



## **NHS at 50 Years !**

NHS has its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year! The first meeting on record was held on March 12, 1975. Some folks had been meeting informally for several years before that so the group was able to roll out with a bang: bi-laws, election of officers, programs, projects and more.

A long-term goal was to find a home and establish a museum. After 20 years of looking coupled with some amazing fund-raising efforts NHS found a home in 1995, the Female Academy on Mercer Road. With this achievement came new goals that we continue to work on in our mission to preserve and share Norridgewock's history and cultural heritage. We've come a long way but to keep things moving we need more help. Volunteers are welcome! **NHS is not just about meetings.** Opportunities abound; volunteers can find their own niche in terms of interest, expertise and the amount of time available to give. Help us with collections/archives, community engagement and education, history/genealogy research; share technical skills; help us in the office or in the yard; step up for a one-time or one day task or on-going tasks. Thanks for any help and time you can give.

I found this quote in the first NHS leaflet from 50 years ago and I think it still fits today:

***The history of Norridgewock, like any good classic, does not wear out, rather it becomes fresher and more valuable with time.***

***Cordially,***

Becky Ketchum, President & Newsletter Editor

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# **Norridgewock Historical Society Newsletter Winter 2025**

## **A Look Back:**

### **The First Town Meeting, 1788**

Norridgewock's first town meeting was held 237 years ago (August 20, 1788). Holding an annual meeting was part of the stipulation for incorporation earlier that year. The meeting was held at John Clark's home on the corner of River Rd. and Willow St. The home (on the left in the photo below) was built in 1779 and served as the town hall and church before those were built.



According to William Allen's *History of Norridgewock* the first order of business in that first meeting was a vote to petition the Legislature of the Commonwealth (Maine was still a part of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts) for a tax abatement. The case made: poverty and no way to obtain cash. An excerpt from the abatement request document: "There is no market we can go to and if there were we have nothing to send. Neither do the inhabitants of this place, considered at large, eat bread in their families more than three-quarters of the year. It is not uncommon to find a whole neighborhood without a cow...".

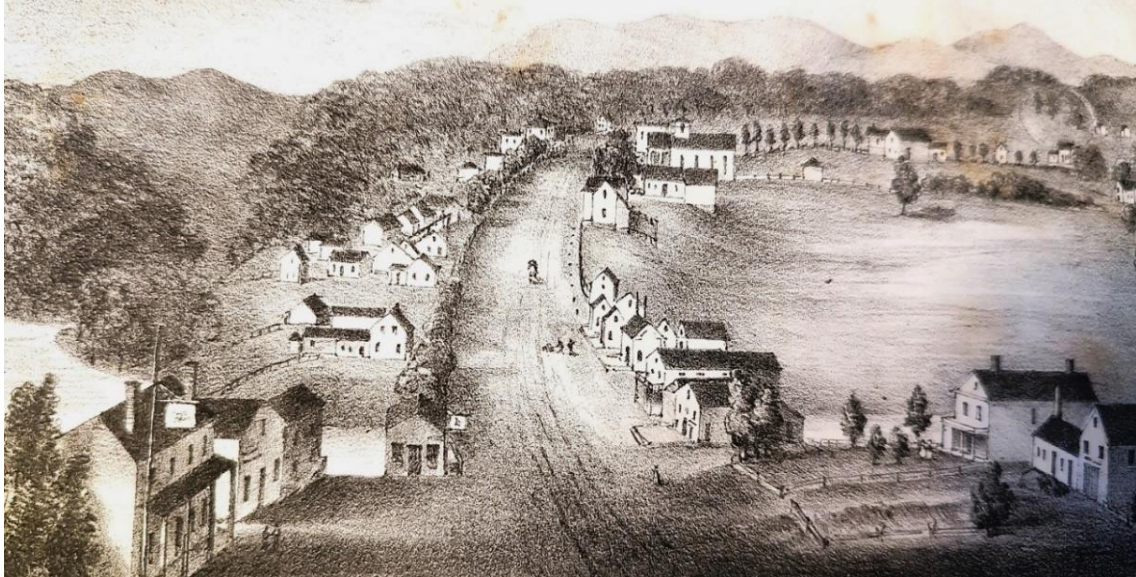
Outcome of the petition: The tax was substantially reduced with instructions that the residue of the tax be expended to support (divided in thirds): a Gospel minister, schooling and the town roads.

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## The Heald/Sawtelle House & Its Early Inhabitants

by Becky Ketchum

Hanson's *History of Norridgewock and Canaan* (1849) includes the wonderful print shown below of Main Street mid-1800's. Several of the buildings in the scene are still standing, one of which (lower right corner of the photo) is the "Heald/Sawtelle House", home today of Norridgewock Springs, LLC.



*(Note: for the purposes of the NHS Registry of Historic Homes this house is referred to as the "Heald/Sawtelle House" in order to distinguish it from other Heald-related properties in close proximity. Special thanks to Nathan Richards who has compiled the deed chains for close to 50 of our old homes. The NHS Registry is a labor of love that he started many years ago.)*

### ***The Heald (sometimes spelled Hale) Family Built the Original Structure of the Home.***

Timothy Heald came to town in 1776 with the intent of building mills along the Mill Stream. His life was cut short in 1785 and his son Josiah took over the business. Josiah became known as "The Miller". His operations included a saw mill, grist mill, fulling mill, and carding mill. (A photo of the saw mill, taken in 1903, is shown below. The old mill, which had a number of different owners over time, burned in 1934.)



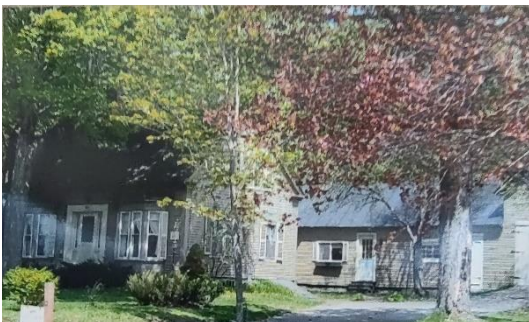
Josiah "The Miller" Heald built a house at the top of Waterville Hill and along with his wife Phebe raised 13 children in this home. The speculation is that the Heald/Sawtelle House, on the other side of the road and down the hill from Josiah's home, was built on Josiah's land for Ezekiel Heald, one of Josiah's older sons, when Ezekiel got married (summer, 1810). The date "1811" is carved into the granite step at the entrance of the original part of the house, **which is now the ell of the house.**



Ezekiel Heald (1784 -1859) was a deacon of the Congregational Church. A search of the Vital Records for the Town of Norridgewock provided a good insight into Ezekiel's character. In addition to the standard date of death the record includes this note: "Deacon Ezekiel Heald, a good man beloved by all; age 75 years 7 months."

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**For reference and orientation with the Heald neighborhood:** In 1816 Josiah started thinking about retirement and with this distributed some of his property to his family and sold the mills to John Ware. Calvin Heald, who had received some of his father's property, built a house directly up the hill from Ezekiel's house/across the street from their father Josiah's house. The two Heald family homes at the top of Waterville Hill are shown below. Calvin's is on the left; Josiah's ("the Miller") on the right.



**Heald-Jones House – 1816**



**Josiah Heald House - 1786**

### ***The Next Owner Was John Ware, Followed Quickly by His Nephew John Ware Sawtelle***

John Ware, who bought the mills in 1816, purchased Ezekiel Heald's home in 1827 and according to the deed chain fairly quickly gifted it to two of his nephews, John and Cullen Sawtelle. John bought out his brother Cullen. (Cullen, who was an attorney, remained on the north side of town and eventually built the Sophie May House and became a member of the US Congress.) John, who had been juggling running a farm on the north side and working at the mills, gave up farming and ran the mills full time. He is credited with enlarging the house and adding the porches and a bigger barn.

### ***The Ames Family Came Next and Owned the House for 100 Years!***

In 1899 the house was sold to Dr. Justin Ames. It remained in the Ames family for the next 100 years. Justin came first, then his brother Frank, and later Frank's son Basil / Basil's descendants. At the time Dr. Ames purchased the house he had an established medical practice either in or next door to the Female Academy building (today home of NHS). We know Justin owned and lived in the Female Academy building, but we have not been able to confirm where the practice was located. When he moved to the Heald-Sawtelle House he made part of the house into a hospital. The large window in the ell locates the former operating room. He is also credited with erecting the original gazebo featured in the yard.



Just prior to WWI Dr. Ames gave up his practice in Norridgewock and went West for awhile. When he came back he bought what came to be known in town as "the Ames Buiding". He shared the space with his brother Frank, an attorney. Many years later Frank shared the building with his son Basil, who was also an attorney. Today the Six Penny Jug is in this spot.

While the name "Norridgewock Springs" is now associated with the medical cannabis dispensary, "Norridgewock Springs" was the name of the tourist home that Frank Ames and his wife Helena ran at the Heald/Sawtelle house in the 1930's. Frank's granddaughter Caroline Crowell shared that one of the popular service amenities for guests staying at the inn was having a pitcher of ice-cold water from the springs that were on the property delivered to the rooms in the evening (delivered by Caroline and her sisters Betty and Margaret who lived next door in Basil's home on Sunset Hill).

Frank also had a water company called Norridgewock Springs. Water was pumped from the Sucker Brook by engine and windmill to storage tanks located on the bluff above the railroad tracks. From there it ran by gravity to the downtown area, all the way up to Monument Square. This operation ran until the 1940s. Another undertaking of Frank's was the management of the central office of the Somerset Farmers' Co-operative Telephone Company. The "central office" was located on the first floor of the Ames Building. For her part, Helena was busy, too (town clerk for 10 years/ selectman for four, etc.) .

Basil Ames inherited the house from his parents, but continued to live next door in the family's Sunset Hill home. His daughter Caroline Crowell and her husband moved into the Heald-Sawtelle house and raised their family there. In 2000 the house was sold to Gerald Cyr/Norridgewock Springs.

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## Brick by Brick ... Norridgewock's Brick Yards

by Becky Ketchum

Bricks were very important for early construction in Norridgewock. Both the "ingredients" (sand, clay and water) and the wood to fire the kilns were plentiful. The popularity of bricks for use in building was also influenced by the somewhat common incidence in the early years of building losses due to fires.

One of the earliest brick yards in town was on the riverbank on River Road just past the intersection of River Road and Willow Street. The bricks used to build the Dole House came from this yard.

The largest brick yard in town was owned by Lot Shorey. (Lot lived from 1804-1882.) The Shorey yard was at the end of Hotel Street behind the Shorey house on Mechanic Street. Most of the brick buildings in town were constructed using bricks from this yard. If you walk on the rail trail that goes through this area you may occasionally spot an old fragment of brick. (Incidentally, the reddish color of the bricks comes from the heat of the kiln.)

**Location of the Shorey Brickyard :** On the old map below the "x" = intersection of Mechanic St. and Main St. This 1860 map pre-dates the railroad. "School House" is where the municipal parking lot is today, just before the tracks cross Main. Yellow highlight = location of the Shorey Brickyard.



One of the other yards in town was on the Byron Lloyd farm on the old Madison Road. There was also a small yard on the Father Rasle Road, near the Land of Rest Cemetery. ( This brickyard is noted on the 1860 map at the NHS Museum.) Other small brickyards were scattered around. Some farmers were known to harvest clay during the spring, let it dry during the summer and then in the fall off-season from farming chores make their own bricks.

Four of the six Norridgewock buildings that are on the National Register of Historic places are locally made brick constructions (nicely laid on locally quarried granite foundations); built between 1820-1845. They include, in order of age: the Spaulding House/1820 (behind Irving on Main Street), the Female Academy/NHS/1837, the Sophie May Library/1840 and the Sophie May Home/1845. Other brick buildings are also found around town, most of which were built during this same Greek Revival period and are on or likely eligible for the NHS Town Registry of Historic Homes.

Although fire safety was a selling point for the use of brick, the Dole House mentioned earlier in this article was actually destroyed by fire in 2008. The interior was decimated by fire while the owners were away and the home could not be salvaged. The Dole House was two doors down from the intersection of River Road and Willow Street. It was built in 1820 by Amos Fletcher. His descendants created the Dole Pineapple dynasty. (A newsletter article for another day!

# NHS Event: MOCA Meeting & Tour of Riverview Cemetery

NHS had the pleasure of hosting the Maine Old Cemetery Association's summer meeting in July. The morning session was held at the Grange Hall and included: three presentations related to Norridgewock's history and cemeteries, the MOCA business meeting, and a wonderful lunch served by Grange members. After lunch we walked down the street to Riverview Cemetery for a tour of restoration work that was recently completed there. The Town of Norridgewock/Cemetery Committee hired Joe Ferrannini, cemetery conservationist /owner of Grave Stone Matters, to tackle some of the most serious issues in Riverview Cemetery, with special focus on the graves of our veterans.



Sign at the main entrance of the cemetery



View from the far western corner of the cemetery



Pre photo of leaning stones, one row in danger of falling down over the other row if not fixed.



Post photo: both rows standing tall!



Pre photo: stone broken in half; base buried and broken.



Post photo: repaired & re-set.



# PHOTO ALBUM:



## Winter Scenes From Long Ago



Hauling Granite for the Soldiers Monument in Clinton



Toll Taker's House / Old Toll Bridge



Looking Down Main Street



Congregational Church on River Road  
1794-1947



Hauling Box Wood



Hauling Logs on Smithfield Road with Caterpillar  
Tractor Built by Sheaff & Keene



**Norridgewock Historical Society  
PO Box 903  
Norridgewock, Maine 04957**

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