

Kennebec Current

Discovering, preserving, and disseminating Kennebec County history since 1891

Volume 32 Issue 5

KENNEBEC HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

September–October 2022

Upgrade Likely to Keep State Cultural Building Closed Until 2024

The Cultural Building, which until 2020 housed the Maine State Museum, the Maine State Library, and the Maine State Archives, is not expected to open until 2024, putting the building out of service at least twice as long as a preliminary estimate had predicted.

The museum, the library, and the archives – all frequented by many Kennebec Historical Society members – moved out in mid-2020 to make way for the half-century-old building's overhaul, which includes upgrading the heating, cooling, and electrical systems and removal of asbestos. The Maine Department of Secretary of State, which oversees the library, the museum, and the archives, reported in 2020 that the Legislature had allocated \$15 million for the project.

News reports at the time of the agencies' departure cited a state estimate that the building would be closed for about two years, although that prediction came with the warning that problems discovered during the renovation easily could cause delays.

Supply chain problems and the scarcity of construction workers have contributed to the elongation of the renovation

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A contractor's fence, shown September 28 in Augusta, surrounds the entrance to the Cultural Building, where a \$15 million multi-year renovation project is underway.

Photo by Joseph Owen

\$500,000 Federal Grant to Boost Colburn House Upgrade

The National Park Service has awarded a \$500,000 grant to the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to help the state rehabilitate the historic Colburn House State Historic Site in Pittston, the department announced in an August news release.

The two-story, timber-frame Colburn House stands on Arnold Road. Built in 1765 atop a long, sloping hill on the Kennebec River's east bank, it is the former home of Maj. Reuben Colburn (1740-1818). Colburn, a shipbuilder, assembled the flat-bottomed bateaux that Col. Benedict Arnold and his 1,100-person expeditionary force used in late 1775 to cross northwestern Maine's wilderness and attack the British-controlled fortress at Quebec in the opening year of the Revolutionary War. The attack, which



The Colburn House is getting a financial boost from the National Park Service to aid in its rehabilitation.

Photo by Joseph Owen

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President's Message



In September, we had the annual meeting of the Kennebec Historical Society. Coupled with a social hour featuring snacks (thanks to all who brought food to share!) and a wonderful presentation by Gay Grant, the evening was a great opportunity for members to get together, address society business, and see photos from the Herman Bryant collection.

Many thanks to Gay for generously donating the proceeds of her book sales from the evening to KHS.

This year, the annual report was dedicated to Joe Owen for his untiring efforts in support of KHS. Joe's contributions to KHS are varied and wide-ranging, and the newsletter you are now reading is just one example of the ways he gives of his talents and time to the society. The report's dedication this year was certainly a well-deserved honor!

KHS is also grateful to Augusta's Lithgow Public Library for sharing the bounty of their leftover book sale inventory with us. This donation, along with the many generous donations of books from members, has allowed us to hold several book sales in September. We had one large one at the beginning of the month, and each September Friday since have invited the public in to shop for fall and winter reading. Book sales are a wonderful fundraiser for KHS, and we hope all of you who have bought a book (or ten) at the sales have enjoyed them.

Thank you all for your continued support of KHS, and best wishes for a wonderful fall.

— Jamie Logan, president

KHS Welcomes the Following New Members

Joshua LaVerdiere — Augusta

Victoria McMullen — Chelsea

Walden Lazaro — West Gardiner

Gary Wood — Litchfield

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

Around Kennebec County - Coming Events

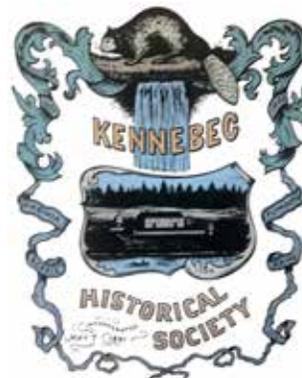
October 15 (rain date October 22): **Monmouth Historical Society's** first Monmouth Monster Mash Halloween Festival, 5:30 p.m., Monmouth Museum, 748 Main Street Monmouth; event includes a paranormal investigation, a cemetery tour, ghost stories, games, snacks, and more. Tickets can be purchased at the Monmouth Museum. Call (207) 933-2287 for more information.

October 20: **Belgrade Historical Society**, "Telling Family Stories," 6:30 p.m. on Zoom. Call Belgrade

Public Library to register at 207-495-3508.

October 25: **Gardiner Public Library**, Spooky Local Authors Round Table, 5:30 p.m., Community Archives Room at the library, 152 Water Street, Gardiner. Contact Dawn Thistle at (207) 582-6890.

October 29: **China Historical Society**, open get-together meeting with light snacks, 10 a.m., portable building at the China Town Office, 571 Lakeview Drive, South China. Call (207) 445-2014.



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Total membership:

591 on October 7

Life members: 242

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.

Cultural Building

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period, according to Adam Fisher, the state library's director of collection development, digital initiatives, and promotion. Considering that and the complicated nature of the renovation, he said, the library's probable re-opening date is not far off schedule,

"We think it'll probably be in early 2024," he said.

The Bureau of General Services is supervising the renovation projects. Its parent agency, the Maine Department of Administrative and Financial Services, did not respond to questions about the project by presstime.

The Cultural Building was built from 1967 to 1969, according to the secretary of state's website. After the building's closure in May 2020, the Maine State Library moved to a temporary location at 242 State Street, on the corner of Manley Street, and opened to the public there on June 12, 2021. The library's temporary site has 5,500 square feet of space, about one-fourth of the 7 shelf miles of books available at the regular location. Its other items are stored at a Winthrop warehouse and elsewhere, but they are available by request and might take up to three days to retrieve.

"We've tried to minimize the burden on our patrons," Fisher said, adding later, "We didn't lose a step – after that first step that pretty much everyone did because of COVID."

Fisher said the library hopes to make its shelving more compact, thereby making more room for Kennebec Historical Society lectures and presentations or meetings of other groups, and to improve the seating and acoustics. The library also hopes to install a new main-floor restroom that complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

"What we're trying for is to make the best use of the space that we have," Fisher said.

The Maine State Archives staff has shifted its material and operations to the Williams Pavillion at 17 Elkins Lane, located on Augusta's east side on the campus of the former Augusta Mental Health Institute. Visitors are admitted there by appointment only, according to the archives website. Patrons can call (207) 287-5790 to pose a research question or make an appointment to visit.

The Maine State Museum has closed entirely during the renovation, and it is expected to open no sooner than 2025, according to Bernard Fishman, the museum's director.

"The (renovation) project started as a big one and has only grown larger," he said.

It took the museum staff two years to vacate about 55,000 square feet of space, including more than 10,000 for exhibits, in the Cultural Building, Fishman said; and it should take a year to move back in. The renovation has consumed about half of the museum's staff hours in the last two years because of the need to inventory, protect, and move the museum's collection of more than 800,000 objects and to find additional storage space, he said.

"All of our storage areas were full at the beginning of this project," Fishman said, adding that the state has provided the museum about 6,000 square feet of storage at the Center Building on the former AMHI campus.

When the museum reopens, its exhibit area will be reduced to 8,000 square feet, and its exhibits no longer will include a lumber industry display or the highly deteriorated natural history dioramas that were major elements of the old layout, Fishman said. Their replacements will include skeletons of two humpback whales and a general exhibit titled "Meet Maine Here," which is intended to introduce the state's culture and character to visitors. The museum also will include a new 2,500-square-foot education center.



Early signs of the Cultural Building renovation were spotted in the rear parking lot near the Vietnam Veterans Pine Grove in September 2020.

Photo by Rich Eastman

— by Joseph Owen

Where Many Used to Stay: A Brief Review of Area Hotels

The recent opening of an in-town lodging business in Waterville, Lockwood Hotel, brings to mind the era when there were many such places located close to the center of a city or sizeable town. The Lockwood is on the spot formerly occupied by the Crescent Hotel (see illustration) and, before that, Lockwood House, circa 1880.

Some may recall the large and gracious Elmwood on College Avenue, which opened in 1850. The society is fortunate have a number of postcard views, showing it largely unchanged in footprint. *The Centennial History of Waterville* (edited by the Rev. Edwin Carey Whittemore, 1902) reported that a “recent addition” (p. 428) expanded it to 150 rooms. There is also a brief YouTube video ([youtube.com/watch?v=kfaEUjag11k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kfaEUjag11k)) paying tribute, dated 2007, which states that the Elmwood



The Collections Box
Emily Schroeder

Hotel was in business for 111 years. The building is gone, replaced by a Rite Aid store. Interestingly, there is now another Elmwood, on Kennedy Memorial Drive.

Other Waterville lodging places included the Bay View Hotel (40 rooms) and the Park (25 rooms). In an 1892 city directory, the City Hotel appears at 47 Main St.

Perhaps the most notable hotel in Gardiner began its tenure as the Cobbossee House, built in 1827. Benjamin Johnson purchased it in 1856 and renamed it the Johnson House. It was in business for over a century, on the present site of Dearborn Park, next to the still-familiar Johnson Hall, constructed in 1864 so the town would have a decent venue for events. A Kennebec Journal article published July 25, 1968, describes an



These postcards show the various stages of the Elmwood Hotel's architecture throughout its history. Its footprint remains largely unchanged.

Scans from the KHS collection

upcoming auction of the house's contents to benefit Gardiner General Hospital.

J.W. Hanson's 1852 *History of Gardiner, Pittston and West Gardiner* lists other such establishments: Washingtonian House, Gardiner Hotel, Kennebec House, and Mansion House. By 1876 there were two others: the Evans and the Jones Hotel.

In Hallowell we find the Hallowell House, in business at least by 1876, according to our earliest city directory. With new ownership in 1925, it was renamed Worster House, famous for its cooking (see menu, page 5). What one could get for \$3 for Thanksgiving in the 1950s was astonishing!

Augusta definitely held its own in the lodging business. It had the Augusta House, which the Kennebec Historical Society covered in a Zoom presentation at the end of June. James North, in his 1870 *History of Augusta*, notes 10 hotels within a mile of the State House; in addition to the Augusta House, there was the Mansion House, Franklin House, Cushnoc House, Kennebec House, Frederic Spenser's house at the foot of Court Street, New England House, Benjamin Piper (north end of Water Street), John Reed (east side of the river), and James Snow (behind the old courthouse). Six



This 20th-century photo shows the Johnson House on Water Street in Gardiner.

KHS collection photo

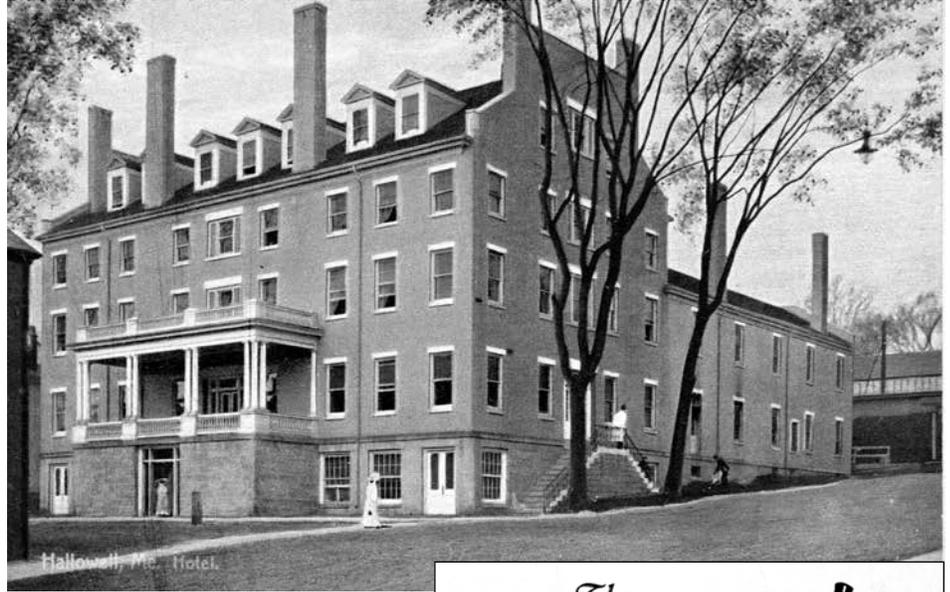
years later we find the Central House at State Street and Western Avenue, the Cony House at 148 Water St., and the Farmers Hotel at the north end of Water Street.

The Mansion House, just opposite the jail, was built in 1802. It became famous for its hospitality. A 1932 article in our collection states that on the night the building burned in 1877, the furniture and some of the folks staying there were given room in the jail. The land was purchased by publishers Vickery and Hill, and today one will find three “sister” houses in a row there.

In 1803 Amos Partridge built Cushnoc House. He was the grandfather of the well-known local druggists who later operated Partridge’s Pharmacy. Amos Partridge enlarged the store and dwelling to three stories, and subsequently sold it to Henry Johnson, of Farmington, in 1835. It’s depicted on the 1895 Sanborn map as the Hotel Johnson. The house had several owners until it was eventually was sold to the Lithgow Library Association. On the same map we find the City Hotel, 145 Water St.

I must also recognize the Hotel North, which appears in our directories from 1883 to 1967 or so. It was located in the heart of downtown Augusta, at 264 Water St. We have very little in our collections about this establishment. Some time ago I spoke with someone who recalled the wonderful smell of the bread that was baked there. I’d love to hear from anyone who would like to share their memories of this place!

Today we have hotel and motel chains, bed-and-breakfasts, and even some people who rent extra rooms in their homes. However, there’s just



The Worster House, formerly the Hallowell House, featured some fine dining.

Scans from the KHS collection

The
Worster House
Hallowell, Maine

Thanksgiving Menu
1832 - 1955

Minted Fruit Cup with Lemon Ice
Cream of Fresh Maine Lobster Soup

Wheat Toast Saltines	Melba Toast Cheese Crackers	Triangle Thins Maine Sweet Cider	Venus Wafers Fresh Radishes
Queen Olives Iced Pascal Celery	Stuffed Manzanilla Olives Sweet Watermelon Pickles	Ripe Olives Fall Russet Pears	
Red Emperor Grapes Maine McIntosh Apples	Golden Delicious Apples Oranges	Bananas	

ROAST YOUNG NATIVE TOM TURKEY

Giblet Gravy	Sage Dressing	Cranberry Sauce
Creamed Green Peas	Buttered Tiny Onions	Homemade Biscuits
Cream Whipped Potatoes		

Melba Peach, Nut and Cottage Cheese Salad—Cream Dressing

DESSERTS

Baked Indian Pudding with Vanilla Ice Cream	Ice Cream Nut Roll with Chocolate Sauce	Vanilla Ice Cream	Chocolate Ice Cream	Strawberry Ice Cream
Fresh Strawberry Parfait	Lemon Sherbet	Chocolate Nut Sundae	Butterscotch Sundae	Pumpkin Pie
Apple Pie	Hot Mince Pie	Cheddar Cheese	Roquefort Cheese	Walnut Cake
Fruit Cake	Gold Cake	Chocolate Cake	Walnut Cake	
Kemp's Mixed Nuts	Assorted Chocolates	Chocolate Wafer Mints		
Dainty Fruit Thins	Fresh Calavo Dates	Old Fashioned Mint Creams		
Coffee	Tea	Milk	Sanka	Postum

NOVEMBER 24, 1955 \$3.00



The Mansion House in Augusta featured its own livery stable that was attached to the house.

something special about a grand old hotel that catered to one’s every whim, and treated the lodger as a family member. We can dream, can’t we?

Thanks for joining me for this brief tour. Until next time!

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

Hallowell Memory Quilt Comes Home



Nancy Peterson displays the Hallowell Memory Quilt at the Hubbard Free Library.
Photo by Bob McIntire

Reprinted from the fall 2022 issue of the Champion, Hallowell's city newsletter.

Some years back, Nancy Bryant, of Mechanic Falls, donated a memory quilt to the local library. Quilts of this kind were often sewn by members of a church congregation or community group and given to a member who was moving from the area as keepsake. She said that the quilt was given to her by her mother-in-law, Elsie Bryant, and was thought to come from a church in Mechanic Falls. It was often used as a couch covering in the Bryant household.

Nancy Petersons, the librarian, accepted the quilt. Her husband is the president of the local historical society, and the gift would be greatly appreciated. When she unfolded the quilt, she realized, much to her surprise, that the quilt wasn't from Mechanic Falls after all. It came from Hallowell. The back of the quilt bore the inscription, "Presented to Mrs. W.H. Holmes by the ladies of the M.E. Church

Hallowell, Maine March 30, 1899." The names of 391 members of the congregation are neatly written in longhand around the edges of the red-and-white quilt. The M.E. or Methodist Episcopal Church was renamed Cox Memorial Church in 1928.

A quick web search led Nancy to the site historichallowell.org and a call to the Historic Hallowell Committee. Would we like the quilt? You bet! The weekend of the Maine Quilt Show in Augusta provided an occasion for Nancy and her husband to visit Hallowell and bring the quilt home. The quilt, which measures 79 inches by 81 inches, is made up of red and white squares so neatly stitched together that it looks like it was sewn by machine. Laurie LeBar, chief curator of history and decorative arts at the Maine State Museum, examined the quilt and provided guidance for its safe storage as part of the Hubbard Free Library collection. A list of the church members and close-up pictures appear on the website historichallowell.org.

— by Bob McIntire, *Historic Hallowell Committee*

Journalism Intern Stagnone Starts Scouting the Archives

The Kennebec Historical Society welcomes Colby College senior Meghan Stagnone as its first Glenn Adams Jr. Memorial Journalism Intern. Stagnone is majoring in government with a double minor in English and Italian studies. Born and raised in Chelmsford, Massachusetts, she graduated from Chelmsford High School in 2019.

At Colby, Stagnone is involved with the Equestrian Team and the Italian Club, works as an assistant in the college's two libraries, and is a tutor for the Italian Department. She hopes to pursue a master's degree in library and information sciences.



Stagnone

KHS was able to "meet" and interview Meghan this past May over Zoom just before she went to Rome for the summer to pursue an additional internship as an archival intern for the Associazione Letteraria Premio Nazionale Elio Pagliarani. After interviewing several qualified candidates and hearing about her interest in studying library and archival sciences, KHS selected Stagnone for the internship at its Augusta headquarters.

"I was drawn to apply to the KHS journalism internship because it aligns well with my postgrad plans. I became interested in pursuing a career in library and archival sciences when I first found out I was going to Rome. I became fascinated with how libraries are evolving and immediately wanted to become a part in preserving the past with today's technology," Stagnone said. "Writing has been a passion for as long as I can remember, so when I saw the opportunity to learn more about writing outside of an academic environment, I knew I had to take it."

Stagnone said learning how to search the archives and library at KHS so she can write stories for the society's newsletter reminded her of her experience in Rome. "It's been great so far; I have learned so much in just my first few weeks here and have felt so welcomed and supported by the KHS staff and volunteers," she said.

The society established the paid 100-hour journalism internship to honor the late Glenn Adams Jr., who was a dedicated and committed KHS volunteer. He wrote for 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. Adams contributed to the society in many ways, including acting as the co-chairman of its Membership Committee and a member of the Development Committee. Adams also wrote news releases for the society and articles for the *Kennebec Current*.

Colburn House Upgrade

Continued from page 1

occurred on December 31 during a snowstorm, was unsuccessful.

Colburn's house is designated as a state historic site and has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 2004. As state property, it falls under the administrative authority of the Bureau of Parks and Lands. It has been in disrepair and closed to the public since 2019, according to the state news release.

"We're going to be going from the foundation all the way up to the top," the bureau's Southern Region state park and historic site manager, Gary Best, said of the rehabilitation project, noting that improvements to the siding, interior, trim, and roof are anticipated.

Best anticipates that an engineer will be contracted in early 2023 to identify areas in need of repair and to assemble bid proposals for contractors. Also, a curator will be called in to assess the home's contents and to plan solutions to problems such as the presence of mold. After the awarding of contracts, the rehabilitation work probably will be carried out in 2024, Best said.

The project's cost will depend on the contract bids, but Best said he doesn't expect that the \$500,000 federal grant will cover the entire bill. Also, the terms of the grant allow the state to use the money only for repairing the original portion of the main house, but the house has an ell and two outbuildings – a carriage house and a barn – and all of those structures need work as well. As a result, the bureau expects to continue looking for other funding sources.

When the project is complete, the bureau hopes to resume making the site available to visitors. Best said he met in September with members of the Arnold Expedition Historical Society to discuss the possibility of that group providing docents to give tours to visitors.

"I look at it as a limited combination of staff and volunteers," he said of the personnel requirements.

The lingering deterioration of the house up to this point reflects, in a way, Colburn's own story during the Revolutionary War and afterward. Colburn spent more than 500 British pounds on the construction of the bateaux for Arnold's expedition, according to Colburn descendant Mark A. York, who wrote about the effort in his 2012 book *Patriot on the Kennebec: Major Reuben Colburn, Benedict Arnold and the March to Quebec, 1775*. That expenditure was an amount greater than the value of Colburn's property. He received an initial payment of 26 pounds from Arnold and Gen. George Washington, but the Continental Congress never followed through on the rest of the bill.

Although Colburn and his family built ships for decades on their Pittston property after the war, the federal government's failure to reimburse Colburn for Arnold's bateaux caused him a long-lasting financial hardship, according to York.

The \$500,000 federal grant was awarded as part of the National Park Service's \$7 million Semiquincentennial Grant Program. The Maine Historic Preservation Commission called the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry's attention to the program and provided the department with guidance and assistance in its application for the grant, according to the news release.



The Colburn house's decayed dining room ceiling, shown in 2019, is one of many features that need repair at the historic site in Pittston.

Photo by Joseph Owen

Fayette Historical Society's Inactivity Leaves Its Collection in Limbo

A lapse in the Fayette Historical Society's operations has left the future of its archival collection in doubt, and it's unclear who gets to determine the fate of those papers and artifacts, as well as what Fayette residents might do to address that concern.

The society was fully active most recently under the presidency of Sara Reed. Reed was "the spark plug that kept the Fayette Historical Society going for so many years," said Joe Young, president of the Friends of Starling Hall, caretakers of the town's former Grange hall. That building, located on Route 17, is where the historical society's artifacts are stored.

A locked storage space there was designated to hold the town's historic documents, and a number of showcases were obtained for the display of artifacts such as local farming implements, effectively becoming what was to be considered the Fayette Historical Society Museum.



Starling Hall, Maine's first Grange hall, boasts a new entry and has been moved back onto a new foundation. Documents and other items collected by the Fayette Historical Society are housed there.

Photos by Kari Mullen-McLaughlin

Reed was involved in refurbishing Starling Hall's upstairs meeting space to represent its historic use as the first Grange hall built in Maine; its construction began in the summer of 1879. Her work included overseeing the manufacture and display over the stage area of an oilcloth curtain with the names of past local advertisers printed on it.

Reed, who often held lunchtime meetings in her historic home, the Underwood House, stepped down as Fayette Historical Society president after a decade or so and passed the torch to Diane Polky. Some meetings occurred at Underwood Library as well as in Starling Hall, but the regular monthly meeting schedule began to lapse when some older members died. Then the coronavirus pandemic hit in 2020, and all meetings were off the table for the foreseeable future.

In a recent interview, Reed lamented the society's current inactivity. Nonetheless, she expressed eagerness to rejoin the group as soon as it begins meeting again. It's unclear when that might happen, however. Masking still was required in June at the Fayette Town Office, Underwood Library, and Starling Hall; and it still was recommended in September. Also, historical society members tend to be an older segment of the population who might feel more at risk during a pandemic and therefore less inclined to gather in groups.

In June, Polky, the current society president, said she hoped to call a meeting soon, possibly by September. In September, she reiterated plans to renew a meeting schedule, but that had not happened yet. She offered to provide notification when a meeting was finally in the works.

In the meantime, the society's collection lies untouched and essentially inaccessible at Starling Hall, which slowly has been awakening from its own long period of dormancy.

After the local Grange disbanded in the 1990s, the town bought its hall in the interest of saving it as a community building. Without a planned use or funding structure, the hall



This dress is part of the museum in an upstairs storage room at Starling Hall in Fayette.

began to deteriorate. The historical society made efforts to protect the collection under its purview there, but the long-term viability of the structure itself was questionable. In response, in 2015, a few concerned residents founded Friends of Starling Hall, a nonprofit group determined to repair and refurbish the hall with the purpose of having it become a gathering, meeting, and event space for the community. Throughout the years since, many fundraising events, donations, grants, and in-kind professional help have supported consistent progress toward that goal.

However, what remains unclear is how the Friends' vision of a new use of the building will affect the Fayette Historical Society's holdings there. Reed said she had felt the collection was being "threatened" with impending removal and relocation.

The society's items consist of a collection of papers in a seemingly secure room on the ground floor. Nobody connected with the society or the Friends was able to say who last tended to the collection or when. While a modern brass lock is positioned right beneath the white porcelain knob on the door leading to the storage room, Reed said the door actually was stuck shut and inoperable even if unlocked.

The society's display cases are located in the central main floor area and in a side room off the upstairs Grange meeting room. Many historical items are on display or loosely stored on both levels, unregulated and/or unprotected. Luckily, all of it seems to have survived the moving of Starling Hall 30 feet back from Route 17 onto a stable new foundation a few years ago.

Young and Donna Barrett, the Friends vice president, expressed interest in caring for the historical items in their midst, depicting them as an extension of the building that they are trying to preserve for current and future generations. Yet as the space is intended for community use and will have particular requirements, it is not unlikely that a fair amount of FHS materials eventually would need to be moved elsewhere. That decision may fall to the Fayette Board of Selectmen as property owner, should the Fayette Historical Society fail to exercise active oversight, they said.

Were the collection to require relocation, finding an appropriate new home for it would demand serious investigation. Underwood Library, previously one of the town's historic one-room schoolhouses, is small; and while it has a few items in its collection of historical interest, it doesn't appear to have space for that quantity of material in its current state, to say nothing of how much space would be needed if the collection were properly organized and catalogued in acid-free archival storage materials. The Fayette Town Office is also a small space without room for anything extra. It's unknown whether Fayette Elementary School could offer assistance.

Anyone interested in supporting a revival of the Fayette Historical Society is advised to contact Polky or Reed through the Fayette Town Office.

To support Friends of Starling Hall in protecting Fayette history, visit the group's website or Facebook page to get updated on current projects. The Friends' upcoming Saturday events include a hunters' breakfast on November 5, a holiday craft sale on November 19, and breakfast with Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus and a holiday bake sale on December 17.



An oilcloth curtain bearing the names of area businesses from long ago hangs over the upstairs Starling Hall stage, thanks to the efforts of the Fayette Historical Society.

Le Club Calumet Marks Century of Franco-American Culture

Reprinted from the September 25 edition of the Kennebec Journal.

On Sunday, September 25, in a small function room around the corner from the Members Lounge, Patrick Boucher spent a few minutes reflecting on the milestone Le Club Calumet has reached.

On Thursday, September 22, Augusta's Franco-American club turned 100 years old, and the former club president is optimistic about the next 100 years.

"A lot of people feel it's amazing that we have survived as long as we have," Boucher, a past president and co-chairman of the centennial events committee, said. "It has to do with a lot of the people you see here."

The celebration of the club's centennial offered daily events between that Thursday and Sunday, beginning with the unearthing of a time capsule Thursday that had been buried five decades ago. The club also hosted dinners, including Saturday's banquet and a barbecue and casino Sunday.

"I think the key is that the club has always been involved (with the community)," Boucher said.

At the time the club was founded, French Canadians were migrating into the New England states, joining Irish immigrants in taking jobs at mills that formed the industrial backbone to the manufacturing economy in the Northeast.

When they arrived, immigrants often found distrust and discrimination. Nativist, anti-Catholic sentiment was running high in Maine, and the Ku Klux Klan was working to gain a foothold.

On September 22, 1922, 24 men met in the basement below Morin's Shoe Store on Water Street to form the club. According to the club's history, the founders wanted to coordinate the interests of their members and take part in the civic affairs of the Augusta community.

"The purpose of Le Club Calumet shall be for the propagation of the French language and intellectual development, by means of music, literature, education and anything else the club shall judge beneficial to the interest of Franco-Americans," the history on the club's website reads.



Pat Boucher, bottom left, talks to others September 22 about the items found in the 1972 Le Club Calumet time capsule, during a celebration of the 100th anniversary of the club's founding in Augusta.



People walk past a hole left after the unearthing of a time capsule September 22 during a celebration of the 100th anniversary of Le Club Calumet's founding in Augusta.

Photos by Joe Phelan

"The club created a community and gave the French people a place to go," Boucher said, "and also, at the same time, the founders got involved in other aspects of the community and integrated themselves in the community."

He noted that many Augusta mayors have been club members, and the club has been involved in a number of efforts that benefit the Augusta community – among them, building the swimming pool on Northern Avenue. More recently, the club's Hole in One Tournament has raised about \$8,000 a year for the Augusta Food Bank.

In the 1960s, the club launched the Calumet Education Foundation to offer grants and scholarships to help children of club members and nonmembers further their education.

"It's always been a group of people doing things," Boucher said, "and with all the most successful things we've always done, it's been a small group of people

bringing the whole together. No one person can really take credit for anything that goes on around here."

As other social and civic clubs have waned, Le Club Calumet, unaffiliated with any other organization, has remained

active and now has more than 950 members.

“It’s not a club for old French people,” Nicole Stein, one of the organizers of the centennial events, said. “It’s got that stigma.”

Boucher said the COVID-19 pandemic hit the club hard, forcing cancellation of many events and activities that are only now picking up again. The centennial celebration has drawn people who have not taken part in events over the past couple of years.

To this day, one meeting a month is conducted in French, harking back to the club’s stated purpose, and Boucher said that will continue as long as anyone in the club continues to speak the language.

When the time capsule was unearthed Thursday, club members found the contents had been damaged by water. When the club buries the next time capsule, to be unearthed in another five decades, members plan to take precautions to protect what they leave for future generations.

Boucher said that over the next 100 years, the club will remain a mainstay in the community and a place for French people to gather, even if some skeptics have doubts.

In the short term, that means the return of the community Thanksgiving dinner, which was canceled during the pandemic. It has drawn volunteers from as far away as New Hampshire to help put it on, Boucher said. In the longer term, it means continuing to celebrate French culture in central Maine.

“Our constitution, I believe, states as long as six people want this club to happen, it can’t dissolve,” Boucher said. “It’s either six or eight. It’s a low number. There’s always a core group of people that keep things going.”



— by Jessica Lowell



A slide show of old photographs, including one of then-U.S. Sen. John F. Kennedy, D-Mass., campaigning for president at Le Club Calumet in 1959, is shown September 22 as members enjoy appetizers during a gathering celebrating the 100th anniversary of the club’s founding in Augusta.

Shades of the B-movie Era



Attendees at the Kennebec Historical Society’s August 17 lecture wear paper spectacles, each set with a red lens and a blue lens, to look at Bernard Fishman’s presentation of 19th-century stereoview images of Maine. The glasses enabled the audience to see the images in three dimensions. Fishman, who is the director of the Maine State Museum, gave the lecture at South Parish Congregational Church in Augusta.

Photo by Scott Wood

Gardiner Public Library Exemplifies Richards Family's Legacy



Answer to Keyhole #2

Q: What is this?

A: A sculpture of two children reading on a bench

Q: Where is it?

A: In a garden behind Gardiner Public Library

Q: What's historic about it?

A: The sculpture itself is just a generic whimsical decoration, but the library next to which it stands reflects the varied community involvement of prolific local author Laura E. Richards and her husband, architect Henry Richards.

If pedigree influences destiny, then it's no wonder that Henry and Laura Richards became a power couple who left a large legacy in Gardiner.

Henry Richards (1848-1949), an architect, (not to be confused with two other well-known architects born in the 19th century, Henry Hobson Richardson and Henry DeCourcy Richards) was a great-great-grandson of the city's founder, Dr. Silvester Gardiner, as well as of Benjamin Hallowell, the founder of Hallowell. His wife, born Laura Howe (1850-1943), was the daughter of prominent abolitionist Samuel Gridley Howe and Julia Ward Howe, a poet and essayist who wrote the song "Battle Hymn of the Republic."

The Richardses arrived in Gardiner in 1876. Five years later, Laura Richards became a founding board member of the Gardiner Library Association, and her husband was hired as the architect who designed the library's original Romanesque building. The building was completed in that year, 1881, long before the founding of the current public libraries in Augusta and Waterville.

The Rev. Leverett Bradley, rector of Christ Church Episcopal, led the fundraising effort to establish the library, according to "Gardiner Public Library, 1881-1981," a booklet written by the late Gardiner historian and Kennebec Historical Society member Joanne D. "Jody" Clark and published to commemorate the library's 100th anniversary. Bradley

soon was transferred to another parish, but Henry and Laura Richards stayed in the community and worked continuously to support his project.

Displaying what must have been Herculean time-management skills, Laura Richards also raised six children and wrote more than 90 books. Her literary works include a biography of her mother co-written with her sisters, which won the 1917 Pulitzer Prize for biography; and the children's novel *Captain January*, which was made into a movie starring child actress Shirley Temple.

Shoe factory magnate Robert Parks Hazzard later funded the construction of a children's annex at the library, according to Dawn Thistle, the special collections librarian; and it's not hard to imagine that many of Laura Richards' works of juvenile fiction found their way onto the shelves there.

Laura Richards struggled to subdue a wave of envy when the annex opened on May 19, 1930. "To-day," she wrote in her 1931 memoir, *Stepping Westward*, "when by a single gesture a public-spirited modern Aladdin brings into being the long-desired Children's Annex, we elders, with all our delight and gratitude, cannot resist a backward glance at the days when – brick by brick, it almost seems – the main Library was raised."

In any case, the children's room moved elsewhere in the building in 1977, and the wing became the Hazzard Reading Room.

Henry and Laura Richards remained advocates of the library throughout their long lives. According to Clark, in 1935 – only five years after the dedication of the annex – Laura Richards shepherded a fundraising drive that was instrumental in preventing the library's closure in the middle of the Great Depression. She was in her mid-80s at the time.



History Through
a Keyhole #2



This issue's puzzler, the sculpture of 2 children on a bench, resides in a garden behind the Gardiner Public Library.

Photo by Joseph Owen

In 2005, a commercially available bronze sculpture depicting two children reading on a bench was placed in a garden behind what had been the children's wing.

"We bought it when we created this garden," former library Director Anne Davis, now retired, said during a recent visit to the library. Children "absolutely love it," she said, adding that they sometimes put hats on the two figures seated on the bench. Those bronze children seem to be reading a book about the alphabet.

One wishes it were a copy of *Captain January*, but you can't have everything.



— by Joseph Owen

History Through a Keyhole - Puzzle 3

Disappointingly, a total of zero readers submitted guesses about the sculpture that appeared in the July-August issue of the *Kennebec Current*. Was it too obscure, or were members too busy lining up for yet another COVID-19 booster shot? We don't know, but we'll try again.

The carving at right appears just a few dozen feet away from a well-known area restaurant and is plainly visible from the street. Readers who want to identify the object in the photo are challenged to contact the *Kennebec 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. 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 November 10, 2022. Good luck.



Members Elect Three to KHS Board Seats at Annual Meeting

Three current members of the Board of Directors won election unopposed to two-year terms on the board September 15 at the Kennebec Historical Society's annual meeting, held at Hope Baptist Church in Manchester.

The returning board members are Robert Bennett, of South China; Anne Cough, of Gardiner; and Rich Eastman, of Augusta. Bennett and Eastman were re-elected to elective seats, and Cough was elected after having served in an appointive capacity. Bennett and Eastman also serve on the society's Collections Committee and contribute to the *Kennebec Current*, and Eastman is on the society's Publicity Committee. Cough is chairwoman of the KHS Program Committee.

Appointed board members Amelia Clukey and Billy Noble have stepped down and are not seeking re-appointment.

The KHS bylaws stipulate that most board members are elected, but some are appointed. The society's members amended the bylaws several years ago to authorize that configuration so the board could recruit and appoint suitable candidates who became available between elections.

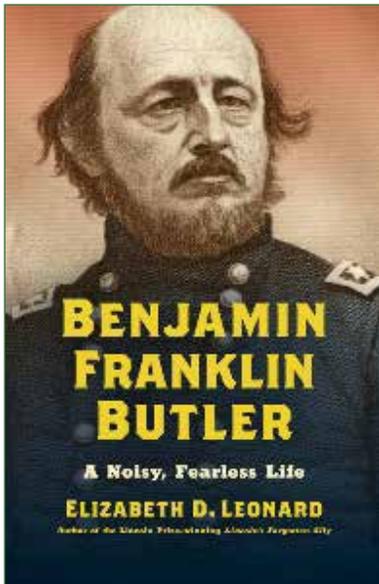
The September 15 gathering, which 51 people attended, was the first unrestricted in-person KHS annual meeting since 2019. The coronavirus pandemic prompted the board to hold a small, brief outdoor meeting in 2020, and an online meeting in 2021.

After the meeting, South Gardiner author and former Maine House of Representatives member Gay Grant presented a lecture based on her new book, *Around the Kennebec Valley: The Herman Bryant Collection*. Bryant (1858-1937), a photographer who also lived in South Gardiner, made the images contained in Grant's book in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The book is a companion to Grant's 1995 book *Along the Kennebec: The Herman Bryant Collection*. The society still has signed copies of Grant's new book available and is selling them for \$20 apiece.

Upcoming Programs

October: “Let’s Stop Calling Him ‘Beast’: Revisiting the Life of General Benjamin F. Butler”



Cover photo courtesy of the author

In 2013, when Colby College decided to restore to public view – in its new alumni center – the large portrait Maj. Gen. Benjamin F. Butler had presented to the institution in 1889, Elizabeth D. Leonard agreed to write the text to hang near it. In it, she explained why, even at his alma mater, Butler’s memory had remained tangled with epithets like “Beast,” a nickname derived from his stern treatment of the local secessionists and their foreign allies during his army’s 1862 occupation of New Orleans. But the nickname is misleading, Leonard claims; and in this presentation, she will explain why she thinks it is well past time to retire it in connection with Butler, a former Colby student, unless we mean it in the way the *Urban Dictionary* defines the word, as “a person that is extremely talented at whatever they do and always display great determination, dedication, and resilience to always win or want to win.”

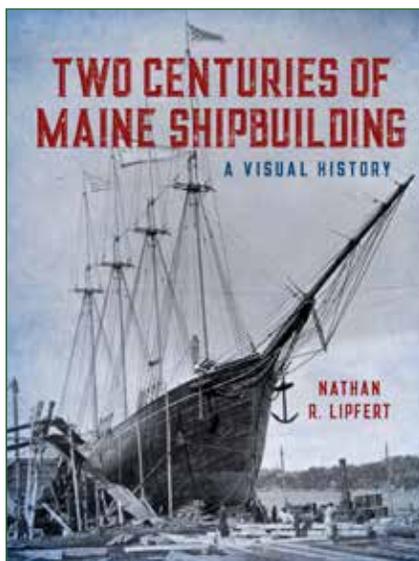


Author and KHS presenter
Elizabeth D. Leonard

Leonard, presenter of the Kennebec Historical Society’s October lecture, is Colby College’s Gibson Professor of History, Emerita. She earned her doctorate in U.S. history from the University of California, Riverside, in 1992 and is the author of several articles and seven books on the Civil War era, including *Yankee Women: Gender Battles in the Civil War*, *All the Daring of the Soldier: Women of the Civil War Armies*, and *Lincoln’s Forgotten Ally: Judge Advocate General Joseph Holt of Kentucky*, which was named co-winner of the Gilder Lehrman Lincoln Prize in 2012.

The presentation is free to the public (with donations gladly accepted) and will take place at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, October 19, at Augusta City Center, located at 16 Cony Street in Augusta. Questions about the program may be directed to KHS Executive Director Scott Wood by calling 622-7718.

November: “Two Centuries of Maine Shipbuilding”



Cover photo courtesy of the author

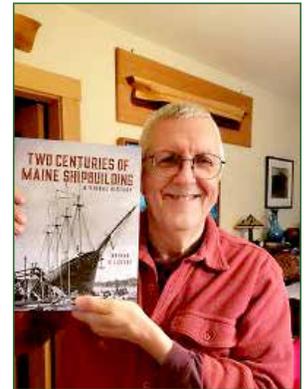
As long as wooden shipbuilding was the state of the art, Maine shipyards built more ships, and more tons of ships, than any other state. Every coastal community participated in this industry. Maine continues as an important shipbuilding region into the present, providing well-paid skilled employment to thousands of people and building vessels of wood, metal, and composite materials that have an impact felt around the world. Nathan R. Lipfert will discuss the history of Maine shipyards and shipbuilders and the vessels they built, concentrating on the 202 years since statehood. His presentation will be based on research for his recent book, *Two Centuries of Maine Shipbuilding: A Visual History*.

The KHS lecturer for November, Lipfert worked at the Maine Maritime Museum from 1971 to 2017 in various curatorial capacities: assistant curator, curator, library director, curator and library director, and senior curator. His present title is curator emeritus. He was educated at Hofstra University and Vermont College of Norwich University, and at the National Archives Institute of the National Archives, among other places. He has curated dozens of exhibits, large and small, for Maine Maritime Museum; has written many articles, papers, lectures, finding aids, book reviews,

Upcoming Programs

and successful grant applications; and has been involved in many book projects. He is an archivist, has served as an Elderhostel faculty member and ran an annual maritime history symposium for the museum from 1993 to 2017. He has wide experience in rowing and sailing small craft and has sailed a number of large sailing vessels. He is the recipient of MMM's 2011 Mariner of the Year Award, and the Maine Historical Society's Neal W. Allen Jr. History Award in 2017. He co-authored *Lobstering and the Maine Coast* and co-authored and edited *Maine & The Sea: 50 Years of Collecting at Maine Maritime Museum*. He is the author of the 2021 book *Two Centuries of Maine Shipbuilding: A Visual History*. He has just completed a small book on the history of the Bath Custom House and is working on a future book on shipbuilding tools.

This Kennebec Historical Society presentation is free to the public (with donations gladly accepted) and will take place at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, November 16, at the Augusta City Center, located at 16 Cony Street in Augusta. Questions about the program may be directed to KHS Executive Director Scott Wood by calling 622-7718.



November presenter
Nathan R. Lipfert

* In Memoriam *

Joanne D. “Jody” Clark, 90, of Gardiner, a Kennebec Historical Society member since 1998 and a life member since 2006, died August 4 in Augusta. She was an adult education history teacher, a tireless promoter of Gardiner’s heritage, a Christ Church organist for 38 years, a newspaper columnist, an active member of several community and professional organizations, and a KHS supporter and occasional volunteer. She wrote a centennial pamphlet on the history of the Gardiner Public Library in 1981. Her survivors include three children, four grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren.

Jean M. “Duke” Dulac, 88, a longtime Augusta barber and a Kennebec Historical Society life member since 1999, died September 7 at home in Augusta. Dulac’s pre-election polls at his Duke’s Rotary Barber Shop – where a Walgreens pharmacy stands today, a few blocks north of the Maine State House – drew national attention because of their high accuracy rate. Dulac, a longtime Mason, was a past president of the Kennebec Valley Shrine Club and was a recipient of the Kennebec Valley Chamber of Commerce’s Lifetime Achievement Award. His survivors include wife Jeannine (“Neno”), four daughters, seven grandchildren, and 12 great-grandchildren.

The Rev. Richard H. Freeman, 74, of Augusta, a former longtime Kennebec Historical Society member and Old Fort Western Board of Trustees member, died August 6. Freeman was a church pastor for decades, including service at the First Congregational Church of Pittston and churches in New Hampshire, New Jersey, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. His survivors include wife Elaine, a son, and a granddaughter.

September KHS Book Sales Boost Revenue Past Record 2021 Total

A series of book sales in September increased the Kennebec Historical Society’s 2022 income from such sales to a record \$2,787, exceeding the 2021 total by more than \$500.

KHS held a two-day sale on September 9-10, seeking to raise money to offset operating expenses. With paltry sales that weekend and a large assortment of quality books remaining, the society’s executive director, Scott Wood, decided to continue the sale each Friday remaining in September. As a result, KHS raised another \$1,645 from the September used-book sales and when added to the \$1,142 from the spring book sale, the total amount raised in 2022 broke last year’s record of \$2,281.50.

The abnormally large inventory of books was a result of KHS receiving thousands of leftover books from the Lithgow Public Library sale in August.

“I had no idea what to expect when I agreed to take Lithgow’s books,” Wood said, adding, “Despite having to find places to store all of them until our own sale, KHS is extremely grateful for their contribution.”

The society hopes to donate the remaining books to other historical societies and/or libraries in Kennebec County with the idea that they might be able to have their own book-sale fundraisers.

If you have any books you would like to donate for upcoming book sales, or if you have any questions about the sales, please call Wood at (207) 622-7718.

Kennebec Historical Society, Inc.
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KENNEBEC HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC. – Application for Membership

Name(s): _____

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Town/city: _____ State: _____ ZIP code: _____

Telephone number: Home _____ Business _____

Email address: _____

Type: New ___ Renewal ___

Category: Individual (annual) – \$20 ___ Family (annual) – \$30 ___ Senior (60+) (annual) – \$15 ___

Senior Family (annual) – \$25 ___ Student (full-time) (annual) – \$15 ___

Life (1 person) – \$200 ___ Life Family (2 people) – \$300 ___

Business (annual, fewer than 25 employees) – \$ 75 ___ Corporate (annual, 25 employees or more) – \$125 ___

Nonprofit group (annual) – \$35 ___ Donation (optional): \$ _____

These membership rates good through December 31, 2022

This is a gift membership, given by: _____

(Please send to Kennebec Historical Society, P.O. Box 5582, Augusta, ME 04332-5582.)

This line and below for society use only:

Date received: _____

Cash _____ Check #: _____

file 2.8.2

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

Telephone: (207) 622-7718

Web site: www.kennebechistorical.org