

ANDROSCOGGIN HISTORY

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Newsletter of the Androscoggin Historical Society

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MUSEUM CONSORTIUM UPDATE

In October 2006 we learned that the proposed museum consortium in which several historical organizations would share space for their holdings and programs has been rejected.

The consultants hired by Museum L-A have recommended and the Museum L-A board has accepted the conclusion that the consortium as proposed is not feasible. Planning concerning a new museum space will proceed without the designation of space for any particular groups. A "mall" arrangement with a space for each group will not work. Their rationale was as follows:

1) The various groups have unequal needs, interests and levels of participation in the proposed consortium.

2) A consortium arrangement is very unstable. There is no guarantee that each of the several groups would participate forever. If any pull out, it is difficult to find a replacement. In a commercial mall, if a drug store closes, a shoe store might replace it. In our case, if a historical group pulls out, it is necessary to find another historical group to replace it.

3) Experiences with consortium arrangements in Providence and Boston have been toxic. It is very difficult to govern. Groups have pulled out over disagreements and left the others struggling.

4) Museum L-A should focus on its specialty of labor and industry in Lewiston and Auburn. The rest would be beyond its mission. There are aspects of sports, veterans, railroading, or Franco heritage that touch upon labor and industry, but much is beyond that focus. Androscoggin Historical Society aspires to cover a much broader range of topics and the whole county.

The consultants propose that any further relationships with Museum L-A be bilateral. That is, each group might negotiate with Museum L-A on such matters as renting storage space, sharing archival staff, holding meetings or functions in their space, lending materials for exhibits, placing items for sale in a gift shop.

Nevertheless, group representatives have con-

tinued to discuss what the groups still might be able to accomplish together, with Museum L-A also included in the consortium. It would be a consortium divorced from the question of occupancy of the same physical space. Some possibilities for cooperation concerned publicity and marketing, possibly through a joint brochure of events (we would list our lectures), common approaches to the news media, a common web page, etc. Other possibilities were classified as business activities, such as pooled insurance, joint purchasing, hiring a full-time staff who would rotate during the week according to respective groups' needs. Third, the groups might conduct or co-sponsor joint events and programs.

Now the Board and members of the Androscoggin Historical Society must face the fact that we are approaching crisis regarding adequate space and adequate finances. It was hoped that the consortium would be a device for solving these problems. That no longer is the case.

MEETING NOTICE

Speaker: Nancy Lecompte

Topic: The Life of John W. Johnson – A White Boy Raised by Abenaki in the Early 1800s

Date/Time: Tuesday, 27 February 2007, at 7:00 PM

Location: Androscoggin County Building, Auburn

Admission: Free, wheelchair accessible

This month's presentation will introduce you to the unique story of a young man living the life of an Indian in the early 19th century. Born in Maine in 1829, John disappeared from his family home at age four. He was found and raised by Indians and became an Indian basket maker, doctor, and entertainer, traveling around the Northeast countryside. As a young man, he learned his true identity and was reunited with his family. Shortly after, he recorded his story for future generations. For decades historians dismissed his story as romantic fiction. Come learn John's story in his own words and how research has shown it to be true.

AUBURN'S MYSTERY INDIANS, STEVE & ANNIE, IDENTIFIED by Canyon Wolf

While doing research for our book, *Alnôbak: A Story of Indigenous People In Androscoggin County*, I learned of an Indian couple living in the woods off Park Avenue in Auburn in the early 1900s. They were first brought to my attention by Gordon Windle, who remembered them well. During the course of research, I learned that they were rather well known in the neighborhood. They supported themselves making baskets and other "Indian" crafts. AHS has in its collection, a set of snowshoes made by this couple. Perhaps some of the baskets in our collection are theirs as well. Several people came forward with stories about them, but no one knew their last name, where they came from, or what became of them. I still have not discovered what became of them, but thanks to a recent "Looking Back - 100 Years Ago" column in the Lewiston *Sun-Journal*, I have finally been able to identify them.

The clues I needed appeared in the newspaper on 30 October 2006. From the column we learned their surname was Acquin. In October of 1906 they were building a cabin in "Burr's Pasture" and were interviewed by a reporter. Prior to this, they had been in the area for "3 seasons," living in a canvas tent. They spent their summers at Popham Beach "where their work found a ready sale."

Burr's Pasture, is probably associated with the Charles F. Burr family of Auburn. A search of local directories of the time period shows only one family of that surname in Auburn. The family ran a grocery and provisions store at 375 Court Street and lived "off Granite" in the late 1800s and early 1900s. A pasture belonging to the family could easily extend towards the Park Ave./Lake St. crossroads.

Armed with a surname, I searched census records, not really expecting to find them! What a wonderful surprise - I located them in Auburn in the 1910 census. The census taker did us a wonderful favor - he listed the couple using an "Indian Population" schedule, which provides tribal information not found in normal census schedules.

Stephen G. Acquin was born about 1865 in New Brunswick. Steve's occupation was "basket maker" and his heritage was Maliseet. Annie M. (maiden name still unknown) was born about 1875 in New Brunswick. Her father was Maliseet and her mother

was a white woman. Steve and Annie were married about 1891 and this was a second marriage for both of them. They migrated to the U.S. in 1899. Annie had given birth to 3 children, only one of whom was still living. The census doesn't tell which husband fathered her children. The street address given for them is "upper Lake Street" and they owned their home but not the land it sat on. They were both English speaking and Steve could read but could not write. Annie could do neither.

I checked local directories from 1906 through 1920, and found Steve listed in the 1910/11 directory and the 1912/13 directory. The entry is identical in both books and reads, "Acquin Steve, baskets and snow shoes, h off Park Ave."

I have not been able to locate a marriage or baptism record for Steve. However, in the mid 1800s, when he was a child, the surname appears almost exclusively in Fredericton NB parish records, so that is very likely the region of his birth. I have not had any luck locating Steve in other census years in the U.S. or Canada. There are only a few Canadian census that have been indexed and one day MOCA may have an every name index that might lead us to their graves - so there is still hope of learning more. In the meantime, if this sparks a memory for anyone, I would love to hear from you - nedoba@adelphia.net or contact AHS and leave a message.

Editor's Note: This interesting essay shows the process of research, including the serendipity of the 100-years-ago column in the newspaper. Do you have a bit of research that you could write up for the newsletter? It might be about an event in your town's history. Maybe you have encountered an interesting story in your genealogy. Does your house have an interesting history? We do ask that the story have a link with Androscoggin County. Even if you do not have all the answers, your article may stimulate a reader to provide you with information or a clue that helps you in your research.

NATALIE G. FOYE (1912-2006)

Natalie G. Foye, a member of the Society's Board of Directors for many years, and more recently an honorary director, died 16 November 2006. She also was a member of the Stanton Bird Club, the Women's Literary Union of Androscoggin County, and the Harness Racing Museum & Hall of Fame.

EARLY PASTORS AND BAPTISMS

Elder Ward Locke and Elder Abiezer Bridges organized the Second Free-will Baptist Church of Lewiston on 26 July 1826. Thomas Hodgkin's diary mentions Elder Bridges as the continuing religious leader of the congregation. About him, Hodgkin recorded on 1 August 1826, "I handed 1 dollar to Elder Bridges & my wife Sent 2 dol. to Mrs. Bridges because we think he is a true Servant of Christ & never makes any request for Compensation."

Hodgkin reported church baptisms held at a river. On 23 July 1837, Elder Perkins baptized Sarah Ames, Benjamin Bubier, Amos D. Hodgkin, Winslow Litchfield, and Abraham Woodard at the river near Deacon Graffum's. After a meeting at the Ferry Road schoolhouse on 17 August 1837, Perkins baptized Hosea Garcelon, and "Elder Tracey delivered to him the right hand of fellowship & Charged very Solemnly." [Spellings as found in original diary.]

An unusual incident is related for 3 September 1837: "we went to meeting at the Shop ... Mis Carvill & my wife related their Expearance & was received by the Church ... PM they repaired to the river & having assembled at the water Mr Carvill Came & forbid his wife being Baptized my wife and [daughter] Esther was Baptized by Elder Purkins & united with the free Church."

In a handwritten history by Rosa E. Tukey found in the church's record book in the Society's safe, we find reference to the first instance of a vote to hire Elder G. Perkins as a regular pastor for one quarter at twenty-five dollars, if they could raise that sum.

Although the church building had been erected in 1846, meetings continued in private homes. On 5 September 1847, "Elder Libby preached a lecture at my house to Acts Vth 29th then the people went to the river and [Hodgkin's daughters] Ruth & Lois was Baptised & united with the freewill Church"

Baptisms were even held in the winter. On 13 February 1832, after a meeting at the widow [Mark] Garcelon's house, Elder Chandler baptized Sally and Betsey Litchfield, and, as Hodgkin noted, "Although they had to Step or be assisted to go right down into a grave Cut through the ice which was about 3 feet thick yet they went with as much Composier of mind as though they had bin walking into their Fathers House." Similarly, on 11 January 1851, Hodgkin, his son Moses, and Hosea Garcelon went to the river to clear away a place for Moses' baptism the next day.

Goings-On at the Society

By Michael C. Lord

- Calendar Year 2006 statistics are as follows: Telephone calls - 539; Museum visits - 237; Library visits - 236; Correspondence - 560; Programs sent - 165; Meeting attendance - 156; Meeting Notices sent - 486; Board & Committee Meeting attendance - 22; Newsletters sent - 500; Annual Dinner attendance - 34; Emails - 2,995.
- Donations Report: Douglas I. Hodgkin, \$200.00; Laurie McGilvery of Wells has donated \$20 in memory of Natalie Foye; Irving Isaacson, \$250.00; Barbara B. Lounsbury, \$50.00; Douglas W. Pepin of Woodland, CA has donated \$100.00 in memory of Robert Taylor; Bowdoin College Dining Services, \$50.00, donated for a tour; Mechanics Savings Bank, \$500.00.
- The publication *Memories of Maine*, published by Bill Hodgkins and David Branch out of Portland, has included an article titled "William Ladd, Minot's Apostle of Peace" in their January 2007 issue on pages 35-39. They gave both the Society and me credit. We have a number of free copies available for those who want one.
- A special Abenaki display will be set up in the museum and will be available to view for several weeks. We thank Nancy Lecompte and her fine organization, NeDoBa, which means "friends" in Abenaki, for this presentation.

Historical Acquisitions

Donations

- Bates Seersucker Gingham sample booklet published by Wood, Gates & Co. of Orange, MA. Given by Jean Hankins of Otisfield.
- All of the following were donated by Douglas I. Hodgkin of Lewiston: *Collage*, by Lewiston High School, Spring 1969, a student art publication; *Partner States - Rio Grande do Norte and Maine*, pub. by Maine Teacher's Assoc., Augusta, 1972; Deane M. Woodward, AIA, Architect Associates, Auburn, Maine book of blueprints, ca. 1971; Lewiston *Annual Report*, 1969; "Evaluation of Lewiston High School," 1971; Lewiston *Annual Budget*, 1972; *Preliminary Inventory of Substate Districts in Maine*, 1978; Lewiston School Department Budget Message, 1995-96; Lewiston School Department Approved Budget, 1995-96; 1½ inches of church bulletins from the Wales Union Church, ca. 1950s & '60s; also ¼ inch of same from area churches (Wayne, North Monmouth, Leeds, Greene, Sabattus, etc.), ca. same time period; one large "Support Our Troops" ribbon car magnet from the current conflict; two milk bottle caps, for glass milk bottles, from Stukas Dairy Farm in Lewiston. Also from his late mother's collection: Ephemera of Edward Little High School, Lewiston political matters, local music, local religion (church bulletins), Turner (including

Leavitt Institute), miscellaneous, and a photograph of Lewiston City Hall, 1907.

- 1³/₈ inches of Frye and White genealogies photocopied from material of John White of Minot.
- Inaugural Address of Edwin C. Burleigh to the Legislature of the State of Maine, January 8, 1891 (Augusta: Burleigh & Flynt, Printers to the State), 1891. Gift of Dennis Stires of Livermore.
- An employment contract from Libby & Dingley Company for Margaret Ronayne dated January 26, 1918. Gift of Kevin Juskewitch of Lewiston.
- "Living with Fire" poster, published by the U.S. Forest Service and given by the Maine Forest Service at the Fryeburg Fair when I went there this year.
- A packet of Methodist Episcopal ephemera found in a wall by the son of the donor, having been from Mrs. B. F. Fickett, ca. 1897-1903. Also *The New Reference Atlas of The World, 1931*, with 1930 Census data, including Maine. Given by Romeo H. Blouin.
- *Maine - Downeast and Different An Illustrated History*, by Neil Rolde (Sun Valley, CA: American Historical Press), 2006. We supplied some illustrations for this book and received a free copy in return.
- Desk from Merrill Hill School given to Thirsa E Merrill when the school was moved from corner of lower Court St & Fairview Ave to Western Ave, Auburn. Thirsa was born May 23, 1868, graduated Edward Little High school in class of 1887, started her teaching career at Merrill Hill School, then continued for more years at Webster Grammar School in Auburn for total of 19 years of teaching until unexpected death January 28th, 1910. She lived her lifetime in the Merrill homestead at 498 Court St, with her parents. After her death, her sister Alice Beal painted the desk & allowed her niece, then grandniece to carefully use it. It is donated to the Androscoggin Historical Society by their great niece, Dorothy Merrill Leclair of Woonsocket, RI.

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- A foot long billy club made by the American Bobbin Company of Whipple Street in Lewiston, used to stun caught fish and measure them; it has 6, 7, 8, & 10 inch grooves turned into the wood. Given by Jack Higgins of South Paris, Maine.
- A packet of newspaper article copies and photographs of sculptures and monuments, mostly of the controversial industrial sculpture formerly in Heritage Park, and of the model thereof. Given by Natalie D. Dunlap of Lewiston.
- Four sheets of paper relating to Wade & Dunton Carriage Company of Lewiston, given by Richard Fraser.
- *Bear Pond Park Memories, Turner, Maine, 1921-2005*, authored by Eva Dudley Leavitt for the benefit of the Turner Museum & Historical Association; donated by the author.

Purchases

- One 8x12 color photo of the space shuttle hot air balloon from the 2003 Great Falls Balloon Festival, a CD of 175 photos of the G.F.B.F., 1993 - 2000, and two 20x30 framed photos of the 1995 G.F.B.F., one of Noah's Ark and the other of a Porteous balloon. These were, with a couple of minor supply items for the society, \$16.00 on the last day of business for the Camera Service Center (Fotofactory) at 40 Lisbon Street, Lewiston.
- *Fryeburg Fair - First 150 Years, 1851 - 2000*, Ed. by Penny Hathaway (Fryeburg, ME: Fryeburg Fair Book Committee), 2000. Copyright West Oxford Agricultural Society, Fryeburg, Maine, First Edition, hardcover.
- *Maine Register*, 2007, by Tower Publishing Company (Standish, ME: Tower Publishing Company), 2006.
- *Maine's Visible Black History*, by H. H. Price and Gerald E. Talbot (Gardiner, ME: Tilbury House Publishers), 2006.
- *Marriages of Auburn, Maine (St. Louis & Sacred-Heart & St. Philip), 1902-1977*, compiled by Youville Labonte, (St. Petersburg, FL & Auburn, ME: by the author), n.d.