

Jonathan Fisher Memorial, Inc.

Presented in the Month of
November, in This Year
of Our Lord
Two Thousand & Two



Most Humbly Prepared by The
Board of Trustees
The Jonathan Fisher
Memorial, Inc.

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A Journal of Events from the Home of Jonathan Fisher

OUR PURPOSE

“To perpetuate the memory, spirit, works and teachings of Reverend Jonathan Fisher and to preserve at Blue Hill and elsewhere his home, relics and other things of his, (and of) his descendants and the period in which he lived, in order that his life may serve as an inspiration to others.”

ERIC LINNEL RETIRES

This autumn Eric Linnel stepped down as President of the Fisher House Board of Directors after many years of active participation and leadership. Under Eric's watch, the Fisher house earned several significant grants to assess and improve our collections, significantly repaired and protected the house from aging and deterioration, raised awareness of the Fisher house through summer open houses, crafts festivals and encouraged research on the life of Jonathan Fisher. Many visitors will remember Eric in period dress as the living image of a New England Parson. The board is extremely grateful for the time and effort that Eric devoted to the Fisher House.

ASSESSING OUR COLLECTIONS

Three grants were received this year, each designed to assess our current management practices, the condition of our collections and to make recommendations for best practices. Key points from these assessments include:

- Jonathan Fisher produced and subsequent generations have preserved a unique collection of artifacts and documents from this early phase of Maine history.
- While great strides have been made toward

preserving these archives, there is much yet to be done. Contributions of Jonathan Fisher's works continue to arrive and require proper identification, recording, handling and storage.

- Some of the recommendations will be easy to implement, such as moving documents to acid-free boxes. Other recommendations, such as maintaining ideal temperature and humidity conditions in this historic structure for document preservation will be more challenging.

As we await the final reports from our consultants the board is moving ahead where our funds permit with improved document storage and managerial procedures. We will also pursue cost estimates for the more ambitious recommendations. There is room for innovation, such as identifying new partners for winter storage of historic materials and moving more of our documents on-line, so that they are available for research and not at risk of damage from mishandling.

We always welcome new ideas from our members and visitors. Please contact us by mail, email or phone and share your thoughts.

STRATEGIC PLANNING: PRESERVING OUR HERITAGE

Jonathan Fisher was a planner. Reading from his diaries, one is struck that Parson Fisher laid-out his calendar with the same precision and planning that he employed to craft sermons, paint portraits and landscapes, and carved his incredible block-prints.

This fall's transition in board leadership and consultant reports have demonstrated the many ways in which we can make our future or simply watch it happen. Accordingly, the board will be drafting a small, concise document to

serve as a strategic plan for the next five years. Like many plans, we will take stock of where we are, inventory our assets as well as our areas of concern. We will also endeavor to create a small list of achievable objectives to serve as milestones toward the mission and vision expressed for the Fisher house.

To accomplish this important work, we will be looking at plans from similar organizations throughout the state, evaluating reports from state historical agencies and consultants who have recently visited this house, contacting members for their input on where to place our limited resources and ways to secure new support.

The plan will include sections covering preservation of our collections, education of the visitors, support for scholarly research on the life of Jonathan Fisher, public outreach, development of a stronger financial base and membership services. We hope that we can gain the perspectives of a wide audience for this study.

THE WEEKLY PACKET September 5, 2002

"FISHER SELF-PORTRAITS SEEN TOGETHER FOR FIRST TIME IN LIVING MEMORY" By MEGAN DEFRANCESCO

BLUE HILL-On Thursday, August 15, a group gathered to acknowledge the existence of and effective contributions made by the Rev. Jonathan Fisher in his lifetime at the 48th annual Jonathan Fisher Memorial Inc. meeting.

On display at the meeting were all four of Fisher's self-portraits, which he painted for his daughters. It was most likely the first time that all four paintings have been seen together since 1838, when Fisher painted the second two.

Jonathan Fisher (1768-1847) was Blue Hill's first minister and influenced the town and its history. This Harvard graduate was the founder and a trustee of the Bangor Theological Seminary, and the founder of George Stevens Academy. Fisher was a proficient in reading Greek, Latin and Hebrew.

Coming from a family of artisans, he spent his leisure time between the ages of 10 and 15 making buttons, brooches, windmills, snare traps and purling sticks. He took up oil and watercolor painting and developed his own woodcut engraving method using boxwood.

Fisher built his own press to print his engravings. He has been reported as a man of great self-reliance as well as a devout minister with a primary focus on baptizing children and religious education. "Every minute of his time was accounted for," said Serge Liros of Liros Gallery, Blue Hill, one of the featured speakers at the meeting.

Liros spoke about Fisher as an artist. He described the portraits as "executed with great and fine detail," and said Fisher was an American Renaissance man." The pose is the same in the four portraits, and in each Fisher points to a passage in the Hebrew bible. The Rev. Rob McCall said the passage is from Deuteronomy when Moses bids farewell to the people. The Hebrew characters are painted backwards, confirming that Fisher painted what he saw in the mirror.

After the formal meeting, while members of the community observed the portraits up close, Margaret Fisher, a fifth generation descendant of Jonathan Fisher, pointed out that the face in the portraits changes with Fisher's age. She noted how the wrinkles are more prominent in some portraits than others. The first two paintings were created in 1824 when Fisher was 56 years old.

The paintings were displayed courtesy of the Bangor Theological Seminary, The First Congregational Church of Blue Hill, a family donation, and Ethelwyn Hinckley.

Director Sandra Linnell reported that the Jonathan Fisher Memorial had received grants this year from the Institute of Museums and Library Services, the Martin Foundation, and the Maine State Archives. President Eric Linnell said there has been a growing interest from people all over the world in the life of Fisher and that the Fisher Homestead has had many "interesting and interested visitors."

McCall spoke on how Fisher was known to walk everywhere in Downeast Maine. On foot, he traveled to Machias, Bangor, Castine and Ellsworth, among other locations. In April this year, McCall said, members of the Blue Hill Congregational Church decided to walk to Bangor in Fisher's steps. Participant Jim Fisher remarked that perhaps Fisher's walk had been more pleasant in the absence of the large blundering trucks and thick traffic of today. Nevertheless, they hope to do it again next

spring with more walkers.