

ANDROSCOGGIN HISTORY

October 1990 Newsletter of the Androscoggin Historical Society No. 1

AHS BEGINNINGS

The Androscoggin Historical and Antiquarian Society, as it was first called, was conceived on June 10, 1922, at a meeting of the Mary Dillingham Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. The meeting was an outing held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Bryant in South rs. Harry Bryant in South Lewiston, a colonial home containing many historical items. It's reported that talk turned to preserving such relics and that Mrs. Helen Frye White and Mrs. Alice Frye Briggs, daughters of Senator William P. Frye, expressed the need for a place where their father's valuable collection could be safely kept.

This was not idle talk, for at its next meeting, the chapter discussed the founding of an historical society and appointed a committee to look into the matter. As a result, this society was incorporated in November of the following year, and its first meeting was held on May 13, 1924. "Thus it was," as an early president of the society, James E. Philoon, wrote, "that the Daughters of the American Revolution became the mothers of this society."

In the beginning, all members of the Mary Dillingham Chapter became voting members of the society, paying no fee. For all others, membership was one dollar, later changed to one dollar annual dues. The chapter used a fund left by Nancy B. Emery to help outfit the new society with show cases, tables, and other supplies. Over the years, a close relationship with the Mary Dillingham Chapter has continued, with current by-laws requiring that one member of the society's board be a representative of the DAR chapter.

When the society was formed, offices consisted of president, clerk, treasurer, custodian, to be in charge of the collection, and three directors. First to hold these positions were Mrs. John Sturgis, president; Mrs. James A. Pulsifer, clerk; Mrs. Charles A. Turgeon, treasurer; Mrs. H. O. Cutler, custodian; and Mrs. B. G. W. Cushman, Mrs. George C. Wing Sr., and Mrs. Franklin W. Packard, directors.

The first quarters were a room on the third floor of the old part of the Androscoggin County Building. Within a year, the society moved to a larger room on the third floor (later removed) of the Auburn City Building. In 1936, the growing collection was

moved back to the third floor of the County Building, but this time to three rooms in the new part of the building, which the Androscoggin Historical Society still calls home.

In subsequent issues, we'll write of later years. If anyone has knowledge of society history, including officers, programs, meetings, events, newspaper clippings, and pictures, please call Executive Secretary Robert Taylor. The society, in preserving the history of our area, certainly should have a written history of its own.

--

Harold Dutch

HISTORY OF LEWISTON

Last year the Androscoggin Historical Society sponsored publication of Janus G. Elder's work on *A History of Lewiston, with a Genealogical Register of Early Families*. David and Elizabeth Young edited the book, which was published by Heritage Books, Inc., of Bowie, Maryland.

Mr. Elder died in 1907 at age 71 in Lewiston. Until his death he had been the historian of Lewiston. The Society has Mr. Elder's genealogical and historical correspondence.

The book consists of two main parts: (1) a reprint of a narrative history of Lewiston published in 1882 and (2) a genealogical register of Lewiston's early families.

The book is priced at \$26 and copies may be obtained at the Society's library. Of 520 printed, the Society purchased 100 at discount prices, and at this writing has only 18 copies left.

A VISIT BY A FORMER WEST AUBURN FAMILY

During the summer months the Wagg-March Library and Museum have a number of out-of-state visitors, some of whom are descendants of former residents of the area. Dr. and Mrs. Albert Parker of Old Greenwich, Conn., whose ancestor was Libeon Crafts of West Auburn, were recent visitors.

They presented the Society a large picture of the old Crafts homestead that was built in 1854 and a copy of an article on the family that appeared in the Jan. 30, 1943, issue of the *Lewiston Evening Journal*. The article contained excerpts from 1847 and 1849 diaries kept by Libeon's wife, Patience (Ingall) Crafts, who was Dr. Parker's great grandmother.

While Dr. Parker has in his possession seven other years of the diary, he was surprised that those two years were owned by the Society and in our collection. Dr. Parker has typed transcripts of the diaries he owns and will give us copies.

Dr. and Mrs. Parker are especially interested in obtaining information on Dr. Moses Shepherd Leach of Canton, Maine, who died in 1846, at age 26. He married into the family, and the Parkers have an oil painting of him.

-- Robert Taylor

Readers are encouraged to share materials for publication in this newsletter. We welcome original articles based upon your own research or selections you have found on local history.

DIARIES IN OUR COLLECTION

The Society has in its possession the following diaries:

Andrew Robinson Giddings of Danville, covering period 1784-1840 (some years missing). Transcriptions were done by Stanley Atwood and John E. Libby, consuming about 2000 hours of spare time.

Amos Davis of Lewiston, with transcriptions, 1764-1807.

Thomas Hodgkins of Lewiston, original, 1803-1809 and 1819-1826, and account book, as well as transcriptions of 1809-1819 in a series of articles from the *Lewiston Daily Sun* (1929).

Col. William Garcelon of Lewiston, Mar. 1838 to July 1841, with his *Journal on Early Lewiston History and Its Families*.

Nathan Bucknam of Lisbon, with transcriptions, 1847-1863.

Anne Susan Jumper of Minot, 1844-1846, and her future husband, **Oliver H. Brown**, 1850.

Anna F. (Bailey) Daggett of Greene, 1886.

MOTOR AGE COMES TO POLAND SPRING HOUSE

The first automobile to come to the famous resort hotel appeared on July 10, 1901, a five-horsepower, one-cylinder De Dion Bouton owned by Garret A. Hobart Jr., whose father was vice president under William McKinley. The car was shipped by boat from New York to Portland, then driven to Poland Spring.

Eight years later, the resort conceded that the motor car was here to stay by building at the east end of the front veranda a special entrance and reception room for guests arriving by auto. The *porte-cochere* matched the one at the main entrance. The hotel's magazine, the "Hill-Top" for July 4, 1909, reported that this was "the most important improvement for the new season. . . . Guests arriving by automobile will use this entrance and here may lay aside their wraps . . . thus affording an opportunity to appear in a more presentable guise."

This entrance, the article also stated, would relieve congestion at the main entrance and cars would not interfere with the horses and carriages. Few realized that the promise of the motor age would lead to the demise of the resort hotel era.

-- Harold Dutch

(*The Society has an almost-complete set of bound "Hill-Top" magazines.*)

HISTORY OF LEWISTON SCHOOLS

[Report of remarks of J. G. Elder, esq., at dedication of Barkerville School House].

It would be interesting to notice the early history of the schools in Lewiston, the difficulties under which they labored, the persons who taught, as well as the amount expended in their maintenance. Unfortunately, however, the first quarter of a century is involved in much obscurity, there being no records, and the information derived from the oldest persons being exceedingly meagre. It is possible that Amos and Daniel Davis, brothers, who were early in town, were among the earliest teachers; but of this we are not certain. A Mrs. Poor, a relative of Mr. Amos Davis, was the first female teacher whose name has come down to us. She taught on Sabattis street, in a small building erected for that purpose, near the residence of Mr. D. B. Jones, perhaps as early as 1780.

Mr. David Goss taught in the house of Mr. James Garcelon at Garcelon's ferry, in 1791, and we have no *positive* information that any male teacher was employed at an earlier date.

The names of but few of our early teachers have come down to us, but the more prominent were Thomas Mitchell, who taught in the west end of his log house, about 1793 or 4, on the farm now owned

by Capt. S. B. Osgood, Dan Read, esq., who taught in various places in town, Mr. Benning Wentworth who was employed in the lower part of the town, and a Dr. Barrett, who had a class in one end of James Ames' blacksmith shop.

But in 1803 a new interest was given to our public schools by Richard D. Harris, who came here about two years previous from Connecticut. At the close of his school in the spring of that year, he gave a public exhibition--the first in town. It was given at the house of Mr. James Garcelon, at the ferry, and besides his own school a number of scholars from the third district took part in the exercises. Many were present from neighboring towns.

The first attempt to establish schools in this district--No 1--by the town, was in 1796, when, at the annual meeting, it was decided to raise \$706.66, to be expended in the erection of school houses in Lewiston. Of this amount \$166.67 was assigned to this district. The same year \$100.00 were raised for the support of schools, to be apportioned among *six districts*.

The year following \$150 were raised for the support of schools, and this district was allowed to expend its proportion of the fund towards the completion of its school-house. Notwithstanding the meagreness of the amount appropriated for school purposes, the town elected eighteen of its best citizens to see that it was economically and legitimately expended.

The school house was erected on the hill near the burying-ground, and was called the Herrick School House, for many years, serving the double purpose of school and meeting house. Here, Sept. 10th, 1803, was organized the First Free Baptist Church in town, and for the most part was occupied by the church as a place of worship, and

on the third day of December, 1817, the Second Free Baptist Church was organized in the same building, and was used by this church until it became extinct--about 1833.

Among the natives of this district who attended school here, and became eminent citizens, were Ebenezer and Oliver Herrick, brothers. Ebenezer prepared for college, and entered Bowdoin, but did not graduate. He was a member of the Convention which met at Portland, in October, 1819, to form the State Constitution, in which he took a prominent part; was a representative to Congress from this district from 1821-7 three terms, and a member of the State Senate in 1829. Oliver, his brother, wishing to obtain a better education than the district school afforded, started for Fryeburg Academy, on foot, with staff and wardrobe in his hand, where he pursued his studies for some time. He commanded a company in the war of 1812, became Colonel after his return, and occupied positions of trust in his native town.

In 1839 the district was divided, the northern part being set off into a separate district, and a new school-house was built in the location where we are now assembled. A few years ago it was enlarged and thoroughly repaired. It has now given place to the one in which we are now assembled -- a great improvement on the old building in every respect.

No one, I think, can say our public schools have not improved within the last few years. Nearly a quarter of a century ago I became connected with the schools at the "Falls." The house was a dilapidated brick building, with gaping walls and rickety floors, but now we have thirteen school houses in the same district, and a large corps of teachers.

--Reproduced from *Lewiston Journal*, Sept. 25, 1873.

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SOCIETY'S RECENT ACQUISITIONS

(Maine Books and Manuscripts)

- * Historical Notes on Lewiston taken from *Lewiston Journal* articles.
- * Historical Notes on Auburn, partly taken from *Lewiston Journal* articles.
- * New Gloucester Vital Records.
- * Parsonsfield Vital Records.
- * Limerick Vital Records.
- * Standish Vital Records
- * Lisbon Vital Records.
- * Turner Births.
- * Raymond Birth Records.
- * Oak Hill Cemetery, Auburn, listings.
- * Leeds cemetery listings.
- * Gray Vital Records.
- * Early Descendants of Hampton, N.H., dated 1845. (Manuscript owned by Warren Randall)
- * Fifield Genealogy, by Randall Bennett.
- * Early Families of Standish.
- * Early Families of Limington
- * Early Families of Limerick.
- * Early Families of Cornish.
- * Early Families of North Yarmouth, by Rev. Allen Greeley (1781-1866).