

# THE SHIRETOWN CONSERVER

## The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society Newsletter

Volume VIII, Number 4

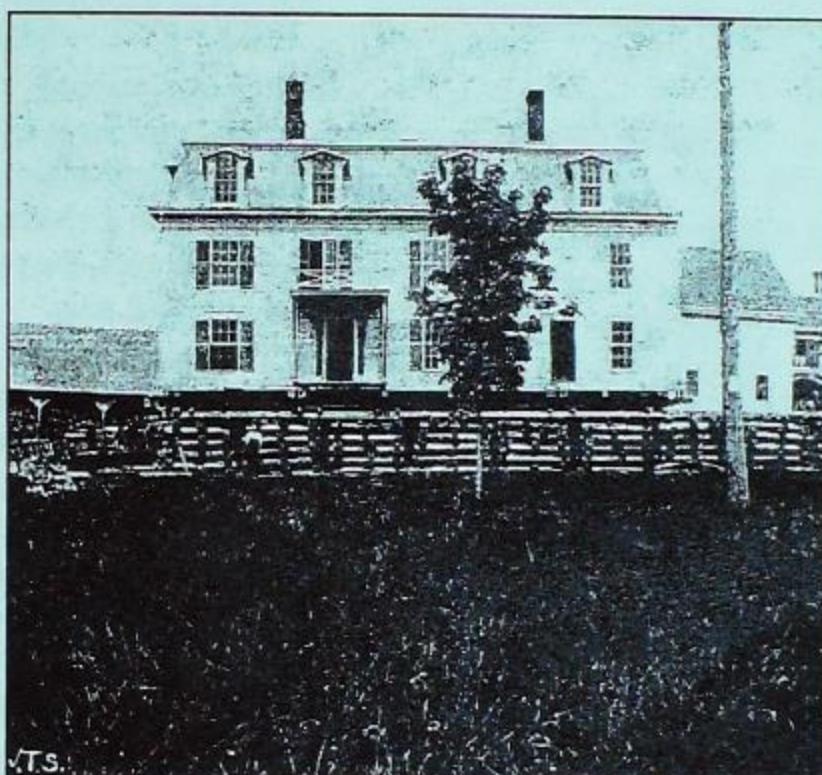
Winter 2004-2005

### Future Dormitory On The Move By Nancy & Jack Battick

It must have been quite a sight. Although moving large buildings was not unknown at that time, this was a challenging project by any definition. Surely young boys and adults gathered to watch the inch-by-inch progress of the long white building with the mansard roof as it slowly, carefully, made its way from the crest of the steep hill onto its new site opposite what was then the Central Grange Hall.

The gossipmill must have been in full motion long before moving day. This was the Chamberlain House once considered among the finest in town, now sold and destined to be a tenement. The house and the property it had stood on had been bought by the wealthy Col. Edward J. Mayo and the house was being moved, gossip surely said, to make way for a grand new mansion on the hill.

Preparations for the move had been underway for weeks and been reported in the local newspaper. The *Observer* told its readers that Elbridge Douglass was in charge of moving the buildings: the house to Grange Street, the barn relocated north of where it stood, and the small stable and shed were to be moved by A. J. Bennett who had purchased them for his property on upper Main Street.



Dormitory on the move by Chet Swallow and Frank Atwood from Mayo Hospital location to Grange Street. Photo by W.T. Stubbs, 1905. Courtesy of Bill Allen.

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The paper noted that the chimneys on the Chamberlain House were not taken down for the move and in June mentioned that S.F. Atwood and Charles F. Dearth owned the building. (Atwood was a carpenter and Dearth a wealthy businessman). It was Atwood who would be (Continues on page 9)



## **The Burgess Family of Dover, Maine, Part I**

### **By Ted Grant**

On June 7, 1834, William Burgess purchased from the proprietors of Dover all of lot 2 in the third range of lots in the town of Dover, Maine. Here they would cut and make the first burn, build a cabin, and start a family. To this day, almost 175 years later, part of this land is still occupied by descendants of William and Mary Burgess.

William Burgess was the 11<sup>th</sup> of the 14 children of Captain John and Hannah (Moore) Burgess of Belfast, Maine. Captain John Burgess was a 5<sup>th</sup> generation descendant of the immigrants (ca. 1630) Thomas and Dorothy (Phippen) Burgess of Sandwich, Massachusetts. William was born October 10, 1802 or 1803 in Penobscot or Belfast, Maine. His father had moved from Yarmouth to Vinylhaven to Penobscot before settling as one of the earliest settlers in Belfast.



Will was apparently the only one of his large family to move into the Dover area. On May 2, 1830, he married Mary, daughter of Isaiah, Sr., and Jemima (Johnson) Knowlton of Knowlton's Mills, Sangerville. This Knowlton marriage connects the Burgess's with most, if not all, the present day Knowltons in the Sangerville, Dover, and Guilford area.

William and Mary had 3 sons and 5 daughters: John, Hannah, Jemima, Mary, William, Harriet, Charles, and Susan. The oldest son, Josh Oscar Burgess, born April 5, 1831, would eventually purchase the farm from his father, with a covenant to care for his parents til the end. John married a girl from the Garland Line Road, Betsey Ann Merrill, daughter of True and Sarah (Lowe) Merrill and John's sister, Hannah, married Betsey's brother, Samuel T. Merrill, making for lots of double cousins.

A great many of the True Merrill descendants are still living in the area today. Some of the local family surnames descended from True Merrill are: Horne, Bailey, Roberts, Kinney, Patterson, Hill, Colbath, Thomas, Hews, Batchelder, Fairbrother, and Warren just to name a few.

Daughter, Jemima became the second wife of Augustus Ayter. Daughter Mary connected us to the area Harlows by her marriage to Isaac B. Harlow. Son William Jr. married Georgie Bennett of Guilford making a connection to the earliest settlers of that town and connecting the present day Guilford Burgesses to William and Mary Burgess of Dover. Other area names brought into the family by that marriage include: Drake, Crabtree, McDonald, Church, Harrington, Lewis, Law, and Edes.

Daughter Harriet also married a Harlow, though I'm still searching for which one. Son Charles married Hannah Abbot of Dexter and Daughter Susan died in 1873 aged 25. Continued on page 7)



## The Case of the Mortgaged Teeth

In 1881, Orlanda Morrill, wife of farmer Ruben (or Reuben) Morrill of Barnard, aged 49, needed a set of dentures made. And so she went to Foxcroft dentist, Henry A. Robinson.

We don't know what had happened to Orlanda's own teeth, whether they decayed because of disease, loss of calcium from bearing several children, or neglect. All of these are possibilities for that era and sadly not unknown today.

We do know from the original of the document shown at right that the Morrills couldn't afford the full cost of the teeth (\$25) and signed a promissory note to Dr. Robinson agreeing to pay the \$25 within 15 months of signing the note.

Dr. Robinson, obviously a prudent man, had the terms of the note spelled out as well as the following: "Nevertheless it is understood and agreed that the property in said teeth is not to pass to me, but to remain the property of the said Henry A. Robinson until this note is fully paid. And I further agree to freely deliver the said . . . teeth . . . on order . . . should I fail to make any of the above payments . . ."

*I, Foxcroft, Me. Jan 3 1881  
for value received I promise to pay  
Henry A. Robinson, or order, twenty five dollars  
within fifteen months from date; the same to  
be paid in quarter yearly installments of  
five dollars each.*

*The consideration for which this note  
is given is one full set of teeth made  
for me by the said Robinson.*

*Nevertheless it is understood and agreed  
that the property in said teeth is not to pass  
to me, but to remain the property of the  
said Henry A. Robinson until this  
note is fully paid.*

*And I further agree to freely  
deliver the said teeth to the said  
teeth to the said Robinson, or order,  
(application being made therefor,) should  
I fail to make any of the above pay-  
ments as agreed, and also to forfeit  
such payments as may then have been made.*  
*Orlanda Morrill*

Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society Collection. Gift of Madelyn C. Betts

Orlanda and her husband dutifully made two payments of \$5 each in March and June of 1881. Sadly, Orlanda died in 1882 and there is no record of further payment.

We wish we could tell you what happened then. One can only speculate if Dr. Robinson exercised his ownership of the teeth and re-possessed them from the corpse and if he did, what was their fate? Or did he write off his loss and allow Orlanda to be buried with her dentures intact. Sometimes history is alive with tantalizing questions and incidents such as this one. If any of you know what happened to Orlanda (or the teeth for that matter) be sure to let us know.



## BUY A WINDOW AT THE BLACKSMITH SHOP IN MEMORY OF YOUR LOVED ONES



Even the glories of autumn reflected in the shop's window above can't hide the marked deterioration.

Would you like to give a loved one a unique gift or create a historical memorial to a departed friend or relative? For some time it has been apparent that the Blacksmith Shop Museum's windows are in trouble. As the photo to the left clearly shows the casings need to be re-built and the windows themselves replaced. But with 11 windows to re-do the \$300 each price tag is beyond the Society's funding ability at the current time.

It has therefore been decided that individuals may "purchase" memory windows at the \$300 per window cost. Plaques will be placed with inscriptions by each window naming the donor and his or her chosen recipient.

When first announced at the September meeting of the Society three pledges were made on the spot for windows, leaving 8 still available.

If you would like to "buy" one of the windows remaining please fill out the form below. Remember, if you are buying a window for a living person the wording should read "in honor of" (for example, "in honor of Mary Annis" If you are buying a window to memorialize a dead person the wording should read "in memory of" (for example "In memory of Dr. Mary Chandler Lowell".)

All forms should be accompanied by a check for \$300 made out to the Society. If you have questions on the windows please contact Dave Lockwood, Curator, Blacksmith Shop Museum. If you don't wish to cut up your *Conserver*, you can send the information requested on a blank piece of paper.

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### Blacksmith Shop Window Purchase

Name of Donor: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ # of Windows Purchased: \_\_\_\_\_

I wish to purchase a window in honor/in memory [please cross out one] of: \_\_\_\_\_

Please print name: \_\_\_\_\_

Please enclose a check for \$300 per window and send to: Blacksmith Shop Window Project, Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society, 28 Orchard Road, Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426. All donations to the Society are tax deductible to fullest extent of the law.



## A Word on Our Last Unknown

In the last issue of the *Conserver* our unknown was a little girl in a wicker baby carriage identified only as "Mildred Thayer". For the second time in as many issues we're happy to report that our unknown subject has been identified.

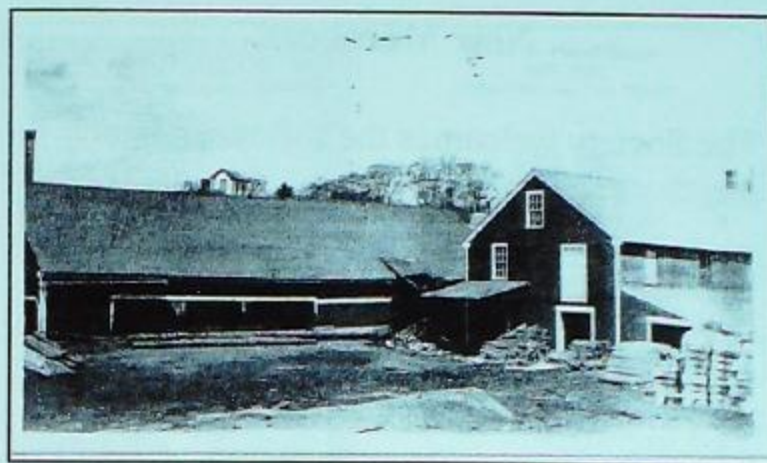
Both Madelyn C. Betts and Ted Grant came forward with genealogical information on Mildred and her family.

Mildred Alice Thayer Wyman was the daughter of Harry and Alice Greeley Thayer. She was born March 5, 1906 and on December 2, 1935 married Lt. John F. Wyman. Mildred was the granddaughter of William and Mary Mayhew Thayer, and the great-granddaughter of Charles and Amelia Towne Thayer. She was the great-great granddaughter of Abner and Persis Turner Thayer and of Moses and Betsey Towne.

Moses Towne was the brother of Eli and Abel Towne (it was Eli's wife, Betsey who "visited" the Museum this summer).



Mildred Thayer, Dover.



The Thayer Saw Mill, date unknown. DFHS Collection

Madelyn Betts tells us the house that belonged to the Thayers is on Lincoln Street with the bow window showing behind baby Mildred in the photo still evident today.

Harry W. Thayer was a prosperous businessman who ran a shoe store on Main Street and eventually moved into lumber and building materials. In the 1908 Souvenir Booklet of the Piscataquis region he was described as having been born in Foxcroft and educated at Foxcroft Academy and Bucksport Seminary. It said he was previously in the grain and feed business and was a man "known for his commercial integrity". He was a member of the Masons and the Royal Arcanum.

Mildred was his only child.

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*Beauté*

**\$2.00**

**WOMAN'S SHOE**

is the greatest shoe on the market at the price.

We are selling large quantities of them, and have yet to hear the first complaint.

**Any lady who wants to secure lots of shoe value for a little money should**

**BUY THE**

**"BEAUTÉ"**

**SHOE**

Call and see them, anyway. We are always glad to show goods.

**H. W. Thayer & Co.**  
**DOVER.**



## New Members

The Society welcomes the following new members:

Elizabeth Hewett	Florida
Robert Thomas Dietzko	Monson
Ruth Flanders	Sangerville
Gail E. Lynch	D-Foxcroft
Wendy Love	Bath

## Holiday Hours

The Observer Building Museum will offer a respite from all the holiday cooking, cleaning, partying, and stress by being open December 28 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. There will be special Christmas displays, recipes from the past, and other surprises. So, if you're just a little tired of all the holidaying be sure to stop by and take a refreshing walk through the past with us!

Leilani and Rich Stites will be hosting and hope you will bring your D-F Xmas memories to share with others.

## Editor's Corner

I remember being told as a youngster that time sped up as you aged. I'm sure I didn't believe it, but it does seem to be the truth. How did the holidays get to be right around the corner? I think I'm still waiting for summer! And now we're winterizing the house and planning winter activities at the Museum.

This has been a fun issue to assemble, from Orlanda Morrill's "mortgaged" teeth to unraveling the story of the Calvin Chamberlain family and house. I hope you enjoy it as much as I did putting it together.

As always I owe a debt to everyone who

contributed to this issue of the *Conserver*. And, so a tip of the editor's winter hat to Bill Allen, Mary Annis, Ted Grant, and Jack Battick. When you receive this issue of the *Conserver* we'll already be working on the next. So, if you have ideas, photos, comments, or brickbats please let me know. I can always be reached at [battick@midmaine.com](mailto:battick@midmaine.com) or at 308 Foxcroft Center Road, Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426.

I hope each of you has a happy holiday season.

Nancy Klimavicz Battick, Editor

## Our Sponsors

If you patronize or see any of our sponsors please thank them for their help in supporting the work of the Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society. Their



financial support is crucial to our survival and continuing efforts to preserve the town's history and culture for future generations. We

can't do it without them so be sure to sound a note of gratitude for their generous support in 2004.

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The Green Door Gallery  
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Dexter Regional Federal Credit Union  
Ellen Anderson, D.P.M.

If you would like to become a sponsor please contact Jack Battick at 564-3576 for details.



## The Burgess Family of Dover (Continued from page 2)

### Second Generation

On December 14, 1852, William's oldest son, John, married Betsey A. Merrill of Dover. It's uncertain if they stayed on the family farm in the beginning, but on March 10, 1860 a deed was executed giving John one half of an undivided interest in the farm with his father William. On April 16, 1877 a second deed with covenant was written, transferring the balance of the farm to John. The covenant provided for the maintenance of William and Mary as long as they lived including necessary medical care and medicines, clothing, fuel and necessities "according to their rank and standing in society" and provision of a suitable horse and wagon in the summer season and a suitable sleigh in the winter season with which to ride to church, visit friends, etc. The covenant required John to provide reasonable spending money for William and Mary. It also set aside the "back center bedroom" for the couple's use.

William and Mary remained on the farm until their deaths in 1883 and 1887 respectively.

John Burgess, along with being a successful farmer, managed to find time to run and be elected to the Maine Legislature in 1878 and was a Dover selectman for 8 years, serving as chairman for 5.

John and Betsey had a family of 2 sons and 3 daughters: Louisa, Frank, Mary, Marinda, and Walter.

Louisa married George Demeritt and after his death, Edwin Demeritt. Frank married Mary Hazeltine of Dexter. He taught school several years at the White, Norton Hill, and Macomber's Corner schools in Dover. He worked area farms in the summer until October 1890 when he went to work for the Brainard Milling Machine Company in Hyde Park,



John & Betsey Merrill Burgess. Photo courtesy of the author.

Massachusetts. It was about this time when many area folks left for the mills in Massachusetts. Some returned weekly, some monthly, and some not at all.

In 1892 Frank returned to the area and starting "doctoring" under the watchful eye of Dr. H.E. Field of Dexter until August 1896 when he opened his own practice at his residence on Pleasant Street in Dexter. My father remembers his Great Uncle Frank "Dr." Burgess, coming to the farm to search for roots and plants used in making his medicines.

Frank's sister Mary Burgess married Les Demeritt. They lived on a farm at Gilman's



Louisa Burgess. Photo courtesy of the author

Corner in Sangerville. Les and Mary's son Dwight became head of the School of Forest Resources at the University of Maine. The 1700 acre Dwight B. Demeritt University Forest is named for him. A Dwight B. Demeritt professorship was



established at Orono in 1972.

The youngest of John and Betsey's daughters, Marinda or "Minnie" married Gilman Bailey of Sangerville making a connection to a whole new group of Sangerville and old New England names, not the last of which is Gilman.

The youngest son, Walter, was born January 11, 1867 and became the next owner of the farm. Walter married Eva Leah Pratt on September 21, 1889. Eva was the daughter of Nelson and Annalostine Withee Pratt. Eva was a fourth generation native and the great-granddaughter of Deacon Joel Pratt who moved to what would become the town of Foxcroft in 1808 from Clarksburg, Vermont.

Deacon Pratt is mentioned in Dr. Mary Chandler Lowell's *Old Foxcroft* "At a meeting called August 31, 1812, the town of Foxcroft assumed a corporate existence with Messrs. Joel Pratt, S. Chamberlain and William Thayer chosen selectmen and assessors."

**Editor's Note:** The story of the Burgess family of Dover will continue in the Spring issue of the *Conservator*. Ted Grant is a member of the DFHS and the Wassebec Genealogical Society.

### The Society's Unknown

The year was 1915. Sometime during the winter months the Chase Studio took this picture and titled it "Baby Day 1915". Does anyone know the names of any of the ladies or children pictured?





constructing the Mayo's new mansion once the Chamberlain house was moved and in late June the old house was finally at its new site.

The large crew of movers, including Chet Swallow and Frank Atwood kept careful watch that June lest something go wrong, but they were good at their work and no harm came to the building or to any bystanders who witnessed the process.

At its new location, the Chamberlain House was divided into tenements. Its new owners were happy to grant an easement to Col. Mayo which allowed him to run a sewerage pipe across the Grange Street lot "being the premises on which we have moved the Chamberlain house, so-called" from the site of Mayo's new home under construction to the Piscataquis River where it was discharged untreated.

The Edward J. Mayo mansion was destined to play a prominent role in the lives of thousands of Dover-Foxcroft residents when, under the terms of the Colonel's will, it was turned over to the town to serve as a hospital. Several generations were born, treated, or died inside its grand Victorian halls and rooms.

The Chamberlain House had come down in the world. It had been built as the home of one of Foxcroft's earliest families, the Samuel Chamberlains. Samuel's son, Calvin, farmed the land and in the 1850 census had an estimated worth of \$3,000 a considerable sum for that time. In 1874 he raised the house a story, adding the distinctive mansard roof. It was then the house earned the title "one of our finest homes" from *the Piscataquis Observer*.

Born in 1810, Calvin Chamberlain outlived both his wives and his two children. By 1880 it is Calvin's younger brother, Luther, who is listed as head of household and the farmer while Calvin has become "without occupation".



Foxcroft Academy Dormitory, 1908. FA Catalog. DFHS Col.

Luther had been a teacher of penmanship for many years. Luther Chamberlain died in 1881, followed by Calvin's wife, Mary in 1887 while Calvin lingered on until late 1904.

Calvin and Mary's wills reveal a devoted couple who shared the "enlightenment and improvement of humanity" as common goals. When they first married, Calvin placed all his earnings and investments for several years in Mary's name alone to safeguard her against claims from his family and Lucy, the daughter of his first wife. This arrangement continued until Mary's death in 1887. Mary's will is substantial, with a legacy to Central Grange, her 10 nieces and nephews, \$2,000 to a charity of Calvin's choice upon his death, and provides for Calvin's maintenance either in the home place or in any other he chose. She named her sister-in-law (Luther's wife) Cornelia as executrix.

Calvin became heavily involved with the First Piscataquis Spiritual Association which met in his house. His will mentions his "communications" with his beloved daughter, Lucy in the spirit world. Accordingly, he designated the \$2,000 left for charity to go to organize a Children's Lyceum and established the Lucy Chamberlain Fund. The interest was





Luther Chamberlain  
(1817-1881). DFHS  
Collection

to be used for the library and other supplies for a school to be formed by the First Piscataquis Spiritual Association. After his death in October 22, 1904 the highly detailed inventory of the house, land, contents, shares, and other goods (even including 1 pair of wool socks and 1 pair of old boots), finally allowed Mary Chamberlain's will to be settled and the

Chamberlain property was sold.

The Chamberlain House would play a role in the town's life beyond its days as a tenement. In 1908 the property was sold to the trustees of Foxcroft Academy (who included Col. Mayo) for the sum of \$2,400. In the deed it is referred to as the "Dormitory lot and building".

The house underwent a full renovation. Steam heat and electricity were added, a bathroom was installed on each floor, and the exterior was painted. The Academy proudly announced its new dormitory for young ladies and two women teachers were given rooms to act as chaperones. Room and board in 1909 were \$3 per week. The Mayos graciously hosted a lawn festival at their mansion to raise money for items for the dormitory and the *Observer* proudly reported that \$125 would go to the dormitory project.

By 1913 the room and board rate was \$4.50 a week. Alarmed that the dorm was underutilized despite heavy advertising by the Academy, the Trustees voted not to rent the dorm for the 1913 winter term and the dorm was then offered for sale at \$2,500. It remained unsold until 1921 when Wilbur T. Snow bought the property for

an unstated sum.

The Chamberlain House still stands today on Grange Street.. It is still an apartment house and is currently once more on the market and appears in need of renovation. A few people remember it was once a dorm but most don't realize it was moved or recall the name Chamberlain.

What the future holds for this once grand home is hard to say. But we can wonder if those with fanciful imaginations or in tune with other times ever hear the echo of young women's laughter on a spring evening as reminder of the old building's happier days.



The Chamberlain House/Dormitory today. Photo  
by Jack Battick

**Authors' Note:** Sources used for this piece include original records at the Piscataquis County Probate Court and Registry of Deeds, D-F Tax Records, *200 Years of D-F History* by Lou Stevens, *The Piscataquis Observer*, *Old Foxcroft* by Dr. Mary Chandler Lowell, the 1904 Town Register, and the U.S. Census schedules 1850-1900 as well as other records. We would like to thank Bill Allen for lending the photo of the Chamberlain House being moved and for suggesting this story.



## A Message From Mary

We now begin the quiet time of the year at the museums. This is when we catalog, archive, and think about our new exhibits for next summer.

Do you have any ideas for programs for next year? We have a couple in mind, one on railroads and the other on the first murder in Piscataquis County. Maybe you have a program you would be willing to present or know of someone you does. Please help.

As 2004 winds down and we look ahead to 2005 we wish you and yours the happiest of holiday seasons.

Mary Annis, President, DF Historical Society

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## Stumped for Holiday Gifts?

Look no further! You can give a gift membership in the Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society for \$5 per year and this membership includes a year's mailing of *the Shiretown Conserver*. We'll gladly notify the recipient of your gift and we'll even send a renewal notice to you if you wish so you can continue sharing the *Conserver* each year. And you don't even have to wrap! Hint: you might want to renew your own membership at the same time.

Also, do you have an FA grad on your list or someone with connections to Dover-Foxcroft? If they don't have an official D-F throw please consider giving one. It's full size, suitable for hanging, tossing over your lap on a cool evening, or draping over the back of a sofa. It's done in official FA colors and features thread portraits of historic buildings from Dover-Foxcroft. Throws cost \$38 and we'll ship for you for an additional \$10 UPS shipping & handling. You can arrange to pick your throw up in person by calling 564-0820.

## Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society Holiday Order Form

Gift Membership Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Given By: \_\_\_\_\_

Shall we notify your recipient? ☐ Yes ☐ No Would you like to renew your own membership for 2005 at this time? ☐ Would you like us to automatically notify you when this gift is due for renewal? ☐ Please enclose a check made out to Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society for \$5.00 per membership. Gift memberships requests should be sent to 308 Foxcroft Center Road, Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426. Memberships are tax deductible.

## Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society Throws

Please send  throw(s) to: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Please make out checks to Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society for \$38 per throw plus \$10 shipping and handling. Orders should be mailed to: DFHS, 28 Orchard Lane, Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426.



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