

Published by Denmark Historical Society

Keeping up with the past

Bridgton and Saco River Railroad

In the years following the end of the American Civil War, railroad fever was spreading throughout the United States. Railroads were being constructed rapidly and connected people in a way they never had been before. Towns and Villages that had railroad access were now given a direct link to the outside world. To the disappointment of the town officials in Bridgton Maine, both the Atlantic & St. Lawrence Railroad as well as the Portland & Ogdensburg Railroad bypassed the town. After an article was published in the Bridgton News about the completion of the Sandy River Railroad on April 18th, 1879, some citizens of Bridgton, ME decided they wanted a railroad of their very own.

The subject of building a railroad to the town of Bridgton was a popular topic among Bridgton residents when the Atlantic & St. Lawrence R.R. was being constructed throughout the 1840's and 1850's. When completed, the closest part of the Atlantic & St. Lawrence R.R. was 17 miles from Bridgton, not close enough to make much of an economic impact for the town. Supporters for a railroad to Bridgton rejoiced when the Portland & Ogdensburg Railroad was chartered to build a railroad from Portland to the White Mountains of New Hampshire, only to be disappointed that once again a railroad wouldn't be building through Bridgton. Serious railroad talk occurred throughout the 1870's and many proposals were submitted.

The location of the route for the the newly proposed railroad varied. The route to Hiram was found to be more favorable and on July 30th, 1881, the Bridgton & Saco River Railroad was officially chartered.

Construction began in earnest in 1882. Two Identical steam locomotives, B&SR's #1 and #2, were built. The railroad started laying track from Hiram through the towns of Sebago and Denmark as it snaked its way to Bridgton.

The line was completed from Bridgton Jct. (Hiram) to Bridgton on January 21st, 1883, giving the railroad a total of 16 miles of track. The B&SR was officially open for business on January 29th, 1883, as a large crowd braved the winter weather to see the first passenger train depart Bridgton for Hiram, and the train was stated to be full to overcrowded by the local papers.



Bridgton locomotive #8 at Bridgton Jct. sometime in the 1930's.



The difference between a narrow guage and a standard guage railroad.

In the beginning the B&SR ran 2 daily passenger services between Bridgton and Hiram, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Freight traffic was slow until logging increased in the area around 1891. Besides lumber, the railroad transported apples, coal, goods, mail, and other assorted freight. With the boom in freight traffic in 1891, another locomotive was needed so B&SR #3 was added. In 1893 however, both #1 and #3 were caught in an engine house fire. Short on motive power, the B&SR borrowed an engine from the Franklin and Megantic Railroad. This borrowed engine, "Bo Peep", was the only named steam locomotive on the Bridgton & Saco River. It was borrowed from the F&M until later that same year, once repairs to the other locomotives were completed.

Starting in the early 1920s the railroad started to decline in revenue as the better roads and automobiles started to cut in on the railroad's passenger revenue. Nonetheless, in 1924, the railroad purchased one last steam locomotive, B&SR #8, from the Baldwin Locomotive Works and this would be the largest of the B&SR engines. It was also the last steam locomotive constructed for any of the Maine Two-Foot Gauge railroads. The railroad also lost a good amount of its freight traffic in the mid-1920s due to mills in Bridgton closing in favor of relocating elsewhere in the country to take advantage of cheaper labor.

On March 28th, 1927, the Bridgton & Harrison Railway Company was chartered to save the failing Bridgton & Saco River Railroad. The B&H officially took over operations of the railroad on October 1, 1927, thus the Maine Central no longer had control of the Bridgton narrow gauge. This was a victory for the town, but the survival of the railroad was still in question.

The stock market crash of 1929 and ensuing Great Depression did not help the struggling B&H one bit. Even on the first day of operations, the new Bridgton & Harrison Railway had trouble. On the same day that the B&H purchased the railroad, locomotive #8 hit a sun kink on the Harrison extension and derailed, tipping onto its side. This incident eventually led to the closure of the Harrison extension in October 1930.

With fewer passengers and hardly any freight traffic at this point, the railroad custom made a railbus out of a 1927 Chevrolet sedan with a custom trailer to handle light freight and passenger duties on the line so as to not waste too much money firing up a locomotive for a run.

The financial situation was gloomy for the slim gauge railroad, but the B&H was to get ridership from an interesting source. In the mid-1930s, magazines and other publications that catered to railroad enthusiasts

2024

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Joseph A. Bennett, born and raised in Denmark, a strong advocate of the railroad, was the thirty-year-old chairman of Bridgton's board of selectmen when construction of the line began. Bennett became an employee of the B&SR, quickly moved up through the ranks, and for many years served as general manager and superintendent. He retired in 1916, serving the B&SR very capably for 33 years. Portrait taken a few years before he retired.



During the summer of 1901, General Manager Joe Bennett built a large two-story cottage next to the B&SR main line at Hancock Pond. An avid fisherman, he spent his summers at the cottage. The track runs along the lakeshore between the water and the buildings.

started publishing articles about the “Maine Two-Footers” and those who had never heard of them flocked to Bridgton to charter train excursions and photograph the engines and rollingstock.

Throughout the late 1930s and until 1941, many would visit the railroad to see and ride behind the unique little engines.

In 1940, the Bridgton Railroad & Development Company was formed by a group of New Englanders who had heard of the impending abandonment of the railroad and were interested in saving the remaining locomotives and rollingstock. Another group for the same purpose that formed was called the “Save the Bridgton Narrow Gauge Railroad Club”. These groups’ goal would be realized later on but in 1940 both groups clung to the idea of the railroad surviving this ordeal. Weirdly enough, while the B&H knew that abandonment was inevitable at this point, they still held onto the hope.

On September 7th, engineer Everett Brown fired up No. 7 to move the final revenue train over the line. The eyes of the veteran employees were misted as they unloaded the final car, operated the last switch, and dropped the fire on the little Baldwin. Then, slowly, sadly, they turned away, leaving the (rail)road they had loved so well to a fate which it didn’t deserve. No special ceremonies were observed; the little (rail)road just stopped operating.

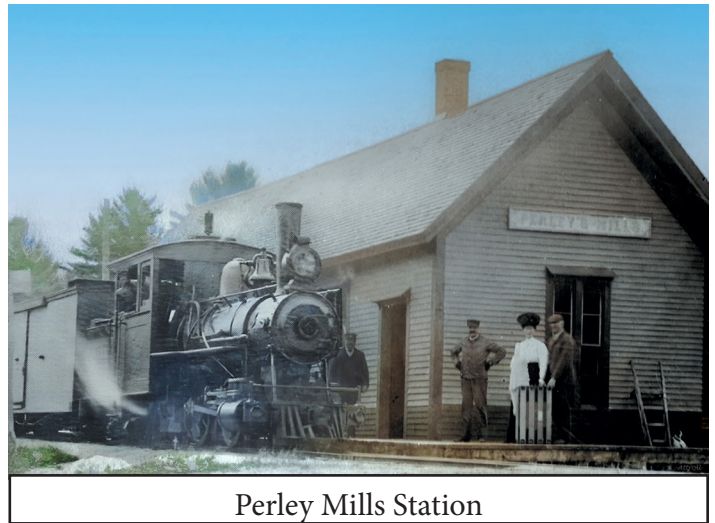
For those who have further interest, there is the Maine Narrow Gauge Railroad Company and Museum at 49 Thames Street in Portland. They have a collection of passenger and freight equipment, as well as artifacts from the 2 foot narrow gauge railways that ran in the state in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The museum operates a 1 1/2 mile track that runs along the Casco Bay waterfront parallel to the Eastern Promenade. Historic locomotives and a variety of restored coaches are used to run passenger services on the short track. Guests of all ages can enjoy an historical trip on a narrow gauge train ride, with a season that runs April through October, and 6 trips a day, 7 days a week.

These rail lines were cheaper to build, and run than standard gauge rail lines as they more easily navigated the hilly terrain and undulating topography of our state. The narrow tracks limited speed and power, but were very serviceable for passengers and shipping smaller freight.

www.mainenarrowgauge.org 207-828-0814.

Enjoy the experience!



Perley Mills Station



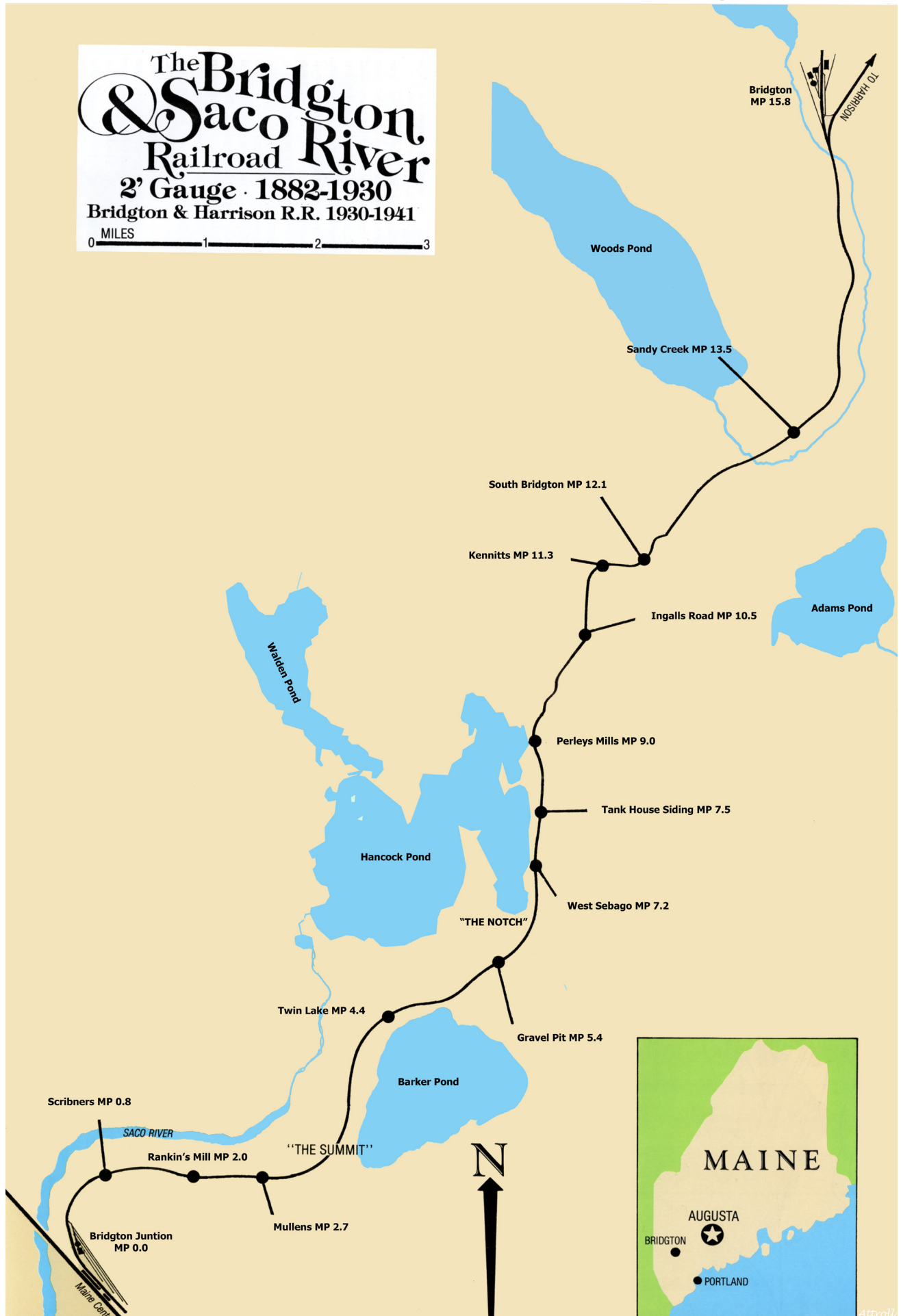
This image shows Bridgton and Harrison Railway Locomotive #8 paused at the Hancock Pond water tank with an enthusiast excursion sometime in the late 1930's.



Unseasonable hot weather in mid-May of 1911 caused a sun kink just south of Perley's Mills depot. Engineer could not stop train in time and it came to rest on its side.

**The Bridgton
& Saco River
Railroad**
 2' Gauge · 1882-1930
 Bridgton & Harrison R.R. 1930-1941

MILES 0 1 2 3



Mileposts along the Bridgton to Saco River Railroad

Milepost 0: Bridgton Junction - Interchange yard with the Portland and Ogdensburg (later Maine Central Railroad Mountain Division).

Milepost 0.8: Scribner's - southbound spur.

Milepost 1.0: Granite masonry arch over Hancock Brook.

Milepost 1.2: Small's.

Milepost 2.0: Rankin's Mill - small flag stop passenger shelter.

Milepost 2.7: Mullen Siding - northbound spur.

Milepost 3.0: Summit - highest point on the railroad.

Milepost 4.0: Fill over the north end of Barker Pond with granite masonry abutments for a short timber stringer span on the boundary between Hiram and the town of Sebago.

Milepost 4.4: Twin Lake - small flag stop passenger shelter.

Milepost 5.4: Gravel Pit - northbound spur.

Milepost 7.0: The Notch - a rock cut.

Milepost 7.2: West Sebago - southbound spur with small flag stop passenger shelter.

Milepost 7.5: Water Tank Siding - passing siding adjacent to Hancock Pond. The main line ran between Hancock Pond and B&SR superintendent Joseph Bennett's lakeside cottage was a short distance south of the covered water tank.

Milepost 9.0: Perley's Mills - southbound spur with small flag stop passenger shelter.

Milepost 10.5: Ingall's Road - southbound spur with small flag stop passenger shelter.

Milepost 11.3: Kennett's - southbound spur.

Milepost 12.1: South Bridgton - southbound spur with small flag stop passenger shelter.

Milepost 13.0: High fill with granite masonry abutments for a short timber stringer span over Willett Brook.

Milepost 13.5: Sandy Creek - agent's station with passing siding serving a sawmill.

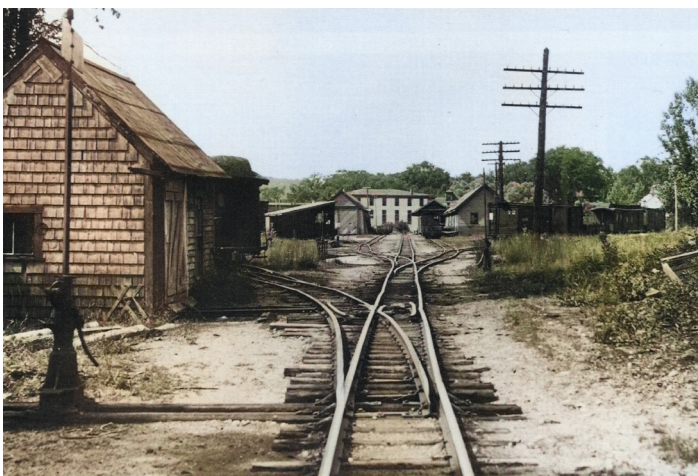
Milepost 15.8: Bridgton - had the largest population of any village served by the Maine 2 ft (610 mm) gauge railroads. The yard was on the stub of a wye with branches to Harrison and Bridgton Junction. There were 2 storage sidings and 4 spurs serving the agent's station, a separate freight house, a team track, an oil distributor, a grain store, the B&SR shop, and a turntable with a 4-stall enginehouse.

Milepost 15.9: Farmers Market - two northbound spurs (one was a coal trestle.)

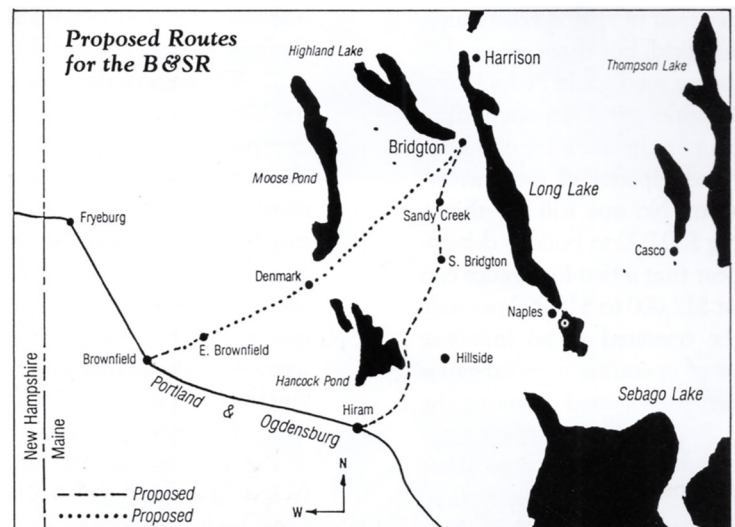
Milepost 16.4: Forest Mills - passing siding with a northbound coal trestle spur.

Milepost 19.5: North Bridgton - agent's station with passing siding serving a separate freight house.

Milepost 20.7: Harrison - agent's station with a passing siding and several southbound spurs serving a freight house, a cannery, a grain store, a 2-track car shed, and a turntable with a single-stall enginehouse.



Bridgton depot and station



What the Census Tells Us

When doing family research, the United States census reports can render lots of information. The questions have changed over the decades and often have reflected what was going on in the country in those years. Unfortunately, the earliest census reports did not list names in a family, but only ages by whether the people were over, under or between certain ages, so even if you have a list of family members, you have to try matching your names to those numbers.

The first census to list names of household members was taken in 1850. It was straightforward asking for name, age, sex, color, occupation, real estate value, place of birth. These are questions we would expect to answer for this kind of questionnaire. Then after asking if the person attended school, the next question wanted to know if the person was deaf, dumb, blind, insane, idiotic, a pauper or a convict. This was asked in its entirety in other years and piecemeal in later years.

In 1860 they left out some of the questions but asked for the value of the person's personal estate as well as the value of the real estate. After the civil war, in 1870, they added questions regarding whether the person could read and write, if a male citizen was over the age of 21, and if that person was someone whose right to vote was restricted or denied for any reason. This could have something to do with reconstruction and the Negroes right to vote.

1870 was also the first year that the question was asked about the relationship held by household members to the head of the house, and the first asking about "place of birth meaning state or territory in the US, or the country if foreign birth", whether father and mother of the person were of foreign birth, reflecting the increase in immigration.

Perhaps the aftermath of the Civil War was responsible for questions in 1880 regarding whether the person was single, married or widowed, sick or disabled, maimed or crippled.

The turn of the century brought questions about the years married and how many children a mother birthed, and the number of them still living. 1900's questionnaire also extended questions about the parents place of birth, year of immigration, number of years in the US, and naturalization, and whether the person could speak English. It was the first time a person was asked if he owned or rented the home he lived in, if owned - free and clear or mortgaged, and if it was a farm or a house.

The 1910 census continued its questions for foreign born persons regarding whether they were naturalized (and when) or alien. Regarding work it questioned whether a person was an employer or a worker, working or out of work. The most surprising question asked if a person supported the Union or the Confederacy. Why after so many years was that important? This particular year one was only asked if 'blind' or 'deaf and dumb', not all the earlier conditions.

In 1920, in addition to place of birth, the mother tongue of each person was asked for. Instead of asking for a person's occupation he was asked for "trade" and "in which industry". More importance was placed on a person's work status in 1930, also whether a person was a veteran, of which war. Additionally, It was the first time to be asked if the respondent owned a radio. Times were changing!

The 1940 census had some new questions. After the depression people were asked about highest grade attended in school, whether born in the US or another country, if Canada, was it French or English Canada, more questions regarding employment and unemployment, how much wage was earned.

The last census available for research is that of 1950 which was opened in April of 2022. There is a 72-year hold on each census so 1960 won't be available until 2032.

As you can see, not every census had all the same questions. Even the same questions not always showed the same answers. Sometimes the census taker wrote down nicknames, or misspelled names, got some numbers wrong or mixed up some information. While each census is a good source for information, it is always a good idea to check what is there against all other information you can find hoping they support each other.

What Are You Worth?

I recall scenes from movies long ago of when a farmer went bust and his farm and most of his possessions were sold at auction to pay off some of his debt. Then the family left town in an old wagon with a few meager belongings. When people died it was common practice to figure the value of their land and personal property and to work out the disposition of the same.

Today we might think of real estate, vehicles, bank accounts and more. But our ancestors really did not own much. Their farm or house and livestock were of greatest value. As you can see below, the things they owned really did not account for much.

Here are two estate listings, that of John Pike Smith from 1841, and that of Cornelius Bell McIntire from 1885, both farmers who lived in Denmark in the 1800s.

What value do you place on your belongings? What a difference in the relative prosperity we live in today in comparison to, from reading these two lists, was a bare bones existence.

John Pike Smith

Will and probate 25 May 1841

Homestead farm containing 80 acres with 2 story dwelling house and barn	\$1,300.00
80 acres of land being part of Spring land	\$360.00
80 acres of land in Bridgton being part of lot #1 in 16th range in lots in said Bridgton	\$200.00
Pew #22 in Congregational Meeting House.	\$15.00
	<hr/>
	\$1,875.00
Personal Estate	
1 pair oxen	\$60.00
7 cows @ \$11	\$77.00
3 yearling steers @ \$5	\$15.00
1 horse	\$65.00
2 hogs	\$16.00
2 pigs	\$4.00
1 pair cart wheels, 1 cart, hay rack and co/os pin	\$10.00
4 draft chains	\$18.00
1 plough	\$5.00
1 harrow	\$2.00
1 scythe, 2 hay forks, 1 shovel, 2 rakes	\$2.00
1 horse wagon	\$45.00
1 sleigh	\$20.00
1 harness	\$7.00
1 buffalo robe	\$2.50
20 bushels of corn	\$20.00
1 ox sled and drag	\$3.00
3 feather beds and pillows	\$50.00
3 beds and pillows	\$24.00
3 French bedsteads	\$7.50
2 common D	\$1.00
1 high post D	\$4.00
6 bed comforters	\$9.00
6 bed quilts	\$9.00
12 pair sheets and pillow cases	\$6.00
4 bed blankets	\$4.00
6 under beds	\$3.00
18 chairs	\$6.00
3 tables	\$6.00
	<hr/>
	\$481.00

Cornelius Bell McIntire

From probate records 10 Jan 1885

Real estate - homestead farm	\$1,000.00
Personal estate	
2 plows	\$2.00
1 crowbar	\$0.25
5 chains	\$5.00
1 pung	\$3.00
1 crosscut saw	\$0.20
1 cart and wheels	\$8.00
1 wagon	\$5.00
4 yokes	\$2.00
8 tie chains	\$0.80
1 cow bell	\$0.25
3 forks	\$1.00
1 handbrake	\$0.10
8 tons of hay	\$80.00
14 chains	\$3.50
2 bedsteads	\$2.00
Crockery	\$2.00
Spoons	\$1.00
Knives and forks	\$1.00
3 tables	\$3.00
1 clock	\$1.00
3 lamps	\$1.00
6 blankets	\$3.00
12 sheets	\$3.00
12 rugs	\$3.00
9 quilts	\$9.00
2 rag carpets	\$4.00
1 shovel	\$0.25
	<hr/>
	\$144.35

Maine Granite - Local Quarries

Maine granite comes in many colors and textures depending on where it is found. Maine's granite industry activity was highest in the 1800s to 1901. Public buildings all over the eastern United States were built using Maine granite including New York, Washington, DC and even Chicago.

Most of this came from quarries on coastal islands where it could be loaded onto boats for transport. Smaller inland quarries were often not too far from railroad lines. Limestone and slate were also quarried in Maine.

There were a number of commercial quarries in Oxford County and the granite was transported by cart to the Maine Central Railroad. But there were also numerous smaller local quarries that furnished granite for house and barn foundations. There are many fieldstone walls in Denmark but you will find cut stone walls as well.

Local quarrying began as a small scale operation with local men working together to cut and transport the stone. Most of the early houses and barns were built over cut granite foundations. Men in their ox carts or with heavy sleds would enter the quarry to collect the cut granite. Building a foundation and the house or barn that went on top of it was a collaborative effort that took many hands, sharing the work to move the heavy stone.

There are a number of small quarries in our area, some furnished stone for more foundations than others. Smaller local quarries are found on private land, but Narramissic in South Bridgton has trails that lead up to several quarry areas where you can see large granite deposits and tool marks left on some of the stones.



Denmark Clubs & Meetings

Denmark ATV Club - Bob Spear, President.

Facebook: Denmark A.T.V. Club

Denmark Dragers Snowmobile Club - Jim Stacy, President. Facebook: Denmark Dragers Snowmobile Club.

Denmark Lions Club - Nicole Watkins, President. Meetings are the first and third Tuesday of every month at 7pm at the municipal building. denmarkmainelions@gmail.com.

Denmark Rod and Gun Club - John Wiesemann, President. Meetings are the first Saturday of every month at 7pm at the municipal building. denmarkrodandgunclub@gmail.com.

AA Meetings - Every Thursday at 6pm at the municipal building.

Denmark Veterans Committee - Rick Towle, President. denmarkveterans@gmail.com

Denmark Recreation Center, Director, Hillary Allocco
Facebook: Denmark Recreation

Denmark Events

Denmark Library events

Mahjong Group - Meets every Tuesday at 3pm.

Coffee Cafe - Meets the first Friday of every month from 9am - 11am at the Denmark Library.

Book Club - Meets the second Tuesday of every month from 4pm - 5pm at the Denmark Library.

Story Time - Kids 5 and under Wednesday's at 10:00am.

Denmark Congregational Church

4/19/24 - Denmark Congregational Church Concert at the Denmark Arts Center

7/4/24 - Lobster Lunch after Fourth of July parade

Denmark Arts Center, check website for upcoming events. (www.denmarkarts.org)

5/12/24 - Sip N' Paint-Pet Portraits on Mother's Day 3-6pm

5/31/24 - John Waldie-Billy Joel 7pm

6/01/24 - Art Show Pride Students opening 5-7pm

6/21/24 - Mary Bastoni-Barbra Streisand 7pm

6/22/24 - Pride Celebration-In the Park 3-7pm

6/22/24 - Them Burlesque 7pm

6/23/24 - Author Series-Ryan Brod & SS Flies

7/4/24 - Parade starts from town garage and ends at the town hall.

7/6/24 - July Fireworks at the town park at dusk.

Hours of operation

Denmark Library

Tuesday: 2pm-6pm

Wednesday: 9am-12pm

Thursday: 2pm-6pm

Saturday: 9am-2pm

Denmark Transfer Station

Memorial Day thru Labor Day

Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday 8am - 4pm

Labor Day thru Memorial Day

Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday 9am - 4pm

Sad news:

On the morning of 26 February the Mark Schrader home on Hio Ridge Road was leveled by fire. It started as a chimney fire and ended up going through the whole house. Everyone is safe and well.

Retrunable Committee

The Denmark Returnable Committee would like to thank everyone for their support with the returnable can and bottle bin at the transfer station. It has been a success. We do, however, ask that you only put returnable cans and bottles in the bin.

Please keep household trash out the bags that you place in the bin with your returnable cans and bottles.

Thank you

Veterans Committee

The Denmark Veterans Committee is making an offer for those that for some reason cannot make it to the transfer station or do not want to deal with going there. We can make arrangements with you to come directly to your home and pick up your returnable cans and bottles to go to the veterans committee.

To make these arrangements please email me denmarkmainenewsletter@gmail.com

Fire Department

Maine Burn Permit System is now online

Who Can Use this Service?

- Individuals seeking to burn brush piles, wood debris and agricultural burns. As of October 25, 2023, this system can also be used for recreational campfires larger than 3 feet high and more than 3 feet in diameter.
- Permits are only valid when the daily fire danger rating is low or moderate

What you will need

- The physical address where the burn will occur and material being burned.
- A printed copy of the permit, or the ability to show it on a mobile device.

<https://www.maine.gov/burnpermit/>

We hope to see everyone at the Fireworks on July 6th.

Places, People or items needing identification

We are collecting old photos of Denmark and its residents of the past and other items of historical interest. We cannot always identify the location or the people. We will occasionally post a few of these photos in the newsletter and on the Denmark Memories Facebook page. If you can help identify these photos, please contact Rick Towle at attroll@gmail.com. If you have photos or other items to share, he can scan them right in your home!

Photos identified from January issue

We are happy to say that we unidentified two houses after printing the last newsletter through more digging and researching.

Photo #1 - The house belonged to Ahban Bradbury. The place was once located at 56 Rocky Knoll Road. It later burned down. Ahban had three wives and six children.

Photo #2 - The house was located at on the left side heading up Mill Hill. It burned many years ago. The town later built a tractor garage in its place and that has since been removed. If you look today you can see the rubble of a foundation in the brush.

Photo #3 - The house was located off Davis Road, up in the woods. Nothing remains off this place.



H4

New photos
we need help
identifying



P1



H5



P2

Our Local Sponsors

Would you like to be listed as a local buisness and a sponsor? Fill out the form on the back page.



Jimbob's General Store
43 East Main Street
Denmark, ME 04022
Telephone: 207-452-2100
Facebook: Jimbob's General Store



33 East Main Street
Denmark, ME 04022
Telephone: 207-452-2931

www.minuteman.com/us/locations/me/denmark



Legoff Excavation Co.
Roger LeGoff
253 Hio Ridge Roasd
Denmark, ME 04022
Telephone: 207-452-2540



WhiteBlaze Pages
A Complete Appalachian Trail Guidebook

Rick Towle
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Denmark, ME 04022
www.whiteblazepages.com
whiteblazepages@gmail.com



Steve Sudduth
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Denmark, ME 04022
Telephone: 207-452-2051
Facebook: Wyonegonic Camp
www.wyonegonic.com

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207-935-4357

ANTIQUES

COLLECTIBLES



6 Merrill Corner Road, Brownfield, ME 04010
ccgillespie@fairpoint.net

Stacy's Service Center

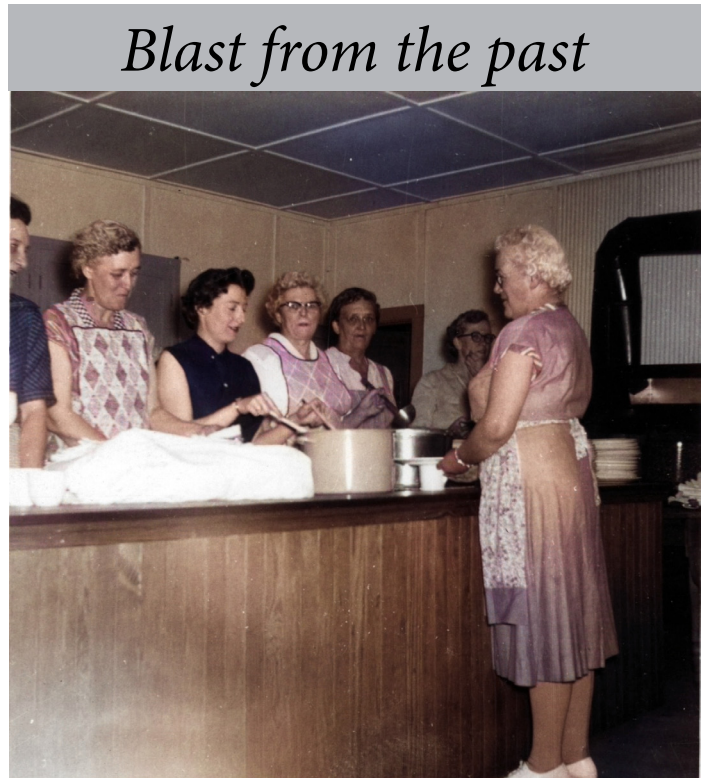
Rusty Stacy
449 Bull Ring Rd
Denmark, Maine 04022
Telephone: 207-245-2266

MacDonald Motors

456 Portland Road
Bridgton, ME 04009
Telephone: 888-287-6297



Legare Mini Excavation
Keeno Legare
Denmark, Maine 04022
Telephone: 207-890-0597
keeno.legare2017@gmail.com



Blast from the past

Mount Moriah Chapter, Order of Eastern Star.
Imogene Demings (Wentworth) in front of counter.
Behind counter ?, Verna May Babb (Moulton),
Barbara Dennett (Barton), Emma Annette
Trumbull (Lord), Amanda Armstrong Berry (Stone),
Etta Lillia Warren (Dunn). If you can identify the
first person behind the counter, please let us know.

“If you are a member, lifetime member, sponsor and would prefer to get this newsletter by email, please send your email address to denmarkmainenewsletter@gmail.com”.



Denmark, Maine Historical Society

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PLEASE INDICATE YOUR MEMBERSHIP LEVEL:

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- Family \$25
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- Anonymous \$ _____
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Thank you for Your Support!

Make checks payable to: Denmark Historical Society, PO Box 803, Denmark, ME. 04022

Printed copies are available at Jim Bob's, Post Office, and the Town Office.



Volume #2

Denmark Reflections

Apr-Jun newsletter 2024

Keeping up with the past

Published by Denmark Historical Society

Take one
 The history of Denmark, Maine and
 up and coming events.
 April - June 2024

