



33 Arnold Road, Pittston, ME, 04345  
Tel: 207-582-7080

# Arnold Expedition Historical Society

Pittston, Maine, September 2007 Newsletter 109

## **New Mailing Address:**

It will be easier to find the Colburn House and the Arnold Expedition Historical Society, now that we have a street address. Everyone that corresponds with the historical society should discard any old PO Box or rural route (RR) addresses. The new address is **Arnold Expedition Historical Society, 33 Arnold Road, Pittston, ME, 04345**. Our phone number is still 207-582-7080.

We are in the process of updating our web site, a much needed project that volunteer Tom Desjardin has described as very exciting. Tom will unveil his hard work at the annual meeting and again in a newsletter later this fall or early winter.

## **Invitation to the Annual Meeting**

On Sunday, October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2007, we will meet at the Ground Round Restaurant, 110 Community Drive, Augusta, ME (access road for the Augusta Civic Center). From Highway 95, take the Augusta North, Exit 112, to Highway 27. You will want to head towards down town Augusta for a very short distance. Community Drive is just across from the Wal\*Mart entrance road.

Registration begins at 11:00am, with a buffet luncheon of beef tips and baked stuff chicken which will be served at 12:00 noon. By 1:00pm we will have a brief business meeting, before we move on to our guest speaker.

Please call the Colburn House at 207-582-7080, no later than October 4<sup>th</sup> to make your reservations. Please leave your name and the number in your party. Payment can be made by mail or at the door. The total cost will be \$20.00 for members who pre-register, \$25 for non-members and those who arrive without pre-registration.

This year we will have Lee Cranmer, an archaeologist for the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, as our guest speaker. Lee's topic will be Fort Halifax in Winslow. He has studied the fort for many years and is preparing a book on the subject. Lee will also have actual artifacts from the fort on display. There will also be artifacts from Arnold's Expedition on display.

Fort Halifax, the nation's oldest blockhouse, built by the British Colonists in 1754, in Winslow, was a military post, and served as a storage depot for Benedict Arnold's Expedition to Quebec, later the home of Ephraim Ballard, whose wife Martha Ballard became the nation's most famous colonial midwife.

## **Exciting things along the trail**

Earlier this spring, the initial planning session for long range trail work, map making and a possible trail history project was begun. Several interested parties met in Kingfield to discuss society

objectives, financial resources, and such. After a long summer, additional meetings are now being planned. The directors are tentatively scheduled to meet with a sponsoring organization to discuss projects and funding. These projects are long overdue, and have been talked about with much enthusiasm. With help from some new members, we are committed to moving these projects forward and will be reporting our progress on a more timely manner. A winter or early spring newsletter should have more information and report a progress timetable. Thanks to a dedicated few, we will be focusing more on the trail. This is good news for the society and for the touring public, too.

### **Summer 2007 at the Colburn House**

July and August of 2007 was a banner year for weekends at Colburn House, thanks to members of the society, Tom and Lori Ann Desjardin, Mabelle Haynes, Susan Hutchins, Gene Lockyer and Danny Warren; also helping were Pittston Literary and Historical Society members Gwenn Dunbar and Juanita McKenney. Each and every Saturday and Sunday was covered by volunteers and open to the visiting public.

We had special group visitors in July, August and September. The Flitner family (descendents of Lucy Colburn & Dr. Zacharias Flitner) gathered and toured the house after the burial service of a family member. In August, Ed Barr's tour arrived somewhat late but enthusiastic. Folks came from as far away as California and a good tour was had by all. Danny, Susan, Tom and Lori Ann were invited to Old Fort Western for a fort tour and a colonial style dinner. In September the Hanscom Family had their family reunion in the caretakers quarters and toured the house as well.

The new open house hours of 1-4 worked very well, especially for the volunteers! Spending 3 hours at the Colburn House instead of 8 makes for a very pleasant volunteer experience. Hopefully, more members will be willing to step forward and sign up. The Docent Tour Guide has also been updated and is more user friendly. Those interested in volunteering for a day, or a weekend in 2008 may contact Susan at [susanhutchins@outdrs.net](mailto:susanhutchins@outdrs.net).

### **Exciting things in the works for the Colburn House and the AEHS museum**

The remainder of the newsletter will bring you up to date about a new enthusiasm at the Colburn House. New volunteers always bring fresh thinking and lively planning. Tom & Lori Ann Desjardin have a vision of welcoming visitors to a home sparkling with fresh paint, a keeping room more reminiscent of Reuben & Elizabeth Colburn's time, and sporting the likes of a functioning fireplace, food on the table, and great smells in the air. Already there are plans for some much needed redecorating. Tom, our historian, has plans for sprucing up our Arnold artifact displays, providing much needed interpretive signage and a hope of increasing visitor numbers and enthusiasm.

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS: Contact the society at the above address or:

President & Treasurer:  
Daniel H. Warren, Jr.  
33 Arnold Road  
Pittston, Me, 04345  
Ph (207) 582-7080

#### **AEHS MEMBERSHIP CLASSES:**

Student	\$ 3.00
Individual	\$ 20.00
Family	\$ 25.00
Contributing	\$ 50.00
Life	\$ 200.00

Int: [daniel.h.warren.jr@maine.gov](mailto:daniel.h.warren.jr@maine.gov)



JOHN ELIAS BALDACCI  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MAINE  
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION  
22 STATE HOUSE STATION  
AUGUSTA, MAINE  
04333-0022

PATRICK K. MCGOWAN  
COMMISSIONER

September 10, 2007

AEHS

Dear Member:

Lots of things have been happening recently relating to the Colburn House and I thought it was a good time to update all of you on our progress.

The Bowdoin College Art Museum has donated a nearly new display case for any artifacts that would be displayed in the house. The attached photos show the base of the case which also has a 36 inch high Plexiglas "bonnet" that would cover the artifacts. Because the bonnet fits in the channel around the outside of the base, it can be made almost air-tight.

My wife Lori-Ann and I recently purchased an 18 foot dugout canoe at an estate auction along with a deacon's bench which we have been restoring. The canoe will go in the barn along with the birchbark canoe and the remnants of the older dugout as examples of Native American watercraft and the two types that Arnold used on the Kennebec. The deacon's bench will be ready for display in the Keeping Room soon.

We recently discovered a brick from the Colburn brick yard with finger marks in it and this is on display in the house next to a lump of clay from the brickyard site. We also recently discovered a baseball sized piece of British flint on the property near the river. This has been worked by hand and struck with a metal hammer probably in efforts to make musket flints. There's no telling for certain whether it is an Arnold Expedition artifact or from Native American or British visitors to the shoreline, but it will be on display in the house along with some explanation of "flint-knapping" – the art of making musket flints from large pieces of flint.

I have also dropped off two granite posts that will hold a year-round interpretive panel about the house that will be displayed near the Arnold sesquicentennial plaque on the lawn. This will give visitors a brief introduction to the site even when the house is not open.

We have delivered pressure-treated posts to make a new signpost to replace the leaning post out on the main road. We will try to get a new wooden routed-letter sign in place next spring.

Another supporter of the house has donated six chairs for the dining room and some pewter items for the Keeping Room mantle along with a "sack-back" Windsor chair.

There has been much talk among a group of people interested in the Colburn House who would like to see it restored and reinvigorated into an attractive tourist experience, perhaps loosely linked to the Pownalborough Courthouse and Fort Western in helping promote one another. These include some Colburn descendants, banking interests, and others with a love of Maine history.

There has yet to be a meeting of these folks, but as I see it, they may become a sort of "Friends of the Colburn House" whose focus would be on improving the structure and grounds as the Arnold Expedition Historical Society sees fit. AEHS could identify needs and desires and the "Friends" would work to accomplish these things.

Already, ladies from a local garden club have offered to restore and care for the herb garden so we can demonstrate the use of herbs by frontier families and Arnold's men.

Obviously, a priority would be to finally deal with the exterior of the house by removing the lead-based paint, re-painting the house, and replacing the front door surround. There are many sheathing boards under the clapboards that need to be replaced as well. I met at the house with the Maine Historic Preservation Commission this week to devise a plan for this long overdue project.

We have many other hopes and dreams for the site, and our hope is to make the Colburn House a popular and educational site for tourists interested in the history of Maine, the Kennebec region, and especially Arnold's Expedition.

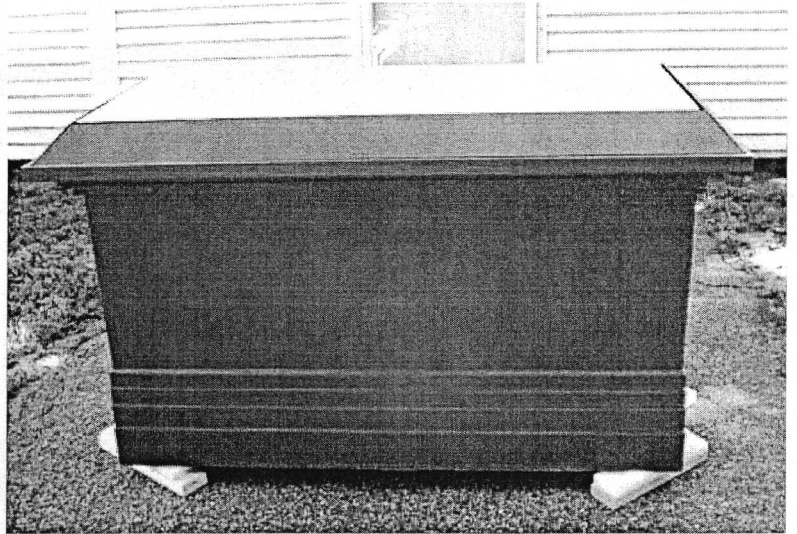
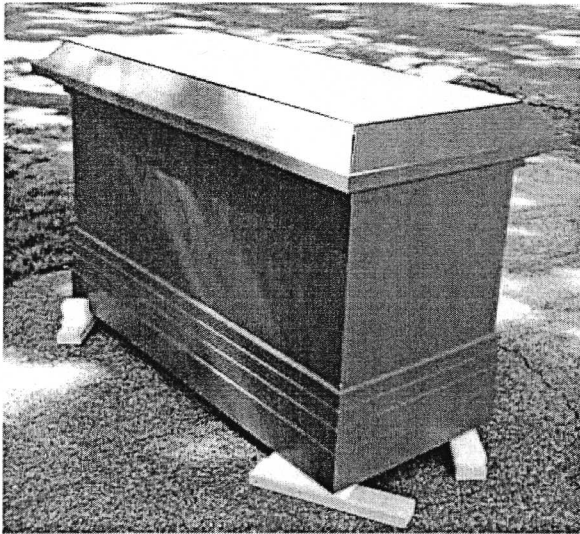
As for the trail as a whole, two different groups, the Maine Humanities Council and Old Fort Western, are providing bus tours of the Arnold Trail for the public this fall.

All of this is good news and bodes well for a great summer season next year and going forward. See you all at the Banquet on October 7.

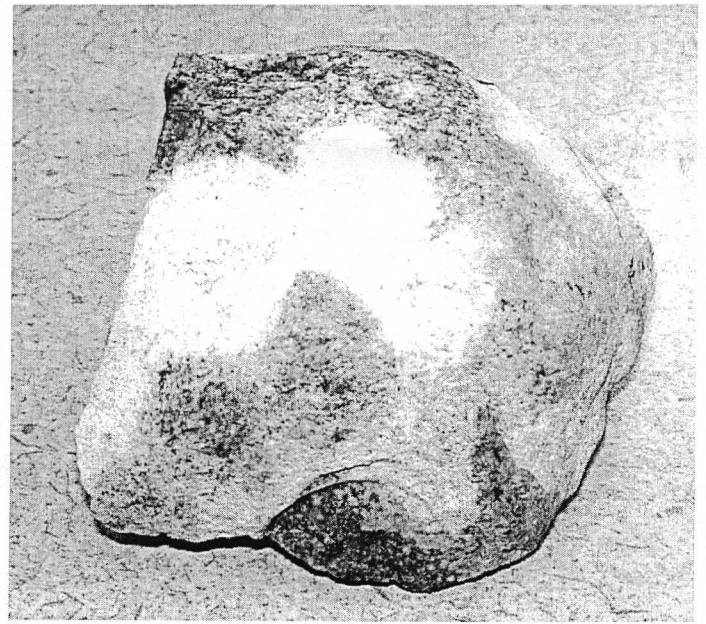
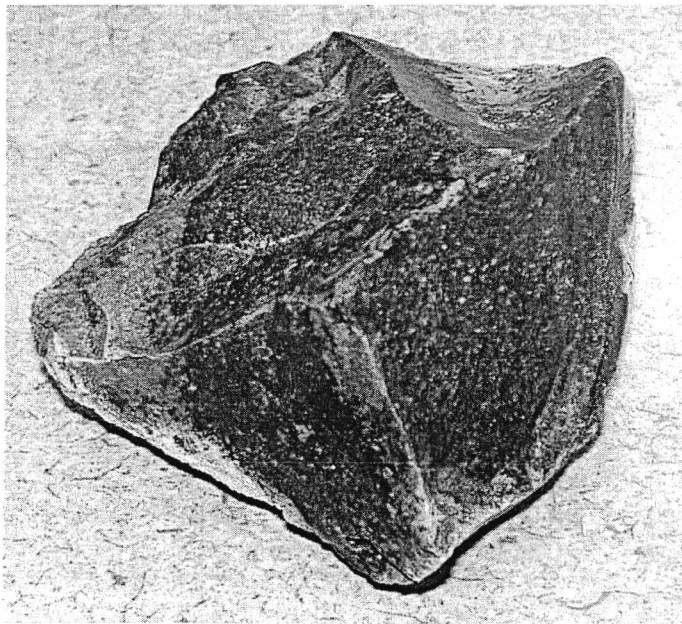
Sincerely,

Tom Desjardin  
Historian

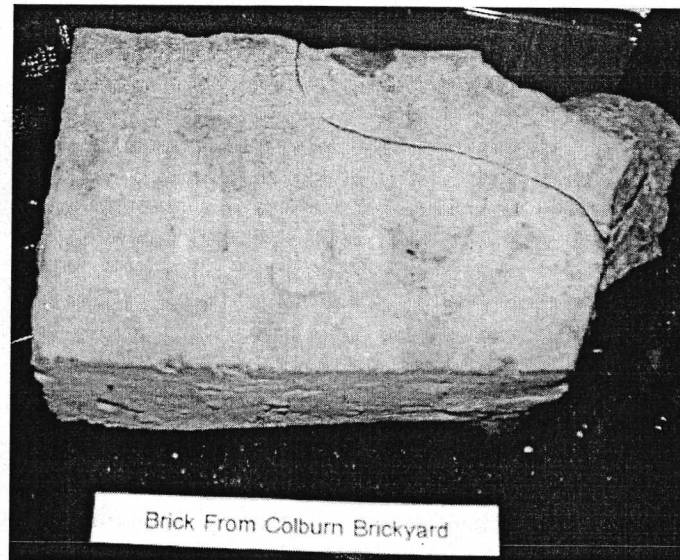




The very expensive and nearly new museum display case donated by Bowdoin College. It is 32" x 68" x 38" high. A ¼ inch thick Plexiglas "bonnet" (or vitrine – not shown) that is 36 inches tall goes on top. It fits in slots around the top of the base that can render the inside virtually air-tight. All of the expedition artifacts that we display at the Colburn House could safely and securely fit into this case. It weighs more than 200 lbs.



Two pictures of the British flint found on the Colburn House property near the Kennebec River last month. About the size of a baseball, this piece of raw flint (with chalk exterior) is from England and has been "worked" to create gun flints, possibly by men of Arnold's expedition. Notice the distinct hammer marks on the bottom of the photo at right.

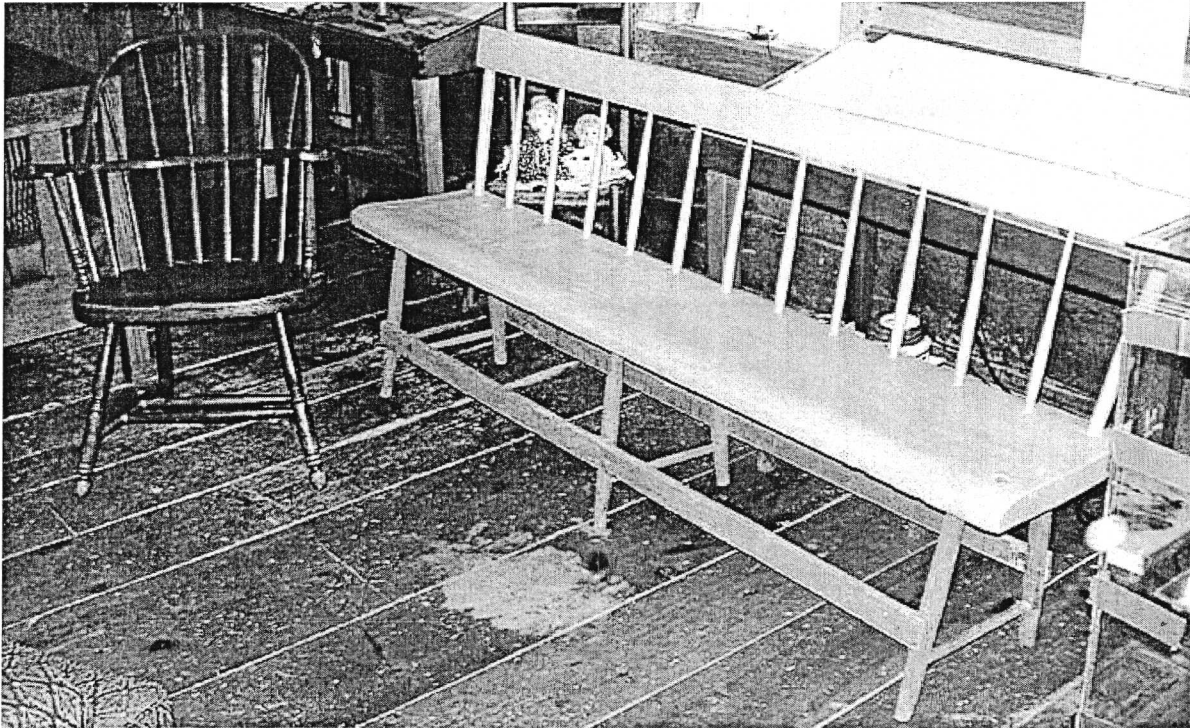


I recovered this brick from the 1790s portion of the Allen house on the Colburn House property. It was undoubtedly made in the Colburn brickyard nearby. It has what appears to be a "119" marked into it with a finger before it was fired. Susan Hutchins recovered some clay from the brickyard site to display next to the brick at the house.

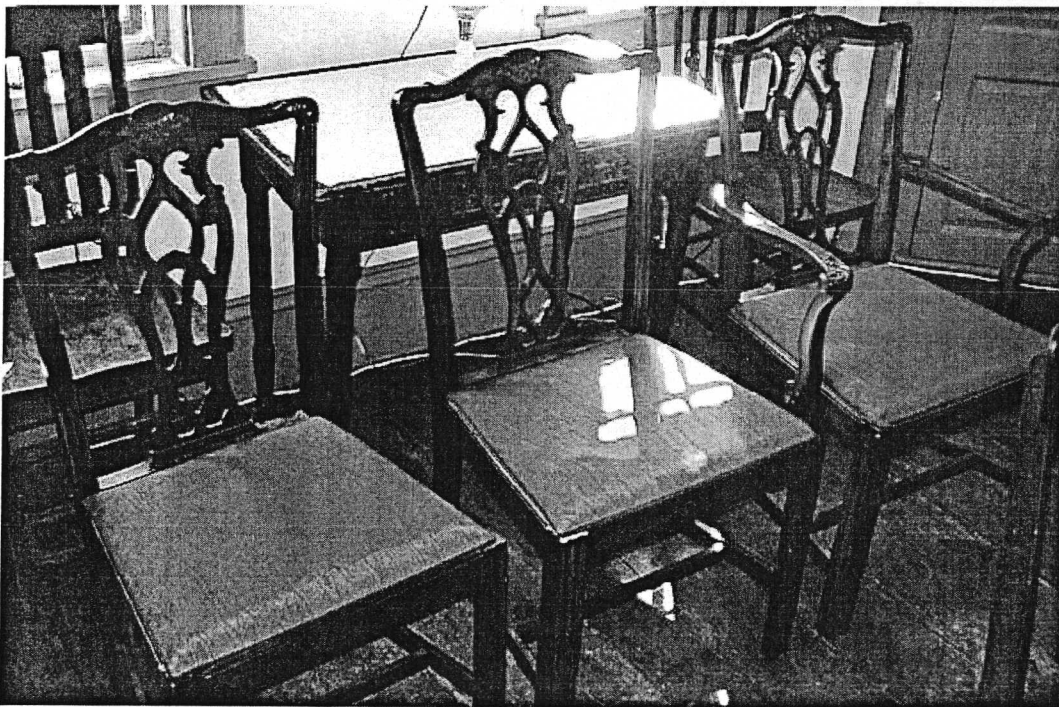


My wife, Lori-Ann, and I bought this 18 foot dugout canoe at an estate auction recently because we thought it would make a great museum display along with the birchbark canoe and the dugout remains already in the barn. Benedict Arnold started from the Colburn House in a birchbark canoe but it leaked so badly that he switched to a dugout at Fort Western. Now we just have to lift the silly thing into the barn. It weighs several hundred pounds!

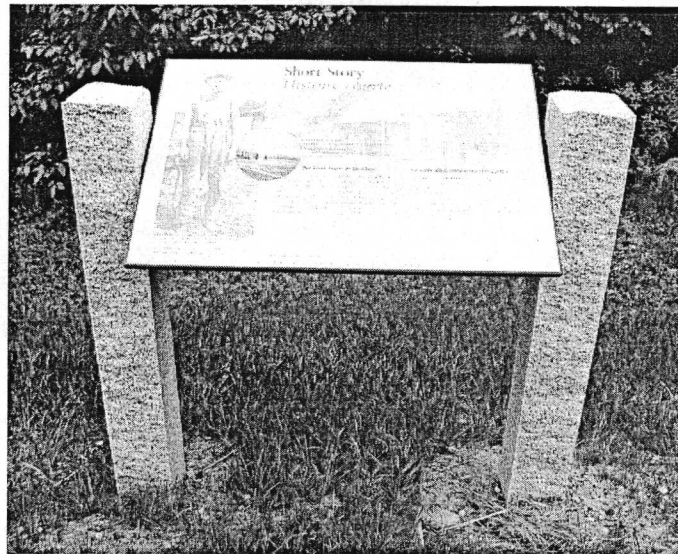




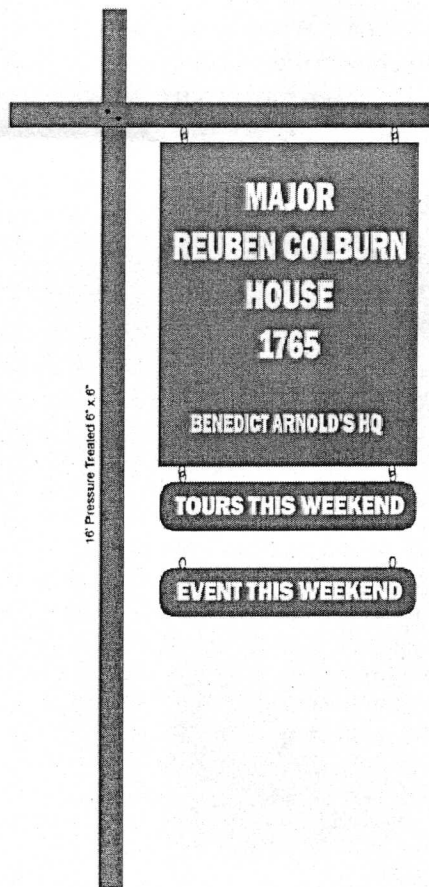
This newly acquired deacon's bench (still undergoing restoration) and a "sack back" Windsor chair are just two of the new acquisitions recently donated to the Colburn House for display in the "Keeping Room." Dan, Susan, Lori-Ann, and I have been trading ideas about restoring the room more to its original appearance when the Colburn's greeted Arnold and his men.



Another donor has given these three mahogany dining room chairs and will donate three more when he has finished the reupholstering. This will give us a set of 6 elegant and matching chairs for the dining room. I have also ordered some artificial food to place in a very valuable set of china that Dan Warren has on display on the dining table.



A sign very similar to this one will soon be placed on the lawn near the Arnold plaque so that visitors year-round can learn about the house and Arnold's March even when the house is not open. The granite posts are on-site and the sign is ordered and paid for.



By next spring, a new "yard-arm" sign like this one will replace the worn and tilted sign on the main road by the Colburn House. We will be able to hang the "Event This Weekend" or "Tours This Weekend" signs on the bottom when the house is open. The pressure treated posts, hardware, and concrete for the base are already at the house.