

Kennebec Current

"Our long-range objective must be free education beyond high school for every boy and girl who has the desire and talent to use this education."
— Gov. Kenneth M. Curtis, from his inaugural address on January 5, 1967 (see page 14)

Volume 35 Issue 1

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Question 3's Passage to Help Revive Nonprofits' Properties

The Maine Historic Preservation Commission will administer \$10 million in grant money, approved November 5 by the state's voters as Question 3, to help restore historic buildings owned by nonprofit organizations and local, municipal, and state governments. A 25% local matching share of funding from private or nonprofit sources is required, excluding money from government sources.



Buildings must be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, or at least nominated by the commission for inclusion on the register, to be eligible for the grants. Kirk F. Mohny, the commission's director and the state's historic preservation officer, said the application forms are likely to be ready in late summer or early fall, with the first round of grants to be awarded late this year.

He said there will be three to four rounds of grants in total, and the amount for which an organization can apply will be limited. The limit may vary from round to round.

Mohny said the bond initiative came from Rep. Sawin Millett, R-Waterford, and was co-sponsored by Sen. Rick Bennett, R-Oxford. Millett has a strong interest in history and preservation, he said, adding that the lawmaker's intent was to help preserve historic buildings "where people gather and (that) are the important fabric of our community." He cited community Grange halls, municipal buildings, and libraries as examples, adding, "Those buildings are in frequent need of investment."

Mohny expects a widespread geographical distribution of applicants.

"The intent is to get the money out all over the state, he said. "The goal of this program is to help restore those community assets."

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Winthrop Group Pays Off History Center Mortgage

The Winthrop History and Heritage Center, owned and operated by the Winthrop Maine Historical Society, stands at 107 Main Street in Winthrop.

Photo by Joseph Owen



Displays of freshly baked Christmas cookies adorned various tables in December at the Winthrop History and Heritage Center; but another holiday staple was nowhere in sight: champagne, a liquid with which volunteers might have toasted the liquidation of their mortgage.

Even so, the Winthrop Maine Historical Society, the organization that owns and runs the center, was feeling bubbly enough without glasses of bubbly. The society's newly elected president, Penny Pray, said the group made its final \$900 mortgage payment at the end of November.

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Our Good News is a Scarcity of Bad News



Editor's Note
Joseph Owen

Progress at the Kennebec Historical Society often can be measured as an alternating series of upward leaps and plateaus, and 2024 clearly added up to a plateau year – not much advancement, but also little backsliding.

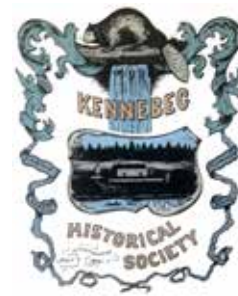
Our live historical lectures generally draw several dozen attendees, which is far fewer than such events attracted before the coronavirus temporarily drop-kicked us into oblivion in 2020. However, several dozen people per month constitute a revival, and the society has managed to fill its calendar with more good speakers.

The society's 2024 Moira H. Fuller Annual Fund campaign – which supplies most of the money for the society's operating expenses, raised a total \$63,874.21, the lowest annual total since 2019. However, that total still beats the average yearly draw over the 17 years of the campaign's existence; the number of individual gifts was 168, the fourth-highest tally ever; and the KHS Board of Directors contributed a total of \$11,424.21, the highest board total ever. Meanwhile, the society's annual Charles Nash Fund, which funds collection expenses, raised a total of \$5,594.01, also a better-than-average return.

Our aspirations to expand the space available to us still can't seem to get any traction, but in the meantime we are using the space we have more efficiently. KHS' headquarters, the Henry Weld Fuller Jr. House, usually has at least four volunteers – and often more – on duty from Tuesday through Friday, according to Executive Director Scott Wood. The Collections Committee continues to receive interesting additions of archival material, and it still manages to find places to put the new acquisitions.

And finally, the newsletter team is managing to keep its bimonthly beast, the *Kennebec Current*, fed adequately with relevant articles, even after having expanded it to 20 pages last summer.

We look forward to seeing you, our members, at our events as we make another attempt at an upward leap from this plateau in 2025.



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

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Kennebec Current

Our 171st Issue

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Joseph Owen, editor
Rich Eastman, designer
Teddy Faugno, photographer
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Writers

Bob Bennett	Jamie Logan
Dale Potter-Clark	Emily Schroeder
Gay Grant	Earle G. Shettleworth Jr.
Harvey Lipman	Ben Sturtevant
Barbara Warren	

The *Kennebec Current* encourages letters to the editor.

Email letters to
KennebecCurrent@gmail.com.
All letters are subject to editing
for taste, style, and length.

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Photo by Teddy Faugno

Alna Museum Hopes to Revive Albion's Railway Relic

Mother Nature can throw Mainers a curveball almost anytime. Snow can be one of the hardest of those “pitches” to hit, and in bygone days some of the most affected “batters” were our state's two-foot narrow gauge railroads, including the Wiscasset, Waterville & Farmington Railway line that ran through parts of Kennebec County. To deal with those winter events, the two-footers employed a varying array of equipment including plows, spreaders, and flangers.

The Albion Historical Society plans to donate the remains of a flanger, now a heap of century-old junk lying outside the restored Albion train station, to the WW&F Museum in Alna, where museum volunteers will rebuild it, according to an October 12, 2024, posting on the Albion the society's Facebook page.

The Maine two-footers no longer exist, except in museum settings; but they were once a vital part of our state's economy, including that of Kennebec County.

To most folks the job of plows, of which the WW&F owned two, is obvious. They moved accumulated snow off the track. Usually locomotives pushed them, but if an engine had its own pilot plow, mounted up front on the “cow catcher,” plows were sometimes pulled. The spreaders, pretty rare on the two-footers, helped shove the snow back from the rails. Unlike modern standard-gauge plows, none of those on Maine narrow-gauge lines had either extendable wings to help push back snow or mechanisms to de-ice the tracks. That's why the flangers were used.

When snow is removed from the top of the rails, an icy residue almost always is left between them, especially if the snow is not light and fluffy. This frozen leftover can easily derail a moving locomotive and cars by lifting the wheels up and over the rails. The two-foot flangers – and there were some on all five of those Maine railway lines – all used a similar set-up, although they differed in size. Seen from their exteriors, they all looked like wooden sheathed boxes on wheels. Some had only four wheels under their bodies, while others had two sets of trucks, for a total of eight wheels. Inside there were hand-raised and hand-lowered mechanisms connected to a double-sided blade that fit between the rails and was suspended down through the floors of the cars. When ice build-up between the rails was encountered, the blades were forced down so they could cut through the blockage to ensure a smooth ride. The two WW&F flangers lasted for the life of the line and were similar to each other.

Those flangers were numbered 201 and 202. Number 202 usually was stationed in Albion, at one end of the line; and 201 was in Wiscasset, at the other end. Number 202 was roughly 30 feet long; and 201, a bit shorter at 26 feet. When built, both units featured horizontal wood sheathing with outside framing. Later, both were rebuilt with vertical wood siding and the framing covered. Each had two windows on each side and centered doors on each end. Steps and platforms on each end made access easy. The operators had to keep an eye open, looking out the windows for upcoming railroad switches, road crossings, and bridges, since the blades had to be raised at those barriers.

When the WW&F died in 1933, number 202 remained in Albion. It gradually deteriorated, becoming merely a pile of wood and rusted metal parts. However, it seems to be gaining a second life. “What is happening is that the WW&F is purchasing the remains (mainly metal parts) of a historic flanger car,” WW&F Museum President Dave Buczkowski said in an email response to questions. “We will have to completely rebuild the flanger from the remains, including trucks and wheels.”

While this might seem like a daunting task, and one that won't happen overnight, the WW&F Museum has a history of restoring and even building new versions of historic two-foot rail equipment. It also has an old Bridgton & Saco River Railroad flanger that resembles those from the WW&F but with the addition of folding, extendable wings. That car was repaired at the Maine Narrow Gauge Museum in Portland.

Because of the project involving the ruins in Albion, soon it might be possible to see WW&F 202 kicking up snow and ice along the original right of way.



In foreground, a flanger stands beside the railroad tracks decades ago at the Wiscasset, Waterville & Farmington Railway station in Albion.

Photo courtesy of Albion Historical Society



– by Bob Bennett

KHS Receives Copy of Local Federalist-era Newspaper

One of the recent gifts to the Kennebec Historical Society is a copy of the *Kennebec Intelligencer* newspaper dated Saturday, January 11, 1800. The historical significance is twofold. One aspect is the paper itself, being one of the earliest in the Kennebec Valley; and a second is the date of the issue, which we'll examine momentarily.

This paper was the creation of printer Peter Edes (1756-1840), son of Benjamin and Martha (Starr) Edes, of Boston. Benjamin Edes (1732-1803) is described on www.geni.com as a journalist, political agitator, and publisher of the *Boston Gazette*, which financed the Boston Tea Party. Peter Edes was an apprentice to his father, and they shared the fervor for independence. The son remained in Boston for some time after his marriage to Elizabeth Walker in 1781; three daughters and two sons were born to them there. The family moved to Newport, Rhode Island, in 1787 to publish



The Archivist's Pen
Emily Schroeder

the *Newport Herald*, and they welcomed four more children. The Edeses then came to Augusta – still part of Hallowell at that time – in 1795, and the first issue of the *Kennebeck Intelligencer* was published on November 21 that year. The family continued to grow, with additional births recorded in 1797 and 1799.

So what drew Edes to Augusta? In Samuel Boardman's book *Peter Edes: Pioneer Printer in Maine*, Boardman quotes Augusta historian James W. North as speculating that Edes' reasons were the likelihood of Maine's separation from Massachusetts, the forthcoming division of Hallowell (The Hook and The Fort) into two towns, and a proposal to build a bridge across the across the Kennebec in Augusta – all providing plenty of fodder for a newspaper publisher.

Edes' paper was not the first in the area, but it was his first Maine publishing venture. The *Eastern Star* appeared in August 1794 in Hallowell. Its last issue came out on July 28, 1795, and the publisher, Howard S. Robinson, became partners with Thomas B. Wait and John K. Baker to produce the *Hallowell Tocsin*, which was also short-lived (August 4, 1795-September 30, 1796). Its sale to Benjamin Poor did nothing to further its life. Frederick Gardiner Fassett, in his University of Maine master's degree thesis, "A History of Newspapers in the District of Maine, 1785-1820" (published in a 1932 issue of the university's *Maine Bulletin*), states that Edes "clashed editorially" with the *Tocsin*. There was no other competition until 1810 with the establishment of the *American Advocate*, followed by Ezekiel Goodale's *Hallowell Gazette* in 1814.

The *Intelligencer* has a checkered history, reflecting the sentiments of its readers and the times. Our KHS colleague Anthony Douin described it in a 2008 "Antiquarian Notebook" column in the Augusta-based *Capital Weekly* newspaper as "strictly Federalist." The Federalist Party promoted a strong central government. It was the dominant U.S. political party from 1798 to 1801, but it essentially collapsed in 1816.

We learn from the same column that Edes' first publishing headquarters on Water Street was the Ezekiel Page house, on the west side of the street at what is now No. 312, currently the



News about the recent death of former President George Washington fills the front page of the January 11, 1800, issue of the *Kennebec Intelligencer*, a newspaper that was published for several years in what now is Augusta. When the paper was established, Augusta was part of Hallowell, but it became incorporated as a separate town in 1797. It's unclear why this 1800 issue continues to identify the paper's production site as Hallowell. Augusta and Hallowell each had slightly more than 1,000 people at the time.

From the KHS collection

location of the Water Street Barber Co. He then moved to the east side of the street, near the Bridge Street intersection. After a fire struck his business, he crossed the street again to a house on the site where Chernowsky's clothing store operated at 228 Water Street through much of the 20th century, and where The Whiskey Kitchen stands today.

Edes used some interesting engravings in the front-page masthead of the *Intelligencer*. On the left is a tribute to the U.S. seal, including an eagle holding an olive branch and 13 arrows, with the words "Arms of the United States" below. To the right of the title is an image of a harbor in the background, supposedly Boston, with a ship; a plow is in front. Directly under the title is the pledge "To Publish Truth Shall Be Our Honest Aim."

The issue we have, that of January 11, 1800, is particularly significant. President George Washington had died on December 14, 1799, and the paper was filled by a lengthy biography of him, an account of his final illness and death, details of the funeral (including an intriguing diagram identifying the pallbearers and their positions around the casket), plus proclamations involving mourning. Some space was given for international happenings in the "Foreign" column; there were "great misunderstandings" between England and Russia in Holland. Napoleon had arrived in Paris on October 16, but he had missed meeting his wife and brother, as they had traveled different routes.

Locally we find an advertisement for Thomas Bond's crockery store opposite the court house. Bond came to Augusta from Groton, Massachusetts, in 1796. He built the first brick building in Augusta. He and his wife, Esther, had 11 children, most of whom died fairly young. Bond Brook is named for him.

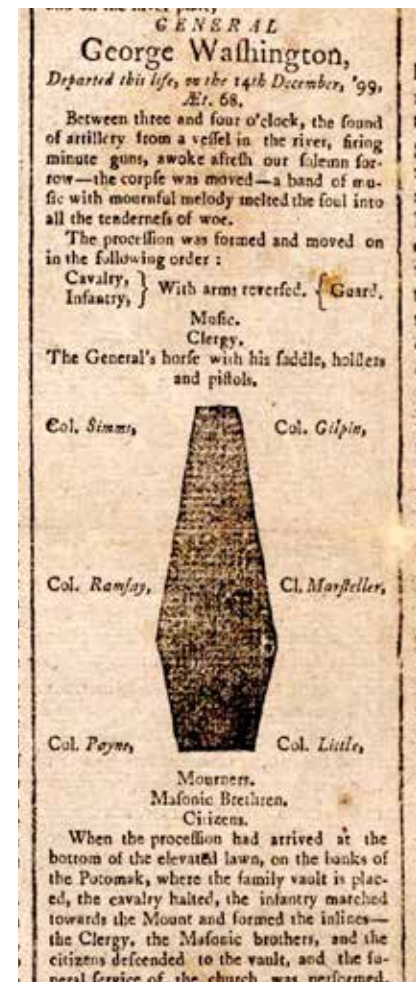
Also, the 200-acre Nantucket Farm in Dresden is reported to be for sale. Daniel Cony, whom we know today as a Revolutionary War veteran, supporter of Maine statehood, and namesake of Augusta's Cony High School, is reported in the paper as having a "convenient dwelling house" and "other buildings appurtenant" in Hallowell near the academy to rent. Barzillai Gannett gave notice that the Court of General Sessions was due to convene January 14.

Should you wish to see this remarkable piece of history, or anything else from our collections, please let us know. We're happy to share the excitement.

Happy New Year!



— Emily A. Schroeder, KHS archivist



A description of George Washington's funeral on December 18, 1799, including a sketch identifying the pallbearers and where they stood in relation to the casket, appears on the back page of the January 11, 1800, issue of the *Kennebec Intelligencer*.

From the KHS collection

Kennebec Intelligencer timeline

November 21, 1795	<i>Kennebeck Intelligencer</i> publication begins in what is now Augusta.
March 18, 1797	Printing location cited as Harrington after area's separation from Hallowell.
June 30, 1797	Location becomes Augusta after community's name changes on June 9.
August 30, 1799	Spelling of "Kennebeck" in title drops its final "k."
June 6, 1800	Publication suspended.
November 14, 1800	Publication resumes; name becomes <i>Kennebec Gazette</i> ; motto deleted.
February 11, 1804	Peter Edes' print shop burns; he goes to Boston for supplies.
January 16, 1805	Publication resumes again.
February 13, 1810	Paper's name changes to <i>Herald of Liberty</i> .
Autumn 1815	Amid postwar recession and competition from Goodale's <i>Hallowell Gazette</i> , final issue appears; Edes moves printing equipment to Bangor.

Kennebec Journal Achieves Its Bicentennial Birthday



This building on Willow Street in Augusta housed the *Daily Kennebec Journal* and its affiliated print shop from the 1920s until 1961, when the company moved to Western Avenue.

All photos courtesy of Joseph Owen

Bridge streets in Augusta. The first issue appeared on January 8, 1825.

“It may, we fear with too much truth,” the owners said in their three-column front-page introduction, “be urged that there are already a sufficient number of political publications in this state; but by an increase the public cannot suffer. Competition, in this as in all other cases, stimulates to exertion.”

In its early decades, the *KJ*, as it is known locally, became one of the state’s most important newspapers, given that the Legislature chose Augusta as Maine’s capital only a couple of years after the newspaper’s founding. With the arrival of James G. Blaine as co-owner and editor in 1854, the paper aligned itself with the newly formed Republican Party, and maintained that allegiance for decades. It also helped launch Blaine’s political career, which would take him to within a hair’s breadth of the White House in the 1884 presidential election.

A later change of ownership resulted in the launching of the *Daily Kennebec Journal* on January 1, 1870. The company continued to publish a weekly edition as well until 1913.

Guy P. Gannett’s purchase of the paper in 1929 ushered in the daily paper’s longest period of ownership by one company – 69 years. Gannett added it to his existing portfolio of the *Portland Press Herald*, the *Evening Express*, the *Maine Sunday Telegram*, and what then was called the *Waterville Morning Sentinel*. The *Kennebec Journal* headquarters moved across the Kennebec River to the massive brick Willow Street building where Gannett’s father, William Howard Gannett, was publishing *Comfort* magazine. During that period, the *KJ* and the other Gannett papers published special glossy pictorial editions about the blizzard of 1952 and Hurricane Carol in 1954.

Willow Street is where John “Beano” Clark, 94, a *KJ* retiree who now lives in Farmingdale, first went to work for the paper. Clark had begun his association with the company as a paperboy delivering about 200 papers per day. After a stint in the Air Force, in which he was an aircraft engine mechanics instructor, he returned to Maine and started at the *KJ* in 1954.

“I went to see Mr. (Richard) Tobey, and he hired me on the spot because I was a former paperboy,” Clark said. He started working as a linotype operator. The job lasted thirty-nine-and-a-half years, starting in an upper floor of the paper’s Willow Street offices, then moving to the later Western Avenue site, and through the transition away from linotype in 1973, when Clark was retrained to do paste-up in the newspaper’s composing room.

“I thought it was excellent. I was proud to work there,” he said of his employment, all of which occurred during the

Once a major local employer, Augusta’s daily newspaper now shares space with a potato-chip distribution warehouse in a small building on Leighton Road. Its once-imposing Western Avenue complex succumbed to a wrecking ball more than a decade ago; its commercial printing business has been gone for more than three decades, and its readership is a mere fraction of what it was in its late-20th-century heyday.

Even so, the *Kennebec Journal*, Maine’s oldest continuously operated newspaper, has managed to survive in a business environment that has extinguished many other American newspapers in recent years. Now part of a nonprofit enterprise, it continues to serve as a window on the world for local readers as it approaches its 200th birthday.

Russell Eaton and Luther Severance, printers who had been working in Washington, D.C., founded the paper as a four-page weekly at the southeast corner of Water and



The first issue of the *Kennebec Journal*, a framed copy of which is shown here, was published on January 8, 1825. The weekly paper consisted of four pages at first.



At top, the newspaper's plant debuts on Western Avenue in 1961. Below, John Clark pastes news copy into place in the *Kennebec Journal* composing room in Augusta. The photo appears in a 1975 booklet commemorating the newspaper's 150th anniversary. Inset, Clark poses at his Farmingdale home in November.

Gannett ownership period. Clark recalled that he quickly attained eligibility for ample vacation time. The company helped its employees in many ways, he said, such as by allowing employees to borrow a company truck if they needed to move to a new residence, giving them \$25 every time a baby was born in a worker's family, and handing each worker a box containing turkey and vegetables for Thanksgiving.

The paper opened its newly built Western Avenue plant in 1961. It had about the same square footage as the Willow Street site, but it was laid out more efficiently. The company marked the occasion by publishing a 180-page edition of the paper, at the time the largest single newspaper issue ever published in Maine. The paper topped that 14 years later, putting out a 212-page issue when the *Kennebec Journal* celebrated its 150th anniversary.

In those days, about 200 people worked at the newspaper and in the adjoining printing plant, known then as KJ Printing and later as Gannett Graphics. The company fostered a bond with its workers by hosting annual summer picnics and Christmas parties. Richard Morin was the newspaper's general manager at the time. Now 92 and living in Virginia, he recalled in a November phone interview that for several years he had 800 lobsters trucked up from Boothbay Harbor annually for the picnics. He used every company van to transport the lobsters to Bangs

Beach in Sidney, along with chickens, eggs, hot dogs, and other picnic staples.

He said that while Portland-based company President John R. DiMatteo gave him free rein to plan and execute such activities, he "was starting to squawk toward the end."

For its 150th anniversary in 1975, the newspapers pulled out all the stops. It hosted a costume ball that year, as well as monthly parties at its Western Avenue headquarters. It handed out souvenir cocktail glasses, rulers, coasters, aprons, and other swag.

On July 12 that year, its 212-page commemorative issue appeared. Managing Editor James Milliken orchestrated the news content of the special sections, which were rife with local journalists' reminiscences about their experiences and packed with descriptions of area communities. A single copy weighed 2 pounds, 6 ounces, Morin said, adding that his goal had been to sell 150 pages of advertisements for that special issue – one page for every year of the paper's existence.

On the front page, the paper advised that readers who might want to preserve the souvenir edition until this year's 200th anniversary to do the following, based on expert advice from a University of Washington professor: "Pour four quarts of soda water and four tablets of milk of magnesia in a pan or other container large enough to accommodate the newspaper lying flat. Soak the newspaper in the mixture for an hour, then pat it dry. That's it."

The 1990s brought about major changes at the paper. The *Morning Sentinel* and the *KJ* were joined administratively as Central Maine Newspapers. The *Sentinel* eliminated its press in Waterville, and the *KJ* took over that responsibility. Many other functions of the two papers were consolidated in Augusta as well, in what turned out to be a preview of even bigger changes years later. Also, the *KJ* and the *Sentinel* launched their joint Sunday edition called *Central Maine Sunday*, and they established a website carrying much of the local news product.

In 1998, the Gannett heirs sold the company to the Seattle Times Company for a reputed \$200 million. Amid the widening availability of online news sources and declining circulation, the papers' financial health deteriorated severely. Several rounds of layoffs occurred before the owners threw in the towel in 2009, selling to an investor group headed by

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KJ's Bicentennial Birthday

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Richard L. Connor, who, acting as CEO, consolidated all printing in Portland and sold off most of the company's real estate – including the *KJ*'s Western Avenue plant – in a supposed effort to right the ship. In a summary of its history published in 2015, however, the *KJ* itself reported that Connor was accused of having misspent more than \$500,000 of the company's money on personal items for himself, although he never was prosecuted for it.

Three sets of owners later, the chain – with other dailies and weeklies added to it – now operates as part of the nonprofit Maine Trust for Local News. The *KJ* and the *Sentinel* are identical except for a few pages. The *KJ* newsroom, which had operated from rented space in the Augusta Business Park since the sale of the Western Avenue property, closed in 2020 when the coronavirus pandemic struck the area. It has remained closed. Reporters, editors, photographers, sports personnel, and advertising representatives usually work remotely from home, the road, or occasionally from the circulation department's small rented space on Leighton Road.

As momentous as the 200th anniversary of Maine's oldest paper might seem to be, there will be no costume balls, souvenir tchotchkes, or special events to mark the milestone. The funding isn't available, according to Managing Editor Scott Monroe, but he added that the *KJ* staff hopes to produce monthly articles this year to note the anniversary.

However small that might be in comparison to observances of the past, it is the voice of a newspaper that is still alive, still reporting the news; and its reductions can't take away what the paper has accomplished over all of its existence, which is still available via libraries and online archives.

"The fact that you have this continuous record of events in Augusta and the area, this is clearly the single greatest collective source about the history of the community and the region," State Historian Earle Shettleworth said in an interview with the *Kennebec Journal* in 2015. "The ability to go back and read a paper at any point ... is to be able to really time-travel back to that particular moment in time and recapture what was going on in the community at that particular point." 🐾

The writer, Joseph Owen, worked at the Kennebec Journal for 25 years as a reporter and editor.

Winthrop History Center

Continued from page 1

"It allows us to look at what changes we have to make in the building," Pray said at the society's headquarters, located at 107 Main Street in Winthrop. Higher-priority projects yet to be tackled include replacing the roof and the carpeting and painting the exterior walls.

The society bought the property nearly four years ago (*Kennebec Current*, March–April 2001) and renovated it, all for a total cost of \$150,000 – just as local real estate prices began to explode. The building, which formerly housed a KeyBank branch office, had stood vacant for a few years. The society paid \$100,000 for the property, a price that then-President Lynda Pratt described at the time as significantly below market value.

"The only stipulation was that we couldn't make it into a marijuana place or a brothel," Pray said in December, laughing.

The society had 181 paid members in December, according to Treasurer Bob Faucher. At the time of building purchase in 2021, it reported a membership of about 120.

Its building comprises 2,500 square feet of fully used space on the main floor and 2,000 square feet of space in two basements. The society houses its museum exhibits and a retail shop on the first floor, and it hosts occasional lectures and other events there.

It also maintains an archive of historic photos and documents on the property. Faucher recently completed a two-year effort to catalogue the photo negatives of Roland LaValle (1924–2007), a Winthrop insurance agency owner who sometimes worked as a professional photographer. Faucher said the LaValle collection consists of about 4,200 negatives. 🐾

— by Joseph Owen



Penny Pray stands on December 14 next to Winthrop History and Heritage Center display about the basketball achievements of Winthrop native Denis Clark (1947–2023). Clark graduated in 1965 from Winthrop High School, where he scored 1,536 points while playing for the school's varsity team, at a time when the three-point line was not used. Clark led the team to the state championship in 1964, when the team was undefeated. He played four years at Springfield College in Massachusetts, then was drafted into the National Basketball Association. He was admitted to the Maine Basketball Hall of Fame and Springfield College's Hall of Fame.

Photo by Joseph Owen

Maine State Library Prepares to Move in Late 2025

When the Maine Cultural Building closed in mid-2020 for extensive renovations because of the presence of asbestos and a poor heating and cooling system, the Maine State Library had to relocate in order to continue providing services. This, of course, meant the huge genealogy collection had to move as well. In November 2020, the state settled on the old Bureau of Motor Vehicles building at 242 State Street in Augusta, with about 10 percent of the collection housed in the new location and the rest stored at a facility in Winthrop. The State Street location remains accessible to the public, while the Winthrop location is only for storage.



Rich Eastman



At the time, it was thought that the move back to the Cultural Building would occur within two years; but as work progressed on the asbestos removal and climate systems, it soon became apparent that the problems ran deeper than had been anticipated. Now, four years later, the state expects to begin the process of moving back into the updated building. “We do not anticipate being fully moved in (collections and staff) until late in 2025, and do not have a date yet for when we will re-open to the public in the Cultural Building,” said Maine State Librarian Lori Fisher.



This image shows the Maine Cultural Building in Augusta before renovation began there in 2020.

Courtesy of Maine State Museum

The Maine State Library has a substantial collection of genealogies, town histories and published vital records for towns in Maine and a good deal of New England, materials on the Maritime Provinces of Canada, and genealogy handbooks and other helpful tools. That collection is still accessible at the temporary location, and the library houses microfilm for many of Maine’s newspapers, including new acquisitions from early Deer Isle newspapers.

Genealogists visiting the library would find that most of what’s there is easily obtainable and any records that are stored off-site can be ordered by speaking to the genealogy research specialist on hand. One such specialist is Barbara Jamieson, who came to the Augusta area from Belfast and authors the genealogy newsletter *Maine-ly Genealogy*. Jamieson and her colleague Jeffrey Knox are available during library hours, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. They are extremely knowledgeable at helping you find your Kennebec roots and can provide genealogists with multiple research sources, whether through books, microfilm, or digital sources. Jamieson also offers free research classes on a regular or on-demand basis. Call (207) 287-5613 to inquire about class schedules.

The highly anticipated move back to the Cultural Building will be of great benefit to researchers wishing to have the entire collection on hand to do their ancestry studies; but during this long interim period, the Maine State Library system has done an admirable job of making the more critical resources available to the public. We look forward to their return.

WILLIAMS/CLARK: Seeking information about the family of Joshua Williams and his wife, Bethiah Clark Williams, who settled in China in 1788 from Marlborough, Massachusetts. He first appears in the 1790 census for Jones Plantation as a laborer with no assets and five children. He was a Revolutionary War soldier who fought in the battle of Long Island and then Bunker Hill, where he was wounded. Any info on his family and the reason he came to Jones Plantation/China would be greatly appreciated. Please contact Trish Newcomb at garyntrish@roadrunner.com.

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 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.

TUCKER/SCOTT: Seeking information, materials, or suggestions about other repositories that might have information on an Augusta resident named Dolly (Scott) Tucker. I am currently researching a Black neighborhood in Fredericksburg, Virginia, that emerged in the 1930s and still exists today. She was enslaved in Fredericksburg but later lived in Augusta from the 1880s to the 1920s and was married to Isaac M. Tucker, who, based on his obituary, had been brought to Gardiner by the Tucker family during the Civil War to work in furniture making. Please contact Krysten R. Moon at kmoon@umw.edu.



A LEGACY OF BRICK, STONE, AND WOOD

John D. Lord's Architecture Endures in Augusta, Hallowell



The Stone Building, the dominant structure at what then was called the Maine Insane Hospital in Augusta, is one of many Augusta-area buildings designed by Hallowell architect John D. Lord.

Photos by Teddy Faugno

During the 1830s, John Dennis Lord was regarded as one of central Maine's leading architects and builders. His work of that decade in Hallowell and Augusta included a large-scale hotel and a major state institutional building.

Like so many Maine people of his generation, Lord's family originated in Massachusetts. His father, Ephraim, was a housewright who moved to Hallowell from Ipswich, Massachusetts, at the age of 20 in 1792. Four years later he married Salome Dennis, of Litchfield, another Ipswich native. Their marriage produced nine children, of whom the eldest was John, who was born in Hallowell on July 15, 1797.

Presumably Lord received his training as a builder from his father. His first professional mention is as a carpenter assisting in the completion of Christ Church in Gardiner in 1820. His first land transaction, in March 1822, also identifies him as a carpenter. Two years earlier he had married Amelia Walker, of Litchfield, a marriage that ended with her death in 1825. In 1829 he married Margaretta Metcalf, and they had two sons and a daughter. By 1831 Lord had attained enough stature in the Hallowell community to be elected a selectman. This office was followed in 1833 with his appointment as first warden of the newly formed Hallowell Fire Department, a post which placed him third in command of the organization.

While the essential details of Lord's personal and public life are recorded, nothing is known of the first decade of his professional career as a builder, from 1818 to 1828, except for his work on Christ Church in 1820. In 1829 the largest public building project in Maine's history to date commenced with the erection of the State House in Augusta. Designed by Charles Bulfinch, this Greek Revival granite structure took two-and-a-half years to build and cost \$145,000. Lord's role in its construction is open to interpretation. His obituary in the *Daily Kennebec Journal* noted that he "was prominently engaged in the erection of the State House. ..." The *Hallowell Register* went a step further in asserting that "The State House at Augusta was built under his supervision. ..." and recounted the delightful anecdote that "when it was building Mr. and Mrs. Lord drove a horse and chaise which they occupied up the staging and upon what is now the floor of the Representatives Hall."

To construct the Maine State House, the governor and the Executive Council appointed a commissioner of public buildings, who in turn employed a superintendent. The superintendent for the duration of the project was Joseph D. Emery, an architect and builder, who served under all three commissioners – William King, of Bath; William Clark, of Hallowell; and Reuel Williams, of Augusta. Comparing these facts with Lord's obituaries, it is more likely to conclude that he headed the construction crew under Joseph Emery's supervision. Lord's name appears in this capacity in a list of 64 workmen employed on the project in 1830.

If Lord was "prominently engaged" in the State House project, it would help to account for his having the experience to undertake two major commissions in the 1830s. The first of these was the design and construction of the Hallowell House, a four-and-a-half story hotel. Following the completion of the Augusta House in 1831 in time for the first legislative session in the new State House in January 1832, Hallowell felt the need for its own hotel. Early in 1833 a group of local businessmen petitioned the Legislature to incorporate "the Proprietary of the Hallowell Hotel for the purpose of purchasing and holding any lots of land and erecting and maintaining a house of public entertainment with all necessary stables and outbuildings. ..."

The act was approved on February 27, 1833, and the proprietors lost no time in designating themselves the Hallowell Hotel Company, acquiring a prime location at Second and Winthrop Streets, and selecting John D. Lord as their architect and builder. At their March 22 meeting, the company's directors voted "[t]o accept the plan offered by John D. Lord, viz. Eighty-four feet front on Second Street, Forty-seven feet in width, Twenty-six feet in width on Winthrop Street." The company's president, Rufus K. Page, and Lord were instructed "to ascertain the comparative expense of building with Stone and Brick." This question was resolved at the next directors' meeting on March 27 by a vote "that the house shall be erected according to the plan submitted by J.D. Lord, viz. Basement of Granite. Superstructure of Brick."

Lord's proposed Hallowell Hotel was of a scale for its community rivaled only by the Kennebec Row, a commercial block on nearby Water Street. A ground story of Hallowell granite formed the foundation for a brick superstructure three-and-a-half stories high, with a principle façade nine bays across on Second Street and a secondary side façade five bays deep on Winthrop Street. The walls culminated in a stepped-gable double chimney typical of late Federal-early Greek Revival design. Severely handsome Greek Revival detailing was employed throughout the building, including large Doric portico columns, side-lighted doorways, elongated rectangular granite sills and lintels, iron railings, and pedimented roof dormers.

Construction of the Hallowell House was underway by May 1833. In August, Hallowell's *American Advocate* newspaper observed that the second story was in progress. The *Advocate* reported in October that the roof had been framed and that the official opening was expected on New Year's Day 1834. This overly optimistic report did not take into account the extent of finishing the interior of a seventy-room hotel. Thus, work was not fully completed on the building until shortly before it opened on October 22, 1834. A writer who attended the hotel's first ball that evening provided the following description of the premises to the *Portland Advertiser*:

And first, this entrance is a very good one, very convenient and very ornamental, two flights of stone stairs under a heavy piazza, supported by columns, with a light iron, ornamental railing running around the floor of it. Through a wide door we enter the hall. At the right we have the office, with its neat furniture and its exquisite wines – farther on and opening from the office is the reading – and need we add, smoking room.

On the left of the hall, as we enter, are two splendidly furnished parlors connected by folding doors. On this first floor we find the long dining room and two other smaller parlors. But let us not be so particular or the night will be spent in our examination. There are long, wide airy halls running through the whole house, story above story, neatly finished and handsomely carpeted. There are parlors enough and to spare, chambers and rooms without number, all furnished as elegantly as any private house in your city; servants enough to answer every call, and delicacies sufficient to satiate every appetite. But come, let us pass into the dining saloon.



Architect John D. Lord designed Hallowell House and supervised its construction throughout most of 1823 and 1824. It was known in the 20th century as the Worster House.



Lord also designed these two private homes, at 11 (right) and 13 Middle Street in Hallowell, in 1832 and 1835, respectively.

At the time of its opening, the hotel was named the Hallowell House. The *Advocate* praised it as "inferior to none in the state, in point of taste and finish, and is one of the largest and best calculated for the accommodation of visitors to be found north of Boston." For the owners' part, they were sufficiently pleased with John D. Lord's work to elect him a director of the hotel company in January 1834. An examination of the company's financial records clearly indicates that such recognition was justified, for they reflect that Lord devoted himself to supervising every aspect of the construction between May 1833 and October 1834.

Continued on page 12

John D. Lord - Architect

Continued from page 11

It was this level of attention and the results it achieved that probably won Lord the reputation that led to the largest commission of his Maine career, the Maine Insane Hospital. The Maine Legislature authorized a state hospital to treat the mentally ill in 1834 and the next year approved a site on the Kennebec River nearly opposite the State House. In 1836 Gov. Robert Dunlap appointed Reuel Williams as the building commissioner for the project. Williams then turned to John D. Lord to design and supervise the hospital's construction. Lord visited three recently constructed facilities in New England and chose the one at Worcester, Massachusetts, for his model.

Lord's plan called for an impressive Hallowell granite structure 262 feet long divided into a four-story central pavilion flanked by a three-story wing on either side. Of the 126 rooms called for in the new building, all but six were to accommodate patients. The style was Greek Revival, accented by a monumental Doric columned entrance portico.

List of known commissions in Maine by John D. Lord

John D. Lord House, 11 Middle Street, Hallowell, 1832, extant
 Hallowell House, Second and Winthrop streets, Hallowell, 1833-34, extant
 House, 13 Middle Street, Hallowell, 1835, altered
 Maine Insane Hospital, Augusta, 1836-40, extant
 Hallowell Academy, Middle and Academy Streets, Hallowell, 1841, altered

As construction neared completion in 1839, Lord submitted a bill to the state for 668 days of work between November 7, 1836, and January 1, 1839, at the rate of a dollar per day. The first patient was admitted in October 1840. The Stone Building, as the structure is now known, received a series of additions over the next three decades and formed the core

of what became the Augusta Mental Health Institute complex. Today, if one looks at the central section of the Stone Building, one can see the similarity to Lord's Hallowell House, later known as the Worster House.

While the Hallowell House and the Maine Insane Hospital were the major achievements of John D. Lord's career in Maine, he should also be remembered for the handsome transitional Federal-Greek Revival house that he designed and built for himself in 1832 at 11 Middle Street in Hallowell, as well as the 1835 house built next door at 13 Middle Street. Lord's last project in Hallowell was the design and construction of Hallowell Academy at Middle and Academy streets. The Academy building of 1804 burned in 1839, and Lord was commissioned to replace it in 1841 with a one-story brick structure that featured a monumental Doric portico surmounted by a large entablature surmounted by a crenellation. This bold Greek Revival façade with its Gothic Revival touch graced the Academy until the building was remodeled in 1890. To experience Lord's Hallowell Academy, one can look at the similar design of the Thompson, Connecticut, bank of 1835 at Old Sturbridge Village, in Sturbridge, Massachusetts.

In 1842 Lord accepted an appointment as superintendent of buildings for the Springfield Armory in Massachusetts. The previous year Maj. James W. Ripley, commandant of the Kennebec Arsenal in Augusta from 1833 to 1841, had taken charge of the Springfield Armory and spent the next eight years transforming it into a modern arms production plant. Lord and Ripley would have known each other in Augusta, especially given the Kennebec Arsenal's proximity to the Maine Insane Hospital. Under Ripley's leadership in Springfield, Lord designed and built several major buildings for the armory, including an elaborate Greek Revival commandant's house in 1845-46. Of Lord's work, the *Springfield Republican* newspaper commented on October 30, 1858: "We should not forget to mention that the architect of the new buildings is John D. Lord, for a long time in the service of the Armory here. The symmetry and beauty of the buildings, and their thorough adaptability to their purpose, are the highest possible compliment to his skill."

During his 23-year tenure at the Springfield Amory, Lord and his family lived within the complex, and he was active during the Civil War in overseeing measures for its security and defense. At the close of the war, the veteran architect, then sixty-eight years old, retired to 11 Middle Street in Hallowell, where he died in April 1888 at the age of 90. At the time of his death, a Hallowell newspaper eulogized him as "an example of honesty, frugality, and good citizenship" and recalled "his ruddy countenance, firm and elastic step, and his ever-cheerful smile." While these endearing personal qualities are no longer in the memory of anyone now living, Lord's Hallowell House and Maine Insane Hospital remain as dramatic presences on today's Kennebec Valley landscape.



The author, Hallowell resident Earle G. Shettleworth Jr., is Maine's state historian and the former director of the Maine Historic Preservation Commission. He is a member of the Hubbard Free Library Board of Trustees.

Silent Film Presentations Evoke Family Memories

I wanted to take the opportunity to note the showings of the silent films of Edgar Jones and Holman Day (*Kennebec Current*, July–August and September–October 2024).

The recent showings on August 21 at Augusta City Center and November 13 at the Maine State Library were a great treat. The six surviving films, some shot in Augusta, are a unique and wonderful legacy of an exciting time.

The restoration by Edward Lorusso, with music by David Drazin and Ben Model, gives a full theater experience to watching these North Woods thrillers. These are stories where adventures on the wild rivers and deep woods of Maine truly capture the romance and danger of the north country. Lorusso's introductions also added a great deal to the events.

The biggest thrill for my family, however, was watching my grandfather William Peavey in several scenes. It is gratifying to see these and remembering hearing stories of the “movie days” that my grandmother would tell. My personal favorite of these is *Cupid, Registered Guide*, and Grandfather is featured in this one. There are some laugh-out-loud gags, some drama, and an inventive resolution that has to be seen to be believed!

Watching these, it's fun to try to recognize local spots used for locations, from downtown Augusta scenes to Ganneston Park, or the beautiful Ripogenus Gorge wild river scenes.

I would like to thank the Kennebec Historical Society and everyone else involved for arranging these showings. They are a great gift to my family and a historical record of an exciting time.

Photo courtesy of Ed Lorusso

Frank Albert, Augusta



William Peavey stars with Edna May Sperl in *Cupid, Registered Guide* in 1921.

Novel about Martha Ballard Enjoyable but Flawed

As a child, I was hooked on historical novels, and yes, I read every reference and footnote.

Ben Ames Williams and Kenneth Roberts were my favorite authors; they opened the world of the past for me. Through their books, my passion for history grew; and as a result, I studied anthropology, became a historical archaeologist, and eventually director of Augusta's Old Fort Western.

I was excited to read Ariel Lawhon's book *The Frozen River* (*Kennebec Current*, January–February 2024). At the fort, *The Diary of Martha Ballard 1785–1812* (transcribed by Robert and Cynthia McCausland and published by Picton Press for the Maine Genealogical Society) is a significant reference book. Her diary and the five surviving account books from the fort-based S&W Howard store, dating 1767–1812, give an in-depth picture of life in the central Kennebec Valley from the late 18th century into the early 19th century. Martha's diary frequently mentions Fort Western, Captain Howard, and his family. I wanted to see how Lawhon took Ballard's diary entries, which were very practical, proper, and concise, with little passion and no flowery soliloquies, and translated them into a vibrant, multi-dimensional person of the 18th century. I wanted to see how Lawhon would take a subject I know so well and bring it to life in a historical novel.

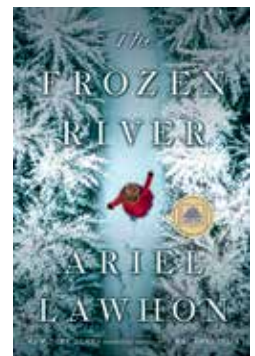
I also wanted to see if my faith in historical novels, such as Williams' and Roberts' books, which introduced me to people, places, and historical eras, was well-placed. *Frozen River* was a unique test, because I know the history and the area's people well. Such books formed my initial introduction and often lasting impressions of the past.

Lawhon's book is well-written and enjoyable. I like her writing style. However, many of her facts are wrong. She is confused by the difference between “the Hook,” “the Fort,” and Fort Western. Also, there were many other midwives at the time.

I particularly did not like Lawhon's depiction of Ballard. She wrote her book from Ballard's point of view. First-person historical characters are rather irresponsible and arrogant, like first-person reenactors who refuse to step out of character to answer a simple question. How can we presume what Ballard thought and felt without infusing our feelings and thoughts as modern people, especially from such short, dry diary entries?

So was my loyalty to historical novels misplaced? I think not. It depends on the author and whom they choose to relate the tale. Williams and Roberts usually had a fictional character or characters who encountered historical characters and described them from an outsider's point of view. They never presumed to tell you what those historical characters felt or thought except through actual letters or correspondence. They also used copious footnotes and author notes to delve into changes made and explain historical contexts.

Linda Novak, Director
Old Fort Western



Book cover image
courtesy of Doubleday

Half-century Later, Gov. Curtis' Legacy Still Resonates

KENNETH MERVIN CURTIS
"KEN"

Academic

Football 2, 3, 4; Baseball 1, 2;
Track 3; Chizzle Wizzle President
4; Band 1, 2; Orchestra 2, 3, 4;
Coniad 4; Cony Cue 4; Spanish
Club 3, President 4; Science Club
4; Science Fair 1.

A lot of credit should be given
to Ken for his hard work on the
successful 58th annual year of
Chizzle Wizzle.



Kenneth M. Curtis appears
in a senior-year photo in the
1949 *Coniad*, the yearbook of
Augusta's Cony High School.

From the KHS collection

This January marks 50 years since Kenneth M. Curtis left office as Maine's first term-limited governor, completing two eventful and highly successful four-year terms after being elected in 1966 and re-elected in 1970.

Curtis was the nation's youngest governor when first elected, just 35; and his youthful demeanor and athletic talents quickly drew comparison with John F. Kennedy (1917-1963), who in 1960 became the youngest man ever elected president.

U.S. Sen. Robert Kennedy, the president's brother, campaigned in 1966 with Curtis at a Portland City Hall rally that was the largest Democratic Party gathering up to that time, drawing 3,000 people, with an almost equally large crowd turning out in Lewiston.

During the campaign swing, the senator was the first to tell Curtis he would win, the governor recalled later, after ousting seven-year incumbent Republican Gov. John Reed. Then as now, it was rare to defeat an incumbent governor, and Curtis is the most recent candidate to do so. Curtis later returned Kennedy's favor by campaigning for him during his 1968 presidential bid, which was cut short when Kennedy was assassinated the same night he won the California primary election.

The Curtis-Kennedy comparisons extended to the Curtis family, with first lady Pauline "Polly" Curtis, then 31, and their two daughters, Susan and Angela, 6 and 3 years old, seeming much like the "Camelot" White House of Jacqueline Kennedy and children Caroline and John Jr. After Curtis won, Robert Kennedy called him "Maine's JFK," a coinage picked up by Maine newspapers and broadcasters.

Although a Leeds native, the governor himself was no stranger to Augusta, having graduated in 1949 from the city's Cony High School. After his election, the whole Curtis family quickly became part of the Augusta community in a way few other first families have. Both girls attended St. Mary's School (now St. Michael's) and were a regular feature in press accounts.

One United Press International dispatch told of the Curtis girls' friendship with Don Nichols, a Maine State Police trooper who was Curtis' driver and bodyguard; they referred

to the "sturdy 215-pounder" as "Donny."

Their father embarked on his governorship at a propitious moment, just as President Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" programs were unfolding, bringing unprecedented funding for a host of new ventures, including aid to public schools, environmental cleanups, and grants for everything from Head Start to the recodification of state statutes.

Curtis, meanwhile, turned the pledges of his campaign document, the Maine Action Plan, into reality by launching comprehensive approaches in eight areas, including education, health care, transportation, and conservation. By common consent, the signal achievement of his first term was enactment of a progressive income tax in 1969, which made possible abundant state aid for kindergarten-through-grade 12 schools and creation of the state university system, including its seventh campus, the University of Maine at Augusta.

Curtis's second term brought about the wholesale reorganization of state government, combining more than 150 separate agencies, boards, and commissions – few of them then under the governor's control – into 10 Cabinet-style departments with commissioners appointed by the governor.

Dozens of new programs and agencies were created during the Curtis administration, including the Maine Human Rights Commission, the Maine State Planning Office, the Energy Office, the departments of Environmental Protection and Conservation, the Maine State Housing Authority (now Maine Housing), the Bureau of Public Lands, and countless others. There was even, briefly, a Department of Indian Affairs and a Canadian relations office.

Curtis strongly supported collective bargaining for public employee unions, property tax relief, and criminal justice and corrections reform. His administration more than doubled state conservation land, including many new and expanded state parks.

He did this while working with a Republican-controlled Legislature throughout his tenure, as well as a Republican-led Executive Council that had confirmation authority over his appointments. Key to his success was the support of GOP legislative leaders such as Augusta's Sen. Bennett Katz, who supported both the income tax and the university system when

both initiatives were in doubt. Bipartisan cooperation reached a level never again achieved.

Curtis recruited and rewarded a talented group of young aides who later went on to careers in government, business, banking, university teaching, and law. Most of them were members of the Curtis All Stars, a crack touring softball team that played charity games all over the state, led by the governor, a .400 hitter and frequently the pitcher.

The Curtis years also were touched by tragedy.

The Vietnam War effectively ended the brief Great Society period, dividing the Democratic Party in Maine as well as nationally.

During the 1970 re-election campaign, Susan Curtis died from the effects of cystic fibrosis, just 10 years old. She is buried in the Maine Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Augusta, which the governor had dedicated just a year earlier. Camp Susan Curtis in Stoneham was established in her memory in 1974, and has hosted about 19,000 Maine children since then for summer programs.

The Curtis administration remains a model of how to create consensus and achieve results even in turbulent times. After leaving Augusta, Curtis served as chairman of the Democratic National Committee and U.S. Ambassador to Canada, and as president of Maine Maritime Academy, his alma mater. He and his wife now live in quiet retirement in Scarborough.



– by Douglas Rooks

The author of this article, Douglas Rooks, has given lectures for the Kennebec Historical Society about his books First Franco: Albert Beliveau in Law, Politics and Love, and Calm Command: U.S. Chief Justice Melville Fuller in His Times, 1888-1910. He is working on a new book, a biography of Gov. Kenneth M. Curtis.



Gov. Kenneth M. Curtis poses in the 1960s for a family portrait with wife Polly and daughters Susan, lower left, and Angela.

Courtesy of the Maine Historic Preservation Commission

Windsor Tale Exemplifies Uncertainty of Justice in Early 1900s

As a reader of mystery books and history books, I found *Alice Shrugged*, by Peter Pettingill (2024), to be both fascinating and frustrating – the latter in no part due to Pettingill's research or writing but to the actual story that he brought to life in the book.



Did Charlie Northey kill himself, or did Alice Cooper shoot him?

Though there is a verdict handed down, the book left me wondering what the outcome of the case would have been with modern forensics and investigative techniques. Was the verdict the right one? The way Pettingill crafts the story, it's exceedingly difficult to know – and to know what the truth is about what actually transpired in the many conversations and meetings between Alice Cooper and Charlie Northey. Pettingill does well to keep this feeling of unknowing and uncertainty going throughout the book, all the while keeping the reader informed and entertained with details about central Maine life at the turn of the 20th century.

From blueberry-picking excursions to Grange gatherings to a croquet tournament, the reader is exposed to the pastimes of Windsor residents. Daily life and family life are also documented, as are the transportation options of the time. Though genealogy is not my specialty, I assume those interested in the genealogy of central Maine will enjoy reading *Alice Shrugged*, especially with its "Biographies" appendix.

The book is available for purchase on Amazon.

Now, on to read *The Murder of Mattie Hackett*, Pettingill's book on a 1905 Readfield murder.



– by Jamie Logan



Book cover image courtesy of author

Lumber Baron's Generosity Gave Clinton Its Library

The impressive chiseled pink granite and red sandstone building shown in our November-December issue is the Brown Memorial Library in Clinton.



History Through
a Keyhole #16

“... I want to do something in the memory of my dear parents who were my ideal of that best and purest in life,” remarked William Wentworth (W.W.) Brown, son of Jonathan and Betsey (Michaels) Brown, during the dedication ceremony when he gave Brown Memorial Library and its contents to the town on July 21, 1900.

Brown was born April 19, 1821, in Clinton and died in 1911 in Portland. He owned the Berlin Mills, a lumber and planing company in Berlin, New Hampshire, that was headquartered in Portland at the Berlin Mills Wharf from 1852 to the mid-1960s.



Brown Memorial Library stands at 53 Railroad Street in Clinton as a memorial to Jonathan and Betsy (Michaels) Brown, parents of benefactor William Wentworth Brown.

Photo by Rich Eastman

of Clinton, donated 100 volumes of the official Civil War records of the Union and Confederate armies to the library.

Much of Brown's original contribution of furniture, sculpture, and pictures still graces the reading room and a beautifully framed 4-by-5-foot life-sized portrait of Brown, by the Boston painter Frederic Vinton (1846-1911), hangs on a wall. Brown gave it to the library in 1902.

For over 124 years, Clinton residents have made full use of this wonderful cultural resource. Brown had expressed such a hope in the closing sentence of his presentation speech: “Generations may come and go, but I trust the good to be derived from this gift may go on forever.” The old and the new have been brought together to serve Clinton's 3,385 residents, plus residents in the abutting towns of Benton, Burnham, and Cannan. In 2023 the library served 3,452 patrons – an average of nearly 300 per month. In addition to the current collection of over 14,000 books (about 100 new books are added monthly), it offers e-books, DVDs, and access to Ancestry.com. It provides local historical information, special programs for children, meeting space for local organizations, and support for Maine authors (monthly presentations), as well as computer access, a printer, copying, faxing, and lamination services.

In recognition of its cultural and historic significance, Brown Memorial Library was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1975.

Answer to Keyhole #16

Q: What is this?

A: The entrance to Brown Memorial Library

Q: Where is it?

A: 53 Railroad Street in Clinton

Q: What's historic about it?

A: Clinton native and businessman William Wentworth Brown funded the library's



He spared no expense in the building of this memorial to his parents. It is an imposing and rather sophisticated building for such a small town. From groundbreaking to opening, it took only 11 months to build. Not only did Brown hire Maine's most noted architect, John Calvin Stevens (1855-1940), of Portland, to design the building; he also purchased the land on which the building was to stand; contracted Horace Puritan & Company, of Waterville and Augusta, as the builder; and supplied only the finest of building materials to be used in its construction, as well as gifting most of the library's collection of books, furnishings, and pictures plus an endowment of \$5,000 (purchasing power of \$187,895 today) to the library at the time of the dedication ceremony.

A year later, in 1901, Orrin Learned, a resident



A 4-by-5-foot portrait of W.W. Brown, by the Boston painter Frederic Vinton (1846-1911), hangs in the library's reading room.

Photo by Rich Eastman

— by Barbara Warren

History Through a Keyhole — Puzzle 17

Our quiz subject in the last issue meshed neatly with Stephanie Frost's weakness for libraries. Frankly, she fathomed our flagrant façade flaunting fairly fast. It's the front of Brown Memorial Library in Clinton, the subject of a story on the preceding page.

Frost, who works at Colby College in Waterville, knew when the Brown library was built, who paid for it, to whom it was dedicated, and that the donor had set up an endowment to fund its operation. It left us wondering whether she also knows our email password. (Maybe she does, but it wasn't relevant to the questions we asked.)

For her correct response, Frost wins a year's free membership in the Kennebec Historical Society, a commodity so hot that cryptocurrency entrepreneurs around the planet are starting to send us jealousy-inspired hate mail.

For our next random foray into the realm of the obscure, we offer the above photo. This site 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 its historic significance 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 March–April issue of the *Kennebec Current*. Answers are due by February 28. Good luck.



KHS Welcomes the Following New Members

Donna & Louis Brann — West Gardiner
Lorraine Carter-Baughman — Selma, California
Lori Fisher — China
Jill Lectka — Hallowell
Cindy Lightfoot — Augusta

Katherine Nerret — Augusta
Nancy Nicol — Dresden
Linda Novak — Monmouth
Gail & Jay Rowe — Winthrop
Dorothy Trask — Augusta

Tina & Kenneth Wood — Lewiston

and continues to recognize ...



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Meadow Park Development
O'Connor GMC

❖ In Memoriam ❖

Christopher Dumaine, 89, a Kennebec Historical Society life member since 2006, died October 13 at home in Mount Vernon. He was a graduate of St. Lawrence University and, at the age of 40, a graduate of the Maine Criminal Justice Academy who later co-founded the Monmouth Police Department and served as its police chief. He also helped establish Monmouth Rescue. He and his late wife, Holly, also a KHS member, moved to Mount Vernon in 1989. His survivors include three children, six grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

Around Kennebec County

WATERVILLE

Friends of Fort Halifax President Ray Caron plans to give a lecture January 11 for the Waterville Historical Society about the history of Winslow's Fort Halifax blockhouse, a national historic landmark that is the oldest structure of its kind in the United States. The event also will feature Peter Tompkins, who has an extensive collection of postcards and other memorabilia related to the fort; Winslow building contractor Mickey Pouliot, who helped to rebuild the blockhouse; members of the Fort Halifax chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, who will talk about their group's prior ownership of the blockhouse; and former Winslow Town Manager Mike Heavener, who helped secure a grant that financed the transformation of Fort Halifax Park. The free event is scheduled for 2 p.m. in the Redington Museum's Marriner Hall, at 62 Silver Street in Waterville. Light refreshments will be served. In case of bad weather, the backup date is January 18, at the same time and location. For details, call (207) 872-9439.



From left, Sara Maschino, Diana Allen, Harlean Jordan, Maureen Parker, and Joanne De Campos sample the fare at the Victorian Tea held at KHS headquarters on December 8.

Photo by Rich Eastman

Winslow Genealogy Group Moves to Former School

A Winslow-based affiliate of the Maine Genealogical Society moved out of its flood-prone headquarters November 13 and into temporary quarters in the former St. John School, less than a mile away.

Current FOLLOWUP

A team of members of the society's Taconnett Falls Chapter had packed most of the contents of their library into 348 boxes. On moving day, PRO Moving Service, of Waterville, loaded all the boxes and the group's furniture into a truck and transferred it to the school building – free, as a charitable contribution to the chapter. Then another team of members spent the next few weeks unloading all the boxes, drying items that had become damp, and placing the entire library on shelving, much of which Habitat for Humanity's recently closed ReStore shop in Waterville had donated to the group in October.

The chapter had occupied the four-room, town-owned former Winslow Public Library building on Lithgow Street for more than two decades. It decided to move out to protect its collection from further flooding on the nearby Kennebec River. The river flooded in December 2023, sending water and spilled heating oil from nearby buildings cascading into the chapter's basement, requiring a cleanup that took months to complete.

The chapter's newly elected Board of Directors now is confronting the task of finding a permanent base of operations in the Waterville area. Suggestions are welcome at (207) 441-5666 or taconnettfalls@gmail.com.



Maureen Parker and Bruce Hanson, both members of the Taconnett Falls Chapter's Board of Directors, finish unpacking the genealogy group's library and office contents December 4 at the former St. John School in Winslow.

Photo by Joseph Owen

Question 3 Bond Issue

Continued from page 1

Mohney said no previous historic-properties bond has provided grant money to this extent.

In 1985, he said, a \$2 million bond question passed narrowly. There were four grants cycles, with \$500,000 awarded in each round.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, money was allotted to the Maine State Cultural Affairs Council for restoration grants. He said a small amount of money was distributed to seven agencies that make up the council, including the Maine Historic Preservation Commission.

Information about the latest grant program, including application deadlines, will be posted on the commission's web site at <https://www.maine.gov/mhpc/programs/grants>.

Organizations that wish to determine whether a property is listed on the National Register are encouraged to contact Michael Goebel-Bain at Michael.W.Goebel-Bain@maine.gov or at (207) 287-5435. For all other inquiries about the grant program, contact Mike Johnson at Mike.D.Johnson@maine.gov or at (207) 287-2949.

— by Joyce Grondin

Upcoming Programs

February: “Civil War Veterans in Maine”

Maine sent more men per capita to fight in the Civil War for the Union than any other state, which meant that Civil War veterans here had an outsized influence in the postwar period. The Kennebec Historical Society’s February lecture will explore the ways in which veterans made sense of the most profound experience of their lives by reviewing their activities, such as reunions and parades, and the places they created to celebrate, remember, and teach.

From campgrounds to Grand Army of the Republic halls to regimental association summer retreats to memorial libraries to civic statues to the soldiers’ home at Togus, Maine’s Union veterans had a lasting effect upon the state’s culture. They also participated in national debates about the public memory of the war’s causes, outcomes, and meaning. This lecture also will explore these themes in broad strokes, with examples drawn from across the state. While Maine also claimed several high-profile veterans, such as Army officers Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain and Oliver Otis Howard, this presentation will focus on the rank-and-file and their activities and legacy.

KHS presenter C. Ian Stevenson is the interim director of the Preservation Studies Program at Boston University. He holds a doctorate in American and New England studies and a Master of Arts degree in preservation studies from Boston University. Stevenson is working on a book manuscript titled *The Summer Homes of the Survivors: Buildings and Landscapes of the Civil War Vacation, 1878-1918*, under contract with the University of Virginia Press. He lives on Portland’s Peaks Island, in Casco Bay.

Stevenson’s presentation can be watched on Facebook Live at 6:30 p.m. February 19. It also will be archived on the society’s Facebook page for those who want to watch it later. For more information, call Scott Wood, the society’s executive director, at 622-7718.



1910 reunion of the 5th Maine

Photo courtesy of C. Ian Stevenson

March: “Augusta’s Memorial Bridge”

The Kennebec Historical Society’s presentation for March offers an in-depth look at the 1948-49 construction of Memorial Bridge in Augusta through a collection of historical photographs from the KHS archive. The prominent landmark, which turned 75 years old last year, (*Kennebec Current*, November-December 2024), was named in honor of local veterans. It is a critical link between the city’s east and west sides, which are divided by the Kennebec River. The images shown during the lecture will give viewers insight into the engineering challenges, design decisions, and community involvement that shaped the bridge. This presentation highlights technical aspects of the bridge’s creation and its cultural significance.

The lecture’s presenter, KHS Archivist and Librarian Emily Schroeder, of South China, was born in Augusta and spent most of her life in Thomaston before graduating from the University of Maine Portland-Gorham (now the University of Southern Maine) in 1978. She worked at the Maine State Library from 1980 to 2018, becoming a reference librarian in 1988 after earning her Master of Library and Information Science degree from the University of Rhode Island. Another chapter in her story opened in 2007 when she took on the duties of genealogy specialist and began teaching classes statewide regularly in that field. She started the library’s genealogy club and added an online genealogy newsletter. From May 2011 to February 2012, she wrote the monthly column “Untangling Your Family Roots” for Augusta’s *Capital Weekly* newspaper. She serves on the society’s Board of Directors as the administrative vice president, and she is the co-chairwoman of the KHS Collections Committee and a member of the Personnel and Program committees. She also chairs the Maine Genealogical Society’s Event Committee, and she is the China Historical Society secretary.

Schroeder’s presentation can be watched on Facebook Live at 6:30 p.m. March 19. It also will be archived on the society’s Facebook page for those who want to watch it later. For details, call Scott Wood, the society’s executive director, at 622-7718.



An eastward view shows Augusta’s Memorial Bridge under construction in the late 1940s.

From the KHS collection

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

E-mail address: kennhis1891@gmail.com

Telephone: (207) 622-7718

Web site: www.kennebechistorical.org