

# ANDROSCOGGIN HISTORY

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Newsletter of the Androscoggin Historical Society

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## HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

## MAJOR JOSIAH D. PULSIFER by Robert A. Taylor

**Officers.** At the Annual Meeting of the Society on May 23, 1995, all officers, including Leslie M. Eastman as President, and the Board of Directors were re-elected for another one-year term.

**Business Membership.** The Society's Board of Directors has approved a Business Membership of \$50. This newsletter will note each business that joins or renews its membership. Please send the dues for your business to our Treasurer, Susan Sturgis, c/o Mechanics Savings Bank, 100 Minot Avenue, Auburn, ME 04210.

## BONNEY PAINTINGS by Robert A. Taylor

Among the holdings of our society are two large framed primitive paintings of Ichabod Bonney (1762-1848) and his wife Anna (Merrill) (1765-1850), done in 1830. They came to Sylvester Plantation (Turner) as newly-weds in company with his parents in 1783. His father, Captain Ichabod Bonney first came to take up settlers lots in 1773 and for the purpose of building a saw and grist mill, but it was not until 1783, or ten years later that he and his son and family permanently settled in Turner.

The Bonneys came from Pembroke, Mass., and came by vessel to North Yarmouth and made their way to Turner by spotted trees. They hauled with an ox team their worldly goods, September 24, 1783, and on the way stopped one night under a large white oak tree at the foot of White Oak Hill, near what has since been called Vickery's Mills, at the foot of Great Wilson Pond, now Lake Auburn. Other families in company with them at the time were Samuel Taylor, Daniel Oldham, Dea. John Briggs, and Dea. Robinson with their families.

Captain Ichabod Bonney (1737-1807) was one of Turner's most influential citizens. He was the town's first postmaster, helped build the first meeting house and chose the minister. He served as moderator in 1788, 1790, 1804, 1805; as town clerk, 1791-1802; and as selectman, 1791-1806.

Major Josiah Dunn Pulsifer was born in Poland, May 13, 1820, son of Dr. Moses R. and Mary Strout Dunn Pulsifer. In 1823 the family moved to Mt. Desert where Pulsifer attended the common school. Later he fitted for college at Kent's Hill, and in 1839 entered Waterville College, but did not graduate.

His taught his first school at Mechanic Falls, when he was 15 years of age. From 1840 to 1842 he was principal of the Minot Corner high school. During this time he studied law.

He was admitted to the bar at Portland in May, 1843, and immediately commenced practice at Somerville. He shortly after moved to Columbia, where he remained until 1849. He was post master at that place for four years.

In 1849, Pulsifer went to California for two years. He returned to Maine and went into trade at Minot Corner for three years, during which time he was post master and selectman of the town.

When Androscoggin County was formed in 1854, he was elected Clerk of Courts three terms. He moved to Auburn in 1855.

In 1864 he was appointed paymaster of the United States Army with the rank of Major, served in Virginia, and was mustered out in 1865. [See letters on pages 3 & 4 of this newsletter.]

Major Pulsifer was for many years prior to this date interested in stenography, then something new. In 1867, when the law was passed authorizing the employment of court stenographers, he was appointed to that position - the first one in the state. This was his work until his health failed him in 1890.

In 1875, he was appointed reporter of decisions of the Supreme Court of Maine and held this position four years, editing during this time volumes 65 to 68 of the Maine Reports.

Major Pulsifer was married May 24, 1848, to Helen A. Woodbury of Minot. They had five children, two sons and three daughters, each of whom were stenographers, who did much court reporting in Maine. Major Pulsifer died in Auburn, Jan. 5, 1896.

**THOMAS DRESSER THORNE**  
**LEWISTON BUILDER**

Thomas Dresser Thorne (1814-1906), son of Rev. Benjamin H. and Alice (Dresser) Thorne, was a well-known local singer and building contractor [Obituary, *Lew. Eve. Journal*, Mar. 19, 1906]. Great grandson Paul C. Walker provided this list of his buildings, many important in Lewiston's development:

- 1837 "Frye Block," Main Street
- 1841 A meeting house for Henry Plummer in Durham
- 1844 House on Main St., Maj. William R. Frye
- 1846 Lincoln Mill, first cotton mill in Lewiston
- 1849 House on Park St., for James Tracy
- 1849 House on Middle St., for Isaac Field
- 1850 House on Middle St., for Charles L. Oliver
- 1850 House on Main St., for Col. J. M. Frye
- 1850 Engine House in Auburn
- 1850 House on Middle St., for L. Litchfield
- 1852 Two blocks for Bates Manufacturing Company
- 1853 Jones Block on Main St. below hill
- 1853 Bates Mill No. 1, and Auxiliary building, Machine shop, now part of the Lincoln.
- 1853 Founding building now the Lewiston Machine Shop
- 1853 DeWitt House
- 1855 Lewiston Depot
- 1856 Free-will Baptist Meeting House on Main St.
- 1857 Hathorn Hall at Bates College
- 1858 Parker Hall (Bates College dormitory)
- 1858 Central Block, Main St.
- 1859 Mill for Luther Lombard at Sabattusville.
- 1860 House on Lisbon Road, for Edward Clark
- 1860 Worombo Mills at Lisbon Falls
- 1861 Machine shop on Sabattus St. for Reynolds
- 1862 House on Bates St. for Winslow
- 1862 The Osgood House
- 1863 House on Chapel St., for J. B. Ham
- 1865 Baptist Church in Auburn
- 1865 House on Park St., for Mrs. Hersam
- 1866 House on No. Main St., Aub., for J. B. Blaisdell
- 1866 A block of houses for Androscoggin Company
- 1866 House on Bartlett St., for Dr. Alonzo Garcelon
- 1867 House on Court St., Aub., for F. Dingley
- 1867 Hotel Atwood
- 1871 Buildings on College St., for Capt. Daniel Holland
- 1872 Mill in Palmer, Mass.
- 1873 Bleachery & Dye works in Waltham, Mass.
- 1874 Dye house and store house in Palmer, Mass.
- 1875 Block of stores in Manchester, N.H.
- 1876 Odd Fellows Block, Lisbon St., Lewiston
- 1879 Trinity Church, Bates & Spruce St.
- 1880 Large addition, Worombo Mill, Lisbon Falls
- 1881 Mohawk Valley Mills & auxiliary bldg., Utica, NY

- 1882 2-Mill yarn mill
- 1883 Block of stores at Waterville
- 1883 Store house for the Lockwood Company
- 1883 Addition to Free-will Baptist Meeting House, Main St., Lewiston
- 1891 Took charge of rebuilding a school building at Cape Elizabeth for the Reform school.

**RECOLLECTIONS OF LEWISTON:**  
**EUNICE A. STEVENS -- Part 3**

We conclude the Eunice Stevens, age 91, interview published in *Lewiston Evening Journal*, March 25, 1911:

"O yes! I knew all the old-time merchants in Lewiston but they were very few, and their methods different from today. Squire Herrick and his son John traded on Main street, and this son was the first postmaster of the town. [Elder says Dan Read.] The stores were mostly on lower Main street and some of the buildings are still there but very dingy. Department stores were unknown and rum and molasses, dry goods and groceries were all kept in the same room. It was a sort of jumble in those old-time stores, but the merchants were honorable men and never misrepresented their goods.

"You ask what incident in my long life in Lewiston most powerfully impressed me. Well, I think it was the great freshet of 1896 that carried out our bridges. I lived on High street at the time and early in the morning went down to the river where a big crowd had already gathered. It was a sublime sight. The water seemed perfectly black and was rushing and swirling as far as I could see. Logs were being hurled high in the air and the entire space between the falls and the bridge seemed to be of equal height. O, it was a grand sight and I could only ask who could doubt the power of God. As I asked this question a man at my elbow turned to me and said that he was about to say the same when I spoke. The scene inspired such thoughts. The end of the bridge had already gone and in a few moments the entire structure was swept away and disappeared in the swirling and seething waters.

". . . I have always been a worker and intend to remain one as I do not believe in drones any more than a working bee. When I worked in the old Columbia mill the spring freshets used to bring water and ice thru the windows into our room, but I kept on working when possible. Then I used to help nurse the sick. There were no trained nurses in those days and we had to help each other in times of stress. I think that course of life gave me my powerful constitution."

### THREE OF JOSIAH D. PULSIFER'S CIVIL WAR LETTERS

Camp of Mounted Rifles

July 19 (Tuesday) 1864

Dear Wife:-

I have just been to the front & paid out 100,000 to parts of 3 regiments -- 1st N.Y. Mounted Rifles -- a Pontoon Company, and the 9th of Maine, the first two of which were paid under the ordinary circumstances of armies in the field, but the 9th of Maine were paid I think under circumstances I think unusual, if not unparalleled. My regiment of mounted rifles were scattered, two companies of them near Baldy Smith's Headquarters. These I paid Sunday, remained with them over night. Monday morning before breakfast, I started horseback for the front, as is a front, right up to the very front line, for there I found the regiment in the trenches, the breastworks in front of them and where if one of them raised his head above the breastworks he would be likely to lose it. The tent of Capt. Grey who commands the regiment is very near the breastworks occupied [by] his troops a small ravine between & the back of the tent (next the enemy) protected [by] a group of trees, while between his regiment and the rebels was an open field of growing grain, all untrampled. About a quarter of a mile in the rear of these breastworks is the surgeons quarters where also the officers of the regiment retire for their meals. Having sent my rolls ahead to be signed & witnessed, I went to the headquarters of the Capt. commanding -- called him up and retired with him to breakfast quarters. I wore over my uniform a linen duster. I wore also a straw hat. A part of our way lay on a hill clear of trees and in plain view of the rebel line. Capt. Grey remarked to me that my coat, that would make a good mark for the sharp shooters & advised me to leave them off. I took off my duster on my return, and worked away thru the forenoon paying 7 companies. Our paying was interrupted by shells & minnie balls thrown as near our quarters as the enemy could guess. I saw one shell strike the ground and explode. I saw it was the custom of the men to watch for the shells to dodge them before they struck & to run behind a shell to escape the explosion. This shell I spoke of bursted within 20 feet throwing its fragments very near. On my way home to dinner with Capt. Barstow when I got to the open space mentioned, I told him that my straw hat would probably attract attention -- The words were hardly out of my mouth when zipp went a minnie bullet in front of me and within arm's length. I consulted prudence & hastened my pace out of the open space. Capt. Barstow not having the courage to exhibit any care of his personal safety walked leisurely on.

My dear Helen

I have applied for a leave of absence for 20 days -- It will be a few days before I shall get an answer. It is by no means certain that I shall get my leave -- I am neither sick nor well, costive, small appetite, coated tongue, on bed half the day, walk a little slowly round town. My lungs are strong, tho I am having some cough -- [The leave was denied.]

The water here is not good, there is no bad odor to it. No positively bad taste & yet you cant drink it without feeling that it is not northern water. You can taste it in your tea & coffee.

Mr. Bessy & wife Suttlers board in the same house with me pay 95\$ per mo. for one room not larger than Perham's furnished & board. They have an ice cistern in their room, and drink ice water, they do not put Norfolk water in & then put in ice to cool it, for that would be Norfolk water, but they have just the northern water. Not the best of northern water, not spring or well water, but the water of northern rivers & ponds & lakes -- still better than Norfolk water. They invite me to drink of it. I have done so once.

It will not be much pleasure to you I fear to have a sick man come home to nurse. It will be a sad pleasure to me but home is home. I feel it possible that I will jump right up as I go north, get the northern air, northern water, northern food, & above all the warm sympathy of northern hearts -- enclosed in my home circle.

[Continued on page 4]

Major Josiah D. Pulsifer

Norfolk, Va 28 July 1864

[Continued from page 3]

Pay Camp  
Fort Munroe  
June 19, 1865

Dear Helen:-

I woke up Monday morning after a very severe week's work in good working trim for another week. I have 3 men detailed for my special service -- one to carry the mail and two as assistant clerks.

\* \* \* \*

I think you would find some amusement if you were here with me. About 100 men are mustered out here every day, besides large streams from the front -- who are paid off by us -- Nearly every man wants to make a special call on the Paymaster in charge, whom they call Chief Paymaster or Paymaster Genl. & try to get in ahead. They have special claims, one says his regiment is mustered out & he wants to join them & collect money he has lent the boys & therefore wants me to get him paid so that he can take the boat tonight -- but there is one standing reason - a sick wife or sick mother -- if smooth faced - his mother is sick & if he expects to see her alive he must take the first boat -- if a bearded man his wife is sick & he fears he may never see her -- They come armed with telegrams & letters as they say to substantiate the facts but then I do not in --- ? for Once in a while a man has a sick wife whom it is necessary to see. I remember one such case, but as a rule - the claim is bogus.

Yours truly

J D Pulsifer  
Paymr in charge

## SOCIETY HOLDINGS ON CIVIL WAR

- \* Transcripts of letters of Osgood D. Nason, of Chesterville, Me., of 7th Me Reg't (1861-1863)
- \* Transcripts of letters of Horace F. Nason, of Chesterville, Me., of Co I, 2nd Mass Inf.
- \* Transcript of nine Civil War letters of Charles Augustus Garcelon (1842-1935) of Lewiston, 16th Me Reg't. (See Garcelon file)
- \* Two Civil War letters of Tillisfor Bailey of New Gloucester, of Co I, 25th Reg't.
- \* Many letters (some transcribed) of Major Josiah Pulsifer of Auburn
- \* Photocopied letters of Capt. Elijah M. Shaw of Lewiston, 10th Me Reg't., (Oct 1861)
- \* Transcript of letters of Edward F. Ross of Poland, 30th Me. Reg't.
- \* Transcript of War diary of Edwin M. Truell, 12th Wisc, Vol Inf.
- \* Diary of William Holmes Morse of Minot, 5th Me Vol. Reg't. (typed)
- \* Handwritten account of Capt. John S. P. Ham of Lewiston, Co C, 13th Me Reg't.
- \* Extract of manuscript by John W. Haley of Saco, 17th Me Reg't.
- \* Handwritten war memoirs of William P. Damon of Paris, Me., 32nd Me Reg't.
- \* Piece of first Battle Flag of 17th Me. Reg't.
- \* Original picture of Co K, 10th Me Reg't., several officers.
- \* Bundle of rosters of 23rd and 30th Maine, Capt. Horace C. Haskell of Auburn.

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