

# THE STATE OF THE UNION MEETING HOUSE

Vol. I, No. 2

Readfield, Maine

December 2011

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The Readfield Union

Meeting House is at

22 Church Rd.

Readfield, ME.

Address mail to:

158 Thorp Shores

Readfield, ME 04355

Phone: 207-685-4537

Our website is:

[http://unionmeeting](http://unionmeetinghouseblogspot.com/)

[houseblogspot.com/](http://unionmeetinghouseblogspot.com/)

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The UMH is a non-profit

§501 (c)(3) entity under

I.R.S. law. Gifts are tax

deductible. Secure donat-

ions may be made online

via our website.

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## 2011's Major Project

As the Board of the Union Meeting House contemplates the end of 2011 it looks back with some sense of achievement and a very sobering report on the condition of the steeple. More on this later, but allow us to sum up what has been accomplished this year.

The Board moved forward on two important fronts: (1) the re-grading of the lot on which the building stands, and (2) the restoration of the endangered windows. Over the decades decomposed leaves and other vegetation has accumulated along the foundation walls on all sides. The result is that rain water and snow melt do not drain away from the building but seep into the crawl space. The resulting dampness raises havoc with the floor substructure.

The Quimby Family Foundation showed confidence in the UMH's efforts by awarding a grant of \$12,000 to improve the lot. The survey and specifications for the project were done *gratis* by Doug Riley of Readfield, a licensed civil engineer. The re-grading project was put out to bid and the successful bidder was Reay Construction of Readfield.

This project encompassed many facets. First, an old septic field that was directing water back under the building was removed, the tank repositioned, a pump installed and a drainage line buried underground to the back of the Old Vestry, where it was connected to a newer septic system. Secondly, dirt was excavated from around the foundation so that a water-proof membrane could be placed up against the joint where the granite foundation stones rested on top of the rubble sub-foundation. Thirdly, the entire lot was then sloped away from the building. Crushed stone was placed around the foundation under the eaves to help water run-off. The slope at the rear of the building was changed to improve drainage and swales installed to carry rain water well away from the site. The final step was spreading topsoil and grass seed.

By removing the front lawn septic field hump, the grade was drastically changed which meant that the handicapped ramp had too steep a pitch. To meet Federal handicapped access standards the local firm of James & Wheeler was retained to extend the ramp to fulfill those regulations. Chris Dumaine of Mt. Vernon repaired and painted the old ramp and will paint the new ramp in the spring.



Re-grading the lot was the perfect opportunity to switch the broken left front step with the right one. The crack is now hidden under the handicapped ramp.

**What Is Your Membership Status?**

**See Page 3**

## Progress on the Windows

In a newsletter in 1986 (26 years ago) former UMH Board President Ernest Bracey pointed out that the church's windows were in poor condition. However, there has been no concerted effort to resolve these serious problems. All the exterior casings, all the sashes, inside and out, were peeling and the muntins showed signs of splitting and even rot. Both exterior and interior sills were also in poor condition.

This year finally saw signs of some forward movement. The five smallest windows were in the worst condition with some of the beautiful stenciled glass panes in danger of falling out because all the putty was gone due to 143 years of exposure to the weather. The Board applied to The National Trust for Historic Preservation for grant assistance. Under their Emergency Intervention Fund the UMH received enough money to scrape, prime and paint the exterior casings and sills and then to install UV-resistant plexiglas over the sashes. With the casings restored and the sashes protected from the weather, it is now possible to start raising funds to take out the five sets of sashes and have them totally restored later on.

Even greater progress was made when the UMH received a grant from Maine Preservation, the state's leading non-profit preservation organization. The grant of \$1,000 was given on the condition that the UMH use it to leverage additional matching funds. Basically, it costs \$1,000 to rehabilitate one large window. The casings and sills have to be done on site with scaffolding and the sashes have to be taken to the workshop of the restorer, Joseph Caputo of East Pittston. There each pane of glass is removed, the sashes repaired, cleaned and primed and the panes then re-glazed. The final step is priming and painting both sides of the sashes.

The Board was very pleased with the response from three individual members. Mr. Dumaine, mentioned above, donated \$1,000 to restore the second window on the northwest corner in memory of his grandmother, the late Elizabeth Dumaine Clarke of Readfield. A plaque memorializing Mrs. Clarke is now on the window.

Miss Charlotte Killam of Greenwich, CT., formerly of Readfield, also donated \$1,000 to restore the last window in the southwest corner in memory of her maternal grandparents, Horace and Bertha Wood, and her parents, Robert and Mary (Wood) Killam. All had close ties to Readfield. It too is now marked with a memorial plaque.

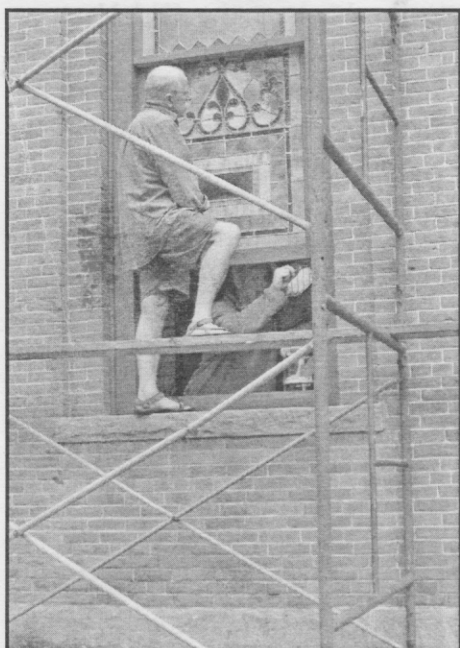
The Board was saddened this fall to lose Miss Ruth Townsend of Readfield Depot, a longtime supporter of the UMH. Her niece, Holly Dumaine of Mt. Vernon, suggested in Miss Townsend's obituary that donations could be made to the UMH. A total of \$800 was received from friends of Miss Townsend and they were allocated, at Mrs. Dumaine's suggestion to the restoration of the choir window. This project was completed a few weeks ago and is also marked with a plaque honoring Miss Townsend and her sisters, Marion and Mary Townsend Hock.

During the summer, we were honored to have a visit from Mrs. Mary Jean (Meggison) Duntley, and David and Glynn Meggison, the children of Mary Louise (Nickerson) Meggison who resided in the family homestead on Nickerson Hill Road. Seeing the poor condition of the the Nickerson Family stained glass window, they pledged \$1,000 to completely restore it. Mr. Caputo completed the work and it now looks as good as new The new plaque remembers Mrs. Meggison and her cousin, Owen Shaw Nickerson.

Finally, with the \$1,000 received from Maine Preservation, the first window on the northeast corner was completed in the fall. Thus, with the incentive provided by the \$1,000 grant to do one window, the UMH was able to leverage this into an additional \$3,800 which means, in all, that five windows were redone in 2011. **Remember, however, that 12 windows remain to be done at a cost of \$750 to \$1,200 each. Do you have a family member you want to honor?**



*Chris Dumaine offered a generous donation to restore one of the rare stenciled glass windows. It now bears a memorial plaque with the name of his grandmother, Mrs. Elizabeth Dumaine Clarke of Readfield.*



*Joseph Caputo and his crew restored several windows this summer and fall. Here they are working at re-installing the Nickerson Family window. It was put in good order thanks to a gift by descendants of the Nickerson family.*

## The Steeple Problems

The building is 183 years old. The wooden steeple is the most vulnerable portion. For nearly 200 years storms have rocked the steeple back and forth. Flashing gets lifted by snow and ice, and wood rots, allowing water to seep in numerous small cracks. Adding to these normal problems was the poor construction of the replacement dome and inadequate flashing around the weathervane mast. From the water stains and wood rot inside the belfry and tower it is clear the problems have been building for decades. Now matters are at a crisis stage.

The 2009 building assessment commissioned by the UMH Board presented a dire outlook for the steeple. This summer the Board asked another steeplejack, Arron J. Sturgis of Preservation Timber Framing, Inc., of Berwick to conduct a more detailed report. The news is not good. The 1916 storm that wrenched off the spire caused initial damage. The dome that replaced the spire was a slap-dash job and poorly done. The fall of the weathervane mast in more recent years both wrenched the top of the dome and left a 12 inch hole at the top.

There is rot from the top to the bottom of the steeple. Without going into details now, the cost will be considerable; more money than the UMH has on hand. Because of the national economic situation granting agencies are cutting back, so a sense of pessimism would be natural. However, the Board is determined to try to preserve this Readfield landmark. The first step will be to remove the dome (it is so shaky it is dangerous to send a worker to the top), remove the bell and its cradle and then construct a new, temporary roof to keep out rain water. The second major step will be to address the replacement of the numerous rotted beams in the belfry and clock tower.

## Is Your Name Listed Below?

In the spring of 2010 a membership solicitation was sent out and the response was most encouraging. It was noted that the membership year would run from July 1, 2010, to June 30, 2011.

If you are receiving this newsletter you were one of those original members (or donors) and you have been carried on our membership list. This spring of 2011 we sent another letter reminding everyone their membership was about to expire. Listed below are those of you who kind renewed for the second year or have otherwise made a donation in 2011. Therefore, if your name is not listed below it means you have not renewed for the current membership year, July 1, 2011, to June 30, 2012. We hope to hear from you.

### Members

Adell, Mrs. Ginger  
Boenke, M/M Warren  
Bryant, M/M Robert  
Day, M/M Robert  
Durgin, M/M Greg  
Feagin, James R  
Grover, Norma  
Hephner, Lee  
Killam, Ms. Charlotte  
Livingston, Capt. & Mrs. H. Lee  
Misner, M/M Peter  
Potter, Mrs. Gene  
Rourke, Mrs. Phyllis  
Webb, V.J., & Leonard, Diana  
Wright, Milton R.

Beach, Mrs. E. Adeline  
Boyd, Mrs. Margaret  
Cadarett, David A.  
Donegan, Thomas  
Edwards, Joseph  
Frame, M/M E. Bart  
Handley, Dr. Allyson  
Jernigan, M/M James  
Lanctot, E. Melanie  
Magee, M/M Harold  
Morse, M/M Edward  
Priest, Les  
Smith, Mrs. Beverly  
Whittemore, M/M Henry

Bessette, Mrs. Jemellie Deering  
Broad, M/M Robert  
Damren-Marschall, Dianne  
Drake, M/M William  
Falconer, M/M Eric  
Gordon, Ms. Eleanor  
Harriman, M/M Donn  
Keating, Patricia  
Lerner, Stephen  
Marschall, Henry  
Péladeau, M/M Marius  
Reinsborough, M/M John  
Tolman, M/M Andrews  
Wiebe, M/M Marshall

### Donors

An anonymous donor  
Dumaine, M/M Christopher (2)  
Kennebec Savings Bank  
Reay Construction Co.

Chadborne, Wayne  
Ifill, Robert  
Kents Hill Lumber  
Douglas Riley

Dilley, M/M Richard  
Harriman, M/M Daniel  
Lake, M/M Howard  
Tedrick, Dr. Phillip

Please bring any errors or omission to our attention

### The Old Vestry

In 1992 the UMH leased the Old Vestry to St. Andrews Episcopalian Mission. The lease expires in May 2012 and after discussions it was decided that financially it no longer made sense to continue the arrangement. The basic problem is that the original lease stipulated St. Andrews was to pay for the upkeep of the building but unfortunately this was not done.

No one is to blame since no one presently associated with St. Andrews and the UMH were involved twenty years ago when the lease was drawn up. The basic fact is that the UMH Board needs every penny it can raise to restore the UMH building. It has no "surplus" funds to pour into the Old Vestry, which needs considerable work. Neither can St. Andrews, a small congregation, afford to uphold its maintenance responsibilities under the original lease.

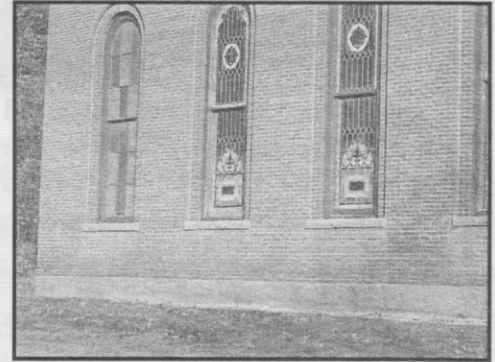
St. Andrews has been a good neighbor and the UMH Board wishes the Mission well as it moves nearby to continue its service to its congregation.



A grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation allowed the UMH to install UV-resistant Plexiglas over five delicate windows including these three on the façade.



Changing the contours of the lot resulted in earth being taken away from several areas. This required an extension of the handicapped ramp which was done by James & Wheeler, local contractors.



This side view of the Meeting House shows the new grade and lawn. The wavy line along the granite foundation shows how much dirt had to be removed.

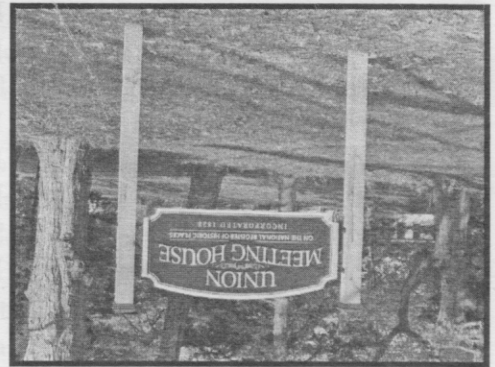
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Readfield ME  
28 chimney Rd  
m/m John Casey

H. Health  
Barb  
204-1795-  
9576

SignWorks of Farmington Falls designed and painted a new sign for the UMH replacing the 25 year old one which was falling apart. It was installed by Ray Construction with posts donated by Kents Hill Lumber.



Address Correction Requested

The Union Meeting House Company  
158 Thorp Shores Road  
Readfield, Maine 04355



SO MAINE PDCC 041  
01 FEB 2012 PM 11 L  
THE UNION MEETING HOUSE COMPANY