



Newcastle Historical Society Newsletter

SUMMER 2021 ISSUE

EARLY AUTOMOBILES

BY ARLENE COLE

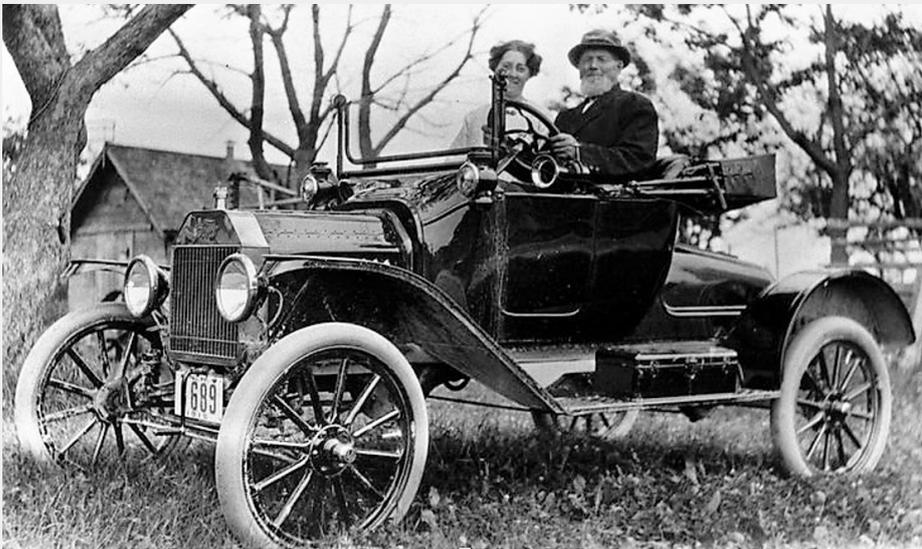


Photo from Dinsmore-Flye collection

America has always had a love affair with the automobile. In *You Auto See Maine* by Will Anderson, at the end of 1905 Maine was calculated to have 731 cars. Maine first required the registration of motor vehicles in 1905, according to Richard and Nancy Fraser in *A History of Maine Built Automobiles 1834-1934*. The state, also, required the operator to have a license. Along with the motor vehicle registration, a pair of license plates were included to attach to the automobile. The plates were white on red with the number in 4-inch-high characters and "Maine" in 1-inch letters.

The *Newcastle Town Report* for the year ending February 28, 1917, reports there were 14 automobiles in Newcastle. There were 250 horses and mules listed. The 1917 *Newcastle Town Report* lists 49.5 miles of highway in town.

By 1915 the state laws stated that autos should travel at no greater speed than 25 miles per hour in open country. Eight miles

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OFFICERS



Tim Dinsmore

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EARLY AUTOMOBILES *(continued from cover)*

per hour should be the top speed in built up or compact portions of any city or town. By March 4, 1925 there were 96 automobiles listed as being in Newcastle. There was no such things as DeLorme's, *The Maine Atlas and Gazetteer* and AAA had not been thought of. However, the *Automobile Blue Book* had been in business since 1910. I have a copy of the 1924 "book", volume one, which my father-in-law, Raymond T. Cole, used to find his way around the roads in the early days.

The *Automobile Blue Book* was a series of books designed to be a standard touring guide of America. Of course, we are interested in what the book said about Newcastle and vicinity. The instructions read: "Before starting on a trip set your 'speedometer' (now called trip odometer) to correspond with mileage given in the directions. For example, if you are in Brunswick and want to drive to Newcastle, you should set your trip odometer to 0.0 at the corner of Pleasant and Main Streets. You will follow Route 322 (present Route #1) over a "paved, oiled gravel road". At 0.2 miles there will be a fork in the road and you should take the left road. At 0.3 will be a four corner, at Bowdoin College, and you should take a left, away from the trolley and onto Bath Street. By the time you have taken the correct turns and gone 9 miles you will come to the Ferry over the Kennebec River. The toll is 50 cents with 5 cents additional for each passenger you have with you. The ferry is operated by the State Highway Commission, and ferries cross daily from April 15th to December 1st. A ferry goes every half hour from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. and you will meet the ferry coming from Woolwich, for it goes every half hour from 6:04 a.m. to 11:04 p.m. In winter the ferry makes frequent trips daily from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m."

After crossing the River you will drive "through a rolling and hilly farming country, following the shore most of the way. Many fine views of the ocean and mountains." At mile 18.8 you will pass through Wiscasset. It is called the halfway stop between Boston and Bar Harbor. In 27.6 miles you will come to a four corners, which is in the center of Newcastle. This would be the corner where Business Route 1, Mills Road and Academy Hill Road meet. 27.8 miles is "Newcastle" and must be about the spot where the Newcastle Post Office was located until 1989 and is now the site of the Sproul's Furniture Store. Then it is "Thru" and you are in Damariscotta. "28.0 Damariscotta. Keep ahead" and you are on your way to Rockland.

To make traveling easier, the Blue Book publishers refer to "banded poles" to help mark the way. The route from Brunswick to Rockland was marked with blue banded poles. This was a system of route markers used before the State highway numbering system was used. For night traveling, two front lights of about equal power, and a red rear light were required. By 1924 the speed limit had risen to 35 miles per hour in Maine, higher than any other state in New England. Most states required the auto to stop on signal from persons driving or leading a horse or other animals.

NEW RESOURCE FOR MUSEUM VISITORS

Thanks to a donation by an historical society supporter, NHS has acquired a gently used laptop. This laptop has been outfitted with a new battery and will be ready when the museum reopens to be used as a resource to help visitors access Newcastle Historical Society's listings of materials and resources. This computer will be for in-house information searches only. We are looking forward to having museum visitors view our local history resources.

JOIN, RENEW OR UPGRADE TODAY



Membership in the Newcastle Historical Society is open to all who want to help preserve the history of the town of Newcastle.

To begin, renew or upgrade your membership, please mail this form and your check payable to the Newcastle Historical Society at P.O. Box 482, Newcastle, ME 04553. You can also join online at nhsmaine.org

Membership Levels

Lifetime:	\$150
Business:	\$50
Family:	\$25
Individual:	\$15
Student:	\$10

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Town/State: _____

ZIP Code: _____

Phone: _____

E-Mail: _____

OUR MISSION

- To collect and preserve historical memorabilia and important records relating to the area and Town of Newcastle
- To encourage and promote interest in Newcastle history among local schools and the general public through exhibits, lectures and other special events
- To maintain and operate an historical reference center for the public



OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

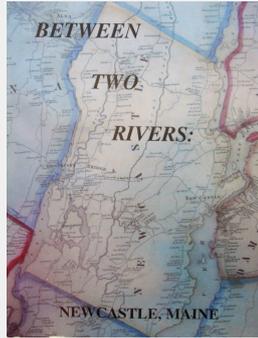
We are proud of the many accomplishments achieved by our society members, including:

- Creation of a museum that houses thousands of artifacts and records about Newcastle's history
- Formation of an extensive genealogy collection
- Scanning and maintaining a database of the Dinsmore-Flye Negative Collection, consisting of more than 80,000 historical negatives of Newcastle and the surrounding area
- Serving as financial representative of archaeological projects in Newcastle
- Funding of annual Lincoln Academy Scholarship
- Presentation of lectures on various historical topics
- Publication/sponsorship of history books focused on Newcastle

NEWCASTLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOOKSTORE

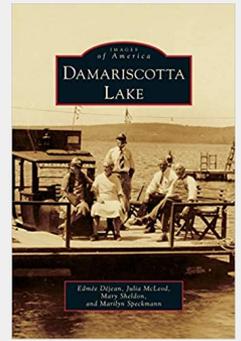
Between Two Rivers

by Arlene Cole
A softcover history of
Newcastle with maps and
photos
\$20



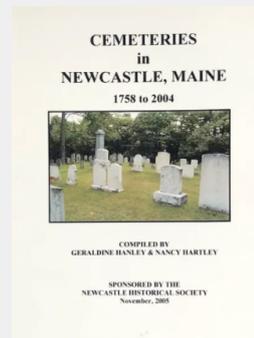
Damariscotta Lake

by Edmee Dejean, Julia
McLeod, Mary Sheldon &
Marilyn Speckman
A softcover pictorial and
written history of
Damariscotta Lake's people,
culture and traditions
\$20



History Tales of Newcastle

by Arlene Cole
A softcover book containing
130 articles on Newcastle
history
\$20

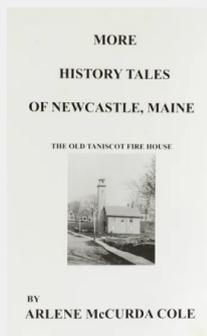


Cemeteries of Newcastle

by Geraldine Hanley &
Nancy Hartley
A softcover book of
burials in Newcastle from
1758 to 2004
\$20

More History Tales of Newcastle

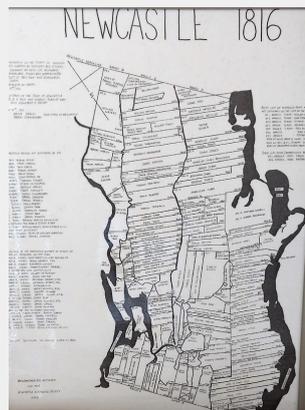
by Arlene Cole
A softcover book containing
more stories of Newcastle's
history
\$25



HISTORICAL MAPS



**1878 Newcastle &
Damariscotta
Panorama Map (18" x 12")**
\$5



1816 Map of Newcastle
(36" x 24")
Laminated: **\$20**
Non-laminated: **\$15**

To order, send check or money order (including \$5.50
for shipping and handling) and mailing instructions to:
Newcastle Historical Society
P.O. Box 482
Newcastle, Maine 04553

NHS EXHIBIT HIGHLIGHTS CARVINGS BY EDBURY HATCH (1849-1935)

NHS participated in the Boothbay Railway Village Bicentennial-Plus-One Celebration by providing a photographic exhibit of select works of the woodcarver Edbury Hatch. Originally trained to be a marine figurehead carver, as the age of wooden sailing ships declined, he turned to carving embellishments for houses, furniture, picture frames and signs. His often whimsical carvings decorated the exterior of several local homes. Edbury's work, including his Taniscot sign, and carving of the Maine state seal are described by Jane Bianco in *Maine and the Index of American Design* as significant artistic contributions to Maine's seafaring and cultural heritage.

Excerpts from a local 1854 newspaper indicate just how busy the ports of Damariscotta and Newcastle were when Edbury was a boy. In July 1854, *The Lincoln Democrat* reported that since last week's paper, "keels have been stretched in the yards of Messrs. Austin & Hall, Messrs. Metcalf & Norris, and Cyrus Cotter. All these are first class ships." With all this building, it would be hard to imagine the need for ships carvers would fade.

The advertisement (below right) for ships carpentry from the same newspaper suggests wood carvers were actively promoting their services. From what we know of Edbury, he anticipated a career contributing to the construction of a handsome sailing ship.

But, by 1870 when Edbury Hatch completed his apprenticeship, there were few jobs for ship carpenters as well as other skilled men who worked and lived on the midcoast of Maine building wooden ships. As a result many men skilled in various aspects of wooden boat building left this area.

Edbury however, found a way to survive the changes and use his carving skills to create objects that celebrated achievements, amused and amazed observers. Work that continues to be valued. Something that might surprise Edbury himself.



Dragon downspout from Hatch family home



Tassel and foxhead on door overhang from Hatch family home

To Ship Builders.
THE Subscriber is prepared to furnish SHIPS CABINS in any style which may be desired. Veneering in all kinds of woods done in the very best manner. He will also furnish every variety of papier mach work used in finishing cabins, such as
CAPITALS, VENTILATORS,
MOULDINGS of all sizes,
ORNAMENTS of every kind.
He will also keep constantly on hand a large assortment of
Ships' Furniture
of every kind.
Specimens of papier mach work may be seen at his shop.
All the above articles will be furnished at the lowest possible prices.
S. S. WYMAN.
New Castle, April 10, 1854. 1139

NEWCASTLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY AWARDS SCHOLARSHIP



Newcastle Historical Society President Tim Dinsmore with scholarship recipient Caitlin Cass

This year's Newcastle Historical Society scholarship recipient is Caitlin Cass. She will be attending Connecticut College in the fall to pursue a degree in English, psychology or sociology from a media/communications standpoint.

While attending Lincoln Academy Caitlin was part of the LA Ambassador's Program, a mentor for freshman, involved in student council and Sigma Sigma Chi. She has been actively involved in tennis for many years and has proudly volunteered 800+ hours at the Lincoln County Y in Damariscotta teaching tennis to younger kids and, later was paid to do so. She also was a tennis instructor at the Boothbay Harbor Yacht Club and at Bald Peak Colony Club on Lake Winnepesaukee in Moultonborough, New Hampshire. While at Lincoln Academy Caitlin enjoyed English and economic classes and took AP US history classes.

The Newcastle Historical Society scholarship is awarded annually to a Newcastle resident with preference given to a student studying history, anthropology, American studies or related fields, with other fields of study considered secondary. The officers and trustees of the Newcastle Historical Society want to congratulate Caitlin and wish her well in her studies.

A LOOK BACK AT MAINE LICENSE PLATES

The first Maine license plates -- issued from 1905 to 1915 -- were made of porcelain. They were initially intended to last for the lifetime of the car, so no annual renewal was required. Due to road salt, road conditions and other factors it became necessary to re-issue each year.

From 1946 thru 1948 the license plates were made of solid brass because steel was too expensive. In 1949 Maine changed to plates made of aluminum.



License plate sources:
porcelainplates.net/Maine-archive..html and
www.licenseplates.tv/blog/Mainelicenseplates