The Dash

Published by Freeport Historical Society | Keeping the past present since 1969.



Historic House Marker Program



Stewarding Harrington House Into the Future

SEE PAGE 8

FALL 2020

What a year this has been!

LETTER FROM
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
SEE PAGE 2

Anchors Aweigh!

BY JIM CRAM, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

N 2016 GEORGE DENNEY gave your Historical Society a gift of one million dollars in response to a declaration of need from the board at our Annual Meeting that year. The board was referring to the fact that we own a set of 190-year-old buildings that require all sorts of TLC and updates, along with a desperate need for a fireproof vault. It was a thrilling moment! The statement was made not as an 'ask' so much, but as a heads up that the need existed, and the request for support would be coming. The meeting rolled on for a few minutes before George stood up at the back of the room, raised his hand and said, "wait a minute - I have something to say." He strode to the microphone and declared, "Freeport has been good to Joyce and me, and we like to think we have been good to Freeport. And tonight, I would like to say we are going to give the Historical Society One Million Dollars." There was a stunned silence for a moment and then the audience leapt to their feet in applause.

Three days later, George and Joyce handed me the check. I asked, "George, really, how do you want us to spend the



With a newly constructed vault and renovated barn, the Harrington House will be a beautiful anchor of Main Street.

money?" He replied, "You figure it out. But, I want to see this property be the anchor of Main Street."

It has taken far longer than we imagined to explore the many possible designs, approaches, and solutions to achieve our goals, while learning just how expensive it can be to adapt old buildings to safer modern standards. As we launch this project, we hope you will be as excited as we are with this final plan which will improve the facility in so many ways.

PROTECT THE COLLECTION:

Build a new fireproof **VAULT** with museum grade shelving and atmospheric controls to organize and protect our historic documents, paintings, and artifacts.

MAKE THE BUILDINGS ACCESSIBLE:

Provide wheelchair access through the gardens and a **RAMP** from the parking lot to our new front entrance on the ell porch.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

The Dash

FALL 2020

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
www.freeporthistoricalsociety.org

OFFICE & EXHIBIT HOURS

Due to the ongoing pandemic, we are closed to the public until further notice.

For inquiries, please call (207) 865-3170 or email info@freeporthistoricalsociety.org

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Eric C. Smith, President
Janice Gerry, Vice President
Scott Burrill, Treasurer
Polly Brann, Secretary
Dr. Mary Babikian
David Coffin

Jim DeGrandpre

Jane Grant Rebecca Hotelling

Dr. Dennis Landis

Brad Snow Alan Tracy

Peter Wagner

Sarah Walsh

Jule Whelan Lonny Winrich

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Jim Cram

COLLECTIONS AND EDUCATION MANAGER

Audrey Wolfe

ADMINISTRATIVE AND PROGRAMS ASSOCIATE

Shannon Gilmore

LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

What a year this has been!

T SEEMS EVERYONE IS SAYING JUST THAT, regardless of their circle of associates. This pandemic is real, and it has disrupted all of our lives in many ways. We can be thankful that we live in Maine and that the great outdoors is all around, allowing us to stretch and breath. And, as the "keepers of the stories" here at the FHS, we know that our community has endured tough times before and that reminder helps us look ahead and know there are good things to come post-covid.

We are managing the potential for exposure to the virus very carefully. The office is closed to the public, all of our board and committee meetings are held via Zoom, and when we do have necessary visitors to the building, masks are mandatory, we and we strictly limit the number of people inside to no more than 2-3 in addition to our staff. In the building, we are fortunate to have plenty of space that ensures that our work stations are well separated. Meetings on the porch have been popular!

The most exciting happening of the summer has to be the integration of a Great New Team here with the addition of **Audrey Wolfe** as our new Collections and Education Manager and **Shannon Gilmore** as the Administrative and Programs Associate. You can read more about them, but I can assure you that both are bright, enthusiastic, and bring a lot of energy to this organization!

Making final plans and preparing for our upcoming building renovations and expansion have all of us scrambling to keep up with the rapidly evolving steps in the process. Audrey has completed an exhaustive inventory of all items in the barn loft storage area and recorded her

findings in our database. With this project, we can be certain that our records are up to date. After putting in many long hours in the barn, Audrey has made friends with every item – and a few spiders.

Shannon is doing well keeping track of me and finding the hiding places of light switches and all the odd items we use to keep the wheels turning. whether they are in the computer or in the back of some closet. All the while, politely suggesting alternative improvements in the process!

I am personally very pleased to see the work that the Tri Town Equity & Inclusion Coalition is doing to educate this community on how systemic racism is entwined in our culture. Now is the time understand it and actively work to eradicate it.

At this time of the year, we always have to ask for your support via the Annual Fund to help cover the operating costs of the organization. The Covid crisis has forced us to cancel our fundraising events and led to the closure of Frosty's Donuts, leaving us without the income from their sizable rent. We were very fortunate to qualify for the government subsidy programs which really kept us afloat. But the bills keep coming.

This year we are making a second Ask and that is for the Building Fund. It has been thirty years since our last big push to catch up on repairs at the Harrington House and now it is time to build the fireproof vault that we have needed for years. There is a fund request going out at this time and I hope you can help us with both efforts.

Please keep an eye on us as you travel down Main Street. The project is starting now and will accelerate as the weather breaks in March.

Stay Safe! — JIM CRAM, Executive Director

Anchors Aweigh!

STABILIZE THE BARN:

Provide critical foundation and flooring repairs to the **BARN** to host a new vendor/tenant in our unique space.

PROVIDE RESEARCH/ LIBRARY SPACE:

Restore the **ELL** with a new accessible public bathroom, life safety and security improvements, and offer space for researching and exploring the collections with staff support.

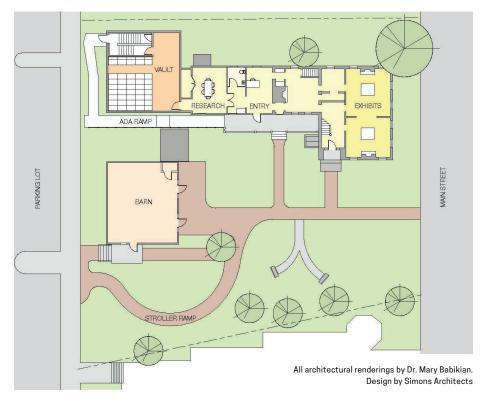


compact Library SHELVING: The new vault is designed to hold these very efficient systems on both the entry and lower levels. Because of their density these shelving units are extremely heavy. Therefore, the floor systems will be composed of reinforced steel and concrete. These systems can be configured for all types of collections including paper and odd-shaped artifacts. We will purchase the expensive shelving over time, eventually making space to store 7 times our existing capacity.

All of these improvements will enable us to serve the community more effectively. With the new construction complete, we will be able to welcome all members of the community to our beautifully renovated and accessible space while also offering a safe harbor for the new donations that we hope will come our way. As you might expect, the Denney gift made this project possible, but we still have significant funds to raise. We are launching a major fundraising effort of \$500,000 today and hope that you will be able to help us to achieve that goal and complete this project. George challenged us to be an anchor to the community and we say, "Anchors Aweigh!"



THIS PERSPECTIVE FROM THE REAR PARKING LOT shows how the new vault building will resemble the existing barn in all its exterior proportions. The trim details will echo the look of the barn as well. The barn is clad in cedar clapboards and shingles while the vault will be clad in fireproof cement-based clapboards and trim. In fact, the entire building will be constructed of non-combustible materials including concrete, steel, and gypsum sheathing.



THE SITE PLAN ILLUSTRATES OUR CAMPUS ON MAIN STREET and clearly shows the changes we can anticipate from this project: a much wider sweep to the curved entry from the rear parking lot, and a gentler stroller-friendly slope. After the barn is raised two feet, it will have a stronger presence toward Main Street and there will be new steps and a covered deck at the south entry. The barn and its shed will have moved south six feet to allow the passage of a new wheelchair ramp from the rear parking lot, past the new vault, onto the porch and into the main building. The new main entrance will be on the porch leading into the ell. The old archival area will house an accessible bathroom, a dedicated research and meeting room, as well as a welcoming reception space. Note that the vault will be accessible from the research room and also from the rear parking lot. Both floors will be fully conditioned for temperature and humidity.



Just across the street from the FHS, ACAF – the Arts and Cultural Alliance of Freeport, is progressing with modifications to the entry level of the shingle style 1896 church into a performing space and art gallery. We are excited to have this venue for exhibits, lectures and performances for up to 200 people opening just steps from our campus.

Collection Showcase

Through staff transitions and a global pandemic, we've continued to collect and preserve items generously donated by donors both near and far. From January to September, we've taken in 22 collection donations representing approximately 1,000 items. Some of the highlights among those items include:



A photograph of the Freeport Grain Store, likely from the late 1920s to mid-1930s We previously didn't have a photo of the building in this time period. The building was located next to the railroad tracks at the corner of Depot and Mill Streets and burned down August 11, 1971.



A 1973 Freeport High School majorette uniform worn by Thais Forbes for President Richard M. Nixon's second inaugural parade. The uniform is in optimal condition and includes a medal featuring the parade's theme, the "Spirit of '76." a nod to the nation's upcoming 200th birthday that was to be celebrated during the final year of President Nixon's second term.



A knitted textile belonging to Sarah Snow Jellison, generously donated by her daughter-in-law Cynthia Jellison. This c. 1956 blanket features the names of 66 women who belonged to the Whosoever Bible Class, connected to the First Baptist Church in Freeport. Pictured here (L-R) is Sarah Jellison, Cynthia Jellison, FHS Trustee Brad Snow, and Matthew Jellison learning more about the textile's construction. Further research about the group and the names that appear on the textile is forthcoming!

PDATED COLLECTING PROCEDURES, a designated quarantine space for newly donated objects, and new handling rules have kept the health and safety of our donors and staff at the forefront. But we've also faced a challenge: How do we responsibly, ethically, and sensitively collect those contemporary items representative of the human experience during this time while acknowledging the incredible toll this has had on our community? It was telling that museums and historical societies were flooded with request to share items, pictures, and material from the 1918 flu pandemic. It's an important reminder that, try as we might, we never quite know what will have relevance and offer solace to future generations.

At the FHS, we don't want the human impact of this moment to be lost for future generations. Thank you notes to essential workers, handwritten grocery lists, social distancing posters, bottles of locally-made hand sanitizer, communications between loved ones, pictures, homeschool lesson plans, rainbow encouragement posters and rocks, closed business signs, hand-sewn personal protective equipment—these are only a few examples of ephemera and other items we are considering collecting. What will future generations remember about how COVID-19 affected Freeport and its residents? That story is still unfolding, and we will be enlisting your help in preserving its impact in the months to come. FHS



Connie Lay gets her first look at her new sign. A close examination of her home's history revealed that Captain John A. Briggs was perhaps the most prominent homeowner of the c. 1848 home



Mary Ann and Bill Hinko at their Holbrook Street home. The house is built on property once owned by E.B. Mallet, Jr. who sold the lot to Presbury Dennison who was the first person to occupy a house on the property.

HISTORIC HOUSE MARKER PROGRAM

Jane Grant and Brad Snow both have a strong appreciation for local history and a keen interest in discovering the stories of older homes in the

community. Jane previously lived in Marblehead, Massachusetts, where nearly every house displayed a marker indicating the name and occupation of the original homeowner. She enjoyed that window into the town's history and the signs sparked her curiosity in house histories. Now, in Freeport, Jane wonders about the history of the homes here and is glad to be part of an effort to recognize our historic homes with signage in-

dicating their history. Growing up in Freeport, Brad was always aware of how many older homes are here and the partial histories of many of them. He remembers at least five houses

REEPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY TRUSTEES that have been moved over the last forty years. A number of those were in the Nathan Nye/Morse St. neighborhood, an area that has become parking lots and now bears no resemblance to its neighborhood past. Having watched the town change over

Brad Snow was surprised to learn that his 1831 house had been owned by 16 individuals before him!

the years, he and Jane both value an awareness of neighborhood shifts throughout history and believe the historic house maker signs are an important way to document the evolution of the town. Brad says that the signs are useful in bringing the past into focus and often bring up interesting surprises. In researching for his own home's marker, he was surprised to learn that he is the 17th owner of his home! Brad and Jane both wel-

come anyone interested in this program to contact them or the FHS to see what information may already be compiled about their home! FHS

FREEPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY LAUNCHED THE HISTORIC HOUSE MARKER PROGRAM IN 2016. Many local homeowners of houses that are over 100 years old now proudly display a sign indicating the year their home was built and the first or other prominent resident. Homeowners can apply for a marker if they suspect their home may be 100 years old or older. They are asked to provide whatever house history information they already know and the FHS staff can often assist with further investigation. The organization already has a large quantity of Freeport house history information on hand, thanks to an extensive Historic House Survey conducted in the 1970s of Mast Landing, Porters Landings, South Freeport, and Freeport Village. Once a home's likely date of original construction and original owner is determined, the homeowner is eligible for one of the 12" x 16" hand-painted weatherproof signs Trustees Jane Grant and Brad Snow have been instrumental in developing and promoting the program.

"A PLACE FOR EVERYTHING AND EVERYTHING IN ITS PLACE"

N OUR FIELD, the most successful building projects that specifically look to address collection security and storage issues also account for a collection's growth. After all, we aren't just looking to house the items we currently have, but also those collection items that will come to us in the future. But there's a reason why museums' collections aren't routinely moved and, when they are, the decision to do so isn't taken lightly.

Why? Well, you may think that the most harmful agents of deterioration to collections items are pests, environmental factors (like light, humidity, temperature, or pollution), or disasters like floods and fires. While these certainly are damaging—and some dramatically so—the most common way collection items get damaged is through disassociation and improper handling.

RISK AND REWARD

The act of intellectually and physically moving our collection does hold an element of risk—but it's a risk worth taking. Our irreplaceable collections are currently housed in every available storage space in the building, including the wooden ell, the basement, the attic, and two of the former upstairs bedrooms. Additionally, the wooden carriage house—which also houses collections—is completely maxed out of usable space. As Jim details in the main article, no matter how many mitigation measures we undertake to the Harrington House, we are on borrowed time.

Our wonderful, historic building was built to be a home and not with our organizational needs in mind. We can no longer demand or ask it to be something it fundamentally isn't. A collections storage building, specifically built with our collections in mind, is the rare once-ina-lifetime opportunity for us to not only honor our promise to those who have



The barn is currently packed with a wide variety of interesting collection items.

Disassociation 2003.33.19

Disassociation (i.e. the loss of information about an object) affects the legal, cultural, or intellectual status of our collection. Without their associated data, objects lose their context, which is of equal importance to the actual physical item. Some disassociation over time is inevitable, but even small measures like—ensuring good record keeping and that object tags aren't faded, torn, or missing—makes a huge difference.



When you touch, lift, or hold an object you are handling it. Anytime we handle objects, we amplify the physical forces that hasten their wear and tear. Understanding how to properly handle objects relies on understanding how it's constructed and thinking through all the risks associated with lifting and moving it. After all, once a manuscript is torn or a pot is broken, the damage is permanent. With careful thought, preparation, and a respectful attitude to what we're handling, we can lessen the likelihood of accidental damage.

already entrusted us with their family heirlooms and stories, but also to future generations of Freeporters.

An exciting opportunity—and a practical challenge. How exactly *will* we move several thousands of manuscripts, letters, photographs, books, and artifacts? We'll be sharing a behind-the-scenes look at what it takes to tackle this endeavor in upcoming issues of the *DASH* as the project unfolds. For now, we've started as we'll end: with a **full collections inventory**.

INVENTORY 101

A collection inventory is a fundamental and crucial responsibility for any museum or historical organization to undertake, no matter their size or the extent of their collection. There are different types of inventories that range in completeness and scope, depending on organizational capacity and policies. Spot inventories (selecting objects at random) and partial inventories (like selecting a shelving unit or file cabinet) are more likely to be performed regularly or as projects demand.

A full, complete collections inventory is where you go through every single object in your collection. **Yes—every single object**. Our building projects are the per-

fect opportunity to not only tackle a full inventory but also establish the organization's commitment to this practice in the future. A complete inventory hasn't been done in decades and we can't move anything until we fully understand what we have, where it's located it, and what condition it's in. An accurate collection inventory is the first step to ensuring proper collection stewardship as well as answering these critical questions.

And yet, it would be a disservice to think that this is just about making a list. A collection inventory is the building block for all that we do. Collection inventories help inspire and inform programming, exhibits, conservation, educational content, publishing, and research. They help us refine our collecting priorities, ensure equitable and inclusive collecting practices, and allow us to interrogate the historical lens through which we view these items. We aren't just making a list (and checking it twice) to get items safely from point a to point b. We are actively engaging with our collection so that at the end of this process, we can answer the question: "So now what?"

It's an ambitious but necessary undertaking and we're excited to bring you on this journey with us. FHS



THE TOOLS OF THE TRADE – a spreadsheet, pencil, and camera











We've collected and continue to collect a wide swath of material, objects, and time periods relevant to Freeporters past and present.

Stewarding Harrington House Into the Future



One of the advantages of the final plan for this project is that it utilizes space between the barn and the vault for an accessible ramp which allows the beautiful gardens and charming porch to remain in front of Harrington House for all to enjoy. We thank local artist Judy Shank for creating this painting of the space that helps us understand how it will look and feel.

ARRINGTON HOUSE'S PRESENCE WAS established on Main Street in Freeport in 1830 when Enoch & Eliza Harrington built their home here on property that was a gift from Eliza's father, Nathan Nye. For over 140 years, the house was a home for many families including the Harringtons, the Foggs, and the Pattersons, as well as to a stream of tenants who rented rooms from homeowners over the years.

By the 1970s, the house had passed into the hands of local artist Helen Randall, who continued to rent out rooms as well as work from her home art studio in the Harrington House. After Randall passed away in 1977, Mrs. Eleanor Houston Smith purchased the building with the aim of entrusting the property's care to

By the 1970s, the house had passed into Freeport Historical Society and created a ne hands of local artist Helen Randall, mortgage agreement with the FHS.

By 1988, Freeport Historical Society was the full owner of the property thanks to Smith's heirs' generous forgiveness of the mortgage. With such a rich history of tenancy and multiple homeowners, Harrington House has many stories to tell.

The FHS has worked consistently to be a responsible steward of this beautiful historic home.

The FHS has overseen regular maintenance along with minor upgrades to the property and grounds but is now poised to tackle a major project that will improve the property's ability to serve as a resource for the organization and the town.

In preparation for our upcoming construction project, we reflect on the way the house has changed in its almost 200-year history. The FHS is proud of the Harington House and excited to continue to steward it for many years to come. FHS

Harrington House through the years....



c. 1930s. Harrington House with a dormer (added to create four bedrooms in the attic) for rental to shoe factory workers. Note the very large elm trees and that the portico has yet to arrive. At this time, the brick house is painted brown with white shutters. In the 1980s, the FHS removed the remaining bits of peeling paint.



Pre-1983. Behind the Harrington House is a large vacant lot and trees.



c. 1985. Volunteers are sorting out the contents of the barn. Note the shed on the south end and that the driveway is well below the level of the lawn.



c. 1978. The FHS has just taken ownership thanks to a gift from Mrs. Eleanor Houston Smith. The elm trees are gone, the dormer remains, and the faux portico, added by Helen Randall, is visible facing the extract



 c. 1983. Sheds are removed from both the south and west sides of the barn



c.1993. The house has been converted to an attractive gift shop and the driveway has been filled in to be level with the lawn. At this time the walkways are crushed stone and very little work has been done to restore the barn.

Welcome to Audrey & Shannon!

FHS welcomed two new staff members to the team this summer

AUDREY WOLFE, Collections and Education Manager, comes to us with an impressive resume of experience in the historical society and museum world. As a nonprofit professional, Audrey is passionate about fostering community engagement in history-centered institutions. She has dedicated her career



to the belief that history is not just a series of events that happened to individuals long ago, but something that is also integral to the fabric of our daily lives. It should be no surprise that Audrey was thrilled to join the FHS team in July 2020. She earned her B.A. in History from Kent State University. She is also a proud alumnus of the Cooperstown Graduate Program and holds an M.A. in History Museum Studies from the program. Her experience in-

cludes working as a docent for Warther's Museum; as an Editorial Assistant for Early American Life magazine; as a Site Director at Historic Fort Laurens; as a Graduate Teaching Assistant for the State University of New York; as an Exhibit Curator for the Cooperstown Graduate Program; as a Program Development and Interpretation Specialist for The Farmers' Museum & The Fenimore Art Museum; as a Development Associate and Grants Researcher for the New York State Historical Association; and as Assistant Director of Development at the Massachusetts Historical Society. Before joining the FHS, Audrey worked at Victoria Mansion as their Director of Development.



SHANNON GILMORE serves as our new Administrative and Programs Associate. Her curiosity about history on a local scale combined with a passion for community drive a commitment to the work of historical societies. A graduate of Bowdoin College who majored in History, Shannon was a recipient of the Historic Deerfield Summer Fellowship and is currently pursuing her M.A. in Historic Preservation from Goucher College. As a trustee for the Pejepscot History Center in Brunswick, Shannon has worked to strengthen community connections through programs and outreach and hopes to do the same for the FHS. While she has conducted research on a wide range of topics from environmental history to textiles, her particular interest is in uncovering the histories of houses and their occupants. To that end, Shannon serves as our point person for the Historic House Marker Program in addition to her varied administrative and program support duties.

The 21-Day Racial Equity Challenge

BY CONNIE CLIFFORD

HE 21-DAY RACIAL EQUITY CHALLENGE was designed to create dedicated time and space for each of us to build more effective social justice habits, particularly those dealing with issues of race, power, privilege, and leadership. Challenges include: reading an article, listening to a podcast, watching a video, and more! These activities are structured to complete on your own time each day (approx. 15 minutes to 20 minutes each day). Participation will help us discover how racial and social injustice impacts our community and allow us to identify ways to dismantle racism and be better allies. Join this challenge with your family, friends, colleagues, running partners, and neighbors together we can build a better, more just community for everyone



Corporate Sponsors

The Freeport Historical Society relies on the generous support of these local businesses. Please support them whenever possible.

GOLD AND SILVER MEMBERS

George & Joyce **DENNEY**





Bath Savings

CREATING HEALTHY BUILDINGS





SUPPORTING AND LEADERSHIP MEMBERS















Desert of Maine









HANDMADE AMERICAN FURNITURE

WOLFE'S NECK FOR AGRICULTURE CENTER

BUSINESS MEMBERS

BEDROCK MEMBERS

Bow Street Market Brown Goldsmiths Catherine Fisher Clothing

Freeport Hardware Grant's Kennebago Jay Enterprises Inc. Kevin O'Brien Design

Maine Idyll Motor Court Mike Hughes Arborist Orchard Hill Investment Peter B. Rice & Co. Schaeffer Douglas Title Wilbur's of Maine Wolfe's Neck Farm

Love Point Oysters

AEC Engineering Alta Dental of Maine Bella Boutique Bessie's Farm Goods Bow Street Market Central Provisions Candlebay Inn Casco Bay Cutlery

Coastal Freeport Living

Casco Bay Ford

Coffee By Design Builders Heating

Criterium Engineers Estabrook's Garden Ctr The Gelato Fiasco James McConnell The Lobster Cooker Mike Rollins Plumbing & Nicholson Inn

Pammy's Ice Cream Parlor Portland Schooner Co. Portland Sea Dogs Shady Glen Nursery Steve Brann Building The Tackle Shop **Traditional Construction** & Design Wildflower Floral Design



Freeport Historical Society Harrington House 45 Main Street Freeport, ME 04032

Non-Profit Organization U.S. Postage PAID Permit #47 Freeport, Maine

NEWSLETTER DESIGN & LAYOUT : O'BRIEN DESIGN, FREEPORT



OIN US TODAY!

MEMBERS RECEIVE a copy of the book Tides of Change: A Guide to the Harraseeket Historic District, A Window Through Time (Pettengill photo book), a trail map of Pettengill Farm, and our quarterly newsletter, The Dash. Family Members and higher receive one hour of research time in our archives (a \$50 value) and invitations to events and exhibits at free or reduced rates.

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS:

- \$20 Senior/Student
- \$35 Individual
- \$40 Senior Family
- \$50 Family
- \$100 Contributing
- \$250 Supporting
- \$500 Sustaining
- \$1000 Leadership

CORPORATE SPONSORS:

- \$100 Contributing Business
- \$250 Supporting Business
- Special Corporate Sponsorship opportunities exist from \$500 - \$5000 Please visit our website for details.

Please make checks payable to Freeport Historical Society and mail to 45 Main Street, Freeport, ME 04032, or pay by debit or credit card online at www.freeporthistoricalsociety.org