

# Kennebec Current

Discovering, preserving, and disseminating Kennebec County history since 1891

Volume 30 Issue 2

KENNEBEC HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

March–April 2020

## Coronavirus Prompts Suspension of Society Activities

**K**ennebec Historical Society President Patsy Garside Crockett, after consulting with board members, announced in mid-March that because of the quickly spreading novel coronavirus, all public activities sponsored by the society are suspended until further notice.

This decision affects the society's monthly lectures and visits to the Henry Weld Fuller Jr. House, the society's headquarters, at 107 Winthrop Street in Augusta.

The number of staff members and volunteers working in the building was reduced immediately, and in April it was reduced even further – to one person, Administrative Director Scott Wood, coming in part time to check the climate control system, pick up mail, and perform a few other essential tasks. The society recently bought and installed new archive and membership management software that allows much of that work to be done remotely.

Researchers who have questions about local history still may call 622-7718; email requests to [kennhis1891@gmail.com](mailto:kennhis1891@gmail.com); or send them by postal mail to Kennebec Historical Society, P.O. Box 5582, Augusta, ME 04332-5582.

The society's committees are looking for other ways to conduct their business, such as by telephone conference calls. For example, the Development Committee, which normally meets weekly on Thursday mornings, began on March 19 to convene by telephone conference call and has been meeting that way ever since.

The Executive Committee met March 25 at the Fuller House, but in the driveway – with committee members spread wide apart while standing on the pavement. Fortunately, it was a sunny day. Stormy weather would have presented a bigger problem.

Public health officials' current recommendations that people maintain personal distance from one another to prevent the spread of coronavirus is making it harder for the society's Board of Directors to comply with the society's bylaws, which require that board decisions and Executive Committee decisions be made only by members who are present and voting. Voting by telephone or email is not allowed. The board is considering drafting a bylaws revision for the next annual meeting that would remove that restriction.

The bylaws do not prohibit the society's committees from participating in decision-making remotely.



**On March 25, the Executive Committee meets in the KHS driveway, observing CDC distancing policy while voting on important matters.**

Photo by Skip Harvey

## Maine Legislature Honors KHS

**T**he Maine Senate passed a joint resolution March 10 honoring the Kennebec Historical Society.

The resolution marks the upcoming 130th anniversary of KHS, but it also was submitted as a way for KHS to celebrate Maine's 200th anniversary as a state. The resolution coincides with the society's action to extend one-year bicentennial honorary memberships to all 186 Maine House of Representatives and Senate members and Gov. Janet Mills.

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**From left, Sen. Matt Pouliot, R-Augusta; Glenn Adams, KHS Membership Committee co-chairman; Sen. Shenna Bellows, D-Manchester; Patsy Crockett, KHS president; and Sen. Scott Cyrway, R-Albion, gather in March the Senate chamber at the Maine State House in Augusta.**

Photo by Scott Wood



## President's Message



The Kennebec Historical Society took a giant step forward March 25 when the KHS Executive Committee gathered for a special meeting I had called. KHS bylaws require that the board or the Executive Committee meet in person to vote. Observing the requirement of having at least six feet of distance between participants, we met in the snow-covered driveway at KHS. Gov. Janet Mills had prohibited meetings of 10 people or more, so the full board was not summoned.

After many months of research, the committee voted unanimously to approve the purchase of a new software system for our archive and our membership database. We now have

PastPerfect software installed on our computers. Our archivist, Emily Schroeder, has been busy for months working with Administrative Director Scott Wood and volunteers, mapping, checking, and rechecking data entries as part of getting our old database ready for this conversion.

During this difficult time, with the coronavirus affecting the world, KHS continues to move forward. When Governor Mills ordered all nonessential businesses to close, we immediately submitted a request to receive an essential-service designation. On April 2, KHS received approval, as a non-essential business, to continue to perform minimal operations necessary to keep the society open because we preserve the history of Kennebec County in a climate-controlled archive and have one employee. We closed to the public and volunteers starting March 18. Scott would be the only person in the building, working on building maintenance, cleaning, processing checks and membership mail, monitoring the climate control unit, applying for grants, etc. Closing down completely simply would not allow us to function and would place the entire collection in danger. The single employee has his own transportation, and since he is the only one in the building, the six-foot social distancing requirement is not a problem. We were granted the exemption and continue to have our administrative director working.

The committee also has approved applying for a forgivable loan funded by the federal Payroll Protection Program. This program provides loans to small business to pay their employees during the Covid-19 pandemic. On Sunday night, April 5, when the PPP borrower application was up on the Kennebec Savings Bank website, KHS applied. On the morning of April 6, the society received notice that its application was approved. This is wonderful news for KHS. We now have the funds to cover the salary of our employee and know our collection will be safe.

As you can see, we have been making difficult decisions as we face unprecedented changes. We look forward to the time when we can re-open KHS archives for your research. Stay safe and stay well.

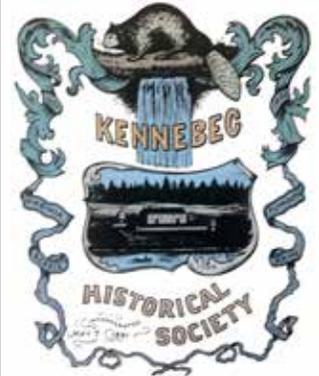
— Patsy Garside Crockett, president

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## Maine Legislature Honors KHS

The resolution, which the House approved March 12, recognizes the KHS “as a repository of tens of thousands of historical manuscripts, photographs, scrapbooks, maps, postcards and other ephemera about Kennebec County and elsewhere that are not available in other archives.”

— Glenn Adams, Membership Committee Co-chairman



### **KHS Board of Directors**

#### **President**

Patsy Garside Crockett

#### **Executive Vice President**

Kent London

#### **Treasurer**

Doreen Harvey

#### **Secretary**

Emily Schroeder

#### **Directors**

Stefanie Barley

Anne Cough

Rich Eastman

Lock Kiermaier

Bruce Kirkham

John Lawrence

Nancy Merrick

Billy Noble

Joseph O'Donnell

Joseph Owen

Phyllis vonHerrlich

#### **Administrative Director**

Scott Wood

#### **Advisory Committee**

Thomas Johnson

Mark Johnston

John O'Connor

Earle G. Shettleworth Jr.

William Sprague Jr.

#### **Newsletter Staff**

Rich Eastman/editor

Sally Joy/advisor

#### **Total membership:**

785 on April 17

Life members: 199

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.

## April 1982 Blizzard Was Big Adventure



**John Hale**  
Guest Columnist

**O**K, so it's April, spring is finally here, the crocuses and the pussy willows are out, and at least we don't have to worry about any more nasty snowstorms. Right?

Wrong! As I write this on April 9, we're being warned of a pending snowstorm tonight and tomorrow that could drop 12 to 18 inches of heavy, wet snow in the Maine mountains and up to 3 or 4 inches around Augusta (we ended up with more than 11 inches).

Back in April 1982, an unusual snowstorm lashed the region for two days and wreaked havoc from Eastport to Rhode Island's Block Island. The powerful late-season

blizzard dropped the most snow recorded in any April storm in Maine up until then, up to 30 inches in some towns outside Lewiston and Augusta, according to an online article by Tom Moore, of The Weather Channel.

All over the Northeast, the spring storm dumped up to 18 to 20 inches in most locations. The two-day whiteout killed eight people in Massachusetts. Huge waves 20 to 30 feet high pounded Cape Cod. Thousands of residents lost their power from wind gusting from 35 to 60 mph, and the monster storm spawned lightning and "thunder snow."



**Colette Caron shovels out her plowed-in car in April 1987 on Green Street in Augusta.**

*Kennebec Journal* file photo by Jay Reiter



**Snow engulfs a car on Water Street in Augusta.**

*Kennebec Journal* file photo by Jay Reiter

then proceeded north, fueled by a blast of frigid air coming south from Canada.

Monday night the storm got under way with light rain, strong wind and temperature in the low 40s. By Tuesday morning, it was snowing heavily and the temperature had plunged into the 20s. Traveling already had become difficult.

At that time, I was a news reporter for the daily *Kennebec Journal* in Augusta. I lived in North Wayne, about 20 miles away from my workplace over some very hilly terrain, to be closer to my girlfriend, Valerie Enos. I made the trip to work on Tuesday morning amid bad road conditions. It probably took an hour or more to make a trip that usually lasted only about 25 minutes in fair weather.

I worked all day on the storm story for Page 1 of the next day's paper, glancing out the KJ windows occasionally to look for signs of life amid the snowflakes. (The KJ office was then on Western Avenue, where Bangor Savings Bank is now.)

"It was a record-setting and deadly blizzard which stopped the region in its tracks," wrote Moore.

The storm on April 6 and 7, 1982 – 38 years ago – also produced fodder for a lifetime of storytelling and nostalgic boasts by its survivors. I had a memorable encounter with the storm, as did my friend Steve Solloway and many others.

On April 5, 1982, a Monday, the National Weather Service quietly issued a storm warning for "a life-threatening blizzard" approaching from the south that was forecast to hit Maine and the rest of New England and the Northeast on Tuesday and Wednesday, April 6 and 7. The blockbuster nor'easter was formed when two big troughs of low pressure merged south and west of New York City and



**Jim Nimon, of 15 Manley Street in Augusta, skis down Glenwood Street.**

*Kennebec Journal* file photo by Allan B. Roach

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## The Collections Box

Several years ago, a good friend told me that history is like a jigsaw puzzle and time has scattered the pieces. It is the goal of the Kennebec Historical Society to look for the pieces and find their proper places in the puzzle of the history of Kennebec County.

Puzzle pieces come in various forms: three-dimensional objects, books, magazines and newspapers, scrapbooks, photos, and manuscripts. Because of the preservation demands that attend them, we do not usually accept three-dimensional objects. In the case of books, the title suggests the relevance to our search and a quick examination of the index to a book on Maine history, for example, will decide whether it will make a worthwhile addition to our library.

On the other hand, newspapers and magazines published in Kennebec County cities and towns in the 19th and early 20th centuries provide much information. In the case of newspapers, the local news is obviously helpful, but so are the obituaries, cooking and sewing sections, and the advertisements that identify both a business and its owners. The many pulp magazines also provide business, self-help, craft, and health information, but more importantly reflect changes in literary tastes over the years.

Scrapbooks are either thematic or simply chronological. A thematic volume might be filled with clippings concerning the present war — Spanish-American, World War I, World War II — and record not only the progress of the conflict but its effect on the local community, documenting engagements, weddings, and deaths. And, of course, scrap paper and metal collection drives by the Boy Scouts and blood drives by the Red Cross. All these activities will record and preserve names not likely to be recorded elsewhere.

A chronological scrapbook is made up of whatever struck the compiler's fancy in that day's newspaper, the political flier in the mail along with a letter from her sister, plus the program from last night's concert. Poems, cute advertisements, empty seed packets, travel brochures all appear in random order. Together somewhere in these pages may lie a piece of the puzzle.

Photos can be both helpful and frustrating. A professional carte-de-visite or studio photo without a subject's name, or photographer's name, or address, or date really has no value. Larger pictures of family gatherings, or parades, or sporting events without any identification, or date, or location are also of little value. Just a photographer's name and address enable us to show that he or she once had a studio in a county town. However, if a photo of David Humphrey was taken in John Smith's studio on Water Street across from the new post office in Augusta on July 17, 1876, and a note on the back not only gives his name but gives David's relationship to Amelia Jones, we have a puzzle piece of much greater value.

Not too many decades ago, historians shifted from the study of princes and prelates in palaces to cooks and carpenters in shops and kitchens. We follow their lead and focus on letters from ordinary people writing to each other, and we find even short letters have valuable puzzle pieces. An October 23, 1848, letter tells us that Samuel Smith lived in Hallowell and Benjamin Jones in Anson. Smith sold lumber, and Jones' logging business was large enough to need more help with twitching logs in the coming winter. Did Smith know of anyone needing a job? All this information on single sheet of paper. A letter from Virginia written April 19, 1863, by Wilson Pettigrew to his family in Gardiner describes life in his Maine regimental camp. Love letters, letters describing sickness and death, birthdays, school life; the list is endless and each one adds another piece to the puzzle which is the history of Kennebec County.

— Bruce Kirkham, Collections Committee chairman



### A Few Observations from KHS Volunteers During the Virus Crisis

We are winnowing books we will never read from our library, CDs from our music collection, and food we will never eat from our freezer, but lamenting our decision to give away all those jigsaw puzzles — Bruce and Kathy Kirkham

These are scary times. I miss going to church, working at the local library and feeling safe shopping for groceries, as well as being at KHS. This awful plague seems to lie in wait, ready to land on anyone. It's very hard to be separated from loved ones, but it's the most effective way to beat this enemy. Stay well, and stay strong, everyone! — Emily Schroeder

During this coronavirus danger, my life is very different. As a Kennebec County commissioner, one of my big worries is our county jail. The thought of the virus getting into the jail creates a constant worry. — Patsy Crockett

My mother recently broke her hip in a fall. She was rushed to the hospital and is now in rehab. We visit each other from the window of her room on the ground floor. — Rich Eastman

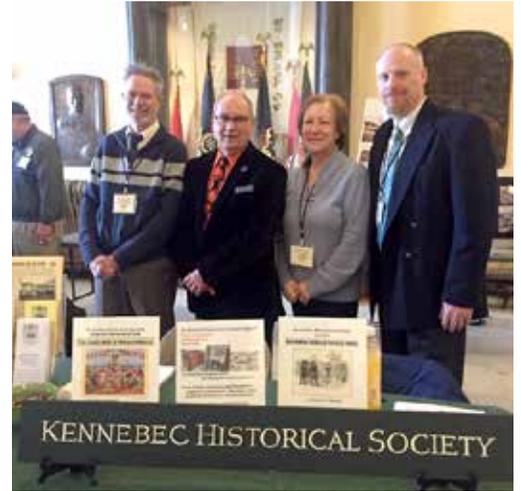
## KHS Participates in Maine Museums Day Again

**O**n February 18, the Kennebec Historical Society, for the second year in a row, joined with the New England Museum Association and Maine Archives and Museums for Maine Museums Day to celebrate the diversity and unique achievements of museums and other collecting institutions in Maine.

Despite the snowy weather, the schedule for the day consisted of advocacy training in the morning at the Maine State Archives, followed by time to meet with legislators and a reception in the Maine State House's Hall of Flags. The event featured guest speakers and displays from participating institutions.

At the Hall of Flags reception, KHS was able to exhibit many of the ways it preserves Kennebec County history. The society was well represented with Administrative Director Scott Wood, Treasurer Doreen Harvey and Membership Committee Co-chairman Glenn Adams all attending and answering questions. The inclement weather did affect the number attending, but the reception still provided opportunities to have conversations with colleagues from other collecting institutions while listening to inspiring speakers such as Dan Yaeger, executive director of the New England Museum Association; and Rep. Erik C. Jorgensen, D-Portland, who spoke on the importance of collecting institutions in Kennebec County.

The KHS exhibit included handouts on how to catalog, brochures on membership and artifact donations, information about the society's monthly programs, samples of archival supplies used to preserve the collection, and complimentary historic postcards. Rep. Bruce White, D-Waterville, stopped by long enough to pose for a photo and to discuss the work KHS is doing and the effect that effort has on the entire county.



From left, KHS Membership Committee Co-chairman Glenn Adams; Rep. Bruce White, D-Waterville; Treasurer Doreen Harvey; Administrative Director Scott Wood cluster at the KHS table Feb. 18 at the State House in Augusta.

KHS photo

## Bicentennial Commission Awards \$2,000 Grant to KHS

**T**he Kennebec Historical Society has received a \$2,000 Community Grant from the Maine Bicentennial Commission for projects that honor and celebrate Maine's 200th anniversary as a state. The society will use the money to extend honorary bicentennial memberships to the Maine Legislature, supplement the purchase of new software to replace the current membership and collection databases, and to augment the KHS schedule of lectures that celebrate Maine and its rich history.

The idea of offering honorary bicentennial memberships to all members of the Legislature was a suggestion by KHS Membership Committee Co-chairman Glenn Adams as a way for KHS to celebrate, reflect on the state's past and future, and reach out to friends and neighbors in the spirit of optimism and pride. Legislators have been invited to visit the historic 1836 headquarters and to familiarize themselves with the KHS holdings. The complimentary memberships are effective until the end of 2021, the 130th anniversary of the society's founding.

After exploring conversion of its complicated collection and membership databases (currently in Access) to a commercially produced, user-friendly software program called PastPerfect, the society decided to buy and install it. Designed by museum professionals, PastPerfect software combines the ability to catalog collections with the ability to manage relationships with members and donors. The software is used by more than 11,000 collecting institutions nationwide. More than 60 museums and historical societies in Maine use the software, including the Maine Historical Society, the Waterville Historical Society, and the Vassalboro Historical Society. Using PastPerfect, volunteers will be able to digitize, catalog, and provide more clarity about records of the lives of those who lived in Kennebec County.

As for the lectures, in the days leading up to the March 15 anniversary of Maine statehood, KHS was co-host of a Kennebec County Trivia Night with Cushnoc Brewing in Augusta and had several lectures planned. Since the outbreak of the novel coronavirus, however, the March and April programs were postponed and are expected to be rescheduled.

In a recent letter to grant recipients, the Maine Bicentennial Commission chairman, Sen. Bill Diamond, recognized that many bicentennial events and programs must be postponed but said he hopes the funding would be used for such events when it becomes safe to do so.

## The Kennebec Historical Society Welcomes the Following New Members

Connie Hanson — Augusta  
 Edward Harter — Columbia, South Carolina  
 Charles Jacobs — Monmouth  
 David Kaplan — Augusta  
 Penny Jackson Pray — Winthrop  
 Bruce Reed — Augusta  
 Lois Rogers — Hallowell  
 Robert Rowell — Hallowell

Dan Warren — Pittston  
 Amy Waterman — Brunswick

~

In addition, to celebrate Maine's Bicentennial, the Kennebec Historical Society has extended complimentary honorary Bicentennial memberships to the entire 129th Legislature (total 187 — 35 senators, 151 representatives, and the governor)

*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 ✧

**Robert “Bob” Irving Curran**, 85, of Augusta, a longtime Kennebec Historical Society member, died February 18 at his home. A Milo native, he earned a bachelor's degree in education from the University of Maine, in Orono, and a master's degree in school administration and law. After working as a teacher and a school principal, he held school administrative positions in midcoast Maine. In conjunction with the state, he was instrumental in instituting health insurance benefits for teachers. He next moved to the Department of Education in Augusta, creating the statewide Adult and Community Education Program. Also, he worked with Maine Partners of America as its secretary and helped develop educational projects in Brazil. His survivors include a daughter, a granddaughter, and two great-grandchildren.

**Nancy B. Hill**, 77, a Kennebec Historical Society life member and benefactor, died April 4 at her home in Manchester. Formerly of Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, and Augusta, she was a graduate of Cony High School and the University of Maine, in Orono. She earned her master's degree in social work from Florida State University in 1966 and her Juris Doctorate from Woodrow Wilson College of Law in 1976. She worked for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs for over 25 years. She also was an adjunct professor at the University of South Carolina College of Social Work and Florida State University College of Social Work. She is survived by brother Richard Barnes, of Manchester, and sister Margaret LaVallee, of Litchfield, both KHS life members.

**Lincoln George Luken**, 97, a former longtime Kennebec Historical Society member and Gardiner resident, died Feb. 12. Born in New York City, he grew up in Ridgefield Park, New Jersey, where he graduated in 1941 from Ridgefield High School. He was a Navy veteran of World War II and the Korean War. He settled in his wife's hometown, Gardiner, where they raised their six children. He worked for Remington Rand Corporation and later co-founded Central Maine Business Machines in Augusta. He retired in 1990. He was active in the Gardiner Planning Board, the school board, and youth and sports groups. He is survived by five children, eight grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

**Mary Ann Prugh**, 86, of Manchester, a Kennebec Historical Society member, died Jan. 13 in Manchester. She was born in Old Town, the only child of Thomas and Pearl Connors. She grew up there and graduated from Old Town High School and the University of Maine with a degree in nutrition. She completed her internship in Boston, followed by stays in Hartford, back in Boston, and finally at Togus VA hospital from which she retired in 1990. She was a member of the American Dietetic Association and NARFE. She is survived by her husband of 13 years, Duane Prugh, of Manchester.

**Carolyn E. Tozier**, 86, of Hallowell, died April 9 at MaineGeneral Rehabilitation at Graybirch in Augusta. Born in Augusta, she graduated from Cony High School in 1952. She retired from the state of Bureau of Motor Vehicles as chief of dealer licensing. Her survivors include husband and longtime KHS member William Tozier, three children, three grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

## April 1982 Blizzard Was Big Adventure

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After I left work about 8 or 9 p.m. that night, the fun really began. I had worked hard all day, gathering storm reports from all the communities in the southern Kennebec Valley area, and I was tired. I owned a 1978 Chevrolet Monza with rear-wheel drive – not a good car for driving in snow.



Drivers shovel snow in April 1982 on Capitol and Florence streets in Augusta.

*Kennebec Journal* file photo by Allan B. Roach

that night. I decided to try to backtrack to my friend Joe Owen's house in Augusta and spend the night there. My car had turned sideways and I descended the hill that way before I could turn it around at the bottom of the hill. The sideways slide was the scariest part of the trip, as I had virtually no control over which way my car went. God was watching out for me, though, and I made it all the way back to the Owens' apartment on Johnson Street without incident. I parked in front of Joe's home even though there was an all-night parking ban in force because of the storm.

Joe was used to working late because he was a police reporter at the KJ. He and his wife, Mary, had three small children. In fact, April 6 was the birthday of Joe and Mary's son Brendan, who turned 3 that day. The Owens graciously ushered me into their blessedly warm home and made up a spare bed for me.

The next morning, when Joe and I went outdoors with snow shovels to assess the damage, we were amazed. My car was nowhere to be seen because there was so much snow on top of it, both from the record snowfall and from what the city snow plows had pushed up. My car looked like a giant white gumdrop, about 7 feet high. It took us quite a while to find and dig out the car. I went back to work right away, wearing my dirty clothes from the previous day. Joe didn't have to work until later that day.

I was not the only KJ staffer who was stranded in Augusta that night. Steve Solloway, the KJ sports editor who often worked until 1 a.m. with his sports staff, Gary Hawkins and Paul Betit, couldn't make it to his home in Weeks Mills and had to spend the night at the newspaper office. He pulled some chairs together in a conference room, lay down, covered himself with his coat, and went to sleep.

"It was just me (left in the building)," Steve recalled recently. "It was raw. I kept looking out the window. I didn't even try to get home."

Steve said he felt "a little stiff" after sleeping on the chairs. He said the first member of the KJ's morning crew arrived about 6:30 a.m.

"But I was only 30. It was an adventure and it was not something that was going to happen again soon," he recalled.

I made it out of Augusta OK and got over the first hill I came to. But I couldn't make it over Pelton Hill to Manchester. My wheels started spinning halfway up the big slope and I had to back down. I decided to try to detour around Pelton Hill on Prescott Road, which led to Belgrade. But this was a dumb idea, because my alternate route was on more rural back roads that weren't as well plowed as Western Avenue, if at all.

At first, things went OK. I drove slowly on flat stretches and accelerated up the snow-covered hills to gain traction. Usually this worked well enough to get me over the top, but this time my plans caved in.

Halfway up what seemed like a long and steep hill, my wheels started spinning and I started sliding back down. It was all I could do to keep the Monza from dropping into a ditch. I quickly realized I wasn't going to make it home



Steve Quimby shovels out the Senator Inn in Augusta.

*Kennebec Journal* file photo by Jay Reiter

*John Hale worked at the Kennebec Journal from 1979 to 1983. He also worked for the Bangor Daily News, Capital Weekly and other newspapers in Maine. He recently completed a book about his sporadic mental illness.*



# Letters TO THE Editor

## Winthrop's Go-to Restaurant

**I**n response to our article in the January–February 2020 issue of the *Kennebec Current*, written by Kari Mullen-McLaughlin, we received these letters from Harvey Lipman and Sally Furber Nelson:

Dear Sir:

I very much enjoyed Kari Mullen-McLaughlin's article titled "Rambling in Winthrop," especially how she describes the way U.S. Route 202 has grown from a quiet country byway into the major highway of today.

It appears this development has occurred more within my own lifetime than hers because I would say no piece about Winthrop should conclude with a description of the Steer House restaurant and overlook mention of McNamara's Restaurant, the town's original "go-to fancy special occasion" family restaurant.

McNamara's original location was a modest white cape with green shutters, the house still standing on the corner of Main and Bowdoin streets. On Sunday afternoons, the line of hungry people waited on the sidewalk for a table. The signature dessert, baked by Mrs. McNamara herself, was lemon meringue pie.

About 1956, McNamara's relocated, building a modern brick eating destination facility west of town on U.S. Route 202, what Mullen-McLaughlin eventually identifies as the Steer House. The parking lot full, the new, expanded location was even more successful than the old. In addition to the dining room, there was a large pastry shop filled with cookie and fruit turnover treats — and a whole cabinet, of course, dedicated just to Mrs. McNamara's lemon meringue confections.

Mentioned on the back of their postcard, the facility even had a picnic playground and reflection pond, today overgrown by bulrushes and cattails, a perfect setting for special events. Our family still has the 8-millimeter home movie of my sister's seventh birthday there. It's not right to tell a woman's age, but that was in 1962. Eventually McNamara also built a short-order-style restaurant separate from the larger, more formal dining facility, what today is Fast Eddy's car hop.

During Cruise Night now in summer, the playground is full of children. The swings, seesaw, and other playground equipment are the very ones that entertained my sister's childhood friends so many years ago. They even sport the same pastel colors from McNamara's time.

The original Steer House was on Lisbon Street in Lewiston. When Mr. and Mrs. McNamara retired, the location was sold and the restaurant remodeled Steer House-style to what Mullen-McLaughlin quite correctly describes as retro-western kitsch. I wouldn't say it was sacrilege, but they even placed a fiberglass bull on top the old McNamara Restaurant sign.

I look forward to Ms. Mullen-McLaughlin's next article about the old road from Augusta to Winthrop.

*Harvey A. Lipman, Manchester*

I really enjoyed Kari's article about Winthrop because I grew up there. I had left by the time the Steer House was popular; however, I remember that site as McNamara's, a Winthrop institution.

Lenny McNamara, the patriarch of the family, was a baker from Augusta who married a Winthrop girl, Annie Curthell. They lived with her parents and he worked at the local Winthrop Bakery. By 1910, he had bought the bakery from Edward Loughton. We moved to Winthrop in 1940 and I walked by the bakery with its tantalizing aromas every day on my way to the old grammar school next to the Methodist Church. Lenny McNamara would sometimes greet us outside the store. I remember him as a jolly friendly man who usually had a smudge of flour on his nose. Sometimes my mother would give me money to buy a loaf of bread just out of the oven on my way home for lunch. She would make egg salad sandwiches with that yummy bread.

Later, Lenny McNamara added a small hamburger stand on upper Main Street, which became popular with the locals and the "summer people." As boy-crazy teenagers, my friends and I would hang out there in the evenings, hoping to catch the eye of one of the handsome camp counselors.

Lenny and Annie had two sons: Dick and Bob. They both served in the Armed Forces during WWII and returned home to take over the family businesses after Lenny died in 1945. By 1950, the McNamara brothers had built a larger restaurant on the family property with a larger and more varied menu. The new, larger restaurant was popular with both locals and summer visitors. My "steady" and I would stop there for a hamburger and a Coke after the Friday night movie.

Esther McNamara, Dick's wife, ran the bakery, which supplied a large variety of pies to the restaurant. During the summers of my last two years of high school, I worked with Esther at the bakery. It was a wonderful job — I could eat all the jelly donuts and cookies that I wanted! Every Saturday, the cooks would make a huge pot of baked beans, which were popular with the summer people. Later, I became a waitress at the restaurant between my two years of college. It was always busy during the dinner hour and into the evening, but it was a fun place to work.

Encouraged by the success of their restaurant, Bob and Dick McNamara built an even larger restaurant on the "new Lewiston road." Unfortunately, Bob died at the age of 49 in 1959 and the family sold to the Steer House. However, those of us who grew up in Winthrop will always remember that site as McNamara's.

*Sally Furber Nelson, West Gardiner*

## Upcoming Programs

### May Public Presentation:

#### “The Traveling Sisters: Moving Forward”



Shelley and Jacklyn, the “Traveling Sisters”  
Photo courtesy of the speakers

**T**hrough photographs, videos, and tales of encounters with wildlife and people from Africa to Asia, the “Traveling Sisters” share their experiences of roaming the world.

Drawing stories from their first three books, *Can I Carry Your Luggage?*, *Upside Down and Backwards*, and *Dromomainea*, Shelley Lance-Fulk and Jacklyn Amtower draw armchair travelers into their world of experiencing unpredictable situations and amazing adventures, especially in times of uncertainty. Their passion for observing, chronicling, and sharing stories reinforces the importance appreciating the beauty our planet has to offer. Through funny, frightening, and heartbreaking narratives, others are invited to immerse themselves in the lives of these two sisters, who have been traveling, experiencing, and photographing our world since their teens.

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 books. Their time throughout the year is divided among traveling, sharing their photographs and stories at artisan fairs, and participating in speaking engagements. The sisters enjoy meeting new people and observing other cultures and wildlife, but their appreciation of Maine always draws them home to the animals and splendor of their beautiful community.

This Kennebec Historical Society May presentation is co-sponsored by the Maine State Library and is free to the public (donations gladly accepted). The presentation is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 20, at the Maine State Library, located at 230 State Street in Augusta. Light refreshments will be available after the lecture.

**Editor’s note:** At presstime, the Kennebec Current had not been notified about whether the statewide stay-at-home order resulting from the coronavirus pandemic will be rescinded. If either the May or June program is postponed, a notice to that effect will appear on the society’s internet home page and in local news media.

### June Public Presentation: “Christ Church, Gardiner”

**T**his year Christ Episcopal Church in Gardiner is celebrating the 200th anniversary of its landmark house of worship. Constructed of local granite from 1818 to 1820, Christ Church is Maine’s first example of Gothic Revival church architecture. This distinctive building was erected primarily through the support of Robert Hallowell Gardiner I, who secured the plans from the Reverend Samuel Farmar Jarvis. From 1847 to 1866 the church served as the seat of Maine’s first Episcopal bishop, George Burgess, who is buried in the adjacent churchyard. A PowerPoint lecture in June will trace the architectural history of one of the state’s most historic churches.

Our Kennebec Historical Society speaker, Portland native Earle G. Shettleworth Jr., attended Deering High School, Colby College, and Boston University and was the recipient of honorary doctorates from Bowdoin College and the Maine College of Art. At the age of thirteen, Shettleworth became interested in historic preservation through the destruction of Portland’s Union Station in 1961. In 1971 he was appointed by Gov. Kenneth Curtis to serve on the first board of the Maine Historic Preservation Commission. Shettleworth became the commission’s architectural historian in 1973 and its director in 1976. He retired from that position in 2015. Shettleworth has lectured and written extensively on Maine history and architecture and has been Maine’s state historian since 2004.

The presentation is free to the public (donations gladly accepted). The lecture is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, June 17, at Christ Episcopal Church, located at 2 Dresden Avenue in Gardiner. Light refreshments will be available after the lecture.



Old view of Christ Church in Gardiner.

Photo courtesy of Wikipedia

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