

ANDROSCOGGIN HISTORY

June 1992 Newsletter of the Androscoggin Historical Society No. 6

AHS OFFICERS ELECTED

Madelyn Provancher was elected as our new Membership Secretary at our May 26, 1992, annual meeting. She succeeds Ethelyn O. Penley, who has served faithfully and with meticulous care for twelve years. The officers re-elected are Douglas I. Hodgkin, President; Aubrey B. Palmer, Jr., Vice President; Robert L. Taylor, Executive Secretary; Robert C. Beliveau, Curator; Ingrid Dutch, Recording Secretary; Susan Sturgis, Treasurer; Willis A. Trafton, Jr., Attorney.

Other members of the 1992-1993 Board of Directors are Gridley Barrows, Harold Dutch, Leslie Eastman, Natalie G. Foye, Eva Labonte, Clarence E. Penley, Ethelyn O. Penley, Walter L. Perry, Mary M. Riley, Norman E. Rose, David Rogers, Peter Rubins, Dwight Tripp, Evelyn White, John White, Leslie M. Wight, Gordon V. Windle, and David Young.

The Board has elected Florence Gremley, Geneva A. Kirk, Robert G. Wade, and Leslie M. Wight as Honorary Directors.

ELEPHANT IN L-A, 1816

Mrs. Esther (Nason) (Ray) Moody, at age 87 when interviewed by the *Lewiston Journal* about 1903, reminisced about early Lewiston and Auburn. The story was reproduced in *Lewiston Saturday Journal*, February 2, 1918, p. 9. One event she recalled:

"The first bridge between Auburn and Lewiston was not covered. I have heard that this has been denied, but I can remember the old bridge as plainly as tho it was but yesterday. After Auburn had been set off from Minot, 66 years ago, the bridge was rebuilt and covered. My mother frequently told me about the first elephant that came to Auburn. It was in the same year that I was born, 1816, and the animal came with a show. They tried to get him across the bridge but he refused to go that way. Then they let her swim across the river and so pleased was the elephant that she refused to come out of the water for a long time. She would swim around and squirt the water in all directions. Elephant Bess was her name and she made a great excitement in Auburn and Lewiston as nothing of the kind had ever been seen there before."

THE DIARIES OF WILLIAM PLUMMER

William Plummer (1756-1838) was born in Scarborough. He served in the Revolution, including the surrender of Burgoyne at Saratoga, the winter at Valley Forge, and the Battle of Monmouth. He then settled at Cape Elizabeth and engaged in farming and fishing. In 1788 he and his family moved onto the Pejepscot Claim, where he built a log cabin. Two years later they moved into a frame house, and the cabin was left as the home of his brother Edward. He was an active farmer, and his market was in Portland. He served in many town offices culminating in Selectman in 1816 and 1817. His diaries cover the years 1804 to 1837 and provide genealogical material and a record of many historical events in the story of early Danville.

tuesday June 26 the 1804 . . . I went to mill to gray i had of Joseph mclellan 1 gallon of N E Rum & one gallon of molases & three lb and a half of Rice one pocket handkerchief and Nothing more this time Wm plummer

Monday July 16the 1804 . . . had 2 gallons of n Rm of Sqr mclellan had a moing frolick at gideon haskells at 4 pm a tempest of hail the haile Stones as big as musket bals Coverd the ground

Thursday Aug 16th 1804 went a fishing caut 100 cod fish

friday august 17 the 1804 went a fishing with mr Robert Stevens of Cape ann Caught 165 hake.

Saturday November 24 the 1804 . . . youngest Child taken Sick

Sunday November 25 th 1804 Very warm all day timothy very Sick indeed Betwixt 11 and 12 Timothy Died Clear & pleasant evening how vain are all things hear below - Swift was his flight Short was his load he Closed his eyes and Saw his god! the Lord Killeth and maketh alive he bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up and we said it is the Lord let him do what seemeth him good.

Monday November 26 the 1804 a Remarkable warm day Buryed my Little Son timothy The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh whearfoer blessed be the name of the Lord.

Tuesday November 27th 1804 Warm & pleasant Little To be done to day all of us heavy hearts by the Loss of the child . . .

Tuesday April 23 the 1805 . . . went to making fence for Abraham pearce my self & oxen & boys oxen half a day 34 cents my self 75 cents my boys 50 cents each . . .

Monday June 16 the 1806 clear & cold & a Remarkable Eclipse all most total & one Star to be seen until the eclips was almost over . . .

the eighth day of July [1806] a horroble murder Was committed at augusta kennebec - a man Killed his wife & six children & cut his own throat a cruel Savage

Wednesday Sepr 3th [1806] . . . Rain with a Remarkable heavy gail of wind at N E - blew down trees and the corn all flat to the ground & fences all flat & some buildings - Killed some cattle it was a distressing time after a great Drought Nothing more Remarkable But a man killd by the falling of a tree at cathans

thursday March the first [1810] old march thee have caught me with my breches down at Last for I have neither money nore credit But thanks to god I have provisins of all kinds mr ambrose finson was marraed to mrs Betsy Jordan this day - clear and pleasant day and warm - I began to split Rails to day

Saturday febr 23th 1811 . . . a man in Lewiston droopt dead this morning

Sunday febr 24th 1811 . . . my wife & I to funeral to Lewiston . . . [There is no indication who the person was.]

Saturday april 25th 1812 . . . we soed a bushel and half of Rye on the burnt land: and we lost one of our best Cows by accident this day: hard luck indeed: for the 6 of this Month we lost a heifer the same way

Saturday May 2th 1812 . . . cold weather and short of hay And rumors of war: prety bad times but all well thanks to god for all things

Tuesday May 5th 1812 it Snows yet and the snow flies very brisk: it is about 10 oclock when I am writing this & it looks like winter and Little or no hay in this town: a great part of The people have been out this fortnight cattle very poor: and many died already and many more i fear will die with hunger Snow and hail all day with very high gales at North: army training and drafting men.

[Plummer recorded heavy rain May 13-16.]

Tuesday 17th 1814 May - . . . Nothing Remarkable these 24 hours But a lad about 16 years old was drowned at Lewiston in the Road by the great freshet [William Dingley; see Thomas Hodgkin diary in our March 1992 issue.]

Wednesday 18 May . . . The freshet carraed away Bridges and Mills and did a great deal of damage - people lost houses - the Water floed up to the windows in many of the houses on andrewscoggin river The greatest freshet for tis 29 years this fall The water abated yesterday

Thursday September 1 the 1814 . . . we Thrashing Wheat - and had News that washington city was Burnt by The english

Tuesday 14 february 1815 . . . We had the Blessed News of peace This Day - Blessed by god for all Things . . .

friday 17 february 1815 . . . Cutting wood in the woods Great Rejoycing for the Return of peace

Tuesday 2 May 1815 . . . Thomas my son returned from hallifax prison

friday 9 June 1815 . . . i went to portland and had the good news of Williams Return from prison England . . .

Monday 12 June . . . we To work on The Roads And my son Thomas left here for sea and Wm Returned from prison in England Blessed be god

Thursday 11 July [1816] . . . an Elephant Passed Thru this Town this evening

Friday 12 July . . . William to see the Elephant to N Gloucester This after Noon

Saturday 13 July 1816 . . . I went to see the Elephant . . .

July 26th 1816 - The Elephant Was shot Dead By some Bad Person unknown In the Town of Alfred on his Return South

Tuesday 13 August 1816 . . . My Self gitting in Hay hard work for old Coggers Like me

Thursday 20 November 1817 . . . This dat i Sold Thomas J. Plummer half My farm for 286 & 25 cents . . .

Saturday 29 [April 1820] . . . Malencholy - Last Wednesday the 26th at night The House of one Parker of this Town took fire & Burnt 2 Children to Death, one 8 years old the other 5 years of age

Tuesday 14 may [1822] . . . Shocking to relate this morn about 9 oclock mr Isaac Libby of this Town was found Dead in his field - he shot hissself with his gun

Friday 13th [June 1828] . . . my self to N Gloucester To Court for mr Aarom Mkeny - against James Thurston concerning a cow

Monday 7th July [1828] . . . Hiram Larrabee Came to work a half a month for ten dollars - Began to mo

Friday January 2th 1829 . . . Last Thursday we began To git timber for a School house

Thursday 12th [March 1829] . . . The third of this month a great fire at Bath [destroyed several stores on 27 February 1829 according to Parker McCobb Reed, *History of Bath and Environs*, p. 281]

Wednesday 12th August [1829] . . . Last Satday the 8 day the S W Bend Bridg fell and Killed a mr Joseph Weman of Durham aged 52 years - left wife And 5 children to lament his loss . . .

Wednesday 14th June 1837 . . . I am 81 years and 6 months old This day Wm Plummer - an old sick man to pay a Pole tax Shame to the young men of the Town . . .

Friday 16th d . . . my sight fails me fast

Friday 23d . . . My self very unwell indeed hard work to live

PLUMMER PETITIONS FOR PENSION

In 1818, Congress provided for pensions for every Revolutionary veteran in need. However, when it appeared that this was abused by those who were not paupers, the pension act of 1820 required each person on the list to submit a petition stating assets and sources of income. As indicated in the following entry, Plummer was stricken from the list, for his assets were too high. Plummer applied again in 1823.

140. WILLIAM PLUMMER, 64, Danville, private, Blasdell's Co., Wigglesworth's Regt., Mass. Real estate, thirty five acres of land in Danville having a small house and old barn on it. Personal estate, 1 yoke of small oxen, 2 cows, 1 yearling, 1 calf, 7 sheep, 2 pigs, one colt -- not fit to use, a few articles of necessary and ordinary household furniture -- not enough to be comfortable, a very few ordinary farming tools. I have no income and am in justly owing the sum of four hundred dollars which I have no prospect of paying. Farmer, not able [due to] age and infirmity. Abigail, wife, 63, sick in a decline; Abigail, daughter, 28, in a consumption; Hannah, 17, will[ing] and able to work. \$434.50, stricken. 13 June 1820.

341. WILLIAM PLUMMER, 67, Danville, private, Phinney's Regt., Mass. Real estate, none. Personal estate, eight old chairs, value two dollars, one pig, value three dollars, one three year old heifer, value ten dollars, one two year old heifer, value seven dollars. Since March 1818, I have sold to Daniel Fessenden thirty four acres of land for one hundred and seventy dollars out this sum I owed said Fessenden, one hundred and fourteen dollars for services as a lawyer. I have also sold for fifteen dollars to my said son one acre of land. Farmer, unable [due to] old age and disease, not having been able to do a days work for the last five months and have afflicted with a cancerous tumor for the last twelve years. Abigail, wife, 65, very feeble and entirely incapable of earning her own living. Abigail, daughter, 31, had been sick for the last five years and entirely unable to support herself. \$22. 21 May 1823.

Source: Paul R. White, Jr., "Maine Estate Schedules from Revolutionary War Pensions," *NEHGR*, 142:30, 142:209, 145:165-6.

AHS HISTORY

(Part Five)

by Harold Dutch

In this issue, we will jump ahead in our chronological record for a significant event in our Society's history: the national recognition received due to Clarence March's leadership.

In the fall of 1966, the American Association for State and Local History awarded the Society a certificate of commendation "for phenomenal growth of the society in the last few years making it a model of all such societies in need of revitalization; particularly for the excellent classification and arrangement of its collections made under the supervision of its gifted curator, Clarence E. March."

A formal presentation to March was made at the Society's February, 1967, meeting by Elizabeth Ring, a member of the awards committee of the American Society for State and Local History and a vice president of the Maine League of Historical Societies and Museums. The award was given after an inspection of the exhibits, archives, and library. March had established a classification and index system of his own invention. Miss Ring said that when March presented a paper on this system before the Maine League of Historical Societies and Museums, he received the acclaim of all. She stated that the great stride made by the Society under the leadership of March could make it a model to inspire old and languishing societies in the state.

March, a retired Lewiston school system manual arts teacher, also installed up-to-date lighting in the museum's rooms and built cabinets and racks to hold the collection. Born in Mechanic Falls, he was a graduate of Bates College. He served as president of the Society from 1950 to 1953, when he became executive secretary and curator, a position he held for 22 years until his death in 1975 at age 83.

The gift of the Morrill home is another major event in our history. Leon Norris, past executive secretary and curator, will have an article in the next issue about Olive Morrill's gift and the prominent local family that owned the house. We then plan to complete this series, picking up with our list of officers and relevant society business, bringing them to the present.

MORE DIARIES IN OUR COLLECTION

- * Capt. Jonathan Hodgkin (1795-1876) of Lewiston. Typed transcripts of account book (1823-1835) and of diary (1829-1833), and biography by Douglas I. Hodgkin
- * Phebe C. Merrill (1832-1903) of Hebron, dated 1868. Typed transcript.
- * William Plummer (1756-1838) of Danville. Typed transcript of 1804-1837.
- * William Holmes Morse (1832-1900) of Minot, Maine, and Stuart, Iowa, while serving in the Civil War (5th Reg't Me Vols, Co. E). Typed transcript of 3½ years.
- * Levi M. Nelson (1804-1880) of New Gloucester. Autobiography beginning in 1829.
- * Horace F. Nason. Typed transcript of Civil War letters.

COMPILED RECORDS

- * John Witham Penny (1831-1909) of Mechanic Falls. Transcript of cemetery listings for Poland, Minot and Mechanic Falls.
- * Transcript of Poland's Early Vital Records.
- * Records of Turner Congregational Church, 1784-1856, photocopy.
- * Records of Congregational Church in Hebron, 1792-1818, typed transcript, ed. by R. E. Bedford.
- * Gen. Ralph Skinner's typed transcripts of his local historical talks for radio.
- * George Herbert Whitney (1878-1965) of Lewiston. Large collection of photographs. Also his scrapbook, "During My 75 Years: 1878-1953."

LEWISTON'S SHORTEST PARADE?

On June 30, 1948, the citizens of Lewiston, Auburn, and surrounding towns gathered to watch the first circus parade in twenty years. The anticipation mounted as they waited for the procession with all its pageantry to arrive. But when it did it was only half a block long. "Just four adult elephants and a small one, four horses, one lonesome lion, two small bands, and a handful of performers marched before thousands -- police described the crowd as Lewiston's largest ever, the parade the smallest yet." The King's Brothers Circus met the letter of their contract, but the spectators were clearly disappointed. -- *Lewiston Evening Journal*, June 30, 1948, pp. 1-2.

LITCHFIELD HISTORY REPRINTED

Local genealogists and historians may be interested in the reprint of a history of a neighboring town -- *History of Litchfield (Maine) and an account of its centennial celebration, 1895*, by Oliver Barrett Clason, with a new preface by David Colby Young of Danville, Maine. Most of the text concerns the genealogies (usually two or three generations), biographies, and the town's history. Information on the numerous families comprises about one-half of the book. The historical part covers such topics as the town's civil history, its churches and several biographies of the ministers, its soldiers (especially during the Civil War), its schools, and its doctors. Dozens of photographs highlight the text. (1897) reprint, c568 pp., illus., index, paper, \$47.00. Heritage Books, Bowie, MD 20716.

Androscoggin Historical Society
County Building
Auburn, Maine 04210