



THE SHIRETOWN CONSERVER

The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society

Volume XIII, Number 4

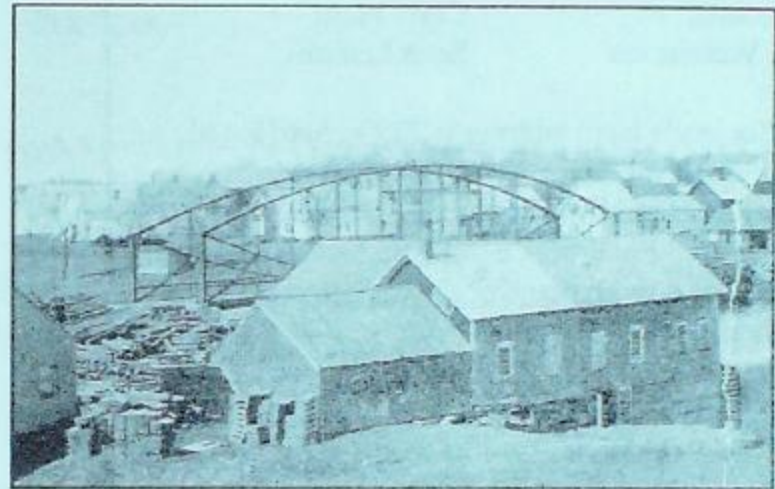
Winter 2009-2010

East Dover's Exotic Iron Bridge

By Jack Battick

When Eli Towne, reputed to have been Dover's first permanent white settler, brought his wife and very young son to what would become East Dover on the eighth of May 1803, he says that they "crossed over" to the clearing he and his father and brother had hacked out of the wilderness the previous year. He must have meant they forded the Piscataquis River because there would be no bridge over the river in that area until 1824.

As a general rule, rivers and streams are most fordable where the water is relatively shallow, usually at or very near rapids during low water conditions. We know that Eli built a dam across the river just a few years later and the site of that dam is very firmly located in old photos. And we know that the very first bridge over the river at what became East Dover was built by Paul Lambert in 1824, according to Lou Stevens' book *Dover-Foxcroft, A History*. It was an "open" bridge, i.e., not covered, and "flat," i.e., without arching over the stream.



Closeup of the Lenticular Bridge in East Dover from Dow Hill. DFHS Collection.

Wooden bridges were periodically carried away by Spring freshets and had to be rebuilt. In the case of East Dover this occurred in 1854 and again in 1857 according to Lou Stevens. By 1884 the third wooden bridge had reached a state of decrepitude. While Dover proper, upstream, was flourishing, East Dover was doing all right and it was decided to take an unusual tack. Instead of building a new bridge of wood, the town opted for a new-fangled iron bridge.

A factory in East Berlin, Connecticut was gaining quite a reputation as constructors in iron. Starting as a manufacturer of tinware, the factory developed machinery to make corrugated iron into siding, shingles, and roofs. Going a step further, by 1883 it was re-named The Berlin Iron Bridge Company, and over the succeeding decade fabricated hundreds of bridges for cities and towns in the northeast. At its peak, it employed 400 people in the factory and up to 400 in crews sent to erect the bridges literally "on the road."

Inside This Issue

King of the Bobcat Trackers	3
Blacksmith Shop Grant	4
Volcanos - Here? When?	6
Xmas Gift Ideas	2
Mary's Message	11

The particular type of bridge the town of Dover wanted for the East Dover site was a peculiar one called a "lenticular" bridge. This engineering design had been patented in 1878 by a William
(Continues on page 8)

The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society

President	Mary I. Annis
Vice-President	Carmen Smith
Secretary	Susan Burleigh
Treasurer	James Annis
Membership Sec.	Chris Maas
Directors	Sylvia Dean
	Tim Burleigh
	Jack Battick
	Chris Maas
	Steve Rainsford
	Nancy Battick
Curator, Blacksmith Sh.	David Lockwood
Curator, Obs. Bldg.	Jack Battick
Editor, Shiretown Cons.	Nancy Battick
Webmaster	Chris Maas
Asst. Webmaster	Sean Letarte

The Society's legal address is 28 Orchard Road, Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426. The Shiretown Conserver is published quarterly. Contact the editor at 308 Foxcroft Center Rd., Dover-Foxcroft, Me 04426; e-mail: nbattick@roadrunner.com or by telephone at 207-564-3576.

The Society is on the web at www.rootsweb.com/~medfhs

It's Dues Time Again

Dues notices for 2010 have gone out and you may have received yours already. If you haven't sent your 2010 dues yet please send a check made out to the Society and mail it to Chris Maas, 874 West Main Street, Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426.

Annual dues are \$10 per year; \$7 per year for seniors over 65.

Your dues and donations help us keep operating. Thanks so much for your support!

Society Offers Great Gifts

Looking for a great Xmas gift, for reasonable price? A gift membership to the DFHS is one of the best bargains around. At \$10 per year per person (or \$7 for a senior) this is a thoughtful remembrance.

We also have our great DVD of scenes of old Dover & Foxcroft for only \$10 plus \$2 shipping & handling; our screened throw for \$38 plus \$8 shipping & handling; and our collectible ornaments. We still have some 2008 silver glass ornaments of the Blacksmith Shop and some 2009 gold glass ornaments showing the Observer Building. Both are a steal at \$6 each plus \$4 shipping & handling. Many of our items are also for sale at Mister Paperback in Dover-Foxcroft. You can see them in color on our website, www.rootsweb.com/~medfhs.

If you have questions regarding any of our gift items please contact Mary Annis at 564-0820.

Annual Attic Sale June 12, 2010

Yes, there will be another attic sale on June 12, 2010. If you're organizing your 2010 calendar please mark that date now. While that may seem a long way away we wanted to remind you to save your books and unwanted treasures for our sale.

We're working on a few new additions for next year's sale (more on this in the next issues). We offer free pick up of items in the greater DF area. Please contact Sylvia Dean at 876-3663 for more information on the sale or to donate items or to help with the sale itself.

The Attic Sale is our major fundraiser of the year. Help us make it a great success.

King of the Bobcat Trappers by Lou Stevens



Veteran trapper Maurice Stevens of Dover South Mills, grandfather of author Lou Stevens, stands by four bobcats he had caught probably in the Lily Bay/Kokadjo area in the winter time judging by his winter clothing, though a definite time, and the photographer, are unknown. Note the hatchet he used to protect himself from any charging animal, and which was used rather than a gun so to prevent damage to the pelts when a trapped animal was killed. Hunters sometimes purchased frozen cats to be made into small rugs or stuffed by taxidermists. Photo courtesy of the author.

From the time he was a young boy in the area of Dover South Mills until many decades later when he was no longer able to spend days in the woods tending his traplines for both pleasure and a way to earn money selling the pelts to fur dealers, my grandfather, Maurice Stevens, had acquired, it could be said, many knapsacks of knowledge about wild animals that helped him outwit them over the years which made him so well known to many game wardens that when

they needed a trapper to clear out an area of bobcats who were killing deer, they knew whom to call up on to eliminate the ever-hungry predators.

How successful was he? A large three column headline in the November 20, 1937 issue of the *Bangor Daily News*, called him "King of the Bobcat Trappers" over a photo showing him (Continues on Page 10)

Blacksmith Shop Receives Grant

In this, the twenty-first century, few people know or care how the mass-produced items they use every day are made. We take it for granted that what we want or need can be supplied at a store. We only have to go there, find it, pay for it, and use it to meet our desires. How different it was back in the 19th century! Of course there were shops back then and many consumer items were being mass-produced in industrial centers. But in just about every town there was at least one craftsman who could provide essential items that would probably not be found in a shop. That craftsman was the village blacksmith.

We in Dover-Foxcroft are fortunate in that there still exists a relic of that past, an authentic blacksmith shop, where we can learn about the near-vanished arts plied by artisans of the past to meet the needs of their communities.

Out on the Dawes Road, Dave Lockwood has for years cared for the Blacksmith Shop Museum of the Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society. With the help of volunteers, the great collection of the tools and products of the smithy has been sorted out and rationalized. Dave has created displays to exemplify many products of the smith. He has supervised repairs and restoration of the structure built in 1863, and is now about to embark upon the creation of graphics to demonstrate the use of many of the artifacts housed in the shop.

To that end, the Society has received a grant from the Maine Community Foundation's Maine Expansion Arts Fund which will enable Dave, working with a trained artist, to place interpretive signs showing how a blacksmith worked at his forge, bent iron bars to make wagon wheels, shod oxen, and performed other skilled tasks.

These graphics will be displayed adjacent to displays of tools and installations in order to educate visitors to the shop about the skills



The Blacksmith Shop Museum will benefit from the Maine Community Foundation Grant. Photo by Jack Battick

craftsmen of the time employed to meet the demands of the community.

Bruce Towl, a Dover-Foxcroft resident, is the artist whose talents will help to portray the skills of the blacksmith. Among the drawings he will execute will be one showing the smith at work at his forge, including the fire pit, the anvil, the bellows, tongs, the hardie, and the quenching barrel.

Another drawing will demonstrate how wagon wheels are made and iron tires fabricated and shrunk onto the wheels. The use of specialized implements will be depicted on yet other drawing.

Each graphic will be framed and mounted beside the display of objects the smith would have used in performing his work. And a separate, portable, set of each drawing will be made available for various groups in the community when the shop is inaccessible. This should offer a great teaching tool.

All of this is in fulfillment of the mission of the Society to preserve and display our heritage and to educate the public therein.

We'll have photos and more information as this project unfolds.

Our Last Unknown Identified



Thanks to several of our members we can now identify the ladies in the photo to the left. They are, l-r: Joyce Jenkins Cross, Ruth Robichaud Noyes, Kay Burns Libby, Hope Austin Lacourciere, Jane Ladd, Faith Austin Holland.

Many thanks to those who sent in or called with identifications: Martha Rollins, Hope Lacourciere, Bill Burgess, and Joyce Cross.

Thanks for your help!

Mrs. Robinson's Will

In our last issue we ran a copy of a holographic (hand written), unwitnessed will by Mary Purrington Robinson which is part of the Society's collection. Mrs. Robinson died in 1898.

We pointed out that at that time the legality of holographic wills was questionable and so it was, in 1898.

Judge Kevin Stitham wanted us to let our members know that as of January 1, 1981 holographic wills are now legal in the state of Maine. (See Maine State Revised Statutes, 2-501-503 for details).

The Society never offers legal advice but we do recommend you consult a legal advisor prior to writing any will or other legal document.

Our Corporate Sponsors

We want to send many thanks to those

businesses which helped us with money and/or services this year.

The Society couldn't survive without you!

Sponsors

Maine Highlands Federal Credit Union
Dover Auto Parts
The Green Door Gallery
Webber Ace Hardware
Dr. Mark Stitham
Lary Funeral Home
Webber Energy
Drs. Steinke & Caruso
Mallett Real Estate
Bob's Hardware
Howard Insurance Agency
True Value Hardware
McKusick Petroleum
Pleasant River Lumber

Friends

Carmen's Greenhouse
Nor'easter Restaurant
Riverside Florist
Mr. Paperback
Rumbling Falls Gift Shop
Stutzman's Farmstand

The Piscataquis Valley's Earliest Days by Jack Battick

As difficult as it may be to imagine, there were volcanoes in these parts hundreds of millions of years ago. And around thirteen thousand years ago, the sea lapped gently at the hills along what is now the Piscataquis River Valley. Geological processes: plate tectonics, volcanism, glaciation, ice cap melting, and crustal rebound all played a part in creating the land forms we see about us.

Tens of millions of years ago the rocks now beneath the hills were tilted, bent and folded into mountains. Long periods of erosion by water, wind, and ice lowered the peaks and softened the contours of those ancient mountains. During the great Ice Age, their tops were torn off and rounded by an ice sheet about two miles thick that crept inexorably toward the southeast and south-southeast. When the ice sheet melted, it left behind eskers of sand and gravel, moraines of gravel and boulders, and the sea level rose to flood the land between the hills. Gradually, the land surface, relieved of the weight of ice, rebounded and the sea receded. Remnants of beaches in the form of banks of sand and gravel and beds of clay containing fossil sea shells remained.

Run-off from mountain lakes and spring freshets carved the river bed from soft stone. Where the river encountered ledges of harder stone, falls or rapids occurred. Between those falls and rapids the river meandered, eroding hillsides and depositing soil downstream, creating rich bottom land in what are called intervalles. Over eons, the Valley became a place where, beginning two centuries ago, settlers found everything they needed to create a livelihood. They cleared trees off those intervalles and farmed. At the rapids, they built dams to power sawmills, grist mills, and later woolen mills. Where they found clay beds, they created brickyards, using local timber to fire their kilns. Thus nature created conditions that settlers

needed: land to farm, wood to cut, stone and rock with which to build, clay to make bricks, and falling water to power their machinery.

When you go to the center of East Dover, Dover village, Foxcroft, Dover South Mills, and our sister towns you will find a dam or places where



Mount Kineo, once molten rock, uncovered by glaciation. Photo by Nancy Battick.

dams were built atop rapids which natural forces created long before man appeared here and around which the first European settlers built their communities.

And, by the way, if you ever briefly think you hear a very large truck running outside your home but find no truck, it is possibly a mild earthquake. A series of fault lines run more or less west-to-east in southern Piscataquis County along which the deep bedrock shifts occasionally, not enough to do any serious damage, but enough to be detected by seismographs. I suspect that the series of small ponds (Garland, Harriman, Parker, and Dow) located more or less in a line west-to-east in Sebec have something to do with a fault line.

NOTE: Suggested reading: D. S. Caldwell, *Roadside Geology of Maine*, Missoula, Montana: Mountain Press Publishing Company, 1998; David L. Kendall, *Glaciers and Granite: A Guide to Maine's Landscape & Geology*, Unity, Maine: North Country Press, 1987.

Request for Information

Linda Eulalie Newman, daughter of Adelbert Martin White and Zelma Grace Arno, has requested help from our members. Linda lives at 315 Bleeker Street, #297, New York, NY 10014.

She is asking if anyone has articles or newspaper clippings on the burning of the blacksmith shop in the 1960's. Linda says she and her brother, Delwin Smart and sister Deborah White spent much of their childhood in DF and she remembers visiting the blacksmith shop, cows coming by train, and the flood of 1964 and their getting around by boat.

Does anyone have any information, memories, clippings, etc. they'd be willing to share with Linda? Please contact her directly at the address above. Her e-mail is cookiedel.linda@gmail.com.

Shaw's Rewards

Do you shop at Shaw's Tuesday-Thursday? If so we ask that you consider registering your Shaw's Reward card and signifying the Society as a charity of choice. A percentage of what you spend will be returned to the Society. This costs you absolutely nothing, but every dollar helps us survive.

You can register online at www.albertsons.com. Our Community Partner ID number is 49001018739. If you're not online please send the information to Community Partners Program Headquarters, PO Box 193, Bethel Park, PA 15102-0193. If you need more information on this please contact Mary Annis at 564-0820 or online at mjannis@hughes.net.

Thank you for your support.

Villages Program

Four members of the Society have been assisting the Villages of Piscataquis County project. Society members Lou Stevens, Jack Battick, Steve Rainsford, and Chris Maas have created copy and identified photos for future signs to be erected, as funding permits, in Dover-Foxcroft. Sites chosen include Union Square, East Dover, Foxcroft Academy, and Monument Square.

Curator's Corner

Since last spring volunteers have been recording the oral recollections of several senior citizens of DF as valuable additions to our historical collections. In order to protect the interests of the interviewees as well as the Society, the board of directors has approved deposit agreement forms, unrestricted or with restrictions, which will be signed by the person being recorded and the volunteer taking the recording. An article on this exciting program will appear in a later issue of this newsletter.

Since our last issue the Society has received the following donations to its collections: *Jim & Mary Annis*: photos, a wedding dress, an antique folding cot, yearbooks of the Rebecca Weston Chapter NSDAR; *Jack & Nancy Battick*: a pair of cardboard fans, promotional by R.G. Gould, jeweler from about 1920; *David L. Finley*, Foxcroft Academy publications and crafts fair materials from 1978-2005, pin, eyeglasses, and sunglasses case; *Ruth Kinney Flowers*: WWII naval uniforms and memorabilia of her brother Donald C. Kinney; school photos; *Leah Foster*: instruction booklet for the parlor organ distributed by Dyer & Hughes, ca. 1900; *Elizabeth Warren Hewitt*: cradle, child's highchair; doll carriage, all with long family associations; *Margaret Rooks*: 4 potato sacks printed M.A. Sanborn, Dover-Foxcroft, ME"; *Margaret Webber*: 1873 Holy Bible.

Jack Battick, Curator, Observer Bld. Museum

The East Dover Bridge, from page 1

Douglas who sold building rights to BIB soon after his patent was granted. Where most bridges of the time were fabricated about heavy iron beams built up from plates and bars of wrought iron in the shape of large girders with the roadway in between them, the lenticular bridge (literally "lens-shaped") consisted of a roadway suspended from two curved trusses, each truss made bowed on top and bottom with vertical lace-like girders connecting the two. The result was a lighter-looking, pleasing combination of curves and straight lines, and it used about ten percent less iron than a conventional flat or girder design. To be sure there were problems

with this design, especially as each piece had to be shaped in pairs slightly different from every other pair, but BIB's employees overcame the difficulties and sent hundreds of, in effect, bridge-building kits to sites in the northeast. One wonder of the design was that it came by rail in hundreds of pieces, each one marked for a specific place in the structure, to be noisily riveted together by teams of workmen "from away." Just how it was assembled, in place at grade or moved or even raised into position, we don't know.

How long it took to erect the lenticular bridge at East Dover is not revealed in sources ready to hand, but it soon became an object of wonder to all who came upon it, seeming to vault the Piscataquis River with an airy grace, as seen in the photograph on this page. The numerous



View of East Dover from Dow Hill showing the lenticular bridge and a bustling industrial community. DFHS Collection.

buildings on each side of the river attest to the industrial vigor of the hamlet at the time. On the nearer side is a mill which appears to turn out shingles and perhaps clapboards while, on the other side of the river stand below the bridge successively, a sawmill with logs and lumber stacked to the left, a taller building which might be a gristmill or perhaps an excelsior factory, and a smaller building whose use is not discernible. There was, it seems, also a woolen mill in East Dover at one point. Parts of the foundations of these buildings can still be seen on each side of the river.

Did many small and not so small boys climb the lacy girders of the new bridge? Was the walking pace of a horse the top speed permitted on the roadway as was the rule on the covered wooden bridges of the town, or was a trot allowed on this marvel of iron engineering? Did it sway sometimes as other lenticulars did from lateral loads such as in hearty winds until BIB solved that problem with additional bracing? No one seems to have written of these aspects, but the residents of East Dover must have been proud of "their" bridge," while other residents of Dover and Foxcroft had to make do with stodgy old wooden bridges that had to be covered lest snow and heavy rain rot their timbered fabric.

The bridge stood until 1947 when, wartime scarcity of material being a thing of the immediate past, the lenticular bridge, just barely up to the heavier weights trucks carried to it, was replaced by the wider, sturdier, but obviously less esthetically pleasing, steel bridge that stands in its stead today.

All of it that remains in the town is the cast iron builder's plate, now in the collection of the Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society's Observer Building Museum. It bears the names of the road commissioners under whose authority the bridge had been erected way back in 1884.

Is there anyone in Piscataquis County who remembers this bridge? If so, please write to the Society with your recollections.



Photo of the original builder's plate from the lenticular bridge at East Dover. The Committee named were: E.A. Thompson, W. L. Sturtevant (misspelled), and Edward Doore. DFHS Collection. Photo by Jack Battick.

Volunteers Needed

Not sure what you'll do with yourself this winter? We have a suggestion. The Society is in need of volunteers to help us catalog and care for our collections.

Needed is someone(s) to photocopy onto acid-free paper old newspaper clippings and eventually file them into research files

Also, someone(s) to help remove photos from old magnetic albums, copy their captions, and place them into acid-free sleeves

If you are comfortable with computers we can also use people to catalog and enter items into our museum software, Past Perfect

For more information contact Jack or Nancy Battick at 564-3576.

Bobcats (Continued from page 3) holding some traps with a dozen frozen carcasses minus their tails which had to be cut off and taken to a town office to receive the \$15 bounty for each one paid by the state. This was during the time he was especially busy in the Lincoln, Enfield, Argyle, and Greenfield woods.

The author of the *News* story was Bill Geagan, a long time sports writer who was similar to Bud Leavitt, and now John Holyoke. A smaller headline said, "has caught Hundreds in 20 Years on Trapline." And 18 years later the Woonsocket, R. I., paper for March 24, 1953, printed an Associated Press story with the dateline being "LILY BAY, Maine." The headline said, "Maine Trapper Is Still Nemesis of Many Wild Animals." The author wrote, "Stevens goes where the state game wardens say the bobcats are the thickest. In the past 15 years, he figures he has killed 400 cats, 23 last year. In a month (note: at Lily Bay) he got 5 cats, 5 otters, 5 mink, 6 red foxes, 2 raccoons, and many weasels. Deer hunters appreciate Stevens' efforts because the cats kill many deer."

I saw him, when he was in his mid-seventies, set a bobcat trap using great patience, how every detail was done with a purpose such as placing dead leaves and pine needles in a perfectly natural way, making sure no human scent was left to scare away a cat, tying a bunch of hen feathers together and hanging them on a branch just far enough over the trap so the cat would have to leap a number of times trying to reach them and eventually landing on the trap before making another jump, and placing a small branch over the trap so a deer coming up on the trap would naturally leap over the branch, and so would avoid stepping in it. This all happened more than 40 years ago, but it is still vivid in my mind.

Editor's Note: Do you have a family member you'd like to tell us about? Please contact me with any photo(s) and your story. If you need

help writing a piece please get in touch with me at 564-3576 or by e-mail:

nbattick@roadrunner.com or snail mail at 308 Foxcroft Center Road, DF 04426.

Editor's Corner

I'm always amazed at how quickly the years seem to fly by. I can remember people telling me this would happen as I got older but somehow it didn't seem to make sense. Yet here it is December again and I have a feeling most of you experience the same sense of "where did the time go?"

I'm very grateful to all who have contributed to the *Conserver* this year. You make the editor's job so much easier and it is deeply appreciated. I hope more of you will consider submitting pieces, photos, and memories for future issues. Please consider sharing your memories with your fellow Society members. You don't have to be a great author to write something for us - if you need help in writing, then a helper will be found.

As for this issue I want to offer a tip of the editor's hat to all who contributed, however small: Lou Stevens, Jack Battick, Mary Annis, Dave Lockwood.

Finally, I want to wish all of our members a most happy and healthy holiday season. For those of you with relatives in the service overseas, I pray they come home safely to their loved ones.

And I want to thank all of you who have written praising the *Conserver*. Your kind words make it all worthwhile.

Nancy Klimavicz Battick

A Message From Mary

Here we are at the end of another year. They slip by so quickly. We had a nice summer with an excellent Attic Sale, a wet Garden tour, and lots of visitors at the Blacksmith Shop and the Observer Building Museums. We have received many wonderful treasures thanks to the generosity of those people interested in seeing our history preserved.

Now we begin to look forward to 2010. We will be changing some displays this year and the news about the grant from the Maine Community Foundation for artwork in the blacksmith Shop (see page 4 for full details) is wonderful. These drawings should bring the activities of a blacksmith alive for all.

We wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year. Please remember, we'd love to hear from you.

Mary I. Annis
President

The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society Membership Application & Donation Form

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Town/City: _____

Phone: _____ e-mail: _____

Annual Dues (\$10.00 per person; \$7.00 senior membership):\$ _____ Donation: \$ _____ (tax deductible)

Please make checks payable to: Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society. Mail to: 874 West Main Street, Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426. Dues cover January to December.

If you are giving a gift membership, please include the name and address and we'll gladly notify the recipient of your gift.

Remember Society memberships make wonderful gifts!

The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society, Inc.
28 Orchard Road
Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426-3706

NON-PROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO. 57
DOVER-FOXCROFT
ME.

From All of Us to All of You

*Whatever holiday you celebrate have a
joyous, safe, healthy, and wondrous one!*

And Happy New Year to you and

those you love