exempt status, found the coffers very much improved with memberships, gifts, donations and an endowment. We've come a long way, but we aren't any way near the finish line," Jim added. "I would like to see the Society self sustaining with membership being the only source of income. That will take a lot of very generous people, or corporations, willing to provide the Society with income from endowments or investments," he said.

With the acceptance of the Observer building as a museum, the Society finds itself with two buildings to maintain. The other being the Blacksmith Shop Museum on Dawes Road. "They're two fine buildings very deserving of preservation," said Jim, "And we are doing the very best we can to keep them going. But it takes money and a lot of volunteer work," he said. "It's a financial challenge and I just love it! Without the donations from the membership, we'd have to panhandle pencils on the street corner," Jim said. "For every dollar in dues, we picked up three dollars in donations," Jim added, "God bless the membership. They've got my heartstrings."

Jim is married to Mary Ives Annis, the Society's president, and they have three children, Colleen, Kevin and Louise. All three children are married and Jim and Mary are the proud grandparents of three grandchildren.

## *Know your Officers (cont)*

Madelyn Betts has been the Society's secretary since its founding in 1963. "It's been a labor of love," she says, "and I think I'll give it up when they carry me away in a pine box."

That seems to be the attitude of the only current officer who is one of the charter members of the Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society, Inc. Although she has been involved in other organizations throughout her association with many volunteer groups, Madelyn thinks of the Society as a "home" and hopes to dedicate many more years in its struggle to be the "best."

Madelyn was born in Garland, Maine. She is the only child of George and Grace McComb Ballard. Her parents moved to Dover-Foxcroft when Madelyn was very young and she spent her childhood there finishing her secondary studies at Foxcroft Academy. She went on to Husson College and was graduated there in 1930.

Her professional career started as the secretary to the principal and the Superintendent of schools in 1931. She worked at the Academy until 1948. She then became a part time secretary to a district sales manager for American Cyanamid from 1950 to 1955. Along with her job at Cyanamid, she was a part time library assistant from 1957 to 1960. And from 1960 to 1980, Madelyn was secretary to Robert G. Hall an Antique Dealer and Auctioneer.

Madelyn's music career spans many years and, as you'll find out, has been in great demand as an organist. For the Miriam Chapter #40 Order of the Eastern Star, she's been their organist for 14 years. She was the Congregational Church organist, here in town, for 26 years.

Madelyn's volunteerism spans many years and many organizations. "It's what keeps me young," she says. She's been recording secretary for the Wenonah Rebekah Lodge #11 for the past 8 years and secretary for the Thompson Free Library. She is currently an honorary member and past president of the Cosmopolitan Club, a member of the Maine Old Cemetery Association, The Maine Genealogical Society and was Congregational Church clerk for many years.

And, if you can believe she has time for all this, she has hobbies! Among them are antique collecting, reading, knitting, crocheting, needlepoint, genealogy and local history. Got a question regarding the town? Call Madelyn. Everybody in town knows that!

Madelyn was married to Earl H. Betts for many years until his passing. They have one daughter, Celeste B. Hyer. Celeste is a secretary for Digital Equipment Corporation in Nashua, New Hampshire. Celeste is married to David W. Hyer. David is a Supervising Component Engineer for Digital Equipment Corporation in Maynard, Massachusetts.

In her Foxcroft Academy reunion book of 1980, Madelyn lists her "grandchildren" as *one cat!* Humor is a greater part of Madelyn's life and it serves her well. There's never a dull moment with Madelyn around!

Madelyn's historical knowledge of the town of Dover-Foxcroft is invaluable. She has served her town well in her sharing of that knowledge. She has never turned anybody away by being "too tired" or "not interesting enough." She pushes herself beyond points you and I would gladly give in and quit. Dover-Foxcroft, and especially the Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society, can be proud to call her their own.

**Sebec Lake Notes**  
**From Dover-Foxcroft: A History**  
**by Lou Stevens**

Long before white settlers made their appearance at the lake, it was certainly inhabited by Indians as shown by the great number of arrowheads and stone implements found along the shore. Their name for the lake was Sebecco.

The lake itself is 322 feet above sea level, about 13 miles long and nearly three miles in width in the upper section, with the shortest distance across the lake proper being the Narrows. The deepest spot is about 155 feet down and the lake contains 349,485,384 cubic meters of water. The surface covers about 6,567 acres of ground, 2,700 of which are in Foxcroft. Logs that sank during the days of the great drives and wrecks of steamers and boats rest on the bottom of the lake. Of course, only the south shore is in Dover-Foxcroft. Still, the entire lake has meant much to the economic conditions of the town.

For many years the summer seasons at Sebec Lake did not start nearly as early as they do now. The first boat notice to appear in the *Observer* was printed in 1859, but not until July 28th. In 1860, it was Bragg & Wiggins advertising their boat rides for the blueberry season with the same morning schedule. Capt. A.G. Crockett, who spent many years on the lake, offered rides during the blueberry season in August of 1862. He left Sebec Village at 7 and stopped at Steadman's Landing at 8:30 where there was good "accommodations for horses at Thompson's Stable" for folks who would be gone all day. Fare each way was 75 cents.

The first mention of a hotel at the lake came on July 19, 1866: "Messrs. Blethen and Gilman have built a new and commodious hotel at the head of Sebec Lake for the reception of company during the blueberry season. It will be opened July 23. This house is the easiest access to the blueberry mountains." But for some reason, not given, the hotel on the bank of Wilson Stream and at the base of Granite Mountain did not open for a year later until July 11, 1867.

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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 \$3.00 membership is 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 AND STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP CODE \_\_\_\_\_

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

## *A Cinderella On Lincoln Street*

*by Madelyn C. Betts*

A miniature "house by the side of the road" has quietly surveyed the passing scene these many years and sits unnoticed by the passing traffic. Snuggled in the corner of the Weatherbee property on Lincoln Street, is a one room building that was once a lawyer's office whose early history is unusual. Doubtless few townspeople realize the interesting story connected with this unassuming structure.

The building was the 1826 law office of Charles Parsons Chandler who was the first preceptor of Foxcroft Academy. He was also Justice of the Peace, town treasurer and representative to the Maine legislature. The Chandler family was notable in the legal profession. Charles Chandler, born October 29, 1801, practiced law in New Gloucester with his father, Peleg Chandler, Jr., before his settlement in Foxcroft. Charles Chandler's two brothers, a son, a son-in-law, two nephews and a granddaughter were all lawyers. His granddaughter, Mary Chandler Lowell, enjoyed the distinction of holding both medical and jurisprudence degrees. An unusual feat for a woman at the turn of the century. She was also the author of the "Old Foxcroft" a town history. Chandler numbered among his Bowdoin College friends, Franklin Pierce, 14th president of the United States, Chief Justice John Appleton and the immortal poets, Hawthorne and Longfellow.

Following Chandler's death, the law office ceased to function when his son-in-law, Charles Lowell, closed its doors and headed for Louisiana. In 1868, Charles P. Chandler's widow, for sentimental reasons, had it moved across the frozen Piscataquis river to the corner lot of the old family homestead on Lincoln Street. The present Masonic Temple stands on its former site. Seth Brown, master mover, transferred it across the ice above the dam to its present site. When the schools were found in a congested state, Mrs. Chandler offered the office as an overflow school of the intermediate grade with Miss Matilda Daggett in charge.

In later years, the building was used for storage by the A.W. Gilman & Co. grain store located across the street during the time a family member owned the property. The 18 square foot building has white clapboards with a window on each side and a door at the front. Obviously it never had a constructed chimney. It is still in excellent condition. Many of these early law offices have now been restored and are designated as historic sites.

How quietly this little building has stood by the side of the road watching the progress of the community and how interesting its stories would be if the walls could talk.

### **RED ALERT**

**Do you have a red number, or numbers, on your address label? If you do, the numbers mean the year, or years your dues are delinquent. It's costly to print the newsletter and your dues show that you want support that cost. Non-payment of dues indicates to us that you're not interested in the newsletter. On page 4 there is a dues payment slip. Please take the time to fill it out and, with your dues, send it to Madelyn Betts. We'd truly love to continue sending the *Conserver* to you. It's our way of showing you we appreciate your membership.**

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**The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society, Inc.**

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**MESSAGE FROM MARY**

Dear Members,

We are looking forward to the Summer and being open to the public. The Blacksmith Shop Museum is open from Memorial day to Labor Day. The "OPEN" flag flies most days as Dave Lockwood is usually there to greet visistors. The Observer Building Museum will be open on Saturday afternoons from 1 - 4 PM during July, August and September. We hope to see our member's names in the visitor books. If you can see your way clear, we sure could use some help in hosting the Observer Building. Please give your Society an afternoon and call me at 546-0820.

We're also having some work days in an attempt to finish the back room of the Observer Building. We're meeting every other Saturday at 9:00 AM at the museum and are working until noon or so. We could use help painting, cleaning and constructing. In the meantime, have a wonderful Summer.

**Remaining programs to be seen on the below listed dates:**

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| <b>June 7, 2000</b>      | <b>Lou Stevens tells us "How to write a history book"</b>      |
| <b>September 6, 2000</b> | <b>Meeting at South Dover Cemetary at 6:00PM - Lou Stevens</b> |
| <b>October 4, 2000</b>   | <b>18th Century program - Jim Annis</b>                        |