

# EXPEDITION MESSENGER

NEWSLETTER OF THE  
ARNOLD EXPEDITION  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY



September 2010

Editors, Steve and Sherri Clark

## Revolutionary War Reenactment Over The Great Carrying Place

On Columbus Day weekend, a group of Revolutionary War reenactors from Northern Virginia will be coming to Maine. They will be marching the entire Great Carrying place from what was then the Kennebec River, now Wyman Lake, to what was then the Dead River, now Flagstaff Lake. This route is roughly a distance of 11-12 miles. They will be in period dress uniforms using arms and tents similar to those used in 1775.

The Great Carrying Place was at that time, a long portage to avoid rapids, falls and fast water in the Upper Kennebec River to reach the more navigable Dead River. It had been used by Native Americans for hundreds of years. The original portage was 13 miles in length. It took the Expedition five torturous days to march and haul their bateaux and equipment across this rugged portage.

In 1775, the small army, led by Col. Benedict Arnold ascended the Kennebec and Dead Rivers on their way to attempt to capture the then English stronghold of Quebec City. The route led through an utter wilderness.

The lead company in the 1100 man army was a company of soldiers from Northern Virginia, the tough Daniel Morgan's Riflemen. It will be this Revolutionary War company that inspires this reenactment.

It will take two days to traverse the rugged terrain. Luckily they will not be carrying 400 pound bateaux and a half ton of equipment and food, as did the Expedition's men. They will set up a camp on Middle Carry Pond for two nights, during the march.

Since much of this route is difficult for the public to reach, the best time to view and meet the reenactors is on Saturday morning October 9 at 8:00 AM. This will be at a location on the Carry Ponds gravel road, in Pleasant Ridge Plantation, where the Great Carrying Place Portage Trail crosses and follows the Carry Ponds Road for about a half a mile.

This point can be reached via US 201 in Bingham, then follow the Pleasant Ridge Road, on the West side of Wyman Lake, and then onto the Carry Ponds Road. It is about 10 miles from US 201 to reach this point. There will be cars parked near this point so you will recognize the location. The marchers will be passing this point just for a short time,. Then they will enter the wooded foot path

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### HIGHLIGHTS IN THIS ISSUE

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- Annual Meeting to be held
- Election of Officers and Directors
- New Woodshed At Nichols Cabin
- Two Trail Clearing Trips in Spring
- No Gold, Silver or Artifacts
- News from the Colburn House
- The Second Portage, Skowhegan Falls



Reenactment, cont.

leading uphill and out of the valley towards the Carry Ponds. The private roads in that area are gated and not open to the general public. So this point mentioned is the only good viewing and contact point.

They will finish their march on Sunday, after passing East, Middle and West Carry Ponds. They will end up on the Long Falls Dam Road in the late afternoon of Sunday, October 10. It is only a short distance from there down to the point where the portage trail is inundated by Flagstaff Lake. About a mile of the old trail is now under the impoundment. From the LFDR, they will break up and head back to their homes in Virginia.

Part of the route between Middle Carry and West Carry Ponds is over the Appalachian Trail, which utilizes the old portage trail as far as the pond. It should be an exciting experience to follow the exact route of their ancestors, who braved this route in 1775.

The Arnold Expedition Historical Society and members of the Carry Ponds Association will assist and guide the reenactors in their march. For further information, contact the AEHS at 60 Burnham Road, Scarborough, Maine, 04074 or at (207) 510-1230.

#### Home Address of Society Changes

Since the Society has no permanent home address, the mailing address will from time to time, change, following the president's or secretary's mailing address.

This is the case now. The president and secretary have recently moved to the town of Scarborough, Maine to a new and beautiful home. Therefore, the new address for the Society is as follows:

**Arnold Expedition Historical Society**  
**60 Burnham Road**  
**Scarborough, Maine 04074**

## Officers And Directors Nominated

At the AEHS annual meeting to be held on October 2 in Augusta, both officers and directors will be elected. The chairman of the nominating committee has proposed the following slates.

For Officers, one year term of office.

|                 |                |
|-----------------|----------------|
| President:      | Stephen Clark  |
| Vice President: | Jay Robbins    |
| Secretary:      | Sherri Clark   |
| Treasurer:      | Bob Cunningham |

For Directors, term of office, three years.:

Robert Cunningham, Lincoln Ct. MA  
Mabelle Haynes, East Boothbay, ME  
John Parsons, Monroe, NY

There are several vacancies in our directorship. If members would be willing to serve, please contact us at our new address in Scarborough. Nominations can also be accepted from the floor.

### No Gold, Silver or Artifacts!

On August 22, an AEHS group, armed with metal detectors traveled to West Carry Pond to see what they could find. Tom Desjardin, John Parsons and Duluth Wing were to explore a site near Arnold Point, at the end of the portage trail from Middle Carry Pond.

At this point, during the five-day portage over the Great Carrying place Arnold and other contingents camped here. However, careful exploration near the pond's shore did not produce any identifiable artifacts. This was the first time this site had been explored.

Norm Kalock, camp owner on the pond, assisted the group by ferrying them across the pond in his trusty boat. Although the group got no results, further exploration of the site may come at a later date.



## Annual Meeting To Be Held

On Saturday, October 2, the annual meeting of the AEHS will be held in Augusta. It will begin at 1:30 PM. It will be held in the function room of the Ground Round Restaurant. This is located just off the Augusta North-Belgrade exit of I-95 of Civic Center Drive. Just look for the Holiday Inn and the restaurant is a part of it. Members may choose to have lunch there.

The business meeting will consist of reports by various officers and committees, election of officers and directors and a review of events of the past year. A discussion of the upcoming reenactment on the Great Carrying Place during Columbus Day weekend will ensue. Several exciting new programs will also be discussed. A report on progress at the Colburn House will be given by Tom Desjardin.

The main feature, will be a presentation by long time member, **Duluth Wing** of Eustis. This will be a narration of his canoe trip along the entire route of the Expedition in Maine and Canada. The trip ascended the Kennebec and Dead Rivers to the Height of Land and the Canadian border, then across Lac Megantic. Then the canoers descended down the rugged Chaudiere River. This is mostly dangerous Class two and three rapids all the way down to St. Georges. This exciting adventure was accomplished by Dude and AEHS member Cecil Pierce, and is the only known completion of the route by water. It will be a great story to hear.

Hope to see many members there for an entertaining afternoon.

## What was Col. Benedict Arnold's first command of the war?

Answer: Cooperation with Ethan Allen in the capture of Fort Ticonderoga.

## New Woodshed at Nichols Camp

Under the direction by Ron Gamage and Rusty Arsenault, a new woodshed has been built at the Nichols Camp on Middle Carry Pond. This has been a two year project as the old woodshed, completely unusable, had to be torn down and hauled off. The design and capacity of a new shed had been debated by the directors at several meetings and a final design was overseen by the two above mentioned directors.

The new shed was completed in late July and the first coat of paint has been applied. So when the winter winds whistle around the camp, there will be plenty of dry wood to keep the cabin warm. It was a job well done.

Others have also been at work on or around the cabin. John and Sara Donovan spent time this spring in straightening up a leaning backhouse. Also, two new all season fire extinguishers have been added. Also, the old LP gas refrigerator which has not worked in years, is in the process of being removed. All of the old bedding and old clothes in the cabin have been removed to reduce the ever present threat of mice. Also, Jon Dulude of York is planning to paint the white trim around the cabin this fall. All in all, the property has seen great improvement over the last two years.

A new protection to the Nichols Cabin comes in the form of a new insurance policy. For the first time, the cabin is now covered up to \$ 35,000 dollars for fire, wind and other damages. The policy also carries a reasonable amount of liability insurance. The policy was taken out with the Miles Carpenter Insurance Co. of Skowhegan. Rusty Arsenault was instrumental in helping to identify a carrier with a reasonable cost.

Thanks again to the cabin committee consisting of Ron Gamage, Rusty Arsenault, and Bob and Sarah Donovan. Many others have contributed, but it is the committee's oversight that has seen these substantial improvements.



## Two Trail Clearing Trips

In early June, two trail clearing trips took place to clear the Great Carrying Place Portage Trail, between Wyman Lake (Kennebec River) and Middle Carry Pond. The clearing of winter damage was chain sawed out and brush clipped back. It was especially bad near East Carry Pond, in a young spruce-fir grove.

The four plus miles of the portage trail are open and ready for hikers desiring to follow the ancient portage trail. The trail has orange blazes and is well signed. From Middle Carry to the SW corner of West Carry Pond, the Portage Trail utilizes the Appalachian Trail, so it can be followed until a series of camp and logging roads can be utilized to complete the portage route all the way to Flagstaff Lake (which now inundates the last mile or so to the old Dead River.)

Don Howard and Steve Clark comprised the first trip which cleared the Middle Carry to East Carry section, and a part of the trail near the east side of East Carry Pond.

On June 12, a crew of six comprised of Ron Gamage, Bob and Sara Donovan, Charlie Miller, John Gamage, and Hank, cleared the section from Wyman Lake up to East Carry Pond.

Bob and Sarah also spent time making some repairs at the Nichols Cabin. In particular, they righted a wrong slant on the backhouse by jacking it up and giving it better foundation support. Doing things on an angle always presents problems.

All in all, it has been a productive spring on the Trail.

*Oct. 2<sup>nd</sup> "...at 10:00 arrived at Sochegin Falls where there is a carrying place of 250 paces which lies across a small island. Encamped on the west side of the river, opposite the island."*

*Major Return Meigs*

## Activities at the Colburn House

It has been another good season at the Colburn House as greater numbers of visitors have stopped during the weekends this summer. Part of the reason for this is the new State Parks and Lands "Passport" program, where people want to get stamped for visits to as many State parks and historical sites as possible.

Work has continued on the facility, with more work to improve the living quarters for a resident caretaker. It is hoped that one can be found for occupancy sometime next spring. This would then allow for greater coverage for the House, including weekdays. Volunteers continue to assist the State in providing coverage during weekends.

The Barn is still very much "up in the air," as funds under a tight State budget are on hold for a while. Tom Desjardin will be seeking foundation help for the completion of this huge project. He estimates it will take approximately \$ 35,000 to get the barn back on a solid foundation and replacement of the barn floor. This will then allow the second floor, where the bateaux are stored to be revamped and arranged for informative and proper display.

If any Society members can help in this endeavor, it would be greatly appreciated. After its completion, it will be the finest restoration done on the House in many decades. It will also bring the facility up to a point where many more visitors can be accommodated, and new programs considered.

## TransCanada Wind Power Project

The proposed Wind Power project near the Chain of Ponds and Sisk Mtn. has been withdrawn for revisions. This was after it appeared that the Land Use Regulation Commissioners were ready to reject the entire application.

It is presumed that a revised application will be resubmitted in the fall of 2010.



## The Second Portage

*By Stephen Clark*

As the Quebec Expedition assented the Kennebec River into the great Maine wilderness in early October of 1775, they encountered their second of four portages at Skowhegan Falls.

After a hard and wet struggle with the Five Mile Rips (continuous fast water) above the first portage at Ticonic Falls (in present day Waterville), the Kennebec was a more gentle assent for the now tired bateaux men. This more navigable stretch of river began at what is now the village of Shawmut. There is a dam and power station here today.

As each of the four divisions reached this section, they were able to make good time upriver against the moderate current. In 1775 there were a number of new farms along the Kennebec (this area currently is in the town of Fairfield and Hinkley Village).

At Ticonic Falls, Arnold had hired an oxen team and sledge (a wheelless wagon on runners) in what is now Waterville, to haul his wooden canoe and equipment up to the top of the Five Mile Rips. This allowed him to begin to gain on the lead divisions ahead. It was October 1st when he ascended this part of the river.

As his party approached what is now Skowhegan, he stopped to dine and talk with one of the leading settlers who had a flourishing farm adjoining the river. This was a leader for the area, one John Wesson (Arnold spelled his name Weston). He and his extended family had been one of the first settlers in the area. His farm was located approximately 3 miles (Arnold's estimate) below Skowhegan Falls. Wesson was familiar with the river as far as Norridgewock Falls and agreed to supply Arnold with valuable information on what lay ahead.



Portage over the rock face at Skowhegan Falls  
Thanks to Library of Congress

Arnold, after some persuasion, was able to convince Wesson to take two teams of oxen north to Norridgewock Falls. This was a long portage, a mile and a quarter in length. The teams were sent to help the expedition's men to speed up the carry around this long portage.

This was to prove unfortunate for Wesson, as he worked with his oxen in a cold rain for several days, and soon after returning to his home, he contracted pneumonia and died several

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weeks later. This was the second casualty of the Expedition. He was recognized as one of the first heroes of the war in this remote area. Arnold's party then continued late in the afternoon, northward on the river to a point where it curved more westerly. His party soon reached what is now called, "The Eddy," a large pool below a gorge with high cliffs on both sides. The fast water at this time of year was low, so the men were able to creep up stream behind rock ledges and protruding rocks. The Expedition's men roped, pushed, poled, and hauled the heavily laden bateau up against this swift current for about a half mile before reaching a pool below the bottom of Skowhegan Falls.

The Falls were and are unusual in that the river cuts around both sides of a rocky island that forms the falls. The portage was located up a steep rock face for nearly sixty feet to reach a flat area on the island. So the heavy bateaux had to be unloaded, and wrestled up the steep rock face. Above this, was a level stretch for 50-60 rods across the island to a launching point above the falls. Arnold was able to enlist the help of one of the companies to speed up the carry around the falls.

There was still light left, so Arnold, anxious to reach the head of the column proceeded five miles (Arnold's estimate) further up the river to the cabin of the Widow Warren, who at dusk, agreed to accommodate Arnold and several of his officers for the night. Arnold did not know this, but it was the last time that he would sleep under a roof for more than a month as

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Rapids and swift water below Skowhegan Fall, in Gorge



## (The Second Portage, Continued)

they were now entering a true wilderness.

Skowhegan Falls had proven to be an easier portage than at Ticonic Falls, but a much tougher falls was ahead at Norridgewock Falls, located in present day Madison and Anson.

At this point, there were two divisions ahead of him, Morgan's lead three rifle companies and Meigs's second division. They camped at a point five miles upriver, in present day Norridgewock Village. He would catch up to them the following day as Morgan was already in the midst of negotiating the formidable Norridgewock Falls.

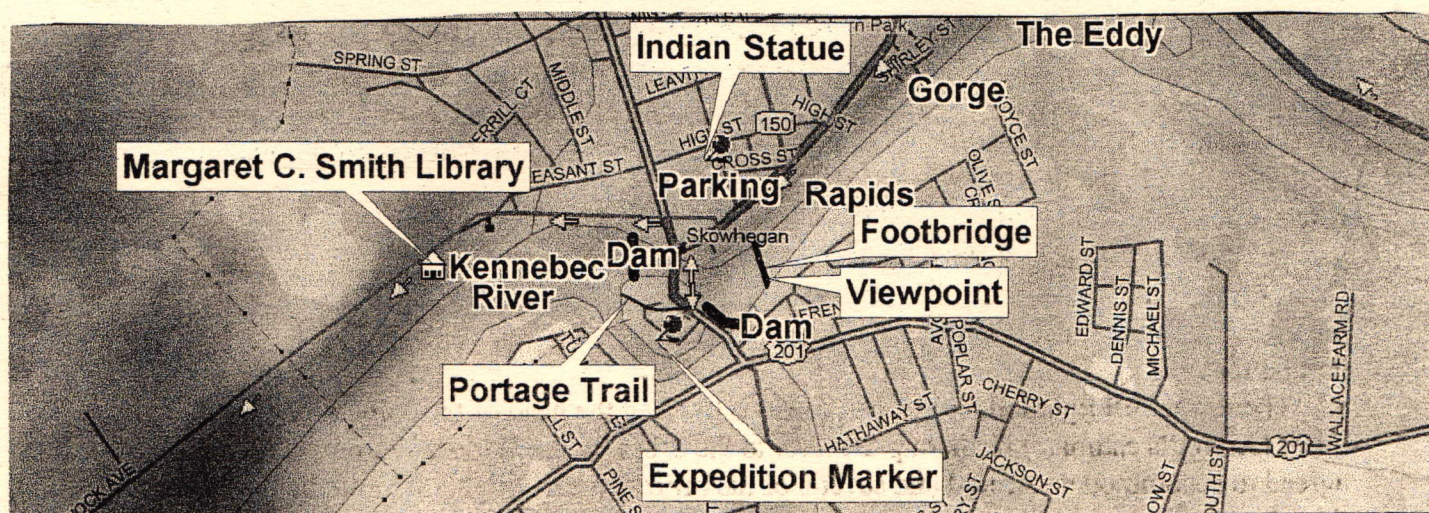
Captain Dearborn's company came up to the falls on Oct. 3. He also estimated the carry as being 60 rods. He had his men do the best they could to caulk the leaky bateau, as he complained accurately that they had been poorly built. His company spent most of the day approaching the falls through the rugged and swift watered gorge, then the carry itself. They camped that night only a short distance above the falls. He commented that he sent two very sick men of his company back down river that day.

The rest of Green's division and all of Enos' rear division would portage over Skowhegan Falls during the next three days.

Thus did the Expedition negotiate the second portage on the Kennebec River in its journey north to the Great Carrying Place, where they would leave the Kennebec. The good weather was left behind, and ominously, the rains and showers portended an increasingly difficult ascent of the river.

For today's visitors, once you reach the Skowhegan Island, there is an interesting set of plaques and information signs in a small fenced in preserve near a walk bridge to the left of a large church on the island. This will mark the approximate route of the portage trail, as it passed across the island, to its upper end. Some of the route would be through the current church parking lot. The dam's pool now covers the upper end of this portage trail.

Today, visitors to the falls can easily see the steep rock face as the dam is anchored on this rocky face. It can be best viewed from an old railroad bridge, now converted into a foot bridge. It is easily accessed from Skowhegan's main street.



Map of downtown Skowhegan, showing location of major features relating to the Second Portage



### New AEHS Membership Form

Mail this in with your check and membership info. Include your phone number and email address if this is acceptable to you. Make check payable to AEHS.

Category.

|   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| _____ Annual Member                               | \$ 20                     |
| _____ Family membership                           | \$ 25                     |
| _____ Contributing member                         | \$ 50                     |
| _____ Life Membership                             | \$ 200 (one time payment) |
| Additional donation for Society programs \$ _____ |                           |

To order the new map of the 1775 Expedition's route from the Kennebec River to Lac Megantic, send check for \$ 5.95 to AEHS. These make great gifts for birthdays and Christmas. These can be ordered unfolded suitable for framing or wall mounting for an additional \$ 6.00 to cover cost of shipping tube and postage.

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