

CHAPTER II

THE BEGINNING, OR FIRST QUARTER CENTURY

1816 - 1841

The first explorers, 1816; first settlers, 1820; Peter Bull's coming, 1819; a notable wedding; first white child born, 1822; seven families on banks of Aroostook river; the beginning of Dennis Fairbanks in 1828; his choice of 1000 acres given by State; lay-out of the village; sale of lots; built a saw mill; then a grist mill; built the bridge; named Bridge Street; coming of Gowen Wilson family in 1838; Rev. J. G. Pingree, first minister; only 9 stores and ships 1840; Plantation L--F organized in 1840.

It is a remarkable fact that in the history of the early settlers, that the islands in the Aroostook River above the Presque Isle Stream were conspicuous spots and were first settled and became their first dwellings or rude log cabin homes.

It is very certain that these islands were such attractive places that they were chosen for their temporary homes. It was here that John Bradley and Ferdinand Armstrong lived. It was here that Bradley lived when Peter Bull and his young bride made their cabin home near the mouth of the Presque Isle Stream. For Mrs. Bull said so, it is reported, in her reminiscences of her early experiences, "that during her first summer in Aroostook for four months she did not see a woman. The first was one day while standing by the river, she heard someone singing, and looking up the stream she saw John Bradley's wife coming down the river in a canoe singing which was the sweetest she had ever heard" and who wonders at this declaration of joy? It was here upon this island that the wild buckwheat grew rank and tall and the salmon was easily caught in the channel between the network of the island. The river was full of fish, and game was easily found along the shores and in the forests.

One of these islands, and perhaps the most noted, was Bradley's. It was here that the first white child was born in letter G-- or Moysville, now Presque Isle, September 22, 1822. This child was Catherine, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ferdinand Armstrong. Her father moved down the river in 1822 to what is now known as Armstrong Flat where he lived and died and was no doubt buried in the Bean burial yard. Armstrong made a farm where he lived and died.

This child who grew to womanhood married James Ashby of Fort Fairfield where she lived and died. She was the grandmother of the Aroostook Historian, and the Ashby brothers now living in Fort Fairfield and Caribou, an a sister of Mrs. Bathany Weeks, wife of Peter Weeks of Presque Isle, and mother of Fred Weeks now living on the State Road in Mapleton. The old lady who was the guest of honor and who rode in the Centennial Parade in 1920 was Mrs. Ashby.

To make sure and unquestionable the location of the island, I wrote W. T. Ashby, asking him to give me the most accurate information, to which he replied, "I am not sure I could go to Bradley's Island today, although I have been there many times. I went with my grandmother the first time many years ago. We forded the river near the Lewis Scott place and drove up to the Daniel Chandler farm. There we took a canoe and went down to the island. I should say it had two or three acres, and was nearly in the center of the river. I think it was the second island of any size going down the river after leaving the big island near the Rafford Hole, so called, opposite the Chandler farm.

The island was covered with a dense growth of trees, and the shores were skirted with choke cherries. The only clearing was a small spot on the south side of the island where the cabin was to stand. There is, or was, a spring on the island, a few yards from the cabin site. Grandmother dug up an iron pot near the spring in which was a hatchet, a hunting knife, some gold coins, and a pair of bullet molds. This was at the time of the Civil War. Her boy had just been killed at Fredericksburg, and she was crying and would answer none of my questions."

In the above we have the facts of the birthplace of Catherine Armstrong, the first white child born in Letter G or Weyssville, now Presque Isle, as related by her grandson, and the place of her birth after more than a century had passed with all its changing events. It is a fact of much gratification to the writer that I have known the sister of this first child born on this island, known her very well and heard over and over again her story, and all agree.

ALLENS ISLAND

Allens Island is another which was the home of John Allen, one of Weyssville's earliest pioneers who came to Presque Isle of Letter F very soon after the Ashburton Treaty in 1842. Captain Ferry Rolfe who had been a soldier in the Aroostook War, having been discharged and after visiting his home in Somerset County, decided as did many others to return to Aroostook and make his home in the new county where land was cheap and could be had almost for the asking. John Allen, being a shrewd and far-sighted man, decided to come with him, and secured claim to 1000 acres of land in the township of Letter F.

Before leaving his home in Allen neighborhood, he studied the conditions of the new and uncleared county, and bought quite a quantity of groceries to take with him, such as molasses, tea, spices, and other things easy to haul. Among these were several chests of tea - 25, 50, and 100 pound chests of tea for his home... while clearing the wilderness he must have a place to live. Hence he made an offer to the owner or claimant of this island. He replied he would sell it for \$100. Mr. Allen accepted the price asked saying, "I have brought with me some groceries bought in Hollowell, among them chests of tea weighing 25, 50, and 100 pounds. Would you not like some of these?" The man replied he would...a 100 lb. chest.

At that time tea was scarce in Aroostook and costly, being worth one dollar a pound, while in Hollowell or Gardiner it was only twenty-five cents a pound. The island now owned by Col. Charles P. Allen and his son Edward, a valuable piece of land, has continued in the family from 1842; and John Allen and his family first lived there until they made their home upon their 1000 acre lot, now the one hundred thousand farm of Charles Fussey on the well-known Caribou Boulevard.

OAKES ISLAND

This is one of the large and valuable islands of the Aroostook River. It has some forty acres, so is a small town by itself. It was no doubt owned by the Oakes family, one of the early families who came from Nova Scotia, and cleared the farm on the shore and hillside opposite this island which has been known as the Hartley Oakes farm until recent years. It has been said that Hartley Oakes was born on this island. It is certain that Merchant Rand and his sister Elizabeth were twins and born there. Elizabeth married Welts of Castle Hill, so this fact was well-known and established.

When John Rand, father of Judson Rand, came to Aroostook from Nova Scotia the family lived for some years upon this island while they were making the old Rand farm on the shore just above the Oakes farm. There Arthur Rand, the well-known horseman, and his brothers and his sisters were born...and have lived in town.

The Oakes farm and the Judson Rand farm with four or five others have been united into one of the largest and financially strongest syndicates of seed potato companies in Aroostook County - the W. R. Christie Co.

The Oakes farm has one of the best sets of farm buildings in town, made over and enlarged by Sam Black, now the wealthy Jew of Cambridge, Massachusetts, who came to Presque Isle a pack peddler, and made his fortune in the potato business and now owns one of the largest shipping potato houses in town. While living in aristocratic Cambridge, Mass., he delights to visit once or twice a year the Aroostook town, the scenes of his busy life which yielded him, with his acute mind and training, intuition, economy and clear-sightedness gave him rich returns and pleasant memories...

If this island had the power of speech and the dead could communicate with the living what interesting stories of the early days and experiences could be told of spring freshets when the river overflowed the island, the cabin floor, so they had to climb to the attic and the horses and cows in hovels were almost immersed in water for days, and dwellings almost floated from their weakened bearings. What days and nights they must have spent waiting so anxiously for the water to subside and dry land to appear.

These were the days that tested their faith and proved their heroism, and came near being their end. But these explorers lived and triumphed, reared large families and their descendents have lived to possess the land of honey and potatoes, now called the Garden of Maine.

Presque Isle is located in the valley drained by the Aroostook River and its tributaries. It is bounded on the north by Caribou, on the east by Fort Fairfield and Easton, south by Westfield, and west by Chapman, Mapleton and Washburn.

The Aroostook River makes a big half circle in the northern part of the town, some twelve miles of it being in the six mile block that was formerly Maysville before the two towns were united. It is forty-two miles from Houlton, Shire town of the county, eleven miles from Fort Fairfield, and eleven miles from Caribou; each town somewhat makes the extreme points of an old fashioned harrow.

If it has better farms than other towns (which may be questioned), it is because it has so many farms on the banks of the river running through it, by the circle forming, as it is said, the two bows of an ox yoke as it flows on to be a part of the magnificent St. John.

Presque Isle is a double town in area being twelve miles long and six miles wide, hence has an area of seventy-two square miles or 46,080 acres of as rich and fertile land as is found in any part of the county, as its productive qualities prove.

The first men who came to the town as explorers came in 1816. They were Ferdinand Armstrong and Jonathan Parks. They came from Canada west on a tour of inspection. They had heard of Aroostook by those who had passed through it following Indian trails, who told them of a country "where the Pine Trees were so large and tall that their tops tore the clouds or skies."

They were pleased with the country they found. They were successful in their lumber operations in cutting and rafting their cut up the Aroostook and St. John rivers. Their remuneration was such that they continued to come. They visited their homes perhaps annually. The second time they returned they came from Montreal through the forests to Norridgewock. There they bought a yoke of oxen and on a rude sled loaded their camp belongings. They drove through to Penobscot River and up it, and to the Aroostook, sometimes cutting their road, until they reached the mouth of the Presque Isle stream where they camped and commenced operations.

"They had permission from the land agent in Massachusetts at Portland to cut great pine trees for a shilling a tree." They hewed and floated this timber to the market at Fredericton, N. B. Timber prices were high; theirs was large and well-hewn and so well did it sell that each man received \$400 in gold. As wages were only \$12 a month at that time they were well satisfied. They had found a

great country and here they decided to settle.

In the spring of 1820, they returned from a visit to their homeland and Armstrong brought back with him a wife and bride, Polly Parks, the sister of his companion in business, Jonathan Parks...and no doubt her brothers' family. They went to house-keeping on Bradley's Island above the Presque Isle Stream and lived there two years.

In the fall of 1822 a girl babe was born to them and was positively the first white child born in Aroostook valley. It is claimed that there were no babies in Aroostook at this time, but W. T. Ashby proves otherwise. He says, "There were some two or three years old and their parents were living here, but they were born at Tobique, N. B. or some other place on the St. John River. There were no doctors or medical aid on the Aroostook, and when Catherine Armstrong was born on Bradley's Island Sept. 22, 1822, Mr. John Bradley's widow was the medical attendant." ... "In 1850 Miss Armstrong married James Ashby and moved with him onto a farm in Fort Fairfield where they lived fifty years and where she died." She was the mother of W. T. Ashby, the noted Aroostook historian.

The next spring Mr. Armstrong moved down the river some six miles.

It is claimed Peter Bull came in 1819 with a patent or permit of ownership of 600 acres of land if he built a saw-mill, which he did on the Presque Isle Stream. The mill was never a success, but a final failure.

"THREE MEN IN 1820"

"It was in the year 1820," says Mrs. Sidney Graves in an article prepared to be read before the Pierian Club, which was published in the Star Herald, June 11, 1903, a well-written and carefully prepared paper which showed much study and research after facts, "that these three men came up the Aroostook River from N. B. and made clearings a short distance below the mouth of the Presque Isle Stream on the west side of the river.

"They were Lewis and Chas. Johnson and Mr. Wm. McKee. They had the whole country to themselves. Theirs were the only campfires in all the vast region of the wilderness. Soon they were followed by others and in 1825 there were seven families living in their log cabins on the river banks, the river being the natural thoroughfare, where the settlers made their homes as near it as possible. All supplies were brought from New Brunswick in boats poled up the river.

"One Sunday, while riding up the Aroostook River to the Chandler Schoolhouse, I was telling my companion of the three settlers upon the river in 1825 as being Lewis and Charles Johnson and a Mr. McKee whose Christian name no one seemed to know; he said, 'Why, that Mr.

McKee was my mother's father, and one of his sons was Andrew McKee who was a shoemaker in Presque Isle, and once lived where Woodford Brown now lives.' So accidentally I found the name of this unknown man."

I also found some of our citizens, who knew and remembered Andrew McKee whose family went west and became wealthy in the lumber business and one of them became a member of Congress.

I mention this to show facts in my tracings of the early settlers. This William McKee's daughter married Major General Graham, a major general of the Provincial Militia, who lived until a few years ago at River de Sante, New Brunswick.

So we have this fact to show that before 1825 there were some settlers along the Aroostook River and the name of Ferdinand Armstrong must be added to the list, also that of Peter Bull and his wife, Thomas Warden Beckwith and family, and Mr. and Mrs. John Rufford. Peter Bull, you must keep in mind, came to Aroostook in May 1819, and very soon after that was the noted triple wedding of the three sisters, the same evening in the same place.

It is said that Bull's Uddy, where Peter Bull decided finally to locate, was historic ground before he was born...that if traditions or legends can be relied upon here was once an Indian village, that here the Indians were wont to meet for their annual feast of green corn. Mr. Bull first built a first-class log cabin. He was bright, smart and shrewd enough to look out for his personal interests and those of his connections, so he took up his claim, selecting and lotting off his six hundred acres on both sides of the Presque Isle Stream and on both sides of the Aroostook River.

The so-called patent claim which many of the settlers had was only a certificate so that the person holding it could hold the land while occupying it, and when others came and wished to purchase land Mr. Bull could not transfer it. That was, so it said, why Presque Isle village was built where it was rather than further down toward the river. So the Bull's, Beckwith's, and Churchill's farms were moved up and made on the rich interceles and fertile lands. Ferdinand Armstrong at this time sold his island home and moved down the river to the rich intervale afterwards known as "Armstrong Flats." This was in 1824.

Dennis Fairbanks came in 1827. He and Peter Bull quarrelled over the land claims. Peter Bull, as it was natural for one of British birth, had confidence in his claim, and on the other hand Dennis Fairbanks trusted in his claim. Dennis Fairbanks visited the mouth of the Machais River near where the village of Ashland is situated, also visited Salmon Brook Stream and not being satisfied with either, returned to Presque Isle and with a crew of men began to lay the foundation of the village. How well he succeeded for himself is sadly related by those who knew him, but so far as the after results, in the choice of his wisdom there is not a doubt...

COMING OF PETER BULL

It is claimed that Peter Bull, one of the earliest settlers, came in 1819. With all the research and inquiry I have been able to command, and I have an intimate acquaintance with the Beckwith family, relative of Eunice Beckwith whom Peter Bull married, one of the three daughters. I have been unable to find the exact date of his coming and settlement upon the shores of the Arrostook. However it could not have been far from the time claimed.

There is strong circumstantial evidence sustaining this claim. Among them is the following:

Very early in the 1820's a wedding occurred at Chatham, N. B. This was at the home of Thomas Warden Beckwith. Great interest was aroused in the entire community over this rural wedding because of the prominence of this well-known family. The Beckwith family, from as far back as we have any knowledge, was a religious one and hence influential in church circles. Besides this there were three marriageable daughters in the family; each was so fortunate as to have a lover to whom she was betrothed. Their names were Eunice, Martha and Olive. Peter Bull was to marry Eunice and the marriage was soon to take place in this rural place. As Martha was engaged to James Johnson and Olive to John Rafford, the girls suggested to each other that it would be a nice thing to do, unique, and a novelty in the parish of Chatham if they could be married at the same time and by the same minister. It would also save time, expense, be convenient, and save mother and father the grief of the good-byes.

It was agreed that Eunice, the oldest, should propose it to Mother Beckwith and secure if possible her consent and approval. She told her, we suppose, how nice it would be, how much talk it would make, and how sensational and unheard of it would be for three sisters to be married the same evening. So Eunice went to her mother and said, "Mother, you can't guess what we three girls have been thinking would be nice."

"Why no," said the mother, "What can it be, my daughters?"

"Mother," said Eunice, "we have decided to have but one wedding and all be married the same evening."

While the mother almost fainted at first, and thought she could not consent, she rallied from the shock and the daughters triumphed. Their request was granted. Peter Bull, James Johnson, and John Rafford were happy as well as the girls. Arrangements were made and the evening appointed. The marriage came off and was probably the greatest wedding Chatham people ever knew.

This is the connection the wedding bears to the early settlers of Presque Isle, for Peter Bull came to Presque Isle with his bride. The Beckwiths and John Rafford's followed very soon and settled on the east shore of the Arrostook where Thomas Warden Beckwith lived till an old age. John Rafford, after living in Meyesville a few years, moved to Ashland, raised a family of children, the descendants of whom are residents of that town.

James Johnson moved to Somerset County, Maine, afterward going to the west where he died.

I quote at this time another account of the settlers.

"In 1819 when Capt. Peter Bull died, his son Peter, armed with a British land paper, or right (called at that time patent) covering six hundred acres, and with a large sum of money for that time, crossed over into the disputed territory and pitched his tent at the mouth of the Presque Isle Stream. He came to locate and the Bulls never went back on anything they undertook. He came to build a mill in consideration of the six hundred acres given him which he held. He built the mill, but the land went to the State of Maine at the time of the Ashburton Treaty.

"With a tow boat he ascended the St. John River as far as Tobique. His load consisted of provisions, household utensils, carpenter's tools, and what machinery he needed to put into the saw mill, which was very little in those days as all wheels and shafts were made of wood from the surrounding forest. He also had a millwright along with him, six strapping axe-men, and last but not least, a tall, handsome, energetic young wife. Going back to Peter Bull's coming, his effects were hauled on a sled (no wagons then) to the Aroostook River where they were loaded upon a raft and towed by horses around the big bend in the river to the mouth of the Presque Isle Stream."

THE COMING OF DENNIS FAIRBANKS

In the spring of 1827 Dennis Fairbanks came into the wilderness of Aroostook from Troy, Maine. He consulted Joseph Houlton of Houlton, land agent of Washington County, in regard to the best and most promising places to locate. There are many places which presented flattering inducements for locating. There was mill site after mill site in the wilds of Aroostook and in the Aroostook Valley then.

The State was anxious and ready to give any man who had the pluck and spirit of enterprise enough to accept a mill privilege and 646 acres of land, or 1,000 acres if he could build both a saw and a grist mill. Mr. Fairbanks, after inquiry and investigation, decided the best location was in the Aroostook Valley, the beautiful spot where the Presque Isle Stream joins the Aroostook and where there was land sufficient to lay out and found a town and village.

He tried to buy out Peter Bull, who had become a poor man from the loss sustained in the building and failure of his mill. Peter Bull had faith in the rights of the British Government's claim to the land; Fairbanks had faith in the rights of America to the land. Their interview was not of the kind to make friends of friendship, and Peter Bull refused to sell an acre of land to the newcomer.

Fairbanks offered to become a partner in the mill business, but Peter Bull, as was natural to anyone born on British soil, did not

went any Yankee mills or Yankees around him and told Fairbanks so. Fairbanks lost his temper, which I am told "Was easy for him to do, and twitted Bull of the 'Wyoming Massacre' and the men became bitter enemies for life."

Fairbanks went away and looked elsewhere, but finally returned and began to lay the foundation of the present village of Presque Isle. He built the dam on the very spot where the present Aroostook Stebbins Lumber Company now is. He built a good dam across the Presque Isle stream on one of the best sites for a mill in all the county. "Here the banks were high and the ledge dropped out, while the bottom was favored with a solid bed of lime stone."

Just above, the river widened out and made an excellent mill pond. The dam and pond were exactly where they were when Fairbanks owned the property. Ten acres of trees were felled on the east side of the stream; this was in the fall of 1828. The Fairbanks shut down the gates and left two men to guard the property and went away during the winter of 1828-29. The machinery for the Saw and Grist mill were hauled through the woods from Bangor.

They came up the Penobscot River either on the ice or lumber roads. Crossing over to the Aroostook, they came down the ice. Washington Vaughn a young man had charge of the transportation, and Robert McCann poled one of the boats. Mr. Vaughn was later the founder of Caribou, one of the most up-to-date and largest, progressive towns of Eastern Maine.

The mill was then built and the machinery was placed in it, and lumber sawed. He then built the bridge, a strong and substantial one. It was first covered by wide elm planks sawed from the Fairbanks first chopping, "I am told." This gave the name to Bridge Street, which has been retained until recently, and will be difficult to change during the lifetime of the present citizens. Mr. Fairbanks then built a cabin on the banks of the street below where the bridge crosses the river...he laid out his six hundred acres.

Soon after, he laid out the village in a businesslike and thorough manner. It was laid out in one half acre lots; the streets were wide and laid off at right angles forming squares of two acres each, less the streets, as they are today, only now they are covered with business places, blocks, beautiful and magnificent residences, churches, schoolhouses, and village institutions.

The village plan covered one hundred and sixty acres and was one hundred and sixty rods square. "This was the first and only village in Aroostook laid out before it was built." Many of the streets and lots today are as Fairbanks laid them out. He built the Grist mill on the west side of the stream about where the starch factory now stands...or perhaps the Grist mill itself.

Then he named the street running North and South, Main Street, a very appropriate name; then he built a dwelling house, a shop,

a barn, and a stable on the north side of Bridge Street near the saw mill. This corner was called "Fairbanks Corner" while he lived there, and retained its name until the time of the Civil War.

Mr. Fairbanks then offered to sell a block of land in any part of the town site, one half acre for one dollar a lot providing the purchaser would live on the lot for ten years.

The question was not then settled, whether the territory belonged to Maine or New Brunswick, although Dennis Fairbanks had a gift of a mile square from the State on the building conditions stated, and he never doubted that the State would back its agreement. "Notwithstanding, Mr. Fairbanks had a great trade with the scattered settlers and lumbermen, his town grew slowly."...We are informed, and all records and traditional statements confirm it, that in 1839 there were but three houses in the village of Fairbanks Corner. A part of one of the houses is the house next below the R. J. Smith Furniture Store, now owned by one of the well-known and much respected citizens, Sidney Graves. This building ought to be retained in its present and original form of construction for this was one of the parts of the historical old tavern in which the first Maine Press Excursion of 1858 was entertained.

Why doesn't the town purchase this building and fit it up as a memorial, for the keeping of ancient relics and antiques, records and papers.

THE END OF DENNIS FAIRBANKS

What became of Dennis Fairbanks, founder of Presque Isle?
What was his end?

To answer this inquiry...we are obliged to depend on those who knew his end.

It is said Mr. Fairbanks, although a smart business man and a good scholar had two failings or weaknesses. One was a quick temper, the other a passionate fondness for women. These caused and brought him many difficulties. Had it not been for these, he might have lived and died a wealthy and respected man and been buried beneath the folds of the American flag and in the soil of his native state instead of dying in a foreign country and occupying a now almost unknown grave.

We are told that twice his quick temper "got the better of him" and he struck down a fellow man with a deadly weapon and came near to being a murderer each time.

One of these men was Washington Vaughn, his business partner at the time. Mr. Vaughn recovered after months of great suffering and confinement but he carried the scar of the assault to the grave. Mr. Vaughn at this time dissolved business relations and associations with Fairbanks and moved to Caribou, going into the

hotel business which he continued. He established the hotel which bears his name and is so well known.

The scandals about Dennis Fairbanks and his liability to the penalty hanging over him for striking down his fellowmen made it too hot and unpleasant and to escape the iron arm of the law, or perhaps lynching, he fled to New Brunswick. After wandering for a while, he returned and located in sight and reach of his native land. He liked the new country of Aroostook which seemed to promise a chance he was never able to forget. Mr. Fairbanks after his wanderings and many regretful reflections of "What might have been", settled at the boundary line on the old road leading from Fort Fairfield to Tobique, New Brunswick.

He built the first buildings on that now famous and to some sadly known as the "Line Store." Here he entertained travelers and sold liquor for a few years until he had trouble with the custom-house officers and traded his house and land for a mill at Three Brooks on the Tobique, where he died in 1860. His wife lived and died of old age in the country.

Mr. Fairbanks had deeds from the State for 1000 acres of land. Some 300 acres of this he sold before leaving Presque Isle. This was on the east side of the stream. Mr. Trafton, father of Herbert Trafton of Fort Fairfield who had charge of the estate sold 100 acres on the west side of the stream and the rest remained unsold as there were no buyers. This land was for years called the "Common", and was used by the village people as a pasture. Land commenced to be in demand and to increase in value. New settlers came to the village and wanted land upon which to build. The village began to grow and no owner of this land could be found.

Dennis Fairbanks was dead; Mr. Trafton had long ago ceased to be his attorney and had turned the deeds over to the heirs, and they had left the country and for a time no one seemed to know where they were. The State could give no title to the property for it had once been deeded land. People nevertheless built upon the lots and moved into and occupied the buildings they had made until the half mile square was mostly built upon. They sold to others their claims so in 1870 there was not a vacant lot left. Above this half-mile square and included in it was a piece of land now a part of the Northern Maine Fair Association possession and a part of the late John Foster estate, now the home farm of his son Fred Foster, which came into the Fair and Foster ownership. By the shrewd management of Hon. A. B. Irving who was one of the town's selectmen and had to do with the assessment of taxes learned where and who the rightful owner was. For years before while I was the collector of taxes, and for some time after, the tax was paid by a man in the city of Augusta.

Mr. Irving either as treasurer or president of the Fair Association, and Mr. Foster, who held a mortgage on the land obtained a title to the property. Emery Brown bought the last lot of the

Fairbanks estate which he is now clearing as a fine addition to his home farm.

Mr. Fairbanks, the first settler in what is now Presque Isle Village, who received the 1000 acres from the State...laid out the village in a businesslike and thorough manner, in half acre lots...

ORGANIZATION OF PLANTATION LETTER F

In the spring of 1840 the township was organized as a plantation known as Letter F. About this time the people taxed themselves and built a schoolhouse and in it at the fall election cast their votes instead of going to Houlton; but the State did not act upon the organization until after the treaty of 1842.

It was in this schoolhouse that the citizens of Letter F cast their first votes for President, Governor, members of Congress and the State Legislature. It was here they elected their first plantation and town officers after its incorporation. Without doubt it was a great day and occasion when the early settlers voted for the first time in their own plantation.

How many stories were told of what they did at the first plantation meeting as the pioneer returned home or gathered around the home circle or as the boys gathered in the store and shops and listened to their seniors. How many stronger and more friendly acquaintances were made, as the people gathered, some of them for the first time, as citizens of Presque Isle.

At this time there were only six business places which the village could boast of, namely, a shoeshop, blacksmith shop, a variety store for general merchandise, a saw mill and grist mill, and last but not least, a tavern. This was a house or building now a part of which is the dwelling house owned by Sidney Graves; it stands next to the R. J. Smith Compnay Furniture Store and corners next to the Episcopal property. This was a long one-story building which was saved into different parts when it was replaced by newer and larger hotel accomodations.