
LCHA CHRONICLE

Lincoln County Historical Association

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President's Letter

As we head into the fall of 2020, our three historic sites remain closed to the public. In a normal year volunteer docents would share stories of these buildings to show how history intertwines with the heritage of this part of Maine. The individuals who lived and worked in these historic buildings were observers and sometimes influential participants in the growth of Lincoln County from a district of the Massachusetts Bay Colony to one of sixteen counties in the State of Maine.

Despite the disappointment in not being able to interact with the public at our sites and in school programs, the organization has remained focused on the care and stewardship of our collections and buildings. The Coronavirus has not deterred the Collections Committee from their work recording our inventory with new collections management software called *Catalogit* that allows several volunteers to work directly with the collections at once. You will read within this newsletter about grants received to help fund administration, capital improvements, and for an archaeological dig.

We are especially grateful to the membership for their continued involvement this year and for their response to the Kermess Non-Event. You clearly understand the need for LCHA during this difficult and seemingly endless time.

Please look at our new website, www.lincolncountyhistory.org, which has additional elements to describe what we do. One new feature is an "object of the week" column to highlight the collections. Look for it under the LEARN tab. Many thanks to Vice President Ryan LaRoche for shepherding continued improvements to our web-based communications.

Michael Chaney, President of the Board of Trustees

Painter Henry Cheever Pratt in the Pownalborough Court House Collection

by Faye A. Snyder, Chair, Collections Committee

The LCHA Collections Committee has been hard at work behind the scenes this summer. We meet on Monday mornings and practice physical distancing at the Pownalborough Court House to inventory the many objects in the collection. As we worked, we became intrigued with a photograph of Henry Cheever Pratt and his wife Sarah Howard Johnson Pratt. Both the old frame and mat were in very poor condition and continuing to deteriorate. We thought it best to have Peter and Teresa Fogg of Fogg Art Restoration in Wiscasset take a look at the photograph before it was gone forever. They fell in love with the story of Henry and Sarah.

Sarah, born in June 1807, was the third child of John and Eliza Johnson, Jr. In 1831 she married Henry Pratt, a prominent portrait artist from Boston. Pratt's talents had been discovered by Samuel F.B. Morse when, as a boy of fifteen, he had been using his talents to paint landscapes on barn doors. Morse took him to Boston as an errand boy and gave him lessons in portrait painting.

Later on, Henry became friends with Thomas Cole, founder of the Hudson River School of painting and one of the most important American landscape artists. Henry brought Cole to the Pownalborough Court House for a few days during an excursion to paint scenes of Mount Desert Island. Pratt and Cole subsequently made many sketching trips to the White Mountains that resulted in several well known landscape paintings. In 1851 Pratt was appointed to the US-Mexican Boundary Survey to use his skills to depict the topography of the border region between the United States and Mexico.

The Pratts were a delightful couple and full of fun. They loved to make long visits to the Court House to see Sarah's family, traveling by the Boston boat or by the railroad, which had been built along the river bank in the 1850s. During these visits Henry painted two of Sarah's sisters, his father-in-law

John, Sarah's Uncle Thomas, the Hooper children (Sarah's niece and nephew), and Governor Thomas Pownall (from an etching). The Johnson family portraits hang in the Court House collection.



Photo of Henry and Sara Pratt (c.1860) prior to conservation work.

This charming photograph of Sarah and Henry was taken in the days when one had to sit for a very long time to get a picture made. Sarah refused to sit for the photographer, so Henry took an earlier portrait he had painted of her, set it on a chair and posed alongside it with a brush and palette. They had their picture taken together, whether she participated or not! The Foggs have generously donated their time and expertise to conserve, mat and beautifully frame the Pratt photograph. It now hangs proudly with the priceless portraits that Henry C. Pratt painted of this early Court House family.

The Pownalborough Court House collection contains seven works of art by Henry Cheever Pratt:

- **John Johnson Jr.** (portrait painted c.1830). Born Aug. 29, 1779 and died July 12, 1833, soon after the portrait was painted. He married Eliza Rand and had 12 children.

- **Thomas Johnson** (portrait painted c.1850). Born February 8, 1778 and died January 2, 1850. Never married.
- **Governor Thomas Pownall** (portrait by Henry Cheever Pratt painting from an engraving in 1831).
- **Nancy Goodwin Johnson and daughter Nancy Elizabeth Johnson.**, c.1830
- **Hooper Children** (Alice born 1828 and Harrie). Mother is Rebecca Goodwin Johnson (born July 22, 1805) sister of Sarah Johnson Pratt, Henry Cheever Pratt's and Sarah Pratt's niece and nephew.
- **Unfinished painting of Cross Road** c.1840. Cross Road went East from PCH to the Common Road and Dresden Mills. Pratt painted this landscape to illustrate a family story. The Johnson family liked to tell about the time the stage driver was inside the Court House delivering mail. Workman who were re-shingling the roof dropped some old shingles and frightened the stage horses. The horses bolted and took off over the Cross Road with a woman inside. When the horses and stage reached the hill, they slowed down enough for her to jump out safely.
- **Still life of Strawberries and Flowers** painted by Henry Cheever Pratt c.1872.



Nancy Goodwin Johnson and daughter Nancy c.1830, by Henry Cheever Pratt, LCHA Collection

LCHA manages its finances in uncertain times

by Kerry Cushing, Executive Director

Our fundraisers have been canceled and the museums are closed for the season. This has resulted in a considerable loss in projected income for 2020. The good news is that we received a Paycheck Protection Program forgivable loan for \$9,400.00 as well as a \$5,000.00 grant from the Maine Humanities Council to help offset this loss of income. Our membership drive has been successful and we are nearing our goal of \$7,500.

Thank you to our members for your continued support this year. The annual campaign, which supports general operations, kicks off in the fall and we hope to raise \$20,000.00 this year. The Kermess non-event fundraiser has raised \$5,000.00 from individual gifts and sponsorships, and the Chapman-Hall House archaeological dig, now scheduled for 2021, has raised \$6,500.00 in support of projected expenses.

While our traditional summer is very different this year, a lot of work is being done behind the scenes. The front door of the jail has been repaired extensively, and the antiquated wiring in the Jailer's House and cells is soon to be replaced with help from a \$13,000.00 Davis Family Foundation grant. This major project will begin in September.

Also during this time, the buildings and grounds continue to be maintained by our wonderful volunteers. Thank you to the stewardship committees for your devotion to our three historic properties. Our administrative committee will continue to look for resources to complete capital projects, to expand education programming, and support operations. We appreciate the LCHA community for its continued generosity in so many ways this year.

Stewardship Committee Reports

Pownalborough Court House

by Dave Probert

We held a condensed version of our Memorial Day event this year, with 14 people attending. This upholds our record of having the event each consecutive year for the past 60 years. All other events have been canceled.

The grounds are being kept in great condition with regular mowing; the flower gardens are beautifully maintained by the Garden Club of Wiscasset; and Mike Dekker and friends created a new Colonial garden using 18th-century style hand tools. The Court House interior has been cleaned and put into readiness by many members of our stewardship committee.

The Court House is currently featured in a video by Waterville Creates as part of their “On the Road in Maine” series. Perry Palmer, a longtime volunteer docent, gives viewers a tour that includes a few of her favorite stories. This 30 minute video is very interesting and well done. I hope you can take some time to watch it either on our Pownalborough Court House Museum Facebook page or our updated LCHA website. <https://www.lincolncountyhistory.org/news/waterville-creates-features-the-pownalborough-courthouse/>. Waterville Creates is a nonprofit that enriches lives and grows the creative economy by supporting and promoting high-quality, accessible arts and cultural programs and institutions.

Chapman-Hall House

by Louise Miller

We sorely miss our visitors, but “life” at Chapman-Hall House continues. Committee members undertook spring house-cleaning as usual and assessed any winter damage. The archaeology dig scheduled for August has been postponed until next year. The Stewardship Committee wishes to thank all those who helped us

meet our financial requirements to undertake the dig.



A primly dressed mannequin waits for visitors in the parlor of the Chapman-Hall House.

All of our summer fundraisers have been canceled, although it may be possible to hold the *Shredding on Site* this fall.

Yet the House has not been left to sleep away the summer. New windows have been constructed to replace those on the second floor. Committee members are helping to defray costs by undertaking to paint the sash and install the glass in the frames. A railing for the stair case to the second floor is being built.

The Old Bristol Garden Club has again invited the Stewardship Committee to submit a proposal for a project to sponsor. In prior years the garden club provided funds for a shrub, for the purchase of books on herbs and gardening for children, and for plants and supplies to be used by the children in the summer program. This year, despite the cancellation of their own fund-raising events, they remembered us with the gift of plants for our little herb garden at the back of the house.

With the new posting on the LCHA website, *Object of the Week*, Committee members look forward to sharing with the LCHA membership some of the interesting pieces displayed in the Chapman-Hall House.

Museum and Old Jail

by Christine Hopf-Lovette

Although we are disappointed that we can't take summer visitors on tours of the Old Jail this year, the closure allows us to get a start on the upgrade of the museum's electrical system. The Davis Family Foundation has granted our request for funds to replace the knob and tube wiring and outlets in the three floors of the Jailer's House, including the update of circuits and outlets. The project will require considerable intrusion into the plaster walls, which would not have been possible during a normal summer season. We appreciate the work that George Keyes and Kerry Cushing have put into this request.

The massive front door of the Jailer's House is once again in fine shape, thanks to Darryn Peterson's excellent carpentry. The gazebo in the center of the parking area, however, needs costly repairs, and its fate is in limbo as we research our options, including the possibility of relocating it to another historic site, since the structure was not originally a part of the Jail.

The building is inspected by committee members on a regular basis to see that we are keeping the bats, pigeons, and chipmunks at bay. In addition, Bill Sutter and Greg Shaw mow the lawn weekly, and Judith Sutter keeps an eagle eye on the rest of the grounds.

Education Outreach

by Louise Miller, Education Director

As spring moved into summer it became sadly evident that "business as usual" would not be happening for some time to come. To replace the children's program, *Summer with the Past – Discovering 18th and 19th Century Art, Crafts and History*, we are producing a series of videos that include simple projects. The first video focuses on the Colonial era and its purpose is to introduce the audience, both children, and adults, to skills

popular at that time. The video series will eventually include 19th century projects as this initiative builds.

The videos are fairly short. The materials required for each project do not need to be purchased. They can be found around the home or can be easily acquired. It has been one of our goals to make these projects accessible to all families —taking into consideration families that have been impacted by the "stay in place" mandate.

In the struggle to incorporate new health and safety measures, many in-school presentations and field trips may be suspended. We are therefore considering the use of videos, Zoom-type communications, and handouts for the LCHA outreach programs. Furthermore, as the challenge of limiting the impact of the coronavirus affects education at all levels, many families with at-risk individuals are seriously considering home schooling. For this reason, one of our major goals is to continue to be innovative in making the LCHA outreach programs available to all students.

Have you renewed your membership?

If your name is not included here, please join or renew on our website at lincolncountyhistory.org.

Thank you to our members!

Membership Gifts from January 2020 -August 10th 2020

Individual Level - \$25.00

David Bailey
Robert Bickford
Ellen Bowman
Bobbi Brewer
Leonard Chapman
Dennis Dunbar
Patricia Fales
Robert F. Faunce
Cynthia Fischer
Maia Hart
Shirley Haskell
Tania Hayes
Blanche Johnson

Richard Miller
 Peter Morrissey
 Perry Palmer
 Richard Plunkett
 David Probert
 Margaret Ricker
 Ann Robison
 Barbara Rumsey
 Cheryl Rust
 Carole Sargent
 Susan Stedman
 Sarah Sutter
 Karyn Townsend
 Susan van Alsenoy
 Mariellen Whelan
 Alexandra Wilson, M.D.

Family Level - \$35.00

Fred and Mary Bowers
 William and Deane Brewer
 Kathe Cheska
 James Crissman
 Eliot and Taffy Field
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 George Haduch and Ellen Miller
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 Ernest McNiff
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 Michael and Elaine Pew
 R. Sargent and Elizabeth Potter
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 Bill and Sonnie Robb
 Wallace and Nancy Roby
 Greg and Jan Shaw
 Charles and Faye Shea
 Anne and John Upton
 Dan and Carol Watts
 Peter and Terri Wells
 Ingrid and Ethan Whitaker
 Fred and Linda Winterberg
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Business Level - \$50.00

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Supporting Level - \$100.00 to \$499.00

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Theodore and Louana Frois
 Theodore and Mary Gene Myer
 Joe Zoellers and Chris Erickson

Lifetime Members

Susan Blagden
 Eleanor Everson

A report of gifts to the annual campaign and the archaeological dig will be included in the fall newsletter.

Thank you for a successful non-event!

by Christine Hopf-Lovette, Kermess Committee Chair

In mid-March, when the world seemed to shut down, our Kermess finance committee headed by Sally Gemmill was in the middle of soliciting underwriters for the event. A number of businesses had already sent in their checks. When we announced that the party had been canceled, they readily agreed to make their donations anyway. Because the event was so important to our annual budget, we decided to go ahead and send invitations to a Kermess Non-Event. **Thank you to the following generous donors who responded to our request:**

Kermess Business Sponsors

Ames Supply
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Hall Funeral Home
J. Edward Knight & Co
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Karen Stram
Paul and Judy Tunkle
John and Anne Upton
Joe Zoellers and Chris Erickson

\$150.00 and above

Donald and Susan Blagden
Ralph and Judith Doering
Tom Eichler and Wendy Ross
Warren and Karen Freund
Bill and Sally Gemmill
Sarg and Elizabeth Potter

Some thoughts on the importance of the written word

by Louise Miller

As a member of LCHA, you honor the past and its preservation. You also, most likely, enjoy learning about the people and events of the past. Much of what we now know of the people and events that comprise the histories of our LCHA historic sites has been passed down through letters, diaries, newspapers and town records.

Standing in 2020 one wonders how often hand written letters are sent, how many individuals today keep a journal or a diary. Documents such as newspapers, and probates are all digitalized for storage and preservation. E-mails and texts have replaced the letters and notecards that used to be exchanged between friends and family. The future of special correspondence, tied with a ribbon and tucked away, is very bleak.

I'd like to suggest that you consider preserving your history and the history of your family in a journal or a diary — or print off special e-mails as keepsakes, perhaps tied up with a ribbon. Then, when today's thumb-drive goes the way of the dodo like the floppy disc, you won't have to worry about losing a piece of your history. The researchers of the next century will appreciate your efforts.

Much of the history of Pownalborough Court House and the families who lived there would have been

lost if the letters by Captain Sam Goodwin and his wife Sallie had not been saved. For example, on March 5, 1855, Sallie wrote to Sam:

My own dearest Husband, Our post office has gone in real earnest (the Dresden Post Office had been operating in the Court House since 1807) and we shall not have the pleasure of opening it again, although we little thought it would be removed till the end of the quarter. We do not intend to go to a rum shop for our letters, so will you please direct in future to Richmond Maine as we have all united in the determination of receiving letters there, for the present at any rate. And if we don't like it we will make some change. I intend to get a box. Is it not provoking?



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