

# EXPEDITION MESSENGER

NEWSLETTER OF THE  
ARNOLD EXPEDITION  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NOVEMBER 2005

## Report of Annual Meeting Oct. 12, 2005

Submitted by Dan Warren

The meeting was held at the Ground Round Restaurant in Augusta. A buffet lunch was enjoyed at noon and the business meeting began at 1:00 PM. Twenty seven people were in attendance.

The business meeting was called to order by president Dan Warren. He reviewed the activities of the Society over the past season. First were the trail reports.

Steve Clark reported that two trips had been made to work on the Carry Ponds trails. On the weekend of May 20-22 a group of five including Ron Curtis, Jay Leggett, Casey Clark, Jim Thomas and Steve worked on opening and marking the trail from Wyman Lake to Middle Carry Pond. One crew cleared the blowdowns and the second painted blazes on the trail using 2 X 6" orange blazes. Seven new laminated informational and directional signs were installed along the route. These were installed on heavy cedar posts supplied by Ron Gamage.

A second trip was made in mid September to complete the blazing by Steve and Sheni Clark. This was done so that the entire trail, 3.2 m. between Wyman Lake and East Carry Pond, and the 0.9 m. section between East Carry and Middle Carry are now complete and up to "standard."

Duluth Wing reported that the portage trail between the Chain of Ponds and Arnold Pond is open, but needs much work. Clearing was done on the trail in the vicinity of Horseshoe Pond. He said that there were two sections of trail which were boggy and will need bog bridging to make it fully passable. More work will be done on this next year.

President Warren then- described and read notes from a trip along the route of the expedition that was conducted by Steve Sheinkin, who was using a light weight boat. At last report, he had ascended the Kennebec and Dead Rivers as far as the Chain of Ponds. He is intending to go all the way to Quebec.

## HIGHLIGHTS IN THIS ISSUE

- Annual Meeting Report
- Meet Your New Officers
- Article, *Henry's Mistake*
- Article, *The Savanna*
- Christmas at the Colburn House
- Trail Reports

President Warren also said that some work had been done at the Colburn House but that he would let Tom Desjardin, the Historic Site Specialist from the Bureau of Parks and Lands describe what may be done.

Tom Desjardin of the State Bureau of Parks and Lands was the main speaker. Tom said that there is a reasonable chance that up to \$ 100,000 may become available to paint the house, barn and carriage house. This will be determined later this fiscal year. He explained that the high cost was due to the special process of removing lead paint safely. The house will be painted white. He also said they would examine the sills of both the carriage house and barn. Some clapboard replacement will also be done. The barn floor will also be examined to determine if repairs to the support timbers will need to be done.

He said that the very old house on the river, called the Allen property will be tom down as it is too far gone. He also said that a foot trail running down from the Colburn House to the Allen property on the shore of the river would be highly desirable.

Tom also described a new book about the expedition he has written, which will be available around December.

Voting for new directors was conducted. Nominated for a three year term were Rusty Arsenault, Stephen Clark, Susan Hutchins, Gene Lockyer, and Taisto Maki. For a two year term Sherri Clark was nominated. A motion was made, seconded and passed to have the secretary cast one vote-to accept the slate as submitted by the nominating committee.

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## Annual Meeting, (cont. from page 1)

Officers nominated for one year terms were voted upon. For president, Stephen Clark; vice president, Jay Robbins; for secretary, Sherri Clark and for Treasurer, Dan Warren.

It was acknowledged by all present that Dan Warren having completed eleven years as president was thanked for these many years of devotion and all his accomplishments in behalf of the Society.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:00 PM. A short directors meeting was held by the new president, Steve Clark in which plans for the coming year were discussed. Thirteen of the fifteen directors were present (absent were Hutchins and Maki).

## Meet Your New Officers

A full slate of officers were elected at the Annual Meeting. Two are long time key members of the Society; two are quite new to the Board. Below are brief biographies of the four.

### President

New President Steve Clark is a native of the Waterville area for most of his life. His family owned for many years, the historic Rice House in Winslow on the banks of the Kennebec River, below Ticonic Falls and on the route of the Expedition. A graduate of Waterville High School, MCI and the U of Me, he has spent most of his life as an educator and coach at both Waterville High School and Kennebec Valley Community College.

He is past president of the Maine Appalachian Trail Club, a project he has been involved with for over fifty years. He has also served as vice chairman, New England for the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. He has served on numerous other Maine environmental groups.

He was the editor of the Guide to the Appalachian Trail for 15 years and has authored *The Guide to Baxter Park and Katahdin*, in its fifth edition and more recently, a guide and history of the Expedition to Quebec, entitled *Following Their Footsteps*. He currently resides in Shapleigh, Maine with his wife Sherri.

### Vice President

John (Jay Robbins Jr.)

Jay is a long time member of the AEHS and brings to this organization, an extensive background and experience in the understanding of history's role in our modern life. Among his many professional experiences, he operates Robbins Historical Research Inc. from his home in Richmond.

He is a graduate of Bowdoin College in the area of environmental studies and received his masters from the U of SM in New England and American Studies. He has had extensive experience in business and government at the local and regional level. He has served as town manager in Richmond (1999-2003) and has served on a variety of other town boards and commissions.

He currently is serving as both VP and the Executive of the Lincoln County Historical Ass. and on the Kennebec-Chaudiere Heritage Corridor Corp. as treasurer. He also serves on a significant number of area historical societies and related groups. He specializes in the history, archeology and landscapes of the Kennebec tidewater lands.

With this rich experience, Jay brings great strengths and experience to the AEHS.

### Secretary

Sherri Clark

Hi there, my name is Sherri Clark and I am honored to be your new Arnold Expedition Historical Society secretary. I have been rather busy in my 34 years of living in Maine. My main interests have always been the homeless, the hungry, the handicapped and the elderly. Over the past years I have been instrumental in starting the meals-on-wheels program in Maine and the Maine Hospice program. I have also been the State Rep. for the National Shut-In Society, a member of a health clinic in my community, teaching residents about healthy diets and ways of living, including providing blood pressure clinics.

During this time I was voted as Maine's first "Woman of the Year" and also Sanford's first "Woman of the Year". I have also owned and operated The Oakwood Inn in Sanford with husband Steve Clark for 5 years. During all this time I have raised three children (two of whom are handicapped) and have owned and operated an assisted living facility for the elderly named the Spring Hill Farm, in Shapleigh, Maine for 34 years. I am also an avid photographer, providing many photos that were included in my husband's book, *Following Their Footsteps* about the Arnold Expedition.

### Treasurer

Daniel H. Warren, Jr. 56, is a lifelong resident of Pittston, Maine. Son of Daniel & Betty Warren, also of Pittston. Attended Thomas College in Waterville, earned a Bachelors of Science degree in Business Administration. Principle Bank Examiner for the state of Maine, Bureau of Financial Institutions, Department of Professional & Financial Regulation.

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(Warren, cont. from page 2)

Has completed advanced studies in trust management and administration at Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill.

Descended from some of Pittston's earliest settlers including Jeremiah Colburn (Rueben Colburn's father), Dr. Zacharias & Lucy Colburn Flitner, and Capt. William Hanover. He owns the farm that has been in the family since 1794. He developed an abundant curiosity and love for history in his early teens, primarily in genealogy and local history. Owns, and is preserving the c.1880's site of the only gold mill in Pittston, operated by the Snow Mountain Gold Mining and Milling Corporation, which had been established by his great-grandfather, Rufus A. Snow. His interest in the outdoors led him to cross country & down hill skiing, hiking the Appalachian Trail, the Arnold Trail, Katahdin, and volunteering for the Maine Appalachian Trail Club and Arnold Trail work bees.

Dan has also served extensively with a variety of local service organizations and historical societies. He is presently the resident caretaker of the Colburn House, (the Arnold Expedition Historical Society museum), trail volunteer in Carry Ponds area and contributes to archaeological research along the Arnold Trail at various locations. He has been a director since 1993, served as 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President 1993-4, and President from 1994-2005. Has spent countless hours exploring the Arnold Trail, particularly in the Carry Ponds area

*Editor's Note* Dan has served as President of the Society since 1994 and continues to contribute mightily.

### **A very big THANKS to Bob Cunningham**

Robert Cunningham, long time officer of the AEHS, has stepped down this year as Treasurer of the Society. He has served in this capacity for many years and has guided the Society into a solid financial position. He remains as a director of the Society and continues to contribute in many ways.

Bob is the only Director who was present prior to and participated in the great **1975 Re-enactment**. Bob has contributed more than 30 years of service to the Society and to the memory of the men who were on the 1775 Expedition.

*Thanks Bob, for a job well done.*

## *Christmas at the Colburn House*

ON WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21 THE SOCIETY WILL CELEBRATE 247 YEARS OF CHRISTMASSES AT THE COLBURN HOUSE IN PITTSSTON, WITH A TRADITIONAL CELEBRATION OF BOTH THE CHRISTMAS SEASON AND THE WINTER SOLSTICE.

THE MAIN EVENT WILL BE THE SINGING OF SUSAN PLANTE, ACCOMPANIED BY KEYBOARD VIRTUOSO, MIKE BIASIN. THEY WILL PERFORM TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS MUSIC OF BOTH ENGLISH AND FRENCH ORIGIN. VISITORS WILL ENJOY THE SING-ALONGS AS WELL AS THE WONDERFUL SINGING OF SUSAN.

THE SOCIETY HAS SPONSORED OPEN HOUSES IN THE PAST, BUT THIS ONE WILL BE SPECIAL AND FOCUSES AROUND TRADITIONAL ENGLISH AND FRENCH SONGS OF THE SEASON. THE OPEN HOUSE WILL BEGIN AT 5:00 PM AND EXTEND THROUGH 9:00 PM.

MEMBERS AND THEIR GUESTS CAN ENJOY WHAT LIFE IN 1758 WAS LIKE IN THE LARGE "KEEPING ROOM" HEATED BY A ROARING FIREPLACE, THE SAME THAT KEPT THE COLBURN FAMILY WARM SO MANY WINTERS AGO. VISITORS CAN EXAMINE THE BIRTHING ROOM, THE DINING AND THE LIVING ROOMS, AS WELL AS THE MANY HISTORICAL EXHIBITS RELATING TO THE 1775 BENEDICT ARNOLD EXPEDITION. ARNOLD STAYED HERE FOR SEVERAL DAYS DURING THE EXPEDITION'S EPIC JOURNEY TO CAPTURE QUEBEC.

REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED.

WE INVITE ALL WHO WISH TO EXPERIENCE A TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS IN AN HISTORIC HOME, SIMILAR TO THOSE OF AN ERA MORE THAN TWO CENTURIES AGO, TO JOIN US IN AN EVENING OF SONG AND MUSIC. THERE IS NO CHARGE. THE EVENT IS SPONSORED BY THE ARNOLD EXPEDITION HISTORICAL SOCIETY. FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CALL (207) 582-7080.

Directions: Cross the bridge over the Kennebec River from Gardiner to Randolph and turn south on Route 27 for 2.7 miles. At a brown State of Maine Historic Site sign, turn right onto the Ripley Road and immediately left onto the Arnold Road and pass a church. Follow the Arnold Road for 1/10th M. The Colburn House will be on the right and is painted red with a separate red barn. The AEHS sign is on the front lawn.

### **Notice to AEHS Annual Members.**

We are changing the process of membership renewal for those members that renew annually. Beginning January 1, 2006 we will be sending out the renewal notices to all such members, rather than staggering them on a monthly basis as has been done in the past. This is designed to simplify the process of renewal. Thanks for your understanding and continuing support of the Society.

## *The Savanna*

By Stephen Clark

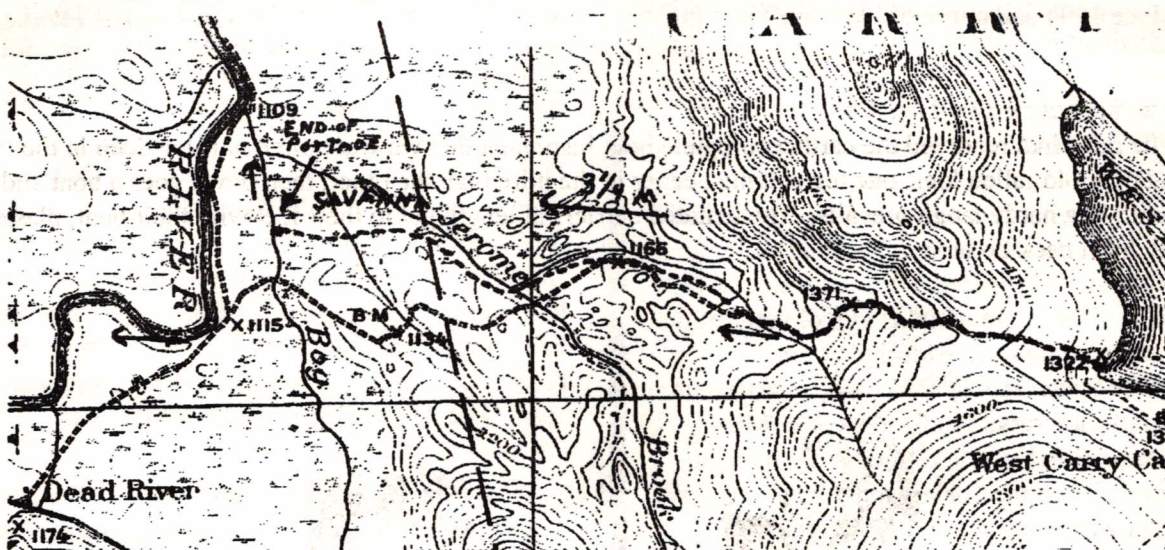
On Oct. 16, 1775 Arnold's party crossed what he and others called a "savanna." This was located on the forth part (most westerly) of the Great Carrying Place, from West Carry Pond to the end of the portage at Bog Brook, a tributary of the Dead River. The day before, he had crossed West Carry Pond and climbed through a gap [between Round Top Mtn. and a hill further north], then descended a mile to the edge of the feature he called a savanna. He and his party camped here for the night.

A savanna (also spelled savannah) is described as a flat, treeless grass-land. It was memorable to the men of the Expedition for several reasons. The country they had traversed to this point had been hemmed in by a continuous forest primeval. There had been little chance to observe the topography of the land through which they passed in any significant way. Suddenly, here was this wide open, treeless area with views of a "snow covered, forked mountain" (Mt. Bigelow) in the distance to the west.

This savanna and those similar, are known to most Maine woodsmen as a spruce bog, usually to be avoided and always described with serious oaths. This is so because the low grass and bushes on the bog's surface, is a thin veneer covering a sinister layer of wet, black mud, tangled with a network of roots and half rotted fallen tree trunks.

With nearly a thousand men trudging back and forth over this bog with heavy loads and bateaux, it did not take long to punch through this thin crust of grass and moss, into the mud below. Arnold describes this muck as being knee deep. If their shoes or boots had not already been in bad shape before, they were dealt a severe blow here. These bogs have been known to suck the shoes right off the unsuspecting traveler's feet. It was so bad that Arnold, after crossing the bog and reaching Bog Brook at the end of the portage, ordered Major Meigs to send back ten men from each of his three companies to improve the path for the fourth division to follow. By this time the crossing of the savanna must have looked like a wide, muddy cattle path. Improvements usually consist of "corduroying" the path by cutting and laying thin, delimbed trees cross wise to provide a base to walk on rather than sink in the muck. This technique was widely know to woodsmen of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries which was used to fill in bad spots on the path or tote road, thus avoiding having heavily laden wagons from sinking to their axils.

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Map of West Carry Pond to Bog Brook portion of the Great Carrying Place  
The approximate location of the Portage Trail is shown by a dotted line.

(*The Savanna*, cont. from page 4)

This savanna is clearly shown on the 1928 USGS topo map. It measures approximately 3/4 of a mile on an east-west axis and more than a mile on a north-south axis. Jerome Brook passed through and fed the swamp. So the Expedition's traverse of this would have been due westward to Bog Brook, a crossing of 3/4 of a mile.

It is unclear from the journals, as to what point, after descending from the gap, that the portage trail entered the Savanna. Since the trail had existed for many years prior to 1775, Native Americans would have determined and established the most advantageous route. They used the Savanna as it was open and easier for them to cross with a light bark canoe than weaving through the nearby dense and tangled forest which often borders such spruce bogs. As the portage trail came out of the gap, traveling westward, the route encounters a small brook draining the west side of the gap. Native Americans most likely would have followed this as the banks of such streams provide a more graduated descent. This small brook soon emptied into the larger Jerome Brook, which then led down hill and into the Savanna. It is most likely that the portage trail followed Jerome Brook all the way to the edge of the swampy area. From this point, it is almost exactly 3/4 of a mile due west to Bog Brook at the end of the portage. This matches the approximate distance estimated by several of the Journalists. This, of course is all speculation, as any possible evidence to confirm the route now lies under the waters of Flagstaff Lake. However, this suggested route is probably the best guess we can make.

The accompanying map also shows that the old 19<sup>th</sup> century West Carry Pond Tote Road after leaving the Dead River and crossing Bog Brook, was laid out to swing more southerly to gain higher ground and avoid this boggy area. The old tote road then headed uphill, crossing Jerome Brook, then continuing east, following the same route as the Expedition Portage Trail through the gap, and downhill to the shore of West Carry Pond. The elevation gain over this gap is more than 200 feet (east to west), a hefty climb for the heavily laden soldiers.

The entire savanna was inundated by Flagstaff Lake in 1949-50. The nearest USGS Base Marker to the savanna was at an elevation of 1115 feet. The pool elevation of Flagstaff Lake is 1146 feet. So the entire bog-savanna is now under approximately 31 feet of water. Thus all the secrets that the Savanna and this portion of the portage trail hold, now lies submerged until some future age when the Long Falls Dam disappears and once again this land will emerge from its present watery veil.

*Capt. Dearborn's Journal, for Oct. 14, 1775*

".....and the last mile, a spruce swamp Knee deep in mire all the way."

*Melvin's Journal, for Oct. 16, 1775*

"... part of the way over a boggy swamp, overgrown with white moss and bushes, which seemed half withered; found it difficult getting over our bateaux and barrels, sinking knee deep in moss and mud."

*Morison's Journal for Oct 11, 1775*

"The rains had rendered the earth a complete bog; insomuch that we were often half leg deep in the mud, stumbling over old fallen logs, one leg sinking deeper in the mire than the other, then down goes a boat and the carriers with it, a hardy laugh prevails. The irritated carriers at length get to their feet with their boat, plastered with mud from neck to heel ..."

Crossing the Savanna  
courtesy of the Library  
of Congress



## HENRY'S MISTAKE THE MYSTERIOUS JEREMIAH By Frank A. Getchell

[editor's note: Frank Getchell is an AEHS member who is a lifelong resident of Vassalboro, Maine. He lives near Getchell's Corner in that town. He is a direct descendant of the Getchell men who participated in the Expedition]

There is a detail in the History of the Arnold expedition to Quebec that is in need of correction. John Joseph Henry stated that his two guides in Lt. Steel's party were John Horn and Jeremiah Getchell. I believe that Henry had a lapse in memory in this case. It probably was John Getchell and Jeremiah Horn. John Getchell did live in Vassalboro. There was a Jeremiah Horn in the next generation. He might have been a namesake of his father or uncle.

At 36 years after the fact [*Henry wrote his journal of the Expedition in 1811*] it is quite understandable for anyone to forget, especially names. I have done extensive genealogical research and John Horn or Jeremiah Getchell do not appear anywhere in that period. Church records, court, state archives, U.S. census of 1790, private or any other records do not show them. Henry was with Getchell on September 23 according to Henry and Kenneth Roberts. Arnold's secretary, Captain Oswald said it was the 24th but he probably included Lt. Steel's departure with Lt. Church's although Steel left Fort Western a day before Church.

Henry and Getchell parted on or about October 10 at Dead River. That was an acquaintance of only 17 days on an expedition that lasted more than three months.

Although some genealogists claim that there were four or five Getchell brothers on the expedition, there is record of only two, John and Nehemiah. Dennis, another brother, took part in the pre-march scouting trip two weeks before the Expedition left Fort Western. The question has been, which one was with Lt. Steel and which with Lt. Church. The record plainly shows, when carefully considered, that John was with Steel. When Steel, Henry and Getchell arrived at the Great Carry, Henry stated that Getchell said that he had never been across the carry before. That Getchell couldn't have been Nehemiah [or Dennis] because Nehemiah had been across to Dead River two weeks before on the pre-march reconnoiter. This latter fact is documented in Reuben Colburn's bill to The United States of America, dated July 3, 1786 [as stated in Justin Smith's, *Arnold's March from Cambridge to Quebec*, page 293]. Henry has been faulted for lapses of memory but no one has accused him of fabrication.

Arnold arrived at the Great Carry on October 11. Steel and John Getchell returned there from Dead River on the same day. Arnold paid John Getchell one month's wages, dated October 6 which was an erroneous date entry. Arnold made no entries from October 6 or before, to October 27, a period of three weeks or more which was unique in his entire pay record. He had to have made many entries from memory with evident error. It must have been on the 11th or 12th, when they were in the same place that the wages were paid. That is not to say that the wage payment date is critical to identification; only that it seems more likely.

On October 11, John Pierce recorded that he had been assigned to Steel's command, which explains why, when he speaks of Getchell, he speaks of him as Steel's guide. Pierce records that Steel and Getchell upset a canoe on October 20. Pierce records on October 22 that "Getchell, our guide returned home this day." That is consistent with the day he started, September 23 and Arnold's payment of one month's wages. Nehemiah, meanwhile was with Arnold or Major Meigs. Arnold, on October 26 recorded, "Sent back Nehemiah Petchell to pilot up the rear." Major Meigs reported payment of wages to Nehemiah on October 28. The Getchell who returned home from Steel's party had to be John.

It seems just and proper that the credit from Henry's praise of his Getchell guide should belong to John Getchell. History would be better served as well.

Don't Forget *Christmas at the Colburn House* on December 21  
Bring a friend, and celebrate an old fashion Christmas with song and music!

## Historic Arnold Expedition Portage Trail Improved

This season, members of the Arnold Expedition Historical Society worked to clear and improve the historic Benedict Arnold Portage Trail named the Great Carrying Place. The old trail, which ran between the Kennebec and Dead Rivers, was used by the 1775 military expedition, on their way northward to attempt to capture the fortified city of Quebec. It has been maintained for years by the Society, but is not widely known or used because it was not well marked.

The thirteen mile portage trail left the Kennebec River south of the town of Caratunk on the west side of the river, then proceeded out of the river valley directly west, utilizing the three Carry Ponds, eventually reaching the Dead River. Both ends of the route now lie under the impoundments of Wyman Lake on the trail's eastern end, and Flagstaff Lake on its western end. But most of the original trail is still intact and followable.

The AEHS has attempted over the past few years to upgrade the historic trail so that it may be easily followed by the general public.

On the weekend of May 20-22, five members of the organization removed blowdowns with chain saws, pruned back brush, painted in new marking blazes and

installed seven new interpretive and directional sign on heavy cedar posts. The crew consisted of Steve Clark of Shapleigh, Casey Clark of Clinton, Ron Curtis of Milton, NH, Jay Leggett of Portland, OR and Jim Thomas of Mexico, ME.

A second trip in August by Steve and Sherri Clark completed the paint blazing so there is now a continuous marked trail from Wyman Lake to the east shore of Middle Carry Pond. The Appalachian Trail can then be utilized from Middle Carry to West Carry as the AT utilizes the old portage trail route to West Carry. The remainder of the portage trail from the west side of West Carry Pond to Flagstaff Lake will be completed next summer.

Ron Gamage of Cornville provided the heavy cedar posts used in the new sign erection.

The trail is now easily followable, starting from the Peasant Ridge Road, in that town. The trail can be hiked as a day trip or an overnight using the portage trail, the Appalachian Trail and a series of tote roads through the Carry Ponds country, as far as the Long Falls Dam Road, north of the town of North New Portland. A short trail then leads to the shore of Flagstaff Lake where the portage trail ends.

### New sign installed at Portage Trail junction with Pleasant Ridge Road

#### 1775 Arnold Expedition Portage Trail

##### The Great Carrying Place

At this site, the Army left the Kennebec River, now inundated by Wyman Lake, portaging their heavy bateaux and equipment. The portage trail left the valley westward thirteen miles to the Dead River.

AEHS

#### 1775 Arnold Expedition Portage Trail

- ← 0.6m. Jct. with Appalachian Trail.
- ← 2.5m. West Carry Pond via AT and Portage Trail
- 1.4m. East Carry Pond via tote road →
- 3.9m. Pleasant Ridge Road →

AEHS

### New sign installed on Carry Ponds Road, near Middle Carry

Coming events:

December 21, *Christmas at the Colburn House*

We need B & W photos of the Arnold Trail of either a current or historic nature for future editions of this newsletter. Please send to Secretary, AEHS 599 Shapleigh Corner Road, Shapleigh, ME 04076

To Contact us:

Arnold Expedition Historical Society

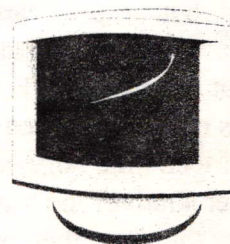
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### Christmas Suggestions:

Books: Justin Smith's *Arnold's March From Cambridge to Quebec*

The most definitive history of the Expedition, written 1903

Reprinted in Paperback, \$38.85 plus 4.00 for S&H.

Stephen Clark's *Following Their Footsteps*, a modern history and guide to the Expeditions route, illustrated, with 25 maps of route, printed 2003

\$18.95 plus 4.00 for S&H

Colburn House Christmas Ornament, \$10.75 plus 2.50 for S&H

Send orders to AEHS address and make checks payable to the AEHS



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