

The Falmouth Historical Society Minutes

Falmouth Heritage Museum—January 15, 2019

The meeting was called to order at 6:45 PM. Present were Betsy Jo Whitcomb, David Farnham (President and Treasurer), Sue Farnham (Secretary), Sheri Fistal, Rich Meserve (Vice President), Ron Scorsone, and Fred Howe; Erin Cadigan was unable to attend.

Secretary's Report

FHS has a total of 108 current members, of whom 27 are pending renewal.

Treasurer's Report

Utility costs in November and December saw a big increase. The heat pump control board malfunctioned, causing the furnace to do more of the heating. The propane-burning furnace is less efficient and more expensive than the heat pump. Maintenance costs were higher than expected due to the cost of repair to the heat pump. Ron believes the heat pump was under warranty at the time of the repair and will follow up with AAA.

FHS has received the \$1,000 grant from the town covering most of last year's Tercentennial expenses. We also received a generous gift from a family that was credited and then backed out by the bank. David will inquire with the bank.

Old business

Maintenance

Fred states that a dumpster may be needed during the renovation of the Museum's second floor. This can cost anywhere from \$180 to \$280. To control overall costs and break the work up into more manageable pieces, the Society could also consider renovating one room at a time. In this way, a dumpster would not be needed, as the smaller amounts of refuse could be hauled to the dump in pick-up trucks. The work will be planned for warmer weather. Volunteers who can help in any capacity—demolition, dump runs, etc.—are welcome! Fred Howe and Ron Scorsone are contacts.

Since Fred owns a power washer and has offered to continue the cleaning the house, we will continue to do so, one side at a time.

The Museum's windows should be sealed from the weather in order to control heating costs. Scraping and painting of the windows, doors, and trim needs to be done as well. There are some areas that are badly flaking and are down to bare wood. Ron reports that we may have a volunteer for painting. Additional volunteers for this work are most welcome, as many hands make light work!

There is much electrical work that needs to be done—both inside and outside of the Museum. Ron and Fred have installed motion-activated lights around the stairway and door, making it significantly safer to enter the building after dark. (Many thanks to the two of you!) Improving the electrical system will continue to be an ongoing endeavor.

Collections

Fred reports that T & J Towing will charge \$100 to tow our firetruck to the garage in Scarborough, where Leif Nilsen offered to fix the truck for just the cost of parts. The registration also needs to be renewed. Fred will meet with Leif to go over the truck and put together an estimate.

The Girl Scout dolls have been returned to former longtime member Dick McKenzie.

Cataloging will commence in earnest once we purchase *PastPerfect* software.

Sue will check with Ann Gagnon about any new accessions and the status of the recently acquired Forecaster collection.

FHS members Faith and Ehrlon Varney are offering a horse drawn plow to us. Sue and Ron will go and look at it.

Merchandise

Betsy, Erin and Ron are working on reprinting the FHS cookbook. The original printers are still in business, and they have given us a price. They are looking to see if they still have the original print set-up. They require that Past President Marge Devine give permission because she signed for the original printing. It will

cost \$2,000 to get 500 copies; we will net \$2,000 from the sales. We will also pursue reprinting the Wallace book. Ann Gagnon will help Betsy with this.

New Business

Calendar

David has posted the 2019 calendar online. Annual Meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday October 15th. The Town is changing the rules on who can use Town Hall after hours, so that only groups with town employees as members may use it. We are fortunate to have Betsy as our Society contact!

Our February meeting will be on the second Tuesday, February 12th, as the Secretary (Sue) and President (David) will be out of town the first Tuesday.

We need to talk about 2019 summer hours for the Museum. One option is to trade a week day for open hours on the weekend, when people with “day jobs” can visit. Based on comments from other historical societies, Sunday afternoons are popular. Comments on this from the membership and community are welcome!

Reminder: The Museum is closed on Federal holidays, Christmas and New Year’s weeks, and Election days.

To discuss at next month’s meeting when Erin is here: activities for the year: tours, history events, etc.

Online Presence

In response to a query about website activity at the December meeting, David provided statistics collected using Google Analytics. There were 202 sessions over the past month by 196 users. The most popular page was the colonial origins of Falmouth, followed by the Museum page, then “town to suburb”, then upcoming events. It may be useful to report on this every month.

David thought he had corrected the issues on the web page describing the history of the Museum, but we’ve been told it still isn’t right. The issues arise because the original farmhouse burned down and was rebuilt around 1830.

We promised to post self-guided tours on the website, based on the “east and west” tours done with Falmouth Community Programs as part of the

Tercentennial celebration. Betsy will forward her notes to David, who will then get them up on the site.

The Board discussed things we can do to expand our online presence. One example of this is creating an Instagram account. FHS needs to become disciplined about regularly posting pictures and a story about an artifact at the Museum each month. Any help from the membership is welcome.

When time permits, David will expand local resources on the website. He will add sections with guides for family history research and for finding historical information about homes in Falmouth. He will also create a “virtual library” containing digital copies of books and documents related to Falmouth history that are now out of copyright. Digital volumes can be searched, which makes it easier to find information in references such as the eighteen volumes of York Deeds. We also have printed documents that have not been digitized, such as those Falmouth town reports that are not in the digitized UMaine collection.

Strengthening FHS

Fred and Erin suggested ways to improve the vibrancy of our Society in emails sent to the board. Some are easy, such as putting a notice in the Forecaster that we are recruiting new members.

We would like to recruit some amateur genealogists to help respond to online inquiries. FHS provides context for place and time, crucial to making sense out of local records. FHS is also less intimidating than the larger institutions; many online inquiries result in visits to the museum.

We absolutely must increase revenue. We have been tapping our long-term savings with the Foundation to fill the shortfall. We also need to get financials straightened out for 2015-16 and filed with the IRS. David will continue to work on this. Fred and Erin will work on a fundraising strategy.

Other Activities

Betsy reported that the Town Hall cataloging is postponed until spring when the town hall attic is warmer.

Longstanding FHS member Carol Kaufman is very active in the Falmouth Congregational Church, which holds the records of the Third Parish of Ancient

Falmouth. It would be very beneficial for FHS to work with her to gain a deeper knowledge of what they have.

Theo Holtwijk from Town Hall currently has the FHS binders containing the history data sheets on Falmouth homes. He will scan these into the computer at Town Hall and create a digital file. We will get the binders back along with a digital copy of the scans for our computer. This is a win for both Town Hall and FHS!

Adjourned at 8:20 PM.