

Robert Frost Farm Friends Newsletter

(Robert Frost Homestead Foundation)

*The
Robert Frost Farm*



Issue 7

Spring 2005

*P.O. Box 1075 Derry, New Hampshire 03038
A National and New Hampshire Historic Site*

ROBERT FROST YOUTH POETRY PROGRAM — 2005

At twelve noon on Saturday, June 18, fourth grade students from New Hampshire's public and private schools will read their poems at the Robert Frost Farm where the reading and award ceremony will be held. Since 1989 the Youth Poetry Program has offered budding poets the opportunity to express their feelings about New Hampshire in a poem at the place where Robert Frost was inspired to create much of his poetry. The Theme selected for this year's competition is "*Spring in New Hampshire.*"

The Robert Frost Youth Poetry Program is generously supported by The Finisterre Fund of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation; The Trustees of the Robert Frost Homestead Foundation; University of New Hampshire Library; State of New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic Development — Division of Parks and Recreation; and the Poetry Society of New Hampshire.

A GIRL'S GARDEN

A neighbor of mine in the village
Likes to tell how one spring
When she was a girl on the farm, she did
A childlike thing.

One day she asked her father
To give her a garden plot
To plant and tend and reap herself,
And he said, "Why not?"

In casting about for a corner
He thought of an idle bit
Of walled-off ground where a shop had stood,
And he said, "Just it."

And he said, "That ought to make you
An ideal one-girl farm,
And give you a chance to put some strength
On your slim-jim arm."



(Excerpted from Robert Frost's "A Girl's Garden" written and published in 1916 in Mountain Interval.)

SUMMER 2005 LITERARY SERIES

SUNDAY, JULY 17, —2 P.M.

LESLEY LEE FRANCIS

"MOTHER GOOSE and the IMAGINATION THING"

Lesley Lee Francis is the granddaughter of Robert Frost. Having retired from the professional staff of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) in Washington, D.C., she is currently Scholar-in-residence and Adjunct Professor of Spanish at Shenandoah University. Dr. Francis received her A.B. degree from Radcliffe College and her Ph.D. in Romance Languages from Duke University. She taught Spanish language and literature at Sweet Briar College in Virginia and at St. Edward's University in Texas before moving with her three daughters to Arlington, Virginia. For many years she owned and directed a summer school in La Granja (Segovia), Spain. She has lectured and published extensively on her grandfather; her biographical study, *The Frost Family's Adventure in Poetry: Sheer Morning Gladness at the Brim* (University of Missouri Press, 1994) is now in a paperback edition entitled *Robert Frost: An Adventure in Poetry, 1900 - 1918*, with a new introduction by the author (Transaction Publishers, Rutgers University, 2004).



Besides writing and lecturing about her grandfather, Lesley Francis is an Honorary Trustee of the Robert Frost Farm in Derry, and a member of the Advisory Board of *The Robert Frost Review*.

SUNDAY, JULY 31 —2 P.M.

RICHARD HOLMES

"DERRY IN 1900"

Richard Holmes, a New Hampshire native son, teacher, author, and Founder/Director of Derry Museum of History, is currently Chairman of the Derry Heritage Commission. He is the author of numerous historical articles about the area and co-author of two books, *Derry* (1995) and *Derry Revisited* (2005). A former teacher and Department Head of Social Science for the Pelham School District, he has a Masters degree in History from Nashua's Riviere College. His ongoing interest in New Hampshire history fueled by his work as a history consultant and weekly columnist for Derry News provides him with a rich background for his talk on Derry in the first decade of the 20th Century. His informal history will recall the economy, schools, landscape, churches, and community leaders of Derry during the years 1909 — 1911. He says..."he is a believer that even great men are, to a very large measure, pulled, turned, twisted, and shaped by the environment in which they live. You can't just look at Derry in 2005 and think that was Mr. Frost's Derry.



We are today a very different community than we were a century ago. And I hope that by understanding Derry as it was, we can better understand Robert Frost as he became."

SUNDAY, AUGUST 14 — 2 P.M.

NATALIE S. BOBER

"ADVENTURES of a BIOGRAPHER"

Natalie S. Bober is an award-winning biographer and historian with a strong background in the humanities and eighteenth century British and American history. "Biography is the human heart of history," Bober tells us. Bober's titles have appeal across a wide spectrum of ages, and have garnered starred reviews from *Booklist*, *School Library Journal* and *Kirkus Review*. They have been acclaimed in The New York Times Book Review as among the best of their genre being written today. Her biography of Thomas Jefferson caught the eye of Ken Burns and as a result, she served as a consultant for his PBS documentary: "Thomas Jefferson" and appeared as a historian ("talking head") throughout the program. Her 1981 biography of Robert Frost entitled "*A Restless Spirit: The Story of Robert Frost*" features a jacket painting by Frost's artist granddaughter, Robin Hudnut, depicting the snow-filled landscape of Frost's New England.



In this stunning biography of Frost, Mrs. Bober uses interviews, letters, and Frost's own poetry to present a dramatic story of the conditions and events that nurtured and shaped his restless spirit. Here is Robert Frost as a student, husband, father, teacher, friend, and of course, poet, a man who "gently but firmly refused to conform." *Language Arts* calls the biography... "A passionate book [that] does justice to an American giant."

SUNDAY, AUGUST 28 — 2 P.M. — CYNTHIA HUNTINGTON, N.H. POET LAUREATE

"A POETRY READING"

Cynthia Huntington, whose five year appointment as New Hampshire's poet laureate began on March 22, is Chair of The *Creative Writing Program* at Dartmouth College. She is the author of three books of poetry as well as a prose memoir, *The Salt House*. Her newest poetry collection, *The Radiant* won the 2001 Levis Prize from Four Way Books. Cynthia Huntington has received grants from the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts, The Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, and the Massachusetts Cultural Council, as well as two Fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts. Other awards include: the Robert Frost Prize from The Frost Place in Franconia, the Jane Kenyon Award in Poetry, and the Emily Clark Balch Prize. She has also taught poetry and non-fiction writing in the MFA in Writing Program at Vermont College as well as workshops for the Frost Festival in Franconia New Hampshire. Noted poet and former New Hampshire Poet Laureate Donald Hall writes ... "Cynthia Huntington writes poems by the sentence, punctuated by the line, and by a vocabulary of nice distinctions. Hers is a poetry of wit, surprise, observation, and exemplary intelligence."



ROBERT FROST AND PINKERTON FOOTBALL

By Lorraine Raitt Kimball — Pinkerton Class of 1931

In the early 1900s, much of the Derry Village focus in autumn was on Pinkerton football. A game was an event, especially with arch rival Sanborn Seminary from Kingston.

Robert Frost, who earned a place on Pinkerton's faculty in 1906, accomplished many innovative things during his five years there, including inspiring his students to write and study poetry, to create interesting and well constructed compositions and to develop a lasting appreciation for good literature. He organized a successful debating team, presented plays and at the request of the principal, revised the entire English curriculum. His students came to like and respect him. Some of the boys were surprised and pleased to learn that their teacher was quite a sports enthusiast who had been on the Lawrence football team during his own high school years.



Vernon Raitt, 07, Courtesy of Lorraine Raitt Kimball '31'

My sisters and my brother, Vernon Raitt, were in Mr. Frost's English classes. The family's home in Derry Village backed up to Pinkerton Oval, making it convenient to activities at the field. One morning, after Frost was taken with chills at Pinkerton, Vernon brought him home where my mother doctored him with her panacea ginger tea.

After this, he often accompanied Vernon home before he went to the oval to watch the boys work out on the athletic field after school. Vernon was very proud to be on the football team and of the letter he earned. Nicknamed "PQ" short for Pretty Quick, it stuck with him throughout his life.

Usually Vernon and Mr. Frost would be joined by John Clark, Vernon's friend and teammate and another favorite of Frost's. John was a budding linguist but sadly his outstanding talent as a writer was lost to the world in the Argonne Forest in World War I. Teammate Alan Bartlett Shepard was more fortunate. He married another Pinkerton graduate, Renza Emerson, and retired as a Lt. Colonel in the Army Reserves. Bart and Renza's son made history in 1961 as America's first man in space.

A glimpse of Derry's past



Football was a rougher sport in the early 1900s before stricter safety rules together with improved equipment reduced playing field injuries. Nevertheless, it was obvious Frost found "poetry" in the teamwork of the football squad and the execution of their plays.

In 1909, when Ernest L. Silver, who shared a love of sports with Frost, replaced Principal Bingham at Pinkerton, he proposed a faculty-prepared dinner in the Academy's new domestic science kitchen for the football team after the big game of the season, Pinkerton vs. Sanborn Seminary. If Pinkerton won, cake and ice cream would be added to the menu.

John Bartlett, Frost's best student and Captain of the football team that year, scored the winning touchdown, and as promised, at the banquet a few nights later, Frost was one of the faculty waiters to serve dinner.

It is also noted that Frost led the cheering with a chant he had composed on the blackboard:

"In the days of Captain John,
Sanborn Sem has nothing on
Pinker-ton, Pinker-ton."

FARM NEWS

New Hampshire State Parks Announce Rate Increase

(Concord, NH) In January the New Hampshire Division of Parks and Recreation announced rate and fee increases in New Hampshire State Parks. Admission fees for historic sites this season will be \$7/adult; \$3/child age 6-17 and \$3/ New Hampshire senior citizens.

Attendance at the Speaker's Programs and other scheduled special events will continue to be open to the public free of charge.

Conservation Assessment held at the Robert Frost Homestead

Last October, Don Davis, Historic Sites Supervisor; Tom Mattson, South Region Parks Manager; and Tom Mansfield, DRED Preservation Architect, together with Trustees Hannah Martin, former Board Chair, and Laura Burnham, current Chair of the Board of Trustees met at the Farm with Marc A. Williams, founder of American Conservation Consortium, Ltd. and Sheryl Hack, Curator of Buildings at Canterbury Shaker Village, for a daylong evaluation and conservation assessment of the building and collections of the Robert Frost Homestead. Based on the Assessors' recent detailed report which outlines their recommendations for making much needed improvements at the Farm, it is likely that federal funding will be available to accomplish these goals.

Trustee Resignation and New Trustee Nominated

At its April meeting, the Board accepted with regret the resignation of Trustee Sue Mullen. To fill this vacancy, Derry resident, Peter Gaucher was nominated. His name has been forwarded to Governor John Lynch for approval. Gaucher, a Dartmouth graduate, has been teaching English at Pinkerton Academy for over twenty-five years and has a long-standing interest in the poet and his legacy. Additionally, he is a gardening enthusiast whose skills will be a welcome addition to the Farm's Grounds and Garden committee.

Antiques Appraisals to be Held at Farm

Trustee Herc Papachristos, who specializes in antiques and auctions, has offered to hold an unofficial "Antiques Road Show" at the Farm this coming summer, donating the proceeds to The Robert Frost Friends for use in underwriting speakers programs and/or other special events. (Date and time to be announced.) The Board extends its sincere thanks to Herc for his generosity.

AmeriCorps to Assist with Farm Landscaping

Tom Mattson, South Region Parks Manager, has made arrangements for a group from AmeriCorps to do some work at the Farm. Created in 1993, AmeriCorps is part of the Corporation for National and Community Service which engage more than 2 million Americans of all ages and backgrounds in service each year. The work will involve clearing brush from the meadow along toward the brook, cleaning and grooming the Walking Trails, in addition to removing a large dead tree from the property. This should esthetically improve the surrounding landscape of the Farm. We appreciate Tom's effort in bringing this work crew to Derry.

**** PLEASE NOTE; ****

Your Membership Expiration Date follows your name on the mailing label

FRIENDS of the ROBERT FROST FARM MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM

STUDENT.....\$10.00 INDIVIDUAL.....\$20.00 FAMILY.....\$35.00
SPONSOR.....\$50.00 SUPPORTING....\$100.00 CORPORATE...\$250.00

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY, STATE _____

Mail to: Ian Veitenheimer, Treasurer
Friends of the Robert Frost Farm
P. O. Box 1075
Derry, NH 03038

THANK YOU FOR RENEWING YOUR MEMBERSHIP -- *Please tell a friend.*

DIRECTIONS FROM ROUTE I-93

Rte. I 93, Exit 4. East on Rte. 102 to Derry New Hampshire Traffic Circle. South on Rte. 28 for 1 ¼ miles to the farm. Programs are made possible by grants from the New Hampshire Humanities Council and are sponsored by the Robert Frost Homestead Trustees and the Friends of the Robert Frost Farm. Speaker Programs are free to the public.

<<http://www.nhstateparks.org/ParksPages/FrostFarm/Frost.html>>

Telephone (603) 432-3091

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