

# The Dash

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



## Pettengill Farm Day

*The tradition continues*

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## Porter's Landing Cemetery

*Headstones heroes with Joyce Veilleux*

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FALL 2022

## Join Us!

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# LIGHTS, BUTTONS, ACTION!

## NEW EXHIBIT FEATURE PUTS FREEPORT ON THE MAP

AS FHS WAS PUTTING THE FINAL touches on our renovated Harrington House this spring, we asked some critical questions: What will the visitor experience be in this space? What will people see and do? How will we engage people with the breadth of Freeport history, whether their visit is a few minutes or a few hours? Of course, we had plans and designs for our exhibit spaces and research room and reception area, but once we were actually in these new spaces created within old walls, we asked these questions again. While some of the answers will still take some time to develop into reality, one element caught the enthusiasm of a trio of our most dedicated volunteers who took it on as their mission.

Mary Babikian, Polly Brann, and Kathy Smith realized we needed a map. We needed to show visitors what



Polly, Eric, and Mary identify historic locations on the map.



this place is that we call Freeport—a centerpiece to orient visitors to where they are within the geography and history of our town. The team had four primary ideas: high resolution aerial photography, on a table, with buttons, that activated lights at places of historical interest. They went to work to find people who would help bring all these elements together into what would become our map table. What they accomplished is remarkable.

Mary went to work sourcing the photographic maps, color correcting the images, planning the dimensions of the table for the optimal scale and viewing position of the map, and the ultimate challenge of where the boundaries of the map would be set. Polly went to work finding experts in

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## FALL 2022

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## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

THE BRIGHT FIRE orange of our Main Street maple tree is one of the beacons of fall in Freeport. Fall has long been a time of both celebration and preparation in our community, and it has been a time for both here at FHS this year. We celebrated with our gala in our still blooming garden in September (page 6), and again at our 46th Pettengill Farm Day with hundreds of children and families delighting in wonders of woodworking, historic crafts, lively music, and farm tours (page 4). We also celebrated our town's history through Meetinghouse Arts' production of *Our Town*, engaging audiences with an examination of Freeport in the early 20th century through the lens of the play (page 7).

As the last of the foliage falls and the sun slips south, we turn now to the equally important task of preparation, not just for winter and the holiday season, but for a new year and a new focus for FHS. As we complete the transformational building project so many of you helped us accomplish, we have been actively planning for how to transform our organization to reach our vibrant potential amid a changing Freeport economy and

community needs. Our Vision Committee and our Board of Trustees are exploring new opportunities for education and community engagement, new and renewed partnerships with Freeport organizations and businesses, and new ways to share the stories of Freeport past



and present in our community and with our many visitors.

Some of these plans are already taking shape, like our amazing new map feature (page 1) and our growing introduction to Freeport history exhibit, while others will take more time to cultivate. I look forward to sharing more with you in the coming months as we move into the wonder of winter and the time it provides to prepare for renewal.

All of us at FHS wish you the very best in your own preparations for a happy and healthy holiday season.

— ERIC C. SMITH,  
Executive Director

## Membership Subscription for Easy Renewal!

**New and renewing members** who pay online can now enjoy convenient and seamless renewals by opting for a membership subscription. This option, available to members of all levels, will automatically collect your annual membership dues when your membership expires.

To do this visit the membership page of our website, select your desired level of membership, and check out through PayPal.

Setting up a subscription membership will save you time and effort; it also helps cut down on mailing and administrative costs, allowing us to redirect resources to other mission-driven activities.

We hope you will consider this new and convenient option to allow your recurring membership to renew seamlessly.

## Lights, Buttons, Action!

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

furniture making, which led her to Richard Grieves at Cape Shore Woodworking, and in low-voltage electrical design, which led her to Don Harmon of Electronics & More. Kathy set to work planning what key elements would be featured on the map, and how elements would be grouped to highlight periods or themes of our history. Then the real work began, of determining every detail of layering map and lights under glass, and how each exact location would tell the stories of centuries of life, work, industry, and culture. This indefatigable team met nearly every week through the summer to work out answers to ever emerging questions of how all this would come together.

In early September the premium custom-built table arrived, and the holes began to be punched to install the LEDs. Those groups of LEDs were carefully



Richard, Mary, Kathy, and Don with the table prior to installing the map and protective glass.

wired together to link to each of the sixteen buttons highlighting places of interest in Freeport history. Later this month the glass will seal the map together and the table will be in full operation. All of this has been driven by the energy of key

volunteers, as well as the generous support of Bath Savings who stepped in to sponsor this project.

Beginning in December visitors will be able to see the map reveal spots along the Harraseeket River, Wolfe's Neck, Flying Point, and across town. Buttons will illuminate shipyards and shoe factories, villages and farms, roads and tracks, and many more elements of our shared history—some still visi-

ble and others long gone. We hope you will stop in to see this extraordinary new feature in our exhibition space that will engage people of all ages in the layers of history just below the surface of our modern landscape.

## MAKING IT HAPPEN

The knowledge, skill, generosity, and dedication of the team working on the map table made this new exhibit feature possible.

**Don Harmon** of Electronics & More in Windham welcomed the opportunity to help us teach Freeport's history with a unique and challenging project. Wiring dozens of individual LEDs was a process Don described as "tedious but rewarding."

**Richard Grieves** of Cape Shore Woodworking in Cape Elizabeth built an attractive yet func-



Don Harmon working on the back of the map to connect the complex network of LEDs that mark locations.

tional table to house the map display. No stranger to custom projects, Richard has been building custom cabinetry in the greater Portland area for over 40 years. About the project Richard said, "This interactive map table was something different for me and a bit of a challenge, however collaborating with Mary Babikian and Don Harmon, the final product was very rewarding."

**Mary Babikian** serves FHS as Vice President. Her skill and knowledge of design meant she could create a map layout that communicated information clearly for visitors viewing the image from all four sides. Her practical skills and creative insight were key throughout the planning and fabrication of the table.

**Polly Brann** also serves as the FHS Secretary and as the Chair of our Education Committee. Drawing on her experience as an educator,



Richard Grieves and Mary Babikian in Richard's Cape Elizabeth workshop while the table is under construction.

Polly's role in developing the concept of the table, identifying landmarks, and leading the search for craftspeople to carry out the fabrication was crucial to the project.

**Kathy Smith** is a long-time member of FHS and a published historian with an impressive professional background in engaging the public with historic places and neighborhoods. Kathy's experience and knowledge helped the group determine which sites would best tell the stories the group wanted to communicate.



# The Tradition Continues at PETTENGILL FARM



As a quiet walking trail Pettengill Farm is a part of many people's daily lives. How fitting, considering the farmhouse's last inhabitant, Millie Pettengill, was well known for her long daily walks about town. But once a year we get a little more exuberant with our appreciation of the farm for Pettengill Farm Day, a celebration of fall and nineteenth-century rural life in Freeport.

PHOTO BY DENNIS LANDIS



David Coffin helps Jasper Cram build a wooden tote.



Bagpiper Derek Cerjanec was among the many musicians providing lively entertainment.

PHOTO BY DENNIS LANDIS

**T**HE FIRST SUNDAY IN OCTOBER our community came out in great numbers to celebrate the 46th Annual Pettengill Farm Day. Whether they're doing crafts in the fields, touring the farm on a hayride, or exploring the storied interior of the farmhouse, we never get tired of seeing visitors new and old appreciate this place and its connection to Freeport's past. Some were even able to hear from those community members who remember visiting with Millie Pettengill at the farm or about town. The past is never very far away.

An event like Pettengill Farm Day takes a small village to execute. Our Trustees and FHS volunteers, led by Education Committee Chair Polly Brann, played a huge role in organizing everything from activities to animals, food, and music. Our supportive community also pitched in, with Freeport High School and Bath Savings providing friendly and enthusiastic volunteers to help throughout the day. We're always impressed by how people are willing to help. As we ended the day we heard repeatedly from visitors and volunteers alike that they are looking forward to coming back next year. We are too!

PHOTO BY SALLY WALSH



Fair weather ensured that games were a big hit.



Local Boy Scouts working hard at the cider press.

PHOTO BY DENNIS LANDIS

PHOTO BY DENNIS LANDIS



Action from bean bag toss.



A young visitor pieces together a woodworking project



Meeting goats visiting from Wolfe's Neck Center.

PHOTO BY DENNIS LANDIS



## Pettengill Fund: a new opportunity to support a local treasure

The Pettengill Farm Fund supports the preservation and maintenance of our 140-acre saltwater farm on the Harraseeket estuary, including the 18th-century saltbox farmhouse, fields, stonewalls, and trails that are a beloved part of Freeport's past and an active part of the Freeport's community today. **Those who wish to lend their support can donate by phone, mail, or online at [www.freeporthistoricalsociety.org/support](http://www.freeporthistoricalsociety.org/support).**

*A beautiful piece of Freeport's historic landscape and important educational resource, Pettengill Farm is also enjoyed by many as a quiet place to walk, take photographs, and appreciate nature. Because of the broad use and appreciation of the farm in our community, FHS has created a fund for donors who wish to target their giving to this property.*





# Gala in the Garden

**I**N SEPTEMBER THE RETURN OF OUR GALA fundraiser also brought a change of location, moving to our very own Harrington House Garden. Transformed from its day-to-day existence as a frequented green space in the heart of downtown Freeport, our garden was dressed for the occasion. With lighting provided by sponsors Griffin & Griffin, centerpieces created by Connie and David Coffin, and blooms maintained by our volunteer gardeners the courtyard had charm to spare.

Our generous sponsors ensured that food and drink were abundant and delicious. The Freeport Oyster Bar provided oysters

and tended bar with a house-made punch and wine provided by Vessel & Vine. The Harraseeket Lunch and Lobster Company, ZesTea, Athena's Cantina, Bread & Friends, and Winter Hill Farm contributed specialties from their respective menus.



Board President James DeGrandpre and Executive Director Eric C. Smith addressed the group, acknowledging a year of hard work and re-emergence. Each took a moment to appreciate the generosity of our many supporters in the community, not the least of which were the Gala Hosts who lead the charge in making the Gala a successful fundraiser in addition to being an enjoyable evening.



Mary and Randy Mraz with Trustee Heather Zacharo.



Sara Tracy with Pat Palmer.

# FINDING FREEPORT IN THORNTON WILDER'S OUR TOWN



PHOTO BY KELLY SINK

*Our Town* cast members perform on stage. Left to right: Rose Tuttle as Emily Webb, David Webster as Mr. Webb, Maria Abbateamarco as Rebecca Gibbs, and Lukis Crowell as George Gibbs.

**T**HIS OCTOBER A SIX-SHOW RUN OF Thornton Wilder's play *Our Town* was the first major theatrical production mounted by our neighbor and local promoter of the arts in our community Meetinghouse Arts (formerly known as Arts and Cultural Alliance of Freeport). Directed by Freeport Resident Nat Warren-White, the play featured an intergenerational cast of actors from Freeport, Durham, and Pownal. Collaboration with local artists, traditional musicians, and FHS made this production completely unique to our area.

FHS was happy to be able to lend some historical insights to the production by delving into what Freeport was like during the time of the play, which takes place between the years 1901-1913. Posters and a program insert provided audience members with photographs and text that showed similarities between Freeport and the fictional town of Grover's Corners, New Hampshire in which the play is set.

Theater has the ability illustrate the past with great emotional clarity. We are grateful to have been a part of this production. It was wonderful to see the way our community engaged with this play which prompts viewers to appreciate life, community, and loved ones in the moment.

We look forward to further collaboration with Meetinghouse Arts to find ways to use the arts to

This image Freeport High School baseball team in 1887 shows that high school-aged boys in turn of the century Freeport shared a common interest with the play's character George Gibbs who is the pride of the Grover's Corner team. Gift of Mrs. Louise Randall Hale.





# HEADSTONE HEROES AT PORTER'S LANDING CEMETERY

*We recently visited with Joyce Veilleux at the Porter's Landing Cemetery on South Street to see the remarkable work she and American Legion Post 83 have done to preserve and repair gravestones there.*

**A**ERICAN LEGION MEMBERS play a key role in protecting and preserving graves of veterans in cemeteries across town, marking graves with service symbols and American flags each year. Joyce and other members took a step further by attending training workshops in 2015 led by the Maine Old Cemetery Association (MOCA) on cleaning stones and straightening leaning stones before they fall and break, and further still with an intensive course in 2019 on repairing and resetting broken stones. They have now cleaned and preserved the gravestones of over 300 veterans buried in Freeport.

But the group has gone even further at Porter's Landing, preserving any stones in need of repair, not only those of veterans. By bringing in MOCA's conservators and expertise, they have been able to lift and reset some of the largest stones, as well as remediate earlier repair efforts that used iron and cement materials that eventually led to more damage. Joyce can point to entire families whose stones have now been completely cleaned and restored, including some stones broken into many pieces now epoxied together and returned to standing.

The primary goal is to preserve the information contained on the stones about the lives of those buried there. Birth and death dates, relationships, and other details intended to be preserved for posterity are once again able to be read and appreciated by those who take the time to look.

We thank Joyce, American Legion Post 83, and the many volunteers that have joined them including families, individuals, boy scouts and girl scouts for their dedication in keeping Freeport's past present for generations to come.



Joyce Veilleux stands near the gravestones of the Coffin family, three of the many stones she and American Legion Post 83 have cleaned and repaired in the Porter's Landing Cemetery.



George Brewer's stone was in multiple pieces. His tablet was broken at the base, but thankfully the base was still usable, and most pieces could be located. After some very careful epoxy work and a lot of back filling George's headstone has been preserved to stand alongside those of his family members.

PHOTOS BY JOYCE VEILLEUX



LOW RES PHOTO

Joe Ferrannini of Grave Stone Matters set two of the Coffin family stones in new bases and used epoxy to repair fractures. Stones were then left with supports and covered to allow the materials to cure before they stand upright on their own once again.



Two-year-old Harriet Lufkin's slate stone was almost invisible. Over time it had fallen and broken into many pieces. After searching the area for pieces, her stone was carefully reassembled and displayed upright.

## Community Collaboration Brings Freeport's Past to Life

BY ELIZABETH GUFFEY



Gretchen Welle as Helen Randall, Kyrstyn Koehling as Ellen Ballard, and Tommy O'Brien as Seward Porter.

A NEW SEVEN-PART VIDEO SERIES, *Voices from Freeport's Past*, offers a starting point to learn what life was like in Freeport from people in different times and from different walks of life.

The project has its origins in the "Ghosts of Freeport's Past" cemetery tours produced in partnership with Freeport Players. We expanded the community collaboration to include Freeport High School theater students, who incorporated the project into their class curriculum under the direction of Natalie Safley. Producers Polly Brann and Elizabeth Guffey selected and updated seven of the "ghosts" to feature. Students and Players worked in teams to direct, costume, perform, and capture them on camera. The footage was edited by Phil Chin to create the final versions.

We hope these glimpses of Freeport's history will inspire you to dig deeper. We are here to help when you do!

The videos were premiered alongside a panel discussion with cast and crew at Meetinghouse Arts in August and are now on view for visitors to our Harrington House exhibit space and on our website.





# SALIBA SCULPTURE GARDEN PARTY

**W**HAT BETTER WAY TO APPRECIATE art than with good friends in a stunning garden overlooking the Harraseeket River? That's exactly what FHS supporters did this August at the Saliba Sculpture Garden Party. In addition to being avid collectors of a wide variety of sculpture and other art forms, hosts Tom and Rita Saliba are skilled gardeners who have sculpted the landscape surrounding their home into a work of art in its own right.

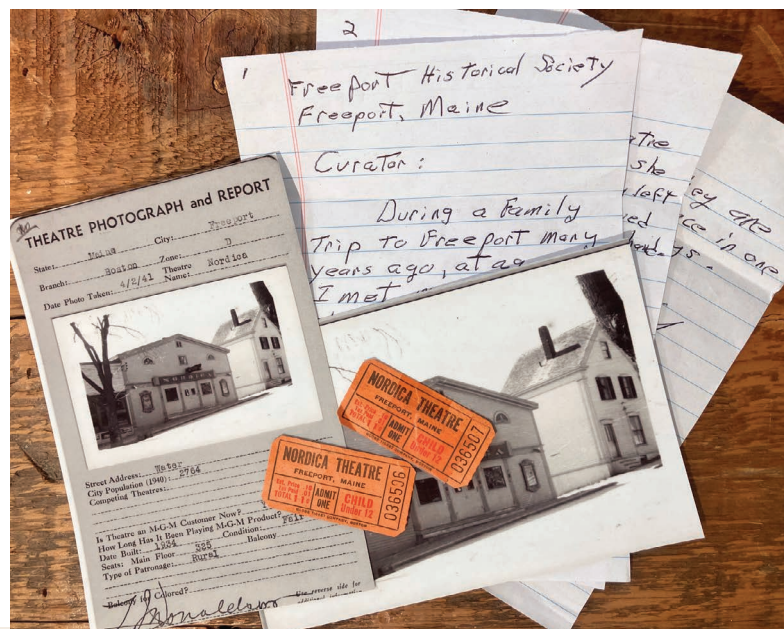
Admirers of the sculpture garden enjoyed oysters shucked by Freeport Oyster Bar staff and wine by Vessel and Vine of Brunswick among other refreshments. Local singer songwriter Paddy Mills crooned original music inspired by his life on the Maine coast as friends gathered to enjoy a beautiful evening. Many thanks to the Salibas and those who attended for their support.

## IN THE MAIL

"During a family trip to Freeport many years ago, 1953, at age 10, I met my first girlfriend, also age 10. We decided to see a movie at the Nordica Theater. I bought the two tickets that you now have. But, before we could enter the seating area, an angry woman (her mother) rushed in and told her daughter not to [go] into a dark theatre with a young boy she didn't know! They left in a hurry. I followed slowly out, tickets in hand. The next day my family returned to Millinocket. I stashed the tickets in my bedside drawer ... I hope they are worthy of space in one of your displays."

We couldn't resist the chance to share this story from one of many visitors to Freeport over the years. Thanks to Donald for sharing his memory of almost visiting the Nordica Theater.

We recently received an interesting letter from Donald Howard of Millinocket containing a souvenir and a story from a childhood visit to Freeport.



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## Join us today!

New and returning members provide a foundation for our organization to continue to carry out our mission to enrich lives by keeping Freeport's past present. Member support allows us to offer our exhibits and access to our two historic properties free of charge so that everyone can engage with our town's history.

**Membership allows you to show your support while gaining access to member benefits including** early invitations to programs and events, free and discounted admission to events, 10% discount at our gift shop, 10% discount at the Freeport Oyster Bar, free use of our research library, and priority access to research services.

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