



# Kennebec Current



Discovering, preserving, and disseminating Kennebec County history since 1891

Volume 29 Issue 2

KENNEBEC HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

March–April 2019

## KHS Widens Search for Collaboration Partners

The Kennebec Historical Society continues to contact organizations within Kennebec County in search of ways to collaborate. After a productive 2018 meeting with the Chelsea Historical Society, KHS President Patsy Crockett and Administrative Director Scott Wood have been promoting all KHS has to offer to other potential collaborators, with some success. In late January, they met with the Old Fort Western director and curator, Linda Novak, and discussed ways in which the two organizations could assist one another. KHS hopes to help Old Fort Western with its Maine bicentennial lecture series, “The Rise of Industry,” in the fall of 2020.

In March, Crockett and Wood met with University of Maine at Augusta President Rebecca Wyke and UMA Vice President of University Advancement and Chief of Staff Joyce Blanchard. They discussed several ways to collaborate, including UMA’s assistance in finding students interested in internships at KHS, providing a space to host some of the society’s monthly programs, and promotion of the society through the university’s social media (See President’s Message on Page 2).

KHS also has approached the Windsor Historical Society and has arranged to participate in the Windsor Fair by staffing a table in one of the buildings in the historic village on the fairgrounds. KHS will have a representative for the duration of the fair – from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., August 25 to September 2 – to explain volunteer opportunities, encourage membership and talk about the importance of preserving Kennebec County documents, photographs, manuscripts, books, maps, and scrapbooks in the climate-controlled KHS archive at the Henry Weld Fuller Jr. House in Augusta.

In May, KHS plans to host Maine State Archivist David Cheever at a KHS wine tasting event. Cheever will talk about celebrating Maine’s statehood bicentennial. The wine tasting also will serve as the society’s kickoff of its ambitious membership goal of signing up 1,891 members by May 7, 2021, the 130th birthday of the Kennebec Historical Society. Achieving the membership goal would mean increasing the current total by nearly 1,400. The goal’s numeric total was chosen as a tribute to the year of the society’s founding, 1891. Details about this event will be available at the May KHS program; on the society’s website and its Facebook page; on its new Instagram page, which can be found by searching for “kennebechistorical”; or by calling society’s headquarters at 622-7718 in May for more details.



Old Fort Western Director and Curator Linda Novak, left, discusses with KHS President Patsy Crockett and KHS Administrative Director Scott Wood the possibility of collaboration between the two organizations.

Photo by Lorie Mastemaker

## Fuller Fund Hits the Ground Running

The Kennebec Historical Society hasn’t even begun its solicitation of member contributions for the 2019 Moira H. Fuller Annual Fund, yet the total collected so far this year already is \$22,165.

The fund, which provides the bulk of the society’s money for operating expenses, was founded in 2008 with an initial major donation from the late philanthropist Elsie Viles, of Augusta, and named for one of her friends, Moira H. Fuller, formerly of Winthrop.

The amount collected so far puts KHS about 40 percent of the way toward meeting its fundraising goal for this year. The goal is \$55,000. The society fell short of that goal in each of the past two years, but the amount collected to date gives the Development Committee confidence that this year, the 12th year of the campaign, will be different.

Also, the committee is ahead of schedule in preparing to send out donation requests to the membership. Those letters, which usually are sent in June, are expected to be mailed in May.

## President's Message



Every day I think how lucky we are to live in Kennebec County. It's small enough that we can know our neighbors, the folks on our streets and in our towns and cities. We all want to help each other succeed. This is how I felt when I called to arrange a meeting with University of Maine at Augusta President Rebecca "Becky" Wyke.

I have known Becky for many years, since when I was a legislator and she was commissioner of the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, appointed by Governor John Baldacci. This month KHS Administrative Director Scott Wood and I met with President Wyke and Joyce Blanchard, UMA vice president of university advancement and chief of staff, to discuss ways UMA and KHS could work together to benefit both organizations.

UMA opened its doors in Augusta in 1965 and now has 5,470 students, the third-largest enrollment in the University of Maine System. After KHS had been inactive, with its collection stored in boxes for a number of years, negotiations took place between UMA and KHS. KHS moved into a beautiful room at what is now the Bennett D. Katz Library at UMA. This was the opportunity KHS needed to start to become the wonderful historical society it is today.

After a productive meeting with President Wyke, KHS now will hold some of its monthly programs in UMA's Jewett Hall. With this collaboration, not only will KHS have the use of a beautiful, large area for a program, but also UMA will list the society's programs in its newsletters and advertise its events on its electronic sign on Civic Center Drive. We sincerely hope that many students will attend our programs and also become members of KHS.

President Wyke also said she will work with professors to help create interest among UMA students in internships at KHS. What a wonderful opportunity for the students to learn firsthand about the archiving process and working in an office. This is also a chance for KHS to get help in dealing with its ever-expanding collection and to attract new members.

After attending one KHS program, a professor in the Senior College at UMA expressed interest in having his students tour KHS to learn what the society has in its collection. Arrangements are being worked on for this class of about 38 students to be welcomed at KHS by Archivist Ernie Plummer.

What's that old saying? Everything old is new again. What started in the early 1990s as a collaboration between UMA and KHS will continue in 2019, because we are a small area, we know each other, and we want to help each other.

Please stop in at 107 Winthrop Street in Augusta and see your Kennebec Historical Society. Happy spring!

— Patsy Garside Crockett, President



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#### Total membership:

513 on April 7

Life members: 188



Rebecca Wyke, University of Maine at Augusta President

UMA file photo

## KHS Book Sale

The Society will hold a book sale from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., May 18 at 107 Winthrop Street. Books may be dropped off there between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. Pickup of books can be arranged by calling 622-7718. Please include no *National Geographics* or other magazines, computer books, textbooks, *Readers Digest* condensed books, or VHS tapes, simply because no one will buy them.

The Kennebec Current encourages letters to the editor.

Email letters to [kennhis1891@gmail.com](mailto:kennhis1891@gmail.com).

All letters are subject to editing for taste, style, and length.

## A Notch in the Tines of Manchester Forks: The Corner Store

Settled in 1775, in what is now the town of Manchester, the confluence of the ways to and from Winthrop, Readfield, Augusta, Hallowell and Litchfield used to be called “The Forks.” This descriptor of five intersecting roadways was likely to have predated and led to the incorporation in 1850 of the town, which was pieced together from lands of these very communities. For the first four years of incorporation the town name was “Kennebec,” then changed to “Manchester” because its mail was being misdirected to Kennebunk.

Although the roads have shifted a bit over the years, Western Avenue/ U.S. Route 202 is a major thoroughfare between Winthrop and Augusta. Granite Hill Road still leads us past the granite quarry to Hallowell. Pond Road, the prestigious address touching upon the Augusta Country Club golf course and the eastern side of Lake Cobbosseecontee (an Abenaki word for “the place of many sturgeon”), used to be called Quaker Road, for the Quaker meetinghouse at the top of the hill. It still leads to Litchfield and Purgatory Village. Readfield Road to Readfield is now more commonly referred to as Route 17. I remember, sadly, in the early 1990s, the town’s decision to take down a magnificent tree to shift that road to allow Pond Road to be accessible directly opposite. Convenience often outweighs beauty in these situations.

While much has changed in our communities over the years, we often see that some things maintain a certain continuity. One of these things is on the corner of U.S. Route 202 and Pond Road — in its latest form, a store called Mulligan’s. This corner store got a facelift and reimagining in the last year. A major renovation with a further setback of a new building and fresh gas pumps included the installation of the first Dunkin’ Donuts franchise anywhere to have the new “Dunkin” signage. The old building of Mulligan’s used to be Daggett’s before that. Even since my arrival in town in 1990, I remember the Daggett’s building sitting close to the road and a few years later being set back from the road to allow for a run of new gas pumps. I enjoyed the ubiquitous Dagwood sandwich (that for some reason is served in a pita pocket) from that establishment quite often back in the day.



Mulligan’s on U.S. Route 202 in Manchester

Photo by Rich Eastman

But a store presiding on this corner goes back a long time. A 1929 article in the *Daily Kennebec Journal* celebrated the W.E. Atwood store, then owned by William Atwood for nine years, for having just become part of the Independent Grocers. There have been of a line of stores with various owners on this site for over 150 years. Alden Sampson had built the then current structure prior to 1854 (that brings it back 75 years). In 1882 it was Jesse Wood who was grocer and postmaster. Samuel Weston was another owner wherein Alden Sampson took over about 1912. Other owners were E. M Boynton, Isaac Wadsworth, George Wing, Wood and Kilbreth, Robert

True, Bowman and Cummings. Bowman and Wood held on to it for at least 20 years apiece. The suggestion is that the store site had been serving the public with goods and groceries since at least 1779.

In 1930, the Manchester General Store and adjacent house was “razed by fire,” said the papers of the time. Thanks to the “country boys in shirtsleeves,” the other homes of the community were saved. It was soon rebuilt by Atwood and his partners, and they had a grand re-opening within the year. By 1936 John F. Turner, an Augusta grocer and supplier, sold the store to Frank B. True, of Augusta. We can imagine such a prime corner location at Manchester Forks forever remaining that of the general store/convenience store variety.

I know some of you were wondering how Purgatory Village, as mentioned in the second paragraph, got its name. The story is that in August 1776, William Gardiner came to inspect the local dam in that area of Litchfield. Someone asked the next day where he had spent the night and he replied; “in Purgatory — the mosquitoes and black flies were so thick we couldn’t get a wink of sleep.” I had the pleasure of having my first apartment in Maine be the Old Purgatory Post Office building, with the dam nearby and the stream running behind it, I can attest to the same experience, but then we had screens.

— Story by Kari Mullen-Mclaughlin, archival intern



KHS Archives file photo

# The Collections Box



**A**s frost heave subsides and sand is swept up off the roads, many of us will take a day trip to get out of the house and end our winter confinement.

Today with MapQuest or a GPS, it is easy to select a location and instantly be provided with a route and a driving time. To go from Augusta to Lewiston, Brenda, your GPS voice, will either suggest U.S. Route 202 or Interstate 95. A century ago, it was not that easy.

State and federal highways were not assigned numbers until 1926. Without route numbers, there could not be the road maps we so fondly remember from our youth. So in 1919, your only help in finding your way was to call on the experience of your friends and neighbors. Help arrived in 1922 in the form of the American Automobile League’s *Automobile Green Book, Volume 1*, which covered the New England states. Affixed to the inside of the back cover was a large fold out map of cities, towns, and villages. Lines which linked towns were given numbers which referred to “Trips.” Thus, Trip 402, labeled “Augusta to Portland, ME. Via Winthrop and Lewiston.” Each “trip” provided detailed directions describing landmarks on the way and giving the distances between them. The pages were replete with advertisements and notes at the entries for larger towns, sometimes including the names of lodgings and auto repair facilities.

Now we will go again, almost a century ago, from Augusta to Lewiston: “Trip 402. Augusta to Portland ME. 65.5 miles. Via Winthrop and Lewiston. Mostly State road; some stretches of dirt.”

With an atlas to find the destination, one could piece together “Trips,” to travel pretty much anywhere in New England.

- 0.0 Augusta. P.O. on left; straight ahead upgrade, following trolley.
- 0.4 Junction of five streets, Park and monument on right; curve slightly right with trolley on Western Ave.
- 3.0 Y, after passing old barn on right; turn right, leaving heavy poles, turning left at Y just beyond.
- 4.9 Manchester. Y, store on left; keep left
- 7.0 East Winthrop P.O. on left; straight ahead.
- 10.8 Winthrop. P.O. on right; straight ahead upgrade, bearing right at Y just beyond, and at four corners at station turn left. (11.1) Winthrop House  
Norcross Motor Sales



- The Adams House  
Garage De Luxe 171-179 Park Street  
Weegar Auto Supply Co.

- 12.5 Disregard right hand road at top of hill.
- 14.7 Monmouth. Straight ahead and through four corners at 15.2.
- 16.5 At barn on left, turn right around farmhouse.
- 20.5 Y, near foot of hill, house on left bank; bear left.
- 22.5 End of road; turn left across bridge.
- 23.3 Greene Straight ahead, bearing right beyond station. Sabbatus Pond about 2 miles over to left.
- 31.4 Lewiston. Straight ahead over bridge across Androscoggin River.

But other problems assailed the motorist. The most common and most infuriating was flat tires. In the early years of the previous century, my mother, her sister and my grandparents frequently took Sunday drives. My mother told me that a trip was pleasant if they only had one flat tire, because a single flat was infrequent, three or four more common.

The problem of the first flat was solved with the spare. If the car had two spares, as some did, you were still good to go, but the third flat required a ritual. The passengers left the car and sat in the grass along the side of the road. Any comments or other conversation were absolutely forbidden. Grandpa got out a jack, a lug wrench, tire irons, a pump, and patching tools, and set to work. After the car was jacked up and a chock placed under a wheel to keep the car from rolling and the tire removed, he tried to find the nail or whatever had caused the puncture and remove it. Then, using the first tire iron, he tried to break the bead of the tire away from the rim. Using the iron as a point of entry, he ran a second iron around the rim to break the whole tire free. Carefully removing the tube, he looked for the puncture.

When he found it, he opened his patching kit, and using a small metal file-like tool, roughed up the area around the hole. He then spread a good amount of liquid Vulcanizer over the hole, set fire to it with a match, and when the flames stopped, applied a patch. He then used a small roller to make sure the patch was secure. After a short wait, he pumped up the tube to be certain the patch was holding, let out the air, and inserted the tube into the tire casing, being certain to insert the valve stem through the hole in the rim. Again, using two tire irons, he put the tire back on the rim, pumped the tire up, and installed it back on the car. He then let the jack down and waited a few minutes again to be sure the patch held. If there was a fourth flat, which according to my mother, happened occasionally, he started all over again. And no one waiting on the verge dared say a word.

Spring is here and you have a GPS and puncture proof tires. Happy motoring.

## Research-ready: A Small Picture Opens a Fun Rabbit Hole

Recently we received a small 2¼-by-3¾-inch photo from Jane Chase in Whitefield that apparently belonged to someone in Randolph between 1920 and 2000. On the back was the word “airport.”

As we discussed it, the buildings, both in numbers and shape, did not seem to match those of the Augusta State Airport. We decided to go to the airport and take a picture to see if we were right. That didn’t help as there were too many buildings on the left, the terminal seemed at a different angle, and the rounded-roof building on the right was missing.

These looked like 1930s automobiles, but why were so many



In this recently donated photo from the 1930s, looking west, the Augusta State Airport terminal building can be seen in the background at center left, and a round-topped Quonset hut can be seen at center right.

KHS archive image



The above photo, a 1937 aerial view of the Augusta State Airport, looking northeast, is on a page from the brochure at left. It shows the same terminal building and Quonset hut.

KHS archive image

people at the airport? We needed a photo of the airport back in the 1930s. As it turned out, a search of the database brought up four issues of the *Maine Aero Rendezvous* program, spanning the period 1934-1940. The 1937 issue contained an aerial view of the whole field. Clearly, the building in the background was the terminal in 1937. The round-topped Quonset hut was present, as were the buildings to the left in the picture. We can now say that the newly donated picture was indeed from the 1930s and the event it pictured was likely the Maine Aero Rendezvous. The airport shown in the picture can be identified as the Augusta State Airport.

We would appreciate it if anyone knows more about the Maine Aero Rendezvous, has issues of programs we don’t have, or has early photos of the airport to add to our collection. We also want to thank Jane Chase for providing a fun challenge to a happy history detective.

— Ernest L. Plummer, archivist

## ❁ In Memoriam ❁

**Norman Abbott Gosline**, 83, of Gardiner, died March 23. The Gardiner High School and University of Maine graduate and Kennebec Historical Society member received many professional awards during his career of more than a half-century in real estate appraisal, brokerage and consulting. He was a 50-plus-year member and former president of the Gardiner Rotary Club, was a member of the Land for Maine’s Future board and was involved in many other community activities. He recently donated several antique local maps to KHS.

**John Nathan McAuley Jr.**, 88, of Augusta, died February 12 in Scarborough. He was a lifelong Augusta resident, a Cony High School graduate, an Army veteran, the first African-American member of the Augusta police force, a 25-year U.S. Postal Service employee, a pilot of more than 30 years, and a former Kennebec Historical Society member. He is survived by two daughters, two siblings, and six grandchildren.

## Social Event Aims to Demystify KHS Volunteer Opportunities



The Kennebec Historical Society’s Maine Museums Day display that was presented Feb. 5 at the State House to describe volunteering at KHS is re-created here Feb. 14 at a volunteer social at the Henry Weld Fuller Jr. House in Augusta.

Photos by Scott Wood

On Thursday, February 14, Valentine’s Day, the Kennebec Historical Society held its first volunteer social at its headquarters, the Henry Weld Fuller Jr. House. This was an opportunity for current volunteers to mingle with potential volunteers and learn about the numerous volunteer tasks available. KHS has many volunteer opportunities in a variety of areas, including administrative tasks, archival cataloging, updating date files, solving computer problems, and general building maintenance. When seen as a whole, these numerous opportunities can be overwhelming. The goal of the social was to break down any inhibitions or fears that potential volunteers might have by having current volunteers share their experiences and their sense of accomplishment about the work completed. Current volunteers understand the importance and significance of the work they are doing, but also expressed how much fun they have volunteering at KHS.

explanation of how to catalog, and a listing of jobs some of our current volunteers do. For refreshments, there were baked goods, such as orange triangles, chocolate hazelnut brownie bites, strawberry meringue kisses, cream cheese brownies, juice, coffee and tea available for attendees. Tours of the house. The archivist, Ernest Plummer, gave a behind-the-scenes look at our archive areas. Administrative Director Scott Wood hopes to continue socials to spread the word about how easy it is to volunteer at KHS and to express the importance KHS has in preserving the history of Kennebec county.



KHS archivist Ernest Plummer explains work opportunities to volunteers in the KHS archival office

There was a display of archival materials used, an explanation of how to catalog, and a listing of jobs some of our current volunteers do. For refreshments, there were baked goods, such as orange triangles, chocolate hazelnut brownie bites, strawberry meringue kisses, cream cheese brownies, juice, coffee and tea available for attendees. Tours of the house. The archivist, Ernest Plummer, gave a behind-the-scenes look at our archive areas. Administrative Director Scott Wood hopes to continue socials to spread the word about how easy it is to volunteer at KHS and to express the importance KHS has in preserving the history of Kennebec county.

Special thanks to KHS volunteers Kari Mullen-McLaughlin, Cynthia Thompson, Hannah McLaughlin and Ernest Plummer for taking time away from their usual “labor of love” and making themselves available to have conversations with prospective volunteers.



Baked goods prepared by volunteers cover a table at the volunteer social

## The Kennebec Historical Society Welcomes the Following New Members

Pete Bolduc – Winslow

Terrence F. McCabe – Farmingdale

Brigadier General Dwaine and Brenda Drummond – South China

Brigadier General Eric and Sandra Lind – Augusta

Vicki Oliver – Manchester

Marguerite Andrews – Augusta

Christopher Landroth – Manchester

*and continues to recognize...*

**Sustaining Business Members (\$1,000+ annual)**

Kennebec Savings Bank

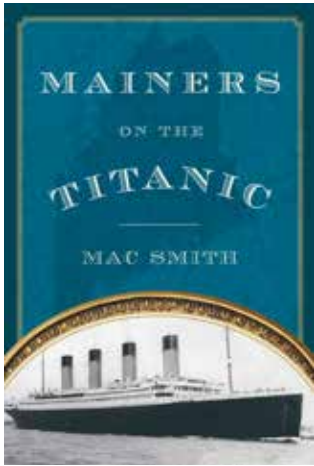
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## Upcoming Programs

### May Public Presentation: “Mainers on the Titanic”



Cover photo by Mac Smith

When the passenger ship RMS Titanic sank on April 15, 1912, in the frigid North Atlantic, its passengers included several who had ties to Maine. Author Mac Smith, tells their stories in the 2014 book “Mainers on the Titanic.” As the featured speaker for May, Smith will do the same for the Kennebec Historical Society.

Many of the Maine-related Titanic victims were wealthy summer visitors to Mount Desert Island, but other residents of the state were aboard as well. Smith’s book includes descriptions of them and of sinking-related events in the state at that time. The book recalls Mainers’ agonizing day-to-day wait for news of what happened to their loved ones aboard the ship and tells the stories of Maine passengers from their boarding to the sinking, their rescue, and their arrival back in the country; and, for those among the more than 1,500 who died, the retrieval of their bodies and transportation of them to Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Smith, a Navy veteran of the 1991 Persian Gulf War and former news reporter for the Bar Harbor Times, lives in Stockton Springs, in the village of Sandy Point, where he is restoring the family homestead. This is his first book.

This KHS presentation is free to the public, although donations are accepted gladly. The lecture, to be followed by light refreshments, will take place at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 15, at Christ Episcopal Church, located at 2 Dresden Avenue in Gardiner.

## June Public Presentation: “Risking Lives and Fortunes: Maine’s Underground Railroad”

Maine’s crucial part in the Underground Railroad, which helped runaway slaves escape to Canada in the mid-1800s, included a number of Augusta-area residents who put their lives and fortunes in peril by breaking the law — the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850.

History books focus on the prominence of Harriet Beecher Stowe and Hannibal Hamlin when recounting Maine’s connection to the Underground Railroad. However, lesser-known Mainers from Kittery to Fort Fairfield formed a network of illegal “safe houses” operated by “conductors” and “station managers” to hide slaves from slave hunters.

Author Mark Alan Leslie, whose historical novel *True North: Tice’s Story* was a Publishers Weekly Featured Book when it was released, will speak on the Underground Railroad for the Kennebec Historical Society at 6:30 p.m. June 19 at South Parish Congregational Church, located at 9 Church Street in Augusta.

Leslie weaves a tale of the brave families — including Farwells, Nasons, and Lambs, of Augusta — who housed and fed slaves in hidden rooms, attics, and elsewhere while the slaves were en route to the next secret “way station” on the “railroad.” Maine’s Underground Railroad was “a marvel of secret connections from churches to hack stands, second-hand clothing stores and people’s homes,” according to Leslie. “Slaves sometimes escaped aboard ships, but more often northward on land, and that included through Augusta and eastward along the Boston Post Road through Vassalboro and China to Bangor.”

A longtime journalist who started his career as a reporter for the then-Waterville Sentinel, Leslie became a published author in 2008 with the appearance of his novel *Midnight Rider for the Morning Star*, based on the life of Francis Asbury, America’s first circuit-riding preacher. Since then, in addition to *True North*, he has written *The Crossing*, about the Ku Klux Klan in Maine in the 1920s, and four contemporary thrillers: *Chasing the Music*, about the hunt for King David’s music of the Psalms; *The Three Sixes*, about Islamic terror cells in America; *The Last Aliyah*, about the Jewish escape from America when the United Nations bans Jewish emigration to Israel; and the just-released *Operation Jeremiah’s Jar*.

A book signing will follow Leslie’s presentation.



Photo courtesy of Mark Alan Leslie

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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: \_\_\_\_\_

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