



# Kennebec Current



Discovering, preserving, and disseminating Kennebec County history since 1891

Volume 29 Issue 6

KENNEBEC HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

November–December 2019

## Gardiner Library, Association Win Building Inventory Grant

The Maine Bicentennial Commission has awarded Gardiner Public Library and the Gardiner Library Association a \$3,500 grant to fund the compilation of an inventory of 50 to 75 buildings dating to 1820 or earlier in the library service area's six communities, according to a news release from the library and the association.

The communities are Farmingdale, Gardiner, Litchfield, Pittston, Randolph, and West Gardiner.

The library and the association plan to allocate an additional \$3,500 of their own money to the project, which will focus particularly on residential, farm, commercial, religious, and public buildings from that period that are still standing. It also will use photographs, drawings, paintings or textual descriptions to include significant public buildings that no longer exist. Also, project organizers hope to add information about early roads, cemeteries, dams, and other structures.

Library Director Anne Davis and archivist Dawn Thistle are undertaking the project and are working with School Administrative District 11 to recruit student volunteers to help them.

Davis said the group will select buildings by examining them visually, then confirm their age by conducting deed and map research.

"Gardiner may be the easiest, because we're already working with a survey that was done in the '80s," she said. The library intends to put completed inventory data about specific buildings on its website and to make and exhibit



One of the properties to be inventoried in a six-community survey of buildings dating to 1820 or earlier is this Federal-style house, originally located on one of Sylvester Gardiner's "settler's lots." Built in 1798 for Rufus Gay (1770-1852) and his wife, Mary Marble (1771-1839), the house overlooks the Kennebec River in Gardiner. One distinct feature is the main entrance door on the side.

Photo by Rich Eastman

displays of that information in schools, historical societies, and elsewhere in the library's service area. The final product will be a printed book that will be copied and distributed among the six communities. The book is expected to be printed next fall.

Anyone who wants to help carry out the project is asked to call Davis at 582-6893.

The Gardiner Public Library building was erected in 1881 and expanded twice afterward, according to its website. The association, formed in 1881, owns the library building and the grounds, funds capital improvements, buys equipment, and looks for ways to improve library services. The library's Community Archives Room houses documents, newspaper microfilm and other artifacts relating to local history and genealogy in Gardiner and elsewhere.



Gardiner Public Library

Photo courtesy of Gardiner Public Library

— Joseph Owen

## President's Message



Christmastime brings many friends together to share a few moments of laughter, memories of fun times and the opportunity to meet new friends. December 8 was one of those special times at the Kennebec Historical Society's headquarters, where we celebrated the 2019 Victorian Tea. Many years ago we conducted this event annually, but for a few years we didn't hold the tea. Last year we resurrected it, and folks let us know they enjoyed having it back.

KHS' home, the beautiful Henry Weld Fuller Jr. House, was built in 1835-36. I'd like to think that Henry Fuller (1810-1889) and his wife, the former Mary Storer Goddard (1807-1881), would have been pleased to see more than 50 people enjoying their home and the Christmas decorations in it.

Many volunteers worked for a number of weeks to get the Christmas tree up with all its beautiful decorations, the fireplace decorated and ready for Santa Claus, the Fuller room (that's what KHS now calls it) filled with so many wonderful tasty treats and beautiful old-time decorations. Best of all, every room was full of happy people enjoying the home. We had Marie Tesch, a new Augusta resident and a new member not only of KHS but also of the society's Development and Membership committees, playing Christmas music on our piano. We are lucky to have so many wonderful volunteers. We appreciate all of them and thank them for their hard work.

This year we were not sure we would have enough teacups for the event. We put a notice in the newsletter and I made a request at our last program for donations of teacups and saucers that KHS would keep for special events. Well, ask and you shall receive; we received at least donated 100 cups. Thanks to a generous community, we will be able to hold more fun tea events.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, the staff and volunteers, I hope you and your family have a Merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year. We hope to see you at our programs in the coming year.

— Patsy Garside Crockett, president



Cecil Munson watches his wife, Marie Tesch, playing Christmas music at the Victorian Tea on December 8.

Photo by Scott Wood



### KHS Board of Directors

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#### Total membership:

601 on December 16

Life members: 203

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.

## KHS Logo Contest Deadline Extended

The contest for the Kennebec Historical Society digital media logo design has been extended to February 1, 2020. Any member of the public is welcome to submit a design.

The design should keep in mind that its final use is for concise and easy-to-identify brand use, representative of the KHS mission and/or Kennebec County. A KHS committee, working in conjunction with the KHS Board of Directors, will select the top three finalists and make a recommendation to the board. The board will pick the winning design.

For more details about the contest, visit the Kennebec Historical Society Facebook page (@KHS1891), email us at kennhis1891@gmail.com, or call us at 622-7718.

## KHS Receives \$5,000 Morton-Kelly Charitable Trust Grant

The Kennebec Historical Society has received a \$5,000 grant from the Morton-Kelly Charitable Trust to catalog the society's growing collection, buy archival supplies and replace an aging computer. The society will use the grant to pay two interns who will address the backlog of donated materials and to purchase the protective archival boxes and folders necessary to properly preserve documents, photographs, scrapbooks, maps, manuscripts, books, and ephemera.

The Portland-based Morton-Kelly Charitable Trust was established in 1988 by Joan Morton Kelly and her mother, Mildred Duncan Morton, to facilitate their philanthropic activities, which include educational programs, cultural projects, historic preservation projects and environmental initiatives. The trust considers grants for public programming, capital expenses, and, in some circumstances, operating support, according to its website.

"I'm very pleased and excited that this grant will help assist KHS in preserving, cataloging, and digitizing the society's collection of Kennebec County history," said Patsy Crockett, president of the Kennebec Historical Society. She added, "Researchers will be more inclined to find what they are looking for if more items are cataloged."

Each year, KHS accessions about 200 donations or purchases. An accession can contain from one to thousands of items. Many collections contain hundreds of items that have not been fully cataloged beyond a brief description. The grant provides funds to pay interns who will reduce or eliminate the backlog of donated materials, create more searchable items in the database, and therefore provide better results for researchers. A new computer will be purchased to supplement the society's goal of replacing computers on a five-year cycle. Indirectly, the grant will allow KHS to continue to offer its free monthly historical programs and continue the production of its bi-monthly newsletter for members.

**MORTON-KELLY**  
CHARITABLE TRUST

## KHS Teacup Supply Overflowing

KHS President Patsy Crockett and Program Committee Chairwoman Anne Cough requested donations of china teacups with matching saucers in the last KHS newsletter and received an overwhelming response. The teacup request was to supplement the number of cups necessary for the annual Victorian Tea Party, which was held on December 8 this year.

Some people donated as many as 60 teacups and saucers and others donated as few as one matching set. The teacup donations continue to come in, but at this point the society has more than enough and may need to host several tea parties a year in order to use them all. Over 160 teacups and saucers had been received as of December 13, and KHS also received over 33 related items such as sugar bowls, serving plates, creamers, teapots and a silver ladle.



"The number of beautiful teacups and saucers given to KHS has been amazing, and we still are expecting some more," Cough said.

Cynthia Thompson and Administrative Director Scott Wood photographed the donations in order to keep track of who donated which teacups and saucers. "We want to have the ability in the future to know whose teacups we are using, and will be



unable to keep them separated once they are in use," Wood said.

Thanks to all who donated teacups and saucers and other items to KHS. Donors include Ginger and Chester Hillier, Diana Allen, Joanne Clark, Dennis and Anne Doiron, Alison Maxell, Joseph and Mary Owen, Nancy Merrick, Marilyn Dunn, Adam Litteaur, Gerry Scott, Beverly Davis, Ida Levine, Deborah Campbell, and Harvey and Melicent Versteeg.

## The Collections Box

**A**lthough the number of recent acquisitions was fewer than usual, several of them were most interesting.

Among the manuscript items was a notarized business report from Stephen S. Lancaster in New York City to Sewall Lancaster, Esq., in Augusta, written December 16, 1842. On September 13, 1861, James W. Bradbury in Augusta wrote to George Folsom in Brattleboro, Vermont, thanking him for his publication *Catalogue of Original Documents in the English Archives Relating to the Early History of the State of Maine*. Mrs. J. M. Caulkins, of Lorraine, Jefferson County, New York, wrote to J. F. Hill and Company, of Augusta, enclosing 35 cents for a year's subscription to *Happy Hours* and the package of laces as offered in the advertisement in *Lady's Home Companion* of the previous December. Mary in Fayette wrote to her sister Sarah Ann (Mrs. James Fuller) in Hartland on September 7, 1847, with news of the family. On August 7, 1821, Deputy Sheriff Peter Fuller wrote to the sheriff of Lincoln County that on the fourth Monday of April, 1821, Benjamin Davenport, of Hallowell, had received judgement against John Pain, of Thomaston, in the amount of \$53.40. Fuller asked the sheriff to seize Pain's chattels or land and hold Pain in jail in Wiscasset.



I have spoken in the past of the value of scrapbooks to document the lives and times of their authors. This November, we added the scrapbook created in the 1920s by Emma Stackpole of her years at Cony High School, in Augusta. What makes this collection different is that Emma's has not only the usual dance tickets and sports schedules, but also numerous newspaper clippings of local persons and events.

The second unusual item is a collection of four ledger books that chronicle the founding and history of the First National (later Granite) Bank of Augusta. Here are the annual board meeting minutes from the first meeting, on April 6, 1836, through December 31, 1908. In addition, the donation includes the application to the United States Treasury Department for federal bank status and related Maine state banking material.

— Bruce Kirkham, Collections Committee chairman

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## 2019 Fuller Fund Income Tops Budgeted Figure

**W**ith a few weeks still remaining in the calendar year, the Kennebec Historical Society's 12th annual Moira Fuller Fund drive has exceeded the \$55,000 that was budgeted for income from the campaign.

As of December 16, the society's Society's Development Committee had collected a total of \$60,098 in 2019 for the campaign, the most ever recorded in a single year, according to KHS Administrative Director Scott Wood. The committee still is awaiting another \$2,520 expected as a result of recent pledges.

The committee remains committed to strengthening the society's financial condition as much as possible in preparation for a proposed major expansion of the society's Augusta headquarters building, the Henry Weld Fuller Jr. House.

The Fuller fund was established in 2008 to provide money to pay for office staff, heat, utilities, supplies, groundskeeping, supplies, printing, postage, and other day-to-day expenses incurred in running the society. The fund was named in honor of Moira H. Fuller, formerly of Winthrop and now of Potomac, Maryland, at the request of her friend Elsie Viles, of Augusta, who provided the key donation to the fund's first campaign.

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## KHS Explores Collaboration with Training Group

**B**ack in October, KHS was contacted by Judith Mitsui, a representative with the nonprofit organization Associates for Training & Development (A4TD). This organization provides training and employment services to mature workers by updating their skills to remain in or re-enter the workplace. Some of the local organizations who are already utilizing the program include the Viles Arboretum, Augusta Boys and Girls Club, and Habitat for Humanity Re-Store in Waterville.

A4TD utilizes a federal job training program for unemployed, low-income older adults called the Senior Community Service Employment Program. The program is part of the U.S. Department of Labor and was started by President Lyndon Johnson as part of his "war on poverty" in 1965. Participants train 20 hours a week and gain work experience in a variety of community service activities at nonprofits and public facilities, including hospitals, schools, day-care centers and senior centers. We will include more about this partnership in future newsletters.

## Off the Shelf

**G**reetings from your interim archivist. There are some of you who don't know me, so I'd like to introduce myself. My last position was with the Maine State Library as its genealogy specialist. I retired a couple of years ago because of vision problems; they're still not completely resolved, but I'm hopeful. My first experience with the Kennebec Historical Society was nearly 20 years ago, when Joe Owen recruited Anne Cough and me to help with a newsletter mailing. It didn't take long for us to get hooked, and now we're both life members and participate in several committees. They say librarians never retire, they just get reclassified, and that fits me to a "t." My wish is to continue putting my library degree and experience to good use as long as I'm needed.

Every day I find remarkable things in our collection. One of our more recent donations has been a set of two daybooks originally owned by David Knowlton, Augusta carpenter and undertaker, dated May 30, 1826, through July 15, 1833. Carpenters in that era built coffins as needed, but not all of them became full-time undertakers. Knowlton was one of the founders of what's presently known as Knowlton, Hewins and Roberts Funeral Homes. These account books offer valuable insight into the busy life of an accomplished woodworker, including all work orders, profits, and costs. Besides offering a wide view of company history and accounting practices, such material is a gold mine for genealogists and family historians. Individuals are named, naturally, with whatever they ordered. This confirms residency in Augusta (or close by), before the U.S. Census listed everyone in the home. (Only heads of households were given until 1850; later, some folks could've been inadvertently omitted when the census taker visited.)



Entries in the Knowlton ledger books that show items and their prices, from coffins to bedsteads, made for area residents.

Photos courtesy of KHS



On page 13 of the first volume, we find that Samuel Ingram ordered a coffin on March 19, 1827. FamilySearch.org confirms that Mr. Ingram's 2-year-old son died the previous day. In the second book of the set, on page 11, there is a request for a birch coffin from the "Estate of James Wade" dated November 15, 1834. According to Ancestry.com, this is the death date for Mr. Wade, who is buried in Mount Vernon Cemetery, just up the street from society headquarters. He was born on January 2, 1792, and left a wife and child. William Wade, likely a relative, was the administrator of the estate.

KHS is also fortunate to have other records of this company: a small batch of receipts and bills from the 1830s, and seven other account books: 1863-1884, 1863-1885, 1884-1886, 1886-1891, 1890-1891, 1899-1904 and 1910-1914.

Feel free to let us know if you'd like to see any of these items, or something else in our ever-expanding collection encompassing our county. We're here to help with your research needs.

My thanks to all those who donate materials, their time, funding and moral support; without you, KHS would not exist.

Until next time, I remain your obedient servant.

— Emily Schroeder, KHS Archivist

## KHS Hosts Victorian Tea

**K**HS held its annual Victorian Christmas Tea at its home in Augusta on December 8. Society President Patsy Crockett and committee Chair woman Anne Cough hosted the party, which boasted a wealth of teas, cakes, cookies, and good conversation.



Guests chat it up at the KHS Victorian Tea on December 8.

Photos by Cecil Munson

## The Kennebec Historical Society Welcomes the Following New Members

Frank Albert — Augusta

Sue Allen — Vassalboro

Byron Barley & Heather MacFarland — Augusta

Douglas & Venita Barley — Bedford, Indiana

Jorgeanne & David Barley — Augusta

Lois Bosworth — Augusta

Deborah Caldwell — Augusta

John Covell & Kathryn Carter — Augusta

Maureen Chick — Lisbon

Anne Davis — Gardiner

Karen & Matt Foust — Pittston

Daniel Gilbert — Augusta

Danielle Gorman — Waterville

John Hale — North Monmouth

Pia & Bruce Holmes — Augusta

Ann Hussey-Hogaboom — Hopkinton, Massachusetts

Sharon Wright — Winslow

*and continues to recognize ...*

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

G & E Roofing

Kennebec Savings Bank

Meadow Park Development

Joan Lancaster — Hallowell

Raegan LaRochelle — Augusta

Pauline Marceau — Winslow

William Marceau — Farmington

Gail Morin — Vassalboro

Nikko Noble — Sidney

Tina Noble — Sidney

Philip Norvish & Amy Calder — Waterville

Jane Perry — Vassalboro

Ruth Riopell — Augusta

Davis Sheperd — Farmingdale

Harold Snow — Manchester

Ruth Tondreau — Augusta

Pam & Bob Wallace — South China

Dianne & Roger Weber — South China

Tracy Weber — Augusta

### Sponsoring Business Members (\$500+ annual)

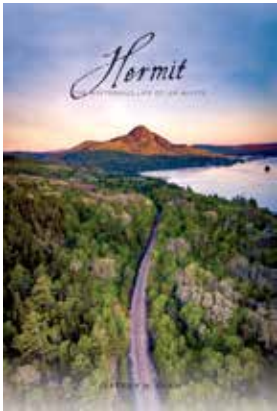
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## Upcoming Programs

### January Public Presentation:

#### “Hermit: The Mysterious Life of Jim Whyte”



When Jim Whyte settled outside the slate mining town of Monson in 1895, people hardly knew what to make of him. Almost 130 years later, we still don't. A world traveler who spoke six languages fluently, Whyte came to town with sacks full of money and a fierce desire to keep to himself. It was clear that Whyte was hiding from something—enough to make even the FBI eventually come looking. But even the Feds couldn't imagine how Whyte, who lost every penny he had when World War I broke out, amassed another fortune before he died. Based on a true story, the historical novel *Hermit: The Mysterious Life of Jim Whyte* follows one man's quest to discover all he can about Whyte's secret life before it's too late.

KHS speaker, Maine-based author, and photographer Jeffrey Ryan has a contagious passion for exploring the outdoors, particularly on foot. Jeff has hiked thousands of miles, including his first “trip of a lifetime,” a 6½-month hike on the Pacific Crest Trail. In 1985, Jeff began “section hiking” the Appalachian Trail with a childhood friend, a journey that would take 28 years to complete and culminated in his first book, *Appalachian Odyssey: A 28-year Hike on America's Trail*. Intrigued by the question of how the legendary trail came into being, he researched and wrote his second book, *Blazing Ahead: Benton MacKaye, Myron Avery and the Rivalry That Built the Appalachian Trail*. His latest book, *Hermit*, is centered in Monson on the Appalachian Trail. When he is not researching and writing, Ryan explores the back roads of the United States and Canada in his vintage 1985 Volkswagen camper.

This KHS presentation is co-sponsored by the Maine State Library and is free to the public (donations gladly accepted). The presentation will be followed by some light refreshments and take place at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, January 15 at the Maine State Library, located at 230 State Street in Augusta.

### February Public Presentation:

#### “Lost Indian Tribes of Western Maine”

Hopelessly caught between the colonial aims of several European nations, primarily England and France, Maine's native population never stood a chance. Dozens of tribes in western Maine were decimated by an endless series of war, disease, trauma, and displacement from their homelands. Their cultural presence has been lost to the world; their histories are told by white men. This presentation locates the tribes along western Maine rivers and identifies the forces that sealed their fates. Learn of the names of Wawenocks kidnapped by George Weymouth and Capt. Henry Harlow, of the murder of Squanto, and of the western Maine Indians who were tricked into capture at Dover, New Hampshire, and later imprisoned, hanged, or sold into slavery never to be heard from again.

Our KHS speaker, Peter Stowell, grew up in Andover and Bethel. Educated at Gould Academy, the University of Maine, and Tulane University in New Orleans, he was entranced early by the majesty of Oxford County's mountains and rivers and began exploring its history and geography as a child. He is now focused on recovering cultural information long lost to present generations through assiduous research in Maine's defunct newspapers, official state and federal directories and reports, and informed sources. For his presentation to the Kennebec Historical Society, Stowell has collected information on Maine's Indians from more than 100 sources, some of them dating back to the early 1600s and most of them dating before 1900.

This KHS presentation is free to the public (donations gladly accepted). The presentation will be followed by some light refreshments and take place at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, February 19, at Hope Baptist Church, located at 726 Western Avenue in Manchester.



**Captive Indians sold into slavery.**

Photo courtesy of the Stowell Collection.

Kennebec Historical Society, Inc.  
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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 (2 people) - \$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:***

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**Business hours:** 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Wednesday through Friday **Assisted research hours:** By appointment only

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