



The SHIRETOWN CONSERVER

The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society
Volume 22, Number 1 Spring 2019

The Tale of the Little New Testament

Mary Annis



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Preface: *You never know what will end up in the archives of the Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society. This summer, when this item was donated, I put it aside until things quieted down in the Fall. I began to catalog the collection and picked up this small New Testament. I didn't think too much of it until I opened the pages to find the original owner and the stories which appeared on the pages. Wow! Was I blown away! I decided this story needed to be told. The more research I did on the people mentioned and their stories I was even more certain. I decided to write this story in the "first person" from the perspective of the little book. I hope you enjoy it – I sure enjoyed writing it. - Mary*



I was born in 1855 in New York and brought forth by the American Bible Society. Not very large, just 2 ¼" wide x 4 ¾" tall x 1" high, I never grew any bigger. I was just big enough to fit in a pocket and be safely carried, to be taken out and read as needs arose for the hearing of God's word.

My first owner was Horatio Packard Farrington. Horatio was born on March 21, 1837 in China, Maine. He had 6 brothers and 2 sisters and was the son of Ezekiel B. and Mary Hallet (Hamlin) Farrington. Horatio was the eldest child and the perfect age to enlist in the Civil War. He did so in 1861 – enlisting in the 6th Maine Infantry. He became sick and tried his best to serve out his time with the unit. However, he ended up sacrificing his life by staying too long and he perished in New York making his way home. He died in New York on June 1, 1864 leaving his wife, Angie Judkins, and no children.

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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 207-924-4553

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When you wake up in the mornin'
 And the house is freezin' cold,
 And it's snowin' and it's blowin',
 And the sky don't show its gold –

When the old alarm-clock's ringin',
 And crawl out you must at dawn
 When you'd rather be reposin'
 In your bed all snug and warm:

Far away a rooster's crowin',
 Though you don't see how he can,
 With the ice congealin' thicker
 On the water in his pan –

And you have to build the fire,
 And you stand around the while;
 With your feet a growin' colder,
 You can't manage any smile.

While you're pullin' on your trousers,
 And you're shiverin' up your spine,
 You can't imagine why the poet
 Says that life is so sublime.

But when the fire's cracklin',
 Well, that perks you up a bit,
 And a good hot cup of coffee
 And some muffins make a hit.

But you know the pigs are hungry,
 And the pipes are likely froze,
 So you bundle up and hustle
 In your very warmest clothes,

Now the days are growin' longer
 And you're glad to see it's so,
 Through the cold is growin' stronger
 As they say it's s'posed to do.

So you shovel snow and shiver,
 Poke the fire 'til it roars,
 And you get the ice and wood in,
 And do all the winter chores

But when the sun runs higher,
 And the snow is nearly gone,
 And the air is warm and balmy
 You find you've been all wrong.

For when the grass is greenin',
 And the birds begin to sing,
 You're mighty glad you're livin'
 In New England in the spring
Louine A. Libby, Dover-Foxcroft

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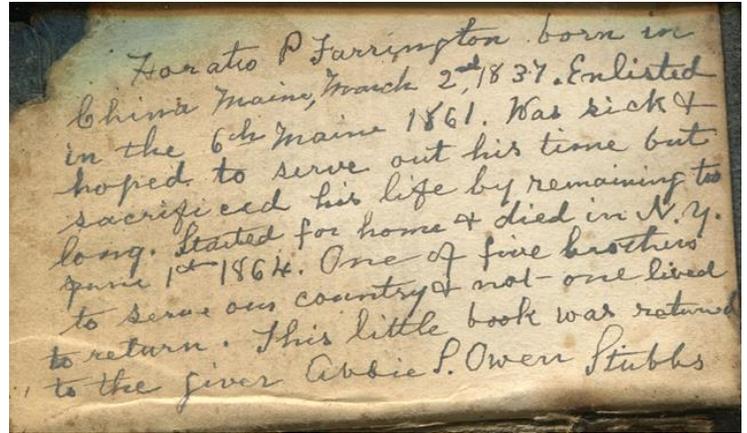
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MAKE SAFETY YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

(1925)

(Little New Testament, continued from page 1)

The Civil War was cruel to the Farrington family. After Horatio, the next brother was Charles Atwood born on May 14, 1839. Charles enlisted in Co. I, 31st Maine Infantry on April 14, 1864. He fought in the Battle of the Wilderness on May 5-7, 1864, and suffered a gun shot to his thigh. He died several days later, on June 20, 1864 in the Division Army Hospital in Annapolis, Maryland. His body was returned home and he is interred in the Pine Grove Cemetery in Waterville.



The third brother was Byron Hamlen born on April 19, 1843. Byron enlisted as a Private in Co. C of the 1st Maine Cavalry on October 2, 1861. Byron served until August 25, 1862 when he died in the Douglas Hospital in Washington, DC of disease – ‘Febris Typhoidea’ (Typhus). He is buried in the Soldier’s Home Cemetery in Washington, DC.

The fourth brother to serve was Reuben Meigs, born November 22, 1845. He enlisted as a Corporal in Co. B of the 16th Maine Infantry on August 14, 1862 and mustered out in 1864 as a Sargeant. Reuben suffered chronic diarrhea and passed on June 12, 1864 in China, Maine, where he is buried.

Gustavus A., the fifth brother, born on November 9, 1848, enlisted in 1864 as a Private in Co. B of the 2nd Maine Cavalry. Gustavus died in New Orleans on October 30, 1864 in the Barracks General Hospital of chronic diarrhea. He is buried in the Monument Cemetery in New Orleans. It was a sad time for this family and I hoped that my presence helped the family through these hard times.

I was brought home to China, Maine with Horatio who was interred in the Weeks Mills Cemetery. Custody was then given over to Horatio’s widow Angie and, she passed me on to her sister, Sarah Newton. Sarah gave me to her good friend, Abigail Owen Stubbs who lived in Dover-Foxcroft. Abigail had written on one of my pages that she would like to see me handed over to Horatio’s nephew Horatio Frank. He was the son of William Owen Farrington, Horatio’s youngest brother. But Horatio Frank died in 1915 so I never made it into his care.

I stayed with Abigail Stubbs. She was a congregant of the United Baptist Church in Dover-Foxcroft. A young man who was a fellow parishioner was called to serve in World War 1. His name was Albert Silas Tompkins, a very sincere and religious man. He enlisted on April 7, 1917.

He was a member of our local 103rd regiment Co. F. Albert and I sailed off to France on September 25, 1917 along with the unit. The event held us up in prayer. The first night overseas in the barracks we knelt to pray. Albert and I saw action on September 12 to 16 at St. Mihiel, September 26 at Meuse Argonne and several smaller skirmishes. Albert was gassed on November 5 during one of these skirmishes.

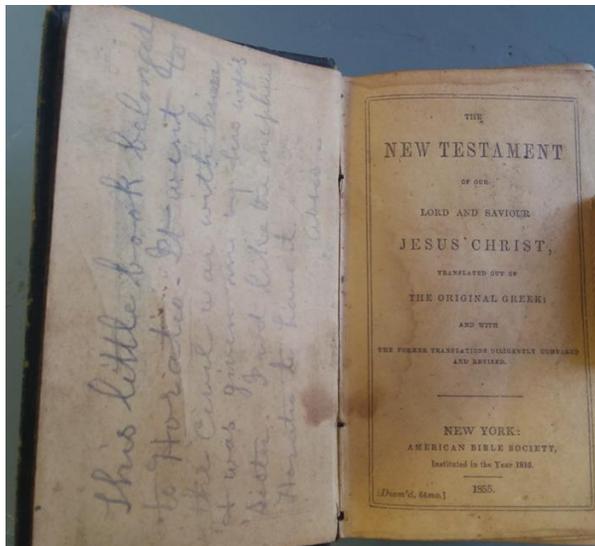
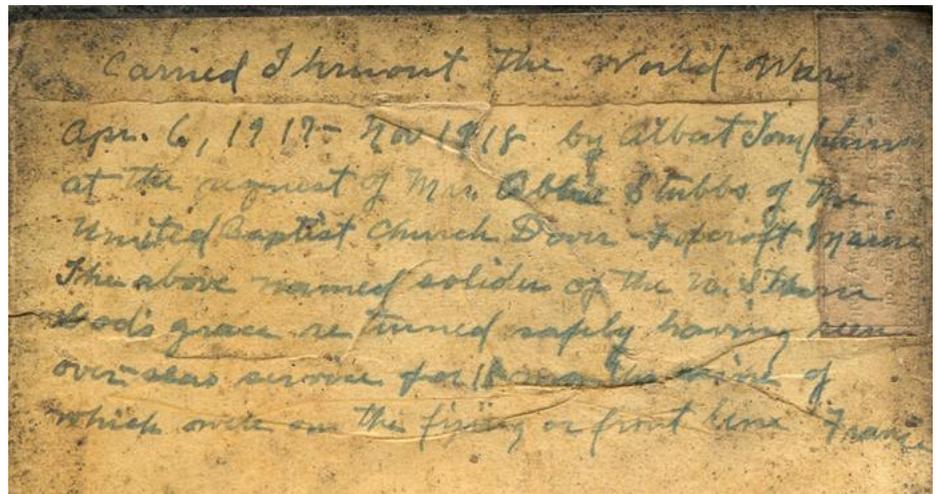
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(Little New Testament, continued from page 3)

Albert was a very good Christian and wore his faith with courage for all to see. During our time serving in World War One in France, Albert was “dubbed” “Deacon” by his fellow soldiers. We were often ridiculed for not going out to get drunk and visit the French harlots. On the day Albert received his discharge he singled out one in particular who had been particularly vile repeatedly and in front of the whole company he reminded him of how he had called him a yellow protestant bastard and dared him to fight. “Now”, Albert said, “you can have that fight you have been craving for so long, perhaps your fists”. “Wait a minute”, the soldier said, “I think I have given you about as raw a deal as any one possibly could. We are both out of the army now, you can have your fight if you want it and I know you will get hell knocked out of you for you don’t know the first thing about fist fighting, but I want you to know that every one in the whole damned outfit thinks you are a better soldier than any of us and that you have a religion that puts most of us to shame. There isn’t one of us but what admires you for the way you have stood up under our abuse. You are not yellow, you are just the levelheaded damn guy I’ve ever seen. Come on now if you want to fight, let’s fight but I’d rather take your hand deacon and say so long buddy and good luck.”

Well, that guy just took all the starch out of Albert’s sails. He couldn’t help but yield to the impulse to put his hand out and say, “so long buddy, may God keep you”. (These words are from Albert’s life story, written in his own hand.)

We returned to the United States on April 5, 1919 and Albert was honorably discharged on April 28, 1919. From then on we shared many adventures as he spread the word of our Lord through his work in many missions and writings.

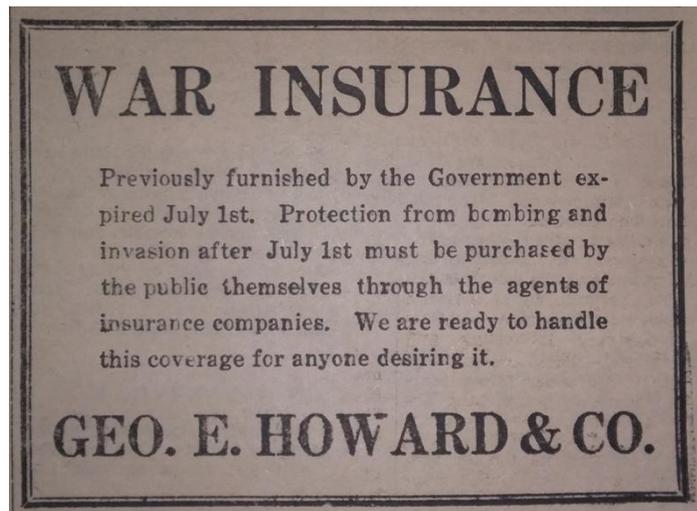


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(Little New Testament, continued from page 4)

I stayed with Albert until his passing on August 19, 1986 in Greene, Maine. It was amazing to be owned by Albert. He was such a Christian man, spreading the word of our Savior far and wide. He was buried in the Gray Cemetery in Dover-Foxcroft, Row 12 Lot 3. It was an end of an era for me.

From there all of Albert's belongings, including me, went to the safe keeping of his family and into the possession of Carolyn Amos. She kept me safe for many years and finally one day in 2018, she decided to donate me, along with several other items, to the Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society. I now have found a permanent home where I am safe and cared for in our museum.



(1943)

Leo Vetal Robbins
(1894-1990)

Leo Vetal ("Doc") Robbins was born in Fort Kent, Maine, January 20, 1894. He was the youngest child of James Robbins from Lincoln, Maine and Julia Butterfield Robbins of Danforth, Maine, where James set up shop as a harness maker, a trade he taught Leo's eldest brother, Will, who moved to Fort Kent. Soon James moved the rest of his family there. Growing up on the border of French Canada, Leo became bilingual. His mother and sister taught him to read at a very early age, which enabled him to read to his father whose eyesight was failing. Leo's first education was in whichever town sister Flora was teaching school. As a youngster, he spent a lot of time with his older brothers hunting and fishing. When he became a youth, he worked in the lumber camps and a shingle factory operated by his family. He had many stories to tell about the Spring log drives down the St. John River and life in the camps deep in the Maine woods. (This is before the arrival of paved roads, electricity, and telephones; life in remote lumber camps was quite adventuresome.) Later, during summer vacations from school, Leo served in the State of Maine Fire Patrol, and as a guide for sportsmen visiting in the Allagash wilderness.

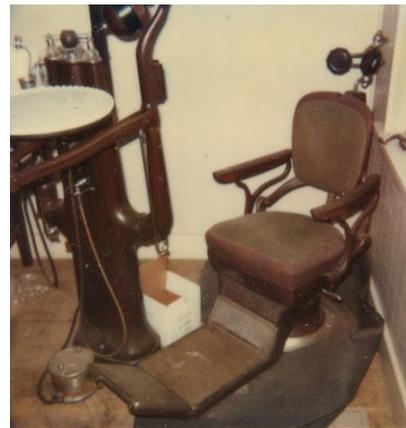
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(Dr. Robbins, Continued from Page 5)

In 1911 Robbins graduated from Ricker Classical Institute, a private secondary school in Houlton, Maine. It was at his school an instructor urged him to become a writer. This talent showed up in a variety of fine poems and letters throughout his life. For those days, Leo was tall (6') so he played basketball at Ricker as well as on the Fort Kent town team. He accepted a football scholarship to the University of Maine, living at the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity house. An older brother offered to pay for his education if he'd study law, but Leo did not want to be beholden and have to work for "Lex" in his various businesses – he was a "Yankee dickerer". Instead, he worked his way through the Philadelphia Dental College of Temple University. Years later, "Doc" regaled his progeny with tales of his experiences part-time in an undertaking parlor, a shoe store, etc. At that time he could buy a tankard of beer for 5 cents, a sandwich for 10 cents at a tavern; this became his mainstay for lunch. Robbins excelled academically (was elected to the College's exclusive Bromell and Garristonia Honorary Societies.) Also he was a member of Psi Omega Dental Fraternity. A prominent professor at Temple U., Dr. Parkinson, wanted him to shift to studying medicine, even offering room and board at the good doctor's parents' home while matriculating.

However Leo stayed with his dental pursuit. He said he never would have become a dentist had anesthesia not been invented. For tooth extractions, a general anesthetic, gas, was first used. In those days fillings were often regarded as luxuries, so for the general public, extraction was the preferred solution.

After graduating in 1917, Robbins first worked with other dentists in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Joining the army dental corps in World War 1, he was discharged at Ft. Oglethorpe, Georgia. After his release, "Doc" had all his money stolen while swimming at a YMCA, en route to Johnstown, Pennsylvania (The famous flood city).



Here he was associated with another dentist before moving to Altoona, Pennsylvania in 1920. Living at the Phoenix Hotel (owned by Paul and Emma Just, who had come from Germany) he met and married youngest daughter, Hilda, in the middle of her Goucher College days. Although Robbins had no professional connection when he came to Altoona, he had no difficulty developing a vibrant dental practice which he conducted until 1932. Many physicians quickly learned of his dental skill and were happy to refer their patients to him. He was rated one of the top dentists practicing in the city of Altoona. Years later, Doc would amuse his wife in movie theaters when Altoona's star, Janet Blair's name appeared: "Teeth by Robbins" he would mutter.

The 3 Robbins offspring were born in Altoona (Julia, Fred and Justine). But Doc decided not to rear his children in this fast-paced, industrialized, urban setting so they moved to Dover-Foxcroft, Maine where his elderly father and several siblings had settled. The town was ripe for a modern dentist. In fact Robbins brought the first X-ray machine of any sort to this small central Maine community, so even the physicians made use of it!

(Cont'd Page 7)



Robbins House (2009)



1890

His first office was over a clothing store in an old wooden building. Later he bought a home on Main Street where he set up his office. He and Hilda lived there until his death. During his 40 years' dentistry in Dover-Foxcroft, Doc served as Dental Examiner; was active in American Legion (even rode in his 1st Memorial Day parade, age 96); was a member of the Masons, and of the Congregational Church.

Establishing a modern dental practice during the early years of the Great Depression was a challenge, requiring long hours of work – 6 full days each week, including many evenings and some Sundays. In a few years, Dr. Robbins became well known and respected for his superior work, which was then regarded as “state of the art” dentistry, quite uncommon in the early 1930's, especially in small central Maine communities. Moreover, he became widely known for his most careful and caring attention to all his patients. He was often quoted for his soothing “just one more little razoo” (last touch with his drill in cavity preparation).

Those who were unable to pay – there were many during the “Hard-Times” – received the same high quality work as the ones who could afford good dentistry. As his professional reputation spread, Dr. Robbins' dental practice grew quite dramatically throughout the 1940's and 1950's. In addition to his patients from Dover-Foxcroft and neighboring towns, a great many folk came from other areas, including down on the coast. A sizeable proportion were from out of state, regular summer residents. Due to his genuine interest in people, combined with a vast range of knowledge and wide interests, many patients became good friends, including the parish priests of his wife's church, and Sir Harry Oakes' niece and family in Greenville, Maine.



Doc and Hilda sledding
(Continued on Page 8)

(Doctor Robbins, Continued from Page 7)

“Doc” had personality “to burn”, including an outstanding, unique sense of humor. Being a voracious reader, not only of current publications, but also of history and biography, Robbins was concerned about the future, and made a number of accurate predictions. At one time he read factual detective stories far into the night! An avid sports enthusiast, he played golf most of his adult life, enjoyed swimming at his Sebec Lake, Maine cottage, was a staunch supporter of the minor league baseball team in Dover-Foxcroft. Music appealed to him – he taught himself to play a banjo-mandolin and ukulele. He and Hilda loved to dance, including square dancing at one time. They often broke out in song, some in German (her family’s native tongue which he had never studied). They played much bridge (cards) well into his latter years despite diminishing vision, which caused him to retire at 78. Despite his modesty, he really made his mark in the world. During 55 years of devoted dentistry, he could reap much inner satisfaction as returning service people continued to report the astonishment of their widespread military dentists upon learning such top-notch work emanated from a small Maine town.

In rearing his family, health was always top priority. Doc continued daily calisthenics and long, brisk walks, becoming a familiar and much-loved figure about town. Sadly, too proud to carry a white cane, at age 96 he stumbled over a broken barricade, suffering a fatal fall.

He and Hilda were married almost 70 years, had nine grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren as of 1995.



Thus ends this biography. The original resides in the archives of the Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society and on display is his complete dental office.



Some thoughts on Thompson Guernsey 1904-1979

By Sylvia (Richards) Dean

The marvel of the early 20th century was the radio. Interest in this new way of reaching a large number of people with entertainment, news, education, religion, and politics offered a wealth of opportunity for enterprising adventurers. In the 1920's fifteen radio stations were licensed in Maine. Most of these were short lived, running out of money and/or enthusiasm by the 30's. As the concept of radio business took hold many small stations faded away.

Thompson L. Guernsey of Dover-Foxcroft was granted a license for WLBZ at the age of 22. He was experimenting with radio in 1917 when only seventeen year of age. His first license was for Amateur Radio Station IEE in 1921. He received a commercial license in December 30, 1926. putting WLBZ on the air. The first broadcast were from the harness room in the chicken house at the Guernsey's residence in Dover-Foxcroft. (Probably behind the house was River Street) By 1928 he moved the station into the back room of Andrews Music House at 98 MainStreet Bangor. According to Irving Hunter, transmitter engineer at WLBZ Tom drove from Dover-Foxcroft to Bangor in his Straight-A packard Roadster to manage his station in Bangor. Thompson Guernsey was the founder and managing director of WLBZ Bangor and Waterville. Of the fifteen original licensed stations WLBZ was one of only three that made it into 1930. He had a vision of of the expanded commercial interests of radio and later television as a bussines enterprise and was actively courting the entertainment industry in Piscataquis county. In 1938, feeling the effects of the depression, Guernsey could nolonger support the staff at WLBZ and closed down. However the commercialization grew into the 40's as WLBZ changed hands and location.

So who was Thompson Lyford Guernsey? He was born February 17, 1904 the only child of Josephine Lyford Guernsey and Honorable Frank E. Guernsey. His family lived at 70 East Main Street. That part of town commonly known as "dead end" was also where S. Fernald Richards live with his Grandfather Sumner Sargent Richards at 138 East Main Street. Both boys attended Foxcroft Academy and the University of Maine, Orono. Though not classmates they must have spent time together as both had interests they pursued with passion. Perhaps the cristal radio set left under the barn for years was left over from their youthfull activities. A friendship was evident by Thompson's role as best man at the wedding of Fernald and Leona Coy Richards 30 June 1930.

Some of the people in town may have memories of Thompson Guernsey's later years. He continued to live in Dover-Foxcroft until his death in 1979 at the age of 75. There are stories of his down and out existance while still working on his miniaturized T V set. He shared his passion for this project with my father S. Fernald Richards in 1953 or 1954. Dad saw his old friend on the street and was shocked to see his down and out condition. Both men had seen the demise of their inheritance. I remember Dad reporting to my Mother as to the low state of his condition and asked could we not invite him to dinner. Tom did come to dinner and that is my only recollection of him. When asking others in town to recall Thompson Guernsey they only report a down and out hermit who they saw on the street. His last 30 years of life were spent as a recluse in Dover-Foxcroft. This eccentric genius was not known for his early radio activities or his patented Guernsey "TV Scope", a small television set contained in a 10inch square box.

Annual Dues

Many thanks to all those who have sent in their Historical Society dues for 2019. 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: _____

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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.

Curly Bob Shoppe
45 South Street
Dover - Foxcroft, Maine

Blethen House Molasses Lace Cookies.

3/4 cup melted shortening	3 level teaspoons soda
1 cup granulated sugar	1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup molasses	1 " cloves
1 egg	1 " cinnamon
2 cup flour	1/2 " ginger

Cream to-gether shortening, sugar, molasses and egg. Sift to-gether the dry ingredients and add to the creamed mixture. Cool in refrigerator about 1/2 hour before rolling in a ball, especially if shortening is warm. Roll by level Tablespoons in small ball. Roll ball in granulated sugar. Place two inches apart on greased pan. Bake about 12 minutes at 350° or until cookies become flat. Cool 5 minutes before removing from pan.

Message From Mary

Well, here we are at the start of another season. The snow is hip deep and we are anxiously awaiting the arrival of spring and some warmer weather.

The Society has dismantled the World War One display in the back room and will be setting up a new one entitled “Let’s Talk Business”. Featured will be Cushing Dye Co., Cushing Coal and Oil, Dwelley Spool Factory, Foxcroft Bakery and Maine Leathers. We have many artifacts in our collection pertaining to these businesses and want to share! Also in the back room will be a display by Dennis Allen. Dennis loves to go along our river and metal detect. We’ll be featuring some of the items he has found. You’ll be surprised to see what has survived all these years! This winter we posted a photo in our collection of the ice circle which appeared by the Foxcroft bridge in the river in 1926. We received over 8,000 hits. Wow!

We hope you will plan to stop by this summer to say “hello” and check out the new exhibits. We plan to open on Whoopie Pie Day – June 22. As always there is an open invitation to visit on Thursdays. Help is always needed and welcomed.

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!

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

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- 2009 – Observer Building
- 2010 – Central Hall
- 2011 – Thompson Free Library
- 2012 – Foxcroft Academy
- 2013 – The Blethen House
- 2014 – Pleasant Street School
- 2015 – Mayo’s Mill
- 2016 – Piscataquis County Court House
- 2017 – Brown Mills
- 2018 – (Old) Mayo Hospital

DVD’s : Glimpses of Dover and Foxcroft - \$10.00 (add \$3.00 for shipping)

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