

# EXPEDITION MESSENGER

## NEWSLETTER OF THE ARNOLD EXPEDITION HISTORICAL SOCIETY



May, 2016

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### Possible Archeological Exploration Near Chain of Ponds

For some time now, the events and route surrounding the expeditions passage over the Height of Lands portage trail have posed many questions. The portage trail was eight miles in length beginning at the west end of the Chain, at Round Pond, then followed Horseshoe Stream and a series of four small ponds which are the headwaters of the Kennebec River. Then from Arnold Pond, the trail headed north and west through a gap in the Boundary Mountains, then downhill to the Arnold River at the Beautiful Meadow. Along this trail, Col. Benedict Arnold had ordered the bateau to be abandoned in place. Only about twenty of them were carried across to the Arnold River and on to Lac Megantic.

It is our estimate that between 75-100 bateau were left behind. But where? If we knew, there would be better insight about the important transformation from a water borne army to one on foot.

We also do not know the exact route of the portage trail, nor where they camped along the route.

The AEHS is working closely with the Maine Historical Preservation Comm. to organize an archeological study to answer some of these important questions. It is possible that we may be able to undertake such a study during the 2016 season. This will be decided by early summer.

The first steps are to outline the objectives of such a study. This has already begun. Its main focus obviously is to better understand the history of the expedition's passage in this area and to possibly recover artifacts from that passage. Since this portage trail existed many years prior to 1775, we are also interested in more information regarding Native American usage of this route.

Maybel Haynes was a long time director and member of the AEHS and after her death in 2015, her family generously offered to support a major project along the expedition's route. The Society also has some funds from other bequests that could be added to this project. The Trust for Public Lands has applied for funds to do such a study through the National Park Service's Battlefields Protection program. This is highly competitive and is far from a sure thing. In any case, a reasonable start could be funded for this purpose.

All these efforts very well could bare fruit towards the goal of discovering important facts relating to the history of the expedition. It is one of the prime purposes of our Society.

### HIGHLIGHTS IN THIS ISSUE

- Possible New Archeological Study
- Restoration Day At Colburn House
- What Ever Happened To The Bateau?
- Portage Trail Clearing Planned
- Member's Green Fingers Needed
- Colburn House At A Crossroads
- Directors Meeting To Be Held



## **Directors Meeting To Be Held**

Our semiannual meeting of the Society's directors and officers will be held at the Colburn House in Pittston on Saturday, June 11<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 AM.

The directors will be tackling several major programs and changes, including the new management for the Colburn House, an archeological project in the Chain of Ponds area, possible changes to the Society's bylaws and a review of preservation efforts in the Chain of Ponds country.

Society members, as always are invited to attend. We also will tour the facility to view the improvements made and to discuss those to be accomplished in the future. Don't forget to bring a light lunch to have after the meeting. The State will have installed three new picnic tables by that date.

## **Trail Day At The Carry Ponds**

On Saturday, May 21 there will be a trail clearing trip on the Great Carrying Place trail system. Once a year we go up to the Carry Ponds area to clear out the brush and blowdowns that accumulate during the winter. We have two sections to concentrate upon, from Wyman Lake up out of the valley to East Carry Pond, and a new section from the Spring Road to connect to the Appalachian Trail near West Carry Pond.

We will meet at the point on the Carry Ponds Road north of Pleasant Ridge, where the GCP Portage Trail comes up from the lake and joins the road.

We will meet at 8:30 AM and should be done in the afternoon. Bring your own tools, equipment, a bag lunch and water.

We also have a number of signs to install on the connector trail near West Carry Pond. These are to make the following of the trail along a wide haul road easier. Norm Kalloch will be in charge of this project.

To co-ordinate the trail clearing effort or if you have questions, please contact Steve Clark

at (207) 510-1230 or on email:

[sclark60@live.com](mailto:sclark60@live.com)

As always, good weather is guaranteed!

## **Griffiths, Lois**

Long time AEHS member, Lois Griffiths of Monmouth died March 11, 2016 at age 85. She was a graduate of Monmouth Academy and Bates College, valedictorian and magna cum laude in history in 1951.

She later worked in various school systems and in the library at Bates.

She was one of the founding members of AEHS and participated in the 1975 reenactment. She was a life member of the Society. She will be greatly missed.

A full obituary can be found in the Kennebec Journal.

## **Society Members With Green Fingers Wanted!**

As a part of the restoration efforts at the Colburn House in Pittston, we are considering reestablishing the extensive flower gardens on the property. In the 1980's and 1990's several Society ladies did an outstanding effort to keep and maintain this garden.

If there are several members who live in the area who would enjoy such a task, this would add much to the historic site. In particular we would want to research what flowers and herbs would have been planted in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and see if those would be appropriate in this garden. Hopefully we will have members knowledgeable enough to advise us in this matter.

Such a project would be open to a lot of creativity for a knowledgeable person(s) willing to undertake such a beneficial project. Mrs. Colburn will also appreciate this project as well

People interested in this project should contact:

AEHS Secretary, Stephen Clark for more information.

(207) 510-1230 or at email: [sclark60@live.com](mailto:sclark60@live.com)



For the past two years the Historic Coburn House has not been open for public visitation. A few special events have occurred there but essentially, the facility has remained dormant. This has been most unfortunate as Tom Desjardin, former historian for the Bureau of Parks and Lands had overseen a masterful job in restoring the property. He and his wife, Lori had established new displays, overseen the rebuilding of the magnificent Keeping Room fireplace and Dutch oven, the refurbishment of the caretaker's apartment, building a new display case for Expedition artifacts and most involved, the complete rebuilding of the main barn.

All this was to prepare the facility for a reopening for the public and more involved use of the entire facility. After Tom moved on to other positions within State government, the managing agency, the Bureau of Parks and Lands, did not refill the position of State historian and further budget cuts in the bureau reduced funds allocated for the Colburn House.

The bureau altered its priorities in that the more popular State parks such as Popham, Reid, Sebago and other major parks got the lion's share of the limited funds. Less visited historic sites became much lower on the Totem Pole. The Colburn House has never been managed in such a way as to attract many visitors. What is needed is a modern management plan. Without it the future of the facility looks bleak!

This winter, under the leadership of president Fred Clark, the Society has met multiple times with representatives from both the BPL and the staff of Old Fort Western (OFW) in Augusta. Their objective was to explore the possibilities of a joint long term effort to manage and operate the facility.

The effort would essentially designate OFW to manage the day to day operation for the public, including the choice and oversight of a caretaker(s). The facility would be open from Memorial to Columbus Day. Between July 1 to Labor Day it would be open five days a week. Either side of that time block, it would be open weekends.

The BPL would remain as the prime entity as they do own the facility. They would be responsible for large structural or logistic projects and overall physical management. The AEHS would act in a supporting role, helping to supply volunteers to act as guides. They would also retain the overall care of the Carriage House where Expedition artifacts are displayed.

OFW would also conduct educational events such as blacksmithing, weaving, colonial cooking, including the use of a true Dutch oven. Other groups such as reenactors would also be encouraged to hold events at the facility. Marriage ceremonies might also be conducted in the renovated barn. All such events require coordination and planning which OFW does very well.

There are many, many details to be worked out as might be suspected. The ever present issue of money always looms large. As time goes on, there will be major expenses. These need to be planned for on an orderly basis. Currently there is no management plan for the facility. This needs to be addressed very soon as long range planing is key for such a historic facility.

The future use of the facility has many possibilities. One suggested by former historian for the BPL, Tom Desjardin, was that a landing and picnic facility could be established on the nearby river, so that people boating the ever popular Kennebec River could then have accesses to the facility as was the case in the 1700's. There is already an established path leading from the House down to the river.

We hope the Society will support this innovative effort between public and private entities to manage the facility. It is too valuable a part of our Maine heritage to be dormant, or worse, to entirely loose it. Because this is the location where the expedition's bateau were built in 1775, the Society has a vested interest in assuring meaningful management of this facility.

We welcome AEHS member's comments and suggestions, as well as your support.

A formal agreement is currently in the works, and as you might suspect, a complex plan takes time to work out. It will take several years of trial and error to make it work well.



## Restoration Day at the Colburn House

On Saturday, May 14, beginning at 8:00 AM, the AEHS will conduct a "clean-up and restoration" event at the Colburn House in Pittston. The Colburn House is located in the town of Pittston, just off Rt. 27, three miles south of the Gardiner-Randolph bridge.

The activities will be held both in the Carriage House, where all the AEHS artifacts and memorabilia are displayed, and on the grounds surrounding the property.

In the Carriage house, there are a variety of tasks, including the usual windows, floors and walls, and installing new displays such as our newly mounted Arnold's March map (both sides), a newly discovered portrait of our founding president, White Nichols, and a remounting of the wonderful graphics found in the Hilton booklet. Also, we will need to mount new lights to improve the lighting in the dark Carriage House.

Outside, we will begin the spring clean-up of the grounds, including cutting back overhanging limbs, cutting back brush in the back field, and clearing the path that leads down to the river front picnic area.

We also are going to examine the grounds and the possibility of reestablishing the magnificent flower garden that was maintained by members of the Society.

These tasks are our part in the effort to reopen the Colburn House from its two year slumber. This will help prepare for this coming season and we need to do our share of the effort.

It is most likely that other sessions will be scheduled in the May-June time period as the tasks are many and involved. There will also be efforts to spruce up the inside of the main house itself.

So we need as many members to participate as possible. Bring a bag lunch and water, as the effort will extend into the afternoon until we "run out of gas." You will need to bring gloves, and tools that you think might be handy for this kind of endeavor.

For more detailed information, contact president Fred Clark either by phone or email. These are, (207) 872-9471 and [fredclark791940@gmail.com](mailto:fredclark791940@gmail.com)

Good weather guaranteed! Should be fun!



Longfellow House, Brattle St. Cambridge, MA. This was Washington's headquarters Where Arnold departed on Sept. 15, 1775.



## What Ever Happened To The Bateau?

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By Stephen Clark

On September 21, 1775 Col. Benedict Arnold, commander of the expeditionary force to capture Quebec, arrived at the Colburn shipyard on the shore of the Kennebec, in the Town of Pittston. He disembarked from his flagship, the *Broad Bay*, one of 11 schooners or sloops that were bringing his army of more than eleven hundred militia up from Newburyport after a three day journey.

Captain Reuben Colburn greeted him and they immediately began an inspection of the many bateaux that were piled all over the shipyard. Arnold saw almost immediately that the craft were smaller and could carry less than those that had been planned. So he ordered that Colburn immediately construct 20 more bateaux than the original 200 that had been ordered by Gen. Washington.

During the next two days, Arnold oversaw the loading of the bateaux with the tons of food and military supplies to sustain them for 45 days. He urged speed to start them up the Kennebec River on each tide to the assembly point at Fort Western, 14 miles up river.

On Sept. 25<sup>th</sup> he oversaw Capt. Daniel Morgan's first division of three rifle companies, up the swift river. Each militia company consisted of about 80 men. The bateaux were so heavily loaded with the tons of supplies, that many of the men from each company had to hoof it along the thickly wooded shore of the river. Each company was assigned between 15-17 of the craft as they left the landing just below Ft. Western.

The bateaux were setting low in the water with little freeboard, a foot or more below the waterline. Further, they were prone to leaking having been built hurriedly, many with green pine boards and with a shortage of nails. The overlapped side boards had been caulked hurriedly and accumulated water from the sky above and the river below. With collisions from each rock they hit while poling up the river's shallow, rocky bottom, they leaked more.

Each of the four divisions the army had been divided into, would have had approximately 45-50 bateaux, although Lt. Col. Green's division would have been somewhat more as he had four companies under his command.

So a day apart, the four divisions ventured forth, upriver 18 miles towards their first portage at Ticonic Falls, near Ft. Halifax.

More than a month later, on Nov. 1-2 the remnants of the army emerged from the wilderness in a starving condition, at the southern most French settlement at Sartigon, on the Chaudiere River. They were on foot and their bateaux were gone! What ever happened to their 220 craft? This crucial question unfortunately has been little touched upon by many historians. First, readers should understand that although there are 27 known journalists who participated in the expedition, few left clues as to the disposition of the bateaux. So the following paragraphs are no more than speculation supported by only bits and pieces of fact.

The starting number of 220 bateau is known. The ending number of zero, or nearly so, is also known. So let's do a bit of elementary arithmetic.

We know that the three companies of Lt. Col. Roger Enos, without orders, turned back on Oct. 25 from a point on the Dead River, near present day Eustis. This was immediately after the terrible hurricane which caused the Dead River to become in full flood. Assuming each of the three companies had 16 bateaux, that would account for 48 craft. In addition, they had been

joined by a number of bateaux from the column upriver, bearing 20 or more sick soldiers that had been sent back. That would account for another 4-5 boats. In total, this would account for between 50-55 of the original 220. What ever happened to these craft, once they reached civilization at Ft. Western or at Colburn's shipyard is not known. We do know that the bulk of this division of nearly 250 men

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We do know that the bulk of this division of nearly 250 men proceeded piecemeal on foot back to their homes or to Washington's army in Cambridge.

Back to the other three divisions of 10 remaining companies, undoubtedly broken or unneeded bateaux were abandoned all along the route from Ft. Western. Also, as the route along the river courses became shallower, the portages longer and more frequent, the toll on the fragile craft became greater. How many of the battered bateaux were lost along these water courses is not known.

The next subtraction that is known occurred at a point just below Shatagee Falls on the No. Branch. The campsite here was named Camp Disaster for good reason. Just after the hurricane, the No. Branch was in flood. In a narrow canyon below the falls, seven bateaux all in a neat row, were overturned like bowling pins and smashed. Luckily the soldiers were fished from the swift, cold river and none died. All their valuable contents ended on the bottom or in pieces, strung out on the banks on the banks of the river down stream.

At Camp Disaster, the officers present held a Council of War, voting to proceed ahead. Capt. Hanchet and his company were sent ahead immediately to attempt to procure food at the French settlements for the starving soldiers. The rest of the shrinking army then fought their way upstream, soon reaching the Chain of Ponds. Many of the soldiers were already on foot and had great difficulty climbing along the rocky shoreline of the ponds.

Ahead through snow squalls could be seen the the Boundary Mountains, that separated the south-flowing Kennebec watershed from the north-flowing Chaudiere River.

On Oct. 27 Arnold's party with surveyors and trail blazers Church and Steele reached the Beautiful Meadow at the end of the eight mile Height of Land portage trail. Here they found Capt. Hanchet and his men who had just carried across five bateaux. These were immediately requisitioned from Hanchet and used by Arnold's party to descend the Arnold River through a huge swamp, which led into the 14 mile long Lac Megantic.

Arnold's party encamped that night on the east shore of the lake on a point where an Indian bark hut was found. That night they had to send back the bateaux across the lake and into the swamp to rescue Hatchet's company who had become trapped in the swamp. It was a very close thing and Arnold realized that the army could not descend the river on foot into that swamp trap.

The following morning, he sent back a guide by the name of Hull, with two orders. First, the men were warned not to descend down the Arnold River into the swamp. Rather, they were to strike further east, avoiding the swamp.

Second, the bateau were to be abandoned and the army was to proceed on foot. They were to march north along Lac Megantic's shore, then follow the Chaudiere River from the outlet.

The guide, walked back along the portage trail encountering each company in the process of portaging their bateaux. After happily unburdening themselves they salvaged any remaining food and their arms, and with joy they left them where they lay.

Before the guide reached them, we do know that Capt. Morgan's men had already carried across seven of his remaining bateaux. We do know that some of the companies carried across one bateaux to carry their sick and disabled men. This was stated in the various journals. The thing we do not know is how many total were carried across the portage to the Beautiful Meadow at the Arnold River.

It is our estimate that approximately 20 bateaux were carried across. We do know the bulk of the army was on foot as they reached the Beautiful Meadow. This means the majority of the remaining bateaux had already been abandoned.

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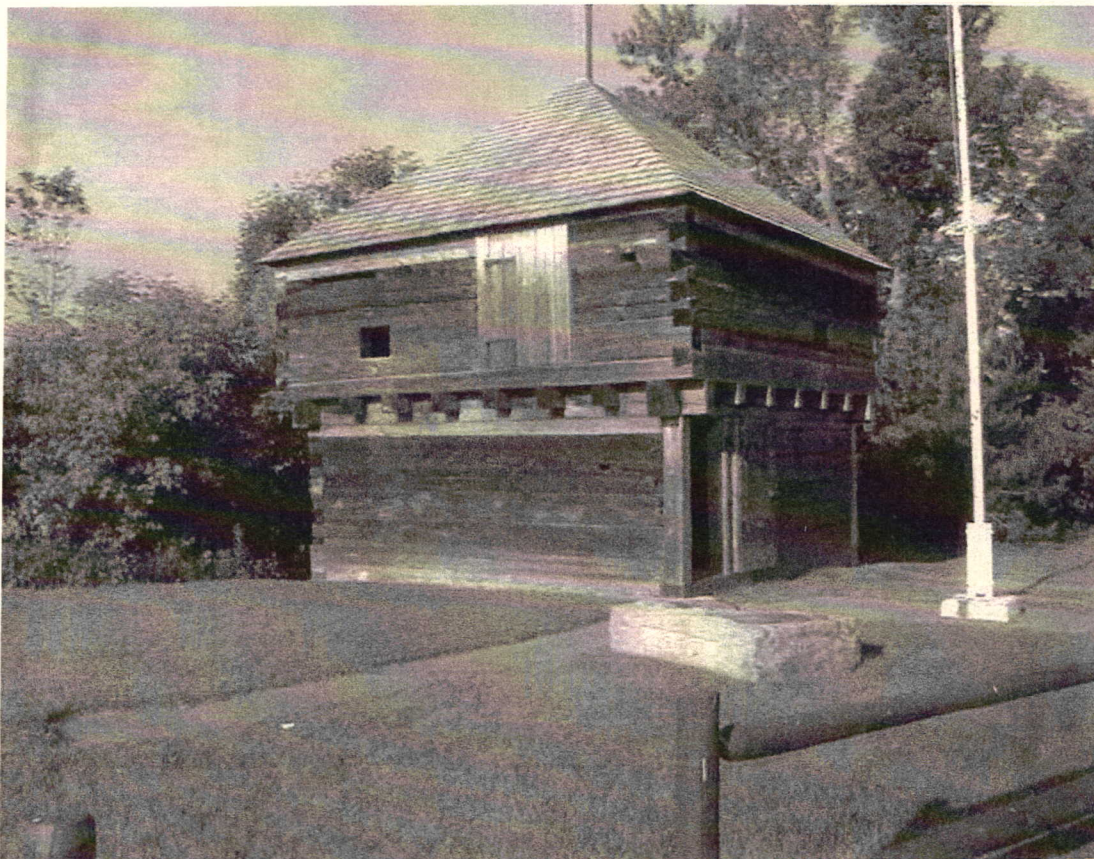
So between the beginning of the Height of Land Portage at Round Pond (the western end of the Chain), to Arnold Pond, the point where the trail ascends the mountains, the bateaux were abandoned. Where exactly no one has yet discovered. Most likely they were abandoned at various points as the guide walked back along the route of march and gave them Arnold's orders.

Even murkier is to guess the number that were abandoned along the portage trail. Such an estimate becomes no more than an educated guess. Our's is between 75 to 100, based on tidbits of information from various journals. It is impossible to estimate the number that had been wrecked or unserviceable prior to the abandonment.

The bateau had been constructed mostly from pine boards. Laying on the damp woodland ground for just a few years, would have begun the process of decay and decomposition. Subsequently it has been 240 years since that occurrence, so there is little or nothing left that was organic. Only the metal parts could have survived and even those are well along toward rust flakes.

However, there are artifacts, possibly many, that are still there. Even with limited exploration, the Society has recovered metal pic pole ends, musket balls, a jack knife, musket parts, and most revealing, clinched nails used in the bateaux construction. 75 or more bateaux will have left many such artifacts. It is just a matter of finding them.

Most importantly, their location will unravel many facts about the critical transition of an army depending on water borne craft to an army on foot. So their location is paramount to an understanding of the story of the Quebec expedition.



Fort Halifax  
Winslow, Maine  
The oldest original  
blockhouse remaining  
in the United States.  
Many of the expedition  
soldiers camped here.



**AEHS New Membership Form Note: membership fees change after Jan. 1, 2014**

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:	New fees as of Jan. 1, 2015
_____ Individual Member	\$ 30
_____ Family Membership	\$ 35
_____ Contributing Membership	\$ 75
_____ Life Membership	\$ 250 (one time payment)
Additional donation for Society programs	\$ _____ (tax deductible)

➡ To order the Booklet, **The Great Carrying Place Portage Trail**, send check for \$5.00 to AEHS. For non-members, add one additional dollar for postage (\$ 6.00 total).

➡ 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 can be ordered unfolded, for framing or wall mounting for an additional \$ 6.00 to cover cost of shipping tube and postage.

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