

ANDROSCOGGIN HISTORY

June, 1996

Newsletter of the Androscoggin Historical Society

No. 18

A MEMORY OF ROBERT L. TAYLOR (1939-1996)

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

[Ed. note: Robert L. Taylor, executive secretary of the Society, died suddenly on March 12, 1996.]

In the fall of 1986, as a member of the Search committee, I first met Bob Taylor when he was chosen for the job as Executive Secretary.

From visits to the Society office, one soon learned two things about Bob: he didn't think much of that new tool then coming into use, the computer, and once he had seen something in the files or on display, whether it be a book on the shelves or an object in the museum, he never forgot it or its location. Seldom do I recall that he used an index to find something in our holdings.

In the late 1980's there was a big push by the Library of Congress and others to establish central information locations across the country where one could find what had been saved for posterity and where it was located and how best to preserve it.

While attending a workshop on the subject with Bob three years ago, we were sitting on a bench outside the building where it was being held. He revealed to me some of his thoughts. He strongly supported the idea of central information locations. He said he spent many days going from location to location while he was doing research on his publications and it would have been some helpful and time-saving if he knew what was where and a bit about it. He then told me, slyly, that a computer and network was the best way to do it. I nearly fell off the bench. He had changed his mind about computers. From then on he started to get the information we have in a form that will go into an on-line computer that he knew would be coming in the near future.

We had planned that I would help him in the next few years of my retirement getting the Society's information, much of it original, ready and on line. Bob, you will be in our memories for years to come. Good-bye.

NEW EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

On June 20, 1996, the Board of Directors chose David Richards to contract for the Executive Secretary position, beginning 1 July 1996. Mr. Richards is a candidate for a Ph.D. in history at the University of New Hampshire. His dissertation is "A City of Vivid Contrasts: A History of the Poland Spring Resort, 1860-1900."

Dave is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Bates College in 1984 and earned his M.A. in New England Studies in 1991 with a thesis on the Sabbathday Lake Shakers, having served as curator of their collections, 1984-1991. He also has experience at Strawberry Banke and at the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, both in Portsmouth, N. H.

Dave Richards has been an active scholar, with published articles, public presentations and interviews, and project directorships to his credit.

The search committee, composed of Chairman A. B. Palmer, Jr., Gridley Barrows, Harold Dutch, Merton Leavitt, and Les Eastman, advertised widely and received sixteen inquiries. Of the six applicants, three were interviewed on June 5. Our thanks for an excellent job go to the committee.

BOB PALMER ELECTED PRESIDENT

At our annual meeting on May 24, 1996, new officers elected were A. B. "Bob" Palmer, Jr., as the new president of the Society and David C. Young as vice president. Other officers were re-elected as follows: Ingrid Dutch, recording secretary; Alma Palmer, membership secretary; Susan Sturgis, treasurer; and Richard L. Trafton, attorney.

The members of the Board of Directors for 1996-1997 are Gridley Barrows, Harold Dutch, Leslie M. Eastman, Natalie G. Foye, Franklin Goss, Douglas I. Hodgkin, Eva Labonte, Merton Leavitt, Walter L. Perry, Warren B. Randall, Mary M. Riley, Norman E. Rose, and Gordon V. Windle.

Douglas Hodgkin continues as the newsletter editor.

The meeting concluded with a presentation by Charles Plummer as General Joshua Chamberlain.

NATHAN BUCKNAM'S DIARY

On 15 Nov. 1847, Nathan Bucknam of Lisbon, Maine, bought the book in which he sporadically recorded his activities until 1863. During this time he served on 63 vessels that travelled the Atlantic Ocean in North America, the Caribbean, South America, and England. He also farmed at Mackie's Island in Falmouth, Maine, and at the end of the diary began work in the Lewiston mills. He married Rachel Hinckley Powers, widow of Reed W. Powers, and they had 14 children. The transcription of the diary by John E. Libby is in our files. Selections:

- 1847
 Nov. 15th Left home with Father for Bath to get a chance to go to sea.
 Nov. 16th Engaged on board ship Forest King, Capt. Thompson, a new ship of 1000 tons, just launched
 Nov. 17th Go on board Forest King, being rigged, the masts alongside in the water, taking in balast etc.
 Dec. Load lumber & hay for New Orleans.
 1848
 Jan. 6th Sail from Bath for New Orleans
 30th My seventeenth birthday in New Orleans.
 March Sail for Liverpool. Arrive last of April or thereabout
 May 25th Sail for New York with 400 passengers aboard
 July 6th Arrive in N. York
 10th Leave N.Y. for home via Boston & Portland. Work on the farm and go to High School (fall term) at the village.
 Nov. Go to Bath. Ship in ship Milan, Capt. Monson, and sail for New Orleans
 1849
 August From Bath home.
 Sept. Go to Litchfield Liberal Institute, Fall Term. Study Navigation, Astronomy, Writing and Drawing.
 Nov. Go to Boston to go to California with Uncle Frank in Ship Cheshire. Arrive too late. Crew all engaged. Board at sailors home, North Square.
 1853
 Jan. 30th In Liverpool. 22nd birthday.
 Feb. 28th At sea bound for Charleston, S.C. A boy lost overboard in the Channel a few days out, an Austrian.
 1856
 Nov. 18 In Portland. Buy suit of clothes.
 20 Thanksgiving at home, after an absence of 4 years.
 Dec. 1 At home. 2 To Lewiston and back. Make arrangements with Father to take Mackies Island in company with George Wm. and go to farming in the spring.
- 10 Go to Bath and ship for N.O. in ship Roswell Sprague
 1857
 Apr. 13 Morn. Wind N.E. Shorten sail. Midnight blows a gale, lay too under close reefed main topsail, foretopsail split in clewing up. While furling mizen topsail a boy (English) fell from the yard, struck on deck and instantly killed. A man also fell from the foreyard, escaped with sprained ankle.
 Apr. 18 Arrive in Portland. Go out to Falmouth. Meet Geo. Wm. and Uncle and Aunt Bruce at Uncle Ezra's.
 19 Come on to Mackies Island.
 22 Move on goods & furniture & buy a boat.
 23 Uncle & Aunt Bruce arrive on Island to keep house
 May 1 Commence plowing for planting sowing &c
 6 Uncle Bruces cow arrives 30 Finish planting
 June 1 George & I go fishing. Catch 91 haddock.
 July 4 To Portland, Regatta & Balloon ascension.
 7 Commence haying.
 Aug. 31 Get in last load of hay. A long drill haying. Bad weather.
 Dec. 17 Finish pressing hay. 13_ tons.
 29 George leaves Island for the winter. Goes to Lisbon. Intending to work in mills at Lewiston.
 1860
 May Commence to build fish weir in co. with Capt. Sam Sargent. Weir a failure, get but few fish. Breaks up in Sept. gales.
 1862
 May 6 Leave home for Portland to go to sea.
 Oct. 27 Go to Dr. Chickerings with Mrs. Powers. Married. Board at Mrs. Johnsons, Summer St.
 1863
 Jan. 1 Quartermaster on board steamer New England lying at foot of 12th St., East River, New York.
 3 Chartered by U. S. Government
 4 Leave N.Y. at 8 o'clock P.M. for Fortress Monroe.
 5 Arrive Fortress Monroe
 7 Take on board 20 horses & 10 ambulance wagons.
 8 Go to Norfolk. Take in 600 troops and leave for Beaufort N.C. at 4 P.M.
 July 1 Baltimore under martial law. Rebels in rear of city. Get under weigh & ordered back. No boat to leave port until further orders.
 2 Sail from Baltimore for Portland.
 22 Commence haying for father.
 25 Bought pair 3 yr. old steers \$60. Girth 5 ft. 10 & 11 ins. Work haying for father 16 days.
 Aug. 13 To Lewiston. Hill Mill No. 1, \$2 a day. Board at Mr. Scribners. Room with Mr. Burnham on Corp.
 Sept. 14 Election. To Lisbon. Vote for Judge Cony
 22 Move into No. 1 Hill block. Rent \$150 a year.

WOMEN IN MAINE COTTON MILLS -- 1908

Part III

This is the third and final installment of Miss Eva L. Shorey's report on investigated working conditions in (Lewiston) Maine cotton mills as reprinted in the *Bridgton News*, December 18, 1908.

The French Canadian Operatives

The great majority of the mill employes [sic] are French Canadians, some of whom have lived in New England so long that they speak both English and their French-Canadian patois, or "old French" as some call it, with equal rapidity. They have intermarried with the American population to quite an extent. Some are prominent citizens of the two cities, holding important official positions in the city and county government. Some of these families have homes of their own, some keep "Maison de Pensions" in the corporation blocks or elsewhere, others live in houses rented from the men of their own nationality who have acquired property, and still others occupy the four or five story tenement blocks, which are very numerous in certain sections of the city. These buildings are of a box-like style of architecture, built close together, with verandas at the front or rear, which in some instances appear to be convenient storehouses for wash tubs, tin dishes, and various articles of wearing apparel, not at the time in use. They correspond to the backyards of some houses. A passerby can appreciate some of the joys of tenement house life, when observing the verandas of a five-story tenement, filled to overflowing with crowds of excited children, in various stages of apparel and non-apparel, their shrill voices raised in shouts or other exclamations, while the older people are at the windows, conversing with their neighbors across the street.

It is said there are 800 families residing in an area not over one-quarter of a mile square, in which are 4,000 people and 2,000 of them, at least, children. No person

can walk through these treeless streets, where the sun beats mercilessly down on the dust and dirt, or go through the narrow, dark alleys, where little sunlight comes, and observe the swarms of half-clad children, whose hard-working mothers have not time to keep them tidy, without feeling that somewhere in our social life a great wrong is being done these helpless bits of humanity, reared in squalor and poverty.

One thing which is greatly to be deplored in this connection is the fact that numerous little ones are left to the care of older sisters, the "little mothers" of eight or ten years, or perhaps to some accommodating neighbor who "keeps her eye" on them as they play about the streets and railroad tracks, while the mother is at work. In the early morning hours, fathers or mothers may be seen carrying the half-asleep babies in their arms to a neighboring tenement, to be cared for during the day by some one who has several of these charges. Some fathers and mothers, however, prefer to live on the amount the father can earn, small though it may be, so that the mother may care for the home and little ones.

A red-cheeked little girl of five years, who was playing about a boarding house, practically deserted during working hours, said: "Mamma works in the mill, but papa isn't busy all day, so he looks out for me when he is at home." A condition similar to this is often found, where "father's job" doesn't keep him busy all the time, while mother is working the full sixty hours a week. Yet it should be said that many of the women greatly prefer the factory to house work, or to do scrubbing and washing part of the time. The difference between the size of the family and the size of the income often renders the fact that mother must earn something somewhere a matter of course. Most of the women have spent so much time at the machines, where the work becomes largely mechanical, that the numerous home duties, or work along domestic lines, is irksome to them. "Why," said one woman, "I wouldn't do dress-making for anything. I'd much rather tend my looms."

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

If you have not already renewed your membership in the Androscoggin Historical Society for 1 June 1996 to 31 May 1997, please do so without delay. Circle the amount of the membership level that you choose.

Annual member	\$5.00	PRINT Name(s)_____
Contributing member	\$10.00	Address_____
Life member	\$50.00	Post Office_____State_____ZIP_____

Please send me information on becoming a Corporate/Business Member.

Mail this form with your check to **Androscoggin Historical Society, Alma Palmer, POB 67, Minot, Maine 04258**

ROBERT BELIVEAU HONORED

At the 1996 Annual Meeting, it was announced that the Board of Directors had voted to grant a life membership in the Society to Robert C. Beliveau in recognition of his service to the Society. Elected to serve as assistant curator 1979-1985 and curator 1985-1996, he kept the Society's holdings clean and orderly, and he often added to our collection items of local historical interest that he ran across at flea markets and auctions. We appreciate his devoted service.

WHAT'S THAT STUFF ABOVE OR AFTER MY NAME ON THE ADDRESS LABEL?

That stuff lets you know at what dues level and what year our membership records show you last paid your dues. the "an" means Annual; "conb" means Contributing (able to give a little more support) and "life" means Life Membership (no more dues to pay). If you have a "95-6," you paid your last years dues and will get one more meeting notice (to those within driving distance) and one more newsletter. When it is "96-7" you will get all the publications of the coming year. As you recall our dues year is from 31 May to 1 June the following year. Well, that wasn't too difficult was it!! Oh, by the way, if you find any errors or omissions please contact the Membership Secretary (Alma Palmer, POB 67, Minot, ME 04258) or (207) 783-2513 to get them corrected.

Douglas I. Hodgkin, editor
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NEW HOURS FOR LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

The Board of Directors has adopted a new schedule for the Society's library and museum to be open, effective for the 1996-1997 year. We now shall open three days a week on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday from 9:00 A.M. to noon and 1:00 to 5:00 P.M.

This enables our new executive secretary to have blocks of time to work on his dissertation and to be able also to obtain other part-time employment.

The board also believes that the new schedule will better serve our clientele. Researchers from out of town now can work for seven hours in one day rather than three and a half. Moreover, we now shall be open twenty-one hours each week, rather than the 17½ under the old schedule.

MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS

Our Corporate-Business Members and others provide donations to help us to meet a very tight budget. We appreciate the help of all contributors and here give recognition to the following larger donors during 1995/1996:

Mechanics Savings Bank
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