

NEW SWEDEN

The question of making some attempt to attract Scandinavian immigration to the State of Maine was discussed in this State as early as 1861, and in that year His Excellency, Gov. Israel Washburn, Jr., at the suggestion of Hon. Geo. F. Talbot, called attention to the matter in his inaugural address and recommended that some steps be taken by the Legislature to locate Swedish colonists upon the unsettled lands of Aroostook County. The work of raising, equipping and forwarding soldiers to the Union Army occupied the attention of the State for the three or four years following to the exclusion of almost everything else, and no measures were formulated to bring about the result contemplated in Gov. Washburn's message. In 1869, the Legislature resumed the consideration of the subject and more definite action was taken. As a result of this action, Hon. W. W. Thomas, Jr., was appointed a commissioner of immigration, with instructions to proceed to Sweden, collect a colony, accompany the colonists to Maine and settle them upon a township in Aroostook County set apart for that purpose. Mr. Thomas was the one man in the State of Maine peculiarly fitted for this work, he having served as United States Consul at Gothenburg, and during his residence in Sweden having acquired the language and made himself intimately acquainted with the manners and customs of the people.

The details of the enterprise were largely left to the discretion of the commissioner, and the faithful and successful manner in which he executed the work proves the appointment to have been a most wise and fortunate one both for the colonists and for the State.

The tract set apart for the settlement of the Swedish immigrants was Township 15, Range 3, and the State engaged to give to each head of a family a lot of one hundred acres, to fell five acres of trees and build a comfortable log house upon each lot.

Mr. Thomas sailed for Sweden in the spring of 1870 and upon his arrival proceeded at once to recruit his colony. He exercised great care in the selection of emigrants, accepting only such as he was satisfied were honest, industrious men, and of this class only those who were possessed of sufficient means to pay the expense of passage for themselves and families. No contract or written agreement of any kind was made with the colonists, all they had to depend on being the simple

word of the commissioner, supported by the authority he had received from the Legislature of his State. As Mr. Thomas has himself expressed it, they left their homes "without the scratch of a pen by way of contract or obligation, but with simple faith in the honor and hospitality of the State of Maine."

All arrangements having been completed, the little colony, accompanied by Commissioner Thomas, sailed from Sweden on the 25th of June, 1870. The company consisted of fifty-one men, women and children who thus consented to leave their native land and journey across the ocean to find new homes in what was to them the unknown wilderness of Northern Maine. Their faith and trust in Mr. Thomas was complete and the faithful manner in which he redeemed every promise made to them is shown by the respect and affectionate regard expressed toward him by every citizen of New Sweden today.

On the 23rd of July, 1870, the colony arrived at their new selves to their new and strange surroundings. Strangers in a strange land, wholly unacquainted with the manners and customs of our people and nearly all of them unable to speak or understand a word of the language, unaccustomed to the work of clearing up the forest and contending with the hardships of pioneer life, it may be surmised that the first settlement of these "children in the woods" was attended with many misgivings and frequent heart yearnings for the old home over the sea. With cheerful courage and a determination to overcome every obstacle they went manfully to work and in every direction the the forest resounded with their sturdy blows.

Mr. Thomas remained with them and not only superintended the work of this first summer, but pulled off his coat and worked with them, encouraging them by word and example to clear up their lots and prepare the land for a crop. His task was a hard one from the first, and there were not lacking busybodies in our own State who by their continual interference and captious criticisms rendered his position still more uncomfortable. The many incidents of this first summer, some of them amusing and some otherwise, including a hurried trip which the Commissioner was obliged to make to Augusta to quiet apprehensions raised in that quarter by foolish meddlers, are among the events of the unwritten history of the colony.

Having planted the colony in the wilderness it was necessary that they should be supplied with provisions and with implements until a crop could be harvested, and Mr. Thomas

adopted the plan of selling them the required supplies to be paid for in work upon the roads. The amount of State aid thus furnished was about \$25,000, nearly all of which was paid for within three years from the time of the arrival of the colony.

Upon an eminence in the southern part of the town a large and substantial two-story building was erected by the State, the upper story to be used as a place for religious meetings and public gatherings of the colonists, and the lower story serving as a store, where all needed supplies were kept for sale. This building was called the Capitol, and has played quite an important part in the history of the colony.

During the next year and the years immediately following, large accessions were made to the colony, and every available lot in New Sweden being taken, lots were surveyed in the northern portions of the adjoining towns of Woodland and Perham and upon these many Swedish settlers were located. It soon became apparent that these colonists were an honest, industrious people, and their steady application and frugal economy gave promise of assured success. The visitor to New Sweden fifteen years ago saw much to remind him that he was in the midst of a people whose language, manners and customs were those of a foreign land. The arrangement of their houses and their mode of living, their manner of doing farm work, more especially of harvesting their grain; the single ox harnessed to the rude cart, the big, wooden shoes in common use; these and many other things betokened that the newcomers had not yet "caught on" to the ways and methods of the people among whom they had made their homes. All this, however, has now almost entirely passed away and anyone riding through New Sweden today would hardly know but that the dwellers upon these beautiful farms, and in these neat and comfortable residences were "to the manner born," so completely have they adopted the ways and appliances of their Yankee neighbors. Occasionally, even now, may be seen a pair of oxen with the light Swedish yoke and harness, attached to a cart, or even at times to a mowing machine, but for the most part these farmers have good horses and are well supplied with all the various kinds of farm machinery in use among their neighbors upon the older settled towns.

New Sweden is bounded on the east by Connor Plantation and also partly by Caribou, on the south by Woodland, and on the north and west by the wilderness townships of 16 R. 3, and 15 R. 4, respectively. These latter townships are owned by pro-

prietors, but a number of Swedish settlers are already located upon those portions of each of them adjoining New Sweden.

A short distance from the Capitol in New Sweden is the Lutheran Church. Farther to the west is the church building of the Baptist Society, while on the higher ground east of the Capitol is the Advent meeting house. In the rear of the Capitol is the little cemetery where lie the remains of those of the colony who have passed to their final rest. Directly opposite the Capitol and fronting on the Caribou road, is the handsome residence of Mr. F. O. Landgrane, who came to New Sweden three years ago and bought the farm, upon which there was then very little improvement. Though much interested in his farming speculations, Mr. Landgrane is a skilled mechanic, having been for a number of years master mechanic of the city railroads of San Francisco. He is also the inventor of several street car appliances, including a fare box, change gate, bell, safety brake, etc., which are in use in many of the cities of the United States, and from the manufacture and sale of which he derives a comfortable income. He has a partner, and their manufactory is located at 1804 Mission Street, San Francisco. Mr. Landgrane intends to make his home in New Sweden, but makes periodical trips to San Francisco.

Directly east of the Capitol is the farm of Mr. John G. Uppling, who was a man of means in the old country and came to New Sweden in 1871 and bought the lot next the Capitol of its original proprietor. Capt. N. P. Clase, one of the original colonists, was of much assistance in the early days of the settlement, as he was the only member of the colony who could speak English, and upon him Mr. Thomas relied very much during these first years. We remember attending a banquet at his house years ago upon the occasion of the visit of Gov. Perham and his Council to New Sweden. The place has changed wonderfully since then and the Captain begins to show the marks of advancing years.

There are six good schools in the town, three of which were taught during the present summer by young ladies born in the town and graduates of the Caribou High School. Each school is doing good work under the supervision of Mr. A. F. Ulrich.

New Sweden may be ranked as one of the prosperous towns of Northern Aroostook. Its citizens are industrious and frugal and have the faculty of saving and adding a little to their possessions each year. They are an honest and religiously inclined people, yet have a keen sense of humor and are gener-

ally intelligent and well informed. They have for the most part adopted the manners and customs of their Yankee neighbors and all the men and children speak good English. There are very few of the original log houses left in the town, nearly all having been replaced by neat frame buildings. The improvement made upon this wilderness town in twenty years is very creditable to the thrift and energy of these worthy people and the addition thereby made to the valuation of the State proves the wisdom and success of the enterprise.

New Sweden was organized as a plantation in 1876 and in 1880 had a population of 517 and a valuation of \$22,041. In 1890 the population had increased to 707 and the valuation to \$107,832.

The first birth in the New Sweden colony was a boy in the family of Mr. Nils Persson, on the 12th of August, 1870, the 21st day from the arrival of the colonists. The babe was christened by the name of William Widgery Thomas Persson, in honor of the founder of the colony. A few weeks afterwards Mr. Thomas presented his young namesake with a silver cup, on which was engraved:

WILLIAM WIDGERY THOMAS PERSSON

The first child born in New Sweden,
August 12, 1870.

From

W. W. THOMAS, JR.

The first marriage was performed on Sunday, August 21st, 1870, when Mr. Jons Persson was united in marriage to Miss Hannah Persdotter, by W. W. Thomas, Jr., Esq. The ceremony was in the Swedish language, but after the American manner.

The first funeral was on the next day (Sunday) after the arrival of the colonists. A child of Mr. Nickolaus P. Clase, only a few weeks old, died just above Woodstock on the way up the St. John River. The remains were brought to New Sweden and there buried. The funeral services were conducted by Rev. Mr. Withee, a Methodist clergyman of Caribou.

The following are the names of the heads of families who were settled upon lots in New Sweden and Woodland in 1870, with the number of their lots:

	New Sweden	
Name		Number of Lot
Wilhelm Hard		75
Per J. Jacobson		96

Eric Ericsson	96½
Nils P. Jansson	97
John Borgesson	99
Carl Voss	111½
Per O. Julen	113
Gottlieb T. Pilts	114
Oscar G. W. Lindberg	114½
Nils Ohlson	115
Jons Persson	116
Svens Svensson	117
Karl G. Harleman	118
Anders Malmquist	121
Jans L. Lundvall	12½
Truls Persson	133
Nils Persson	134
Nickolaus P. Clase	135
Olof C. Morell	135½
John P. Johnson	136
Anders Johansson	137
Anders Svenson	138
Olof Ohlson	138½
Laurentius Stenstrom	99½
Per Persson	112
Mans Mansson	131
Anders F. Johansson	130

Woodland

Per Petersson	A
Solomon Johansson	B
Jonas Boden	C
Jonas Boden, Jr.	D
Frans R. W. Planck	E
Jacob Johansson	F
Anders Wesbergren	32

At the close of the year 1870, the colony numbered 114 Swedes, of whom 58 were men, 20 women and 36 children. A number of the original colonists afterward emigrated to other parts of the United States and their lots were taken by later arrivals.

 OXBOW

In all this fair northland no fairer river sends its waters to the sea than the beautiful Aroostook, and no river of all the

land flows through a grander or more beautiful country. Along the banks of its upper waters are not only immense tracts of valuable timber land, but through all its tortuous course from source to mouth it flows through a section as fertile and productive as any in New England. Broad, smooth intervalles, easy of culture and rich in all the elements of plant life are along its banks, and, swelling back from these, are grand ridges of fertile upland, which, when cleared of their forest growth, are easily converted into fair and productive farms, upon which are the homes of a peaceful, happy and prosperous people. Many strong flowing streams, draining immense timber sections, add their waters to its larger volume and upon all these are valuable water powers, capable of turning many busy wheels and adding to the industrial resources of this great county.

In the valley of the lower Aroostook the forest has given place to the fertile farm, whole townships have been brought under cultivation, handsome villages have been built up, and from this section immense quantities of food products are sent out to feed the thousands of hungry toilers in other portions of the land. Fort Fairfield, Caribou, Presque Isle, Washburn, Mapleton and Castle Hill, all lying on the Lower Aroostook, are towns whose exports are mainly cultivated and manufactured products, while still farther up, Ashland and Masardis are well maintaining their claim to be classed as agricultural and manufacturing towns.

As we ascend the river still further we begin to find ourselves in the midst of the "forest primeval" and to leave behind us the larger settlements, and penetrate into Nature's loveliest retreats. Now standing upon some slightly eminence, we look away towards the north and west, and as far as the eye can reach behold an unbroken forest, with its mountains and valleys, its rivers and streams, and in these mild October days, its dazzling richness of color, ranging from the darkest green of the spruce and fir to the most gorgeous crimson of the maple, a sea of heaven-tinted beauty, an ocean of enchanting loveliness.

Such was the beautiful picture spread before us as we stood upon the grand swell of cultivated land in the little settlement of Oxbow Plantation, the farthest inhabited township upon the upper waters of the Aroostook.

Leaving Masardis, we ride southward on the old Aroostook road some four miles or more, half the distance being in Township No. 9, Range 5, when we come to the mouth of the Oxbow road. Here we turn to the west and continue on for

nearly five miles through the unbroken wilderness of No. 9. The soil in this township is quite stony and in that portion through which the road passes, hardly suitable for cultivation, though in other parts of the town there are some tracts of good farming land. Crossing Houlton Brook and Trout Brook further on, we come to the town line and all at once emerge from the wilderness, and find ourselves upon a handsome ridge of cultivated land, with a beautiful prospect before us of something over four miles of field and meadow lying along the Aroostook River. Broad farms and fertile fields stretch away on either side of the road, the clearings terminating at the river on the north and at the grand old forest on the south. Standing upon this fertile slope and looking over the smooth fields and comfortable residences we can hardly realize that we are in the heart of a vast wilderness and that as far as cultivated improvement is concerned we are at the end of the road when we pass the last farm in sight. The forest is cleared away to such a breadth on either side the road, the fields and pastures are so well fenced, the houses and barns so comfortable and all the evidences of prosperous agriculture so apparent that it does not at first occur to one that after leaving this settlement he could strike out into the edge of yonder woods and travel through unbroken forest for days without coming upon a human habitation until he reached the Canadian settlements upon the far-off St. Lawrence.

Looking westward along the road we can see at the foot of the cultivated slope the Umcolcus Stream which rises in Umcolcus Lake down in the southwest corner of No. 8, Range 5, and flowing northwesterly across the corner of Penobscot County, enters Oxbow Plantation through its south line and flows northward into the Aroostook. A half mile to our right is the Aroostook River winding among beautiful intervalles and making here the "ox bow" from which the town takes its name. After crossing the Umcolcus the road ascends the slope on the other side through a cultivated section for some two miles, when it enters the forest and is lost in the mazes of the grand old woods. Looking beyond the little settlement we see forest to right of us, forest to left of us, and almost interminable forest in our front. Across the long stretch of gorgeous autumn blazonry, directly in our front rise the wooded peaks of the Mooseleuk mountains, extending for some distance from north to south. Farther to the north are rugged heights of the Machias mountains, these being more distant and less clearly defined. Away to the southwest,

high above all and grander than all, towers grand old Katahdin, seeming now like an old familiar friend, we have looked upon his rugged features so often of late, and from so many different standpoints. Lesser hills appear on every hand, all wood-covered and autumn-tinted, and everywhere forest, and forest glorified by Nature's matchless limning, and all illuminated by the splendor of the mild October sunlight.

We are on the Upper Aroostook now, but still the head waters of its tributary streams are many miles away. Some ten miles above Oxbow the Sapomkeag, a small stream rising in Penobscot County, flows into the Aroostook from the south, and two miles above, the Mooseleuk enters from the north. This latter is a stream of considerable volume and large quantities of lumber are driven from it every spring. It heads away over in Piscataquis and flows in a southeasterly direction into the Aroostook. Some six or eight miles above the mouth of the Mooseleuk the Munsungun and Millinocket streams unite and form the Aroostook. The Munsungun is the northerly branch and flows from a lake of the same name in the northeastern part of Piscataquis County. The Millinocket flows out of Millinocket Lake also in Piscataquis, and the two unite in Penobscot County a short distance from the northwest corner of that county.

Though the Oxbow settlement is away to one side of the world's busy centres and is surrounded on all sides by forest, yet it is by no means a solitary or unfrequented locality, but is on the contrary in winter season one of the busiest points in the county. It has been for many years the headquarters and point of departure for the vast lumber business in this section and on that account has been a most important point.

In the days of the great pine timber business many thousands of dollars were yearly brought to the town and fortunes were made and lost in operations of which it was the centre. The Aroostook War, which came so near embroiling two great nations in a sanguinary struggle, was the means of attracting attention to this fertile region and many who marched in with the posse to fight the British trespasser remained to battle with the wilderness and to make farms and homes in this new country. It also demonstrated to others not of the martial force that the country was accessible and quite a tide of emigration followed.

In September, 1839, Elias H. Hayden and Samuel Hayden came from Madison Centre, in Somerset County, to spy out the

land in the far-off Aroostook. They came up via Patten to Masardis, where they took a boat and went down the river to Presque Isle, which at that time contained but little beside Fairbank's mill on the Presque Isle Stream. The road from the Aroostook River to Caribou had then been spotted out, and they followed the line through, looking for a location to suit them. At that time there was no opening in the wilderness after leaving the Aroostook River at the point where the bridge now crosses in Presque Isle, until they arrived at the chopping of Ivory Hardison in Lyndon, and from there to Caribou the forest was unbroken. Not deciding to settle in this region, they returned to Presque Isle and poled their boat up the river to the Oxbow. Here they found Surveyor Henry W. Cunningham lotting the town, which was Township No. 9, Range 6, and here they concluded to make their future home. Selecting lots on the south side of the Aroostook River, near where the river makes its abrupt bend, they returned to their homes and in June, 1840, came back and commenced felling trees upon their lots. A few small choppings had been made during the previous year, but all had been abandoned and the Haydens were the first settlers who came to stay.

In 1842 Mr. Samuel Hayden moved his family to Oxbow, being the first family to come to the town. He remained until about 1860, clearing up a good farm and building comfortable buildings, and then removed to Minnesota.

Mr. E. H. Hayden was unmarried when he came to the town. He built a log camp on his lot and went to work to clear up a farm. In 1842 he built a barn which was the first frame building in the town. The plank and boards for this barn he procured at Pollard's mill on the St. Croix, running them down that stream to Masardis and then poling them in a boat up the river to Oxbow. Mr. Hayden says that at one time he poled 500 feet of green plank in a batteau from Masardis up to Oxbow without assistance. In 1843 Mr. Hayden married a daughter of Thomas Goss, and brought her to his log camp on his forest farm. After the boundary dispute was settled by the treaty of 1842, the lumber business improved and a ready market was afforded for all the produce raised in this vicinity. Thus becoming more independent, Mr. Hayden, in the fall of 1843, built him a comfortable log house in which he lived until 1849, when he built a frame house and commenced keeping a hotel, in which business he continued in connection with farming, until some six years ago.

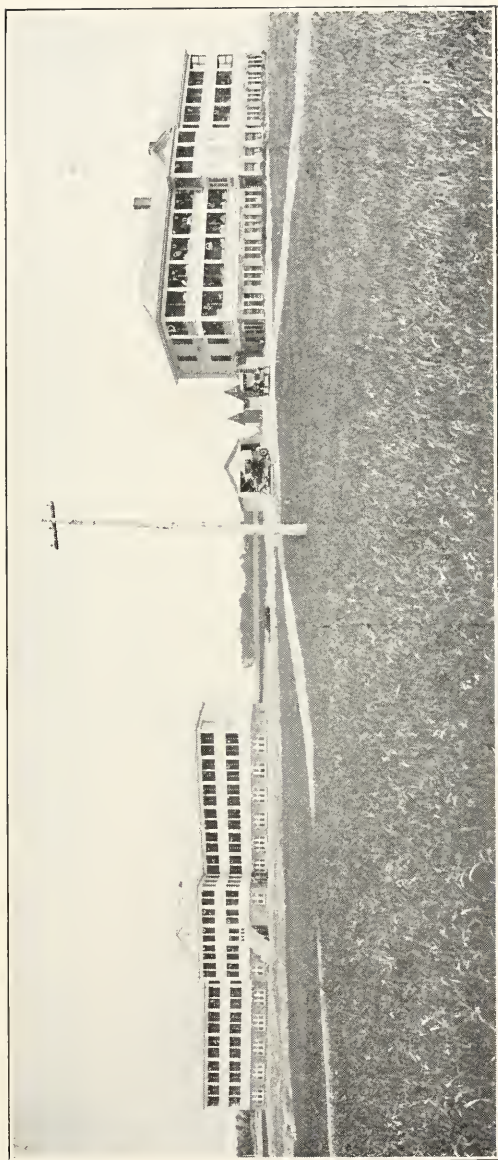
The next settler to come to the town was Mr. John M. Winslow, who came from Freedom, Waldo County, in March, 1842, and settled opposite Mr. Hayden's. He cleared up a farm and also engaged in the lumber business. He was the first clerk of the plantation after its organization. He remained until 1862, when he removed to Minnesota, where he afterwards died.

Mr. Thomas Goss, Jr., son of the pioneer settler of Masardis, came with his family to Oxbow in April, 1842, and settled on a lot in the extreme west of the town. He remained but about three years, when he removed to Masardis and afterwards to the Fish River road. About 1870 he returned to Oxbow and settled in the east part of the town where he remained until his death in 1875. His widow is still living in the town with her daughter, Mrs. I. L. Junkins.

Aaron Scribner and family moved from Lincoln in 1843 and settled on a lot on the Umcolcus Stream, where he made a farm and lived about twenty-five years, when he removed to Patten.

William Bottin came from Madison in 1843, moving his family to the town the next year. He took up a lot on a beautiful ridge west of the Umcolcus, where he made a fine farm on which he still lives.

In 1843 Ira Fish & Co. of Patten, built a sawmill on Umcolcus Stream a short distance above the present bridge. In aid of this enterprise the company received from the State a grant of a block of land near the mill, a large part of which grant has since been made into productive farms. The mill at first contained only an up and down saw, but in 1845 a run of stones was put in. In 1852, Shepard Boody, of Old Town, bought the mill property and the land connected with it. Mr. Boody was largely engaged in the lumber business, having extensive operations upon the headwaters of the Aroostook. Pine timber being at that time much higher in Bangor than in St. John, Mr. Boody for a number of years drove his lumber to the mouth of the Munsungun, where he took it from the water with teams and derricks and hauled it across to Sebois Lake on the Penobscot, and drove it to Bangor. He employed a large number of men, sometimes continuing his operations during the entire year. He moved his family to Oxbow, where he made the headquarters of his large lumber business and here also he engaged in farming. He cleared up more than two hundred acres of land and raised large crops of hay and grain for his lumber operations. Mr. Boody failed in 1864, and removed from Oxbow, living at



NORTHERN MAINE SANATORIUM. PRESQUE ISLE

various places in Aroostook County, devoting much of his time during his later years to preaching the gospel according to the Methodist faith. He died at Moro, on the Patten road, something over a year ago. Those who knew him as a business man speak of him as an honest man, kind and generous to the poor, but unfortunate in his business operations. After Mr. Boody's failure the mill property passed into the hands of Mr. George Sawyer of Masardis, who operated it for a number of years, when it was sold to Mr. C. C. Libby, who came from Newfield and married a daughter of Mr. Eben Trafton, of Masardis.

Mr. Abram H. Currier came from Maysville in 1854 and for a number of years had charge of the Boody farm. In 1862 he bought the lot on the west side of the stream, where he now resides.

Samuel Willard moved from Old Town in 1854 and settled a mile east of the stream on the farm now owned by Stephen Ellis. He lived there until 1862, when he moved to the Winslow farm where he resided for a time and then moved to Presque Isle. In 1879 the Winslow farm passed into the possession of Mr. Eben Trafton of Masardis, who made many improvements and raised large crops of hay and grain. Mr. Trafton never lived in the town and afterwards sold this farm to Mr. Julius J. Jenkins who now lives upon it.

James Anderson came from New Brunswick about 1860 and bought the Samuel Hayden farm, where he has lived ever since. Robert Purvis came from New Brunswick about 1854. He married a daughter of Mr. Samuel Hayden and in 1858 settled on the lot where I. L. Jenkins now lives in the east part of the town. John McLean came from Nova Scotia in 1861 and bought the William Day farm a short distance west of the stream. Mr. McLean was killed in the woods by a falling tree, and his widow afterwards married James Smith, who carried on the farm until his death a few years since. Mrs. Smith is now living with Mrs. Joseph Pollard at Masardis. Thomas Fleming came from Nova Scotia in 1854. He afterwards married a daughter of William Bottin and settled on the lot east of Mr. Bottin's, where he now resides.

The township was first organized in 1848 and as Oxbow Plantation in 1870. There are two schools in the town and the people are intelligent and prosperous.