

# THE SHIRETOWN CONSERVER

The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society Newsletter

Volume VIII, Number 2

Summer 2004

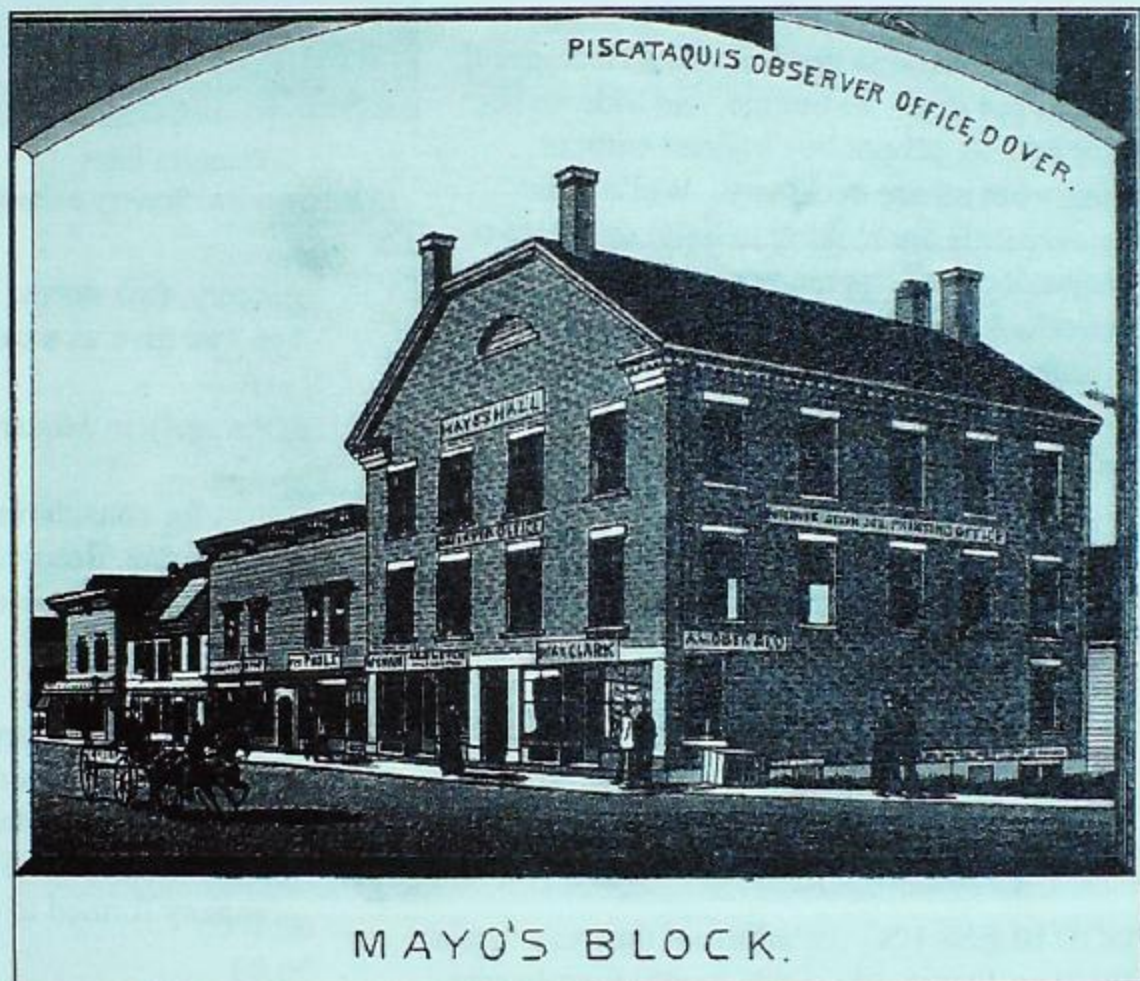
## The Mayo Building Fire of 1895

By Lou Stevens

Many spectacular fires have threatened to level the entire center of town as has happened in some other Maine communities over the years, but fortunately great work by the firemen always prevented such a catastrophe.

A fire that could have meant the leveling of the entire south side of Union Square occurred 109 years ago on June 20, 1895, when flames quickly burned three wooden buildings and gutted a furniture store and Mayo's brick block, while damaging another nearby structure.

Two great advantages - the absence of any wind on a calm summer night, and the superb work of the firemen from both villages - probably kept the entire business section from even greater,



Home to P.E. Ward's and True Value Hardware, the Mayo Building once housed the Piscataquis Observer on its second floor. B.F. Pollard Souvenir Booklet, D-F Historical Society collection.

ruination. No reason was ever given for the

cause of the fire, but an alley between Mayo's Block (later Ward's and now True Value) and the next building was often the scene of drunken carousals at that time, so possibly a carelessly thrown cigarette, match, or cigar started the blaze. (Story continues on page 7)

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## The Hearse & the Engine By Madelyn C. Betts

Firefighters and Fire Departments have been much in the minds of America recently. Early residents of both Dover and neighboring Foxcroft also had a need for the protection of these dedicated people and equipment.

Early in 1849, George Edes, editor of the local newspaper, ever mindful of the needs of these growing communities made the following editorial suggestion:

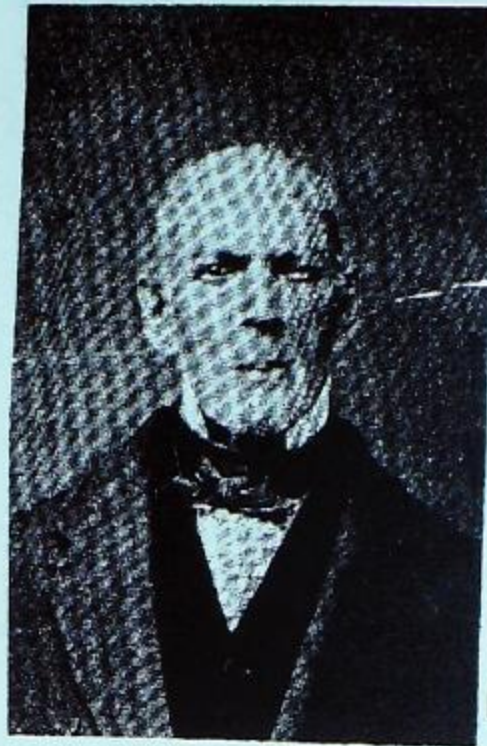
“There are three very indispensable things our two villages stand in need of viz: a Hearse and house to put it in - an Engine, and Side-walks. All of course, cannot be obtained without money - but all are necessary. While great improvements are making to build up our two villages, those things among the rest, should not be overlooked. The citizens of the two villages can unite, if they are so disposed, in getting a Hearse, if they do not see fit to purchase an Engine; but both are needed.”

He urges them to think on this subject, open subscription papers and to discuss and bestow their might towards the projects.

Editors frequently took verbal pot shots at one another and on May 10<sup>th</sup> Mr. Edes prints the following item which had appeared in a Boston paper . . . .

“GOD BLESS US - the editor of the Piscataquis Observer, Dover, Me. Calls loudly for a hearse and an engine! He has no notion of walking to the grave nor be in danger of anticipating his fate by fire. That’s the way, as soon as a village gets a meetinghouse, two stores, and a grocery and a printing office, the people want to put on airs, ride to the grave in a hearse, and have a real engine to put their fires out.” Signed, Aurora Borealis.

Obviously piqued, this is Mr. Edes’ reply . . . .



Georges Edes  
D-F Historical Society collection

“The above is an observation on a paragraph of ours. The Aurora man is growing quite a crank of late. He had better select some less serious subject matter on which to show his witticisms, than talking of an Editor’s walking to his grave. And then if he had ever visited this Queen of the Piscataquis Valley, we think him a man of more sense than to have thrown out those sly insinuations, about small villages with a grocery, two stores, and a meetinghouse. Why can’t he give us a call this way?”

Ultimately in January 1850 a meeting was held.

“ . . . . for considering expediency of procuring Fire Engine. Resolved that our property shall be taxed in an equitable manner to procure a Fire Engine.”

A committee was appointed “to define the limits within which property should be taxed” and in May 1850 a new Hannemen & Co. Fire Engine was purchased for \$903 in Boston, and a company formed to work it.

But not until two years later in August 1852 do we find that a meeting was called of subscribers to the fund for “procuring a Hearse and Fixtures and to discuss best method of attaining same.” These were eventually received about April 1854 so four years were needed to expedite the means of “travel to the grave!”





Madelyn C. Betts and James Annis display the Legislative Sentiment honoring Madelyn's service to the Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society. The Sentiment was one of the gifts presented to Madelyn at the Annual Meeting of the Society in grateful appreciation of her 41 years of service as secretary. Photo by Jack Battick.

### Officers Elected

At the Annual Meeting held April \_\_ the following officers were elected for 2004-5:

President	Mary Annis
Vice-President	Helen Kelly
Secretary	Nancy Battick
Treasurer	James Annis
Directors	Louis Stevens
	Robert Ladd
	James Brown
	Leilani Stites
	Jack Battick

Blacksmith Shop Curator, Dave Lockwood  
 Observer Bldg Curators: Jack & Nancy  
 Battick

### Our Corporate Sponsors

Ellen Anderson, D.P.M.  
 Dave's Frame Shop  
 Dexter Regional Federal Credit Union  
 Dover-Foxcroft Chiropractic Services  
 Lary Funeral Home  
 The Piscataquis Observer  
 Rowell's Garage  
 Mark Stitham, M.D.



## Our Members Write

We heard from two of our members in response to Lou Stevens' story on Central Hall in our last issue.

Brian Howe e-mailed:

"Have just finished reading your spring edition of the *Conservator* (belatedly) and want to commend you and your staff on a great publication. I was particularly pleased with the article by Louis on Central Hall. I have not lived in Dover since 1960 but remember fondly my childhood there. I have many memories of Central Hall from the Kiwanis shows that my father and I participated in to my graduation from the Academy in 1960. There were also the Academy basketball games which were watched by a capacity crowd. The players had to be contortionists to play there. I particularly remember the 1952 show with my father, Earle Howe, singing with Buz Hall and others the campaign song, "We like Ike". Our school plays were held there also (Mrs. Trefetheren) since the Academy gym did not exist then. Louis' article took me back to a much simpler time when life was appreciated for the little things. How we took it for granted though. What a wonderful place to grow up, Dover-Foxcroft in the 1950's"

And from Dr. Mark Stitham:

"Another interesting issue . . . Lou, your story on Central Hall was welcome. I have many memories of the Hall, including "rec center" at Dover Grammar School on Friday nights in the early 1960's. I also saw my sister Susan [FA '61] play basketball there. I wonder if others sitting in the audience had fantasies about that Mediterranean scene on the curtain. It had a burro going up a road as I recall.

Did want to correct page 8 wherein you say that the minstrel shows were in the late '30's and early '40's before TV came. I made my stage debut in a Kiwanis minstrel show at age 5 in 1955 at Central Hall dancing the jitterbug with Sally Lyford [Tom Harvey and Lorinda Annis were the other couple] as

the 4<sup>th</sup> grade chorus sang in the background Eddie Fisher's hit *Dungaree Doll*."

**Editor's Note:** Do you have a special Central Hall memory you'd like to share? Please send it along and we'll print it in a future issue.

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## New Member

Jean Hanson

Dover-Foxcroft

## From Stump To Ship

At the annual meeting, members viewed a video "From Stump To Ship" about the logging operations of time past. Afterward, the members discussed their own memories of lumbering in Maine including the annual log drives in the rivers.

## New York Trip In Your Future?

One of the Society's members has items for the Museum, but can't get them here. If you'll be anywhere near Lockport, New York in the next few months and are willing to pick up and deliver some materials to the Museum, please get in touch with Nancy Battick (564-3576) for further information.

## Goodbye to an Old Friend

It is with great sadness that we learned of the death of the Rev. David McLeish of D-F, friend and member of the Society. Our condolences to the family.



## The Society's Unknown

We don't know where this photo was taken, the event, or any of the youngsters involved. Do you know or have any clues that can help us? Some of the youngsters are in sailor costume, some dressed as nurses, others are in civilian clothes.



### Seeking Sawyer Information

Judy and Ray Sawyer are seeking information on his grandparents, Ora and Lizzie Sawyer, of Dover-Foxcroft. Ora was the son of Joseph Coffin Sawyer and his wife, Anna. Ora and Lizzie were married in 1902 and celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary at Central Grange. Ora and Lizzie lived on Lincoln Street. If you have any memories of Ora and Lizzie you'd be willing to share, please contact Judy & Ray Sawyer, P.O. Box 1246, Newport, VT 05855.

### Books Sought

The Society will be holding its second annual booksale on August 7 during Homecoming Weekend at the Observer Building Museum. Last year we raised nearly \$200 on this event and we hope to do better this year. If you have books you'd care to donate (or vhs tapes or other similar items) please contact Nancy Battick (564-3576) or Mary Annis (564-0820) for pickup of your items.

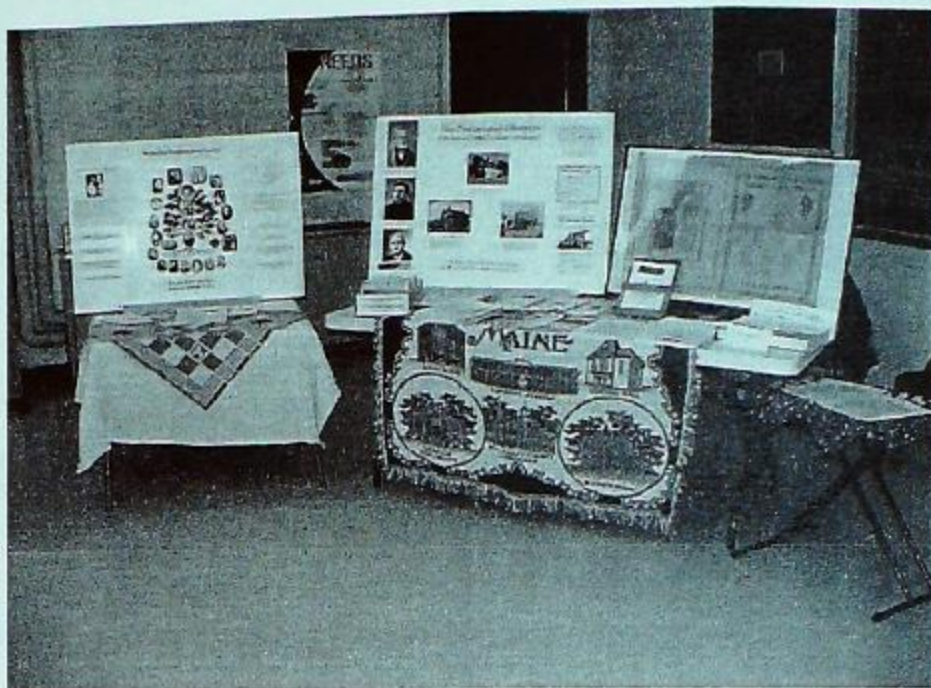
Be sure to visit our booksale and help make this fundraiser a great success.

If you can work at the sale at any point during the day, please contact Nancy.

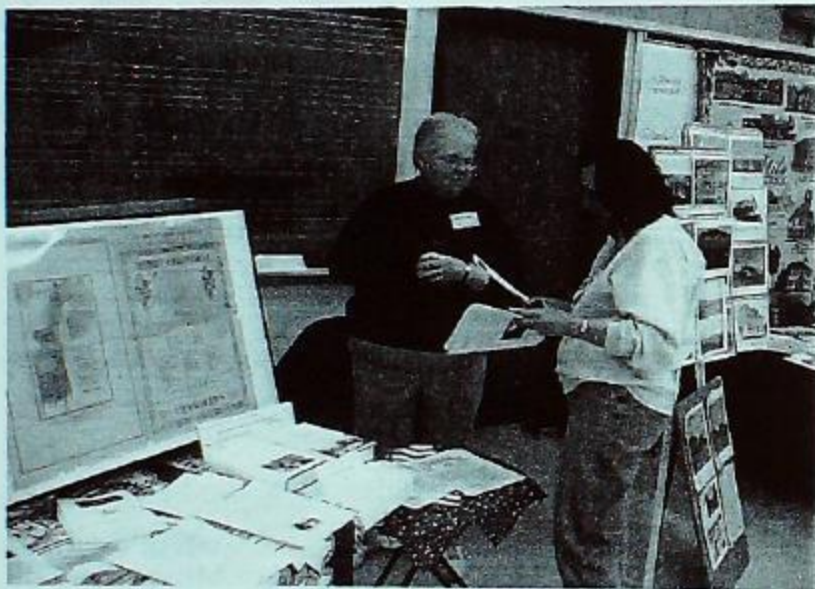


## The Society Was At The Expo

Again this year the Society was well-represented at the annual Southern Piscataquis County Chamber of Commerce Business Expo. Together with our fellow societies in the mid-Maine Historical Society, we mounted an exhibit which was well received and attended. Our theme was *the Piscataquis Observer*, the county's oldest newspaper. Many thanks to Jack Battick for preparing the exhibit, Mary Annis and Leilani Stites for setting up, and to Mary and Jack for staffing the exhibit during the Expo.



Our exhibit (that's the Wassebec Genealogical Society on the left).



Mary discusses the exhibit with an interested visitor.



Visitors enjoyed the 1919 Xmas ads.

All photos by Jack Battick.



## Mayo Fire (continued from page 1)

The clanging of bells was heard soon after two in the morning when flames were discovered coming from the building next to Mayo's. Nothing could be done to prevent 3 wooden buildings from being quickly enveloped in flames. A 4<sup>th</sup>, containing a grocery store and the American Express delivery service, was badly damaged by fire, smoke, and water.

Now the big question was whether the brick building could be saved. The two fire departments (each town had its own before they united 27 years later) fought the flames for 4 hours with hoses hitched to the hydrants plus using force pumps from both the Brown and Mayo woolen mills, and did manage to save the building, which, in photographs, looks like it survived the burning of Atlanta or the bombing of London in World War II (see back cover).

Only one other landmark structure in the town is older than this block and that is the "flatiron" one across the square where the *Observer* was located for many years and is today the home of the Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society. That oddly shaped triangle was constructed in 1854, and 4 years later in the summer and fall of 1858, Cyrus Hill replaced his old store on the corner of Main and South Streets, with a new one of bricks, 160,000 of them purchased from the kiln of B.F. Sands in Foxcroft.

George Edes, editor of the *Observer*, complimented Mr. Hill for providing a much-needed larger building with a third-floor meeting hall, little knowing Hill's Block, as it was immediately known, would be the home of his weekly for nearly 25 years from 1875 to 1899.

Later, after it was purchased in 1866 by John Mayo, it naturally took the name of Mayo's Block, the name still clearly visible after the fire on a large sign over the third-story windows on

the front.

The morning after the fire had been doused revealed a completely gutted building. The gable roof was gone, leaving just two trapezoidal end sections, and the two chimneys standing. All the windows were broken and it was possible to look through those windows to the walls opposite as all the room partitions were burned.

The third floor (first called Hill's Hall and then Mayo Hall) was gone. Before Central Hall was built in 1881, that hall was used for Dover town meetings, stage shows, walking marathons, boxing matches, and velocipede lessons, among other things. But in 1895 it was the armory of the Douty post, GAR Civil War veterans who because the fire came through the roof, lost their uniforms, rifles, and relics and mementos.

Storeowners on the ground floor were more fortunate as they had time to remove their goods before any great extensive smoke and water damage. The businesses were the dry goods store of Ober & Clark (on the right half of the floor), the drugstore of Liston Evans (on the left side), and the jewelry store of A.G. Blethen which occupied space in the drugstore.

The middle floor had been occupied by the *Observer* office and printing business which was completely flooded by the water poured into the building. Newsprint was soaked as were the presses on which the paper was printed; type cases were drenched; and stock used for job printing was ruined.

Two businesses very kindly took pity upon Mr. Evans who had purchased the paper in 1890. He used Sampson's monumental marble works shop in Union Square for an office, and the *Dexter Gazette* printed the *Observer* for several months during the summer.

The building was quickly restored by the owner,  
(Continued on page 8)



## Mayo Fire (concluded)

with new plate glass windows added on the ground floor. But the biggest change in appearance was made in the roof which now went straight up on both sides with the gable now gone. The dry goods store and the drugstore with the jewelry area went back into their old quarters.

What would be the future 109 years for the grand old building? The *Observer* stayed just 4 more years until November 1899 before moving to the first floor of the Bion Anderson Building behind the Mayo Block. Years later the second floor was occupied by the Moosehead Telephone Co.

The third floor became the armory of Co. F of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment, Maine National Guard. Various stores, including one by Harry Bush, occupied the first floor over the years.

Walter Mayo sold the building in 1922 to Willie Rollins who kept the stores on the first floor, put in a bowling alley in the basement, converted

part of the second floor into an apartment with the rest being the telephone office, and made the third floor into two more apartments.

He owned the block for 11 years until 1933 when he sold it to P.E. Ward & Co., which made extensive renovations on the first and third floors with the phone company still on the second.

In 1939 the Anderson Building, directly behind the block, became part of the Ward's store. When Ward's closed in September 1993, the company had spent about 60 years in the building which is now the home of True Value. So that the brick section is still one of 5 brick landmarks in the town, the others being the House of Pizza across the street, the old Bank Building, the Court House, and the Methodist Church.

**Editor's Note:** Much of the material in this article is reprinted through the courtesy of the *Dexter Gazette (Eastern Gazette)* where it first appeared.

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### Editor's Corner

Summer is fast approaching and with it the opening of the Museum for another season. If you can spare some time to help set up exhibits, vacuum or dust, help construct a storage room upstairs, build bookcases, or any of dozens of projects, please let us know. And, don't forget the Blacksmith Shop can also use volunteers - please call Dave Lockwood to find out how you can help there.

Again, I must express my joy in hearing from so many of you. It's humbling to learn how many of you enjoy the *Conserver*, read it faithfully, and save your copy. If you have any material we might use to share with the members of the Society please be sure to contact me. We promise anything you lend us will be treated carefully and returned safely.

This issue, as with all the issues of the *Conserver*, owes thanks to the many people who contributed in one way or another. So, a tip of the editor's hat to: Lou Stevens, Madelyn C. Betts, Mary & Jim Annis, Jack Battick, Brian Howe, and Mark Stitham.

You can reach me at 308 Foxcroft Center Road, D-F 04426; e-mail: [battick@midmaine.com](mailto:battick@midmaine.com). NB



## Mary's Message

Spring is here and the world is coming back to life. We have had two interesting meetings. In April we saw a logging video, From Stump to Ship, followed by a sharing of memories by those who remember those days of logs floating down the rivers. In May, Wayne Bennett shared the everyday life of a Union soldier, Eric Boothroyd told the history of the GAR and other military organizations formed after the Civil War including the Sons of Union Veterans. Finally Donna Runnels related the story of forming a new Daughters of Union Veterans tent (the Sarah Elizabeth Palmer Tent). Anyone with a direct line to a Union soldier is eligible to join these organizations. If you would like further information please contact me.

We will be having a couple of workdays at the museum soon. Some spruce up is needed before we open. And, as always, we re looking for volunteer hosts, July through August on Sunday afternoons from 1 to 4. We may be open during September also. And this year during July we are trying Fridays from 10 to 2. And, of course, Homecoming Saturday, August 7.

Please let me know if you can help. I'll have a sign up sheet at our June meeting. You can reach me by calling me at 564-0820 or e-mail [jmannis@midmaine.com](mailto:jmannis@midmaine.com).

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### Upcoming Program

June 2            7 p.m. Thayer Parkway. Betsey Ross (Leilani Stites) will join us to discuss the making of the first American flag. Betsey will be clad in period dress. Join us for this patriotic and Flag Day themed program.

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### Membership Application & Donation Form

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

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Town/City: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Annual Dues (\$5.00 per person):\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Donation: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (tax deductible)

**Please make checks payable to:** Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society. Mail to: 308 Foxcroft Center Road, Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426. Dues cover April 2004-April 2005. Please enclose a list of gift memberships and we'll notify your recipients.



## President's Report 2004

The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society continues to chug along - busy with many activities, collecting items of importance to Dover and Foxcroft and adding new members. We receive wonderful feedback from our Shiretown Conserver. The articles are varied and of interest to all. Thanks goes to Nancy and Jack Battick for their tireless efforts and also to the contributing authors.

Our five formal meetings were held using varied topics - April, at our annual meeting, Madelyn Betts spoke about Dover and Foxcroft photographers; in May Lou Stevens showed us his family's interest in harness racing; June saw us enjoying an information filled evening on Moses Greenleaf presented by Walter MacDougall; Jack Battick led the September meeting talking about land use in Dover and Foxcroft from settlement to present and in October Mary Annis presented a program on ghost stories in Maine complete with audience participation.

The Blacksmith Shop Museum hosted many visitors this year. The south side of the roof was rebuilt and shingled using cedar shingles, but the building is in need of further repair. The rest of the roof needs to be addressed, the sills of the windows and the sill near the foundation are in bad shape.

The Museum at the Observer Building also hosted many people. We thank all those who volunteered to help on Sunday afternoons. This year we will be adding Fridays to our open time on a trial basis. New lighting was added to the middle room and the back room Cataloging has begun in earnest with Nancy and Jack Battick and Leilani Stites and Mary Annis going in one day a week. Jean Hitchcock also has helped with these efforts.

At Christmas the building was once again covered with white lights. It looks very festive there in Union Square. We had an exhibit at the SPCCC show in April. Our theme was the Dyer and Hughes Company and we had our second organ there. The organ then was donated to the Monson Historical Society because the organ originally came from a Monson home. We kept the organ that still works.

One of the most active days at the Museum was our open house at homecoming. Dot Greenlaw and Lou Stevens hosted and we held a book sale in the backroom. Several hundred came through that day and we hope for a repeat this year. We now have two big display cabinets and will be setting up special displays for the summer.

Thanks goes out to all who helped the Society last year. It takes many hours, busy hands, and much dedication to keep our history safe.

Mary Annis  
President



## Annual Treasurer's Report For The Period April 1, 2003 Through March 31, 2004

Total Cash as Of March 31, 2003: \$13,454.35

Cash Received

Closed out B/S Shop Acct	\$1182.66
Dues	685.00
Donations	1815.51
Interest	41.07
Gifts	3052.50
Blanket Sales	342.00
Building Fund	1085.00
Book Sale	173.00
Blacksmith Shop Donation	25.04
Ruby Williams Memorial	175.00

Total \$ 8576.78

Disbursements

Memberships	\$ 45.00
Postage	195.39
Printing	553.66
Insurance	933.00
Electricity	283.97
Fuel/Service	3130.45
Water/Sewer	406.56
Building Supplies	553.50
Phone	554.68
Labor	100.00
Display Cabinets	1300.00
Conference	100.00
Rent	25.00
Food	3.69
B/S Maintenance	3031.22
H/S Maintenance	254.90
Check Purchase	7.00
Road Signs	60.00
Blanket Purchases	507.21

Total \$12045.23

Total \$(3468.45)

Grand Total \$9985.90

Bangor Savings Account	Checking	\$ 298.34
	Savings	9687.56

Grand Total \$9985.90

James D. Annis, Treasurer



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**28 Orchard Road**  
**Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426-3706**

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The Mayo Building after the fire of June 20, 1895. Two buildings next to it were destroyed. The Piscataquis Observer was housed on the second floor. Story on Page 1.