

Falmouth Historical Society Annual Meeting

Online via Zoom—January 19, 2021

The slides are posted on the Society website at: <https://thefhs.org/Annual2020>.

David Farnham, president, called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. A quorum was present. He announced that there would be a short business meeting as required by our bylaws followed by two presentations illustrating what the Society is doing.

Secretary's Report

Suzanne Farnham, secretary, noted that the minutes for the 2019 annual meeting were approved by the board so we would dispense with the reading of the minutes.

Minutes for the annual meeting and monthly board meetings are posted online at the Society website.

Members of the Society and community are urged to attend any board meetings; the calendar is posted on the Society website. The board and committees meet regularly using Zoom Meetings.

The Society currently has 85 members plus two corporate sponsors. Our membership is lower than usual due to the timing of this meeting; the membership mailing goes out next month and we hope to recover lapsed members.

Treasurer's Report

David, as interim treasurer, presented the Society's financial position, beginning with the balance sheet.

During fiscal year 2019-2020, the Society took in \$13,551 (including a \$5,000 withdrawal from savings) and spent \$9,906. David noted that expenses were half what they had been the previous year because we were closed during winter. Expenses were \$346 over budget—the biggest overrun was the electric bill. After winterizing the Museum, the heat was turned down as low as it would go but

additional tweaking was needed to prevent the “smart” thermostat from turning up the heat anyway.

Committee Reports

The Society adopted a committee structure at the beginning of 2020 to make it easier for volunteers to connect with their areas of interest.

Programs. Sally Farneth spoke about efforts to develop packages portraying rural life in 19th century Maine for elementary school students.

Merchandise. Sue Farnham gave an update on the new edition of the cookbook now being edited. She also mentioned plans to produce a Falmouth-themed tote bag.

Museum Operations. Betsy Whitcomb related plans to re-open the Museum this summer.

Buildings & Grounds. Ron Scorsone described the modest renovation of the office and kitchen space at the Museum. It has a fresh coat of paint thanks to Falmouth Boy Scout Troop 93 and an Eagle Scout project. Water seepage into the basement has been a problem; we recently replaced the sump pump and took other steps to improve drainage.

Collections. Ron Scorsone gave a progress report on the effort to migrate the Museum catalog from index cards to PastPerfect, an online application accessible from the Internet. Catalog entries for artifacts acquired during 2004-2009 have been loaded into the new system but much work remains such as photographing all artifacts in the collection.

Ron picked up the story of Tidewater Farm (featured in a presentation at the previous annual meeting). After funding could not be found to preserve the historic farmhouse and barn, the town razed the buildings in December but not until after volunteers from the Society and Land Trust salvaged period artifacts for future re-use.

Technology. David Farnham described how information technology adopted by the Society over the past several years made it possible for our volunteers to continue their work during the pandemic. Many of these products and services are offered to small non-profits free or at steep discounts giving us the same

capabilities employed much larger organizations. One new product is Zoom which we use to meet from the safety of our homes.

Local History. The Society responds to an average of three queries from the community each month. To provide context for our responses, we include information about the history of Falmouth. We plan to add these guides to property and family history research, along with digital copies of references we use often (such as Willis' History of Portland), to the Society website. Responses to queries explain how we found the answer to the question along with links to the resources we used. Volunteers have found these responses to be informative, so we plan to post them in the "members-only" section of the website.

President's Report

David applauded the fine work our volunteers are doing. It is almost "business as usual" despite having to close the museum. He noted that the Society still faces the same challenges as we did a year ago with the addition of Covid. Re-opening the museum while complying with the state guidelines will be a heavy lift for a small non-profit like us. He was happy to report that the administrative issues highlighted during the previous annual meeting have been resolved, allowing our focus to return to the history of our town.

There being no new business, the business portion of the annual meeting was adjourned at 7:45.

Respectfully submitted,
Suzanne Howe Farnham
Secretary

The business portion of the meeting was followed by two presentations illustrating what the Society is doing to preserve the heritage of our town and make it accessible to the community.

The Proprietors Map

Digital Preservation of Historic Documents

David Farnham explained why the 1732 map of Ancient Falmouth at Falmouth Memorial Library is historically significant and how Osher Map Library's digital imaging of the map--plus their making the digital map

accessible online--has given a big boost to genealogical and property history research in Falmouth.

Bucknam Tavern

Historic Preservation of Old Homes in Falmouth

Betsy Whitcomb & Sue Farnham told the story of one of Falmouth's older buildings, explained how the narrative was reconstructed from publicly accessible documents, and gave an update on the renovation now underway. The owner of the tavern and the contractor performing the renovation joined in a discussion at the end of the presentation. The most interesting revelation came from work on the original fireplace: it appears likely the tavern was constructed around an older (early 18th century) building.

Both presentations were filled with tips and hints for those researching families or property in Falmouth.