

ANDROSCOGGIN HISTORY

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COLLECTION OF EDWARD LITTLE'S LETTERS

by Robert Taylor

The name of Edward Little (1773-1849) is well-known in Auburn. The society owns a large picture of him and a painting of his father, Josiah Little (1747-1830), who was proprietor of a large portion of Poland and Minot, and also the leading owner and agent of the Pejepscot Company. In 1826 Edward Little moved to Auburn and was the family representative of this large inheritance and had great influence in directing and promoting the growth of Auburn. Edward often wrote letters to his father, who resided in Newbury, Mass., relating personal and family business in the sale and development of their lands.

In 1950 Miss Thelma White of Auburn took on a year-and-a-half project of transcribing and typing up a large collection of Edward Little's letters that he had sent from Goff's Corner in Auburn to his father in Newbury, dating from 30 October 1826 to 21 December 1830. The resulting file is an inch thick. The Society is pleased to be able to make available to researchers this detailed record of the activities of our most prominent early citizen.

Here is one of those letters:

Lewiston Decr. 24th 1826

Dear parent,

Your favours of 19th and 23rd inst were recd today. I expect to go to Portland next week & shall probably have several hundred dollars to send you.

Murray has been hired at \$100 per year & his time will be out in January except loss time & he will not stay any longer to take care of that place; but will take care of the saw mill & clapboard machine.

The farms yield less profit this year than usual. The profits of several are in wool on hand in Portland. Butter is unsold mostly & some pork to market yet, waiting for sleighing. (Best weather) I have hired about 150 sheep kept & am killing about 70.

Joshua is some disappointed in not receiving permission in season to go home

As soon as I have a little leisure I will make out a schedule of the notes & send you. It will be less troublesome to do than to set Joshua to copying them

with their indorsements & examine to see if they are correct; & then it would not exhibit the acct. without a new statement, nor would it inform you what ones might be considered good & what not.

Thomas would rather sell the ½ Township for \$9000 than to keep it, with the addition of any expense he may be at before the offer is accepted on account of location, as he expects to set out for that purpose as soon as Genl. Webber is ready to go with him.

You may make such other proposals as you think best; if Fisk & Bridge do not accept the offer of \$9000, if you will release Thomas & allow him the expenses of his journey to Bangor & \$1 per day for his time. As I before stated, he is not well able to bear the necessary expenses.

I have had an application from Elijah Webster with an offer of \$7000 & proposal of good security I have had an application from Elijah Webster with an offer of \$7000 & proposal of good security but I fear he might fail in security as he did for the N. G. Academy land.

It is not impossible that something might be made to locate the ½ Township & sell out the timber & afterward retail the land but the risque is so much that on the whole it would not be prudent for Thomas to pursue it, if it could be sold at a saving. In the event of a loss it would sweep what little estate he has.

To jeopardize the whole for a prospect of gains is hardly prudent for one who has a family dependent; & so he is inclined to sell the first opportunity, if he can & if not at a saving.

I shall continue to collect as best as I can without distressing debtors whether often reminded to do so or not.

Your obt Son
E Little

My wife is better & was out to meeting yesterday.

P.S. I sold a little strip of land on the Southerly side of the river road from the bend to Brunswick & the grantee, Job Sylvester, is sued in trespass and is put to his title & requests me to furnish your title. I do not recollect the No. of the lot but it is part of the farm that constitutes the farm at the bend adjoining M. Dyers will state the title to the lot & send it if you have it.

BRIEF HISTORY OF WEST AUBURN

The following is a history reprinted from William F. Stanwood, *The Lewiston and Auburn Directory* (Lewiston: 1864), pp. 149-150.

This village is situated on an elevated site west of Wilson Pond, and five miles from Lewiston Falls. Among the first settlers who commenced about 1789, were James Parker, John Downing, Benjamin Noyes, J. Nason, a Mr. Bray and Mr. Verrill. In 1799, James Perkins, Asaph Howard, John C. Crafts and Azel Kinsley came from Bridgewater, Mass., and bought out the original settlers. James Perkins, the principal purchaser, was a blacksmith and manufacturer of hoes, shovels and axes, and in the time of the war of 1812, he made gun barrels, table cutlery, iron spoons, tobacco pipes, &c.

In May 29th, 1805, the first meeting-house in the town was raised here. This was called the East meeting house, another in Minot being denominated the West. It was occupied exclusively by Congregationalists during the life time of Rev. Jonathan Scott, who was their minister. After his death it was occupied by Orthodox, Baptists and Universalists, according to the property owned by the several societies. In 1845, by permission of Court, the Orthodox proprietors bought the house,

which the next year, 1846, was taken down, and the present house was erected on the old site. The same year the Universalists built their house on the opposite side of the street.

The first shoe manufacturing company, to which may be attributed most of the present business and wealth of the town, was organized as the Minot Shoe Company, January 3d, 1835, by the choice of Asaph Howard, President, Benjamin Johnson, Vice President, Eliphalet Packard, Clerk and Treasurer, and Charles Briggs and Nehemiah Packard, Directors. The capital stock of said company was \$5,000, divided into shares of \$100 each. On the 2d of January this capital was increased to \$10,000, by the sale of new stock at a premium of five per cent. L. R. Vining, of Woburn, Mass., was employed as agent of the company for three years, at a salary of \$500. May 1st, 1839, the lamented David Green, who was lost by the burning of the ill-fated Lexington upon Long Island Sound, January 13th, 1840, was employed as agent of the Company at a salary of \$450. J. H. Roak was then employed by the Company until August 7th, 1851, when the stockholders "voted to close business," making a dividend of their capital, which amounted to \$12.39 per share. J. H. Roak bought the real estate of the Company, and continued the shoe business at the old stand until the spring of 1843 [sic, probably 1853], when he sold to C. S. Packard & Co. This Company has prosecuted the shoe business with much shrewdness and success to the present time.

The greatest number of shoes manufactured at West Auburn in one year was 3,000 cases, or 180,000 pairs, valued at \$120,000.

When the shoe business commenced, in 1835, there were but four dwelling houses within one-fourth mile of the P. O. The whole number then within the P. O. delivery was thirty-eight.

RICHMOND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

John A. "Jay" Robbins, Jr., has provided us with news of the Richmond (Maine) Historical Society. He writes, "After years of collecting 'stuff' in boxes stored here and there, The Richmond Historical Society finally has a home at 25 South Front St. (PO Box 25, Richmond 04357) across from the Waterfront Park. No regular hours but the process of sorting and cataloging has begun. We would be glad to help as we can in the meantime if anyone has Richmond questions."

FOUNDING LEWISTON TOWN FARM

We find in Col. William Garcelon's diary an account of the establishment of the Lewiston Town Farm. Because he became its second superintendent, the diary records persons and activities on the farm. Here we provide the story of the founding in 1839:

Mar. 12 The Town voted to purchase a farm for the paupers + appropriated \$3500. for that purpose + authorized a loan to pay for it at 5 years -- by the Treasurer J. Lowell.

Mar. 21 . . . I . . . met the committee to purchase a farm, we then went to Abel Goddards + closed the bargain about his farm + I made a deed of the same to the Inhabitants of Lewiston + we the Committee viz S. D. Garcelon S. Litchfield J. Nash J. Ham + myself gave our security to the Town for the same being \$3,000 we made some other arrangements about the farm + adjourned to meet at Col. J. Nash's on thrsday the 28 day inst . . .

Mar. 23 . . . Samuel Litchfield came here + I went with him with my horse + slead to the uperend of the town and mooved Abraham Battin + his wife Mary + his two sons Francis + True on to the farm the town bought of Abel + Isaac Goddard for the accommodation of the paupers. this is the first family that has been mooved on to the Town farm - it took all day.

Mar. 27 . . . I have been to the town farm + carried Dean F. Grover on to the farm I then went to Wm Atkinson, thence to Edwd Estes to buy a swine for the farm. I came home at noon P.M. I took some provision + went to Lisbon to see J. Holland + family. they were destitue of Provision -- they refused to go on to the Town farm. I came home.

Mar. 28 . . . I have been to Col. J. Nashes to meet with the Committee to purchase a farm + employ a Superintendent - the committe came to the conclusion to employ Isaac Wilson for \$125. as superintendent for himself + wife + daughter -

Mar. 29 . . . I have been to isaac Wilson's made writings with him to go on to the Town farm if we like on both sides for \$125 pr year or in that proportion for a shorter or longer time

P.M. I went to Dea D. Graffams + took Hermon Blanchard from there + carried him on to the Poor farm - S. Litchfield went to the Widow Skinners after Isaac Blanchard I brought him on to the farm - these two men are brothers both blind from their birth + have not seen each other over three years - they are elegant natural singers

Mar. 30 . . . S. Litchfield came here + took C Clarks waggon + I took the double waggon + 2 horses + went to Lisbon Factory to mill for the Town farm we had 2 Bus corn + 1 Bus of Wheat of c. Clark for the town -- we

came to Daniel I. Jones and removed Christopher [Bubier] + his wife Town Paupers from there + carried them on to the town farm - where I had to stay until 10 Oclock at night fixing beds + c for the Poor . . .

Mar. 31 Sabbath . . . I have been to the town farm to see to the Paupers . . .

Apr. 2 . . . S. Litchfield came here this morning I went with him to see Capt S. d. Garcelon about a superintendent for the Poor farm the Committe met at S. d. Garcelons - + agreed to dismiss Isaac Wilson. took dinner at S.D.G. + then the Selectmen went to said Wilson's + gave up his agreement and S.D.G. + S. Litchfield went to the falls I came home. called at the Town farm + made some arrangements . . .

Apr. 3 . . . S. Litchfield, S. D Garcelon + J. Ham met at our house to agree about who shall go on to the farm to superintend for the town and after consultation S.D. Garcelon + S. Litchfield agreed with me to go on to the town farm and superintend the same one year for \$300 - for himself + wife and we moved on to the farm this P.M. -- carred one bed + bedding 1 Table 1 writing desk. looking glass.

According to "Dire Poverty," Lewiston Journal, Dec. 14, 1889, the blind brothers were there fifty years later:

. . . Originally there were three brothers, all blind from birth, but one has died within a few years. In many respects they are quite remarkable. They find their way alone to Lewiston, and wander all over the city selling candles and knicknacks which they purchase of the dealers, to speculate with. For years they have been doing this, and have carefully put aside every cent of profit, until their assets are now estimated at ten or a dozen dollars.

With this amount of money on hand they occasionally purchase quite a large stock of goods and launch out on a business trip into the country, each carrying a heavy pack on his back. They call on all the country folks living within several miles of the farm, and supply them with print cloth, needles, candy, apples, and a score of Yankee notions. At the close of last year they figured up the year's profits at twelve dollars.

Usually they go about the country entirely alone, but when it is possible, they are shrewd enough to give some lad a bit of manufactured spruce gum, who will conduct them from house to house. In this way they save time and get more business. Often they go to Sabatis and dicker with the residents living in the vicinity of No Name Pond. they work the Lisbon road to Lisbon. Last year they went to Bangor on a peddling trip, and turned up again at the farm after an absence of five weeks, with their pockets full of coppers.

MR. BALLARD: SURVEYOR OF AUBURN

Many thanks to reader John A. "Jay" Robbins of Richmond, Maine, for his identification of Mr. Ballard, the surveyor of Poland-Minot-Auburn referred to in Stanwood's "Brief History of Auburn Village in 1864" that we reproduced in our June 1993 issue. He undoubtedly is Ephraim Ballard of Hallowell, husband of Martha Ballard, midwife. From *The Diary of Martha Ballard 1785-1812*, Robert R. McCausland and Cynthia MacAlman McCausland, editors (Camden, Me: Picton Press, 1992), he cites the following entries:

20 Aug 1798 . . . Mr. Ballard, P. Bullin, and Jona Brown sett out for Poland to perform a tour of surveying by the apointment of the Genl Court. They left our house at 4h P.M. I was calld at 5 to go and see Mrs Brown. I took the keys. Bullin came back for papers and was oblided to pry the hinges of ye desk. . . . [p. 454]

3 Oct 1798 . . . I wrote to my Husband . . . [p. 459]

27 Oct 1798 . . . Mr Ballard returned from his tour of surveying . . . [p. 461]

More detail on Ballard's surveying career is in L. T. Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale* (NY: Vintage, 1990).

ORIGINS OF BAKERSTOWN

Charles E. Waterman gave this account of the founding of Bakerstown Plantation in *Lewiston Journal Magazine Section*, July 26, 1941, p. 2A:

The plantation was a gift or bounty to soldiers who served in an invasion of Canada in 1690 under captains John March, Stephen Greenleaf and Philip Nelson.

As early as 1735 a petition to the General Court of Massachusetts Bay Colony was entered by John Taylor

and others, and as a result, a township was laid out north of the Merrimac river, which proved to be within the limits of New Hampshire and consequently void. The matter then rested until 1765 when another petition was entered and another grant made, this grant to be located east of the Saco river. It called for parcel of land seven and a half miles square, 8600 acres additional being allowed for water. This plantation was laid out north of New Gloucester.

The limits of the new grant, as recorded in the old records of Poland, are as follows,

Beginning at a great rock in the Amarisoggin Falls; then running Southwest to New Gloucester side line; then by side line to north-west corner of said New Gloucester; then south-west to the head line of New Gloucester four miles; then northeast about seven miles and one-quarter to Hebron, then running northeast by Hebron line to Turner, then by Hebron line to Amerisoggin River; then down said river to the bound first mentioned.

This plantation was large and its territory covered what is now the city of Auburn and the towns of Poland, Minot and Mechanic Falls.

The name given this new plantation was Bakerstown. It was in honor of Captain Thomas Baker, a provincial Indian fighter, who in 1720 gave battle to the Indian sachem Waterumus near the Connecticut boundary, defeating his tribe. This was considered an important victory and a river near where the battle was fought is still known as Baker's river because of it. The petitioners made a curious mistake, however. Somehow they thought the new grant lay in the vicinity of Baker's river, which was many miles east of it. Nevertheless, the thought of this battle that had taken place forty-five years before prevailed, and the new plantation was named after this Indian fighter.

Androscoggin Historical Society
County Building
Auburn, Maine 04210