



# THE STATE OF THE UNION MEETING HOUSE

Vol. II, No. 1

Readfield, Maine

November 2012

## Taking the First Step Forward

This year the Union Meeting House took a major step in the stabilization of the steeple. A generous grant from the Davis Family Foundation of \$20,000 made this possible. The total cost of the project was \$33,000 which meant that the UMH had to come up with \$13,000 from its own resources. Some of this amount was from your membership dollars the Board has saved over the last two years, but it still meant that approximately \$5,000 had to come out the UMH's bank account.

This drew down our savings and so we hope, in the last six months of this 2012-13 membership year, those of you who have not yet renewed will do so. By using our savings for the steeple project it meant that there are no extra funds to undertake other projects that need to be done.

The steeple project was undertaken by Preservation Timber Framing, Inc., of Berwick. Noted for tackling major projects of this scale, their work is highly recommended by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission. Arron Sturgis of Preservation Timber Framing visited the UMH and presented to the Board a detailed report that would allow a phased, multi-step approach to resolving the leaking steeple and the replacement of numerous rotted framing timbers in the belfry and clock tower.

Phase I was to get rid of the rotted dome and the large hole at its peak. Not solving this major leak would continue to endanger the beautiful painted ceiling and walls in the choir and also lead to further rotting of the interior structural framing.

It took Mr. Sturgis' crew one month of preparatory work to allow the final steps to take place. The dome had to be reinforced from inside because it was so rotten it would have fallen apart and come crashing down on the roof when it was lifted off the belfry. It then was cut loose from the top of the belfry and lowered to the ground by a large 110 foot boom crane. It weighed 4,000 pounds. Then, to allow workmen to work inside the belfry during Phase II, the entire bell and its cradle was lifted out. It weighed 2,100 pounds. It was the first time the bell saw daylight since it was installed in 1859. The final step was to lift a new roof to the top of the steeple and fasten it down. Bill Mace on Route 17 kindly offered inside storage space to keep the bell and cradle safe and sound until Phase II is completed.

It was quite a project but many more steps have to be taken before the UMH can say the steeple is in good condition. **Can you help us move forward?**

**What is your Membership Status? See Page 4**

## SUCCESSFUL QUILT SHOW AND RAFFLE

In August, during Readfield Heritage Days, the UMH sponsored a wonderful quilt show under the leadership of Board member Joan Wiebe. Dozens and dozens of quilts attractively draped over the pews filled the UMH's sanctuary, with others displayed from the front of the choir and others near the lectern in the apse. The space was a blaze of color, The out-pouring by the public was gratifying and everyone was sorry after that we did not think of taking a visitor count. Many persons came from far distances. Mrs. Wiebe was assisted by Beverly Newton Norton, Cindy Black, Bonnie Dwyer and volunteers from the Board and Advisory Board.

During the summer Evelyn Potter, a member of the Advisory Board, organized a quilt raffle to raise funds for the restoration. The 50-state quilt had been made by the late Mrs. Dawn Wile of Waldoboro and was donated by her family to benefit the UMH. Tickets were sold during the summer and it was announced that the quilt would be raffled off during the Quilt Show. The winner was Phyllis Rourke of South Road, Readfield. Evelyn proudly turned over \$1,114 to Treasurer Donn Harriman.

These two wonderful events were made possible by dedicated volunteers. **The Meeting House needs more volunteers. Give us a call if you have some free time.**

## MORE PROGRESS ON THE WINDOWS

In 2011 progress was made in restoring some of the seventeen famous stenciled and stained glass windows. There were substantial donations from Miss Charlotte Killam, Mr. and Mrs. Christopher Dumaine, friends of Marion and Ruth Townsend and Mary Townsend Hock, as well as descendants of the Nickerson family (Mrs. Mary Jean Duntley, and Glenn and David Meggison). These, along with a grant from Maine Preservation, allowed five windows to be put in good order. However, twelve more need attention, some very badly. The windows in the facade and apse have clearly deteriorated, and none of the stained glass windows have received any attention.

This summer Mrs. Donna Page, a descendant of the famous Hunton family, visited the UMH and most generously presented a check to fund the restoration of the stained glass window that memorializes Nancy Hunton Atkinson. All the Huntons are, of course, related to the family of Jonathan Hunton, ninth governor of Maine, whose house still stands in Readfield. This was a timely gift since it is a window that needs the most work. Thanks to Ev Potter for helping us making contact with Mrs. Page.

The bottom third of the sash has bulged out from the downward weight of the stained glass and is in danger of breaking into many small pieces. Oakes & Parkhurst Glass in Manchester, has taken this sash so professional craftsmen for return it it to its original condition. Joe Caputo,

who has worked on other windows, will repair and paint the top sash and also do the outside window casing.

**Anyone interested in adopting a window? Depending on the window, they will cost between \$500. and \$1,200 each.**

## Are You Listed Below?

If you find your name on the lists below it means that you are a member in good standing for the 2012-13 membership year or that you have made a donation to the UMH in another category. The membership year is half over. It runs from July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013. If you have not renewed to date, we hope that you will keep the Meeting House in your thoughts and give it the benefit of your support as it tries to raise funds for the next big step in the steeple restoration. **If there are errors or omissions above please let us know.**

### Membership Renewals, Donations and Gifts since July 1, 2012:

Beach, Mrs. E. Adeline	Bishop, James M., Jr.	Boenke, M/M Warren
Boyd, Margo	Broad, M/M Robert	Bryant, M/M Robert
Buck, M/M William	Burke, Belinda L.	Caderett, David
DiBonaventure, M/M Robert	Donaghy, Annette R.	Drake, M/M William
Durgin, M/M Philip	Edson, M/M Daniel	Edwards, Joseph A.
Folsom, Mrs. Elaine B.*	Gilman, M/M Stephen	Gottschalk, M/M Thomas
Grover, Ms. Norma H.	Gyorgy, Cynthia H.	Handley, Dr. Allyson
Harriman, M/M Donn	Hecker, Ms. Ann M.	Hepfner, Lee E.
Higgins, Ms. Christine J.	Jernigan, M/M James	Keating, Patricia
Lanctot, E. Melanie*	Lerner, Stephen - Mary Koski	Livingston, Capt/M Lee
Magee, M/M Harold	Magi M/M Richard	Mason, M/M John
Monsulick, M/M Stephen	Morse, M/M Edward	Norton, Jon
O'Connor, Mrs. Susan	O'Keefe, George E.	Osborn, Pamela Riley
Péladeau, M/M Marius	Penniman, Ms. Joan, & Walter Krzastyek	Poulin, Gerard & Sons, Inc.
Perry, M/M John	Peterson, Mrs. Karen	
Priest, M/M Les	Quist, Ms. Genie Gannett	
Sause, M/M Richard	Smart, M/M Jack	Stanley, M/M John
Steffan, M/M Dan	Sweeney, Arline P.	Therrien, M/M Dana *
Thompson, Peter G.	Tolman, M/M Andrews	Trunnell, Mrs. Amy
Twitchell, Mrs. Lynn	Wagner, M/M Alvin	Wagner, M/M Jonathan
Whitcomb, Ms. Martha L.	Whittemore, M/M Henry	Wiebe, M/M Marshall
Wight, Dan	Williams, M/M Curtis	Wise, M/M Donald
Worthing, M/M Parker	Wright, Milton R.	(*) memorial gifts

Mr. Warren Boenke, husband of our Board Secretary, Mrs. Barbara Boenke, passed away this fall. Barbara has kindly requested that memorial gifts in his memory be given to the UMH.

#### Donations in Memory of Warren Boenke

Bonaccorsi, Ms. Mary	Clarke, M/M Richard	Dumaine, M/M Christopher
Glaeseman, Mrs. Judith	Harriman, M/M Donn	Péladeau, M/M Marius
Steindl, Ms. Betty	Wiebe, M/M Marshall	Wright, Milton

#### Other donations:

David Meggison (Nickerson window pledge)  
Mrs. Donna Page (Hunton window pledge)

**Remember the membership year goes until June 30, 2013.  
There is still time to renew.**

### **The Benefit of Memorial Gifts**

Past mailings have mentioned the problems with the two front doors. It is natural that a 184-year-old building should shift with time. The granite thresholds under the two doors (which are also foundation stones), have moved slightly, preventing the bottoms of the doors from swinging open freely. To enter a person has to use a knee or foot to force the doors open. The result is that the doors are getting wracked and twisted, loosening and weakening them.

Thanks for a fine gift from Dana and Amy Therrien of Readfield worked started on the repair of the left front door by Mr. Caputo of East Pittston. The gift was given in memory of Mr. Therrien's parents, Norman and Claire Therrien. Once the work is completed they will be appropriately memorialized. The other door will receive the same restoration with donations received from the August Quilt Raffle.

Before cold weather set in Mr. Caputo scraped, repaired, primed and painted the casings (frames) that hold the doors within the brickwork. This winter he will take off the doors, close up the openings with plywood and remove the doors to his workshop so that decades of accumulated, gummed-up paint can be removed, the doors strengthen and then primed and painted. Physical evidence (under layers of newer paint) and documentary evidence in the form of old photographs show the doors were originally brick-red in color to match that color which still remains on many of the old windows. The repaired doors will be returned to their original shade. To the Board it is important that all restoration be based on solid research to preserve the building as it looked during its years of glory. Would you like to make a memorial gift?

### **Tidbits of History**

We have discovered that Charles Schumacher, the artist who executed the beautiful *trompe l'oeil* murals in 1866-68, was also a painter of some note. He did both seascapes and landscapes that were apparently well received by art patrons in the Portland area. We do know that he undertook at least 51 murals in private homes, churches and civic and public buildings, but that the UMH sanctuary and choir is the only commission that survives intact today. Its rarity is what caused the UMH to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.

There is a portion of another mural commission that survives in Portland. The B&B on Carlton Street has an entryway with Schumacher's murals still visible. Thanks to Advisory Board member Dale Marie Potter Clark for all this information.

When the bell was removed from the belfry this year and exposed to the light of day after 157 years it was possible to examine it more carefully. As was known, it was cast at the famous bell foundry of George Holbrook of East Medway, Massachusetts, and is dated 1859. We can only assume it was installed in the UMH in that year. Holbrook was a prolific bell maker, starting in

1804 and continuing until at least 1875. There are Holbrook bells throughout New England, including ones in Gorham at the old Academy and one at the First Parish Church in Yarmouth.

The bell remains on its original wooden cradle. It is currently stored safely undercover to protect it from the weather and vandals.

The UMH is a legal non-profit entity [a 501(c)(3)] still operating under its original July 4, 1828, incorporation as granted on the formation of the organization. In those early years of statehood incorporation was not granted by the Secretary of State, as it is today but by an Act of the Legislature. Thus, in 1828 a special bill was passed and signed by the Governor to allow incorporation. This action is still operative and gives the UMH its unusual status as a 184-year-old "company." The Board also operates under by-laws, passed in the 1980s, that authorizes it to preserve the building as a historic site as well as serving as a community resource and for non-denominational religious services.

This newsletter kindly sponsored by  
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