

ANDROSCOGGIN HISTORY

October, 1998

Newsletter of the Androscoggin Historical Society

No. 25

SOCIETY DUES CHANGED

At a meeting held on July 29, the Society's Board of Directors voted to change the schedule of individual membership dues. Our Society has been using our savings to balance the budget for several years now. Moreover, our regular annual dues of five dollars is far below the fee for similar societies. Therefore, effective for the year 1999-2000, the individual membership dues will be fifteen dollars. Life membership is now \$150, effective immediately.

GOINGS-ON AT THE SOCIETY

by Michael C. Lord, Executive Secretary

One of our central concerns is the archival preservation of our holdings. We have completed a grant application to the Maine State Archives to purchase archival supplies to preserve our map and photograph collections. If successful, it should enable the Society to purchase archival map folders and photo sleeves.

We also are requesting application materials from several charitable foundations to fund a variety of projects.

Upon receipt of an ear-marked donation for this purpose, we have rescued from disintegration a fragile 1857 tax map of Lewiston drawn by Col. William Garcelon. This map shows all the property lines and their owners at that time. After removal of adhesives, the map was treated and encapsulated between two sheets of mylar film at Rayer Fine Arts Conservation in Portland. It is now properly protected and stored in our map case. Before and after slides of the map now reside in one of our fireproof vaults.

MICHAEL LORD RECEIVES M.A.

Our congratulations are extended to our executive secretary, Michael C. Lord, who has received his Master's degree in Economics at the University of Maine, Orono.

NAMING OUR TOWNS: WALES

The warrant for a meeting on 24 August 1781 of the plantation voters was issued to the "inhabitants Bloomingboro'." The clerk's record for this "town meeting of the inhabitants of the Destrict of Wales, notes that it was "voted that this Destrict shall be known by the name of Wales." According to Cochrane, this change was "a mark of respect for John Welch, one of the most highly esteemed of the pioneers, whose ancestors were natives of the country bearing that name." At a meeting held at the house of John Welch, the voters sought incorporation as the Town of Monmouth, apparently to commemorate the Battle of Monmouth during the Revolution. However, those in the part now called Wales did not want to be included. They held no offices in the plantation and took no part in public affairs, except to pay taxes. Therefore, the area was divided in 1792, the northern portion incorporated as a town named Monmouth. The southern section was organized in 1803, again as Wales Plantation. The name was retained when the town was incorporated in 1816.

Source: Harry H. Cochrane. *History of Monmouth and Wales*. E. Winthrop: Banner Co., 1894, Vol. I, pp. 44, 45, 144, 465; Vol. II, pp. 634-635.

MEETING NOTICE

The next meeting of Androscoggin Historical Society is Tuesday, October 27, 1998, at 7:30 P.M., in the County Building.

Topic: "Hiram Maxim & Firearms Law"

Hiram Maxim was the Maine man who invented the first true machine gun.

Speaker: Arne C. Eastman, local firearms enthusiast and historian.

The public is welcome, so bring friends, neighbors, and relatives. An elevator is available. Refreshments will be served after the meeting.

ICE STORM OF 1886

On January 29, 1886, much of Maine was coated with ice similar to our storm of January 1998. However, news coverage in the *Lewiston Saturday Journal* of January 30, was quite low-key. Much of the reporting came from elsewhere in the state. Moreover, nothing was in the newspaper the following Monday!

The Lewiston report focused on the state of the telephone, fire-alarm, and telegraphic wires (p. 8):

. . . The telephone wires, as one of the workmen vouches, easily hold a man's weight at ordinary stretches but many of them have fallen by the weight of ice. Those on Main St., bridge are drooping so low that they can easily be reached by the pedestrian. Out of 375 wires into the Portland office only 19 were in operation, Friday, it is said, and a great many of the wires in this city were in the same condition. The telephone and fire alarm men were out all of the night, looking after the wires. The fire alarm circuit is tested every hour. If the public has missed the 1.30 P.M. time-stroke, it is because no accurate time has been received over the wire from Boston or Cambridge since the beginning of the ice-storm and so no time-gong has been struck. . . .

For two days New England has been isolated by the breakage of the telegraph wires. The *Journal* received Washington dispatches this afternoon, by wire to Boston and thence by mail. The wires are working in no direction. We do not remember that so long a prostration of the Western Union is on record. By Monday, we doubt not, the Pan-Electricity will be working as usual. The longest telegraph circuit on the Lewiston route is between Danville Junction and Skowhegan. The poverty of our telegraphic intelligence is thus explained.

As there was very little dependence on electricity for light and heat, there is no mention of this for the local scene, but the following is noted for Portland (p.4):

Portland streets were lighted in a novel manner, Friday night. The electric wires were either down or considered unsafe, the gas lights have been allowed to get out of repair since the introduction of electricity as they could not be used, and the streets were hardly in a condition to make traveling in the dark either safe or pleasant. In this emergency an appeal was made to the citizens, to which they generally responded. Lighted lamps were placed in the windows of nearly every house and by this illumination the traveler was enabled to go on his way rejoicing. In other places similar expedients were resorted to. Thursday night, one citizen of Deering kindled a large bonfire near the road for the public benefit. Kindly remembrance of others' needs usually finds a way to make a bright lining to even the darkest cloud.

Local damage and danger was noted briefly (p. 8):

Lewiston was a city of snow slides, Saturday, no travel was allowed on the sidewalks about the city building, the walks being roped off to the curbing. A big slide of ice struck E. H. Jackson's team in Lisbon St. alley, and would have injured the driver if he had been in the team.

Damage to trees was extensive. The Society has a local picture exhibiting many limbs in the streets, but there is no description of local tree damage in the *Journal*. Elsewhere, it is noted (p. 5):

Portland people were busy all day, Friday, clearing the streets [M]any obtained a considerable amount of firewood. Evergreen cemetery has escaped with much less damage than was supposed. A gentleman who came to Portland from Falmouth, Friday, said he was four hours coming less than ten miles, and he was obliged to stop several times and cut his way through trees that had fallen over the road. At Cape Elizabeth the damage to fruit trees was very great. In Mr. Webster's orchard, out of seventy-five trees, only twenty-five were uninjured. Elm trees are everywhere disfigured, balm-of-Gilead trees are unsightly trunks stripped of limbs, the apple trees have suffered least of any, Gorham's handsome elms present a sorry sight. At Bar Mills trees suffered badly. As early as 2 o'clock, Thursday afternoon, trees were blown down and blockaded the road so that teams were obliged to remove them before passing. At Cumberland, fruit trees were badly damaged. At Saccarappa nearly every tree on Maine street was broken. Such an exhibition of destruction to shade trees in Cumberland county was never before witnessed.

The beauty of the ice-coated trees was noted (p. 8):

The Lewiston city park looked so much like fairy land in winter Saturday, that the photographers surrounded it early in the morning and took it in storm. The newly fallen snow made it as pure as can be fancied. The trees were like branching trees of crystal. There was no wind, and beneath their arches one could look into a perfect grotto of white. The artist said that no ideal picture of winter ever equalled this tract of white in the city's center.

The reporter described other natural wonders (p. 8):

. . . The icicles from the eaves of the buildings and the overhanging signs were weighted with the snows. A peculiar effect on Auburn bridge were thick casings of the lamp-posts, where the sleet in the teeth of the north winds had lately been lodged. The pendant icicles along the railings had a rakish cant towards the south, some of them bending in beneath the railing in a way that it seems quite impossible for them to form.

Our **75th Anniversary postcards** of the 1823 bridge at the site of the Longley Bridge are still available for 25¢ each or five for \$1. Call us at (207) 784-0586.

DANA TRUE MERRILL'S PHILIPPINES JOURNAL

Dana True Merrill was born in East Auburn, Maine, October 15, 1876, one of five children of Daniel Cummings and Mary Noyes Merrill. After graduation from Edward Little High School, Auburn, Dana earned the B.S. from the University of Maine at Orono in 1898. With the outbreak of the Spanish-American War, he enlisted in U. S. Army as a private and made a career, retiring in 1940 as brigadier general. While he served in the Philippine Insurrection as a lieutenant, he kept a detailed journal from Feb 17, 1899, to Feb. 6, 1901. The following is from a transcript at AHS:

Monday, Feb. 19th Well - we are finally at sea [on the *Sheridan*] 280 miles from New York with a fresh breeze astern and a slight roll that has confined a few of these human beings to their docks. I have not been afflicted at all as far as I can see, only a slight dizziness last night which soon passed away . . . Today Lieut.'s Barnett, Curtis and myself solemnly shook hand over a prospective third eyebrow to be placed in the lower part of our face over our mouths. This may mean a permanent adornment of my visage, and may not. . . Have attempted a new way of learning Spanish - direct from the object instead of using English as an equivalent or go between.

Saturday March 18th '99 . . . We are well down the Red Sea, having made a rather brief stop at Port Said . . . In town the filth and stench was bad. Beggars came galore in all shapes and ways and many donkey men. . . I saw little in the picturesque about Port Said, more of filth and dirt. An occasional uniform Soudanese patrolled the town. The beggars seemed to have no care where they took a nap - in a gutter out in the sun wrapped up in their dirty clothes. . .

Saturday April 1st. Another month gone! . . . here I am on an Aprils fool day when the buds are bursting at home and the pussy willows have broken their shells, on the other side of the world with even chances or never being fooled again.

Friday, April 7/99 This morning we came in sight of the Islands near Singapore, so many and varied that I could think of little comparison except near Portland, Me. in Casco Bay, only here they are wooded to the waters edge.

Friday April 14/99 . . . Landed in Manila at 3 P.M.
Saturday April 15th, 1899.

Manila P. I. Apr. 29/99 . . . received orders at 4.30 P.M. Sunday to move for the front near San Pedro Macati at 5. P.M. . . . It was a long hot dirty march nearly east, through the suburbs of Manilla, past the line of Spanish brick houses out into the country closely following the Pasig River. Here all the Nipa huts were burned and the natives driven out as a necessary safeguard.

Thursday, May 11/99 . . . There are some pretty Spanish Senioritas across the street from our quarters. I mean to get acquainted, have already attracted their attention. Wish I could swap some of my English for their

Spanish. I am plugging the latter language, but it comes hard especially when I want to use it. However by a judicious combination of pigeon Spanish and hands, I get along and manage to make myself understood. That may be all right for Chinos and Filipinos, but surely it wont go down with pretty senioritas. . . .

Thursday, June 1, 1899. . . we have remained in the old place with however an unbroken unceasing run of rumors, destining us from Zamboanga to San Pedro Macati.

Saturday June 3, 1899. . . A movement is going on out upon the South lines today, . . . We are as usual totally out of it, but an emergency may pull us out of this place, a dumping ground for recruits and discharged soldiers. . . .

Monday June 13/99 . . . Today I met with a sore and grievous disappointment. No mail! and after near 3 weeks. Some connection missed I suppose . . . Most particularly I wish to hear how U of M is progressing in atheletics [sic]. Oh, I can wait. One gets used to that here now days.

Friday, June 16, '99 . . . Senioritas Carmen and Clotilde Rosardo are back from the Convent and I gave them a lesson in English today. Shall continue as long as we are in Fort Santiago. . . . Today I received a Lewiston Journal. I suppose it had wandered all over Luzon, but as it was news (Apr 24) I enjoyed it hugely.

Sunday June 25 '99. For sure this is our last night in Fort Santiago, we leave early tomorrow morning for San Fernando, bag and baggage, and no one is more pleased than I at our change.

San Fernando, Tuesday, June 27, 1899 I am writing this after dusk on an improvised table in a native Nipa hut, in this straggerly town in the heart of Luzon. We left Manila Monday at 10 A.M. and pulled into San Fernando shortly before one P.M., . . . Signs of the combat were evident everywhere, in the black ruins of native huts or the bleached skeleton walls of more solid habitations. . . . In all our 37 miles journey through the fertilest land of the Phillipines not a church was seen intact, all burned and wrecked, mournful monuments to a natives hatred for his oppressors.

Friday June 30/ 1899 . . . It was a hard nights work, our new men saw strange sights and innumerable of the foe . . . Hence my time was principally spent in making rounds in reassuring nervous men, (I wasnt too calm myself) in preventing by my utmost endeavors the useless and senseless waste of ammunition and the corresponding disturbance among our men . . . no one could sleep and the strain was frightful for Col Smith has previously warned us (unnecessarily) that an attack was expected. Then the ants and mosquitoes completed the programme

SKINNER TRANSCRIPTS

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

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Feb. 15 The Youngs of Young's Corner
Feb. 16 Youngs Fought for the Union
Feb. 22 From Youngs to Libbys
Feb. 23 Lapham to Fossett to Irish
Mar. 1 The Young's Corner Town House
Mar. 2 The Knight House and Cincinnati
Mar. 8 Minot Records for Auburn
Mar. 9 Auburn History Book
Mar. 22 Lewiston Falls Academy's Paper
Mar. 23 More about That Lewiston Falls Academy Paper
Mar. 31 Commerce Plus Culture
Apr. 2 The Aura of Lewiston Falls Academy
Apr. 4 Lewiston Falls and Its Academy
Apr. 7 John F. Moody, Educator
Apr. 9 Discipline, the Prof. Moody Way
Apr. 11 Prof. Moody's Final years
Apr. 14 Art Festival's Good Start
Apr. 16 The Ideas Behind Art
Apr. 18 The Gray Nuns and Lewiston-Auburn
Apr. 21 Dr. Peale and Positive Thinking
Apr. 23 Authors and Readers Meet
Apr. 25 Prin. L. E. Moulton
Apr. 28 The Ingersoll Sisters
Apr. 30 Mary G. Carroll
May 2 Another Face in the Falls
May 5 Be Kind to Animals
May 7 Restoring Davis Cemetery
May 9 Centennial Ahoy
May 14 Lay of the Land . . . and Local History
May 17 Philoon on Androscoggin County
May 19 Serious Civil Defense

May 21 The Two John Knights
May 23 Jim Skene, First Auto Dealer
May 26 Putting Old Folks on Plush
May 28 How Bliss College Started
May 30 Auburn in the Wars
June 2 Old House in Auburn . . . Where?
June 4 These Old Boards of Trade
June 6 The Centennial Rush
June 6 Commerce Grads in New Locale
June 11 Own Securities Firm
June 13 Interurban Car for Museum
June 16 Massing of the Colors
June 18 Turn of Century Transportation
June 20 Water Power Picture in 1900
June 23 Bill Skinner
June 25 This Beard Business
June 27 Senior Citizen Share in Centennial
June 30 Tribute to Dick Murray
July 1 To Open Church for Centennial Services
July 4 Lewiston's Old Cemeteries
July 4 New Gloucester Nears 200th Year
July 9 How Our Valley Got Settled
July 11 They Knew Where They Were Headed
July 14 Centennial Fun
July 16 Life in a Laundromat
July 18 Centennial Reception Center
July 21 Religious Heritage Day
July 23 Auburn-a-rama, Great!
July 25 Torch of the City Friendship
July 28 One Hundred Years Young - Auburn
July 30 Historical Inaccuracy
Aug. 1 Auburn's Oldest House
Aug. 4 A Pejepscoot Deed
Aug. 6 Home City Sightseeing
Aug. 9 The Lonesome Seafarer
Aug. 11 Stovers Brig Clears Mobile Bay
Aug. 13 Sirloin Steak for 40 cents
Aug. 16 A Letter for C. A. Stephens
Aug. 18 Maine's a Tolerant State

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~meandrhs>

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