

Kennebec Current

Discovering, preserving, and disseminating Kennebec County history since 1891

Volume 30 Issue 1

KENNEBEC HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

January–February 2020

Central Maine Power Gives KHS \$3,167 for Technology Upgrades

The Kennebec Historical Society has received a \$3,167 corporate donation from the Central Maine Power Company for the purchase of new computers and scanners to assist in processing the society's growing collection. The society will use the funds, a supplement to its operating budget, to buy two desktop computers and two flatbed scanners and replace equipment that is outdated and inefficient to properly preserve documents, photographs, scrapbooks, maps, manuscripts, books, and ephemera.

On February 10, CMP Vice President Eric Stinneford visited KHS headquarters — the Henry Weld Fuller Jr. House — and received a tour and information about a proposal to expand the building. The tour included a trip through the current archive areas and the closed stack library, information on the current exhibits and recent acquisitions. After the tour, Stinneford presented KHS President Patsy Crockett and Administrative Director Scott Wood with the donation and a copy of *The Light from the River: A History of Central Maine Power's First 100 Years of Service*, written by Clark T. Irwin Jr., for the KHS collection.

Crockett said in a news release, "I'm very pleased that these funds will allow KHS to begin a cycle of replacing our aging equipment and provide volunteers with the tools necessary to preserve and catalog the society's many collections." She added, "Our older computers are slow and quite frustrating to the many wonderful volunteers at KHS."

The initial request for the funding was submitted to CMP's Corporate Communications Committee, which reviews funding requests as it looks to support nonprofits working in central Maine. The company said on its Facebook page, "CMP has been part of the Kennebec Valley in Maine for over 100 years. We are pleased to support the Kennebec Historical Society's efforts to purchase the equipment needed to properly preserve the history of the region."



Administrative Director Scott Wood and society President Patsy Crockett accept a check from CMP Vice President Eric Stinneford.

Photo by CMP staff

Society Receives Fuller Family Antique Once Housed in Augusta

An heirloom article of furniture known as the John Hancock secretary, once belonging to Benjamin Apthorp Gould Fuller, has returned to Augusta and now resides in the Fuller House, home of the Kennebec Historical Society. The secretary stood in Fuller's law office in Augusta until his wife demanded it be placed in their house. It went to Boston when Fuller moved there about 1880.

Fuller was the son of Henry Weld Fuller, alias Habijah W. Fuller. His great-great-grandson Henry W. Fuller recalls, "If I remember, it was appraised at around \$30,000. My father left it to me in his will, but there was a bit of a tussle here as my uncle Horace had claimed primogeniture rights and asked the secretary to be shipped to Greece. I suggested a reasonable solution to cut it in half. By (my) standing firm, the John Hancock secretary returns to Augusta after 140 years."

For a history of the Fuller family, see page 6.



Photo by Rich Eastman

President's Message



As president of the KHS Board of Directors, I have the opportunity to meet and work with folks who, I believe, are the best volunteers any organization has. Today I will introduce two of our great volunteers. One has been with KHS many years; the other, a short time.

Jessica Couture is one of our more recent volunteers. She is chairwoman of our Building and Grounds Committee and is the person designated to work with E.S. Coffin Engineering & Surveying, Inc. on the plan for our gardens.

Plantings for KHS will reflect the time period of the Henry Weld Fuller Jr. House, built in 1835-36.

Jessica has an associate degree in natural resource management from Sterling College in Craftsbury Common, Vermont. She completed the Maine Master Gardener program and has taken additional classes with Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens. While she has worked at other jobs since college, landscaping has been her continuous interest since that time. Creative Gardenscaping, formed around 2003, has become her full-time business from spring to fall. Jessica said us she leaves lawn care to others, as there are many more people who specialize in lawns and there are few businesses like hers. Perennial and shrub gardens with multi-season interest are her primary focus, design, installation and maintenance.

Jessica grew up in Waterville and feels fortunate to live in the house she grew up in. Jessica also is president of the Maine Old Cemetery Association and likes the challenge of gravestone care and preservation workshops. She told me, "I am interested in garden plantings for KHS which will reflect the time period and will enjoy continuing research on this project." This makes Jessica a wonderful fit to help make KHS a beautiful addition to our Augusta neighborhood.

Emily Schroeder is another volunteer I'm delighted to introduce to you. She has been with the society for more than 20 years. Most recently, she was interim archivist. I'm pleased to announce that during the past week, our Board of Directors appointed Emily as the KHS archivist.

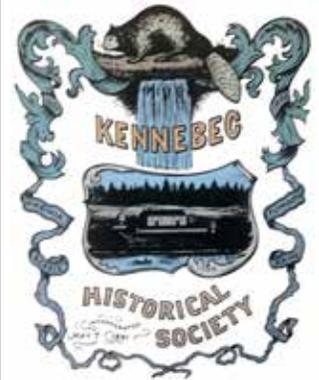
Emily has served in many other positions during the years she has been with KHS. Currently she is the secretary of the Board of Directors and a member of the Collections Committee, the Program and Publicity Committee, the Personnel Committee, the Facilities Management Committee, and the Carriage House Expansion Committee.

Emily was employed as the Maine State Library genealogy specialist. She retired a couple of years ago and is now co-chairwoman of the Maine Genealogical Society's Event Committee. She does cataloging for and spends time manning the desk of the South China Public Library and is an elder and serves on the council of South China Community Church. She told us, "My wish is to continue putting my library degree and experience to good use as long as I'm needed." I have had so many folks tell me that Emily is needed, and I sure agree.

Thank you to both Jessica and Emily and all the other wonderful volunteers for all they do to support KHS. I'm looking forward to telling you a little about other volunteers in coming newsletters.

I hope to see you at one of our monthly programs or see you at KHS. Please stop by and browse our wonderful collection.

— Patsy Garside Crockett, president



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Total membership:

603 on February 21

Life members: 202

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.

Rambling in Winthrop

“**R**ambling” can be defined in a few related ways. Webster states it means “proceeding without a specific purpose goal or direction, wandering about, straying from subject to subject or spreading or growing in a winding way.” Sometimes my writing rambles as does my research as I find interesting tangents of history to learn and share. But rambling to Winthropians seems to have a special significance, as in the fact that the “Winthrop Ramblers” is the school mascot in the personification of a yellow school bus. I venture a guess that the sort of rambling done is that of the last bit of the definition above: spreading growth.

Winthrop was a frontier town, as all American towns were at some point in time, as we transplants came to these foreign shores, pushed the locals westward, and cleared the forest for our agricultural scratchings. The first white person to stay for a time in Winthrop, circa 1750, was a trapper/hunter named Scott. This is according to “The Historical Sketch of Winthrop” by an unknown author in the 1889 book *Leading Business Men of Lewiston, Augusta and Vicinity*. The author reports that the first true settler was Timothy Foster, who bought Scott’s hut in 1764. At that time the town was called Pond Town, due to the Winthrop Lakes region having more than three dozen lakes or ponds. As Maine’s twenty-third town, it became Winthrop immediately when incorporated in 1771, named for English Puritan lawyer John Winthrop, one of the leading figures in the founding of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and the first Colonial governor of Massachusetts. Hallowell, Vassalborough (as it was spelled then), and Winslow also became towns that same day. Winthrop’s geography included the present-day town of Readfield until 1791, when that portion was set off.



A trolley trundles along Main Street in Winthrop in the early 20th century.

Postcards in KHS collection



This scene shows downtown Winthrop in the mid-20th century.

From the perspective of some of those “city folk” in Augusta, it’s practically the wild west out in Winthrop. Really, we are talking “way out” beyond even the portion of U.S. Route 202 known as Outer Western Avenue and Manchester Forks. Yes, nowadays it may be dotted with motels and service businesses, but long ago, before U.S. 202 made a beeline between Augusta and Lewiston, the Augusta-Lewiston Road meandered through hamlet-sized groupings of farmhouses and fields, edging many ponds and lakes. These old pieces of road that were once part of the main road are mostly still there and are worth the exploratory side jaunts to imagine how the commute used to be. The old main road used to go right along Main Street in downtown Winthrop and out the other side before heading to Lewiston. The downtown was busy and wide, full of a variety of stores, and it looks like a Western town in some old postcards. Did those western Winthrop pioneers not find it as harsh a frontier as any other? They endured many hardships as they toiled with great effort and will to survive harsh winters and muddy springs and burning the forests to clear and enrich the soil, in which crops could grow to support the survival of their families, farms, and businesses.

Survive and grow they did, as they rambled the hills between the lakes. The *History of Winthrop, Evolution of a Maine Community 1771-1971*, put out for the town’s bicentennial by a group of volunteers, states in its section on industry: “An isolated frontier community, as was Winthrop in its early years, must provide its own necessities: food, clothing and shelter.” Sawmill, grist mill, woolen mill, potash plant, tannery, currying shop, and cabinet makers were soon in residence. Agriculture and animal husbandry boomed, with crops of corn, wheat, hay, and apples as well as merino sheep and trotting horses. “The father of Maine agriculture,” Dr. Ezekiel Holmes, settled in Winthrop in the 1830s and had a farm on Mount Pisgah and a home in the village. He edited the well-renowned agricultural journal

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The Collections Box

We recently accessioned two letters. One was a business letter; the other dealt with family matters. On June 12, 1871, Samuel Emerson wrote from Albion to Levi Wyman, Esq., on Mount Desert Island about mill work and lumber. Ten years later, on March 13, 1881, George Gray in Kansas wrote to Miss Etta M. Bailey in Augusta about life in Kansas, reporting that it had been a cold winter.

We received two books: Glenn Wendall Starkey's textbook titled *Maine: Its History, Resources, and Government*, and Eve Anderson's *A Breach of Promise: Cilley Family Letters 1820-1867*. A scrapbook of World War II newspaper clippings will be added to our scrapbook collection. Five issues of *Good Stories* magazine will fill gaps in our collection of local magazines.

You will recall that in the December newsletter, we told of Deputy Sheriff Peter Fuller of Kennebec County writing on August 7, 1821, to the sheriff of Lincoln County that on the fourth Monday of April 1821, Benjamin Davenport, of Hallowell, had received judgment against John Pain, of Thomaston, in the amount of \$53.40 and asked him to seize Pain's chattels or land and to hold Pain in "gaol" in Wiscasset.

This month we acquired a similar manuscript. On February 6, 1805, John Davis, Lincoln County clerk, wrote to the sheriffs of Lincoln and Kennebec counties that Solomon Arlin, of Ballstown, Lincoln County, owed \$60 to Thomas Eldred and David Crowell, of Pittston. Arlin refused to pay \$30 with interest on demand on June 26, 1804. The sheriffs are asked to detain Arlin and hold him until the next Common Pleas Court to be held on the third Tuesday of May, three months hence. Arlin was taken to jail in Wiscasset. On February 10, 1805, Arlin paid and was discharged.

The practice of holding a person in debtors' prison until a debt is paid goes back hundreds of years. Inspired by his father's imprisonment for debt, Charles Dickens describes Marshalsea Prison conditions in *Little Dorritt*. Wilkins Micawber in Dickens' *Pickwick Papers* believes that something will always turn up to effect his release. The law in Maine was repealed 1969.

— Bruce Kirkham, Collections Committee chairman



KHS to Sponsor Trivia Night

The Publicity Committee has some exciting news to share about a new event that pairs nicely with a cold drink — Kennebec County history trivia night. KHS is partnering with Cushnoc Brewing to bring you a night of fun and knowledge at the Cushnoc Annex on North Belfast Avenue in Augusta. The event is being held just three days before Maine officially turns 200, so coming out to show off your local history knowledge is a great way to support KHS and



This is the interior of the Cushnoc Annex, where trivia night is held on Thursday nights through March 20.

Photo courtesy of Cushnoc Brewing Company

celebrate our great state's big birthday (and maybe even win a prize). Mark your calendars for March 12 at 6 p.m. and keep an eye on our Facebook page for more details.

Have you gone over to Facebook or Instagram to follow KHS? It's a great way to keep up with what's going on at the society while also supporting KHS. Every like and follow helps generate more traffic to our posts and our page, driving up public awareness of KHS and its mission. To find KHS on Facebook, visit: facebook.com/KHS1891; and to find KHS on Instagram, search for: @kennebechistorical

Thank you to all who already have "liked" us on Facebook and who like and share our posts. Every interaction helps.

— Jamie Logan
Publicity Committee chairwoman

Off the Shelf

Daniel Cony (1752-1842) wore many hats in his lifetime, and he served his communities in Massachusetts and Maine well. I've been looking at the portraits of him and his wife, Susanna, in the West Parlor of the historical society for many years, and wondered just what his story was. He was indeed a Renaissance man, way before that term was coined.

Born in Stoughton, Massachusetts, he had an apparently uneventful childhood until he began studying medicine with his future wife's uncle, Dr. Samuel Curtis, in Marlborough. His marriage to Susanna Curtis occurred on November 14, 1776. Shortly thereafter, he heeded the call to fight for his country and left home to join Maj. Gen. Horatio Gates at Saratoga. He was also present at the surrender of British Gen. John Burgoyne. In 1777, his father and mother, Deacon Samuel and Rebecca Cony, moved to Fort Western; Daniel and Susanna Cony and their baby daughter, Nancy Bass, followed the next year. Sadly, Nancy lived only until October, dying when just 13 months old.

The doctor practiced for many years and was a contemporary of midwife and diarist Martha Ballard. He was elected the first president of the Kennebec Medical Society in 1797. Cony had a great regard for education, though he never received any formal training. He was instrumental in establishing charters for Hallowell Academy (1791) and Bowdoin College (1794). At Bowdoin, he served as overseer from 1794 to 1797 and was granted an honorary degree in 1820. Local historians will recall that he founded Cony Female Academy (1815). Cony High School is named for him.

In this year of Maine's bicentennial, I was especially pleased to discover that Cony was sent as a delegate to the convention for the separation of Massachusetts and Maine in 1786, in Falmouth. That was the first year he was elected to represent Hallowell in the General Court; that position lasted until 1792, when he was one of the 16 electors from Massachusetts to vote for the continuation of the presidency and vice presidency of George Washington and John Adams. Meanwhile, at the local level, he was Hallowell town clerk from 1785 to 1787, selectman in 1786 and 1789, and court representative again, for Augusta in 1797. He also served as judge in both the Court of Common Pleas and the Probate Court for Kennebec County, once independent statehood was achieved.

Speaking of statehood, an act of separation had already been passed in Massachusetts in 1811; the next step was to discuss a constitution. Delegates met on October 11, 1819, in the courthouse in Portland, and Cony was selected to chair the event. On the fourth day, Cony made the unfortunate suggestion to change the name of Maine to "Columbus." The account in *Perley's Debates* (pp. 70-71, full reference on request) quotes our statesman as follows:

"The name of Columbus is associated with all that is noble — all that persevering fortitude, or manly virtue could bestow or bequeath. The success of his voyage of discovery stamped immortality on his name. ..." Judge Thacher responded thus: He "did not perceive any good reason for the alteration. ..." After all, this "new state ... is already very well known, in the commercial world, by the name of Maine. ..." His coup de grace (p. 72): "Columbus did not discover this part of the continent, nor did he know as long as he lived, that the Continent he discovered, extended to these latitudes. ..." And more: "The District of Maine is everywhere known as to its situation, commerce and products; and the State of Maine will naturally take its place in the human mind. ..." Need one ask why, after seeing these statements, we remain the state of Maine?

Perley's Debates also provides copies of letters questioning the concept of separation; one addressed to President Adams from Cony; and the second, a response. Cony stated on January 25, 1819, in part: "A government established within the territory, amongst themselves, would be better able to consult and to promote the interests, the growth and the welfare of the state" (see p. 410). The president responded rather negatively on February 1: "It is to Massachusetts and her strenuous exertions that Maine is indebted for her preservation from the grasping clutches of Great Britain. ..." He thought separation would "leave her in a state below mediocrity in the union" and "they stand well to stand still." Adams admitted that he really had no influence on the decision, but appreciated being asked, and clearly held Cony in high regard.

Daniel and Susanna Cony left a legacy that everyone, especially in Kennebec County, can appreciate. Grandsons included two governors, Joseph H. Williams (1857-8) and Samuel Cony (1864-7). The rest, as they say, is history.



Daniel Cony

This portrait of Judge Daniel Cony hangs in the Fuller House, home of KHS. Below it is Cony's signature, as seen on the Maine Constitution.

Photo by KHS staff

Henry W. Fuller: My Fuller Mayflower Connection

Recently, I received the 2020 winter issue of the *Mayflower Quarterly*, which is the publication mailed out to Mayflower Society members — people who can trace their family lineage back to the original passengers on the Mayflower, which arrived off the coast of Massachusetts in November 1620 after spending 66 days crossing the Atlantic from Plymouth, England. In September 2020, the 400th anniversary of this epic voyage will be celebrated in Plymouth, Massachusetts; London, England; Plymouth, England; various English country towns; and Leiden, Holland.

On September 7, 2019, the replica of the original Mayflower was launched at Mystic Seaport in connection with a three-year rebuild, during which 75% of the vessel was replaced. This is a magnificent restoration of the replica, which stands out as a fitting tribute to those Pilgrim forefathers, their spouses, and children who risked their lives being desperate to find a new life that offered a freedom to worship and self-determination in the New World. They were fleeing religious oppression by the Church of England.

Given that the Kennebec Historical Society has its headquarters in the house built by Henry Weld Fuller Jr. (1810-1889), son of Henry (Habijah) Weld Fuller (1784-1847), there is much interesting history here. Each of these male Fullers can trace their ancestry back to Edward Fuller (1575-1621) and his brother, Samuel (1580-1633), who were passengers on the Mayflower. Henry (Habijah) Weld Fuller is my great-great-great-grandfather and Henry Weld Jr. my great-great-uncle. Melville Weston Fuller (1833-1910), whose bronze statue stands on the grounds of the Augusta courthouse, is my great-grandfather's first cousin. Henry Weld Fuller Jr. and Melville Weston Fuller also were first cousins. They both took up the law as their profession. Later in life, Melville Fuller became chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court (1888-1910). He died in Sorrento on July 4, 1910, an American patriot's unintentional gesture.

Today it is high fashion to trace one's family ancestry aided by such websites as myheritage.com and americanancestors.com. The computer has made tracing one's family heritage amazingly simple if you have the time. In fact, you can hire genealogical experts to trace your family ancestry to the "nth" degree. Those bent on tracing their family heritage back to the Pilgrim fathers may expend thousands of dollars in an effort to qualify as a member of the Society of Mayflower Descendants.

I was fortunate that my father, Henry M. Fuller (1914-1962), made me and my three sisters life members in the Mayflower Society prior to his death in 1962. If this had not happened, I most likely would not be writing this submission. Realizing that I was a lifetime Mayflower Society member a few years ago piqued my interest in the fact that I could trace my Fuller lineage back to the 1500s to Redenhall, England, where brothers Samuel (1580-1633) and Edward Fuller (1575-1621) were born and baptized in the St. Mary's Church that still stands, having been constructed close to 600 years ago. There are several Fuller gravestones lying in the church's adjacent cemetery.

Many years ago, I traveled with my sister Emily H. Fuller (born 1951) on a 13-day excursion to trace Pilgrim family ancestries. The group consisted of 43 Mayflower Society members from numerous U.S. states. We travelled by bus from London to various locations in England to learn of the origins and history of the Pilgrim fathers. The final stop was Leiden, Holland.

Our New England-bred chests puffed out when we found that of this group, the two of us were the only participants to retain an original Pilgrim surname. In fact, on doing some genealogical research, I found that I, as a Fuller male of the 12th generation from Edward Fuller, enjoy one of the most direct and cleanest ancestral lineages from a Mayflower passenger living today. The question is, how can this be?

This has occurred by virtue of a very narrow lineage of male Edward Fuller descendants, among whom there may have been only one male Fuller in a family generational group to sire a male child. For example, I am the only male in my generation to have a male child as my son is in his following generation. I have dubbed this as the "flickering Fuller family flame."

My grandfather Robert G. Fuller (1882-1919) was one of two brothers. He married and had five children — four boys and a girl. I have three Fuller male first cousins. None of my three living Fuller male first cousins has had children that I am aware of.

My great-great-grandfather B.A.G Fuller (1818-1885) who married Harriet Selden Williams (1819-1896), of Augusta, had only one son, Horace Williams Fuller (1844-1901). Horace's wife had two sons — another B.A.G. Fuller (1879-1956), my great uncle; and Robert G. Fuller (1882-1919), my paternal grandfather. B.A.G. Fuller never married.



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The Kennebec Historical Society Welcomes the Following New Members

Michael Bennett — Berlin, Maryland
 Dick Bevins — West Gardiner
 Suzanne and Gary Cole — North Monmouth
 Glen Gibau — New Bedford, Massachusetts
 Dave Jacobs — Augusta
 Virginia Jones — Palermo
 Evelyn Knopf — Augusta
 Lauraine Mansur — Waterville

Dick Partridge — Augusta
 Roberta Record — Augusta
 David & Karen Roper — Whitefield
 Andrew Silsby — Manchester
 Ina Small — Litchfield
 Linda Sommer — West Gardiner
 Dr. Judith Whiting — Manchester

and continues to recognize ...

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

G & E Roofing
 Kennebec Savings Bank
 Meadow Park Development

Sponsoring Business Members (\$500+ annual)

J. S. McCarthy Printing
 O'Connor GMC

✧ In Memoriam ✧

Jeannette Powell Davis, a longtime Kennebec Historical Society life member, died February 6 at home. A Cornell University graduate, she moved to Augusta with her husband in 1951. She worked at the Kennebec Valley YMCA as a teacher and then director of the preschool program. She also taught at the South Parish Nursery School for three years. She was an active volunteer in the Kennebec Girl Scout Council, Common Cause/Maine, the Maine Peace Campaign, the Maine Council of Churches, the Maine Conference of the United Church of Christ, MaineShare, Senior College at UMA, the Augusta Food Bank, and the Maine Refugee Advisory Council. Her survivors include five children, 11 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

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Fuller Mayflower Connection

Edward Fuller and his wife perished early in the first winter of 1621. They had two children: Samuel, who accompanied them on the voyage, and Mathew, an older brother, who remained in England, transiting the Atlantic later. Samuel was brought up by his uncle Samuel, Edward's brother.

So my personal Pilgrim Edward Fuller lineage, comprising 14 generations, runs as follows: 1. Edward (1575-1621); 2. Samuel (1608-1683); 3. Samuel (1637-1691); 4. Mathew (1663-1734); 5. Young (1708-1796); 6. Caleb (1735-1815); 7. Henry (Habijah) W. (1784-1841); 8. Benjamin Apthorp Gould (1818-1885); 9. Horace W. (1844-1901); 10. Robert G. (1882-1919); 11. Henry M. (1914-1962); 12. Henry Weld (1946); 13. Michael R. (1975); and 14. Louis "Mayflower" Fuller (2013). Louis, age 7, has a heavy reproductive responsibility to bear on his young shoulders.

Now housed in the KHS archives is a copy of Fuller family history written in 1946 by my great-uncle Benjamin Apthorp Gould Fuller (1879-1956), titled *The Fuller Family Reminiscences*. This document covers much of our Fuller family narrative history in Maine from 1801 to the early 1860s, when the Fullers abandoned Augusta for Boston and its suburbs. My father moved to Maine in the late 1930s and practiced law in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. I have a sister, Emily H. Fuller, and two Fuller first cousins who currently reside in Maine. My niece and great-niece now call Maine their home. Recently, a great-nephew once removed has moved to Maine. I have lived in Nova Scotia since 1973, recently joining the Canadian Mayflower Society.

My first cousin Robert G. Fuller moved to Maine in the late 1960s to practice law. He ended up practicing law in Augusta. In July 2017, he moved to Potomac, Maryland. We are all indebted to Rob (Bob) for his magnanimous generosity and support of the KHS, magnified by the fact that today the extended Fuller family Augusta history and memorabilia are enshrined within the premises of Kennebec Historical Society headquarters: the Henry Weld Fuller Jr. House, built in 1835-36.

— Henry W. Fuller

Rambling in Winthrop

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The Maine Farmer. Churches, schools and a library were raised and time marched on like a band in the July Fourth parade down Main Street.

Jumping far ahead in time now, at our Winthrop Street headquarters in Augusta, we are currently enjoying a resurgence of a volunteer team effort to increase accessibility to our many postcards of Kennebec County. It was in rambling through some of these postcards the other day at KHS that I came upon a Winthrop Western-themed memory of my own. Herein we revisit the concept of U.S. Route 202, our current Western Avenue. Consider the upheaval that must have occurred as the state of Maine decided to make this graciously meandering thoroughfare into an impersonal highway. I can't even bear to think what history has been lost as the mode and speed of travel have caused businesses and old homes to be torn down, remodeled or replaced with square boxes of concrete block. However, the new straightened expanses of 202 that bypassed the old road sections had potential for new business. This was the new frontier.



This postcard shows various rooms in Winthrop's Steer House restaurant, as well as an exterior view.

Postcard in KHS collection

One place at the fore of this new western frontier was the Steer House. It was located on a new section of 202 shortly after the road divergence known as the "Old Lewiston Road." The Steer House became the go-to fancy, special-occasion restaurant in the area in the late 1960s and 1970s. It was for birthdays, anniversaries, date night, and other special occasions, but also accessible to all. This was the business's second location, the other being in Lewiston on Lisbon Street.

A giant three-dimensional steer stood on top of the sign, which said, one word over the other, "Steer House." You've likely seen the steer. It has persevered up there through the decades, though now the business in the space is Adams Pet Supplies. Who could resist that steer and the colored spotlights panning onto the exterior of the low-slung building in red, green and gold? Entering through the shiny modern glass doors, visitors found the lounge to the left, dining room on the other side, function

rooms in beyond, the kitchen in the basement. The ambience was dark and warm with wooden tables, chairs and booths upholstered in black and red pleather. Wagon wheel candelabras topped with amber glass globes graced the beamed ceiling, and the carpet was deep red. Glasses were either amber or red plastic; cocktail swizzle sticks were red or black with a steer head on top. The lounge bar back glittered with the amber liquid in the bottles reflected in the mirror. The fireplace burned merrily and the air was permeated with the aroma of charred beef. Placemats were at every place setting with a Steer Head prominent in the center. They advertised: "Dining Room and Lounge specializing in steaks and seafoods. Our banquet facilities are air conditioned and we have rooms available for small cozy gatherings or meeting of 250 persons. Live entertainment on weekends in our beautiful Ponderosa Room. Open 7 days."

By the late 1980s and by the time I first experienced it in the early 1990s, shortly before it closed for good, it had become a somewhat tacky anachronism. The furniture, carpeting worn and stained, the cavernous rooms forgotten and forlorn, the food a necessary afterthought. My husband, however, recalls with great fondness going there on select fancy occasions, everyone wearing their Sunday best to meet his Nana at her favorite spot. The steak dinners were always garnished with one of those enigmatic red apple rings, and on the counter on the way out was a dish of pastel mints with a spoon in it.

I had an opportunity, years later, before Adams bought it, to view the space with a real estate agent to investigate an alternate use. It was, as expected, in rough shape and had an overwhelming aura of a ghost ship. One could picture the kitchen and service staff bustling about, the bartender mixing drinks, the families deep in conversation, and couples laughing. Today I think this whole operation could be rebuilt just as it was and greatly succeed with its currently acceptable retro vibe of a Western-themed restaurant. Now, just in case I have whetted your appetite for good food and retro-Western kitsch, there is a fun and popular establishment in downtown Livermore Falls called the Chuck Wagon you might like to check out that has stayed open to this day.

Lastly, if you are interested in more information on the "the old road" from Augusta through Winthrop, I will be discussing the full route in our next newsletter. Stay tuned.

— Kari Mullen-Mclaughlin

Upcoming Programs

March Public Presentation: “The Spool Mills of Western Maine”



Dearborn Spool Company, Bryant Pond
Photo courtesy of the Stowell Collection

In the late 18th century, patrons of James Clark’s cotton thread shop in Paisley, Scotland, first found that they could buy thread wound on wooden spools made by a local wood turner. The convenience caught on and the thread spool industry was born, first in Scotland and Finland, then in the United States. Initially Maine birch wood was shipped to cotton mills in New Jersey and Rhode Island, but it became more economical to turn the spools in Maine, eliminating heavy transportation costs.

Maine had the country’s largest supply of white birch, grown as a succession crop to massive forest fires. Oxford, Franklin, and Piscataquis counties led in the amount of birch available. After the passage of tariffs on spool created overseas, the spool mill boom was on. Peter Stowell’s ancestors were early to the expansion of these mills as, almost accidentally, they grew the industry from a single mill in Dixfield to dominance in the industry. His presentation traces the history of this now-vanished industry in western Maine.

Stowell, our KHS speaker for March, 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.

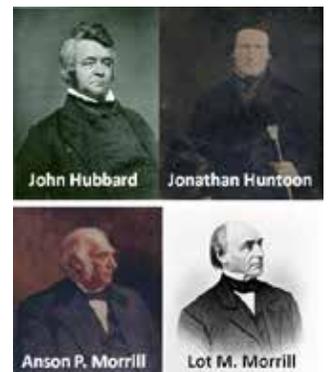
This KHS presentation is free to the public (donations gladly accepted). The presentation will be followed by some light refreshments and take place at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 18, at Hope Baptist Church, located at 726 Western Avenue in Manchester.

April Public Presentation: “Four Readfield Governors”

Four of Maine’s 75 Governors have hailed from the small town of Readfield in Kennebec County. Jonathan Huntoon was the ninth. He was born 1781 in Unity, New Hampshire, and moved to Readfield in 1806 to study law under an uncle, whose practice he later assumed. Dr. John Hubbard was Maine’s 22nd governor, born 1794 in Readfield. He studied at Dartmouth College then practiced medicine in Virginia for a few years before moving to Hallowell in 1830. There, Dr. Hubbard continued his medical practice and became involved in politics. Anson Peaslee Morrill was the 24th governor and his brother, Lot Myrick Morrill, was the 28th. They were born in Belgrade in 1803 and 1813, respectively. Lot Morrill moved to Readfield in 1837 to study law under Judge Edward Fuller and later joined Fuller’s law practice. Anson Morrill first moved to Madison then followed his brother about 1850 to Readfield, where he became successful in business. The Morrill brothers later moved to Augusta, where they are buried in Forest Grove Cemetery. Dale Potter-Clark will bring these four men to life by sharing some stories and vintage photos.

Potter-Clark is a retired nurse who currently spends her days (and sometimes nights) doing genealogical and historical research. She is a born “Mainah” whose family has lived in Readfield for 10 consecutive generations. Dale has loved local history for as long as she can remember and enjoys spinning the tales she unearths in her research. She is the co-founder of Readfield History Walks and has written articles about local history for area newspapers and *Discover Maine Magazine*, as well as several monographs pertaining to Readfield’s history.

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, April 15, in the Jewett Hall Auditorium, located at 46 University Drive on the campus of the University of Maine at Augusta.



Portraits of the four Readfield governors of Maine

Photo courtesy of the speaker

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