

Kennebec Current

“The [Gardiner] downtown compares very favorably to other 19th century main streets in its character. It doesn’t surprise me that people are coming here . . . Gardiner’s always been underestimated and undervalued.” — Maine State Historian Earle G. Shettleworth Jr. (*see this page*)

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Maine Historical Society Pays Tribute to Earle Shettleworth

History mesmerized Earle G. Shettleworth Jr. when he was growing up in Portland, but he didn’t think he could make a living from it. Instead, he figured he’d probably become a lawyer.

Fast-forward six decades, and Shettleworth, 74, now a Hallowell resident, has done as much as anyone to foster a widespread appreciation of Maine history – so much so that the Maine Historical Society presented him its Maine History Maker award May 16 in a ceremony at the University of Southern Maine’s Hannaford Hall in Portland.

The presentation included a documentary video about Shettleworth’s life and career and a keynote speech from Maine Library Commission member and former Maine first lady Karen Baldacci, who worked closely with Shettleworth on raising awareness of historic preservation during the eight years when her husband, John Baldacci, was governor.

“Very honored by it, that’s essentially how I feel,” Shettleworth said in a recent interview, when asked for his reaction to the accolade. He served four decades as director of the Augusta-based Maine Historic Preservation Commission before retiring in 2015, and he has been Maine’s state historian since Gov. John Baldacci appointed him to that post in 2004; but those are merely his most recent, and most public, efforts to promote Maine’s past.

Shettleworth said he first showed an interest in history at the age of 4. The 1961 demolition of Portland’s Union Station



The Hubbard Free Library in Hallowell serves as a backdrop for Earle G. Shettleworth Jr., who was honored by the Maine Historical Society on May 16 at the University of Southern Maine’s Hannaford Hall in Portland.

Photo by Rich Eastman

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Ol’ Man River Keeps Rolling ... into Cellars, Parking Lots, Etc.



The lower dining area of the Quarry Tap Room in Hallowell is partially submerged by the Kennebec River on May 2.

Photo by Rich Eastman

Maine’s population had a median age of nearly 45 years in the 2020 U.S. Census, meaning what far more than half the state’s population is too young to remember the Kennebec Valley’s most recent disastrous flood, which occurred in 1987.

Even so, every few years the Kennebec River swells inconveniently over its banks, reminding the region’s residents that it’s worth keeping an eye on the weather forecast in the spring. The most recent flooding occurred in the first week of this May, when the river surged out of its banks in Augusta, Hallowell, Gardiner, and elsewhere.

For those who were born too late to remember them, here’s a glance at some of the more spectacular floods to hit the region:

- February 5, 1795: “[T]he greatest freshet arose in the

Continued on page 5

Helpers in Top Form; Book Sale Awaits



Executive Director's
Message
Scott Wood

As the weather turns a little nicer, the activity around the Henry Weld Fuller Jr. House becomes a little busier.

For instance, recently, I arranged for the Kennebec Historical Society to host a group of area historical societies (see page 7), spoke with several potential volunteers interested in getting involved, and conducted an interview for a possible archival intern.

In fact, at any point during the week, volunteers can be seen buzzing around the building, cataloging, and correcting entries about historical items in the collections database, making them more accessible to researchers.

Other volunteers help me with my administrative tasks, such as preparing for a book sale or mailing Moira H. Fuller Annual Fund Campaign solicitations, and generally keeping the society moving forward like a well-oiled machine.

All our volunteers are crucial to our mission. Without their help, preserving Kennebec County history would be extremely difficult.

Although there is much work to be done, our volunteers have not forgotten the social aspect of our society. Catalogers will dive down deep rabbit holes and spend hours trying to connect the county's history to the items in the collection. Their focused conversations with one another involve many "what ifs" as they search for the missing puzzle pieces. I usually provide some comic relief when I tell them a quick joke or one of my "long story short" stories. There is a balance of work and fun that takes place at KHS, because who wants to volunteer to do a job that's not fun or exciting?

Speaking of exciting things, the society plans to host its spring used-book sale from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Thursday, June 1, and Friday, June 2, at its 107 Winthrop Street headquarters in Augusta; and continuing from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday, June 3. KHS has sold or donated its previous stock and has received more than 2,800 hardcover and paperback book donations for this sale. Hardcover books cost \$2 each, and paperbacks cost \$1. Good luck finding prices like these elsewhere! There will also be a table of specialty books and books signed by the author, which will be priced as marked.

I encourage all our members to come and see the wonderful treasures we have housed in our archive. Perhaps you could stop by for a quick joke or one of my "long story short" adventures.

Either way, I am sure you will have fun. For more information about volunteering or about the upcoming book sale, please feel free to call me at (207) 622-7718.

KHS Welcomes the Following New Members

Stephen Clark — Scarborough
Sky Lyn Danforth — Vassalboro

Steven Lightfoot — Dover, New Hampshire
Judith Rogers — Litchfield

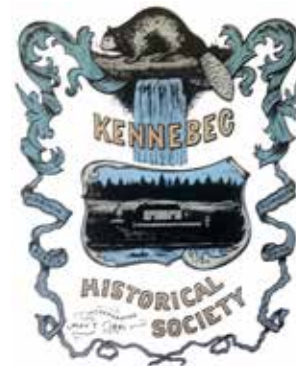
and continues to recognize ...

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



*Discovering, preserving,
and disseminating
Kennebec County history
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Total membership:

604 on May 17

Life members: 248

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.

Benton's Meeting House Bell Has Its Own Tale to Tell

Any schoolchild knows that when the final bell rings, it's best to be in your seat. Is it possible that churchgoers at the Benton Falls Meeting House felt the same way about their church bell?

While it probably didn't serve to differentiate between parishioners who were prompt and those who were tardy, it was the final bell in another way. Purchased on October 19, 1828, it was the last bell sold by the Revere Foundry and Copper Mill in Canton, Massachusetts, according to the company's records.

Although not cast by Paul Revere himself – he had died in 1818 – this bell, now removed temporarily from its decaying steeple, has an interesting history.

The meeting house was erected by 1828. It was the first meeting house in Benton, which at that time was part of the neighboring town of Clinton. Although predominately a Congregational church, the building has been used by Baptists, Methodists, and Universalists, as well as local secular groups. Four of the town's most prosperous men – Hobart Richardson, Asher Hinds Jr., David Reed, and Johnson Lunt – sponsored its construction at their own expense.

Hinds was responsible for negotiating the purchase of the bell. According to a February 11, 1831, letter of invoice addressed to Hinds and now on file at the Maine State Museum, the cost of the bell, plus accrued interest, was \$257, equivalent in purchasing power to about \$8,139 today. The bell was brought from Boston by schooner to Bath and then up the Kennebec River as far as Augusta, where it was transferred to a longboat for its journey to Winslow and from there for the final 5-mile leg up the Sebasticook River to what is now Benton Falls.

In 1833 Hinds married Mrs. Lucy Turner Lunt, of Bath. Over the years, according to a story appearing in various newspaper articles, she often spoke of having heard the Revere bell ring as the schooner carrying it from Boston hit rough water as it entered the harbor near her home at Bath on its way up the Kennebec River. At the time, she asked, "What bell is that?" and was told that it was intended for the meeting house at Clinton. She had no idea that one day she would live within hearing distance of the bell after she married Hinds and moved to Benton Falls.

In those days, water travel to the falls area was rather easy. Boats carrying 40 tons were able to pass, most of the time during the summer, to the lower falls, which was as far as boats could travel on the Sebasticook. When it reached the landing spot – earlier known as Grant's Landing, according to Carleton Fisher's 1970 book *History of Clinton, Maine* – the boat was tied up to "Old Charlie," a large boulder still standing on the west side of the Sebasticook River just below the falls. According to local folklore, the 798-pound bell fell overboard as it was being brought ashore; but it was rescued from the river and, fresh from its "baptism," hauled up Brimstone Hill to the church by teams of oxen.

From the front porch of the Hinds homestead, just down the hill from the church, Lucy Hinds later could look down upon the river and see "Old Charlie." Until her death in 1883, she attended the Benton Falls Meeting House and heard its bell, which her husband had purchased 55 years earlier.

The Revere bell rang every Sunday and on special occasions until November 2016, when it was determined that the belfry was no longer sturdy enough to support the swing weight. Members of the town's small, historic Benton Falls Congregational Church launched the Benton Falls Church Steeple Restoration Project that year to plan roof and steeple repairs in order to preserve the nearly two-century-old building and the Revere bell.

The bell was removed and set on the ground nearby. However, while waiting to be returned to its proper place in the belfry, it continues to serve the community. At 11 a.m. on November 11, 2020, several months after the bell had been taken down, a group of about 20 members of the Benton Falls Congregational Church and residents gathered around the Revere bell to commemorate Veterans Day with a bell-ringing ceremony.

The ongoing steeple restoration project and efforts to have the building placed on the National Register of Historic Places are about saving a 195-year-old rural building and its historic bell and preserving its unique early American history, workmanship, and architecture for future generations.



The Benton Falls Meeting House's Revere bell rests on the ground next to the building, awaiting the restoration of its decaying belfry.

Photo by Barbara Warren

Caldwell Receipts Offer Snapshot of Turn-of-Century Augusta

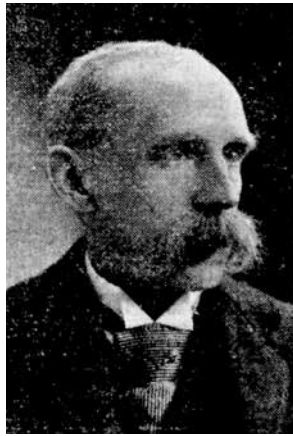
The Kennebec Historical Society recently received an interesting collection of receipts and invoices from Augusta area businesses, covering the period of about 1885 to 1906. These papers provide a glimpse into the life of Charles Buckminster Caldwell, who lived at 193 State Street in Augusta. Envelopes include receipts for everyday expenses such as electricity, water, fuel, household repairs, clothing, and even the frequent services of a local handyman, John T. Moulton, who lived nearby on Powhattan Street. Interestingly, Caldwell had grouped taxes and religion together.

This time was one of growth and change for the city. In 1885, a company was established to provide the city with water from the river. Three years later, *Comfort* magazine began publication. During 1890, a three-story west wing was added to the State House, and the new post office was opened on Water Street. Lithgow Public Library was built in 1895, and the City Hall, now an assisted-living residence for the elderly, was dedicated the next year on the Fourth of July. 1897

marked the centennial of Augusta's incorporation. In the early-morning darkness of January 7, 1904, the most disastrous Augusta fire since the Great Fire of 1865 swept down the east side of Water Street. The Augusta Yacht Club was built in 1906 on the Kennebec River's west bank, where the downtown Front Street parking lot is today.

So who was Charles Caldwell?

A bit of sleuthing in Ancestry.com, Newspapers.com, and a 1964 Kennebec Journal article in the KHS archive reveals that he was the only child of Sylvanus (1812-1876) and Hannah Rice Buckminster Caldwell (1819-1913). Sylvanus Caldwell was a merchant who, along with his brother William, came to Augusta in 1827 when they were only teenagers. He eventually disbursed state aid for the city (1865) and served as mayor for several terms in the 1860s. He continued his association with several businesses until 1869, then went on to the state Treasury Department as a clerk for his brother, who was named state treasurer that year.



Charles B. Caldwell

File photo courtesy of the
Kennebec Journal

Charles Caldwell was like-minded, and he wished to serve his community and the country at large after attending business college in Poughkeepsie, New York. For some time he was in California working for the Union Pacific Railroad. (Voter lists place him in San Francisco in 1882.) Returning to Maine in 1885, he eventually took a position as chief clerk in the Treasurer's Office, which he held for almost 25 years until his death. The apple had not fallen far from the tree!

What else do we know about Caldwell? He remained in his childhood home, with the exceptions given above, with his parents. His mother outlived him by seven years. He was a responsible, well-respected man who took great care of his home and, ultimately, his family. He used his financial acumen to best advantage, the evidence of which is found in the listing of his personal estate. He had a number of shares in companies such as Dominion Coal Co., Bristol Manufacturing Co., U.S. Rubber, American Ice Securities, Greene Copper Co., and American Woolen Company.

His house has a noteworthy past as well. In 1835, the land initially was passed to Capt. Isaac and Joanna Gage, who promptly erected a brick structure directly opposite the Hall residence, which later became the Blaine House. Sylvanus Caldwell purchased the Gage property in 1862. Four years after Hannah Caldwell's death, all was conveyed to Ernest L. McLean. McLean,



The Collections Box
Emily Schroeder



An 1898 receipt shows the charge for labor and materials of plumbing services and supplies rendered by the A. D. Ward Company of Augusta.

From the KHS collection



A 1902 receipt shows the charge that Charles Caldwell incurred for labor and materials of glazing services and supplies rendered by Ricker & Glazier of Augusta.

From the KHS collection

an attorney for the city and Augusta’s mayor in 1922 and 1924, and ran for governor in 1928. He and his wife added a music room and office on the State Street side, plus another room on the east side. Gardens were also established there. The McLeans’ heirs sold the house to the state in 1964, with plans for it to be used as the state archives. Passers-by will recognize it today as the headquarters of Maine Arts Commission.

Charles Caldwell died on July 14, 1906, and is buried with his parents in Augusta’s Forest Grove Cemetery. The same company he purchased window shades from in 1904 handled his remains.

Our thanks go to Wes and Joanne DeCampos, of Hallowell, new KHS volunteers, who rescued this remarkable collection decades ago from the basement of the now-defunct First Consumers Bank in Augusta. 🐾

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

Ol’ Man River Keeps Rolling ...

Continued from page 1

Kennebec that had been known since the settlement of the country,” historian James North wrote in his 1870 *History of Augusta*. Ice and water knocked the home of Jonathan Ballard off its foundation at the mouth of Bond Brook, forcing now-famed midwife and diarist Martha Ballard and her daughter Martha to flee from the sick bed where they had been confined for the previous four days. Water also rose to the sills of the home of militia commander Henry Sewall, who, like Martha Ballard, also kept a diary.

- February 17, 1870: A flood washed away the Kennebec Dam in Augusta, idling the nearby mills that relied on it for power. Repairs could not be made until the following summer, after the water slowly receded. Three days after the dam’s destruction, a bridge linking Hallowell and Chelsea was destroyed. An ice jam tore the walls off riverside buildings in Hallowell. The river crested at 25 feet. The flood also crippled the ice industry in an era before the arrival of electrical refrigeration. A storm blew down two ice houses, and the flood washed out the river’s ice fields before they could be harvested.

- March 2, 1896: A flood propelled ice and debris onto Water Street in Hallowell’s Joppa section and submerged much of the street, as well as downtown Gardiner. The peak water level, and well as those of other floods, is recorded in granite on the corner of a building at Water and Wharf streets in Hallowell.

- March 13, 1936: A major flood ravaged much of northern New England, including the Kennebec Valley. An ice jam destroyed the bridge linking Richmond with Dresden, and the damming effect launched miniature icebergs onto low-lying streets upriver.

- April 1, 1987: A record-setting flood peaked in the valley after several days of rain and warm weather that melted the snowpack, submerging riverfront business districts and causing about \$34 million (about \$90.3 million in 2023 value) worth of property damage.

- April 2005: Repeated flooding on the Kennebec and Cobbosseecontee Stream put most of Hallowell and Gardiner’s low-lying areas under water, at levels similar to what occurred this May.



The flood of 1896 left much of downtown Hallowell under water. This image shows an eastward view from Central Street.

From the KHS collection



May’s flood provided tricky driving through the Hannaford supermarket’s parking lot in Gardiner.

Photo by Joseph Owen



Gardiner’s Christ Church Members Rally to Save 200-year-old Steeple

Reprinted with permission from the April 10 edition of the Kennebec Journal.

Church officials are working to raise about \$1 million to pay for repairs to the steeple of the oldest Episcopal church in the Diocese of Maine, beginning with a fundraiser scheduled for May 6.

For more than 200 years, the bell in the tower at Christ Church has rung out at church services and for celebrations, floods and temperance meetings.

The bell, crafted more than 200 years ago by Paul Revere and Sons and purchased by the church in 1820, sits in a steeple that has developed cracks in the stonework. Now church officials are putting together a plan to make repairs to the oldest Episcopal church in the Diocese of Maine.

The estimate to fix the structural problems is now at about \$1 million, and in coming weeks, the church at 2 Dresden Avenue is set to launch fundraising efforts to pay for it.

“A worshipping community can worship anywhere,” the Rev. Kerry Mansir, Christ Church’s rector, said last week, sitting in one of the pews in the sanctuary. “But we feel a responsibility to this building not only as a church, but as a historic part of Gardiner and what this church has meant to this area.”

And its historic nature is valued even by those who do not worship there.

On Sunday, Craig Parlin, a lifelong Gardiner resident who was spending time at the Gardiner Common across Dresden Avenue from the church, said anything about historic Gardiner should be kept.

“I work on a 200-year-old house, which is also historic,” Parlin said. “There’s no right angles in this house, but it’s one of the most beautiful places I’ve seen. Historic landmarks like that — they don’t make things like they used to, so I totally believe it’s well worth the investment.”

The deteriorating condition of the bell tower was discovered about two years ago, when several church members were doing restoration work on the arched clear windows in the steeple over the sanctuary entry. They noticed cracks developing in the mortar holding the exterior’s granite blocks in place, and staining from the metal used in rods installed to stabilize the tower.

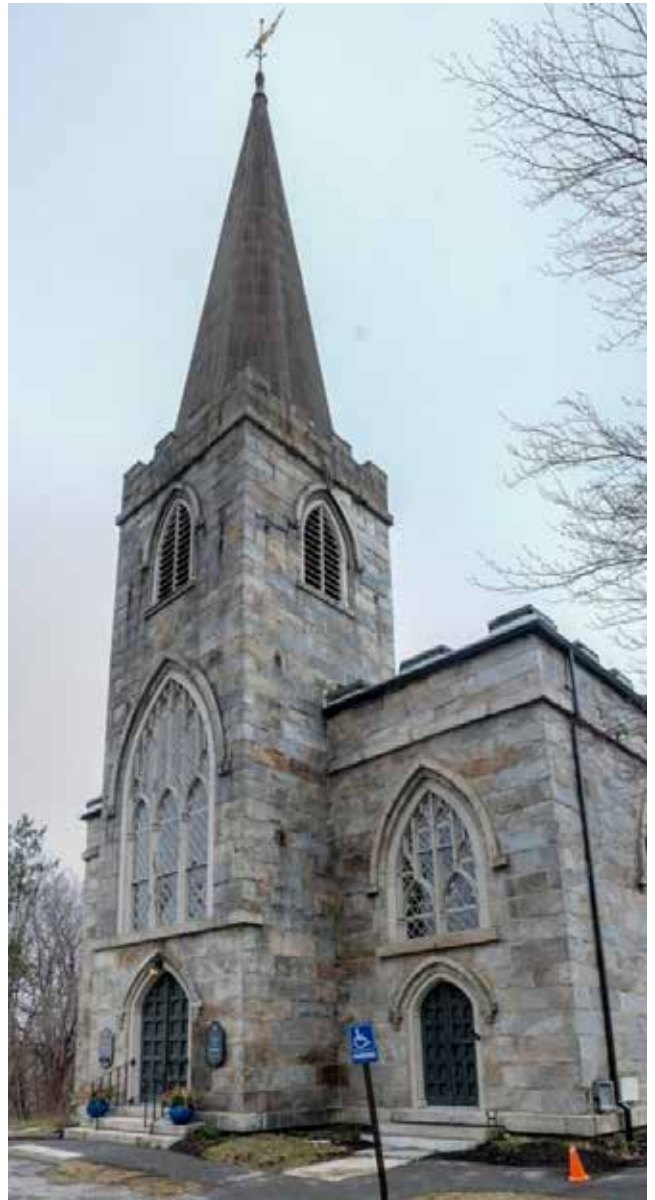
Church officials started from scratch, first reaching out to the Maine Steeples Fund for an assessment grant, then hiring Artifex Architecture & Engineers of Bangor to evaluate the steeple and make recommendations about repairs in priority order.

The result is a list of what needs be done over the next two years, including reopening drains in the belfry floor to keep moisture out of that area, rehabilitating the masonry on the upper section of the tower, reinforcing the masonry on the lower section of the tower, replacing decayed trim, and replacing flashing at the base of the spire.

Other fixes, such as reinforcing the tower stairs and replacing the bell frame, are next in priority, followed by interior plaster repairs and restoring the west tower window.

The building was completed in 1820, but it was not the first church to be set on the crest of the hill overlooking the Gardiner Common and downtown Gardiner.

By the time St. Ann’s Church was dedicated in 1772, church services had been held on the land for nearly a decade.



The bell tower of Christ Episcopal Church in Gardiner, shown here on April 6, needs about \$1 million worth of repairs.

Photos by Joe Phelan



This bell, crafted more than 200 years ago by Paul Revere and Sons and purchased by Christ Episcopal Church in 1820, hangs in the church's belfry in Gardiner.

Photos by Joe Phelan

The building was destroyed by fire in 1792. The church was rebuilt, but as the second decade of the 19th century was drawing to a close, the congregation was outgrowing it.

The congregation sold the church building to the town of Gardiner and used the proceeds to pay for the Revere bell. It was among the first in New England to be built in the Gothic Revival style. It was consecrated in October 1820. The church, now formally known as Christ Church on the Common, was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973.

Mansir said she was probably a little naïve about the cost of repairs. “It never occurred to me it would cost as much as it costs,” she said.

But finding a way to make the investment was never in doubt. Along with hiring a grant writer to seek out grants for historic preservation, church officials plan to launch fundraising May 6 with a Kentucky Derby party at the Augusta Country Club. They expect to finalize details on ticket sales and sponsors in the next week or so.

“We’re a growing congregation,” Mansir said, “but we’re not a congregation that can raise a million dollars within the people who attend church here.”

The rest of this year will be spent raising money and preparing to put the project out to bid. Work is expected to begin next year, which will bring changes to how people will enter the building while the work is being done.

In the meantime, the bell can still be rung after services. Two ropes hang in the entryway. One moves the clapper to strike the side of the bell like a gong, and the other moves the bell so the clapper strikes it.

With the investment, Mansir said, the steeple should be safe and stable for the next 200 years.



— by Jessica Lowell

Central Maine Heritage Council Meets at KHS Headquarters

Delegates from the Central Maine Heritage Council’s member organizations gathered May 5 at the Kennebec Historical Society’s headquarters in Augusta to tour the building and learn more about the society.

The organizations represented included historical groups from Belgrade, Benton, Hallowell, Litchfield, Oakland, Pittston, Sidney, Vassalboro, and West Gardiner. As hosts of the event, Kennebec Historical Society representatives gave the visitors a tour of the Henry Weld Fuller Jr. House, the society’s headquarters; and held short seminars about how the society maintains its collection and produces its bimonthly newsletter, the *Kennebec Current*.

The council is an informal affiliation of historical societies and related groups that strive to learn from each other’s experiences. It meets semi-annually. Previous meetings have occurred in Readfield and Vassalboro in 2021 and Litchfield and Belgrade in 2022.



Kennebec Historical Society Executive Director Scott Wood, upper left, greets Central Maine Heritage Council meeting attendees May 5 in the society’s board room at the Henry Weld Fuller Jr. House in Augusta.

Photo by Joseph Owen



Scouts in the Genealogy Merit Badge session at Merit Badge College, recently listen to guest speaker Emily Schroeder, right, the Kennebec Historical Society archivist. Schroeder explained to the Scouts the resources available at the society’s collections to help with genealogy investigations. Shown with Schroeder are, from left, Anthony Fortin, of Augusta Troop 603; Ricky Phillips, of Winthrop Troop 604; Manny Stevenson, of Augusta Troop 603; Devyn Deleomardis, of Anson Troop 481; and Nicholas Gower, of Anson Troop 481. The event was held at the Augusta First Church of the Nazarene on February 25 and March 25.

Photo courtesy of Turner Publications

Shettleworth's Maine Historical Society Award



From left, Maine Historical Society's board chairwoman, Eileen Skinner, Maine State Historian Earle Shettleworth, and MHS Executive Director Steve Bromager, acknowledge applause May 16 from a few hundred people who attended the society's presentation to Shettleworth of its 2023 Maine History Maker Award at the University of Southern Maine's Hannaford Hall in Portland.

Photo by Joseph Owen

While occupying that demanding post, he managed to shoehorn into his schedule leading roles in various public and private history-related commissions and organizations, including serving as president of the Maine Historical Society. He also delivered a stamina-challenging blizzard of lectures around the state and wrote many books on Maine topics, often in collaboration with other authors.

As part of that tsunami of involvement in history, Shettleworth also has been a longtime Kennebec

Continued from page 1

raised his consciousness of historic buildings when he 13. He became a Maine Historical Society member at the age of 14, sponsored by one of his many mentors, Deering High School history teacher and author Elizabeth Ring. He said Ring, a brilliant historian with an outgoing, spirited personality, was the person who taught him that “all history is local. What you learn about what’s happening in a town, city, or state, you work that way up through to the national level.”

During an address at the award presentation, he also credited historian Mildred Burrage, of Wiscasset, with boosting his motivation to pursue history as a career. Burrage, a daughter of Maine’s first state historian, once met Civil War icon Joshua Chamberlain while traveling on a train as a young girl with her father. The man who had commanded Union troops at Little Round Top during the 1863 Battle of Gettysburg gave Burrage a book he had inscribed, Shettleworth said. About 60 years later, she gave the book to him, and he still has it.

Shettleworth, in his acceptance speech, credited Ring, Burrage, his parents, and many others with having provided him with key inspiration and support. “As Isaac Newton wrote, ‘If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants,’” he said.

The budding historian gave his first public historical lecture as a high school student for the Greater Portland Landmarks preservation group. By the time he was a history major at Colby College, he was writing a series of history-themed newspaper articles and the culture was changing in a way that made a career in history seem more attractive and less risky.

After graduation from Colby, and while working on a master’s degree in architectural history at Boston University, he became the Maine Historic Preservation Commission’s architectural historian. Three years later, at the age of only 28, he was promoted to director.

“There is an untold amount of work to do. There are so many rich themes and paths to pursue in local and Maine history, and you should just follow your fascination, and these wonderful new aspects of local and state history will unfold for you.”

Maine State Historian Earle G. Shettleworth Jr.

Historical Society member and frequent lecturer to KHS audiences. In fact, the first page of the first edition of this newsletter, published more than 33 years ago, reported on his nomination to the KHS Executive Committee.

He said the historical spotlight in the early 1960s shined mostly on research and genealogy, but he found historical objects more captivating. As a result, he worked throughout his career to enlarge and strengthen collections of photographs, paintings, and other items.

In 2006, for example, he donated to the Maine Historical Society what now is called the Vickery-Shettleworth Collection of early Maine photography. It consists of portraits, landscapes, street scenes, and images of houses and other buildings. The collection greatly enhanced the society's holdings of photos from the period of 1840 to 1870.

Last year, his work on a collection of 19th- and 20th-century paintings by Portland artists was published as a book, *A Century of Portland Artists, 1820-1920*. It contains brief biographies of more than 20 artists, both men and women, and includes illustrations of paintings at MHS. The purpose in part was to showcase what might be called “hidden collections,” giving readers an opportunity to enjoy the paintings from afar.

Shettleworth said his personal interest in architecture, art, and photography in relation to the cultural history of Maine has led him to rediscover many figures who had been forgotten or lost. One such person was Charles G. Bryant (1803-1850), of Bangor, about whom Shettleworth and James H. Mundy wrote the 1977 book *The Flight of the Grand Eagle: Charles G. Bryant, Maine Architect & Adventurer*.

Mundy, the Maine Historic Preservation Commission's first director, began researching Bangor buildings and kept coming across Bryant's name. Gradually, he began to uncover a two-track story: Bryant was highly gifted and celebrated Greek Revival architect, but he also became embroiled in the border controversy known as the Aroostook War, to the extent that he was the subject of a federal warrant. He eventually wound up in Texas, where he is regarded as one of the state's founders, and where he was killed in an 1850 Indian attack while on a mission with the Texas Rangers.

Asked which loss of a Maine architectural gem he considers particularly regrettable, Shettleworth chose to focus on positive results instead. Since the 1960s, he said, not only individual buildings but also entire historic districts have been preserved, which he called “a positive and progressive set of accomplishments in relation to the challenge of preserving the distinctive built environment.”

Shettleworth noted a resurgence of interest in local history in Kennebec County, exemplified by the Kennebec Historical Society's growth. He recalled that when he arrived in Augusta in 1973 to work for the state, KHS had just lost its space at the city's Lithgow Public Library, the society's collection was hidden away on the third floor of a county building, and the organization's future seemed precarious. Now all that has changed.

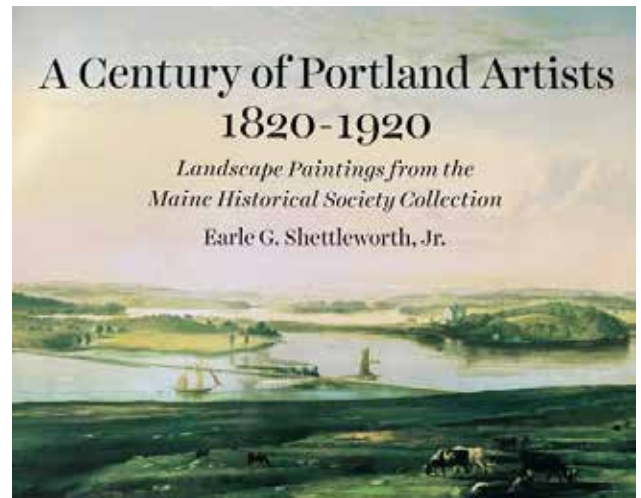
“It's such a pleasure to see that you have the wonderful facility that you have,” he said during his interview, referring to the Henry Weld Fuller Jr. House in Augusta, “and the staff and the organization and the collection, so it can be used by public.”

He added that the society's collection of bound newspapers is especially noteworthy.

“I base a lot of my research on Maine architecture, art, photography on information in 19th- and 20th-century newspapers,” he said. “We wouldn't begin to know of that aspect of cultural history in Maine if we didn't have those papers. You have a very strong collection, with some holdings that are unique.”

He also said thinks today's history students don't need to worry, as he once did, about whether they can find secure employment in the field.

“There is an untold amount of work to do,” he said. “There are so many rich themes and paths to pursue in local and Maine history, and you should just follow your fascination, and these wonderful new aspects of local and state history will unfold for you.”



The Portland Museum of Art has published *A Century of Portland Artists, 1820-1920*, which Earle G. Shettleworth Jr. wrote about. A collection of Portland artist's paintings that are housed in the Maine Historical Society.

Cover image courtesy of Earle G. Shettleworth Jr.

Hallowell Weather Vane Gone Again, This Time Not Mysteriously

An iconic feature of downtown Hallowell’s skyline has taken a leave of absence that might turn into a full retirement.

On April 6, the city removed a copper weather vane that, except for a short interruption in 1983, had perched atop the former Second Street fire station since the Fire Department occupied it at the end of the 19th century. The Historic Hallowell Committee, a municipal panel, arranged for the removal to evaluate the weather vane’s condition and to get it appraised, according to the committee’s chairman, Bob McIntire.

For now, the Hallowell Police Department’s evidence locker is the new home of the antique decoration, which depicts a fireman riding on a horse-drawn fire wagon. It is 26 inches high, 48 inches long, and 9 inches deep.

The committee is considering several options for its future, including commissioning a replica to mount on the fire station and enclosing the original in a protective display case at City Hall. A Maine company has submitted a \$14,000 estimate for making a reproduction, but McIntire said he isn’t sure how the city would be able to obtain that amount of money for such a purpose.

The Harris company in Boston, in business from 1868 to 1882, manufactured the weather vane, according to Jane Radcliffe, who represents the Hallowell Initiatives group on the Historic Hallowell Committee. The city first deployed it on an earlier fire station, the yellow brick building that still stands at the northwest corner of Water and Winthrop streets. It appears in old photos of that station, Radcliffe said, adding that when other city departments vacated the Second Street building to move into the current City Hall, the Fire Department took their place and the weather vane moved there as well.

The last time the weather vane vanished was in 1983, when a thief or thieves used ladders from a nearby construction project to climb to the tower roof in the middle of the night and take it. City officials discovered on the morning of November 16 that it was missing. Police concluded at the time that accomplishing such a feat would have required at least two people. The city had insured the weather vane for \$20,000 in that era and had turned down offers from antique dealers for nearly twice that amount.

City officials offered a \$1,000 reward for information leading to recovery of the weather vane and arrest and conviction of the criminals. A police search failed to turn up anything, but they speculated that news of the search might have prompted another thief to dump a collection of 54 stolen signs off Meadow Hill Road in Manchester. More than half of the signs had been stolen from locations in Hallowell. A hunter reported seeing them in and around a cellar hole where they had not been two days earlier, and police retrieved them.

Then on November 22, in a cloak-and-dagger rendezvous in which *Maine Antique Digest* publisher Samuel Pennington acted as the city’s agent, two strangers turned the weather vane over to Pennington in Manchester, New Hampshire, in exchange for the \$1,000 reward. The city restored it to the fire station tower the following year. Also, police in New Hampshire arrested at least one of the strangers that year in connection with the deal, charging him with receiving stolen property.

“There’s hardly anybody who can believe we’ve got that back,” then-City Manager Cornell Knight said after the recovery.

At the time, the Fire Department still was using the old Second Street station, and the weather vane’s image represented the city on signs and brochures and in other contexts. It also appeared on the cover of *Down East* magazine in 1991 in connection with an article about a new illustrated book on Maine weather vanes.

Four decades after the theft, the Fire Department has moved uphill to the Stevens Commons neighborhood, and the dozens of colorful Adirondack chairs lining the wharf at Granite City Park seem to have taken over the weather vane’s role as a symbol of the city.

A Boothbay antiques merchant offered Hallowell \$400,000 for the weather vane in 1999, McIntire said, and once again, the city turned it down. The market for such objects has softened considerably since then, he said.

He doesn’t know what Hallowell residents think about the weather vane’s more recent removal.

“We didn’t get that much feedback when we took it down. Nobody said much of anything,” McIntire said.



Harry Wolfington, owner of Pinnacle Tree Professional Arborists, works to remove a weather vane April 6 from a Hallowell building that used to house the fire station on Second Street. He ended up cutting the post underneath it to get it down

Photo by Joe Phelan, courtesy of the *Kennebec Journal*

Kennebec Classic Beckons Tennis Players for Fifth Straight Year

The Kennebec Historical Society plans to host its fifth annual Kennebec Classic Tennis Tournament on July 29 at the North Street Playground tennis courts in Waterville.

This edition marks a return of the event to Waterville. The tournament was held indoors last summer at ACOP Racket and Fitness Center in Augusta because the North Street tennis courts were undergoing renovation.

The all-day event will feature doubles and singles draws. The cost to play is \$15 for singles players and \$20 for doubles teams. Please follow the Kennebec Historical Society's Facebook page or its website, www.kennebechistorical.org, to stay up-to-date with the latest information on the event as the date draws closer. For more information, or to sign up and play, contact Billy Noble at (207) 313-6976 or bnoble24@gmail.com. Donations to the society for the tournament expenses are appreciated.



Great fun is served up in this doubles game at the 2021 Kennebec Classic at the North Street Playground tennis courts in Waterville.

Photo by Rich Eastman



KHS to Hold First Fundraising Golf Tournament



Photo courtesy of Augusta Country Club

Join the Kennebec Historical Society for its first KHS Golf Tournament to benefit the society's capital fundraising campaign on September 27 at the historic Augusta Country Club. Proceeds will benefit the much-needed expansion of the society's headquarters at 107 Winthrop Street in Augusta.

Like the historical society, the Augusta Country Club is steeped in history. Guy Gannett, Percy V. Hill, and Walter S. Wyman founded the Augusta Golf Company on June 30, 1916. These gentlemen, along with 10 to 12 local businessmen and residents, believed a golf course and country club would enhance the area.

To make their dream come true, they purchased the Arthur Brainard farm, a 53-acre property that included a small home on the north side of County Road. The dirt lane at that time later became what is now known

as U.S. Route 202. The cape-style residence, which still stands, served as the greenkeeper's home for many years.

In the fall of 1916, the Augusta Golf Company established the Augusta Country Club as a state-chartered, nonprofit corporation and constructed its original nine holes on the Brainard farmland. Over its 107 history, Augusta Country Club has made major enhancements to its golf, tennis, and beach facilities, as well as a full-service clubhouse that provides fine dining and entertainment for members and guests. It's also a popular venue in the region for weddings and events.

Registration starts at 9 a.m. and the tournament begins with a shotgun start at 10 a.m. The cost to play is \$120 for single players and \$480 for a foursome. The price includes 18 holes of golf, a cart, and a post-golf luncheon. During the meal, raffle prizes will be offered. Tickets for raffles and mulligans will be sold at registration, with raffle tickets sold up until the drawings. A cash bar will be available, as will a beverage cart on the course.

For more information on how to sign up for the event, please follow the Kennebec Historical Society's Facebook page or its website, www.kennebechistorical.org. To sign up as a sponsor, contact Rich Eastman at (207) 215-2370 or email reastman1952@gmail.com. Donations to the society for the tournament expenses are always appreciated.



Fort Halifax Backers, Town Improve Blockhouse Accoutrements

The Friends of Fort Halifax, seemingly on the verge of disbanding a few years ago, changed their minds and have charged ahead with new projects.

Their revival echoes that of the building that is the focus of their attention: Winslow's Fort Halifax Blockhouse, a section of which appears in the mystery photo in the March-April issue of the *Kennebec Current*.



History Through
a Keyhole #6

The massive flood of April 1, 1987, blasted the original 18th-century blockhouse apart and propelled its timbers down the Kennebec River, funneling many of them into the ocean. A commemorative plaque that had

been attached to the blockhouse came ashore on Casco Bay's Whaleboat Island after a journey of about 100 miles, according to a *Morning Sentinel* report at the time.

You'd think the blockhouse would have vanished permanently after such a disaster – and you'd be wrong.

On October 30, 1988, state and local dignitaries gathered at the Fort Halifax State Historic Site in Winslow, at the confluence of the Kennebec and Sebasticook rivers, to celebrate the blockhouse's reconstruction. The word "reconstruction" is appropriate in this case because the \$89,000 project used 21 of 22 original timbers that had been recovered after the flood. Organizers said future floods probably couldn't sweep the new blockhouse away because it is secured to 12 pilings that descend 20 feet into bedrock.

The reconstruction project came to fruition partly because of the efforts of the newly formed Friends of Fort Halifax, the brainchild of longtime state Rep. and Winslow Town Council member Donald V. Carter. Carter died in a car accident in 1990 on U.S. Route 201 in Vassalboro. His name now adorns a highway bridge that crosses the Kennebec about a mile southwest of the fort grounds.

While the town made improvements over the ensuing years to the park where the blockhouse stands, the

Answer to Keyhole #6

Q: What is this?

A: Part of the blockhouse at the Fort Halifax State Historic Site

Q: Where is it?

A: On the south side of Bay Street (U.S. Route 201) in Winslow at the confluence of the Sebasticook and Kennebec rivers

Q: What's historic about it?

A: The British built the wooden, palisaded Fort Halifax, including the original blockhouse, at the start of the 1756-1763 French and Indian War. The blockhouse's reconstruction in 1988 using many of the original timbers helps support the claim that the structure is the oldest wooden blockhouse in the United States.



Fort Halifax's reconstructed blockhouse stands on the north bank of the Sebasticook River in Winslow.

Photo by Rich Eastman

Friends group eventually drifted into inactivity. Its members called a meeting in 2020, expecting to disband and give away their remaining \$10,000 to another nonprofit, according to current President Ray Caron, of Winslow. However, the group decided to reinvigorate itself instead.

It elected officers and a board of directors, then put up \$5,000 to help cover the cost of replacing the blockhouse's dilapidated roof. The town's Recreation Department provided another \$5,000, and the state Department of Conservation allocated the rest that was needed. The roof work took place in the spring of 2021. This year the group erected new informational tablets at the fort site and reattached the plaques – one from the Daughters of the American Revolution and one from the federal government, designating the blockhouse as a National Historic Landmark – that had been mounted on the old blockhouse before the flood.

At the town's annual Fort Halifax Days event on June 17, the group aims to assemble a team of children who will build a 60-foot section of cedar palisade, placing it in the same spot where a much longer palisade originally surrounded the fort grounds.

"It will be a semi-permanent palisade that will hopefully be there a long time," Caron said, adding that the use of cedar should make it last 30 to 40 years. He said that will be the last of the fort's infrastructure projects for a while.

"We might just try to replenish our coffers," he said, adding that the group probably will turn its attention to educational programs.



— by Joseph Owen

History Through a Keyhole - Puzzle 7

Will wonders never cease? Just when it seemed as though we had lulled our puzzle-loving readers into a Rip Van Winkle-style coma, three of them quickly came up with correct answers to puzzle 6, the photo that appeared in the March-April issue of the *Kennebec Current*. The most interesting development was that their descriptions of the Fort Halifax blockhouse's historical significance were different from one another but still accurate and relevant. As a result, we're fairly sure the contestants – Roger Madore, of Augusta; George O'Connor, of Vassalboro; and Barbara Warren, of Benton – weren't copying off each other's papers.

So anyway, here's the next clue ... and yes, folks, it's another door! The image at the right is of an object that is easily visible from a public road in Kennebec County. Readers who can identify it are asked to contact the *Current* and tell the editor three things: what the object is, where it is, and what its historic significance is.

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

The winner, to be selected randomly from all correct answers submitted, will be awarded a year's membership in KHS for the respondent or a friend or relative. If nobody meets that threshold, the editor reserves the right to make the award to a respondent who provides a partial 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 July 15. Good luck.



Around Kennebec County

ALBION

The **Albion Historical Society** plans a presentation about the last departure of a Wiscasset, Waterville, and Farmington Railway train from the Albion station. The trip, which occurred on June 15, 1933, ended when the train derailed accidentally in Whitefield. Speakers will talk about the event at 7 p.m. June 15 – exactly 70 years after the fateful final run – at the Town Office, which is in the Besse School Building on Main Street. Also, the society is hosting an open house from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. June 17 at the train station, which it owns. The station is on the west side of Benton Road about a half-mile north of the Main Street (U.S. Route 202) intersection.

AUGUSTA

Old Fort Western, Augusta's 1754 French and Indian War-era wooden fort, is inviting children of all ages to sign up for its Apprenticeship Program (ages 8-11) or its Junior Interpreter Program (ages 12 and up), which will be available in five one-week sessions beginning the week of June 26. Payment must be received on the Monday of the week before the session begins. More information is available online at www.oldfortwestern.org – click on “Summer Youth Opportunities” – or by calling (207) 626-2385. The fort, a period museum depicting local life in the 18th century, opens for the season on May 27.



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LITCHFIELD

The **Litchfield Historical Society** plans to open the Old Town House museum to the public from 2 to 4 p.m. June 24, July 22, and August 26. The Old Town House is on Hallowell Road next to the Litchfield Sportsmen's Club. For details, call Kris Stenberg at (207) 268-5037.

VASSALBORO

Joann Austin is scheduled to address the **Vassalboro Historical Society** from 3 to 5 p.m. June 18 at the society's museum, at 327 Main Street (Route 32) in East Vassalboro. Her topic is the Quakers of East Vassalboro. On July 16, also from 3 to 5 p.m., Sharon Hopkins Farrington will give a lecture titled “Rug Hooking Past & Present.” The society is hosting open house events from 1 to 4 p.m. on June 11 and 25 and July 23 at the museum. All events are open to the public. The museum's phone number is (207) 923-3505.

WINSLOW

The annual **Fort Halifax Days** celebration will take place from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. June 17 at the Fort Halifax State Historic Site on Bay Street (U.S. Route 201). The event features participants clothed as 18th-century figures, displays about local history, live music, a petting zoo, vendors, and more. (See more about Fort Halifax on pages 12-13.)



✧ In Memoriam ✧

Dr. Geoffrey Clark, 84, of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and York, Maine, died January 8 at his family's retreat at Argo Point in York. Clark, a gastroenterologist, pharmaceutical entrepreneur, and philanthropist, and his wife, former New Hampshire state Sen. Martha Fuller Clark, established a fund through the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation that has made grants to a wide variety of nonprofit organizations, including several to the Kennebec Historical Society. Dr. Clark, who grew up in Rhode Island and Massachusetts, was a co-founder of Gastroenterology Partners, which has offices in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Together with two fellow entrepreneurs, he founded Braintree Laboratories, which had become a nationally prominent business by the time of its sale in 2019. Clark had strong ties to Maine, especially the woods of northern Maine. He was a pilot, Arctic explorer, sailor, and theater and opera enthusiast. His survivors include his wife, three children, and four grandchildren, all collateral descendants of Henry Weld Fuller Jr., after whom the Kennebec Historical Society's headquarters building in Augusta is named.

Jean MacPherson Matheson, 90, a Kennebec Historical Society member since 2014, died April 10 at home in Augusta. After growing up in Buffalo and Syracuse, New York, she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in education from Farmington State Teachers College (now the University of Maine at Farmington). She and husband Brandon Arlo Matheson settled in Augusta, where she taught for nearly 30 years in the city's school system. She was a South Parish Congregational Church deacon, a 60-plus-year member of Beta Sigma Phi International Sorority, and a Kennebec Valley Garden Club member. Her survivors include a daughter and a son-in-law.

Upcoming Programs

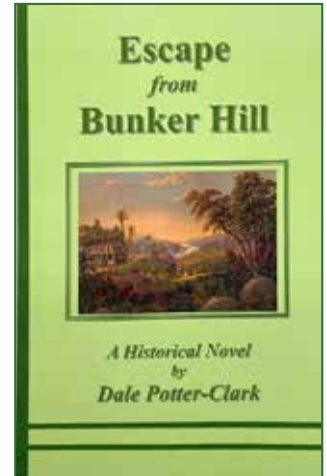
June: “*Escape from Bunker Hill*”

Dale Potter-Clark’s new historical novel, *Escape from Bunker Hill*, tells a story about a native Maine couple who move to Jacksonville, Florida, to help slaves escape north. Four of the refugees pass through Portland, Hallowell, Manchester, Winthrop, and Readfield, among other towns and cities along the Eastern Seaboard.

“Although the main characters Dr. Joseph and Myra Mitchell existed, their tale comes from my imagination,” Potter-Clark wrote. “I was inspired when researching their ‘real’ home in Readfield and evidence led me to suspect they’d been involved in the Underground Railroad.” A 35-page illustrated appendix provides information about the real Mitchells plus actual abolitionists, events, places, publications, and organizations she included in the novel.

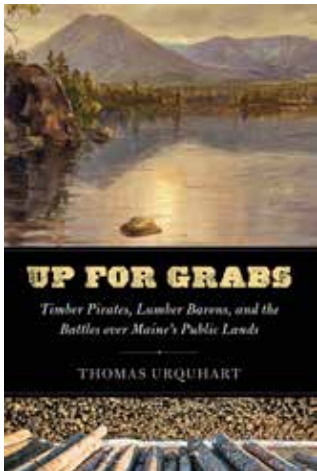
Potter-Clark, the Kennebec Historical Society presenter for June, is a retired nurse who spends her time doing genealogical and historical research. Her family has lived in Readfield for 10 consecutive generations. Her mother, Readfield’s town historian, whetted Potter-Clark’s appetite at a young age to learn more about her roots. Potter-Clark started coordinating Readfield history walks in 2012 and she has written articles for area newspapers and *Discover Maine* magazine as well as several books, monographs, and websites pertaining to Readfield history. She is a founding member of the Readfield Historical Society and sits on its board of directors. Her other three books are: *The Founders and Evolution of Summer Resorts and Kids’ Camps on Four Lakes in Central Maine*, co-authored with Charles Day, Jr.; *The Paupers and the Poor Farms in Readfield, Maine 1791-2018*; and *Brief Biographies c. 1900 pertaining to some residents of Readfield*.

The Kennebec Historical Society’s May presentation is free to the public (donations are gladly accepted) and will take place at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, June 21, at the Augusta City Center, located at 16 Cony Street in Augusta. For details, call Scott Wood, executive director, at 622-7718.



Cover image courtesy of the author

July: “*Up for Grabs*”



Cover image courtesy of the author

Thomas Urquhart, the July speaker sponsored by the Kennebec Historical Society and the Maine State Library, was born in London, England, and brought up in New York City. He received his secondary education in London. He has a Master of Arts degree in geography from Oxford University. Reflecting his trans-Atlantic background, his career has been split between the arts and wildlife conservation. After nine years of working for performing arts organizations, he worked at the Massachusetts Audubon Society and at Birdlife International in Cambridge, England. In 1988 he became executive director of the Maine Audubon Society, and he has lived in Maine ever since.

His most recent book, *Up For Grabs: Timber Pirates, Lumber Barons, and the Battles over Maine’s Public Lands*, was published by Downeast Books in 2021. It relates the long, twisted history of how, beginning under Colonial and then Massachusetts rule, Maine sold or gave away its 20 million-acre public domain; and how it succeeded in clawing back 600,000 acres, which today make up the state’s Public Reserve Lands.

Urquhart has written for numerous publications in Europe and America on environmental, wildlife, and cultural topics. He is a frequent reviewer of books for the *Maine Sunday Telegram*. He also has worked internationally as a consultant, with clients including the World Wildlife Fund and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. He has traveled extensively in Europe, in Africa, in South America, and on various islands. A father of three, he and his wife, children’s author Amy MacDonald, divide their time between Vinalhaven and Portland.

The Maine State Library and the Kennebec Historical Society’s July presentation is free to the public (donations are gladly accepted) and will take place at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, July 19, at the library’s temporary location, 242 State Street in Augusta. For details, call Scott Wood, KHS executive director, at 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

Telephone: (207) 622-7718

Web site: www.kennebechistorical.org