

THE STATE OF THE UNION MEETING HOUSE

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Readfield, Maine

January 2017

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*The UMH is a non-profit
§501 (c)(3) entity under
I.R.S. law. Gifts are tax
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allowed by law*

A BIG STEP FORWARD

As noted in the cover letter with this mailing 2016 was a year of significant progress. The big drawback for decades was the deteriorating substructure of the floor which prevented the full use of the building for the diverse events the Board would like to present for the residents of Readfield and its surrounding area.

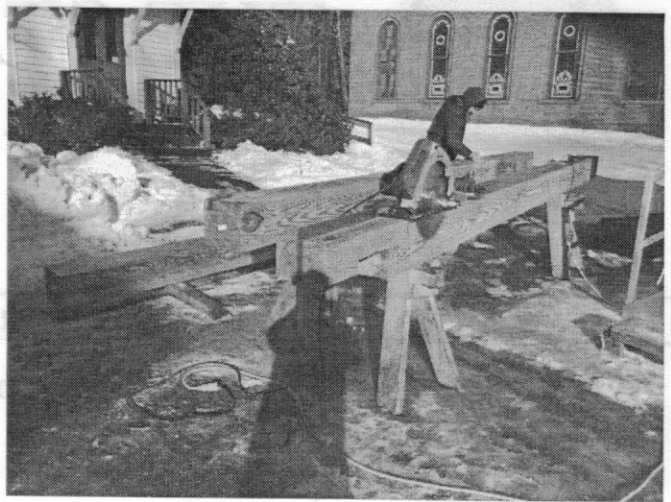
After marshalling its funds the Board decided in 2016 to take the big step of commissioning Preservation Timber Framing of Berwick to draw up detailed specs and drawings for the complete reconstruction of the floor support framing. Although the cost estimate was more than expected, the Board gained confidence when the Davis Family Foundation and the Maine Historic Preservation Commission awarded the UMH \$35,000 and \$25,000 respectively to move the work forward.

Bids were advertised in the summer and the work was awarded to Maine Barn Co. of Edgecomb. Unfortunately delays in finalizing contract details and difficulties in obtaining the necessary materials resulted in actual work not starting until late fall. Despite this, the Maine Barn has worked valiantly during cold temperatures and is making excellent progress. The company will complete Phase I of the project in the coming months.

Because of the cost noted elsewhere the project was broken in Phase I and Phase II. Using the grant funds, membership gifts and other donations Phase I is paid for. The Board is now seeking gifts in 2017 to go ahead with Phase II. The assistance of our faithful friends will, the Board hopes, rise to the challenge.

WHY TWO PHASES?

Once the bids were evaluated it was obvious the total project cost of \$245,132 was beyond the Board's resources. The logical first step as outlined by engineers, was to rebuild the floor of the narthex, the building's front portion. This includes the foundation for the massive steeple, the entrance vestibules, the storage closets and the two stairways that give access to the attic and upper portion of the steeple. It is that part of the foundation that bears the greatest weight and incorporates the massive narthex beam into which all the other floors joists and carrying beams are tied. Common sense dictated that the repair of this section of the floor come first. To lift the weight of the building off the beam seven 20-ton jacks were positioned so the old beam could be removed and the new one installed.



The length and size of the three white oak beams that form the narthex support could not be obtained locally but came from the west coast. They also had to be pressure treated elsewhere. The three beams shown here will linked with a special "dovetail" to completely span the width of the building and provide support for the weight of the building that rest on them. (J. Tukey photo)

The Next Step – Phase II in 2017

Climbing Mt. Katahdin and getting only halfway does not bring much personal satisfaction. Likewise, finishing the first phase of the floor work means little if the second step – the rebuilding of the sanctuary floor – is not completed. It is encouraging that the Morton-Kelley Charitable Trust in Portland has kicked off the Phase II fund-raising by recently granting \$10,000 to the UMH. This is most helpful, but with the total cost estimated at \$110,038, everyone can grasp the challenge. The Board will be looking at other granting agencies and in securing a bank loan. However, nationally these are uncertain times so the Board is trying two new avenues of fund-raising.

The first is seeking pledges over a three-year period, the possible term of the bank loan, so that it can be repaid. The Board's Fund-Raising Committee has put together a very attractive brochure outlining how individuals can participate in this campaign. If you are interested in joining with others willing to make a leadership commitment to Phase II, Treasurer John Perry will be glad to send you a copy of the program and explain its details. The pledge

commitment can be for one, two or three years. (Contact John at 28 Chimney Rd., Readfield, or jmpgmp@myfairpoint.net.) Already the entire Board has stepped forward to make three-year pledges.

Also, a local pledge can redouble to the UMH's benefit. June and Alvin Wagner and their family have pledged to match any \$1,000 pledge from a Readfield resident with another \$1,000, thereby doubling the gift. This is a very generous gesture and we hope someone in town will take advantage of this opportunity to see the fund drive grow.

And then there is the final avenue open to all – the continuing support of our loyal friends who each year renew their membership (and oftentimes add a little something above and beyond their basic membership category). Once Maine Barn Co. finishes Phase I we would like them to stay on site and move seamlessly into Phase II. This will be possible only if we see the fundraising is bringing in results. Use the enclosed self-addressed envelope and return it to us at your early convenience. We will be indebted to your generosity. The membership year runs from January 1 to December 31, 2017.



This short section of the original narthex beam will be saved since it shows the deterioration caused by 89 years of dampness and also documents the special "dovetail" that links the beams together. It will be replicated in the new timbers. (J. Perry photo)

MORE GOOD NEWS

For years it has been obvious that the arch leading into the apse has been settling, resulting in serious damage to Charles Schumacher's famous murals. Since the murals are the "jewel in the crown" the Board cannot let them deteriorate further. In 2016 the Belvedere Trust for Historic Preservation awarded the UMH \$8,000 to retain Tony Castro of New Gloucester, one of the finest mural conservators in the country, to restore the damaged plaster. The UMH pledged to match this grant with another \$8,000.

Tony worked all fall to stabilize the loose plaster, re-adhere it to the laths, and fill the cracks with a special product so that the surface is now smooth and unblemished. However, it became too cold in December to continue work so he will return in the spring to do his final

in-painting and match the original mural colors.

As a sign of confidence in the UMH the Belvedere Trust awarded another \$8,000 grant in December to allow Tony to do major surgery on a large section of the mural walls that have developed a serious crack in the southwest corner of the sanctuary. The damage is so bad that if it comes loose a large portion of Schumacher's art will be lost. After Tony completes the arch work In the spring he will then tackle this new problem area. Again the UMH must match the grant. The support of the Belvedere Trust two years in succession is most encouraging.



Tony Castro erected scaffolding in the arch to the so he could consolidate loose plaster, re-adhere it, and fill the numerous cracks that developed when the arch began to fail. In this photo he is in the 1 o'clock position with his light doing some in-filling. The final application of colors will take place in the spring. (Péladeau photo)



Address Correction Requested

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

THE UNION MEETING HOUSE

National Register of Historic Places, 1982

22 Church Road
Readfield, Maine 04355
207-685-4537

Dear Friends of
The Union Meeting House

January 16, 2017

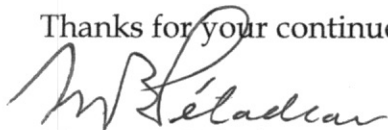
Everyone who knows Maine understands that if you ford one river you'll soon have another one to cross. Likewise, once you climb one mountain there will forever be another peak to surmount just down the trail.

The Meeting House conquered the tallest mountain it has ever faced in 2016 and as I write this letter we are anticipating shortly the successful completion of Phase I of the floor substructure reconstruction. Using grant funds from the Davis Family Foundation, the Maine Historic Preservation Commission and adding membership income, corporate donations and a flurry of end-of-the-year gifts from members who increased their annual giving, the Board was able to totally cover the \$135,094 cost of Phase I.

But the bank account is now slim and we need \$110,038 to cover the cost of Phase II of the floor project, scheduled in the spring and summer of 2017 (not too far away). We will try to obtain a bank loan to cover the total amount but that means we will have to raise the funds to repay the loan. I don't have to write three or four more paragraphs to outline our needs and how we hope you - our loyal friends - can contribute to the solution.

Ask yourselves a few questions: 1 - What does the Meeting House mean to you? 2 - What does it mean to the ambiance and history of Readfield? and 3 - How would future generations judge us if we allowed this landmark building to fall into disrepair?

Thanks for your continued support,



Marius B. Péladeau, president
The Readfield Union Meeting House

