

Kennebec Current

Discovering, preserving, and disseminating Kennebec County history since 1891

Volume 32 Issue 3

KENNEBEC HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

May-June 2022

Maine Preservation Pays Tribute to Gardiner Cemetery Project

A team of Gardiner volunteers has been cited as outstanding in its field after having recovered, repaired, and repositioned dozens of old gravestones that now, once again, are out standing in *their* field.

The project, a long-running effort to rehabilitate St. Ann's Churchyard, has earned its organizers one of 10 annual awards issued by Maine Preservation, a nonprofit statewide historic preservation group.

The churchyard is next to and owned by Christ Episcopal Church and is immediately east of the Gardiner Common. It has been restored to its earlier dignity after decades of neglect and the disappearance of most of its gravestones.

Maine Preservation announced the award March 31 in an online ceremony. A reception for all award winners was scheduled for June 7 at the Portland Country Club.

Two other Kennebec County projects also reaped Maine Preservation Honor Awards: the New Purington Brothers Block at the south end of downtown Augusta and the former Mt. Merici Academy convent in Waterville.

Continued on page 4



The grave of Dorcas Gardiner, who died in 1791, is the earliest known burial in St. Ann's Churchyard.

Photo by Joseph Owen

Fourth Annual Tennis Tournament Scheduled for July 31

The Kennebec Historical Society plans to host its fourth annual Kennebec Classic tennis tournament July 31 at the A-Copi Tennis & Sports Center, located at 23 Leighton Road in Augusta.

The all-day Sunday event will feature doubles and singles draws and a barbecue around noon. The cost to play is \$15 per singles player and \$20 for doubles teams. For more information, contact Billy Noble at (207) 313-6976 or bnoble24@gmail.com. Donations to the society for the tournament are appreciated.

Additional details about this event will be available by the end of June on the society's Facebook page and its website, www.kennebechistorical.org.



KHS held its third annual tennis tournament last year at the North Street Tennis Courts. The event, though successful, came to an abrupt halt because of violent thunderstorms just minutes before the final matches. This year, the matches will be held indoors at the A-Copi Tennis & Sports Center in Augusta.

File photo by Rich Eastman

President's Message



In April, the Historical Society of Litchfield, Maine, hosted a meeting of area historical societies. The Kennebec Historical Society had three attendees at the meeting: Bob Bennett, Joe Owen, and me. In addition to KHS and Litchfield, societies from Winthrop, Sidney, Belgrade, China, and Vassalboro were also represented.

This was the second such gathering of local historical societies, and the discussion was lively and fruitful. It was an opportunity for all to share updates about what each organization is working on, discuss challenges, offer ideas and advice, and get to know other local history enthusiasts. The amount of local history knowledge

in the room was amazing. I enjoyed listening to people swap names, dates, and facts throughout the afternoon.

We are so fortunate to have so many active, local organizations dedicated to the preservation and sharing of our region's rich history. The fact that all of them are largely volunteer-run makes it all the more impressive. If you have a chance this summer, go visit your town's historical society to see all the great work going on. And if you have the time and interest, consider sharing your talents with a local historical society, whether your town's, or here at KHS. Dedicated volunteers are always needed.

As always, thank you for your support of the Kennebec Historical Society. Enjoy the summer!

— Jamie Logan, president

June Book Sale Nets More Than \$1,100

On June 3 and 4, KHS held its annual book sale fundraiser and raised a total of \$1,142.00. Last year, the society held three book sales and raised over \$2,281.50. This year's first book sale netted nearly half of that amount. The society plans on having another book sale in late August or early September. If you have any questions or if you would like to donate books, please call the society's executive director, Scott Wood, at (207) 622-7718.



Customers look over books June 4 at the KHS book sale.

Photo by Scott Wood

KHS Welcomes the Following New Members

Joann Clark Austin — South China
Ed Avis — Litchfield
Tizz E.H. Crowley — Auburn

Scott Grady — Augusta
George Jones — Augusta
John Perry — Readfield

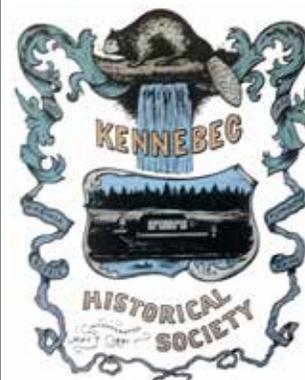
and continues to recognize ...

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

Kennebec Savings Bank
Ganneston Construction Corporation

Sponsoring Business Members (\$500+ annual)

J.S. McCarthy Printing
Meadow Park Development
O'Connor GMC



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- Total membership:**
624 on June 9
Life members: 234

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.

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

Last fall I had a nice visit with Bob Weston, son of Lowell “Pete” and Hope Weston. He brought us many items giving us a glimpse inside the colorful lives of the 20th-century Westons.

Augusta residents are certainly familiar with the family name. James North’s 1870 *History of Augusta* takes us back to John Weston, who came to America as a stowaway on a vessel and lived to the ripe old age of 92, dying in 1723. His grandson John was one member of the company settling Bloomfield (now Skowhegan) in 1771.

The first Nathan Weston was the great-grandson of the stowaway and arrived in Hallowell (the part that now is Augusta) in 1778, living at Fort Western and conducting business. He served the area well as a representative to the Massachusetts General Court, a member of the Massachusetts Senate and of the Executive Council. His third wife, Elizabeth, had four children – including another Nathan, of course, but the connection to the current local branch is through his brother Samuel. Fast-forward four generations and we find our donor.



These mementos from the estate of Lowell and Hope Weston, formerly of Augusta and East Winthrop, are among the items their son Robert Weston donated to the Kennebec Historical Society last fall.

Photo by Emily Schroeder

the Blaine House, the U.S. bicentennial, publishing magnate William H. Gannett, downtown business announcements, and other items.

As always, please let us know if you’d like to peruse this collection yourself; we’re happy to share. And if you have any materials related to Kennebec County, do keep the society in mind. We’re here to preserve your legacy.

Until next time!

Lowell and Hope Weston had quite a life together. The society has copies of her book *Hope’s Two Lives, Eighty Years: From the Far East to the State of Maine*, published in 1997. Thanks to Bob, we can add this lovely collection, highlighting Lowell’s childhood, early adulthood, and close connection to Augusta. The “school days souvenirs” include photos of baseball and basketball teams, and classes, in which some people are identified; 1900s graduation exercises; three ribbons awarded in 1924, 1926, and 1928 at the Grammar School Winter Sports Meet, given for different events; a 1930 program for a Cony High School play; a Kennebec Journal article with a photo of the Chizzle Wizzle Executive Committee, circa 1931; a 1932 birthday card and telegram from Lowell’s grandparents; a few poems and songs he wrote; and even a prized letter from a classmate.

Older items in this group were likely saved by dad Nathan Simmons Weston: a 1904 Chizzle Wizzle Fair flyer; a dance card from the Chizzle Wizzle Ball that same year; a copy of the November 29, 1856, issue of the *Rural Intelligencer*; a list of Augusta Country Club members in 1920, with a note about Nathan giving land so the club could expand from nine to 18 holes; and a playbill for the Cony High School Minstrel Club (1903).

The family’s interest in local history is also evident. There is a copy of *The Augusta Guide: A Handbook – 1929-30*; more recent items such as a photocopy of a history of St. Mark’s Church and an account of the stained-glass windows in South Parish Congregational Church, with a commentary by Hope; and numerous articles and supplements about

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





Continued from page 1

The churchyard project is unusual for several reasons. First, the effort called for a lot of research, science, and detective work. Second, it won the award even though it was not a building, unlike the vast majority of other honorees over the years. Third, inspiration for the project took root 19 years ago in the mind of William King Jr., now of Bath, who visited the churchyard and discovered that several gravestones there, including those of his Gardiner family ancestors, were tipped over and lying on the ground, some of them in pieces.



Dawn Thistle stands on May 27 in St. Ann's Churchyard, where she, Bill King, and Hank McIntyre, all volunteers, spent seven years reassembling and re-installing most of the gravestones.

Photos by Joseph Owen

“We worked at it one day a week for seven solid years to get this job done,” King, 90, said in a telephone interview.

King and two others – Hank McIntyre, a volunteer church groundskeeper; and Dawn Thistle, the Gardiner Public Library special collections librarian – financed and carried out most of the work, with help from other volunteers.

The churchyard dates to the establishment of St. Ann's Episcopal Church – the predecessor of today's larger Christ Church – by Dr. Silvester Gardiner in 1771. Its cemetery includes the city's earliest marked grave, that of Dorcas Gardiner, who died in 1791; as well as the graves of Revolutionary War veterans and families of the community's early industrial developers.

The cemetery suffered from severe neglect in the late 19th century and much of the 20th. City records show that 65 gravestones stood there in 1911; a century later, only 11 of them remained upright. The restoration group started its work in 2014, using the only two known old photos of the cemetery for reference and building on the efforts of a previous group that had gathered and recorded broken, fallen gravestones. They received guidance from Jody Clark, who is a local historian, a Christ Church parishioner, and a longtime Kennebec Historical Society member; and Cheryl Patten, of the Maine Old Cemetery Association.

The group began its work by cleaning and re-installing fallen gravestones, starting with those that were complete. It then repaired broken stones and set them in place.

“In some instances, proper placement was confirmed by the discovery of matching material underground,” the group wrote in its award application.

One of the toppled stones that was restored to its proper place bears the name “Phebe Gardiner.” Oddly, the woman it commemorates had that name neither when she was born nor when she died. Born as Phebe Cartwright, she was married three times, Thistle said. Her second husband's family name was Gardiner. After she died in 1834 at the age of about 49, her third husband, Joseph Sager, was accused of having poisoned her.

Sager was tried and convicted, then executed by hanging on a cold, stormy day — January 2, 1835, according to James North's *History of Augusta* — with several thousand spectators gathered at the northeast corner of State and Winthrop streets

in Augusta, where the jail stood at that time. (The trap door of the gallows on which Sager died is now an artifact in the Kennebec Historical Society’s collection.)

Considering her husband’s crime, it’s unsurprising that the name “Sager” is absent from the victim’s gravestone.

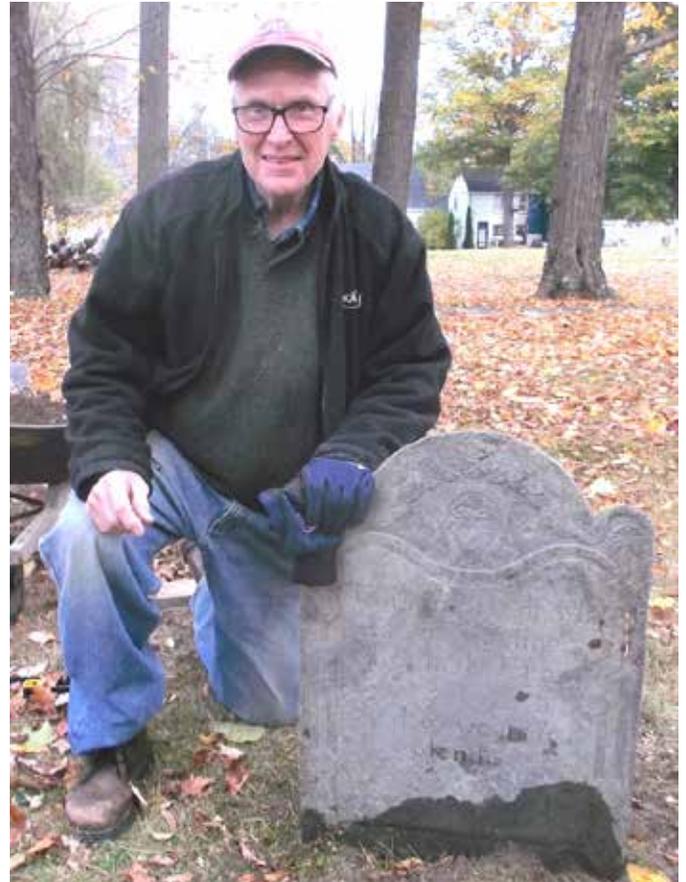
During the cemetery project, Thistle dug through local records to determine the relationships among members of family groups to ascertain better which stones should go where. “With what little photographic evidence we had, we went with family connections that I had discovered through genealogical research,” she said.

When the group could find no graves for 11 stones that were left over, it hired a New Hampshire company to use ground-penetrating radar to locate anomalies indicating the presence of unmarked graves. That work turned up 50 such anomalies, which suggested that many more stones were missing.

With help from a neighbor, in 2018 the group members found the remnants of 21 gravestones in a crypt under the Christ Church steeple. Those were cleaned and repaired. Many were missing their bases, so the team reconstructed them from scrap stone.

After examination of old records and other clues, Thistle said, stones were placed in the proper family group in almost every case, if not in the exact spot where the person was buried.

The team paid for the project, which incurred mostly incidental costs. Thistle said the biggest expense was the \$1,500 charge for the radar survey. The work ended in September 2021, with 11 footstones and more than 50 headstones having been re-installed. Christ Church reconsecrated the cemetery soon afterward.



Bill King, of Bath, kneels next to the gravestone of his direct ancestor Gideon Gardiner in 2015 at St Ann’s Churchyard in Gardiner. The stone was the first of dozens to be reconditioned and put back in place in the cemetery as part of a multi-year restoration project.

Photo courtesy of Bill King



This 1916 Neo-classical commercial block was originally occupied by the Purington Brothers Company, which provided its customers with heating coal and oil. It is now owned by Matthew and Heather Pouliot and is fully rehabilitated and leased.

Photo by Joseph Owen

As for the other winning local projects, New Purington Brothers Block owners Matthew and Heather Pouliot removed a drop ceiling and exposed an octagonal monitor roof that became a light source for the Neoclassical 1916 building’s second floor. The rehabilitated and fully leased Augusta building now contains three first-floor storefronts and nine new residential apartments, according to Maine Preservation.

In Waterville, the former Mt. Merici convent once was occupied by the Ursuline Sisters, who had come from Quebec province in 1888 to teach the children of French-Canadian millworkers, Maine Preservation says on its website. The Ursulines occupied the convent building after its completion in 1967 and used it until 2005, when the few remaining elderly nuns moved into a newly built Ursuline Care Center. The convent remained vacant for 15 years until the Waterville Housing Authority converted it into affordable housing for senior citizens.

The Augusta and Waterville projects both received support from federal and state rehabilitation tax credits, and the convent conversion benefited from low-income housing tax credits as well, according to Maine Preservation.



— by Joseph Owen

Three Cities Designate June as Martha Ballard Month

City councils in Augusta, Gardiner, and Hallowell have issued proclamations making June a month in which to honor famed post-Colonial-era midwife Martha Ballard.

The cities’ action occurred in connection with an ongoing effort to install a monument to Ballard at Mill Park in Augusta.

Gardiner’s proclamation, approved May 11, cites the many babies that Ballard helped to deliver in the Kennebec Valley, as well as a “detailed 27-year diary that elevates our understanding of the day-to-day life in that founding period of our history.”

Four members of the Augusta-based monument committee attended the Gardiner council meeting. They included sisters Glee and Ruth Ballard, both of Sidney, who are direct descendants of Martha Ballard.



Larry Fleury, left, chairman of the Mayor’s Committee for Martha Ballard, listens June 2 at an Augusta City Council meeting as Mayor Mark O’Brien reads a proclamation designating June as Martha Ballard month in Augusta.



Gardiner Mayor Pat Hart, left, hands Glee Ballard, of Sidney, a framed copy of a Gardiner City Council proclamation on May 11 at Gardiner City Hall. Ballard’s sister, Ruth Ballard, also of Sidney, stands at right. The proclamation, which the City Council approved that evening, designates June as Martha Ballard Month, honoring the Ballard sisters’ famed ancestor, who was a local midwife and diarist.

Photos by Joseph Owen

As reported earlier, the committee is hosting a June 15 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. The site of this fundraiser has changed, however. It now is scheduled to take place at Le Club Calumet, at 334 West River Road in Augusta.

The 5:30 p.m. event still includes hors d’oeuvres, wine, soft drinks, and a silent auction. Tickets cost \$30 each and can be ordered online from the committee’s website at www.marthaballard.com, or from Fleury at (207) 252-0540.

Realism Abounds at Old Fort Western Reopening



Left: Gabriel Norwood, of the Plimoth Patuxet Museums, in Plymouth, Massachusetts, displays Colonial artifacts and replicas May 28 at the seasonal opening day of the Old Fort Western museum in Augusta. Staying in character as a 17th-century colonist, Norwood spoke in an archaic form of English when explaining the items to visitors.

Right: Jonathan Yellowbear, of West Gardiner, an Abenaki Indian and a gunsmith who specializes in 17th- and 18th-century arms, displays replica arrows he made using obsidian tips, which he said is what indigenous people in New England used before contact with Europeans. Yellowbear also was taking part in Old Fort Western’s opening day. The fort, owned and operated by the city of Augusta, is celebrating its 100th anniversary as a public museum.



Photos by Joseph Owen

Manchester Man, 97, Becomes Newest, Oldest KHS Life Member



Harold Snow poses for a photo in May and the home of son Fred and daughter-in-law Cynthia in Manchester.

Photo by Cynthia Snow

The Kennebec Historical Society doesn't make a habit of asking members who pay their dues how old they are, except to ascertain sometimes whether they are older than 60, the age of eligibility for a discounted senior membership.

In the case of retired electrician Harold Snow, however, an exception was made. Snow, a longtime Manchester resident, became a KHS life member in May, the same month in which he turned 97.

As a result, while the society can't say with absolute certainty that he has set a record, Snow appears to be the oldest person ever registered as a life member.

Snow, a widower, spent most of his childhood and early adult years in Augusta. He built a house in 1956 in Manchester, using lumber cut from trees on the property for framing timbers. Then he moved his family into it in April 1957. Sixty-five years later, he still lives there. He also still drives occasionally, reads voraciously, and enjoys telling jokes and stories about people he has known.

A long-vacant house visible just across the road from Snow's living room window is a reminder that longevity runs in the Snow family. That once was the home of his grandfather Fred Snow, who lived to turn 100. According to family lore, the elder Snow was so old that he had a boyhood memory of somebody running up his family's driveway on Sewall Street in Augusta, yelling that President Abraham Lincoln had just been shot in Washington.

It might seem counterintuitive that a person of Harold Snow's advanced age would become a life member, but the \$200 fee (scheduled to increase to \$250 on January 1) benefits the society in a way that isn't immediately apparent.

When a member pays annual dues, the expenses of keeping the KHS headquarters staffed, heated, lighted, and otherwise accessible gobble up that money almost immediately. Life membership money, on the other hand, is set aside for investment by Kennebec Savings Bank's trust department so it will generate operating income continuously, into the distant future.

The person who became a KHS life member at the youngest age is Sarah Crockett, whose grandparents Bob and Patsy Crockett, of Augusta, signed her up in 2004 when she was 11.



❁ In Memoriam ❁

Jerome E. Maschino, 85, of Ave Maria, Florida, a native and longtime former resident of Gardiner, died January 28 in Naples, Florida. The 1954 Gardiner High School graduate earned a degree in chemistry from Nasson College in Springvale. In addition to his career as a chemist in various Northeastern states, he became an interpreter of Mandarin Chinese while in the Army; was a flight instructor, college teacher, and photographer; and founded a computer hardware and software company. He was a Kennebec Historical Society member for about 10 years. His survivors include his wife, Mary; three children; and eight grandchildren.

Maryanne Prince, 70, of Augusta, died May 19 in Augusta. A South Dakota native, she earned a law degree from the Thomas Goode Jones School of Law in Montgomery, Alabama. Prince worked as a private-practice lawyer in Alabama, specializing in civil litigation and criminal defense, before moving to Augusta 15 years ago. She was an attorney advocate for the Maine Compensation board at the time of her death. She also was a KHS member for six years. Her survivors include her husband, Steven; three children; and three grandchildren.

Robert Russell, 93, of East Winthrop and formerly of Augusta, died November 22, 2021, at his home on Cobbossee Lake. Along with his late wife, the former Margaret Dunn, he was a KHS member for several years in the early 2000s. He graduated from Augusta's Cony High School and the Maine Vocational Technical Institute and was a military veteran of the World War II era and the Korean War. He worked for the U.S. Postal Service for more than 30 years, retiring as assistant postmaster. He is survived by four children and five grandchildren.

Gayle Ann Sawyer, 68, died May 22 at her Augusta home. A KHS member for several years in the late 2000s, before retirement she worked as a clinical administrator for 17 years at the Harold Alfond Center for Cancer Care in Augusta. She was a 1971 graduate of Cony High School and held a master's degree from the University of Southern Maine. Her survivors include four sisters and several nieces and nephews.

Manchester Walls Hint at Long-overlooked Indian Culture



The stone wall at right, which separates the North Manchester Meeting House from a neighboring cemetery, is of Indian construction, according to archaeology enthusiast Harvey Lipman, pointing at right.

Photos by Joseph Owen

Lipman, an Augusta resident who has a summer home in Manchester, described the space between the walls as a centuries-old trail linking Cobbossee Lake to the Belgrade Lakes system. Down below, beside the meeting house, he pointed to a rock bearing a barely visible petroglyph known as the “Devil’s Footprint.” That’s a Native American symbol, he said.

“I’m curious about the outdoors, and I’m very curious about local history,” said Lipman, a longtime Kennebec Historical Society life member, explaining his passion for studying rock formations.

His attraction to archaeology dates to 1973, when he spent a year in Israel and was involved in a dig in search of Ezion-Geber, an ancient port on the Gulf of Aqaba documented only in Hebrew scriptures. That inspired him to look more closely at what was back in New England.

“I realized that you could do this locally. You didn’t have to go to Israel,” he said.

Before returning to his native Augusta, Lipman lived in Ashland, Massachusetts. He said he hiked often in that area and became interested in rock walls he saw there. He learned that while Europeans saw rocks as obstructions that were useful only as building material, they had special significance for indigenous people.

“They saw rock walls as a spiritual expression of their connection to the earth,” he said.

Skeptics of such theories abound. For example, Robert M. Thorson, a University of Connecticut geology professor, wrote the following in his 2008 book *Exploring Stone Walls: A Field Guide to New England’s Stone Walls*: “Circumstantial evidence suggests overwhelmingly that the vast majority of New England stone walls were built by farmers, their hired hands, and their sons, daughters, and wives.” He added later, “The pre-European age ... was characterized by the absence of stone walls.”

However, in his 2018 book *Stone Prayers: Native American Stone Constructions of the Eastern Seaboard*, Curtiss Hoffman, a retired archaeology professor who taught at Bridgewater State University in Massachusetts, cites evidence of stone walls built by indigenous people up and down the East Coast. Southern New England has a dense concentration of them, he wrote. Maine has fewer, but Hoffman acknowledged in a telephone interview that many Maine sites probably remain unresearched.

It’s worth the effort to walk into the woods to see two roughly parallel stone walls lining an abandoned but accessible section of Knowles Road on a hill behind the North Manchester Meeting House, which is on Scribner Hill Road in Manchester.

Some visitors take the walls to be agricultural “linear landfills” – that is, evidence of farmers clearing big rocks out the way to make planting crops easier.

Harvey Lipman sees that, too, but he also sees traces of the indigenous people who trod these paths long before European colonists and their descendants did. He shared his conclusions May 7 with about a dozen people who, at his invitation, toured part of the 735-acre Allen-Whitney Memorial Forest, which straddles Scribner Hill Road and is open to the public for hiking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and mountain biking.



Fred Snow, of Manchester, left, looks into a barely covered well while his wife, Cynthia Snow, steps on the edge of a protective screen. At right, Harvey Lipman describes the seasonal buildings that once stood on Allen Hill in the Allen-Whitney Memorial Forest in Manchester.

Often, he said, people can't tell whether walls were built by Indians or by European colonists or their descendants.

“Colonial farmers did clear fields, and did have people build stone walls for them, and it's not always easy to tell the difference,” he said.

Compounding the problem, he said, some New Englanders have rebuilt indigenous walls to suit their own purposes, such as confining domestic animals. They also hired Indians to build walls, right up to our own century. Hoffman said he knows a Narragansett Indian who worked for years as a stonemason.

Even examples of stone structures built by Europeans in the Indian style exist. Hoffman cited a stone pile commissioned by James Oglethorpe, the 18th-century founder of the Georgia colony, to honor Tomochichi (c. 1644-1739), a Yamacraw chief, after the latter's death. Tomochichi had provided land that enabled Oglethorpe to found the city of Savannah.



This south-facing view shows the western rock wall of a roughly parallel pair of walls on Allen Hill in Manchester.

Generally, walls that don't meet at right angles, are built in a zigzag pattern, or are built only one course of stones high tend to be Indian-built walls, Hoffman said.

For Lipman, Manchester turned out to be a good place to look for walls for two reasons. First, he said, water routes and heights of land are important in American Indian cultures, and the abandoned road behind the meeting house includes a high point on Allen Hill separating three watersheds. Second, the town government has taken advantage of lidar (laser imaging, detection and ranging) geological surveys and satellite mapping that reveal much about contours on the land.

Hoffmann said the Manchester walls' location near a watershed boundary reflects a broader pattern. He recalled an old Narragansett woman who told him, “Our people like to build these in places where the water flows in two directions.”

The discontinued road behind the meeting house offers ample evidence of Maine residents of European lineage. That evidence includes a spring-fed well, barely covered by a screen to prevent unwary passers-by from falling into it; scattered remnants of summer homes and recreational buildings; and the road itself. The Indians, however, who had no written language but expressed themselves vibrantly in their placement of stones, left a longer-lasting impression on the landscape, if Lipman is correct.

In some cases, their walls' original expression is obscure because European colonists or their descendants modified the walls for other purposes. Nonetheless, a careful observer can see a classic zigzag snake pattern in a wall behind the meeting house, as well as in the narrow western wall of the pair leading up Allen Hill.

The Indian walls in Manchester also contain vertical triangular rocks with their tips pointed upward, an anthropomorphic symbol linked with the idea of “manitou,” a supernatural life force embedded in Algonquin Indian groups' theology, Lipman said. “Once they are put in place, they take on a sacred significance,” he said. Also, he pointed to spots where he said the Indian rock walls include indentations in the top to let spiritual forces flow across them.

Another feature of the Indian walls is the occasional appearance of nearby round heaps of small stones. Those grew because travelers moving between lake systems deposited stones in the piles, one by one, to mark their passing, Lipman said.

The May 7 tour participants left only footprints behind but came away with heightened curiosity about the walls. 🐾



Harvey Lipman points to what he described as a Native American petroglyph on a boulder next to the North Manchester Meeting House. The meeting house still is used for religious services, as well as other gatherings.



Letters TO THE Editor

Kudos to Bennett from Railroad-family Reader

Regarding the article by Bob Bennett in the March-April issue of the *Kennebec Current* on the Wiscasset, Waterville and Farmington Railway Museum: Very well done by Bob, including his mention of the other 2-foot-gauge railroads in Maine.

I have a connection to the WW&F that goes back to its origin, in that my grandfather was the section foreman at China and my father was a fireman for a few years. He ultimately left and hired on with the standard-gauge Maine Central Railroad in Waterville.

I have a lifetime membership in the museum and its commitment to restoration. The dedication to restoration by volunteers is awesome. There is a work weekend every four seasons. Volunteers show up from as far away as the West Coast, and in at least one instance, one whole season was spent there by a person from Australia. People from the British Isles have shown up, as well as Japan. This all to point out how infectious the appeal of this little railroad in Maine is.

Al Cook, KHS member, Augusta

Locomotive Story Brings Back Train Trip Memories

I am writing to share my sentiments regarding Bob Bennett's article "Old Alna Locomotive Once Frequented Kennebec County Rails," which appeared in the March-April issue of the *Kennebec Current*. I am an avid fan of historic railroads and have collected many books on the Sandy River and Rangeley Lakes (SR&RL) Railroad as well as the Kennebec Central (KC) Railroad mentioned in the article. I have always called these railroads "narrow gauge" (in this case, "two-footers"). I also collect books about standard- (wide-) gauge railroads in the state of Maine.

Did you know that when KC bought the old Alna locomotive from the SR&RL, in transport one of the cylinders got damaged and they hired a local firm to do the repairs? It was repaired in Randolph, so I believe T.W. Dick Company in Gardiner may have performed the repairs, as this company was a large welding, fabrication, and foundry company in that day.

I've always been interested in trains since childhood but was never able to grasp any part of it until after I had a family of my own. The first time I ever rode a train was when I took my family to the Boothbay Railway Museum, and it was amazing. I was really impressed with the train layout they had, so it made me pull the trigger on building my own model railroad collection and layout. I've been attending several train shows and collecting locomotives and rolling stock. Soon I plan to build a train room and start my own model layout.

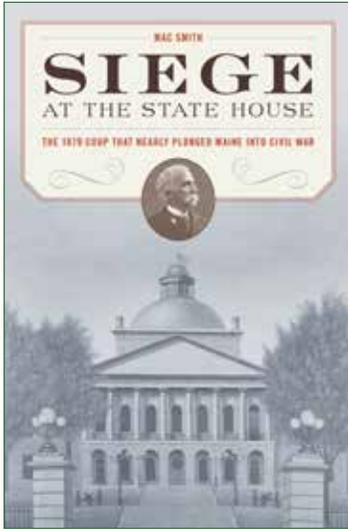
I enjoy riding trains and have not only ridden behind the old Alna locomotive, but also had the pleasure of riding in the cab, and I enjoyed every minute of it! I frequent the Wiscasset, Waterville, and Farmington railroad once a year and usually support them by buying something in the gift shop. I was really intrigued by their efforts of expanding the museum by not only rebuilding some of their rolling stock but also restoring and building an engine from scratch. I've ridden on the SS&RL railroad on their section of track at their museum years back. I've also ridden on many standard-gauge railroad tracks with my off-road vehicles. Back in the early '70s, when I was a freshman in high school, there was a group of us that used to get together to ride off-road vehicles (dune buggies) on the old KC narrow gauge in Chelsea, which took us into Randolph. We were always looking for new trails and asked for and were granted permission by the landowners to clear much of that old railbed. By doing so, we gained access to many different parts of Randolph and Chelsea. Since then, the trails have been closed except to pedestrians, but that was interesting.

If you like the old Alna No. 9 locomotive, you should check out the Down East Scenic Railroad in Ellsworth, which is standard-gauge. They are in the process of restoring the old steam locomotive No. 470, which is a 4-6-2 (Pacific) wheel arrangement, that used to sit near the old Maine Central facility in Waterville. It's owned by the New England Steam Corporation (NESC). They also have an old Maine Central switcher (diesel engine) that they pull people around in. It is an enjoyable ride, and if you have a chance to go, you will not be disappointed by the experience.

Mark Newcombe, KHS member, Augusta

Upcoming Program

July: “Siege at the State House”



Cover photo courtesy of the author

Accusations of election theft, an armed confrontation at the Capitol building, and widespread rallies of indignation might seem like a broad summation of recent U.S. electoral history, but that also describes Maine’s political atmosphere in the winter of 1879-80.

Historian Mac Smith, of Stockton Springs, explains the long-forgotten crisis in his new book, “Siege at the State House: The 1879 Coup that Nearly Plunged Maine into Civil War.”

Smith, the Kennebec Historical Society’s lecturer for July, tells the story of an attempted post-election coup engineered by Maine’s Democratic governor and the leaders of a new political party, almost igniting a second civil war. A pro-Republican armed mob surrounded the Maine State House for several weeks. That prompted Gov. Alonzo Garcelon to call out the state militia, which was led by a former governor and Civil War hero, Brig. Gen. Joshua Chamberlain.

Chamberlain, working in cooperation with Augusta Mayor Charles E. Nash (later a co-founder of the Kennebec Historical Society), strove to keep the sides apart and peaceful while the Maine Supreme Judicial Court sorted out the controversy. At one point, in a showdown with the armed mob, Chamberlain stood on the State House steps, exposing his chest and challenging any man present to settle the standoff with violence, if he dared.

It was an event Chamberlain called “another Round Top,” a reference to his unit’s pivotal role in the Battle of Gettysburg.

A Navy veteran of the 1991 Persian Gulf War and former reporter for *The Bar Harbor Times*, Smith is also the author of *Mainers on the Titanic* and *Peyton Place Comes Home to Maine*.

This presentation is free to the public (although donations are gladly accepted). It is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, July 20, at the Maine State Library’s temporary location, 242 State Street in Augusta, the former site of the Bureau of Motor Vehicles and the Public Utilities Commission. Questions about the program may be directed to Scott Wood, KHS executive director, at 622-7718.

History Through a Keyhole

In the interest of promoting an awareness of local history – and hey, isn’t that our main mission anyway? – the *Kennebec Current* is launching a regular column called “History Through a Keyhole.”

Each issue of the newsletter, starting with this one, will contain a photo that is a partial glimpse of a building, monument, piece of infrastructure, or natural feature that is clearly visible and accessible from public property. Readers who want to identify the object in the photo are challenged to contact the *Current* and tell the editor three things: what the object is, where it is, and what its historic significance is.

Answers may be sent by email to kennhis1891@gmail.com or by postal mail to Kennebec Historical Society, P.O. Box 5582, Augusta, ME 04332.

The winner, to be selected randomly from all correct answers submitted, will be awarded a year’s membership in KHS for the respondent or a friend or relative, or an alternate prize that may be announced from time to time. If nobody meets that threshold, the editor reserves the right to make the award to a respondent who provides a partial and correct answer.

The full answer and more information about the subject will be provided in the *Kennebec Current* issue published after the one in which the clue photo appears.

The first clue photo, taken May 22, appears at the right. The window is part of an existing building. What is it? Where is it? What historically significant event happened there?

Answers are due by July 20, 2022. Good luck.



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Business hours: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday or by appointment. Appointments are highly encouraged. Call first.

Mailing address: P.O. Box 5582, Augusta, ME 04332-5582

E-mail address: kennhis1891@gmail.com

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Web site: www.kennebechistorical.org