

# EXPEDITION MESSENGER

NEWSLETTER OF THE  
ARNOLD EXPEDITION  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Spring, 2012

## What A Coincidence!

As most AEHS members know, last August members of the Society uncovered significant artifacts and located the original site of "Arnold's Hospital." One of the items uncovered was pieces of a large, cast iron camp kettle. It was found close to other expedition identified artifacts, so it was most certainly from the 1775 expedition.

These large kettles were issued to each company to do communal cooking for the men. These kettles were extremely valuable even though they were quite heavy and hard to be carried over the many miles of portages. Why it was destroyed, can be only mere speculation. Best guess is that the retreating soldiers of the Fourth Division did not want to carry this heavy item with them. Previously it had been left at the hospital site to cook food for the sick soldiers. The retreating soldiers felt it was too valuable to leave for their enemies to use. So it was broken up by a few sharp blows from an axe head.

Since its discovery, AEHS member Thomas Desjardin has investigated to identify the kettle, with little luck as there was no identifying marks or numbers on the broken kettle. Also, there were pieces missing from the remains of the kettle.

But one fine day, Tom happened to be passing through the Keeping Room at the Coburn House in Pittston, when he glanced over to the kettle hanging in the fireplace. Just out of curiosity, he took the pieces of the broken hospital kettle and tried to match them with the intact Colburn kettle. What a surprise! They were an exact match and obviously were cast from the same type and size of mold. The accompanying picture will show this. (See Page 2)

How could the same manufactured kettle that was used on the Expedition be identical in size and type to that which hangs in the Colburn House fireplace? Most mystifying! !

Over time, we may be able to gain more information about the kettles and at least date their manufacture. But how the same type kettle could appear in both places raises a host of speculations. Example: could the kettle in the Colburn's fireplace be one that was salvaged from the equipment and bateaux left when the three retreating companies (more than 200 soldiers) reached the Colburn shipyard? What did happen to all the equipment and bateaux they had as they returned to civilization?

We most likely will never know the details of the mystery, but stay tuned as the story unfolds. We solved one mystery of where the hospital was located, only to have new mysteries unfold.

## HIGHLIGHTS IN THIS ISSUE

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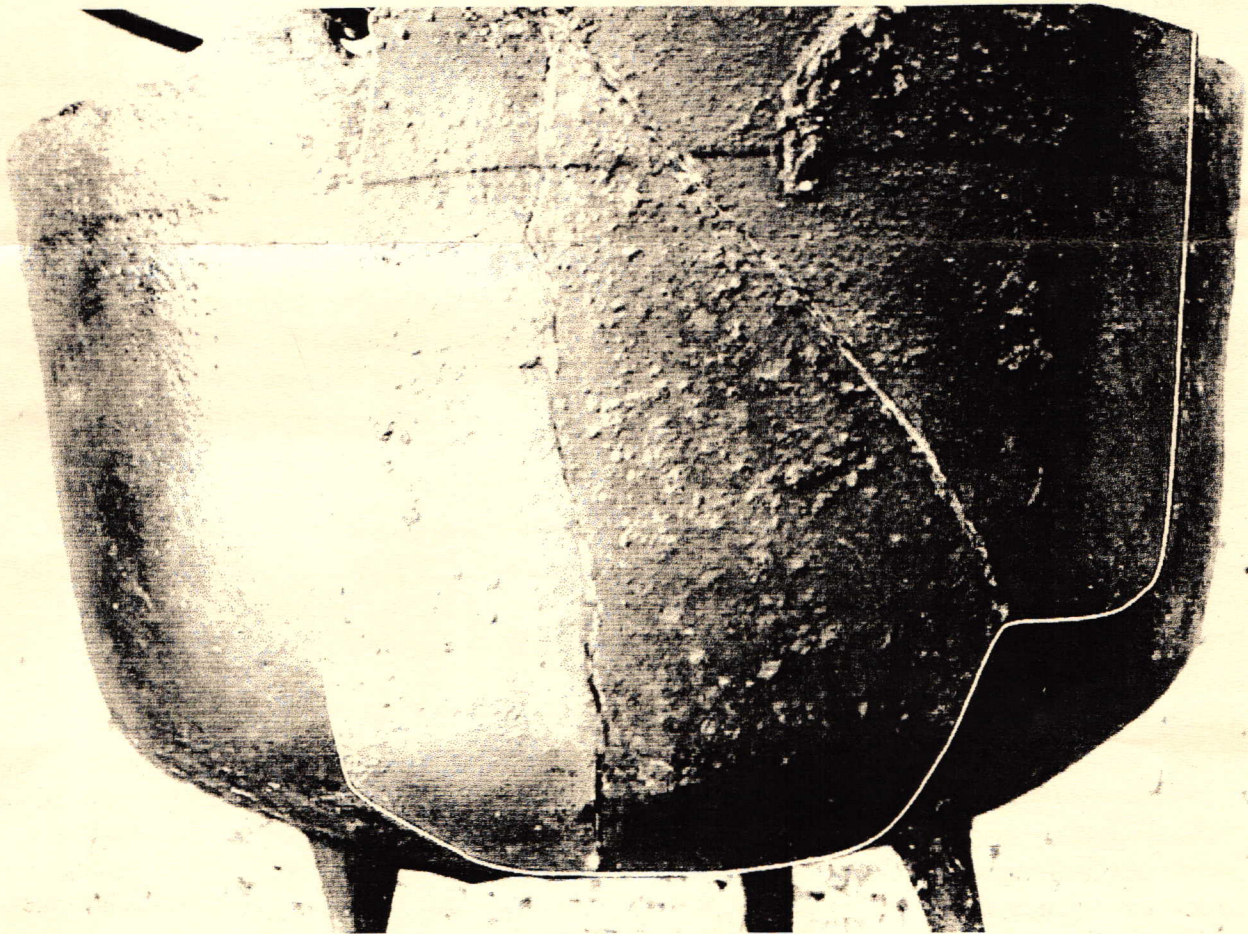


## The Kettles

The picture below is actually a complete kettle, with parts of another. The complete kettle came from the fireplace in the Colburn House. The parts of a kettle came from the expedition's Hospital Site in the Carry Ponds country.

Initially, they look like one kettle. That is so because they came from the same or similar mold and fit closely. Note the irregular white lines drawn in, outlining the perfectly fitting pieces overlaying the complete kettle. The crack towards the center of the kettle, again indicates a broken piece from the Hospital site.

These may be seen at the Colburn House. What do you think? See article on cover page.





## Major Return Jonathan Meigs [1740 - 1823]

*By Bart Crattie*

As most AEHS members are aware, Major Meigs was the leader of the third division during the 1775 Expedition. He was captured on Jan. 1, 1776 during the attack on Quebec. Later he was paroled and returned to his home in Connecticut. He later rejoined the army and led a successful raid on Sags Harbor, Long Island, for which he was awarded an honorary sword by Congress. He participated in several other campaigns. He left the army in 1781 with the rank of Colonel.

He later was one of the first leaders to settle the Ohio territory and later became an Indian Agent and advocate for the Cherokee Nation. He died with great honor in 1823.

AEHS members Bart Crattie and John Parsons, have done a little background investigation of his life. He is buried in Tennessee, and a nearby county is named after him. For a very interesting short biography of his life and the Meigs family, click on the following website.

<http://meigs.org/rjm90.htm>



Return Jonathan Meigs' role as a division commander on the Arnold expedition is well documented, especially through his thoughtful and information-filled journal relating the many details and hardships. His being presented a sword by the first Congress for his Sag Harbor raid as well as his exploits with "Mad" Anthony Wayne at Stoney Point are well known. At 40 (January 1, 1781) he left military service. Little is written of Meigs life between then and 1787. In that year, one month before his 46th birthday, Meigs began living a series of lives above and beyond any one life accomplished by other contemporaries.

I'm a simple old country surveyor from Tennessee, but upon reading *Arundel*, I vowed to visit Massachusetts, Maine and Quebec in order to trace Arnold's remarkable trek. November of 2011 found me and my wife, Beth in New England following Arnold and John Pierce searching for Pierce "advertisements". I had promised an article to *American Surveyor* magazine about Pierce, so equipped with Steve Clark's fabulous guide, while reading Desjardin's words, we spent 6 days from Cambridge to Newburyport, then along the Kennebec and Chaudiere on into Quebec. (A short aside: while crossing on the ferry from Pointe de Levy over to Quebec City on the ferry, one of the

dockhands was whistling "Yankee Doodle").

It wasn't until I returned to Tennessee the following week and was presenting a continuing education seminar on the Oconee Survey District of southeast Tennessee disposing of the lands of the Cherokee that it hit me like a ton of bricks just who Return J. Meigs was.

In November, 1787, Meigs was appointed one of the first surveyors of the Ohio Company. General Rufus Putnam (who, like Pierce served General Washington as an engineer or surveyor during



the war) and a group of veterans had raised monies, taken subscriptions and petitioned congress for land west of the Ohio River. The deed for 1,500,000 acres of property at the mouth of the Muskigum River was signed by both President Washington and Jefferson, then Secretary of State.

The journey from civilization to the unsettled lands for Meigs was just opposite the Arnold experience. The would-be settlers left Massachusetts in the dead of winter. Early into the journey, the first obstacle was the Alleghenies. They conquered this new "Great Carrying Place" with sleds, all the while fighting deep snows. Having crossed the mountains, they now needed boats. After spending 6 weeks boat building (the Mayflower was 45' long and 12 feet at the beam), the group made the casual drift downstream, unlike the ordeal of the Kennebec. Meigs made the mouth of the Muskigum in early April, snows melting and spring breaking.

Colonel Meigs composed the System of Regulations which were posted on a large oak tree. These were the laws observed by the settlers until the arrival of civil authorities in July. "This vendable oak was to the emigrants more useful, and as frequently consulted, as the Oracle of ancient Delphis ..." (from Meigs' obituary). He served as Clerk and Prothonotary of the early Court. In 1789 a fellow surveyor lost 7 men to the Indians, then joined up with Meigs with both crews eventually making it back to Campus Martius, Putnam's garrison. Colonel Meigs later served as a judge and clerk. In 1798, Meigs was elected to the territorial Legislature.

In a letter to James Wilkinson (who later proved to be a scoundrel), dated February 10, 1801, Meigs (now 60 years old) wrote: "... In the first place, I enjoy excellent health; in the next place, I am doing what I can at farming business ... I have been for more than two years one of the territorial Legislators; this, though credible, is not profitable. My principal dependence for living is the labor of my own hand. I am confident, sir, you can serve me, as you are conversant with every department of the government and may know what place can be had... I don't care whether it is civil or military or *where situated*. I don't know Mr. Jefferson; have always revered his character as a great and good man. I am personally acquainted with Colonel Burr (*Aaron, now the V.P.*) He ascended the Kennebec as a volunteer ... in 1775 and was with me in the Mess a great part of that march to Canada. I think I have his friendship, but his is not yet, perhaps, in a situation to assist me." In May, 1801, President Thomas Jefferson appointed Return J. Meigs both Cherokee Indian Agent and Agent of the War Department in the new state of Tennessee.

Depending on who you read, Meigs could also be a scoundrel or a beloved friend of the Cherokee. "Born in Connecticut, Meigs was a longtime federal Indian agent who had aggressively pushed the U.S. policy of acquiring Indian land by any means. Meigs had bribed every chief he found receptive, including Doublehead" (*Driven West*; A.J. Langguth; Simon & Shuster; 2010). OR "Meigs continued to work for what he considered the good of the Cherokee. His sincere friendship won him the respect of the Indians. The Cherokee named Meigs "The White Path" as a symbol of their feeling (Meigs' Family and Genealogy).

He derived a plan that eventually failed, not necessarily from the U.S. government's objections but from the many opinions of the Cherokee. Meigs had done a census and determined there were little more than 10,000 "souls" or 2000 families living on perhaps 10,000,000 acres of land. If the Cherokee became an agricultural people, an assignment of 640 acres per family could be made, leaving more than 8,000,000 acres of surplus land to be sold for the benefit of the tribe. Meigs estimated that they would receive 50 annual installments of \$300,000 applied to their needs. (Fifth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology...; J.W. Powell, Director; 1887; Government Printing Office)

The agency served much like a mini-Department of State for a foreign country. Passports were issued, trade was regulated and pilfering/smuggling was policed. The agency at Fort Southwest Point was moved in 1807 to the Hiwassee Garrison, on the west bank of the Tennessee River just opposite the mouth of the Hiwassee River. Around 1817, the Agency was relocated up the Hiwassee River to Calhoun, where there is now a very old stone marker commemorating Meigs. The very last Agency was

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***Voices From A Wilderness Expedition*** by Stephen Darley.

[available from Amazon.com]

Ever since Justin Smith's definitive 1903 analysis of the 1775 Quebec Expedition, (*Arnold's March From Cambridge to Quebec*) and Kenneth Roberts 1938 *March to Quebec*, there has been only limited basic historical research on many of the remaining questions regarding the expedition. Now Mr. Darley has filled in many of the gaps and added materially to our understanding of the men and events of their epic journey.

It is not a book for those seeking the story of the expedition, rather it deals with a basic factual understanding. This is done through their "voices." Mr. Darley in this work, is easily identified as a very meticulous historical researcher. He has been able to assemble a significant body of new data regarding the men of the expedition.

In the book, he has uncovered and printed for the first time, previously unknown journals. First, he provides bibliographies for the thirty expedition journalist. Among these is the journal of Captain Durben (Dearborn). This was discovered from a library in Glasgow, Scotland. Next is the four Ward's Company journals, a new journal of Dr. Senter, the army's senior medical officer, new information about previously unknown expedition commanders, and an insightful, important biography of Lt. Col. Roger Enos (providing very interesting new information regarding this controversial officer).

In addition is new information regarding the three company captains who were the leaders of the retreat of the fourth division. Also included is valuable information on the previously unknown exploits of Captain Scott.

In the extensive appendix, there is for the first time a complete roster of every known soldier (1,125) who participated in the expedition, along with basic information about

each, when available. This is listed by company, so it is easy to find their affiliation. Also in the appendix is a well organized wealth of other related information regarding the expedition's officers and men. We highly recommend this book for those who wish to delve deeper into the character or the men who marched through the wilderness to Quebec. It is not a chronological description of the events beginning at Cambridge. Rather it is a rich stew of facts that draw us closer to the men who participated. This book truly does allow us to hear their voices, and by doing so, makes them more real. It fills in the picture of the men in color, rather than bland black and white. It better unveils their bravery, as well as those who were not so brave.

Editor, Steve Clark

### Trail Clearing Trip Planned

On **Saturday, May 19**, an AEHS trip is planned to do the spring clearing of the Great Carrying Place portage trail. This is done annually to ensure that the trail is easily followed by summer hikers desiring to follow the historic trail. There are two sections, from Wyman Lake (Kennebec River) westward out of the valley to East Carry Pond. There is about two and a half miles to clear.

Also, there is a mile section of the portage trail extending from the shore of East Carry Pond, over level terrain to Middle Carry Pond.

The trip will be led by AEHS directors, Ron Gamage and Rusty Arsenault. The group will assemble on the Carry Ponds Road at the intersection of the portage trail and the road, at 8:30 AM on May 19<sup>th</sup>. To learn details of the trip, contact Ron Gamage at 474-3530. Pack a trail lunch and bring water. Saws and brush clippers are needed. Hope to see you there. It is very beautiful country and good weather will be provided.



(Continuation from page 4, Meigs article)

just across the river from Calhoun in the new town of Charleston (Fort Cass).

This Return J. Meigs was not the only Meigs to leave a mark on Tennessee History. His son Timothy stayed with him while in Tennessee. Timothy and John Ross, one of the principal Cherokee Chiefs had a trading post on the Garrison site. A grand daughter married a child of Ross and moved out to Oklahoma following the removal. A grandson, Return Jonathan Meigs III became one of the most distinguished attorneys in the State of Tennessee, later becoming the Clerk of the Supreme Court for the District of Columbia. A son, Jonathan Meigs, Jr. served as Chief Justice of the Ohio Supreme Court and was later elected Governor of that state.

Colonel Meigs traveled through the snows of Maine and Canada, measured ground and justice in the Northwest Territory (Ohio) and served as the primary diplomat for the United States in the foreign lands and balmy climes of the Cherokee and Tennessee. Its well documented that at the age of 82, he gave up his bed to an aged Cherokee Chief and slept on a cold floor. Because of his generosity, he contracted pneumonia and died at the Agency in Charleston, Tennessee in January, 1823. He is buried at the site of the old Hiwassee Garrison on the west side of the Tennessee River in Rhea County along with his wife and son, Timothy.

For a full list of reference material for this article, please contact the author.

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### Now Available to AEHS Members: *Crisis in the Megantic Swamps*

A new article written by Stephen Clark is now available. This article examines in detail, the 1775 Quebec Expedition's passage through the mountains of the Height of Land and the Megantic Swamps. It is entitled, *Crisis in the Megantic Swamps; How the Quebec Expedition Was Nearly Destroyed*.

The article describes in detail, the routes and events that befell the various contingents that came down out of the Height of Land and attempted to traverse the dangerous Megantic Swamp lands. Men died there and the army came perilously close to destruction. It describes Handchitt's company's rescue from the swamp, Dearborn's and Goodrich's companies near destruction and how the main army became lost in the maze of ponds and lakes east of Megantic.

The article is longer than can be printed within the *Messenger Newsletter*, being 12 pages in length. It also includes three maps detailing the various routes taken by the different companies.

Students of the Expedition have read varying accounts of what actually happened. This article attempts to remove the confusion and contradictions surrounding the Expedition's passage through the Megantic country. We think you will find this most interesting and informative.

Here is how you may obtain a copy. Write to the author, **Steve Clark, 60 Burnham Road, Scarborough, Maine 04074** or email at [sclark60@live.com](mailto:sclark60@live.com) Just send us your mailing address and we will send you a copy by mail. To cover the cost and also to help the programs of the AEHS, send a donation check for an amount of your choosing, payable to the AEHS. The article is ready to mail now. On the following page is an excerpt from the article so that you may sample the article's content.



### Excerpts from *Crisis in the Megantic Swamps*

After ascending the swollen North Branch of the Dead River and crossing the Chain of Ponds, the weakened army already on short rations was confronted by an eight mile series of portages across several small ponds, then over the Height of Land to reach the Arnold River. Following this river would lead them downstream to Lac Megantic and the Chaudiere River.

So the army began the long, grueling portage over the Height of Land mountains. The end of the portage was located on a small water course later named the Arnold River. There the men of the expedition encountered in this wilderness, an unusual open meadow, having a park-like appearance, shaded by towering elm trees (see point #3 on topo map). It was named the Beautiful Meadow. For the first time during their journey, the water in the river flowed north and downstream. The Meadow was located approximately six miles south of Lac Megantic. But between the Meadow and the lake, unbeknown to the men, was a huge swamp, one that would threaten the army's existence. Into this wild country, came the unsuspecting American army.

After completing the portage, the first to venture down river into the swamp was the army's leader, Col. Benedict Arnold and his advance party. It had been an arduous and exhausting eight miles from the Chain of Ponds, through a gap in the mountains. As a result, the men were very tired. However Arnold wasted no time to get his men ready to move. It was imperative that they reach the French settlements to send back desperately needed food.

At that point, the Arnold River was a small, shallow stream but was deep enough to allow navigation by water craft. Upon reaching the Meadow, Arnold caught up with Capt. Handchitt's company which had just completed the portage, laboriously bringing over three or four heavy bateaux. Arnold, not waiting for his own bateaux to arrive, decided to requisition Handchitt's bateaux. They themselves were preparing to descend the river. Handchitt's men were not pleased about this change and these feelings were to be exacerbated later that day.

Arnold's decision is curious and not explained in Arnold's journal. It was a substantial change of plans. At a Council of War held on the North Branch of the Dead River three days earlier, it had been decided that Capt. Handchitt and his company would forge ahead in all haste

to reach the French Settlements on the Chaudiere River. There they were have to procure and send back food for the starving army. This had been an honor to have been selected to undertake this crucial task. Handchitt and his men knew it. Now their commander had suddenly relieved them of this task and assumed the task himself. Arnold had caught up with Handchitt who then was at the head of the column. Arnold may have assumed that Handchitt and his men were too slow to accomplish the task as speed was essential. Later, before Quebec, there was animosity between Arnold and Handchitt. It may have begun with this decision by Arnold.

He wasted no time in organizing his party for the dash down river and on to the French settlements. Time was crucial for his starving men. His party included several adjutants and guides. Also, Lts. Church, Steele and their small trail scouting party was ordered to join Arnold's party. Justin Smith states that there were twelve men in this new advanced party. They loaded the bateaux and hurriedly left Handchitt and his disgruntled men.

It may be observed that this decision by Col. Arnold was the first time since the army left Ft. Western that he had taken the lead.....

To obtain the complete article, see instructions on page 6



### AEHS New 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.

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

To order the AEHS map of the 1775 Expedition's route from the Kennebec River to Lac Megantic, Canada, 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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