

Kennebec Current

"A knowledge of local, state, and national history is essential in defining the truth of who we are, where we have been, and where we hope to go."
— Earle G. Shettleworth Jr., Maine state historian, 2018 (see page 4)

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Town of Pittston Votes to Take Back Historic Schoolhouse

At their annual town meeting on March 16, Pittston voters agreed to retake ownership of the historic Colburn School. The old "Red Brick School" is located across Arnold Road from and a few hundred feet south of the Major Reuben Colburn House. Selectwoman Jane Hubert, who supported the acquisition, said the paperwork for the transfer should be completed within a few weeks.

The single-story building was constructed about 1815 and served the town's children from first through eighth grades until the current Pittston Consolidated School was built in 1961 as part of the formation of Maine School Administrative District 11, which includes Gardiner, Pittston, Randolph, and West Gardiner. The building then reverted to town ownership and was used as the Town Office until the 1970s, Hubert said. In 2001, the school was added to the National Register of Historic Places.

Hubert said the town plans to work with the Pittston Literary and Historical Society, which has owned the building for decades, to stabilize and restore the school building by marshalling community support and seeking grant funds. Also, contractors in the town have expressed interest in volunteering their expertise to help preserve the historic school, she said.

Continued on page 5



The "Red Brick" Colburn School sits next to a cemetery on the Arnold Road in Pittston.

Photo by Gay Grant

Early Mount Pisgah Residents Live on in Farmer's Tales

Andrew W. Tinkham was a local farmer and amateur historian of wide interests. He wrote articles for *The Winthrop Budget* newspaper in 1885. His articles about the neighborhood of Mount Pisgah neighborhood – now known mostly as a good spot for hiking, skiing, and picking blueberries – are a valuable record.

The people whom Tinkham (known colloquially as "AWT") knew are long gone, or cours, although some are buried in Glen Side Cemetery at the foot of the mountain or other local cemeteries. Their surnames are still extant in Winthrop, North Monmouth, and bordering communities. Tinkham gives us a glimpse of the years before the Civil War. The young people who lived there, as in other rural Maine neighborhoods, were leaving their family farms and what had been, for some, their only home. Local industries such as shoe factories, the oil cloth business, and textile mills offered an alternative to the hard life on the farm. Life in rural Maine was rapidly changing.

The Pisgah locale described below was of an era when homes there already had been reduced to cellar holes and piles of rocks. It is an abridged version of Tinkham's two Pisgah accounts written in 1885.



Cook

This story by Winthrop's town historian, David S. Cook, is second in a two-part series about settlers on Winthrop's Mount Pisgah. The first one, by Winthrop native Ben Sturtevant, appeared in the March-April issue of the *Kennebec Current*.

Continued on page 8

Busy Time of Year For KHS



Executive Director's
Note
Scott Wood

As the summer arrives in full swing, the Kennebec Historical Society continues to be busy with activities and programs, not to mention all the usual work that takes place at the society's headquarters, the Henry Weld Fuller Jr. House.

In addition to the regular cataloging and indexing of items in the collection, the society held a volunteer recognition event for its numerous volunteers on June 18 (see photos on page 14). Attendees enjoyed specialty pizzas provided by Brickyard Hollow and wandered around the first floor of Augusta's spectacular Viles House, home of the Elsie & William Viles Foundation, which hosted the affair. Society President, Joseph O'Donnell and I welcomed more than 30 volunteers to the event. O'Donnell thanked the Personnel Committee and volunteers for the work they do for the society. KHS hopes to make the gathering an annual event.

Also, the Augusta Symphony Orchestra and KHS members hosted a free concert and reception on June 30. The afternoon program consisted of 18th- and 19th-century classical chamber music woven together with a historical fantasy narrative. The concert was a continuation of a collaboration between the two organizations that started in 2023, when the ASO board of directors began holding its meetings at the society's headquarters.

Again this year, the society has an intern to help make more collection items available to researchers. Oliver Parker, a student at Endicott College, is working on inventorying and cataloging nine boxes of single-issue newspapers. Parker's work will give the society a better handle on what the collection holds and greater accessibility.

From the routine cataloging and archiving of collection items to collaborations on public events and programs, KHS remains committed to preserving and disseminating the history of Kennebec County.



*Discovering,
preserving,
and disseminating
the history of
Kennebec County,
Maine, since 1891*

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583 on July 3

Life members: 255

Inside the Current ...

FEATURES

- 01 • Pittston takes back schoolhouse
- 01 • Mount Pisgah farmer's tales
- 04 • Hallowell carver
Allen Drew



DEPARTMENTS

- 03 • The Archivist's Pen
- 06 • Your Kennebec Roots
- 07 • Current Bookshelf
- 10 • Current Followup
- 12 • History Through a Keyhole

NEWS

- 07 • In Memoriam
- 10 • Annual meeting preview
- 11 • KHS visits trolley museum
- 13 • KHS tennis tournament update
- 14 • Around Kennebec County
- 15 • Upcoming programs

Kennebec Current

Our 168th Issue

Staff

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Tiny Unity Township Has Left Its Mark on History

The unorganized township of Unity is located in the northeastern corner of Kennebec County. It is *not* the town of Unity, which is next to it, in Waldo County. The township's land area is 10.4 square miles, most of it lacking bodies of water. Besides its neighbor Unity, it's surrounded by Burnham, Albion, Benton, and Clinton. The township has six sides, with the northwest corner following the Sebasticook River.



Unity Township sign post

Photo by Emily Schroeder

It is nearly bisected by Route 139, running east-west, so one may enter from either Unity or Benton. That route goes through Fairfield to the west and continues on to Norridgewock, where it ends. Going east, Route 139 meanders from Unity through Thorndike, Brooks, Monroe, and Winterport, where the traveler connects to U.S. Route 1A following the Penobscot River, north to Bangor and south to Stockton Springs. So you can get there from here!

Historically speaking, Unity Township was part of the Kennebec Purchase. A portion was set off to Benton (formerly known as Sebasticook) on July 26, 1847.

It was organized in 1853 as Unity Gore Plantation. Another part was set off to Albion on March 30, 1853. By 1860, the population was 54, and increased to 68 in 1870. Over the decades there were minor increases, but mostly declines in population.

During the 1860s several of the plantation's men were called to war. Henry D. Kinsbury and Simeon L. Deyo's 1892 book *Illustrated History of Kennebec County, Maine, 1628-1892* names them: Orison T. Brown, George W. Flagg, Sicard Felix, George A. Hanson, Elisha Libby, Joseph McClure, and William A. Powers. That's about 12 percent of the plantation's 1860 population. Brown (listed with the middle initial "F" in the Maine adjutant general's report for 1864-65) served in Company F of the 20th Maine for a short time: October 26 to December 6, 1864. Flagg was also a part of the 20th Maine, though in Company G. He had served previously in the 24th Maine, Company C. He was mustered out June 21, 1865. By 1880 he was in Palermo but was buried in Pond Cemetery in Unity (the town) in May 1893. Felix, a native of Canada, was a substitute for Charles H. Means, also of the plantation. He was mustered into the Third Battery of Mounted Artillery on October 26, 1864, which was reorganized to form the Third Battery, Light Artillery. This unit returned to Augusta and was mustered out June 17, 1865. Hanson enlisted at age 16 on March 3, 1865, and served as a musician for less than two months in the 28th Maine. Libby joined Company C, 24th Maine Infantry, on October 13, 1862, but died of disease in June 1863. He never made it home and is buried in the Chalmette National Cemetery in Louisiana. The only reference to McClure I found was in a list of substitutes, and his substitute was Elish Simpson. Powers does not appear in Civil War records that I accessed; although I found a William T Powers, a lumberman from Penobscot County.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, a number of families were in Unity Plantation, nearly all farmers, county directories report. The names Bacon, Decker, Flagg, Gatchell (or Getchell), Libbey (or Libby), Means, and Reynolds are prominent. In 1892, the plantation boasted three selectmen; one person serving as clerk, treasurer, collector, constable, and school supervisor; plus a three-person board of health. Members of the Libbey family filled most of the positions. By 1899 the roles had shifted, but the same offices existed. By 1905, the directory listed only primary residents. The decline had begun.

Alonzo Bacon was born in Waldo County's Unity, in 1844, and married Eliza Hamlin in 1867; by 1880 they had four daughters and a son. The 1870 agriculture census states that he owned 40 acres of improved land and 60 unimproved.

Cyrus Decker had strong ties to Unity Plantation. According to Helen Decker (*Downeast Ancestry*, Vol. 12, No. 1, "Chronology of a John Decker Family of Maine"), his father, John, was on the Board of Assessors in 1846, and the family held the position for three generations. Cyrus with his wife Nancy and three daughters kept his father's farm – 50 acres improved land, 80 acres unimproved (1870) – and he remained there until his death in 1901.

Charles Means, born in 1838 in Clinton, and arrived in the plantation by the age of 22. He and his wife Hannah welcomed three boys a one girl, and possibly one more girl, to their large farm, 65 acres each of improved and unimproved land. Means was a selectman in 1892. Before his 1900 death he witnessed the demise of a daughter and a son.

Mott Reynolds, also is listed in the county directory until 1900 as a farmer, may have had something to do with the naming of today's Reynolds Road. He was born in Burnham, married Annie B. Howard in 1885, and had two daughters. Only one survived him when he died of tuberculosis at age 47 at his uncle's house across the county line.

The second installment of this column on Unity Township, which will appear in the September-October issue of the *Kennebec Current*, will deal with a wave of death and court cases that overwhelmed a single family.



The Archivist's Pen
Emily Schroeder



Hallowell Carver Allen Drew Left His Mark on Ships, State House

In the 1800s shipyards flourished on the Kennebec River from Phippsburg to Augusta. For much of the century, vessels built in these yards displayed decorative figureheads and stern boards made by local ship carvers.

These skilled craftsmen included Allen Drew, of Hallowell, who was born in Kingston, Massachusetts, on January 11, 1808, the son of William and Charity Drew. Drew's father descended from shipbuilders in Kingston, and he may have been engaged in shipbuilding on the Kennebec as early as 1797. In 1814 he moved his family from Kingston to Hallowell. In 1816 he built the schooner *Hannah* in Gardiner and the schooner *Emmeline* in Pittston.

Allen Drew began work as a carver in Hallowell in the late 1820s. One of his first commissions was to make ornamental woodwork for the Executive Council Chamber and the House and Senate chambers in the Maine State House in Augusta. Designed by the Boston architect Charles Bulfinch, this major public building was constructed from 1829 to 1832.

Reflecting the dual nature of his trade, Drew advertised in Augusta's *Gospel Banner* newspaper on April 5, 1836, that "He is prepared to execute orders for the carving of vessels' heads, sterns, cabins etc. and of any designs which may be furnished him for public and private houses." Except for those in the State House, his architectural carvings are unknown. However, his work on several vessels in the 1830s and '40s has been identified. In 1832 he provided bow and stern carvings for the ship *Lagrange*, which was built at Bowdoinham. In 1834 he made stern carvings for the Bath ship *Caspian*. On November 15, 1842, the *Portland Weekly Advertiser* praised his stern board for the ship *Sabattis*, which was being launched at Pittston:

The stern board is neat and tasteful in design and appropriate; it was executed by Allen Drew of Hallowell and shows conclusively that we have no occasion to go from home in search of workmen of superior skill in the branch of naval architecture. It represents an Indian chief Sabattis leaning on his bow; at the left is a deer, emblematic of the Indian chase; at his right is seen a ship in full sail, representing Commerce.

Drew's figureheads included Neptune with his trident, which he carved for the barque *Trident*, built at Gardiner in 1843. Of this carving his son John recalled:

I must have been a very little child when my father was at work on the figurehead of the barque Trident in Gardiner. I went with him in his little skiff to see the head "set." ... I can see the figurehead of Neptune with his trident looking way down on me now.

Allen Drew was active as a carver in Hallowell from the late 1820s until at least the mid-1860s. Hallowell carver Alexander C. Currier worked with him in the 1850s and '60s. As late as 1880 Drew was listed as a carver in the U.S. Census. While his shop was in Hallowell, he accepted commissions on a regional basis for vessels being built in communities such as Gardiner, Pittston, Bowdoinham, and Bath.

Drew became blind in old age. For the last seven years of his life, he lived with his niece Carrie Osgood in Palermo. He died there on January 11, 1903, his 95th birthday. On January 29, 1903, the day of his funeral, the *Daily Kennebec Journal* paid him the following tribute:

Mr. Drew was a well-known and respected citizen of Hallowell during years of an active business life. In the old shipbuilding days, he was a carver by trade, and he carried on a most lucrative business in hand manufacture of figureheads and other ornamental designs for ships. His work was often of the most elaborate nature and commanded a high price.

A few years after Drew's death, his State House woodwork was discarded during a major renovation of that building, and none of his ship carvings is known to have survived.

In 2025, Texas A&M Press will be publishing a major book composed of the writings of Allen Drew's son Capt. John Drew, edited by maritime historian William H. Bunting, of Whitefield.

– Earle G. Shettleworth Jr., Maine state historian

The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance of maritime historian William H. Bunting in the preparation of this article. 🐾



The Executive Council room of the Maine State House, photographed about 1875, displays the chair and desk once used by Gov. Joshua Chamberlain.

Courtesy of the Maine Historic Preservation Commission

Pittston Takes Back Schoolhouse

Continued from page 1

“Citizens of the town went to that school, and they wanted to see it preserved,” Hubert said. “We did say there would be costs to the town, and the people accepted that.”

Pittston Literary and Historical Society President Louise Kruk said her organization has 13 current members. Last August, the group was assisted by Dan Mitchell, property manager at Vaughn Homestead in Hallowell, who assessed the condition of the building and suggested a list of repairs.

Mitchell’s report showed the building needed to be jacked up and the addition at the back would need to be stabilized, which alone could cost \$5,000 to \$15,000. Among other repairs, Mitchell noted rotted windows and sills and the sagging ceiling in the classroom. Mitchell told the society that everything needn’t be done at once, suggesting they focus first on work that will prevent further damage.

Kruk said one of her board members looked at Mitchell’s list and concluded that “it’s beyond bake sales and quilts now,” and the group agreed it would need the town’s help. Kruk said she gets a little emotional about her work to preserve the old schoolhouse.

“Six of my eight brothers went to Colburn School,” she said. There were 12 children in the Kelley family. Kruk lives on a town road named for her family.

Kruk said the society hopes to host tours for schoolchildren again and open to people who once attended the school, as well as others interested in the town’s history.

“We need to preserve it for posterity,” she said. “It’s our history.”

Society board member and longtime Pittston resident Rosie Schacht said the group completed the paperwork in March to become a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, and she hopes that will boost the group’s grant-seeking and other fundraising efforts. Schacht is hopeful that with the town’s help, the group will be able to preserve the building for future generations.

“Life happened there. Kids’ lives began there. People who attended the school have stories and all that needs to be preserved,” Selectwoman Hubert said. She hopes that as work on the school continues, people will come forward to tell their stories and describe memories of their days at Colburn School.

Hubert said she hopes that soon young people can sit in the old desks in that one-room schoolhouse and imagine themselves there more than 60 years ago, and hear or read about the memories of those who attended the school.

“Some things change, and some things remain the same,” she mused. “You have to learn your ABCs and you have to learn to communicate with people just the same now as then.”

She credits Kruk, Schacht, and the other Pittston Literary and Historical Society members for preserving the building and keeping it in public ownership.

Schacht said turning the school building back to the town is the path to its longevity. “The town will always be here,” she said, adding that she hopes the society will be too.

“Everybody’s welcome if you’re interested in history,” Schacht said. “We could use some younger people when it comes to climbing ladders,” she quipped. “Come share with us, or learn with us. You can’t possibly learn all there is to learn about Pittston.”



Pittston Historical Society members Rosie Schacht, left, and Louise Kruk, right, examine the joint where the wooden latrine addition is separating from the main brick building.

Photo by Gay Grant



– by Gay Grant

Pittston Museum Commemorates Many Schoolhouses



Colburn School was not the only Pittston building that once housed a single classroom. Lifelong Pittston resident George Eastman points to a photo of another, Longfellow School, while awaiting museum guests June 20 during the annual Pittston Fair. Eastman attended that school, located on Kelley Road, when he was a boy. Others include Village School, on East Pittston Road (Route 194); Caston School, on Caston Road; Lincoln School, on Whitefield Road (Route 126); Moody School, on Moody Road (now known as Blinn Hill Road); Roosevelt School, on Nelson Road; and Smithtown School, on Smithtown Road.

Photo by Joseph Owen

Drouin Collection: A Boon for Franco-American Research

Given the large contingent of Franco-American population in Kennebec County, one of the most valuable sources of genealogical information lies in the Drouin Collection, a treasure trove of images of parish registers (baptisms, burials, and marriages) as well as of other documents of historical and genealogical significance assembled by the Drouin Genealogical Institute in Longueuil, Quebec. It covers all of Quebec and French Acadia, as well as parts of Ontario, New Brunswick, and the northeastern United States.



Rich Eastman

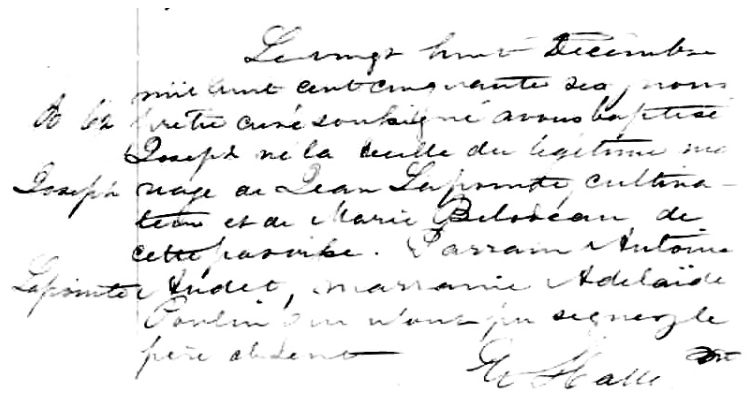


This massive collection contains the entirety of Quebec's civil registry from 1621 to the 1940s, which encompasses the vast majority of people who lived in the province during that period, making it an invaluable tool for genealogical research in the province. This collection's existence is one of the reasons that so many Franco-American and Franco-Canadian genealogies can be so complete.

Founded in 1899 by a lawyer named Joseph Drouin, the Drouin Genealogical Institute uses Quebec's vital records to research and sell family genealogies. The collection captures over 25 million Franco-Canadian and English historical records from 1621 to 1967.

Catholic churches kept records of baptisms, marriages, and burials, as those were associated with three of the seven Catholic sacraments and were diligently recorded in each parish. The baptismal records were consistently formulated to include dates, places, age at baptism (with the birth often occurring the same day), parents, and godparents. Conforming with Catholic tradition, a woman was recorded with her maiden name in all three types of records, making it much easier to identify secondary lines. The practice was also recorded in Canadian census records.

The majority of records in French Catholic churches are written in French, but as they are consistent in form, a simple knowledge of terms will be of great help to those who don't read the language. The following list can help you understand what information is being recorded:



A typical recording of a French Catholic baptism, this passage was recorded in Sainte-Marguerite-du-Lac-Masson, Quebec, on December 28, 1856, about the baptism of Joseph, born the previous day of the legal marriage of Jean Lapointe and Marie Bilodeau of that parish. The godparents are also named.

Photo courtesy of the Drouin Collection

née: born	veuve: widow (sometimes abbreviated as "vve")	fille: daughter
hier or la veille: yesterday	veuf: widower	décédé: died
l'avant veille: the day before	épouse: wife (sometimes abbreviated as "espe")	cimetière: cemetery
l'avant hier: the day before yesterday	époux: husband	cette Paroisse: this Parish
la même: the same	 fils: son	mil neuf cent: 1900
ce jour: this day		mil huit cent: 1800
courrant: current (month or year)		nous, Prêtre soussigné: we, the undersigned priest

Unfortunately, access to the Drouin Collection be achieved only through subscription sites such as GenealogyQuebec.com or Ancestry.com. Many libraries that offer computer access may have a subscription to one of these sites, so check with your local librarian.

SMALL: Seeking to verify and document what I know about Ambrose H. Small, born about 1814 in Clinton, died September 29, 1892, in Scarborough and was buried in Augusta. He married Experience Wentworth, who was born October 20, 1811, in Rome and died April 2, 1900, in Augusta. They lived in Augusta and had eight children, one being my great-grandfather William B. Small (1846-1896). Ambrose Small's parents were Jonathan Small and Huldah Brann, both possibly from Clinton. Any information is greatly appreciated. Contact William C. Small at wsmall@verizon.net.



Grace Maxwell's Ode to Hallowell Still Poignant after 34 Years

Who Stole the Onions? and Other Hallowell Stories is a slim volume of anecdotes and character sketches that provide a nostalgic look at Hallowell and its people.

Written by former Mayor and Hallowell's 1984 Citizen of the Year Grace Maxwell, the 1990 book allows its appreciation for the city to shine through even in less-than-flattering stories, such as its opening piece. The first tale is of Tom Brown, a curmudgeonly barber who had, apparently, numerous unfriendly run-ins with his fellow Hallowellians. Other characters and local luminaries covered in the book are Petticoat Jack, Harold Tibbetts, Samuel Hayes, Benjamin Blake, and Fred Moore.

Maxwell could have included herself among well-known Hallowellians. She was Hallowell's first woman mayor, a city councilor, and at times a teacher, antique store owner, and writer for the *Kennebec Journal*. She died in 1999 at the age of 91.

Beyond individuals, Maxwell also tells stories of the Fourth of July in Hallowell, the Curtis Pharmacy, and the *Bi-Weekly News* and the *Daily Herald*. The former was run by a 12-year-old and an 11-year-old; the latter folded after just one issue.

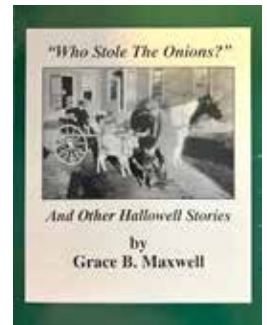
A chapter of various brief anecdotes appropriately called "Shorts" concludes "Who Stole the Onions?"

Maine humor punctuates the book's stories, such as when Fred Moore tells a potential buyer that the cow he's considering buying "don't look good." The buyer purchases the cow, only to find out that was Fred's way of letting him know the cow was blind.

Your best bet for finding a copy of *Who Stole the Onions?* to buy is likely a local store selling used books, a book sale conducted by a library or other local organization, or a yard sale. Also, Hallowell's Hubbard Free Library has a copy available to borrow, as does the Maine State Library in Augusta, according to their online catalogs. Finally, the Kennebec Historical Society has a copy available for in-house reading only.

If you're looking for a chuckle and a quick peek back at Hallowell in days past, it's worth picking up.

— by Jamie Logan



Book cover image courtesy of Jamie Logan

KHS Welcomes the Following New Members

Mary Treat Bayer — Augusta

Leon Bresloff — Augusta

Ted Borduas — Naples, Florida

Donald Gasink — Augusta

Christine Schiraldi — Waterville

and continues to recognize ...



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✿ In Memoriam ✿

Richard G. Bachelder, 96, a Hallowell native who lived in the city for most of his life, died June 6. A former Hallowell mayor, City Council member, and key booster of the city's civic institutions, he also was an occasional Kennebec Historical Society supporter and a past president of the Augusta Country Club, where the tennis courts are named for him and his late wife, Betty. He was a Hallowell High School and University of Maine graduate. His career included serving as director of the Maine Bureau of Public Improvements. His survivors include five children, 13 grandchildren, and 13 great-grandchildren.

Kathleen A. "Kaye" Flanagan, 82, of Yarmouth and formerly of Manchester, died June 13 in Yarmouth. A 10-year Kennebec Historical Society member, the Bronx, New York, native worked as a hospital nursing supervisor and a Catholic Charities Maine agency director. She and her late husband, David T. Flanagan, were active major supporters of the Augusta-based Children's Center, and she played key roles in several other Maine charitable organizations. In addition to her nursing credentials, she held a bachelor's degree in history from the University of Southern Maine in Portland. She is survived by a nephew and his family.

Early Mount Pisgah Residents Live on in Farmer's Tales

Continued from page 1

"The western part of Winthrop," he wrote, "... contains the 780' mountain ... which ... borders on Wayne in the west and North Monmouth to the south. Both parts of both towns had neighborhoods on the boundary line so these citizens of three different towns were more neighborly with each other than they were with most of their townsmen in the villages of Wayne, Monmouth and Winthrop."

Tinkham was a shepherd for 30 years, caring for his father's flock. He claims to have climbed Mount Pisgah "more than any living man" in the three decades before the Civil War.

The mountain was not settled by the first pioneers probably because they selected land that was preferable to Pisgah's stony, hillside terrain. As the population grew, however, people looked at the sunny western side of the ridge, and even the top itself, as good for farming and/or pasturage.

Tinkham writes:

The first clearing on the west side of the mountain [was done] by a man by the name of Smith. About 1790, he felled about 30 acres of trees and planted it to corn. He sold his claim to Amasa Dexter of Wayne, who harvested 400 bushels of corn which he sold for 42 cents a bushel.

In 1832, Amasa Tinkham and Robert Jacobs bought the eastern pinnacle. They used it for pasturing sheep. The writer had the care of the sheep for more or less 30 years and has climbed to the top more times than any living man.

The old cellar, spoken of by Mr. Bishop, was that of Mr. Gideon Dexter who lived there a goodly number of years. It was probably built about 1792 and was the place where the late Joshua Wing learned to sing by note when a mere boy. There are no less than 12 old cellars on Mt. Pisgah once occupied by families who struggled in the world's rough race for a living.

Near one of the old cellars is a little grave, not more than 30 inches long with a rough headstone but no inscription. Perhaps the occupant was laid there without a prayer over its tiny grave, but was moistened by the tears of some fond mother. ...

The nearest [home] to the top of the mountain was built and occupied by the late Ervin Dexter. It was built in 1831 or '32 and in a year or two was moved to the next lot north where Mr. Dexter lived for a number of years. ...

I cannot refrain from mentioning the name of one of Winthrop's most [renowned] citizens, Jabez Bacon. He came from Attleboro, Mass., in 1792 when only fourteen years old. He was descended from the Pilgrims who never persecuted others for religious opinions and who gave shelter to Roger Williams when cruelly banished from Salem...

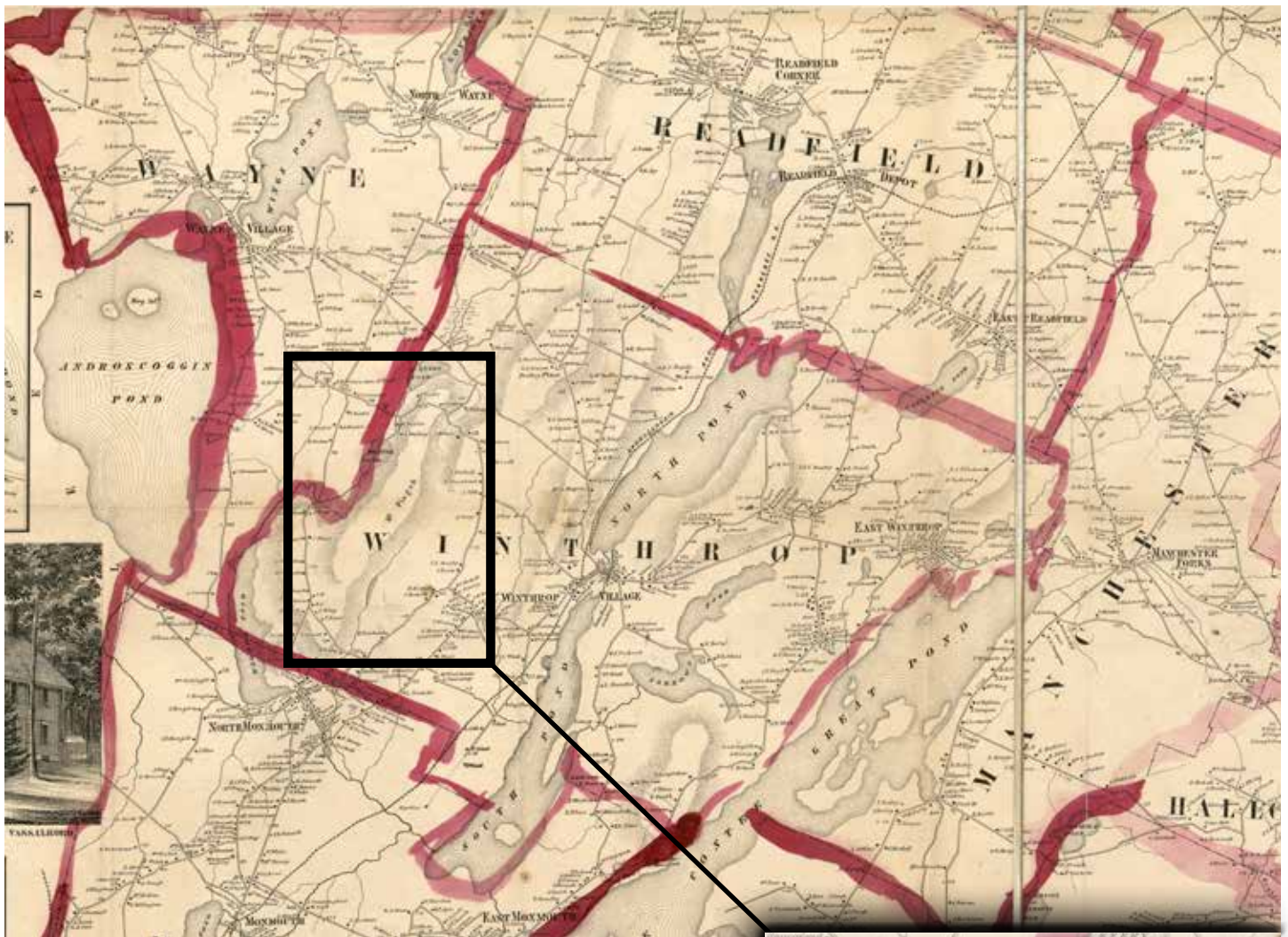
Mr. Bacon did more hard day's work on old Pisgah than any other man. He was great conversationalist using remarkably euphonious language. Like Goldsmith's "Sweet Auburn!" The vowel sounds predominated. He had no sons but a large family of daughters who were an ornament to the family and honor to the town. One of them married a man named Milliken. They had a son who lived with Mr. Bacon for a time. A party of young folks on a May-day walk over the grounds of Mr. Bacon carelessly dropped a match in dry grass and soon had a first-class bonfire. It burnt over a large tract doing some damage. After the fire, Mr. Bacon and his grandson went out to view the burnt district. The boy put himself into a Websterian attitude, and stretching forth his tiny arms exclaimed: "Grandpa, look yonder! Behold the work of interlopers!" Whoever says he was not a chip off the old block is not a judge of chips.

Tinkham also describes other residents, including Dexter's son Henry V. Dexter, a multilingual minister; carpenter Freeman Dexter, who "framed more buildings than any other man in Winthrop and Wayne," and who built the old South Church in Winthrop in 1824; Capt. Joshua Wing; agricultural pioneer Dr. Ezekiel Holmes (see *Kennebec Current*, March-April 2024); several generations of the Chandler family; and others, including "the widow Robinson" and her three children, who came from New Hampshire. "She had a hard time to keep the wolf from the door," Tinkham wrote, apparently metaphorically, "but her son John became wealthy afterwards and kindly cared for her in her old age."

Tinkham also describes a place "[a] few rods southwest of Black's bridge and near the base of the mountain ... where the great joker, Ansel Black, drew his first breath. He was the victim of rum and died on the Wayne town farm."

He finished his account in 1885 with one more memory:

In a southwesterly course from the top of old Pisgah once lived a worthy couple by the name of Cumming. They obeyed



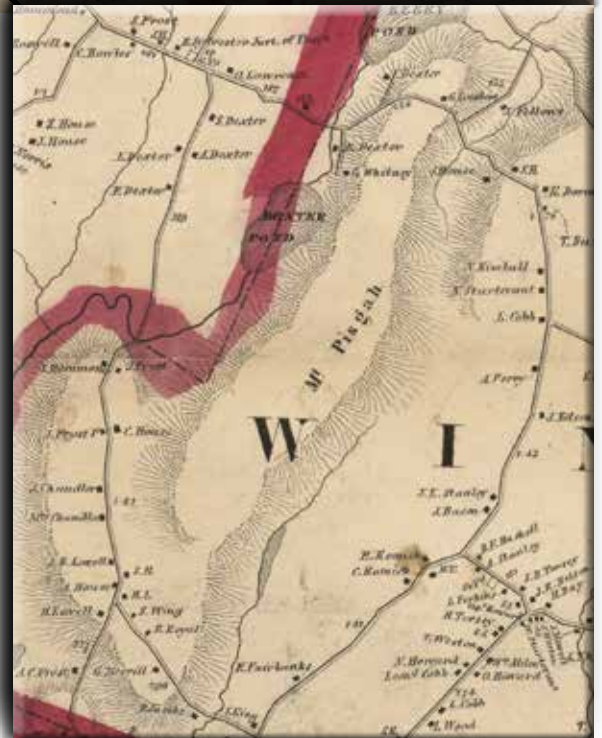
This 1856 map of Kennebec County, currently on display at the Kennebec Historical Society, shows the area of Mount Pisgah between Berry and Wilson Ponds in the western portion of Winthrop. The inset at right lists the residents who lived near the mountain.

from the Kennebec Historical Society collection

the Scripture injunction “to multiply and replenish the earth.” Upon the advent of the 17th addition to the family, which was a son, the joy of the mother’s heart knew no bounds ... With a heart overflowing with gratitude she named the young hopeful for the family physician whose name was Moore. The kind-hearted doctor thanked her ... but guessed she had better call him “No Moore Cumming.” And I think the readers of the *Budget* will be glad to learn that there will be “No Moore Cumming” articles on Pisqah from my pen.

To learn more about the people Tinkham describes, see Everett S. Stackpole's 1925 *History of Winthrop*. A biography of Andrew Tinkham himself appears in Harry H. Cochran's *History of Monmouth and Wales* and the chapter on Monmouth in Henry D. Kingsbury and Simeon L. Deyo's 1892 book *Illustrated History of Kennebec County, Maine*.

— *By David S. Cook*



Genealogy Group Struggling to Get Back into Business

More than six months after Kennebec River floodwater surged into the basement of the library of the Maine Genealogical Society's Taconnett Falls Chapter in Winslow (*Kennebec Current*, January-February 2024), the library remains closed and chapter members are struggling to solve problems the flood caused.

Current FOLLOWUP

With some volunteer help from various outsiders, the chapter removed yard-sale items and other belongings from the basement last spring, and electricity and water service have been restored. A few members of the chapter – composed mostly of people in their 70s or 80s – have contributed hundreds of hours of volunteer labor to remove mud, repair damage and clean the Lithgow Street building, which belongs to the town of Winslow.

Even so, the furnace boiler still isn't working and a bad smell permeates the basement, apparently because of heating oil that spilled elsewhere and flowed into the building during the December flood. Also, mold bloomed on the basement walls in the latter half of June, said chapter Librarian Mary Boulette, who has concentrated her efforts on cleaning the first floor. The cost of solving the problems could wipe out the chapter's meager savings, leaving no money to pay its utility bills or other expenses, she said. Members have discussed the prospect of moving their library's contents elsewhere, Boulette said, but that probably would mean paying rent. Under its current arrangement, the chapter uses the town-owned former Winslow Public Library building for \$1 per year – essentially free.

"We're in a quandary. We can't agree on anything," she said, noting that some members won't enter the building because of the contamination problems.

Chapter President Fred Clark, an 84-year-old retired former Winslow High School shop teacher, probably has spent more time than anyone else to mitigate the damage. Interviewed in mid-June at the chapter library, he said the town doesn't have money to upgrade the building. A professional cleaning company told the group that a full cleaning would require removing the library's contents, and the cleaning itself would cost several thousand dollars, Clark said then.

Boulette said the group has arranged for a paid worker to clean up the basement mold. She said the Taconnett Falls Chapter also has donated genealogical records about Cranberry Isles residents to a genealogy group in Bangor, and it is considering deaccessioning some other records to provide them with a safer home.

She encouraged anyone who might be able to help the group to call her at (207) 859-0477.



Taconnett Falls Chapter President Fred Clark stands on June 17 at the entrance to the library of the Maine Genealogical Society's Taconnett Falls Chapter on Lithgow Street in Winslow. A small white disk attached to the left side of the door frame between the hinges signifies the high-water mark of an April 1987 flood that swamped the building when the Winslow Public Library still was located there. A December 2023 flood was less severe, but it put the chapter in greater jeopardy because of its meager financial resources.

Photo by Joseph Owen



Three KHS Board Members Seeking Election at Annual Meeting

The Kennebec Historical Society's Nominating Committee has submitted a slate of three candidates for election at the society's annual meeting on September 18.

The three candidates – Anne Cough, of Gardiner; Rich Eastman, of Augusta; and Josh LaVerdiere, of China – are current board members seeking two-year terms. Cough and Eastman have served on the board since 2006 and 2019, respectively. LaVerdiere joined it as an appointed member in late 2023.

The committee also is recommending the appointment of Robert Bennett, of China, and Barbara Warren, of Benton, to one-year terms on the board at the October board meeting. Both are board members now. Bennett is completing a two-year elective term, and Warren is serving an appointive term. The board has two other unfilled appointive seats that it may fill when suitable candidates become available.

The society is scheduled to gather for a potluck supper at 5 p.m. at South Parish Congregational Church, located at 9 Church Street in Augusta. The annual meeting, including the election, is due to start at 6 p.m.; and the evening's lecture on 19th-century author Lydia Maria Child (see page 15) is expected to begin at 6:30 p.m.

Amendments to the society's bylaws are subject to approval at the annual meeting or a special meeting called for that purpose, but no amendments are being proposed this year.

KHS Visits Seashore Trolley Museum



About a dozen Kennebec Historical Society members took advantage on June 5 of an offer of a free tour of the Seashore Trolley Museum in Kennebunkport. Sunny weather prevailed, and even those who had been there before had a chance to see the museum's new model railroad layout building for the first time.



At far left, Anne Cough, a Kennebec Historical Society board member, prepares to board a trolley at the Seashore Trolley Museum in Kennebunkport. The trolley once was part of a mass-transit system in Connecticut.

Photos by Tom Johnson



Maureen and Dave Parker, at left, ride on a refurbished trolley with other visitors at the trolley museum.



Ben Hickey, a Waterville native who now lives in Sanford, stands next to a Maine Central Model Railroad layout in a building that the trolley museum custom-built to house it. Hickey supervises the model train project. Helen and Harold Beal, of Jonesport, built the HO-scale layout at their home, then gave it to the museum.



Volunteer tour leader Phil Morse, far left, addresses visitors from the Kennebec Historical Society at the trolley museum. The visitors, from left after Morse, are Dave Parker, Vicki Lawry, Maureen Parker, Melicent Versteeg, Anne Cough, John O'Hearn, Joseph Owen, Harvey Versteeg, Lori Perry, Barbara Warren, and Doug Rooks.



The *Narcissus*, a streetcar that once operated on the short-lived Portland-Lewiston Interurban rail line, is undergoing gradual restoration in a workshop at the trolley museum. The nonprofit museum has raised \$500,000 to fund the project and hopes to raise that much again to complete it.

KHS Volunteers Recognized at Governor's Awards Event

On May 5, three Kennebec Historical Society volunteers joined over 200 other volunteers from organizations around the state at the 38th annual Governor's Awards for Service and Volunteerism ceremony. The ceremony was held at the Children's Discovery Museum in Waterville and included individual award recognitions along with the calling of the Volunteer Roll of Honor.

KHS volunteers Joseph Owen, Emily Schroeder, and Cynthia Thompson were included among those on the 2024 Maine Roll of Honor. To be eligible for inclusion on the roll of honor, a person must have volunteered at least 500 hours in the previous calendar year.

Owen, Schroeder, and Thompson's contributions to KHS include serving as archivist, serving on the KHS board, fundraising/development, work on the *Kennebec Current* newsletter, cataloging, and general assistance to the largely volunteer-run society.

– by Jamie Logan

Free-standing Chimney Honors Mount Vernon's Industrial Heritage

In 1881 a tannery and a 101-foot-tall brick chimney were built on Taylor Pond in West Mount Vernon at a cost of \$14,000 – the equivalent of about \$430,000 today. “The chimney,” as it is commonly known, and the abutting dam are all that remain today as evidence of Taylor Mills, the active industrial center that existed there during the 19th century.



History Through
a Keyhole #13

Water power sites once used in Mount Vernon included those at Dunn's Corner, Wing's Mills, Mount Vernon village on the outlet from Flying Pond, Hopkins (aka Meadows) Stream, and the outlet stream from Parker Pond into Hopkins Stream. Phineas Taylor and Paul Blake were the first to harness any of that water power before 1790, when they built two dams a half-mile apart in

Answer to Keyhole #13

Q: What is this?

A: A 101-foot-tall chimney that once was part of a tannery

Q: Where is it?

A: At the south end of Taylor Pond alongside Pond Road (Route 41) in Mount Vernon's West Mount Vernon village

Q: What's historic about it?

A: The chimney and the dam beside it are the sole remnants of a cluster of 19th-century industrial buildings that had been built there to use the available water power.



The tower shown here on Pond Road (Route 41) in West Mount Vernon is all that remains of the Taylor Mills industrial complex.

Photo by Rich Eastman

and the tall chimney in its place atop massive oak timbers. By September 1912, Charles Mansur owned the tannery when it was destroyed by fire. The inferno also destroyed buildings on the opposite side of Pond Road (Route 41), where barrels, tool handles, and excelsior were being produced; and it claimed two houses, a store, and a sawmill as well. Only “The Chimney” escaped destruction.

In 1970 widow Helen Getchell deeded land bordering Taylor Pond to the Maine Bureau of Parks and Recreation, where a sawmill owned by her husband, Ervin Getchell, once had been located. She also deeded land bordering Echo Lake on the opposite side of Pond Road. In 1971 a contract was awarded to Dick Butman, of Readfield, who created boat launches and parking areas on both parcels.

Mrs. Getchell's deed stipulated the chimney should be maintained for as

the western part of town, according to Henry D. Kingsbury and Simeon L. Deyo's *Illustrated History of Kennebec County 1625-1892*. The upper dam was built on the outlet stream from Parker Pond. Charles and John Walton bought a mill there in 1841 and the area was thereafter known as Waltons Mills. Taylor built the lower dam on Hopkins Stream, which created the mill pond identified as Taylor Pond to this day.

Taylor operated a sawmill on the lower dam and erected a building that housed a turning shop on the upper level and a tannery in the basement. As time passed, West Mount Vernon evolved into a village that included a carding and fulling mill, stores, a carriage shop, a meeting and dance hall, a cider mill, a post office, a church, a school, a box factory, and a blacksmith shop. Additionally, innovative water pumps made from logs, and their associated parts, were manufactured there, as were banisters and dowels.

In 1880 a successful horseman and real estate agent named Thomas French moved from Chesterville to Mount Vernon and bought the carding and fulling mill at Taylor Mills. He moved it across the road and, with his partner, Dr. Warren Wright, of Readfield, built a large tannery



A bridge that was replaced in 1929 stands in front of mill buildings and the chimney in West Mount Vernon.

Photo courtesy of the author

long as it was financially feasible to do so, and by that time it was showing significant deterioration. The state of Maine agreed to provide 70% of the restoration cost but asked the town to contribute the other 30%. During the 1973 annual town meeting, a lively discussion occurred before residents voted to dedicate \$1,350 from town surplus toward the endeavor, according to a *Daily Kennebec Journal* report. The contract was awarded to the Knowles Industrial Service Corp., of Portland, and work began that August. Thanks to those efforts, the chimney still stands sentry over West Mount Vernon nearly a century and a half after its construction and remains a well-known landmark in western Kennebec County. 

The author, Dale Potter Clark, of Readfield, is a great-great-granddaughter of Lewis Johnson, a mason who helped construct the chimney in West Mount Vernon. Various members of her family have lived in the town of Mount Vernon for 10 consecutive generations.

History Through a Keyhole — Puzzle 14

“**W**hen in Rome,” the old saying goes, “do as the Romans do.” We’re hard-pressed to disagree, given that the winning answer to the puzzle in our May-June issue came by email from Rome, New York, resident Kevin Hoehn, who said he has driven by the depicted landmark many times during visits to Mount Vernon, which is his wife’s hometown and the current residence of one of their daughters. We congratulate him.



The photo at right, showing a rock standing between two millstones, is the latest clue. It is easily visible from a public road in Kennebec County. Readers who can identify it are asked to contact the *Current* and tell us three things: what the object is, where it is, and what the historic significance of the property is.

Answers may be sent by email to KennebecCurrent@gmail.com or by postal mail to Kennebec Historical Society, Attn: Kennebec Current, P.O. Box 5582, Augusta, ME 04332.

The winner, to be selected randomly from all correct answers submitted, will be awarded a year’s membership in KHS for the respondent or a friend or relative. If nobody meets that threshold, the editor reserves the right to make the award to a respondent who provides a partial correct answer.

The full answer and more information about the subject will be provided in the September-October issue of the *Kennebec Current*. Answers are due by August 31. Good luck. 

Kennebec Classic Tennis Event Registration Opens

The Kennebec Historical Society’s sixth annual Kennebec Classic tennis tournament is open for registration.

The tournament will be held starting at 9 a.m. Saturday, August 3, at Waterville’s North Street Recreation Area tennis courts. (The date provided in the May-June issue of the *Kennebec Current* was incorrect.)

The entry fee for players participating in the singles event is \$16. For doubles the fee is \$20 per team. The event will feature singles and doubles competition for both men and women. To register, contact tournament organizer Billy Noble by email at bnoble24@gmail.com or call or text him at (207) 313-6976. Payment at the site may be made in cash or by check; electronic payment options may be made through Noble.

In case of rain, the tournament will be postponed until August 4.

Latest KHS Book Sale Yields Solid Return

The Kennebec Historical Society collected a \$860 over three days, from May 30 to June 1, during its latest sale of donated used books. The tally included \$791 for the books themselves and another \$69 in general donations.

The sale took place at the Henry Weld Fuller Jr. House, the society’s headquarters, at 107 Winthrop Street in Augusta.

Counting that total and the amount received for books sold at a previous sale in February, the society has received a total of \$1,785 through book sales so far this year.

Around Kennebec County

HALLOWELL

Row House, a historic preservation group in Hallowell, plans to set up a booth on **Old Hallowell Day** – July 20 – at the McAllister Real Estate building on Water Street, at the south corner of Central Street. The organization plans to sell 36-by-20-inch reproductions of an 1860s painting of downtown Hallowell, new note cards depicting old Hallowell buildings, copies of the Hallowell-themed book *Dwellings*, and other items related to the city and its history.

READFIELD

The **Readfield Historical Society** plans to host a wine-and-cheese reception from 5 to 7 p.m. August 9 at its headquarters, at 759 Main Street, to kick off the town's annual **Readfield Heritage Days** event. On the following day, society member Dale Potter Clark is scheduled to lead a 10-to-11:30 a.m. walking lecture tour of Kents Hill School, which is celebrating its 200th anniversary this year. The events will conclude with fireworks on the evening of August 10 at the town beach, located at the north end of Maranacook Lake. For details, see the **Readfield Heritage Days** page on Facebook or call the Town Office at (207) 685-4939.

VASSALBORO

Waterville military historian Pearley Lachance is listed as a guest speaker for July 21 at the **Vassalboro Historical Society**. Lachance's lecture is about a group of Gold Star mothers, including some from Maine, who went to France and Belgium in the early 1930s to visit the graves of their sons and husbands who died in World War I. The event is scheduled for 3 to 5 p.m. and will be held at the society's museum, located at 327 Main Street in East Vassalboro.

VIENNA

The Vienna Historical Society will present its annual summer play, *A Romance in Vienny*, by former society President Beverly Wight Smith, at 7 p.m. July 25, 26, and 27, as well as a 2 p.m. performance on July 27, at the Vienna Union Hall, at 5 Vienna Mountain Road in Vienna. Admission charges are \$10 for adults and teens, and \$5 for children 12 and younger. Proceeds from the event are intended to help fund restoration of the Waite House, the childhood home of board-game entrepreneur Milton Bradley.

WATERVILLE

The **Waterville Historical Society** is hosting Colby College art history professor Véronique Plesch as a lecturer July 11 at the society's Redington Museum. She will describe the history of cemeteries in the United States and Europe. The event is scheduled for 6 to 8 p.m. On August 8, Peter Violette will speak at the museum, also from 6 to 8 p.m., displaying a digital model of the Maine Central Railroad station in Waterville. For details, call (207) 872-9439.

WINTHROP

The **Winthrop Maine Historical Society** has announced that Robert Pelletier, a Winthrop resident and former superintendent of the town's schools, will deliver a lecture July 11 about Winthrop's cemeteries. The event is scheduled for 6 to 8 p.m. at the Winthrop History and Heritage Center, located at 107 Main Street. The lecture can be seen in person or online via Zoom. Email winthropmainehistorical@gmail.com to request the Zoom link. For more information, call (207) 395-5199.



At left, Kennebec Historical Society President Joseph M. O'Donnell, standing at center, introduces KHS Executive Director Scott Wood, right, to the audience June 18 at the Viles mansion in Augusta. The mansion is the headquarters of the Elsie & William Viles Foundation.

In right photo, Kennebec Historical Society volunteers and their guests chat with each other at the Viles mansion on Stone Street in Augusta while awaiting a greeting from society officials at a reception honoring the volunteers for their efforts. More than 30 people attended the event.

Photos by Jessica Couture

Upcoming Programs

August: “Silent Films in Maine”



Edgar Jones in *Cupid, Registered Guide* (1921).

Image courtesy of Ed Lorusso

From 1919 to 1921, Augusta was home to a movie production company founded by Edgar Jones and local businessmen. His goal was to make “North Woods” films. He chose the Augusta area because of the Kennebec River, its surrounding lakes and forestland, and its four seasons. Jones brought in a company of actors and a film crew, who all lived together at 129 Sewall Street. Jones used locals as extras in the films. The films premiered at the Colonial Theater in Augusta.

Jones worked with local writer Holman Day to adapt many of Day’s stories for the films. In 1921 Day and local businessmen took over the company, ousting Jones. Day soon bankrupted the company.

Six of the dozens of two-reel films from this era are known to survive. Four are archived at the Library of Congress in various collections, and British Film Institute donated a pair to Northeast Historic Film in Bucksport. Digital scans of the original 35-millimeter films, with new music scores added, were screened in June 2023 at the Colonial.

KHS presenter Ed Lorusso will show two of the films, *Caught in the Rapids* and *Cupid, Registered Guide*, roughly 20 minutes each. He also will provide commentary, then answer questions after the viewing.

Lorusso has been restoring silent films since he retired. Six of his projects have been licensed by Turner Classic Movies, including *The Enchanted Cottage* (1924), which will air later this year. His projects have been screened at various theaters and silent film festivals across the country. He’s also the author of *The Silent Films of Marion Davies* and is working on a book about filmmaking in Maine during the silent era.

The Kennebec Historical Society presentation is free to the public (donations are gladly accepted) and will take place at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, August 21, at Augusta City Center, located at 16 Cony Street in Augusta. If you have questions about the program, call Scott Wood, executive director, at 622-7718.

Sept.: “Lydia Maria Child on American Ideals, Democratic Engagement”

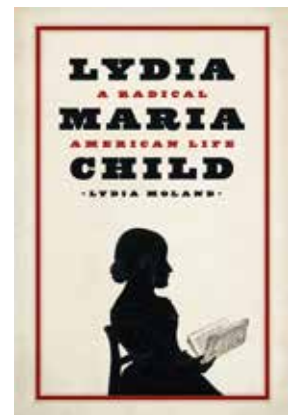
By 1830, Lydia Maria Child had established herself as something almost unheard of in the American 19th century: a beloved and self-sufficient female author. Best known today for the immortal poem “Over the River and through the Wood,” Child had become famous at an early age for spunky self-help books and charming children’s stories. But in 1833, Child shocked her readers by publishing a scathing book-length argument against slavery in the United States – a book so radical in its commitment to abolition that friends abandoned her, patrons ostracized her, and her book sales plummeted. Yet Child soon drew untold numbers to the abolitionist cause, becoming one of the foremost authors and activists of her generation.

Building on her book *Lydia Maria Child: A Radical American Life*, philosopher Lydia Moland will use Child’s example to ask questions as pressing and personal in our time as they were in Child’s: What does it mean to change your life when the moral future of your country is at stake? How can ordinary citizens fight for justice? As Americans go to the polls in 2024, Child’s lifetime of bravery and conviction provides a wealth of spirited guidance for political engagement today.

Moland, the KHS presenter for September, is the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur professor of philosophy at Colby College. Her scholarship in German philosophy has been supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the American Academy in Berlin. Her work on Child has appeared in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Boston Globe*; and on National Public Radio.



Lydia Moland, KHS’ September speaker



Cover image courtesy of Lydia Moland

The presentation, free to the public (with donations gladly accepted), will take place at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, September 18, at South Parish Congregational Church, located at 9 Church Street in Augusta. The program will be preceded at 5 p.m. by a potluck supper and at 6 p.m. by the society’s annual meeting and election of directors. For details about the potluck supper, contact Anne Cough, either by email at acough60@yahoo.com or by phone at 582-2823. Questions about the lecture should be directed to KHS Executive Director Scott Wood at 622-7718.

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Mailing address: P.O. Box 5582, Augusta, ME 04332-5582

Society's email address: kennhis1891@gmail.com

Telephone: (207) 622-7718

Website: www.kennebechistorical.org

Current email address: KennebecCurrent@gmail.com