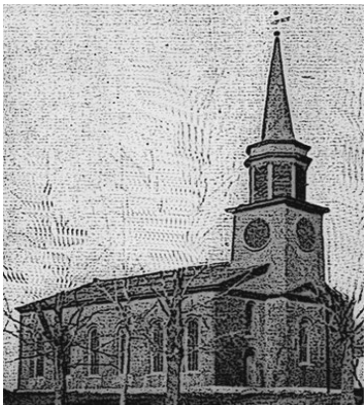


# THE STATE OF THE UNION MEETING HOUSE

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READFIELD, MAINE

MAY 2020



## AN UPDATE ON THE STEEPLE RESTORATION

Building on the success of last year, this past January the Board of Directors decided to take on the most ambitious fundraising and restoration program in its history: the restoration of the steeple, including the clock tower, belfry, and construction and erection of a replica of the original 30 foot spire that was lost in a winter storm of 1916. The project contract would have been sought in late 2020 with the work being completed in 2021. The cost would have exceeded \$450,000.

Little did we know in January of a looming global pandemic that would turn our lives and economies upside down, The impact of the Covid-19 on our fundraising will not be fully understood for some time to come. However, for certain our ambitious schedule to restore the steeple and contract a replica spire in 2021 will need to be rescheduled. As more is understood, the economic environment and potential will be reassessed and our plans will be updated.

The Board will keep you informed as it moves forward.

Jim Tukey, president  
Board of Directors

### Board of Directors

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Nancy Durgin, V.P.  
John Perry, Treasurer  
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Robert Harris  
Evelyn Adell Potter  
Jack Smart

### Friends of the Vestry & the Meeting House

Cricket Blouin  
Deane Buuck  
Deb Elwell  
Bonnie Harris  
Jeanne Harris  
Rosalee Kimball  
Linda Tukey

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[www.unionmeetinghouse.com](http://www.unionmeetinghouse.com)

The Readfield Union Meeting House is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

*It is a 501 (c)(3) entity under I.R.S. law. Gifts to the Readfield Union Meeting House are tax deductible.*

## GRANT SUPPORT RECEIVED

Good News!

The Union Meeting House has been awarded a \$10,000 grant from the 1772 Foundation for badly needed exterior repairs. The funds will go to restore and repaint the eaves and soffits, the re-glazing and repainting of the windows on the south side of the building, removal of lead paint and repainting of the front gable ends and pediment, and the rebuilding of the damaged rear window.

The 1772 Foundation is dedicated to preserve, restore and enhance historic structures, neighborhoods and farmlands across the country for the benefit of future generations. Our own Union Meeting House is fortunate to be recognized by the Foundation for its historic value and the important role it has played in the story of Readfield, Kennebec County and the State of Maine.

The grant, which will be administered by Maine Preservation, provides a significant head start on the overall restoration cost of \$20,000 for this project. The remaining balance will come from existing funds and generous donors to the Meeting House.

## “Push To The Top” Capital Campaign Being Planned.

Have you ever felt that there is not enough money to make your dreams come true? The Union Meeting House feels that way about its dream – completing restoration of the Brick Church in time for its 200<sup>th</sup> birthday! This particular dream will need about \$1/2 million, and the Board’s Fundraising Committee knows it can be done. How do we know? That much has been raised in the last decade to do the repairs and restoration already accomplished. We can’t stop now!

“Push To The Top” means fixing everything, all the way up to the weathervane, nearly 100 feet above ground level. And that includes a newly fabricated spire as was originally installed in 1828. Planning for the fundraising campaign is well underway, but won’t be fully inaugurated until the economic conditions improve later this year. The major elements of the Campaign will be:

- donations from businesses and individuals, highlighted by a three-year pledge drive;
- a variety of fundraising events, from concerts to social gatherings, to auctions, and starting in 2021, programs held in the rehabilitated Vestry;
- a series of “challenge” appeals, in which donors can adopt a specific part of the Meeting House in exchange for their gift;
- grants obtained from charitable organizations, leveraged from the public support listed above.

There will be much more about “Push To The Top” in the coming months. We will be counting on you to help make the dreams come true!



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*The CARES Act allows you to claim an above-the-line deduction on cash contributions in 2020, up to \$300. Ask your tax advisor for more information.*

### YOU DID IT!

Thanks to all the Meeting House's friends and members for the amazing outpouring of support for the second phase of the ceiling's restoration. We needed to raise \$7,000 to augment the \$15,000 from the Davis Family Foundation and the \$16,095 from the Maine Historic Preservation Commission to the final segment of the ceiling this year.

As noted, we needed \$7,000, a considerable sum. Your total donations totaled \$15,000. What an amazing show of support. In the first year of the challenge we received a lead gift of \$10,000 from Miss Linda Bean and her sister, Diana Bean, and the remainder from friends such as yourselves. The just completed second phase challenge, again spear-headed by gifts from the two Bean sisters, brought the project to a beautiful climax.

This means that our conservator, Tony Castro, will be on site this summer completing the final quarter of the ceiling. At last notice Tony was expecting to pick up the needed scaffolding so that he and his talented assistant, Chris Blackburn, will be able to start work late May. He expects to be able to finish completely before cold weather settles in this fall.

"This project was produced with assistance from the Historic Preservation Fund, administered by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of the Interior."

### The "Buy Some Time" Invitation

The Meeting House's clock was installed in 1930 as a generous gift to Readfield by Leon Tebbetts, a local businessman and mayor of Waterville. Unfortunately, it has not had regular maintenance for several decades, and now does not operate. Also, the three clock dials and hands need to be rebuilt and re-gilded. The fee for restoration of the clock faces and the clock works inside the tower is estimated at \$50,000. Later this summer we will invite people who love the clock and remember hearing it ring the church bell, to help fund the project.

We are applying for a Department of the Interior grant for the clock restoration. If the grant is approved this summer, restoration must begin immediately. Donations received in this forthcoming challenge invitation will help with the required financial match to grant funding.

Will you share in the project of "buying" one or more of the 180 minute marks, or a "little hand" or a "big hand"? You could also underwrite an entire 8-foot dial, and dedicate it to your family or a loved one. Or, you might support work on the clock's pendulum, and become the Town's "Major Chroniker". Other opportunities will be announced in a special mailing later this summer. The Board hopes you will help by "Buying Some Time"!!

### News on Events and Programs

Following the recommendations of the Events Committee, the Board has agreed to the cancellation of all June programs. However, the organizers of the Strawberry Festival scheduled for July 11 are considering a take-out option rather than having it on the lawn of the Meeting House due to group size and social distancing requirements. The final decision on this event will be posted on our Facebook page and Webpage no later than June 10<sup>th</sup> and notices will be placed in the *Community Advertiser*.

The International Dinner, which would have been held on April 25<sup>th</sup>, was canceled. The Planning Committee is looking to a possible October date. However, it is unknown what restriction may be imposed for using the Maranacook school site and what restriction Governor Mills has in place.

It is a waiting game for our organization, as it is with other groups that plan gatherings in our community. We will keep the safety of all as the first priority.



*The clock faces were totally restored and re-gilded in 1985. By 2015 (only 30 years later) they were in ruinous condition. Now they require a complete overhaul before they can be re-installed. Rotted wood will have to be replaced, exterior molding reformed, new numbers made and 28.5 gold leaf used to make everything right.*

In January the Board welcomed two new Advisory Board members, Chris Dumaine of Mt. Vernon and Bob Harris of Readfield. Chris' association with the Meeting House goes back decades to the strong support of his wife's aunts – the Townsend sisters – to the Meeting House. He also fills a spot on the Advisory Board once held by his late wife, Holly, who loved the building. Bob is well known to us all. His efforts to preserve Readfield's past in his capacity as president of the Historical Society is acknowledged by all. The Board welcomes them both.