

ANDROSCOGGIN HISTORY

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Newsletter of the Androscoggin Historical Society

No. 31

LEWISTON ADOPTS ORDINANCE TO DELAY DEMOLITION OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS

On September 19, 2000, the Lewiston City Council adopted an ordinance that will delay demolition of many of the city's historic buildings, as well as a significant portion of a structure. This is an outgrowth of the dismay that the community felt a year ago when two landmarks disappeared suddenly. The Henry Free House on the corner of Main and High Streets was torn down for a parking lot. The owner of the Continental Mill obtained a demolition permit and within hours was dismantling the architecturally impressive tower, a distinctive element in the Lewiston skyline.

The ordinance provides that when the owner of a building that is on a list of designated historic sites applies for a permit to demolish the building, there must be a wait of ninety days. This is to enable organizations and others interested in historic preservation to find alternatives such as assisting the owner to secure public or private funding to preserve the building, to relocate or purchase the building, to save historic artifacts, or to record the building. The latter involves detailed description and photographing of the structure.

The ordinance does not guarantee the preservation of any building. It merely delays demolition in order to provide "breathing space" to mobilize assistance and to seek alternatives.

If the Division of Code Enforcement determines that a building is an immediate hazard to the public health or safety and there are no reasonable ways to preserve the building, it may come down immediately. Also, the Historic Preservation Review Board may waive all or a portion of the ninety days if the physical condition makes continued upkeep uneconomical.

Not all historic buildings are included on the list. The categories are as follows: (1) buildings in historic districts, now including the Kennedy Park Historic District and the Lisbon Street Historic Commercial District (between Cedar and Chestnut Streets); (2) specific buildings designated locally as significant sites; (3) buildings and structures on the

National Register; (4) buildings in the Lewiston Mill System District; and (5) properties in the Lewiston Historic Preservation Plan developed by Russell Wright that are designated as "buildings of major importance" or "buildings of importance." There are other buildings scattered throughout the city that may be eligible for inclusion when their historic significance has been properly documented and the City Council approves.

The Lewiston Historic Preservation Board spent many months drafting the proposal. The Planning Board then reviewed it and requested several changes. The most important were the reduction in the delay period from 120 days and the elimination of provisions that required the property owner to offer the building for sale for a period before demolition could occur.

Some property owners opposed any provisions that would limit their property rights in any way.

On the final vote to adopt the amendments to Article XV of the city's Zoning and Land Use Code, the supporters were Marc Gousse of Ward 1, James Carignan (3), Joyce Bilodeau (6), and Gary Adams (7). Those who voted in opposition were Renee Bernier of Ward 2, Ronald Jean (4), and Paul Samson (5)

DEBRA J. CHADBOURNE (1958-2000)

The Society has lost a dedicated member and employee with the sudden death of Debra J. Stronach-Chadbourne on 6 October 2000. We hired Debra 1 October 1999 to inventory our holdings and to check our title to each item. She had completed these phases of the project and had started to catalog the 3000-plus items in a computer file.

Debra also was a valuable member of the staff to help patrons when things got busy in the library and to keep the library and museum open when the executive secretary was conducting business elsewhere or was on vacation. We shall miss her cordial, helpful service.

Debra contributed to the historical community further as treasurer of the Auburn

Heritage Society. She attended Sixth Street Congregational Church and volunteered with the American Red Cross and the Armed Forces Disaster Services.

THE ATTACK ON COL. JOSIAH LITTLE

The Pejepscot Proprietors under their local agent Col. Josiah Little were slow about confirming the deeds of the early settlers of Lewiston. In *Historic Lewiston: A Textile City in Transition*, James Leamon tells of an incident when Little stayed at the house of Ezra Purinton. The settlers disguised themselves as Indians, appeared at the house in the night on 22 September 1800, and demanded that Little come out. According to Purinton's deposition reported in Alan Taylor's *Liberty Men and Great Proprietors* (p. 118), the crowd

uttered many threatening speeches against said Little and Demanded the Body of Josiah Little, Declaring with horrid Oaths that if said Little was not delivered up they would have the Deponent's Bones and the Bones of his family all together by burning the house.

Further details of the incident are included in two letters, the first from Josiah Little to his son Edward, 24 September 1800:

"I find, by sad experience, that the People are as bad as has been represented; perhaps before you receive this, you may be under some concern for my safety – I am in pretty [sic] good bodily health; have a small wound in my face which is healing up.

"This wound I received at Mr. Ezra Purinton's the night before last. The house was beset by a number of the sons of darkness with an intention of using some violence on me, whom they demanded to be delivered up to them by Mr. Purington, which they did not effect.

"Mr. Purington has suffered the loss of every window in the house, had a number of Guns fired into it and one or two into the bed where I slept, but I had left it a moment before. The stones also came in in every direction; but no lives were lost in the house. we had nothing to defend our selves with but the fire slice, which Mr. Purington took to defend his house. Mr. Purington knew one, if not two of these sons of darkness; and I hope that some of them may be brot to Justice."

Little's grandson, Joshua Toppan Atkinson of Geneseo, Illinois, wrote to Mr. Joshua Hale in February 1884, in response to a query about a later accident to Josiah Little's hand:

"Do not know the year Grand father's hand was lost, though have heard – May have date which if I can

find will send you. Perhaps Charles [his brother] may remember & I will write. Jan 1824, 1826, 1827 Grandfather took me to Maine to help run lines with his old survey on Quaker Davis (David, I think) We slept in the same room that he slept in when he was shot at by the squatters (in 1800) he shew me where he ran down cellar, before they fired into the bed, he had left, five balls or charges, went through the bed. The man of the house (Mr. Purington) kept the men from entering by threatening to kill the first man who should attempt to enter. His weapon of defence was a large old fashioned iron shovel used for cleaning out ovens, & putting in bread & pies – & as they could or did not get into the house, they threw a large stone through the window striking Grandfather Little. on the face, knocking teeth; thinking they were really in earnest he ran down cellar, before the firing commenced through the window. As Grandfather had his rafting done, down the River to Merrymeeting Bay where the Androscoggin River connects with the Kennebec, thence, vessels used to take it to Newburyport, Mass. & else where. Between Lewiston and the Bay there then was a Ledge of Rocks now called the (Rips, or Rapids) Grandfather had some men blasting & he went to assist, & in drawing the iron priming wire, (as they did not use fuse or copper wire, in those days)."

The incident at Purinton's house was not an isolated one. Alan Taylor documents that men in many parts of the state resisted the proprietors and their local supporters. In Lewiston itself in March 1799, seven or eight armed men fired shots outside the house of Amos Davis. Settlers plundered tools from Josiah Little's sawmill July 13, 1800. Shots were fired on July 14 & 23, August 7 & 14 at the homes of Amos Davis, Stephen Chase, and/or Robert Anderson. Harrassment at Ezra Purinton's house continued through 1800, with shots fired, stones hurled, and/or fences torn down October 1, 8, 13, November 1, 4 (also at William Carvill's), & 26 (pp. 267-270).

POLAND POST OFFICE BICENTENNIAL

The first post office in Poland, Maine, was opened in October 1800. Currently there are post offices at 965 Maine Street, at East Poland, and at West Poland.

MEETING NOTICE

The next meeting of Androscoggin Historical Society is Tuesday, October 24, 2000, at 7:00 P.M., in the County Building.

Topic: Gems & Minerals of Androscoggin Co.

Speaker: Ray Woodman

CHARLES E. WHITE DIARY

We have in our safe an account book for the Stone & Morse lumber business 1833-1838, which includes a diary. In the text, the diarist notes his election as town clerk in Topsham during the 1880's, and he also mentions his son's name. With the assistance of Topsham's current town clerk, Ruth A. Lyons, we identify the author as Charles E. White (1820-1890). Mr. White was the town clerk of Topsham 1843-1849, 1857, 1858, 1871, 1876, 1877, and according to the diary in 1882-1884. (Sources: *Vital Records of Topsham, Maine*, I-199, II-293; Wheeler, *History of Brunswick, Topsham, and Harpswell*, p. 930.) Here are selections from the diary, which covers Sept. 12, 1881, to June 10, 1888:

Sept. 14 Mrs Caroline Dill widow of Washington Dill was fatally injured by falling backward down stairs about 5 P M this day. She lingered in a comatose state about nine hours, when she expired at 2 AM. She was much beloved and highly respected by all who had her acquaintance. Her age was 70 years and 4 Months. Her remains were carried to Lewiston for burial on the 15th inst.

Sept. 19 President Garfield died this evening at 10 oclock and 35 minutes at Franklyn Cottage, Long Branch, New Jersey from the effects of a gun or pistol shot in the hands of a ruffin [sic] by the name of Giteau on the second day of July last in the depot at Baltimore – A nation mourns his loss. - a great wise + good President has been taken from us. Vice President Arthur immediately was qualified and took his seat.

Oct. 3 . . . Signed a Bond for Orlando Dyer for good behaviour at Bowdoin College which he enters today . . .

Jan 21, 1882 . . . Married Alden C. Jones and Susan M Rackliff both of Topsham at 7 P M and about five minutes after the ceremony was performed another couple appeared, Viz. Eugene S Temple of Bowdoinham and Miss Annie C Nelson and were immediately joined in marriage. - almost a double marriage.

Jan. 25 . . . Henry Groves was injured by having his leg + knee crushed on the ice at Bowdoinham with an Ice Scrapper which turned over onto him - he will probably be laid up most of the winter. . . .

Jan. 27 . . . The wind done a great deal of damage in this vicinity. In some places Barns were unroofed - chimneys blown down. Glass blown out - 1 Light in Thompsons +

Temple's store Lewiston was broken by the wind - It cost \$150. Staples [sic] were blown of [sic] in several places - some 2 or 3 chimys [sic] were blown down here - but the most injury was done to trees - a great many were broken off one uprooted.

June 22 Went to Waterville PM with Lucien to attend Samls graduation which occurs tomorrow.

June 23 Attended Saml graduation with 21 others this AM at 10 o'clock. PM 8 young ladies graduated. Evening the Class had a reception at Dr. Hanson's the Principal of Waterville Classical Institute. . . .

Sept 11 State election took place to day. Robie is elected Governor he is a Republican . . . The House will have a Republican majority of 52 and the Senate 25 - making 77 on joint ballot. Securing the return of the Hon W. P. Frye to the U S Senate - The result of the election has set a seal on Gov. Plaisted's Administration. He will not be liable to use any arbitrary power - as the election gives a rebuke that cannot be mistaken and he will return to private life after the first Wednesday in January - when without doubt Gov Robie will reappoint Judge Libby to his position [sic] on the Supreme Bench or Court which he has so ably represented, and his condemnation of the State Steal of Gov Garcelon time. . . . The whole Republican ticket is Elected in Sagadahoc Co by about 1300 plurality. All hail! . . .

March 5, 1883 Our Son Samuel went to Poughkeepsie N.Y. today . . . to attend Eastman's Business College. Was re elected Town Clerk by a unanimous vote today and was also elected the 3^d Selectman. . . .

March 3d 1884 Today I was again chosen Town Clerk by a unanimous vote. . . .

June 3 James G. Blaine of the State of Maine was nominated Republican candidate on the 4th Ballot for President. the 6th inst. receiving 544 votes out of 816 votes.

June 25 James G Blaine came through on the 5 oclock train - was the third one in the Car - shook hands with him and passed the usual salutations, then withdrew. He was in a Pulman [sic] Car on his way to Lewiston for an interview with Lewiston officials.

July 4 Androscoggin Engine Co. took their tub to Bath, won the first prize in second class and beat all the first class tubs and one Steamer. The prize was a silver Trumpet . . . The Androscoggin played over 174 ft.

Aug. 16 Myself and wife went to Lewiston - purchased Chandelir [sic] \$20 + Glass Case \$3 and bought 2 Rublin coats for Winnie + Lucien + 1 Pr Pans for Roland and paul \$3.00 for same.

Sept 26 Myself + wife went to Lewiston on a trading mission and attended State Fair.

May 14 1887 . . . Attended the clinic at Medical College and had a Epithelioma or hard Cancer cut out of the right side of my face just below the eye - the cut was about half an inch long - _ inch wide + about ¼ inch deep. Dr

Weeks of Portland cut it out before some 50 Medical Students at the Clinic about 3 PM. I did not take Either [sic] and stood it very well.

May 30 1887 Our dear Son Roland Howard White died this day at 9 oclock PM after a lingering and distressing illness of about three years of Consumption. . . .

NAMING OUR TOWNS: AUBURN

Leslie Wight lists six names by which Auburn was officially known. At first settlement, it was known as Sylvester (now Turner) and then Trimshire. It also was part of the Bakerstown grant. Most of the area was incorporated as Poland in 1795. Minot separated from Poland in 1802, and Auburn was incorporated as a town from a portion of Minot in 1842 . One may also note a separate sequence for the portion known as Danville, as noted in the June 2000 newsletter.

Informal names were applied to the area near the falls. The settlement on both sides of the river was known as Lewiston Falls. What is now downtown Auburn was once called Goff's Corner after the store operated by James Goff. The name survives on Goff Block at the corner of Main and Court Streets. The village also was sometimes called "Pekin."

Chadbourne notes there was a "city" in Lincolnshire, England, named Aubourn. Aubourn is so tiny a place, however, that one wonders how it may have come to the attention of Auburn's founders.

A better explanation notes that James Goff, Jr., was the legislator who sponsored the bill to incorporate Auburn. According to Skinner, Mrs. Goff, who was chosen to select the name, was inspired by Oliver Goldsmith's 1770 poem "The Deserted Village":

Sweet Auburn! loveliest village of the plain,
Where health and plenty cheer'd the labouring swain,
Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,
And parting summer's lingering blooms delay'd:
Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,
Seats of my youth, when every sport could please,
How often have I loiter'd o'er thy green,

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~meandrhs>
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Where humble happiness endear'd each scene!
How often have I paus'd on every charm,
The shelter'd cot, the cultivated farm,
The never-failing brook, the busy mill,
The decent church that topt the neighbouring hill,...

Ironically , the main thrust of the remainder of the poem is a lament about the devastation caused by policies that depopulated the English countryside.

The editor has conducted an informal survey of several other communities in the United States with the name Auburn. Responses from those in Alabama, Indiana, Michigan, and New Jersey indicate that Goldsmith's poem, which was widely known and admired, was *probably* the inspiration.

Sources: Ava Harriet Chadbourne, *Maine Place Names and the Peopling of Its Towns* (Portland, ME: The Bond Wheelwright Company, 1955), pp. 440-441; Leslie Wight, *A School History of Auburn, Maine* (M. A. thesis, Boston University, 1951), pp. 1, 4, 5; Ralph Skinner, *et al.*, *Auburn, 1869-1969: 100 Years a City* (1968), p. 10;

<http://www.britannia.com/tours/lines/swline25.html>;
<http://www.library.utoronto.ca/utel/rp/poems/goldsmi1.html#1>

Note: This concludes the "Naming Our Towns" series. The complete list of articles may be found as follows:

Town	No.	Date
Auburn 31	Oct. 2000	
Danville	30	June 2000
Durham	23	Feb. 1998
Greene	22	Oct. 1997
Leeds	24	June 1998
Lisbon	26	Feb. 1999
Lewiston	16	Oct. 1995
Livermore	20	Feb. 1997
Livermore Falls	20	Feb. 1997
Mechanic Falls	29	Feb. 2000
Minot	21	June 1997
Poland	28	Oct. 1999
Sabattus	27	June 1999
Turner	19	Oct. 1996
Wales	25	Oct. 1998