

FRANK FRENCH

Frank French was born in May, 1850, in Loudon, NH, but spent his childhood in Merrimack at 624 DW Highway with his parents, who later sold the home to the Smiths. It is no longer standing. By 1870, he lived in Manchester where he married Alice Hendricks. They moved to New York City in 1880, returning to Merrimack in 1925 to live in the brick house at 598 DW Highway. They did not own it, but rented from Mr. Jackson, where Frank had a studio. They had two children, Mabel Edna and Frank Allison

Frank was known as the “Dean of American Wood Engravers”, although his many artistic talents included oil and pastel paintings of landscapes and portraits and sculpture. In 1880 he was a regular contributor to the *Harpers New Monthly Magazine* in New York. In 1893 he won a medal at the Columbian Exposition; in 1904 a gold medal at the St. Louis Exposition and in 1915 at the Panama Pacific Exposition in San Francisco.

He was a prolific writer as well, being the art director of the *Manchester Mirror and Farmer* and he published at least three books on the arts. He was one of the organizers of the first Manchester Art Exhibit and established the Manchester Art Association. Many of his works are found at the Currier Art Gallery and some at the Smithsonian in Washington, DC. A reproduction of one of his works is found at the Merrimack Historical Society, showing the McGaw Tavern as it appeared in the 1920’s on the corner of Daniel Webster Highway and Depot Street with Chuck Mower’s barn in the background. The home attached to the tavern was demolished and the tavern itself was dismantled and rebuilt in Bedford.

When Frank died in Reeds Ferry, on Feb. 20, 1933, at the age of 83, his daughter, Mabel, purchased the brick home and opened it as “The Sycamores” with the French studio and gift shop. This is no longer standing, having been demolished in 2018.

There is another French in Merrimack’s history, but he is not known to be related to Frank, although they appeared in Merrimack in 1930 at about the same time in the village of Reeds Ferry.

For more information about Frank French or other citizens and homes in Merrimack, visit the Historical Society at 520 Boston Post Road (open Tuesdays noon- 8 PM) or contact Anita at 603-424-5084 or anitacreager58@comcast.net. J

