

EXPEDITION MESSENGER

NEWSLETTER OF THE
ARNOLD EXPEDITION
HISTORICAL SOCIETY



September 2014

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AEHS Annual Meeting to be Held.

On **Saturday, September 20**, the annual meeting of the Society will be held at the Colburn House in Pittston. This is the same weekend that Arnold and the Expedition arrived at the Colburn Shipyard after a sea voyage from Newburyport in eleven small coastal ships, 239 years ago. The Directors meeting will begin at 9:30 AM (members, as always are invited to attend). A bag lunch will be held at noon, with cold water and soft drinks provided. The Colburn House will be open for visitation and inspection, including the room where Arnold slept.

At 1:00 PM, the AEHS Annual Meeting will commence with a short business meeting and reports on various activities. Election of officers and directors will follow. At approximately 1:45 PM, our guest speaker, Sam Brakeley will present his amazing adventure along the Arnold Trail (see accompanying article regarding Sam). The meeting will be held in the refurbished Colburn Barn. All AEHS members and guests are cordially invited to attend.

Annual Meeting Speaker, Sam Brakeley

We are pleased to inform our members of the most interesting speaker to attend our Annual Meeting, Sept. 20th. He will present his experiences along the Expedition route to Quebec at about 1:45 PM.

The Expedition took 53 days from the time they left the Colburn Shipyard in Pittston, to reach the gates of Quebec. It took Sam in his light craft an amazing 14 days. This was with the difficulties created by the terrible disaster at the town of Lac Megantic and the Chaudiere River below.

This amazing feat, will be told to us at our annual meeting. So plan to attend and hear the once in a lifetime saga. Below is a short bio of Sam and his background.

"I grew up in Massachusetts before attending Colby College in Maine from which I graduated in 2010 with a degree in Environmental Studies. After school I worked with the Randolph Mountain Club, the Northern Forest Canoe Trail, and the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps before starting my own company, Hermit Woods Trailbuilders LLC, in 2013 which I continue to manage today. I also ski patrol during the winter and sometimes guide canoe trips for Keewayin Camps. A lifelong outdoors enthusiast, I thru-hiked the Long Trail of Vermont, the Appalachian Trail, and thru-paddled the Northern Forest Canoe Trail before completing the Arnold Expedition Trail in 2013. I currently live in Norwich, Vermont where I'm planning my next adventure!"

HIGHLIGHTS IN THIS ISSUE

- **Annual Meeting**
- Meeting Speaker, Sam Brakeley
- Great Carrying Place Trail Opens
- The Third Portage
- Spring Work Trip
- The Expedition at Swan Island
- Officers And Directors To Be Elected

[‘Ed. Note: This summer Sam led a month-long canoe expedition into the wilds of Northern Quebec].

Did Dearborn and Burr Sleep at Swan Island?

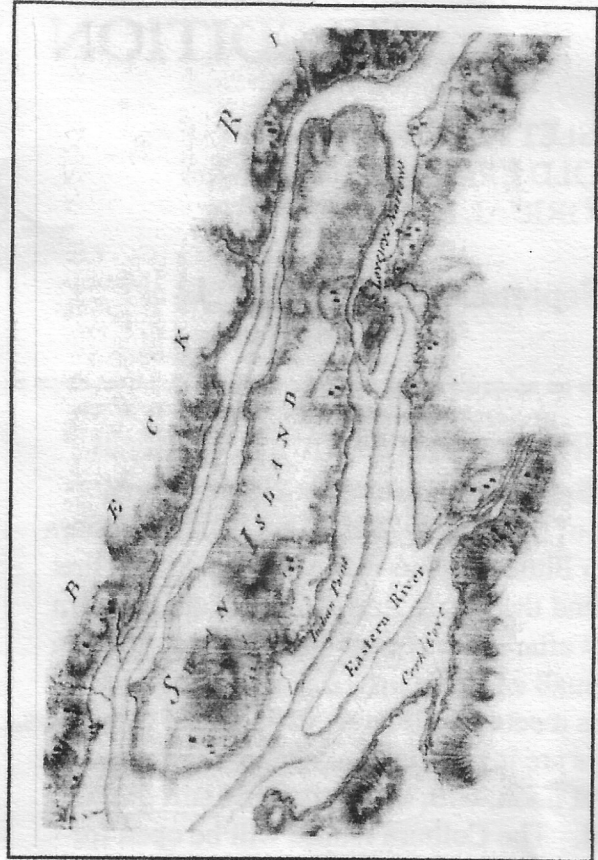
Swan Island, situated in the Kennebec River at the north end of Merrymeeting Bay, is firmly attached to the story of Arnold's Expedition up the Kennebec to Quebec. This is largely due to the Aaron Burr/Jacataqua romance fabricated by Henry Dearborn and brought to life by Kenneth Roberts in *Arundel*. So...what do we know about Swan Island and the immediate region in 1775? Did Dearborn and Burr in fact sleep here?

From Kenneth Roberts *March to Quebec*:

Dearborn's Journal - "21st Put up the River as far as Swan Island, at the upper End of Merry-meeting-Bay- where we Run on Shore and Came to an Anchor, I went, on Shore with some of my officers, and Stay'd all Night."

Caleb Haskell's Diary - "September 22nd, Friday. We made sail early this morning, and crossing Merry Meeting Bay we ran aground at ebb-tide. At 11 o'clock the Swallow came up with us. We were ordered on board of her, then we went up as far as Cobbescontee, then came to."

Ephraim Squier's Journal - "21st Hoisted anchor,



Detail from Plan of the Coast from Kennebec River to Round Pond

went up the river to Swan Island, run aground, lay till nine o'clock at night, got off, went up about a mile, cast anchor."

John Pierce's Journal - "We passed thro the Chops about 11 O'clock into merry meeting Bay so Called ...- Dined on Salmon and Lobsters in Betseys Cabbin ... Eston (Eastern) river Comes in near Boardingham (Bowdoinham) on the opposite the river - wind S. W. Good Gale - Several of our Ships ran aground and the Betsey amongst the rest but with some Difficulty were got her off - very Fair Serene Air - Passed thro Lovejoys Narrows between two Small rocks about Sun Set where we run onto the rocks but with Some Difficulty got her off one of our men Shot at a Crane - river about 20 roods wide."

All the running aground likely happened where the Eastern River joins the Kennebec. As this 1772 Holland/Sproul map shows, there are large tidal margins, abutting the main channel, that would be hidden in high water. The tide runs between 4 1/2' - 7' here. When the Kennebec Arsenal was built at Augusta (1828-1838), the Federal government built huge retaining walls at the mouth of the Eastern in order to keep the Kennebec channel from silting in.

Dearborn does not clearly state that he went ashore on Swan Island. He may have stepped to the east into what is now Dresden. The map does show 5 houses with barns on Swan Island. The most northerly is the Gardiner/ Dumaesq House, a summer residence then, that still stands. No documentation has been found for the next house south, although the land was also owned by the Gardiner interests. They were supporters of the King. The three southern most houses had recently been bought by Nantucket Quakers. Perhaps only one of these houses was then lived in. There were no Native Americans present.

~submitted by Jay Robbins

The Great Carrying Place Portage Trail

11.8 Mi. Between Wyman and Flagstaff Lakes

In the distant past, Native Americans had developed an elaborate system of travel routes along Maine's many waterways. Just after the ice age, people traveled north, deep into the interior as far as the Forks of the Upper Kennebec River, Moosehead Lake and further north.

More modern Native Americans developed a route for the Atlantic coastal dwellers to reach the St. Lawrence River villages. This route utilized two rivers, the south-flowing Kennebec and the north-flowing Chaudiere.

This route ascended the Kennebec, surmounting four relatively short portages around prominent falls. These were Ticonic (Waterville), Skowhegan, Norridgewock, and Caratunk (Devil's) Falls in present day Solon. There were several native villages along this section of the river.

However, when natives ascending the river reached a point near the present day village of Caratunk, the river became very difficult to navigate, becoming a continuous series of rapids, fast water, and several huge waterfalls.

To avoid this almost impassable stretch in their fragile birchbark canoes, the Indians discovered a 13 mile portage that lay almost due west. It rejoined the Kennebec's West Branch, now called the Dead River. This long portage avoided the huge 700 foot rise in elevation, which caused the river above Caratunk to be dangerous to either ascend or descend. Once the Dead River on the west side of the portage was reached, the river was much more navigable.

This portage, because of its length and difficulty, was named by native Americans the Great Carrying Place. Later, English settlers adopted it as well. Luckily the portage utilized three small ponds, shortening the land portion of the route. After about 1636, French Jesuit Priests often used this route to reach Native American villages along the Kennebec. How many centuries the route had been utilized prior to the arrival of Europeans is not known.

In 1763 an English army engineer named Montresor was sent to explore this route from Quebec City to the Atlantic coast. He documented the route in a later published journal, which included crude maps.

In 1775, the fledgling American Army sent two columns of soldiers north to capture Quebec City and annex all of Canada to expand the Revolutionary War. One army of approximately eleven hundred soldiers left Cambridge, MA in September of that year. It marched overland to Newburyport, then embarked in eleven small schooners that sailed up the Kennebeck to Pittston, Maine. Here the army took possession of 220 hastily constructed flat bottom bateaux. From Fort Western, the last outpost, they began their epic journey by ascending the Kennebeck River. The first contingent arrived at the Great Carrying Place about October 6-7 and began the arduous 13 mile portage. The last contingent did not complete the portage at the Dead River until October 19. The soldiers were forced to spend great time and energy to widen and clear the narrow portage trail to allow for the wider and heavier bateaux.

Due to this great expenditure of energy to carry the tons of boats, barrels of food and military equipment across this portage, the army was greatly weakened. Even a small log hospital was built to accommodate the increasing numbers of the sick and disabled men.

[For more detailed information, read Kenneth Roberts *March to Quebec*, a compilation and analysis of the many journals of the soldiers; or read his later great historical novel, *Arundel*.]

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In the late 1960's the newly formed Arnold Expedition Historical Society (AEHS) began to rediscover and protect the old portage route that had remained obscure for nearly two centuries. The land upon which the old portage trails were located, had been altered by two centuries of timber harvesting operations and more recent development. But in many places, it was still mostly intact.

Today, the AEHS has striven diligently to protect and maintain much of the Great Carrying Place route by acquired easements, working with cooperative landowners, utilizing a portion of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail's protective corridor and by State protective zoning. The route is also registered with the National Park System's National Battlefield Protection Program.

In 2014, the AEHS obtained permission from a benevolent landowner to utilize a portion of their land to connect two parts of the route. Also, the National Parks System's Appalachian Trail governance body gave permission to utilize about three miles of the A.T. This latter portion is near West and Middle Carry Ponds. These initiatives have allowed the Society to complete a continuous, marked and maintained hiking route closely following the original portage route. Both ends of the original GCP route unfortunately are now inundated by impoundments. However, most of the trail can still be followed.

The portage trail is not only an outstanding hiking experience through wild Central Maine woodlands, but an adventure in retracing our Revolutionary War heritage. In retracing the route, the hiker is following in the footsteps of centuries of Native Americans and also following the same route as used by our brave Revolutionary forefathers.

There may be a question as to which direction would be the best to hike, east to west or west to east. Either is a fine hike! However,

to more closely emulate the experiences of the soldiers of the 1775 Expedition, the better way is east to west, Wyman Lake to Flagstaff Lake [Kennebec to Dead Rivers].

It most likely will be hiked as a one day experience being a moderate 12 miles in length. But it could be done as a two day hike as well. There is an authorized AT campsite near the south end of West Carry Pond.

When you take a quiet break along the trail, listen carefully for the clandestine shouts and talk of the soldiers of the Expedition. Although their footsteps have been long erased, the spirits of these brave soldiers are still heard along the way.

A Heartfelt Thanks!

We have three directors that will be stepping down from the Society in September. They are **Rusty Arsenault** of Skowhegan, **Sherri Clark** of Scarborough who has also served as Society Secretary and assistant *Messenger* editor, and **Bob Donovan** of Embden.

Both Bob and Rusty have been active in maintaining the Nichols Cabin at Middle Carry Pond, as well as keeping the portage trail clear for the bateaux.

All three have given fine service to the Society and all three will continue to be active as members. All three will be missed at Board meetings, but know we will see them on the trail.

Did you know That...

The only known statue of Benedict Arnold is a partial one. At the Saratoga Battlefield, is a single bronze leg mounted on a pedestal. Just the leg! No markers or plaques. This represents the heroism of Arnold as he led his soldiers to victory at Bemis Heights winning the Revolutionary War's most decisive battle. He was wounded when his horse was shot and fell, crushing the same leg that received a bullet wound during the attack on Quebec. Because of his later betrayal, only his leg is honored.

The Third Portage, Norridgewock Falls

By Stephen Clark

[Ed. Note: This is the fourth and final article describing each of the four portages experienced by the 1775 Expedition along the Kennebec River.]

The expedition began leaving their staging area at Fort Western (Augusta) on Sept. 25, 1775. Each of the four divisions, consisting of approximately 250 soldiers (Greene's division had one additional company), left one day apart, so as to not overburden the narrow, upriver portage trails. The four in order were led by Capt. Daniel Morgan, Major Return Meigs, Lt. Col. Christopher Greene and Lt. Col. Roger Enos. The leader of the expedition was of course, Col. Benedict Arnold.

Eighteen miles of fast water existed upriver from Ft. Western to the first portage encountered at Ticonic Falls (at present day Waterville). The portage around these falls was a relatively short 60 rods.

Above these falls was the difficult Five Mile Rips, a section of river with fast water, rapids and rocky ledges. Most men had to get out of their bateaux and wade along the river's shore, laboriously hauling their heavily laden craft knee to waste deep in the cold water.

The next portage lay 20 miles above the Ticonic portage, at Skowhegan Falls. Again, this was a relatively short portage of about 60 rods across an island that split the river into two channels, both with falls. Just below these falls the river passed down through a narrow gorge replete with rapids and fast water.

Above these falls the river was more placid until they reached Bombazine Rips (above present day Norridgewock Village). One soldier from Morgan's riflemen drowned here. The second expedition fatality to this point. Above the rips the river was more navigable until they reached the formidable Norridgewock Falls (within present day Madison- Anson).

The distance from Skowhegan Falls to Norridgewock Falls is about 14 miles.

[Readers Note: It is confusing to note that Norridgewock Falls is not located within the present Town of Norridgewock. It lays eight miles further north.]

The portage at Norridgewock Falls was quite different from the other three falls on the Kennebec River. Rather than a single drop over sharp ledges, it was a series of cataracts, with rapids in between. The entire elevation drop in the river was approximately 70 feet.

The portage around the falls was located on the west (Anson) side of the river. The entire length of the portage was 1 1/4 miles (Arnold's estimate was 1500 yds.). There were a few scattered farms in the vicinity, but none above the falls. It was at that time, the edge of civilization.

Several of the journalists commented upon examining the remains of the old Indian village on the east side of the river, a half mile below Norridgewock Falls, opposite the confluence of the Sandy River with the Kennebec. It had been destroyed by Colonial troops in a massacre in 1724. Father Sebastian Ralse, a Jesuit priest and many native Americans died during the attack.

Arnold reached the falls on October 2nd and found that Morgan's lead division had mostly completed the arduous portage. They forged upriver the next day in order to be the first to reach the Great Carrying Place, 30 miles north. Arnold's party set up camp at the lower end of the portage. He greeted each succeeding division and supervised the portaging process. Two days earlier Arnold had stopped at the Wesson farm located several miles below Skowhegan Falls. Here he had secured in hiring two teams of oxen with sledges to carry the tons of equipment around Norridgewock Falls.

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Greene's division was the next to arrive. Arnold had them examine their food supplies and found that many barrels of bread, flour, dried peas and salted meat were spoiled and had to be thrown into the bushes. The rain from above and the water slopping over the gunnels, or springing through leaks opened by the bateaux colliding with the river's many rocks, had leaked into the barrels.

This played havoc with the men as they began to realize this lost food could not be replaced. A week later, while crossing the Great Carrying Place, after discussing this with his quartermaster, Arnold cut back daily rations to 3/4 portions. The soldiers ran completely out of food, three weeks later after surviving the hurricane and reaching the shores of Lac Megantic. The threat of starvation began at Norridgewock Falls with the discovery of so much food spoilage.

The two oxen teams were kept very busy hauling bateaux and supplies over the portage during the next several days. Also, Ruben Colburn who had built the 220 bateaux at his shipyard in Pittston, had sent a group of carpenters north to aid in repairing the hastily built craft. Bateaux were recaucked and renailed in an attempt to hold them together for the next rock and gravel filled section of river.

Meigs' division followed Greene's. Enos' lagging rear division, finally reached the bottom of the portage on Oct. 7. It had rained hard on this day and the following day, further complicating the laborious portaging process over the now muddy path of a portage road.

With Enos' division mostly over the portage on the 9th, Arnold's party struck upriver to catch up with the head of the column. He had spent seven days here, supervising the portage, the food inspections and repair of the boats. He caught up with the head at East Carry Pond on the Great Carrying Place, Oct. 12.

After Enos' fourth division struck upriver, Colburn's carpenters and some of the sick headed down river to their homes. The expedition was on

its own as they struggled deeper into the wilderness toward Quebec. .

John Wesson with his two oxen teams also returned south under a cold rain. Several days after arriving home, he contracted pneumonia, and a week or so later, died. His was the third life to be lost, with many more to come.

Norridgewock Falls was the most difficult portage on the main stem of the Kennebec River, but it was a relative cake-walk compared to the soon to be encountered Great Carrying Place.

Nominees for Officers and Directors to be voted upon at the Annual Meeting, Sept. 20, 2014

Officers, for terms of one year

President: John (Jay) Robbins
V. President: (vacant)
Secretary: Stephen Clark
Treasurer: Alan Burnell

For Directors, Group 1, terms expire 2017

Henry (Rocky) Freeman
Stephen Clark
Guy C. Grant
Robert Donovan
Kenny Wing

To fill the vacated term of Ronald Gamage, term expires in 2015

Clayton McLaughlin

Did You Know That,,, Major Return Meigs and Capt. Henry Dearborn, after spending the winter of 1775-76 in a Quebec prison, were paroled, and transported on English warships to the Maine coast. They were put ashore and released in what is now Waldoboro, Maine.

Historic Trail Dedication to Take Place

With the reopening of the Great Carrying Place Portage Trail in 2014, the AEHS has decided to conduct a dedication to the long abandoned trail. It will be held on site at the point where the portage trail crosses the Long Falls Dam Road. This dedication was suggested by AEHS members, Clayton McLaughlin and Norm Kalloch.

This will be held on **Saturday, Oct. 11th** and will begin at **11:00 AM**. All attendees should bring a bag lunch and drinks, as the event will include a short hike to the shores of Flagstaff Lake at the point the portage trail disappears under the waters of the Flagstaff Lake impoundment. We will have a picnic lunch there.

There are great views westward up the huge lake, and there is a spectacular view of the 4,000 foot Bigelow Range, named after one of the 1775 Expedition's officers, Major Timothy Bigelow. And of course the fall colors will be in their full glory.

Coincidentally this is the date, 239 years ago that the brave soldiers of the Expedition struggled by this place, on their epic journey to Quebec. Bring your cameras!

The dedication ceremony will include the story of the men as they crossed the portage, readings from the journals of several of the participants including Col. Benedict Arnold and later to be, Gen. Henry Dearborn. The Expedition included no less than three future Revolutionary generals, many other high ranking officers and a future vice president of our country (Aaron Burr). So plan to be there for this fun and historic event.

Directions to the Dedication

Drive to the small town of No. New Portland on ME Highway 16 between No. Anson and Kingfield. In the middle of the village, Route 16 makes a sharp turn. Leave Route 16 here and turn onto the Long Falls Dam Road. Set your odometer to zero. It is **21 miles** north through Lexington and Highland Plantations through the mountains to reach the ceremony site.

Continuing on the LFDR, and after passing

the entrance to the Bigelow Preserve, then crossing the Appalachian Trail, you will reach a junction with the so-called Spring Road (on right) at the brow of a hill. There is off road parking at this point. Meeting will begin next to the prominent GCP sign. Hope to see you there!

Spring Trail Work Trip Opens Great Carrying Place

Under the able leadership of Norm Kalloch, the opening of the remaining segment of the trail system to the old Great Carrying Place Trail was accomplished in late May. Norm Kalloch has also put in additional work on his own. The original trip had been washed out by rain, but the following week, Norm lead a group that cut and cleared a new section of trail called the connector, from the south end of West Carry Pond, from the Appalachian Trail to connect to the old GCP route near the top of the ridge that divide West Carry from the Dead River Valley.

No less than seven new cedar sign posts were installed to mount new directional signs. The route was also blazed by orange markers to make it easy to follow. The new trail will closely follow the original route, of the GCP.

No less than 10 new signs, including a new interpretive sign at Arnold Point on West Carry Pond were installed.

The completion of the west side of the old portage trail will compete the original route, which extended from the Kennebec River to the Dead River. Because of the construction of dams at Bingham and the Long Falls, two new impoundments inundate both ends of the original route, but most is still intact. See accompanying article on the opening of this trail. Besides leader Kalloch, others who participated in this spring trail work were Don Howard, Steve Clark, Fred Clark, Hank Dillenbeck, Rocky Freeman, Kenny Wing and Alan Burnell.