



ERLON JONES NEW CURATOR AT FRYEBURG FAIR'S FARM MUSEUM

Fryeburg Fair is pleased to announce that Erlon Jones, 47, of Chatham, NH, has been named the Curator of the Farm Museum.

Jones follows in the footsteps of his parents, Ed & Diane Jones who were the curators from 1994 to 2018. Ed Jones passed in 2019 and Diane Jones in 2022. Erlon Jones started working with his parents at the Farm Museum when he was 17. His first role was handwriting tags for every museum item.

Jones' parents were life-long historians. "My mother was a researcher, a genealogist and very involved with the Fryeburg Historical Society. She wrote two books on local history. I guess I got the gift of historical detective work from her. My father loved to go find pieces of history. He liked to dig for bottles, metal detect and find old things. Once we went on a search for a piece of rail from the old horse railroad. That item is in the Farm Museum. My father always said, 'If we don't grab this history now, it's just going to rot into the ground.' I was brought up with their interests and have taken to it."

Since then, Jones earned his bachelor's degree in behavioral science and his Master's in leadership studies. His full time work is as regional supervisor for the State of Maine's Department of Health & Human Services Division of Licensing and Certification.

30 years later he thinks it's time to update the tags as well as signage at the Farm Museum. He wants to make it easy for devoted fairgoers to find their past donated items and to see what's new in all collections.



Erlon Jones, Farm Museum Curator & Trustee



Erlon Jones with his mother, Diane Jones, at her retirement ceremony from the Farm Museum in 2019

"When I first started we had about three antique chainsaws. I cleaned them up, made a display and labeled them and it seemed to spur on donations. We now have a collection of about 50 old chainsaws. It's a very popular, colorful and interesting exhibit."

The primary section of the Farm Museum is an old barn that was moved to the fairgrounds from Island Farm at Lovewell's Pond in Fryeburg in 1976. Jones says, "I am proud to say my parents were instrumental in developing the museum by adding interesting exhibits and demonstrations where farm ways, techniques and history come alive."

There are many big contributors to Fryeburg Fair's Farm Museum effort. Committee members include Matt Barker of Harrison and Loretta Greene of Sebago. Jones says, "Loretta has been running Loretta's Kitchen for as long as I can remember, doing old time cooking on the wood stove. Northeast Historic Films runs old videos during Fair week. We have the Greene Family demonstrating logging, wood splitting, and old equipment. Ted Greene ran this area for years until his passing in 2019 and now his son Alan, and his daughter Tara Greene-Wilson and their families have

continued their father's traditions. Tara also oversees the homemade ice cream operation. Doug Farnham bakes the bean hole beans and operates the smokehouse all week. Bob Farnham and his daughter, Leia, demonstrate old-time oxen plowing with equipment from the Farm Museum. The old schoolhouse, donated by Marion Hobbs in 1992, has been restored and is open for all to take a seat in old fashioned school desks. We have long-time exhibitors and demonstrators working in the carriage shed like Everett Bailey with his homemade brooms. There's so many wonderful employees and volunteers who make the Farm Museum exceptional. Many come back year after year. Our museum attendants answer questions and generally oversee the displays. These are really important jobs and we welcome new applicants who are interested in history."

Jones says, "We continue to follow the magic formula - change some things and maintain our traditions. I'd like to add some more interactive and educational exhibits. It's best to show people how things work. We're starting to network with local historical societies featuring a new one each year. This year it will be Chatham, NH."



Jones was the star of online cooking videos for Virtual Fryeburg Fair 2020 (preempted by COVID). See these videos on YouTube!



As Agricultural Exhibition Center Assistant Superintendent, Jones oversaw the Baking Contests. Here with blue ribbon winner Norma King of Lovell, ME.

Jones recently taught home canning, preserving, food drying, smoking and preservation skills to Fryeburg Academy students as part of their curriculum. "At the end of the class they had things they could take home as well as contributions to an exhibit for display this year. As a kid I got bored in high school but really liked hands-on learning so this was one of my dreams to teach today's students. I would also like to design a similar learning program for developmentally disabled learners. I want students to be proud of their skills and to know they can make a difference for their families and community."

Jones has an impressive temperament of calmness and reason. He feels old things, skills and traditions are even more important at this time in history. "We're losing our sense of tradition and the knowledge of the old ways of doing

things. I really worry about young people today. I'm not saying they have to be wedded to past methods and ways, but knowing one's history, genealogy, roots and the past - well if you know this, you're more grounded and able to make better decisions in life - like what you want to do for work and who you want to spend your life with. At the Farm Museum we like to highlight and honor many of these historical traditions and have young people experience and learn them."

Written by Rachel Andrews Damon



The antique chainsaw collection at the Farm Museum