

## The School District Tax Book That Wandered Far from Home

by Holly Hurd, FHS Collections Manager

Freeport Historical Society received a wonderful gift this holiday season... from a far away institution. Reference Librarian Bertram Lippincott at the Newport Historical Society in Rhode Island found a Freeport school tax booklet from 1798-1802 in their collections, and sent it on to us. "Freeport" was written in ink on the cover, but Bert had to consult the 1790 U.S. Census to determine that the document was from Freeport, Maine. (Although there are about 12 cities in the U.S. named Freeport, none of the others existed in the 1790s.) The savvy librarian matched names in the booklet with the census records, then found our mailing address online.

When I called Bert to find out more about how the item happened to make its way to Newport, he said he did not know. Although their institution was founded in 1854 and accessioning records go back to that early date, this item, as well as a number of others, were never officially taken into their collections... so no records exist to indicate where they came from. Bert encountered the Freeport tax booklet in a box with many other papers as part of his process to carefully comb through all their holdings since their building is undergoing a major expansion and renovation. According to Bert, they have discovered hundreds of items that haven't been seen for a century, including a letter signed by Queen Elizabeth I!

He has been working for months to place the documents he has found that have no apparent relevance to Newport history.

In talking with him further about how the booklet *might* have strayed so far from our town, we surmised that it probably came to their society through a descendant of the person who kept the record. These types of records were kept by various townspeople and, although they are official town documents, many places in Maine did not have or keep their records in a central repository until well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. (Even when towns did have a town hall, records were often stored at the homes of town officials, even into the 20<sup>th</sup> century!)

Bert says they acquired the item sometime in the past 90 years, so that wide time span makes the acquisition details difficult to pin down. Most of a name is visible on the front, which appears to be "J. Curtis." (Some other writing is located in front of his name, but it is cut off.) A "James Curtis" is listed in tax and census records at that time, as well as in the booklet as a school agent, so presumably he is the most likely owner (at one time, see below). The genealogical information we have does not

(Continued on page 3)



Figure 1 Cover of the School Tax Book

## The Dash

### Winter 2015

*The Dash is published four times annually by Freeport Historical Society for its members.*

#### Freeport Historical Society

Harrington House  
45 Main Street  
Freeport, ME 04032  
(207) 865-3170  
info@freeporthistoricalsociety.org  
www.freeporthistoricalsociety.org

#### Office Hours

Tuesday - Friday, 9 am to 4 pm  
and by appointment.

We encourage a phone call prior to a visit to make sure the office is open.

To conduct research, please call (207) 865-3170 and speak with Holly Hurd, Collections Manager, for a convenient appointment.

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FHS Director, James Myall

## From the Director

It's a great feeling to be writing to our membership for the first time in the pages of *The Dash*! Despite having been on-board for four months now, it's still something of a thrill to be at the helm of Freeport Historical Society. As you might expect, I've already been identifying (and implementing) some areas for change at FHS, and you'll no doubt see the results over the next weeks and months.

Some of my priorities are going to be continuing Christina's work to expand the membership and reach of FHS, and continuing to make the case that the relevance of Freeport's history doesn't stop with the town line. Complimenting this effort, will be an increased emphasis on the digital future of history – a stronger online presence, more electronic communication, and greater access to our collections from afar. Our initiative to bring Mildred Pettengill's diaries to life, and the publication of our newsletter archive online are examples of this kind of outreach.

As you'll see in the pages of this publication, though, for all the thoughts of change, we haven't lost sight of the nuts-and-bolts. You'll see that we have an exciting calendar of programs and events over the next few months, including the return of popular favorites like the tree-pruning and dry stone wall workshops. Our 2014 exhibit, *You Can Get There from Here* was a great success (thanks to our sponsors, the Maine Humanities Council and Norway Savings Bank!) and we're already preparing for the next display on the history of shoemaking in Freeport.

With all this activity, FHS is a busy place these days, and we're always happy to receive help! In addition to some of our regular volunteer opportunities, we're particularly interested to hear from members who would be interested in helping to manage FHS through membership of our committees. Please get in touch if you'd like to learn more.

Here's to a productive and dynamic year ahead for Freeport Historical Society!



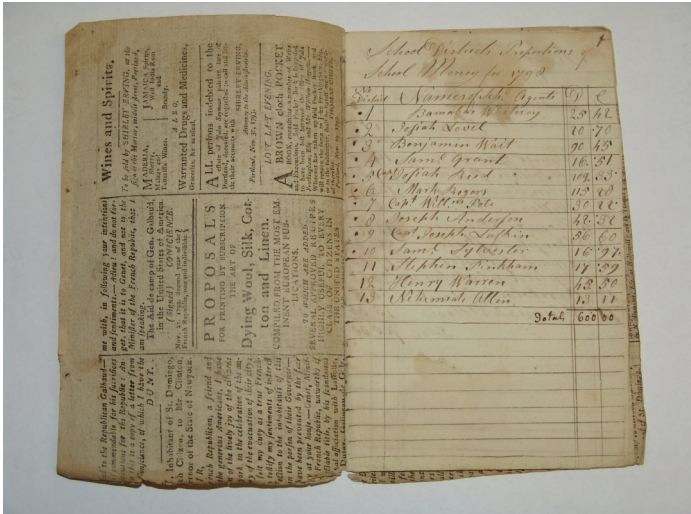
## Buildings & Grounds Committee

As we look to revive our dormant Buildings and Grounds Committee, we'd love to hear from any of our members who would like to contribute to FHS with their labor or expertise. If you consider yourself

handy and would like to donate a few hours of your time, please let us know. Maintaining Harrington House and Pettengill Farm are no small task, and the more help we can get, the better! We're also interested in hearing from green-fingered members and friends who would be interested in helping to maintain the gardens at both our properties.



# The School District Tax Book (continued from page 1)

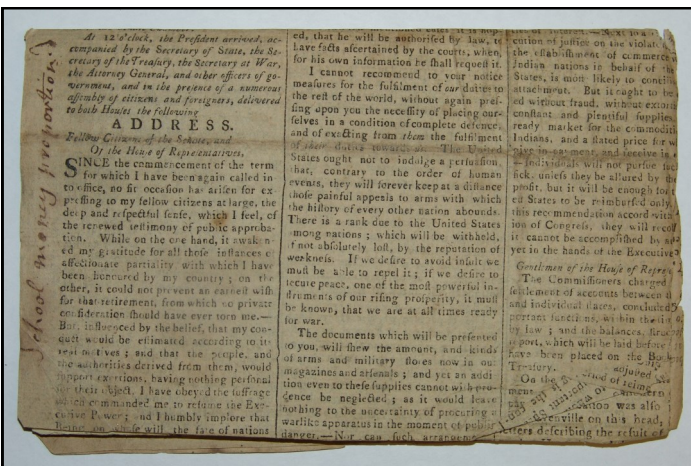


**Figure 2** Inside the tax booklet showing newspaper covering on the left and the money collected by tax agents of each district on the right.

show any Curtis descendants moving to Rhode Island.

Even so, Bert is going to explore further (after renovations) and perhaps we will learn more about this mystery in the future.

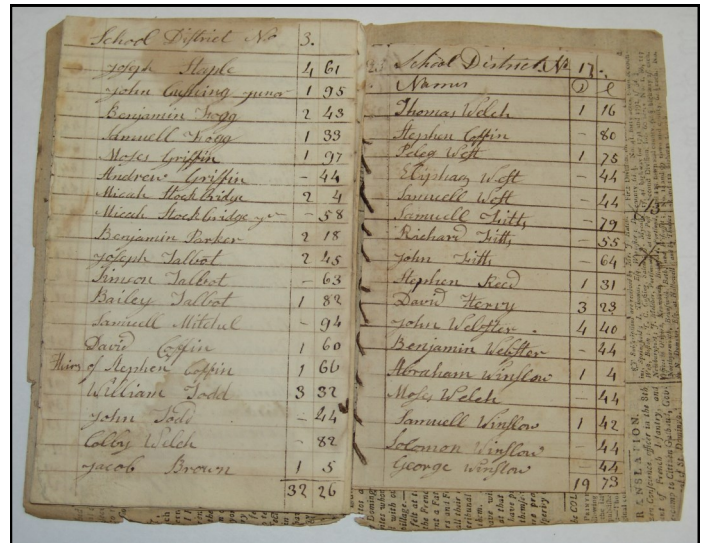
The artifact itself has some other interesting stories to tell, independent of its travels and location over the past 220+ years. Notably, it is covered and bound into part of a very early newspaper, *The Eastern Herald*, from Dec 23, 1793. (Figure 1. and Figure 2.) This paper was published in Portland by Thomas Baker Wait, one of the founders of Maine's first newspaper, *The Falmouth Gazette*. (FHS Director James discovered this fact when the item first came in, along with the interesting tidbit that the covering includes a speech by George Washington! See Figure 3.) According to Maine Historical Society, this newspaper is quite rare—they own no original copies and the Dyer



**Figure 3** George Washington's address

Library in Saco is the only repository in the state known to have a few issues dating from 1801-1804. What a find!

More sleuthing revealed that the tax booklet includes the handwriting of at least four individuals. This is typical of town records since different residents served as school agents—the tax collectors for each school district—over the years. The handwriting suggests that the first person to write in the book kept the records for only the first year—in 1798. In 1799 and 1800, the handwriting of the record keeper matches the name on the cover—presumably James Curtis—so he may have been the one to use his six-year-old newspaper to cover and bind the booklet. In 1801 and 1802, another Freeporter kept the book, and a fourth person recorded the actual money collected from individ-

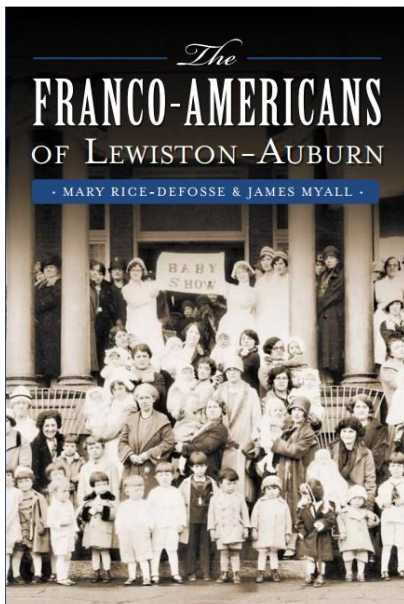


**Figure 4** Freeport residents taxed for schools over 200 years ago.

uals in the town. (Figure 4)

Who was the last person to write in the book? He was probably the man who served from 1801-1802, who appears to have written "School money proportion'd for 1798" on the cover, and who may be one of the 17 men listed as agents in 1801. (No information is recorded in 1802 besides the date.) Was he the person whose descendants carried the document to Rhode Island? Where was the booklet between 1802 and ~1920 when it was acquired by the Newport Historical Society? Perhaps time will tell.

Thanks to Bert Lippincott and the Newport Historical Society for sending the school tax booklet back to Freeport.



## Book Talk with Freeport Historical Society Director James Myall and Mary Rice-DeFosse

Wednesday, February 18<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 p.m. (Snow date Feb. 25)  
Freeport Community Library

Join FHS Director James Myall and co-author Mary Rice-DeFosse of Bates College for a discussion of their new publication, *The Franco-Americans of Lewiston-Auburn*. The book is the only comprehensive, approachable history of the most significant example of a population which had a big impact on the state's history, and in cities like Lewiston and Auburn, formed a distinct community with its own story. While the book focuses on the Twin Cities of Lewiston and Auburn, the lessons within are relevant to Franco-Americans across the state, and will be of interest to people of French-Canadian descent and anyone with an interest in Maine history.

Myall, who was previously Coordinator of the Franco-American Collection, and Rice-DeFosse, who is Professor of French and Francophone Studies at Bates College, embarked on the project to write a comprehensive history of Lewiston-Auburn's Franco-Americans because they were surprised to realize no-one had done so before. "Despite an increase in awareness in recent years, a lot of Franco-American history goes unrecorded in Maine" says Myall, "We wanted to make that story more widely known."

*The Franco-Americans of Lewiston-Auburn* explores the history of French-Canadian immigrants to the cities of Lewiston and Auburn, from the first arrivals in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century through the Maine Gubernatorial election of 2014. Unique personal and family stories are interwoven with the history of social clubs, and institutions like the Basilica of Sts. Peter & Paul and St. Mary's Hospital. The authors also explore a number of social and cultural themes – from the arts and literature to language, discrimination, and assimilation.

The discussion, accompanied by some of the dozens of historic images included in the book, will take place at Freeport Community Library (off Main Street, Freeport) at 6:30 p.m., Wednesday, February 18<sup>th</sup> (snow date Weds. Feb. 25<sup>th</sup>). Signed copies of the book will be available for sale. For more information, contact Freeport Historical Society at (207) 865-3170 or visit the FHS website, [www.freeporthistoricalsociety.org](http://www.freeporthistoricalsociety.org).

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## Tree-Pruning Workshop at Pettengill Farm

Join us Sunday, March 29<sup>th</sup> from 2:00pm-4:00pm at historic Pettengill Farm for a timely, hands-on workshop on pruning fruit trees with Maine Cooperative Extension Educator, Dr. Richard J. Brzowski. Brzowski will share why, when and where to prune apple and other fruit trees, with an eye to maintaining healthy and productive trees.

Brzowski obtained his Doctoral Degree at the University of Missouri in Columbia in Agricultural Education. In his work as Extension Educator, he travels throughout the County educating all agricultural topics. In addition, he oversees the popular Master Gardener program for Cumberland County.

Tools and goggles will be provided. Work gloves and appropriate footwear are advised as we will be working outside during the entire session.

Pettengill Farm is owned and maintained by the Freeport Historical Society. This 140-acre saltwater farm features an early 1800's saltbox, open fields, and wooded trails. Its small apple orchard, likely dates back seventy-five or more years. The farm is located on Pettengill Road, off Flying Point Road in Freeport.

Tickets are \$5 for FHS members, \$10 for non-members. Registration and payment are required in advance. To do so and to get directions to Pettengill Farm, please call FHS at (207) 865-3170 or visit [www.freeporthistoricalsociety.org](http://www.freeporthistoricalsociety.org).





# Think Globally, Eat Locally *and* Historically

A “localvore” is someone who eats local food. A “historyvore” is someone who eats food while talking about local history. (More precisely, someone who devours history.)

Freeport is a rich community of people whose families have lived in town for generations, or for decades, and those who have been here for a relatively short time. All of these different cross-sections of people are important contributors to the collective history we share—some have artifacts and photographs that have been saved over many years, others have stories and experiences of years gone by, and newcomers often bring to the table an enthusiastic interest in their town’s history.

We are bringing back last year’s successful “Lunch with Locals” series to support our next exhibit on shoemaking in Freeport. FHS will host two luncheon events, each with a different focus, one in February and one in March. The format this time is *we* provide lunch and *you* come to share your stories, knowledge, and information about shoes and shoemaking in our area. Or, if you are a historyvore, come and join in the fascinating conversations.

Lunch will be soup and sandwiches. Each event begins at noon at the Harrington House, 45 Main St., Freeport. All are welcome to attend, listen, and observe even if you do not have artifacts or stories to share. The topics will be:

**Sat Feb 21 SHOE AND TELL** (snow date Feb 28) —The purpose of this luncheon is for community members to bring and discuss items (or photographs of items) they own that relate to shoes and shoemaking in Freeport. An example is the cobbler’s anvil shown here that was used to hold a shoe upside down while a sole was added or repaired. (This interesting artifact belongs to FHS member and volunteer Bob Fusselman.) Mystery objects are encouraged—you have *something* related to historic shoes/shoemaking, but what is it?

**Tues March 10 BARE YOUR SOLE** (snow date Wed March 11) —This luncheon will focus on hearing and recording your experiences and knowledge of the shoemaking industry in Freeport. No story will be left untold...

RSVP for one or both events! Call (207) 865-3170 or email to [info@freeporthistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@freeporthistoricalsociety.org)



Cobbler's Anvil



## Dry Stone Wall Building Workshop

Join Freeport Historical Society for a hands-on workshop led by Chris Tanguay, Master Craftsman with the Dry Stone Walling Association of Great Britain. Participants may opt for a one- or two-day workshop over the weekend of April 18 & 19. The workshop runs from 9:00am – 4:00 pm both days and takes place at historic Pettengill Farm in Freeport.

Tanguay is the owner of Maine Dry Stone. A local stone-waller, he is a certified instructor and examiner for the DSWA of Great Britain.

Saturday’s workshop will focus on the basic structural techniques used to build or restore a typical field stone wall. The second day of the workshop will build on these skills, but will include more on detail work. If desired, more advanced instruction can be provided for those with a higher level of skill.

Saturday’s workshop is \$65.00; the two- day workshop is \$110. Lunch is included both days. Pettengill Farm is located on Pettengill Road, off Flying Point Road, in Freeport.

Registration and payment are required in advance. This workshop often sells out quickly, so register early!

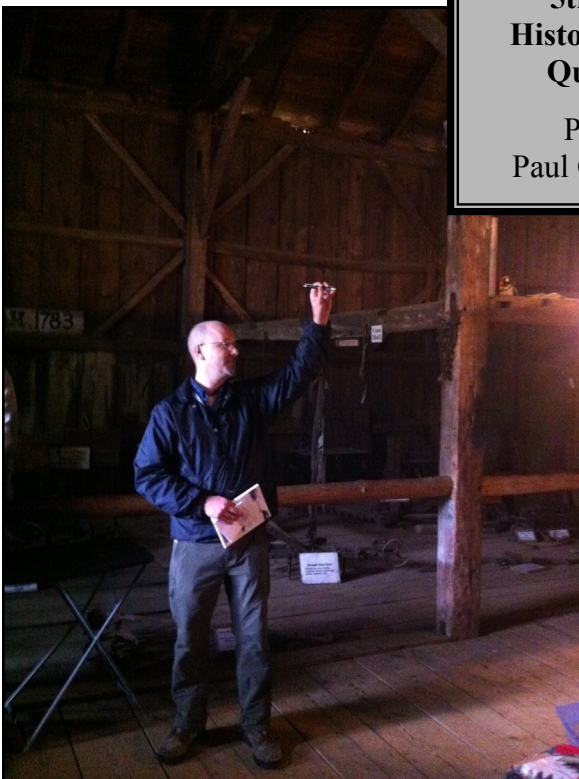


# Fall 2014 FHS Events



## 5th Annual Historic Barns & Quilts Tour

Photos by  
Paul Cunningham



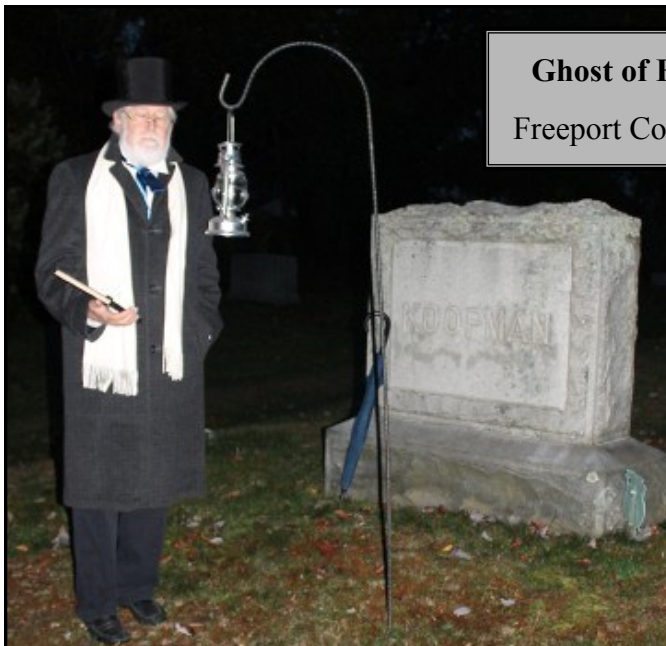




**39th Annual  
Pettengill Farm Day**  
Photos by Paul Cunningham



**Freeport Trolley Tour**



**Ghost of Freeport's Past**  
Freeport Community Players







Mildred Pettengill, aged 28,  
c.1911. FHS Collection 62

## Follow Mildred Pettengill's Year on Twitter

Throughout 2015, we'll be offering you the chance to step back in time and live a year in the life of Mildred Pettengill, the last resident of Pettengill Farm, now in its 40th year of stewardship by FHS. Among the artifacts FHS received from the estate of Mildred Pettengill were several

diaries, which record interesting details about her life in the early-mid 20th century.

Every day this year, Freeport Historical Society will be Tweeting (from @Miss\_Pettengill an entry from Mildred's 1921 diary. The Tweets will be augmented with photographs and other historic material from the Pettengill Family Collection at FHS, and annotated with historic details. The diary entries, with annotations, are also view-able on the FHS website where you can also catch up with past days' entries.

The diaries offer us a great sense of rural Maine life in the 20s, as well as personal details of Mildred's own life. While many days' activities revolve around the routine of farming—trimming the junipers, churning butter and canning meat—January's entries also include the touching story of a friend's pregnancy.

## Harraseeket Historic District Update

In October, FHS began a project to update our records on the Harraseeket Historic District, one of Freeport's two historic districts included in the National Register of Historic Places. The aim of the project is to "check in" on the properties in the district, which were last surveyed in 1997, and also to bring the district's listing into line with contemporary National Register standards. We're also taking the opportunity to review the definition and description of the historic district.

The Harraseeket Historic District encompasses most—but not all—of the properties around the Harraseeket from Winslow Park to Wolfe's Neck. It's an area that encompasses some of Freeport's earliest history, and several phases of development. Pettengill Farm speaks to the area's connection to saltwater farming, while Mast Landing and South Freeport demonstrate the importance of the mast trade and ship-building. Architectural styles vary dramatically, from the William Pote house to Casco Castle and the Stone House.

Residents of the District should already have been notified of the project. If you still have questions, or would like to learn more, we've prepared a "frequently asked questions" page on our website, at [www.freeporthistoricalsociety.org/projects](http://www.freeporthistoricalsociety.org/projects). As always, please free to get in touch with us directly as well.

## E-newsletter Available

We're pleased to announce we'll soon be able to offer *The Dash* in a 21<sup>st</sup>-century format—as an e-newsletter straight to your e-mail inbox! Those members for whom we have mailing lists will automatically be enrolled in the e-newsletter, and will receive it within the next two weeks (bear with us as we iron out the wrinkles in the new format!). If you would be interested in receiving the electronic copy, just send an email to [info@freeporthistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@freeporthistoricalsociety.org) and we'll sign you up.

If you like your paper copy—don't worry! We'll still be sending out printed copies of *The Dash* to anyone who wants one—and no-one will be taken off the mailing list except at their request. That being said, if you'd like to go "green" and save us some printing and mailing costs, just let us know.



Students Lena Champlin (l) and Nicole Jordan (r) digging at the privy shed site in 2008.

## Archeology at Pettengill Farm This Fall

Thanks to grants from the Martha Proctor Foundation and recently-received funding from the Davis Family Foundation, Freeport Historical Society is able to undertake another phase of archeological exploration at Pettengill Farm, with the help of Norm Buttrick and the students at Freeport High School. The archeological team will be surveying the site of a former wharf and brickyard at Pettengill Farm in the Fall of 2015. Artifacts from the work will be deposited at FHS, and Norm will offer a public presentation to members of the community in early 2016.





Volunteer Jake Messer working to remove the wallpaper in the parlor of Harrington House.

## A New Look for our Exhibits Space

After a successful run, our 2014 exhibit on the development of transportation in Freeport, *You Can Get There From Here*, ended on January 28<sup>th</sup>. We're already gearing up for our next exhibit on the history of shoe-making in Freeport.

I hope many of you were among the more than 500 visitors who stopped by the exhibit since May. We received lots of positive feedback – the history of Casco Castle and the railroads were particularly popular subjects. We were able to educate not only our friends and neighbors, but also guests from Los Angeles, Florida, and even Canada. The exhibit clearly brought back memories for many of you of times past and of stories passed down through the family. If the mention of our new exhibit topic brings to mind anything relating to Freeport's shoemaking industry, make sure to attend one of our "Lunch with Locals" coming up.

With the double-parlor empty of the exhibit, we've taken the chance to make some improvements to our exhibition space. The reproduction wallpaper, which was put up by FHS when we acquired Harrington House in the 1980s, has been removed (a sample will be kept for the archives) and we're painting the walls to create a gallery space that will allow us to display our collections to best effect.

Thanks to all the volunteers who helped with the renovations work—Jake Messer, Elizabeth Hyde, Guy Blanchard, David Coffin, Bob Fusselman, and Rebecca Hotelling—to Holly Hurd for overseeing the project, and to the members of the Collections Committee who contributed advice and guidance – Peter Gerquest, Sally W. Rand, David Coffin, Bob Fusselman, Vicki Lowe, Cathy Wagner, John Davis and Ruth Gruningier.

Stop by some time to see how the work turned out!

## Newsletter Archive Online

Our website now allows you to travel back through five decades of Freeport Historical Society history! Back issues of FHS newsletters are currently available from 1977 through 2004; more recent editions will be added to the online archive shortly. The archives, which cover the *Pettengill Papers*, through the pithily-named *Freeport Historical Society Newsletter* to our beloved *Dash*, include a wealth of information not only on FHS happenings but historical research conducted by staff and members. You can learn, for example, about an NAACP chairman who attended Freeport High School ("The Spottswood's of Freeport, Maine, Winter 1995) or our initial thoughts on the Pettengill Farm sgraffiti ("Pettengill House Graffiti, June 1977).

Browse the archives at your leisure at [www.freeporthistoricalsociety.org/newsletter-archives](http://www.freeporthistoricalsociety.org/newsletter-archives).

## Welcome Rebecca!

The newest addition to the Freeport Historical Society team is Rebecca McNulty, who came on-board in December as our new Office Manager. Rebecca will be the first point of contact for visitors and volunteers alike. With two months of experience at FHS under her belt, she's already beginning to make herself indispensable! Thanks to those of you who have taken the time to stop by and say "hello" – and if you haven't, feel free to do so!



Rebecca lives in Wiscasset with her partner, Andrea Ellis, and their three house rabbits. She was the coordinator at the Brunswick Jung Center for six years. She has a BA in Religion and Theater from Wells College and an MFA in Drama from UConn, where she specialized in puppet, mask and shadow theater. She is currently working on a toy theater film called "Carnival of the Harvest Moon." Rebecca also directs *Dragon's Eye Adventures*, a summer mystery program for children. The adventures she writes tap into her love of history, myth and art. Those same interests brought her to Freeport Historical Society, where she hopes to share her skills in support of the intriguing work the society is doing.





## 2014-15 Annual Fund Campaign

A big thank you to all those who supported this very important campaign. We are committed to collecting, researching, teaching and advocating the history of Freeport to students, Freeporters, regional neighbors, and visitors. Our exhibits, community service school projects, and public programs and exhibit all contribute to our goal of sharing history in interesting, innovative ways. The Annual Fund is essential to our meeting those challenging goals. With your help, we were able to meet this year's target of raising over \$24,000!

## Thank You to Our Annual Fund Donors

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... and other donors



## A Legacy for the Future: Planned giving

Planned gifts are a meaningful way to provide generous support for Freeport Historical Society. They require no outlay of financial resources while alive and the long-term benefits of such foresight are immeasurable.

**BEQUESTS: PAYING IT FORWARD.** The work of collecting and preserving Freeport's long history is important not just for ourselves, but for those who come after us. By including a gift for Freeport Historical Society in your estate plans, you make a promise to future generations that the archives and artifacts that allow us to share Freeport's heritage will always be there. Your generosity provides a legacy that enriches the lives of those who come after you. Bequests to charity through a will or trust are the most common type of planned gift.

**TAX ADVANTAGES:** There are many planned giving options with significant tax savings. A charitable gift to FHS through your will or trust can reduce your overall estate value thereby reducing estate taxes for your heirs. You can direct a gift of cash, tangible property, real estate or intangible assets such as stocks and bonds. You can leave a percentage of your total estate or a specific gift amount. If you give appreciated assets to charity, you are eligible for a deduction for the full fair-market value on the date of gift and avoid payment of capital gains tax.

**PLANNED GIVING VEHICLES:** Planned gifts are a significant way to secure your financial future while providing generous support for Freeport Historical Society. There are a variety of estate planning vehicles, each with unique benefits, such as charitable remainder trusts, charitable gift annuities, gifts of real estate, appreciated stock, life insurance policies, and retirement plans. We recommend you consult your financial advisor as to the kind of gift most appropriate for your circumstances.

**LEGACY:** Name Freeport Historical Society as a beneficiary in your will and make a lasting contribution to the organization in your name. Or consider making it in the name of a loved one.

**Your foresight and generosity will insure the preservation of Freeport's heritage.**

## THANK YOU TO OUR 2015 BUSINESS SPONSORS

**L.L.Bean**



## WISH LIST

- A new hand-held rechargeable vacuum cleaner
- A rechargeable battery powered lawn trimmer
- A new gas-powered lawn mower (for Harrington House courtyard and property)
- A 12 cup coffee maker

## Membership

A new year means it is time to re-new your FHS membership for 2015! All memberships run for a calendar year, so if you joined us in 2014, you will likely need to renew your membership for this year. Those of you who joined at the tail end of 2014 will be current until January 1, 2016.

We will be sending out a paper reminder shortly, but you can preempt another piece of mail in your box by renewing today. The easiest way to renew is online, at [www.freeporthistoricalsociety.org/membership](http://www.freeporthistoricalsociety.org/membership), or you may renew over the phone or in person.

## JOIN US

Membership has its benefits!

A copy of the book *Tides of Change: A Guide to the Harraseeket Historic District*, a trail map of Pettengill Farm, and our quarterly newsletter, *The Dash*, are included.

Members also receive three hours of research time in our archives (a \$75.00 value) and invitations to all Society events and exhibits at free or reduced rates.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Town \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 Individual | <input type="checkbox"/> \$10 Senior       | <input type="checkbox"/> \$10 Student               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$40 Family     | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Contributing | <input type="checkbox"/> \$150 Sustaining Business  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$75 Supporting | <input type="checkbox"/> \$150 Sustaining  | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Contributing Business |

Please make checks payable to Freeport Historical Society and mail to 45 Main Street, Freeport, ME 04032, or join us online at [www.freeporthistoricalsociety.org](http://www.freeporthistoricalsociety.org)



# Spring Events at FHS

Wed, Feb 18, 6:30 pm **Book Talk with James Myall & Mary Rice-DeFosse** at Freeport Community Library. The authors discuss their new book, *Franco-American s of Lewiston-Auburn*.

Sat, Feb 21, Noon **Shoe & Tell** at Harrington House. Bring items related to local shoe businesses to a lunch provided by FHS.

Sat, Mar 10, Noon **Bare Your Sole** at Harrington House. Bring stories of local shoe businesses to a lunch provided by FHS.

Sun, Mar 29, 2-4 pm **Tree Pruning Workshop** at Historic Pettengill Farm. Dick Brzowski of Maine Cooperative Extension.

Sat/Sun, April 18 & 19, 9 am to 4 pm **Dry Stone Wall Building Workshop** at Historic Pettengill Farm. Learn from Master Craftsman, Chris Tanguay.

Sat, June 20 **The 2015 Harraseeket Harborside Gala and Boat Parade** "BBQ & Bluegrass" (Details to come)

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FREEPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
Harrington House  
45 Main Street  
Freeport, ME 04032

info@freeporthistoricalsociety.org  
www.freeporthistoricalsociety.org

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