

ANDROSCOGGIN HISTORY

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Newsletter of the Androscoggin Historical Society

No. 14

ANDROSCOGGIN MAN IN THE GOLD RUSH

Recently, Dr. Douglas W. Pepin of California, a life member of our society, wrote for information on Major Josiah D. Pulsifer. Dr. Pepin has purchased a collection of Pulsifer's Gold Rush letters written during his time in California, 1849-1851. A large portion of the letters were in short-hand.

The Society has a great deal on Major Pulsifer in our files, including a hand-written autobiography and a number of his original letters written to his wife while serving in the Civil War. We shall feature selections from those letters in our next issue.

Pulsifer left his wife (the former Helen A. Woodbury of Minot) and little daughter with her people in Minot and sailed in a bark around Cape Horn to California, a long trip from November to June following. He described his experiences:

"When we arrived [in California] after a six months' voyage, our company worked some six weeks in discharging cargo, building the steamboat, etc, after which we sold our property all out as to make fair pay for our labor and our passage clear. After selling our property, I went to work on the roads a few weeks at \$5 per day shoveling dirt. I then went into the mines where I worked nine months, in which time I made clear of my expenses some \$3000, and then started for home, where I arrived in August 1851. The first year after my arrival I did but little except enjoy my family and educate my daughter. In 1852 I went into trade at Minot, where I continued two years, not making any money. I was then elected clerk of Courts for three years, and was reelected in 1857."

MEETING NOTICE

The next meeting of Androscoggin Historical Society is Tuesday, February 28, 1995, at 7:30 P.M.

Topic: "General Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain -- Live"

Speaker: Charles W. Plummer

Location: Our museum in the County Building

RICH HERITAGE IN MINOT CENTER CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH RECORDS

by Robert Taylor

The first church in Bakerstown was organized with thirty-nine members, Sept. 8, 1791, in a log house in the "Scott Neighborhood." In 1793 and 1794, Rev. Jonathan Scott from Nova Scotia preached for some months. He urged the people to build a church and assisted in cutting the lumber. This church was built in the summer of 1794 near Reuben Chandler's residence. That fall, Rev. Scott returned and this time became their minister. Ninety-eight persons agreed to contribute toward his salary. Sept. 8, 1804, a meeting was held to see about building a meeting house near the center of Minot. Sept. 28, the town voted "not to build a meeting house near the center of the town and not to build two meeting houses." Nov. 27, the town consented to the incorporation of a Congregational Society. In 1805 the center meeting house was built, but in 1806 fourteen members were set off in a new society worshipping at what is now West Auburn. Rev. Scott opposed this division, which finally led to his withdrawal as pastor, although he continued to preach for them more or less until his death in 1819. The town, however, was not large enough to support two churches. After dissension and neglect had reduced their ranks to only thirty-seven, they finally were re-united in 1823 with Rev. Elijah Jones, who preached alternately at the "East Meeting House" and the "Center."

In 1842 Auburn was set off from Minot. In 1844 the church was again divided and 86 members were set off to form a church at West Auburn, leaving 163 in the church at Minot. The church at Minot Center decided to erect a new meeting house. The old one was demolished and the present building was dedicated on Nov. 25, 1846.

Rev. Jones continued as pastor of the Minot Center Church until his death in 1869. During his pastorate of 46 years nearly 500 members were added to the church. Following Rev. Jones, the church had few settled pastors and was ministered by many different

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RECOLLECTIONS OF LEWISTON: EUNICE A. STEVENS -- Part 2

Eunice Stevens at age 91 recalled early life in Lewiston during an interview published in the *Lewiston Evening Journal*, March 25, 1911:

"There was but one meeting house in Lewiston at that time. This was the Free Baptist and it then stood near where the Geo. B. Haskell store is now located [corner of Main and Chapel Streets]. The head men in the society were Temple Tibbetts, Mayor Wm. Frye, Rev. Jacob Golder, Father Marston, Deacon Stephen Davis and the Gliddens. The Thorne family, Thomas and his sisters, sang there, while Elder Libby was the preacher. I had been trained as a Calvinist Baptist and didn't exactly jibe with them but always attended service there, as that was the only church in the village. Long sermons and eternal punishment were the proper thing in those days, but I was very independent and never agreed with the hell part. I had joined with the Baptists in North Livermore when I was nineteen years of age and it was a curious dialogue that we had. The man I worked for was one of the committee that examined me and he knew that I took no stock in hell fire. They were anxious to get me into the church, however, and he said if I could state that God would cast me off into hell in case of wickedness that would have great weight with the committee and perhaps I could slip thru. I refused point blank to make such a statement as my belief, but yet I slipped thru and became a member! I had a mind and a will of my own even then.

"There was no Methodist church here then, but I had a cousin and another friend who were members of that faith and we all went to the Free Baptist church where I was one of the singers. Finally seven Methodists showed up and formed a class. One morning Mr. Tibbetts asked me if I had heard the news. He was shocked that such a thing should happen in Lewiston, but I clapped my hands and cried out that it was good news. Altho not a Methodist, I was glad of it and liked to plague him because of his narrow religious views. I told him to listen to reason and let the Methodists alone. I also told him that I should live to see the day when there would be two or three Methodist churches in Lewiston and also two or three Catholic churches. At that time there were no Catholics whatever and only seven Methodists in the place. He was horrified at the idea, but it was fun for me.

"After all their narrow views those were good men. Rev. Jacob Golder was a deacon and itinerant preacher after the old style but he was a thoroughly good man and he had much ability. He was scholarly, smooth and diplomatic, altho very set in his Calvinism. Mrs. Jacob B. Ham of this city is his daughter. A more frank and honest man never lived in Lewiston.

"Father Marston was also a good man. Stephen Davis was the first deacon here and he had a large as well as a fine family. The Gliddens and Mitchell families lived out on farms and they were solid citizens. Then there was the Field family who were among the earliest settlers. Archie Wakefield was the father of Seth, and he was a prominent figure all thru his life, as well as being a thoroly [sic] good man. The Nash, Moore and Witham families were all leaders in both church and society and may be called among the best of our foundation stock. Some of those pioneers are buried out in that old yard on Sabatis street and their graves are sadly neglected.

"I think it is a burning shame and a disgrace to the people of Lewiston that such a condition of affairs should exist. I feel the matter more keenly because I have a baby buried there. Dr. Gorham's family are buried there as well as the Davis family and many others of the best blood of old-time Lewiston. I wonder what they would say of their posterity if they could see that old burying ground and could speak.

"When the Baptist church was organized they wanted me to become a charter member and I wrote to the clerk of the church in North Livermore to find out what sort of standing I was in and the answer came promptly back with an O. K. You see I wasn't very strong on the eternal punishment business and didn't know but I had fallen into disfavor.

"Rev. George Knox was pastor of the church and he asked to see the letter. It seemed to satisfy him and I was taken into his church. He was a man of much ability and very fine looking. I remember of his telling my husband that God was too wise to err and too good to do wrong. He was the father of the Baptist church in this community, and thru his energy the first building for worship was built at the head of Lisbon street where the Masonic hall now stands. Webster and Wiggin of Auburn helped to build the church and their families joined it soon after. Later Mr. Knox became chaplain of a Maine regiment and one day was thrown from his horse and killed.

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MINOT CHURCH (Continued)

preachers. Owing to numerous removals the church became greatly reduced in numbers.

This church at Minot Center has not been active for some time, except for holding services in the old building each August. Through its long history the church has left numerous records and documents. Because of their historical and genealogical content, our society a few years back borrowed the church's records, made photo-copies and placed them within our files.

NOTEBOOKS OF BENJAMIN DOLE BRYENT

Benjamin Dole Bryent, historian of the Town of Webster, whose brief biography appeared in our June 1994 newsletter, wrote notes and commentaries on a wide range of topics. Following are examples from photocopies of his notebooks in the Society's files. These are Bryent's opinions, and the Society takes no position on their veracity.

The law requiring municipal clerks to make an official record of births and deaths is believed to be almost wholly disregarded now, November 26, 1879 in the State of Maine. . . . Five cents each is the legal fee for recording births and deaths. In the town of Webster the town clerk has for many years failed to observe the provision of law in this respect.

James Fitzgerald, the half lunatic Irishman, April 4, 1880, requested little Harry J. Bryent to inform him when the assessors of Webster came along to take the valuation so that he might hide away and so avoid being assessed for a tax. He concealed himself in Ben. Davis' cellar.

[Bryent moved to Greene on 24 June 1881 to live with his sister Hannah, wife of Simeon C. Wiley.]

At the march term, 1882, term of the Supreme Court for Oxford County held at Paris, Alma G. Spears obtained a divorce from her husband, Charles D. Spears. Charles Dennet Spears was once a resident for some years with his father, Alfred Spears of Webster. Liked rum, was a shoemaker, his feet were deformed, was very dishonest, course vulgar and profane; never returned \$5 he borrowed of me and with the whole Spears tribe went 20 years ago to Stoneham, Oxford county, Maine.

Tuesday, June 6, 1882, Greene. making some Ink, with one part of gren [sic] Vitreol [sic], One part Logwood, three parts Aleppo Gauls, one part Gum Arabic, one pint Vinegar. The mosquitoes here in Green at this time, June 6, 1882 are exceedingly numerous and annoying. At Sprague's Mills they are said to swarm in clouds.

On Sunday, July 16, 1882. Barnum's Circus in three large railway trains passed southward along the railway in this town of Green This circus, I think, is some way from being an unmixed good, though it might be made freer from objection than now.

Louis Ware . . . died in Lewiston, Maine, August 14, 1882, . . . was for a time a student in Harvard College, was expelled for his intemperate habits, came to Maine, became a brickmaker, married a daughter of Andrew Bubier of Lewiston, settled on a farm in the north western confines of Lisbon, lost his property by excessive use of strong drink; reformed, became a Washingtonian, accumulated a handsome property, mostly by brickmaking in Lewiston [near Ware and Russell Streets]; he was of large stature, stout, smoked tobacco; For his

many good qualities was kindly regarded by those who knew him.

December 2, 1882, a cow of Mrs. Emma Shaw, of Greene, was saved from chocking [sic] with a piece of beet, by a neighbor, John Gray, forcing it the length of his arm into the stomach.

Mary Robinson . . . died suddenly at the house of her brother, Dea. Samuel Robinson in Webster . . . February 1883 . . . had from childhood a peculiarity of conduct which early developed into incurable insanity, said to have been caused by a visit of the mother during pregnancy to Mary Eames an insane woman. When a girl, Mary, the deceased, was good looking, with rosy cheeks, but insanity with physical illness gave her a haggard emaciated look. . . . Some attributed her insanity to disappointment in not marrying David S. Sandborn. . . .

Our neighbor, Mrs. Emma Shaw, I learn, is now, May 14, 1883, having some trouble with her son, Truman Shaw, a lad perhaps fifteen years old [actually 16½] growing out of the interference of a neighbor, Mr. Thomas, who wants his daughter to become the wife of her son, Truman, to which Mrs. Shaw, who is forty two years old, objects.

Dr. George L. Peaslee of Greene has invited his neighbors to come this afternoon, Wednesday June 6, 1883, to a "raising", that is, to assist in putting up the frame of an extension to his barn, (on the Col. Quimby farm.) and as the Docter [sic] appears to be something of a favorite with them I think they will cheerfully do him a favor. He is an enterprising man.

The wages of laborers in harvesting hay in Greene the present season, 1883, were two dollars and a half (\$2.50.) a day for ten hours work, including board. Farmers generally in this town have a mowing machine and horse rake.

Mrs. Olive (Lord) Jordan, wife of the late Henry Jordan, of Lisbon, and the eldest of the five children of the late Abraham Lord of Webster, died August 28, 1883 She was a very large stature, dark complexion, and mentally and socially a full average of her sex and class. In her religious convictions she held to the faith of the universalists. Her father came from York County, Me., to Lisbon now Webster about 1825 and bought the farm of Capt. Aaron Dwinel, near the Corner, and being a very earnest [sic] Democrat and Capt. Dwinel as earnest [sic] a whig the latter for the credit he had given Lord in the purchase of the farm, made Lord vote for whigs at elections, a very distasteful thing for the Democrat.

A little Humming bird was, today, Sept^r 15 1883, busy for some time about the flowers in the garden here in Greene, for a moment upon an apple tree and then again resuming its whirring flight, no mythic spirit so beautiful as this tiny fellow.

LEWISTON'S OLDEST HOUSES

by Douglas I. Hodgkin

We may never determine which is the oldest house in Lewiston. Deeds generally are of little help because many settlers were squatters and the Pejepscot Proprietors did not confer ownership by deed until much later.

The Lewiston Assessor's records indicate construction dates of many houses, yet staff there do not know the sources of these dates. These records place at least five structures in the eighteenth century.

Although assessor's records date the property at 47 Russell Street in 1781, the house may actually be one hundred years younger. Zelotes Randall purchased the land from Lucy A. King, wife of Moses King, Jr., on 17 June 1882, but the deed mentions no buildings (Andros. Deeds, Book 106, page 600). Then Randall mortgaged the land and buildings to Pamela Randall on 2 January 1883 (Andros. Deeds, Book 116, page 242). He probably constructed the house in 1882 after having purchased the land, but needed to borrow money for the costs of the construction.

This conclusion is also consistent with maps that record individual Lewiston houses. This house is not shown in the *Atlas of Androscoggin County* of 1873. Moreover, an 1858 wall map, copies of which are at the Registry of Deeds and in the Androscoggin Historical Society, also shows no house and no street or road where Russell Street is now.

The assessor's records date a two-story house at 144 Ferry Road in 1791. The Pejepscot Proprietors granted several lots to James Ames and two of his

sons, Ezra and Winslow. James Ames was probably the first blacksmith in Lewiston and kept a public house (Elder, *History of Lewiston*, pp. 16, 19, 85-87). However, William Garcelon's history claims, "Jedediah Morrill built the first two story house ever built in town, 1795."

John Herrick settled at what is now 901 Main Street. For many years, this was the only public house in town. The assessor's records say it was built in 1792, but in their histories of Lewiston, Elder says 1800 and Garcelon says 1799.

In this newsletter (No. 9, June 1993) the William Garcelon house at 91 Ferry Road was suggested as a candidate on the basis of Garcelon's history stating construction occurred in 1799. The assessor's office, however, records the date as 1843.

Jonathan Hodgkin, who came to Lewiston in 1777 (Elder, 16), built a house at 217 Ferry Road in 1792, according to the assessor's records. He operated a farm that was owned and occupied by his descendants and their families until 1987.

Jacob Barker built a dam and grist mill on Bog Brook in 1775 and a saw mill a few years later (Elder, 15). The assessor's records indicate Barker's house at 814 Main Street was constructed in 1792.

Which *is* the oldest? The Hodgkin and Barker houses are dated 1792 and no contrary records are known. But who really knows? The assessor's records have no particular claim to authenticity. This is an interesting historical problem with no solution to date. Does any reader have information on these houses or other contenders?

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