

ANDROSCOGGIN HISTORY

June 1991 *Newsletter of the Androscoggin Historical Society* No. 3

DIRECTORS ENDORSE JOINT LIBRARY

The AHS Board of Directors voted unanimously on May 7 to endorse the concept of a joint public library/cultural center for Lewiston and Auburn located in the W. S. Libbey mill building adjacent to the falls. The Board concluded that the idea addresses the needs both for library space and for historic preservation at a reasonable cost.

The concept includes not only a joint public library, but also the possibility of a textile industry museum, a hydro-power museum, and the relocation of the Franco-American Heritage Center and of our own library and museum.

We have been grateful to the County Commission for renting us our current rooms in the County Building. However, we are becoming so cramped for space that our ability to continue to serve as a depository to preserve local history is seriously jeopardized. Location in a public cultural center would enable us to expand and to receive greater exposure.

AHS OFFICERS RE-ELECTED

The Society's incumbent officers were re-elected for 1991-1992 at our May 28, 1991, annual meeting. They are Douglas I. Hodgkin, President; Aubrey B. Palmer, Jr., Vice President; Robert L. Taylor, Executive Secretary; Robert C. Beliveau, Curator; Ingrid Dutch, Recording Secretary; Ethelyn O. Penley, Membership Secretary; Susan Sturgis, Treasurer; Willis A. Trafton, Jr., Attorney.

Other members of the Board of Directors are Harold Dutch, Natalie G. Foye, Florence Gremley, Geneva A. Kirk, Eva Labonte, Clarence E. Penley, Walter L. Perry, Mary M. Riley, Norman E. Rose, David Rogers, Peter Rubins, Dwight Tripp, Robert G. Wade, Evelyn White, John White, Leslie M. Wight, Gordon V. Windle, and David Young.

THE DIARY OF AMOS DAVIS

Amos Davis was a farmer, a shoe maker, and a practical surveyor of land, who settled in New Gloucester and then moved to Lewiston in 1773. He was an elder in the Society of Friends. He

provided the land for what is now Davis Cemetery on Sabattus Street, as well as a meeting house and a school house. He had a personal and professional acquaintance with Moses Little of Newbury, Mass., who with Col. Jonathan Bagley became the first operating owner of the vast land areas that were to form the most of the present communities of Androscoggin County. Here are selected portions of his early diary:

June 7, 1770 -- I set out from my house in new glocester for newburyport

June 11 -- I arrived at Mr. Littels in newburyport about 9.

Oct. 29 -- I went to raising of a mill at Lewis town [This was the first ever built in Lewiston.]

January 1, 1771 -- this day I went to falmouth and bought ½ barrel of rum and 4 galands of molases

March 18 -- I cut wood for brous Daniel [his brother] went hunting

May 12 -- Sabath Day this my birthday this day I am thirtey years of age blessed be god I hope in his marcey and trust in my Savour.

May 24 -- Daniel went to work with william stinchfld to worke ½ month for 3½ dols I cleard land at home

June 24 -- this day Nathaniel Ingerson came hear and hired him self out for 3 months from this day to labour with me his wagers is to be 6 dolers pr mounth half muney . . . other half in goods.

June 25 -- nat fell trees hear at home

June 27 -- nat and I begun to fell trees for uncel hubard haskel and fell 4 acers finish july 4 day for which he is indebted to me 8 dols.

July 5 -- nat and I hod corn

July 6 -- I mad pare of pumps for Mrs. Megwire he helpd me nat fell trees and mended fence

July 9 -- nat mowed I raked.

Oct. 14 -- Nat and I went to Silvester [Turner] worked all the weake to felling trees.

Oct. 28 -- I set out for Silvester made sabel traps by the way nat and jabez merel with me

Oct. 30 -- We got to Silvester.

Oct. 31 and Nov. 1 -- nat and jabez merrel healped foll trees at silvester

Nov. 29 -- this day I mended up the house and mended shoes

Nov. 30 -- I lade the harth and other things I sold a cow today to Ebeneser Lane for 21 bushels of corn

Dec. 8 -- Sabath day this day at midnight my mother departed this life afte 35 days sickness She sleeps in jesus

Jan. 22, 1772 -- father went to yarmouth with Mrs. True and war married.

Feb. 3 -- I set out to go to capan [Cape Ann in Gloucester, Mass.] and I went see my friends found them well and I got home to new glocester Sabath Day 23 of febuery 1772

Mar. 2 -- I went to mill had five bushels of weat six of ingen corn one of ry of nathan haskell he had of me nathanel ingersols noot on David barker for ten dollers

Mar. 10 -- I went out in the wood after moos meat and 12 day got home in a grait snoo storm

Apr. 25 -- I helped mr tyler today this day Mrs. eveleth was buried the snow is mostly gone

May 3 -- the beach trees just begin to leaf out

Jan. 25, 1774 -- this day I with my famely moved from New glouster to Lewiston. Imlah Merrill with 4 oxon and Josiah Smith with his mare helpd move me over.

Feb. 1 -- Israel herick with his famely moved hear is now 8 fameleys in Lewiston.

Feb. 22, 1807 -- first of the weeke at our meeting Lewiston this day about ½ past sicks met with considerable shock of an earthquake

Feb. 28 -- this morning Samuel cole with his fameley ware moving west they staid here all night weather modrat we are geting up wood today the three winter months have been mostly cold weather and now in this place it is a genrel scarsety of hay my foder 3/4 spent

Mar. 12 -- geeting wood & this day settled with thomas hodgkins collector for the year 1806 pad my own and my son John Davis's [taxes] sum total eight dollers & 73¢

Apr. 22 -- Returned to Lewiston [from Durham] was in som danger of drowning at Dingleys ferry but faverebel made out to get safe back on same shore again. Joseph Sampson & Elener Morroson in compney with the feremen came up and crost at Reeds ferry

On the facing page is a copy of a plan for the Town of Lewiston that Amos Davis drew at the incorporation of the community. He also was involved in the original survey of the area with his brother-in-law David Purinton of Windham. Here is his recollection written sometime after 1800:

I moved from Southhampton in the State of Newhampshire in the year 1762 to the town of Newglocester in the county of cumberland. Soon after my arivel their I heard of land called the pegepscut purch laying between sd glocester and Androwsogin river and I remember that about that time the newglocester proprietors being doubtful of having extended their town to far northerly as to reach on to the pegepscut clame.

They called on a surveyer to goo to the Andrewsogin River and from thence to meashuer southerly so as to live four miles in width from sd river which was said to be the pegepscut clame by purch from the ingens. . . . Likewise I remember of hunters telling of gooing and having ben over to Androwsogin grait falls and to the best of my remembrance I became aquanted with coln Jonath bagley from alsmbury and cap Moses Little from newbury in the year 1770 who ware down to lay out a township near androwscoggin grait falls and having employed one brown as surveyer proced to run round a tract called Lewistown and runing part of sd tract or township into 100 acer loots and in the 1771 & 2 they being proprietors of sd tract informed me and others of giving settlers 100 acers of land each whare they should chuse in said Lewistown and in the year 1772 I with others went to see the tract of land finding it faverebell to our minds we ware desirous to know how their titel was so that we might goo on with out danger of being called on by other proprietors or persons. I remember perfectly that Coln bagley informed us of his exeming the clames or titels of lands and he fount it as good as aney in the then province and we might depend on their titel to be good and for the [encou]ragement of settlers they proposed cuting or clearing a road from glocester to andrewscoggin River near the grait falls and thence to clear a road down river to Royalsborough [Durham] so called which they acomplished . . . and all the town was not lotted.

CHARLES M. STARBIRD, LOCAL HISTORIAN

by Robert L. Taylor

Charles Millard Starbird was born March 15, 1898, in the Danville section of Auburn, where his ancestors were early settlers. He graduated from Edward Little High School in 1917 and Bates College in 1921. While at Bates he was on the college's first international collegiate debating team (against Oxford University). He afterward attended Yale University Law School for two years and had intended to enter the practice of law. Instead he served as tax collector for the city of Auburn from 1923 to 1928 and later engaged in the contracting and carpentry trades. Near the end of his life he was an income tax accountant. He was a member of the Danville Union Church, and an honorary member of the Androscoggin Historical Society. Charles Starbird died August 18, 1969, in Auburn, a life-long resident. He left his wife, the former Helen Eastman, and three children, Jean, Eleanor and Laura.

During most of his lifetime, Starbird was interested and active in historical research, especially as to the Pejepscot or Danville section of Auburn. All the results of his research were carefully recorded and catalogued and given to the Androscoggin Historical Society. He managed to accumulate a large amount of Danville material, including town records and a genealogical record of the early families. In fact, this exhaustive genealogical study probably cannot be surpassed by any other Maine town.

In consequence of his extensive and intimate knowledge of Danville history, Starbird also was an authority on a great part of the history of Auburn. This was not only due to the fact that the towns of Danville and Auburn eventually joined to form the City of Auburn, but because in its early years a triangular strip of Danville reached up to a mid-point of the Falls of the Androscoggin. The original Goff's Corner Village, now the principal business center of Auburn, set partly in Danville and partly in Auburn. Charles knew of all the governmental ramifications that resulted in reduction of the size of Danville and its final annexation to Auburn.

His studies far antedated the coming of the first white settlers to this area, and his book on "Indians of the Androscoggin Valley" was an accepted authority on the subject. Starbird wrote as complete a history on Indians of the Kennebec Valley but was unable to finance its publication. A typed and bound copy of that manuscript, as well as his other historical records, are in the holdings of the Androscoggin Historical Society.

LEWISTON BICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE

Mayor James Howaniec of Lewiston has appointed Rick Lachapelle to begin plans for the 1995 celebration of Lewiston's bicentennial as an incorporated town. A committee has considered fundraising projects and production of a pictorial history. Community groups are encouraged to sponsor projects and events for the year-long calendar. Anyone interested may call 784-0541.

Androscoggin Historical Society
County Building
Auburn, Maine 04210