

CHAPTER XIII

END OF THE SECOND QUARTER CENTURY

REVIEW OF HISTORIC EVENTS OF VALUE

No mail under government authority until 1842; then it was brought by Nosh Chandler on horse-back from Houlton Line Store. During the war (Aroostook War), it was brought twice a month by the Aroostook giant, Dave Bubar, who did it on foot.

After this time Eliezer Packard bought the Reed Hotel. He afterward sold it to Sumner Whitney, who later sold it to his brother, Jerry Whitney. Jerry kept it for many years, then moved the old part of the rest home below (the R. J. Smith furniture store is a part), and built a larger and better hotel which burned in 1884.

There was no store until about 1842 near where the B. & A. crosses tracks near Bridge Street. This was the first store north of Houlton.

In 1849 a store was built where the Perry block stands, and is now the property of the Presque Isle National Bank. It was occupied by David and A. W. Dudley.

Next was the Vincent Hall store on the Bolton Corner. Next came the Dudley store, now owned by A. M. Smith Co., since enlarged and modernized.

About 1853, Dr. G. E. Freeman came, and in addition to his professional duties, he carried on the drug business under the firm name of Rose and Freeman. Dr. Freeman proved a great acquisition to the town, in the years following; he was very active in many of the enterprises which broadened and helped the town. Continuing active, he was influential up to the close of his life. Mrs. Freeman, his widow, is still living, and is one of the noblest women Presque Isle has ever had, and whose continuous life of three quarters of a century still tells for righteousness and good citizenship.

It was written that in 1855 there were about fifteen or twenty families in town. This must have been in the village, for I knew from personal interviews and acquaintances that there were more, and the town's population in 1860 was 732. Ten years later it had increased after its incorporation 1870 there were 975.

In 1859 when James Cleaves came into town, there were but 19 buildings in the village, including the old academy which stood near, perhaps on the same spot, where Col. C. P. Allen's home is.

Sumner Whitney ran a saw mill, with an up and down saw. Joseph Hines and David Dudley kept general stores. Brackett and Joseph Hall were traders. Dr. Francis and Zabolen Rose kept groceries

The same authority says, "There was only one turn-pike road in Presque Isle; that was extending up the hill on the cross road from the Rose farm on the Center Line Road to the Houlton Road." This must mean, if true, excepting the Houlton Road, which was made in 1842.

Here comes the first newspaper published in town in 1857. It was published by Joseph B. Hall and W. S. Gilman; a more extended account will be given in a chapter by itself...

In 1860 comes its first fire, when the village met its first disastrous blaze and the northern part of the village was nearly destroyed. The loss was estimated to be \$25,000, which although it would be a small loss now, was a great loss then. Not discouraged, the burned district was soon rebuilt, it is said by those who knew.

It was about this time that C. A. Johnson came to Presque Isle and entered into trade under the firm name of Johnson and Judd, which resulted in the establishment of the large business under the name of Johnson and Phair.

This brings us to the time which stirred the whole nation, for it was an outbreak and outcome of a conflict which had long been growing in the embittered minds of one part of the government against the other...

During this time the increased growth of the town's population was much less than it would have been if the nation had not been rent by a civil war. Notwithstanding this internal strife which was deeply felt in Aroostock, many valuable and influential families came and made their homes in the country.

In 1863 we find a directory compiled and published by David Stickney in the SUNRISE, that the village had eight business firms, that it, places carrying goods for sale. The eight business firms of 1863, it is safe to say, did not carry as much stock or do as much business as a single firm of today in any one of the leading lines that may be mentioned.

From 1860 to 1881, 1882, 1883, and 1884, the growth of the county in population and wealth was not so marked and progressive as it had been since the Canadian Pacific Railroad first entered the central part of the county, or what is more frequently called "The Garden of Maine". For, it is certain, that from that time to the present, the increase in wealth and population, also in up-to-date-ness, has been a surprise to our own people, as well as those who have seen and studied our development and progress.

This is due first, to the opportunities brought to us by the different railroads which have entered our county; and by the new advantages which have been introduced by an intelligent and wide-awake citizenship, who have used, to their best advantage the

resources long locked up in Aroostook's soil, which awaited the touch and skill of wise and judicial leadership to bring it where the world could know, and receive the products of forest and soil. This has been what has made the new and greater Aroostook.

The growth in school population and school facilities in Presque Isle, and the development of the school system and accommodations are also one of the most remarkable as a future which shows the growth and contrasts of the town that there is.

In the village its pupils were all accommodated and instructed in the "Ancient Academy Building", since moved from its site on Academy Street to Maine Street and converted several years ago into a furniture store by R. J. Smith and Co.

Part 3

THIRD QUARTER CENTURY 1865-1890

CHAPTER XIV

The bill for the incorporation of Presque Isle and Maysville; State of Maine Private and Special Laws of 1883.

By agreement and vote the towns of Presque Isle and Maysville asked the Maine State Legislature at session in the winter of 1859 that their towns be incorporated.

In compliance with this request, I find the Bill of Incorporation of Presque Isle and Maysville having been amended in the Senate so as to provide that the towns may be united, if a majority of the people in each town are in favor of the union, and not otherwise, came back from the House - that branch having refused to adopt the amendments and insisted on the former vote. The Senate agreed to House Bill as passed, this being satisfactory to all. It passed to be engrossed, as amended April 4, 1859, and Presque Isle and Maysville became one incorporated town.

STATE OF MAINE PRIVATE AND SPECIAL LAWS OF 1883

An act to annex the town of Maysville to the town of Presque Isle:

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in Legislature assembled as follows:

Sect. 1. The town of Maysville, in Aroostook County, is hereby annexed to and made a part of the town of Presque Isle.

Sect. 2. All the liabilities of the town of Maysville are hereby assumed by the town of Presque Isle.

Sect. 3. All the personal and real estate owned by the town of Maysville is hereby conveyed to and becomes the property of the town of Presque Isle.

Sect. 4. The collector of taxes of the town of Maysville is hereby authorized and empowered to collect and ~~turn~~ ^{turn} over to the treasurer of the town of Presque Isle all taxes he was directed to pay to the treasurer of the town of Maysville, now assessed and committed to him for collection, not already collected and paid to the treasurer of the town of Maysville.

Sect. 5. All taxes which have been assessed for repairs of highways and committed to highway surveyors in the town of Maysville shall be expended and worked out on the highways under the direction of said surveyors of the town of Presque Isle.

Sect. 6. The treasurer of the town of Maysville shall pay over all moneys, and deliver all books papers and documents pertaining to his office, to the treasurer of the town of Presque Isle.

Sect. 7. The town clerk of the town of Maysville shall deliver to the town clerk of the town of Presque Isle all reports and books belonging to the town of Maysville, and all papers, records and documents pertaining to his office.

Sect. 8. The selectmen, assessors and overseers of the poor of the town of Maysville shall deliver all books, papers, and documents pertaining to their several offices to the selectmen of the town of Presque Isle.

Sect. 9. This act shall take effect in thirty days after it is approved by the governor.

Approved February 14, 1883.

A true copy,

ATTEST:

A large, flowing handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "John E. Brucher". The signature starts with a large loop on the left and ends with a horizontal line that extends to the right, underlining the name.

Secretary of State

CHAPTER XV

Civil History of Presque Isle: town
officers; representatives.

Selectmen of Presque Isle

1883-1886
L. I. Judd
C. P. Ferguson
S. D. Butterfield

1887-1889
L. I. Judd
C. P. Ferguson
R. J. Smith

1890-1891
L. I. Judd
R. J. Smith
A. E. Irving

1892-1894
R. J. Smith
A. E. Irving
S. W. Duff

1895-1898
A. E. Irving
S. C. Greenlaw
C. H. Richardson

1899
A. E. Irving
Lewis Scott
C. H. Richardson

1900
A. E. Irving
S. C. Greenlaw
J. H. Judd

1901
A. E. Irving
S. C. Greenlaw
M. S. Huson

1902
A. E. Irving
C. H. Richardson
M. S. Huson

1903
A. E. Irving
D. W. Gilman
M. S. Huson

1904
C. H. Richardson
M. S. Huson
C. C. Rolfe

1905
C. H. Richardson
M. S. Huson
C. C. Rolfe

1906
C. H. Richardson
M. S. Huson
C. C. Rolfe

1907
M. S. Huson
C. H. Richardson
C. C. Rolfe

1908
N. P. Cook
John Bishop
C. H. Richardson

1909
Dan Gilman
John Seeley
John Bishop

1910
Jerome Clark
John E. Bishop
John Seeley

1911
W. O. Chase
John E. Bishop
John Seeley

1912
A. C. T. Wilson
John E. Bishop
John Seeley

1913
John E. Bishop
A. C. T. Wilson
John Seeley

1914
A. C. T. Wilson
J. C. Seeley
N. P. Cook

1915
N. P. Cook
John C. Seeley
A. C. T. Wilson

1916
N. P. Cook
John C. Seeley
J. Frank Guiou

1917
J. Frank Guiou
John C. Seeley
George W. Perry

1918
George Perry
John C. Seeley
J. Frank Guiou

1919
A. A. Joy
Herbert W. Kitchen
J. Frank Guiou

1920
Roy M. Barker
George Washburn
George Oches
A. C. T. Wilson
G. W. English
Herbert Kitchen
Dan Gilman

1921
George Washburn
Roy Barker
G. W. English
J. W. Beckwith
Herbert Kitchen

1922
George Washburn
Roy Barker
G. W. English
J. W. Beckwith
Herbert Kitchen

1923
George Washburn
G. W. English
N. P. Cook

1924
E. A. Keirstead
George Washburn
N. P. Cook

1926
N. P. Cook
George Washburn
E. A. Keirstead

1927
E. A. Keirstead
N. P. Cook
George Washburn

1928
G. W. English
George Washburn
E. A. Keirstead

1929
George Washburn
E. A. Keirstead
G. W. English

1930
Roy M. Barker
E. A. Keirstead
Howard Everett

1931
E. A. Keirstead
Roy Barker
Howard Everett

1932
Roy Barker
G. W. English
Walter Merritt
F. Parker Jacques
Frank Lancaster

TOWN COUNCILS

1933
A. C. T. Wilson
Herbert Kitchen
J. E. Estey
A. Howard Smith
H. N. Crandall

1934
A. C. T. Wilson
F. C. Wheeler
Ralph K. Wood
Herbert Kitchen
Clayton Steele

1935
Ralph Wood
Clyde P. Johnston
Clayton Steele
A. C. T. Wilson
F. C. Wheeler

1936
A. C. T. Wilson
Clyde Johnston
Ralph Wood
Clayton Steele
F. C. Wheeler

1937
A. C. T. Wilson
Clyde Johnston
C. F. Wheeler
Ralph Wood
Clayton Steele

1938
A. C. T. Wilson
Clyde Johnston
Ralph Wood
Dr. R. A. Graves

1939
A. C. T. Wilson
Clyde Johnston
Ralph Wood
Dr. R. A. Graves
F. C. Wheeler

1940
CITY COUNCILERS
A. C. T. Wilson
Clyde Johnston
R. K. Wood
Dr. R. A. Graves
F. C. Wheeler

1933
Frank Lancaster temporary
town manager. April 6
Frank T. Adams appointed
town manager.

1934
Mark Trafton appointed
town manager in December

CIVIL HISTORY OF PRESQUE ISLE

In trying to relate the civil history of Presque Isle, one must be quite familiar with the different types of town government and their efficiency.

When Presque Isle was only a small "stopping off" place, the democratic form of government was already in progress...although the men did have to journey to Houlton to cast their votes for the various elections. The journeys were often tedious, and one can well imagine the heated discussions which took place in the homes and stores before and after an election.

In the spring of 1840, the township was organized as a plantation known as Letter F, but it was not until after the treaty of 1842 that the State acted upon the organization.

About this time, in 1840, the people taxed themselves and built a schoolhouse and in it at the fall election cast their votes instead of going to Houlton. Without doubt, it was a great day and occasion when the early citizens voted for the first time in their own plantations. How many stronger and more friendly acquaintances were made as they gathered, some of them for the first time as citizens of Presque Isle.

The population, of course, was steadily increasing until an act was finally presented to Legislature to incorporate the town of Presque Isle in 1859. The town immediately assumed all the obligations of Presque Isle Plantation. The town of that day consisted of thirty six square miles.

The first town meeting held in March 1859...various officers were chosen. The following were officers at that time. Assessors: Amzie Dow, David DeWitt and F. M. Rackliffe. John W. Trueworthy was elected clerk and other officers chosen were: Constable, O. P. Smith; Treasurer, Emmons Whitcomb; Collector, Dr. G. H. Freeman; Fence viewer, Dr. G. F. Parker; Surveyors of lumber, J. I. Goss, Jerry Whitney and Charles DeWitt; Superintendent of Schools, E. P. Rinds. It seems that a fence viewer acted as judge when the parties could not agree on just where their fences began and ended.

We can well imagine that those early town meetings created much spirited debate, probably more so than occurred in recent years.

Maysville was also incorporated in 1859, working on just about the same basis as Presque Isle. It was not until 1883 that the two towns decided to be united, taking the name of the southern half - Presque Isle.

In 1890 after the towns had been united, the population of Presque Isle had increased to 3046, and in 1900 to 3804, with a valuation of \$1,413,668.00.

Three selectmen were chosen and served on the board for one to three year terms. This form of government continued until the year 1920 when Presque Isle took a trial trip in reform management. There was no fuss, no lengthy debates, no city manager plan, no commission form of government, no bothering to secure enabling legislature and that sort of thing. Presque Isle simply took the statutes of Maine, said we'll do thus and so, and did it.

Its first step was to enlarge the board of selectmen from three to seven men. This required no sanction of the legislature as the law already provided that a town could have a board of either three, five or seven men, as it deemed best for itself. Next it elected three business men of the village and four farm men, one from each of the various rural districts of the town. Here in the start was an important innovation. Every section of Presque Isle was represented on the board. This was an assurance that the needs of the various communities composing the town would be understood by the selectmen. Of still greater importance was the fact that when there was work to be done in one of those centers it would be under the direct supervision of a man who was in the town government.

Innovations in town government did not end with these things. The selectmen believed that the idea was good, that it would prove beneficial to the town and to show their interest in Presque Isle, they said their services should be free. Not one of these men received a cent of pay for his work. Any expenses to which he was subjected by his duties as a member of the board, naturally, were made good to him. At the end of the municipal year, no one in Presque Isle desired to turn back the pages.

The enlarges, free-working board had made good. Results always tell, and these were excellent. A board of seven men was retained for the year 1920; that is, the number was kept at seven, but the personnel was changed as three who served in 1919 were unable because of business reasons to continue in office. It was also voted to pay the board a small compensation. These actions of the town meeting of 1920 placed a final stamp of approval upon the idea.

From 1921 on until 1933 the number of selectmen of the board varied from three to seven members. Finally in 1933 Presque Isle made a radical change in its form of government.

Manager-council form of government was introduced as a bill to the legislature by Dr. F. E. Bennett who was representing the town at that time.

Considerable debate resulted at the town meeting over this proposed change. The late Harry Pipes and Levi Crory spoke enthusiastically on this plan, while E. A. Keirstead and Charles Hussey spoke against.

Frank Lancaster was appointed temporary town manager until April 6 of the same year, and then Frank Adams was appointed permanent manager. He served until December 1934. Then Mark Trafton was appointed and has served in that capacity up to the present time.

Early in 1939 Philip D. Phair, a well-known lawyer, drafted a proposed city charter which was introduced to the Legislature by Representative Cleaves and passed. Many were not entirely satisfied with this plan and much debate was in progress before and after the bill was passed.

Small prejudices were visible about the surrounding towns and many prognosticated that it was surely to be a failure, but after 112 years as a town, Presque Isle blossomed out as the first city in Arcostook.

Some of the more important sections of that proposed charter were:

1. No difference in tax rate --- that was emphasized greatly because the tax rate usually governs the inhabitants of a town.
2. Councilmen may all be councilmen-at-large, or the city may be divided into wards with a representative for each ward, whichever is the will of the citizens. This proved advantageous for the people, for in that way better management could be obtained and supervision more unified.
3. No change in expense either way. Expense is usually the greatest worry of a large group of people; but this statement reassured them, thus removing all hesitancy from their minds.

At this time it would be fitting to sketch the financial affairs of the town for the past few years.

The valuation of the town at the close of March 1931 was \$4,122,630.00, and the money appropriated for that same year was \$241,154.83, being the largest appropriation made in the history of the town.

In 1933, the town issued scrip for obligations of the town, which of course was approved by the merchants. It was issued in denominations of one, five and ten dollars. It was transferable and accepted at face value by the town in payment of taxes and other bills due to the town. Most of the town's laborers were paid with this scrip which they used in payment of bills. This, however, did not prove as successful as they had hoped for after issuing it one more year, it was discontinued.

In 1933 the town had a total valuation of \$3,988,955.00 and at the end of December 1939 it was \$4,612,130.00, thus having a gain of \$623,175.00 in a period of six years.

Town officials have not neglected the streets of the community for in 1939 8.6 miles of street surface work was done.

A sizable amount has been put to work in the charity department for since 1931 it has increased from \$12,505.00 to \$32,200.00 thus helping others as well as themselves.

Above all, Presque Isle has been rather successful with its new form of government; and we may thank ourselves for having such splendid cooperation from its officials as well as its people.