

ANDROSCOGGIN HISTORY

October, 1997

Newsletter of the Androscoggin Historical Society

No. 22

CONSERVATION ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

Our Society has completed a process of evaluation of our facility and holdings through the Conservation Assessment Program, which is funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services and administered by the National Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Property. We are one of five recipients in Maine in 1997. The visits occurred on September 3 and 4, 1997.

Russell Wright of Bridgton, an architect and consultant in historic preservation, did the architectural assessment. He concluded we are generally in fine shape. He did note a couple of dangerous electrical problems, which have been fixed. Also, we need to insulate unsafe heating pipes, as well as cold water pipes to help control humidity.

Ronald Harvey of Tuckerbrook Conservation was concerned primarily with our material collection. He found some areas of concern; namely, excessive light levels, both ultraviolet and visible, that we shall have to deal with. Harvey also raised concerns about the non-archival state of our photographic collection. He was pleased to learn of our on-going collaboration with J. Michel Patry, who is assisting us with application for grants to take care of this problem. Harvey found our temperature and relative humidity levels largely satisfactory.

MEETING NOTICE

The next meeting of Androscoggin Historical Society is Tuesday, October 28, 1997, at 7:30 P.M., in the County Building.

Topic: "The Depression in Lewiston and Auburn: Oral History"

Speaker: Professor Anne Williams and students of Bates College

IP GRANT FOR COMPUTER

The Androscoggin Historical Society has received a grant of \$3000 from International Paper Foundation for the purchase of a computer. This will permit us to catalog our holdings in such a fashion that we can find them easily. Another potential use is the conversion of our photographic collection to digital format. Moreover, our executive secretary will at last be able to use it for word-processing with its advantages over a typewriter for revision of text and storage of documents.

The IP Foundation was established in 1953 "to improve the quality of life in the communities where IP employees live and work by providing grants to qualifying charitable and nonprofit organizations and public institutions." We qualified as an organization devoted to enhancement of public education.

The Society is most grateful to IP for this gift.

ANDROSCOGGIN RIVER SALMON

Historian Ralph Skinner quoted from Col. William Garcelon's letter to Janus G. Elder in which Garcelon recalls his father's reminiscences about the Androscoggin River. Garcelon wrote, "Salmon used to be quite plenty when my ancestors first came to the falls, as I have heard them say, and I have made many a good meal in my boyhood from the salmon caught at the falls. And now while speaking of salmon I find on reference to my father's old ledgers in 1798 & in 1801 credits to Mr. Harris for salmon and the price was 3 pence a pound, and know my Uncle Harris used to take occasionally a salmon until he sold out, at the falls, in 1809 or 1810 & left for Ohio."

Garcelon also noted that his father had pointed out where "Aaron Harris had his salmon hole or pot as it was sometimes called. This was reached by running across to the east shore of the Island (now almost washed away) and up to near the foot of the falls where he could easily arrive to his salmon hole or pot." This was a depression under the falls where receding river waters left salmon captive or where caught salmon were kept alive until needed for cooking or sale.

[Skinner Transcript, August 20, 1967.]

DIARY OF WILLIAM HOLMES MORSE

William Holmes Morse of Minot, Maine, kept a detailed diary throughout his service (1861-1865) in the Civil War. We have a 95-page, single-spaced transcript taken from its publication in the *Algona Advance* of Iowa, 1901-1903. Morse is buried in Stuart, Iowa. Here are selections from the beginning months of his service, as well as the closing entries:

Dec. 21, 1861 -- Bade goodbye to home and friends in Minot, Maine and went to Lewiston, where with nine others, I enrolled my name as volunteer recruit for the 5th Maine Regiment, Co E, and under charge of the 1st Lieut. Frank Lemont, left Lewiston at 10:30 a.m. for Augusta, which we reached about sunset and took up quarters at a private house.

Dec. 22 -- Went over east of the Kennebec river and saw some of my friends who were in the 13th Regiment encamped on the Arsenal grounds. In the p.m. I visited the Flying Artillery and Cavalry camped near the State house. In the evening I was examined at the Augusta house and mustered into the U. S. service, then went to the State house and received a blanket, two shirts, pair drawers, 2 pair stockings and a haversack.

[He was stationed at Camp Franklin about 4 miles from Alexandria, Virginia.]

Jan. 15, 1862 -- Rainy. . . . The weather thus far has been cold, windy and rainy. The continual traveling in our Company street and about the camp has so worked over the "Sacred Soil" that with the aid of a funnel about 8 inches of the top might be easily bottled up. . . .

Jan. 17 -- . . . This morning our company called out to practice target shooting. The target was a piece of tobacco in the center of a board 3 feet square. Distance 150 yards. The best shot was made by this raw recruit who put a ball through the center of the tobacco. Our parade ground is a complete paradise for hogs, so we don't use it much.

Jan. 26 -- . . . Orders received forbidding anyone visiting other regiments for fear of Small Pox.

Jan. 30 -- Made a lamp to burn bacon fat and it works fine. Candles are too expensive. Received a singing book from home and the occupants of the tent enjoyed the evening.

Feb. 6 -- Rainy most of the day. Was invited down to the Chaplain's tent to discuss theology. On returning I looked in the glass to see if my nose was out of joint, concluded it was slightly sprung.

Feb. 27 -- . . . a private of one of our companies has been forging suttler's tickets. He is now standing on a barrel with a ball and chain around his neck.

Mar. 6 -- . . . One of the boys brought a possum with him that he took from a tree while on picket and we had considerable sport with it. . . .

Mar. 9 -- We had regimental inspection today for the first time since we have been here. Were required to appear according to Army regulations: -- Knapsack to contain woolen blanket, rubber blanket, 1 shirt, 1 pair drawers and one pair of stockings packed inside. Outside of the pocket and under the flap of the knapsack is packed half of the traveling tent with 3 pegs and the guy ropes rolled in it. Outside of the flap is secured one of the tent poles and upon the top of the knapsack is strapped the overcoat, closely rolled up. The knapsack now weighs from 23 to 25 pounds. Next is the cartridge box containing 40 rounds of ball cartridges and a few implements used in cleaning and fixing the rifle; cap box and bayonet which together weigh 12½ pounds. After inspection I found by the Quartermasters scales that my load on a march would be about 50 pounds. . . . After inspection came religious services. . . . Chaplain Adams' text was the first three verses of Luke 13. He lectured the soldiers severely for using profane language -- I remember the first time I attended religious service here, that he read the 12th chapter of Romans all but the last two words. I thought it was pretty good advice for the occasion.

Mar. 10 [camped at Fairfax, Virginia] . . . As I could not sleep, I got up It was a splendid sight to see the camp fires burning in every direction, for we are a multitude. . . .

Mar. 27 -- Pleasant. In the afternoon we were reviewed by King, McDowell, Slocum and others and honored with the presence of McClellan and some ladies. The 5th Maine was complimented as being the best appearing regiment on the field. Don't we swell up!

Apr. 13 -- Struck tents and marched at 7 a.m. Reached our old ground at Fairfax about noon, where we stopped an hour and a half. Here two companies hired a team for \$15 to take their knapsacks the remaining 17 Miles. Our major undertook to "cut Across" and instead led us two miles out of our way over a dreadful country with streams without bridges. We reached our old winter quarters near Alexandria at 7 p.m. with feet blistered and ourselves tired out. . . .

Apr. 14 -- . . . Forty of us detailed to go on patrol guard at Alexandria and pick up members of our regiment. Found 15 or 20 of them -- mostly in the streets and eating houses. . . .

Apr. 16 -- . . . Was sick yesterday and am no better today. . . . The doctor talked quite furiously about our late march and its effect on the men. . . .

July 2, 1865 -- We had a good breakfast and reached Camp Preble [near Portland, Maine] after daybreak.

July 3 -- I started early in the morning, went to the city and got transportation to Lewiston where I arrived in the afternoon, and then walked out home to Minot.

July 6 -- I went back to Camp Preble where our regiment was paid off and I received my discharge. Thank God I am once more a citizen. I have served the United States four years, six months and nine days, have received for that service \$1,465.75 and my board and clothes, and returned home with a whole skin.

NAMING OUR TOWNS: GREENE

Originally, the territory of Greene was considered part of Lewiston Plantation. Then it was called Littleborough after Moses Little, a Pejepscot proprietor. The petition for incorporation of the town in 1788 requested the name Greenland in honor of Major General Nathanael Greene of the Continental Army, but the name adopted by the Massachusetts General Court was Greene.

General Greene (1742-1786) was born in what is now Warwick, Rhode Island. He served in the General Assembly, 1770-1772 and 1775. In 1774 he helped organize a militia company known as the Kentish Guards. In 1775 he became a brigadier-general, served in Boston, New York, and New Jersey, and the next year became major-general.

Greene served throughout the war, including the vital position of quartermaster-general, 1778-1780, responsible for transport and supplies for the army. He was president of the board of general officers that convicted Benedict Arnold. Finally, he led the southern campaign 1780-1782. He was called "next to Washington the greatest soldier the war produced."

Sources: Ava Harriet Chadburn, *Maine Place Names* (Portland: The Bond Wheelwright Co., 1955), p. 203; *Dictionary of American Biography*, Vol. 7 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931), pp. 569-573.

PLAYING BY THE FALLS

Col. William Garcelon recalled his father's stories of how he and other white boys used to play with young Indians whose families frequently visited the falls. The elder William Garcelon arrived in Lewiston with his parents in 1776 at the age of thirteen.

"He said those Indian boys were smart and very active in the water and not willing to be outdone, but he told them he could go on the bottom of the river from the east shore & cross the channel to the shore of the Island in time of drought, which he and the Indians performed. But he could outdo the Indians as he used to pick up a stone in each hand which enabled him to keep the bottom while he crossed the channel and could perform the feat quite comfortably."

[Skinner Transcript, August 19, 1967]

BUILDING A SCHOOL HOUSE IN LEWISTON: 1803

After a successful petition by James Garcelon, Jr., William Brooks, and William Adkins, the voters of the eighth school district in Lewiston, Maine, met on February 14, 1803, at Peter Garcelon's house to authorize the construction of a new school house. This district was located in south Lewiston in the vicinity of what is now Ferry Road. They elected James Garcelon, Jr., as moderator, and William Dingley as clerk and made the following decisions:

3d Voted to raise one hundred & seventy dollars to build sd house

4th Voted to Chuse Mark Garcelon James Ham & Robert Moody as Committee to superintend building sd. house

5th Voted a piece of ground that is known by the Name of verils walls to build sd hous on

6th Voted to build sd house According to Robert Moody descriptions Viz. 20 feet 18 Sircumference 8 feet high between Joints - hipt roof well Boarded claboarded & shingles with five twelve square 7 by 9 glass windows, sashes primd the fourside of sd house - window shetters hung with iron hinges staples & harsps to each window one outside pannel door hung with iron hinges iron latch & ketch 1 inside door iron hung & latch with good brick chimney iron mantletree & under pind with stone & double floor seald to window stools lathd & plasterd the remainder overhead & wall seat horazontal fit for writers & a pannel brestwork & writing desk and lock on outside door - a door lock so called

7th Voted that sd. house be done the first of Nov next.

8th Voted the sd house be put up at vendue at the lowest bider

9th Robet moody Bid sd house off at one hundred & thirty six Dollars

10th Voted to diminish twenty six dollars out of the first sum voted and not to bee but 144 dols

However, on March 7, the district school committee, James Garcelon and Thomas Rann, asked the selectmen to resolve a dispute about the location of the structure. The selectmen selected on March 28 a nole on James Garcelon Pasture about twenty rods from the corner of his lain about a spot of ground where now lies an oak rod blowed up opisite a piece of wall of Peter Garcelon

[Source: Lewiston Town Records, Vol. I, pp. 58-60.]

SKINNER TRANSCRIPTS

We continue to catalog Ralph Skinner's transcripts of his radio addresses that are available in the Society's files.

1966

Sep. 11 A Letter from the Gaol
Sep. 17 The Squire Little Letters
Sep. 24 The Squire's First Letter
Sep. 25 A House for a Squire
Oct. 1 The Littles Move to Auburn
Oct. 2 Clapboards for Little's Mansion
Oct. 8 Squire Little, Diplomat
Oct. 9 Little's Widespread Interests
Oct. 15 Josiah Little Has Ill Turn
Oct. 16 Winter at Lewiston Falls
Oct. 22 E. Little: Lawyer, Farmer, Mill Man
Oct. 23 Little's Mill Affairs
Oct. 29 High Water at Lewiston Falls
Oct. 30 The Head Man Has Troubles
Nov. 5 Land Deals at Lewiston Falls
Nov. 6 Mill Stones and Screw Irons
Nov. 12 Spring, 1827, at Lewiston Falls
Nov. 13 Court Cases at Augusta
Nov. 19 Auburn's First Mansion
Nov. 20 The Meaning of an Old Manse
Nov. 26 Father Josiah Doesn't Write
Dec. 3 The First Dams at Lewiston Falls
Dec. 4 What One Little Dam Grew To
Dec. 10 The Squire's Troubles
Dec. 11 The Squire Could Get Mad
Dec. 17 The Graveyard That Disappeared
Dec. 18 Where the Old Burying Ground Went
Dec. 24 The Story of SPCA
Dec. 25 For the Sake of Children
Dec. 26 Changing Times and SPCA
Dec. 27 SPCA Pushes Ahead
Dec. 31 Horseback to Portland

1967

Jan. 1 The Squire's New Year Advice
Jan. 7 The Start of Oak Hill Cemetery
Jan. 8 The End of "The Old Burying Ground"
Jan. 14 When a Brook was a Moneymaker
Jan. 15 A Cargo for Freeport
Jan. 21 Gravestone Mystery Solved
Jan. 22 Captain Davis Verrill: His Life
Jan. 28 Wild Land Loggers
Jan. 29 The Wane of Winter
Feb. 4 From Lewiston to Moosehead
Feb. 5 The Pick of the Land
Feb. 9 When Auburn Hall Burned
Feb. 11 How Auburn Hall Started
Feb. 18 The Little Lawsuits
Feb. 19 Moosehead Hangs Fire
Feb. 25 Taxation in 1815
Feb. 26 Cheap Land and Scarce Money
Mar. 4 The Passing of Mother Little
Mar. 5 A Step Toward Shoe Manufacture
Mar. 11 More Littles Arrive
Mar. 12 A Brotherly Tiff
Mar. 18 Old Excelsior No. 2
Mar. 19 Village Corporation Takes Over
Mar. 25 A Sad Thanksgiving
Mar. 26 The Many-Sided Squire
Apr. 1 Misfortunes Multiply
Apr. 2 Hard Start of a New Year
Apr. 8 Old-Time Land Development
Apr. 9 Mills, Farms and timber
Apr. 15 The YMCA Story
Apr. 16 The YMCA Keeps Growing
Apr. 22 Politics and Business in 1829
Apr. 23 Late Spring 1829-1927
Apr. 29 Boxers Island Bridge, 1877
Apr. 30 The Commissioners Decide

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