

FREMONT IN REVIEW - 2008 – REPORT OF THE TOWN HISTORIAN

2008 was not a dull year in Fremont. The year started out with several moderate and frequent snowstorms causing the winter of 2007-2008 to be the second snowiest winter in recorded New Hampshire history. 120 inches of snowfall accumulated in Concord, NH making it just two inches shy of the all-time record of 122 during the winter of 1873-74.

The summer of 2008 was one of the wettest on record with several thunderstorms, and rainstorms taking place during nearly 2 ½ months of the summer. Autumn was pleasantly mild, with bright vibrant foliage colors carpeting the countryside around Fremont.

The **December 11th ICE STORM** was the worst such weather event of its type to strike New Hampshire since 1998, and before that, the November 28, 1921 Ice Storm that wrecked great destruction between central Massachusetts and southern Maine. The 2008 Ice Storm caused the largest power outage in New Hampshire history with over 400,000 residents being without power for days if not nearly two weeks.

Here in Fremont power lines were down all over town caused by downed trees and broken branches. Loud popping sounds echoed all over as trees popped under the pressure of ice building up inside tree crevices. In some places it sounded like the town was under attack by gunfire. Several roads were closed until power lines could be repaired and trees cleared from roadways. The Fremont Safety Complex was turned into an Emergency Shelter for those without power and heat. Roughly 30 families availed themselves of this emergency resource during the first several days following the storm. Defrosted food had to be thrown out after 48 hours of being without power.

It was a surreal sight indeed driving along Main Street into Fremont Village and seeing all the buildings completely in darkness with not so much as one streetlight or sign light on--but just the light of a full moon silhouetting and illuminating the buildings in the Village on the crisp, cold night of December 12th.



Fremonters during this protracted event exhibited the very best of humanity by lending a willing and helping hand to family, friends, and neighbors by providing generators, food, housing, chainsaws, manpower, wood, propane, and other supplies wherever needed. A significant snowstorm just before Christmas added to the anxiety of many trying to get ready in time for the fast-approaching holiday.

LAST TOWN MEETING – Voters approved the passage of SB-2 on March 11th by a vote of 424 to 239. Fremont's 244th traditional Town Meeting was held for the last time on Saturday, March 15th at the Ellis School Gym with 128 people attending. Under the new SB-2 Official Ballot Law, a Deliberative Session will be held in late January or early February where voters come together to discuss, debate, and amend warrant articles, but not vote them up or down until voting by ballot, or absentee ballot, during Town Election Day in March.

2008 was an exciting Primary & Presidential Election year all across the United States. The all-important New Hampshire Presidential Primary was held on Tuesday, January 8th with Fremont voters supporting in the Democratic Primary former First Lady Hillary Rodham-Clinton over Senator Barack Obama 310 to 228 votes. On the Republican Primary side, Fremonters supported Senator John McCain with 326 votes to Governor Mitt Romney's 313 votes. 1,624 Fremont voters, or 64% cast ballots during the NH Primary in January...by far a Fremont Primary Day voting record.



The national **Presidential Election** was held on Tuesday, November 4th.

Like so much of the nation, Fremonters came out to vote in droves. **Over 2310 Fremont voters out of 2,640 registered voters cast ballots for U.S. President -- another Presidential Election Day record for Fremont** – surpassing the 2004 Presidential Election by 256 votes. Fremonters supported Republican U.S. Senator **John McCain** and his Vice Presidential running mate Governor Sarah Palin with **1282 to 1006 votes** for

Democrat U.S. Senator **Barack Obama** and his running mate U.S. Senator Joe Biden. 11 votes were cast for Independent Presidential candidate Ralph Nader. 11 other votes were cast between two other Libertarian presidential candidates.

Double fatality – Townspeople were greatly saddened by the tragic death of two young men whose deaths occurred on December 7th when their car crashed on Beede Road. Robert Theori, 22, of Fremont and Joshua Janvrin, 21, of Derry will be greatly missed by their many family and friends.

Phase I of the **COOPER'S PLAZA** was completed in 2008 on the site of the former Spaulding & Frost Barrel Cooperage site. In July the parking lot was paved and parking spaces painted.

New **WELCOME TO FREMONT** signs were erected at each end of Main Street on October 8th thanks to the generous support of many local businesses and individuals. The project was sponsored by the **Fremont Garden Club** which continues to do much to enhance the attractiveness of our community. Many thanks are extended to this dedicated group of gardeners.

Joseph Dreyer was elected in 2008 as a Selectman, but resigned the position in April to accept a new job that would take him out of the country. **Brett Hunter** was appointed to fill out the first year of Joe's term.

Timothy Comerford, 22, of Fremont was elected in November to his first term as a State Representative from Fremont & Epping. We wish this young college graduate much success as he embarks on a political career. He will serve with incumbent representatives **Dan Itse** of Fremont and **Penn Brown** of Epping, both of whom were reelected from the district.

Signs marking the "**EXETER RIVER – A Protected River**" were erected in April at various locales around town where roads intersect with the river.

The **Fremont Universalist Society** celebrated its 130th anniversary in August. Founded in 1878, this is the oldest existing organization in Fremont responsible for adhering to the provisions in Sarah Chase's 1873 Will requiring an annual Universalist Church Service/ Old Home Day at the 1800 Meeting House.

The 24th **Annual NH GRASS DRAGS & WATER CROSSING COMPETITION** held since 1985, took place at Peterson's Brookvale Farm on Martin Road. Over 25,000 spectators from all around the nation attended this popular event over Columbus Day weekend. **Todd Palin**, husband to Republican Vice Presidential Candidate Sarah Palin of Alaska made a campaign appearance on behalf of the McCain-Palin Republican Presidential campaign team.

The **Fremont Energy Committee** under the chairmanship of **Robert Larson** was established to find ways to reduce Fremont's fossil-fuel energy consumption in homes and town buildings, and to find grant monies to help purchase equipment that will help make Fremont reduce consumption of fossil fuels.

Old Ridge Road was widened and improved during the summer of 2008. **Kenniston Way** was approved as a Town Road at the 2008 Town Meeting. Many trees, especially old maple trees lining South & North Roads, were cut down by utility companies and/or the town highway department to make way for new taller telephone poles, etc.

On February 7th a **tractor-trailor truck jackknifed** across Main Street near Louise Lane after hitting a utility pole causing a power outage and closing the state highway for over 3 ½ hours. The driver of the truck was not injured.

Stephen Mole, 54, of Keller, Texas was sentenced to 30 years in prison in January 2008 for a drunk driving accident that caused the tragic death of Marilyn Gates, 52, of Fremont on March 26, 2006 and which also injured four other Fremonters who were visiting friends in Texas at the time.

Fremont People In The News:

Richard Butler was appointed interim Fremont Fire Chief in January 2008. He was appointed as the official Fremont Fire Chief in October by Town Selectmen. He succeeded former Fire Chief **Richard Heselton** who has held that position since August 1976 when then Fire Chief **Clarence (Phibby) Philbrick** died of a heart attack while fighting a fire at the former Spaulding & Frost Cooperage 40# Shop and its attached paint finishing shop. On June 5, **Interim Fire Chief Richard Butler** and **two young unknown boys**, happened to be in the right place at the right time when they saved the life of a Shirking Road woman found lying unconscious on the floor during a house fire. Thanks to the very quick action of these fine individuals a serious tragedy was averted and a life was saved.

Mildred (Emerson) Frye, 84, a Fremont native, who served as a Navy WAVE during World War II (1941-1946) as one of only two women from Fremont who served in the military during WW II. She gave a very popular and inspirational talk at Winnacunnet High School in Hampton on her wartime experiences. Mildred is just one of only 9 known surviving Fremont natives that served in WWII.

Shannon D. Keeney became the first woman in Fremont's history to become a minister. She graduated from Vanderbilt Divinity School in Nashville, TN. She received her Master in Divinity degree on May 9th.

Erica Magnusson raised money to travel with her college to Africa to assist in village profiling, medical outreach, and agricultural work. She is a dedicated, caring, and compassionate young lady who has excelled both in her college studies and community volunteer roles.

Matt Voss is a Civil War re-enactor portraying a member of the 32nd Regiment of Massachusetts by participating in Civil War encampments that re-enact various battles, meal preparation, and first aid treatment. He participated in Plaistow's 100th Anniversary of its Civil War monument in 2008.

Ellis School Students participated in a major fundraiser to support fifth grader **Brianna Bruno** who suffers from osteosarcoma cancer. Young Brianna is to be greatly admired for her unflinching strength, courage, and inspiration, as well as all those within Ellis School and the community, who so generously donated funds and assistance to aid Brianna in her time of need. **All of Fremont sends its very best wishes to this special young lady.**

Erin Taylor, 25, of Fremont, an AmeriCorp VISTA staff member, has admirably been trying to raise \$100,000 to support the Waveland, Mississippi Volunteer Center, a Hurricane Katrina recovery volunteer camp which houses teenage and college-aged volunteers responsible for helping to rebuild homes in the hurricane-torn region. Erin is a very community oriented person who was active in promoting a new library in Fremont, and active at Pinkerton High School where she graduated in 2001.

Milestones:

2008 was a difficult year because Fremont lost several longtime, worthy, highly respected residents.

Barbara D. Baker passed away on March 6th. She was a friendly, active member of the community who served as a Supervisor of the Checklist for over 30 years, and was a Library Trustee for 10 years. She was a good friend to all who knew her.

Fred Wallace, 85, died June 15 and was the friendly face that greeted customers nearly every morning for over 40 years at Rowe's Gas Station. He was a Fremont institution remembered by

many generations of local youngsters for passing out free bubble gum when Rowe's Gas Station was owned by Kenneth & Marion Rowe and Charles & Louise Rowe back in the 1960's and 1970's.

Bruce Walker, 53, died unexpectedly on June 17. He was a lifelong resident of Fremont and he, along with his late wife Nancy, were dedicated foster parents to several youngsters over the past 30 years.

Norton Smith who died June 27 was a good-natured person who enjoyed Fremont history and donated many artifacts to the town museum. He and his family had lived in Fremont since the 1950's.

Rowena LeClair, 94, was a pillar of goodness and kindness in Fremont. **She was the oldest living native in Fremont** passing away on August 22. She was an active member of the Methodist Church who baked countless pots of beans for decades of Church Suppers, was a member of the Fremont Community Club, the 1964 Fremont Bicentennial Committee, and a founding member of the Fremont Historical Society in 1966. Her cheerful demeanor and unselfish nature will be long remembered for years to come.

Ruth Anderson was a lifelong resident of Fremont who passed away on September 8 after waging a valiant fight with cancer. She served Fremont in a variety of capacities as a longtime School Board member, Deputy Tax Collector, Deputy Town Clerk, and Ballot Clerk, who generously gave of her time and knowledge to her native town.

Philip E. Peterson, aged 79, died September 28 in the same room where he was born in the family homestead on Martin Road. "Farmer Phil" as he was commonly called, was a kind, friendly, helpful, hardworking dairy farmer whose frankness, ingenuity, and kindness knew no bounds. His homespun wake held at the farm attracted over 800 mourners, and an impressive tractor parade during his funeral was so unique that it was televised on the nightly news.

Lester Blackwell, who died November 16, was a longtime resident of Fremont who served as a police officer, and was a former owner of the Fremont Village Market. He generously gave of his time and knowledge in a variety of capacities relating to the town.

Fremont soldiers are still performing valiant military duty in Iraq and Afghanistan. We must not forget these dedicated men and women who are fighting to keep us safe. The Iraq War will be 6 years old on March 19, 2009.

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Fremonters are feeling the effects of the economic downturn that became most evident during the autumn of 2008. February 12, 2009 marks the Bicentennial of President Abraham Lincoln's birth, and in the spirit of Abe Lincoln, we Americans must once again, set aside personal agenda's and work **together** for the common good of the nation if we are to truly overcome the many economic challenges the nation is currently facing. With that being said, **I wish my fellow Fremonters a very happy, healthy, and purposeful New Year.**

Respectfully submitted,

Matthew E Thomas
Town Historian

Photos courtesy of Matthew Thomas and Aja Mahoney