

ANDROSCOGGIN HISTORY

February 1994

Newsletter of the Androscoggin Historical Society No. 11

AHS MEMBERSHIP MAILING MEMBERSHIP MAILING

by A. B. (Bob) Palmer, Jr.

This year the Directors voted to explore ideas to increase the income and reduce the expenses of the Society in order to make ends meet to continue the Society at its current level of service to the members and the public. They authorized mailing of meeting notices within house to reduce our mailing expense.

Starting this year Bob (Vice President) and Alma (Membership Secretary) Palmer print out the mailing and meeting notices labels from their computer and take them to Robert Taylor, our Executive Secretary. Bob then, with any available volunteers, puts the labels on post cards and mails them out. So far, this procedure seems to be working well.

The "membership list," which is comprised of all names in the Society's records for the past three years, had 149 entries as of 13 Nov. 1993. Some of the entries may have two members' names if they are at the same address. For the 1993 November meeting of the Society, the Palmers revised the "meeting notice card" list to reduce the postage costs. All entries out of state, long travel distances within the state, and past members (folks whose dues for 1993-94 have not been received, were removed. This list has 115 entries. This reduced the postage cost (stamped cards) by \$9.86 per meeting.

On each mailing label you will notice 2 or 4 small letters above first names or after a name to designate our three paying membership levels, namely an = Annual (\$5.00 yearly), conb = Contributing (\$10.00 yearly), or life = Life (\$50.00 once). If there is a [past] on your label it means we have not received any dues for the 1993-94 year.

Our financial and member years run from July 1 to June 30 of the following calendar year.

If you note any errors or omissions, or wish to be added or taken off the list, or have any questions or comments, please contact Bob Taylor at the Society, 207-784-0586, weekdays, 1:30-5:00 P.M., or 2 Turner Street, Auburn ME 04210; or Bob or Alma Palmer, 207-783-2513 anytime (we have one

of those answering machines), or Minot, ME 04258-0067.

OUR COLLECTION OF LETTERS AND AUTOGRAPHS OF FAMOUS AMERICANS

by Robert Taylor

At the October 1993 meeting of the Society, Geneva Kirk, one of our members, gave the Society a letter written by Edwin Booth on October 11, 1872, in which he states that he would be performing the play "Hamlet" at Lewiston that month. Mr. Booth, besides being the brother of the assassin of President Lincoln, was a well-known actor of the time. He appeared in Central Hall in Central Block at the corner of Maine and Lisbon Streets, Lewiston.

The Booth letter adds to the Society's already large collection of letters and autographs of famous Americans, such as those of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. The oldest group of letters and autographs are from many members of Congress in 1846, all addressed to James O. L. Foster, Esq., of Lewiston, in compliance with his request for their autographs for the Harper Library Association. Foster pasted them in a ledger, along with some autographs of some noted Maine figures like Hannibal Hamlin, Judge Nathan Clifford, and Governors Enoch Lincoln, Robert P. Dunlap, John Fairfield and Edward Kavanagh.

The Society also has a more recent collection of letters written to Alice Lord (1877-1966), the first woman journalist in this state. She was a member of the editorial department of the *Lewiston Evening Journal* for more than 47 years before her retirement in 1946. Among these letters written to Miss Lord are those from Eleanor Roosevelt, Carl Sandburg, Booth Tarkington, Joshua L. Chamberlain, Holman Day, Luther Burbank, Percival P. Baxter, W. T. Grant, Jane Adams, John Philip Sousa, Robert Tristram Coffin, and many others.

Autograph of Hannibal Hamlin

J. W. PENNEY - LOCAL HISTORIAN

by Robert Taylor

John Witham Penney was born in New Gloucester in 1831, and his education was received in the common schools. He came to Mechanic Falls in 1860 where he worked at his trade as a blacksmith. Five years later he sold his shop and tools to the Denison Paper company and entered the service of that corporation where he remained until 1872.

In 1872 J. W. Penney established his own company and began manufacturing steam engines, machinery and foundry articles of all kinds. In 1886 he admitted his two sons, A. R. and S. R. Penney to partnership and from that time their business known as J. W. Penney & Sons company grew to become one of the greatest machine shops in Maine and was a great factor in the prosperity of Mechanic Falls.

J. W. Penney retired from business in 1892 and devoted himself to his favorite occupation of writing and collecting Indian relics. Of these he had a fine collection which he presented to the Maine Historical Society. A smaller portion of his collection was later given to the Androscoggin Historical Society and are on display there. Some 124 potsherds, listed as the "J. W. Penney Collection," are found at our museum and were catalogued in December of 1983 by the Maine Historic Preservation Society. A copy of that work can be found at our Society. The catalogue mentions that Penney had gathered his Indian relics from Indian village sites along Bog Brook in Minot and on Laurel Hill in Auburn.

Mr. Penney was also a member of the Maine Society of the Sons of the American Revolution and spent most of his time in his later years locating and recording a number of soldiers' graves in the local area. In conjunction with this project he copied numerous grave inscriptions found in cemeteries in Minot and Poland. A transcript of his cemetery listings can be found at the Maine Historical Society, from which our copy was obtained. Mr. Penney possessed considerable literary ability and wrote several articles along historical lines for various publications. He died November 2, 1909, aged 78 years, 5 months, in Mechanic Falls.

BRIEF HISTORY OF NORTH AUBURN

The following is a history reprinted from William F. Stanwood, *The Lewiston and Auburn Directory* (Lewiston: 1864), page 151.

This village is situated at the head of Wilson pond, one mile north of West Auburn. It was first settled by Simeon Caswell, from Plymouth County, Mass., about 1787. Mr. Caswell built the first mills upon the stream, which he sold in a few years to Isaac Brett, from Bridgewater. Mr. Brett remained in possession of the mills until 1815, when he sold to Timothy Bailey, the father of the Baileys now prominent citizens of the village. During the first 18 years of the present century, five dwelling houses were erected; one by Isaac Brett near the present site of T. Bailey's mansion, one by Nathan Warren on the site of F. H. Lander's cottage, one by Artemus Warren on the site of Asa Holmes' house, another where the town tavern now stands was occupied by Artemus Brown and David Warren, both as a dwelling and store, and the fifth near where P. H. Keith now resides, by Chelsea Hatch.

In 1820, Nehemiah Packard and his son Stephen Packard purchased the mills of Mr. Bailey, and erected the house now occupied by Peter Noyes, Esq. Mr. S. Packard sold one-third of the water privilege to Messrs. Bradford & Conant about the year 1848, who erected a machine shop and furniture manufactory on it.

Joseph S. Sargent, from Hallowell, Me., built a tannery near the mills in 1825. In 1851, the mills, machine shop, furniture manufactory, and tannery were consumed by fire, which, except the tannery, were immediately rebuilt, and are now in successful operation.

ON OUR WISH LIST: A COMPUTER

As you upgrade your business or personal computing capabilities, you may be faced with what to do with the old computer, keyboard, and printer that still have some life in them. Please think of a tax-deductible contribution to the Historical Society, not as an artifact for our museum, but as equipment to enable us to operate in a more modern fashion. This equipment also may be of great value to the users of our library as an efficient way to take notes from our books and documents. If you have something that may be appropriate, please contact us at 784-0586. Thanks.

THE DIARIES OF ANNE SUSAN JUMPER OF MINOT

Anne Susan Jumper (1824-1881) was the daughter and only child of Nicholas and Huldah (Chandler) Jumper of Minot, Maine. She married Oliver Hubbard Brown on March 20, 1852, and they raised seven children. The surviving diaries in our library are dated May, 1844, to May, 1846. For a master's degree, Mona Ervin transcribed and annotated the diaries and introduced them with an essay that provides some history of Minot and of the Jumper family, along with an analysis of the diaries. We have a copy of this work, "The Diary of Anne Susan Jumper: Revelations of a Rural Woman, 1844-1846." As Ervin points out, the diaries contain substantial material on Anne Susan's religious beliefs and on her relationships with other women. Here we provide a few samples of interest:

[May] 21. [1844] . . . marriage of M. [Merrill Davis] and R. [Roxa Jane Prince] against the will of her parents, she being only 15 years of age. The affair excites considerable interest and is much talked of. There are various opinions of course concerning it. For my part I think her far "too young to marry yet," and I hope she may not repent in coming years of the step so rashly entered into.

[Oct.] 18.- On Monday last spite of the warning clouds, we, i.e. besides Anne S., Elizabeth, Clara and her father, sat out for the Conf. at Portland - the great metropolis of our state, which C. and myself had never visited and of course were delighted with the idea tho' it was cold and cloudy. We could not converse much, such were our several positions, and thus enliven the dull monotony of gray fields, tree and scattered houses, but that we mattered not much - we were going to Portland. . . .

Well - we rode on and rode on, until nearly sunset I should think when it began to rain. . . . The rain began to pour at no very gentle rate, as we reached Gery Corner and so much that we turned aside to Mr. Sheldon's - where we spent the night - E, C, and I occupying one bed as we had before wished. . . .

Well - the next morning in the rain we sat out again for Portland. The roads were muddy, the wind tolerable light, the rain heavy and the way almost dreary, but Mr. J. [Rev. Elijah Jones, pastor of Center Minot Cong. Church] enlivened the dreariness in some degree singing fifty stanzas of The Minstrel.

At length we arrived in Portland . . . For the afternoon we went to meeting The meeting was interesting when I could arouse my insupportably dull senses enough to realize it, but I felt really guilty that I could appreciate it no more.

[The next day after visiting and shopping:] We listened for the remainder of the forenoon to Mr. Freeman, pastor of the Abyssinia Church, his discourse was good and had our eyes been closed we could not have supposed him to be a Negro. . . .

[March] 15. [1845]- . . . Eve. Have just received intelligence from my old friend, Jane Coburn, that she has become bound in the wires of matrimony. Mrs. Jane Clarke! Indeed! Well - all my friends will be married before long I suppose - that is the way of the world - however, I do not think my friends will very soon find my friendship buried in the tomb of matrimony. . . .

[April] 11. . . . I am distressed for poor cousin F. That which I have long foreseen has at length come to pass. He has learned that he is not particularly loved by one whom he adores, and what pang could be worse. . . .

17. "They tell me I am free!" Is it indeed possible that I have seen 21 years? It must be a mere imagining - an idea of the brain! 21 years! That age which has seemed to me a kind of a gloomy spot in youth; - I do not know why, but it does seem so - that the twenty first year must be different from those that went before or are to come after. . . . Twenty one years! In all probability another twenty one years, will have blotted my name from the knowledge of all now in existence. The turf over my resting place trodden in forgetfulness, none will remember that I ever existed Brothers and sisters, there are none to treasure up my name with affection and when I am dead to cherish it as a sacred remembrance. . .

[June] 12. Yesterday heard of the death of Nathan Downing - a young man from Auburn about 21. He was at work in Cambridge, Mass. and on Sabbath morning last, he went out to bathe. The water was deeper than he supposed and being unable to swim he was drowned. What an awful warning! On Monday night the news was brought to his parents and to-day his body has been brought home. His parents are agonized almost to distraction. He was their eldest son - and besides him they had only one.

[August] 28. . . . We have had quite a merry time to-day. This morning James went to Brunswick for Lewis and his moveables which have been ensconced for five years in the walls of Bowd. Coll. . . . [A]fter a merry time over L's chair, which we thought must be very literary after having spent five years in college, we went into the house where again we found topics enough for merriment.

[Feb.] 15 [1846]. This has been a day of general rejoicing - we have seen with our own eyes the Intentions of Marriage between Kimball F. Verrill and Olive H. Dinsmore. For eight or nine years they have been - as the term is - "engaged" - but now off, now on -

until they have become a proverb and a by-word throughout the town. . .

AHS HISTORY - Part 8

by Harold Dutch

Part Seven of our history in Newsletter No. 8, took us to the end of the '60s. We now pick up with the year 1969-70. Officers elected were Harry Rowe, president; John White, vice president; Clarence March, executive secretary-curator; Edith Labbie, recording secretary; Ruth Bishop, membership secretary; Willis Trafton, general counsel; and Jane Norris, treasurer, replacing Imelda Thibeault, who retired after serving 24 years.

Clarence March reported at the annual meeting that the Society had helped the Auburn Centennial Committee and would hold open house during Centennial Week. On the continuing search for a new museum location, he had the last word. He said after consulting with numerous museums, including the New York Historical Society, his opinion was we should not seek a home of our own until we have at least \$100,000 in the bank. We have not yet moved.

In September 1969, James Philoon was given a Life Membership in recognition of his years of service, more terms than any other as president, and for his historical research, including a monograph on the Washburns of Livermore.

The following year, all officers were reelected, except Harriette Simpson replaced Edith Labbie as recording secretary. The following changes in the by-laws were proposed that year: increase yearly dues from one dollar to two; increase the board of directors from seven to ten. The membership accepted the changes on September 28, 1971.

John White became president in 1971, with Leon Norris elected vice president. All other officers

remained the same. In 1972, Betty Clifford became recording secretary, and this slate served to 1975. That year, titles changed. Leon Norris became vp-associate curator; Merriam Irish was elected executive secretary-curator, and Clarence March was named executive secretary-curator emeritus. He died before the year ended (See newsletter No. 6 for a recounting of March's service to the Society.) All other officers were reelected. Clarence Penley and Florence Gremley joined the board. All officers served for two more years, with titles again changing in 1977: Leon Norris, VP-curator; Merriam Irish, executive secretary.

Another change in titles came in 1978. Leon Norris was VP-executive secretary-curator. Merriam Irish was not listed, and recording secretary reappeared, filled by Leslie Wight. A special meeting in July considered the County Commission's request for annual rent of \$1,000. The committee appointed to negotiate with the commissioners did an excellent job, as we later signed a year's lease in the amount of \$1.00. Willis Trafton was authorized to obtain tax exempt status for the Society. He amended our Incorporation to a C-3 Education Corp. Tax exemption was granted in June 1979. The minutes also noted the museum was open in summer on Tuesday and Thursdays from 1 to 4 p.m.

For 1979-80, this was the line-up of officers: president, John White; vice president, Gordon Windle; executive secretary-curator, Leon Norris; assistant curator, Robert Beliveau; recording secretary, Geneva Kirk; membership secretary, Ethelyn Penley, who held the office until 1993; treasurer, Jane Norris; counsel, Willis Trafton. At the annual meeting, Leon Norris announced that the museum was now open 1:30 to 5 p.m. each weekday, the hours we continue to keep.

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