



The SHIRETOWN CONSERVER

The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society

Volume 17, Number 2 Summer 2014

Memorable Times at Central Hall

By Louis Stevens



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While I was sitting near the front seats at a special town meeting--in other words, about a new street light at some dark street, or whether the town road crew needs a new truck, or why the selectmen feel they need a small raise--I was letting my mind wander until tonight's much awaited meeting, I began to count the large number of buildings in town that I had seen demolished or the result of demolition, starting, I guess with the American Hotel in Merrick Square, followed by, but not in any exact order, three educational places (Pleasant street school, Foxcroft Academy, and North street school--all wooden); then part of the western side of North street for parking spaces for stores; old enough to remember seeing the remains of the Opera House and the New Star Theater; the Western Auto store and restaurant in Union Square--I began to wonder if Central Hall in 1940 at the age of about 60 years since built in 1882, would join the above list if the voters tonight decide the Hall should be replaced by a totally new emporium or repaired once more for the umpteenth time; All this started in February of 1940 when Town Manager Theriault announced that the Hall had been "condemned for public gatherings" due to rotting of sills. What to do? Spend long hours debating--A very familiar situation in the history of the Hall.

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The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society

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The Society's legal address is 28 Orchard Road, Dover-Foxcroft ME 04426. The *Shiretown Conserver* is published quarterly. Contact the editor at 874 West Main Street, Dover-Foxcroft, Me 04426 or e-mail chrism@roadrunner.com, or by phone at 207-717-2666

Visit us on-line at
www.rootsweb.com/~medfhs
and on Facebook



Quaker Spring Song

The birds have reached the North again;
They're holding holiday.
They sing and chatter merrily,
Decked out in Spring's array
Of scarlet, blue, and saffron tints.
Hear what they have to say:

They're talking of amazing things,
Of brooks now free from ice,
Of budding trees, white cherry bloom,
Spring costumes that entice;
And how new branches of the pine
Perfume the air with spice.

The gaudy plumage of the birds,
The flowers, pink and blue,
Have cast a spell upon my heart.
I'm puzzled what to do!
A hat of crimson hue?

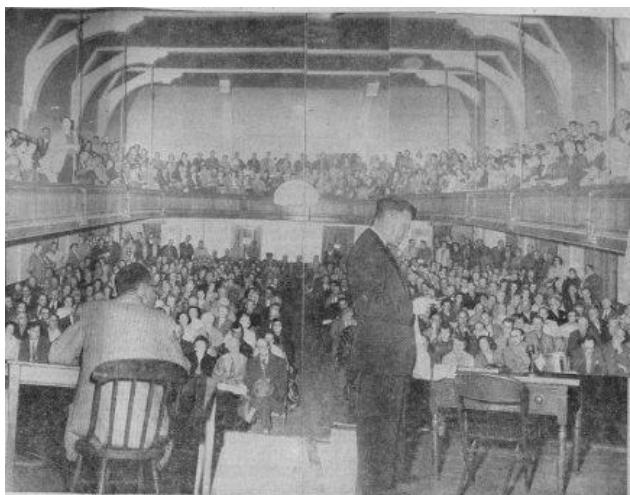
Oh, how the neighbors all would stare!
‘Twould be a serious affair –
If I should ever dare!

Anna Shaw Buck
“On Wings of Song”, 1935

The Blacksmith Shop Forge

Thanks to the good work of Dave Lockwood and his volunteers, the new forge at the Blacksmith Shop is now complete. We will be conducting blacksmithing demonstrations this summer. Watch for opening times in the *Observer*.





Those opposed to a new hall had excellent arguments for the current time which was the lack of money by the town due to the Depression; war loomed, which proved true, just over the horizon; and though it could not be said nicely, there did not seem any group who would or could get together to build it as they did the Hall and Opera House years before. Oh, yes, the costs? About \$5000 for a new roof, and maybe \$10,000 for a new hall.

But no decision was reached at the first meeting except that a new committee of Walter Mayo, Henry Gerrish, Everett Downs, and Arthur Gilman was given eight weeks to produce some choices about

what to do. Their top choice it seemed was a new hall at the same place once the standing hall was torn down. Their hall would have one floor with town offices, and a new gym with showers and lockers, all constructed parallel to East Main- Cost? Maybe \$15000-

Even Dr. Mary Chandler Lowell's very blunt comment about "stop spending any more money on that old shell of Central Hall--a fire trap only" did not deter those who wanted to give the old place another period of use as it was voted 310-233 to repair the hall. Who could have guessed that many years later an empty shell of a hall would be under renovation for a new lifetime to join the many it had already experienced since 1881-2 when it was built.

Most small towns have certain historic dates—for the basketball fans it would be when their high school team won its first and only state championship; for many it could be the date of a great fire that wiped out one of the most prominent buildings as the Opera House in Dover-Foxcroft, of maybe the date that was either the VE or VJ celebration to end World War II—so it was when I entered Central Hall on March 14, 1921, and found it difficult to find a seat because, as the Observer would say in its next edition, "A record breaking attendance that filled the floor of the Hall and the stage with voters" when a total of 665 men and women voted.

But wait a second, before today, the women had to sit with their children in the balcony to watch the town's business being handled by the men in their families. Why different today? How could the women make their stubborn men stop saying "NO!" for 5 times to the town of Foxcroft's marriage proposal to create one town, but, of course, the feminine voters had gotten the right to vote, but surely that would not cause such a great shift in the vote! A quick estimation count showed maybe close to 300 women would vote. Could the extra powerful cooking aroma from the Methodist Church next door tell us the ladies knew there would be an extra number of dinner guests with the women celebrating a victory of becoming "Mrs. Foxcroft" you might say?

But today, the voters decided to settle this uniting business and get it out of the way finally, so the big decision of becoming one town would come before they satisfied their stomachs at the dining tables at the church.

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(Memories of Central Hall, from page 3)

The exact number of minutes it took to vote was not announced only the result which determined the future of the two towns showed that 665 voted (311 more than ever voted on this matter before) with the YES to join winning by 376-249. Then to lunch!

The date, a historic one, was March 4, 1921, and the next such moment would come a year later the first town meeting under its new name would be held On May 3, 1922. Just all in a matter of a few days work of great decisions made at the Hall in its more than 100 Years of its existence. Of course, it really hasn't been those 376 voters that has kept the towns married for 92 years, but a small mark anyway.

It's a beautiful early September afternoon 106 years ago in 1898, and I'm sitting in the midst of a large group of folks seated in chairs on the floor of Central Hall. Many of them are workers at the Brown mill who have been given the afternoon off so they could attend the ceremony we are about to see and hear. Soon the balcony will be filled with Dover school children and teachers from the Pleasant Street building, and here they are, being brought by what the Observer paper would call "a juvenile drum corps". A quick glance around shows all the seats taken in a few moments.



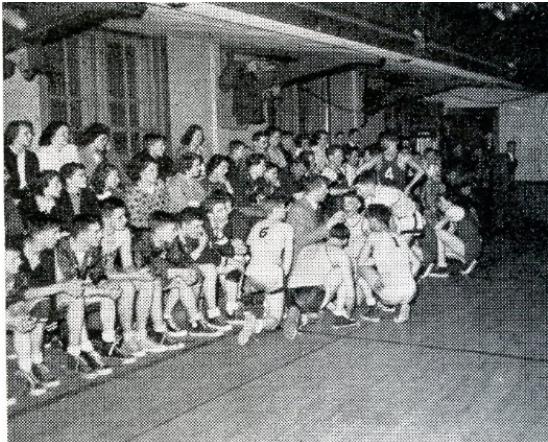
Thankfully, a very brief program on the stage is held before Dr. Elbridge Thompson is introduced by what the Observer will call "Tumultuous applause". Before attending today, I checked the doctor's age which is 70 today (born January 4, 1828, in Sangerville), and he would live 13 more years until his death in 1911. But now, back to the doctor who surely, during his long career as a physician here had treated many in the audience as patients.

The Piscataquis Observer had him speak first about why he and all of us are here today: "My fellow townsmen, ladies, and gentlemen, I am here today to perform one of the most pleasant acts of my life--to transfer to you the building that I have erected for a free library for the town of Dover....Now fellow citizens, I transfer to this property and place it in the hands of the man whom you have elected as your representative on the board the keys of the building."

Surely, such a civic minded and benevolent man would not forget folks across the river, so he said, "I have but one favor to ask of you in your management, and that is that you may see your way (note: he did not say must) to admit to the privileges of the library, residents of our sister town of Foxcroft." Then came what to me is the one moment in the long and entire history of Central Hall when a great spontaneous moment occurred when the audience--young and aged alike--rose and showered him applause and "three hearty cheers, said the Observer reporter. It still brings drops to my eyes to type that brief but memorable time to type it another time

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(Memories of Central Hall, continued from Page 4)



The downstairs doors slam shut and I'm left standing alone with my memories of this place under the basket attached to the balcony of Central Hall--the basket that helped provide me with the subject of my first sports article for the Piscataquis Observer 67 years ago. Soon, wisps of nostalgia fill the air, especially in the blue smoke from the lobby downstairs, back in the days when smokers could avoid the cold outside by getting a few puffs between games.

Let's see, it is 1954 or 1955 so maybe both which would be about 50 years after the first Foxcroft

Academy basketball teams (both girls and boys) began their long relationship with the Hall. I had seen many of those games as manager, a mere fan, and the sports writer. But no more as the teams now would be moving to the gym at the Mayo street school as visiting teams did not like the balcony any more than I did, so would not come here any longer as I recall.

Oh, I'm at the rickety scoring table held up by unstable pipes which makes it tough to maintain easily readable notes of the game for my Observer report--oops, there goes Barry Vigue is scoring again that acts like a fire lighting up his teammates and the FA crowd across the floor--and sometimes the old scoreboard would not turn until jabbed by a long pencil; and some FA fans ribbing Phil Clark for changing schools to Guilford High (No SAD 68 then) from FA where he had been very successful coaching basketball. No showers or locker so players' duds and uniforms got tossed on the floor for the manager to pick up,

And F-O_X_C_R_O_F_T_ a cheer being performed by a group of men wearing a maroon and white uniforms, FA students, with megaphones urging and succeeding to get the FA crowd old and young; to make their school name bounce from wall to wall and ceiling to defeat such rivals as Milo (not Penquis)-In those days, it was easy to understand what cheerleaders were saying. Male students included if memory is correct John Ronco, Charles Robinson, Philip Crocker, Joe Ingraham, and Joe Andrews for squads for several years, sometimes alone and other times with the girls teams. Seems too that some somersaults and tumbling (on purpose!) were done by the boys

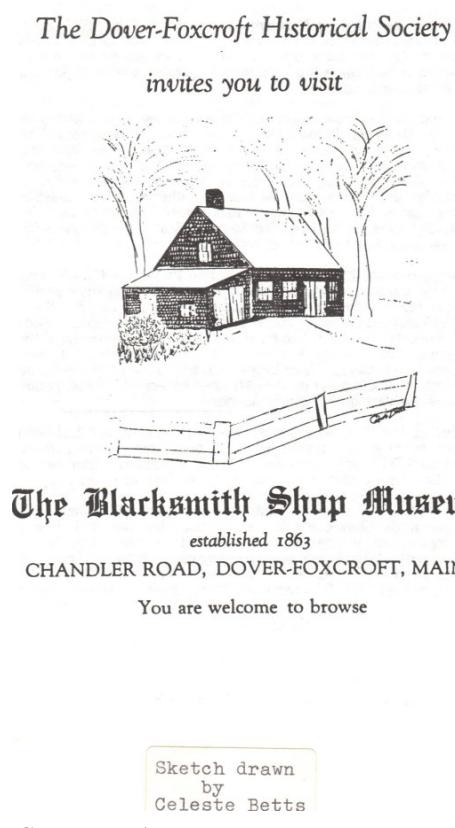
My hurrying to get the stats calculated and names of players correct so to call the Bangor Daily News so to get the report of the game in the paper next day...and so such memories to fill the mind that suddenly I'm here at home at my typewriter rather and no longer at the scoring table at Central Hall.

Louis Stevens, 2014

The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society Turns 50!

Mary Annis

Chapter 2



We pick up our story in 1966. The Historical Society has had a very successful year. During that summer nearly 800 visitors come to the Blacksmith Shop. On the 4th of July an open house was held with Richard E. Boone, Sr., a local blacksmith, who had been in the trade for some 50 years, giving generously of his time, showing visitors the art of blacksmithing. To quote from Madelyn Betts' annual report "The old bellows once more puffed up the red hot flame in the forge and sparks flew from the anvil as horseshoes once more took shape under his ringing hammer."

The museum had plenty of publicity, even appearing in *History News*, a magazine of national importance. An article appeared in the August 27, 1967 issue of the New York Times entitled "Echo of Hammer on Anvil".

During this time the Society took on a new project – the Lime Kiln Works located on the Elbridge Weston farm. The kiln, circa 1875, was opened up with the cooperation of Elbridge Weston and Ronald Crockett and a nature walk was made with the help of Central Grange members. The kiln was once a thriving business and in 1966 the small community still maintained most of its original structures. (This may be a topic for a future article in the

Conserver).

From newspaper articles around this time, it was noted that the Historical Society was looking for a home. As wonderful as the Blacksmith Shop was, it was not a place to store and display many items, such as paper documents, textiles, etc., as the shop is not heated and has no power. It was noted the Society put in a bid for property downtown, but this must not have materialized.

In November of 1967, the Society was honored by the "American Association of State and Local History" headquartered in Nashville, Tennessee. The honor was a Certificate of Merit, and was one of 52 awards given for preservation efforts in the Eastern United States and Canada. Mr. Charles Cuddy from the Association came to the Blacksmith Shop and presented the certificate to President, George Dunham.

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1967 shows the restoration of the Blacksmith Shop completed. Again from Madelyn's annual report "From tumble-down ruins it now stands financially free of indebtedness and ready for another 4th of July Open House. Attractive brochures, pen sketched by the Society's 16 year old member, Celeste Betts, announced the open door policy of this museum and invites all to view the assorted array of artifacts from small tools to a 'one hoss' shay and ox sling, which pertain to the early life of a rural Maine community".



Over 1600 people had visited that year, among them many school groups and teachers. Items from the shop were loaned to school classes, letting the students see for themselves the wonderful tools made by our ancestors. The Society was also instrumental in putting on an exhibit at the Thompson Free Library of works of art by Mary Elizabeth Greeley.

By the 1970's the interest in the Society was beginning to decline. A letter was sent to residents asking for their input. "Dear Friend", it began, "What can we do to stimulate your interest in the Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society? Or "What have we done that turned you off?" A page was included announcing the next annual meeting and asking for feedback.

In 1971, dues were raised from \$2 to \$3. Miss Barbara Klimavicz was still the treasurer. Dues notices were sent out annually asking for support. The dues and donations were used for maintaining the shop as admission was free to the public.

The dues notice for 1975 showed that the previous year 841 visitors had stopped by at the shop. The Society had attended several Bicentennial town meetings and put on an interesting display in Koritsky's window. They had printed more brochures for \$118 and nearly depleted the treasury.

Still looking for museum space in 1977, the Piscataquis County Commissioners made available space in the office annex of the Court Building for the use of all local historical societies. The Miosac Club sponsored the project.

In April of 1978, the dues notices carried a nice poem written by secretary, Madelyn Betts.

Robins and crows have now arrived,
The sun hangs high in a blue sky,
Tourists in our town will soon make a stop,
We hope they will visit the old Blacksmith Shop.
A noisy fanfare is not our way,
But expenses accrue and we must pay.
This is the time in each passing year,
When your dues (\$3.00) to us should soon appear,
Our Treasurer, we know, the Post box will scan,
Looking for your check to help with our plans.
Send your contribution out please, today
And accept this big "thank you" wafted your way.

Madelyn kept the poetry coming most years into the early 1990's.

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History of the Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society (continued from page 7)



The Society continued on during the 1980's with George Dunham remaining as President and Madelyn Betts as Secretary. Apparently Barbara Klimavicz had stopped being treasurer, as the dues now went to Madelyn. Barbara passed away on July 25, 1989. She had been treasurer since the Society began. The dues

remained at \$3.00. During this time many news articles about the Society and the Blacksmith Shop appeared in newspapers and magazines. One article of interest was about a poem which had hung at the shop since it opened. The poem was entitled "The Silent Man" written by Fred Washburn, a local poet who had published several books of his verse.. Over time it had faded. Julie Knowlton, Mr. Washburn's granddaughter, redid the poem in calligraphy.

In 1985, the Society was instrumental in unearthing the large cast iron watering trough that had been removed from Monument Square in the 1930's. George Dunham said the trough was never really "lost". It had been erected in the late 19th century and used for travelers to water their teams. It had been removed when North and Main Streets were resurfaced and given to Carroll Wiles who used it as a fish pond in his backyard rock garden on Pine Street. In October of that year, John Paul Ross undertook digging up the trough as his Eagle Project. The trough was returned to Monument Square and still resides there, usually filled with petunias in the summer. This subject is another future article for the *Conserver*.

On March 9, 1987, at a town meeting, it was voted to accept a trust fund, the income generated from it to be used to benefit the Blacksmith Shop. It is called the "Laurence A. and Arlene Folsom Peabody Fund" and still exists today.

I will now stop this chapter of our history and begin Chapter 3 with the 1990's. We leave the Society in the hands of George Dunham and Madelyn Betts and a few members who know the importance of saving our town's history. It's been a joy reading about these years. I have compiled a book of these memories and I think future dues notices should incorporate Madelyn's poems. See you in the next issue of the *Conserver*.

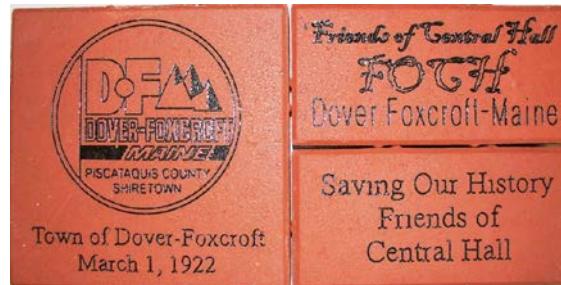
FRIENDS OF CENTRAL HALL FUNDRAISING BRICKS

FOCH BRICK ORDER FORM



Help Friends of Central Hall (FOCH) preserve and restore CENTRAL HALL by purchasing your engraved brick. Buy a brick in memory of a loved one, your children or family. Buy a brick to promote your business or organization. Artwork or your business logo can be added to the engraved bricks. Each sponsored brick would be a visible part of the walkway to a newly renovated CENTRAL HALL in downtown Dover-Foxcroft, Maine. All proceeds raised from the commemorative brick program will be used toward the restoration of CENTRAL HALL.

ENGRAVED BRICKS are 4"x8" or 8"x8" and allow for 15 spaces per line and up to 6 lines of text. Clip-Art and business logos can be added for an extra fee. We have selected Moonbeam Laser Engraving of Levant, Maine. The "Whitaker Greer #30" clay brick, a beveled edge brick, and vector engraving enable the etching to turn into glass. Create a lasting memory for a loved one or promote your business or by contributing to the preservation of Dover-Foxcroft town



organization for a lifetime, by contributing to the preservation of Dover-Foxcroft town history.

Please fill out order form below and return to: FRIENDS OF CENTRAL HALL, Attention: Mary Annis, 28 Orchard Road, Dover-Foxcroft ME 04426, or call Mary at 564-0820. Please make your check or money order payable to: Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society.

4"x8" ENGRAVED BRICK(s) with 15 spaces/line and (3) lines of print	\$100.00	\$ _____
8"x8" ENGRAVED BRICK(s) with 15 spaces/line and (6) lines of print	\$200.00	\$ _____
Basic Logo you supply in .eps format - add \$50.00 per brick	\$50.00/ea	\$ _____
In addition to, or in place of purchasing a brick, I wish to donate to FOCH	DONATION	\$ _____
	TOTAL	\$ _____

(For additional artwork options or clip-art details, contact Bob and Lisa Bemis, Moonbeam Laser Engraving, 207-884-8372)

(For additional artwork options or clip-art details, contact Bob and Lisa Bemis, Moonbeam Laser Engraving, 207-884-8372)

PLEASE USE LINES BELOW FOR YOUR TEXT – 15 spaces each including punctuation and spaces - text will be centered

Please provide contact information below:

Name(s) or Business Name _____ Phone _____
Mailing Address _____
City, State, Zip _____ Email Address _____

The mission of the Friends of Central Hall is to preserve, restore to its former glory, maintain, and operate Central Hall as an event center that showcases small town America and promotes a vibrant Main Street by joining forces with those seeking to revitalize the community.

Annual Dues

Many thanks to all those who have sent in their Historical Society dues for 2014. We really appreciate having you as a member. If you haven't sent in your dues yet, please do so now so you can continue to enjoy all of the benefits of membership in the Historical Society, including receiving copies of the *Conserver*.

The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society – Membership Application Form

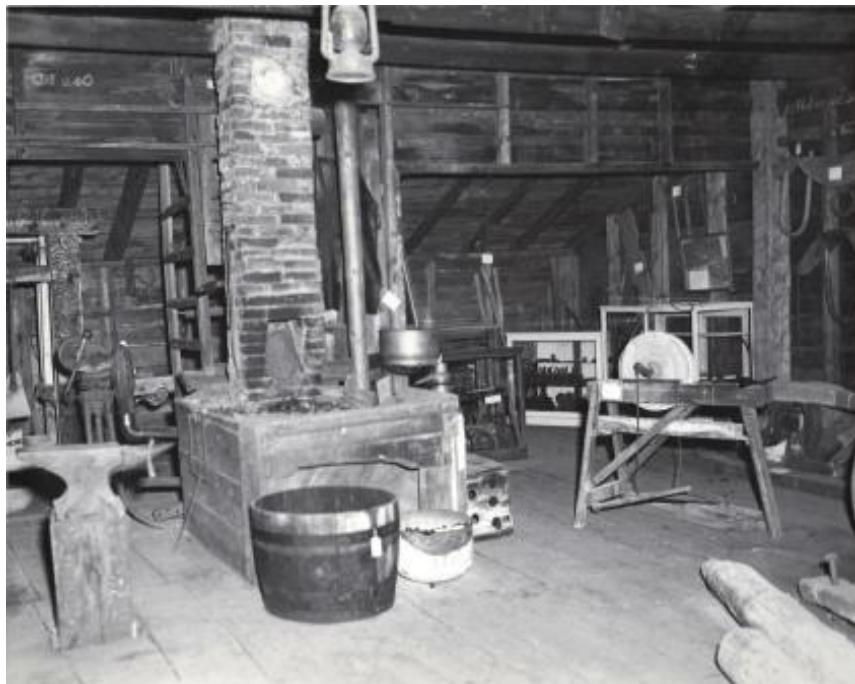
Name: _____ Phone: _____

Street: _____ City/State/Zip _____

E-Mail: _____

Annual dues are \$10 per person and \$7.00 for senior memberships. Please make checks payable to: Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society, 874 West Main Street, Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426. Dues cover January to December. If you are giving a gift membership, please include the name and address and we'll gladly notify the recipient of your gift.

We plan to celebrate our 50th birthday on July 4th at the Blacksmith Shop Museum. We have just completed the small building next to the shop which will enable us to invite blacksmiths to come and share their trade. It will be the grand opening for the building. We hope you put the date on your calendar and can join us for the festivities.



The Interior of the Blacksmith Shop

Message from Mary

Here we are at the beginning of another summer season. The Observer Building will be opening on Whoopie Pie Day, June 28, with a new World War One exhibit and, if time permits, a Central Hall exhibit. If you have some time this summer, we'd love to have you sign up for hosting on a Thursday. It's only 3 hours and most hosts have a wonderful time greeting our visitors. Just give me a call at 564-0820. The Blacksmith Shop is now open. On July 4th please stop by and help the Society celebrate its 50th anniversary. We will begin our summer schedule of hosting visiting blacksmiths who will be demonstrating their trade in the new building next to the shop. It will be a busy day and we hope a successful one! We also have a new website, doverfoxcrofthistoricalsociety.org. Please take a minute and check it out. The schedule for the blacksmith demonstrations is on the website. Also visit our facebook page. We often put on new photographs and they seem to get many comments. Hope to see you this summer!

Our Corporate Sponsors

A grateful thank you to the following businesses whose funds support the Society and its efforts to preserve our history. When you shop or see these folks, please tell them 'thank you' for their support!

Ellen Anderson, D.P.M.

Family Eyecare

Green Door Gallery

Lary Funeral Home

Maine Highlands Federal C/U

Mallett Real Estate

Pleasant River Lumber

Rowell's Garage

Steinke and Caruso

Mark Stitham, M. D

Sean Stitham, M.D.

Items Available

We thank Bob's Home and Garden on Lincoln Street for stocking our ornaments and DVD's. Please stop by their store and support this local business.

Glass Christmas ornaments: \$6.00 each (add \$4.00 for shipping)

2008 – Blacksmith Shop

2009 – Observer Building

2010 – Central Hall

2011 – Thompson Free Library

2012 – Foxcroft Academy

2013 – The Blethen House

2014 – Pleasant Street School

DVD's :

Glimpses of Dover and Foxcroft - \$10.00 (add \$3.00 for shipping)

Memories of Central Hall/Lou Stevens - \$15.00 (add \$3.00 for shipping)

Dover-Foxcroft throws: \$40.00 (add \$8.00 for shipping)

Work Day at the Historical Society

Thursdays are almost always work days at the Historical Society. We generally start work at about 10:00 and work from two to four or five hours. If you are interested in joining us for an interesting and enjoyable day working with good friends, contact Mary for more information.

Thank you all!

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

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ME.



On the left is the beloved long-time treasurer of the Historical Society, Barbara Klimavicz. Can you guess who that young fellow on the right is?