

# ANDROSCOGGIN HISTORY

June 1994

Newsletter of the Androscoggin Historical Society

No. 12

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## AHS OFFICERS ELECTEDAHS OFFICERS ELECTED

At our annual meeting on May 24, 1994, new officers elected were Leslie M. Eastman as the new president of the Society and Richard H. Trafton as Attorney. Other officers were re-elected as follows: Aubrey B. Palmer, Jr., Vice President; Robert L. Taylor, Executive Secretary; Robert C. Beliveau, Curator; Ingrid Dutch, Recording Secretary; Alma Palmer, Membership Secretary; and Susan Sturgis, Treasurer.

The members of the Board of Directors for 1994-1995 are Gridley Barrows, Harold Dutch, Natalie G. Foye, Franklin Goss, Douglas I. Hodgkin, Eva Labonte, Merton Leavitt, Walter L. Perry, Warren B. Randall, Mary M. Riley, Norman E. Rose, Dwight L. Tripp, Jr., Arthur Vanier, Gordon V. Windle, and David C. Young.

Former president Douglas Hodgkin continues as the newsletter editor.

## POLAND SPRING PRESERVATION SOCIETY

by Harold Dutch

The Maine State Building and All Souls Chapel, on the grounds of the Poland Spring Resort, opened for the season on Memorial Day Weekend.

The Maine State Building displays artifacts and pictures of the famous resort, the Ricker family of innkeepers, and the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago where the building was first erected. All Souls Chapel, built in 1912, contains a Skinner Pipe Organ and beautifully crafted stained glass windows.

The buildings are maintained by the Poland Spring Preservation Society. Open hours through June are Saturdays and Sundays, 9:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. Starting in July, the buildings are open every day, same hours. A one dollar donation is requested, which goes toward restoration and maintenance.

Again this year, the Society presents twelve musical programs at All Souls Chapel, starting June 6.

## THEODORE ROOSEVELT FIRST PRESIDENT TO VISIT LEWISTON-AUBURN

by Douglas I. Hodgkin

As part of a New England tour, on August 26, 1902, President Theodore Roosevelt became the first incumbent president to come to Lewiston and Auburn. Only Presidents Polk, Grant, and Benjamin Harrison had visited Maine while in office. TR arrived at the Auburn railroad station at 5:47 P.M. with "the Vice-President," Senator William P. Frye of Lewiston. (Roosevelt had become President upon William McKinley's death; under the succession law then, Frye as president of the Senate was next in line.)

Senator Frye introduced Mayor McGillicuddy of Lewiston and Mayor Eveleth of Auburn to the President. Then members of the President's party and leading citizens of the twin cities boarded eleven carriages for the procession along Court, Main, and Lisbon Streets to the Lewiston city park. Buildings along the way had been decorated, and "every spot that the eye could reach held a human being. . . . Everywhere that the President passed there were cheers on cheers" from a crowd estimated at 20,000.

At the park, the President addressed another 10,000. His speech contained many references to the Civil War and contrasted simpler times with "our latter-day industrial civilization." He emphasized the virtues of American workers and good citizens.

Then the presidential party rode to the lower depot near Main and Lincoln Streets. During the fifteen-minute wait, one man said, "The people of Lewiston and Auburn have given us a better reception than we have received in any other place in Maine. The people appreciated the President's remarks more here than they did anywhere in New England."

After having left the President in Auburn, the train went to Leeds Junction and then through Sabattus and Crowley's Junction to come up to Lewiston at the lower depot, a distance of about thirty miles. At 7:30 P.M. the train departed for Brunswick, with President Roosevelt "standing on the rear platform, bowing and waving his hand to a cheering throng."

## BAKERSTOWN'S PETITION FOR TAX EXEMPTION

George C. Wing, Jr., submitted the following to the *Lewiston Evening Journal*, November 12, 1938:

As is well known, the . . . towns of Poland and Minot and the City of Auburn were included in a grant by the Province of Massachusetts Bay, dated in 1765, to Samuel Gerrish and others of a tract of land known as Bakerstown. The hardships suffered by early settlers is not understood or appreciated.

One burden which they suffered, in common with their descendants, was that of taxation. Instead of asking for less tax or a reduction in rate or valuation they made bold to ask for relief from all tax burden. . . .

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Tax Act of 1788 provided in order to answer the exigencies of government that the Treasury of the Commonwealth be supplied with a sum of 1500 pounds and four shillings; that each town, district, plantation within the Commonwealth be assessed and pay the several sums with which they stood charged on a schedule made a part of the Act. Bakerstown was charged as their proportion of the total tax with the sum of 34 pounds 16 shillings and one pence.

Jan. 8, 1789, the inhabitants of Bakerstown presented a petition for relief from taxes . . . .

"The Petition in Behalf of the Inhabitants of Bakerstown so called in the County of Cumberland humbly sheweth:

"That about the year 1765, A Grant was made . . . to a number of Gentlemen (who from that Time have born the name of the grantees or Proprietors of said Bakerstown) with this proviso Viz that the Grantees within Six years then next coming Settle thirty Familys in said Town (or Plantation) Build a House for public Worship, and Settle a learned protestant Minister, and lay out one Sixty fourth part of said Tract for the use of the first Minister, and one Sixty fourth part for a Grammar-school, and one Sixty fourth part for the use of Harvard College &c. &c.

Which conditions have never yet been complied with nor in any one Instance performed by the said Grantees, excepting only in regard to the Setling of a Number of Families, Some of whom after having with great Labor and Fatigue made considerable Improvements have been turned off the same by some of said Proprietors (so called) and others put onto the Same, without any kind of Recompence; Notwithstanding, after having been called upon by the said General Court sometime in the year 1779 to fulfill the conditions aforesaid, they the said Grantees then had three years more allowed, for the fulfilment thereof. . . .

Sometime in the year 1784 [the inhabitants] were called upon for their proportionable parts of public Taxes, and thereupon preferred their Petition to the then Honorable General Court of this Commonwealth praying to be relieved from Taxes &c whereupon a committee was appointed to repair to said Bakerstown and view, enquire

and Examine in Regard to the Circumstances of said Inhabitants, which said Committee having examined &c Reported to the Honorable General Court aforesaid among other things that the said Inhabitants were not of sufficient ability to pay Taxes, and ought therefore to be accepted in the Honorable House of Representatives, but for ought your Petitioner knows, has never yet been acted upon by the Honorable Senate. In the meanwhile they have still been called upon and have in fact paid considerable Taxes; But in Case they must be burthened with all their Taxes that have arisen since they were first called upon therefor as afores their Circumstances being much the same as when the said Committee Reported as aforesaid, or at most but very little better, they must be entirely ruined, for their whole Interest will be but little, if anything, more than sufficient to discharge the same.

And your Petitioners further beg leave to acquaint Your Honors that so long as they continue in their present State, laboring under various Disadvantages, under no Regulations, Having neither Order nor Discipline, civil, nor Religious, and but very few of them any real Title to their Improvements, and liable to be dispossessed whenever the righteousness of the Soil shall please, they esteem it a great hardship to be burthened with any Taxes at all. Tho' in case they may be quieted in the Possession of their Improvements and put under proper Regulations they hope for the future to be able, and if so, shall be fond of contributing their share of public Taxes.

"Whereupon Your Petitioners humbly pray Your Honors to take these Matters under your wise and Judicious consideration, and inasmuch as the said Grantees have forfeited their Claims to the Lands contained in said conditional Grant, make provision for said Inhabitants being Intitled to the Right of soil, or in Case said Grantees Shall not be adjudged to have forfeited said Grant oblige them forthwith or as soon as may be to fulfil the conditions aforesaid that your Petitioners may be in a Condition to be of Use to the community of which they are a part by contributing their proportionable parts of the public Tax for the Support of government. Meanwhile your Petitioners further humbly pray to be relieved from all past Taxes, Or that your Honors will otherwise provide for their Relief as your Honors in Your superior Wisdom shall think proper. . . . Dated the 8th day of January A. D. 1789. Moses Emery, Samuel Seville Jr., Edward Jumper, Solomon Wilcut, Israel Bray, Jobe Tucker, Benj. Lane".

On this petition the Commonwealth acted as follows:

"Moses Emery in behalf of Bakerstown Commonwealth of Massachusetts. In the House of Representatives Febr. 4, 1789 on petition of Moses Emery and others of Bakerstown Praying to have their taxes abated, Resolved that their petition Lay over to the first sessions of the Next sitting of the General Court & the Treasurer Be Directed to stay his Execution till the first of July next."

## AHS HISTORY PART 9

by Harold Dutch

The officers for 1979-80, as listed in our last issue, were reelected for 1980-81. Two longtime, active members of the Society passed away in 1980: Ralph Skinner on October 1, noted historian, writer, and commentator; and Harry Rowe on December 23, president of the Society for ten years and active director until his death.

The directors recommended that annual dues be raised to \$3.00 and that an assistant curator, assistant librarian, and acquisition secretary be added to the board, but the minutes do not record that any of these recommendations were adopted. In fact, "assistant curator" had been added as an officer in 1979.

Gordon Windle became president in 1981, with Gridley Barrows as vice president. Leon Norris, Robert Beliveau, Geneva Kirk, Ethelyn Penley, Jane Norris, and Willis Trafton were reelected, and all served two more years.

Douglas Hodgkin was named to the board in 1982; Harold Dutch, in 1983. At the 1983 meeting, Leon Norris announced that the museum rooms had had a "face lift" with the help of Auburn Boy Scout Troop 111. Work included painting and laying a carpet.

In November 1983, new bylaws were adopted, major changes being that the directors now had the authority to "set and reset" dues, the officers and twelve other members made up the board, and all members of the finance committee must be members of the board and have authority to inspect and change all investment funds. The new bylaws were amended the following year to allow a bank trust arrangement, with the finance committee controlling the overall investment, and to change program meeting months, dropping January and adding September, a schedule still in effect.

There were two changes in the officers for 1984-85: Aubrey (Bob) Palmer was elected vice president; Leslie Wight, recording secretary. That year, the Society received the Harry W. Rowe Award from the Maine League of Historical Societies and Museums for outstanding contributions to state and local history. We were presented a plaque and \$100.00.

In April of 1985, Leon and Jane Norris, due to personal commitments, resigned their offices of executive secretary-curator and treasurer, the resignations regretfully accepted.

## WEBSTER'S TOWN HISTORIAN: BENJAMIN DOLE BRYENT

by Robert Taylor

Benjamin Dole Bryent was a tall, slightly-stooping old man, with a bald head, gray beard and refined face, who always dressed plainly but neatly, and was once a familiar figure in the village of Lisbon. He was born in 1815, a native of Webster, now known as Sabattus, and died 1887 in Lisbon at the age of 71 years.

He was known as a philosopher, poet, scientist, historian -- a sort of a natural genius. He had a remarkable mind and spoke five languages. He was a student of books, a writer of manuscripts, a man with always a busy mind, yet he was quite eccentric, as he never went into society and had no companions. It was said that his room had been lined with bugs, butterflies, odd pieces of rock and dried moss; that he "was a great hand" to read the old records of the town of Webster; and that he asked many questions, but said little about himself.

He wrote uncounted manuscripts, which ranged all the way from versification to lively histories about his friends, neighbors, and his native Webster. Indeed, this singular old man with the dreamy air was an authority on the affairs of Webster village from the earliest days of its founding right down to the time of his death. Dole Bryent was an inveterate diarist. Unfortunately, his record books or journals became scattered after his death. Three of his journals are in the collection of the Androscoggin Historical Society, their content ranging all the way from bits of genealogy to neighborhood gossip, for nothing escaped his eye. All of his writings are extremely interesting. In one of his bound journals he traced at considerable length the family histories of his own Davis and Bryent lines as well as other neighborhood families in Webster.

Mr. Bryent's pen was devoted for the most part to local history, and his lengthy account of the history of Webster is included in the celebrated Atlas of Androscoggin County published in 1873. Most of the known information on Webster (now Sabattus) can be attributed to Benjamin Dole Bryent.

## THE JOURNAL OF OLIVER HUBBARD BROWN

In our February 1994 newsletter, we presented the diary of Anne Susan Jumper. AHS also has the journal of her husband, Oliver Hubbard Brown, with occasional entries from 1850 to 1854. During this time he lived in Boston, Mass., and South Bridgton, Maine; married 20 March 1851; and lived in East Auburn and Minot. The editor has supplied words in place of Hubbard's shorthand symbols.

[in East Auburn]

Apr. 30, 1851. Have [been away] yesterday + today, to Turner -- 'Uncle' B's, where lay one in the bloom of youth + loveliness, wasting under that scourge to N.E. -- Consumption.

May 1. Spring's gala-day has come again. Though the morning was dull, damp and rainy, the bright warm sun appeared before sinking to his western bed. No doubt many a young, buoyant heart has [been] made sad today by the unpropitious state [of the] weather, still we must rejoice in the opening of May -- the Month of Months.

May 24. Began to day the use of Iodine &c upon my knee, according to prescription of Drs Kilborn + Oakes, who think "palliatives" [have been] used long enough, and [that it is] now time to use something more powerful.

July 17. Dropped in to see the physician, who said [that one] probable reason why the lameness + tenderness continued so long in my knee was a serofulous tendency in my system.

Aug. 5. By the direction [of the] Physician I am to commence showering my knee tonight [with] cold water.

[in Minot]

Dec. 23. The teacher of our District School came to board with us to day -- thus increasing our little family. It seems not a little strange -- instead of teaching away and boarding among strangers, to have a stranger teacher

board [with us].

Dec. 26. Wrote to Hon. E. M. Thurston, Sec. of the Board of Education, in reference to the disparity in the length of our common schools.

June 11, 1852. Part of yesterday + to day I have been at work on [the] public highway. It seems quite a step, gained in my strength yet it seems no less strange that I have a tax to work out.

Oct. 13. My knee seems to let me do most anything now a days, if I am careful, as I most surely try to be. Have been gathering apples to day, for Mr. Jacobs. Quite a new thing for me and I ought to be thankful for increasing strength.

Nov. 23. Carried in my first case of shoes, without having much fault found -- only to show me how to do the next better. My earnings are small, but steady employment will keep me [from] idleness -- the parent of much mischief besides letting [my] knee have rest.

Dec. 3. Darkness and sorrow have been surrounding us, but light and joy have returned, for Annie, the "wife of my bosom," lives. Yes. Annie lives, but that little mound in our Church Yard denotes her sufferings. . . .

Mar. 14, 1853. Town Meeting today, and the friends of Law + Order attained a complete triumph, blotting out -- in part at least -- the stain of the previous year. [Brown was also elected to the school committee.]

May 3. Examined Miss Wilson to teach in school district No. 11. She was young, diffident and embarrassed, so that she failed to do herself justice -- as I should judge.

Aug. 11. Hot as it was, I visited the school at West Minot. A more strict discipline would doubtless have been attended with greater success.

[Several additional entries contain Brown's accounts of visits as a school committee member to various schools with his evaluations of the teachers.]