

ANDROSCOGGIN HISTORY

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Newsletter of the Androscoggin Historical Society

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

androhs@verizon.net

MEETING NOTICE

Speaker: Mr. Gordon V. Windle

Topic: What I Know of Local History

Date/Time: Tuesday, 24 October 2006, at 7:00 P.M.

Location: Androscoggin County Building, Auburn

Admission: Free, wheelchair accessible

We are pleased to invite you to a very special talk about local history. Mr. Gordon V. Windle, a former president and now an honorary director of our Society, will speak from his rich knowledge gained from his life in the Twin Cities and from his extensive research.

He will cover many topics from his life and times, including the genealogy of his family, the history of his family farm, his schooling (ELHS Class of 1933), work, and sports. Born in 1915, he witnessed the New Auburn Fire of 1933, the Flood of 1936, and the Cassius Clay/Muhammad Ali and Sonny Liston fight in Lewiston in 1965, as well as the many other events and developments in our area.

Mr. Windle also has researched and studied the local history of Lewiston/Auburn and area towns. He will speak, for example, on the last Auburn hanging at the Androscoggin County Courthouse in the nineteenth century; the condemned was a black man, and there is quite a story behind the hanging.

There will be a question and answer session; please be thinking of questions for him to address.

Mr. Windle has been a student of Lewiston and Auburn area history for many decades, and we look forward to hearing his accumulated knowledge of a lifetime.

MUSEUM CONSORTIUM UPDATE

As reported in earlier newsletters, Museum L/A proposes a consortium of local history and arts organizations. Museum L/A received a grant to hire professional museum consultants and did hire E. Verner Johnson and Associates, object|IDEA, and Roberts Consulting to assess the feasibility of the proposal and to develop a comprehensive master plan for the new museum. Dennis Stires, Michael Lord, and Doug Hodgkin met with the consultants on 5 September 2006 to describe our Society, its purposes, its holdings, its strengths, and its weaknesses. Our own board discussed the proposal on September 26 and noted the various advantages. The prime and very important reservation is financial, that is, if we are expected to make a significant contribution to the operation of the new museum very much beyond what we currently spend on staff and rent, we cannot afford to join. It would be necessary for the umbrella organization to take responsibility for such finances.

ELEPHANT IN L-A, 1816

In our June 1992 newsletter, a short article described the 1816 visit of the first elephant in Lewiston and what is now Auburn. An interview with Mrs. Esther (Nason) (Ray) Moody in 1903 was reproduced in *Lewiston Saturday Journal*, February 2, 1918, page 9. She recalled,

[T]he animal came with a show. They tried to get him across the bridge but he refused to go that way. Then they let her swim across the river and so pleased was the elephant that she refused to come out of the water for a long time. She would swim around and squirt the water in all directions. Elephant Bess was her name and she made a great excitement in Auburn and Lewiston as nothing of the kind had ever been seen there before." Ed. note: There was no bridge at Lewiston Falls until 1823.

Now we find in Thomas Hodgkin's diary a reference on the precise date of 11 July 1816:

"Pm I went up to Esqr Herricks to See an Elephant – & if it had not bin that She was formd by wisdom or I Should have Said She was an ugly looking Beast."

CONSTRUCTION OF CLOUGH MEETING HOUSE OF SOUTH LEWISTON

On 21 March 1846, the Second Free Will Baptist Church of Lewiston met and decided to build a meetinghouse. They voted to purchase a lot of land from Andrew Bubier for twenty-five dollars. They chose William Garcelon as trustee or agent to receive the deed and when the meetinghouse was built he was to give deeds of the pews.

The lot was forty square rods (about one-quarter acre) and it actually cost thirty-three dollars [Andros-coggin Deeds, 117:393, filed 16 June 1885].

They chose Anis Garcelon, Samuel Robinson, and Samuel Litchfield as a committee to prepare a plan, to contract to the lowest bidder, to superintend construction, and to direct sale of pews. It was specified that "said house to be 40 ft. by 36 ft between Joints of wood materials and lighted with 9 by 24 squared windows [that is, nine windows each with twenty-four panes] of 8 by 10 glass and to be finished according to the direction of said committee."

It was decided to raise the money for the lot by subscription, apparently as loans from William Garcelon, William Woodard, Peter Dennet, and Samuel Robinson at five dollars each; Samuel Litchfield, four dollars; and James Garcelon, one dollar, thereby making the required twenty-five dollars. Each subscriber was to draw interest until the repayment of the funds.

To assess the pews, they chose Anis Garcelon, Samuel Litchfield, and Samuel Robinson. Other officers were Josiah S. Clough as treasurer, William Crowley as collector, and Josiah Clough as clerk.

The Building Committee put forward the following specifications:

36 feet wide by 40 long + 12 feet between Joints [*sic*], with square roof to be of good sound timber + well framed to be lighted with 9 – 24 square windows the glass to be 8 by 10 to wit 3 windows on each side. 2 in one end, and one in the other – and two outside doors + 2 small enteries [*sic*] with Preaching stand, between the enteries [*sic*], and the singing stand in the opposite end of the house the pews to be finished with outer doors to have aron [*sic*] stocks + round railing for caps and to be finished with 40 Pews all in a good workmanlike manner."

Further, the house was to be furnished with 2 suitable stoves + suitable funnel to be supported by iron suspenders after the manner of the 1st Freewill Baptist Church in Durham. The house to be underpined [*sic*] with good split stones 15 inches wide +

not less than 6 inches thick, to be set on large flat stones to be laid on the ground, the frame to be boarded with suitable boards, + shingled with No 1 shingles to be laid not more than 5 inches to the weather, the walls to be clapboarded with good sap clear Clapboards to be laid 3 ½ inches to the weather – the house to be painted out side with 3 good coats of oil paint and painted on the inside like the Meeting house in Durham and the preaching stand + singing stand to be finished after the stile of said Durham M. House all to be done in a good workmanlike manner by the first of November AD 1846.

Finally, "we have entered into contract with Henry M. Garcelon to build said Meeting House according to the above dimentions [*sic*] for the sum of \$750."

Thomas Hodgkin's diary indicates that the meetinghouse was dedicated 9 September 1846. The deed for the land was signed only two days before!

In its final report, the committee listed \$33.00 for the house lot. The expense of construction was \$748.08, just within budget. Additional expenses were incurred for building a platform and frame (\$15.33), for furnishing the pulpit (\$8.16), and for expenses for selling pews and dedicating the house (\$4.00). The grand total was \$808.57.

They raised \$812 by the sale of thirty-nine pews for amounts ranging from twelve to thirty dollars. William Garcelon purchased the most expensive. One pew was reserved for the pastor's family.

NEW BOOK – CHASE

William Allison, a member of our Society, has written a historical novel, *Chase*, set in Maine and Hawaii in the antebellum period between 1830 and 1857. Infinity Publishing provides this synopsis:

Young and ambitious, George Chase takes his wife, Harriet, to pioneer a frontier town in Maine where he champions the oppressed in his rise to power. Chase wins a consulship to Hawaii, but on his way to the Pacific he confronts America's disgrace - slavery. Persuaded to liberate a slave girl, Chase secrets her to freedom on the island of Maui where he oversees the whaling fleet, only to discover ships ruled like plantations. Arresting a ship captain for manslaughter, he inflames Washington from the White House to the Supreme Court.

Go to <http://www.bbotw.com> for more information or to order.

LEWISTON JOURNAL: EARLY HISTORY OF LOCATIONS AND POLITICS

Joseph Griffin provides a detailed early history of the *Lewiston Journal* on pages 202 to 207 of his *History of the Press of Maine*, published at his own press in Brunswick in 1872. We select those passages that detail the newspaper's location and political orientations through that date:

The first newspaper published within the limits of the present county of Androscoggin – setting aside an advertising sheet temporarily printed elsewhere – was the *Lewiston Journal*, the initial number of which was issued at Lewiston, Friday, May 21, 1847. ... The size of the *Journal* was 33 X 23 inches, and it was printed on an ordinary hand press in an office in a wooden building on Main street [Lewiston], which stood on the site of what is now Jones Block.

Ed. note: Jones Block was located on the south side of Main Street just above what is now Raymond Park on the corner of Lincoln Street and a little below Bates Mill No. 5.

At the time of the establishment of the *Journal* in 1847, Lewiston and Auburn were towns of but little more than two thousand population each. ... Androscoggin county did not then exist So diverse county relations interfered with the circulation and business development of the *Journal*. In the winter of 1854 the new county of Androscoggin was established, and Lewiston and Auburn made a political, as it was previously, a growing business center.

The *Journal* pursued the even tenor of its way as a local and politically neutral newspaper, with scarcely more than seven hundred subscribers, until 1850 During this period the paper devoted very little attention to political topics, and gave the briefest possible summary of foreign and domestic news. To local news was allotted the largest space. ... In 1850-'51 Jones Block was erected, and the *Journal* office was removed to the third story of Garcelon's building, constructed in connection with the block.

Ed note: The 1873 *Atlas of Androscoggin County* shows an adjacent building on each side of Jones Block. We have not determined which of these was Garcelon Block, which, incidentally, was the location of the first meeting of the Androscoggin County Commissioners in 1854.

In 1854-'55, during the exciting controversy over the Kansas Nebraska question, the *Journal* warmly espoused the free-soil cause, and earnestly supported the principles of the Republican party, then just organizing. ...

In 1855 the *Journal* office was removed to a new brick building on Main street, erected by Mr. Waldron

Ed. Note: The 1873 *Atlas* identifies a building opposite the end of Lincoln Street as "Waldron & Garcelon."

In September, 1856, Nelson Dingley, jr. [*sic*], who had been but a month or two before admitted to the bar, after studying law for one year, purchased one-half of the *Journal*, and it was published for a year by Messrs. Waldron and Dingley – the former taking charge of the mechanical, and the latter of the editorial department. In September, 1857, Mr. Dingley purchased Mr. Waldron's half interest and became sole proprietor, publisher and editor. Under Mr. Dingley's management the *Journal* became more decidedly political, and was recognized as one of the leading Republican papers of the State. ...

... In 1862 the *Journal* establishment was removed to the *Journal* Block, [14-16] Lisbon street, constructed especially for the business of the paper. ...

... While the *Journal* is uncompromisingly Republican, yet it does not devote so much attention to politics as to prevent giving a very comprehensive summary of State and Domestic news, and considerable space to agricultural topics and general reading for the family circle. ...

... Of fifteen newspapers started previous to Jan., 1872, [in Androscoggin County] all are dead [in 1872] except the *Lewiston Journal*.

Ed. note: *The Lewiston Daily Sun* was established in 1893 at 32 Ash Street. The two newspapers came under the same ownership and the *Journal* moved to the *Sun's* building at 104 Park Street in 1926, but they maintained separate staffs and their rivalry.



Journal Block, 14-16 Lisbon Street, Lewiston
From Androscoggin Historical Society files

DEMOCRATIC ADVOCATE

The *Journal* did not have the field to itself in the 1850s. Griffin provides a brief history of the newspaper in *The Press of Maine*, page 206:

In May, 1852, the Democratic Advocate was started by George W. Chase, Esq. It was printed for six months in the Journal office, and then removed to an independent office on the Auburn side [in Phoenix Block on Main Street]. At the death of Mr. Chase in 1853, the Advocate passed into the hands of a company of leading Democrats In 1857 the Advocate was purchased by C. B. Stetson, Esq., who conducted it until 1861, when it was merged in the LEWISTON HERALD.

Just as Dingley of the *Journal* took a prominent role in the Republican Party, Charles B. Stetson similarly was among the leaders of the Democrats. He was their nominee for local offices and served on party committees [*Lewiston Town Records*, III: 298, 331].

Historical Acquisitions

Donations

- *Views of Lewiston and Auburn*, photographic booklet, pub. by L. H. Nelson Co., Portland, ME, ca. 1890s. Donated by the Kingfield Historical Society.
- B. Peck Co.'s Golden Jubilee employee photograph of 1930, about a yard long and rolled; a Saunders Florist & Supply ruler and part of a B. Peck yardstick; two Lewiston & Auburn Street Directories, ca. 1960s & '70s; *Best from the Farmer's Almanac*, ed. Ray Geiger, Philom. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc.), 1963, and signed by the editor. All donated in memory of Harry & Lenora Booth by Paul E. Penley.
- McLean's Furniture Co. letterhead, Auburn, and Marcel Motors postcard, Lewiston, given by Richard Fraser of Poland.
- *Settling the Maine Wilderness, Moses Greenleaf, His*

Douglas I. Hodgkin, Editor
Androscoggin Historical Society
County Building, 2 Turner Street, Unit 8
Auburn, ME 04210-5978

Maps, and His Household of Faith, 1777-1834, by Walter M. Macdougall (Portland, ME: Osher Map Library and Smith Center for Cartographic Education, University of Southern Maine, on behalf of the Osher Library Associates), 2006. Donated by the publisher.

Purchases

- *Marriages of SS. Peter & Paul, Lewiston, Maine, (1869-1979)*, Vol. I, Abelin - Labbe & Vol. II, Labbe - Zoromski, Compiled by Ange Marie Begin, OP, \$35.00.
- *Mount Hope Cemetery, 1847-1958, Lewiston, Maine*, Compiled by Rev. Youville LaBonté, Auburn, Maine, \$10.00.
- Two framed photographs of the 1995 Great Falls Balloon Festival, 20x30 inches and 12x18 inches, on sale from the Camera Service Center Fotofactory during their going-out-of-business sale. They were 90 percent off! Prices of \$6.00 and \$4.00 were too good to pass up and provide images of our recent history.
- *Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Lewiston Falls Academy, for the Year Ending May 23, 1848*. (Lewiston, ME: William H. Waldron & Co.), 1848. Bought for \$20 via Bob Gardner. (This is really neat. You can pick out names that would later be famous in Lewiston and Auburn!)

TWO BOARD MEMBERS ADDED

At a meeting of the Society's Board 26 September 2006, Marti A. Chabot and Gail E. Fickett were elected to the Board to fill vacancies. We welcome these new members and look forward to their input.

Correction: The June 2006 newsletter incorrectly stated that a \$400,000 grant to Museum L-A was "another step toward creating the museum cluster of several local historical organizations." This was taken from an incorrect report in the *Sun-Journal*. In fact, the grant was for Museum L-A's own programs.