

ALEXANDER-CRAWFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY MARCH 1981

(We are growing. 133 members)

REPORT NO. II

BREAKNECK TRAGEDY; Three brave men, who lived on ^Breakneck Hill, 121 years ago, are being lauded as heroes by our Society this month for their valiant efforts to rescue a neighbor from a well. Only one survived! The account, found by our genealogists Harold and Ellen Fenlason in an August 12, 1852 copy of the Calais Advertiser (two days after the tragedy). is being printed in its entirety on the 2nd page of this newsletter

MARCH 17 BOARD MEETING TO FEATURE *A HANGING* AND CHAIR CANING; A hanging and other local stories, will be taped at our March board meeting at the Dudley's cabin. All members are invited to attend the open session that begins promptly at 9:30 a.m. Bring a sandwich for lunch and stay for our Reviving the Old Arts* workshop which will include an extension of our knitting & tatting instructions, and chair caning by Jack Dudley for those who come equipped with chair and cane

ALEXANDER TOWN POUND; What excitement I A town pound in Alexander! Merle Knowles told us about it. He played there when a child, It's situated across the Cooper road from the old Knowles place. The stone posts are still there, but Merle said when he was young the old cedar rail fence was still there, but later a neighbor burned it for firewood. There is one rail left. There are those who would like to see the fence replaced and the pound preserved as a historical site

BREAD LOAVES TO RAISE BUILDING FUND; Homebaked loaves of bread each month are helping to fatten our building account. Ellen and Jane are the bakers (Millie and Geneva, the customers). Any persons interested in becoming a baker, or customer, should contact Jane.

CHILDREN'S SUMMER READING HOUR (mid June through August) is being planned by our Story Book Lady naturalist, Audrey Ketner at her Ledge Lodge home on Pocomoonshine Lake. Starting with Cabin in the Woods*(Vol. of the Laura Ingalls Wilder series) our vice president will read aloud an hour each week, then take her young guests on a mini nature walk to illustrate the text, and to promote appreciation for the beautiful woodland community in which they live. Older children will be invited to help out. The program is planned to stimulate the children's interest in their own personal heritage, and that of their ancestors,

WE ARE MAKING HISTORY RIGHT NOW! Important 1981 happenings in our community are being recorded by our Current Events historians. Orris and Marian Cousins. Also, Ethel Wallace who has been listing the past & present birth records for A-C) has also graciously consented to serve as our Crawford Historian Her address; RR #1, Box 114, Crawford, Me. 04694,

RESEARCH LIBRARY; Our Society is delighted to announce the following contributions; Charlotte, Maine Sesquicentennial Historical Souvenir Book (1825-1975) given by Ralph B. Hatton & Leta Flood Hatton; History of Early Baileyville Maine Its Pioneers' Genealogy of Nathaniel Bailey families written by Albert W. Bailey; and donated by Gertrude by our Winter of Bucksport, Mrs. Winter also sent a copy of Jeremiah Frost Families to our curator John Herbert Dudley, which has been copied for our research library, and a 45 page manuscript of The Alexander Strouts now in the process of being copied for us.

WE APPRECIATE the General Fund donations from Teresa Gray Normal, Ellen Wells and Annie Frost Williams, and Blanche Shain Palmer's Memorial Donation in the name of her mother, the late Sarah Shain of Woodland (Building Fund),

NEWSLETTERS; Members who have not received their January or February newsletters should contact the editor. (A small blue dot beside your mailing address Indicates 15^ stamps would be appreciated for the 10 remaining monthly mailings.)

OCCURRENCE FROM INHALING NOXIOUS VAPOUR IN A WELL

On Tuesday last an inquest was held by Coroner D.K. Chase upon view of the bodies of John S. Phillips, Joel Gooch and R. T. Fenlason of Alexander, which were taken lifeless from the bottom of a well near the dwelling of Mr., Phillips. We are indebted to the Coroner for the following;

On Monday the 9th (1852) inst. Mr. Phillips had the water bailed out of his well which was about thirty feet deep, and had not been used for a year or more, and he went down into the well and cleaned it, and put fire to a handful of straw and threw it down to burn up, as he said, the unpleasant smell.

On Tuesday morning he went down into the well to get a few pieces of boards which were left in the day before; when he had descended nearly to the bottom, his feet slipped from the rocks and he pitched forward, and sank down into a kind of sitting posture, his head and shoulders resting against the wall.

His son, a lad about twelve years old, who had watched his father, ran to the house and told his mother that there was trouble with his father in the well. Mrs. P. knowing that Mr. P. had formerly been troubled with fits, supposed he was then in one; she went in one direction and sent the boy another, for help.

Mr. Joel Gooch, the nearest neighbor, arrived at the well first, and went down to assist Mr., Phillips • He reached the bottom, took hold of Mr. P. raised him up a little, and spoke to him; he then looked up and hallooed to those looking down, "Can you hear me?" and repeated the same, three times, then uttered a faint groan and sank down powerless, Mr., John Gooch, brother of Joel, arrived next, and immediately descended to help his brother. He took hold of him and spoke to him, but found he was just breathing his last, and feeling himself much exhausted, he made haste to get out, and his strength barely supported him till he reached the surface where he fell prostrate on the ground, and was for a time completely exhausted,

Mr. Reuben T. Fenlason, nephew of Gooch came to the spot soon after John had got out, and though warned of the danger, he insisted on going down, and taking the end of a long rope he went rapidly down, stepping on the rocks on each side of the well; made the rope secure around his uncle's body, and then began to falter, but was aroused by those at the mouth of the well, and he made an effort to ascend, but his strength failing him when about two-thirds of the way up, he pitched forward and fell head downward to the bottom,

No hope was now left of getting either of them out alive, and no other attempt was made to go down into the well. The body of Gooch was drawn out by the rope which Fenlason had put around him, and a grapple was made of an old pitch fork with which the bodies were laid out, a lighted candle was lowered down the well and would burn dimly, seven feet down, but would go out at nine feet down,

The Jury was composed of John Springer, James S. Boies, Luke Stephenson, J. Stephenson, John Perkins, Robert L. Tyler, and their verdict was, That the deceased came to their deaths by inhaling the gas or noxious vapor which had accumulated in the well.

Each of the deceased has left a wife and children, and many friends to mourn his loss,

THE CALAIS ADVERTISER (the following week)

In the account we gave of the fatal occurrence in Alexander last week it was stated that the water in the well had not been used for over a year, which was not the fact, as it had been used constantly up to the time they undertook to clean it. And over twenty pails full of water had been taken out of it a few minutes before Mr. Phillips went down into it,