

# HISTORY OF AROOSTOOK

---

Mr. Wiggin's record of the early history of Houlton is as follows:

## HOULTON

---

The oldest town in the County, distinguished as having been for years the extreme northeastern outpost of the United States.

In the years immediately following the Revolutionary War, the people of New England began to pay much attention to the matter of the establishing of schools and institutions of learning, and in this respect Massachusetts took the lead.

The people of New Salem, a pioneer settlement well toward the Connecticut River, sought aid from the State in establishing an academy in their town, and the Legislature of Massachusetts in June 23, 1799 passed a resolve granting them one half of a township six miles square, to be laid out and assigned by a committee for the sale of the eastern lands in some of the unappropriated lands in the District of Maine belonging to this Commonwealth, excepting all lands within six miles of the Penobscot River.

On the 19th of June an additional resolve was passed authorizing agents appointed by the legislature to convey the lands. The half township was surveyed in 1801 by Park Holland, Esq., and on Feb. 21, 1805, was conveyed by John Beard and Peleg Coffin, as agents named in the resolve, to the trustees of New Salem Academy. This tract is the southern half of the present flourishing town of Houlton.

Previous to the survey, and soon after the passage of the original resolution in 1799, a company of thirteen men of the town of New Salem, purchased the land of the trustees of the academy, and commenced to take measures to have it lotted and opened for settlement. The deed to these thirteen proprietors was not, however, made until June 1st, 1810. On June 1st, 1810 the proprietors voted that Joseph Houlton be agent to survey the half township, and he was directed to lay it out in square lots of 160 acres each, and to divide it by lots and half lots into

20 equal shares according to the quality of the land, at his discretion, reserving two lots for public uses.

Mr. Houlton attended to this work, taking Mr. Holland with him as surveyor, and on November 8, 1801, the proprietors voted to accept the division and draw for their respective shares two lots and three half lots to each share. The other seven of the original proprietors owned two shares each, and the remaining six one share each, and the drawing was made accordingly. At the same meeting three of the number sold their shares to the others, reducing the number to ten. The men to whom fell the task of opening the grant to settlement, and who may be called the founders of the town of Houlton, were: Aaron Putnam, Varney Pearce, Joseph Houlton, John Putnam, Joshua Putnam, Rufus Cowles, John Chamberlain, Wm. Bowman, Consider Hastings and Thomas Powers. All these were citizens of New Salem except Rufus Cowles, a physician of Amherst, Wm. Bowman of Hadley, and Thomas Powers of Greenwich.

Of these ten only three became actual settlers of the grant, namely: Joseph Houlton, who may be termed the father of Houlton, and for whom the town was afterwards named; Aaron Putnam and Joseph Putnam. The other seven sold their lots to settlers at different times, some of them holding their proprietorship as late as 1826.

The act of the legislature passed June 19, 1801 required that six families should be settled on the land within five years, or the grant should be void. But at the same time that the conveyance of the half township by the State agents to the trustees of the Academy was made, on Feb. 21, 1805, no settler had as yet entered upon his lot. Only one year more remained, and the outlook was not promising.

The region in which the settlers were asked to make their homes was most remote; no settlement had as yet been made in the then District of Maine except the Acadian settlement in the Madawaska District. To add to the troubles they were to locate upon disputed territory, the settlement of which might leave them under the British flag. Nevertheless, six families made known their intention of emigrating. They were the families of Mrs. Lydia Trask Putnam, whose father was a soldier under Wolfe, and whose eldest son fell in the movement following the battle of Lexington; Joseph Houlton, a grandson of a Revolutionary soldier; Varney Pearce, John and Joshua Putnam, also of Revolutionary lineage, and Dr. Samuel Rice.

The first to make actual settlement upon the new town was

Aaron Putnam, son of Lydia Trask Putnam, who came with his mother and family in the summer of 1805. The others followed in due time, though not all within the five years allowed in the grant. Mr. Putnam and his family embarked at Boston and sailed to St. John, N. B., thence up the river to Fredericton. Here they took a boat and worked their way with much difficulty to Woodstock, where the weaker ones of the party remained, and the men went on through the woods and began felling trees and taking possession of the new lots. Mr. Aaron Putnam appears, however, to have remained at Woodstock as storekeeper until 1809, when he joined the colony at Houlton. Mr. Joseph Houlton and family came in the spring of 1807. Mr. Houlton was the acknowledged leader of the pioneer band, and was a man of much energy and ability, being a man of property and influence in Massachusetts.

In the years of hardship and privation which followed in the new township Mr. Houlton proved a tower of strength to the settlers, and his ever ready counsel and assistance were of much value. He lived to see the colony placed on a firm foundation, and the settlement he had helped to plant in the wilderness, incorporated into a town in the good State of Maine. On a beautiful Sabbath, August 12, 1832, as he sat in his chair by the window, watching the soldiers of the garrison march by, he peacefully passed away, at the age of seventy-six. He was accorded a military funeral by Major Clark, who commanded the troops, and an officer's salute was fired over his grave.

In 1809 came John Putnam, and in the same year Aaron Putnam returned, and the next year built the first mill dam upon the stream. This dam was washed away and rebuilt a number of times before a permanent dam was secured. Dr. Rice and family came in 1811, and Mr. Wormwood and family came in 1812. In 1814 came Deacon Samuel Kendall and family, and with them Deacon Townsend. Nearly all these families had grown-up sons and daughters, and these inter-married and started new homes.

In 1808 Joseph Houlton was appointed register of deeds for the Northern District of Washington County by Gov. Sullivan of Massachusetts. This office he held until August 8, 1832, only four days before his death, when he was succeeded by Timothy Frisbie.

In June 1839 the new County of Aroostook was formed, and the first Aroostook deed was recorded June 18th of that year. After the War of 1812 new settlers began to come in, and

quite an immigration from the Province commenced. Mr. Wm. Williams and family were the first comers from the Province, and their descendants are now among the principal citizens of the County.

Up to this time the settlers were all living in log houses, and the first frame building in the town was the dwelling of Dr. Rice, built in 1813, which was years afterwards the residence of Chas. P. Tenney, until it was destroyed by fire in 1879. The next frame house was erected by Aaron Putnam, and is today (1890) in a modernized form occupied by Capt. B. H. Putnam as a residence.

The first clergyman who came to the place was Rev. Edward Eastman of Limerick, who organized the first Congregational Church Oct. 13, 1811. No meeting house was built in Houlton until 1837, though religious services were held in the houses of the citizens. In 1837 the Unitarian Society, composed of some 25 members who had withdrawn from the Congregational Church, erected a meeting house, which is still standing, though much damaged by the fire of 1888, and abandoned as a church edifice. In 1838 the Congregational meeting house was built, Rev. Chas. C. Beaman being its first pastor, and also chaplain of the garrison.

The years of 1816 and 1817 were hard years, the traditionally cold years, with heavy and continued frosts every month in the year. In those hard years those who had means shared with those who had not, and by the aid of an abundant supply of fish in the streams, and flour obtained from Fredericton at great expense, the people somehow got through without starving.

During these years Mr. Houlton built his large mansion, which, remodelled in many respects, is still standing. In 1817 Col. Turner of Vermont, and Mr. Johnson of Massachusetts, commissioners on the part of the United States, and Sir Archibald Campbell and Mr. Bouchette, on the part of Great Britain, came, with a party of 60 men and workmen, to establish a boundary line. This party made its headquarters at Houlton for a time, and on the Fourth of July, what was long known as the Line Men's Ball, given by the commissioners and engineers, took place at Mr. Houlton's new house. This was the grandest affair of the settlement up to this time. Army officers on the survey were present in full uniforms, and the citizens, of both sexes were attired in their best. A sumptuous dinner was served and the festivities were kept up during the day, and when evening came on the house was brilliantly lighted, though at that

time unfinished within, and containing only one immense room on the ground floor. Sir Archibald Campbell led the dance, and chose for his partner Miss Christina Wormwood, the youngest female present, she being then about fourteen. The surveying party did not remain very long after this event. The location of the boundary was a matter in dispute between the two nations, and no further attempts were made to locate the line until after the Webster—Ashburton Treaty of 1842.

In 1818 a petition was sent to the Massachusetts legislature for the incorporation of the half township, together with the adjoining half township granted to Groton Academy, which latter now constitutes the town of Hodgdon, into a town to be called Houlton. This petition shared the fate of a similar one sent in 1809, and the settlement remained unorganized.

Some time previous to this Mr. Houlton had built a grist mill and saw mill on the Cook Brook; Aaron Putnam, a saw and grist mill near the bridge, and Ebenezer Warner, who came in 1810, a saw mill on Houlton Falls.

In 1820 these pioneer settlers found themselves under the jurisdiction of the State of Maine, but still without local organization. Soon after that year came the children of Varney Pearce, one of the original proprietors, who did not settle on the grant, and had recently died at New Salem. The descendants of this family are numerous, and are among the foremost business men of the town.

In 1822 Mr. Wm. H. Cary of New Salem removed his family to the new settlement, and immediately commenced the erection of a spacious residence, which is still standing on the hill above the station. Mr. Houlton was keeping tavern at the time, and with him Mr. Cary and family boarded until their house was finished.

Shepard Cary, the second son, afterwards became the most prominent business man of Houlton, and probably no man ever came to Aroostook who did so much to further its business interests, or to help the laboring men of the County. Mr. Cary was in his early manhood when his family came to Houlton, being then but seventeen years of age. He commenced work as a carpenter on his father's new house, and afterwards worked for a number of years in the adjoining Province of New Brunswick. In 1826 he returned to Houlton and opened a store in part of the Cary residence, and soon after formed a partnership with Mr. Collins Whittaker, from New Salem.

The new firm of S. Cary & Co. commenced the business of

trading and lumbering, which they continued to enlarge until it reached dimensions hitherto unknown in this eastern section. The principal part of their business was cutting and squaring pine timber upon the upper St. John and Allegash waters, and driving the same into Fredericton.

The extensive and beautiful farm at Seven Islands, some eighty miles above Ft. Kent, was cleared, and upon this farm immense quantities of hay and grain were raised for the lumber operations. The crews remained in the woods throughout the year, some being employed in cutting and hauling timber, and others in work upon the farm. Teams of six and eight horses were used for hauling the timber, and sometimes as many as 300 men and 200 horses and oxen were in their employ.

Mr. W. Holman Cary Jr., a brother of Shepard Cary, was employed as overseer in the woods. This gentleman afterwards continued in the lumber business in connection with W. H. Cunliffe, of Ft. Kent, under the firm name of Cary & Cunliffe, and later moved to Minnesota, where he died. His two sons, W. M. and W. H. Cary Jr., are now worthy and prosperous business men in that State. Mr. Cunliffe is now a resident of Ft. Kent and still continues in the lumber business.

In all the years that Shepard Cary carried on this immense business and employed such large numbers of men, he was influential in politics, served for many years as a member of the House and Senate of Maine, and was the acknowledged leader of the Democratic party in his County. In 1843 he was elected to Congress, and acquitted himself with honor. He built extensive mills and manufacturing establishments at Houlton, and in many ways impressed himself upon the business and political interests of Aroostook. He died at Houlton August 9, 1866.

The settlement of Houlton was organized as a plantation April 21, 1826, and the town of Houlton was incorporated March 8, 1831. The following April 11th, the first town meeting was held. The town includes the New Salem Grant, and also the half town granted about 1815 to the trustees of Williams College, of Williamstown, Mass. This part of the town was for a long time known as Foxcroft, and many in modern times have supposed it was a grant to the Foxcroft Academy.

At the time of the incorporation considerable progress had been made in the building of roads in order to render the new settlement more easy of access. We have seen that the first settlers came by way of the St. John River to Woodstock. Later arrivals came by way of Bangor, thence by the rivers, lakes

and streams and the long swamp through the wilderness, to their forest homes.

As early as 1827 a road was cut through to Baskahegan, and thus the distance was shortened, and the journey made easier. Mr. James Lander was the first mail carrier, and in the early days he traveled on foot through the woods, then on horseback, and later by carriage as the roads began to be opened. Mr. Lander continued to carry the mail from Houlton to Calais as late as 1856.

In 1828 a new and prosperous era commenced for the struggling colony, for on a bright summer day in June of that year Company C. of the Second U. S. Infantry, under the command of First Lieut. Joseph C. Gallagher, having come up over the Baskahegan route, marched through the village to the merry music of fife and drum, and pitched their tents on the high ground in the rear of Mr. Joseph Houlton's house. Three other companies of the same Regiment, Company E., Lieut. Bloodgood, Company F., Lieut. Staniford and Company K., Lieut. A. B. Eaton, were left behind to accompany the supplies, which the firm of Towle & Parsons, Bangor, had contracted to deliver at the Post at Houlton.

The entire detachment was under the command of Major N. S. Clark, and the other three companies arrived at Houlton Sept. 29, 1828. In the meantime a tract of land, containing 25 acres, had been purchased by the U. S. Government of Mr. Houlton, and on the arrival of the first company the men were immediately set at work to erect a stockade, and to build the necessary buildings for a complete military post.

The work of preparing a parade ground was one of much magnitude, as an outcropping ledge had to be blasted, but when it was finally completed it was one of the finest grounds in the country. In the erection of so many buildings and the establishment of a military post, the labor of many men were required, and employment at good wages was provided for every man and boy willing to work. For some time the pay roll to these workmen amounted to about \$2,000 a month. This large amount of money was of incalculable benefit, and from this time dates the assured prosperity of this banner town of Aroostook.

The transportation of supplies for the Post from Bangor up the Penobscot River and Mattawamkeag Rivers, and thence over the rough roads to Houlton, was attended with so much difficulty that Maj. Clark determined to build a military road from Bangor direct to Houlton, and having obtained the necessary

instructions from the Government, he proceeded to construct the road, which was finished in 1832, and was so fine a road that a party who left the town of Freeman, in Franklin County, on the 16th day of December of that year, drove to Houlton in four days. This road was for many years kept in an excellent condition and became one of the finest routes for mail coaches in the State. Since the advent of the railroads it has gradually fallen into disuse and much of it is now considerably out of repair.

These garrison years were years of great prosperity for Houlton, increasing to a great extent the business of the town and furnishing a local cash market for all kinds of produce. The social relations between the militia and the citizens were most cordial. Many of the officers had their wives at the garrison and some of those who came unmarried found wives among the fair daughters of the town.

In the winter of 1836, Companies F and K of the Infantry were removed to Boston and subsequently the other companies followed and were replaced by Companies C E and F of the First Regiment U. S. Artillery, who arrived at the Post on the 11th of October, 1838. Major R. M. Kirby of the 1st Artillery now became Commander of the Post. Then followed the exciting times of the Aroostook War, which came so near being a tragedy, but proved a farce.

That Major Kirby realized that serious trouble might arise is evident from the fact that on February 1st, 1839, he writes to the Ordnance Department that "ten barrels of cannon powder should be constantly in magazine, subject to such exigency as may occur on this frontier, at this isolated station." Major Kirby kept himself well informed in regard to the state of affairs in dispute between the authorities of Maine and New Brunswick and it is largely due to his judgment and discretion that more serious hostilities were not precipitated. When requested by the Governor of Maine to co-operate with the State troops, he respectfully declined, as he would not compromise the United States by any act committed without orders. He informs Gov. Fairfield of the capture of Land Agent McIntyre and party, but gives it as his opinion that it was an act committed without authority, civil or military, from the Province of New Brunswick.

The excitement in Maine increased, however, after this event, and in the spring of 1839 twelve companies of State Militia marched up the Military Road and quartered at different times in Houlton. By the prompt and judicious action of Gen.



Scott, trouble was averted, as he negotiated an arrangement with Sir John Harvey, Governor of New Brunswick, that the troops on both sides should be withdrawn from the territory and the whole matter be referred to diplomatic action. The Garrison at Houlton was retained until after the final settlement by treaty of the disputed boundary question, when the troops were removed and the Military Post abandoned.

It was a sad day for Houlton when its citizens bade adieu to the soldiers and saw them march away down the Military Road. Among those of the officers who afterwards obtained military farms were Lieuts. Hooker, McDowell, Ricketts and others of the Union Army, while Lieut. Magruder, afterwards of Rebel fame, was remembered by the older citizens as a dashing and popular young officer. As may be easily believed, the years following the departure of the troops brought hard times for Houlton and its surrounding towns. Having this ready market thus abruptly taken from them, money became scarce and a check was put upon the common prosperity. The large lumber and other operations of Shepard Cary were of great advantage during these years. Other lumbering operations were also carried on nearby, and the farmers turned their attention to raising supplies for the woods. This, with the making of shaved shingles in the winter, and the raising of beef cattle, which drovers took out of the County, was for a long time the business of the farming population.

The growth of Houlton was slow during these years, but the town received a new impetus from the coming of the railroad. A railroad in New Brunswick was built from St. Andrews to Canterbury in 1858 and in 1862 was continued to a point on the Woodstock turnpike, five miles from Houlton. This at once caused a revival of business and made it possible to ship from the section articles which formerly had little value except for home consumption.

In the next ten years various changes were made in the Provincial railroad and in 1870 a branch was extended to Houlton. This gave Houlton railroad communication with the seaboard by way of Calais, but it was not until the E. & N. A. Railway was completed to Vanceboro in 1871, thus connecting Houlton, though by a circuitous route, with Bangor and the great American markets, that she became the busy inland city that we find today. Being practically the terminus of railroad communication with that portion of Southern Aroostook, Houlton came to be more than ever a trade center for all that large and

fertile agricultural and lumber region, and its business and wealth has largely increased during the last decade.

From a straggling settlement in the midst of an almost impenetrable wilderness and practically devoid of all communication with the great business centers it has grown to be the metropolis of northeastern Maine.

---

## HODGDON

---

One of the oldest, as well as one of the best towns in Southern Aroostook, is the good old town of Hodgdon. The early history of this town is intimately connected with that of the town of Houlton, as a number of the earliest settlers of Hodgdon moved from that town, and the Creek, as Houlton was then called, was for years the trading point of the town of Hodgdon.

The south half of the township now included in the town of Hodgdon, was originally granted by the State of Massachusetts to Westford Academy, and the high elevation of land extending through a portion of the southern part of the town, is still known as Westford Hill. The resolve granting this half township to Westford Academy was passed by the General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts on the 27th of Feb., 1797. The tract was surveyed by Park Holland in 1801. It was deeded to John Hodgdon of Ware, New Hampshire, and Nathaniel Ingersoll of New Gloucester, Cumberland Co., Mass., by the trustees of Westford Academy, June 7, 1802, for the sum of \$5760. The deed is signed by Jas. Prescott, Samson Tuttle and Hezekiah Packard. Nathaniel Ingersoll deeded his interest to John Hodgdon, Jan. 27, 1804, for the sum of \$1000. The bounds of the half township in the original deed began at the southeast corner, at a spruce tree on the boundary line between Maine and New Brunswick, marked "Four miles north from the monument at the head of the St. Croix River; thence north three miles; thence west 6 miles, south three miles, and east 6 miles to the point of starting." The grantees were bound by the deed to lay out and convey a lot of 100 acres to each settler who was upon the township previous to Jan. 1, 1784, but as no settler had come to the town at that time, this condition was of no effect.

They were also bound by the deed to set apart three lots