

THE SHIRETOWN CONSERVER

The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society Newsletter

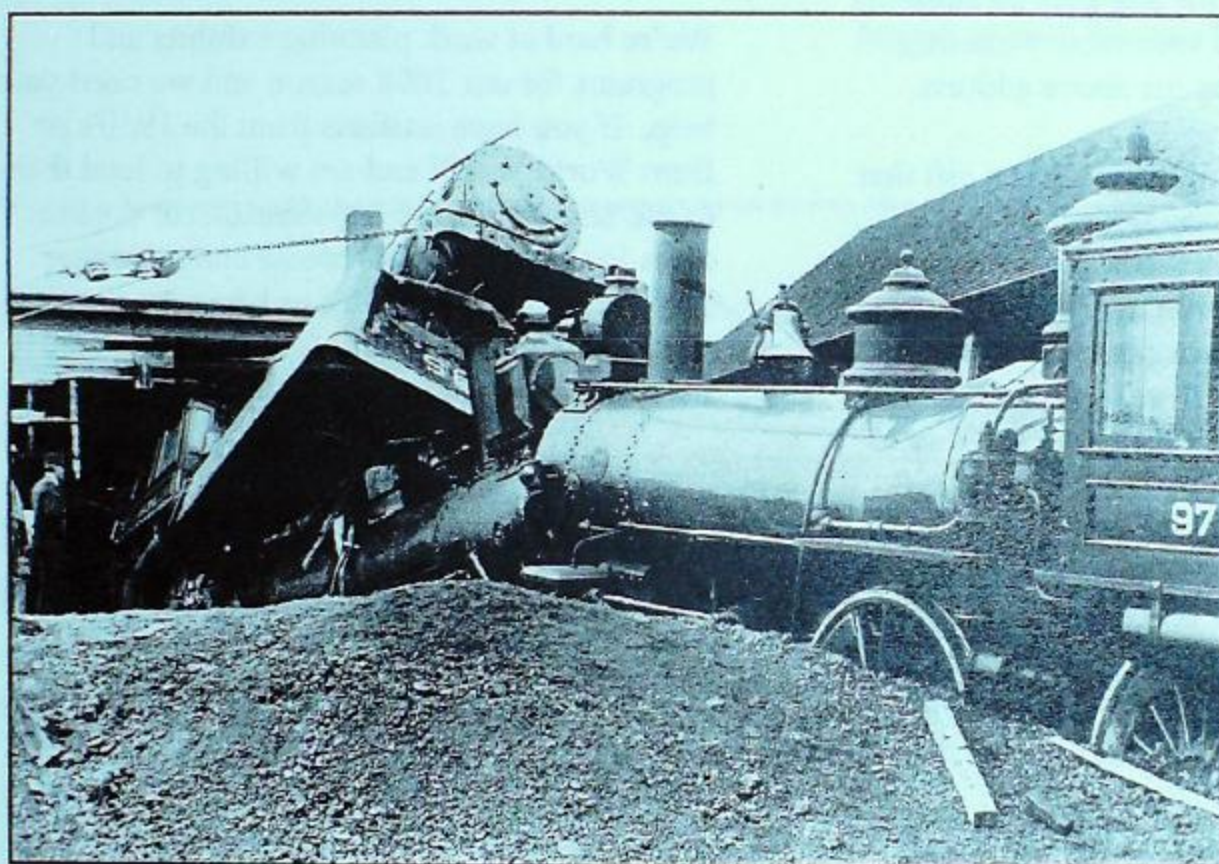
Volume XI, Number 4

Winter 2007-8

Major Wreck At Foxcroft Yard!

Fireman French Fatality!

By Our Correspondent Jack Battick



The remnants of the worst railroad disaster in Foxcroft's history. DFHS collection.

Engineer Harry Rich, in charge of Engine No. 85 tested the air brakes of the afternoon freight train from Newport before it crossed the Piscataquis River west of town and everything seemed to work fine. But the train, due to arrive at the Maine Central station in Foxcroft at 6:30 p.m. was two hours late that Thursday evening, November 7, 1901.

Initially, the train consisted of 24 freight cars, an unusually large number, so an extra engine No. 234 under engineer Charles Bradley, had been added at Newport Junction. Even after dropping off five cars along the way, the train made slow going up the grade to Dover that evening. Once across the river bridge the train began a long slight down grade to the station in Foxcroft.

As the train passed the cannery located near the intersection of present Forest Street and Dwelley Avenue, Rich applied the air brakes, but the train didn't slow down as anticipated! (Continues on Page 9).

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Gift Items Available

It's that time of year when people are looking for a great gift for small amounts of money. May we suggest the following . . .

Our Great DVD of Dover-Foxcroft's past.

It's the best buy in town with over 120 historic photos. Crafted by Carlson Williams set to music by Randy Wall, our DVD sells for \$10 plus \$3 postage and handling or you can pick it up at DF's Mr. Paperback. Send orders to Mary Annis at 28 Orchard Road, DF, 04426.

The Society's Throw is still available with fabric portraits of our past. No inflation here, we're still selling them for \$38 plus \$8 shipping and handling. Just send your money mailing address to Mary Annis at the above address.

A gift membership in the Society is a gift that keeps giving with quarterly issues of the *Conservator* and update on the Society's many activities. At \$5 per person a gift membership is almost a steal. Send check made out to the DFHS to 151 Lawrence Street, DF, 04426. Just include the name of your giftee and we'll send him/her a note letting them know of your gift.

For anyone with a connection to Dover-Foxcroft any or all of these items makes the perfect gift!

Helping the Society

The Society is currently participating in two fundraising efforts and you can help us earn money just by doing one of the following:

Save Your Shaw's Receipts:

Shaw's Supermarket will donate a percentage of your grocery purchase to the Society, but we need your receipts to earn this money. Next time you shop for groceries or other items at Shaw's please keep your receipt and turn it into our president, Mary Annis, at 28 Orchard Road, DF. Any purchase from any Shaw's in any state is eligible so please help us earn money to keep

operating.

Also, if you purchase items online take a moment and register at www.igive.com. The Society is already named as a charitable recipient so check us as your charity and a percentage of what you spend will be donated to the Society. Details are available at the website, but many vendors including Staples, e-bay, Lands' End, etc. participate in this program and aside from registering you won't have to do anything except shop through the igive portal. For more information please contact Mary Annis or Nancy Battick.

Items Needed for 2008

We're hard at work planning exhibits and programs for our 2008 season and we need your help. If you have artifacts from the 1950's or from World War II and are willing to lend them to the Society for the 2008 season (or donate them for a tax writeoff) please contact either Nancy Battick (564-3576) or Mary Annis (564-0820) or e-mail us at dfhistory@yahoo.com. Please help us make our exhibits great.

The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society

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Lou Celebrates 60th!



A familiar site for many years, Lou is shown busily making notes at a football game at FA. Photo, courtesy of Lou Stevens.

Lou Stevens, a frequent contributor to the *Conserver*, celebrated his 60th anniversary as a journalist in November 2007. His first article with a byline was published in the *Piscataquis Observer* in November 1947 when he was a junior at Foxcroft Academy. For the next year and a half, until his graduation from the Academy in the class of 1949, he covered FA sports.

During his college career at Boston University where he graduated in 1953 with a degree in journalism, he sent occasional articles to the *Observer* and then, while in the US Army at Governors Island in New York, he contributed 42 columns in 21 months to the *Observer* on such topics as marching down 5th Avenue, going to games at the three baseball parks there then, learning the subway system and others.

He joined the *Observer* for a dozen years starting in 1956, during which time he continued

his reporting of county sports, writing a weekly column and doing photographic work. After a stint of 16 years teaching, he did part-time sports again for the *Observer*, and then for 10 years covered FA football while also writing history articles for the *Eastern Gazette* in Dexter for which he has written over 100 columns.

In 1994 he was presented the Maine Interscholastic Athletic Directors Association Media Award "In recognition for outstanding media contributions to Maine interscholastic Athletics".

Editor's Note: On behalf of all of us at DFHS I want to congratulate Lou and thank him for his ongoing support of the Society.

Lou Teaches History

The Society's own Lou Stevens has been teaching the History of Dover-Foxcroft to the 5th Grade students at SeDoMoCha School. The students have learned about topics including one room schools and landmark buildings and people. Using photos and artifacts from his own collection and the Society's to bring the past alive, Lou has thoroughly enjoyed this experience and another generation now knows more about their historical and cultural heritage.

How Do I?

We often get requests for help at the Historical Society and one of the most frequent is how do I research the history of my house? We recommend you start with the tax assessment card at the town office. These cards hold a wealth of info including the date your home was built and often who built it. Then a trip to the registry of deeds will allow you to search the record trail of deeds (starting with yourself) back to the property's first owners. Good luck and enjoy finding out the history of your home.

Eliphalet Washburn: A Legendary Foxcroft Pioneer

By Timothy D. Mallory

Eliphalet Washburn was likely born between September and December 1782 in the town of



Eliphalet Washburn in the 1860's. Photo courtesy of Tom Sparrow's Genealogy Pages, www.tomsparrow.net/genealogy.

Middleborough, Massachusetts, the son of Stephen Washburn and his first wife Hannah Norris. Stephen had served in the American Revolutionary War and the Washburn family (children: Eliphalet, Hosea, Benjamin, Stephen, Jr., Hannah, Jesse, and Edward) resided in Bridgewater, Massachusetts.

Around 1786 the family joined a large group of homesteaders traveling by horse drawn covered wagons planning to form a new town in the northern wilderness. Eliphalet was 5. He often accompanied his father steering the wagon over the rugged terrain. After traveling several weeks the settlers arrived in New Gloucester, a flourishing town in the southeastern District of Maine.

Eliphalet learned at an early age the duties required of pioneer life. The type of chores expected of a young boy would have included clearing underbrush, trimming trees, gathering

firewood, using an axe, feeding the livestock, threshing hay, clearing rocks from fields, tilling the soil for gardens, and carrying fresh water from the well. Eliphalet cherished time spent with his father and learned new tasks as he grew older. These would prove to be invaluable to Eliphalet in life as a young man.

Young Eliphalet attended school at the first church parsonage, an oversized hall that was divided in half, allowing for multiple uses. By 1796 Eliphalet had completed his education and worked as a laborer alongside brothers Stephen, Jr. and Jesse, at the Washburn Mills in Shepardsfield Plantation. His eldest brother Hosea operated a small lumber mill in an adjoining blacksmith shop on the family lot.

In the spring of 1807, Eliphalet left New Gloucester to assist Col. Joseph Ellery Foxcroft in the settling of the new town of Foxcroft. Accompanying Eliphalet were Timothy Hutchinson, Joseph Morse, Samuel Chamberlain, Ephraim Bacon, and John Bigelow. These young men cleared acres of wilderness for farming, roads, and the first dwellings in Foxcroft. Eliphalet cleared lot #3 in the first range occupying land later known as the B. T. Genthner farm. During these years Eliphalet earned a reputation as an ardent worker skilled at timber frame construction.

Dr. Mary Chandler Lowell quoted a tale about Eliphalet told by Capt. Samuel Chamberlain in her book *Old Foxcroft*:

"He was an ambitious youth and being unencumbered by wife or family, he deemed a barn essential to his prosperity, and in the fall of 1807, held a barn raising, the first built in a township of seven families. Tradition says that when Washburn had his frame ready, he walked to Bangor, ostensibly for an iron bar, and some cut nails for boarding. But upon his return, it was found, that, added to the above was a keg of New England Rum; the nails were suspended in a bar from the bar over his shoulder, and they (Continues on Page 8).

Queries

Ssgt. Daniel Porter (grandson of Harold Ruskznis) is seeking information on the Davee family and the Davee home on the Greeley's Landing Road. If you have info to share please contact him by e-mailing:

Daniel.Porter@mebng.af.mil.

And, Jim Choma is working on a book about the life of Russ Snow and daughters Charlotte and Jane who attended FA in 1834-1835. Do any of you have any information on the Snow family of that time period? Please contact Jim at James.Choma@wchwab.com.

Bookshelves Donated

The Thompson Free Library recently replaced the bookshelves in the childrens' room and the Society was fortunate enough to acquire most of them. The metal shelves are currently in our new archive room where our textile collection, documents, and photos are stored.

The Society would like to thank the Library for the wonderful donation which has saved us hundreds of dollars.

Also, our thanks to the wonderful FA students who helped move the shelves, bases, and supports: James Xia, Terry Jin, Allen Tu, J. R. Oh, Liz Lee, and Yujiro Sano. And, to our own Jim Brown and Jack and Nancy Battick who also worked at moving the bookshelves.

Blacksmith Shop Roof

Thanks to a capable crew from Mountain View Correctional the Blacksmith Shop's northern roof is now done. The Society is grateful to the skill and hard work of these young men. Thanks to their efforts and the generous donation of materials from Stephen Jackman, the cost to the

Society to complete this project was very little.

New Archive Room Completed

The Society is blessed with hardworking, dedicated volunteers who recently completed constructing an archival storage room from the former darkroom in the Observer Building.

The volunteers, who wish to remain anonymous much as we'd like to thank them publicly, insulated the room, primed, mudded, and painted walls, ceiling, and floor, and rewired to allow more light.

A crew consisting of Carmen Smith, Chris Maas, Edie Hussey, Jack Battick, and others moved the library bookshelves in, and then moved the textile collection into the storage room where it's easily accessible. A new steel door will be installed soon and then the document and photo collection will be moved to the new storage room.

Our eager volunteers are now at work on the room adjacent to our library and the archive room to create a workroom where we can prepare exhibits and work on other projects. The Society's new flat file which was purchased through a generous grant from the Maine Historic Records Advisory Board will be located in the new workroom.

New Members

The Society welcomes the following new members:

Ruth Bell	Connecticut
Judith Bennett	Maine
Muriel O'Brien	Arizona
Heather Wood	Maine
Bertha T. Mitchell	Florida

Last Programs of 2007 Season



Jack Battick gave our September program, speaking on the topic of Diseases in Maine including a look at the 1918-1919 influenza pandemic. Photo by Nancy Battick.



Earle Shettleworth of the Historic Preservation Commission poses with President Mary Annis following his illustrated program in October on Historic Photos of Dover & Foxcroft. Photo by Jack Battick.

The Society's Unknown

Does anyone recognize the man in the photo below?

His image is on a postcard recently donated to the Society and while we think we know who it is we'd like a positive ID. Please let us know if you recognize this man.



Our Photo Finalists



#1 is this unknown charmer.

This summer's photo exhibit was on Images of 19th Century Childhood and we urged our visitors to vote for their favorites. Here are the three winners in overall votes.



#2, another unknown sweetie. Maybe it was the hat?



Young Maurice Farmer at 7 months was #3.

While we had some charming photos of children of all ages our visitors clearly loved the babies. If you missed our exhibit or would like to see it again it's on our website along with last year's Great Whiskers exhibit.

Be sure to check out our website at www.rootsweb.com/~medfhs. We've got some great new photos and information and will be adding more as the months progress. Be sure to bookmark us as a favorite site! The Society wants to thank Dale Mower for his great work getting our face online to the world.

Eliphalet Washburn, continued

had so rubbed against his back as to cause sores, the scars of which he carried through life. . . ."

It is not clear in this story if Eliphalet was motivated more by the cut nails or by the rum! Nonetheless, by year's end in 1807 the town's first barn was completed.

Dr. Lowell also states that in 1808 Eliphalet's older brother Jesse arrived and started clearing a lot close to Eliphalet's property. During this time Jesse, his wife Phoebe and daughter Sally lived with Eliphalet. A son, Peleg, was born by the end of the project in August 1809.

In the fall of 1809 Eliphalet returned to New Gloucester. While there in 1810 he married Mary Harris. Eliphalet and Mary stayed at the Washburn family home to help care for his father. Their firstborn son, Moses Harris Washburn, was born there on November 6, 1810.

Stephen, Sr. died in January 1812. Following his father's death Eliphalet, Mary, and baby Moses, traveled by stagecoach back to Foxcroft. They arrived in the summer of 1812 after a tiring 150 mile journey. Eliphalet is listed as present at the first town meeting held August 31, 1812 in the newly incorporated town at Gilman Greeley's millhouse. Eliphalet was elected the town's first road surveyor. He maintained tax assessment books from 1813 to 1816 which served as an official town accounting record.

In the years from 1812 to 1830 Eliphalet and Mary completed their family: William, Charles (first named Seth), Otis, Charlotte, Stephen Decatur, George Washington, Donirum Judson, Mary Ann, and Andrew Jackson. During this time Eliphalet served as one of the selectmen with Nathan Carpenter and Daniel Buck for the town's school districting committee. Eliphalet worked as the town's official surveyor for marking lots and staking roads and this knowledge proved valuable in establishing school districts. He was also responsible for establishing the boundaries of farms and

deciding the best locations for many businesses and homes.

In the period from 1830-1850 Eliphalet attended town meetings speaking out on issues confronting Foxcroft including the possible merger with the town of Dover. One of these issues was the badly deteriorating bridge. A special assessment was organized under his leadership to rebuild the original bridge, composed of an iron bar and two long shafts. He aided in the collection of taxes needed to improve bridges and roads as well as other unpaid duties for the town. In 1832 he was a charter member of the Dover-Foxcroft Baptist Society organized in March 1832.

The 1850 census shows Eliphalet as 67 years, a farmer with the comfortable property value of \$2,500. Eliphalet died on September 8, 1869 in his 87th year. He is buried in the Lee Cemetery in the Washburn family plot with his wife Mary and their son, Andrew Jackson Washburn.

Our Business Sponsors

The Society owes a huge debt to our business friends and sponsors. Be sure to say thank you when you patronize the following merchants:

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Business Sponsors

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Bob's Hardware, Foxcroft Agway,

Dan Smith, Riverside Florist, Creative Printing Services, AMB Signs, Mr. Paperback.

Thank You So Much!

Editor's Corner

As winter approaches nothing has slowed down at your Society. If you have time you'd like to share with the Society we can always use volunteers and we can almost certainly find a job that will interest you and let you share your skills whether you have minutes, hours, days, or more free to help us. Just call Mary at 564-0820 or me at 564-3576.

I'd like to thank all who contributed to making this issue a success: Tim Mallory, Jack Battick, Mary Annis, Lou Stevens, the work crew who ready this issue for mailing, and all of you who have shared ideas and items for the *Conserver*. If you've sent something and haven't seen it yet, don't despair. It will be in a future issue.

Have a terrific holiday season,
Nancy Klimavicz Battick, Editor

Wreck at Foxcroft Yard From Page 1

Passing the spool mill near Mechanic Street he sounded the emergency on the whistle as the

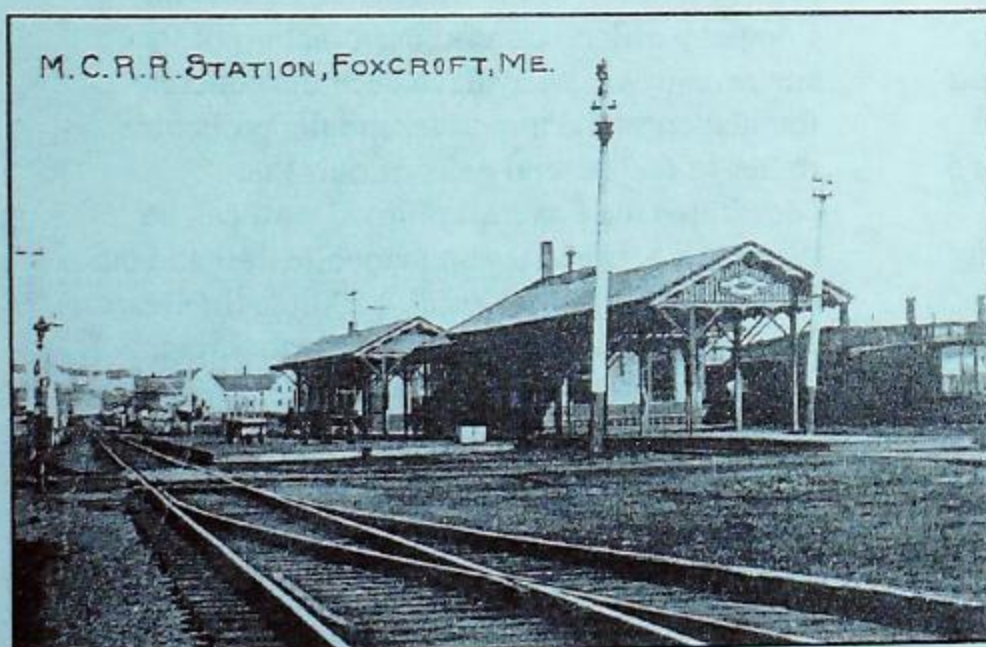
train neared North Street and the brakemen turned to on the handbrakes to little avail as fewer than half the cars actually had handbrakes. Realizing that the freight cars were actually pushing the engines both engineers threw their engines into reverse but there wasn't time to stop the train before it reached the station on the other side of Summer Street.

Somehow, someone had tripped the switch at the yard so instead of heading onto the freight yard tracks the train cut into the enginehouse spur going about 5 miles per hour with sparks flying from the brakes and rails. Just inside the enginehouse oiler Harry Pierson had been clearing ash from engine No. 97 when he heard the emergency signal and saw the train heading toward him. He leaped out of the way as the double-headed train crossed the turntable, smashed through the enginehouse doors and crashed into No. 97, driving it through the back wall of the enginehouse. Engine 85 dropped into the pit in the enginehouse and No. 234 rode up over No. 85 and its tender and there was a colossal pile up of iron and steel, hot coals and escaping steam where a minute before had been the enginehouse and repair yard of the Maine Central station at Foxcroft.

Of the men on that train only one was injured, though fatally. When it was apparent that Nos. 85 and 234 were about to crash, engineers Harry Rich and Charles Bradley, conductor Henry Russell, fireman Harry Warren and three brakemen were able to leap clear, but when

fireman Frank French, aged 30, jumped from No. 234 some obstruction apparently threw him back under the train where his leg was severed and his skull fractured. He died shortly after the crash leaving a wife and young daughter in North Newport. His funeral with Masonic ritual was held at Newport town hall on Sunday the 10th.

Oddly, none of the freight cars derailed, but it took 3 days for the wreckage at the enginehouse to be sorted out and cleared. Initially engine No. 85 was declared a total loss to the company while repairs to No. 97 would cost about \$1,100 and for No. 234



The Maine Central Railroad Station at Foxcroft. DFHS Collection.



ENGINE WRECK, Nov. 1901

Hundreds of people visited the accident site, most bringing cameras to record the scene. DFHS collection.

about \$1,500. While this amounted to a considerable loss to the company, traffic on the rail lines was not affected.

State railroad commissioners including local businessman Joseph B. Peaks, held hearings in the Foxcroft passenger station on November 15th and quizzed the surviving crewmen. While their estimates of the speed of the train as it reached the Foxcroft railroad yard varied from a low of 5 mph to a high of 10 mph, the commissioners concluded that the train was going too fast as it approached the yard, that engineer Rich had misjudged the speed of the train, had failed to check the pressure of the braking system, and as a result had lost control of the train at critical times.

Of course, none of the commissioners were present when the accident happened and had to

depend upon the opinions of company officials who investigated immediately after the crash.

Today the scend of this railroad debacle is the empty lot across Summer Street from the present location of the McKusick Petroleum Company office. Careful examination of the site reveals what may have been the concrete foundation of the turntable, and the probable routes of the several pairs of rails that constituted the Foxcroft railroad yard can be discerned between the snowmobile trail and the driveways of the McKusick building, the Bears Den, and the Agway outlet off North Street.

And it is possible that the tall grey frame structure at the east end of the lot sits upon the site of the enginehouse where Maine Central Railroad engines Nos. 85, 97, and 234 came to grief on November 7, 1901.

A Message From Mary

The holiday season is upon us once again. The Society continues to do its work of preserving our history. We now have a beautiful archive room on the second floor of the Observer Building thanks to the tireless efforts of some anonymous dedicated volunteers. The Thompson Free Library has new bookshelves and offered their old ones to us. They are in excellent shape and most sit in the new archive room and some in our library. What a wonderful gift this was! We also have a new flat file thanks to a grant. This file will allow us to properly store our oversized documents, photos, and maps.

We are also busy brainstorming new exhibits for next year and we have some ideas for some very exciting programs. Stay tuned.

I hope all of you have a wonderful Christmas and a happy, healthy New Year. We look forward to hearing from you. We love your input.

Mary I. Annis, Society President

The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society 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: 151 Lawrence Street, Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426. Dues cover April to April. If this is a gift membership please indicate and we'll notify your giftee.

Thank you for your support!

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