



# Kennebec Current



Discovering, preserving, and disseminating Kennebec County history since 1891

Volume 28 Issue 5

KENNEBEC HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

September–October 2018

## Annual Meeting Mixes Business with Socializing, Dining

About 85 members and guests took part September 19 in the Kennebec Historical Society's annual meeting, which featured an election of board members, bylaws changes, a potluck supper for dozens of diners and a lecture by Maine State Historian Earle Shettleworth on Maine's participation in World War I.

South Parish Congregational Church in Augusta made its parish hall available for the event.

Nancy Merrick and Jan Rollins, both of Augusta, and Ernie Plummer, of Pittston, were elected to seats on the Board of Directors. The society originally had announced that Jean Carney Gallant, of China, was among the slate of candidates; but a long-term scheduling conflict prompted her to withdraw her candidacy.

Later, at its October 10 meeting, the board re-appointed Anne Cough and Billy Noble to board seats; appointed Phyllis vonHerrlich, who last served on the board in early 2016; and left one appointive board seat vacant.

Also at the annual meeting, KHS President Patsy Garside Crockett awarded a certificate of recognition to Bruce Kirkham, who stepped down as vice president after more than five years of service. Kirkham remains on the board of directors. Longtime life member Sally Joy received a certificate and gifts for her 22 years of service as the Kennebec Current newsletter editor. Her successor is Rich Eastman, of Augusta.

The pre-meeting potluck supper featured home-made offerings that spanned a wide swath of the culinary spectrum.

Sam Howes, of Jay, who works as an archivist at the Maine State Archives in Augusta, won the 50-50 raffle.

The membership approved changes to the society's bylaws, the most significant of which was the expansion of the society's Executive Committee from five members to a potential total of eight.

The Executive Committee formerly consisted of the president, the vice president (now called the executive vice president), the treasurer, the secretary, and one additional board member. The new Executive Committee consists of all of the above, plus the vice president for community relations, the administrative vice president, and another board member.



Kennebec Historical Society President Patsy Garside Crockett presents outgoing Vice President Bruce Kirkham with a certificate September 19 at the society's annual meeting in Augusta in recognition of his five and a half years of service in that office.

## After Sprint That Turned into Marathon, Editor Joy Steps Down

It was nice to be recognized at the annual meeting for the years I've spent doing editing and layout of the society's newsletter. I have affixed the certificate to the wall in my computer room. The peace lily is lovely and also has a place in that room. I will probably save the gift certificate to Longfellow's Greenhouses until spring. I have yet to see what use will be found for the giant Sharpie marker, but am open to the possibility that it may actually come in handy somehow, somewhere.

As I think back over my 22 years of involvement with the newsletter, I am grateful to Anthony Douin, who responded favorably to my suggestion that he let me try it for three issues and if he didn't like it, I'd bow out. I am also grateful to have had coaching and assistance from Hully McCarthy and Joe Owen. Twenty-two years later, I am delighted (and very grateful) that we have someone with Rich Eastman's background and ability to take over.

– Sally Joy



## President's Message



**R**eviewing the past year, I feel pride and gratitude for the Board of Directors and the volunteers and staff members who have helped our society grow its membership, host wonderful monthly programs, produce interesting newsletters, manage our expanding collection and maintain our building and grounds.

This year our society's membership surpassed 500 for the first time. We also strengthened all standing committees. The Personnel Committee, led by Emily Schroeder, produced many needed procedures that the board has approved. A new ad-hoc committee chaired by Jamie Logan is working on fulfilling the society's technology needs and setting policy for its use. The Finance Committee, chaired by our new treasurer, Doreen Harvey, is working hard to provide reports that are easily understood. Our new Publicity Committee, which split off from the Program Committee, also is chaired by Jamie Logan, and its members are anxious to work on publicity for KHS.

In addition, Scott Wood has become administrative director. In his new role, Scott keeps the building in good repair and the grounds well maintained, keeps the board and committees updated and makes sure the mailings go out on time; and he does all this while greeting and assisting visitors with a welcoming smile. Also, the newsletter has a new editor. After 22 years of doing a wonderful job, Sally Joy is stepping back and Rich Eastman will assume that role. We owe special thanks to Sally, and she has assured us she will be available to assist KHS, just as she always has been.

I'm proud to have played a small part in working with many members of this community to help take this organization one more step forward. Now we hope, with your help, to take the giant step of expanding our archive. For years we have needed a larger archive, as well as work and display space. After you elected me president a year ago, I formed the Carriage House Expansion Committee with Co-chairman Kent London. That committee has met 18 times since last January. After much discussion, compromise, hearing from experts and studying our needs, the committee voted unanimously to move forward with the latest Coffin Engineering proposal. The KHS Executive Committee has supported it unanimously. I expect we will need a professional fundraiser to launch a capital campaign. Then as we proceed, we will need all KHS members' support as Coffin Engineering leads us through the process of building an addition, roughly occupying the footprint of a carriage house that was on the KHS property many years ago.

Also this year, we opened the doors of the Henry Weld Fuller Jr. House for a number of events. On March 25, we honored the 1978 Cony High School New England Championship basketball team on the 40th anniversary of that achievement. Later in the spring, we met with local history teachers to find how we can work with area schools to create more interest in historical events. On September 8, we hosted many of our KHS Proprietors – the major donors to our Moira H. Fuller Annual Fund campaign – and honored one, Development Committee member John Bridge, with special biographical pages that were added to the society's Kennebec County Leadership History Book. We also had a silent auction and wine tasting at that event.

A special thank-you to the Nominating Committee, which provided us with a slate of members for your Board of Directors for 2019. I look forward to working with all returning members and new members.

As I sign off, I do so in memory of board member Clyde Berry, who died May 12.

— Patsy Garside Crockett, President

## Corrections

July–August edition, Page 2: In the list of new members, Dennis Doiron's name was spelled incorrectly.



### **KHS Board of Directors**

#### **President**

Patsy Garside Crockett

#### **Executive Vice President**

Kent London

#### **Treasurer**

Doreen Harvey

#### **Secretary**

Emily Schroeder

#### **Directors**

Stefanie Barley

Anne Cough

Bruce Kirkham

John Lawrence

Nancy Merrick

Billy Noble

Joseph Owen

Ernie Plummer

Jan Rollins

Phyllis vonHerrlich

#### **Membership Secretary**

Joan Plummer

#### **Advisory Committee**

Thomas Johnson

Mark Johnston

John O'Connor

Joseph M. O'Donnell

Joseph Owen/newsletter

Earle G. Shettleworth Jr.

William Sprague Jr.

#### **Newsletter Staff**

Rich Eastman/editor

Sally Joy/advisor

Scott Wood/production

#### **Total membership:**

519 on August 1

Life members: 183

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.

## Bounty of Historical Names Available to Expectant Parents

It seems many friends of mine have announced that they are expecting a baby. For others, the little darling has recently arrived.. Some are volunteers and/or members of this very society (you know who you are)! I've been experiencing a more pronounced connection to how KHS is preserving and increasing access to local history for this new generation. Fantastic news all around! In the midst of this wonderful reality, I have been thinking about the naming of babies and how the selection of baby names has been accomplished over the past couple of centuries.

Of course, many have been passed down or adopted from a relative or a famous or inspirational person. Biblical names have a rather consistently strong showing. Greek and Roman names appear here and there, as well as, of course, many other cultures' names as people emigrated. There is also a wide variety of babies named for what the name means (Rex, Leroy and Basil mean "king") and often after a desired disposition (Patience, Prudence, Hope). While more common in recent times, children might be also named for weather (Stormy, Sunny, Rain), seasons and months (April, Summer), or things (Flower, Blanket). Many choose a baby name for what works with a pattern of speech such as alliteration (Leona Louis Lewis) or a syllabic rhythm paired with the last name (two for a first name with a three-syllable surname, or maybe three for first name with a single-syllable surname) or to my chagrin, phonetic variation (Eethen for Ethan, Mykal for Michael). And then, some parents name to avoid the child's future teasing in school. My grandfather's name was Percy, and had he gone to school in my era, he'd have had a rough time of it. Lastly, parents may choose to name their baby with what flows easily off the tongue, that they won't get exhausted calling out, or that either can or can't have a nickname.

The connection to the Kennebec Historical Society is this: On a daily basis the committed volunteer staff and I are adding new searchable names into the database records as well as re-entering for each related record our regularly historic personages. On our website, anyone can find, by using the "genealogy" tab, a surname list of 88,213 entries covering 47,687 surnames. Even more are accessible and available on the most recent updated copy in our Reading Room for researchers. We are determined to expand searchable connections to the community of Kennebec County personages and their related materials. Every new name I add in is a personal joy. If helping us fulfill this mission of adding in increasingly more searchable names excites your need to make a meaningful difference, please come see us. We could use your efforts!

According to the Social Security website, these are the most popular baby names in these select years:

1880 – Mary, Anna, Emma, Elizabeth, Margaret, John, William, James, George, Charles (nationwide)

1918 – Helen, Dorothy, Margaret, Ruth, John, William, James, Robert, Charles (nationwide)

1960 – Susan, Linda, Brenda, Karen, Donna, David, Michael, Robert, James, John (in Maine)

2017 – Emma, Olivia, Ava, Isabella, Sophia, Liam, Noah, William, James, Logan (nationwide)

The names above, all in markedly different eras, are rather safe and acceptable. My husband's name is John, and I often reflect on the solidity and warmth that his name offers. On the other hand, my name is rather unusual, and I spend much time explaining how it is pronounced, as it comes from Norwegian. Thus, I am intrigued by some of the more unusual first names, feeling a sort of camaraderie with these folks. I would like to share with you some of these lesser-used names that I have been coming across recently in manuscripts, letters and history books at KHS, circa 1840-1908. I am not including the surnames, but some might be obvious. Arno, Rufus, Erastus, Nehemiah, Jabez, Silas, Elisha, Amory, Moses, Eleazer, Dorcas, Meltiah, Church, Roxana, Issachar, Greenlief, Reuel, Zilpha, Esreff, Oramandel, Claradel, Irl, Theophilus, Marcellus, Todo, Clorinda, Pheobe, Artemas. What is the story behind your name? Care to share it with us?

*Kari Mullen-Mclaughlin, Archival Intern*

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### ❁ In Memoriam ❁

**Cynthia Olmsted Bean, 88**, of Hallowell, a Kennebec Historical Society life member, died October 2. She was a graduate of Bryn Mawr College in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. She was active in the Daughters of the American Revolution and Girl Scouts, and was a longtime member of the Christ Church on the Common in Gardiner. A memorial service was scheduled for 11 a.m. October 22 at the church.

**Peter Oakes, 82**, of Randolph, a Kennebec Historical Society member, died September 18 at his home. A Rangeley native and University of Maine graduate, he worked as a civil engineer for the Maine Department of Transportation and, later, for Casey and Godfrey, a Gardiner engineering firm. He had been an artillery officer in the Maine Army National Guard, a Randolph selectman, and a member of the Randolph United Methodist Church board of directors.

## The Collections Box

**L**etters. Lots of letters. Over the years I have read the hundreds of letters we have received through purchase and donation. I have read 10 new letters since the last Collections Box.

The topics vary widely, encompassing most of life's events from birth to death. I have read love letters, birth announcements, letters from school ("lots of pretty girls here"), letters sent home from vacationers, and letters from job holders ("I hate this lumbering. I'm cold and wet"). Many are business oriented concerning lumber orders, shipping plans, travel records, and estate settlements. Others are on legal topics such as surveyors of the poor in one town asking another surveyor for reimbursement of costs, title transfers, settlement of debts, and indentures. And of course, there are letters about family matters and friendships. In short, lots of letters.

However, recently I received a letter, unique in my reading experience. On May 5, 1927, F.H. Beale Furniture Co. Complete House Furnishing located at 211-215 Water Street in Augusta sent a statement to Mrs. Henry Cassidy concerning the outstanding balance of 59 cents for one shade in her account. Written below on the statement was the following: "If you don't pay this before sunrise, I'll set fire to your coal pile or what have you and how do you suppose we can run our business when such dead beats as you won't pay their bills."

I love my job.

For the Collections Committee  
— Bruce Kirkham



## The Kennebec Historical Society Welcomes the Following New Members

Diane Hastings - Potomac, Maryland (Life)

Linda Keaten - Fryeburg

Tom Daggett - Augusta

Beverly Bustin-Hatheway - Hallowell

Nancy Rines - Gardiner

Tom and Karen Foster - Augusta

Jean E. Carney-Gallant - South China

Valerie Dawes - Manchester

Elaine Miller - Augusta

Dale McCormick - Augusta (Life)

Thomas M. Valley - Whitefield

Bob Wyman - Ipswich, Massachusetts (Life)

*and continues to recognize...*

### Sustaining Business Members

(\$1,000+ annual)

Kennebec Savings Bank

Dufour's Welding and Machining Services, Inc.

### Sponsoring Business Members

(\$500+ annual)

Pine State Trading Company, Distributor, Gardiner

## Improved Collections Database is More Conducive to Research

**O**ver the past few months, the catalogers at the society have been working to create a collections database in which photographs and documents can be viewed. In many cases, digital images of letters, newspaper clippings, ledgers, scrapbooks, photographs, and postcards are available for users without the actual item being removed from the archive.

This means that, for independent researchers, we can open up the reading room and provide access to our database without requiring a reading room assistant to be present. All that will be required is that the building is open; that is, at least two staff members need to be present. If an independent researcher has questions, then the staff can answer them.

We will provide orientation workshops for anyone who wants to search the database independently.

For others, we will maintain reading room hours once per week, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Wednesdays, in the fall. As in all cases, it is important that you call ahead to assure that the building is open.

## Research-ready: Story from Early Augusta's Post Office History

Recently, we have been preparing the society library for an inventory. While looking through the shelved books and pamphlets, I came upon a small pamphlet titled “Official Local Postal Guide, V01 N02, February 1891.” Paging through it, I discovered that it contained a 10-page article titled “The History of Postal Affairs in Augusta” by Walter D. Stinson (1857-1901). Stinson was, among other things, the postmaster in Augusta, a charter member of the Kennebec Historical Society, and a nephew of James G. Blaine’s wife. In the July-August 2002 issue of the Kennebec Historical Society Newsletter, Joe Owen also indicated that Stinson was married to Susanne Hall Owen (1866-1944), Joe’s grandfather’s aunt.

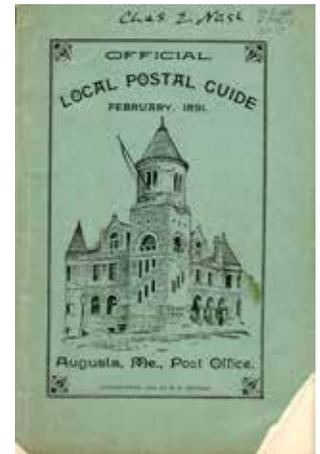
I was drawn to this article because it addressed the history of the post office in Augusta up to the time that the old post office on Water Street was constructed and addressed some of the reasons it became, in 1890, the 11th-largest post office in the United States. The article has been transcribed and may be found in the collections database under item ID 1891.5000.0316.

Stinson provides an exhaustive list of Augusta postmasters of the 19th century along with brief stories about their lives. One of them was about Robert Charles Vose, who was appointed postmaster on May 3, 1814. Like most other postmasters, he did not depend on his government job for his full livelihood. Indeed, in addition to running the post office, he kept a store where he also helped Revolutionary War veterans get access to their pensions. A quick look at the subject of Revolutionary War pensions in the collections database revealed a ledger that Fort Western donated to KHS in 1992 when it deaccessioned much of its paper holdings. The only problem with this item is that we have no idea who kept it or when it was composed. Since this ledger starts in 1818, this gives us a big hint about its origin. A full transcription of the very closely spaced handwritten document should help determine if Robert Vose was the person who created the ledger.

The article also provides a timeline for changes in postal rates over the course of the 19th century. It indicates that until the 1840s, postal rates for a single sheet of paper sent 250, 500 and 1000 miles were 12½, 18¾, and 25 cents, double for two sheets. For the average person, this was too expensive to make mailing a letter anything but a luxury. Indeed, he points out this is why people wrote letters with writing on both sides and even on the edges of the paper. The era of cheap postage started in the 1840s and was a key to the later publications of Gannett and Morse as well as others and the need for the grand post office built in 1890.

There is much more in the article of interest, but there is a particularly interesting section on the horse-drawn, nine-passenger Concord coach that carried the mail through Augusta in 1827. It includes the slaughterhouse, Craig’s Store near Britt’s Gully, Kennedy House, Nolan’s, and Hinkley’s plain and barn, all names that it would be interesting to confirm.

— Ernest L. Plummer, Archivist



## Changes Improve Area Around Society Building

Leaves aren’t the only things that are changing this time of year around KHS. Our next-door neighbor Gerry Gaboury has wanted to clean up our backyard for quite some time. In September, he and his friend Guy “Gee” Richard were able to cut down some of the small saplings and pull up all those nasty weeds. After some heavy-duty raking and lots of good old-fashioned elbow grease, the backyard looks great!

The city of Augusta has also been busy this fall. At the start of October, the city sent over a crew of construction workers to repave our front sidewalk. The sidewalk was in rough shape, with numerous potholes and uneven pavement made up of many loose pieces. The new sidewalk to the west of our driveway has been tapered to divert water away from our driveway and building and the eastern side of the driveway is now smooth. The sidewalk is here just in time to make shoveling snow a little easier.



## KHS Hosts Kennebec Proprietor's Wine Tasting



Lorie Mastemaker, left, and KHS President Patsy Garside Crockett

On September 8, the Kennebec Historical Society held its first wine tasting event, honoring our Kennebec Proprietors, the major donors to our Moira H. Fuller Annual Fund campaign. In addition to sampling a variety of wines served by KHS member Lorie Mastemaker, who precisely described the uniqueness of each wine to tasters, invitees were also able to participate in a variety of other activities. Christopher Faris prepared an impressive assortment of hors d'oeuvres and played piano music throughout the event. Nancy Merrick organized a silent auction in which participants were able to bid on a variety of items donated by local businesses. Phyllis vonHerrlich was instrumental in preparing the event, and she also told a short historical story, while Glenn Adams encouraged the attendees to participate in a 50/50 raffle. Lastly, KHS' own John Bridge was recognized by the KHS Development Committee with pages to be added to the Kennebec County Leadership History Book. The book is a way to recognize the significant contributions of individuals and organizations to Kennebec County communities.

Sponsors for the wine tasting included Norman Elvin, of G&E Roofing; and Roger Pomerleau, the KHS Development Committee chairman. Wine was provided by the SOPO Wine Company. Items donated for the silent auction were contributed by Glenn Adams, Berry & Berry Floral, The Black & Tan, John and Charlene Bridge, Cushnoc Brewing Co., Christopher Faris, Lorie & Ian Mastemaker, Otto's on the River, Russell's Gems, Scrummy Afters, Shipwreck Coffee, and Slates Restaurant and Bakery.

The wine tasting was the first hosted at the Kennebec Historical Society's headquarters, the Henry Weld Fuller Jr. House, located at 107 Winthrop Street in Augusta. KHS hopes to continue to offer events that will encourage members to visit the society and learn what KHS has to offer. Many other KHS volunteers participated in much of the behind the scenes work, and without their help, the event would not have happened.



John and Charlene Bridge

## Norm Elvin Honored by Kennebec Historical Society

Augusta philanthropist Norm Elvin, co-founder of G&E Roofing, was honored Wednesday by the Kennebec Historical Society. The group presented Elvin with a framed copy of his biography, which will also be added to the society's Kennebec County Leadership History Book on display at KHS headquarters in Augusta. The presentation was made at G&E Roofing's offices in Augusta.

Elvin co-founded G&E Roofing in 1975 and has for years been a generous donor to KHS and numerous other nonprofits, civic groups and charities. Recipients have included the Kennebec County YMCA, United Way, and HealthReach Hospice. He was recipient of the 2018 Peter G. Thompson Lifetime Achievement Award from the Kennebec Valley Chamber of Commerce.

The September 26 KHS presentation was made by Roger Pomerleau, chairman of the KHS Development Committee. KHS President Patsy Crockett, and other members of KHS attended the presentation.



From left, KHS Development Committee members Glenn Adams, Nancy Merrick, and Chairman Roger Pomerleau, along with KHS President Patsy Garside Crockett, at far right, give Norm Elvin, second from right, a framed copy of his Kennebec County Leadership History Book pages.

## Upcoming Programs

### November Public Presentation:

### “Our World of Animals in Photographs and Stories”

Join two sisters as they share their passion for travel and photographing wildlife around the world and share enlightening and often humorous stories of their adventures. Their first book, *Can I Carry Your Luggage?*, introduces the reader to the multitudes and variety of animals living on all seven continents; and their new book, *Upside Down and Backwards*, focuses on their two favorite continents, Africa and Antarctica. Whether being bush piloted into a tented camp to view the great migration in Kenya and Tanzania, trying to sleep with lions resting against their tent, following a young leopard as she hunts, or climbing up the side of a dormant volcano in Uganda to photograph mountain gorillas, the travelers find that Africa is an overwhelming assault on one's senses. The remoteness and beauty of the icebergs, crystal clear water and countless numbers of penguins, whales and sea birds in Antarctica drew them back to that continent for the sixth time earlier this year. Their photographs of the wildlife that enrich our lives bring their stories to life in their engaging presentation.



Shelly Lance-Fulk



Jacklyn Amtower

Our KHS speakers, Shelley Lance-Fulk and Jacklyn Amtower, are sisters living in Beaver Cove, a few miles north of Greenville. They have been traveling and photographing wildlife around the world since their teens. They have visited all seven continents on multiple occasions and their passports have stamps from more than 135 countries. Their experiences of adventure, enlightenment and respect for animals are shared in tales and stories with accompanying photographs in their two books, *Can I Carry Your Luggage?* and *Upside Down and Backwards*. Their time throughout the year is divided



among traveling, sharing their photographs and stories at artisan fairs, and speaking engagements. The sisters enjoy the experience of meeting new people and observing other cultures and wildlife, but their appreciation for the state of Maine always draws them home to the animals and splendor of their beautiful community.

The Kennebec Historical Society's November presentation is co-sponsored by the Maine State Library and is free to the public (donations gladly accepted). The presentation will take place at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, November 14, at the Maine State Library, located at 230 State Street in Augusta.

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## Victorian Tea Party to Be Held December 9

For December, in lieu of our monthly program, KHS will host a Victorian tea party at its headquarters, 107 Winthrop Street in Augusta. Please come and join us as we celebrate the holiday season from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday, December 9. If the weather does not cooperate, we'll host the tea party at the same time the following Sunday, December 16.

There will be a variety of goodies to sample including cookies, snacks, coffee, and of course, tea! Enjoy the festive decorations and holiday musical selections by Christopher Faris. Anyone who is interested in decorating, serving, or bringing some tasty treats is asked to contact Anne Cough, either by email at [acough60@aol.com](mailto:acough60@aol.com) or by phone at 582-2823. Hope to see you there!

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## City/Town/Village Annual Reports

We suspect by now all the municipalities in Kennebec County have held their annual meetings and published their city, town, or village annual reports. KHS has an extensive collection of over 1,800 town reports dating back to the 19th century, although the series from some municipalities are incomplete. We would welcome 2018 reports as donations as well as other years if you have them. Thanks for your help in making our collection complete for interested patrons.

Kennebec Historical Society, Inc.  
PO Box 5582  
Augusta, ME 04332-5582  
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**KENNEBEC HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC. - Application for Membership**

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Town/City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: Home \_\_\_\_\_ Business \_\_\_\_\_

Email 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

**Business hours:** 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Wednesday through Friday **Assisted research hours:** 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Wednesday or by appointment

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