



Kennebec Current



Discovering, preserving, and disseminating Kennebec County history since 1891

Volume 28 Issue 1

KENNEBEC HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

January–February 2018

Hallowell Ponders Space for Local Museum



Gerry Mahoney at the Hallowell Fire Department.

The Hallowell Fire Department expects to occupy its new \$2 million station later this year, and city leaders already are talking about what to do with the old one, where the department has been located for the past 120 years.

At recent public meetings of Hallowell’s City Properties Planning Group, participants devoted a lot of time discussing whether city’s police force should move there from the basement of City Hall, provided that the fire station – an 1828 Second Street building that is on the National Register of Historic Places – is reconfigured to make the first floor suitable for police use.

The second floor also has drawn attention, however, generating a lot of informal discussion about the possibility of organizing a city museum there.

Gerry Mahoney, a planning group member, said the second-floor space already houses a large number of old Fire Department photographs, ledgers, meeting minutes, banners, buckets and other artifacts; and several city residents have other local historical items they would be willing to donate. At the moment, there’s no other place in Hallowell where people can take such things, and nobody has proposed any other specific use for the upstairs area.

The city once had a local museum at the back of Hubbard Free Library, but it was dissolved in the 1980s when heating the entire library building became too costly,

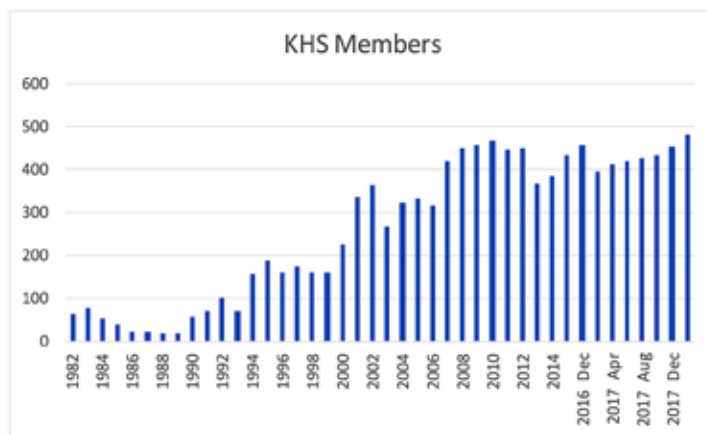
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Total Membership Hits Record

The total number of current Kennebec Historical Society members reached 486 in mid-February, more than ever before. The total includes 182 life members.

With the establishment of a full and active KHS Membership Committee under the leadership of Glenn Adams and the active recruiting of new members that has taken place so far this year, the society’s prospects for growth appear bright.

The membership profile also is becoming more diverse. The society now has members in all but two of Kennebec County’s 30 municipalities, the only exceptions being Rome and Unity Township. The top three communities in terms of membership are Augusta, where nearly one-third of KHS members reside; Hallowell, about 7 percent; and Manchester, about 4 percent. Several dozen are scattered around the United States and Canada.



President's Message



The Maine bears may be sleeping, but I'm here to tell you many wonderful volunteers at the Kennebec Historical Society are busy as bees.

Each time I stop by KHS, it's just wonderful to see how many folks are working so hard for you. Yes, I say "you," because I believe that everyone who becomes a member shows strong support and is an owner in this wonderful organization. By your membership, you show you want to help preserve our Kennebec County history for future generations to enjoy. Thank you for your continued support.

These busy folks are entering oh-so-much data into our computers, planning for the great programs we enjoy each month, writing grants to help keep the building and all the great historical material safe, planning for ways to expand the facility to serve you better and, of course, helping to raise money to be sure we can keep that much-needed heat on.

If you could spare any time to volunteer, please call to schedule a time convenient for you. Volunteers are always welcome. Please remember that KHS does not receive taxpayer dollars. If you have any money in that change jar that you could spare, we would appreciate your financial support. Any amount helps.

Thank you to all the busy bees who help make KHS the wonderful treasure it continues to be.

— *Patsy Garside Crockett*

KHS Enters Online World of Electronic Banking

These days, you can pay for pretty much anything from the comfort of your own home. Some folks no longer even have a checkbook and even fewer people carry any cash around with them. Making online purchases is not only convenient; it also saves everyone involved time and money.

The Kennebec Historical Society has recently entered into this online banking world by placing a "Donate" button on its website, www.kennebechistorical.org, on the right side of the home page. You can pay your KHS membership dues, buy something from the recently revitalized museum shop at the society, or simply make a donation. When you click the "Donate" button, it will take you to the secure PayPal website. You do not need to have a PayPal account to make an online payment; you just need your debit or credit card. Simply type in the amount you would like to donate, tell us what the amount is for under the "Add special instructions to the seller:" section, and enter your card information.

KHS is committed to making it easier for our members, and even non members, to contribute funds that allow us to preserve Kennebec County history for future researchers.



* In Memoriam *

Patricia E. Marvin, of Augusta, a Kennebec Historical Society member and frequent attendee at society programs, died January 30 at the age of 77. She was a former Sabattus police officer and Androscoggin County deputy sheriff. She is survived by husband Donald, four children, nine grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren.



KHS Board of Directors

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Total membership:

486 on February 19

Life members: 182

The Kennebec Current encourages letters to the editor. Email letters to kennhis1891@gmail.com. All letters are subject to editing for taste, style, and length.

The Collections Box

As I have often said, my job as society librarian is filled with surprises. As I was leafing through a recently donated copy of Kingsbury's *Illustrated History of Kennebec County*, a small trifold card fell to the floor. It was the announcement that this history "was now available."

This serendipitous moment brought to mind a staple of 19th-century book publishing: the salesman's sample or "dummy." From the 1850s to the end of the century, traveling book salesmen, as they went from door to door, carried a dummy for each of the books they were promoting. In the 18th century, publication was frequently financed by seeking support from subscribers prior to the printing of the book. The public was asked to subscribe based on a prospectus and the salesman's pitch, and trust that the book, if it ever appeared, would fulfill the salesman's promises. The dummy proved that the book already existed.

The dummy was an abbreviated form of the book. The front and back covers were identical to the promised volume. Inside was an engraved frontispiece, a title page, and detailed contents of all the chapters. There followed selections from various chapters with illustrations and full-page illustrations. Samples of the various available bindings were provided by way of back strips or spines. At the end was an order form where a customer indicated the number of copies he or she wanted and signed his or her name and address. The salesman would mark the order "paid." A successful salesman would first try to obtain orders from local influential people — the mayor, local clergymen, doctors, or businessmen — to assure that their names were at the top of the list. The dummy gave clear evidence that the book existed. There are several salesman's samples in the society's library.

I'm looking forward to the next surprise.

For the Collections Committee
— Bruce Kirkham

Kennebec Historical Society Standing Committees — 2018

Executive Committee

President: Patsy Crockett
Vice president: Bruce Kirkham
Treasurer: Ernest Plummer
Secretary: Emily Schroeder
At-large member: Anne Cough

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Treasurer: Ernest Plummer
Member: Tom Johnson
Member: Nancy Merrick
Member: John Lawrence

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Member: Kim Michaud
Member: Stefanie Barley
Member: John Lawrence
Member: Joan Plummer
Member: John Stewart
Member: Kari Mullen-McLaughlin

Museum Committee

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Member: Ernest Plummer
Member: Bruce Kirkham

Personnel Committee

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Member: Kari Mullen-McLaughlin
Member: Cynthia Thompson

Development Committee

Chair: Roger Pomerleau
Member: Joseph Owen
Member: Glenn Adams
Member: John Bridge

Buildings and Grounds Committee

Chair: Phyllis von Herrlich
Member: Kari Mullen-McLaughlin
Member: Ernest Plummer
Member: Scott Wood
Member: Gerry Gaboury
Member: Cynthia Thompson
Member: Rich Eastman

Program and Publicity Committee

Chair: Anne Cough
Member: Emily Schroeder
Member: Clyde Berry
Member: Richard Bridges
Member: Tom Johnson (programs)
Member: Sally Joy (newsletter)
Member: Joseph Owen (newsletter)
Member: Ernest Plummer
Member: Joan Plummer (membership secretary)
Member: Scott Wood (program press releases)
Member: Rich Eastman (newsletter)
Member: Jamie Logan (Facebook)

Advisory Committee

Member: John Bridge
Member: Tom Johnson
Member: Sally Joy
Member: John J. O'Connor
Member: Joseph O'Donnell
Member: Joseph Owen
Member: Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr.
Member: William Sprague, Jr.
Member: Roger Pomerleau

Carriage House Expansion

Co-chair: Kent London
Co-chair: Patsy Crockett
Member: Phyllis von Herrlich
Member: Ernest Plummer
Member: Joseph Owen
Member: Rich Eastman
Member: Scott Wood

Collections Committee

Chair: Bruce Kirkham
Archivist: Ernest Plummer
Member: Anthony Douin
Member: Ellen Gingras
Member: Kari Mullen-McLaughlin

Ad-hoc Technology

Member: Jamie Logan
Member: Ernest Plummer
Member: Scott Wood
Member: Billy Noble

A Corner, a Cookbook, and a Cat

What fun to explore local history! Sometime this past December, I was in the process of cataloguing items for the KHS database, and I came upon an interesting topic to share with you all. This was in the first of a large series of scrapbooks compiled by Sarah and Ruth Higgins, of Augusta and Manchester, ranging from 1921 to the late 1960s.

Do any of you recall a special section of the *Daily Kennebec Journal* called the “Home Corner”? It all began with a bright idea back in 1926 in the newspaper’s editorial room from staffer Bernice Patterson. Believing that women readers would have particular interest in a department wherein household hints, recipes and the like could be exchanged, “Patt,” as she was familiarly known, became the section’s first editor. Its first letter came from Gardiner in February 1927. It is unclear, at present, how long the section lasted.

A single column allotment per week soon grew to half a page. Then it expanded to the point that it became a daily feature. As of 1934, it was still going strong. Ideals of “helpful exchange” went beyond letters in of tips and recipes to include a quilt square exchange and spiritual exchange of “sympathy, hope, and courage.”

A 1934 Home Corner reunion program included this schedule of events: registration and social period, general assembly and announcements, quilt exhibit, lunch, entertainment, sports, plant exchange, and dance. Below this listing is the following additional announcement: “There will be an all day supervised program of sport, stunts, games, in which men, women, and children will have an opportunity to participate.” Sounds like a fun and eventful day.

In the previously mentioned scrapbook, a few interesting newspaper clippings featured Home Corner reunion photo mentions, but also a photo of the Home Corner cat (seen in the accompanying photo). In another captioned photo, a group of Home Corner reunion attendees are referred to as “Fatty Woodchuck, her husband and their two sets of twins.” In trying to track down why this well-dressed lady would opt for this nickname, all I could find by way of research was a “Fatty Woodchuck” referred to in a 1917 book by Georgia M. McNally called *The Babyhood of Wild Beasts*. Perhaps this was a commonly known book at the time and the reference stems from it?

A major undertaking of the Home Corner members was the compilation of *The Daily Kennebec Journal Home Corner Cookbook* in 1932. In the foreword, the editor explains that more than 500 members have contributed, and that the loosely corralled recipe groupings are meant more to inspire than to be a complete culinary repertoire. Many recipes are baked items, such as breads and desserts; but savory departments yield salads, soups, pickles, meats, fish, casseroles, and soft drinks. As we consider a recipe for canned tomato soup sent in by “Bubbles” of South Gardiner, we are reminded that in this case, canned means homemade and “put up.” (I think I know what is going in my vegetable garden this spring.) The recipe is as follows:

CANNED TOMATO SOUP

{ 1 peck ripe tomatoes, 2½ quarts boiling water. Peel tomatoes, cut and boil 1 hour. Take 8 large onions, peel, cut and fry in ½ pound butter until tender. Mix 2 pounds sugar, 4 green peppers, cut fine, 6 tablespoons corn starch, dissolve in cold water, then add tomatoes to onions. 2 tablespoons salt. Can hot. Yields 7 quarts. }

Yum! All sorts of tried and tested, well-loved recipes are included in this cookbook. Some have variations sent in from various members that might also inspire a “test kitchen” adventure to find the best one. Here are a few select tips offered in these pages:

- Vinegar will remove the odor of kerosene from tinware.
- In washing ecru curtains, dip them in water that has had a little coffee added. This helps retain the color.
- To cut cheese smoothly, fold paraffin paper over the knife blade.
- Instead of washing linoleum every day with water dampen a cloth with kerosene, with a little melted paraffin added and this saves the pattern of the rug.

Please share with us any stories or knowledge you may have about the Home Corner column and/or the cookbook. We have two copies of the cookbook (one just recently added to the collection) at the society, in case you don’t have your own and are interested in checking out these tasty recipes or helpful tips from the 1930s. If you attend our monthly programs, you may see some baked goods on the refreshment table from these recipes that I just couldn’t resist trying out.

— Kari Mullen-McLaughlin, intern



Are you following the Kennebec Historical Society Facebook page yet?

If you're not, I'd encourage you to do so. It's a free, fun way to stay updated on the goings-on at KHS. You will also see photos and information from the archives, as well as other fun tidbits about the work being done at KHS. We also post information about history-related events and presentations being put on by other organizations in the area.

When I make it to KHS to help with research projects, I am always amazed at the interesting documents, photos, scrapbooks, and other items that we have in the archives. It is my goal to keep sharing more of KHS' impressive collections with the public through the Facebook page. If you do follow the page already, you might have noticed a few interesting items highlighted recently — a brick from the Augusta House; scrapbook pages featuring the Cony High School mascot, Ramses, a live ram; and Hallowell pharmacist Franklin Scammon's notebook.



In the year that I've been curating the KHS Facebook page, I have been happy to see steady growth in views and followers, particularly in the past few months. We don't spend money to boost posts, so all of our growth is organic and relies on KHS members and other interested people from the community to drive sharing and views of posts. If you engage with the page we can continue to grow the page as a platform for getting the word out about KHS even more. Plus, you just might learn a thing or two about Kennebec County history.

It's been a pleasure to work with Ernie Plummer, Scott Wood, and Kari Mullen-McLaughlin to keep the page updated on a regular basis. If you'd like to see what we've been up to, head on over to Facebook, search for Kennebec Historical Society, and click "Like" on the page.

Hope to see you in the notifications soon!

— Jamie Carter Logan, KHS Social Media Volunteer

Research-ready: New in the Database

Each newsletter, we report items that have been acquired in the last two months in the Collection Box column. Yet because it is a resource-intensive process, it sometimes takes months or years before they actually are catalogued in the database. In the process of cataloging the items, we often do research to better understand the provenance, or history of ownership, of the item(s).

This column will regularly report when significant items have been catalogued and are ready for review by researchers. We will also report enhancements to the database and the archive.

To that end, we are happy to report that the database has been "image enabled." That is, you can see many of the images in our database as you search it. You can even print the image on the spot.

Building Photographs



061	Winthrop Street	Item ID	1994.0002.0166	WPA Tax Photo Location	151	2	3
Architectural Style	Italianate	Building Type	Residential	Building Material	Wood	Scanned	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Stories	2 1/2	Bays	5	Roof Type	Gabled, Side		

As for new items in the database, J. Richardson Collins recently completed his internship under our Maine State Archives grant. The last set of items he catalogued were:

- 17 photos of Capitol Theater demolition, Augusta, 1983
- 6 photos of Edwards Dam repair, Augusta, 1983
- 19 photos of Kennebec River flooding, Augusta, Hallowell, Gardiner, 1983
- 20 photos of Gannett estate gardener's house, Augusta, 2001

These photographs, donated by Joe Owen, can be viewed at the society. They all have the accession number 2016.0127.

The Kennebec Historical Society Welcomes the Following New Members

Thomas and Diane Dowd – Belgrade
 William Budd – Farmingdale
 George M. Rogers – Litchfield
 Matthew and Heather Pouliot – Augusta
 Tyler C. Trott – West Gardiner
 Anna D. and Mike Blodgett – Augusta
 John Fallona – Gardiner
 Charles Mahaleris – Augusta
 Allison MacArthur-Ruesink – Onstead, Michigan
 Kay and Dwight Gagnon – Benton
 Dawnella C. Sheehan – Benton

Rose A. Johnson – Augusta
 David and Ann Leigh – Belgrade
 Nancy Merrick – Augusta
 Patricia Zimba – Winslow
 Aaron Chrostowsky – Winthrop
 Doreen and Skip Harvey – Winthrop
 Kennebec Journal – Augusta
 Adam Fisher – Farmingdale
 Rita Oellers – Hallowell
 Linda J. Conti – Augusta
 Catherine A. Ramaika – Augusta

and continues to recognize...

Sustaining Business Members

Kennebec Savings Bank
 Dufour's Welding and Machining Services, Inc.

Sponsoring Business Member

Pine Tree Trading Company, Distributor, Gardiner

Hallowell Ponders Space for Local Museum

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and the museum's contents were sold, Mahoney said, adding that much of it had no local connection anyway.

"It just became chock-a-block full of things that people donated when they didn't know what to do with them," he said.

Many visitors seem surprised to discover that a city as history-drenched as Hallowell is doesn't have a local museum, but Mahoney said local people would be interested in seeing one instituted.

"It's always been there as a discussion," he said, but added, "It's never been considered remotely possible."

Now the soon-to-be-vacant fire station presents an opportunity, although not a cheap one.

"In order to use the second floor, you have to have an elevator, and an elevator would be a \$100,000 ticket," Mahoney said, adding that the city might be facing the prospect of a \$1 million bond issue to upgrade both the fire station and the public works garage on Water Street.

While the financing of such a project might be undefined so far, however, the city probably wouldn't have much trouble finding items to display.

"You've got artifacts around town. The library doesn't have space to display them," said Bob Stubbs, a former Hallowell mayor. Stubbs said himself he has historical items from the whole capital region he'd like to display, and he knows of others who do as well. "There is no other place, really, where the city can do it."

He acknowledged that an elevator is needed to achieve Americans with Disabilities Act compliance, but he said efforts are underway to raise the money to build one.

Meanwhile, Stubbs' wife, Sandy, has been active in a preservation group that has worked to upgrade the building's fire tower. Through fundraisers and a donation drive, the group raised \$50,000 for fire tower repairs, including \$25,000 from the Kennebec Savings Bank, she said,

Sandy Stubbs said the fire station's second floor could serve a variety of purposes, including a museum, and a city-owned parking lot next door on Perleys Lane could provide parking space for visitors.

City officials have an ambitious timeline for thinking these ideas through. They have asked Mahoney's committee to submit recommendations by mid-April. After that, the museum idea's viability probably will become clearer.

Upcoming Programs

March Public Presentation:

“How Maine Changed the World: A History in 50 People, Places and Things”



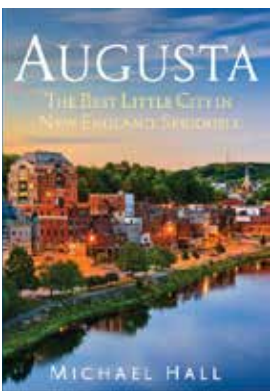
This talk will center on the achievements of some prominent as well as nearly forgotten or never-known Mainers who materially changed the world. Lots of people will remember Margaret Chase Smith’s “Declaration of Conscience” delivered on the U.S. Senate floor to oppose the actions of her colleague Senator Joseph McCarthy, but fewer people may know that Maine inventors F.E. and F.O. Stanley provided the photographic plate that made Eastman Kodak successful, or that Chester Greenwood gave the world the earmuff. Probably still fewer could name the inventor of the zig-zag stitch for sewing machines that revolutionized commercial sewing forever. Maine’s unique contributions include the microwave, the Maine coon cat, Moxie, the “bridge in a bag” and the Clean Water Act.

Our speaker, Nancy Griffin, of Thomaston, is a former newspaper and wire service reporter who has been a freelance writer for magazines and newspapers for more than 20 years. She is the author of four books: *The Remarkable Stanley Brothers*, *Making Whoopies*, *Maine 101* and *Fifty Things to Do in Maine before You Die*.

The Kennebec Historical Society’s March presentation is free to the public (donations gladly accepted) and will take place at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 21, at South Parish Congregational Church, located at 9 Church Street in Augusta.

April Public Presentation:

“Augusta, the Best Little City in New England. Seriously.”



When it comes to quirky energy, Augusta has it in spades, according to April’s speaker, Micael Hall. A capital city with a schizophrenic personality, this city by the Kennebec sits in one of the most beautiful valleys in all of Maine. Filled with gossipy neighbors, charming merchants, down-and-out vagabonds, and smartly dressed bureaucrats, there’s no other place in the state that can quite match it. A small city with big-city issues, and hearts bigger than the sturgeons that splash along its waterfront; it’s a place both simultaneously confident and insecure. Self-aware enough to know its limitations, but clueless enough to fully realize its potential, it remains the last place in Maine that has yet to be claimed by hipster and tourist alike. Mr. Hall’s new book is a guide to everything that makes Augusta so ... Augusta. From a calendar of local holidays to a profile on area neighborhoods to really weird history, as well as personal stories from local movers and shakers, this is your glimpse into one of the most intriguing places around. So welcome to Augusta, the best little city in New England. Seriously.

Michael Hall is the executive director of the Augusta Downtown Alliance and a member of the Main Street Maine program. A native of Florida, Michael moved up to Augusta in the winter of 2016 to realize his goal of working in a historic, urban setting. With a bachelor’s degree in history from Centre College, a master’s degree in communications from Rutgers University, and a master’s degree in architectural conservation from the University of Edinburgh, Mr. Hall said he feels fortunate to live and work in an environment where he gets to use all three of his degrees.

A big fan of Maine and an even bigger fan of Augusta, Mr. Hall takes full advantage of everything both places have to offer, including mountains, coast, rivers, and lakes. In his spare time, Mr. Hall enjoys reading Stephen King novels, getting out on the water, working with his board of directors, volunteering, and socializing over a beer.

The Kennebec Historical Society’s April presentation is free to the public (donations gladly accepted) and will take place at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, April 18, at the Viles Arboretum, located at 153 Hospital Street in Augusta.

Kennebec Historical Society, Inc.
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KENNEBEC HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC. - Application for Membership

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Town/City: _____ State: _____ ZIP code: _____

Telephone number: Home _____ Business _____

E-mail address: _____

Type: New ___ Renewal ___

Category: Individual (annual) - \$20 ___ Family (annual) - \$30 ___ Senior (60+) (annual) - \$15 ___

Senior Family (annual) - \$25 ___ Student (full-time) (annual) - \$15 ___

Life (1 person) - \$200 ___ Life (Family) - \$300 ___

Business (annual, fewer than 25 employees) - \$ 75 ___ Corporate (annual, 25 employees or more) - \$125 ___

Nonprofit group (annual) - \$35 ___ Donation (optional): \$ _____

This is a gift membership, given by: _____

(Please send to Kennebec Historical Society, P.O. Box 5582, Augusta, ME 04332-5582.)

This line and below for society use only:

Date received: _____

Cash _____ Check #: _____

file 2.8.2

Reading Room hours: Wednesday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.; other times by appointment

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Web site: www.kennebechistorical.org