



Corinth Historical Society

Corinth Historical Society Newsletter

Summer 2019

Skinner Diaries

George Fisher Skinner, an author of the diaries, was born on Nov. 12, 1829. His grandfather was Daniel Skinner, who came to this area about 1793 and established what was called the Skinner Settlement, later was part of West Corinth. His father was Elijah Skinner, who was a very important member of the early community, signing the petition to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to incorporate the town of Corinth, and later serving as Selectman, Assessor, Town Treasurer, Surveyor of Highways, Justice of the Peace, and School Agent.



George Fisher Skinner

“Mother Skinner” to George.

George’s mother, Nancy Nichols Budge Skinner, died in February, 1834 when George was a little over 4 years old. Elijah married Elizabeth Crosby in September, 1834, and she became

George does not appear to have been interested in the politics of town management. His name does not appear on the lists of town officers, though he makes many references to political rallies and meetings over the years. His focus was on the farm, which apparently developed greatly under his management.

Sarah Deering Skinner was born on November 8, 1832. She was a very skilled seamstress (as witness the elaborate clothing in her portrait)



Sarah Deering Skinner

and most of her entries have to do with her business. She also notes her visitors for the day, sometimes the weather, what food had been prepared, and what the family did in the evening. When the interest in displaying stuffed birds in homes and on clothing was at its height in the 1870’s, Sarah added that to her accomplishments, assisted by George.

The first diary that we have available to us was written in 1853, when George was 24 years old. He had married Sarah the previous year, and his father Elijah was still alive. The diary entries are brief but to the point. He records where he worked on the farm during the day, what crops he planted and when, sometimes describes the weather, and records significant events such as the births, marriages, and deaths of friends and neighbors. Humorous entries are such notes as “April 3, ice has gone from Bangor,” and “April 9, frogs have thawed out.”

Sarah’s diaries begin in 1866 and end in 1883, but George’s diaries continue through 1912. Both give us an invaluable insight into life in the Corinth area during their lifetime.

During the late 1800’s, America was in a phase of rapid economic growth, and life was changing for everyone. Electric lights, the internal combustion engine and automobiles were available. Many types of machine were invented and because of a new steel making process, these machines were reasonably priced. The phonograph, typewriter, and tabulating machines were being developed. The railroad network was expanding rapidly, and street railways were introduced as communities expanded. As a result of competition, prices for products became more affordable. Rural free delivery was being implemented, chain stores and mail order companies were being introduced.

The diaries indicate that life for the Skinners was changing with the times. The Town of Corinth decided to contribute funds toward the financing of the railroad, and work commenced on grading the track. George mentions use of powered saws, mowers and road grading equipment, pumps, a new well. Sarah acquired a sewing machine.

George and Sarah's son, Frank, particularly seems to have been moving away from a life as a farmer and venturing out into other enterprises. In Jan. of 1883 he went to Bangor and purchased “a magic lantern.” (“*Jan. 6, 1883, 150 views for \$50,*”) and arranged some shows in the local area. (“*Feb. 5, Frank and C. Robinson went to Garland to ‘try their luck’ with Magic Lantern.*”) “Magic Lantern” probably refers to a stereopticon show in which a projected image, a live narration, and music were combined. These were incredibly popular during those years, and there were opportunities for investors as well as narrators and salesmen who traveled the area promoting shows.

In 1884, Frank “fixed a telephone for Mr. Pressey,” and in 1885 he was cutting telephone poles and “set 3 poles for Marshall.” In 1888 and 1889 Frank was working on carriages, building carts and sleighs, and repairing machinery as well as assisting with work on the farm, syrup making, and the apple business.

The Skinner family in the year of 1889 was comprised of George, Sarah, their son Frank, daughter-in-law Eva, and grandson Fred, then about 6 years old.

During 1889 George noted 14 deaths and 6 marriages, a trip to Northport, Sarah traveling by boat to Boston from Bangor, oyster suppers, box socials, Grand Army installation of officers, rain, snow, windy days, road flooded, worry about getting in the hay, thrashing, planting, harvesting, grafting apple trees, caring for his horses and other animals, and maintenance on the farm.

In November 1888 George had written that Frank and J. Wesley Hunting, who ran a 4-horse mail stagecoach, were having a disagreement over work that Frank had done on a carriage. This had ended in a lawsuit which came to trial in April, 1889. George wrote: “Mar. 29, Frank, self & Mr. Ayer went to E Corinth to give depositions in Evening in Wess Huntings suit.” Then, “Apr. 22, Frank went to Bangor for the trial of the suit between him and J.W. Hunting. Apr. 25, Frank got home from Bangor at noon. J W Hunting got the case through false swearing of himself and others.”

Example of other entries from the George Skinner Diary 1889:

- Jan. 29** Frank “went to Dexter.....to see if he could go drilling. Got a machine.” *This appears to be something like a drill press. There are later entries indicating they built a bench for it.*
- Feb.** George and Frank building a cistern and running pumps and pipe.
- Feb. 11** Frank & George working on the drilling machine. Changed a wheel – the original one was too small.
- May 21** Killed about a bushel of caterpillars.
- May 27** George got some glasses. Dr. Jeffords of Bangor examined him and had the glasses made in NY. \$5 for the exam, \$4.50 for the glasses
- July 9** Store, Grist mill, then blacksmith shops and the covered bridge burned at Kenduskeag last night.
- July 11** Went to E Corinth to see the ruins of the 8 buildings burned last night. Fire set by parties that robbed the drug store.

- July 20** Charles Gilman arrested and taken to Bangor for Robbing and setting fire to Philbricks store.
(Charles Gilman, son of Ellis and Harriet Trask Gilman)
- Dec. 11** Frank & George went to “see the R Road surveyors”
- Dec 12** went to see the R R levelers.” *Apparently they were working on the tracks during the winter and close enough to go watch.*
- March** Made 40 gal. soap.
- Mar. 15** Commenced to tap trees. Ed McKusick & Eva washed pails in A M. Ed put out pails & covers in P M and Frank hung 300 and George 210 and did the chores.
(Ed McKusick, son of Zimary McKusick, neighbor. Owned 322 Black Rd. between 1890 and 1927.)
- Mar. 23** Collected & boiled. Since last Saturday at 3 P M till 3 P M today have boiled off 93 gals. syrup.
- Apr. 9** Finished boiling sap. Big collection yesterday. F & E boiled all night. Have made 200 gal., about 30 of shall sell in bulk.
- May 4** Went to E Corinth to town meeting. Town voted to loan its credit to help build a R Road.

The Skinner Diaries are available for reading in the Historical Society Museum, along with available details of the many people to whom George refers. The entries, while brief, do flesh out our vision of life in Corinth those long years ago, and some of the individuals alive at that time.

Please take advantage of our library. We look forward to your visit!

**Corinth Historical Society dues for fiscal year
 July 1, 2019 - Jun 30, 2020 come due the end of this
 month. Thank you for your continued support of
 Corinth Historical Society!**



Veteran Tribute



The memory lives on! 6th June 2019 marks the 75th anniversary of the D-Day Landings and the Battle of Normandy. This is an occasion to celebrate the peace and liberty that these hard fought battles have given to America and Europe.

On June 6, 1945 and during the long summer that followed, men from all over the world came to fight in Normandy to defeat Nazism and re-establish freedom.

The Allies had divided the 60 mile coastal stretch chosen for the invasion into five sectors, code named Sword, Juno, Gold, Omaha and Utah. The British forces were assigned Sword and Gold. The Canadians led at Juno. The American forces landed and fought at Omaha and Utah. D-Day was seen as a great triumph but heavy German resistance was encountered at all landings and terrible losses of lives were encountered at all points and through out the Battle of Normandy



Americans landing at Omaha Beach June 6, 1945

We take a moment on this date to honor the memories of those that fought here on these beaches and later pursued the Germans through Normandy and into their homeland where they were finally defeated on September 2nd, 1945.

Gems for Genealogists

To figure a person's age from birth and death dates, use the Windows 10 built-in calculator

- 1) Click the Search Box (in the Task bar), then key **Calc**
- 2) From the display that pops up, click **Calculator app**.
- 3) In the **Calculator app** click the navigation icon (looks like an equal sign with 3 little lines instead of 2.)
- 4) From the drop-down list choose **Data Calculation**, then enter the relevant dates.

Going the other way, as tombstones so often do, to calculate death date using date of birth and age at death, try the online calculator at <https://www.calculator.net/age-calculator.html>



Glass Insulators

Insulators were first manufactured in quantity in the 1800's when the first telegraph and telephone circuits were put in place. A way was needed to prevent the telegraph signal from draining into the earth wherever the wire touched a solid object. Insulators were invented to fulfill this need.

We have a collection of various sizes and colors of insulators at the museum mounted on a power pole crossarm.

Exciting New Museum Exhibit

This summer we are pleased to have a new exhibit of Soap Box Derby cars. Gareth and Beverly Blackwell have loaned three Soap Box racers that were made and used by Gareth and his brother Delwin in the mid 1940s.

Soap Box handmade. Delwin and Gareth raced in the initial derby in 1948.



Soap Box Derby race in Bangor circa 1948

2004 model sponsored by Blackwell Insurance.



Wax Museum SAD 64 4th Grade Activity

This is the second year that SAD 64 4th graders enacted a wax museum of famous Maine people. Each child researched a person of interest and then created a display about the person. Then he/she dressed like the person and gave a memorized 1st person speech about who they were, whenever a visitor "activated" them.

Corinth people of note with informational displays about their importance to the community.

This year the represented people were Ena Chapman, phone operator, Norman Buswell, fire chief, Mrs. Kate O'Roak, farm housewife and mother, and Reverend Lockhart, Methodist minister and poet, Geneva Smith, aviatrix, college math professor, and benefactor to Corinth, and Frank Morison, successful business man and benefactor to Corinth

ENA CHAPMAN

(1906– 2002)



ENA CHAPMAN AT THE SWITCHBOARD.
THE PHONE SYSTEM'S DISTRIBUTION FRAME
IS IN THE BACK.

- TELEPHONE OPERATOR

ENA & HER MOTHER RAN THE FIRST
TELEPHONE SERVICE IN CORINTH. IT
WAS LOCATED IN THEIR MAIN STREET
HOME FROM 1914 TO 1956.



TELEPHONE OFFICE AND CHAPMAN HOME
MAIN ST., CORINTH

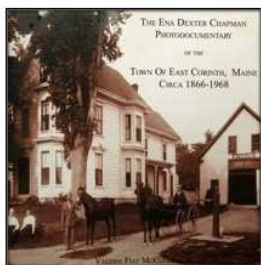
- TOWN HISTORIAN

MUCH OF HER LIFETIME COLLECTION OF CORINTH PICTURES AND ITEMS
ARE FOUND TODAY IN THE CORINTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY MUSEUM.

ENA'S PICTURES AND HER REMINISCENCES WERE MADE
INTO A BOOK:

**THE ENA DEXTER CHAPMAN
PHOTODOCUMENTARY OF THE
TOWN OF EAST CORINTH,
MAINE CIRCA 1866 - 1968**

BY VALERY FELT MCCLEAD





Goody Two-Shoes

Goody Two-Shoes is a variation of the Cinderella story. The fable tells of Goody Two-Shoes, the nickname of a poor orphan girl named Margery Meanwell, who goes through life with only one shoe. When a rich gentleman gives her a complete pair, she is so happy that she tells everyone that she has "two shoes". Later, Margery becomes a teacher and marries a rich widower. This earning of wealth serves as proof that her virtuousness has been rewarded, a popular theme in children's literature of the era

Yard Sale Reminder

The museum's annual fundraising event will be held June 21 & 22. This annual Yard Sale helps the Historical Society raise working capital for our many museum events and preservation efforts.

If you have any items that you would like to donate to this effort please contact us. Sorry we cannot accept clothing or large collections of books. We can arrange pickup of your donations.

Donations

A heartfelt thanks to the following people for artifacts, cash, documents donated or placed on loan and time volunteered:

Janice Cynewski
Estate of Carol Rich Strout
Betty LaForge

Next Historical Society Meeting

June 12th 5pm at the museum

To contact the editor: write
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Membership Information

The postal address on your mailed newsletter has a small notation to the upper right of your name, showing your membership type and the dues-paid-through date that our records show. (Periodically, we send a status e-mail to recipients who receive their newsletter in that manner.) **Dues now come due in June**, not January, although feel free to pay them sooner, if you wish. If it says June 2019 or earlier, then please renew now. If your label says June 2020 or later you're paid up. If you are a **Lifetime** or **Emeritus** member, no membership year will be displayed since your dues are paid up forever! If it says Courtesy, this newsletter is a courtesy copy sent to another historical organization, or friend of the Society.

Dues:

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|----------------------------------|-------|
| Individuals | \$10 |
| Families (living a same Address) | \$15 |
| Under 18 (please inquire) | |
| Benevolent donor | \$25 |
| Lifetime membership | \$200 |
| Benefactor | \$500 |
| Organizations (50-250 members) | \$20 |

Periodically, we vote to elect Emeritus members. Emeritus members are over 85 in age and have demonstrated ongoing interest in the history of Corinth, Maine.

New Members:

Corinth Historical Society
PO Box 541
Corinth, ME 04427

