

Kennebec Current

“Suddenly, while the ship was about 500 feet from the ground, a small flame could be seen about the engine. A flash followed, flame shooting up to the big gas bag. In an instant the whole rear end of the balloon was in flames and disappeared...” — *Waterville Morning Sentinel*, September 3, 1908 (see page 6)

Volume 33 Issue 5

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September–October 2023

Scout Leads Restoration of Albion’s Lovejoy Monument

A grandfather served as the inspiration behind the Eagle Scout project of Nathan Choate, of Albion, who has organized the restoration of a monument to Albion native Elijah Parish Lovejoy, an icon of the early-19th-century anti-slavery movement.

Choate is the son of Mike and Stephanie (Drake) Choate and grandson of Hilton and Cindy Drake. Hilton Drake is a direct descendant of Washington Drake who, along with Daniel Lovejoy, was among the earliest residents of Albion according to early-19th-century census records.

Daniel Lovejoy’s son, Elijah Parish Lovejoy, was born in Albion, in 1802 and perished in Alton, Illinois, in 1837, shot by a mob that was burning down his newspaper building. He was an American Presbyterian minister, journalist, newspaper editor, and abolitionist. He had attended Waterville College (now Colby College) in 1826. His murder made him a martyr to the abolitionist cause opposing slavery in the United States. He was hailed as a defender of free speech and freedom of the press.

Colby established the annual Elijah Parish Lovejoy award in 1952, according to the college’s website, to honor “a



Scouts from China Troop 479 measure for holes July 22 where granite posts will be installed later at the Elijah Parish Lovejoy monument in Albion.

Photo by Rich Eastman

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Work at Augusta Home Uncovers Long Hidden Hint of History

It is now three years since my wife and I purchased and began renovation of the historic Ham House at 98 Winthrop Street in Augusta.

Despite extensive research into the history of the property and the dwelling’s construction, we are still making new discoveries, most recently the original granite horse-hitching post. The house, now named for its first owner, was built in 1835, contemporary to the Henry Weld Fuller Jr. House diagonally across the street, which today serves today as headquarters of the Kennebec Historical Society. These houses were just two of many imposing Greek Revival structures built during the same period of rapid growth as Augusta established itself as the capital of Maine.

The broad width of Winthrop Street reflects the original land survey, which laid out what eventually became Augusta, for the Kennebec Proprietors. In map terms, it is a rangeway, a widened boundary purposely set aside to avoid future dispute between the adjacent holdings of two owners.

This gives the street today its distinctive nature of a boulevard, the sidewalks set back on both sides from the road by a green space. In 1850, elms, planted every 45 and 15 feet from the road, added to the elegance.

As the horse-and-buggy era gave way to the automobile, the owners of 98



This chunk of milled white granite, used until recently as a driveway curbstone, showed markings of having been used as a hitching post when it was dug out of the ground this summer at 98 Winthrop Street in Augusta.

Photo by Harvey Lipman

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KHS on Solid Footing as Transfer Approaches



President's Message
Jamie Logan

It's already been two years! As I step down as president of KHS, I thank you for the privilege of serving this great organization in that capacity. The Kennebec Historical Society is remarkable, especially since, as I've noted before in this space, so much of the work is done entirely by volunteers.

Over the last two years, we returned to in-person programs under the guidance of the Program Committee. All of them have been a great success, bringing members as well as new people together to learn about a wide range of fascinating topics.

The Finance Committee and the board were guided by Michael Seitzinger in setting up an endowment fund. The work done to get an endowment established will benefit KHS in the years to come.

As you've probably noticed by reading the *Kennebec Current*, the newsletter team has been putting in a significant amount of time and effort. Sixteen pages of historical and organizational information is now the norm for the *Current*.

Joe O'Donnell, a current board member, has been nominated to serve as the next KHS president. He will do an excellent job in this role, which he is expected to take on following the election at the annual meeting in September.

I hope to see you at the annual meeting and at other programs! Thank you, as always, for your support of the Kennebec Historical Society.

KHS Welcomes the Following New Members

James Barnard — Whitefield

Victor Trepanier — Augusta

Capitol City Tire — Augusta

Vienna Historical Society — Mount Vernon

Jonathan Rogers — Benton

Cathy Whittemore — Vassalboro

and continues to recognize ...

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

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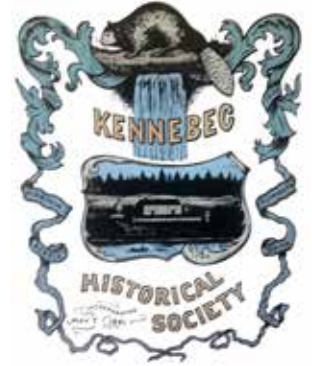
Stencil size

The Collections Box column on pages 4 and 5 of the July-August issue stated the dimensions of a Needlecraft magazine crate stencil inaccurately. The stencil's lettering is 16 inches long and 5 inches wide.

NEEDELRAFT PUB. CO.

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*Discovering, preserving,
and disseminating the history of
Kennebec County, Maine, since 1891*

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Total membership:
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Kennebec Current

Our 163rd Issue

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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.

Lovejoy Monument

Continued from page 1



Nathan Choate, of Albion, stands on July 22 next to the new monument he constructed from the original plaque mounted on a large stone he found on the Lovejoy property.

Photos by Rich Eastman

monument's plaque. He found a large rock suitable for remounting the plaque and had the work done by Augusta monument carver Eric LaCroix, of Riverside Drive Memorials in Augusta, who graded the surface of the rock to fit the plaque. He also obtained the help of Albion residents, who provided him tools and the application of heavy machinery.

The new monument now stands where the old one was.

On July 22, Choate held yet another workday with volunteers from the town and his Scout troop, China Troop 479, led by Scoutmaster Christian Hunter. The group was busy cutting more brush and hauling it away, as well as cleaning up around the area of the monument. Holes were drilled for the



Albion Lions Club volunteers clean up the Lovejoy Cemetery and install a new fence.

journalist who continues the Lovejoy heritage of fearlessness and commitment to American freedom of the press.”

In 1948, the town of Albion erected a monument at the site of Lovejoy's birthplace on the western shore of Lovejoy Pond and installed a sign indicating the roadside entrance to the site. Over the next 75 years, however, the site deteriorated to the point that the entrance became no longer passable. The sign was removed, the wooden fence around the plaque rotted, and the cement base of the plaque became severely diminished. Today it is hard to find the spot off Pond Road because it is so overgrown.

When Choate asked his grandfather about a possible project for his Eagle Scout badge, Hilton Drake recommended trying to restore Lovejoy's birthplace site. The project would require a fair amount of funding, so Choate and Drake approached Colby College, which owns the land where the monument stood, and gave their presentation. According to Drake, Colby accepted their proposal and offered to fund it completely.

“It's encouraging to see the younger folks taking on historical projects like this,” said Phil Dow, president of the Albion Historical Society. “We need youth to develop an interest in preserving that which others have been physically unable to do.”

Choate soon put his plan into motion. He has been holding work outings at the site to begin clearing the entrance, tearing down the old fencing, and removing the cement from the



Choate instructs a group of volunteers about the day's tasks and gives a brief history about Elijah Lovejoy while his grandfather Hilton Drake watches.

granite posts that will replace the earlier wooden fence, with chain draped from post to post. Completion of the project is not yet scheduled, but Colby College expects to hold a ceremony there to dedicate the refurbished monument.

In a related event that same day, Choate's grandmother, Cindy Drake, spearheaded a local Lions Club effort to clean up the old Lovejoy Cemetery on the pond's western shore on South Vigue Road and to replace the fencing around it. The group cut overhanging tree branches and raked leaves from the cemetery, which were then hauled off for disposal. Cylindrical posts were positioned over the old iron pinions and cemented into place. They, too, also will have chain connecting the posts.



— by Rich Eastman

“Castles” in Our Midst

Castles have always held a special fascination for me. Their imposing, strong, yet ornate appearance inspire awe and admiration. We can find a number of castle-like buildings in our area, some regrettably a part of the past. They’re tough to define. What I might think is a modern-day castle you may not agree with. The local examples I found vary in architectural style:

- Gothic Revival: a style originating in Western Europe, 12th century to 15th century
- Victorian Gothic: from Victorian-era Britain, featuring elaborate pointed arches and flying buttresses
- Romanesque Revival: imitating the style of Roman and Byzantine periods, ninth to 10th centuries, featuring rounded arches and barrel vaults
- Tudor Revival: an homage to English architecture of the late 15th to early 17th centuries, with a timber framework outside filled with plaster or brick
- Eclectic: the use of a variety of styles, defying definition



The Collections Box
Emily Schroeder



The home of William Howard Gannett and his wife, Sadie, stood on the south side of Augusta's Western Avenue until 1965.

From the KHS collection

probably be arrested for disturbing the peace!) The building was enlarged a couple of decades later to 32,000 square feet. It remains a majestic presence downtown.

Not far from the post office stands another architectural marvel: St. Augustine Catholic Church. This building was constructed in 1915-16 in the predominantly Romanesque style. The congregation had outgrown its wooden home on Washington Street, opened in 1888. Edwards Manufacturing donated the land, and buildings were moved to clear the imposing setting. Boston architect Thomas G. O'Connell designed this church, as well as Augusta's St. Mary of the Assumption Church, Lewiston's St. Mary's, and what now is St. Peter and St. Paul Basilica in Lewiston.

St. Augustine displays elements of Gothic, Romanesque, and Classical styles in cut granite. It now has a spire, the original flat-topped parapet having been removed in 1932. It remains castle-like in my estimation: its commanding site overlooking the city, not just Sand Hill; its emphasis on height, reaching to heaven; its stone façade and its implied role as “defender of the faith.”

Western Avenue used to be a showcase for Augusta's finest homes. One that must be mentioned was that of publisher and business entrepreneur William Howard Gannett (1854-1948). Cay Gallant, a local newspaper columnist, certainly thought that home was castle-like. Gannett purchased what was left of the Mulliken farm, 30 acres north of Western Avenue and 160 acres south of it. The handsome home was constructed on the larger parcel, about where Shaw's Plaza is today. The family moved in on July 4, 1898. The Gannett property was the site of Maine's first winter carnival in 1921, and part of the northern portion was carved off to form the Blaine Memorial, the current burial place of former U.S. House Speaker James Gillespie Blaine (1830-1893), the 1884 Republican nominee for president; and his wife, Harriet Stanwood Blaine. When “progress” came to the avenue, porches were removed from the house and it was moved in 1965 to its current location on Parkwood Drive.

Gardiner still has its own castle: Oaklands, a 21-room mansion. This large home was constructed of finely worked

The basic castle could include features such as battlements, serrated top edges, tall side walls, a permanent garrison, fortress and/or a manor house. Take a look at a few examples and see what you think.

Locally, first and foremost is the old post office building on Water Street in Augusta. The *Kennebec Journal*, in a December 21, 1900, article, pointed out that with “... its corner towers, Roman arches, and spires, (it) is at least a castle in spirit.” Designed by Mifflin Bell, a U.S. treasury architect, its construction with Hallowell granite began in 1886. (Ladies of Augusta: Have you ever imagined yourself as a damsel in distress, calling out from one of those towers, hoping for a handsome knight to rescue you? Well, nowadays you'd

granite in 1835-37, replacing the home of Robert Hallowell Gardiner I (1782-1864), which burned. Boston architect Richard Upjohn included octagonal towers and a crenelated roofline in the English Gothic Revival style. Another Boston architect, Edmund Wheelwright, added a third story and end gables, but these changes were removed in 1957. At present, the grounds are available for events, and there is also a farm business on adjoining acreage.

Another marvelous example is Cumston Hall, in the center of Monmouth. This fanciful design was created by artist Harry Cochrane and was a gift to the town from Dr. Charles McLaughlin Cumston. Cumston wanted Monmouth to have a better town hall. It was dedicated on June 27, 1900. The tower is 91 feet to the finial; the main part of the building is 88 feet long. Adding the porch and the selectmen's office brought the measurement to 120 feet. In 2000 the town began a renovation project, including a two-story, 60-by-40-foot section for Cumston Public Library. This magnificent building also houses The Theater at Monmouth.

Finally, we can't overlook the Maine Criminal Justice Academy campus of U.S. Route 201 in Vassalboro, where the tower and turrets of the buildings could prompt observers to wonder whether they were looking through a peephole at some Renaissance-era landscape in Europe. A Quaker school was established on the site in 1840, but all of the current structures date to the early 20th century, when the complex was Oak Grove Seminary. It became Oak Grove-Coburn School in 1971, then closed in 1989. The state bought the property after that.

We've looked at only a few of Kennebec County's castle-like structures. What is a castle to you, and why? I'm hoping it's your home, refuge and fortress. We'd love to see it, if you'd like to share. Reporting from my fortress ...

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

Hidden Hint of History

Continued from page 1

Winthrop Street, like their neighbors, adapted to change. The original carriage stable was demolished, and the granite foundation became what it is now, a retaining wall for the driveway and turn-around area. Opposite the old barn and to reflect the growing wealth of the property owners, a substantial automobile garage was then constructed. This was done about 100 years ago, judging by the full-dimensioned lumber and the knob-and-tube wiring.

It was therefore an astounding surprise to me a few weeks ago to notice by happenstance a piece of granite, half-buried as curbstone, with peculiar features: one half rough, the other coarsely polished and milled into a taper. Curious, we excavated the entire length and discovered a horse-hitch post, the top drilled for a ring, the rod long broken off.

The post was milled from high-quality white granite, the four sides tapered with the four corners of the flat top again milled off so that a diamond, rather than a square, is formed when seen from above.

Chisel marks reveal that it was cut from ledge before 1840, before quarrymen employed the more familiar drill, plug and feather technique to break granite along the grain. These same chisel marks are found on the granite foundation stone of the Ham House itself, making the horse-hitch post therefore contemporary to the construction of the property itself.



The old hitching post has a new home in front of the former Ham residence, now owned by Harvey Lipman.

Photo by Harvey Lipman

On August 10, after clearing the excavation with Dig-Safe, Augusta contractor Jean Brochu dug a 40-inch hole at the corner of the driveway and reset the post upright for the first time in 100 years. It now joins the hitching-posts at numbers 89 and 99 that adorn the other side of Winthrop Street.

This backyard archeological find makes one wonder the other treasures, large and small, lie cast aside by “progress.”

A piece of granite by itself is no rare thing here in Maine. No one will ever hitch a horse to the post now out on our lawn. This is not a thing of use. Its value is in its own being, a little piece of history – not only to our property, but to our city and state. In function, the hitching post represents our older way of life and the forgotten skills of Maine industry. In form, however, it represents a certain beauty and exudes an aesthetic nature. When the horse gave way to the auto, no one gave any of this a moment of thought, with the post's value considered to be no more than that of a curbstone.

Archeology in so many ways is more about how we view the future than it is about how we interpret the past.



— by Harvey Lipman

1908 Waterville Airship Fatality May Have Been 1st of Its Kind

The first fatality in a powered aircraft, according to a U.S. Air Force website, occurred on September 17, 1908, when Army Lt. Thomas E. Selfridge died in Fort Myer, Virginia, in the crash of an airplane piloted by renowned aviation pioneer Orville Wright, who was injured in the crash.

That would be true, however, only if the definition of “powered aircraft” excludes dirigibles, one of which crashed a mere 15 days earlier in Waterville, Maine, leaving the pilot no less dead than Selfridge.

On Wednesday, September 2, in front of 25,000 onlookers, Charles Oliver Jones, 43, ascended in his motor-driver airship, the *Boomerang*, from the Central Maine Fairgrounds, a now-long-forgotten gathering spot that had opened in 1904 in Waterville, near what today is the former Seton Hospital. Jones rose to an altitude of about 500 feet, positioned about a quarter-mile away from the fairgrounds.

While Jones was in the air, the motor started throwing flames above his head. People on the ground tried feverishly to draw his attention to what they were seeing. By the time he looked up and saw what was happening, however, it was too late. The airship caught fire.

“Roaring flames behind him, tangled with cordage and engine, crouched in the bow of the frame like an animal caught in a trap,” the *Waterville Morning Sentinel* newspaper reported the next day in a burst of florid prose, “the brave aeronaut plunged to his death while thousands watched with half-stunned senses and hearts aching with sympathy.”

Jones tried to get the ship down by the tether line to which it was attached, but the airship burned up fast. Jones plummeted to the ground. He was found under the wreckage and died an hour and a half later.

NOTWITHSTANDING THE ACCIDENT

The Central Maine Fair
will continue Today and Tomorrow with its
great show in all departments.

There is a Big Show for everybody. Today is Governor's
Day. Friday, Old Folks' Day.

The Executive Committee of the Fair, at a meeting last
evening, voted unanimously that the
**Receipts of the AIRSHIP TENT for the balance of
the Fair be Paid to MRS. CHARLES OLIVER JONES.**

The Wrecked Airship will be shown in Tent and Lectures will
be given by Mr. Fagin of the crew.

An advertisement in the September 3, 1908, edition of the *Waterville Morning Sentinel* for the Central Maine Fair sought to raise money for Charles O. Jones' widow.

Courtesy of the *Morning Sentinel*

first arrived in Waterville, “remarked that no deaths or serious accidents to airship operators had ever been recorded, although balloonists had often come to grief,” the *Sentinel* reported. As it turned out, he might have been the first person to meet such a fate when his machine crashed 115 years ago.



The gravestone of aeronaut Charles O. Jones, who died in 1908 in the fiery crash of a dirigible, is in Waterville's Pine Grove Cemetery.

Photo by Joseph Owen

His body was retrieved and kept at the home of James Bowie at 19 Oakland St. until Jones' funeral on September 4. Jones, his wife, and their child had been staying with Bowie since August 20. Jones' wife decided the burial would take place in Waterville, as they had never called any place home, although they came from southern Illinois.

Funeral services were officiated by the Rev. Canon Nicholson, of St. Mark's Church. Jones is buried in the Pine Grove Cemetery in Waterville.

The *Sentinel* reported that Jones had been living in Cincinnati until about a year earlier, when he moved to Hammondsport, New York, where he worked with inventor Alexander Graham Bell on experimental aircraft. The Air Force Historical Support Division's website says Selfridge, the first Army officer to fly a plane, also worked with Bell.

Jones, in speaking of aviation accidents when he



— by Lee Amalfitano

Turnpike Link Gets Peace Advocate Samantha Smith's Name

The Manchester girl who tried to put the world on the road to peace in the now has a South Portland road named in her honor.


Samantha Smith became famous in 1983 when she toured the Soviet Union with her parents at the invitation of Soviet leader Yuri Andropov, who had responded to her 1982 letter to him advocating peace between their countries. After her death at age 13 in a 1985 plane crash in Auburn, a foundation set up to honor her peace advocacy arranged for many American children to travel to the Soviet Union, and for Soviet children to come to the United States. Gradually, however, Smith faded from the public memory, and the foundation that bore her name closed in 2012.



Samantha Smith

The publication of Russian immigrant Lena Nelson's book *America's Youngest Ambassador: The Cold War Story of Samantha Smith's Lasting Message of Peace* (see *Kennebec Current*, March–April 2023), published by Down East Books, might help to reverse that trend. So might the June 5 dedication of a Maine Turnpike connector road, which now bears the name "Samantha Smith Way."

"It's things like this that will help keep Samantha's legacy alive," said Don Kimball, of South Portland. An Air Force veteran and former air traffic controller and pilot, Kimball said he proposed the idea as a member of the Maine Veterans for Peace organization.

State Sen. Anne Carney, D-South Portland, submitted legislation to adopt the road name. Kimball obtained the support of South Portland Mayor Kate Lewis, and the City Council issued a resolve on January 17 to support Carney's bill, which the Legislature passed and Gov. Janet Mills signed. Then the Maine Department of Transportation posted a green-and-white Samantha Smith Way sign at the western end of the 2-mile expressway that links Maine Turnpike exit 45 with U.S. Route 1, and the city of South Portland posted an identical sign at the eastern end. 

KHS Schedules Fall Book Sale

The Kennebec Historical Society plans to hold a sale of used books from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. September 7 and 8 and 9 a.m. to noon September 9 in the driveway and the garage at the society's headquarters, at 107 Winthrop Street in Augusta.

Subjects include fiction, biography/memoir, history/politics, literature, sports, business, cooking, children's literature, and much more. The prices of the books will be donations determined by the buyers, but please remember this is a fundraiser for KHS. Autographed books cost \$5 each.

After the sale ends, the remaining books will be available to buy from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Wednesdays at the society headquarters. For more information, call (207) 622-7718.

* In Memoriam *

Margareta C. Eldridge, 99, a Kennebec Historical Society member since 2005, died August 10 at the Augusta Center for Rehabilitation. A Gardiner native who graduated from Gardiner High School in the class of 1942, Margo worked 30 years as an administrative assistant for the Maine Department of Human Health and Services. She and her husband, Dana Eldridge, lived in Augusta.

Virginia Rae Hersom, 96, formerly of Hallowell, died July 7, 2023. A Kennebec Historical Society life member for nearly two decades, she held an associate's degree from Lasell University in Newton, Massachusetts. She also belonged to Altrusa International, Daughters of the American Revolution, Augusta Players, the Red Hat Society and the Cobboscontee Lake Association, the latter drawing her interest partly because of her enjoyment of Seadoo rides around the lake, even in her 90s. Her survivors include three children, six grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Kathlyn L. "Kay" O'Brien, 86, a longtime Hallowell resident and a Kennebec Historical Society member since 2012, died August 18 in Bangor. She had a 43-year career as a registered nurse, including a stint at the veterans hospital at Togus and another as a public health nurse with the Maine Department of Human Services. Before retirement, she worked part time in the rehabilitation unit at MaineGeneral Medical Center's Thayer Campus in Waterville. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science from the University of Maine at Augusta at the age of 80, becoming UMA's second-oldest graduate. Her survivors include four children and six grandchildren.

Gardiner High School Class of 1953 Reflects on 70 Years

The Gardiner High School class of 1953 held its 70th reunion July 22 at the Knights of Columbus Hall on Spring Street in Gardiner, with more than 25 members in attendance. A life-size stuffed tiger, the school mascot, stood guard over the tables of school days memorabilia. The room was festooned with the school colors of orange and black, thanks to Tia Spearin Hetu and Terri Spearin Larsen, daughters of master of ceremonies Rodney Spearin. The sisters, along with two friends, Barb Learned and Laura Salley, also served a catered lunch.

Though a core group of these classmates has gathered quarterly for lunch in Augusta, this was a special program to mark their 70th. There was a palpable energy to the gathering as many marveled at having reached this unusual milestone together. David Fields, class historian, said of the 40 surviving members of the class, 31 live in Maine, eight in other states, and one in Canada. Ninety-nine members of the 120 people who began as freshmen graduated with the class. Rodney Spearin was not one of them.



Rodney Spearin, shown July 6 at his home on Pleasant Pond in Gardiner, holds a 1922 copy of *The Quill*, a Gardiner High School periodical that later morphed into the school's yearbook. Spearin later took the publication to his class reunion to show it to his former classmates.

Photo by Nikko Noble

Spearin attended his first two years of high school at Gardiner and his last two at Higgins Classical Institute, in the Penobscot County town of Charleston. He wanted to play varsity baseball, “but I was from South Gardiner and didn’t have the right last name,” he recalled. He remembers being so depressed that he wanted to quit school, when a friend of his father’s intervened and helped him get admitted to Higgins.

Spearin, whose family ran a farm at the top of Cannard Street in South Gardiner, landed a scholarship and a job on campus delivering mail, and he boarded with a classmate. He became captain of the baseball team at Higgins and went on to be starting catcher at the University of Maine his sophomore year, he noted proudly. Spearin said he drew on his own experiences as a youth during his career as a teacher, counselor, and superintendent of schools.

Decades ago, Spearin was invited to attend the class lunches. He said he did so reluctantly at first, but the friend who invited him, Bob Andrews, told him, “Rod, you are part of us.” He was eventually tapped to help lead the group and organize the gatherings.

Patricia McLaughlin Cote, president of the reunion, reflected on her years at the old high school that once stood on the corner of School and Pleasant streets. A convenience store, Mrs. Crowley’s, she said, was across the street, and students who did not walk home for lunch bought sandwiches



Judy Purington set up this collection of memorabilia that was on display for the class of 1953’s 70-year reunion in Gardiner. The Knights of Columbus Hall was decorated in Gardiner’s school colors for the occasion.

Photos by Gay Grant



Laura Booker Buker, left, chats with Carol deWinter Bostrom. Buker has been the class of 1953 treasurer for 50 years. She retired after a long career at the National Bank of Gardiner and lives in Hallowell.



Class of 1953 alumnus Walter Ulmer, seen with his wife, Lorna, sports his 70-year-old Gardiner High baseball letter sweater. Ulmer retired after 60 years as the meat manager for Goggins IGA in Randolph. The couple lives in Randolph and Florida.




Gardiner High's school mascot.

there. “It was a big building,” she said of the old high school, “but it left such a small space.” A retired radiologist, Cote recalled fondly the Friday night dances, or “hops.”

Carol deWinter Bostrom, of Madison, Connecticut, has been regularly attending the quarterly lunches with the class, but she had not passed through Gardiner in many years. Her daughter, Laura Downes, drove her to the reunion and they decided to go by the old school site, as well as the Gardiner Common, where Bostrom had learned to ride a bicycle. Bostrom was shocked to find, in place of the school building, a gravel parking lot.

Fields, a retired civil engineering instructor at the University of Connecticut, said he still remembers how overwhelming it was to go from a one-room school in Whitefield to this large brick building, where he had to change classes, but he quickly adapted. Fields rode to school with a woman from East Pittston who taught in Randolph, then drove himself after his junior year.

Looking around the room full of his former classmates, Fields said, “I’m so proud to be part of this class.”

The class of 1953 plans to gather again in October, this time at the Great Wall Chinese Buffet in Augusta. 

— by Gay Grant

Editor’s note: Grant, of South Gardiner, recently attended her 45th Gardiner Area High School reunion. Her latest book is Around the Kennebec Valley: The Herman Bryant Collection, published by Arcadia Publishing in 2022.

Three Sites Housed Secondary Education in Gardiner

Nine years after the Gardiner High School class of 1953 graduated, the present Gardiner Area High School on West Hill Road was opened. The last class to graduate from the 1921 brick high school did so in 1962. The current, modern-style building still serves students from the city and the surrounding towns of Pittston, Randolph, and West Gardiner, as part of Maine School Administrative District 11.

When the new high school opened, the old 1921 high school became the junior high. In 1971 it was renamed O.C. Woodman Junior High School, according to the Gardiner Public Library archives. A *Kennebec Journal* article noted in 1971 that Woodman had come to Gardiner in 1927 as Gardiner High School’s principal. Woodman became Gardiner’s school superintendent in 1944, retiring in 1961.

According to a 1922 edition of *The Quill*, the first high school in Gardiner was held in the former Gardiner Lyceum from around 1852 to 1869, when fire destroyed that building. The lyceum had been the country’s first agricultural school, its purpose being to provide young men “scientific” education in farming and mechanics. In 1870 a new building was built on the lyceum site and used for the high school until a new, larger school was built.

The pamphlet-style *Quill*, published by the students at Gardiner High School, was the precursor to the school yearbook of the same name. Gardiner Public Library has multiple editions. Former GHS student Rodney Spearin has donated the Volume 5, Number 1 edition referenced here to the Kennebec Historical Society.

As early as 1917, Laura E. Richards, a Pulitzer-prize winning author and tireless community organizer, led the fundraising efforts for a new high school for the city. Built in 1921 at a cost of \$200,000, the new building boasted two floors and a sunken gymnasium in a floor below ground. The 1922 *Quill* noted it was “a finely built, up-to-date building, well lighted and ventilated, with modern improvements and excellent equipment for class-room work.”

A 1931 Gardiner Board of Trade publication called the city’s high school “one of the best in the state with modern equipment throughout and has an enrollment of 447 pupils, the largest in its history. Orlando C. Woodman is principal of 14 teachers and six special instructors.”

“One of the principal features of the building,” the Board of Trade article enthused, “is the Alice M. Richards Memorial Library, named in memory of the beloved instructor of English, daughter of Henry and Laura E. Richards, who taught at Gardiner High for 27 years.” The library at the current high school retains the Richards name.

In 1975 the 1921 brick building served the school district’s fifth and sixth grades as O.C. Woodman Middle School. In 1996 the schools were reorganized again, and the building reverted to the city of Gardiner, serving as a recreation center and later as a private school. The building was demolished in 1998 after an architectural and engineering study showed its numerous deficiencies.

— by Gay Grant



This circa 1925 postcard shows the old Gardiner High School that was located on School street. Opened in 1921, it was demolished in 1998. Only a vacant lot remains.

Courtesy of Gardiner Public Library

Augusta's 1971 Players Cheer Mainers in '23 Little League Tourney

Reprinted with permission from the August 17, 2023, edition of the Kennebec Journal

When the players on the Gray-New Gloucester/Raymond Little League team made their World Series debut August 17 in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, Paul Pickett knew exactly what some of them would experience.

After all, as a member of the 1971 Augusta East Little League team that also reached the World Series, Pickett, now 64, can relate to the excitement and nerves that accompany the big stage in Williamsport.

"It's pretty neat (that Gray-New Gloucester is going)," said Pickett, 64, who played third base on that Augusta East squad. "I watch (the Little League World Series) every year. I have ever since we went. I love watching it, because those kids give 100 percent."

Gray-New Gloucester/Raymond is just the fourth Maine Little League team to reach the World Series, joining Portland Suburban (1951), Augusta East (1971) and Westbrook (2005). The Maine team, the New England champion, played its first game in the tournament against the Northwest champions from Seattle, losing 10-0. Two days later, the team lost its elimination game to a team from Media, Pennsylvania, 5-3.

Pickett, who lives in Gray, said he's followed the team's journey through the state and regional tournaments with great excitement, as memories of that 1971 run flooded back.

In 1971, baseball ruled in Augusta, which had three different Little League squads and offered plenty of talent to select an All-Star team for postseason play.

Al Cloutier, a second baseman on the Augusta East squad, said he was not surprised by the 1971 team's eventual success. In the summer of 1970, the team made a strong run in the district tournament before it got knocked out by rival Auburn Suburban. The following year, most of the group returned, including the squad's entire starting infield.

"We at least expected to win a state championship," Cloutier said. "We'd gone to the district finals (the year before); our infield was intact. We had three dynamite pitchers, but two (Jeffrey Keezer and Gerald Mason) that really carried us. We had real high expectations. ... We had our work cut out for us, but we certainly expected to win our district and get to the state tournament, possibly win the state tournament."

Charlie Gallant, who played at the University of Maine, coached the all-star squad. Gallant, his players recalled recently, preached pitching and defense.

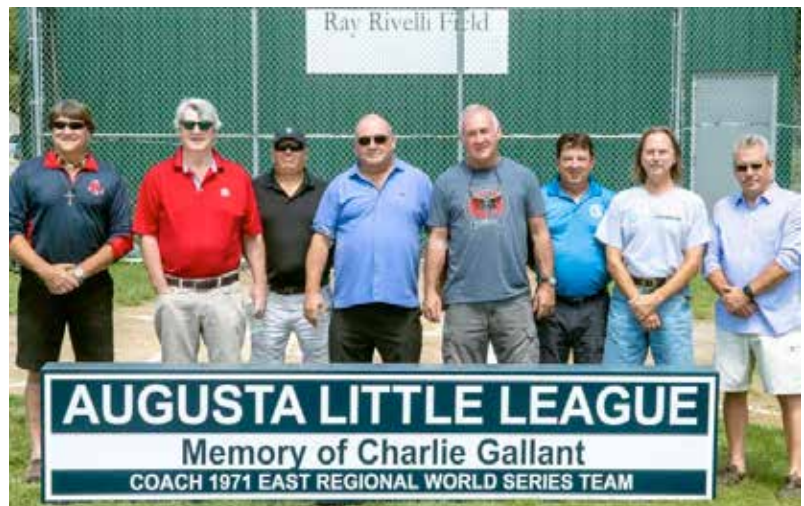
"He was very demanding and he intimidated us, knowing he had played at Maine," said Cloutier, 64, who would go on to become a longtime assistant and head baseball coach at Cony High School. "He was tough on us but had a good sense of humor. He certainly had his own style, but it was very enjoyable."

"We had practices back then where – (and) you don't see it anymore because they probably consider it child abuse (now) – but it was a 'four corner drill,' our coach would call it," Pickett said. "It would be 100 ground balls, with a kid hitting and a kid catching. Our infield – Al Cloutier, myself, (Mark) St. Pierre and (Leon) Mooney. They'd hit 100 ground balls to us. If you missed it, you had to go get it. I attribute (much of the success) to defense. I think we had one error in the 12 or 16 games that we won."

Augusta East exacted some revenge in the 1971 district tournament when it ousted Auburn Suburban.

"We had a couple of benchmarks (during the run). One of those was beating Auburn Suburban," said Scott Mitchell, who played left field for Augusta East. "That was a real focus for us, and Charlie Gallant, our coach. When we won that, we were three games in and were like, 'Hey, we just beat Auburn Suburban. We can do some things.'"

The run almost ended before it began. Augusta East had to beat South Portland Central 5-4 in eight innings to win



Members of the 1971 Augusta East All-Star team, from left, Gerald Mason, William Leet, Jeffery Keezer, Edwin Pickett Jr., Paul Pickett, Al Cloutier, Mark St. Pierre, and Scott Mitchell stand behind a scoreboard sign honoring their late coach Charlie Gallant on July 10, 2021, at Ray Rivelli Field in Augusta.

Photo by Joe Phelan/Kennebec Journal

the Bi-District Tournament.

“That was probably the toughest game of them all,” Cloutier said. “That was a nail-biter that we won in extra innings. We rose from the dead a couple of times in that game. Then we went on to the state tournament and kind of rolled in that.”

Indeed, Augusta East cruised to the state championship, beating Portland League Three (5-0) and Knox Suburban (4-0). The team also had strong victories at the start of the East Region tournament in New London, Connecticut, beating Hazleton National (Pennsylvania) 6-1, and Rotterdam (New York) 3-0. But it was the championship game – with Augusta East holding off Wallington, New Jersey, 3-2 – that provided the play of the season, a home run-robbing catch by Mason that clinched the team’s trip to the World Series.

“It was just an incredible catch by Gerry Mason,” said Mitchell, 64 and a Norridgewock resident. “It was going to end (the game) one way or another. If he didn’t catch that, we were going home. I was right there when it happened and yelled, ‘Get to the wall! Get to the fence!’ And he did. Just an incredible athlete, that kid.”

The team had little time to celebrate, as it boarded a bus two hours later with the team from Madrid, Spain – which traveled to Connecticut to scout the competition – on the way to Pennsylvania.

Augusta East was one of eight teams to play in the 1971 Little League World Series. It dropped a 5-0 decision to Madrid in the opening round, but pulled a surprise 1-0 win over Lexington, Kentucky in the consolation round. Augusta eventually lost to Cagaus, Puerto Rico, 4-0 to conclude its trip. Tainan City, Taiwan, won the World Series title.

The most notable player at the tournament was Lloyd McClendon, of Gary, Indiana, who went a perfect 5-for-5 at the plate, with five home runs. He was intentionally walked in all of his other plate appearances. McClendon would play in Major League Baseball for eight seasons (1987-1994) with the Cincinnati Reds, Chicago Cubs, and Pittsburgh Pirates. He eventually became a manager, leading the Pirates (2001-2005), Seattle Mariners (2014-2015), and Detroit Tigers (2020).



Al Cloutier poses at the Augusta Civic Center on August 15. Cloutier played on the 1971 Augusta East Little League team that reached the Little League World Series.

Photo by Michael G. Seamans/Morning Sentinel

“There were huge crowds,” Cloutier recalled. “It was a rainy kind of week. ... We didn’t manufacture a lot of runs down there. But certainly the highlight of the tournament itself for me was Lloyd McClendon. He was the stud of the whole tournament. Every time he got up (to the plate) it was a home run or an intentional walk. He was just a tremendous player.”

After the series, Augusta East traveled to Washington D.C.

“We went to the White House,” Mitchell said. “We got to see a lot of Washington. We went to a Baltimore Orioles-Milwaukee Brewers doubleheader, this is at the old Memorial Stadium. I remember shaking hands with (Orioles player) Boog Powell, and his hand fully engulfed mine; he was a very large man. And Brooks Robinson. That was a real treat, because they were on top of the world back then, Baltimore. Even being a die-hard Red Sox fan, you couldn’t help but admire those guys. We got to shake (former Vice President) Spiro Agnew’s hand in the Rose Garden (of the White House). That was crazy. We had some boys on that team who had never been out of state, much less Washington.”

“We met (Apollo 11 astronaut) Neil Armstrong at a dinner,” Pickett added. “It was pretty wild. All that stuff, at 12 years old, you just take it in and you appreciate it more as you get older. It was quite an experience.”

The team was inducted into the Maine Baseball Hall of Fame in 2017. The group has celebrated milestone reunions over the years and many still keep in touch. In 2021, the team got together to help dedicate a new scoreboard at Rivelli Field in Augusta to honor Gallant, who had died in 2020. Pickett said he’s planning an end-of-summer party – an annual tradition – and will have many of his former Augusta East teammates over.

Interviewed before this year’s World Series, the players on that 1971 Augusta squad said they would be pulling hard for Gray-New Gloucester/Raymond. They even offered a little advice.

“Enjoy every moment of it and take it all in,” Pickett said. “Be calm during the game; you can’t get over-excited. You almost can’t help it down there. ... It’s probably overwhelming for them. But these kids (from Gray-New Gloucester/Raymond) can play though, all of them.”

“I would just tell these kids, just breathe it in,” Mitchell added. “It’s easy for me to say now at my ripe old age of 64, but I think with these kids, if there’s anything you want to tell them, that’s what you’d want to tell them. See it all, man, and enjoy. It’s an experience.”



– by Dave Dyer

Winslow's Historic Schoolhouse Evokes Memories of Yesteryear

You might think at first glance that the modest structure on Cushman Road in Winslow is a shed, or perhaps a garage; and you would be wrong.



History Through
a Keyhole #8

The one-room building in question is one of Maine's oldest surviving brick schoolhouses.

A sign on the building says it dates to 1806. It has served as a private home, a store, and a school, according to Ray Caron, a former Winslow Town Council member and former member of the now-defunct Winslow Historical Society.

Joshua Cushman (1761-1834), a U.S. representative who advocated for many years for Maine statehood, lived there and owned the property in the early 19th century, Caron said.

Cushman and some other representatives from Maine eventually voted against the Maine statehood proposal because it was part of a deal to allow Missouri to enter the union as a slave state, a story examined in painstaking detail in Ronald F. Banks' 1970 book *How Maine Became a State*. The statehood proposal succeeded anyway.



The Brick Schoolhouse, located on Cushman Road in Winslow, has served as a residence, a store, and a school.

Photo by Rich Eastman

disbanded in the 1990s. Ownership of the schoolhouse then reverted to Giddings' descendants. In 2014 the town agreed to take the building from that owner's heirs in exchange for waiving \$200 in overdue taxes that were owed on it.

"The town saw the importance of it," said Amanda McCaslin, Winslow's director of parks and recreation. "After a lively debate, it took it over."

The building now contains replica benches that resemble those of an earlier period, and a blackboard on the east wall. McCaslin said she gets about a dozen inquiries per year about the building. It has its greatest use each June when Winslow Elementary School fourth-graders tour it.

"A lot of people in Winslow don't even know this is here," McCaslin said, adding later, "The kids love coming here and seeing how it was back then."

People interested in touring the building may call McCaslin at (207) 872-2776.

Answer to Keyhole #8

Q: What is this?

A: The entrance to the Brick Schoolhouse

Q: Where is it?

A: On the east side of Cushman Road (Route 32) in Winslow, 1.3 miles north of the Vassalboro town line

Q: What's historic about it?

A: Dating to about 1806, it is one of Maine's oldest brick schoolhouses.



The store period left its traces on the door, where someone jotted notes about the store's supply of lumber and 20-pound bags of guano, which was used as fertilizer.

Its use as a school probably ended after the Civil War, according to its National Register of Historic Places application. In 1972, private owner Frances Giddings deeded the building to the Winslow Historical Society. It was added to the National Register in 1977. The listing identifies the building only as "the Brick Schoolhouse." The society later got a grant from the Maine Historic Preservation Commission to restore the building, with Caron leading the project.

The society suffered a fatal setback in 1987, however, when a massive flood hit the Kennebec Valley and washed the society's headquarters – Winslow's old town house – downriver. The group sputtered on for a few years after that but eventually



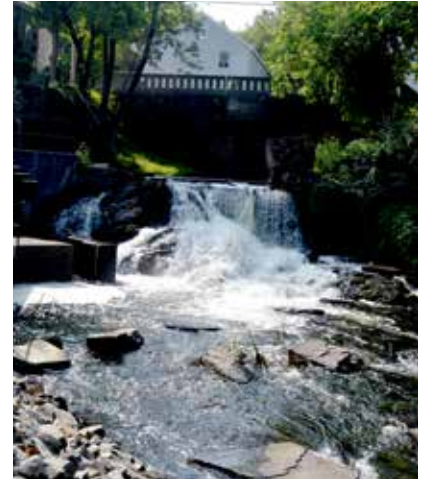
— by Joseph Owen

History Through a Keyhole - Puzzle 9

Regarding the conundrum presented in our last issue, reader and Kennebec Historical Society member C.L. Abbott, of Cambridge, Massachusetts, correctly and descriptively identified the image in puzzle No. 8 as the door to the former Brick Schoolhouse on Cushman Road (Route 32) in Winslow, so she is our winner. We suspect that given this tiny building's lack of internet access, a teacher's lounge, a gymnasium, a sports trophy case, a closet for band instruments, a cafeteria, a baseball diamond, heat, or even a toilet, it will not be a candidate for housing students again anytime soon.


We also received a correct answer from reader Stephanie Frost, who said she often rides past the ancient school building on her bicycle.

The photo at right is the next clue. You might use a solid pair of galoshes to inspect this spot closely, although it's easy to look it over while remaining completely dry. It is 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 October 20. Good luck. 

KHS Board OKs Nominees for Election at Sept. 21 Annual Meeting

The Kennebec Historical Society Board of Directors approved on August 10 the Nominating Committee's choice of candidates to put before the membership September 21 at the society's annual meeting.

The nominees for officers are Joseph O'Donnell, of Monmouth, president; Kent London, of Vassalboro, executive vice president; Mark Laney, of Winthrop, treasurer; and Jamie Logan, of Augusta, secretary. The term of office for each position is two years.

O'Donnell, a longtime board member and KHS life member since 1999, is a lawyer whose practice is in Augusta. If elected president, he will succeed Logan, who is stepping down after two years to become secretary. Logan would replace Stefanie Barley, of Augusta, who is nominated for one of the four other board seats scheduled to be filled by election at the annual meeting.


London, the incumbent executive vice president, has served in that office since 2018. Laney, also an incumbent, has been treasurer since 2021.

The other candidates are Joseph Owen, of Augusta, and Emily Schroeder, of South China, board members who are nominated for re-election; and Stephen Langsdorf, of Hallowell, an attorney who would be serving for the first time.

The board consists of 11 elected members and up to four additional members appointed to one-year terms by the elected members. The three elected members who are in the middle of their two-year terms are Robert Bennett, of South China; Anne Cough, of Gardiner; and Rich Eastman, of Augusta. Also, the board has appointed Barbara Warren, of Benton, to a one-year seat.

No bylaws changes are on the agenda for KHS members to consider this year.

The annual meeting is scheduled to begin with a 4:30 p.m. potluck dinner at Hope Baptist Church, located at 726 Western Avenue (U.S. Route 202) in Manchester. The election will occur during the business meeting, which begins at 5:45 p.m.

As reported earlier, Ron Joseph, of Sidney, author of the book *Bald Eagles, Bear Cubs, and Hermit Bill: Memoirs of a Maine Wildlife Biologist*, will give a lecture at 6:30 p.m. about his career. Copies of Joseph's book are expected to be available at the event. The lecture is open to the public. 

Around Kennebec County

AUGUSTA

Old Fort Western will be the point of departure on September 16 for a four-site archaeological tour that will include stops in at the sites of Fort Richmond, in Richmond; the Pownalborough Courthouse, in Dresden, where Fort Shirley once stood; Old Fort Western, in Augusta; and Fort Halifax, in Winslow. Archaeologists will be at each site to explain their work there. Pre-registration is required and admission will be charged. To pre-register or get details, call (207) 626-2385 or email oldfort@oldfortwestern.org

CLINTON

The **Clinton Historical Society** plans to open its museum to the public during the four days of the Clinton Lions Club Agricultural Fair, scheduled for September 7-10 at the Clinton Fairgrounds. The museum, located on the fairgrounds, will be open 4 to 9 p.m. September 7, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. on the 8th, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. on the 9th, and noon to 4 p.m. on the 10th.

MONMOUTH

The **Monmouth Museum** is hosting the town's 34th annual Applefest celebration from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. September 30 at the Main Street museum, which is charging no admission to visitors this summer.

READFIELD

The **Readfield Historical Society** and the **Readfield Union Meeting House** are co-hosting Christmas Through the Ages, a December 9 walking tour through several Readfield homes,

the Community Library, and the Meeting House. Each location will feature a costumed guide who will talk about a specific historical era and how Christmas was celebrated then, and each location will have period-appropriate decorations. Tickets cost \$15. To make reservations, call (412) 779-4368 or send email to readfieldhistorical@gmail.com.

VASSALBORO

The **Vassalboro Historical Society** is conducting a silent-auction raffle of prizes from Vassalboro businesses from September 8 to October 3 to fund the society's programs. Tickets are available at a cost of \$3 each or five for \$10 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Mondays and Tuesdays at the society's headquarters in East Vassalboro or from President Jan Clowes at vhsresident@gmail.com or Sharon Farrington at colonelhampton@gmail.com. Also, the society's museum, blacksmith shop, harness shop, and fire house all will be open to visitors during all of the town's annual Vassalboro Days celebration. The event is scheduled for 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. September 9 and 10.

WINTHROP

Kerry Wilkins-Demming is scheduled to address the **Winthrop Maine Historical Society** on September 14 about apple orchards, especially the Fairbanks Heirloom Tree, named for an 18th-century Winthrop resident. The event will begin at 5 p.m. at the Winthrop History and Heritage Center, at 107 Main Street, with an apple pie contest, followed by the lecture. Call the society at 395-5199 for details.



A circle of fiddlers and a stray guitarist gather to play under a canopy July 30 at the Littlefield Farm in Benton, site of the 51st annual East Benton Fiddlers Festival.

Photo by Joseph Owen

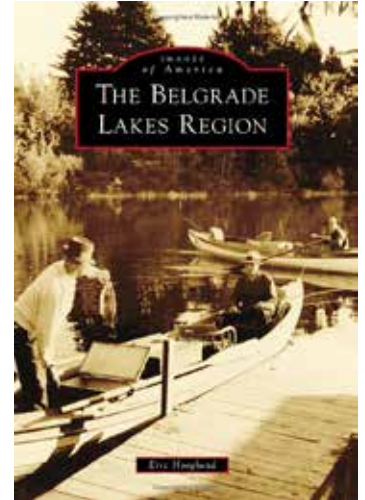
Upcoming Programs

October: “Images of America: The Belgrade Lakes Region”

The Kennebec Historical Society’s October lecture will focus on the history of tourism in the Belgrade Lakes region beginning in the early 1870s, and its evolution over 150 years. The seven Belgrade lakes, interconnected by streams, emerged as a desirable and famous tourist destination because of improvements in transportation, especially the railroad, and the presence of prosperous farms that provided the fresh produce for tourist camps, hotels and inns from 1870 to 1950. The talk will concentrate on the diversity of tourism: rooming houses, moderate to luxury hotels, family camps, youth camps, health and beauty spas, and beaches. The evolution of tourism in the post-1950 automobile age also will be examined.

The KHS presenter, professor emeritus Eric Hooglund, is a Waterville native and founding editor of the award-winning scholarly journal *Middle East Critique*. His many scholarly books and articles include a history of the Lebanese immigrant community in Waterville from 1900 to 1940. After retiring, he moved to Belgrade Lakes, where he has spent every summer, beginning at age 4 months. His most recent book, *The Belgrade Lakes Region*, is a photographic history of the area he loves.

The presentation is free to the public (donations are gladly accepted) and will take place at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, October 18, at the Augusta City Center, located at 16 Cony Street in Augusta. For details about the program, call Scott Wood, executive director, at 622-7718.



Cover image courtesy of the author

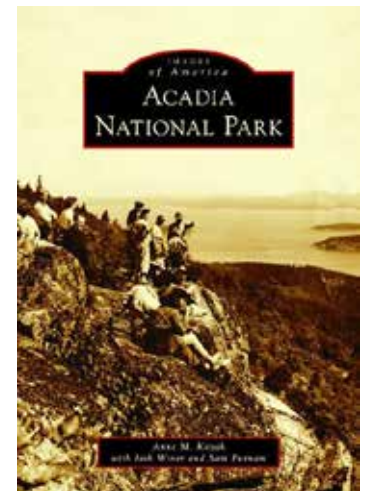
November: “Acadia National Park: Early History”

Most histories of Acadia National Park chronicle the contributions of men in acquiring land for the park. Also, for people to enjoy the park and to find respite required developing infrastructure that provided easy access – a goal of George Dorr, John D. Rockefeller Jr., and National Park Service directors Stephen Mather and Arno Cammerer.

While those contributions were critical, however, women also played a pivotal role. Some funded memorial paths, others facilitated Dorr’s acquiring land, and still others donated land. The Kennebec Historical Society’s November presentation examines the role of women in the park’s history, the activities that characterize people enjoying the park, and the development of infrastructure, particularly the bridges and motor roads. Having access to two private collections – that of the van Heerden Family and Harold MacQuinn, Inc. – as well as the photo collection of Leo Grossman, the engineer for the Cadillac Mountain Road, has allowed the KHS speaker, Anne Kozak, to use many previously unpublished photos.

Kozak retired in 2022 after 45 years as a faculty member and director of College of the Atlantic’s writing program. She developed the college’s Writing Center, where trained peer tutors assist other students with a range of writing assignments. On her retirement, the college renamed it the Anne Kozak Center for Excellence in Writing. For many years, she covered Bar Harbor and Mount Desert as well as Acadia National Park for the *Bar Harbor Times* and the *Mount Desert Islander*. In 2016, she and Susan Leiter published *The Wild Gardens of Acadia* – a place where Kozak, who currently co-chairs the Wild Garden Committee, has volunteered since 1972. In 2023, Friends of Acadia honored Kozak with the Acadia Inspiration award, and she was also named a Steward of History by the Bar Harbor Historical Society.

The presentation is free to the public (donations are gladly accepted) and will take place at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, November 15, 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

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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:

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

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

E-mail address: kennhis1891@gmail.com

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