

## ELIOT HISTORICAL SOCIETY - Minutes of the Meeting - March 5, 2018

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

**Secretary's Report** - The minutes of the February meeting were read and accepted with three corrections to be made.

**Treasurer's Report** – Treasurer Pam Ashley reported that as of end-February the Building Fund total was \$40,304.21 and the checking account balance was \$14,718.57. Income came from The Fabulous Find, memberships and the fudge raffle. Expenses were for rent, electricity and fund raising supplies. The report was approved as presented and is attached.

**Correspondence** - Helen Sullivan has sent a thank you note to the Fabulous Find for our fundraiser proceeds.

**Membership** - Sylvia Moynahan again circulated a list of members asking them to update their current phone numbers and email addresses.

**Programs** – Carolyn Bogh announced that the April meeting, which will be on April 9<sup>th</sup>, will focus on our fundraising efforts. It's time for all of us to come forward with new ideas and man and woman power. Members were urged to make a list of ideas and bring them to the April meeting.

**Education** - Jan Cerabona reported that the second graders are starting their local history unit. They are lining up interesting speakers from our group, including possibly Rosanne Adams talking about slavery, Nancy Cultrera's connection with the Civil War, and maybe inviting Dom Metreud to discuss the electric trolleys in town. Then there will be the traditional visit to the No. 8 Schoolhouse where we will have a new "school marm" this year. She suggested an idea to post in the gym for students arriving in the morning a "Did you know...?" historical fact.

**Fundraising** - Cindy Lentz passed around the sign-up sheet for lasagna and brownie makers for the upcoming Lasagna Dinner on March 24th. The group has also been soliciting donations from vendors. Thanks to all who will be helping and donating.

**Old Business** - Paul Johnson reminded the group that the next meeting will be April 9<sup>th</sup> so that interested citizens may attend the April 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting to present and/or vote on amendments to the upcoming budget.

Zip Zamarchi reported that he was working on the photographs that might be used on the historical plaques project.

**Exhibition Committee** - Polly McDonough reported that they are still working on locating a key for the Post Office display case which we can use. Carolyn Bogh said that she discussed having historical displays at the schools and Superintendent Nash loved the idea.

**New Business** – Julie Johnson performed the audit and for the fiscal year 2016-17 she found no errors or issues.

Rosanne Adams has been asked by the Shapleigh Family Association to see if the Historical Society would be willing to store and keep their historical archives. This is about 5-6 boxes of materials with additional deposits possible in the future. They would supply all boxes and we could provide access to the collection at our convenience. They are willing to pay a fee. This discussion was tabled until the next meeting when Julie Johnson will be back. An ad hoc committee consisting of Denny Lentz and Jack McDonough will make recommendations vis-à-vis legal and contractual issues, guidelines and fees if this proposal were to be approved by members.

Paul Johnson noted that our dear long-standing member and past Historical Society officer Paul Rousseau has passed away. There will be a military service in his honor in the future.

Paul thanked Sophia and Bob Dennis for the evening's refreshments. Next month's will be provided by Ruth and Grant Hirst.

### **Program**

Carolyn Bogh introduced Eric Christian, speaker for the evening's program, "A Historical Overview of the Bay Lands." The Bay Lands have been settled by non-indigenous people since around 1623. The definition of the Bay Lands is the area that extends from Frank Fort Island and Watt's Fort to Route 236. Today there are some major buildings sitting on parts of what was once the Bay Lands. In 1622 Sir Ferdinando Gorges received a land grant that extended from Maine all the way to the Merrimack River and up to what is now Kennebunk. In 1629 this land was divided and the province of New Hampshire was created. Captain John Mason held the grants at that time. The brother of Edward Hilton came to Dover, looked across the river and saw an old corn field there. He built a cabin, continued to plant corn and lived there. He came to what is now Hilton Point in 1623 and it appears that in 1623 none of the land in Eliot was granted to anyone. In the 1630's the

Laconia Company came in and gave out land grants. Fishing colonies and salt production was attempted. In 1633, an agent of Alexander Shapleigh received the first land grant for this area and by 1636 had a house built. Thomas Wannerton received a nearby grant in 1633. He gave Nicholas Frost some land in 1634. Also in 1633 Henry Joselyn received land nearby. Joselyn sold his grant in 1639 to Reverend Henry Knowles who escaped from England and became a Baptist minister in Dover. He returned to England in 1641. William Hawthorne, an ancestor of Nathaniel Hawthorne, received the Knowles purchase as a Massachusetts land grant. In 1652 he tried to convince the local inhabitants to become a part of Massachusetts, promising that doing so would make all the landholders, many of whom were just squatters, legal land owners. That's when those lands in Maine became part of Massachusetts.

As for the two forts, Franks and Watts Forts, they were built on promontories over the water to provide the best visibility. Watts Fort was named after John Watts, a merchant who had established a trading post there. It has also been called Darby's Fort, named after Darby Field who owned a Newington Ferry. This interesting character discovered Mt. Washington and was the first known European to hike it. Franks Fort was located where the island is in the middle of the channel in the Piscataqua River. Francis Williams came to the region in 1631 and had an experimental salt works venture there, but it failed.

In those days land was used as currency, so we see deeds of land being purchased in exchange for wooden boards, hogsheads and other items. Eventually a portion of this land near the forts was sold to Thomas Clark of Boston and his daughters held it for the next 15 years. Other landowners in this region included Dennis Downing, Charles Frost, and the Hammonds, Tobeys, Libbeys and Foggs, based on the survey of 1682 conducted by John Evans and commissioned by Peter Coffin. Shipbuilding was also being conducted at Mast Cove. Stone walls still show these boundaries of the very earliest land grants, attesting to the interesting history in this part of town. The outer limit of this territory is where the elementary school stands today. In fact, Orland McPherson, whose property is near the elementary school, named his tree farm the Bay Lands Tree Farm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Helen Goransson