



# Norridgewock Historical Society Newsletter

**Winter 2020**

## **President's Letter**      **Becky Ketchum**

The 2019 season ended with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Classic Christmas Tree Open House at the museum. It was a very cold and rainy day, but a number of hardy folks still came through. Reta baked 5 dozen whoopie pies and only a few were left--how is that for a way of keeping track of attendance! A few days before the Town event members gathered around the tree for a nice evening of friendship, good food, stories and even a holiday trivia game.

Now here we are, mid-January of the new decade. With high hopes for some roaring 20's, we are starting the year off with event planning for Maine's Bicentennial. Planning is in the early stages, but I will keep you posted. For the short term, if you'd like to help in any way let me know! Help is needed for all aspects of the celebration (publicity, museum displays, parade-related tasks, baking, sponsors and more). If one of your bucket list items is to win first prize for a parade float and/or to play your tuba or twirl your baton in a parade let me know! We can also use some grand kids who might like to dress up in period costumes and/or decorate their bikes and ride in the parade route. The parade will be Memorial Day weekend. The celebration will include a salute to our veterans and also the unveiling of the historic panel "Norridgewock: The Early Years". The panel will be placed down by the Sophie May Library.

Many thanks to everyone for your interest and support in 2019 -- from helping to bring in good programs, to participating in the meetings -- and bringing all those wonderful refreshments, helping to keep us afloat through donations/dues, sending encouraging notes (especially nice to hear from those who are "from away", but have fond memories of from whence they came!), making contributions to the museum collections and yard sale, and for your time/ labor: gardening, mowing, raking, building maintenance, behind the scenes office tasks and much more. All of these things keep NHS going! Thank you!



## **Reminders:**

- \*The first meeting of the 2020 season is on Wednesday, April 22 at 6:30 P.M. This is a kick-off meeting; no program speaker.
- \*January 1 marked the start of the new fiscal year. Annual dues are \$10. "Help Fund Us" categories for new members, old members and life members who wish to renew their commitment to NHS (much needed since at this point in time most of us are "LM") are: \$25 supporter/\$50 patron/\$100 conservator. (See form on page 8)

# Celebrating Maine's Bicentennial

## The Path to Statehood: *Norridgewock's Voting Record*

- 1807: The people of Norridgewock (actually, the men of Norridgewock as women did not have the right to vote) gave 3 votes for and 94 against the District of Maine's separation from the State of Massachusetts.

May 1816: 34 votes for/51 against separation

- September 1816: The vote was split 64 for/65 against
- 1819 Somerset County was granted the right to erect a court house and Norridgewock became the shire town. (This was largely thanks to John Ware, a representative to the General Court, who helped swing the location to Norridgewock by donating the land to build the court house on.) John Hanson wrote in his

*History of Norridgewock and Caanan* :

*"Following its establishment as the shire town the Town forwarded an earnest position to the General Court praying that the District of Maine might become a state immediately. The vote stood 160 yeas/33 nays.*

*William Allen, Esq. was chosen as a delegate to Portland to form a constitution for the State of Maine.*

*After it was drafted 66 votes were cast in Norridgewock, all for the constitution."*

- **March 15, 1820 Maine became the 23<sup>rd</sup> State in the Union.**



## The State Seal

One of the first acts of the first session of the Maine Legislature was the adoption of a State seal. I reviewed a number of flag books/sites to learn more about the design. As the gist was fairly similar I thought it would be fun to share what students at the Eaton School were taught about the seal. The quote below is from a textbook that was in use for Eaton's spring term, 1873:

*"The moose and the mast pine, those princes of the forest, were chosen for the central figures of the design. At one side was an anchor, on the other side a scythe, emblematic of the occupations of our people;*

*while above was the North Star, signifying the place of Maine in the constellation of States."* [Editor's note: Alaska had not yet been purchased.] *These, with the motto, Dirigo (I lead) , and two figures representing a farmer and a sailor form the State Seal.*

(Excerpt from *The Young People's History of Maine* by Geo. J. Varney 1873)



# Mystery People

Eastman Wilder

Hidden in the ceiling! At our regular meeting in October Ed and Dana Holt gave our museum these two beautiful old portraits. The portraits are about 16" x 20" on heavy cardboard, the kind Maine families often displayed in heavy ornate frames in the late 1800's. The Holts had been working on their old farmhouse on US Rte 2 near the Mercer town line. When they opened the ceiling these portraits came tumbling down, much to the Holts' surprise. Naturally two questions immediately came to mind: Who were the people and why in the world were their pictures hidden in the ceiling?!

The people appear to be in their 60's or 70's. Judging from other pictures we have they are wearing 1870s-1880s clothing, so that's probably when the pictures were taken. So we guess the people were born around 1810, although we welcome your opinion on both their ages and the date.

Holts bought their property in Y2000, a triangle-shaped parcel of about 24 acres with buildings that their deed said included the Samuel Clark homestead. At the Registry of Deeds in Skowhegan we traced the deed chain back to 1885 when Samuel Clark of Carthage ME bought from Olive Smith two acres with the buildings, buying the entire property except neighbor Ira Taylor was to have the manure. So Clark was buying a small farm and probably the house, too. Since then the property has often changed hands, in fact about 15 times until the Holts bought it in 2000. Every one of those deeds have referred to the Samuel Clark homestead.

Could the male portrait be of Samuel Clark? Samuel Clark was born about 1801 in NH. (No known relation to the Clarks of Norridgewock.) Around 1835 he married Britania Coolidge of Dixfield ME born ~1812. In 1850 and 1860 they were in Dixfield, in 1870 in Byron. Although old for a soldier Samuel served in the Civil War. In 1875 Britania applied for an invalid's pension for him. In 1880 they were in Greenwood ME.

What brought them to Norridgewock? Of their several children Louisa the eldest and Sarah got jobs in textile mills. Somehow Louisa met Hiram Jones who had grown up near the Holt property. They married in 1876 and were probably living in the neighborhood when the invalid Samuel and his wife Britania followed their oldest daughter there in 1885.

In 1890 Samuel died. Britania had him buried in North Jay close to her old Dixfield home. She lived on in "the homestead" as a widow until 1894 when she willed her home and the two acres to Louisa and Hiram, and then she died. Almost immediately Hiram sold the property along with some adjacent acreage of his own, making up the 24 acres that the Holts ultimately acquired.

So it seems the portraits are probably of Samuel and Britania. But what were they doing in the ceiling? We imagine that when Britania came home from Samuel's funeral and saw him hanging on the wall still looking at her, she had had enough of him. Rather than trash his picture she took it out of the valuable frame and slid it in the gap in the ceiling. Then after a little thought she did the same thing with her own picture. There they rested together, completely forgotten for 125 years.



[Editor's note: if you have a different theory, please send it to me. I will report the findings in a future issue. Rketchum1@aol.com]

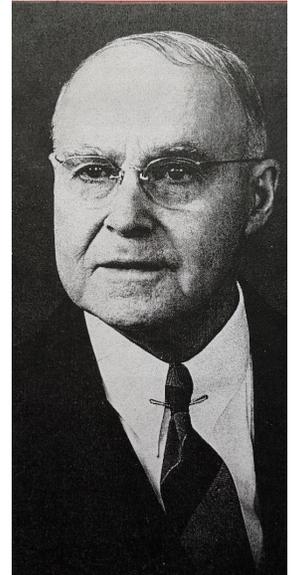
# Charles Sawyer: Photographer

Becky Ketchum

The Alice Emery room of the Museum houses our ever growing collection of Charles Sawyer prints. It is always a pleasure to show this collection off to museum visitors as it provides both the opportunity to tout one of our famous sons and, through his prints, to show off some of the scenic wonders of our corner of the country.

The Sawyer family were among the early settlers in this area. Charles Sawyer's grandfather John Sawyer ran a general store and hotel (see picture below) at the corner of Main and Mechanic Streets (on the lot where Cumberland Farm is now located). His son Henry worked at the hotel and later moved to the top of the hill (to the house now known as Dr. Turner's house) where he ran a livery business. Henry and his wife had three sons: Russell, William and Charles.

Charles was born March 24, 1868. Like his brothers he attended the Eaton School where he studied art and painting among other things. Besides the education he received at Eaton, it was at Eaton that he met the young girl who would later become his wife, Mary Anderson. (According to notes made by Norridgewock historian Elizabeth Miller, Charles and Mary attended many Eaton School reunions.)



Charles began his career as a painter/portrait artist and then as a traveling photographer, "traveling" being via a horse drawn livery wagon with his step ladder and camera thrown in the back. (Later on in his career he was able to upgrade his transportation to a Maxwell Runabout.) As his career took off he set-up a studio in Farmington. Initially he hand-tinted many of his pictures; later he trained others to do this work, most notably Gladys Towle who was with him for over 50 years.

In 1920 he opened a studio in Concord, NH. It was during the Concord years that he made a few trips out West. Thus it is that collectors will find some prints with Western scenes rather than the more commonly found Eastern scenes.



Anyone who has studied his prints will have noticed his very distinctive signature, which is usually underscored.

In fact, some collectors may be alarmed if they make side-by-side comparisons across prints of the signatures! Per Carol Begley Gray's *History of the Sawyer Pictures* the early



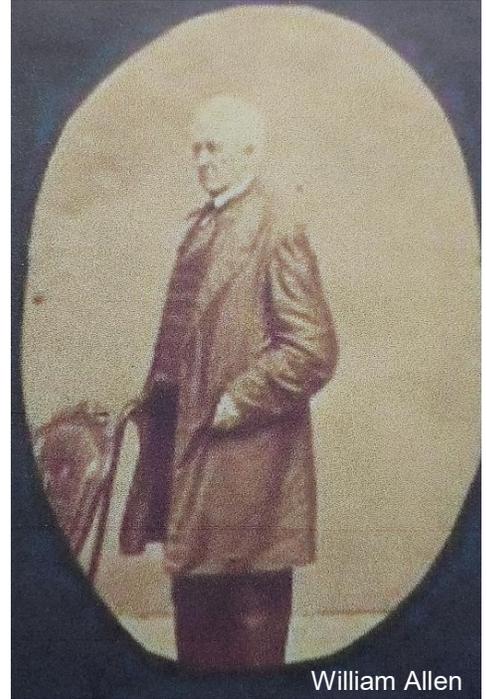
signatures were Charles Sawyer's, but for years the majority were done by Gladys Towle's aunt. Gray also notes that the women who did the tinting often put their initials in pencil on the back of the photo. Per Gray's account much of the framing was done in the studio and for a long time many of the frames were produced by Cherokee Indians in NC.

Charles and his wife are buried in Riverview Cemetery, Upper Main Street. Elizabeth Miller noted that the site where he is buried is also the hill from which he took many of his views of "The Glen" looking up the Kennebec River.

# William Allen and the Brunswick Convention of 1816

Tom Michewich

By 1813, when William Allen moved with his family to Norridgewock, he had established a reputation for honesty and competence throughout the central Maine region. He had been an early settler in the region, a farmer, a teacher in several area towns, and was an active surveyor. The move was occasioned by his appointment as Clerk of Courts for Somerset County, for which Norridgewock was the shire town. By the first Monday of September in 1816, when the citizens of Maine went to town meetings to cast their votes for or against separation from Massachusetts, he must have seemed by a majority of Norridgewock voters to be a natural choice to represent them at the upcoming convention in Brunswick. At this meeting the delegates were to examine the votes from the various towns; if the vote was at least 5 to 4 in favor of separation, they were to begin the process of writing a constitution for the new state or commonwealth. Allen was to become an active participant in these proceedings.



William Allen

There were in fact two votes in Maine in 1816 on the question of separation from Massachusetts. The first, on May 20, authorized reluctantly by the Federalist government of Massachusetts after a vigorous campaign by the separationists, was intended to test the sentiment of the people of Maine for or against statehood. The Massachusetts General Court was by this time prepared to give its consent to separation in the face of a substantial majority in favor, but it reserved the right to say “no” if the vote was close. As it turned out, this May vote was far from conclusive. While a little over 60% of the ballots cast were in favor of separation, only 17,000 people (eligible males, that is) voted out of the approximately 38,000 eligible to vote, from a total population of around 270,000. Given the ambiguity of these results, the General Court, after much debate, authorized a second vote in September. The people of the District of Maine would vote again directly on the question of separation, and they would also elect delegates to the Brunswick convention.

The vote in Norridgewock, unlike that in many other towns in Maine, was evenly split, 65 to 64, narrowly opposed to separation. (In many towns the vote was almost unanimous, either in favor of or opposed to separation.) Throughout the district there was a great deal of tension and ill feeling over this issue. The Democrats were largely in favor of separation and the Federalists were largely opposed, and there were accusations of bad faith on both sides. William Allen was a Federalist, and he appears to have been opposed to separation, although nowhere does he say so directly. (In his memoir of the convention written in 1870<sup>1</sup>, he records another delegate saying to a third that he (Allen) was opposed to separation, and Allen does not refute that claim.) The fact that the citizens of Norridgewock, regardless of their views, trusted William Allen to represent them fairly, in what promised to be a very contentious convention, surely attests to his reputation for honesty and even-handedness. Allen’s integrity would be sorely needed in the weeks to come.

The convention opened on September 30, 1816, with the two sides, after much initial confusion, managing to choose their candidates for President of the convention. William King, a vigorous proponent of statehood, was elected the next day, and the convention proceeded to the contentious task of certifying and tabulating the votes from the various towns. A debate immediately ensued over the legitimacy of the very delegates to the convention. Finally, a committee of nine, including William Allen, was appointed to compile a complete list of authorized delegates. The committee began a procedural discussion, adopted certain rules, and continued with additional discussion, until Allen declared further discussion to be an “idle waste of time” and announced that he and Albion Parris had drawn up a nearly complete list of delegates. This list appears to have been accepted, since by the next day all the delegates had arrived, and the convention turned to the vexed question of certifying the votes.

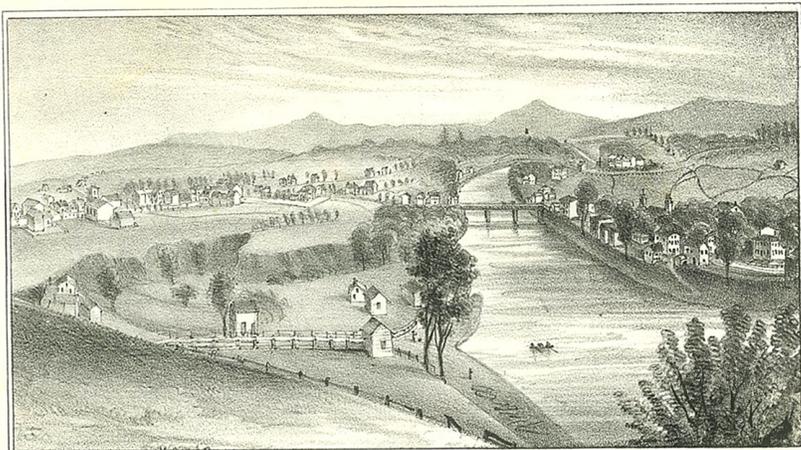
There seems not to have been any sort of officially sanctioned and secure procedure for transporting the election results to the convention, so the votes from the various towns arrived in Brunswick by a variety of (sometimes questionable) means. There was suspicion of cheating on both sides. In his 1870 memoir William Allen relates an incident involving, among others, himself and William Preble, a vigorous supporter of separation.

*When the returns from Somerset were called for I collected all, both for and against, and among others the returns from Phillips and Avon, nearly unanimous for separation, were handed to me by a friend who had been entrusted with them, being known as in favor of separation. I was not known by Preble, and he, being on the watch, immediately inquired of my friend as to the completion of the returns he had delivered to me and what my views were. On being informed that the returns were for separation, but that I was opposed to it, Preble reprimanded my good friend with severity for what he had done, saying that "those returns would be withheld or destroyed."*

*In the course of the day all the returns were accounted for except for five or six towns, among them the town of Lyman, in which six only were in favor and one hundred and seventy-nine votes against separation. The return was traced into two or three hands and lost in the fog. Preble was challenged and denied that he had it. I thought he equivocated, and as he had suggested that I ought not to be trusted, I thought of the motto attached to the sign of the Order of the Garter, "Evil to him who evil thinks." When a committee was appointed the next day to make search for returns that were missing, I kept my eye on him until I saw him pass that from Lyman to a respectable clergyman, a member from the county of York, behind the corner of the meeting-house as we were coming in at the afternoon session, and whisper a verbal message to him. I followed the bearer in and saw him lay the return on the secretary's table without any ceremony. When the convention was called to order the secretary passed the document to the president and said he found it on his table, and did not know how it came there. The contents were announced and the return passed to the committee; but this was not the end of it. It was rejected by the committee – a committee of Hill, Davis and Woodman to inquire about missing returns.*

Allen also notes, rather wryly, "The returns from Eliot and Frankfort were traced to A, and from A to B, and B to C, and were probably tried by fire and lost." In the end the returns from all the towns, except Lyman and a few towns from which the votes were missing, were accepted, and the committee had then to address the question whether or not the five-ninths threshold for separation had been reached.

The total number of votes was 22,316. The number in favor of separation was 11,969 and the total against was 10,347. Now  $5/9$  is 0.556, but  $11,969/22,316$  is only 0.536. Thus slightly less than 54% of the vote was in favor of statehood, and this did not meet the slightly more than 55% threshold required for separation. The push for separation from Massachusetts and statehood for the District of Maine was thus defeated.



UPPER PORTION OF THE NORTH AND SOUTH VILLAGES.  
FROM GILMAN HILL.

Well ..., no, not exactly. Enter again the ubiquitous William Preble, a former tutor of mathematics at Harvard College. Preble first considered all of the towns that voted in favor of separation. In just those towns taken together there were 6,031 more yeas than nays. On the other hand, in all of the towns voting against separation there were 4,409 more nays than yeas. Moreover,  $6031 + 4409 = 10,440$ , and  $6031/10,440 = 0.578$ , which is greater than  $5/9 = 0.556$ . Separation was thus approved; so declared the report of the certification committee to the full convention!

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The reaction was immediate. Banks<sup>2</sup> describes it this way: "The opposition may have been dumbfounded as ... the committee report [was read], but they soon regained their senses, [and] pandemonium broke loose." Allen, in his 1870 memoir, summarizes the ensuing discussion, noting many of the objections to the report. All the arguments against adoption were to no avail, however, and the report was finally accepted on October 10 by a vote of 103 to 84, with William Allen voting against. It was duly submitted to the General Court of Massachusetts and of course released to the people of Maine. To quote Banks, "The abuse that greeted the result of the week-long deliberations at Brunswick was unprecedented in its severity."

This episode in the march toward statehood ended in a rather prolonged whimper. The General Court proved unwilling to accept the report, and the crusade for separation languished for many months. Eventually, however, efforts for separation resumed, culminating in another, and final, vote of the people of Maine, on July 26, 1819. This time the vote was strongly in favor of separation, and, via the Missouri Compromise, statehood finally came to the District of Maine, much to the relief, not least, of the people of Massachusetts.

**Suggested Reading**      The two main sources for this brief discussion were the following.

1. Allen, William, "Brunswick Convention of 1816," Collections of the Maine Historical Society, Series II, Vol. II, pp. 129-142. There is a copy of this article in the William Allen Archives at the Norridgewock Historical Society. At the end of the article Allen lists all those who voted for the report and all those who voted against.
2. Banks, Ronald F., Maine Becomes a State: The Movement to Separate Maine from Massachusetts, 1785-1820, New Hampshire Publishing Company/Maine Historical Society, 1973. Originally published in 1970 by Wesleyan Univ. Press for the Univ. of Maine. This is the softcover edition, from which the appendices have been deleted.

## A Hand Braided Rug for the School Room!

Donna Michewich crafted and braided a rug for the school room!

After 30 years teaching , Donna took up braiding soon after her retirement in 2002. She now has completed over 175 items, including rugs, baskets, chair pads, hand bags and more.

The school room rug is made of all new medium weight wool. Each round is butted and the rug is reversible! (81" L x31"w).

Many thanks to Donna for this wonderful gift!



Close up of the rug

Norridgewock Historical Society  
PO Box 903  
Norridgewock, Maine 04957

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