

The Brentwood Historical Society Newsletter

Winter 2022-2023

Hello to our Brentwood Historical Society members. The Winter Newsletter comes to summarize the major events for the Society in the Fall and Winter and look ahead to the events of the coming year. First we should revisit the Annual Meeting, Sunday afternoon, November 13th. The members present voted to elect the following slate of officers and directors for the coming year:

President	Dexter Swasey
Vice President	Linda Rousseau
Treasurer	David Menter
Recording Sec'y	Karen Ellis
Research Corresp.	Albert "Skip" Belanger
Curator	Rebecca Davis
Lifetime Advisor	Alma Vahey

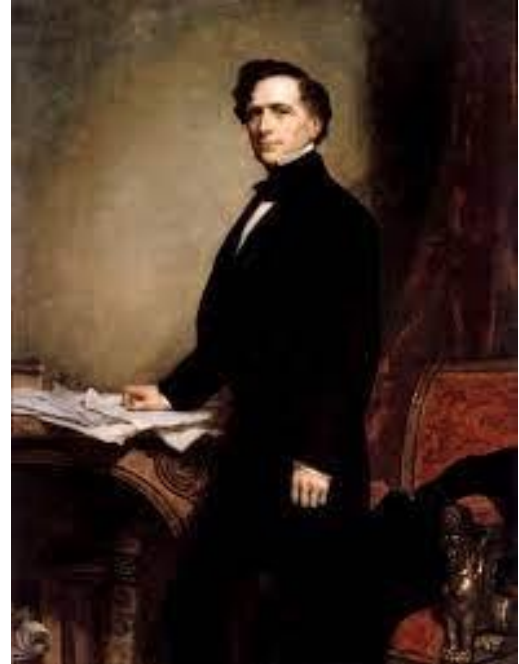
Directors

Dick Chamberlain	Dawn Higley
Rebecca Dunham	Frank Northrup
Laura Hajjar	Mark Tremallo

The program speaker was Matthew Thomas, the well-known author, historian, and president of the Fremont Historical Society. His subject was "Understanding New Hampshire's Franklin Pierce, America's 14th President." He is preparing to publish a book on this subject, the life and political career of Pierce, and we were one of the first audiences he had spoken to with all the research he has been doing.

His point is that Pierce is now largely regarded as a failure as a president, increasing the division between the North and South that led to the Civil War. The truth according to his research, however, is that Pierce was a good and decent man, a well-intentioned though somewhat misguided person, an outstanding speaker, very well regarded at the time of his election.

Almost immediately afterward he began to be hit with one devastating event after another, including the onset of a lifelong illness of his wife, the tragic death of his young son, and several unfortunate political and governmental decisions. Many historians have said it is doubtful that ANY person serving as President during the 1850s could have been successful at keeping the divide between the North and South from growing.



Franklin Pierce
Served 1853-1857



Matthew "Sandy" Thomas

Bake Sale Coming Up March 14

Brentwood has a voting day coming, and that is Tuesday, March 14 – the Town Elections, which will be held this time at Swasey Central School. Once again the Select Board has given the Historical Society permission to offer its popular Bake Sale from 7:00 a.m. until sold out.

One of the main things we ask of members is to donate home-baked goods to these tables. Please be thinking and hopefully choosing what you would best like to make. Friends and neighbors are invited to bake also. We are grateful for all contributions! They can be dropped off at the table in the Swasey Gym on Election Day from 7:00 am on.

With today's food protocols, we ask that all items be brought in zippered plastic bags – 3 or 6 cookies, brownies or half-a-layer-cake to a bag, for example. Other welcome items include quick breads small and large, cupcakes, turnovers and dessert bars, pies, single layer and double layer cakes, fudge, homemade jams, pickles and bean salads, Cowboy Cookies and granola. If you have any questions, please contact Linda Rousseau at fansinger34@gmail.com or 603-379-1568.

HOORAY! We Won the Moose Plate Award

Members may recall reading about the historical hand-painted stage backdrop curtain that the Society owns in the “Grange Room” and the fact that we had applied for a “Moose Plate” grant to have it cleaned and conserved. After months of waiting, we were finally informed at the end of October that we had been awarded the amount we requested, \$6,270.00.

The work will be done this summer on August 1st and 2nd, by two conservation experts who will work for two days. The curtain will be rehung on August 2nd. That evening there will be a talk and slide show by Chris Hadsel, the primary conservator, about how these curtains all over the country have been lifted from obscurity to become recognized works of art, and how they are cleaned, conserved, and used today.

The Historical Society will remind you of this presentation closer to the date. It will also be open to the public. Friends and neighbors will be welcome.



More about Our Listing on NH Historic Places

In the Summer Newsletter we had a photo of our president, Dexter Swasey, showing us the handsome plaque the Historical Society Museum received because it had recently been accepted for listing on the State Register of Historic Places. Most of our members were not there to see it that day. Now it can be seen by all members, neighbors and friends as they drive by the front porch on Crawley Falls Road.

The Museum is only the second building in town to be included on the List of Historic Places. The Pilgrim Church of Christ is the other one. The application for the award was very demanding. Our members can be glad that Becky Dunham was able to arrange with Andrew Cushing that he complete the application, and that she and Mark Tremallo were able to give him so much of the required information that Andrew reduced his fee because it saved him so much time.

Then it developed that the Moose Plate Grant application for the stage curtain required that we have something like the Historic Places award in order to prove that we were historic enough to earn their grant!

Some of the information above is repeated from the Summer Newsletter. The purpose is to underscore how your Society is advancing in the museum world—the world of historically valuable artifacts and information. It is no longer simply a collection of tools and housewares. It is more and more capable of being of real service to researchers.

**The April Program: April 20, 2023, 7pm
“Exemplary Country Estates”**

You may be asking, “What are “exemplary country estates?” This program will focus on the period in New Hampshire history when many landowners were giving up farming, abandoning their farms and heading west. Land parcels of many acres were available, sometimes at very low prices. New owners of those large properties, often from Boston or New York, had differing ideas about how to develop them.

We will hear Cristina Ashjian talk about which schemes were successful, which were not, and how some of the properties grew into strong tourist destinations that contribute greatly to the state’s economy today. Well-known public estates such as The Fells on Lake Sunapee, The Rocks in Bethlehem, and Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site in Cornish will be viewed during the slide presentation by Ms. Ashjian,

The program is sponsored in part by the New Hampshire Humanities Council. It will be free and open to the public.



Bringing Mary Abbie Out of Obscurity

Even when Mary Abbie Sanborn was living her long life (1820-1902) in Brentwood, she doesn’t seem to have been looked upon as a leader or a well-known figure. She did serve as clerk of the church (known then as the Congregational Church) for a time, taught church school and took part in all the women’s usual activities.

Mary Abbie walked back and forth from the Sanborn farm – on what is now the Swasey Central School grounds -- to the church on Middle Road. She never married. After her parents died she and her sister did all the business details of the farm. And she kept “diaries.” It’s the diaries that are bringing her out of obscurity today. We found ten of them at the Pilgrim Church in a storage space and transcribed them from the archaic handwriting of the day. More recently we found more, and more – until there are now 32 diaries. They are not typical diaries. They are notebooks, containing pages of written articles and page after page of lists. Lists of births, of deaths, marriages, family trees, barn and house raisings. Some notebooks were purchased for use, but more were handmade –the paper like a thin brown wrapping paper, sewn together with sturdy brown cotton thread. The image above is a pen and ink sketch made by Mary Abbie to make the cover of one notebook look like the few purchased ones she had.

Watch for the name of Mary Abbie Sanborn. You will hear a lot more about her.

Special Free Tour and Lunch for Members Only – Watch for Details!

On Thursday, June 1st, the Historical Society will host a free event just for members: a bus ride to Concord, NH for a private guided tour of the New Hampshire Historical Museum, with lunch afterward at The Common Man in Concord, and a ride back to Brentwood. The transportation fee, museum fee, and lunch cost will all be included in this special members’ offer.

Watch for the details and mark the date on your calendar!

New Board Member

The officers and board have welcomed Richard Murphy as a new Director of the Society. We are glad to have his interest and enthusiasm added to our discussions.

The May Program: Caretakers for the Statue of Liberty”

The Historical Society had the unusual situation of meeting a couple of area residents – David and Debra Luchsinger in nearby Greenland -- who lived on Staten Island for three years and worked as caretakers for the Statue of Liberty. How often would we have an opportunity to ask folks with that background to tell us what it was like, what chores did they have to do, what repairs had to be made, how did storms affect the property, how did visitors approach the Statue, and so on? Come for this intriguing program on Thursday, May 11th at 7 pm. As usual, it will be free of charge and open to friends, neighbors, and the public.

The Program Schedule for 2023

- Feb. 9** **Rebecca Rule, speaker: “Moved and Seconded: Town Meeting in New Hampshire”
M.E. Bartlett Library, 6:00 pm. Co-sponsor with DAR Chapter**
- Apr. 1** **Museum Open House, 10 am – 1 pm**
- Apr. 20** **“Exemplary Country Estates of New Hampshire,” Cristina Ashjian, speaker
7 pm, Museum.**
- May 6** **Museum Open House, 10 am – 1 pm**
- May 11** **David and Debra Luchsinger, Caretakers of the Statue of Liberty, 7 pm**
- June 1** **New Hampshire History Museum Guided Tour, Transportation and Lunch in Concord, NH.
A Special Free Event, Available to Members Only.**
- June 3** **Museum YARD SALE 8:30 AM – 1 pm AND Museum Open House, 10 am – 1 pm**
- July 1** **Museum Open House, 10 am- 1 pm**
- Aug. 2** **Talk by Chris Hadsel on Finding and Preserving Historical Stage Curtains,
7 pm, Museum’s Grange Room**
- Aug. 5** **Museum Open House, 10 am – 1 pm**
- Sep. 2** **Museum Open House, 10 am – 1 pm**
- Sep.** **Date TBD. Joyce Keegal speaking on working with bones, using latest science to
determine who it was, cause of death, options for burying any individual.**
- Oct. 7** **Museum Open House, 10 am – 1 pm**
- Oct.** **ANTIQUÉ & HEIRLOOM APPRAISAL, Date and Details to be determined.**
- Nov. 12** **Annual Meeting, 2 pm**

Linda Rousseau, Editor

The Brentwood Historical Society

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