

# THE SHIRETOWN CONSERVER

*The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society Newsletter*

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## A.G. LEBROKE, THE TOWNS' GREAT ORATOR

*by Helen Streeter Kelly*

Mid 19th century, Augustus Gardner Lebroke was a prominent personage in the affairs of Piscataquis County. The Dover lawyer was influential in forming a national Republican Party. He served as a legislator at Augusta and was a state and national public speaker of wide fame.

His family moved to Foxcroft in 1828 when Augustus was five. Pioneering life in Maine taught an appreciation for the hardships and privations of frontier life. The boy labored in the cedar swamps cutting trees and shaved shingles winters; in summer he worked in his father's fields. Yet he found time to attend school. He mastered subjects easily and graduated with honors from Foxcroft Academy.

Piscataquis County Historical Society records told a story of A.G. Lebroke who, as a student at the academy, early exhibited a skill for oratory which afterward made him famous. "He had entered into one of the debates with such vigor that it was promptly decided in his favor. He thereupon asked for the privilege of speaking again, which was granted. He took the other side, tore his former argument into fragments and won that side of the question. The students then and there voted that he had beaten

himself."

Fresh from school, he taught in Foxcroft and nearby towns, but he longed to become a lawyer. Lebroke began studying law with the Hon. James S. Holmes of Dover. Gold fever led the young man on an adventure to California in 1849, but within two years he returned to resume his studies with two prominent Bangor men, C.P. Chandler and Albert W. Paine. A.G. Lebroke was admitted to the bar in Dover in 1857 and set up practice in Foxcroft village.

As a lawyer, politician, and orator, Lebroke was a practical man of many interests and wide vision. Noted Maine historian, his friend John Francis Sprague said, "His professional zeal and industry were seldom if ever surpassed by any in (his) profession. His client's cause was his own cause to the fullest degree. He loved the law, its intricacies, its history, and its traditions captivated his mind. Nothing in the world fascinated him as much as a legal problem."

Lebroke was a fervent abolitionist. He made his national mark in the intense debate on the Kansas/Nebraska question.

In 1858 he was elected to the Maine Legislature for a term. Though a member of the bar for just two years, he served on the

legal affairs committee. In 1882, he began two terms as a state senator, taking the chairmanship of the judiciary committee at each session. It was said there was "probably no member of the profession in the state more familiar with its statutes than Mr. Lebroke."

A self-made man, he liked praise and was fond of flattery, but was easily hurt by criticism. Clannishly loyal to his towns, he invested in their future, giving funds for the building of the Exchange Hotel. Yet in loyalty tempered by reason, he lobbied against building Central Hall, arguing that the plan met only a third of the booming county seat's need.

Eulogized as generous to all, he was named a righter-of-wrongs and a diligent protector of "brute creation...So noted has he become for his gratuitous protection to (animals) that even the school children passing in the street, on seeing a horse abused would say: 'We will tell Mr. Lebroke.' And tell him they did, and I have seen him follow the little child into the street to find the animal and then reprimand the cruel driver or, if necessary, compel him by prosecution to properly care for his beast." 🐾

For more information read: John Francis Sprague's *Piscataquis Biography and Fragments*, 1910.

## MESSAGE FROM MARY

The August 2nd celebration of the marriage of Miss Dover to Mr. Foxcroft was a huge success. Starting with a two hour parade and ending with brilliant fireworks, it was a day to remember. The Historical Society held an Open House at the Observer Building and many people attended. We had an exhibit of old photos and memorabilia set up in the front room. Many good comments were heard and many friendships renewed.

The Observer Building now belongs to the Society. The *Piscataquis Observer* was very generous, leaving two presses, type and other items of interest. We will set aside a portion of the building as an exhibit about the Observer. We have also started the ball rolling to have the building listed on the National Register of Historic Places. According to the Maine Historical Commission, it is the only example of a wooden flat iron building in Maine.

We continue to receive donations of items of historic interest to Dover-Foxcroft. Think of us as you clean out your attic or go to yard sales. We have a lot of room to fill up.

Please take a minute and drop us a line. We'd love to hear thoughts and suggestions on our newsletter. 🐣

## Preserving Our Past

by David B. Lockwood

Snow and cold will come on nature's timetable, not ours. Among your preparations, let me suggest doing a few things to protect your valuable artifacts and heirlooms.

Remember, after a few weeks of cold weather, how you stand in front of the bathroom sink applying lotion to your poor cracked hands? The lotion you use is downright necessary to restore moisture and relieve their rough, dry exterior. It's a cycle that repeats itself every heating season: our furnaces and wood stoves warm the air and evaporate the moisture in it. Consequently, everything in the house, along with our skin, dries. The drying causes cracks, rashes and irritations; the lotion we use requires new and regular application. Now, if we could apply the same idea to our important papers, photos, and cloth articles, you can see, just as you suffer the effects of drying, so these articles will surely feel stress.

Too little relative humidity in the air is as bad as too much. (Imagine trying to keep mold from growing on papers and books in a rain forest.) Most things are quite sponge-like, picking up and giving off moisture to the air, in constant adjustment to changing weather conditions. Although a January thaw brings welcome moisture into the house as the doors open and close, our precious old family papers and items don't do well in extended periods of dry or wet conditions. There are two easy solutions to combat the seesaw effects of winter weather.

First, when you notice your own skin drying to the point of irritation, use this as a signal. Take action to protect your artifacts. The easiest and simplest solution is to seal things in airtight, self-sealing plastic bags. By doing this, you will seal in the existing moisture and prevent its escape. It's not a permanent solution, only a temporary one for the duration of the heating season. Do not bag and seal artifacts when it is humid, as too much moisture can be as bad, or worse, than conditions that are too dry.

Second, you should consider keeping house plants. If you haven't already, adding greenery to the inside of a home in winter not only aides our spirit but will add soothing moisture to the environment. 🐣

## CENTRAL HALL, DOVER.

Tuesday Evening, March 14th, 1882.

## SECOND ANNUAL BALL!

GIVEN BY DOUTY GUARDS, DOVER,  
CO. F, 2nd REGT., M. V. M.

The Co. now have their arrangements perfected for their Second Annual Ball, and take pleasure in extending to their friends a cordial invitation to be present, assuring all, dancers and spectators, a first class entertainment. This will be the first ball given in the new hall, and

## ANDREWS' FULL ORCHESTRA

(NINE PIECES)

Will Furnish Music.

All Military Gentlemen will appear in  
Full Uniform.

### -TICKETS:-

To Dance,		\$1.25
To Gallery,	Gents, 35 Cts., Ladies, 25 Cts.	
Dance tickets admit 1 Gent and 2 Ladies.		
Supper, per Couple,		50 Cts.

Grand Promenade concert at 7:45. Dancing, 7:12

## LORENZO DOW'S FARM DIARY

Through history, farmers have kept meticulous records of their days and seasons. Often far more complete than a mere recording of dates and rains, hails, snows, droughts, pests and plagues, the farm diary was a place to note family births, migrations, deaths and the comings and goings of the neighborhood. These records are a treasured resource, documenting town and county events.

From 1873 until his death in 1913, Lorenzo G. Dow owned and cultivated one of the best farms in East Dover, the third generation of his family to work his two hundred and seven acres in the Piscataquis River valley. "A fine set of substantial buildings" were proof of his industry. On the land, he raised "every useful product that can be grown successfully in this climate." His holdings included a large and profitable sap grove. Gallons of syrup were made from the groves of East Dover and sold in town for \$1.00 a gallon.

Another of Lorenzo Dow's many talents was his ability as a local clocksmith. Interested in the workings of time, he kept his own and the neighborhood's clocks mechanically precise.

His father Benjamin Dow was just eight when his father Lyford brought the family from Sanbornton, N.H. to settle the area in 1804, the second permanent settler at East Dover to carve a good farm out of wilderness. Benjamin grew up to become a prosperous farmer and able business man. A civic minded citizen, he was a Captain in the state militia and served as Tax Collector in the days when state tax was payable in cash, while town and school tax was paid in grain. As had his father Benjamin before him, Lorenzo supported the Democratic party. His mother Sybil Towne Dow is said to be the first white child born in East Dover.

After Benjamin Dow died in 1873, his sizeable holdings were used in part by Lorenzo to build new homes for his own sons, setting up each of the men on his own farmstead. Today, the four homes stand as monument to the industry and permanence of this old East Dover family. ☺

With thanks to the Charles Hesketh Family, East Dover.

## Dates and Events from Lorenzo's Diary

July 15, 1859	Wm. Haskell got home from West Indies.
Feb. 12, 1861	End of School.
1871	Trotting Park built on Frank Dow's farm.
Oct. 6, 1883	Employed Lebroke on A. Dow lawsuit.
Sept. 20, 1884	Law suit with A. Dow began.
Sept. 23, 1884	Jury decided against me.
Sept. 26, 1884	Judge decided against me.
Oct. 4, 1884	Petitioned for new trial.
Nov. 30, 1884	Iron bridge all raised at East Dover.
Dec. 1, 1884	School began.
Jan. 1, 1885	Paid A.M. Robinson \$10 to pay for copying evidence in A. Dow lawsuit.
Feb. 16, 1885	Went to Bangor on law suit.
" " "	Commence against A. Dow in Grange.
May 5, 1885	A. Dow Grange trial.
June 6, 1885	A. Dow acquitted by the Grange, 26 to 22.
July 12, 1885	John Dow and Hat got married.
Oct. 20, 1885	A. Dow flogged by Wilson Dow.
Jan. 7, 1886	Report of judges on law suit with A. Dow.
Jan. 21, 1886	Levi Blood and Nell married.
Mar. 22, 1886	Levi and Nell start for Montana.
Feb. 11, 1887	Levi and Nell Blood's baby born.

## ORDER YOUR 1998 HISTORICAL TOWN CALENDARS TODAY!

- ✓ Features wonderful *old photos and annotated historical dates* from the town's past.
- ✓ *Practical* with plenty of space to note your appointments and family birthdays.
- ✓ An Historical Society *collector's item* to add to your own town history bookshelf.

Please send my calendar \_\_\_\_\_ . ☺

Please send me \_\_\_\_\_ calendars .

Cost is **\$5.00 each copy (add \$1.24 postage).**

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Also available in Dover-Foxcroft at the Chamber of Commerce, Dave's World, Mr. Paperback, and Thompson Free Library.

## HAUL THAT HORSE UP!

The *Observer* of April 7, 1864 —

"Look here, Mister! you are growing careless. They say that you trot your horse on Foxcroft Bridge, which has already become weakened by abuse. If you allow your horse to trot ONE STEP on said bridge, you are liable therefore, as provided in Chap. 19 of the Revised Statutes, and in the amendments thereto in Chap. 130 of the Public Laws of 1860. HAUL THAT HORSE UP BEFORE HE REACHES THE BRIDGE, (or) I shall certainly be sorry to compel Deputy Sheriff Thompson to make an official acquaintance with you, but complaints against you are made almost daily.

*A word to the wise etc.*

*A.G. Lebroke, Town Agent"*

Reprinted from *Old Foxcroft, Maine*, by Mary Chandler Lowell, M.D., J.M.

## NEWS OF THE OBSERVER BUILDING

The Building Committee has taken a hard look at our wonderful "old ark," with an eye toward buttoning it up for the winter. First priority was a full tank of heating oil and the installation of an early warning system to protect against a freeze.

Now we're working with Foxcroft Academy to assemble a crew of community service volunteers who will help clean the building and organize its contents. Once that's done, we plan minor repairs; we'll take a detailed inventory of what's there; then we'll think about interior paint and wallpaper. We hope to schedule painting the flat iron building's exterior in the spring, along with some necessary carpentry. In the long term, we would like to add insulation and replace windows with more heat efficient ones.

Planning displays and exhibits has been fun but also hard work. If all goes according to plan, the Observer Building Museum will open to the public, featuring its small exhibits, in the summer of 1998. The *Piscataquis Observer's* presses and history of the newspaper, Francis Bickmore's barber shop, and our Hughes Pump Organ will be featured "for starters." What would you like to see? How can you help?

In a most generous gesture, which was gratefully accepted, the Fire Department offered to decorate the Observer Building this Christmas. Thanks to our fire fighters' welcome enthusiasm, the town will see our cheerful holiday face on Union Square. 🍷

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