

# Kennebec Current

Discovering, preserving, and disseminating Kennebec County history since 1891

Volume 32 Issue 4

KENNEBEC HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

July–August 2022

## Project Yields Unique Night Photo of Cobbosseecontee Lighthouse

The diminutive Ladies Delight Light has served indelibly as the symbol of Cobbosseecontee Lake since the lighthouse's construction in 1908.

The East Winthrop lighthouse's image has appeared on countless postcards, knickknacks, and other objects, including T-shirts, note cards, and water bottles sold on the Cobbosseecontee Lake Association's website. This summer, a sunset view of the lighthouse also graces the cover of the Kennebec Valley Chamber of Commerce's annual tourist guide of the Augusta area.

And in what might be one of its most spectacular depictions ever, the lighthouse



Ladies Delight Light, the Cobbosseecontee Lake lighthouse, is photographed against a starry night sky in February 2021.

Photo by David Zapatka

appears at night under a sky brimming with stars in a photo shot by Rhode Island photographer David Zapatka.

Zapatka, who has worked for 40 years as a television news and sports cameraman, visited Ladies Delight by

*Continued on page 3*

## KHS Reverts to Tradition in Planning Annual Meeting

The Kennebec Historical Society's annual meeting will begin with a potluck supper at 5 p.m. September 15 at Hope Baptist Church, located at 726 Western Avenue in Manchester, followed at 6 p.m. by the KHS annual business meeting and election of directors. Because of technology limitations, the meeting will not be streamed online. Names of the nominees for Board of Directors seats were unavailable by presstime. The society expects to post them on its website by August 12.

The event is reclaiming its customary supper-and-lecture format for the first time since 2019. In 2020, the burgeoning coronavirus pandemic prompted KHS to hold a brief, unceremonious annual meeting of about 16 members in the society's driveway. The 2021 version attracted many more participants, but it was held entirely online.

This year, the society is looking for donations for the potluck supper of hot or cold main meal items, salads, desserts, non-alcoholic drinks, coffee, tea, and punch. For more details or to ask questions about what to bring, please contact Program Committee Chairwoman Anne Cough, either by email at [acough60@yahoo.com](mailto:acough60@yahoo.com) or by phone at 582-2823.

The society's monthly program, "Around the Kennebec Valley: the Herman Bryant Collection," presented by Gay Grant, will begin when the annual meeting has concluded. (See Pages 14-15.)

For details about the meeting or the September program, please call the KHS executive director, Scott Wood, at 622-7718; or drop by the historical society's headquarters, located at 107 Winthrop Street in Augusta.



## President’s Message



I hope that you’re all enjoying your summer, whether you’re reading this lakeside in Kennebec County, or elsewhere in the country! At KHS, we took advantage of the season to host the fourth annual Kennebec Classic Tennis Tournament on July 31. This was a fun event that helped raise some funds and awareness about the society in the community. For the results, see page 6 of the newsletter.

In June, KHS Executive Director Scott Wood and I attended the Kennebec Valley Chamber After Hours event at Viles Arboretum (what a beautiful spot!). At the event, we spoke with several community members about KHS and the work we do and learned about the businesses and organizations they work with. We hope to continue attending similar events to help spread the word about KHS and how we’re preserving the history of our region.

If you’re out and about in the community this summer and find yourself in a conversation about the region’s history, let people know about KHS. The wider our membership, the more impact we can have on making sure Kennebec County’s history is preserved and shared.

On a final note, the programs this summer have been a huge success. Kenny Wing’s presentation about the Arnold Expedition had a standing-room-only crowd; and on an evening in July when the temperature soared into the mid-90s, dozens of people showed up at the Maine State Library to hear Mac Smith discuss his latest book, *Siege at the State House*. Thank you as always to the Program Committee for arranging these events, and thanks to Christ Episcopal Church in Gardiner and the Maine State Library for hosting them. Thank you also to Emily Schroeder, KHS archivist, for taking time out of her summer to provide an online presentation on the history of Augusta in June. We hope to see you in August at the next free public presentation.

Thank you for your continued support of KHS!

— Jamie Logan, president

### KHS Welcomes the Following New Members

- |                                |                                     |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Kathryn Alexander — Randolph   | Sara & Isabelle Maschino — Gardiner |
| Peter Clifford — Northport     | Sandra Niles — Augusta              |
| Brent Elwell — Augusta         | Bill & Kitty Perry — Chelsea        |
| Sebastian Gagnon — Augusta     | Stevens & Day, LLP — Augusta        |
| David & Maria Hassen — Augusta | Robert & Mickie Weston — Winthrop   |
| Richard Hook — Readfield       | Bonnie & John Wilder — Wayne        |

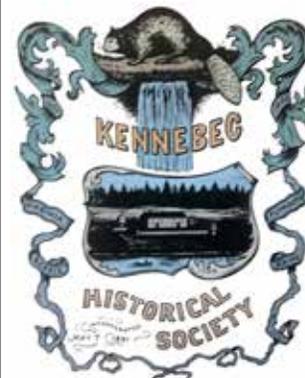
*and continues to recognize ...*

#### 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



#### KHS Board of Directors

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Jamie Logan
- Executive Vice President**  
Kent London
- Treasurer**  
Mark Laney
- Secretary**  
Stefanie Barley
- Directors**  
Robert Bennett  
Amelia Clukey  
Anne Cough  
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John Lawrence  
Billy Noble  
Joseph O’Donnell  
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Scott Wood
- Archivist**  
Emily Schroeder
- Advisory Committee**  
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Mark Johnston  
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Earle G. Shettleworth Jr.  
William Sprague Jr.
- Newsletter Staff**  
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Rich Eastman, designer  
Bob Bennett, writer  
John Hale, writer  
Kari Mullen-McLaughlin, writer  
Emily Schroeder, writer  
Nikko Noble, photographer  
Sally Joy, adviser
- Membership Secretary**  
Joan Lancaster

**Total membership:**  
637 on August 8  
Life members: 241

The Kennebec Current encourages letters to the editor. Email letters to [kennhis1891@gmail.com](mailto:kennhis1891@gmail.com). All letters are subject to editing for taste, style, and length.

## Cobbosseecontee Lighthouse

*Continued from page 1*

snowmobile on the bitterly cold evening of February 17, 2021, with Cobbosseecontee Lake Association President Bill Kieltyka, of Winthrop; Kieltyka's neighbor Shawn Johnson; and Johnson's son Luke. His outing was part of a multi-year project supported by the United States Lighthouse Society.

Kieltyka said he had been unaware of the project until he met Zapatka.

"He found us. He was on the hunt," Kieltyka said.

Ladies Delight Light is believed to be the only lighthouse operating on an inland waterway in Maine. The Cobbosseecontee Yacht Club, as Kieltyka's group was known until only a few years ago, erected it to warn boaters away from the rocky reefs near Ladies Delight Island. A team of oxen was used to build the 25-foot tower. The lighthouse was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984 and was rebuilt to correct tilting in 2001. Today it remains the 560-member association's property, although solar panels and storage batteries have replaced a 2,200-foot underwater cable as the source of electricity to power the light, according to Kieltyka.

The lake, which sprawls across the edges of five towns, once featured three lighthouses. The other two were on Belle Isle and Crow Island, located in Winthrop on either side of a cluster of larger islands in the central part of the nine-mile-long lake. Now, however, Ladies Delight stands alone.

For the photo shoot on that bone-chilling February night, Zapatka deployed TV lights on a dim setting on the ice-covered lake, positioned behind and beside the lighthouse.

In a telephone interview, Zapatka said his fascination with lighthouses dates to his participation in making a documentary film about Plum Beach Lighthouse in North Kingstown, Rhode Island, where he has lived since 1993. That lighthouse, once abandoned and burdened with more than 52 tons of corrosive bird droppings, was rebuilt in 2003 under the guidance of a nonprofit group.

Zapatka soon realized that while lighthouses everywhere were a common subject of photography, something was missing.

"Pictures of lighthouses at night just didn't exist, historically, because film couldn't capture them the way digital cameras can now," he said.

As a result, he taught himself night photography and began shooting lighthouses, starting with Dutch Island Light, off Jamestown, Rhode Island. He tracks the weather carefully, picking cloud-free moonless nights to get a full view of the stars. He learned that the sweet spot for keeping the shutter open was 20 seconds, preferably at the end of evening twilight. At less than 20 seconds, stars don't show up as well; at any more than 20, their image begins to streak because of the Earth's rotation.

He also developed the habit of researching each lighthouse extensively and seeking the appropriate permits before trying to take his pictures, some of which are shot from the water with the camera mounted on a 20-foot tripod.

Zapatka said he thinks of his work as a form of historic preservation, given that many of the lighthouses he photographs are threatened by rising sea levels or abandonment. The U.S. Coast Guard has shut down some that are considered obsolete, he said. That adds a sense of urgency to his work.



Clockwise from left, Shawn Johnson, David Zapatka, Bill Kieltyka, and Johnson's son Luke gather around the Johnsons' snowmobile on the evening of February 17, 2021, in front of Ladies Delight Light.

Photo by David Zapatka

*Continued on page 5*

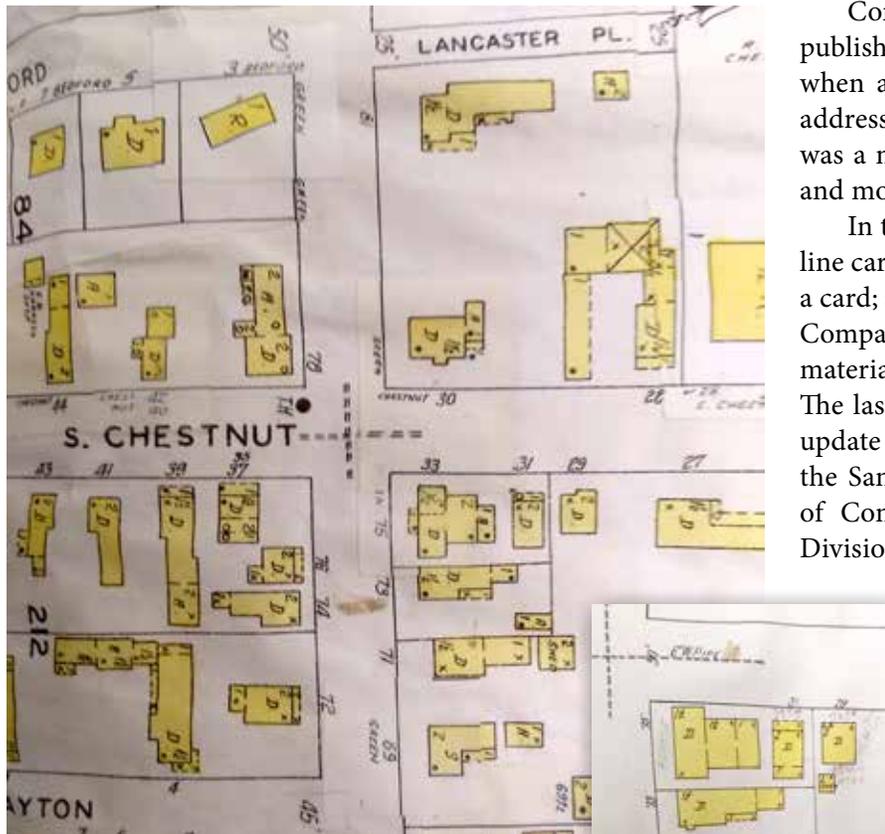
## Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps Prove to Be Colorful Treasures

If you never have seen Sanborn maps, be advised they are a sight to behold. They provided details of homes and other buildings for fire insurance agencies from the late 19th through the mid-20th century. Companies could assess their liability thanks to the information pictured on these amazing maps, including building materials, number of windows, dimensions, and proximity to fire stations. Hand coloring indicated brick, concrete, tile, stone, or iron. A wide variety of codes informs the viewer about firewalls, elevators, boilers, fire alarms, fire escapes, water pipes, hydrants, sprinkler systems, driveways, garages, and chimneys. A series of letters define framing, floors, roof construction, and the overall use of the structure. Numbers, depending on their position, could represent street width, street address, stories, house, or block.

The founder of the Sanborn company was Daniel Alfred Sanborn, a civil engineer and surveyor, who published the *Insurance Maps of Boston* in 1867. He was undoubtedly inspired by the maps produced in London during the late 18th century. Thanks to savvy management, including buying out smaller companies, Sanborn's firm became the largest and most successful. Maps were created for 12,000 cities and towns in the United States, Canada, and Mexico.



The Collections Box  
Emily Schroeder



A 1927 Sanborn Insurance map image shows the area at the intersection of South Chestnut and Green streets. (the inset shows the 1910 version with the address still to be determined at 33 South Chestnut Street in Augusta.)

Scans by Emily Schroeder

Compiling such maps was expensive. Atlases were published for larger cities, and updates were pasted in when appropriate. The volumes indexed streets and addresses, churches, schools, businesses, etc. There was a master index for areas depicted on each sheet, and more general information also was given.

In the 1950s, insurance underwriters began to use line carding, a system that described each property on a card; a map was not used or even thought necessary. Companies also pointed out improved building materials and fire codes, and better fire protection. The last new Sanborn map came out in 1961; its last update occurred in 1977. (A more detailed history of the Sanborn company may be found on the Library of Congress website, in the Geography and Map Division: <http://www.loc.gov/collections/sanborn-maps/articles-and-essays/introduction-to-the-collection>.)

The good news is that the Kennebec Historical Society has several volumes in its archive: for Augusta, 1895, 1910, and 1927, the latter being updated in 1961; Gardiner, 1922, with 1956 and 1962 updates; and Hallowell, 1925, updated in 1946 and 1956.

In examining my family's history, in Augusta, I took a look at the 1910 and 1927 editions for the property at the northeast corner of South Chestnut and Green streets, where I lived until I was 5. In the 1920 edition, there was not even a "33" on the South Chestnut Street side, indicating the family business was not established yet. The 1927 version shows the addition of a porch and half a story to the structure. The coding and symbols are fairly straightforward: Yellow indicates wooden construction, and the letter "D" is for "dwelling." What mystified me was the "SM" classification. I couldn't find an answer from the keys I found, so decided to reach out to the University of Maine at Orono, which has a sizeable collection of Sanborn maps. My colleague Gregory Curtis got right on the case. By our last e-mail, we concluded that the "S" means "store," and the "M" stands for either "manufacturing"

or “metal,” as in metal windows. As far as I know, this was a neighborhood grocery store, possibly with some bulk packaging going on. A further examination of Augusta city directories reveals that my grandfather was a hostler through 1920. In 1921 the business was listed as it remained for the next few decades, on 33 South Chestnut Street; and the home, 75 Green Street.

Sanborn maps are invaluable in the study of urban geography, genealogy, and history in general. They pinpoint locations of homes and businesses, along with other structures. The researcher can pair them with other resources, such as city directories, Census, Google maps and title searches. Comparisons between editions are useful, showing structural and spatial changes, shifts in fortunes: uses, updates and expansions of sites and neighborhoods.

The company still exists, and it is taking advantage of new technology. It offers aerial imagery for surveying, mobile mapping for detailed engineering and 3-D visualization, information management, maps with planimetric (vertical) features, indoor mapping of spaces, and oblique imagery (depicting tops and sides of objects). Check out <https://www.sanborn.com> for more information.

Feel free to come in and see our collection of these great maps. You’ll be amazed!

Until next time!



This photo from the 1920s shows the original home and business on the northeast corner of South Chestnut and Green streets in Augusta.

KHS collection photo

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

## Cobbosseecontee Lighthouse

*Continued from page 3*

“The larger objective is to capture as many of them as possible before they disappear,” he said.

Gradually, Zapatka worked his way through lighthouses in Rhode Island, then Massachusetts and Connecticut, then other states nearby. Soon he had enough to produce a fully illustrated coffee-table book – *Stars & Lights: Darkest of Dark Night*, which was published in 2017. It contains lighthouse images from eight Northeastern states, including Maine. A second volume, *USA Stars & Lights: Portraits from the Dark*, is due for publication this fall. It contains images from 17 states in the Northeast, along the Gulf Coast, and around the Great Lakes.

After years of relative obscurity, Zapatka’s project suddenly has received a burst of attention. The “Today” show aired a segment about it on July 15. A week later, “PBS NewsHour” broadcast its own version. Because of that exposure, the remaining 1,700 copies of Zapatka’s first book sold out in a single day.

“It’s a wonderful problem to have as an artist,” he said.

Having photographed 192 lighthouses, including about half of the 62 in Maine, Zapatka had plenty of images from which to pick for his first two books; and the lighthouse on the lake was shot too late, unfortunately, to make the cut.

“Ladies Delight is waiting, patiently waiting, to appear in the next book,” he said.

— by Joseph Owen

## Kennebec Classic Draws Record Number of Tennis Players



Toru Matsubayashi leaps to reach a ball July 31 during the fourth annual Kennebec Classic tennis tournament at the A-Copi Tennis & Sports Center in Augusta.

Photo by Nikko Noble

**T**wenty-seven players gathered on July 31 at the A-Copi Tennis & Sports Center in Augusta to participate in the Kennebec Historical Society’s fourth annual Kennebec Classic tennis tournament.

The society collected at least \$420 in fees, although the total amount of income was incomplete at presstime. Also, the number of players set a record for the annual event, which was founded in 2019 and attracted 26 players that year, according to KHS Board of Directors member Billy Noble, of Sidney, who has organized the tournament since its inception.

The all-day tournament featured doubles and singles draws. Jason Tardiff defeated Charlie Haberstock, 8-3 in men’s singles. Both players are from Waterville.

In women’s singles, Kira Gregor, of Augusta, defeated Inga Zimba, defending champion, of Waterville, 9-8(9). In doubles, Jason and Logan Tardiff defeated Owen Evans and Josiah Bloom, 8-5. All four are from Waterville.

The event’s sponsors were McKee Law, of Augusta; A-1 Seamless Gutters, of Greene; Quality Copy & Digital Print, of Hallowell; and the Winthrop Commerce Center.

The tournament was held indoors for the first time. Previous tournaments occurred outdoors on courts in Waterville.



Charlie Haberstock prepares to return a shot July 31 during the fourth annual Kennebec Classic tennis tournament at the A-Copi Tennis & Sports Center in Augusta.

Photo by Billy Noble



At left, men’s singles winner Jason Tardiff beat Charlie Haberstock 8-3. Both men are from Waterville.

Photos by Billy Noble

At center, women’s singles winner Kira Gregor, of Augusta, defeated Inga Zimba, defending champion, of Waterville 9-8(9).

At right, In doubles, Jason, left, and Logan Tardiff defeated Owen Evans and Josiah Bloom, all from Waterville, 8-5.

## The Kennebec Historical Society is Seeking New Members

**F**ounded in 1891, the Kennebec Historical Society makes available to the public its resources pertaining to all of Kennebec County’s 30 municipalities. Know of someone who would enjoy a membership? Interested in expanding your current membership to family or life member? Become a member for only \$20 annually, or better yet, make a one-time donation of \$200 for a life membership! If you can help us as a volunteer, we would consider it an honor. Note that the Kennebec Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, so membership dues and other donations are tax-deductible.

## KHS Intern Doubles as Intern at First Amendment Museum

On June 15, the Kennebec Historical Society hosted three First Amendment Museum interns and the museum's manager of Visitor Experiences, Maxwell Nosbisch. The visitors came to the society's headquarters, located at 107 Winthrop Street in Augusta, to learn more about its mission and overall purpose.

KHS Executive director Scott Wood gave them a tour of the Henry Weld Fuller Jr. House and its climate-controlled archive, explained daily operations, and showed off some of the items in the society's collection. However, one of the interns, Sophia Lingar, already had intimate knowledge about KHS procedures. She not only interns for the museum, located on State Street near the State House, but is an academic intern for KHS as well.

Lingar, majoring in political science, is beginning her senior year at Thomas College. KHS hired her in May to catalog items in the archive that had sat idle or partially sorted since they were donated. In addition to receiving compensation for the work she completes, she also is receiving academic credit. The society budgets for paid interns each year and hopes to hire two more before the end of 2022.

Wood gave Lingar a crash course on how items are organized and how to find items in the archive, and he introduced her to the society's collection software, PastPerfect. Then Lingar began working on the Sylvio "Turk" Gilbert Collection. Gilbert served five terms as mayor of Augusta, was elected to the Maine Senate, and was a member of Maine State Sports Hall of Fame. Gilbert Elementary School in Augusta was named in his honor.

Many of the items in this collection were unknown until Lingar made them searchable by adding them to the database. Some of the treasures she discovered included a typed summary of Gilbert's life (2016.0065.0011); numerous black-and-white baseball photos, including a 1973 photo of Boston Red Sox catcher Carlton Fisk receiving the first annual "Turk" Gilbert Memorial Award from Mrs. Sylvio Gilbert (2016.0065.0048); and several scrapbooks and plaques honoring Gilbert's work. Many of the people in the collection's photographs still need to be identified.

Lingar has moved on to another uncatalogued acquisition, the Marjorie Gordon Collection, and hopes to complete it this summer. Anyone interested in viewing either collection can do so by visiting the society's headquarters during research hours, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday; or by calling (207) 622-7718 for an appointment. 🐾



Clockwise from lower left, First Amendment Museum interns Whitney Durgin, Colin Marquis-Boutin, and Sophia Lingar listen as Kennebec Historical Society Executive Director Scott Wood explains how the society's portrait of publisher, banker, and philanthropist William Robinson Smith (1813-1894), of Augusta, was restored recently.

Photo by Maxwell Nosbisch

## Scenes from Fort Halifax Days in Winslow — June 11



**Left:** Children under the guidance of costumed historical interpreters stand in an 18th-century Colonial militia formation during the annual Fort Halifax Days event at Fort Halifax Park in Winslow. **Center:** Nathan Hamilton, of Corinth, left, and Nathan Robichaud, of Kenduskeag, display a sail-powered canoe. The fort, of which only one blockhouse remains, was built in 1754. The canoe is similar to those used by local Native American tribes around the time of the fort's construction. **Right:** Ken Hamilton, a historical interpreter from Corinth, shows tools made of animal bones to three boys.

Photos by Joseph Owen

## Oak Grove Chapel Slowly Shaking off Signs of Decay

Old buildings, regardless of their location and usage, often fall into various states of disrepair. One building in this category in Kennebec County is the Oak Grove Chapel in Vassalboro. A number of changes have affected the architectural landmark over its lifespan, and it now is facing physical problems as well.

The chapel was built in 1786, only three years after the American Revolutionary War ended officially and three years before the U.S. Constitution was ratified. The chapel was constructed as a Quaker meeting house by a group of Friends, as the Quakers called themselves, who migrated in the 1770s to the then-province of Maine, apparently from the island of Nantucket in Massachusetts. Central Maine is noted for its Quaker heritage, and this edifice is one of its older features. It is located on the north side of Oak Grove Road, only a few yards from U.S. Route 201.

The main building was constructed in the post-and-beam style similar to that of many old barns and is shaped like a T. It was listed as on the National Register of Historic Places in 1977. According to information provided to the U.S. Department of the Interior in the application for its inclusion on the registry, the building was initially sided with clapboards, had 12-pane-over-12-pane windows and a gable roof. Only one door afforded entry to or exit from the building. In its original form this artifact, at first referred to as the River Meeting House, was a gathering place for Quakers from the China, Vassalboro, and even Dresden areas until other, closer churches were built. Worshipers at the meeting house sat in basic upright wooden pews arranged in rows, facing the elders. There was also a nearby burial ground. In addition, reflecting a desire to improve education for younger members, a school was begun nearby.

The Oak Grove School was opened in 1850. All children from the Quaker community were allowed to attend, and the school was maintained as intended for more than forty years. Many young Quakers passed through the school's doors, with Rufus Jones (1863-1948) likely being the best-known alumnus. Jones was a longtime professor at Haverford College, in Pennsylvania, and was a lifelong advocate for human rights and the Quaker lifestyle. However, by the mid-1890s the population of Friends in the area had declined dramatically and changes were afoot.

Sometime in the 19th century, according to Susan Briggs, a spokeswoman for current restoration efforts, a secret room was added in the attic. "It was concealed behind the overhang in the attic from the old roof they built around when they remodeled," Briggs said. "I never noticed it before until the light was just right and where portions of the old roof had deteriorated made it easier to see. I caught a glimpse of a white glow and checked it out. It has a small doorway – no door – and there is plaster on the walls and ceiling, 15 feet by 10 feet, more or less."

Given the time frame and location, she said, the room might have been a "station" on the Underground Railroad that hid runaway slaves.

By 1895 the original meeting house, used by students to some extent for worship, had fallen into significant disrepair. To preserve the structure, the Quaker community decided it to the Oak Grove School for official use as its chapel. At that time, a Winthrop resident, Sophia D. Bailey, the wife of Charles M. Bailey, a Quaker factory owner who gave Winthrop its current library building, decided to fund



The 236-year-old Oak Grove Chapel, one of Kennebec County's oldest buildings, stands on Oak Grove Road in Vassalboro across the street from the grounds of the Maine Criminal Justice Academy

Photos by Nikko Noble



Stained-glass windows adorn the walls of the cha

the restoration of the chapel for the school's benefit. The renovation, which dramatically altered both the interior and exterior of the original structure, was extensive.

As stated in the paperwork related to the chapel's 1977 listing on the National Register of Historic Places, "Although the frame of the original structure was retained, the exterior fabric was radically altered and a tower and portico added. In addition, the building was raised several feet to create a cellar for a new heating plant. The interior, previously arranged in traditional Quaker fashion, was radically changed to include space for organ and choir and for a single pulpit. A combined Sunday school and lunch room was partitioned off and stained-glass windows were installed. All work was carried out under the direction of William. H. Douglass of Lisbon Falls who was in charge of the other school buildings and had been employed on many other important contracts by Mr. Bailey. The building was dedicated on December 8, 1895, as the Sophia Bailey Memorial Chapel, Mrs. Bailey having died during the reconstruction."

The outside of the rebuilt structure was covered with shingles, as was the roof. The tower has an open space, or belvedere, with arched openings under its steeply pitched, pyramid-shaped roof. In addition, all of the doors and windows were changed from their original design and locations. These structural changes are still visible today.

The school itself has undergone some alterations as well. It continued as an educational institution for girls until 1970. In that year, the school merged with Coburn Classical Institute, of Waterville, and continued in Vassalboro as Oak Grove-Coburn High School. In 1989, that school was closed and the existing castle-like structures, minus the chapel, were sold to the state of Maine. The former school buildings became and continue to be the home of the Maine Criminal Justice Academy. The chapel, on its original site across the road from the old school, is now on its own.

In 2015, Maine Preservation put the Sophia D. Bailey Chapel on its annual list of critically endangered historic buildings. The Yarmouth-based nonprofit reported, "The Chapel is underutilized with deferred maintenance, and is falling into disrepair." Water damage was among the causes of these conditions.

There was discussion about demolishing the building. However, in 2017 a \$7,500 grant from the Belvedere Historic Preservation Group funded repair of the foundation and stopping the leakage. Other funding from Oak Grove alumni via the Friends of the River Meeting House has surfaced as well, and there are plans to build a neighboring cottage. The cottage would provide a caretaker's living space, a common room and event space, a kitchen, and bathrooms compliant with Americans with Disabilities Act standards. The ongoing coronavirus pandemic sidelined most of these plans, but the group remains optimistic and additional funding has been located.

Briggs said the Oak Grove School Foundation pays for the chapel's maintenance. The Friends of the River Meeting house/Oak Grove Chapel receive donations mostly from alumni, and the group also has received grants to cover the cost of improvements.

"We have sent out newsletters requesting donations and we have had functions at the chapel to generate interest to help with building improvements. The focus of the River Meeting House group is the preservation of the chapel. We did have a historic architect plan to go by for improvements to the building and have taken his plan to use as a guide," Briggs said.

Supported by that effort, this historic central Maine landmark continues as an example of change, resilience and hope. The Sophia D. Bailey Chapel, while certainly not in its original form, still stands on its original site, paying homage to the past and offering hope for the future.



Pews fill the main hall at Oak Grove Chapel in Vassalboro



## Augusta Hosted Debut of What Became America’s National March



Answer to Keyhole #1

Q: What is this?

A: Part of the former  
Augusta City Hall

Q: Where is it?

A: Cony Street in Augusta

Q: What’s historic about it?

A: The building hosted the  
first public performance  
of “The Stars and Stripes  
Forever.”

**S**ure, Willie Nelson appeared in Augusta. So did the Grateful Dead. And some eyewitnesses still recall that electric night in May 1977 when Elvis Presley sashayed into the Augusta Civic Center, flinging scarves into a crowd of swooning women as he sang.

However, they all merely were following in the footsteps of a musical giant whose visit to Maine’s capital city 80 years before Presley’s arrival left the masses agog with admiration and introduced a melody that emblazoned itself indelibly and permanently on the American cultural landscape.

That giant was John Philip Sousa, known as “The March King.” The earliest known public performance of what became his signature song occurred May 1, 1897, on the third-floor stage of what then was the new Augusta City Hall, according to music historians. The only thing the song lacked was a name, but by the time Sousa trotted it out again two weeks later before a Philadelphia audience, he had revealed one: “The Stars and Stripes Forever.”

The brass-and-woodwinds-intensive composition became so popular that Sousa’s band played it at almost every concert for 25 years, and it became the national march of the United States in 1987, according to the Library of Congress website.

Just after Sousa’s performance in the packed Augusta City Hall auditorium, a *Kennebec Journal* reporter managed to buttonhole Sousa in his special train while he was looking over some sheet music.

“It was a piece of his new march which was played as the first encore, Saturday – a march that has not been named,” the reporter wrote in a story published two days later. “Mr. Sousa says that he hoped to formally announce it in Augusta, but certain restrictions prevented. It was superb anyway, and it didn’t matter much what the name was.”

By that time, Sousa and his band were nearly four months into a crushing 21,000-mile nationwide concert tour. Augusta was busier than usual too. It was celebrating the centennial of its incorporation as an independent municipality. It also was still in the throes of a years-long construction boom that included the City Hall, Lithgow Public Library, a Masonic Hall, the downtown U.S. post office, a new Statehouse wing, and other prominent structures.

Augusta’s city government used the City Hall for nine decades, then moved across Cony Street to its current location.

The Police Department abandoned the deteriorating building about a decade later. It eventually underwent extensive renovation and became the Inn at City Hall, an assisted-living facility for elderly people. The stage where Sousa performed is still there, however, and a “Museum in the Streets” historical tablet across the street pays tribute to him and his famous march.



History Through  
a Keyhole #1



A Museum in the Streets sign stands near the old City Hall building in Augusta, where John Philip Sousa first performed his celebrated march “The Stars and Stripes Forever” in 1897.

Photo by Joseph Owen



— by Joseph Owen

## History Through a Keyhole - Puzzle 2

The sculpture at the right stands next to a building in Kennebec County. Readers who want to identify the object in the photo are challenged to contact the *Current* and tell the editor three things: what the building is, where it is, and what its historic significance is.

Answers may be sent by email to [kennhis1891@gmail.com](mailto: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. 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 next issue of the *Kennebec Current*. Answers are due by September 16, 2022. Good luck.



### Responses for Puzzle 1

Connie Hanson, of Augusta, submitted a full correct response to the History Through a Keyhole puzzle that appeared in the May-June issue of the *Kennebec Current*. Hansen, administrator of the “You grew up in Augusta, Maine if you remember?” Facebook page, recognized Augusta’s old City Hall and knew that John Philip Sousa had conducted the first public performance of his march “The Stars and Stripes Forever” there.

Former *Kennebec Journal* reporter Bob Datz, of West Brookfield, Massachusetts, remembered passing under the window many times while visiting the police station in the basement to gather news for the newspaper. As a result, he said, it was easy to recognize the window even 35 years later. “Thanks for serving a piece of cake!” he wrote. Datz made no mention of the Sousa connection, however.

## History Buff Considers Himself Randolph’s “Intern”



Dan Kates has a full-time career as an engineer. At the age of 58, he also is back in school, trying to earn to his bachelor’s degree. In his spare time, he does woodworking in his home workshop. And he’s married, with a family that includes adult children and several children.

In short, Kates’ life is full enough without considering whether to take on the additional burden of the Randolph town historian’s post, which has been vacant since Dick Harriman stepped down from it and sold his Randolph home last fall (*Kennebec Current*, July-August 2021) after a decade of service.

Then again, those two storage tubs in Kates’ house keep beckoning to him.

Harriman, a longtime Kennebec Historical Society member, turned over a large quantity of Randolph archival files at the Town Office last year before departing for his winter residence in Florida.

“They were all at the Town Office, and they had absolutely no one who wanted to be historian, and I absolutely love history,” said Kates, a native of Enfield, Connecticut, who moved to Randolph in 2015.

A town official, Janet Richards, suggested that he take a couple of Harriman’s totes home to look through them. They turned out to be full of maps, obituaries, photos, Kennebec Central Railroad receipts, and other Randolph-related memorabilia.

Kates said Harriman had organized the material well. He hopes to scan much of it and post the images online in a way that will provide researchers better access to them. He also wants to get in touch with Harriman, whom he never has met and who is a full generation older than Kates, and ask him questions about his work.

So is Kates the town historian – a position that doesn’t exist in most Maine communities – or isn’t he?

“I’m kind of the intern,” Kates said, apparently playing his cards close to his vest.

Whatever he decides eventually, it might be reassuring to know that for now, at least someone is thinking of the future when it comes to safeguarding Randolph’s past.



## New Exhibit to Greet AppleFest Guests in Monmouth

When visitors come to the annual AppleFest at the Monmouth Museum on September 24, they'll see a new exhibit showing a reproduction of an old-fashioned country store.

The display is in a building on the east side of Main Street, across from most of the rest of the museum. Shelia Sanford, president of the museum, said exhibit builders are trying to depict a store as it would have looked in about 1925.

The building originally stood where Cumston Hall is now. Built in 1843, it served as a town office and post office. The exhibit also will replicate an old post office from around 1915. Sanford said the Monmouth post office was located in what is now the museum building until about 1940.

"We have a pot-bellied stove, a nickel-plated cash register, and reproductions of canned goods," Sanford said of the exhibit. "Some of us remember the old-fashioned store, and some have seen pictures of it."

The one-day AppleFest is the biggest fundraiser of the year for the museum. About 100 freshly baked apple pies will be for sale in the Apple Pie Café under a tent on the museum grounds. Visitors can buy a whole pie or a slice of pie with ice cream. The museum provides bakers with apples for their pies, mostly MacIntosh and Cortlands.



H. Earle Flanders, founder of the Monmouth Museum

Photo by Bobbie M. Bowler

at the Boston Conservatory of Music.

Flanders also ran a moccasin-making business called Cochnewagen Moccasins. He was supportive of Cumston Hall and The Theater at Monmouth. He acquired the nickname "The Mayor of Monmouth."



Monmouth celebrates AppleFest 2021.

Photo courtesy of the Monmouth Museum

Monmouth once was one of Maine's premier apple-growing locations.

The local museum, which has eight buildings, was started by Earle Flanders with the purchase of several buildings that were slated for demolition or relocation. Flanders' first purchase occurred in 1950. In 1970 he created the museum, later donating it to the Monmouth Historical Society.

"Earle was in World War II, and when he came back to Monmouth, he found the building called 'The Old Fort' had been torn down. After that, he made it his business to save buildings that were likely to be torn down," Sanford said. "His idea was if there was an attraction downtown, maybe it would keep the town going. You could see towns around just going away."

Flanders owned and operated Bragdon-Flanders Funeral Home most of his working life. He had a strong singing voice that could be heard along Main Street when he sang "Amazing Grace" and other anthems for funerals. He also sang at weddings. Flanders' wife, Mildred, was an organist educated



Stencil plates lie on display at the Monmouth Museum's Stencil Shop.

Photo by Joseph Owen

Flanders died in January 1993 at the age of 71. His museum has continued to grow.

One of its buildings, the Blossom House, was built about 1800. It survived a great fire in 1888 that destroyed much of Monmouth’s downtown center. The house contains locally made Safford pottery.

The Carriage House, erected in 1913, contains several interesting old vehicles, including the town’s horse-drawn hearse. A Portland Cutter sleigh, the ice yacht Meteor, and a horse-drawn racing sulky are in the collection.

In front of the Carriage House are huge rollers that a team of horses pulled after snowstorms to pack down the snow rather than plow it. Sanford said this method was used to control winter snow into the 1920s. She said the Carriage House also contains many portraits of local people painted by Harry Cochrane, architect of Cumston Hall.



Longtime Monmouth Museum volunteer Shelia Sanford, shown standing outside the museum’s Carriage House on June 18, grasps a spoke of a roller once drawn by horse teams and used to flatten snow before the universal adoption of snowplows.

Photos by Joseph Owen



Manned by a mannequin, the stern-steered iceboat Meteor stands in the Carriage House loft at the Monmouth Museum in Monmouth. The museum acquired the boat in the 1970s. Volunteers rehabilitated it and put it on display in 2014.

person. Sanford said there may be some “abbreviated tours” of the property during AppleFest.

The Monmouth Museum has 50 to 60 members, Sanford said, adding, “I think interest in the museum has been pretty steady.”

Sanford said she has volunteered for the museum for more than 50 years. She said her parents, Dora and Nelson King, got interested in saving old buildings after they visited an attraction called LumberTown in Minnesota. “My mother was a fan of the museum,” Sanford said.

During AppleFest there will be blacksmith demonstrations in the Blacksmith Shop on Maple Street and weaving and cider-making in the Carriage House. Other museum sites are the Corn Crib; the Freight Shed, which includes an old-time classroom; the Stencil Shop, which dates from about 1840; and a former library in North Monmouth.

The museum is open to the public from 1 to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday. Museum tours are available daily starting at the gift shop-country store, with a recommended donation of \$5 per

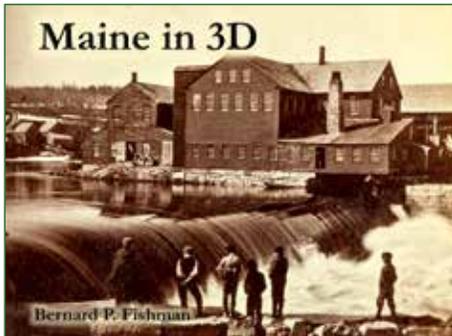


Stencil characters form orderly rows in the Monmouth Museum’s Stencil Shop.

— by John Hale

## Upcoming Programs

### August: “Historic Maine in 3-D”



Cover photo courtesy of the author

**B**ernard Fishman, director of the Maine State Museum in Augusta, will present “Historic Maine in 3-D” as the Kennebec Historical Society’s August lecture. The subject is a modern way of looking at the most important form of early 19th-century commercial photography, which used binocular images on cards or glass, called stereoviews today, to allow images to be seen in three dimensions when looked at through a viewer.

Fishman, one of the nation’s foremost collectors of stereoviews, has amassed nearly 30,000 of them. He has drawn from his own collection, as well as from the 20,000 stereoviews of Maine held by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, to assemble this projection show of Victorian scenes of Maine, largely from the 1860s and ’70s, just after the Civil War.

To see this projection show, attendees will be given free paper glasses, like the ones used to view 3-D horror movies in the 1950s, to see the images in 3-D as they were meant to be viewed. They will see a Maine of small cities and villages, farmers, shipbuilders, and industrial workers in mines and factories; parades and entertainments, social and life-cycle events, homes with their kitchens and parlors, family portraits, institutional buildings and employees, hunters, loggers, Native Americans, and many moments of life in Maine about 150 years ago. Fishman also will discuss the museum’s work in preserving such images and using modern methods to make them available for future generations to enjoy and study.

Fishman was born in New York City and educated at Columbia University and the University of Pennsylvania. For three years he was an Egyptologist in Luxor, Egypt, working at Chicago House, the University of Chicago’s research center there. Since then he has directed five museums. He has been the director of the Maine State Museum since 2012. He had strong roots in Maine before he came to the Maine State Museum. Before the 1980s, under the name of the M.H. Fishman Co., his family operated five-and-dime stores in Calais, Houlton, Waterville, and Biddeford. Bernard Fishman spent 11 summers at summer camps in Maine when he was growing up. He is married to wife Elizabeth and has a son, Philip, who works in Augusta.

Fishman is the author or editor of numerous articles and publications, most recently *A Story of Maine in 112 Objects* (The Maine State Museum and Tilbury House Publishers). He is also a co-founder of Photarchive3D, an archive of 35,000 historic stereoview images that are made available for educational image projections in 3-D.

This Kennebec Historical Society presentation is free to the public (with donations gladly accepted) and will take place at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, August 17, at South Parish Congregational Church, located at 9 Church Street in Augusta. Questions about the program may be directed to KHS Executive Director Scott Wood by calling 622-7718.

### September: “Around the Kennebec Valley: The Herman Bryant Collection”



Author Gay Grant

**F**ans of Gay M. Grant’s book *Along the Kennebec: The Herman Bryant Collection* will enjoy these more than 200 newly released images taken by gifted South Gardiner photographer Herman Bryant (1858–1937). Now part of the collections of the Maine State Museum, Bryant’s work documents late-19th- and early-20th-century life in the Kennebec River region during its industrial heyday.

New information about Bryant and his family reveals fascinating stories about the people and places captured in his photographs. From Augusta downriver to Bath and the coastal islands, Bryant’s lens captured the mills, factories, icehouses, and other ventures that once lined the river’s banks. Vessels of all types that once made the river the artery of the region’s life and economy can be seen along with images of the railroads that revolutionized travel. Bryant’s poignant portraits, photographs of homes, and even images

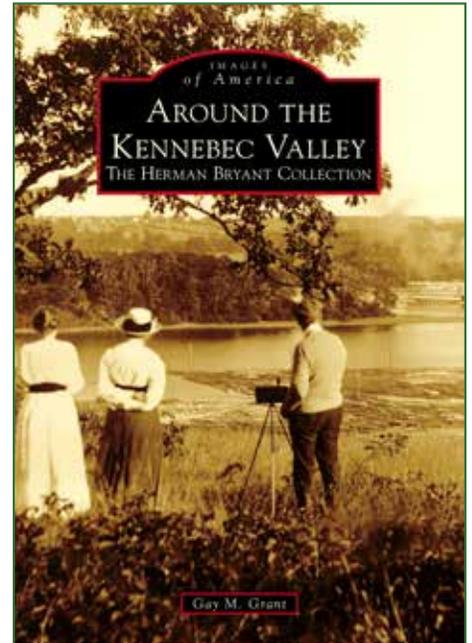
## Upcoming Programs

of beloved pets bring to life the industrious Maine people who built thriving communities.

Grant is the author of three books and is an experienced writer and public speaker. From 2005 to 2022 she owned The Write Way, a writing, grant-writing, and editing consulting firm specializing in nonprofit development. Grant also served in the Maine House of Representatives from 2012 to 2018. She is chairwoman of the Maine Governmental Facilities Authority and a member of the Maine State Museum Commission and the Statehouse and Capital Park Commission. She also chairs the Cobbossee Corridor Trail Committee for the city of Gardiner.

Grant and her husband, Ron Grant, live alongside the Kennebec River in South Gardiner. The Grants have two grown children and a grandson.

The presentation, free to the public (with donations gladly accepted), will take place at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, September 15, at Hope Baptist Church located at 726 Western Avenue in Manchester. The program will be preceded at 5 p.m. by a potluck supper and at 6 p.m. by the society's annual meeting and election of directors. For details about the potluck supper, please contact Anne Cough, either by email at [acough60@yahoo.com](mailto:acough60@yahoo.com) or by phone at 582-2823. Any questions about the presentation should be directed to KHS Executive Director Scott Wood at 622-7718.



### \* In Memoriam \*

**Jane A. Robertson**, 75, a longtime resident of Sidney and a Kennebec Historical Society member since 2006, died June 14 in Portland. An Augusta native who graduated from Cony High School and Thomas College, she taught business classes at Cony for 29 years. Her survivors include her husband, John R. Robertson, also a KHS member; a brother-in-law, William Ross of Randolph; and many nieces and nephews.

**Lillian M. Skillin**, 91, of Augusta, a Kennebec Historical Society life member and volunteer who joined the society about a quarter-century ago, died July 22 in Augusta. A Portland native, she earned a master's degree in education from the University of Maine, then taught fourth grade for 32 years at Williams Elementary School, which stood at the intersection of Bangor and Quimby streets in Augusta. She also was an active member and supporter of the PALS No-kill Cat Shelter in Winthrop, the VIP club at Penney Memorial Baptist Church, and the Augusta Nature Club.

**Linda Lee Hathaway Spearin**, 85, a former Kennebec Historical Society member, died June 26 at her Gardiner home. The Gardiner native, Winthrop High School graduate, ex-cheerleading coach, and homemaker is survived by her husband, KHS life member Rod Spearin; as well as three children, four grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren.

### KHS Book Sale Scheduled for September 9-10

Following the success of the June book sale, which raised more than \$1,100, the Kennebec Historical Society plans to hold another book sale on Friday, September 9, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and on Saturday, September 10, from 9 a.m. to noon.

The society has received numerous donations of books that are in “like new” condition. They include a wide assortment of fiction, biographies, sports, history, travel, cookbooks, children's books, and more.

This will be the last opportunity of the year to shop for used books at KHS. The regular prices are \$2 for hardcover books and \$1 for all softcover books. There will also be a table of specially priced books that are out of print, rare, or simply more valuable than the regular books. In the last hour of each day, shoppers will be able to fill a reusable bag full of books for only \$10.

Questions about the sale should be addressed to KHS Executive Director Scott Wood at the society by calling (207) 622-7718.

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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](mailto:kennhis1891@gmail.com)

**Telephone:** (207) 622-7718

**Web site:** [www.kennebechistorical.org](http://www.kennebechistorical.org)