

Kennebec Current

Discovering, preserving, and disseminating Kennebec County history since 1891

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KENNEBEC HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

March–April 2022

Old Fort Western Seeks to Rebuild Cushnoc Trading Post



The blue area in the map above outlines the area where the replica of the 1628 Cushnoc Trading Post is expected to be built.

Image courtesy of Old Fort Western

Augusta's Old Fort Western is moving forward with plans to build a full-scale replica of the Pilgrims' 1628 Cushnoc trading post near where the original post stood on the Kennebec River's east bank in what is now Augusta.

"The time is right. I would have started earlier, but COVID hit," said Linda Novak, the fort museum's director and curator. "This is just falling into place."

The original trading post was on what is now the front lawn of the First Church of Christ, Scientist, on the south side of Williams Street, according to archaeologist Leon E. Cranmer's 1990 book *Cushnoc: The History and Archaeology of the Plymouth Colony Traders of the Kennebec*. That land probably contains long-undisturbed 17th-century detritus of archaeological interest. The spot chosen for the trading post replica is a few dozen feet away at the former location of Bowman Street, which still contains underground utility lines and other more modern soil disturbances, Novak said. It will be easily visible from the river, she said.

The post-and-beam building is expected to measure 20 by 44 feet and consist of three bays, reflecting the original's division into a trading area, living quarters, and storage space. The replica's trading area will be used to house historical exhibits. The building is expected to include electricity and a sprinkler system, but no other indoor plumbing, Novak said.

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Events Honoring Midwife Martha Ballard Planned

Famed local midwife Martha Ballard, whose diary helped to shine a light on day-to-day life in post-Colonial New England, is getting more light shed on herself this spring.

Augusta's Old Fort Western plans to host a public event, "Martha Ballard's World: Wife, Mother, Healer, Botanist," scheduled for 1-4 p.m. May 15 at the fort. Activities will be set up at five stations that illustrate entries that Ballard made in her diary during the month of May. The activities include making cinnamon butter, working with looms, making candles, learning about herbs and other plants for use in cooking and healing, and a recreation of an 18th-century tea in the fort garrison, where Ballard herself often drank tea with Susanna Cony Howard. Registration for the event closes April 29. Registration materials are available at the fort's website, www.oldfortwestern.org. The cost of admission is \$25.

Also, an eight-member city committee planning the creation and placement of a statue commemorating Ballard's work ([Kennebec Current, July-August 2021](#)) is hosting a showing of the 1998 documentary movie "A Midwife's Tale," which is based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning 1990 book about Ballard by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich. This fundraising event is scheduled for 5:30 p.m. June 15 at the Colonial Theater, at 139 Water Street in Augusta. It includes hors d'oeuvres, wine, soft drinks, and a silent auction. Tickets cost \$30 each and can be ordered from the Augusta Downtown Alliance by sending payment to that organization at P.O. Box 2066, Augusta, ME 04338; or by going to its office in the Olde Federal Building, at 295 Water Street in Augusta.

The city committee includes two of Ballard's direct descendants as well as the Kennebec Historical Society's president, Jamie Logan.

President's Message



Soon the tulips and other flowers will be blooming in the gardens at Kennebec Historical Society headquarters, letting us know that spring has officially arrived. In the spring, there are many occasions to mark, including Mother's Day and Father's Day. As we celebrate these holidays, family and family history are often top of mind.

Perhaps you've heard stories about great-grandmothers and great-grandfathers you never had the opportunity to meet, or would like to know more about your own parents' life and your family tree. At KHS, we're pleased to be able to provide resources and documents that can help you do that. The story of each of our families is the story of our

communities, and every item in our collections has some connection to a family and can help you not only build your family tree, but build the story of your family. Perhaps the records of a local organization contain minutes where your great-aunt spoke up on a critical matter. Maybe a local high school yearbook shows that your grandfather had an athletic prowess you didn't know about, or an old Kennebec Journal photo shows up in a search of your family surname and provides you with a new-to-you image of your mother as a child enjoying a local event. Learn about where your great-great-grandfather worked by looking through a business's account books, or put a relative's experience in better context by looking through a scrapbook kept by someone during the time they were alive.

Such collections and documents are just a small fraction of the resources KHS has in its archives. Its library also contains numerous genealogy and local history books that can help you trace your family history.

Collecting, cataloging, and appropriately storing these papers, books, and other items is the crux of the KHS mission. Without these primary sources, we wouldn't be able to help promote county history or help others research and promote it. Your membership and continued support helps us carry out this mission; thank you!

If this spring you find yourself musing about your family history while exchanging Mother's and Father's Day cards, we invite you to call or email KHS and see how we can help you uncover the past and create a connection with your ancestors. You might be surprised at what you find in our collections.

And, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention that gift memberships to KHS make a great present for any holiday – especially for the hard-to-shop-for mother or father who loves history.

Enjoy your spring, and, as always, thank you for your support of KHS!

— *Jamie Logan, president*

KHS Welcomes the Following New Members

Robert Carter Jr. — Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida

Aaron Miller — Whitefield

Sam Oppenheim — Gardiner

Elisabeth Rockwood — Augusta

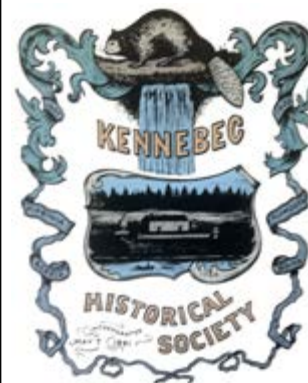
and continues to recognize ...

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

Kennebec Savings Bank
Meadow Park Development

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Total membership:

630 on April 14

Life members: 231

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.

Readfield Mourns Loss of Preservationist, Scholar Marius Péladeau

In the same week when his ninth and last book arrived from the printer, Marius Péladeau died April 11 at MaineGeneral Medical Center in Augusta after having suffered injuries in a fall at his Readfield home.

Péladeau, 87, was a director emeritus of the Farnsworth Art Museum in Rockland and a former director of the Maine League of Historical Societies and Museums and the Theater at Monmouth.

Born in Boston, he graduated from St. Michael's College in Colchester, Vermont, and earned graduate degrees at Boston University and Georgetown University. As a young man, he worked in the 1960s as press secretary for U.S. Rep. Joseph Vigorito, a Democrat from Pennsylvania.

In recent years, he was one of the leading advocates for the restoration of the Readfield Union Meeting House ([Kennebec Current, November-December 2020](#)), the subject of his most recent book. He joined the board of the nonprofit Readfield Union Meeting House Company in 2009 and later became the group's historian.

"He was an active, passionate voice on that board," said Readfield resident and longtime Kennebec Historical Society member Marianne Perry, whose husband, John Perry, is the Meeting House group's treasurer.

Helping to commemorate Readfield's bicentennial in 1992, Péladeau researched extensively the history of Readfield's Factory Square, an industrial complex that thrived during the Civil War and its aftermath, but whose buildings eventually fell into disrepair and collapsed. He created a slide show about the site and used it many times to give lectures on the subject, John Perry said.

Péladeau was the volunteer vice president and curator of the Readfield Historical Society from 2003 to 2005, setting up many exhibits for that group. The society presented him with a certificate of honor in 2019 in recognition of his efforts to promote Maine history. His appearances as a Kennebec Historical Society guest speaker included a lecture about the Kennebec Arsenal in 2010.



Marius Péladeau, left, of Readfield, was honored at the Readfield Historical Society's annual meeting on March 16, 2019, for decades of preserving Maine history. Bob Harris, RHS president, presented the award.

Photo courtesy of Readfield Historical Society



Marius Péladeau stands in the Readfield Union Meeting House in 2020. Péladeau, who died April 11, was a member of a local nonprofit that is supervising the gradual restoration of the building.

Photo by Joseph Owen

Two hundred fifty copies of his final book, *Standing Tall: A History of the Union Meeting House, Readfield, Maine*, arrived in mid-April, John Perry said.

"He had a proof lying on his dining room table, so he had seen it," John Perry said, although he added that Péladeau did not get a chance to sign autographs or write personal notes to people expected to receive copies of the book as gifts. Books are available for purchase from Perry, who can be called at (207) 685-3531.

Péladeau lived alone in a waterfront home that he and his late wife, Mildred (1928–2017), an expert who wrote and taught extensively about hooked rugs, had converted years ago to year-round use, Perry said. A neighbor who had been checking regularly on Péladeau found him lying injured early on the morning of April 10.

A celebration of his life is scheduled for July 10 at the Meeting House.



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.”

— Bruce Kirkham, former Collections Committee chairman



Fuller's Foundry was eventually located near Vaughn Stream in Hallowell.

Photo from KHS collection

The Kennebec Historical Society recently received an interesting collection of materials on the Fuller family of Hallowell, including a number of photographs (of buildings, people, and floods), obituary clippings, and accounts, and a full genealogy of James and Dorcas (Quint) Brann. (I haven't figured out the connection here yet.). There's a wonderful 1930s scrapbook of labeled (!) photos, and 1853 business records of the Fuller Foundry. The latter is a great addition, as we had nothing before on this company.

We learn from Kathrerine H. Snell and Vincent P. Ledew's 1962 book *Historic Hallowell* that the foundry was first located on the east side of Second Street at the corner of Winthrop Street, where it was called Prescott and Fuller. Workers made iron and brass castings, pipes and fittings, plus print blocks for wallpaper and oilcloth. The records we now have are of this period; Prescott and Fuller was burned out and had to move to Bombahook/Vaughn Stream about 1860, with

the new name George Fuller and Sons. One of those sons was Capt. George S. Fuller, whose lengthy obituary is included in this collection. Born in 1835, he began his professional career as a surveyor in Minnesota. He returned to Maine to enlist in the 3rd Maine, participating in 20 or so Civil War battles, and was a prisoner of war in Libby Prison. He was a Mason; treasurer of his regimental association; quartermaster of the Hubbard Post, Grand Army of the Republic; mayor of Hallowell in 1878 and 1879; representative to the Legislature in 1886 and 1887; and active in the First Baptist Church. At the time of his death in 1913, he had outlived his wife, Helen, and two of his four children.

His son Fred H. Fuller took over the business. (The last listing we have for the company is in the 1934 city directory). He also was a Mason, and he was a member of the Hallowell Fire Department for 25 years, during which he served as chief engineer of the steamer company. His obituary states that he was a former clerk of the City Council and past commander of the Sons of Union Veterans. When he died in 1967, he was Hallowell's oldest citizen, at 98. One of the photos in this collection is of his daughter (Helen) Bernice, who died at the age of 12 from diphtheria. A condolence letter from her school is included.

Our thanks go to the donor, Charles Crockett, who gave this collection in memory of Malcom Harve Crockett and Geneva Fuller Crockett (a daughter of Fred H.); and to Hallowell resident and State Historian Earle Shettleworth, who came in to examine and identify some of the photographs.

Another notable acquisition is a group of postcards of Kennebec County places, purchased at the Maine Antique Post Card Show on March 13 at the Fireside Inn in Portland. Our volunteers enjoyed the day and selected over 80 cards, mostly real-photo postcards. As you can imagine, we really value the actual photographs!



KHS acquired more than 80 postcards at the Maine Antique Post Card Show, including these.

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Photo from KHS collection

Cushnoc Trading Post



This painting, "Plymouth Trade House at Cushnoc, 1628," is an oil on canvas by Ruth Dewilde-Major.

Photo courtesy of Old Fort Western

open the trading post by 2028, which will be the 400th anniversary of the original trading post's establishment. Once it is completed, the new trading post would be incorporated into the tours already conducted at next-door Old Fort Western, a British Colonial frontier outpost that was built in 1754 and is Augusta's oldest building.

— by Joseph Owen

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At current prices, the project is estimated to cost \$187,000 to \$237,000. Wood to be used for construction accounts for most of that expense, and that wood probably will be bought in Canada because the type needed is unavailable in the United States, Novak said. Private donations are expected to provide most or all of the funding.

The Augusta City Council approved the trading post idea in concept 10 years ago, but Novak said she will ask current council members to weigh in on it as well.

In conjunction with the building project, the fort museum already has republished Cranmer's book and is offering it for sale in the fort gift shop and the museum office at Augusta City Center. The fort plans to launch on May 28 a campaign to raise at least \$150,000 to support the building project.

Novak said the fort museum hopes to secure all the money it needs for the project by 2026 and to

The Collections Box

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We'd also like you to see the newly restored portrait of William Robinson Smith ([Kennebec Current, January-February 2021](#)). We think he looks wonderful! The portrait will soon be returned to its frame and go back on display, where it belongs. We are grateful to all those who contributed to the annual Charles Nash Fund campaign and made this transformation possible.

One last item: On behalf of the Collections Committee, I invite anyone with an interest in Kennebec County history to join us. We have a lot of fun looking through new donations and purchases for our collections, and having a hand in changing policies and planning the society's future. We value enthusiasm more than experience. Our meetings, which are informal, take place on the first Thursdays of March through December. Please give us a call or send an e-mail if you're interested, and we'll get back to you soon.

Happy spring!

— Emily A. Schroeder, KHS archivist and
Collections Committee Co-Chair



Shown here are the before and after images of the work done to restore the portrait of publisher, banker, and philanthropist William Robinson Smith (1813-1894), of Augusta, made possible through generous donations to the Charles Nash Fund. An elementary school that once stood at the southwest corner of State and Bridge Streets was named for Smith.

Photos from KHS collection

Old Alna Locomotive Once Frequented Kennebec County Rails

Many folks here in Kennebec County and elsewhere who are train fans or model railroaders are aware that we Mainers once supported the most two-foot-gauge railroads in the United States. These short-line routes, ranging from roughly five miles to 120, were built in this narrow-gauge size largely because of their low cost of construction compared to that of the standard-gauge lines.

Two of these companies featured operations in various parts of this county. Almost miraculously, a locomotive that once ran on these two lines has been preserved and restored to operating condition. It is a story of good fortune, hard work, and a recognition of the need to preserve the past, stretching over more than a century.

First, a bit of railroad history: Maine at various times boasted five “two-footers,” as they were often called. The largest was the Sandy River and Rangeley Lakes Railroad

(SR&RL) in Franklin County. Not far away to the east, the six-mile-long Monson Railroad was built mostly to carry slate from that town’s quarries. The Bridgton and Saco River (B&SR) line roamed through parts of Oxford County until 1941 or so. This area had the Kennebec Central Railroad (KC), connecting Randolph and the veterans’ home at Togus; and the Wiscasset, Waterville and Farmington (WW&F), which reached only one of the three places in its name — Wiscasset. The artifact that three of these companies have in common is the locomotive mentioned above.

The SR&RL’s predecessor, the Sandy River Railroad (SRR), started operations in 1879. Like most railroads large and small, it realized the need for more motive power as time went on. In 1891, the Sandy River placed an order for an engine from the Portland Company, located here in Maine. It was initially numbered SRR 5. As several shorter lines later merged into the SR&RL, it became No. 6, and it is No. 6 on which we’ll focus.

As built, it weighed 18 tons and carried 1,500 pounds of coal for fuel and 600 gallons of water to produce steam, according to authors Gary Kohler and Chris McChesney, who described the locomotive in *Locomotives of the WW&F Railway*, part of their extensive *Narrow Gauge in the Sheepscot Valley* book series. It was a Forney-type locomotive named for its inventor, Matthias Forney, and had no separate tender. It featured four driving wheels and a four-wheel trailing truck to support the fuel and water. Its two-man crew was jammed into a tiny cab with hardly any space to sit. The cost of construction was \$4,200. It survived a number of wrecks and even was rescued from a fire in the roundhouse at Phillips. As of 1925, No. 6 was still doing its job.

In that year, the Kennebec Central Railroad, realizing that it needed to augment its two existing locomotives, contacted the SR&RL and ultimately purchased No. 6, as well as a nearly identical locomotive, B&SR No. 3. The latter engine kept its number, and No. 6 became KC No. 4. The KC line ran from a station area on the Randolph waterfront, across the Kennebec River from Gardiner, to the veterans’ facility at Togus, a route of about five miles. Major freight traffic consisted of supplies for the Togus residents and staff and coal for fueling the boilers that heated the many Togus buildings. In addition, many passengers rode the trains, at least in early days, to attend events such as baseball games and band concerts and to celebrate holidays. A number of the old soldiers gained a reputation for riding the KC from nearby towns while “under the influence”; the train crews got them back safely. However, newer technology eventually doomed the line. Trucks took over most of the coal traffic and most passengers began to opt for a trolley line running to Togus from Augusta. In 1929, the KC expired.



The repaired and refurbished No. 9 locomotive stands several years ago in Alna Center on track belonging to the Wiscasset Waterville & Farmington Railway Museum. The museum is open 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. every Saturday. Admission is free. Prices for train rides vary. A schedule of train trips and other events is available on the museum’s website.

Photo by Bob Bennett

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Voters OK Funding for West Gardiner Historical Society Building

West Gardiner voters approved an appropriation of \$120,000 at their April 9 town meeting to help finish clearing property and begin construction of a building that will house the West Gardiner Historical Society.

The town already has hired a contractor to perform the earthwork and build a slab, work that is expected to occur this summer, according to Gregory Couture, chairman of the town's Board of Selectmen.

The plan envisions a town-owned building 80 feet long and 32 feet wide, Couture said. A schedule for the rest of the construction has not been determined yet, and planners also have not decided whether the entire building will be heated and air-conditioned, he said. Society members discussed the likely cost of construction materials at an April 20 meeting.

The building will be located near the West Gardiner Town Office and across from the Helen Thompson Elementary School playground.

The society already has received some historical items and a gift of \$25,000 from the Chester and Gloria Thompson family for use after the building is complete. Other people have donated documents to the society as well, and the town is holding those in its safe in the Town Office until the new building is finished, Couture said.

The West Gardiner Historical Society, a town-affiliated group founded in 2014, has about 20 members, he said.

Alna Locomotive

Continued from page 6

Nos. 3 and 4 were placed in the small engine house in Randolph for a couple of years. At the same time, the WW&F was having difficulties keeping its own engines in running condition and needed new power. In 1932, the Wiscasset line purchased the remnants of the KC to acquire the two leftover locomotives. Again, re-numbering occurred, with KC No. 3 becoming WW&F No. 8 and KC No. 4 turning into WW&F No. 9. The two beasts were loaded onto flatbed trailers and hauled by trucks down to Wiscasset along Route 27. Legend implies that some serious weight limitations were violated in the process.

Once the engines reached the coast, work was done to the brake systems and some minor repairs were carried out on the running gear. In early 1933, both were operable. No. 9 – formerly Nos. 5, 6, and 4 – was used first. The WW&F's route extended to Albion, passing through the Whitefield villages, Windsor, and China, so the engine probably served Kennebec County. However, by June 13, 1933, No. 9 was pulled out of service with a “broken rear frame member,” according to then-engineer Earl Keef, of Albion. Two days later, No. 8, running as a replacement, derailed in Whitefield in an accident that effectively killed the WW&F.

No. 9 was still more or less intact. For several years, it sat in a derelict condition along the Wiscasset waterfront. In 1937, WW&F No. 9 was granted a continued life. According to Kohler and McChesney, a rail fan named William Monypeny had enough money to buy the locomotive, and Connecticut resident Frank Ramsdell had a place to put it.

No. 9 finally arrived at Ramsdell's farm in West Thompson, Connecticut, in the spring of 1938. Ramsdell also had purchased some ex-Kennebec Central rail with the intention of building a short loop on which to run the locomotive after some repairs. This never happened, but fortunately, all of the metal survived the scrap drives conducted to support the soon-to-occur World War II. Along with a couple of nearly decrepit WW&F freight cars, No. 9 sat on the farm, slowly rotting and rusting away, reputedly protected by one of Ramsdell's daughters, Alice, and her shotgun, for more than half a century.

In 1995, Harry Percival, the founder of today's Wiscasset Waterville & Farmington Railway Museum, was able to buy No. 9 and have it moved from Connecticut to the museum's site in the Lincoln County town of Alna. For a year or so, the relic sat unused with only a bit of cosmetic work being performed. Then until 1997, it was operated under air pressure to pull light loads on the museum's growing trackage.

Things have changed dramatically since then. WW&F locomotive No. 9 has been completely restored and operates regularly throughout the year. Almost all of the work has been carried out by volunteers. The engine is maintained with a shiny finish like that created by proud crews a century ago. It moves effectively, creating plumes of smoke and clouds of steam as the locomotive chugs through summer's warmth, fall foliage, or Christmastime snow, hauling cars full of enthralled museum visitors.

Today's Kennebec County residents did not witness WW&F No. 9 on its excursions through the county's towns, but during a well-timed visit to the Alna museum, they can watch its current journey and revel in its legacy.

– by Bob Bennett

The Glenn Adams Jr. Memorial Journalism Internship

Are you an excellent writer with a strong interest in history, research, and preservation? Would you like hands-on experience with a historical society?

The Kennebec Historical Society has established a paid journalism internship in honor of the late Glenn Adams Jr. Adams joined The Associated Press at the Maine State House Bureau in Augusta, covered the terms of five governors, and retired as a correspondent after 32 years. He was involved with the society in many ways, including being the co-chairman of its Membership Committee and a member of the Development Committee. A talented journalist, Adams wrote news releases for the society and articles for the *Kennebec Current*, the society's bimonthly newsletter.

The internship will involve journalistic work: researching, reporting, writing, editing, photography, and/or videography. The position lasts roughly 10 hours per week for 10 weeks. Training and supervision will be provided by the KHS archive staff and will include mentoring from a retired local newspaper editor. Successful candidates will be pursuing college-level studies in journalism or history, will show excellent attention to detail in writing, and will be competent in using Microsoft Office tools. Responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Writing at least two well-constructed articles based on reliable information
- Interviewing key people to write those articles
- Researching using materials in the KHS collection
- Proofreading and editing news articles to improve their contents
- Suggesting headlines
- Researching and verifying facts
- Meeting newsletter deadlines

A cover letter and résumé or CV can be sent by email to kennhis1891@gmail.com and should include a brief description of the applicant's current course of study, available dates, and references. KHS will accept applications until the position is filled.



The Kennebec Historical Society is primarily a volunteer-run organization, with only one full-time employee. Its clientele includes residents and former residents of Kennebec County's 30 municipalities who are interested in local or Maine history, people researching the history of their homes or families, and students doing research for high school or college assignments. Also, the society answers requests for genealogical and historical information from all over the United States. KHS offers free monthly historical lectures in Augusta and nearby communities, a bimonthly newsletter, a social media presence, and a website (www.kennebechistorical.org). The KHS reading room is open to walk-in researchers three days a week or by appointment.

The society collects documents, photographs, manuscripts, books, ephemera, maps, and scrapbooks related to all Kennebec County communities and their history in a state-of-the-art, climate-controlled archive, which is recognized by the state of Maine as an alternative repository of government records. Over the years, KHS has accumulated these unique holdings, which cannot be found anywhere else.

KHS Plans June Book Sale at Its Headquarters

The Kennebec Historical Society will be having a used book sale in the driveway and the garage at the society's headquarters, 107 Winthrop Street in Augusta, on Friday, June 3, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., and continuing Saturday, June 4, from 9 a.m. to noon. The society has received many donations since the last book sale. There are more than 1,000 hardcover and paperback books. Subjects include fiction, biography, history, travel, business, cooking, children's literature, and much more. Hardcover books cost \$2 each, and paperbacks cost \$1 each. There will also be a table of specialty books that will be priced as marked. For more information, call (207) 622-7718.

Gardiner's Johnson Hall Closes for Rehabilitation

Reprinted with permission from the April 4 edition of the Kennebec Journal.

When the Capital City Improv actors took their final bows March 26 at Johnson Hall in downtown Gardiner, their performances became the final acts in the current chapter of the historic opera house.

April marks the start of the long-awaited renovation of the performing arts center at 280 Water St. that is likely to keep the theater closed for at least 18 months.

"It was amazing — packed house, wonderful time," Michael Miclon, Johnson Hall's executive artistic director, said in late March. "But it was just weird to think we're not doing another show in here until the theater is done."

And when the curtain rises on the next performance, it will be in the 400-seat upper theater that is to be rebuilt as part of the Johnson Hall's reconstruction project. The theater's rehabilitation is also to include an addition of a large lobby and concession area, a full-service box office, access that meets requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, an elevator to serve all three floors, and green rooms for the visiting acts. The studio theater on the ground floor, which has been home to recent performances, is also to receive an upgrade.

"We have been looking forward to the start of the Johnson Hall renovation project for more than 30 years," Gardiner Mayor Pat Hart said Friday. "Over those years, many people and businesses have been good patrons, volunteers, donors, and supporters of Johnson Hall and the arts in Gardiner."

Hart and Melissa Lindley, executive director of Gardiner Main Street, the organization responsible for creating and sustaining a vibrant downtown neighborhood, said that when the renovation is finished, the performing arts center is expected to be an economic driver for the city in southern Kennebec County.

"People are going to be coming to Gardiner in waves, often," Lindley said. "We'll be getting people from further away. The class of the shows is going to be attracting new people and putting Gardiner on the map." Those people are likely to spend time at Gardiner's shops and eat at its restaurants, Lindley said, and see Gardiner up close, maybe for the first time.

Early last week, volunteers cleared out the theater's offices to prepare for construction and crews this week are to remove remaining debris before turning the building over to construction workers.

"The first thing they will do is remove the proscenium," Miclon said. "That's the one historic piece." The proscenium is a structure that creates a frame on the stage for the scenery and performers. A small group will delicately take it down, store it in crates and remove it from the construction site before anything else in the building happens.

As construction schedules continue to be decided with Ganneston Construction Corp., of Augusta, the construction manager on the project, Miclon has been working on arranging Johnson Hall's Waterfront Concert Series.

Traditionally, the summer season has been 10 weeks long, with shows on Friday evenings. This year, Miclon said, the season has been lengthened by a week. The roster of acts booked includes many that have not performed at the waterfront before, including the Unfinished Blues Band, The Boneheads, and the Tough End Spring Band.

Because the entire building will be closed during construction, Miclon has been working on the 2022-23 season, not only lining up acts, but also finding places for them to perform. He said he has made arrangements with the Life Community Church at 46 Church St. to host some performances. The Blind Pig Tavern at 266 Water St., across Dearborn Park from the theater, is to host Johnson Hall's comedy shows at its function space. And after construction is completed later this year at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Kennebec Valley, at 14 Pray St., some performances are to be held there.

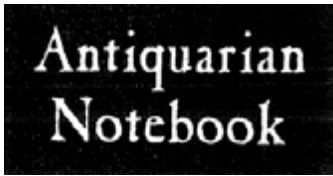
In the meantime, theater officials said they continue to raise money to meet a fundraising goal that has been subject to inflationary pressures in the construction industry.



April marks the start of extensive renovations to the Johnson Hall Performing Arts Center at 280 Water St. in downtown Gardiner, photographed above in July 2021. The iconic facility is expected to be closed for at least 18 months.

Photo by Joe Phelan

Thoughts on the “Antiquarian Notebook”



Editor's note: In 1997, KHS member and local historian Anthony Douin began writing “Antiquarian Notebook,” a historical column for the Capital Weekly newspaper that ran for 12 years. Life member and Kennebec Current contributor Sally Furber Nelson has catalogued those articles.

As bugles blared or big guns belched fire during America's wars, local people often were within earshot of them. The “Antiquarian Notebook” column cites many examples of central Maine residents who found themselves in the midst of the fray.



The USS Maine (ACR-1) was sent to Havana Harbor to protect U.S. interests during the Cuban War of Independence. It was photographed by J.S. Johnston in 1898.

Courtesy of the Library of Congress

When the battleship USS Maine was blown up in Havana Harbor on February 15, 1898, leading to the outbreak of the Spanish-American War, Chief Machinist Elden H. Mero, of Augusta, was killed. He was buried first in Havana but later in Arlington National Cemetery. Local National Guard regiments were called up to “remember the Maine.” Two Augusta men, Herman Hobbs and Frank H. Locke, were responsible for laying a telegraph wire to connect Washington, D.C., with Cuba. Locke later died in Providence, Rhode Island, of a fever contracted while in Cuba. George F. Doe, a former Augusta policeman, served in the Philippines, where he was taken prisoner and held captive until October 1900.

After Mexican rebel leader Pancho Villa invaded New Mexico in 1916, 1st Lt. Frederick Owen (grandfather of KHS board member Joseph Owen), was called to assemble Company M of the 2nd Maine Regiment. Company M members were stationed in

Laredo, Texas, to guard the border. They returned home to a hearty welcome and Lt. Owen was given a Hamilton watch in appreciation of his leadership. During World War II, he became commander of a military police battalion that guarded military railways in North Africa and Europe, eventually rising to the rank of colonel.

There was local support for “the war to end all wars” even before the United States entered World War I. On May 8, 1917, a “preparedness parade” held in Gardiner included the Hazard Shoe Company Band, the Augusta Knights of Columbus, and the Independent Order of Odd Fellows. Nurses Helen Dunn, of Augusta, and Helen Field, of Whitefield, both volunteered in 1916 to work in British military hospitals. Nurse Adele Lincoln served on the hospital ship *Britannia*.

First Lt. Walker Blaine Beale, grandson of James G. Blaine, suffered a fatal wound in September 1918 during the Battle of Saint-Mihiel in France. His mother, Harriet Blaine Beale gave the Blaine House to the state as a memorial to her son. It is now the governor's mansion. A tablet in the front hallway notes that the gift also serves as a memorial to all fallen U.S. soldiers in World War I.

In a column titled “Remembering Our Heroic Dead,” published November 3, 2005, Douin reviews Armistice Day activities and the Augusta parade that followed the end of World War I as well as a description of the ceremony held for the dedication of the World War I memorial in Augusta on November 11, 1929.

Medal of Honor recipients from the area include John F. Chase of Chelsea, who took part in the Civil War; Henry A. McMaster, of Augusta, a 16th Maine Infantry member wounded fatally in 1872 in a fight against Comanche Indians; and Robert T. Waugh, a Rhode Island native who grew up in Augusta and served in Italy in World War II.

The “Antiquarian Notebook” columns don't cover later armed conflicts. However, several people have donated scrapbooks to KHS that include newspaper clippings from World War II. Volunteers have catalogued these scrapbooks, so the names of people mentioned in them are readily available to researchers. Just call the society for an appointment to view them.

— Sally Furber Nelson, KHS contributing editor

KHS Board OKs Endowment Policy; Membership Dues to Increase

The Kennebec Historical Society's Board of Directors voted unanimously April 14 to approve an endowment policy recommended by the society's Finance Committee, and to open accounts into which money to be invested with Kennebec Savings Bank's trust department will be deposited.

Acknowledging the current pace of inflation, the most extreme in four decades, the board also voted unanimously to increase membership dues at all levels for the first time since 2003.

The board already had endorsed at its February 10 meeting the concept of establishing an endowment with an initial investment of \$100,000, advancing a plan KHS first espoused in February 2002. The money to be invested includes about \$30,000 from a Raymond James investment banking company fund stocked with KHS life members' membership dues, \$21,621 that was donated to the society January 4 as the residual balance of a now-defunct Franco-American heritage nonprofit group, and money from the society's savings account.

The endowment's only purpose, according to the new policy, is to provide income to support the society's activities and expenses. It will be divided into two classifications: board-designated endowments and donor-designated endowments. The chief difference between the two is that the society's board may decide to withdraw earnings or the principal of board-designated endowments, while normally it may withdraw only the earnings of a donor-designated endowment, unless the donor or donor's heirs give permission to do otherwise. Within those two groups, individual funds may be set up in the name of specific donors, and others will be set up for specific purposes, such as covering expenses for building maintenance.

The new policy also calls for the board to appoint a KHS Investment Committee, which will be assigned to draft recommendations on how the endowment should be invested and will be required to report to the board at least once a year on the status of investment accounts and any transactions that occur.

The society has developed its endowment plan under the guidance of member Michael Seitzinger, who has helped several other nonprofits in Kennebec County start their own endowments.

As for the membership dues, the most common levels on the current dues table are \$20 annually for an individual adult, \$15 for a student or a senior (age 60 and older), \$30 for a family, \$25 for a senior family, \$200 for an individual life membership, \$300 for a life family membership (for two people), \$75 for an annual business membership (for a workplace of fewer than 25 employees), and \$125 for an annual corporate membership (for a workplace of 25 or more employees).

The new dues table is scheduled to take effect January 1, 2023. The new rates will be \$25 for an individual adult, \$20 for a student or senior, \$40 for a family, \$30 for a senior family, \$250 for an individual life membership, \$375 for a family life membership, \$100 for business, and \$150 for corporate.

Fuller, Nash Funds Achieved Record Totals in 2021

The Kennebec Historical Society benefited in December from the fundraising equivalent of a bottom-of-the-ninth-inning grand slam in baseball.

First, one of the society's regular supporters, Henry Weld Fuller, of Baddeck, Nova Scotia, offered in late November 2021 to match, dollar for dollar, up to \$10,000 worth of any donations to the 14th Moira H. Fuller Annual Fund campaign received between the time of his challenge and the end of the year.

Donations continued to trickle in. Then on December 27, the next-to-the-last day on which the KHS office was still open that year, the society received an anonymous \$4,000 gift in the form of a bank cashier's check in the mail. Counting other contributions that arrived by the following afternoon and Henry Weld Fuller's matching pledge, that raised the campaign's overall total to \$72,852.06, exceeding the Development Committee's \$70,000 goal and eclipsing the record 2020 total by about \$7,600. The number of individual donations was 197, which matches record number received in 2020.

The 15th annual campaign already is underway, and it raised more than \$26,000 by mid-April – about two-and-a-half times as much as had been raised during the same period in 2021. Most of that early success is the result of another \$10,000 gift from Henry Weld Fuller, and of the society's receipt of a \$10,000 grant from the Boston-based Windover Foundation.

Proceeds from the Fuller Fund campaign, conducted annually since 2008, are used to finance day-to-day expenses at the society's headquarters at 107 Winthrop Street in Augusta, including payroll, heat, utilities, bookkeeping, groundskeeping, printing, postage, and office supplies.

Also, the society's 14th annual Charles Nash Fund fall campaign, which helps pay for acquiring and preserving historical items for the society's collection, received a record total of \$6,610 in contributions in 2021. The second-largest total was 4,822.50, achieved in 2018. The third-largest was the \$4,490 donated in 2020.

“Augusta — A Visual Review,” Take Two!



Augusta's 1891 Fuller observatory.

Photo from KHS Collection

The Kennebec Historical Society plans to present “Augusta — A Visual Review,” a Facebook Live presentation, on Wednesday, June 29 at 6:30 p.m. The presentation was originally scheduled for March 23. However, due to technical difficulties, the broadcast ended early. Join Emily Schroeder, KHS archivist, for an informal survey of some of Augusta’s landmarks, sights, and events, featuring photos and other materials from the Kennebec Historical Society’s collections. Travel back in time from the city’s birth through the following 200 or so years.

Emily Schroeder was born in Augusta and spent most of her life in Thomaston before graduating from the University of Maine Portland-Gorham (now USM) in 1978. She worked at the Maine State Library from 1980 to 2018, becoming a reference librarian in 1988 after earning her Master of Library and Information Science degree from the University of Rhode Island. Another chapter in her story opened in 2007 when she took on the duties of genealogy specialist and began teaching classes statewide regularly in that field. She started the library’s genealogy club and added an online genealogy newsletter. From May 2011 to February 2012, she wrote the monthly column “Untangling Your Family Roots” for Augusta’s *Capital Weekly* newspaper. Emily has been interested in Maine and her people for a lifetime and joined the Kennebec Historical Society in 2002. She serves on the society’s Board of Directors as the administrative vice president and archivist. She is the co-chair of the Collections Committee and a member of the Personnel and Program committees. She also belongs to the Maine Genealogical Society and is currently co-chair of its Event Committee. She lives in South China with her cat Binford (middle name “Underfoot”).

To view this presentation, head to the KHS Facebook page at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, June 29, and the video will air live. It will also be available to watch later. If you have a question, please submit it in the comments during the live video presentation. Here is the link to the KHS Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/KHS1891>. If you have any questions about the program, please call Scott Wood, executive director, at 622-7718.

❁ In Memoriam ❁

Marguerite C. Andrews, 90, a Kennebec Historical Society member for 10 years, died October 30, 2021, at MaineGeneral Medical Center’s Alford Center for Health in Augusta. An Augusta resident for most of her life, she graduated from Cony High School in 1949 and attended Gates Business College. She worked at Central Maine Power Co. in human resources and benefits for 30 years after a stint in the Kennebec Journal’s circulation department. She enjoyed traveling with her late husband, Charles Andrews, as well as knitting, hooking rugs, and making porcelain dolls. She is survived by a sister, many nieces and nephews, and their descendants.

Carolyn B. Perry, 85, a former Kennebec Historical Society member, died February 21 in Brunswick. A Connecticut native, she earned a degree from Westbrook Junior College and worked as a laboratory technician for several years before entering the real estate business. She owned and operated the Giroux and Perry Agency with her friend Joan Giroux for nearly two decades. She was president of Augusta Kiwanis Club in 1997 and governor of the New England Kiwanis district from 2003 to 2004. She traveled worldwide with her late partner, Dr. Alice Savage. Her survivors include two children, three grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

Robert Rand, 78, of Augusta, a Kennebec Historical Society member since 2008, died January 30. He was an Army veteran of the Vietnam War and had 20 years of service in the U.S. Navy Reserve. He worked as a statistician for the state of Maine and was president of a state workers’ union, and he was a boat builder in retirement. He was a magic enthusiast and a book lover. He and his wife, Mary Rand, frequently attended KHS lectures together, as well as senior college classes. His survivors include his wife and one son.

Stephen W. Weston, 70, of Winthrop, a member of the Kennebec Historical Society’s board of directors from 2013 to 2015, died February 4 of a heart attack at home. After growing up in Winterport, he had a long career working on antique buildings and furniture, having worked on thousands of projects since opening his furniture restoration business in Winthrop at the age of 20. He did work for museums and historical societies statewide, including the Maine State Museum. He was an accomplished birder and artist. His survivors include his longtime partner, Terrilyn Simpson; and her children and grandchildren.

Upcoming Programs

May: “Maine Voices From the Civil War”



This tintype shows Daniel Webster Marston, of Strong. Marston was 13 when he enlisted as a drummer alongside his father in the 9th Maine Infantry.

Photo courtesy of the
Maine State Museum

Many books have been written about the valiant role of Maine’s soldiers in the Civil War. In her book *Maine Voices from the Civil War*, author and curator Laurie LaBar examines the war from several perspectives, using the writings of Maine soldiers and civilians, as well as the objects they left behind. She discusses the aspects of a soldier’s life and the possibilities that awaited them: camp, battle, prison, hospital, and with luck, safe return home. She also touches on the home front, the challenges that soldiers’ family members faced, and the ways that the war came home to Maine.

LaBar, the Kennebec Historical Society speaker for May, is the chief curator of history and decorative arts at the Maine State Museum. A former archaeologist, LaBar received her master’s degree from the University of Delaware’s Winterthur Program in Early American Culture and returned to Maine to become a curator. In addition to writing *Maine Voices From the Civil War*, LaBar also wrote *Maine Quilts: 250 Years of Comfort and Community*, which was co-published by the Maine State Museum and Down East Books. Her August 2021 presentation for KHS about Maine quilts can still be viewed on the society’s Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/KHS1891/>.

This presentation is free to the public (donations gladly accepted), and will take place at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 18, at the Maine State Library’s temporary location at 242 State Street in Augusta. This is the former location of the Bureau of Motor Vehicles and the Public Utilities Commission. The Maine State Library is a co-sponsor of this program. Questions about the program may be directed to Scott Wood, executive director, at 622-7718.

June: “Artifacts Found Along Benedict Arnold’s Trail”



Portrait of Benedict Arnold by Thomas Hart, 1776.

Photo courtesy of Wikipedia

Kenny Wing, a lifelong native of Eustis, was born right after Flagstaff Lake was created. His father, his grandfather, and his great-grandfather were born and lived in Flagstaff village. His grandfather and his parents were some of those who had to move out in 1949 to make way for Flagstaff Lake. Wing’s presentation is about Benedict Arnold and, in particular, Arnold’s 1775 expedition through Maine and why he was even here in the first place.

Wing claims his interest in Benedict Arnold comes through osmosis from his father, who became a noted expert on Arnold’s expedition through the Eustis area. Both Wings have discovered numerous sites where the expedition spent a night while on its way to Quebec City. The Wings’ Arnold Expedition artifact collection, the largest in existence, has contributed greatly to what we know about that event.

Wing, the Kennebec Historical Society’s June speaker, continues to live in Eustis and is an active board member of four historical organizations: the Flagstaff Memorial Chapel Association, the Maine Archaeological Society, the Arnold Expedition Historical Society, and the Dead River Area Historical Society. He is a co-author of *The Lost Villages of Flagstaff Lake* and has done extensive research for several authors of other books about the area.

The presentation is free to the public (donations are gladly accepted) and will take place at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, June 15, at Christ Episcopal Church, located at 2 Dresden Avenue in Gardiner. If you have any questions about the program, please call Scott Wood, executive director, at 622-7718.

This presentation has been postponed twice — once in July 2020 and again in September 2021 — because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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