

The Year in Review - Fremont NH 2017

2017 started off with several snowstorms in January and February with a NOR-EASTER taking place on February 9th. It dropped 13 inches of snow on Fremont and forced schools to close for the third time in 2017. Businesses closed, and activities were curtailed before and after the Nor Easter creating a quiet old-fashion New England winter day. This Nor Easter was followed by two more large snowstorms on February 12 & 13th, dropping another 13 inches of snow, and another 4 or 5 inches of wet heavy snow on February 15 & 16th. Schools were closed again as a result of these February snowstorms. It was a crazy start to the year with all these storms...it



Highway Crews taking a rest for dinner during the February 9th Blizzard

was very similar to the Winter of 2014 & 2015 which was one of the worst winters on record in New Hampshire. Another Nor Easter dropping 14 to 15 inches of snow took place on March 31st & April 1st -- exactly 20 years to the day of the big Nor Easter of April 1, 1997. It was a wet heavy snow and it caused schools and businesses to close again. Spring didn't want to click in early this year.

When spring did arrive it was a damp, rainy, cool season even into early June. Memorial Day was an exception -- very nice and pleasantly warm. The wet, cool weather was causing many people to become frustrated with the lack of warm weather -- especially after enduring a tough winter and looking forward to the approach of Spring. Planting gardens had to be delayed in most cases due to the wet, cool spring. The Maple Syrup season was almost ideal for a change this year, and this author saw many more maple trees around Fremont tapped than normal.



Summer was mostly pleasant and warm, with a fair amount of rain, sometimes cool, but generally good for growing gardens.

*Rainbow in Fremont over
the KTM Facility on
Spaulding Road
08 August 2017*

Memorial Day was held on Sunday, May 28th and was a wonderful success. Roughly 325 people were in attendance and 13-year-old Amelia Earnshaw sang an amazing rendition of the National Anthem much to the grateful and enthusiastic applause of the audience. The guest speaker - Lieutenant Eric Whicker, US Navy was so impressed by the various speakers, musical renditions, recitations, and the highly attentive, respectful audience that he called Fremont "the little town with a BIG Heart." Such was his very positive impression of Fremont. May Fremont always continue to show our grateful pride towards ALL our men & women, past & present, who served in the armed services dating back to the American Revolution between 1775-1783.

2017 marked the 100th anniversary of the United States entering World War I on April 2, 1917. Fremont sent 22 service men into the War that was supposed to "end all wars." One, James M. Forsaith of Fremont, formerly of nearby Chester, paid the ultimate price on October 28, 1918. One of Fremont's proudest moments came during World War I when it placed first place on a percentage basis out of 37 towns and cities in Rockingham County in all four Liberty Loan Bond fundraising drives!!

Fremont was one of a very few towns statewide that received a three star Honor Flag for reaching, and exceeding, its quota during these Liberty Loan Fundraising Bond Drives. In total, proud Fremonters, of humble and limited financial means, raised over \$130,000 total during these four fundraisers - an astronomical sum for that time! In addition to this amazing feat, Fremonters raised another \$15,000 in purchasing W.S. Stamps meaning the town raised in total over \$145,000 to help fund WW I. Most other towns in the county could hardly raise their allotted amounts, let alone exceed them like Fremont did in all four drives. Fremont was a town of only 600 people in 1917 & 1918 so it was indeed a VERY PATRIOTIC & GENEROUS little town.

2017 saw the nation get pummeled by floods, tornadoes, three major hurricanes, and fires devastating much of the Western states. California was hit with its biggest fire in its 167 year history called the Thomas Fire that destroyed over 450 square miles and hundreds of homes. It took four weeks to put it out...no thanks to the devastating Santa Anna winds that spread the fire at an unbelievable fast and uncontrollable pace. The worst weather to hit Fremont in 2017

in addition to the Nor Easterns, was the severe rain & wind storm on Sunday, October 29th & 30th. Electricity was knocked out over much of the region with several downed trees, branches, and brush falling over roads and power lines. Several inches of rain fell swelling the Exeter River and assorted streams in town causing flooding in several locations and rapid currents on the rivers and streams. The southernmost part of Sandown Road at Bean Hill to Bog Bridges were closed for more than two days because of a large fallen tree near the top of the hill.

The end of 2017 saw Fremont and much of the northeast stuck in an almost record-breaking frigid cold spell that lasted two weeks and into 2018. Freezing temperatures in Fremont and around southeastern New Hampshire dropped to 18 to 25 degrees below 0!!! This historian cannot remember a time when Fremont was in such a prolonged frigid cold spell in over 60 years.

Donald Trump was inaugurated as the 45th President of the United States on January 20th. He is the oldest president ever to have been inaugurated President at age 70. The first year of his administration has been riddled with almost never-ending chaos, drama, and confusion. He did achieve a major tax-cut bill by late December. The economy hummed and the Stock Market soared to almost 25,000 on the stock exchange by the end of the year.



Many trees along Main Street (Route 107) from the Raymond to Brentwood town lines were cut down or trimmed along the sides of existing power lines to help reduce the chance of trees and limbs knocking out power lines during strong wind, rain, and snow storms. This included the cutting down of many stately old maple trees in Fremont Village (formerly called Black Rocks Village until about 1920). Only 35 to 40 years ago, Fremont was impressively adorned with numerous colorful old maple trees lining the sides of Main Street, Sandown Road, South Road, Scribner Road, Chester Road, North Road, and Danville Road. Like the old imposing Elm Trees that used to line and shade much of Main Street until the Dutch-Elm disease killed them during the mid-20th century, many of the Maple trees around town are also gradually disappearing. With the loss of these breathtaking colorful old trees much of the rural charm and scenic beauty of Fremont has been severely diminished. Perhaps sympathetic Fremonters will take time to set out new maple trees to take the place of the hundreds lost around town over the past four decades. *(This photo taken by Bob Meade at 390 Main Street, where one of the removed trees was carved into an eagle peering over Fremont!)*

These along with the 37 barns that have gradually disappeared around Fremont since 1955 goes to show how many of our old landmarks & planted trees like Elm & Maple trees have

disappeared substantially and with it the beauty and character these old barns and trees once added to our local landscape. Slowly but surely, much of our historic landmarks disappear into the mists of time...never to be seen again. Imagine how many barns and old Colonial & Victorian houses Fremont has lost in the past 100 years?? Then add all the houses and barns lost by fire, neglect, abandonment, or deterioration during the past 200 years! That's a lot of history that is lost forever.

Longtime Fremont resident Thomas McGall, a decorated veteran of the Vietnam War was featured on Ken Burn's latest documentary effort, "The Vietnam War" which premiered on PBS in September. He was interviewed for his vital role in the historic & dramatic Battle of Hamburger Hill in May 1969.

Fremont & Brentwood residents formed an Association in October to help preserve and maintain the 1927 Mill Road Dam just over the Fremont line in Brentwood. The dam has long had a major impact on various wells in the southeastern section of Fremont since the mid 1970's. Many property owners adjoining Riverside Drive and Tibbs Grove have been negatively impacted by the closing of the dam. The Association hopes to raise funds to help repair and preserve the existing dam rather than have it dismantled.

Fremonters witnessed the flaming fireball that lit the night sky over New Hampshire and the Northeast on Tuesday, December 26th. The event lasted about four to five seconds and had a peak brightness of -14 magnitude, which is slightly brighter than the full moon. Reports of a delayed sound after the sighting was an indicator that something of the fireball survived.

Al & Barbara Hutchins have shown their amazing level of pride & love of local history by admirably restoring the exterior of their home at 390 Main Street to reflect when it was originally known as the JOHN BROWN FAMILY GUN SHOP between 1845 and 1899. They reproduced a replica of a 10 foot long single barrel gun that hung above the ground floor shop along with a Gun Shop sign. This Gun Shop was also used as a Civil War (1861-1865) Recruiting Office in 1861. The Hutchins also designed and built an imitation cannon and placed it upon a concrete & rock pedestal with a beautifully carved bald eagle and illuminated flagpole standing directly behind the cannon. This, and another Gun Shop built in 1899 at 291 Main Street (a few feet west of the Fremont Town Hall) was built and operated by Andrew Brown - son of John Brown, until he died in 1907. These are two of the only known gun shops still standing in Rockingham County and possibly in all of New Hampshire. A NH State Historical Marker also marks the site. Hundreds of travelers passing by the John Brown Family Gunshop have stopped and admired the restoration of this wonderful Fremont landmark. Many grateful thanks are extended to the Hutchins Family for bringing this unique historic landmark back to life.

The POPLIN CAFÉ, owned by Ethan & Robin Ward of Danville, closed on August 27th after nine years in operation. The popular eatery was a mainstay for locals to visit and enjoy conversing over breakfast or lunch. The Elvis Theme was most evident to all visitors who enjoyed this welcoming establishment.

Benson's Café opened in the former Poplin Café at 665 Main Street on November 13, 2017. The restaurant serves Breakfast & Lunch. It is operated by Sean Benson of Fremont. The new café has quickly become a big favorite among locals.

The Fremont Marketplace opened in the Cooperage Plaza on Spaulding Road in November 2017. It is a Breakfast & Lunch establishment that is quickly gaining loyal and appreciative patrons. Ashley Laskiewicz is the owner of this restaurant.

The Spaulding & Frost Cafe owned and operated by Tom O'Brien since 2016, closed in mid 2017.

Liberty Square Market which opened in 2001 closed on Friday, December 29, 2017. This store built in 1820 is one of the oldest operating country stores in New Hampshire. It has gone by several names through the past 198 years including Daniel B. Chase's Store, Isaiah Robinson's Store, Thompson Barne's Store, Lawler's Store, Vining's Market, Bosworth's Store, and since 1998 Liberty Square Market because it is located at Liberty Square in Fremont -- a term given to the intersection of Main Street & Sandown Road when a 150 high Liberty Pole was raised on July 4, 1861 during the Civil War.

On the humorous side of life a pregnant cat clinging onto a kayak strapped to a car roof was saved in July by astute Fremont Police Officer Jason Larochelle when he and other witnesses thought they saw a cat clinging onto the car under one of two kayaks on the roof. The police officer quickly got into his car and turned the blue lights on to signal the owner of the vehicle to stop. It turns out the driver was headed to work in Raymond and had driven over 2 ½ miles before the cat was discovered. Marley the Cat wasn't very thrilled when the officer pulled her out from under the kayak. He said her claws "left reminders on his right arm of why I am a dog person."

In November another Fremont animal was in the news. A steer owned by Brookvale Farm got her head caught inside a race car tire. It couldn't escape the tire and needed assistance when the owner came and rescued him from his dilemma. Neighbors who reported the incident couldn't believe what they were seeing walking around the pasture and scaring local dogs who didn't know what to make of the funny-looking animal.

In a first of its kind in Fremont, there was an Indian Pow Wow held at Brookvale Pine Farm off Martin Road on June 24 & 25th that attracted hundreds of people from all over New England. Teepees and other Indian related heritage including dancing, drumming & numerous exhibits took place for all those interested in Native American history. The weather was ideal for the event.

On the sad side of everyday life affecting Fremont, Raymond Duval, aged 24 of Fremont was killed while walking on Whitehall Road in Hooksett, NH on January 15th. He was apparently interfering with traffic when he was hit and killed.

50 year-old Mark Lemay of Fremont was found guilty of six counts of rape in Fremont and attempted murder by strangulation in Salem, N.H. on December 19th. He will be sentenced to up to 48 ½ years to 87 years in State Prison in March 2018.

A Lynette Lane woman was seriously injured on February 5th when she accidentally cut her lower left arm with a power saw while doing a home project. She was airlifted by helicopter from a landing zone at Ellis School and flown to Brigham & Women's Hospital in Boston.

A stray bullet narrowly missed a 28 year-old Fremont man at his parents home in Countryside Estates off Route 107 on Saturday, June 3rd. The bullet crashed through his bedroom while he was playing video games startling, but not injuring him. The shooting from behind the home stopped after police arrived at the house, and they were unable to locate the shooter.

Shane Collins, aged 42, a homeless man, allegedly led police on a twenty-mile chase and then on a seven hour manhunt until he was finally captured in a Derry, NH swamp after being bit by a state police dog on Thursday, April 13th. He was suspected in a number of vehicle thefts in recent weeks, and faced additional charges for receiving stolen property and credit card fraud at Liberty Square Market in Fremont on March 13th.

A former 61-year-old Fremonter, Kyle A. Collins who turned gold prospector & hermit out West, has eluded authorities in California who want to question him as a suspect in an attempted murder case, and as a person of interest in two other deaths occurring in 2016 and 2003 in Washington, California. He has yet to be apprehended. It is possible that he was defending himself as no one knows definitively why the murders happened.

A 17-year-old Sandown teen escaped serious injury when his pick-up truck spun and rolled over several times after being hit by another truck on Route 107 in Fremont near the Raymond town line on Friday, August 25. Fortunately, neither occupant of the two vehicles were seriously injured but they were taken to a local hospital. The road was closed for 90 minutes after the accident.

IN MEMORIAM

Fremont lost a longtime, dedicated, community leader with the passing of Barbara B. Bassett, aged 87 on January 14, 2017. She served Fremont in many capacities including an Ellis School teacher for 27 years, 20+ years as Town Treasurer, and 27 years as the longest serving Fremont Town Librarian between 1984 & 2011. Her hard work ethic, dedication, determination, wisdom and good common sense made her a genuine & respected friend to all those who knew, worked, or lived with her. Her many talents, unending kindness, and generosity were greatly appreciated by all who benefited from her thoughtfulness though the years. She is genuinely missed by many in the community.

Stephen H. Menard Sr., aged 78, died July 24, 2017. Steve was a very good-natured Fremonter who grew up in Chester and moved to Fremont in 1958 after marrying his wife Phyllis Langton

of Fremont. Steve served many years on the Fremont Planning Board and coached Fremont's Little League for several years and helped start Fremont's Farm Team. He was also very active in Cub Scouts, Webleos, and was a Scout Master. Steve was a good friend to many and took great pride in his adopted hometown. His large circle of friends & family will miss his down-to-earth, straightforward, friendly personality.

James O'Brien, aged 78, died March 2, 2017. He was born in Exeter and graduated from Exeter High School in 1956. He began his long and dedicated service in the United States Navy that lasted 30 years. In 1974 he was promoted to Chief Petty Officer. He served as a Grand Marshall in the Fremont Memorial Day Parade, and proudly marched for many years in the annual Memorial Day Parade. His family was justifiably very proud of him and he will be missed on Memorial Day in Fremont as he loved to show his pride of country as a longtime dedicated Navy veteran.

This historian wishes to thank one and all for their continued support, interest, and dedication in helping to preserve Fremont's wonderful & colorful town history. Your willingness to assist me in recording and preserving our town's heritage for over 45 years is genuinely appreciated. Fremont is a GREAT TOWN with GREAT PEOPLE and it has been an honor and privilege to be a part of this wonderful town for almost 60 years. THANK YOU and may 2018 be a safe, happy, productive, and enjoyable year for all Fremonters.

Donations of Fremont/Poplin old photos & memorabilia relating to our Town are always greatly appreciated so that they can be displayed in the Fremont Historical Museum at 8 Beede Road. Anyone interested in making a special appointment to view the Museum are welcomed to call me at 895 4032. The Museum is opened one Saturday a month between May & November. Dates will be announced in the Fremont Newsletter and on the calendar page of the Town's website.

Most respectfully,

Matthew E. Thomas
Town Historian

Photo view from front door at the Town Hall during one of the 2017 storms. Photos throughout this report are courtesy of Bob Meade, Makayla Butler & Heidi Carlson

