



# Norridgewock Historical Society Newsletter Winter 2021

## President's Letter    Becky Ketchum

By way of full disclosure most of this newsletter was written in April 2020. I apologize for the lapse in newsletters. (Time flies even when we cannot!) In my April draft letter I wrote: "Hopefully by the time the Summer issue is due I will be able to report on fun things such as new dates for NHS events related to Maine's 200<sup>th</sup> year of statehood and also the opening of Norridgewock's Historic Panel Pocket Park on the river bank by the Sophie May Library. All good things come to those who wait!". Unfortunately, we are still waiting, but there finally seems to be a light at the end of the tunnel. For the record for those who live "away", the Historic Panel Pocket Park was installed, but sadly without pomp and circumstance. When we are finally able to gather again NHS will hold an event at the park. At this point it is uncertain what, if any, celebrations will be held related to Maine's 200<sup>th</sup>.

While due to Covid-19 the Museum closed in mid-March and all of our 2020 meetings/programs were cancelled, volunteers continued to lend a hand in a variety of ways. Some of the behind-the-scenes activities of the 2020 season included:

1. First and foremost: the NHS Gardens! Many, many thanks to Marilyn Dunlap and Valerie Sirois whose gardening work generated a sense of joie de vivre to anyone passing by the Museum. The well-designed and painstakingly maintained gardens popped with colors and delightful surprise plantings from spring through late fall. Our appreciation is even greater given how unbearably hot, humid, and dry it was this summer. Enroute to or from her full-time job at Colby, Valerie spent many hours keeping the thirsty plants sated!

2. Although the annual Museum field trip for 3<sup>rd</sup> graders at the Mill Stream School was cancelled due to Covid-19, we worked with one of the teachers to put together a virtual tour and lesson featuring many items from the Museum's collection. Hopefully by May/June 2021 field trips will resume. As soon as we are able to open, we want to encourage visitations by families, too.

3. We continue to field requests from people near and far who contact us with questions related to genealogy searches, old homes, cemeteries, historical research, etc. People had more time on their hands this year, so there were more inquiries than usual, too! Eastman Wilder (almost any topic) and Nathan Richards (historic homes) are our leading lights when it comes to research. Charlie Dickinson is also key to all of this as he maintains our website which is the primary contact point for inquiries.

4. Most of our old glass plates are now digitalized (thanks to Eastman!) Now we need help in terms of identifying people/places and indexing. When it is okay to open again, I would like to set up workshops and/or slide show programs geared specifically to identification. If this is something you would be interested in, please let me know!

A major financial setback for NHS has occurred due to Covid-19. In recent years our yard sales have been our major fund-raising source. We've been having a sale in June and October; this year we were unable to have either sale. Thus, while my least favorite thing is to put my hand out for funds, I would like to mention that donations are welcome -- and critical -- to our ability to keep operations out of the red this year! Please help if/when you can. (See form on the back of this newsletter) Thanks!

Also note that it is my hope that by early summer we will be able to have a yard sale. For those of you who have used some of the at home time that abounds due to Covid-19 to sort your attic, etc. NHS can use items for the sale, so please hold on to them for us! Thanks! (Reminder: no clothes/bedding/electronics.)

Upward and onward! 2020 is finally behind us. Looking forward to being able to gather together again as soon as it is safe to do so. Thanks for your support of NHS. This is the 25<sup>th</sup> year that the Museum has been in operation. Let's celebrate that asap!

## Aftermath of the 1918 Pandemic: One Positive Outcome

[Editor's Note: This article was written in April. I'm sorry to report that Florence Taylor Goodridge passed away in August.]

The so called "Spanish flu" struck in 1918. In an online article about it, Laura Spinney, a science journalist and novelist, wrote: "there was nothing particularly Spanish about it. It attracted that name, unfairly, because the press in neutral Spain tracked its progress in that country, unlike newspapers in warring nations that were censored". The 1918 flu is actually widely believed to have originated in an army barracks in Kansas. But, this is not an article about politics. Rather I wanted to share a positive outcome of the 1918 pandemic. Following the pandemic interest in health care and developing public health policies emerged worldwide, (although handled differently from country to country). As part of this trend communities across America became engaged in the education and promotion of good health practices. Norridgewock was no exception.

With thanks to Eastman Wilder, who spent a lot of time this winter consolidating and digitalizing 100's of our NHS photos/postcards, I came across some wonderful glass slide photos that captured Nor-



ridgewock's engagement in the national rally for good health practices. The slides show a parade that took place on Main Street circa 1929 or 1930 (guess based on the known age of one of the children in the parade). I hope you will enjoy the photos as much as I did. When you look at the photos you will notice that "social distancing" clearly was not part of the learning!

Now that these photos have come to light, I'm trying to identify the revelers. One of the slides shows students carrying an Oak Hill School sign. Thus, I started the identification process by looking at that particular group, especially knowing that Florence Taylor Goodridge, who is 100 years old and a life-long resident of Oak Hill, attended that school. With the help of Florence and her daughter Marylee Goodridge (NHS member) we now know the names of the majority of people in the Oak Hill School group. Missing a few, so if anyone can help with those, please let me know!

An interesting sidebar to this is a story that Florence shared. Florence's family lived across from the school. At age 4 Florence did not have anyone to play with. When she went outside each day to play in her yard she could hear the happy sounds of children playing at the school. How she longed to be part of the fun! Finally one day the temptation became too great and she "ran away" to join the group. Although she was only four and school back in those days started at age 6 her mother said okay, if you want to go to school that badly you can. So not too long after that Florence became the youngest member of the Oak Hill Student body. (Florence is shown in the picture below at about age 10. She is the 7<sup>th</sup> from the left, partially hidden in the picture.)



L to R: Evelyn Holt, Marion Abbot, Enid Currier, Ruth Holt, Ervina Palmer Goodridge, Annie Goodridge, Florence Taylor Goodridge, (?), (?), Short boy with bow tie (?), tall man, back row: Earl Leavitt, Harry Holt, behind Harry, with regular tie (?), Albert Holt (in white)

Please let us know if you can identify any of these children! rketchum1@aol.com





## Hysterical Rather Than Historical

Look who was spotted in the front yard of the Sophie May House!

(Norridgewock, home of 3,297 friendly people and at least one friendly moose!)



Remember these pins?

How many NHS members were "Polio Pioneers"?

Second, harder question: Do you know where your pin is? 😊

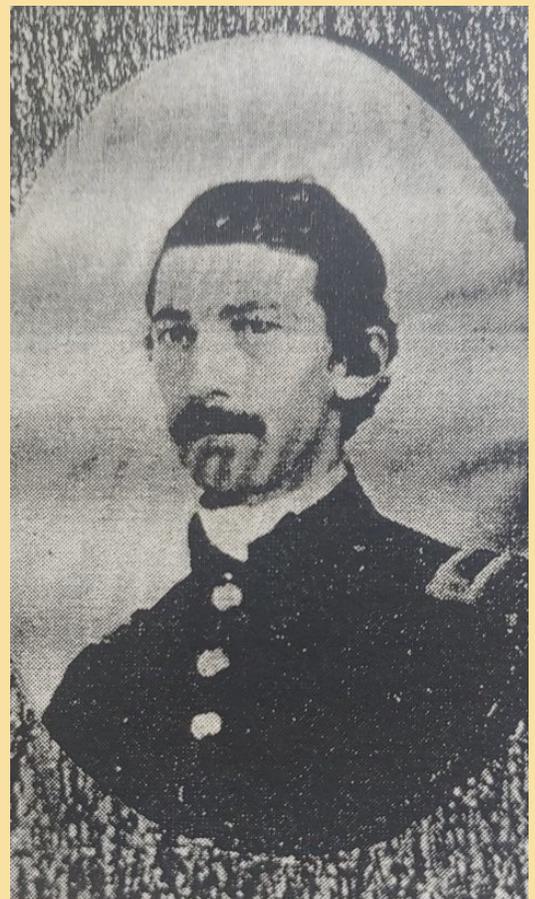
An interesting quote from Dr. Salk who did not obtain a patent for the vaccine: "Who owns the patent? Well, the people, I would say. There is no patent, how can you patent the sun?"

## NHS entrusted with Hamlin Eaton's sword!

An exciting new acquisition for the Museum came from Hamlin Eaton's great grandson Bruce Dierensfield, Ph.D. (Sidebar: like his great grandfather Bruce is an educator – professor of the Honors History Program at Canisius College in New York.) Bruce has gifted us with the sword and sheave that Hamlin Eaton carried during the Civil War. The sword is quite awesome – heavy metal, beautifully engraved, but most importantly seeing it and holding it really helps to bring history alive and also further increases our great appreciation of Hamlin Eaton. It is a wonderful addition to both our Civil War collection and our Hamlin Eaton memorabilia.

In the fall of 1861 Maine organized five batteries of light artillery. Hamlin Eaton, who at that time was teaching along with his father at "the Eaton School" in Kents Hill, became a member of the 4<sup>th</sup> Maine Battery. He rose from private to lieutenant fairly quickly and served with great distinction in the battles of Cedar Mountain and at Antietam. He received a medical discharge in January of 1863 and returned to Kents Hill. Perhaps seeking a change following the death of his first wife and their infant daughter, in July 1865 Hamlin visited several leading citizens of Norridgewock to discuss the possibility of his

founding a school in this shire town. He was enthusiastically received and the rest is history!

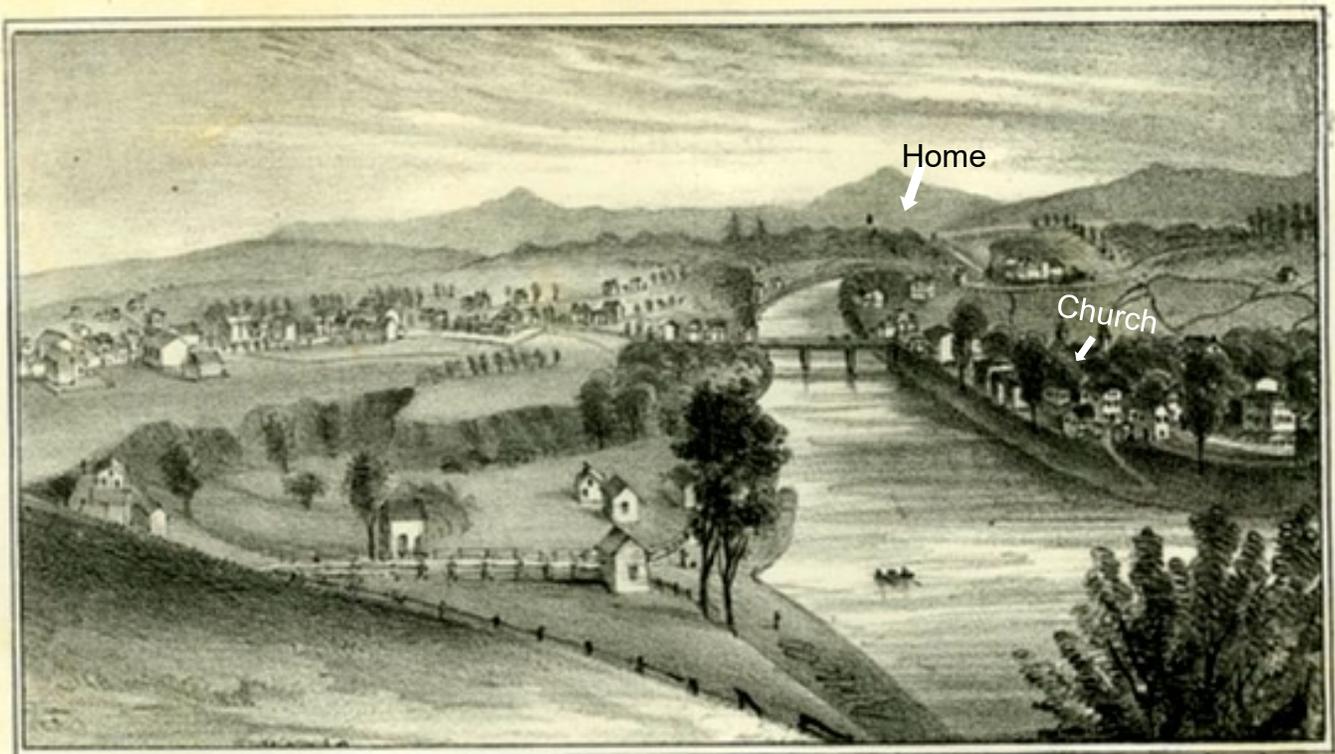


Lt. Hamlin Fairfield Eaton, 1862

(3 years before arriving in Norridgewock)

## Picture this ...

A recent inquiry to NHS through our website was about the Land of Rest ("LOR") cemetery on Father Rasle Road. With this inquiry I became immersed in the lives and times of some of our earliest settlers, Solomon and Lucy Bixby. Several NHS newsletters over the years have referenced the Bixbys. An article in the Fall 1998 newsletter was based on a talk given by Patrica Baldwin. The Baldwins live right down the road from LOR, in the farm house Solomon and Lucy called home (built circa 1790). From the article I learned that Solomon and Lucy Bixby had 12 children and all but one survived to adulthood. (Large families were, of course, common in those days.) I haven't counted all of the grandchildren, but I know from the article that the oldest son Amasa had 12 children, second oldest son Rufus had 14, and I think all but one of the other 10 siblings had children. The article reports that Solomon, in addition to being a selectman for 14 years, was also one of the original organizers of the Congregational Church. He became a deacon as did his son Rufus. Patrica Baldwin reported : "One Sunday in 1833 sixteen children were baptized and all of them had the surname "Bixby"!! As a minister's daughter, I smiled at the vision of all these people # 1 getting ready and then #2 getting to the church! I wonder how many buggies and wagons were involved? Many would have come down from the Father Rasle Road, about 4 miles from the church, or from Madison, where many of Rufus Bixby's in-laws, the Westons, lived. I pulled the map below from William Allen's 1849 History of Norridgewock to give you a better sense of the journey that the families made.



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

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# DMO LANDSCAPING

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- Dues/Contribution Form (Make check payable to NHS. Send to: NHS PO Box 903 Norridgewock, Me 04957 )

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