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A Late Nineteenth - Century Rural Community: Three Homesteads in Sebago, Maine

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A LATE NINETEENTH-CENTURY RURAL COMMUNITY:

THREE HOMESTEADS IN SEBAGO, MAINE

A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MAINE

NEW ENGLAND STUDIES

BY

EDWARD S. ALLEN

1992

Abstract

This thesis examines three homesteads in the small inland farming community of Sebago, Maine, from 1870 to the early years of the twentieth century. These homesteads are analyzed in terms of architecture and landscape, along with documentary sources such as census returns. Set against the backdrop of the history of the town, and northern rural New England in general, the story of these three houses offers insights into the social history of Sebago during this period, as the town suffered from a declining agricultural economy and a gradual loss of population. Two of the homesteads were hill farms. By 1920, both were no longer working farms. One, the Daniel McKenney house, eventually disappeared entirely, along with the fairly substantial neighborhood of which it was a part. The other hill farm, the Oliver Pike house, was converted to a summer home. The third homestead, the Arthur Dyer house, was more centrally located, and is still occupied by Arthur Dyer's descendants. In the mid nineteenth century, this house had been Sebago's only tavern, and was a stop on the stagecoach line. The Dyer family augmented their farming operations with horse dealing. Apparently as a result of their more central location, they were able to maintain their household within the traditional mixed-farming, home industry system.

Acknowledgment

There are a number of people whose assistance was of immeasurable help in the writing of this thesis. Ardis Cameron and Ken Severens, who supervised the study, were of course very important. Their criticisms sharpened and improved my thought processes and writing, while their encouragement helped me to persevere in the work.

I would also like to thank Leona Greene for giving generously of her time, and allowing me to poke around some of the remote corners of her house. My uncles, Charles W. Allen and Franklin B. Allen, were also very kind in sharing their knowledge, and lending me historical documents in their possession. My wife, Carol Colby, assisted with the production and lettering of the two maps, and more importantly, in her untiring support, emotional and otherwise, throughout my career in the New England Studies Program.

Finally, and most importantly, I would like to express my deep gratitude to my father, Neal Woodside Allen, Jr., who died unexpectedly during the final phase of the production of this thesis. An accomplished scholar and dedicated educator, he taught me his love for historical inquiry, and an abiding appreciation for its value. He will be sorely missed.

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Introduction

Nowhere such a devious stream,
Save in fancy or in dream,
Winding slow through bush and
 brake,
Links together lake and lake...

Though thou turnest no busy mill,
And art ever calm and still,
Even thy silence seems to say
To the traveller on his way:...

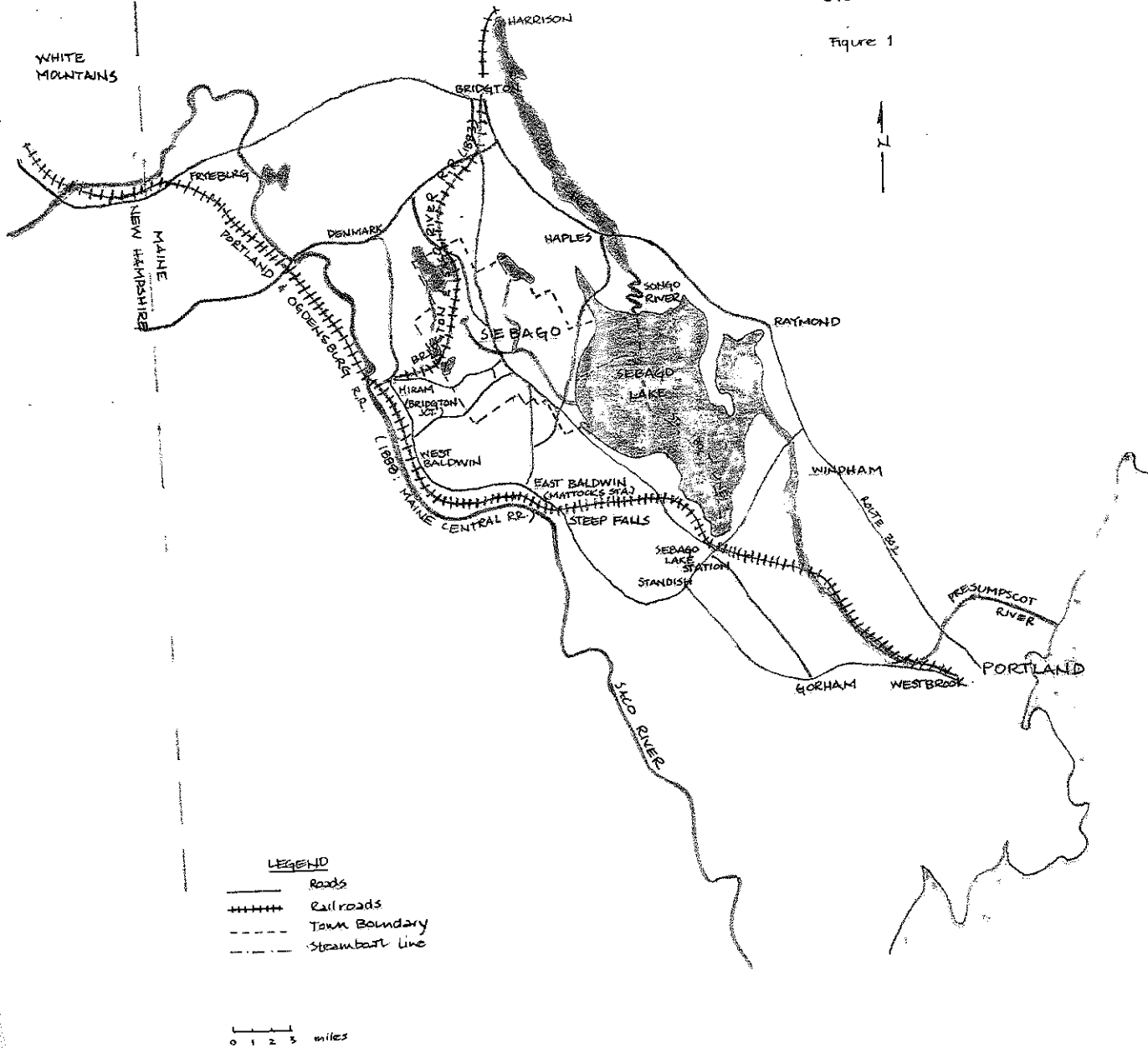
"Traveller, hurrying from the heat
Of the city, stay thy feet!
Rest awhile, nor longer waste
Life with inconsiderate haste!..."

-From "Songo River," Henry Wadsworth
Longfellow, 1875.¹

These lines describe a popular steamboat excursion down the Songo River, which meanders its way between Long Lake and Sebago Lake in western Maine (fig. 1). Longfellow's sentiments embody much of the appeal that a vacation in the Sebago Lake Region, (and rural New England in general), held for nineteenth-century middle and upper class Americans. The slow, languid, pace of life in the natural environment of the country seemed to offer a respite from the hustle and bustle of the modern,

TOWN OF SEBAGO: NEARBY COMMUNITIES
AND MAJOR TRANSPORTATION ROUTES
1870 - 1920

Figure 1



artificial city. Longfellow wrote this poem late in life, during what must have been one of his last trips to a region he had been visiting since his youth. As a young boy, the poet and his family often visited his grandfather, General Peleg Wadsworth, who had established a large farm in nearby Hiram, Maine.

While Longfellow lived most of his adult life as a wealthy and famous man in Cambridge, Massachusetts, many of his Wadsworth cousins continued to live in western Maine, becoming part of the rural culture of that region. Two of those cousins married descendants of a man who lived down the road in the neighboring town of Sebago, a farmer named Oliver M. Pike.² The Pike house, a sprawling farmhouse seated on an open hillside, became a summer home in the early twentieth century. This house was bought by my own grandparents, Neal and Margaret Allen, in 1923, and has remained in the family ever since. Currently, it is my full-time residence, and the genesis of this project. It was by no means the only hill farm in nineteenth-century Sebago. Visible from the Pike farm, on the side of Peaked Mountain to the east, sat the farm of Daniel McKenney. The house, probably built at about the same time as Oliver Pike's (1820s or 1830s) appears to have been a somewhat less substantial building than the Pike farm, though it was by no means a hovel. Today, only a small overgrown clearing marks the spot of this once-productive farm.

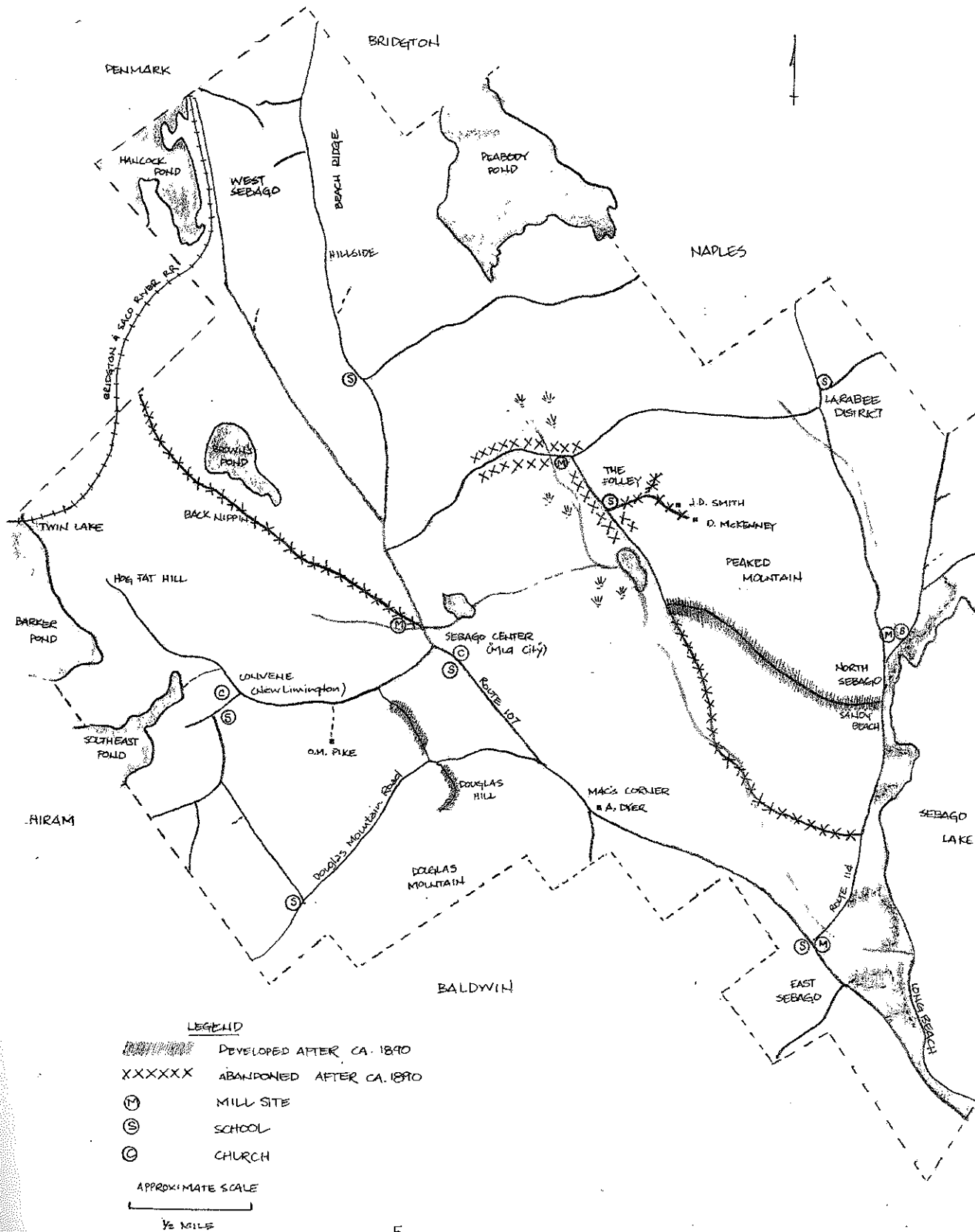
Indeed, the entire farming neighborhood of which this house was a part is now marked only by occasional cellar-holes in the woods, and a few small fields.

This neighborhood, known as "the Folly," sits on the east side of a large bog that nearly bisects the town. The Folly road ran along the northern side of the bog, connecting the eastern side of town (along the shore of Lake Sebago), with Sebago Center, which housed a grist mill, the town hall, and several shops and stores. Long Hill Road also connected the two sides of town. This road followed a route to the south of the bog, intersecting the County road that led to the neighboring (and much larger) town of Bridgton at "Mac's Corner" (fig. 2). In 1848, a little boy named Arthur Dyer watched a house-raising at this corner. When Arthur was growing up, the house was a tavern and a stop on the stagecoach line. There was a dance hall on the second floor, and, at least for a while, it may have been some kind of store.³ By 1868, the little boy had become a twenty-four year old man, and he bought the house he had seen being built twenty years earlier. Arthur and his wife Ellen lived in the house for the rest of their lives, and his granddaughter, Leona Greene, still lives there.

The Dyer house, along with the Pike and McKenney farms, are the focus of this thesis. As products of the

TOWN OF SEBAGO

Figure 2



men and women who built them, lived in them, and worked in them, these homesteads and their history are a record of individuals who left little else to document their lives. The homesteads serve as vehicles for reaching an understanding of the social history of Sebago from 1870 to the early decades of the twentieth century, a period when this farming community was not only changed by the social and economic forces swirling around and through it, but was also transformed into a community that, as the years went by, came to be identified more and more as a summer resort area. Clearly, no three houses could be claimed as "representative" of an entire town, even one as small as Sebago (approximately 500 in 1900), but the point is not to conduct a rigid, social-scientific, statistical study. These homesteads, and the experiences of the people who lived in them, are, in a sense, "windows" through which to view the rural culture of Sebago and interior rural northern New England in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Through these windows, we may catch a glimpse of a past culture and society from the inside out, through the eyes of relatively ordinary men and women who were affected by, and in their own small way, helped to form that culture.

Generally, this study builds on the interpretations and approaches found in Hal Barron's Those Who Stayed Behind, and Thomas Hubka's Big House, Little House, Back House,

Barn, albeit applied on the micro level of a few homesteads in a small community.⁴ Barron's work is a community study of nineteenth-century Chelsea, Vermont. Applying "the new social history" to a settled, rural society, he produces an economic, demographic, and social portrait of the town. Typically, when applied to the nineteenth century, such studies have dealt with urban or frontier settings, which are characterized by diversity and conflict. Barron's study, on the other hand, deals with the stable, settled, and relatively homogeneous community that Chelsea had become by the late nineteenth century. Hubka's work is an architecturally-based social and cultural study of connected farm buildings, the uniquely northern New England phenomenon of sprawling farm complexes connecting the house and barn through a series of ells and attached sheds. He views the structure of these complexes as a result of an essentially functional approach to architecture. Designed around the daily and seasonal patterns of work, these buildings were intended to make the farm more efficient and profitable. Hubka sees them as part of the movement for agricultural reform and improvement. For a variety of reasons, this reform could take place only within the context of the traditional mixed-farming, home-industry system. These connected farms reflect the mutuality and communality that characterized this system, upon which rural nineteenth-century northern New England depended.

The homesteads for my study of Sebago were chosen

because they reflect particular aspects of this culture. The Pike house, a hill farm, was built and lived in by one of the early, prominent settlers of the town and his descendants. Ultimately, it survived not as part of the permanent, year-round, farming community, but by being converted to a summer house. It is also, of course, my house; I had a personal interest and depth of knowledge which dictated its choice. The McKenney farm seemed to offer fertile ground for comparison. It was similarly situated from a topographical standpoint, but Daniel McKenney, though an early settler, does not seem to have become a particularly prominent member of the community, if "prominence" is measured by economic influence and a conspicuous, office-holding role in town government. Moreover, the house does not survive, suggesting that despite topographical similarities with the Pike farm, there must have been important differences as well. In contrast to both of these homesteads, the Dyer house was in a more central location, apparently relying to a greater extent on activities that were not, strictly speaking, agricultural. It was, and remains, part of the permanent community of Sebago that has survived in some form to the present time. In both of these respects, it seemed to offer a contrast to the other two homesteads.

The one major element of the picture that seems to have no direct bearing on any of these homesteads is the lake itself. Sebago is one of the largest lakes in Maine.

roughly ten miles long, and five miles across at its widest point. In the early nineteenth century, it was a route for shipping timber to market, and its importance for the transportation of freight and passengers continued with the opening, in 1830, of the Cumberland and Oxford Canal. The canal connected Harrison, at the head of Long Lake, with Portland, through the Songo River and Lake Sebaqo (fig.1). In more recent times, the lake's proximity to Portland and major transportation routes to Boston have helped make it an increasingly popular tourist attraction. It seems to have been around the turn of the century, when more modest, middle class cottages along the lake began to be built, that the lake's importance as a summer attraction increased dramatically. But the first summer people to descend on Sebaqo seem to have been more interested in the inland mountain locations than the lake. Around 1880, summer boarding houses started to appear in such places. They offered the farm families who operated them an extra source of income, while their guests received the benefits of fresh air, country living, and often breath-taking mountain views. One area, Douglas Hill, became a rather posh watering hole for well-to-do New Yorkers. The summer quest house industry was one strategy many New England farmers adopted in order to survive and (they hoped) prosper in the face of challenges posed by a declining farm economy, a loss of population, and a host of pressures and changes brought on by the urbanization and modernization taking

place in the nineteenth century.

The three homesteads offer an opportunity to explore the broader social, cultural, and economic aspects of nineteenth-century rural Maine. Chapter One examines perceptions of rural northern New England in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Historians, and many contemporaries, typically focused on the loss of population to the cities and the western frontier, and argued that this rural culture was in a process of decay. Others took a more positive view, seeing country life as a continuation of an agrarian, pre-industrial world, while a growing number of urban middle and upper class Americans sought spiritual and psychological renewal in an experience with nature.

Chapter Two deals more specifically with nineteenth-century Sebago. After a period of growth in the first half of the nineteenth century, Sebago, like most small communities in northern New England, suffered a gradual loss of population. However, this population decline did not necessarily lead to shrinking economic opportunities or cultural degeneration (as some have argued) for those who chose to stay in their home town. With an ethnically homogeneous population, the culture of Sebago, and northern rural New England in general, was characterized by strong bonds of communality and mutuality.

Chapters Three and Four deal specifically with the

three homesteads. Chapter Three describes them physically, placing them in the landscape, relating them to the town as a whole, and providing the individual historical background for each. The last chapter deals in detail with the story of each property as it moved through the period, from 1870 to the early years of the twentieth century. By the end of the century, the Pike and McKenney homesteads underwent changes in ownership and, eventually, land use, changes which did not take place at the Dyer house during this time.

Finally, the conclusion will attempt to weave the various threads of the story into a coherent fabric. By bringing the homesteads into the twentieth century, we may be able to better understand the legacy of the nineteenth. Clearly, technological change beyond the imagination of Arthur Dyer, Oliver Pike, or Daniel McKenney has produced equally unimaginable social and cultural transformations. Even so, there are threads of continuity with the Sebago that these three men knew.

Notes to Introduction

1 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, The Poetical Works of Longfellow (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975), 328-329.

2 Susan Moulton, Letter to the author, personal collection of the author, August, 1988.

3 Leona Greene, Personal Conversation with the author, Jan. 15, 1991. The Maine Register and Legislative Year-book For the Year 1876, 203.

4 Hal S. Barron. Those Who Stayed Behind: Rural Society in Nineteenth-Century New England (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984). Thomas C. Hubka. Big House, Little House, Back House, Barn: The Connected Farm Buildings of New England (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1984).

Chapter 1

Hill Farmers and Townspeople:

Perceptions of Nineteenth-century Sebago and Rural New England

The Land

The town of Sebago sits on rugged, hilly terrain, rising steeply from the western shore of Lake Sebago: about five miles inland, the 1400-foot summit of Douglas Mountain is the highest point in Cumberland County. On a clear day, standing atop the stone tower built on this hilltop in 1925, the city of Portland and Casco Bay, about thirty miles away, are visible on the southeast horizon. To the north and west a dramatic panorama unfolds encompassing the hills and mountains of western Maine, and the White Mountains of New Hampshire. Closer by, Sebago lake and a number of smaller ponds are framed by wooded hillsides, punctuated here and there by an outcropping of ledge. Occasionally, a clearing with an isolated house or a small cluster of buildings can be spotted. Across the valley at the base of Peaked Mountain, the Northwest River winds through a large cleared area (fig. 2). This clearing is

not fertile farmland surrounding a river, but a bog, accessible primarily by canoe when not frozen.

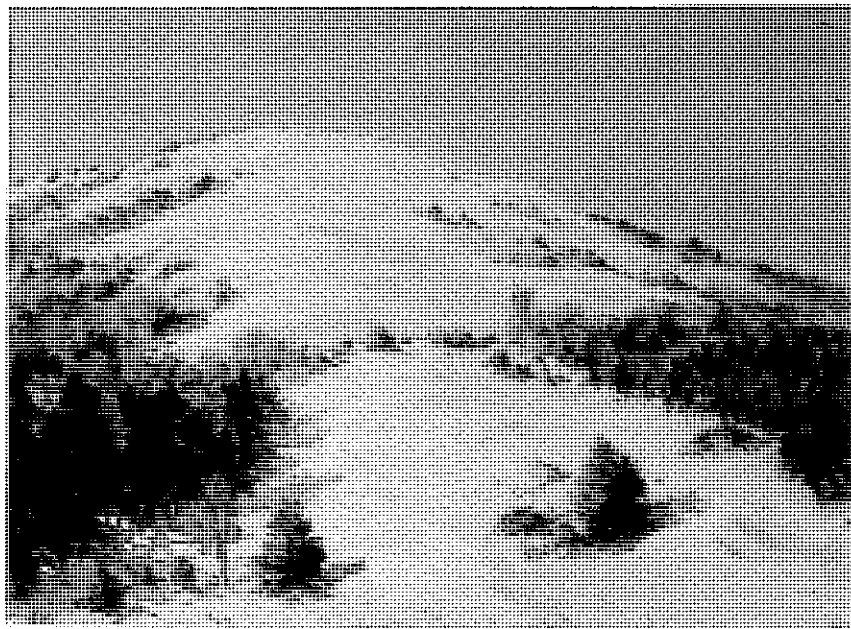
Before the turn of the century, the view from the top of Douglas Mountain would have been very different. Open fields led to a few farmhouses lower down the slope. Beyond, while there was no dearth of woodland, there was far less forest than today. Cleared hillsides, geometrically criss-crossed with stone walls, were dotted with farms. On the far side of the Northwest River, instead of unbroken forest, there were about a dozen farmsteads, four of them high up the side of the Mountain. This small community of a dozen or so homesteads was known as "the Folly."

There is no lack of evidence to document the open landscape of late nineteenth-century Sebago. According to the Agricultural Census taken in 1870, approximately 6,800 of the 12,900 acres of agricultural land in Sebago were classified as woodland, or just over 50%. By 1880 that figure had risen to nearly 9,700, an astonishing increase of over 40%. Approximately three quarters of Sebago was forested by that date.¹ Given the relatively late settlement of Sebago (apparently the 1780s and 1790s), this is rather surprising, for in New England generally, land cleared for farming peaked in 1880, when Sebago's farmland was already shrinking dramatically. Apparently, this land was only marginally suitable for traditional agricultural

activities.² Paintings and photographs, from the early twentieth century, when the process of reforestation was already well advanced, dramatically illustrate this open landscape. Two oil paintings (circa 1912) by Portland architect John Calvin Stevens depict the top of Douglas Mountain. One of these works shows the mountain in winter, and another, known only through a photograph, shows it without snow (fig. 3).³ In both, the stark mountain fills most of the frame, rising in a roughly triangular shape; although trees lap at the edges, the entire summit is open. Today only the granite ledges are treeless. The barren, almost desolate impression left by this painting is startling compared to the mountain's appearance today, which is much more typical of the forested New England landscape of the late twentieth century.

Perhaps the best illustration of the changes in the landscape can be seen in a comparison between two photographs, taken at least seventy-five years apart, from the top of the hill behind the Oliver Pike House (fig. 4). Both show two ponds, Southeast Pond on the left, and Barker Pond toward the center, nestled amongst a series of hills. In one of the photographs, taken in December 1990, only a small area in the immediate foreground (clear-cut in 1988 to open up the view), and two fairly small areas on more distant hillsides, are open fields. The rest is heavily forested. The other photograph dates from no later than 1915, probably earlier.⁴ In this picture, most of the

Figure 3.



Top: Douglas Hill, John Calvin Stevens, 1913. Oil on Canvas. Personal collection of Neal W. and Alice L. Allen.
Bottom: "Photo of Oil, Douglas Hill" (on back). [John Calvin Stevens, ca. 1913?]. Personal collection of the author. Whereabouts of original unknown.

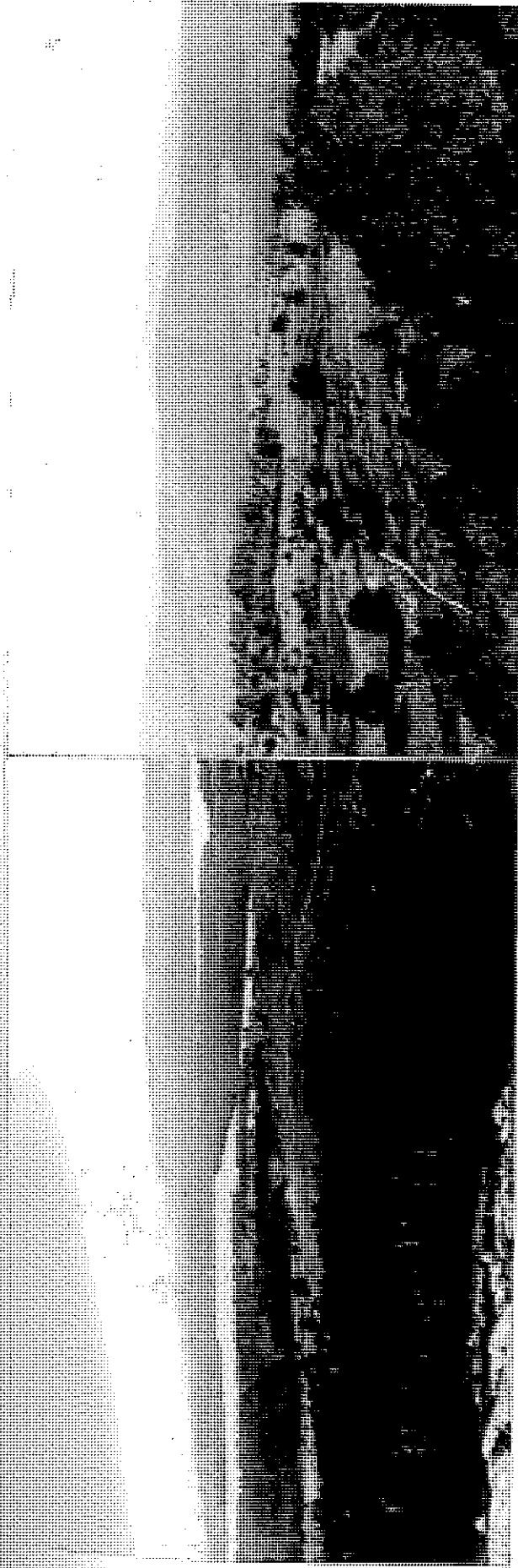


FIGURE 1. View from hill behind Oliver H. Pine House.

Top: ca. 1900(?).

Bottom: 1991.

middle foreground is open fields, strewn with boulders. punctuated by occasional large trees, and criss-crossed by stone walls. Roads, buildings, and occasionally details such as the orderly furrows of small plots of cropland, are visible on close inspection. The fairly small areas that are open fields in the later photograph are much larger in this earlier one. Between one-third and one-half of the closer hillsides, where detail is distinguishable, are open in the older photograph.

Ironically, the recent photograph probably more closely resembles the area's appearance before the coming of the white man than does the earlier view. The early pioneers were apparently more intent on cutting down the heavily-forested wilderness than on carving out a home in that wilderness. White pine, cut from the hillsides, was floated down the Northwest River, then down the lake to the Presumpscot River toward the coast.⁵ Wood-cutting, whether for domestic use (firewood and lumber for building) or commercial sale, has been an important element in the economy of Sebago, and much of northern New England, since that time.

Images of Nineteenth-Century Rural New England

From the environmentalist perspective of the late twentieth century, re-forestation is often seen in a positive light: it is viewed as a preservation and restoration of natural wilderness, helping to maintain the balance of nature. Properly managed, forests generate a renewable resource, and are a productive use of the land. Although the conservation and environmental movements can trace their philosophical roots to the nineteenth century, many observers in that century may well have viewed the rapid reforestation of small farm communities like Sebago with some degree of alarm, seeing it as a loss of agricultural capacity, a decay of farming and the agrarian way of life.

The traditional historical interpretation of rural New England in the late nineteenth century builds on this notion of decay in the countryside. Growing economic opportunities in the cities and western frontier, combined with the region's unsuitability for mechanized agriculture on a scale that could compete with western farm produce (already available in urban eastern markets, thanks to the railroad), were seen as creating near-catastrophic economic decline during the last quarter of the century.⁶

Nineteenth-century observers and social commentators, part

of an emerging middle class, believed economic decline in the New England countryside was causing social and cultural degeneration.⁷ Isolation from the modern world was believed responsible for poverty, ignorance, and even physical brutality. Dozens of magazine articles published in the late 1880s and 1890s lamented the decay of rural society, or, conversely, sang the praises of country life. One writer produced articles on both sides of the issue. Alvan F. Sanborn published an article in Atlantic Monthly Magazine that portrayed an orderly, tranquil town. Two months later, in the same magazine, he published "The Future of Rural New England," a portrayal of a poverty-stricken town in a state of social and cultural decay.⁸ Perhaps the feeling was that while some traditional, orderly, agrarian communities still survived, they were being threatened by the economic and social forces unleashed by westward expansion, modernization and urbanization.

Such views of rural New England often characterized the culture in terms of degrees of isolation from the modern, industrialized, urban world of the nineteenth century. In addition to social observers and commentators, writers of fiction also picked up on the notion of decay. Edith Wharton's novel Summer, published in 1917, depicts the isolated town of North Dormer.⁹ The main character, a young woman named Charity Royall, is almost totally ignorant of the world outside this town. Her sole link to

it is her lover, an architect visiting his aunt and doing sketches of old houses. His knowledge of this outside world, and her ignorance of it, creates a gulf between them which Charity ultimately comes to see as incapable of being bridged in any real and permanent way.

She had been adopted by the town lawyer ("Lawyer Royall"), who brought her "down from the Mountain" when she was an infant. The people of "the Mountain" are portrayed as being utterly uncouth, wild, and savage, looked down upon by the people of the town. In much the same way, the residents of this isolated, backward town are themselves treated with condescension by the urban, outside world. While Wharton does not adopt a totally monolithic and simplistic view of nineteenth-century rural culture, she sees that culture as being essentially out-of-touch with the rest of American society.

The fictional North Dormer and the mountain are paralleled in Francis E. Underwood's non-fictional Quabbin, published in 1893.¹⁰ This work is a detailed, closely observed recollection of the author's childhood in Enfield, Massachusetts, in the mid nineteenth century. Here again, the people of the village, portrayed as rather isolated and suspicious of change in their own right, look down on the "hill people" as being backward, unruly, and uncouth. Lura Beam's A Maine Hamlet, a later work describing her childhood in the 1890s, contains an account of a similar

split between the hamlet, where Beam lived, and the town from which it had earlier separated.¹¹ The hamlet is a hillside community overlooking a bog, an intriguing parallel to the much smaller folly neighborhood in Sebago. The people of the hamlet see the townspeople as too "toney," or sophisticated, and feel that they are treated with condescension by these townspeople.

Although Beam delineated tensions between the hamlet and the town, she characterized the hamlet as maintaining a strong sense of community. Individualism was respected, but not at the expense of traditional sexual mores and values of honesty, thrift, and hard work.¹² Other observers and commentators viewed rural New England as an embodiment of these traditional virtues, and of a simplicity uncluttered by the stresses of modern life. The fiction of Sarah Orne Jewett, for example, while not completely blind to the unsavory aspects of life in the New England countryside, portrays a tranquil, settled society, where people maintained a sense of individual identity without sacrificing a strong sense of community. The photographs of Chansonetta Stanley Emmons constitute a visual representation of this positive attitude.¹³ Most were taken in the Kingfield, Maine, area around the turn of the century, and depict an orderly, innocent world of rustic simplicity, with little evidence of either industrialization or degenerative social decay. In painting, an idyllic view of the countryside was often

combined with images of innocent children, usually barefoot boys.¹⁴ Winslow Homer's Snap the Whip (1872), widely reproduced in high school text books, is perhaps the most famous example of such a work. Here, a human chain of boys plays exuberantly in a field, with a one-room schoolhouse (and several young girls) in the background. Obviously, people who lived in the country were well aware that such idyllic images were at odds with the harsh realities of farm life, where children would more likely be found doing chores than playing games. But these rural residents were just as unlikely to accept the view that their culture was in a process of decay.

City Meets Country: The Invasion of the "Summer People"

Clearly, a number of urban middle and upper class individuals also understood that, despite a certain amount of poverty, the entire countryside was not in a state of cultural and moral degeneration. It is hard to imagine, for example, that city-dwellers would flock to vacation with the ignorant, uncouth, inbred, violent characters portrayed by some of the writers discussed earlier. Of course, much of the appeal of a country holiday had to do with the physical environment. The naturalistic landscapes of city parks, as pioneered by Frederick Law Olmsted, speak to this aspect of the attraction a vacation in the country

held for urban, middle class Americans. These parks were designed not only to offer a rural respite from the stress and congestion of the city, but to encourage virtuous behavior, which the planners of such parks viewed as a natural consequence of rural life.

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, an increasing number of farm families were responding to the needs and desires of these urbanites by taking in summer boarders. In addition to providing their guests with a respite from the hustle and bustle of modern city life, these guest houses also provided their owners with a valuable source of income. In Sebago, the first such boarding house was apparently opened by A.K.P. Ward, who was operating what was known as "Lake View House" by 1880. By 1885 seven such boarding houses were operating, six of which operated into the twentieth century; four of these were still operating in 1920. Others came and went, keeping the total number between a low of six in 1895, and a high of nine in 1910.¹⁵ The earliest and most successful guest houses were mostly inland hill farms, offering a country experience of fresh air, sunshine, and frequently spectacular views.¹⁶ The summer resort and tourist industry became increasingly important to Sebago, and the region generally; by 1930, it was second only to dairying in economic importance for northern New England.¹⁷

By making rural New England more accessible to

urbanites, improvements in transportation must have also caused a shift in perceptions of the country. No longer a remote frontier, the country could become a resource for leisure and spiritual renewal. The Sebago Lake region was served by a full range of transportation options, including stagecoach lines, trains, steamboats, and by the twentieth century, automobiles. The town of Sebago, on the western shore of the lake, has always been a bit off the beaten track. Although travellers bound for Bridgton may have passed through Sebago, the major routes from Portland to the interior of New Hampshire and Vermont seem to have passed just to the west, through Standish, Hiram, and Fryeburg, or along the eastern shore of the lake, through Windham, Raymond, Casco, and Naples (fig. 1).¹⁸ This latter, present-day Route 302, may have been the most widely used route as early as the eighteenth century, when farmers from as far away as Vermont brought products such as cheese and wood to the city.¹⁹ It is certainly the most heavily travelled today, as the commercial development along this eastern corridor far surpasses that of the western shore.

In 1870, the town was on the J.T. Bickford Stagecoach Line, which apparently originated in Groton, Massachusetts.²⁰ The stage stopped at the Dyer House (Sebago's only tavern, prior to the Dyer's occupancy) at Mac's Corner (fig. 2), where the horses were changed. There may have been a brief period around 1880 when the

town was not served by any regular stage line, but by 1885, Sebaqo was the terminus of a stage line from Steep Falls on the Portland and Ogdensburg Railroad. This ride was shortened by 1900, when it arrived from the Mattocks Station, in East Baldwin, on what was by then the Mountain Division of the Maine Central Railroad (fig. 1).²¹ There was also a steamboat landing in Sebaqo, apparently providing passage for freight as well as passengers.²² In 1883, the Bridgton and Saco River Railroad, a narrow gauge line, was built to connect Hiram (Bridgton Junction Station) with Bridgton. This line passed through the northwest corner of Sebaqo, with two flag stops, one at Twin Lake, the other West Sebaqo, on the shore of Hancock Pond.²³ It is not surprising that the Twin Lake House, one of the larger summer boarding Houses, was established near this line. Elm Cottage, another early boarding house, was handy to West Sebaqo.

The line was eventually extended to Harrison, at the northern end of Long Lake, and connected with the Sebaqo and Long Lake Steamship lines (fig. 1). This made one-day excursions possible from as far away as Boston. Travellers took the train to Sebaqo Lake, where they boarded a steamer that took them up the lake, through the Songo River, and on to Harrison at the northern end of Long Lake. From there, they boarded the train, changing in Hiram for the return trip to Portland or Boston.²⁴ Such easy access to previously remote rural regions must have led the city

people who took such excursions to regard these areas as a sort of huge park.

All of these transportation links combined to make the town of Sebago more accessible to increasing numbers of summer people. A typical journey from Portland or Boston might have consisted of a train ride to Mattocks Station in East Baldwin, followed by a short ride on the stage to one of the guest houses in town. Perhaps the most substantial of these guest houses was started by Stephen Douglas in the mid-1880s, and known as Douglas Farm, and later, by the second decade of the twentieth century, Douglas Inn. There was even a six-hole golf course here at one time.²⁵

The Douglass Inn was the focal point of a fairly substantial summer colony. In addition to the Inn, Annex, and "cottages," by the 1890s a number of private summer homes were being built here.²⁶ The architecture of these summer homes is another expression of urban attitudes towards the countryside. These buildings, often of stone and/or shingle, are characterized by multi-planar roofs, sometimes gambrel-shaped, with dormer windows and pronounced overhangs. Occasionally turret-shaped, these overhangs frequently enclose an open porch. Several of these buildings were (and are - several are extant) large substantial houses, while others are of a more modest size. They are part of an academic, relatively high style architectural tradition, closer to architecture like that

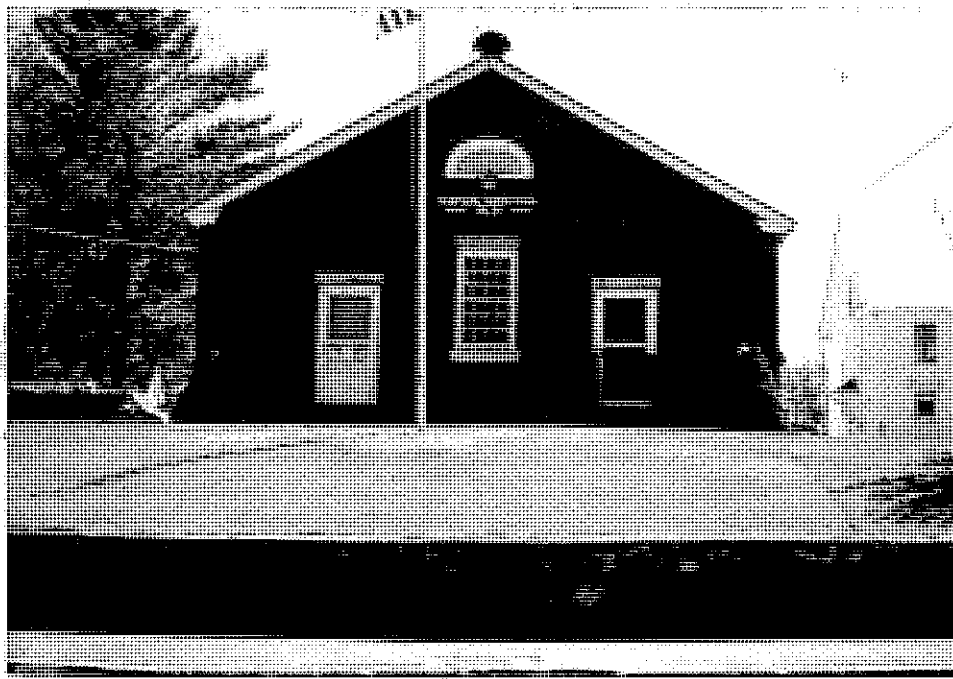
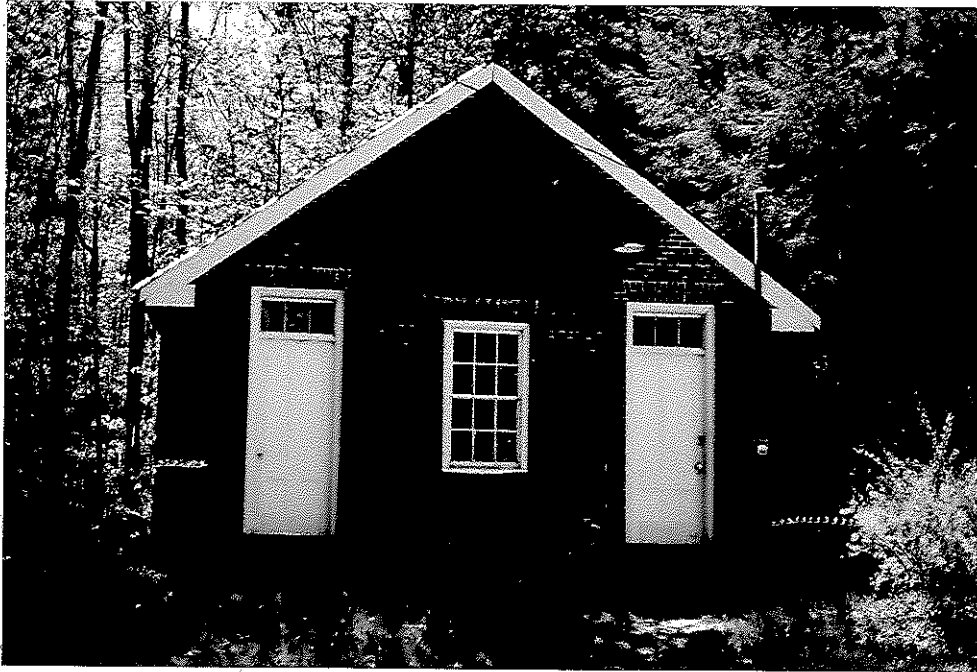
Portland-based John Calvin Stevens, nationally known for Colonial Revival and Shingle Style domestic designs, than to the local vernacular New England farmhouse tradition.²⁷

Even the building materials of this high-style architecture are very different from those of the vernacular building tradition of the town. Despite the immense amount of granite available, local builders used it only (and almost universally) for foundations. Wood, another abundantly available building material, was used for the frame, sheathing, and siding (usually clapboards). Between the eighteenth and the late nineteenth centuries, the basic structure of the vernacular Anglo-American building tradition changed relatively little in rural New England. This tradition is characterized by one or two story square or rectangular building forms. By the nineteenth century, the fenestration of the front facade is almost invariably symmetrical; in New England, usually a door flanked by two windows on either side. Superficial stylistic details were added, Federal style fans over doorways, and later, wide Greek Revival pilasters on the corners of the building. It is essentially a conservative tradition, however: center-chimney houses continued to be built in the countryside well into the first two or three decades of the nineteenth century, for example, with floorplans that differed little from houses built as far back as the early eighteenth century.

What little masonry that was used was usually brick. The most prominent, if not only example of this in nineteenth-century Sebaço was the schoolhouse in Sebaço Center. Apparently an important, though very small, early public building, it was built in the mid-1830s.²⁸ The brick construction of the schoolhouse set it apart from other buildings in town, and probably helped signify its public importance. The Town Hall in neighboring Naples, built in 1831, is similar to the Sebaço Center School in its basic structure, fenestration and gable-end orientation to the road, although it has more architectural ornamentation and is considerably larger than its Sebaço cousin (fig. 5). Henry Glassie has pointed out that using brick, as opposed to stone, represents an extra technological step in masonry construction, since the builder starts with mud, which is then transformed into a durable building material. Bricks are regular, nearly identical, and man-made, expressing a desire to control nature. The manner in which the vernacular tradition used wood, hewing round logs into squared timbers, and covering the skeleton with regularly-sawn, painted clapboards, is a similar transformation of that building material.²⁹

These materials of the indigenous vernacular building tradition, seek, essentially, to dominate nature and civilize the wilderness. The summer people, on the other hand, used field stone, an unprocessed building material, and shingles, which are visually more irregular than the

Figure 5.



Top: Sebaço Center Schoolhouse, ca. 1835.
Bottom: Naples Town Hall, 1831.

linearity of clapboards. These materials embody a very different attitude towards nature and the country. The summer people saw the countryside not as a source of raw materials, but as a place to escape the artificial and perhaps over-civilized city. The idea was not to conquer nature, but to use it as a kind of quasi-religious sanctuary.³⁰ This ironically utilitarian attitude is expressed by the relatively large size of some of these houses, and the degree of material comfort which they no doubt afforded their part-time residents. Aesthetically, these buildings may blend with their physical environment, but they were an alien form imposed on the cultural landscape, an expression of elite sensibilities.

Nevertheless, particularly in the case of some of the larger guest houses and inns, there seems to have been an attempt to incorporate some features of the academic tradition into the vernacular. These large buildings featured a multiplicity of dormers (which were practical as well, providing light and air to upstairs bedrooms) and large, roofed porches. Like farmers who connected their house and barn to increase the efficiency and productivity of their agricultural operation, the owners of these guest houses apparently altered the architecture of their homes for economic gain. Clearly, the presence of these hybrid forms of architecture sets Douglas Hill apart from such relatively nearby planned resort colonies as Cushing's

Island in Casco Bay, or Delano Park in Cape Elizabeth, Maine. These two resort areas featured irregularly shaped lots, winding roads, large open spaces with shoreline held in common among all the owners, and a unified architectural style, dominated by John Calvin Stevens.³¹ Whether a particular resort area was developed from a comprehensive plan, or evolved in a more random process, the people who came to these colonies often had more in common with each other than their choice of vacation spots. In Cornish and Plainfield, New Hampshire, for example, artists formed the nucleus of such colonies.³²

At Douglas Hill, the tie that bound these vacationers seems to have been a common year-round residence. Here, members of the New York medical profession predominated. Two doctors from Brooklyn built houses here in the 1890s (one of which was sold to another New York doctor on the first one's death) and another was built in 1892 by "Dr. Christian Zabrikie, a prominent lawyer from New York."³³ Additionally, the Pike farm, located nearby, was restored by a woman from Brooklyn; it is probable that she had some connection to to these other New Yorkers.

In Sebago, the stone and shingle architecture was found in the Douglas Hill area, with a few examples along the lake. But most of the development along the lake was of a less affluent nature, in the form of small, relatively simple camps. At the turn of the century, for example, a

project called "Sebago Beach Park" was initiated at Long Beach (fig. 2). This is not an Olmstedian community with natural landscaping and open space, but a grid of 59 lots, mostly 50 by 100 feet, squeezed into less than half a mile of lake frontage, with even more lots on the inland side of the road.³⁴ The leisure class was expanding, and ultimately, these less elitist developments along the lake would do far more to transform the face of Sebago than would the Douglas Inn and other inland guest houses.

The attitude toward the countryside exemplified by Olmsted, and in some senses shared by tourists, is essentially an anti-modern attitude. It assumes that city life is somehow artificial, unhealthy, and inadequate for completely satisfying all human psychological and spiritual needs. It also shares in a romanticized perception of pre-industrial America, where small, tightly-knit agrarian communities were seen to have created honest, hard-working citizens. Many of the vacationers stayed in summer boarding houses, living with families operating a working farm. They would have observed first-hand the daily rhythms of life, with husband and wife sharing much of the work, contributing to the viability of the farm as an economic, as well as domestic, unit. This was a clear contrast with life in the city, where gender roles and distinctions between home and work were much more clearly defined. Such experiences could only have reinforced the visitors' notions of the "old-fashioned" way of life.

Such visions of the virtues of life in early, pre-industrial America were an integral part of the Colonial Revival, which is generally considered to have begun in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. "Colonial Revival" is a term used to describe the increasing interest on the part of middle and upper class Americans in all things relating to Colonial America, with a particular fascination with material artifacts, relics of a golden age. Such myths of a golden age are common to many cultures and social settings, and help to maintain a sense of cultural identity.³⁵ The specific historical context of the American Colonial Revival is one of reaction against modernization and industrialization, and all of the associated threats which these changes posed for middle and upper class Americans. It was an expression of nationalism, as well as a strategy to cope with increasing cultural diversity. By defining the roots of the United States as being English, and to a great extent, centered in New England, the Anglo-Saxon dominated urban middle and upper classes were asserting their cultural hegemony in a society that was slipping out of their economic and political control.³⁶

Sebaquo, a land of forests and lakes, must have seemed an idyllic refuge to nineteenth-century city people. Although the agricultural economy was far from strong throughout northern New England during this period, most of the townspeople were still farmers. Many summer people no

doubt found comfort in observing what appeared to be a simple, rugged, but honest way of life. Such a social setting must have formed a congenial and reassuring backdrop for their vacation in the country.

Notes to Chapter One

- 1 U.S. Census of Agriculture. Manuscript Schedules for Sebago, Maine ("Agricultural Census"), 1870, 1880.
- 2 Lloyd C. Irland, Wildlands and Woodlots (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1982), 68.
- 3 Personal collection of Neal W. and Alice L. Allen. It is not absolutely certain that the photograph is of a Stevens painting, but the composition and style appear nearly identical; its provenance (Neal Allen is Stevens' grandson) makes it all the more likely.
- 4 Neal W. Allen, Personal Conversation with the author, January, 1991. This landscape is less forested than he remembers it ever being. His earliest memories of the area would be from 1923. Although a field can be overgrown with brush and small trees at a surprisingly rapid rate, it would surely take at least five to ten years before it would take on any characteristics of a young forest.
- 5 History of Cumberland County, Maine: With Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of its Prominent Men and Pioneers (Philadelphia: Everts and Peck, 1880), 369.
- 6 Harold Fisher Wilson, The Hill Country of Northern New England: Its Social and Economic History, 1790-1930 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), 97.

- 7 Barron, Those Who Stayed, 39.
- 8 Atlantic Monthly, 79:577 (1897), 74-84, and 80:74 (1897), 588-590. Also see Perry D. Westbrook, The New England Town in Fact and Fiction (E. Brunswick, NJ:Associated University Presses, 1972), 164.
- 9 Edith Wharton, Summer (New York: Scribner, 1964).
- 10 Francis H. Underwood. Quabbin: The Story of a Small Town, With Outlooks on Puritan Life (Boston:Northeastern University Press, 1986). Reprint.
- 11 Lura Beam, A Maine Hamlet (New York: Funk, 1964).
- 12 Ibid., 161.
- 13 Marius B. Peladeau, Chansonetta: The Life and Photographs of Chansonetta Stanley Emmons, 1858-1937 (Waldoboro: Maine Antique Digest, 1977).
- 14 Sarah Burns, "Barefoot Boys and Other Country Children: Sentiment and Ideology in Nineteenth-Century American Art." The American Art Journal, 20:1 (1988), 25-49.
- 15 The Maine Register and State Year-Book (Augusta: various publishers, 1871 - 1921-22). This extremely useful publication, providing details of population, business activity, transportation access, and social organizations, was surveyed at five year intervals coinciding with U.S. Census years. The Register for 1871, for example, reports on the year 1870.
- 16 "Dyke Mountain Farm, A Resort Area for Rest and Recreation 1100 Feet above Sea Level," (Advertising

Brochure), collection of the Maine State Library, Augusta. This small booklet, illustrated with a number of photographs, stresses the purity of the air, water, and food, most of which was grown on the farm or procured locally. Although this seems to date from the 1920s or 1930s, Dyke Mountain Farm was one of the earliest and longest-lived guest houses in town, and the sentiments expressed in this brochure must surely echo the attractions of the region for earlier tourists as well.

17 Wilson, Hill Country, 277.

18 Eula M. Shorey (ed.), History of Bridgton, Maine (Bridgton: Bridgton Historical Society, 1968), 427-428.

Timothy Dwight, Travels in New England and New York New Haven: Timothy Dwight, 1821, reprint Harvard University Press, 1969), vol 2, 107-11. Dwight took the route through Fryeburg, Hiram, Baldwin, Standish and Gorham (along the Saco River), when he travelled from the White Mountains to Portland.

19 "Argus Scrapbook." Collection of the Maine Historical Society, describes trade from Vermont and New Hampshire coming over Deering's Bridge, on the northeast side of Portland. In the eighteenth century, there was only one other approach to the Portland peninsula, the bridge at Stroudwater further to the west, much more convenient for travellers from Sebago than Deering's bridge. William Willis, The History of Portland from 1632 to 1864 (Portland: Bailey and Noyes, 1865), 726.

- 20 Maine Register, 1871, 190. This is apparently the line that Leona Greene (Personal Conversation, March, 1991) describes as originating in Massachussetts.
- 21 Maine Register, 1881, 323-324; 1886, 345-346; 1901-02, 430-431.
- 22 History of Cumberland County, 370. Maine Register, 722.
- 23 Linwood W. Moody, The Maine Two-footers: The Story of the Two Foot Gauge Railroads of Maine (Berkeley, California: Howell-North, 1959), 133.
- 24 Ron Johnson, ed., Maine Central Railroad, Mountain Division (South Portland: 470 Railroad Club, 1985), 89.
- 25 History of Cumberland County, 370. Maine Register, 1930, 722.
- 26 Maine Register, 1930, 722.
- 27 The Sesqui-Centennial Chronicle, 1826-1976, Town of Sebago Maine (no author or Publication information), 80-81.
- 28 For discussions of this tradition see Henry Glassie, Folk Housing of Middle Virginia: Stuctural Analysis of Historical Artifacts (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1975) and James Deetz, In Small Things Forgotten: The Archaeology of Early American Life (New York: Anchor Doubleday, 1977), especially Chapter 5 (pp. 92-117).
- 29 Fred L. Meserve (comp.), Centennial History of Sebago, Maine, 1826-1926 (no publication information), 23.
- 30 Glassie, Folk Housing, 133-134.
- 31 The notion that various modes of appreciating nature

and the outdoors are actually utilitarian in character is explored by John Brinckerhoff Jackson in "A Puritan Looks at Landscape," in Discovering Vernacular Landscape, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 57-64.

32 "Frederick Law Olmsted," A Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Maine, vol. V. (Augusta: Maine Historic Preservation Commission, 1988). John Calvin Stevens II and Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr., John Calvin Stevens: Domestic Architecture, 1890-1930 (Scarborough, Maine: Harp, 1990), 30-50.

33 Christine Ermenc, "Economic Give-and-Take: Cornish and Plainfield, New Hampshire." Historical New Hampshire, 39:3-4 (1984), 105-121.

34 Sesqui-Centennial Chronicle, 80-81.

35 "Plan of Sebago Beach Park," surveyed December 10, 1900, Plan Book 9, p. 61. Cumberland County Registry of Deeds ("CCRD"). Book 9, p. 81 is a plan of the opposite side of the road (away from the shore), surveyed in July, 1901.

36 Kenneth L. Ames, "Introduction," in The Colonial Revival in America, ed. Alan Axelrod, (New York: Norton & Co., 1985), 10.

37 Ibid., 10. Jackson Lears, No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920 (New York: Pantheon, 1981), 10.

Chapter 2

Nineteenth Century Sebago

Early Settlement

In the eighteenth century, Sebago was part of the plantation of Flintstown, or Flintston, named after Captain John Flint, one of the original proprietors of the town. In 1780, the Massachusetts House of Representatives (Maine, of course, was part of that state until 1820) granted Flint and company a tract of land extending from the east side of the Saco River to "Sebago Pond." This grant was in lieu of an earlier one, located between the Merrimack and Connecticut Rivers, "which was lost by running the line between this state [Massachusetts] and the state of New Hampshire," apparently the result of a border dispute between the two states.¹ Timber - white pine and oak for ship-building, boards, and planks - and the possibilities for easy transportation of these materials to market via Lake Sebago and the Presumpscot River, seem to have been Flintstown's primary attractions in the eighteenth century.² In 1804, Loammi Baldwin, a prominent Bostonian and one of the Flintstown proprietors,

surveyed a 50 mile canal route to Portland.³ In 1830, the Cumberland and Oxford Canal would be built, presumably following a similar route, only to be made obsolete by the railroad a few decades later.⁴ Additionally, there were on-going attempts during the early years of settlement to work with nearby towns to improve links to the outside world by road.⁵

Many of the proprietors and earliest settlers were apparently more concerned with turning a quick profit from the township's forest resources than with establishing a permanent home. Most of the proprietors seem to have been absentee land-owners. But some settlers, and a few proprietors, did have more long-term goals in mind. According to the census, in 1790 there were 190 people, in 37 different households, living in Flintstown. Joseph Lakin and Jacob Howe, reputed to be the first permanent settlers in Sebago, were among those listed.⁷ These two settled in the area that later became known as "hillside" (fig. 2).⁸ This name appears to be a sort of pun, since Deacon Daniel Hill married Lakin's daughter and settled in the area.⁹ It also describes the land itself, which, like much of Sebago is elevated, away from wet, boggy low-lying areas. Much of it is less steep than other areas in the township; the more gently rolling terrain might have been better suited for farming, and seems to have been a popular area for many of the town's earliest permanent settlers.

In 1805, a man named Daniel McKenney purchased one of these early settlers' properties, along with "the old house and hovel standing thereon."¹⁰ About twenty-five years later, two of his sons, Daniel Jr. and Silas, built a sawmill on the Northwest River, in the Folly district. The younger Daniel's nearby homestead will be discussed in detail in future chapters.

The McKenneys are credited with being the first in Sebago to process poplar, previously thought to be commercially worthless. However, their mill was by no means the first in town. In 1789 Zachariah Fitch, one of the Flintstown proprietors, was awarded a lot, seized for the previous owner's non-payment of taxes, on condition that he build a sawmill there within two years, and keep it operating for a minimum of ten years.¹¹ Apparently this mill was built, since by 1800 William Fitch was operating a sawmill on this lot, in the part of town that came to be known as East Sebago. Also by 1800, he was operating a grist mill in Sebago Center.¹² The Fitch family operated a sawmill in East Sebago well into the twentieth century, and the grist mill in Sebago Center was still going strong in 1880. The family still operates a general store in East Sebago.¹³

By 1805, Flintstown was being referred to as "Baldwin," no doubt in honor of the proprietor Loammi Baldwin.¹⁴ Due to the distance between one end of town and

the other, it appears that every other year Baldwin town meetings were held in the Sebago Center schoolhouse, in the northern end of town, presumably alternating with a location in the southern end.¹⁵ At least in part because of this distance, the northern half of the town of Baldwin was separately incorporated as the town of Sebago in 1826.¹⁶

The same year the Freewill Baptists founded Sebago's first church. Later, apparently in 1844, the Freewill Baptists constructed the first church building in town, located in Convene (or "New Limington," as it was then known).¹⁷ Convene, along with Sebago Center and East Sebago, was one of three areas in town settled in a nucleated pattern, although all three were probably too small to be considered a true "village." It was also the farthest such area from the more central part of Baldwin, well to the south.

Religious, political, and cultural divisions may have separated the two parts of Baldwin at least as much as a few extra miles of often muddy roads. The Freewill Baptists were one of the evangelical sects which challenged the hegemony of traditional Congregationalism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, emerging as a dominant religious movement in inland Maine by 1820. They were associated with Jeffersonian Democratic-Republicans, as opposed to the established Federalist

Congregationalists.¹⁸ The Freewill Baptists were centered in Convene, the northeast corner of Baldwin, while the Congregationalists seem to have been centered in the southern end. Congregationalists in Sebago continued to worship in Baldwin until the construction of the Community Church in 1856.¹⁹ It seems likely that the combination of geographical distance and social tensions was too great to hold the town of Baldwin together.²⁰

It is not certain that the separation of Sebago from Baldwin involved such political and religious movements, but it would be consistent with the pattern in early nineteenth-century rural northern New England. In Chelsea, Vermont, for example, with a population about the same as Baldwin's (before the split with Sebago), Barron found constant religious and political struggles between Congregationalists and anti-Calvinists like the Freewill Baptists.²¹ But Chelsea's conflicts never produced the actual divorce that took place between Sebago and Baldwin.

Population and the Mixed-Farming, Home-Industry Economy

If tensions between the Freewill Baptists and the Congregationalists ever did exist in Sebago, such tensions were apparently eased by the 1870s, when the two denominations shared the Sebago Center Community Church,

known by 1885 as the "Union Meeting House."²² Similar to the situation in Chelsea, Vermont, Sebago's population was growing more homogeneous as it dwindled. Although population loss in Sebago began in the decade of the 1860s, twenty years later than Chelsea, the pattern of population loss for the closing decades of the century was very similar in both communities. In Sebago, the population stabilized in the 1870s, but continued downward until the first decade of the twentieth century, when it levelled off at approximately 540 men, women, and children. Table 1 shows that the period between 1880 and 1900 produced the greatest population loss in both communities.

Table 1. General Population, Sebago and Chelsea, Vermont.²³

<u>SEBAGO</u>			<u>CHELSEA</u>	
<u>YEAR</u>	<u>POPULATION</u>	<u>% CHANGE</u>	<u>POPULATION</u>	<u>% CHANGE</u>
1870	803		1,526	
1880	808	0	1,462	- 4
1890	681	- 15	1,230	- 16
1900	576	- 18	1,070	- 13
1910	536	- 7	1,074	0

Like Chelsea, Sebago's population was also aging. Between 1848 and 1890, Sebago's general population declined by roughly 20%, while the number of students enrolled in the public schools declined at the higher rate of 30%. Between 1890 and 1905, this trend

accelerated. General population declined by less than 20% during these fifteen years, while the number of students enrolled in common schools during the same period declined by a whopping 49%.²⁴ Also, by the turn of the century, people in Sebaqo were living longer than they had been earlier. Between 1870 and 1900, the actual number of individuals sixty and older remained practically the same, while other age groups declined dramatically, as Table 2 illustrates.

Table 2. Sebaqo Population by Age Group²⁵

	Under				
AGE	20	20-39	40-59	60+	Total
1870	355	189	177	83	804
% of Pop.	44	23.5	22	10.3	---
1900	209	151	131	85	576
% of Pop.	36	26.2	22.7	15.3	---
% Change	-41.1	-20.1	-25.9	+2.3	-28.

The most dramatic changes occurred among the groups at both ends of the spectrum, the very young and the very old. By far the greatest decline came from the young people in Sebaqo. In 1900, this youngest group had been born after

1880. presumably to individuals who were between twenty and fifty-nine in 1900. These two groups. young adults and the middle-aged, remained fairly constant as a percentage of the general population, suggesting that adults of child-bearing age were having fewer children. Perhaps adverse economic conditions caused them to wait longer before marrying and starting their own families. At any rate, by the end of the nineteenth century, people in Sebago were living longer, and having fewer children.

Although the percentage of people in the prime of life, between twenty and fifty-nine, continued to comprise about 45% of the population, their absolute numbers declined, suggesting that an increasing number were leaving town. In Chelsea, out-migration followed a selective pattern. It was not necessarily "the best and the brightest" who left, as traditional interpretations and popular myths maintain. Barron found that the most important economic determinant of persistence (a measure of that portion of the population that stayed in the community) was property ownership.²⁶ Particularly for farmers, who made their living directly from the land, property ownership translated to economic opportunity. Frequently, this opportunity was available to the youngest son, who was likely to be reaching adulthood at about the time his father was reaching the age at which he could no longer actively manage the farm. In turn, the son often helped support his parents, as well as unmarried sisters.

Older sons frequently established their own household with help from their parents in the form of loans and mortgages, while dowries helped daughters who married. The practical importance of such family ties was critical in encouraging persistence.²⁷

Lacking such opportunities, many were forced to move. A number of factors effected the likelihood that any given citizen of Chelsea would emigrate. The most likely to move were artisans and laborers, along with young, single people, and those born outside Vermont. The least likely to leave were farmers, merchants, married couples with children, and Vermont natives.²⁸ The importance of family ties to economic success helps to account for the growing homogeneity in the population. This growing lack of diversity produced a stable, tranquil society, without the conflicts that characterized both rural society in the early years of settlement, and urban society in the late nineteenth century. The homogeneity of the countryside is an important key to understanding northern rural New England in the late nineteenth century.

If demographic trends in nineteenth-century rural New England produced a settled, stable society, cultural practices and social institutions reinforced a strong sense of community. Numerous accounts in diaries and farm journals attest to a sophisticated, though informal,

reciprocal system of labor exchange among neighboring farmers.²⁹ The rise and considerable success of temperance movements in the middle of the century helped provide a cross-denominational, institutional basis for a unified, orderly society.³⁰ In addition to a temperance society, Sebaqo had a chapter of the grange, and a "tribe" of the International Order of the Redmen.³¹ Such institutions provided even less controversial vehicles for the maintenance of social stability.

These institutions and cultural practices were all part of the mixed-farming, home-industry system of production, which involved the production of non-farm goods on the homestead. In addition to winter wood-cutting, a critical element in the economic viability of New England farms, the manufacture of products such as clothing and candles was undertaken more and more for commercial sale, rather than home use. Eventually making shoes, barrels, tools, and other items became even more important.³² In Sebaqo, itinerant buyers came through town in wagons, purchasing these home-manufactured products. Women often sewed coats for these buyers, while the men produced hoops, used in the making of nail kegs.³³ Such production became less viable as mass-produced items became more widely available. Barron found a shift from production towards service industries, custom work and repairs, as a result.³⁴ Despite these trends towards standardization, some tradesmen, like blacksmiths, remained an essential

part of the town's economy. Sebaço supported at least one part-time blacksmith until the early years of the twentieth century. In 1870, for example, James Haley worked the equivalent of six months of the year in this trade.³⁵

In Maine, part-time home industries were often located in the ells and sheds of the connected farm buildings Hubka has studied, where the house and barn are connected through a series of ells and sheds.³⁶ In addition to providing work space for home industry, the ells and sheds also provided an area for processing and storage of farm produce, for both home consumption and commercial sale. It was in this area of the farm, which usually included a kitchen ell, where the physical space, and to a great extent, the work itself, was shared by men and women.³⁷ Here too, was the dooryard, a sheltered area which provided a space for work, as well as socializing with neighbors. Often this socializing was itself work, since the labor-intensive mixed-farming, home-industry system encouraged shared labor and equipment among neighboring farmers.³⁸

Hubka has interpreted the phenomenon of connected farm buildings as an attempt to bring order, unity, and efficiency to the farming operation, part of a national movement for agricultural reform and improvement. One key to success in a market economy was specialization in one or two major cash crops, but northern New England was

physically, climatically, and culturally ill-suited for the adoption of such a system. The short growing season, combined with the often thin and quickly-depleted soils, posed a grave threat to the farmer who "put all his eggs in one basket" to concentrate on one or two large cash crops.³⁹ The hilly terrain in towns like Sebago also made the use of specialized, expensive equipment required for such a monocultural system less viable. To further complicate the situation, there was a certain reluctance to abandon the mixed-farming home industry system, since, by encouraging shared work and equipment, it fostered the strong bonds of communality and mutuality which lay at the heart of this rural culture.⁴⁰

This meant that any reform had to take place within the mixed-farming, home-industry system. It is not clear to what extent these agricultural reform movements actually penetrated Sebago, although at least one organization devoted to improving farm life, the Maple Grove Grange Number 148, was active as early as 1875.⁴¹ If results are any indication, the substantial (39%) increase in the wool clip, from 1202 pounds in 1870 to 1670 pounds in 1880, when sheep numbers remained about the same, shows some success in increasing farm productivity and efficiency. Moreover, this increase cannot be attributed to one or two farmers who greatly improved a large flock. In 1880 by far the largest flock of sheep in town had 54 sheep, the next largest had 20, about a half-dozen had 10-15 head, and the

remaining 45 or so had less than 10, so the improvement seems to have been made by a fairly large number of individual farmers.⁴² Although Sebago had fewer sheep, in smaller flocks than Chelsea had, Barron found a similar broad-based increase in wool produced per sheep.⁴³

Despite such improvements in production efficiency, it seems to have become increasingly difficult to operate a profitable farm in Sebago. The apparently substantial growth in the amount of woodland during the 1870s suggests that there was, in fact, some decrease in farming throughout that decade.⁴⁴ The number of farms in Sebago dropped from 140 in 1870 to 120 in 1880. Curiously, the number of households actually increased slightly during this decade, from 169 to 179, while population remained virtually unchanged.⁴⁴ More households, with fractionally fewer members, were working fewer farms. The census of 1880 shows a substantial increase in the number of houses inhabited by more than one household, so the decrease in the number of farms is greater than the decrease in the number of farm families. These multiple-household homes usually consisted of two generations of adults within the same family. Typically a young married couple, often with children of their own, would live with the parents of either the husband or the wife. The presence of such households can be deduced by comparing the total number of dwellings with the total number of households listed in the manuscript census schedules. In 1870, there were four

houses occupied by more than one family. In 1880, 179 families lived in only 163 houses.⁴⁶ Census returns from subsequent decades show the number of houses and households to be again nearly equal, suggesting that the sharing of one house by two adult generations of the same family was a response to the difficult economic conditions of the 1870s, not necessarily a truly voluntary choice.

The declining numbers of livestock in town also attest to the shrinkage of agriculture, a trend that accelerated in the early twentieth century. Between 1870 and 1880, the total numbers of sheep, "milch cows," and "other cattle" held fairly constant. By 1905, the numbers were significantly lower, and the slippage continued for the next 15 years, as illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3. Agriculture in Sebaqo, 1870-1920⁴⁷

	1870	1880	1905	1915	1920
Sheep	365	359	87	104	None listed
Wool					
(Pounds)	1202	1670	NA	NA	NA
Dairy					
Cows	311	296	302	209	193
Other					
Cattle	295	315	207	175	96
Oxen	175	122	14	8	2
Horses	105	NA	174	152	135

The precipitous decline in the number of oxen (the 1870 figure was down from 193 in 1860) does not indicate a decline in farming, but rather, the switch from ox to horse power which took place as a result of the invention of lighter and more efficient farm tools.⁴⁸ Although there were 60 automobiles in 1920, there is no mention of tractors in any of these town valuations.⁴⁹ 17,000 were in use nationally by 1914, but it seems likely the expense involved may have slowed their spread to the smaller farms of Northern New England.⁵⁰ Horses persisted not only for agricultural purposes, but as a means of transportation as well, at least until the winter of 1928-29 "when a great change came over the whole town ... The town plowed roads for the first time. One tractor with a plow driven by Chester Wormwood plowed the entire town. All neighbors ran to the windows to watch the plow go by."⁵¹ Obviously, there was at least one tractor in town by the late twenties, but horses were used for farming at least into the thirties.⁵² The relatively slow pace of farm mechanization in Sebago is but one more example of northern New England's reluctance, or inability, to adopt the large-scale farming practices of the west and midwest, opting instead to maintain the traditional mixed-farming, home-industry system.

The mechanization of farming may have been slower in

Sebago than it was nationwide but it took place nevertheless. The increased efficiency produced by mechanization had its greatest impact on the "hired hands" who were part of at least the more substantial farming operations. Often such "hands" were local young men in their late teens or early twenties with no farm of their own. The loss of this opportunity may have encouraged these young people to move elsewhere. One of the few alternatives for those who stayed was employment at one of the sawmills operating in town.

The Fitch Brothers sawmill in East Sebago, in full operation for 10 months of the year, reported paying a total of \$1500 in wages in 1880, employing as many as twelve hands, six of whom were males over sixteen (the age and gender of the other six are not specified). By 1880 the Bacheldor Brothers operated a much smaller mill at North Sebago. This mill operated for five months full time, and reduced to half time for four months. The Bacheldors paid out \$700 in wages to as many as five hands. Both mills reported buying wood locally, the Fitch Brothers from Sebago and Baldwin, the Bacheldors from Sebago and Naples.⁵³ By 1880, the Fitch mill produced timber, laths, shingles, staves, and more finished products such as sash, doors, blinds, frames, and clapboards, with a combined value of \$10,000. The Bacheldor mill turned out essentially the same products as the Fitch mill, with a total value of \$2,000.⁵⁴ Like farming, this work had an

off-season, the winter, when the frozen waterways would not turn the wheels. The mills not only provided jobs for a few Sebago residents, but, perhaps more importantly, they also provided a local market for pine, hemlock, spruce, oak and poplar, often cut during in the winter, and an important source of income for many.

Several other occupations provided at least a partial living for Sebago residents. There were a number of merchants, mostly operators of general stores. Their numbers declined from four in the 1870s to a low of two in 1895, rebounding to five or six by the early twentieth century. There were eleven manufacturers listed in the Maine Register for 1880, the first year that category appeared for Sebago. Their numbers remained relatively stable, with lows of seven and eight in 1910 and 1895, respectively. In addition to a blacksmith or two, and the small water-powered mills, this category usually included three or four carpenters, one or two painters, and one or two individuals building and/or repairing carriages.⁵⁵

Barron's study suggests that the mixed-farming, home-industry system appears to have adequately supported the dwindling population of rural northern New England. His work challenges the traditional interpretation of near catastrophic economic and social decline. Certainly, economic expansion levelled off, resulting in fewer opportunities for young people, considerable out-migration,

and a decline in in-migration. However, the decline in economic growth was roughly matched by the population decline, so the opportunities for those who stayed remained fairly stable.⁵⁶ In Sebago, with a population roughly half that of Chelsea, the 1870s seem to have brought a degree of economic dislocation that is likely to have had a negative impact on the material circumstances of many, if not most, residents. By the 1880s and 1890s, however, as Table 4 suggests, this seems to have levelled off, although population decline continued.

Table 4. County Taxes Assessed and Population, Sebago, 1870-1920⁵⁷

Sebago					County	
Year	Pop.	% Change	Taxes	% Change	Taxes	% Change
1870	803	-	\$378	-	\$78.000	-
1880	808	-0-	202	-46	55.000	-29
1890	681	-15	195	-3	55.000	-0-
1900	576	-18	175	-10	80.000	+31
1910	536	-7	277	+58	69.000	-14
1920	541	-0-	627	+126	208.000	+201

These tax and population figures represent the only readily available index of the town's economic health. The most consistent figures available are the county taxes assessed for Sebago. Use of the actual tax figures, as opposed to the assessed valuations, may also avoid any

aberrations that might appear from a change in the valuation formula, since such changes are usually accompanied by compensating changes in the tax rate. To be meaningful, these numbers must be interpreted in relation to each other. For example, taxes (an indication - albeit imperfect - of wealth) may decline, but if the population decline is even greater than the decline in wealth (measured by taxes), then that wealth, though smaller, is spread among fewer individuals. Theoretically, each individual should actually be better off. Changes in Sebago's taxes must also be compared to changes in the taxes for the county as a whole, in order to understand how the town stood in relation to the outside world. Sebago was, and is, perhaps the most remote, rural community in Cumberland County. According to the Annual Reports, it was consistently the lowest valued town in the county from 1871 until 1910, after which it moved up a few notches, passing Naples, Raymond, Pownal, and Otisfield by 1920.⁵⁸

Cumberland County includes the city of Portland, the most urban area in the state. Presumably, the city accounted for the lion's share of the county budget and taxes (Sebago's contribution to the budget was measurable in terms of fractions of one percent of the total). So Sebago's changing economic fortunes, plotted against those of the county as a whole, reflect that wider relationship to the outside world to a greater extent than would be the case in a more overwhelmingly rural county.

Between 1870 and 1880, the population of Sebago remained constant, but the town's contribution to County taxes declined by a huge 46%. County taxes as a whole declined by 29% during this depression decade, and state-wide they declined by the even smaller figure of 20%.⁵⁹ Perhaps because of Sebago's extremely small population, the town appears to have suffered much greater economic losses than did the state as a whole (or apparently, Chelsea) during this decade, a time of national depression. This loss of value was mitigated somewhat during the years between 1880 and 1900 by a corresponding loss of population, but the early 1890s, another period of nationwide economic depression, also appears to have been a difficult time for Sebago. During this decade, population was still declining at a fairly high rate, and the number of merchants and manufacturers in town hit lows for the period 1870-1920.⁶⁰ Shortly after the turn of the century, the population stabilized (and remained fairly constant until the 1960s), accompanied by dramatic growth in the tax base.

This growth was clearly a consequence of the increasing numbers of summer people owning property in Sebago. By 1905 these non-residents, listed separately in the tax records, numbered seventy-seven.⁶¹ This calls into question the usefulness of tax records as a reflection of the economic circumstances of the year-round residents. Property values would be expected to rise from the

increased demand for seasonal property, although its value as productive farmland or forest would be unaffected. The resulting higher taxes would be an additional burden for townspeople, and sale of land once used for farming or logging is a one-time opportunity. Once the land is sold, the resource is lost. Still, the summer people provided both additional tax revenue and new economic opportunities.⁶²

Sebago Enters the Twentieth Century

By 1895 some new occupations began to appear in the Register. The first boat builder and photographer had appeared by then. In 1900 there were twelve guides (for fishing and/or hunting) and a bicycle merchant; a taxidermist was at work by 1915.⁶² The appearance of these tourist-related occupations during this period comes as no surprise in light of the development of areas such as Douglas Hill and the lake front as summer resort colonies.

At the very time these leisure-class developments were taking place, two other neighborhoods were in a decline which would leave them deserted within a few decades (figs. 2, 6, and 7). One, "Back Nippin," not far from Douglas Hill, once had six houses. While all six were still present in 1896, the area was uninhabited by the end of the

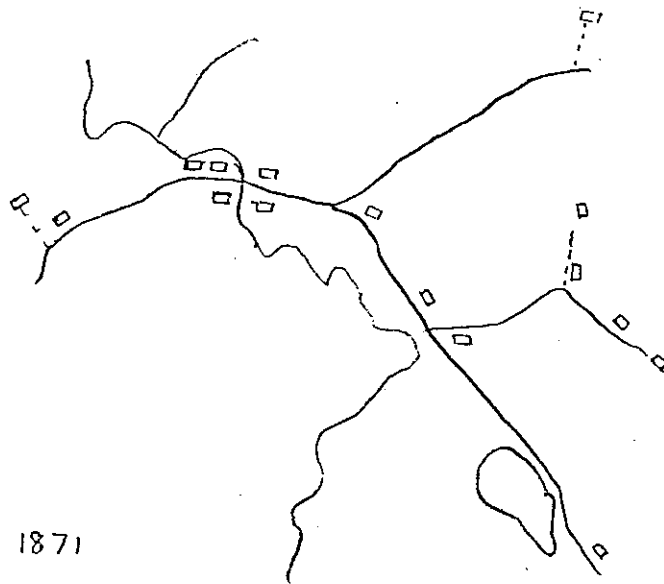
FIGURE 6 - DOUGLAS HILL
□ BUILDINGS

1871

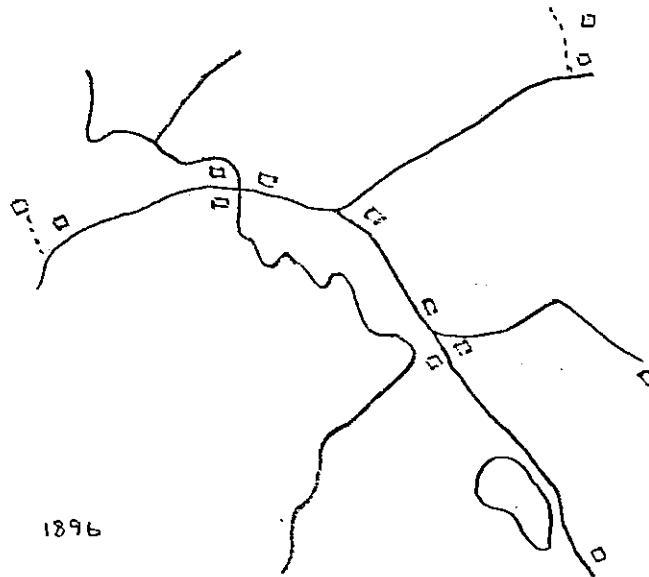
1896

1942

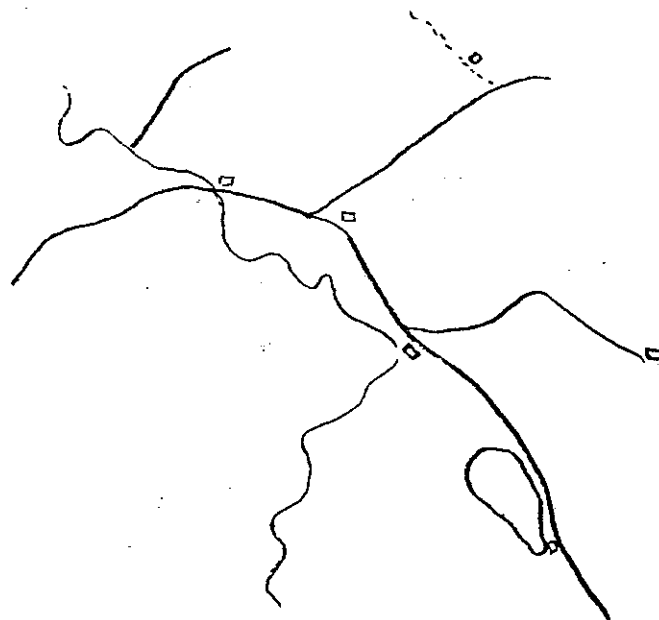
FIGURE 7 - THE FOLLY
□ - - - BUILDINGS



1871



1896



1942

thirties, if not earlier.⁶³ The other neighborhood, the Folly, may have been inhabited for a somewhat longer period, but appears to have experienced a very serious decline in the early twentieth century.⁶⁴ In the 1870s and 1880s, the Folly appears to have been a rather unremarkable part of Sebago. A quick glance at the Agricultural Census reveals that these may not have been the largest farms in Sebago, but they were not obviously impoverished either. The neighborhood also boasted its own school, which was established in 1854.⁶⁵ Ironically, enrollment in the Folly School had substantially increased from twelve pupils in 1880 to nineteen in 1890, a decade when both the general population and over-all school enrollment declined in Sebago.⁶⁶ This was followed by a dramatic reversal: by 1900 only seven pupils were registered at the Folly school, prompting the Superintendent of Schools, William McKenney, to write in his annual report that the Folly shoolhouse, along with three others, "having failed to maintain an average of 8 scholars for the year, will be discontinued unless otherwise voted by the town."⁶⁷ Apparently it was "otherwise voted," since the schools remained open. The same recommendation was made year after year, and the other three remained open at least through the first two decades of the century. Having its own school was important for a neighborhood's self-definition.⁶⁸ It is not surprising that there seems to have been a great deal of resistance to the closing of such schools. Clearly, the community

viewed such proposals, apparently generated by state regulations, as an attack on their traditional way of life.

Educational reform which involved the consolidation and "professionalizing" of rural schools was part of the agenda of the "Country Life Movement," which was comprised largely of highly educated professional academicians. These reformers, like Wilbert A. Anderson, who published The Country Town: A Study of Rural Evolution, in 1906, relied on social scientific analysis for providing a remedy for what they viewed as the "inefficiency" of social institutions in the countryside.⁶⁹ Ironically, these reformers looked to the city as a model for the improvement of rural society, while Olmstedian reformers looked to the country as a model for urban social change.⁷⁰ Although many of the Country Lifers had grown up in rural areas, their professional, urban, middle class status gave them a very different perspective on rural society than that of the actual members of that society. Sebago's refusal to close even three or four neighborhood schools, let alone consolidate all nine into one central school, is a measure of the chilly reception that awaited such proposals.

As in the case of agricultural reform, rural residents apparently preferred to improve their educational system within the familiar, established social structure. One of the Sebago schools slated for closing was the Larrabee school, located at the eastern end of the one of the roads

leading to the Folly (fig. 2). This school seems to have undergone a bit of a renaissance just before 1920: physical improvements were being made to the building, and the superintendent praised the efforts of the "School Improvement League" in this district.⁷¹

The Folly school, though, suffered a different fate. In 1905, the Superintendent wrote that "The Folly schoolhouse is practically untenable." Even this was not enough to close the school, however, since eight pupils were registered in 1905, and it continued to operate in 1907 with just three students.⁷² Its epitaph appears in the Town Report the next year: "The Folly schoolhouse has not been opened, the one pupil from that district having attended the Centre school at a cost, to the town, of thirty-nine dollars for the year."⁷³ A neighborhood without children is surely a neighborhood with little future.

Still, there was at least one family who continued to live in the Folly as late as the 1940s, but the area was clearly deserted by the fifties.⁷⁴ It certainly must have ceased being a true "neighborhood" at an earlier date. By 1955, it seems to have acquired a certain mystique among townspeople. Lawrence Nason, writing in that year, commented that "nobody I know would sleep out in the Folly on a bet."⁷⁵ It had become a ghost town. The area's name derives from a spectacularly unsuccessful attempt, in the

early nineteenth century, to construct a slide for logs coming off the side of Peaked Mountain into the Northwest River. Nason commented that "Nobody moved into that area after the first settlers had gone there and made the Folly a fit place to live. The general idea is that nobody else thought the place was fit for inhabitation."⁷⁶ If this is an accurate representation of the town's attitude, it could account for the persistence of such an uncomplimentary name.

The decline of neighborhoods like the Folly seems to confirm the notion of decay in nineteenth-century rural New England. But the failure of one neighborhood to prosper and survive does not necessarily signal the failure of a whole community, or even of those who left the neighborhood. For the most part, the history of Sebago is consistent with Barron's interpretation of nineteenth-century culture. The population declined, and got older. Unlike Chelsea, there seems to have been some measure of real economic hardship for some of those who had the resources to stay behind. Still, a combination of farming and home industry, and, by the early twentieth century, an economy increasingly oriented toward servicing the summer tourist trade, provided economic opportunities for those who did stay. The tourists, railroads, and automobiles also brought Sebago a little closer to the outside world. Mail delivery improved: in 1870 there was one Post Office in town, by 1900 there were six.⁷⁷

The economic decline seems to have been most severe in the 1870s, although it does not seem to have turned around until the 1890s, following a national depression in the early years of that decade. From that point, change seems to have come at a more rapid pace. In 1895, Potter Academy was opened, thanks to one of those who did not stay behind, Joseph Fitch Potter. Born in Sebago in 1809, he moved to Cincinnati Ohio, became a doctor, and left a trust fund of \$32,000 to his native town for the building of a high school, providing free tuition for Sebago residents.⁷⁸ The 1890s also saw the building of a number of often substantial summer houses, and the number of new faces in town during the summer must have increased steadily. The twentieth century brought the automobile, and considerable development along the lakefront. Still, every fall the summer people went back to New York, or some other urban environment, leaving the natives to lead their lives in the close-knit isolation of winter, waiting to cheer the arrival of the first snowplow.

Notes to Chapter 2

- 1 Records of the Proprietors of the Plantation of Flintstown, 36. CCRD.
- 2 Eastern Herald and Maine Gazette, November 8, 1802. I am indebted to Kenneth Severens for bringing this material from early newspapers to my attention.
- 3 Eastern Argus, December 7, 1804.
- 4 Hayden L.V. Anderson, Canals and Inland Waterways of Maine (Portland: Maine Historical Society, 1982), 78-83.
- 5 Records of the Proprietors, 54. The Eastern Argus, September 13, 1805, reports on the meeting of the proprietors of the "Fryeburg, Baldwin, and Portland Turnpike Corporation."
- 6 History of Cumberland County, 369. U.S. Census of Population, Manuscript Schedules of Sebago, Maine, 1790. There is very little overlap between the names of the proprietors and names in the 1790 Census.
- 7 History of Cumberland County, 369.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Deed, CCRD, Book 74, page 303 ("74/303").
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Records of the Proprietors, 83.
- 12 History of Cumberland County, 370.
- 13 Maine Register, 1881, 323-324; 1886, 345-346; 1920-21,

600-601.

14 Eastern Argus, December 10, 1807, refers to Baldwin, "formerly called Flintstown."

15 Meserve, Centennial History, 23. The History of Cumberland County describes the first town meeting as taking place in the schoolhouse, formerly district five of Baldwin, which Meserve defines in terms of range and lot numbers. These numbers coincide with the Sebago Center area. "Plan of Town of Sebago, Maine," copy by Joseph S. Stickney, Portland, Maine, 1909. Maine State Archives, Augusta.

16 History of Cumberland County, 371. J.S. Woods., "Elaboration of a Settlement Pattern: The New England Village in the Federal Period," Journal of Historical Geography 10,4 (1984):331-356, 335. Wood attributes such town divisions solely to factors of population and physical size. While these were certainly preconditions for such divisions, it seems likely that social tensions and conflicts, such as those described in Barron's treatment of the early period in Chelsea, may have also played a role.

17 History of Cumberland County, 371.

18 Stephen A. Marini. "Religious Revolution in the District of Maine, 1780-1820," in Maine in the Early Republic, eds. Charles E. Clark, James S. Leamon, and Karen Bowden (Hanover:University Press of New England, 1988), 118-145, 118.

19 100th Anniversary, Sebago Center Community Church,

1856-1956 (no publication information or page numbers).

History of Cumberland County, 371.

19 There is at least some circumstantial evidence to support this speculation. Meserve lists signers of the original petition for election. Although it includes Oliver Pike (Selectman and State Representative) and Scolly G. Usher (Collector), the names of other early town leaders, particularly William Fitch and David Potter, are conspicuously absent. Meserve, Centennial History, 24, 45.

21 Barron, Those Who Stayed, 16-30.

22 Apparently, the Freewill Baptists in Convene Became a General Provisional Baptist Church in 1847; a Freewill Baptist church was (re)organized in Sebago Center in 1858.

History of Cumberland County, 371.

23 Sources for table 1: U.S. Census of Population, 1870, 1900. Maine Register, 1871, 190; 1880, 323-324; 1891, 378-379; 1901-02, 430-431; 1911-12, 447-448. Barron, Those Who Stayed, 27.

24 For students in 1848, Meserve, Centennial History, 34; in 1890 and 1905, Sebago Town Reports For the Municipal Year 1890, 1905-06. Total population from Maine Register, 1851 (nearest census to 1848), 1891, 378-379; 1901-02, 430-431; 1911-12, 447-448.

25 Source for Table 2: U.S. Census of Population, 1870, 1900.

26 Barron, Those Who Stayed, 152.

27 Ibid., 92-99.

- 28 Ibid., 81-87
- 29 Ibid., 127. Hubka. Big House, 152.
- 30 Barron, Those Who Stayed, 92-99.
- 31 History of Cumberland County, 372. Maine Register, 1876, 203; 1906-07, 445-446.
- 32 Hubka. Big House, 192.
- 33 Nason. "All About The Folly," Bridgton News, [1955]
- 34 Barron, Those Who Stayed, 74,
- 35 U. S. Census of Production and Industry, Manuscript Schedules for Sebago, Maine, 1870.
- 36 Hubka, Big House, 130.
- 37 Ibid., 150.
- 38 Ibid., 194.
- 39 Ibid., 191.
- 40 Ibid., 156-158
- 41 Maine Register, 1876, 203.
- 42 U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1880.
- 43 Barron, Those Who Stayed, 64.
- 44 U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1870, 1880.
- 45 U.S. Census of Population, 1870, 1880.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Sources for Table 3: U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1870, 1880. Sebago Town Reports, 1905, 1915, 1920.
- 48 U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1860, 1870. Howard S. Russell, A Long Deep Furrow: Three Centuries of Farming in New England (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1982), 238, 275, 302.

- 49 Sebago Town Report, 1920.
- 50 John T. Schlebecker, Whereby We Thrive: A History of American Farming, 1607-1976 (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1975), 168. Horse-drawn farming equipment was used in Sebago at least into the nineteen-thirties, as evidenced by photographs depicting horse-drawn haying. Collection of the author.
- 51 Sesqui-centennial Cronicle, 73. The writer of this section was Leona Greene.
- 52 Numerous photographs (collection of the author) from the 1930s, depicting haying at the Pike Farm by horse-drawn equipment, attest to this.
- 53 U.S. Census of Production and Industry, 1870, 1880.
- 54 Ibid., 1880.
- 55 Maine Register, 1881, 323-324; 1911-12, 447-448; 1896-97, 412-413.
- 56 Barron, Those Who Stayed, 81-90.
- 57 Sources for Table 4: Maine Register, 1871 - 1921-1922. Statement of the Financial Condition of the County of Cumberland, ("Cumberland County Annual Report"), 1870-1920.
- 58 Cumberland County Annual Report, 1920.
- 59 Russel, Long, Deep Furrow, 251.
- 60 Maine Register, 1896-97, 412-413.
- 61 Sebago Tax Records, 1905. The practice of listing residents and non-residents separately in the tax lists leads almost inevitably to speculation that the town taxed

the two groups differently. Although the practice would have been illegal, at least one non-resident was convinced of this in the late 1920s. Neal W. Allen Sr., Personal Correspondence, Dec. 2, 1927 - Dec. 3, 1931. Information supplied to Allen by the Board of State Assessors in March of 1928 does show non-resident real estate assessments rising from roughly \$145,000 in 1923 to over \$240,000 in 1927, while resident real property rose more slowly during the same period, from almost \$196,000 to nearly \$224,000. Other explanations (there may have been more non-residents, for example) are, of course, possible.

62 Maine Register, 1916-17, 458-459.

63 Map, "Sebago Quadrangle," United States Geological Survey, 1946. Neal W. Allen, Jr., Personal Conversation, January, 1991.

64 Map, "Sebago Quadrangle, U.S.G.S., 1896, 1946. Map, "Baldwin and Sebago," personal collection of the author. Reproduced in The Old Maps of Rural Cumberland County, Maine in 1871 (Fryeburg, Maine: Saco Valley Printing, 1979). Originally published by F.W. Beers & Co., New York.

65 Nason, "All About the Folly."

66 Sebago Town Report, 1880, 1890.

67 Ibid., 1900.

68 Hubka, Big House, 152-153.

69 Barron, Those Who Stayed, 41-42.

70 Ibid.

71 Sebago Town Report, 1921.

- 72 Ibid., 1906, 1908, 1909.
- 73 Ibid., 1909.
- 74 Nason, "All About the Folly " Leona Greene- Personal Conversation, March 15, 1991
- 75 Ibid.
- 76 Ibid.
- 77 Maine Register, 1871, 190; 1901-02, 430-431.
- 78 Nason. "The Academy on the Hill." in "Two Stories From Sebago History." Reprint from the Bridgton News. [1955].

Chapter Three

The Landscape, Architecture, and Historical Background of Three Sebago Homesteads

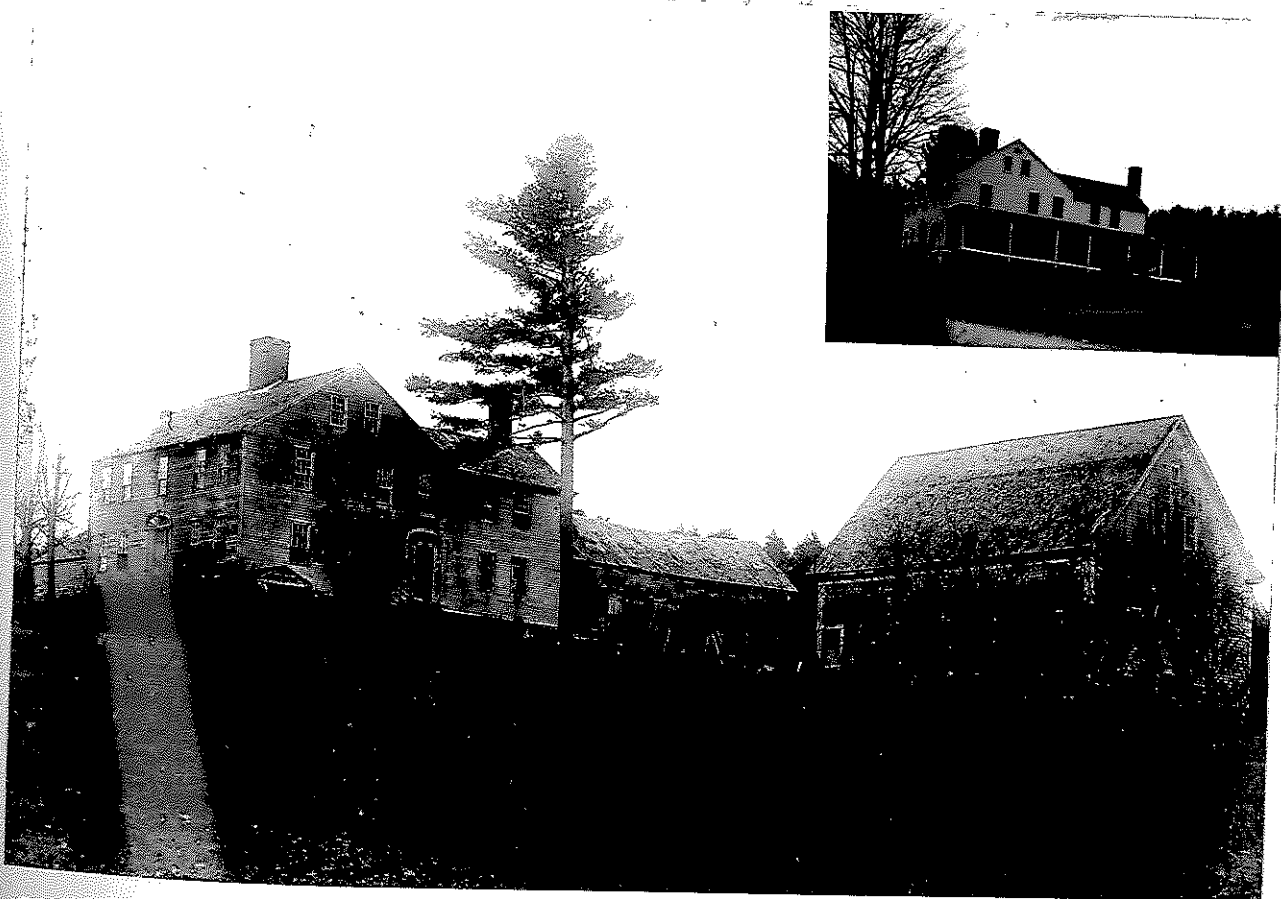
The Architecture of Sebago Farmsteads

Sebago is situated squarely within the geographical area that Hubka has identified as containing the highest density of connected farm buildings. This area encompasses most of interior Maine and New Hampshire, with the exception of the eastern and northernmost counties in Maine. This area also corresponds very closely with areas sustaining English cultural homogeneity throughout the nineteenth century, and with areas sustaining agricultural growth after 1850.¹ These connected farm buildings, still a familiar part of the landscape of the region, utilize all the forms of the traditional, vernacular architectural tradition, but connect the house and outbuildings in a unique configuration. Their significance lies not in their formal or aesthetic originality, but in the functional basis of their arrangement. Hubka has interpreted these often seemingly haphazard arrays of sprawling ells and attached sheds as actually an attempt to bring order, unity, and efficiency to the farm operation, part of the nineteenth-century movement for agricultural reform and improvement.²

The structure of the connected farm complex maintained architectural unity by balancing the large mass of the barn at one end with that of the house at the other, and by extending stylistic details to the barn, a previously unusual practice. The design of the connected farm imposed order through the compartmentalization of space. The distinction between the big house with its formal front yard, and the work-oriented ells, barn and dooryard, helped reinforce the differentiation between genteel domesticity and productive work.

Although a number of such connected farm complexes exist in Sebago, many farms are clearly not organized in this manner. Some simply place the barn in relatively convenient proximity to the house, while others have the barn across the road. Neither of the two extant houses that are subjects of the current study appear to have actually connected the house and barn. By the early nineteenth century the construction of detached barns, in part to minimize the danger of fire spreading between house and barn, was a well-established cultural tradition in New England.³ Unlike many of his contemporaries, Mr. Pike apparently stopped short of defying the traditional practice and actually connecting the house and barn (figs. 8 and 9). However, like several other Sebago farms, the Pike house was clearly organized along principles similar to those of connected farmsteads.

Figure 8.
Oliver M. Pike House



Ca. 1900(?); Inset 1991.

Site of
 Original
 Log Cabin
 →
 Coming Rd.
 ORIGINAL RD.
 Present Road
 1/2 mi. to
 Church Rd.

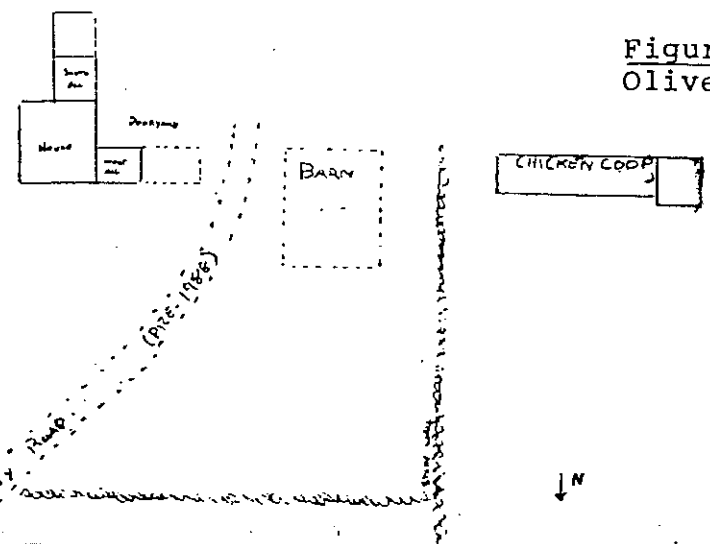
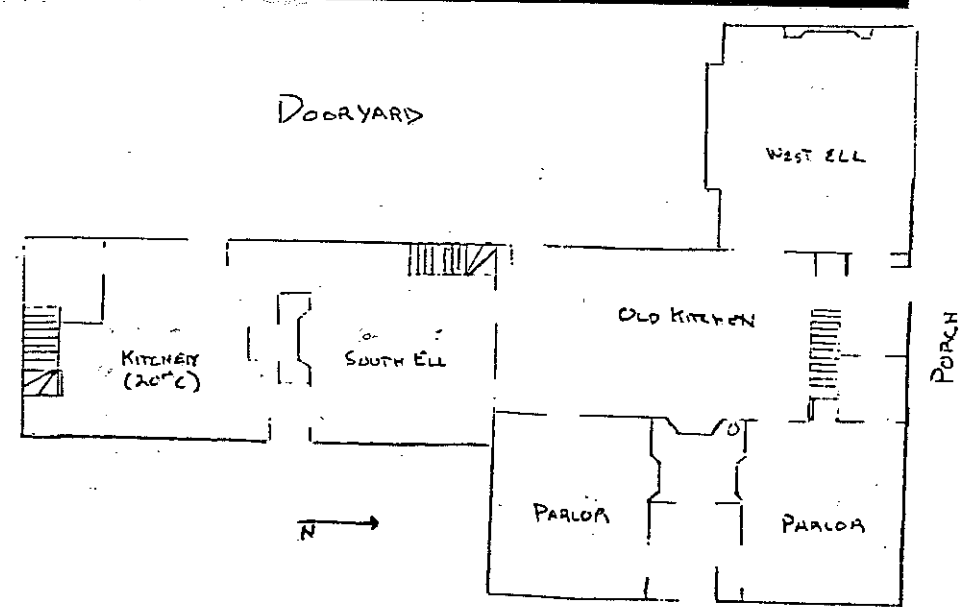
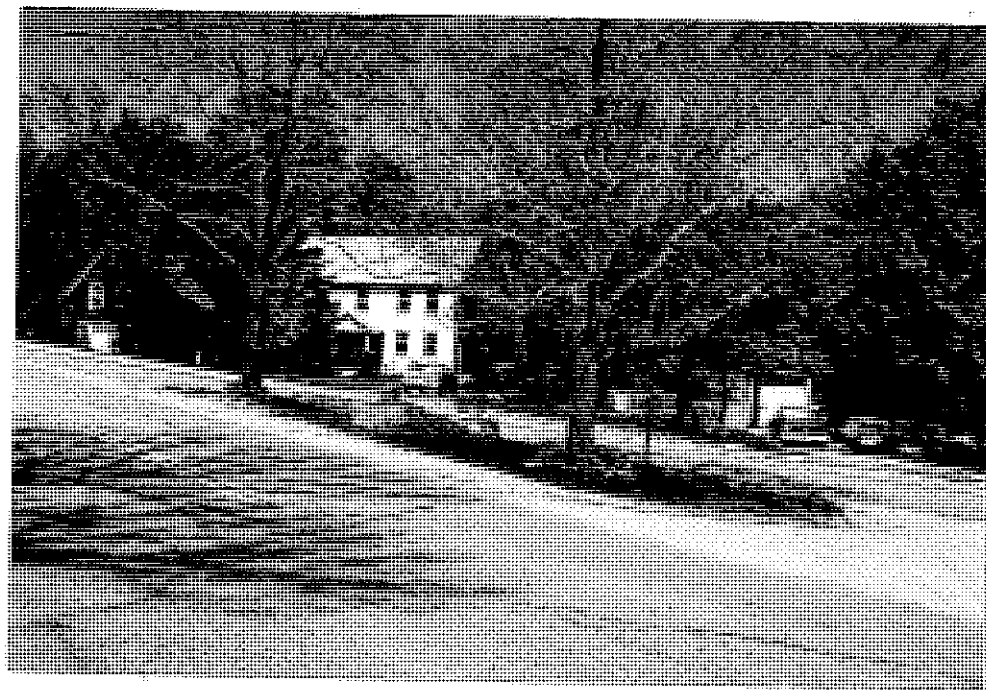
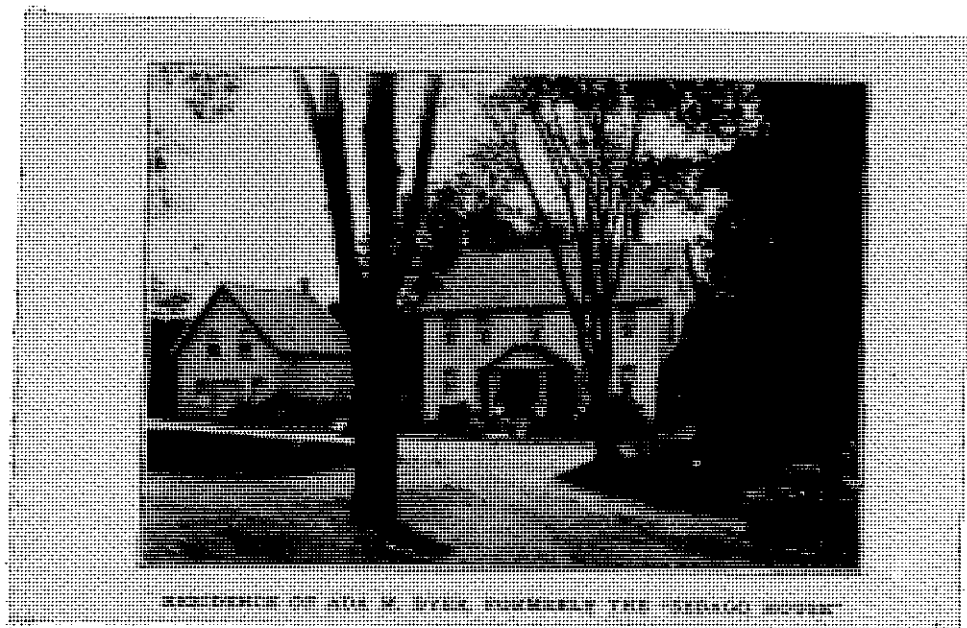


Figure 9.
 Oliver M. Pike House



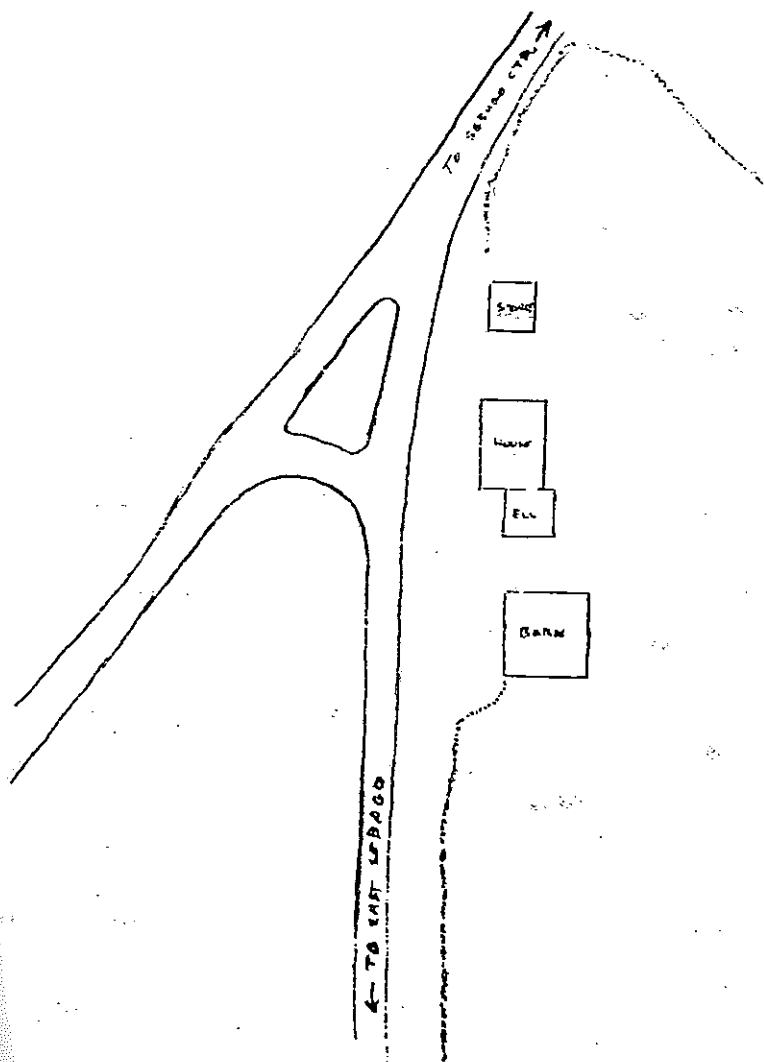
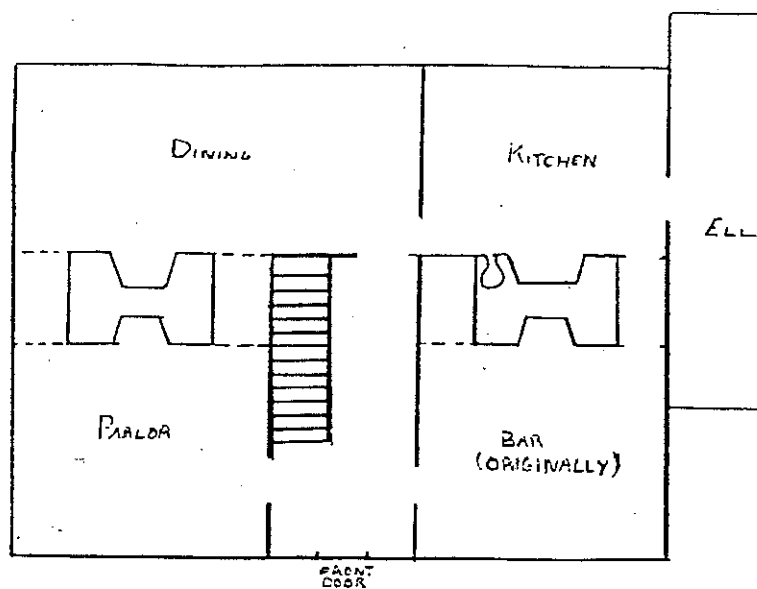
For a true connected farm complex, the cultural objection to the house-barn connection was overcome by placing the barn at the farthest end of the complex from the house, with animal entrance to the barn often in back and on a lower level, into a basement. At the Arthur Dyer homestead the placement of the barn reinforces this distinction. Though close to the house, the barn is not only detached, but downhill, on a lower level (figs. 10 and 11). In connected farms, the distinction between barn and house was often further reinforced by staggering the buildings, whose point of attachment was frequently at the corners, avoiding the creation of a facade arranged in a single plane.⁴ The Arthur Dyer homestead seems to have developed along lines that had little to do with the connected farm concept. Oliver Pike, on the other hand, while apparently refraining from making an actual physical connection between house and barn, nevertheless organized his farmstead in a manner consistent with the connected farm concept. Decades after his death, Pike's conservatism, manifested in his reluctance to form a physical connection between house and barn, may have prevented the destruction of the house. In 1949 the barn burned, leaving the house unscathed. Had the barn been connected, the house would probably have burned too.

Figure 10.
Arthur Dyer House



Top: ca. 1926 (From Meserve, Centennial History)
Bottom: 1991. Left-to right: Store, House, Barn.

Figure 11.
Arthur Dyer House



The Oliver Pike Farm

Oliver Pike, while not part of the first wave of settlers in the 1790s, moved to Sebago at a fairly early date, arriving from nearby Cornish, Maine, around 1815. He started clearing the land, and built a small structure, reputedly a log cabin, located uphill from the present farmhouse. The cellar-hole of this structure is still extant. He married Sarah Page from Epping, New Hampshire, shortly thereafter.⁵ Family tradition maintains that the couple returned from New Hampshire on horseback immediately following their wedding. They had the first of their ten children within a year or two, and probably built the present house around 1825.⁶ Oliver Pike was a prominent member of the community. In 1826, about the same time he built his house, Pike was elected to the state legislature, the first such representative to this body from the newly-incorporated town of Sebago. He also served a number of terms as selectman, and was apparently a self-styled country lawyer.⁷ In addition to these activities, he seems to have augmented his farm income by a fairly prodigious quantity of land speculation; there are nearly four pages of entries under his name in the Cumberland County Registry of deeds index for the years 1760-1870. In a number of cases, these were mortgages, with Mr. Pike acting as the lender of money, although in a few instances he mortgaged

property to others.⁸ He also made smaller, apparently unsecured loans, as the existence of several promissory notes suggests.⁹

During much of the nineteenth century, neighbors, townspeople, and others passing by his property on the Convene Road could have looked up across acres of open fields, divided by stone walls, to a large, two and a half story, center-chimney farmhouse, perched high on the hillside. The rigidly symmetrical front of the house faced east. Two evenly-spaced windows flanked both sides of the front door, while five second-floor windows corresponded to the openings on the first floor. The door, surrounded by sidelights and topped with a louvered fan, completed the rural version of a federal style facade. Ells and sheds stretched off the house in two directions: uphill, to the south, and towards the right, to the west. The western ell was flush with the gable end of the main house, forming a north-facing facade. Although not symmetrical, it too had a formal federal doorway with louvered fan, and two windows on either side. A shed stretched off this ell toward the large barn, which was oriented in the same direction as the main house (fig. 9). It is hard to imagine that a nineteenth-century passer-by would have assumed that the owner of such a house was anything but a prosperous, well-to-do member of the local gentry.

The two formal doorways facing the most public

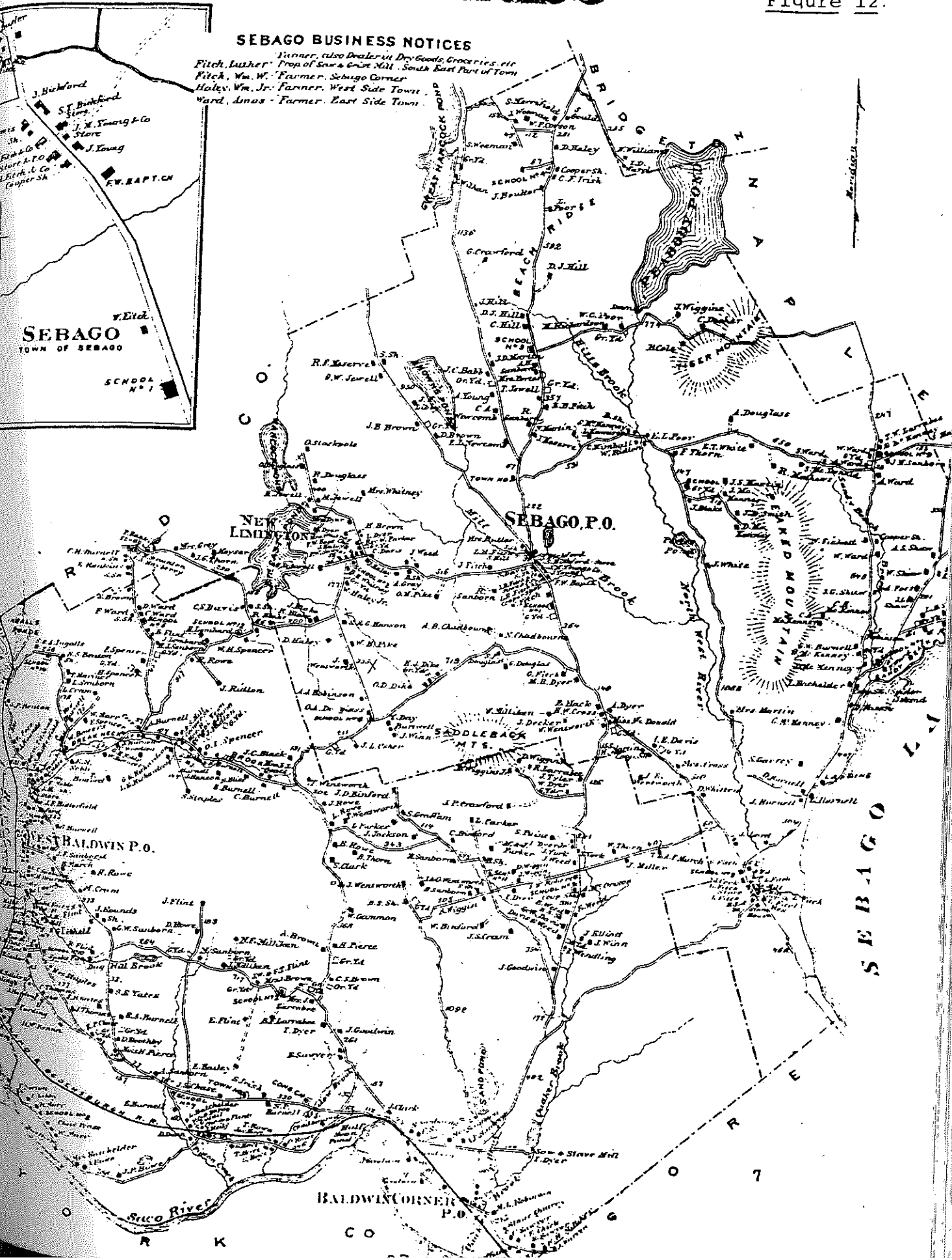
directions would have reinforced such perceptions. The creation of the second formal doorway, resulting in an orderly but not quite symmetrical facade, required the builder to adapt the established patterns of the local building tradition to a situation that may have presented a unique design challenge. The ambiguous orientation to the road probably accounts for the desire for two formal doorways. A similar center-chimney Federal house on Berry Road in the nearby town of Denmark also has two formal doorways; in this case, the road apparently curved sharply around the house. For Pike, interior design considerations (a staircase may have originally been situated in the gap between the two sets of windows on the left) may have complicated the task of creating an orderly, formal facade on an asymmetrical gable end with attached ell, an ell that was built at the same time as the house.¹¹ Although this facade would have been clearly visible from the road, there is evidence to suggest that for much of the nineteenth century, the house was approached toward the eastern facade, the true front of the house (fig. 9).¹²

Such an approach is unusual for Sebago farmhouses. In many cases, the farm complexes range along parallel to the road, while others stretch back. Either way, the dooryard opens onto the road, and the houses are approached through this dooryard. Today, entry is usually through the "back house" (often still an unfinished woodshed) into a small kitchen. This does not necessarily indicate the pattern of

a century ago, but it is consistent with Hubka's description of the dooryard as an important place for social activities such as meeting neighbors, exchanging news, ideas, and gossip.¹³ The parlor, invariably a room in the front of the house, was an infrequently-used room.¹⁴ Given the physical layout of most farmsteads and the strong social ties of community and kinship, it seems unlikely that many visitors were ushered in the front door (many such doors today are not even shovelled out in the winter). But the south-facing dooryard of Oliver Pike's house was between the L-shaped house and the barn, protected from the prevailing (and very strong) northwest winds, an ideally-suited, sheltered work area. (fig. 9). In order to enter the house through this dooryard, it was necessary to go all the way around the formal facade to the back, which would be screened to the gaze of casual passers-by.

The next house down the Convene Road, indentified as "R. Sanborn" on the 1871 map (fig. 12), smaller and far less imposing than the Pike house, was also situated well up the hill, away from the road in the nineteenth century. Like the Pike house, this house exhibits a geographical orientation, although its roof ridge runs along an east-west axis, while the Pike house is oriented on a north-south axis. However, the front door of the Sanborn house ignores the road entirely, facing south, in nearly

Figure 12.



the opposite direction. Instead, the front door is adjacent to the dooryard. The driveway leading to the house curved around the western end and entered this yard, making no distinction between formal and informal approach. Neither the Pike house nor the Sanborn house was located directly on a through road. Among surviving nineteenth-century Sebago farmhouses that were located directly on a road, orientation to that road, usually with the roof ridge paralleling the road, is virtually universal. Apparently, while being open to the road was an important consideration, in the absence of close proximity to a through road, environmental factors took on greater importance. In Oliver Pike's case, this closure (or "intensiveness," as Henry Glassie would put it¹⁵) may have had a social dimension as well. As a lawyer, lender of money, and political figure, he may have considered a certain amount of distance from the public, dictating a more formal approach to him and his house, appropriate.

In addition to the apparent lack of connection between house and barn, there is an element of conservatism in the architecture of the house itself. This conservatism is as much a reflection of local cultural traditions as it is of Oliver Pike's individual outlook. In urban areas end chimneys had usually replaced center chimneys by the time Federal ornamentation came into fashion in the late eighteenth century, making the phrase "center-chimney

Federal" almost a contradiction in terms in such high style contexts. The floorplan dictated by a massive center chimney, with two front parlors on either side of a small entrance hall, and a large kitchen stretching across the back, is also a bit archaic (fig. 9). From the standpoint of traditional architectural history, 1825 would be an unusually late date for such a building form, but it is not nearly so unusual in the regional context of inland rural Maine.

The Daniel McKenney House

Looking east from the front of his house, Oliver pike could have clearly seen Daniel McKenney's house, about half-way up the side of Peaked Mountain. Daniel, who became blind in his later years, was described as "a brave hunter and heroic pioneer," who "built a log cabin in the wilderness" of Peaked (or "Picked") Mountain, and later a "commodious dwelling." It is not clear exactly what is meant by "commodious," and this house has also been described as being fairly modest.¹⁶ It seems unlikely that it would have been as large and impressive as the Pike house.

Having grown up in Sebago during the early decades of

the town's settlement, in later years Mr. McKenney seems to have retained the contentious spirit that characterized the first few decades of the nineteenth century in rural northern New England. In the 1840s, for example, he lost a small portion of his land in a judgment against him in District Court.¹⁷ In 1845, his brother Silas swore out a complaint against James Blake, who lived at the foot of the road leading to Daniel's house (fig. 12), for building a fence "from divers pieces of timber" across the "common highway leading from the folly bridge, so called, to Daniel McKenney's house ... to the great damage and common nuisance of all the citizens of this state."¹⁸ Although his brother swore out the complaint, it seems likely that Daniel had a hand in it. Since the "common highway" (apparently Blake did not consider it as such) ended at his house, passing only three others along the way, McKenney was one of only a handful of the citizens of the state for whom the fence would, in fact, have constituted a nuisance.

In his apparently litigious nature, Daniel McKenney was not so different from Oliver Pike, who also seems to have been involved in his share of private disputes.¹⁹ But unlike Oliver Pike, in spite of the fact that Daniel McKenney lived through three-quarters of the nineteenth century in Sebago (he died at 77, apparently in 1884), his name does not appear once in the list of town officers.²⁰ It would seem that this pioneer was a man with a very different social position from the prominent Sebago citizen

whose hill farm he could see on the other side of the Northwest River.

Located at the end of a steep, dead end side road, Daniel McKenney's farm was topographically similar to Oliver Pike's. But, unlike the Pike farm, which stood alone on a hillside, McKenney's was one of four clustered on the side of Peaked Mountain, almost a sub-neighborhood of the Folly district (figs. 2, 7 and 12). Daniel probably acquired this property around 1830 (about the time he and his brother Silas opened their sawmill), when he married Eliza Sanborn.²¹ The Sanborns owned the farm just down the road from the McKenney farm (identified as "J.D. Smith" in 1871, (fig. 12)). Whether the young couple somehow acquired the land on favorable terms from the Sanborns, or they purchased it in order to be close to family, the proximity of their house to her family is surely not coincidental.

This was apparently just the beginning of a complex web of family, community, and economic relationships that was to entangle these two farms over the subsequent decades. There is no recorded instrument that establishes Daniel McKenney's original claim to this land, but it must have been most, if not all, of "Pond Lot" number 33, approximately 150 acres. In 1841 he sold 100 acres with buildings to Mary Sanborn, "single woman," who also bought the Southeast corner of Pond Lot 33 from George W. Burnell a year later.²² Since Daniel McKenney continued to live in

his house until his death late in the century, the buildings described in Mary Sanborn's deed were probably the Smith house, just down the road, although it is not clear how or when the Sanborns lost title to this property. Apparently, Mary Sanborn is the maiden name of Mary Milliken, who is buried in a cemetery across the road from this house. Hers is the only one of the nine gravestones that does not bear the name "Sanborn," but she is described on this monument as "Aunt." Clearly, it was not always males who had the opportunity, and means, to perpetuate family ownership in property.

In the 1850s, Mary's husband, George Milliken, bought some more of lot 33 from Daniel. In 1857 they sold their land to J.D. Smith, who bought more of lot 33 in the 1860s from Osborn and George W. Burnell, who lived at the end of the old Folly Road, which terminated near East Sebago at the time (fig. 12).²³ In just two decades, Daniel McKenney had sold in excess of 100 acres. His holdings had shrunk to roughly 50 acres, virtually all of the lost land going to the Smiths, whose property had become known as the "Mountain Farm."²⁴ However, this pattern was reversed in the decade of the 1880s. Apparently the elder Smiths died around 1881: Nellie Sanborn, daughter of J.D. Smith (apparently another confusing link in this tangle of interrelated families), sold her land to Edwin L. Poor, and her brother Daniel did the same in 1882.²⁵ Edwin L. Poor was the town lawyer, the Census enumerator for much of the

period. Although he later lived in Sebaqo Center, according to the map of 1871, he was a resident of the Folly (fig. 12).²⁶ Like Oliver Pike just a few years earlier, the numerous listings under Poor's name in the indexes of the Cumberland County Registry of Deeds attest to his active role in the buying and selling of real estate. In this instance, while the transactions may have been a financial investment for him, he may also have played the role of facilitator, allowing the older Smith children to have access to their inheritance soon after their parents' death, when, for whatever reason, the minor children's shares could not be readily transferred. There also seems to be a family relationship between Poor and Hartley Clough, Daniel McKenney's son-in-law, who, in 1883, purchased the two-fifths shares Poor acquired from the Smiths.²⁷ A month later, Clough purchased the other three-fifths at public vendue from John D. Martin, who was the guardian of Joseph, Perley, and Asa Smith, James' youngest children.²⁸ John D. Martin does not seem to have lived in the Folly, but several other Martins did, so there may well have been a family relationship between the Martins and the Smiths.

Clearly, these two households were part of a tangled, confusing, virtually incomprehensible web of larger family relationships. In less than forty years, approximately 100 acres of land had shifted from one house to the other and back again, apparently resulting in the consolidation of

two farms into one. Hartley Clough and his wife, Melissa, Daniel McKenney's daughter, lived in Daniel's house, probably helping to support, and possibly care for him, since by the 1880s Daniel McKenney was an elderly, and apparently blind, man.²⁹ The Smith house does not seem to have been inhabited after this period; in 1896 it is no longer on the map.³⁰ The use of the land for farming and forestry probably did not change much as a result of these transfers, which were probably a vehicle of mutual family support. This wheeling and dealing provided cash for those who needed it (specific sums of money are mentioned in the deeds), and land for other, possibly younger family members, who felt they were in a position to take advantage of the economic opportunity additional acreage could provide.

Despite this strategy of farm consolidation, presumably with the goal of creating a more profitable agricultural enterprise, both houses have now vanished from the landscape. Today, the Smith house is an overgrown cellar hole in the woods, set back from what is left of the road. The Sanborn graveyard sits across the road from the house site. Continuing up this road, a small clearing that is in the process of being overgrown by woods marks the site of Daniel McKenney's house, where what appears to be the cellarhole of the house seems to have been filled in. A large maple, in front of what must have been part of the foundation, signals the apparent location of the house.

The well, dangerously exposed in a clump of bushes, is the only intact feature of this homestead. Here and there straggling lilac bushes, fruit trees, and what appear to have once been ornamental shrubs remain as reminders of the homestead that once stood on this spot.

The Arthur Dyer House

While time has obliterated Daniel McKenney's house in the Folly, the three buildings that made up Arthur Dyer's homestead at Mac's Corner stand very much as they did a hundred years ago (figs. 10 and 11). A small porch by the front door, and a larger porch in front of the ell, both added in 1923, are the only noticeable exterior architectural changes.³¹ In 1938 the road was moved back from the house about fifty feet.³² Otherwise, although the two outbuildings were moved at some point in the nineteenth century, the arrangement of buildings has changed little.³³

In contrast to the hill farms of Daniel McKenney and Oliver Pike, the house of Arthur Dyer was (for Sebago) centrally located on a very small lot. Mac's Corner, named for John MacDonald, the first settler in the neighborhood, is located between Sebago Center and East Sebago, two of the areas in Sebago that come closest to approximating a

village center. Richard Candee has described the extremely dispersed pattern of early settlement in rural New England as "...a landscape of isolated farms linked by a network of town roads to a public meeting house located in a position that roughly marked the town's center." ³⁴ This is an apt description of Sebago. Sebago Center, approximating the town's geographical center, was the site of early town meetings, held in the Sebago Center School. The use of this school as a town hall probably accounts for the construction of the brick schoolhouse in the 1830s, so similar to the larger Naples Town Hall built a few years previously. It is perhaps the only nineteenth-century brick building in Sebago, suggesting its public importance. In 1856-7 The Sebago Center Community Church was built, so in 1870 the church, shared by the Congregationalists and the Baptists, was part of a small cluster of buildings that included a small water-powered mill, a few shops and stores, and several houses (fig. 12). ³⁵ East Sebago, minus the church, followed a similar pattern. Clearly, Sebago is an example of a town that was not only settled in an extremely dispersed pattern, but never had the opportunity to develop a true village center. No doubt the large bog that nearly bisects the town did little to help matters.

Mac's Corner is located on what is today the only paved road from the eastern side of this bog to Sebago Center (or "Mud City" as it has been known for many years). The Folly Road also connects these two sides of town, but

passes through low-lying, boggy area that would have been virtually impassable at times in the nineteenth century (as it still is in the late twentieth century). Moreover, the present-day route 107, which intersects Long Hill Road, is identified on the earliest available map as "The County Road," leading to Bridgton, a more substantial town, with a population of 2671 in 1870.³⁶ It was the major road leading through Sebago in the nineteenth Century. This made the Dyer house an excellent choice as a stop on the stage coach lines, where tired horses were replaced by fresh ones. A stone trough, placed here in 1899 as a memorial to John MacDonald, serves as a reminder that this was once a stop on the stage line.³⁷

This was a watering hole not only for horses, but people as well, since the Arthur Dyer house was built in 1848 as a tavern.³⁸ It was the first, and apparently only such establishment in nineteenth-century Sebago. Taverns in nineteenth-century northern New England towns were quasi-public buildings, often the site of political gatherings, sometimes even town meetings.³⁹ There is no evidence of such early political activity in this particular tavern, but it clearly was a place for townspeople, as well as weary travellers, to meet and socialize. The entire back of the second floor was originally one large open room (it has since been divided into three bedrooms). It was used as a dance hall, and apparently included a raised platform in the middle for the

fiddler.⁴⁰

It does not, however, appear to have been a very substantial public house. The house was only eleven years old in 1859 when John Bradley Hudson, a traveller returning from the White Mountains, stopped in Sebago and described what must have been this establishment:

Towards night stopped at what appeared to be a public house in the town of Sebago. Inquiring for lodgings were told they did not now make a practice of entertaining strangers, but if we would put up with their accomodations we could stay. They proved to be none of the best, and the sleeping room was destitute of furniture except for a bed, and we washed in the kitchen. They gave us a good breakfast.⁴¹

At least the weary travellers were not deceived into thinking they were getting first-class accommodations, and, unlike some of their experiences at other houses, they were well-fed. The fact that Maine prohibited the sale of spirituous liquors in the early 1850s, just a few years after the tavern was opened, probably put a damper on the financial prospects for this business. It is conceivable that the house was a kind of nineteenth-century Speak-easy. There is a sealed vault in the cellar, with granite walls that match the foundation itself, located directly

underneath the bar.⁴² This could have provided a place to conceal the illicit beverages, as well as customers, with access through loose floorboards in the room above, or stones in the wall. This could also account for the rather curious practice of not ordinarily entertaining strangers in a public house.

Outwardly, except for the sign reading "Sebago House" (still extant),⁴³ the building would have appeared to be a fairly typical farmhouse. It is a two story building with a symmetrical five-bay facade, not unlike a slightly smaller version of the Pike house. Unlike the latter, instead of a massive center chimney, it had two internal chimneys, about a quarter of the way in from each end, with fireplaces on the first floor, woodstoves on the second. It is possible that the stoves were added at some later date, but there is no evidence of this. While the chimney placement and floorplan are less conservative than the Pike house, these were hardly innovative in 1848, since houses with end chimneys and central hallways were not uncommon in urban areas fifty or more years earlier (fig. 11). The similarity in massing and fenestration to the Pike farm and other, even earlier houses is further evidence of the conservative nature of the vernacular building tradition in Sebago.

Perhaps the best illustration of this conservatism can be found in the kitchen, which retains its original

fireplace for open-hearth cooking, with a built-in brick bake oven. This is certainly not the most up to date cooking technology available in 1848, when the house was built. By this time, wood-burning cookstoves, though not universally accepted, could be found in over half of the houses in New England.⁴⁴ There is little doubt that the highest concentrations of these stoves would be found in urban areas, where new technologies and styles typically originate. But even in a rural environment, it is easier to understand that an already existing house would not be updated than that a new house would be built that incorporated the old technology. This anomaly, along with the fact that the Dyer house appears to have been built with woodstoves for heat on the second floor, clearly suggests that the construction of this old-style kitchen was dictated by personal choice rather than necessity. It is equally clear that this is a choice that is conservative in nature, looking more towards the familiar traditions of the past than the modern innovations of the future. Ironically, within a quarter-century, similar "olde-tyme" New England kitchens would be constructed as curiosities for Colonial Revival exhibitions.⁴⁵

Adjacent to the kitchen, a small one story ell leads off the gable end towards the barn. This barn is considerably older than the house, having been moved to its current location at some unknown time.⁴⁶ The siting of the barn on a lower level than the house created an arrangement

of house and barn which would have made for a less contiguous dooryard than one commonly finds in Sebago. Another outbuilding, finished on the inside, is referred to as "the store" (figs. 10 and 11), and also pre-dates the house. This out-building has reportedly been moved at least twice in its lifetime, having at one time been across the street in an unknown location. This is not hard to believe: it sits today on precarious-looking stone footings at the corners; the footings rest on open ledge, with (in a slight, but not totally inaccurate over-statement) "the brook running right underneath."⁴⁷

Presumably, the unfinished ell was used for wood storage, and perhaps other auxiliary kitchen functions. A large dining room, perhaps three-quarters of the length of the rear of the house, adjoined the kitchen. Its size probably reflects the public uses for which the house was designed. In front of the dining room was the seldom-used parlor; the other half of the front of the house is a room which originally served as the bar. Two front bedrooms, in addition to the dance hall, completed the second story floorplan.

Although in some censuses Arthur Dyer was listed as a farmer, in 1880 and 1900 he was identified as a horse dealer. In 1876 "A. Dyre" (sic) was listed as a merchant in the Maine Register.⁴⁸ Clearly, activities which took advantage of the house's central location were at least as

important as farming to the Dyer household. This is reflected in the single, relatively small ell (one might expect a larger work area for a more substantial farming operation), the store, and the dance hall. The tavern and public house may have been less than spectacularly profitable, but it seems that more commercial, trade-oriented activity, and activities related to the stage line, did continue.

The small size of the lot would have made substantial agricultural activity difficult. Such activity that did take place may well have done so on separate parcels the Dyers purchased, or in cooperation with other nearby family members. The Moses Dyer house is right down the road, and eventually the property across the road (identified as "Miss MacDonald's" in the 1871 map) came into the family (fig. 12). This pattern of family acquisition of adjacent land is already familiar from the McKenney farm at the Folly, and pertains to the Pike homestead as well. An examination of the 1871 map (fig. 12) shows that W.B. Pike (probably William Bennett Pike, son or brother of Oliver Pike, Sr.), owned a farm that, though situated on a different road, actually adjoined the Pike farm. Clearly, the communality of the nineteenth-century farm neighborhood was frequently reinforced by kinship ties. In the case of the Dyer family, this situation still exists. The former MacDonald house is lived in by Arthur Dyer's great-grandson, Ted Greene, who operates it as a farm, best known for maple

syrup production. Ted's mother, Leona Greene, lives in the Arthur Dyer house. Mrs. Greene and her family attest to the remarkable resilience of the culture of late nineteenth-century Sebaqo, a culture whose legacy is still very much alive in the closing decade of the twentieth century.

Notes to Chapter 3

- 1 Hubka, Big House, 23-25.
- 2 Ibid., 200-204.
- 3 Ibid., 13-14, 120.
- 4 Ibid., 120-122.
- 5 Meserve, Centennial History, 29.
- 6 Although there is no documentation to positively date the house, Pike and Allen family tradition holds that Oliver Pike moved to Sebago ca. 1815, building the proverbial log cabin on a site above the present house (its cellar hole of which is still extant), and built the present house about ten years later. Meserve, Centennial History, bears this out. This is consistent with the Census of Population for 1810 and 1820. Oliver Pike first appears in the census for Baldwin (Sebago) in 1820, with a wife and four children ten or under. 1825 would seem, if anything, to be a fairly late date for the house, since the Federal architectural ornamentation, massive center-chimney design and resultant floorplan would have been less than fashionable in many areas by this time.
- 7 Meserve, Centennial History, 29.
- 8 Deeds, CCRD. For example: 121/525; 125/374.
- 9 Personal collection of the author.

10 The present stairway is located near this position, but not on an exterior wall. A confusion of doorways, framed with later nineteenth-century woodwork, obscures the question further.

11 D. Boyce, L. Griffin, J. Bibber, unpublished Report, "Home of Neil [sic] and Alice Allen," Greater Portland Landmarks Advisory Service, 1988. Joyce Bibber dated the building sequence of the two ells through structural analysis of the framing members in the attic, and the sill in the basement, common to both the main house and the west ell, confirms this.

12 Map, "Baldwin and Sebago," 1871 (fig. 13), though too imprecise to be conclusive, shows the drive leading off the Convene Road at the beginning of the curve, rather than the middle, as it does today. There is a break in the stone wall, as if for a gate, at this point, and this approach would have been a logical route to the original log cabin site.

13 Hubka, Big House, 77.

14 While the popular belief that nineteenth-century parlors were used only for "weddings, funerals, and visits from the minister" may be overstated, at some point a very genuine feeling that this was a special, formal room developed. As Leona Greene put it, "Nobody dared go in the parlor..." Personal Conversation, January 15, 1991.

15 Glassie, Folk Housing, 138-140. It should be noted that in middle Virginia, where the major climatic concern

was cooling the house in summer, the trend toward increasing intensiveness ran counter to environmental considerations. For Oliver Pike and other New Englanders who had to worry more about heating in winter, the two went hand-in hand.

16 Meserve, Centennial History, 18. Neal W. Allen, Personal Conversation, January, 1991.

17 Deed, CCRD, 231/202.

18 Complaint, Personal collection of the Author.

19 One of the few anecdotes about the senior Pike involves a debt he was unwilling to pay. When the sheriff approached to execute the court judgment against him, Pike knocked the sheriff down, then went to swear out a complaint against himself, and paid a fine. When the sheriff went to complain, he found the matter already disposed of. Meserve, Centennial History, 30. Also, at least one real estate transaction was a result of a dispute between him and his neighbor, Oliver Dyke. Deed, CCRD, 112/190

20 Meserve, Centennial History, 40-51.

21 Ibid., 18.

22 Deeds, CCRD: 172/302-304; 187/182.

23 Ibid., 268/151; 289/143,144; 334/219; 423/267. Map, "Baldwin and Sebago," 1871.

24 Deed, CCRD, 494/492, identifies the house as the "Mountain Farm." U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1870, 1880.

25 Deed, CCRD, 494/492.

- 26 Map, "Baldwin and Sebago," 1871. Meserve, Centennial History, 2, 30.
- 27 Deed, CCRD, 494/492. The Census of Population, 1900, identifies Frank A. Clough, 19 years old, as a nephew of Leander Poor, living in his house.
- 28 Ibid., 494/492; 495/492.
- 29 U.S. Census of Population, 1880. Meserve, Centennial history, 18. Deed, CCRD, 459/492. In 1883, Daniel McKenney had transferred his land to his daughter, Melissa Clough.
- 30 Map, "Sebago Quadrangle. USGS, 1896.
- 31 Leona Greene, Personal Conversation, January 15, 1991.
- 32 Maine State Highway Commission Plan of Proposed Relocation State Aid Highway No. 5, Sebago - Cumberland County. CCRD, Plan Book 25, page 32.
- 33 Leona Greene, Personal Conversation, January 15, 1991.
- 34 Richard Candee, "Maine Towns, Maine People," in Maine in the Early Republic, 26-61, 28. Joseph S. Wood described this settlement pattern earlier in "Elaboration of a Settlement System: The New England Village in the Federal Period, Journal of Historical Geography, 10,4 (1984) 331-356.
- 35 History of Cumberland County, 371. History of the Sebago Center Community Church. Map, "Baldwin and Sebago," 1871.
- 36 Maine Register, 1871, 190.
- 37 Leona Greene, Personal Conversation, January 15, 1991.
- 38 Ibid.

- 39 Wood, "Elaboration of A Settlement Pattern," 333,336.
- 40 Leona Greene, Personal Conversation, January 15, 1991.
- 41 John Bradley Hudson, "Up The Canal to the Mountains," Typescript, copied from the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. I wish to thank my uncle, Franklin B. Allen, for bringing to my attention this fascinating account of an early trip from Portland to the White Mountains.
- 42 Leona Greene, Personal Conversation, March 15, 1991.
- 43 Personal collection of Leona Greene.
- 44 Priscilla J. Brewer, "Home Fires: Cookstoves in American Culture, 1815-1900," in House and Home, Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife, Annual Proceedings, 1988, Peter Benes, ed., (Boston: Boston University Press, 1990), 68-88, 73. Hubka, Big House, 125.
- 45 Rodris Roth, "The New England, or 'Olde Tyme' Kitchen Exhibit at Nineteenth-Century Fairs," in Axelrod, Colonial Revival, 159-183.
- 46 Leona Greene, Personal Conversation, January 15, 1991. Thomas Hubka apparently visited and investigated the homestead in researching his book, and made the determination of the age of these buildings based on structural evidence.
- 47 Leona Greene, Personal Conversation, January 15, 1991..
- 48 U.S. Census of Population, 1880, 1900. Maine Register, 1876, 203.

Chapter Four

Coping With a Changing World:

1870 to the Turn of the Century

The Pike Farm

In 1870, eight members of the Pike family, representing three generations, were living in the old homestead. A decade earlier there had been thirteen, a decade later there were only three.¹ Although the population of Sebago as a whole was declining during these years, such a huge loss in one household was extraordinary. Even a house as large as this would have been full of life and activity in 1860 and 1870. We can only speculate on how deserted and lifeless it must have seemed in 1880 for the three family members who still lived there. Rattling around in a fourteen-room house, they exemplify the sort of extreme situation that fueled images of rural decay.

The presence of two households at the Pike farm in 1860 may account for the construction of a second kitchen, located in one of the ells. This new kitchen might have been built anyway, as a result of the switch from fireplaces to stoves for cooking, since the new stove was frequently placed in a brand new kitchen ell.² Still, with

two separate households in the dwelling, it is entirely possible that both kitchens were in use simultaneously for a while. Such arrangements were not uncommon. The two kitchens allowed several generations to live in one house at the same time, but the creation of an entirely separate kitchen demonstrates that this was not a communal household, an "extended family," more typical of urban immigrants. The use of separate kitchens recognized the individual identity of the new generation and its own nuclear family. Since the popularity of the two-household arrangement peaked in Sebago during the 1870s, and rapidly declined in subsequent decades, it probably represented a certain compromise with the ideal living situation. Such compromises were no doubt responses to a depressed agricultural economy, combined with a relative scarcity of new land to settle. At any rate, after several decades during which the Pike house must have been fairly bulging with human activity, it seems likely that by 1880, with just three inhabitants, much of the house was probably not used at all as living space.

As the size of the Pike family shrank in the 1870s, so did the agricultural output of their farm. However, the size of the family shrank faster than that output. Crop production remained at fairly stable levels, perhaps the most significant change being a large increase in the production of oats, from 10 bushels in 1870 to 60 in 1880.³ This may reflect a growing market for oats as

horses replaced oxen, and urban growth increased the market for horse feed generally (oat production continued to increase annually until a later date in Maine than other New England states).⁴ Changing census definitions of "improved" land make comparisons between the amount of improved cropland in 1870 and 1880 problematic.⁵ However, the reported acreage of woodland and forest at the Pike farm remained constant at 75 acres between 1870 and 1880. None of the property seems to have been sold or transferred, suggesting that open land for crops and grazing also probably remained about the same.⁶ The amount of livestock changed little, although there was some shift away from sheep and towards "other cattle," presumably beef. Typically, a look around the barnyard and pastures would have revealed a horse, two oxen, about a half-dozen milk cows, a dozen or so other cattle, two pigs, five or ten sheep, and a dozen chickens.⁷ The total estimated value of all livestock declined from \$643 in 1870 to \$500 in 1880, apparently reflecting changing economic conditions more than declining production. Similarly, the estimated value of all farm production declined by nearly one-half, from \$906 to \$480, a substantial loss of income for the family.⁸

It is important to point out that estimates of value for census purposes should be taken with a grain of salt. Many farmers did not keep accurate records, and their estimates may also be affected by what sort of mood they

were in on the day the census enumerator stopped by. As one anonymous Maine farmer commented to the state Bureau of Industrial and Labor Statistics in 1890:

The day the census man came along I had the blues worse than to-day, and I gave him \$1,500 as the value of my farm, but that was too low ... It seems to me that the census ... will be mostly guess work. The questions should have been printed in all the papers, or as you have done, sent by circular to every house, then there would have been ample time to consider and answer them.⁹

Still, in this case the respondent, Oliver Pike, Jr., is apparently the same individual in both years. Apparently, he inherited the farm from his father, Oliver Pike, Sr., who died in 1868. Even if his estimates are inaccurate, they reflect his perception of his economic condition. Changes in this perception are just as important to his attitude toward life as the actual state of his finances, when measured in objective terms. In other words, looking back from a distance of over a century, it is easy for us to conclude that, given the shrinking size of the household, Oliver Pike was doing a good job of supporting his family in the face of difficult economic circumstances. But Mr. Pike, laboring day-to-day on his farm, may well have become increasingly discouraged

and pessimistic, with all his hard work seeming to gain ever smaller rewards. And despite the problematic nature of census estimates, it seems likely that there was, in fact, a decline in the dollar value of the Pike's agricultural output. Since production levels remained very nearly the same, this decline is no doubt due to outside economic forces, beyond the family's control.

Although these outside factors may have led to lower estimates of farm production and value, and possibly a perception of being worse off than ten years earlier, with a smaller household to support, the family's material condition probably remained about the same. Two of the eight inhabitants in 1870 had their own incomes: one as a domestic servant and one as a schoolteacher. Even without these two sources of income, agricultural output, whether for domestic use or commercial sale, only had to support half the number in 1880 than it had in 1870.¹⁰ The situation is a microcosm of Barron's economic analysis of the period: declining economic opportunity is matched by a declining population, leaving those who remained in much the same material circumstance. Of course, as discussed earlier, this does not seem to have been the case for Sebago as a whole during this decade, so the Pikes were apparently able to maintain an economic position within the community that was better than average.

Whatever the Pike's economic standing was in the

1870s, it does not seem to have continued into subsequent decades. Nathaniel Pike, one of Oliver, Jr.'s sons, continued to live with his father, and added at least two more mouths to feed, his wife and a daughter.¹¹ During this period, the value of livestock assessed for tax purposes declined from \$435 in 1880 to just \$65 in 1895.¹² Increasingly, the livestock belonged to Nathaniel, although he never gained ownership of the real estate. By 1885, his father, Oliver Pike, was being assessed for \$300 at interest, perhaps reflecting a change in his investment strategy. At about this time, non-dairy cattle disappear from the inventory of livestock, and by 1895 there is only one milk cow.¹³

In 1900 the valuation of the Pikes' livestock was just \$35, but this may be misleading. Nathaniel's father, Oliver Pike, Jr., had just died. As a consequence, the farm was sold out of the family, and Nathaniel was now renting from the new owners. This may have been a temporary arrangement, while he prepared to vacate. Oliver Jr. appears to have died intestate, and with a wife and five children, there was apparently no way for him to provide for all of them while still keeping the farm in the family. This may well be similar to the situation that Oliver, Jr. faced in 1868 when his father, Oliver, Sr., died. The elder Oliver Pike had ten children to provide for. The child who inherited the farm was likely to get little else, with the possible exception of burdensome

debts to his or her siblings for their shares of the estate.¹⁴ If this situation occurred in two successive generations, the obstacles to keeping the farm could have been insurmountable. Providing for one's children was an important measure of success for nineteenth-century rural New Englanders, and it was not always possible to achieve this goal, and still pass the homestead on to one of the family.¹⁵

This appears to have happened to the Pikes, since by 1901, the farmstead that Oliver Pike had carved out of the woods around 1815 had been sold out of the family, and went through a succession of owners over the next twenty years. Elsie and Fred Sanborn, who owned the house for most of the first decade of the twentieth century, operated a fairly modest farming operation with two horses, five cows, five other cattle, and a pig in 1905. By 1908 even this fairly small amount of livestock had shrunk to two cows, two other cattle, and the omnipresent pig. Still, the occupation that Fred listed in 1910 was Farmer, although his eighteen year-old son Amos was "working out" as a farm laborer.¹⁶ The fact that Amos hired out further suggests that the home farm was not a very profitable enterprise.

Sometime around the turn of the century, it appears that one of the owners tried to establish a substantial poultry operation at the Pike farm when they built a large (16 by 68 feet) chicken coop. This long, low building is

located on the far side of the barn from the house, perhaps to assure that offensive odors were kept at a distance (fig. 9). It is of two-by-four stud construction, suggesting that it was built early in the twentieth century. Because of the light frame construction, few such buildings survive from this period.¹⁷ This particular chicken coop has a garage or carriage house, possibly added after the initial construction, wider and taller than the chicken coop itself, with sliding doors to allow for vehicle entry. It is inconveniently located at the furthest end of the structure from the house, approximately 300 feet away.

There is no way of knowing just when this particular outbuilding was constructed. Tax records do not indicate a sudden jump in valuation (in fact it declines from \$1000 in 1900 to \$800 by 1905), nor is there any valuation indicating the presence of the large-scale poultry operation which such a building would surely house.¹⁸ Still, the Sanborns seem the most likely owners to have built it, since little or no serious farming was done after this time. Possibly, this explains the mortgage for \$200 which they obtained from Lillian Poor (daughter of Edwin L. Poor, who had played a pivotal role in the earlier transactions between Hartley Clough and the Smith heirs, described in Chapter Three) in 1904.¹⁹ At any rate, it appears that the farm did not prosper. The mortgage was not discharged until 1910, when Elsie Sanborn sold the

property to Laura Miles of Brooklyn, New York, who clearly bought it to use as a summer home.²⁰

The McKenney-Clough Farm

With fifty to sixty acres, Daniel McKenney's farm was about one-third the size of the Pike farm in the 1870s.²¹ While there are wild discrepancies between the tax and census figures for McKenney's farm in 1870 and 1880, by any measure, the valuation was one-half or less than that of the Pike farm, on a per-acre basis. Not surprisingly, the valuation for tax purposes is consistently lower than the census estimates. However, both McKenney and his next-door neighbor, Joseph D. Smith, who owned much of what had been McKenney's land, gave proportionately higher estimates (in relation to the assessed tax valuation) to the census than did Oliver Pike, Jr.²² Obviously, no one is likely to complain that their tax valuation is too low; it is unclear whether McKenney and Clough were over-estimating the real value of their land, or the town was under-estimating it. Either way, there is the suggestion that those who lived in the Folly thought more highly of their neighborhood than did the rest of the town. The name itself suggests that this was not the most desirable neighborhood in Sebago; the low-lying areas are so wet that the road was (and remains to this day) virtually impassable in spring, and the

hillsides tend to be very steep. It would be an exaggeration to find in the folly a parallel to the wild and desolate "Mountain" in Edith Wharton's Summer, but it would not be surprising if residents of this district were more likely to occupy a lower position in the town's social hierarchy than residents of other neighborhoods. At tax time, this would be an advantage; at other times, it could be a source of resentment.

The discrepancy between the town tax records and the census estimates also holds true for livestock evaluation in 1870 and 1880. For the amount of land he owned, Mr. McKenney's number of livestock was proportional to that of the Pike's, about half (particularly in cattle, which account for a large percentage of the dollar value and consume a similarly large proportion of the feed). The town's assessment of the livestock, however, is about a quarter of that of the Pike's. In the census, on the other hand, McKenney's estimate of the value of his livestock is about half that of Pike's, just what one would expect from a farmer who owned about half as much livestock as another.²³

Nevertheless, the fact remains that this household of 6 in 1870 was supporting itself on about half of the agricultural resources that the Pike farm had at its disposal.²⁴ McKenney's estimate of the value of total farm production was approximately two-thirds that of Oliver Pike

in 1870 (\$606 vs. \$906); and it dropped to close to one-fourth in 1880 (\$125 vs. \$480).²⁵ By the latter year, this lower production was supporting five people, as opposed to the three Pikes still living on the farm.²⁶

As discussed earlier, the Smith Farm, next door, had once been part of McKenney's, and by 1883 would be once again. For comparative purposes, it is important to look at this farm in the 1870s, since both farms combined roughly approximate the Pike Farm in acreage and resources. There are some indications that the Smith Farm was making strides towards greater production and, presumably, profitability. An orchard (or at least a few apple trees) may have been planted. Although no income from orchard products was reported in 1870, five dollars worth was reported in 1880. McKenney reported no income from orchard products in either year, while across the valley the Pikes reported a substantial increase, from \$25 to \$100. Smith was also producing more butter from his two milk cows in 1880 than he had been in 1870. Of the three farms, Smith's was the only one to substantially increase its herd of non-dairy cattle, from three to nine head, and to report an actual increase in the total value of all farm production, which doubled from \$125 in 1870 to \$250 in 1880.²⁷ Despite these improvements, he estimated that his farm had declined in total value from \$1,000 in 1880 to \$800 in 1870, although the assessed value remained constant at \$500.²⁸ It must have been easy for farmers like Smith to become

frustrated and discouraged when, after years of work had produced real gains in productivity, they saw their farms continue to lose value.

When figures for the Smith and McKenney farms are combined and compared with those of the Pike farm, It is clear that these families enjoyed a somewhat lower standard of living than did the Pikes. With Smith's expanded herd of cattle, the numbers of livestock were about equal by 1880. In both 1870 and 1880 the combined estimated value of this livestock for census purposes on these two farms roughly equalled that of the Pikes, although the town considered it only a little over half as valuable.²⁹ Crop production was roughly equal, but by any measure, the combined value of the two farms was at best two-thirds that of the Pike farm, and the estimated total value of farm production was lower by nearly as much.³⁰ Moreover, twelve people lived at the McKenney and Smith farms in 1870, and ten in 1880, compared to eight and three respectively, at the Pike farm.³¹ Thus, even if the dollar values placed on the farms and their production are arbitrary and inaccurate (production levels seem to be roughly equal), there were many more people depending on that production than there were at the Pike farm.

Like the Pikes, who had two family members holding down jobs outside the house in 1870, the McKenneys augmented their income from other, non-agricultural

sources. In 1870, two females at the McKenney house listed their occupation as "dressmaker," possibly selling to itinerant buyers as described earlier. The total value of such "home manufactures" was listed at \$20 in 1870, while Joseph Smith reported \$30 in the same category. The Pikes, however, did not report any income from home manufactures.³² Unfortunately, this category was eliminated from the Agricultural Census in 1880, and there is no evidence of any source of non-agricultural income for any of these farms in that year.

After Daniel McKenney's son-in-law Hartley Clough took over the abandoned Smith farm in 1883, life may have become a bit more comfortable for the five people in the household. According to the tax records, between 1885 and 1895, his real estate valuation declined slightly, from \$700 to \$600, while the value of his personal estate (i.e. livestock) increased from \$175 to \$255.³³ The opposite held true for the Pikes, it will be remembered, where livestock value plunged during this period. However, a drastic change had taken place by 1900. At the close of the century, Hartley Clough was not assessed any tax for real estate in Sebago, and was assessed for only \$20 worth of livestock, a horse.³⁴ Since horses were still used for transportation, he appears to have abandoned farming on his homestead. Perhaps his land was mortgaged in an unrecorded instrument, since he and his wife are still listed in the census of 1900, along with his daughter Bertha, who is

listed as a schoolteacher. In 1904 he appears to have mortgaged the land that, according to the Sebago tax lists of 1900, he no longer owned, to John and John H. Tron, of Summit, New Jersey.³⁵ Some financial catastrophe may account for this unintelligible confusion of land transfers, but it appears at least as likely that Hartley made some personal choice involving a change in his economic strategy, since he died in nearby Gorham in 1915, with an estate worth approximately \$3000, part of which was a farm in that community.³⁶ His son Burton was very active in buying and selling real estate: there are nearly 300 separate entries under his name in the index of the Cumberland County Registry of Deeds for 1915-1923. Apparently, although Hartley's Sebago homestead would eventually become one of many abandoned New England farms, he was able to give his children a good start in life.

The farm, however, was not abandoned immediately upon Hartley's departure. In 1907, the mortgage to the Trons was discharged, and in 1910 John and Mary Tron, both aged 48, appear in the census along with six children, aged six to twenty-five.³⁷ The parents and all but the youngest child were born in France, although all spoke English.³⁸ We can only speculate on the forces that caused them to emigrate from France to New Jersey, and then to a rather obscure rural town in Maine. The presence of this immigrant family in the Folly must have been a bit of an oddity for Sebago, which by this time had a relatively

stable, ethnically homogeneous population.

In 1910, John Tron, listed as a farmer in the census, was taxed by the town for one horse, two cows, five other cattle and three sheep, indicating an agricultural enterprise roughly on the same scale as that of the Sanborns at the old Pike house.³⁹ This enterprise was also supporting a family of about the same size as the Sanborns, and the Trons were apparently no more successful than the Sanborns at making a go of it. In 1915, they sold their farm to Hebron Adams, of nearby Westbrook, Maine, a non-resident who apparently used the farm as a summer home.⁴⁰

The Arthur Dyer House

In 1870, 26 year-old Arthur Dyer and his 24 year-old wife Ellen, an immigrant from Nova Scotia, had lived in their house for only a few years.⁴¹ With just one acre of land, his livestock consisted of a horse and a cow. These meager agricultural resources are enough for farming only on a very small scale, presumably for home consumption.⁴² Not surprisingly, he is not listed in the Agricultural Census of that year, although he lists his occupation as "farmer" in the Census of Population. He may have worked on somebody else's farm, perhaps that of a nearby relative.

His homestead apparently was already complete with its three buildings, the house, barn, and store, and in 1875 "Arthur Dyre" was identified as a "Merchant" in the Maine Register.⁴³ Perhaps he operated a general store (in the building the family identifies as "the store") for a brief period of time. If so, this activity does not appear to have continued for long, although, the house may have continued to serve as a stop on the stage line, for a brief period. The house does not, however, appear to have continued being used as a public house or tavern. On the contrary, at least some members of the family may have actively opposed drinking: by the early twentieth century, Arthur's daughter, Ada, was holding temperance society meetings in this former bar.⁴⁴

By 1880 Arthur Dyer had three young children, and was by now a horse dealer, which explains the 3 1/2 horses, worth \$300, for which he was assessed by the town.⁴⁵ This would have been a logical extension of the stage-related activity: he was used to handling a variety of horses, and the barn was set up to accommodate them. In 1900, he was still a horse dealer, and this activity seems to have continued, with his son, Arther E. Dyer, carrying on the tradition. The latter was said to have owned over 500 different horses during his lifetime; many were "green" horses from Canada, which were trained and sold.⁴⁶

In 1880, Arthur Dyer, Sr. acquired an additional 35

acres, located nearby on the Douglas Mountain Road. This apparently enabled him to expand his farming activity somewhat, and may have coincided with the end of the house as a stop on the stage line. He kept a few cattle and a pig or two, in addition to one or two milk cows.⁴⁷ This small menagerie held fairly constant right through the period. By 1910 Arthur Dyer, at 66, was approaching old age. In a pattern familiar from the Pike family, his son Arthur E., 29 in 1910, owned an increasing share of the livestock. Although Arthur, Jr., his wife and daughter are listed as a separate household (apparently next door) in the census, he did not yet own any real estate.⁴⁸ With the coming of the automobile (by 1920 there were 61 in town, all but five owned by residents),⁴⁹ one would expect that the buying and selling of horses would become a less lucrative business, although the Dyers seem to have continued to be involved with it. Rolling the roads in winter, the horse-drawn predecessor of snow-plowing, helped to keep this family busy in the off-season.⁵⁰ It may be that the modest farming operation was also augmented by services for summer people such as the boarding of their horses; this was definitely the case a few decades later in at least one instance.⁵¹

Unlike the hill farms of the Pikes and McKenneys, the Dyer homestead is remarkable not because of the changes that it underwent during the late nineteenth century, but because of how little it changed during this period. The

two hill farms displayed a certain volatility in terms of population, land ownership, and economic instability, and by the early twentieth century, neither seems to have continued to be a viable, working farm. The Dyer family, on the other hand, continued on a fairly even keel. The small farming operation, horse dealing, and early stage coach related activity point to a pattern of diversification of time, energy, and money in order to survive. As Hubka has pointed out, this diversification was contrary to the advice that late nineteenth-century farmers were hearing from agricultural reformers, who urged specialization in one or two crops. For a variety of cultural, geographical, and climatic reasons, this advice made little sense to most New Englanders.⁵² The relatively remote Pike and McKenney farms seem to have been unwilling or unable to either specialize in one or two crops, or diversify beyond agriculture in any sustained manner. The more centrally-located Dyers, on the other hand, appear to have been more successful in finding substantial and sustainable non-agricultural sources of income. This diversification, in part, perhaps, resulting from the absence of a large amount of land, may have helped to buffer the Dyers from the kinds of economic stresses which seem to have led (or forced, as the case may be) Nathaniel Pike and Hartley Clough to give up their farms. The latter two, with much more acreage demanding much more in the way of time, energy, and equipment to tend, seem to have

relied more exclusively on farming. Farming, which depends on the vagaries of weather and climate, is, of course, a risky business, even in the best of times. And the late nineteenth century was certainly not the best of times for farmers in northern New England.

Notes to Chapter 4

- 1 U.S. Census of Population, 1860, 1870, 1880.
- 2 Hubka, Big House, 125-128. Sarah Pike reportedly referred to the two fans over the doors as her "rising suns (sons)." Erwin R. Archibald, "Pike Family History." Unpublished typescript, personal collection of the author. Her symbolic identification of two separate doors with her two sons, when it is known that both Edwin and Oliver Jr. lived in the house at the same time, suggests an awareness of two distinct households.
- 3 U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1870, 1880.
- 4 Russell, Long Deep Furrow, 275.
- 5 Wilson, Hill Country, 100.
- 6 US Census Of Agriculture, 1870, 1880.
- 7 Ibid. Sebago Tax Records, 1870, 1880.
- 8 U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1870, 1880.
- 9 Fourth Annual Report of the Bureau of Industrial and Labor Statistics for the State of Maine, 1890 (Augusta: Burleigh & Flynt, 1891), 5, 64.
- 10 U.S. Census of Population, 1879, 1880.
- 11 U.S. Census of Population, 1880, 1900. If 1890 census schedules were available, they would almost certainly have indicated more children in that year.
- 12 Sebago Tax Records, 1880, 1895.
- 13 Ibid., 1885, 1895.

- 14 The problems caused by large families for any child who tried to maintain the family homestead were described by Will Penney: "Father came from a large family and had to pay the other members off with several thousand dollars ... Carrying this burden he had never been able to make the farm provide more than a bare living." Eighty-eight Years on a Maine Farm, Will and Minnie Penney, Lawrence M. Sturtevant, ed., (Down East Books, 1973).
- 15 Barron, Those Who Stayed, 4-5.
- 16 Sebago Tax Records, 1905, 1908. U.S. Census of Population, 1910.
- 17 Hubka, Big House, 62.
- 18 Sebago Tax Records, 1890-1910.
- 19 Deed, CCRD, 754/230.
- 20 Deed, CCRD, 867/78; 864/185.
- 21 U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1870, 1880. Sebago Tax Records, 1879, 1880.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 U.S. Census of Population, 1870.
- 25 U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1870, 1880.
- 26 U.S. Census of Population, 1880.
- 27 U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1870, 1880. Sebago Tax Records, 1870, 1880.
- 28 U.S. Census of Population, 1880.
- 29 U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1870, 1880. Sebago Tax Records, 1870, 1880.

- 30 U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1870, 1880. Sebaqo Tax Records, 1870, 1880.
- 31 U.S. Census of Population, 1870, 1880.
- 32 U.S. Census of Population, 1870, 1880. U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1870, 1880.
- 33 Sebaqo Tax Records, 1885, 1895.
- 34 Ibid., 1900.
- 35 Deeds, CCRD: 752/106, 752/107.
- 36 Will, Cumberland County Registry of Probate, docket 7449, Dec. 10, 1915.
- 37 Deed, CCRD, 751/328. U.S. Census of Population, 1910.
- 38 U.S. Census of Population, 1910
- 39 Sebaqo Tax Records, 1910, 1915, 1920.
- 40 Deed, CCRD, 953/359. Sebaqo Tax Records, 1915.
- 41 U.S. Census of Population, 1870.
- 42 Sebaqo Tax Records, 1870.
- 43 Maine Register, 1876, 203.
- 44 Leona Greene, Personal Conversation, March 15, 1991.
- 45 U.S. Census of Population, 1880. Sebaqo Tax Records, 1900.
- 46 U.S. Census of Population, 1900. Leona Greene, Personal Conversation, March 15, 1991.
- 47 Sebaqo Tax Records, 1885. Deed, CCRD, 748/315.
- 48 U.S. Census of Population, 1910.
- 49 Sebaqo Tax Records, 1920.
- 50 Leona Greene, Personal Conversation, January 15, 1991.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 Hubka, Big House, 190-192.

Conclusion: The Twentieth Century

The Three Homesteads in the twentieth century

By 1910, the loose, worn clapboards, missing roof shingles, and chimneys in need of repair at the Pike house were evidence of both its advancing age and the declining economic prospects of its inhabitants (fig. 8). This was probably the way Laura Miles, of Brooklyn, New York, saw the house when she visited it for the first time. She also, apparently, saw much more: early intact architectural features, combined with the dramatic setting and spectacular view, probably led her to buy the house. Her aim seems to have been to convert it to a summer house, apparently combining a sense of historic preservation with the therapeutic value of a vacation in the country.

Mrs. Miles (and her husband) had an immense impact on the property, possibly insuring its survival.¹ She embarked on an ambitious project of conserving and restoring the house in the spirit of the Colonial Revival. The apparently original large kitchen fireplace, designed for open-hearth cooking, with its Federal style mantel, was preserved. By the late nineteenth century, such kitchens, which resonated with images of early America for middle and upper class Americans, were the centerpieces of private,

and public, historic house-museum restorations and reproductions.² In the two front parlors, original Federal and Greek Revival style woodwork was preserved, and possibly restored. Carefully-wrought Federal-style reproduction woodwork was installed in the two rooms in the southern ell, and in two upstairs bedrooms. In the western ell, a purely revival style was adopted, with features such as heavy cornices, boxed ceiling beams, and window seats. One of these ells had housed the second kitchen in the latter part of the nineteenth century.³ Mrs. Miles had the kitchen (since remodelled) moved to the smallest, southernmost ell, which had evidently been a shed until this time. This process involved raising the roof of this ell.⁴

Other external changes were made. The finishing of the attic, turning it into living space, involved adding dormer windows on the east facade. It seems likely that Mrs. Miles installed the louvered shutters which, until the 1970's, surrounded the sixty windows. Shutters do not appear in the earlier photographs of the building (fig. 8). The most striking feature that she added was the grand porch, or "piazza," which, with its round classical columns, wraps around the northern and western sides of the house. The piazza provided an outdoor extension of the living space, with spectacular mountain views, and added greatly to the impression of monumentality as the house is approached from the bottom of the hill. It is also, of

course, another instance of the modification of the local vernacular building tradition by the urban elite.

Curiously, although Laura Miles was a summer person, she kept, in addition to horses, three cows and two pigs on the farm.⁵ Perhaps she wanted the country experience to be complete with real farm animals. This must have involved some kind of caretaker, who would care for and have benefit of these animals in the off-season, probably at a neighboring farm. At any rate, for the extraordinary amount of time, energy, and money she put into this house, she kept it only briefly. In 1918 it was sold to Edna M. Waterman, of Portland.⁶

This ownership was also brief: Mrs. Waterman died in 1920, leaving the house to her husband Albert, who kept it until 1923.⁷ Her probate inventory suggests that she was a rather well-to-do woman. Her total estate was valued at just over \$46,000, and included three furs valued at \$1350, along with a considerable amount of jewelry and silverware. The contents of the Sebago home were valued at nearly \$2000, and included numerous rush and wicker chairs, iron bedsteads, a "Victor talking machine," grandfather clock, and enough furniture of various descriptions to fill the fourteen-room house.⁸ In 1923 the house was sold to Margaret Allen (and her husband, Neal W. Allen, Sr.). Horses continued to be kept here for several decades, hay continued to be cut from the fields, a large orchard was

planted, and timber-cutting in the woods was undertaken, but this was clearly no longer a working farm.

Although its eventual fate was very different, the story of the Daniel McKenney house during the first two decades of the twentieth century appears to be surprisingly similar to that of the Pike house. In 1915, the immigrant Tron family sold their farm to Hebron Adams, of nearby Westbrook, Maine.⁹ Adams is listed as a non-resident in the tax records; apparently he bought the place as a summer home. In 1920, he was taxed for an automobile worth \$800, which would seem to indicate that he personally used the house, and had not bought it simply as an investment, or to rent out. Interestingly, this is by far the highest valued automobile in town; the next highest (of which there are several) is \$500. Since the house no longer exists, there is no real indication of what he might have done with it, but it seems that he changed it little, if at all. The tax valuation on the building did not change from \$500 between 1915 and 1920, while Laura Miles' valuation on her buildings had gone up from \$400 in 1910 (when the Sanborns owned it) to \$1100 by 1915.¹⁰ Since the town was not bashful about charging non-residents their full share of the tax burden, and the house no longer survives, it is unlikely that Mr. Adams made many improvements.

For the Dyers, life in the early twentieth century seems to have continued in much the same way as it had in

the late nineteenth. Arthur Dyer died in 1920, with the house eventually going to his daughter, Ada.¹¹ This temperance woman used to boil down sap for her own maple syrup in the kitchen, while the men of the family performed the same task, on a much larger, commercial scale, in the woods. Maple sugaring is still an important part of life for this family: across the road, the farm of Ada's great-nephew, Ted Greene, is probably best known for this product. Of course, some of Arthur Dyer's family moved away, but a modified continuation of the nineteenth-century mixed-farming, home-industry system allowed those family members who stayed, and their descendants, to continue their lives in the same homestead Arthur Dyer established in 1868. Horse dealing is no longer part of the picture, but other elements remain. The huge horse-drawn roller has been replaced by the modern snowplow, but a fourth generation of Arthur Dyer's descendants now helps keep the roads clear in winter.¹²

Sebago Comes of Age

By the first few decades of the twentieth century, the gradual population decline of late nineteenth century Sebago had ceased. The town reached a sort of equilibrium, with a population of roughly 500, which was to last until the 1960s.¹³ If it is possible to find a turning point for

Sebago as it made the adjustment to the modern world, it would probably be the mid to late 1890s. The economy seemed to stabilize a bit, and the summer population began to make its presence felt more strongly. The opening of Potter Academy in 1895, providing an opportunity for Sebago teenagers to attend high school in their own town, symbolized this turn around. Huge handbills invited one and all to attend the dedication ceremonies on September 23, promising "Music, Speaking, and Reading."¹⁴ The guest speaker was no less a personage than the State Superintendent of Schools, and the entertainment was provided by the Hatch and Skillin Concert Company of Portland. Admission to this event was twenty cents, with reserve seats going for the princely sum of thirty-five cents. It was a major event for this small out-of-the-way town.

Sebago's pride in its new high school is indicative of an outlook that found value in its traditional way of life, yet strived for improvement, perhaps sensitive to outsiders who may have perceived the town as backward. The town as a whole bears at least superficial resemblance to the remote, decayed villages so popular with nineteenth-century social observers. While such perceptions were overstated and oversimplified, the very real economic problems that towns like Sebago faced in the closing decades of the nineteenth century could only have reinforced such viewpoints, and residents of these towns were probably well aware of such

the wagon wheels sank half-way into the mire, vacation was declared.¹⁵

While the Folly declined and became deserted in the first half of the twentieth century, the reverse was true for other areas, which became increasingly developed as a result of the growing numbers of summer people. Some of these tourists stayed for a few days or weeks at a guest house or inn, some built their own lakeside camps, and others bought former farms, like the Pike and (apparently, for a short time) the McKenney homesteads, converting them to summer houses. By the 1970s and 1980s, this conversion process was reversed in some cases (as at the Pike farm, now known to the Allen family as "Woodside Farm"), with summer places of all descriptions being winterized and used as year-round residences. Not all of these former summer people have been shy about becoming actively involved in the community. Ken Allen, for example, built a year-round house on part of the former Pike farmstead. He has been active in the volunteer rescue squad, and served as a town selectman.

It would be easy to interpret the history of Sebago since the 1890s in terms of conflict between summer people and year-round residents, expanding in recent decades to include tensions between people whose families have lived in town for generations and newcomers, frequently commuting to jobs in the Portland area. No doubt, cultural outlooks

and economic interests between such groups do not always coincide, but it would be at best an oversimplification to view the situation solely in these terms.. The instantaneous mass communication provided by the electronic media of the late twentieth century has blurred many local and regional distinctions, touching smaller and more remote places than Sebago.

Nevertheless, the traditions of communality and mutuality that evolved in the nineteenth century are not entirely dead. Institutional manifestations of these include the volunteer fire department, rescue squad, and even the town meeting form of government. Saturday night Bean Suppers are held in the town hall from time to time, often to raise money for organizations like the volunteer fire department, and occasionally, to benefit a citizen who has just experienced some kind of monumental personal catastrophe. Townspeople are called on to bake beans, make pies, or buy hot dogs for such affairs. Especially when held in the summer, these suppers take advantage of tourist money as well.

Such traditions cannot be viewed simply as "taking care of one's own," symptomatic of a closed society. Certainly, the shared labor of nineteenth-century farm neighborhoods involved a tacit understanding of a reciprocal debt in kind. Even so, this should not be viewed as some kind of manifestation of the shrewd,

calculating, mean-spirited, 'yankee trader." As Hubka points out, helping a neighbor was simply the right thing to do.¹⁶

Long-term relationships sprang up between summer people and year-round residents. Shortly after Margaret and Neal Allen, Sr. bought the old Pike place, a close relationship was established with the Fitchs in the next farm down the Convene Road (fig. 13). The Fitchs helped with such tasks as haying the fields, and personal friendships grew between some members of the families.

The Fitch homestead, another not-quite-connected farm, is still lived in by the same family, although, like many other houses, it descended through the female side, and their last name is now Anderson. Clearly, the situation of a homestead remaining in a family by passing it on to a daughter, rather than a son, is not unique. Daniel McKenney passed his farm on to his daughter and son-in-law, and Arthur Dyer to his daughter, and eventually a grand-daughter (although Leona Greene was the niece of Ada Dyer, who owned the house after the death of her father). Since family connections were so critical for the survival and success of rural people in late nineteenth-century New England, it should come as no surprise that the home farm was often passed on to a woman. Hubka has shown how the spheres of men and women overlapped in the rhythms of work on nineteenth-century New England farms, and these

inheritance patterns are further evidence that in many areas of life, gender roles were not rigidly segregated in rural communities like Sebago.¹⁷

If family and neighbors were at the center of the rural New Englanders' world, it should not be assumed that strangers were treated with a lack of concern and respect. This spirit of cooperation is eloquently summed up by a story Leona Greene tells about her father, Arthur Dyer.¹⁸ It seems that every Sunday during "mud season" (the time of year that passes for spring in Sebago), he would harness one of the horses. He knew that at some point, a Sunday driver from the city, overly eager for an early spring drive in the country, would need to get pulled out of one of the mud-holes that were common to the unpaved roads of the twenties and thirties. Arthur Dyer expected no payment for this service, and only once received any, when one grateful gentleman gave him a cigar. Mr. Dyer, of course, did not smoke.

Notes to Conclusion

- 1 Allen Family tradition, which refers to "the lady from New York," who owned the house before Margaret and Neal Allen Sr., is borne out by a newspaper dated 1916, which wrapped an unused newell post that exactly matches several used in the attic and room over the kitchen.
- 2 Rodris Roth, "The New England, or 'Olde Tyme' Kitchen Exhibit at Nineteenth-Century Fairs," in Axelrod (ed.) The Colonial Revival in America, 159-183.
- 3 Boyce, Griffin, and Bibber, Report.
- 4 The early photographs (fig. 8) clearly show a much lower roofline. Interior photographs taken during renovations in 1978 also clearly reveal the original roofline. Personal collection of Franklin B. Allen.
- 5 Sebago Tax Records, 1915, 1916.
- 6 Deed, CCRD, 1013/354.
- 7 Ibid., 1139/109.
- 8 Will, Cumberland County Registry of Probate, Docket 11723.
- 9 Deed, CCRD, 953/309.
- 10 Sebago Tax Records, 1910, 1915, 1920.
- 11 Deed, CCRD, 1080/18; 2492/70.
- 12 Leona Greene, Personal Conversation, March 15, 1991.
- 13 Maine Register, 1900-1970.
- 14 Personal collection of Leona Greene.

- 15 Leona Greene, Personal Conversation, March 15, 1991.
- 16 Hubka, Big House, 158.
- 17 Ibid., 151. Leona Greene, Personal Conversation,
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