

History of the Franklin Community Center

This summer (1998) or by September 1999, the Franklin Community Center building will be ninety years old. The history of this building is not only the history of the structure itself, it is the history of education in Franklin, the history of the Town of Franklin itself, and the history of more than four generations of local people.

The First Free High School was started in Franklin in 1903-1904, was held in the Town Hall. In 1908 there were 312 pupils attending eight grammar schools and the Free High School. The first class to graduate from the Franklin Free High School was 1908, with seven students, six girls and one boy. They were Della Bragdon, Edna Donnell, Ethel Eldridge, Daisy Gordon, Marcia Gordon, Verna Lawrie, and Dallas Tracy.

Town Meeting of March 1909 voted to build a high school. Construction began in the summer of 1909 and the school was completed in 1910. Genevieve Collins was paid \$200.00 for the land. Charles Sprague the contractor received \$2,858.75. Bragdon and Fernald received \$16.30 for laying a Marnot floor. The total cost of the new High School was \$3,075.05.

The new High School was accepted as a Class A School by the State of Maine. Alumni of the Franklin High School remember the stone foundation and cellar as they exist today as reasonably close to the original footprint of the High School building. The front entry as you walk in was much the same as today, coats and boots were left here. The door to the Collector's Office is unchanged. Upon entering you found one large room (the Collector's Office, the Selectmen's Office, and the Assessor's Office) with a raised platform for the teacher's desk, and eight rows of seats, two for each grade. The rear door is still about the same when passing through into the current hall, you found on the right the boys and girls bathrooms and on the left a cloak room in which books and coats were stored.

The School Report in the 1948 Town Report lists 115 Grammar School students. There were five buildings and six teachers, Hilda Bragdon, Hulda Bragdon, Marcia Joy, Helen Worcester, Thelma Morgan, and Roger Stewart. There were:

- 22 at East Franklin in sub-primary through Grade 6;
- 30 at Franklin Primary in Grades sub-primary, 1, and 2;
- 28 at West Franklin in Grades 3, 4, and 5,
- 35 at Franklin Grammar School in Grades 6, 7, and 8.

The Franklin High School had 20 students; Freshman 3, Sophomores 6, Juniors 5, and Seniors 6. The enrollment seems to indicate that other than East Franklin, the other three schools were separated by grades not by geographic area.

The last Class to graduate from the Franklin High School was the Class of 1948. Reliable sources say there were seven students, six boys and one girl: Harold Bradbury, Bruce Carter, Richard Giles, Audrey Joy, Douglas Smith, Robert Sprague, and Edward Young. Possibly someone transferred into the Senior Class between the time Superintendent Henry Perkins wrote this report in March of 1948 and the actual graduation in June of 1948.

Town Meeting, March 1948, Article #36: To see if the Town will vote to close the High School and give the School Board the authority to make arrangements to convey the high school students to another school. Article #37: To make High School building into a Consolidated Elementary School and to build additional classrooms at the cost of \$12,317.00.

The School Report in the 1949 Town Report shows an enrollment of 101 pupils in Grades Sub-Primary through Grade 8. There were four teachers; Adah Savage, Marcia Joy, Hilda Bradgon, and Hulda Bradgon. The following is an excerpt from the Superintendents Report: “This has been an extremely active year for the School Department in establishing modern educational facilities for the town. The improvements included:

- A. Remodeling the high school building and adding two class rooms with
 - 1. Installation of oil furnace with steam heat
 - 2. New lighting throughout
 - 3. New water system
 - 4. Insulation of building
 - 5. New seating for 55 pupils
- B. Closing of existing elementary schools and providing conveyance for pupils.
- C. Providing conveyance for high school pupils.

In planning and completing the above educational project your committee have contributed many hours to meetings during the year. There have been fourteen school board meetings, seven building committee meetings, and two special town meetings.”

Old timers recall Allen Butler tearing down a building in Sorrento and using some of those materials to construct the addition on the High School. Mr. Butler with a crew of Chet Smith, Francis Smith, Charles Abbott, and others began construction on the addition in the spring of 1948. The new bathrooms (boys on one side of the hall and girls on the other side of the hall), and the two classrooms at the rear were added. Construction was completed and students started attending in the fall of 1948. Robert Blaisdell’s daughter, Marnie remembers sometime in the spring of 1948 she attended a preschool visitation day for the September 1948 Sub-Primary Class. This visit was at the old Primary School, which stood where the Methodist Church parking lot is today. When her Sub-Primary Class started school that fall they were the first to attend the newly renovated Franklin Consolidated School.

The Class of 1949 was the first eighth grade class to graduate from the new Franklin Consolidated School. The 1949 Superintendent’s Report lists five Eighth Grade pupils. Identified to date are Norma Bradbury, Carolyn White, Joyce Springer, and Robert DeBeck. There were no graduation exercises for the Eighth Grade pupils.

The School Report, in the 1950 Town Report lists 115 students, in grades Sub-Primary through Grade Eight. The four teachers were Adah Savage, Bernard Cough, Hilda Bragdon, and Hulda Bragdon. The following is an excerpt from the Superintendents Report: “Two very worthwhile projects have been undertaken at the school during the past year. The town officials have greatly improved the school grounds by building up the yard about the school, and clearing and leveling the play grounds. The many organizations together with the help of several individual citizens have completed and equipped the lunch room. Since the first of January about ninety percent of the pupils have been enjoying hot lunches at noon. A small pupil

payment, with the surplus commodities, Federal subsidy of nine cents per meal, and donations make the lunches possible. I sincerely hope that this program will be continued during the coming year.”

Town Meeting, March 1952, Article #44: To see if the Town will vote to discontinue the Sub-Primary Grade. Voted ‘to continue’.

The School Report in the 1955 Town Report states: “As an economy measure, the Sub-Primary Grade was suspended at Thanksgiving, with the intention of having the pupils of the grade return to school on April 2. There is an article in the Town Warrant to allow the citizens to decide as where or not the Sub-Primary Grade is to be continued as part of the elementary school program.”

Town Meeting, March 19, 1956, Article #47: To see if the Town will vote to have the Sub-Primary Grade remain a part of the Elementary School Program. Voted “No”. This was the last time Sub-Primary or kindergarten was offered by the Town of Franklin.

In August 1972 Franklin voted to join Schoodic Community School District and ownership of the Franklin Consolidated School was transferred to Schoodic Community School District in June of 1974. In September 1976, the Mountain View Middle School opened its doors. This removed Grades Six, Seven, and Eight from the Franklin building and allowed a Kindergarten program to be started at Franklin by Schoodic CSD.

The last Eighth Grade to graduate from this building was June 1976. The members of this class were Liza Tilden, Carol Bellatty, Kathy Coburn, Lawrence Coburn, Dawn Smith, Nancy Albee, Jeff Gordon, Jeff Crabtree, Terrie Kasper, Jerrie Merritt, Mark Lopez, Ruth Day, Mike Day, Mike Butler, Billy Tracy, Calvin Harper, Danny Storms, Earl Hodgkins, Kenny Clark, Meg Smith, Theresa Smith, Irene Bradbury, Debbie Pickard, Debbie Young, Carroll Crabtree, Colleen Williams, and Ernie Spaulding.

In September of 1982 the fifth grade was moved from the Franklin building to Mountain View Middle School. At mid-year of the 1985-86 school year the fourth grades from Franklin and Sullivan were moved to Mountain View. This was done to alleviate the overcrowding at Franklin. An addition was added to Mountain View School and all classes were moved from the old school to Mountain View. The last time class was held at the Franklin school building was June 1989.

On March 27, 1990 the Schoodic Community School District voted to remove the Town of Franklin from Schoodic CSD even though the vote in Franklin was 3 to 1 to remain in Schoodic CSD. On July 27, 1990 Schoodic Community School District deeded the land and buildings thereon to “The Inhabitants of the Town of Franklin.”

Town Meeting March 23, 1991 Article #51: To see if the Town will vote to appoint a committee of five or more to look into future usage of the Town-owned “Franklin Grammar School” Building, so-called, along with cost estimates of various renovations to suit community needs, and to report back to the voters at the next special (or regular) Town Meeting. (Budget

Committee recommends “yes”). The vote was “YES, not to be sold”. Alice Carter, Henry St. Onge, Robert Cossette, Beverly Billings, Joseph Bellai, Henry Obermann, and Nelson Emerton were appointed to the committee.

Special Town Meeting June 20, 1991, Article #6: To hear and act on the report of the School Building Use Committee, as appointed at the Town’s Annual Town Meeting on March 23, 1991. Report read and accepted. The Report of the Committee states “as for the condition of the building upon transfer to the Town, suffice to say that when the committee first inspected the building on April 6, 1991 we found the refrigerator still contained food, somewhat moldy.”

Committee Recommendations:

1. That the building and surrounding land remain in town ownership and be devoted to the benefit of the people and the Town of Franklin.
2. That the North end of the building (the original building) be devoted to Town Offices.
3. That the South end of the building be converted to a public meeting area.
4. That the basement be modified for public use.
5. That the land surrounding the building be developed into recreational use.

Special Town Meeting June 20, 1991, Article #7: To see if the Town will vote to appoint the Building Use Committee as an interim Board of Trustees until the next Annual Town Meeting to implement the recommendations contained in Article # 6 above. Voted to appoint The Building Use Committee as an interim Board of Trustees until next Annual town Meeting.

Special Town Meeting June 20, 1991, Article #8: Shall the Town raise or appropriate \$14,000.00 to implement the short term/immediate recommendations contained in the Committee Report. Voted - Yes

Town Meeting March 21, 1992 Article #56: To see if the Town will accept the “By-Laws, the Board of Trustees of the Community Center of the Town of Franklin”. Voted Yes.

Article 57: To see if the Town will elect 7 members to the Board of Trustees of the Franklin Community Center, 2 members to be elected to a 3-year term, 2 members to be elected to a 2-year term, and 3 members to be elected to a 1-year term. Voted Yes.

Town Meeting March 19, 1993 was the first Town Meeting held at the newly renovated Community Center. During the summer of 1993 the offices for Selectmen, Assessors, and Planning Board were completed and furnished. The officials immediately moved into their respective offices. The year of 1994 saw the completion of the northeast office and meeting area. The donations of labor, material and equipment from contractors, organizations and individuals were a mainstay in the completion of this project. Future generations should appreciate the level of community involvement in restoring this local landmark.

On October 23, 1994 candidate for Governor Angus King meet with local citizens, at the Franklin Community Center. Two weeks later Angus King was elected Governor of the State of Maine. Although the Community Center may not be responsible for his victory, Governor King in an interview after election said, “it was at this meeting in Franklin, that he realized he had a chance of winning the election.”

There are many names associated with the Franklin School building. Older alumni remember the names of Bessie Wilbur, Hilda and Hulda Bragdon, Adah Savage, Dorothy Jenkins, and Dante Forni. Younger alumni remember Mrs. Faye Havey, Ms. Jerry Golden, Mr. Ken White, and Mr. John Day.

At this time I would like to point out some similarities, and connecting links between the first senior class, the last senior class, the first eighth grade class, and the last eighth grade class. The first Senior Class had six girls and one boy. Forty years later the last Senior Class had six boys and one girl. Marcia Gordon of the first Senior Class in 1908 married Reginald Joy. She was Marcia Joy one of the four teachers in the new elementary school in 1949. She was also the aunt of Audrey Joy of the last Senior Class in 1948. Ethel Eldridge of the first Senior Class in 1908 was an aunt of Bruce Carter of the last Senior Class of 1948. Douglas Smith of the last Senior Class of 1948 had a daughter Dawn Smith in the last eighth grade class of 1976. Edward Young of the last Senior Class of 1948 had a niece Debbie Young in the last eighth grade class of 1976. Norma Bradbury of the first eighth grade class in 1949 had a daughter Nancy Albee in the last eighth grade class of 1976.

Respectfully submitted,

Beverly Billings, Secretary
Franklin Community Center Trustees