

THE SHIRETOWN CONSERVER

The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society Newsletter

Volume XII, Number 1

Spring 2008

What Do We Do About Central Hall?

By Lou Stevens

The question, "What to do about Central Hall?" is not a new one by any means. Over the years the answer by voters has always been to repair rather than to replace. Now that town officials will soon leave the building for new municipal offices in the former Morton Avenue School, the question of what to do with Central Hall has arisen again.

Let's go back 67 years to April 1940 when three factors saved the Hall from being torn down and replaced by a new one: 1) the high cost of a new building; 2) the uncertainty of World War II and what it might do to the local economy; and 3) a vote of 310-233 to repair the Hall once again rather than demolish it.

Although the building had been sturdily built just 59 years before 1940 back in 1881-2, it nevertheless was, over the years, in need of renovations, repairs, and extra upkeep. In July 1892 about 14 feet were added to the back to make it easier for touring stage companies to store their scenery; in 1906 a room under the stage was finished so seats could be stored there; in 1920 a further addition to the back was made to enlarge the stage. Finally, in 1924 the portico was built and in 1930 a fire caused \$3,000 damage to the back which was then rebuilt.

After a WPA (Works Progress Administration) government project in 1939 paid for enlarging the basement by excavation with new sills and posts added, the town manager in his capacity as a building inspector said that some of the older sills had started to rot due to dampness which made the Hall unsafe for crowds.

What to do? The answer proposed was to reinforce the balcony with rods that stretched to the ceiling and new
(Continues on page 9)



Central Hall ca. 1966. Photo by the author.

Inside This Issue

Attic Sale	Pg. 2
Bylaw Amendment	Pg. 3
New Dues Structure	Pg. 3
Museum in the Courthouse	Pg. 3
The USS Isabel	Pg. 4
A Letter from Sacramento, 1862	Pg. 5
Upcoming Programs	Pg. 11

Gift Items Available

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.

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 in to 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 on the list 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, ebay, 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.

Annual Attic Sale

The Society's annual attic sale and raffle will be held Saturday June 14th at the fire station.

We're on the lookout for items to help with this annual fundraiser so please keep the Society in mind as you clean out your attics this year. The money earned at this sale supports our two museums.

While we can't take large appliances or clothing we can handle most other items. For free pickup of items, general information, or to volunteer to help sort, price, or work the day of the sale please contact Sylvia Dean at 876-3663 or Sharon Phillips at 564-7251.

And don't forget to put the date on your calendar now so you won't miss this great annual event. We'll also be doing a great raffle at the sale. More details on the raffle in our next *Conserver*.

The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society

President	Mary I. Annis
V. President	James Brown
Secretary	Wayne Bennett
Treasurer	James D. Annis
Directors:	Sylvia Dean
	Jack Battick
	Sharon Phillips
	Robert Ladd
	Carmen Smith
	Chris Maas
	Nancy Battick
Webmaster	Dale Mower
Curator, Blacksmith Sh.	Dave Lockwood
Curators, Observer Bldg	Jack & Nancy Battick
Publicity	Carmen Smith; Chris Maas
Editor, Shiretown Conserver	Nancy Battick

The Shiretown Conserver is published quarterly and is copyrighted by the Society. Reprints of articles by permission only. For information or to submit an article contact the Society at dfhistory@yahoo.com or by writing 28 Orchard Road, Dover, Foxcroft, ME 04426

Bylaw Amendments

At our annual meeting on April 2nd we'll be discussing Article VIII. Fiscal Year.

Presently it reads: "Section 8.01 Fiscal Year: the fiscal year of the Corporation shall begin on the first day of April and end on the last day of March in each year."

The proposed change would be: "Section 8.01 Fiscal Year: The fiscal year of the Corporation shall begin on the first day of January and end on the last day of December in each year."

The Board of Directors feel it would make it much easier for our members when it comes to remembering to pay dues. What are your thoughts? We will vote on this at our meeting.

Annual Dues Amendment

The Board of Directors has proposed a dues change. Presently the dues for the year, per member, is \$5. This no longer covers the cost of producing and mailing your Shiretown Conserver 4 times a year. We are proposing the following dues structure to begin in January 2009:

Dues would be \$10 per member, per year with the additional category for seniors (over 65 years of age) who would pay \$7, per member, per year.

We will vote on this proposal on the annual meeting and would be happy to hear your thoughts on this proposal.

New Members

The Society welcomes the following new members to our family:

Ann Weston	Maine
Rhonda Kirkpatrick	Maine
Mr. & Mrs. Lawris Harvey	Arizona
Karen & Charles Hildebrant	Arizona

Shirley Booker	California
Gail Doore	Maine
Connie Sands	Maine
Dawna Roberts	Maine
Hesta Maynard	Maine
Neil Postlewaite	Maine

We are pleased to have you as members.

And all our sympathies to the family of member Art Engdahl who died in February.

Museum in the Courthouse

In cooperation with Piscataquis County manager Mike Henderson, the Society has placed a photo exhibit in the hall joining the main courthouse with the annex. Our current exhibit features the Schoolhouses of Dover & Foxcroft. We'll be changing exhibits approximately every 3 months throughout the year so if you missed this great exhibit last year we urge you to visit the courthouse and check it out. The Society is grateful for the chance to reach more people and looks forward to strengthening our relationship with the county.

Researchers Needed

We recently heard from a member who had several good ideas for possible articles for the *Conserver* including interviewing people with interesting stories to tell. We'd love to follow up on these ideas, but truth to tell your editor and the current volunteers at the Society are stretched very thin and we need help.

Are you interested in talking with people about the past? Would you be willing to interview, do some basic research, etc. to help out with the background for *Conserver* features (you need not write these stories if composition isn't your speciality)? If you'd like to talk about this possibility please contact Nancy Battick at 564-3576 or e-mail her at nbattick@roadrunner.com.

USS Isabel: A Small But Mighty Warrior

By David Dean

The Observer Building Museum's 2006 World War I themed exhibit featured a photograph of a U.S. Navy warship in drydock. Captioned "*USS Isabel in drydock at Brest France, November, 1918*" the photo is linked to Piscataquis County resident Gaylon Coy who was serving in the *Isabel* as a Coxswain.

By November 1918 *Isabel* had already been brushed by destiny having been part of a massive convoy escort operation that had delivered supplies and over 1.7 million soldiers safely to the battlefields of Europe. She had on four occasions done battle with German U-boats.

In the safety and relative calm of their perch in the French deck, Coy and his shipmates must have thought of the post-war fate of their ship. They probably expected that *Isabel* soon would be stricken from the Navy list, perhaps to be sold back to her original owner. *Isabel* had not even been built as a destroyer, though she had performed ably the duties of one. Her designator, PY-10, gives it away; "Y" is for yacht and as such she was carried throughout her long Navy career. She had been built in 1917 at Bath Iron Works in Maine, for auto magnate John North Willys of Toledo, Ohio. Before completion, the ship had been acquired by the Navy and fitted out as a destroyer. She was commissioned in December 1917, and sailed for France exactly one month later.

There would be no Great Lakes pleasure cruising for the busy little ship. Less than a year after the Armistice, *Isabel* was assigned as a tender to the famous MC 4 Flotilla whose primitive, open-cockpit flying machines had become famous for



Gaylon Forrest Coy, ca 1918, coxswain aboard the Maine-built vessel the *Isabel*. The Sylvia Dean Photo Collection, DFHS.

completing the first ever transatlantic crossing by an aircraft.

Isabel was decommissioned in Philadelphia on April 30, 1920. After refit, she was recommissioned on July 18, 1921 and sailed a month later for the Far East. She would spend a quarter century in Asian waters.

For eight years *Isabel* was part of the Yangtze Patrol, serving as its flagship. Those were tumultuous times in revolutionary China and ships of the Patrol often came under fire. *Isabel* took part in the Nanking Affair of 1927, later made famous by the Richard McKenna book and Steve McQueen film *The Sand Pebbles*. At (Continues on Page 10)

A Letter From Sacramento

Sacramento, January 28th, 1862

Dear Uncle Charles:

Your letter of the 20th together with Fred's note came duly to hand. I was very pleased to hear from you and learn that you are getting along so well. Nothing of great importance has happened here in Sacramento since I wrote you last. We are having glorious wether and we are all enjoying it pretty well. Tomorrow Charly and I are going into the country for a buggy ride, as the roads are "tip top". I received a letter from Fred a short time ago. He writes no news, but says he is enjoying himself hugely. He has not been to the Aroostook to see father and mother yet, but he says he says he shall go as soon as it is good sleighing. No doubt they will be pleased to see him, as it has been over five years since they saw him. Billey is with uncle Nat Willey at Maddywaskie. I believe I wrote you that Green thought of coming to California. He no doubt will come for I have sent him funds to come with. If he comes how would you like to find him a situation in your blacksmith shop? I think I mentioned it to Mr. Folsom when he was here. I see by uncle Albert's letter that he is anxious to get back. I expect it is very cold there now and I suppose it seems doubly so to an old Californian. But when this civil war is over I think business will be very brisk there as well as here.

You asked to know when I thought of going home. I have not fully decided when I shall go, but I think it will be inside of two years. When I hear from Fred I shall know better for I sent him \$2,000 by last Steamer to buy me a farm. He writes me real estate is very cheap now and as gold is so high now I thought it a fine opportunity for me to make a little investment in a farm and I intend some time to go back on Earth to live. I think if I am fortunate enough to accumulate a few hundred dollars I can go back to New England and live much happier than I can here. You know how unpleasent it is for one to be away from home, from friends and all that is near and dear to him and especially to be here in this Godforsaken country which has ruined so many families by its vice and sin. Do you think of having your family come out with uncle Albert? I should hardly think you would want them to leave their plesent home to come here, for no doubt in a short time you will be in circumstances which will justify you in returning home and be with them.

I thank you uncle Charles for your kind invitation to pay you a visit in Washoe and I should be most happy to do so and think I shall before I go home, but can't well get off now. Uncle Henry, Sarah and the children are well. Little Ida is growing fast and she is a great talker. She says to me to night "Bap no like Ida any more, but Ida got something pretty". Les is the biggest rogue in

town. He knows everybody and everybody knows him. He says he is going to the State of Maine with me after the Fourth of July and the State Fair. Please don't forget your promise to write often. Give my best regards to Mr. Folsom and Mr. Sumner.

Yours Truly,
Bert

The Characters

Uncle Charles is Charles Allen Bragg (1819-1893) who came to California from Dover, Maine, in 1859. Charles had married Marcia Bryant Houston (Huston) of Dover and she and the children joined Charles in the West, probably traveling through the Isthmus of Panama. In 1861, along with partner Gilman Nathaniel Folsom, Charles established a sawmill in Washoe Valley, Nevada.

Bert is Albert C. Bragg (1839-) a son of Charles' half brother, Hiram Alonzo Bragg (1814-1889) and **Lydia Willey** (1815-1880); **Fred** is probably Bert's brother, Alfred Bragg (1838-1901); **Green** is the oldest brother, Greenleaf Bragg (1837-1903); **Billey** is probably William Bragg, another brother, (1841-?)

Uncle Nat Willey is Lydia's brother and from the letter living in either Madawaska County, NB or Madawaska, Maine. The spelling "Maddywaskie" was probably the way it was pronounced.

Uncle Albert is Charles' full brother, Albert Bragg (1815-1883); **Uncle Henry** is Charles' youngest brother, Henry W. Bragg (1829-1910) who came around the Horn to Sacramento, California in 1849 and established a business there. **Sarah** is Sarah A. Martin (1839-1927), wife of Henry Bragg. **Ida** is Ida Louise Bragg (ca 1859-1930), daughter of Henry & Sarah; **Les** is Henry Lester Bragg (1857-1883) son of Henry & Sarah

"**Charly**" is unknown, as is **Mr. Sumner**.

The Bragg family lived in South Dover. Jeremiah Bragg, the patriarch, was born in China, Maine, and had two families by two wives. He and Charles Allen's son, another Charles who died shortly after arriving for a visit to Maine, and Jeremiah's mother, Hannah Moore Bragg, are buried in the South Dover Cemetery. Jeremiah's sister who married Nathaniel Dexter is also buried there. The Society thanks Alan MacLane of California for this and 2 other letters which are now part of the Historical Society's archives.

Special Events This Season

As you know the Society always tries to offer several special events during the summer months. We try to appeal to all ages and to different interests. We'll have more in our next issue but here's a peek at what we're planning for 2008:

June 14th: Attic Sale & raffle at the Fire Station

June 29th: Special one time showing of the movie *Gettysburg* at Center Theatre with special exhibits, costumes, etc.

July 19th: Bus tour of Old Foxcroft with Lou Stevens. Limited Seating.

August 2: Homecoming. The Observer Bldg. Museum will be open noon to 4 p.m. Look for our costumed hosts!

Also, the Blacksmith Shop will reopen, date TBA.

Stone laying ceremony for *Emma B.* a famed Foxcroft trotting mare featured on 3 Currier & Ives prints. Date TBA.

Star Party at the Blacksmith Shop. Date TBA.

A Peek at Exhibits

There may be snow on the ground but the volunteers at the Observer Building are hard at work planning new exhibits. In the works is a fantastic photo display of an 1898 log drive through the center of town. We're also planning another great costume exhibit and we'll be mounting a large exhibit on World War II. Also new this year will be a special photo exhibit from the collection of Steve Rainsford. And we'll be taking a look at the role of local Granges. Be sure to plan to visit the museum this summer.

Our Website

New to the website: more historic photos, a map of current DF with historic ones to follow, the special events for 2008, meeting and program schedule for 2008, and the weather! If you live in sunnier climes and want to know what it's like in your hometown just check out our website. Bookmark our site and check us out often. It's the online center for Society members and interested public alike. We're on the web at www.rootsweb.com/~medfhs. And, please let us know if you have suggestions for content on the site. We want it to be *your* site for DF history.

Thanks to our great webmaster, Dale Mower.

Our Business Sponsors

Again, we want to thank all the businesses whose financial and in-kind donations help the Society survive economically. As you patronize these businesses be sure to thank them for helping your Society:

Friends: (Services, donations to \$49)

Mr. Paperback
Bob's Hardware
Bigelow Travel

Patrons (Donations \$50-\$99)

Brothers Chevrolet
Dover Auto Parts

Sponsors (\$100 and up)

Rowell's Garage
Lary's Funeral Home
Drs. Steinke & Caruso
Dr. Ellen Anderson
Foxcroft Veterinary
Howard Insurance
Maine Highland Credit Union
The Green Door Gallery

The Society's Unknown

All we know of the gentlemen in the below photo comes from the back where "Bushwhackers Club, Sebec Lake" has been written. Can any of you tell us more about the club or any of the gentlemen pictured below?



Observer Building Featured in Memories of Maine

The next issue of *Memories of Maine* magazine will contain a feature story on the Society's Observer Building written by Jack Battick. The article will contain a selection of historic photos of the building and as much of its history as we can research.

A reprint of a portion of the article will be featured in a future issue of the *Conserver*.

We Want You!

Needed: dedicated volunteers to help us with any of the following: helping Dave Lockwood

with work at the Blacksmith Shop museum as it is reorganized for reopening, hosting at the Observer Building, assisting with special programs and events, learning to conserve our artifacts, and any of a dozen other possible ways to aid your Society. If you're interested please get in touch with Mary Annis at 564-0820. Volunteers can dedicate as much or as little time as fits their schedules.

Work at the Observer Building

The Observer Building will be opening later than usual this season while we undergo a facelift to our Union Square facade. We'll have more on this in our next issue but when you're downtown in May and June be sure to check us out!

Central Hall, from page 1

sills. One person, local historian and genealogist, Dr. Mary Chandler Lowell, who had herself survived a dorm fire at Mount Holyoke College when she was teaching there, said it was best "to stop spending any more money on that old shell of Central Hall - a fire trap only." The voters at the March town meeting did what was always done, it seems - it appointed a committee to report back in eight weeks on what should be done.

The committee was composed of Walter Mayo, Henry Gerrish, Everett Downs, and Arthur Gilman, and they reported the Hall could be repaired but a better idea would be to replace it. So they had a Bangor architectural firm draw up a blueprint for a new Hall that showed it would be an eye-catching and very modern structure.

First, they proposed the old Hall be torn down. The front part of the new building would be used for town offices and would be two stories high. In the back there would be a new auditorium for stage shows and a basketball court, and underneath would be lockers and showers for the players, something Central never did have, and neither would Foxcroft Academy until the new gym opened in March 1962.

At a special town meeting on April 29, 1940, 543 voters made a momentous decision to repair rather than replace due to the high cost of the new Hall estimated at \$15,000. Repairing the existing Hall would cost just \$5,000 and with a global war looming there was worry about its effect on how to pay for the new structure.

It is interesting to note what happened just over a half century before. Businessmen and other Dover residents subscribed enough money to build Central Hall, and a few years later the residents of neighboring Foxcroft did the same to construct the Opera House. All done without tax money from the towns. Times had changed!

During the next 67 years there would be more

repairs made to save Central Hall until 2007 when it appears that the majestic old Hall has maybe used up the last of its proverbial nine lives.

NOTE: Efforts are currently underway to have Central Hall placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Town Manager Jack Clukey and the town's selectmen have voiced their commitment that they, with continuing voter approval, will try to preserve Central Hall from destruction. As events develop the *Conserver* will keep you posted.

Editor's Corner

As I write this spring is just a word of hope on our winter weary lips, but perhaps by the time this issue of the *Conserver* reaches you the promise of springtime will be more a reality than dream.

I'm pleased to feature the work of two members this month: Lou Stevens and David Dean. It's a joy to have generous folks come forward with material for the *Conserver* and a relief to the editor!

If you have a story or would like to help research or interview people for the *Conserver* (you need not write an article if you'd rather just turn over raw notes), please get in touch with me. I welcome all helpers!

And, now a thank you to the following people whose work is contained in these pages or who helped with other aspects of this issue: Lou Stevens, David Dean, Mary Annis, Carmen Smith, Jack Battick, Edie Hussey - you're great!

Nancy Klimavicz Battick
Editor

contact info: nbattick@roadrunner.com or 564-3576.

Isabel, From Page 4

Nanking, shelling and threats of more serious measures convinced Nationalists to release a large group of British and American prisoners.

Transferred to the outside Asiatic Fleet, *Isabel* spent the 1930s in China and the Philippines where she served as flagship based at Manila. As war drew closer, *Isabel* readied for action. Late in 1941 she was sent on orders from the White House to conduct a reconnaissance of the Indo-China coast. On December 7 *Isabel* was nearing Manila when the Japanese launched their attack. Three days later, when Japanese aircraft attacked the Cavite Navy Yard, *Isabel* gave good account of herself bringing down one of the attackers.

The first weeks of the war were perilous ones for *Isabel*. Obsolete and outgunned she operated as antisubmarine escort for convoys in the East Indies. She was subject to air raids on three occasions and narrowly escaped from several ports just ahead of the advancing invasion forces. On February 7, 1942 while on a mission to pick up survivors from a torpedoed Dutch merchantman, *Isabel* teamed up with a Catalina flying boat to attack a lurking Japanese submarine and drive it from the area.

In March 1942 *Isabel* was reassigned to Fremantle, Australia, where she served out the rest of the war on escort duties and as a training ship for submarines based there.

With the war at an end *Isabel* left port for the last time setting a course eastward to San Francisco which she reached on October 26, 1945. She was decommissioned on February 11, 1946 and sold for scrap on March 25.

Gaylon Coy stayed in the Navy for a few

years after the end of World War I and at one point made a round the world cruise. On the back cover of this *Conserver* is a photo of Coy and some shipmates seated on camels with the pyramids of Egypt in the background. Gaylon Coy returned to Maine, then eventually moved to Michigan and had a career with the telephone company. His visits home to Maine were warmly welcomed by his family and are fondly remembered by his niece, Sylvia Dean.

As sailors do, Gaylon Coy must have thought often about his early days in the Navy. It is not known that Coy kept informed of *Isabel's* long and lustrous career. If he did, it would have given him much pride and pleasure to think that he once played a vital part in the life of a gallant little ship.

NOTE: Information about the *USS Isabel* is available from the online version of the *Dictionary of American Fighting Ships*. She received four mentions in Samuel Eliot Morison's *History of the United States Naval Operations in World War II, Volume III. "The Rising Sun in the Pacific"*, and is cited in Paul H. Silverstone's *U.S. Warships of World War II*.



Gaylon Forrest Coy was born in Dover, Maine on July 16, 1896. At the time of the First World War he was living in Guilford and enlisted in the Navy on July 18, 1917. After boot camp in Newport, Rhode Island he was assigned to the U.S.S. *Isabel*.

His rate was Coxswain (Boatswain's Mate Third Class) and he was later rated as Gunner's Mate Second Class. In later stages of the war he wore a chevron on his left sleeve indicating he was wounded in service. Gaylon died in Tawas City, Michigan on September 23, 1983.

A Message from Mary

Here we are in Dover-Foxcroft buried in snow! What a winter is has been! But in spite of that we are looking ahead to warmer weather and a summer full of activities.

We are still collecting our Shaw's receipts and have received \$53 so far. We must submit them in increments of \$5000. Won't you save yours? Just send them to me at 28 Orchard Road.

The igive.com project is working great, too. We already have over \$75 through this website and it's so easy to use. Just go to igive.com and enter Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society. A percentage of your shopping comes to us. There are over 600 companies involved. I have used JC Penney, Staples, etc., and new people who sign up earn us a 45 bonus.

Hopefully we'll see you this summer. Right now it's hard to imagine bare ground.

Mary Annis, DFHS President

2008 Meeting Schedule & Programs

April 2nd: **Annual Meeting. Program: Saving Your Family's History - Jack & Nancy Battick**

May 14: **Program: Dover & Foxcroft 100 Years Ago - David Dean**

June 4: **Program: The Race Track - Lou Stevens**

September 3: **Program: Who Killed Sir Harry Oakes? - Carlson Williams**

October 1: **Program: Stereoptican Views of Dover & Foxcroft - Earle Shettleworth, Jr.**

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 St, Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426. If you are giving a gift membership, please include the name and address and we'll gladly notify the recipient of your gift.

The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society, Inc.
28 Orchard Road
Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426-3706

NON-PROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO. 57
DOVER-FOXCROFT
ME.



Sailors at the Pyramids? For the story see page 4. Photo courtesy Sylvia Dean.
