

THE SHIRETOWN CONSERVER

The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society Newsletter

Volume VI, Number 1

Spring 2002

"It Was All About That Battleship of Maine" Dover & Foxcroft in the Spanish-American War

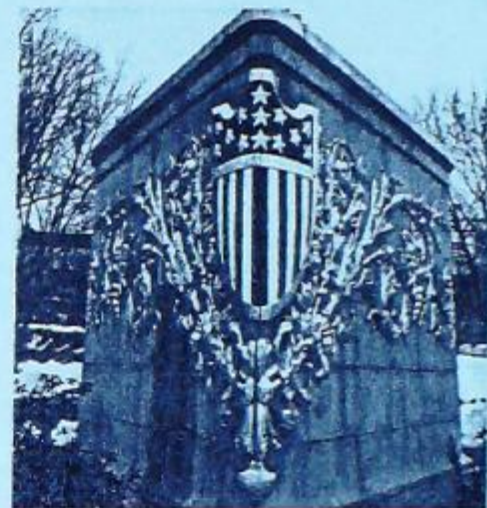
By
John F. Battick

In the early evening of February 15, 1898, the battleship *U.S.S. Maine* was sunk with great loss of life in the harbor of Havana, Cuba. The presence of the vessel was the result of increasing concern in Washington over the plight of U.S. interests in that Spanish-held island. Three years of civil war in Cuba between those residents of the island who wanted independence from Spain and the forces of the imperial government threatened to jeopardize American investments in the island as well as the lives of U.S. citizens living there. And so, in January 1898, the *Maine* sailed into Havana Harbor to "show the flag" and "protect American interests."

Controversy surrounds the sinking of the *Maine*. Initial reports said the disaster was due to an explosion in the ship's ammunition magazine. But at the same time, certain newspaper publishers, most notably Joseph Pulitzer of *The World* and William Hearst of the *New York Tribune*, were locked in a titanic struggle for readership. To increase circulation, each chose to play up rumors that the ship had been the victim of foul play on the part of the Spanish government. Sensational headlines, with dramatic drawings based on eyewitness reports (newspapers had not yet the ability to print photographs) showing the ship torn apart amid leaping torrents of flame, bits of metal and many whole human bodies being flung into the sky, were a daily feature of such newspapers. Hearst is said earlier to have told his illustrator, Frederic Remington, covering events in Cuba, "You send me the pictures, I'll find the war." And most historians agree that find a war, he did.

In the days following the disaster the U.S. Navy set up a Court of Inquiry, the Spanish government ordered its own investigation, and members of both houses of the U.S. Congress sought to discover the facts of the matter. Whipped up by the jingoist press, many members of Congress and the public were calling for war against Spain and the liberation of the Cuban people. In the White House,

(Story continues on page 7)



U.S.S. Maine Scrollwork & Shield; Davenport Park, Bangor, Maine.
Photo by J. Battick

Inside this Issue

Hickory Dickory Dock	pg. 2
Kicksled memories	pgs. 3-4
What is History?	pg. 6
Upcoming Programs	pg. 10

Hickory Dickory Dock

By

Madelyn C. Betts

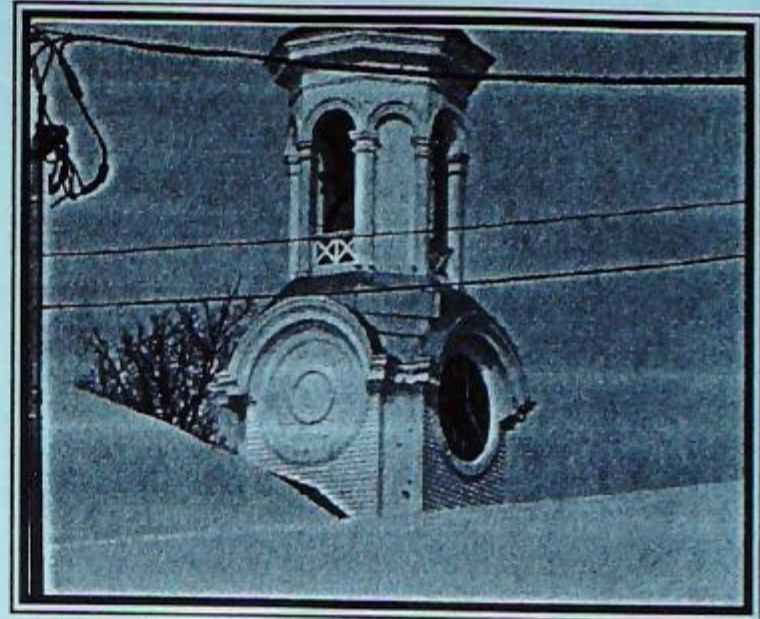
'Spose the tiny church mice run up and down the venerable old Town Clock located at the Dover-Foxcroft Congregational United Church of Christ?

Time is an intangible thing, a measurement invented by man to give order to the passing days. For the past 125 years the faithful ticking of the Town Clock on the stately spire seen in Monument Square, has kept busy citizens "on time" for their daily activities.

It was in 1875 that plans were made to replace the original square belfry with a lofty steeple together with a timepiece when a liberal bequest of \$2,000 from Deacon John G. Mayo was made known. The renovation, however, actually cost \$3,000.

The following year, on October 3, a clock manufactured by E. Howard & Co., of Boston which produced timepieces of lasting quality, built to last hundreds of years, was installed in the steeple. The workings of the clock are a wonder in themselves. To reach them, one must climb into the former choir loft at the rear of the church sanctuary; from there, one climbs in succession, an iron-runged ladder, a wooden ladder, and finally, a series of boards nailed to the studs of the belfry.

The actual clock works, made of cast iron and brass, sit in the middle of an octagonal room, measuring some seven feet from wall to wall. A series of steel cables pass through the floor, holding the iron weights that move the clock, while cables run to the three faces to move the minute and hour hands. Covering the walls of the clock works room are the names and records of persons who have wound, oiled, and serviced the ancient timekeeper.



No Time For Dover? Photo by J. Battick

If Deacon Mayo can be thanked for the installation of the clock, perhaps we should note that the project apparently did not have universal acceptance. An unconfirmed story claims that the townspeople of Dover, on the far side of the river, had refused to contribute anything toward the project and thus the side of the tower facing them contains no face on which to measure the hour.

Once a week someone must climb the ladder to turn the crank that raises the heavy weights and pulley and sets the time. In the summer of 1983, major repairs were done to the church steeple and the town undertook to have the clock faces and hands repainted. The 12 ounce wood and brass pendulum continues its back and forth movement, carefully counting the seconds, reminding generations that time continues on at a steady pace.

Kicksled Retrospectives

Several readers sent us their memories of kicksleds (see *Conserver*, Winter 2001-2). We're happy to share these.

What a flood of memories surfaced in my mind when I read Jack Battick's article on the kicksleds's unique popularity in the D-F and Monson area. I got a real "kick"(!) out of the article, mainly because I received one as a Christmas present from my Mom and Dad in my early teen years (early '30's).

We routinely spent a portion of the Christmas/New Years school vacation break - with my maternal grandparents in Farmington, Me. On this particular Christmas morning we had finished opening our gifts except one, at which time Mom and Dad pointed to a certain tag on the tree and told me to read it, which I did and started following the string as instructed. I became progressively more puzzled as it led me out thru the diningroom and kitchen, thru a door leading into the woodshed passageway then thru another door which opened into the attached barn, diagonally across the first floor, out one of the two back doors, then right outdoors to the detached garage about 30 feet away, then straight into the slightly open farthest door and leading to - you guessed it! - a new kicksled! Needless to say I was excited; it was the gift I had asked and hoped for!

Many of you "senior plus" readers will no doubt remember the Winter Carnival that used to be held on the frozen Piscataquis River above the Mayo Mill Dam. I recall one very unusual kicksled equipped with a "power wheel." I'm sure some of you will remember this ingenious device, originally designed to be used on bicycles. This commercially available item was essentially a disc wheel with a thin hard rubber tire and equipped with a small single-cylinder, 2-cycle gasoline engine.

The powered kicksled adaptation I saw had one of these units attached just behind the chair between the runners. The tire had been equipped with nail-like studs for ice traction. I do not know whether this was one-of-a kind, but I recall seeing it several times (or possibly others like it). It very well could have been the brainchild of the fruitful inventiveness of Fred Washburn, who as the author stated, manufactured numerous kicksleds at that time.

Alfred H. Fortier

More on Kicksleds

I remember Fred Washburn. He worked for my dad once in a while when I was small. That was Dr. Noel. Fred would recite poems to me and incorporate my name as he went along. "Barbara Jane went down the lane," etc.

My dad came to own one of the kicksleds mentioned in the article and I remember liking it a lot. Paperboys delivered newspapers with kicksleds, the papers in a wooden box tied to the seat. Later, after I was married and living in Massachusetts, I was given the kicksled.

On the next page is a 1961 photo of me and my first two children, Steve and Sue Jackman. We had a lot of good times up and down our street and on the pond ice in Topsfield.

The second photo shows the same kicksled and the same little boy, now grown, and his wife and dog, enjoying an afternoon on the ice in Bradford, Massachusetts. Steve is extremely fond of his kicksled and has taken excellent care of it.

(Kicksleds continues on next page)

More on Kicksleds

(Continued from preceding page)



Washburn Kicksled 1961



Washburn Kicksled 1998

I wonder how many of these unique sleds are still around. It is a curiosity in this area and much enjoyed by all who get to use it.

Barbara Noel Buonaugurio

Kicksled Adventure

I My kicksled was not a "store-bought" model, sleek and swift, constructed in Monson, but a sturdy home-grown specimen made by my father, George Ballard. Dad was a blacksmith at the Bangor & Aroostook Railroad in Derby, therefore with the means and place to build my sled. Undoubtedly the iron frame and runners were hammered out at his forge and the sturdy wooden seat and back was painted "box car red"!

One spring in the early 1920's there was an unprecedented thick, hard crust formed on the fields. Just ideal for taking a ride on the new kicksled, so Dad and I ventured out to outer North Street near the present home of Duane LaCasce (then, the Charles Foss home). At the top of a small knoll I took my seat and Dad kicked us off - needless to say we FLEW! Fortunately, a rail fence halted our speeding progress without damaging persons or conveyance.

In the late '20's it was a fun outing on Sunday afternoon for 6 or 8 boys and girls to take a kicksled the 4 miles to Sebec Lake. Donning knit caps, mufflers, mittens, heavy woolen ski pants, jackets, buckled overshoes or lumberman boots, we jumped aboard the thick rails for a fun time in the crisp winter air. Chivalrous boys allowed girls to ride sometimes but it was a hilarious ride on the downside of hills and knolls. No sand or salt to mar the smooth snow packed roadway and bare ground was not given a thought. But when the waning hours of the day began to close in, it was prudent to head home. Once starting up long Mile Hill in gathering dusk, we heard "ungodly screaming". Was someone being murdered? It was only a hungry bobcat screeching in the nearby woods, but we did not linger and that mile up the hill was made in record time!

Madelyn C. Betts

CASHING IN

By
Nancy Klimavicz Battick

The Spanish-American War seems like ancient history to many of us. But if you look closely at the ads in the *Piscataquis Observer* during the year of 1898 you soon notice similarities to advertising during some of our more recent conflicts. True, you don't find zero percent financing of new autos, but local enterprising merchants found ways to cash in on the wave of patriotism and people's natural concerns during a time of unrest. Below are a sampling of the kinds of ads readers found during the critical months of the conflict.

War Atlas for sale at Elmer F. Cole & Co.
25 cents.

Flags available at Buck & Nickerson Druggists.

Old Glory Stationery on sale at the *Observer*.

"Reliable War News" could be found in the *New York Weekly Tribune*. Annual subscriptions could be had for \$1.75 and included a year's subscription to the *Observer*.

Photos of the events surrounding the departure of Company F (see the story starting on page 1) were on sale at the Dinsmore Studio.

E.D. Wade & Co. announced that "War is Declared on high prices. \$15,000 worth of ready-made clothing slaughtered for cash!" Dress Goods and Silks were also included in a later ad.

And, certainly one of the more inventive ads was placed in May 1898 by A.J. McNaughton of North Street, Foxcroft. Mr. McNaughton did his best to reassure his customers - or did he?

"UNCLE SAM" proposes to take care of the Cuban Lawn after this and so he has sent some

of his sons to post notice to the Spaniards to "keep off the grass".

Incidentally, there's likely to be something of a "fuss" but the probabilities are very strong that the dons and the hidalgos and the haciendas and the toreadors, etc. (observe our Spanish) will have to go away and stay away.

Meanwhile those American citizens who remain at home will have to be fed just the same, and we're the people to do it - at least as far as Foxcroft and vicinity are concerned.

We shall do our best to keep prices down - as always; but if the war lasts very long there's bound to be an increase which those who stock up NOW will avoid."



Editor's Corner

Once again a tip of the hat to all who made this issue possible - *Mary Annis, Madelyn Betts, Barbara Buonaugurio, Alfred Fortier*, and my associate editor, photographer, and all-around good guy, *Jack Battick*.

Let me know if you have memories of your own you'd like to share; articles or photos to contribute, suggestions, comments - we want to hear from you. I'm at battick@midmaine.com or Nancy Klimavicz Battick, 117 Foxcroft Center Road, Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426.

What is History? Part I

By
John F. Battick

History is as old as humankind. When early Man developed speech, it was used not only to communicate for immediate purposes, but probably to express memory (as in "Last time we tried to tackle a mastodon we all attacked from the same side and got creamed. Let's attack in a circle this time") Later, sitting around a fire, elders told of events past; youngsters heard the tales and stored them in their memories. Thus, the memory of the group ("history") was created and passed on through oral tradition. Preliterate societies everywhere preserved their past in this way, even into the time when writing was developed. Homer's epic poems "*The Iliad*", and "*The Odyssey*", were based on oral traditions of the ancient Greeks. Many centuries later, the Vikings passed their history down in sagas, long descriptive poems, even after they adopted the system of writing in "runes". Today, oral tradition lives on in folklore considered the providence of anthropologists rather than historians who depend upon the written word.

Writing is the key word. Historians tend to distrust the oral tradition because stories in that medium are subject to modification over time. Memory can get confused; stories changed to play up or down something or someone. Some facet of the past may be emphasized for present purposes, and the actions of one person may be ascribed to another. For example, the various Icelandic sagas often tell the same events, but the story is different in each. Most notable among these are the several accounts of Viking visits to North America.

But, an account written in stone, clay, on parchment or paper, stays the same. It is a more permanent record - what it says today is the same as when it was first written. To oversimplify, "No writing, no history". In the case of the Viking sagas, once they were written

down by monks in the 13th century, the oral tradition was broken. Historians use these versions to try to construct what really happened.

When did the writing of history begin? The roots of historical writing in Western civilization lie in Mesopotamia (modern Iraq) and Egypt five thousand years ago when the exploits of rulers were written on tablets of stone or the walls of tombs. The aim was to glorify rulers and remind readers how much was owed the ruler whose deeds are recorded. This is history with a purpose (propaganda if you prefer). But other writings on clay tablets and papyrus, intended merely to communicate or record important information, were made and have become part of the historical record.

We know for example what kinds of goods were traded within and without the river basins of the first Western civilizations, and even the names of the senders and recipients! We can read personal letters between people containing family news, requests for help, complaints, even love letters. Tax collectors are notorious for keeping records of amounts due and paid, and we have some of these from thousands of years ago. These things don't pertain to the glory of kings, but tell us a lot about the lives of ordinary people in ancient times. Once, historians only wrote about "important" things: kings, wars, laws, (politics). But for about two centuries historians have devoted more attention to other aspects of human existence: economic activities, social structure; human interaction, the realm of the mind as expressed in art, prose, poetry; and have tried to integrate those elements into a more complete picture of the past. Now, how a society exists at the grass roots is deemed as important, if not more important, than what its rulers do.

In the next installment, we'll look at how the first recognized historians of Western civilization began to change the writing of history in Greek and Roman times.

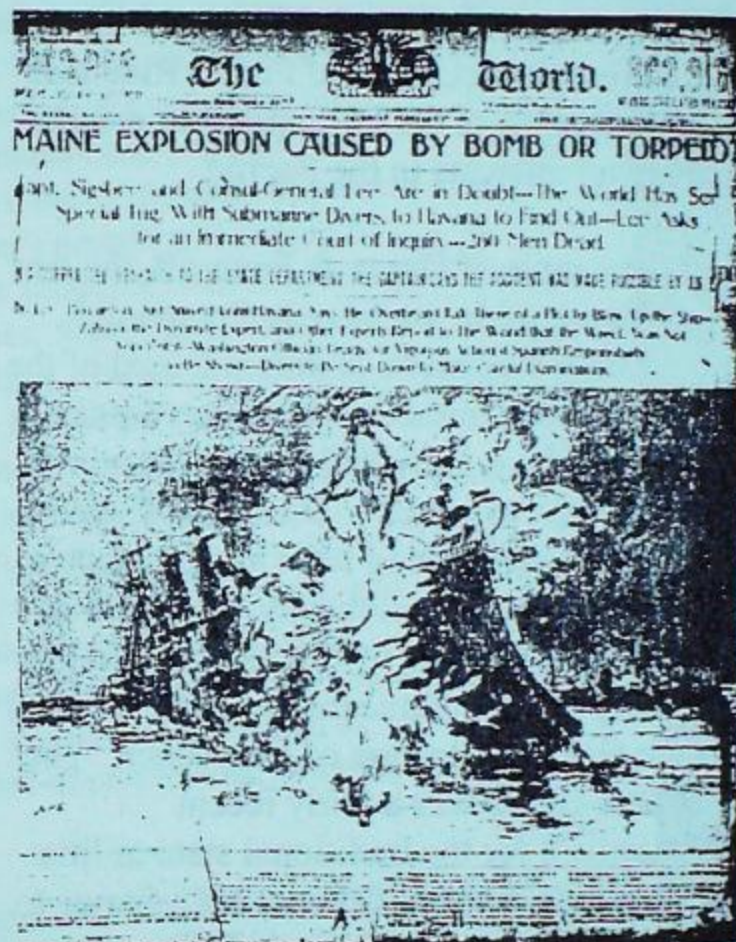
Spanish-American War (Continued from page 1)

President McKinley sought to settle the matter peacefully and in this he was backed by the redoubtable Speaker of the House Thomas B. Reed of Maine, who used his formidable parliamentary powers to try to prevent intervention and war. By late April 1898, however reluctantly, and in spite of conflicting conclusions of the investigators, the American President asked Congress for a declaration of war which was voted on April 25.

Events to that point bear a remarkable resemblance to those which followed the attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C. on September 11, 2001. Of course the scale of the events differed markedly. 266 lives were lost in the *Maine* out of a crew of 354; the shattered hull of the vessel lay below the muddy waters of Havana Harbor, her main deck awash and shattered superstructure visible for all to see. Witnesses ashore, including Clara Barton, in Cuba to oversee distribution of aid to the victims of the civil war, reported a blinding flash of light, the roar of exploding munitions, and the shattering of windows facing the harbor. Theories as to who might have set off the blast were rife. Some said the rebels set it off to bring on U.S. intervention, others said that Spanish Army officers, unable to suppress the rebellion, tried to redeem their pride by expunging a symbol of the country they blamed for their frustrations. And others have theorized that Cuban businessmen, fearing that the U.S. would intervene and disturb the cozy relationship they had with American

interests, misguidedly worked the sinking to warn off the American government. No evidence has ever been brought forward to place the blame on a specific party and no group or person ever claimed responsibility.

The Piscataquis Observer, in its reporting of these events, initially called for moderation in approaching the government of Spain and castigated those who followed the line of



Sensationalism sold papers and inflamed public opinion. *The Observer* deplored this sort of coverage.

what it termed “the hysterical press” and “the Yellow Kid” (Hearst?).

Fourth District Congressman Charles Boutelle had adopted that line and the *Observer* was an unflinching supporter of the Congressman, defending him from charges (Story continues on next page)

Spanish-American War (Continued from previous page)

that his appropriations committee was holding up an important bill to strengthen the U.S. Navy, insisting instead that his crime was not being as hysterical as those editors wished who in the event of war would remain safely behind their desks "hurling anathemas" at Spain. After April 25, however, the *Observer* slowly switched to supporting the war. Its editorial comments became increasingly contemptuous of the Spanish government and it was soon calling for the ouster of Spain from both Cuba and Puerto Rico and the annexation of the Philippines to protect American interests in the Pacific.

For the people of Dover & Foxcroft, the war came home when, on May 1, Company F, 2nd Infantry Regiment, National Guard of the State of Maine, mustered in Union Square after a luncheon provided by the Women's Relief Corps to march to the railroad station en route to the fighting soon to take place in the Caribbean. The company was made up of men from the two towns and surrounding townships who volunteered to serve if called by the Governor in case of emergency. The National Guard was a fairly recent replacement for the traditional state militia. With parade marshal Colonel N.C. Stowe to the fore, followed by Taylor's Military Band, groups of local citizens formed a line of march consisting of the W.R.C. ladies, both the Douty and Chandler Posts of the G.A.R. in their uniforms, other veteran groups, and the firemen of the Tiger Hose Company. The last contingent was the 63 men of Company F with rifles, knapsacks and blanket rolls, fife and drum beating cadence. Up the length of Pleasant Street

they marched, down Main Street through Union Square, across the Foxcroft covered bridge, out Summer Street to the Maine Central Railroad Station.

At the station the throng was treated to a patriotic address by the Honorable Willis E. Parsons, attorney and state senator, before the troops boarded the afternoon train for Augusta. At Silver's Mills, "a Frenchman" who had attached himself to the company insisting he wanted to go fight in Cuba was kicked off the train. War fever ran high enough in the towns for the *Observer* to note that flags were being flown all over, the national colors displayed on shops and homes, and clothing in red, white and blue commonly seen, a sight the paper called "inspiring if eccentric."

Alas, in less than two weeks, all but five men of Company F were back in town. The War Department had decided that only the 1st Maine Regiment of the National Guard would be mobilized for the time being. Four privates and a corporal of the company enlisted to fill openings in the 1st Regiment while still encamped in Augusta. Two others were later signed on in the Signal Corps and a heavy artillery battery (see below for names and units). Company F would just have to wait for its call . . . a call that never came.

The blow to the morale of the company must have been severe. The Inspector's General report the following year painted a dismal picture of Company F. No one met the IG when he arrived in June 1899 to inspect the company (it was claimed that the company commander, Capt. Calvin Brown did not receive the IG's message and was out of (Story continues on next page)

Spanish-American War (Continued from page 8)

town). The two lieutenants were hastily located and they assured the IG the company was drilling and hoped to recruit back up to its nominal strength soon. After a follow-up visit of inspection in August, the IG reported that only 2 officers and 15 men had been present for inspection. The nominal strength of the company was 3 officers and 47 men, whereas in 1897, 36 men had appeared for inspection. In the opinion of the IG the company commander could not or would not bring the unit up to shape and someone else should be appointed. According to the Adjutant General's report for 1900, Captain Brown had resigned his commission and been honorably discharged, along with 3 other captains in the 2nd Regiment. No one was listed as commander of Company F.

The war on Spain had little impact on Dover & Foxcroft. In one-room schools, teachers held patriotic observances with their pupils. Churches mixed tableaux of the war with remembrance services for the Civil War dead. *The Observer* carried a few long articles on aspects of the war and many short editorial pieces regarding Spain, Cuba, and the Philippines. The fighting in Cuba ended with the capture of Santiago in July 1898 and the war was ended by the Treaty of Paris in December. The flags and bunting soon came down and life in the shiretowns returned to normal. However, the US acquired sovereignty over Puerto Rico, Cuba received its independence, and the U.S. acquired Guam and the Philippines in the Pacific from whence its growing economic interests in China were to be protected. Through this war, the US made its debut among the major powers of the world and,

over the reservations of many, became an imperialist nation. Soon, America would solidify its Western Hemisphere and World position by building the Panama Canal and acquiring bases in the Caribbean (Roosevelt Roads in Puerto Rico and Guantanamo in Cuba). These would safeguard that vital trade link between the oceans.

Louis Stevens tells us that Company F had a somewhat similar fate in 1916 when the US sent forces into Mexico to suppress bandit raids into Texas. The company relieved a unit of the regular Army near the Mexican border and then was sent home. The company was again mobilized when the U.S. entered World War I and served honorably in combat on the Western Front.

Men of Company F who served in the Spanish-American War

with place of residence, rank, unit to which assigned; date mustered out of service:

Edward L. Bedell; Newport; Private, Co. A; 1st Regiment; Oct. 25, 1898.

Fred E. Day; Dover; Corporal in Co. F; Private in Company E; 1st Regiment; transferred to the regimental band; Nov. 16, 1898.

William H. Hardy; Guilford; Private, Co. K, 1st Regiment; Nov. 10, 1898.

Fred L. McCausland; Palmyra; Private, Co. A; 1st Regiment; Sick when unit mustered out.

Chauncey N. Rand, Detroit; Corporal, Signal Corps, Sick when unit mustered out.

Hiram L. Sears; Guilford, Corporal, Co. H, 1st Regiment; Nov. 12, 1898.

H.J. Stacy; Newport; Private, Battery A, Heavy Artillery; March 3, 1899.

A Message From Mary

The winter has been a quiet one and we are gearing up for the new year ahead. We are once again planning to open both the Blacksmith Shop Museum (*Dave Lockwood* hosting) and the Observer Building for visitors. A call will go out for hosts at the Observer Building and we hope to include some new faces this summer. Please let me know if you can help. It's a short Sunday afternoon - sometimes it's busy, sometimes no one comes, but those who do come are delighted with our displays. And then again you can entertain yourself by just poking around making new discoveries of the artifacts within the museum. No special knowledge is required of the hosts - just a friendly face.

It was great getting feedback on the kicksled article (see pages 3 & 4 of this newsletter). A hearty thank you goes out to those folks who shared their stories. We love hearing from you!

Please note our meeting schedule for 2002. *All meetings this year will be held at the Thayer Parkway Meeting Room on Park Street. Meeting time is 7 p.m. Meeting day is Wednesday.* We have speakers on a variety of interesting subjects and we certainly hope you can join us and bring a friend.

Mary Annis, Society President

Programs

- April 3** Annual Meeting. *Charlie Hesketh* speaking on collecting milk bottles.
Charlie has bottles from all over Maine.
- May 8** Maine Families Who Went To Sea. *Jack Battick*.
Stories of women and children who braved the oceans with
their sea captain husbands - and sometimes perished as a family
- June 5** Raising Foxes in Dover-Foxcroft. *Lou Stevens*
Another of Lou's intriguing looks at local history.
- September 4** Civil War Medicine. *Bill & Marge Cook*
Bill, a Civil War re-enactor, is with the Bangor Public Library.
- October 2** Writing a Social History (Railroads are the focus) *Walter MacDougal*.
Bring photos to share.



WE WANT YOU!

To

Renew Your Membership

2002 Membership Dues are now payable. Don't miss an issue of the *Conservator* or information on our great programs and activities. Send your \$3.00 per person dues today! And, while you're about it, how about a gift membership for a friend or relative?

Send renewal form & check to:

Madelyn C. Betts, Secretary
11 Harrison Avenue
Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426

Yes, here's my 2002 dues for the Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society.

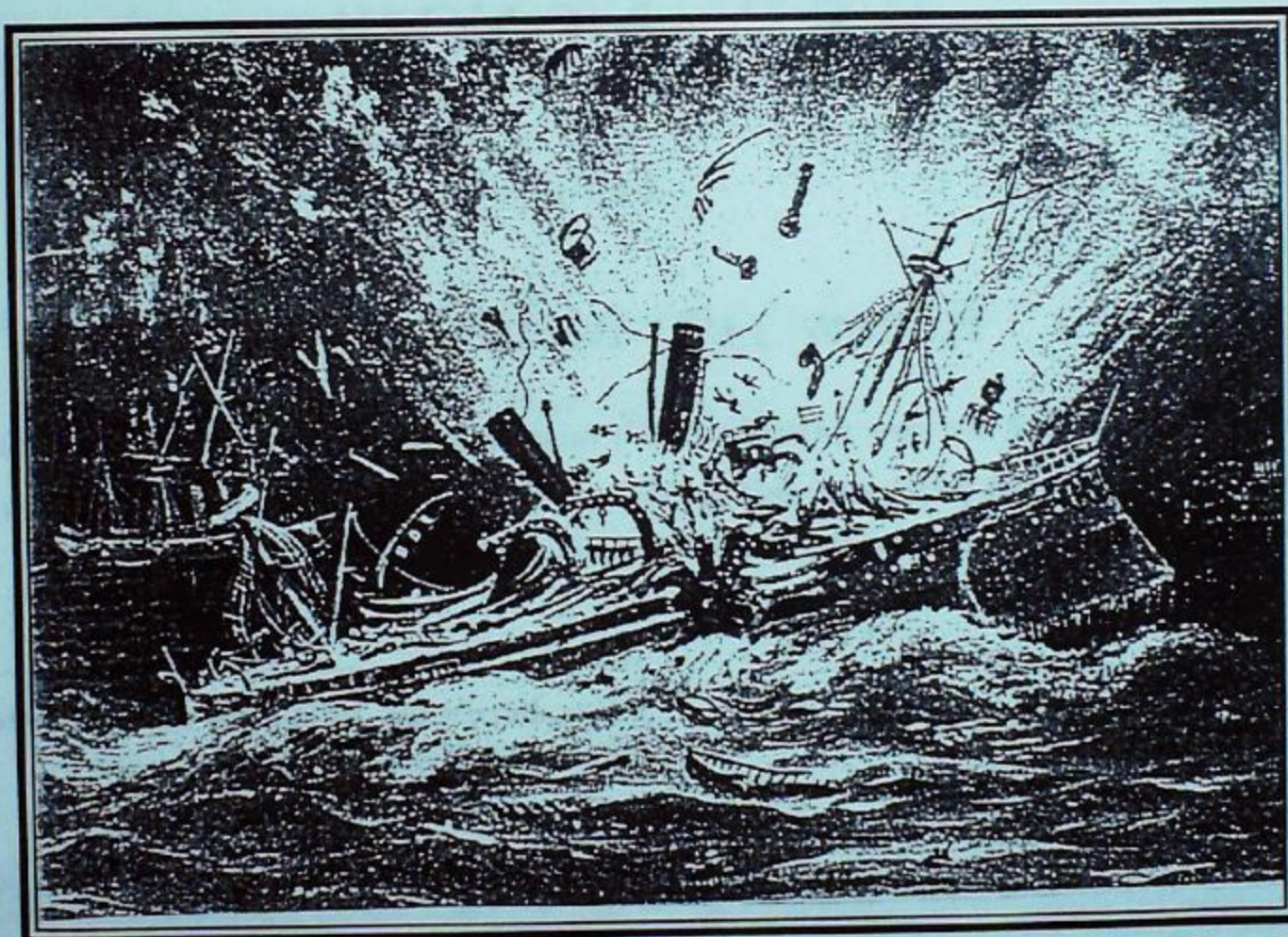
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Dues: \$3.00 per person

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Remember the Maine! Dover-Foxcroft in the Spanish-American War; Page 1