

Copy of a letter to W. H. McLaughlin
from Almira McLaughlin July 29, 1898.

Castine, me
my dear nephew,

Your recent letter and copy of the
"Argus" were promptly received - please
accept my thanks for the courtesy.

I was quite interested in the reports
of the festivities of the "Glorious Fourth"
with you, was glad Scarborough could
join in the universal expression
of patriotism of the "Union" on this
memorable year. I think it has ^{not} been
her wont to freely utter all the
choicest promptings of the Higher nature.

But one must be dull indeed
to resist the powerful influence
that fills our very atmosphere in
every niche - developing such noble
specimens of the possibilities of
Humanity and thus ameliorating the
bitter ills that still stalk beside its
pathway.

I would gladly respond to your
request for information relative to
the Ecclesiastical history of Scarborough were
I in possession of any facts that would

aid you in the least. Very little of my life was spent in my native town and my associations with the Black Point Parish were extremely limited as you will perceive by the assurance that I never saw either the "old meeting House" or the more modern church; and my high estimation of the worshippers therein was imbibed from their just appreciation by the older members of my family.

Parson Lancaster I have many times heard preach in the 2nd Parish Pulpit. The old custom of "exchanges" was continued until the close of his public services, though his theologic views differed widely from his neighboring brothers. I recall him as a tall hard-featured person, whose meritorious traits were sadly obscured by a stern and selfish nature. He has been so long a resident of that Land where happier views attain, we will trust he long ago

attuned his harp to sweeter strains of melody, and are we not told to tread lightly o'er the ashes of the departed?

I do not know the site of the "old meeting House" at Hunstan. When the later House was to be built, there was much discussion about the location, persons in the western part of the town thought a more central point was due to the many residents in that section. Finally it was decided to yield one mile of the distance from Hunstan Corner, a Mrs. Collins, deeding a large lot of land from an orchard for the building, so long as it should be used for "religious purposes". The house was very large and substantially built, fronting north with large well proportioned "Porch" as then styled, entered by three doors, two flights of stairs therein led to the galleries, in which were two rows of pews on the sides, and the front contained the "singer's seats" from which sometimes came

very good music but not always.

The pulpit was at the rear, accessible by two flights of stairs, an inevitable "sounding board" overhead, which was a source of terror to me lest it fall.

Seats for the bleachers were just in front of the pulpit, raised a little from the floor as were all the wall pews. There were three aisles, the center one was entered from the Porch, the two side ones from doors in the main building. The pews were all square with hinged seats which oft times came down audibly. The house was well lighted by its two windows in two tiers of forty panes on each side and eight more at the ends. But there was not a sign of any heating apparatus within its walls save the old time tin footstove or a warmed foot-plank which after a 5 or 6 mile drive was rewarmed or refilled at the

pastor's fire, that was at a later date at opposite side of the way and was expected to be ready for service at "early meeting hour". Truly the people of those days had good courage and power of endurance. During the winter there was usually but one service, and for a number of years, that was held in the Pastor's house. I have no reference at time of Father's final resignation; a year or two afterward a Mr. Sawyer was induced to make an effort to rebuild the society by the Maine Missionary Agency, but less than a year after his ordination he retired, utterly discouraged. The fine old building, with no one to care for it went rapidly to decay - a "resting-place for the Bat and the Owl" - till finally leave was granted by the Legislature for its sale at auction, the proceeds of which, were barely enough to pay for its razing and refencing the lot to previous condition.

The large Pulpit Bible presented at the time of the dedication by

Mrs. Aaron Burnham (one of the staunchest members of the Parish) was transferred to the "Union or Free" House at the west part of the town not far from Buxton.

Mrs. Burnham's home was in that vicinity in those early times. Have I omitted anything connected with this subject? Can you not find your way into the middle aisle and seat yourself in your great grandfather's (Robert McLaughlin's) pew? - about the fifth from the + entrance. The next one was Col. Cumston's, both of which were usually well filled. How many venerable white-haired couples I can recall as assembled there and all of whom have joined the great majority. I am the last surviving member of the church, it may be of the parish also.

One of the bleacons (Daniel Moulton) survived the Pastor a few years and was at his funeral services in 1852 joining his

Stemulous voice in the cheerful, trustful hymns that were there rendered. He had always been prominent in the choir. Mr. Henry G. Storer, whose presence was ever a benediction, led the services on that occasion, as also just eight weeks previously, at the gathering of the same little circle of friends at the funeral of my mother. It comes before me at this moment as the last reunion of both family and church on this side of Life's River and one more crossing will complete the circle on the opposite bank where all will probably better understand their individual responsibilities and have more charity for the failings of others. If a little more of that spirit were for the failings of others. If a little more of that spirit were manifested while here the happiness of the world at large would be greatly advanced.

There was a pastor at Blunston previous to 1800, Rev. Mr. Chadwick, I do not know the length of his

charge. His resignation was caused by ill health, mental and physical. He continued to reside at Blunston a number of years. I recall the gloominess of his funeral. Children of tender age were expected to participate on those occasions. Parson Lancaster officiated, being the elder clergyman. Mrs. Chadwick a delicate sensitive woman was very ill and the three daughters were also quite worn with long watchings.

Under the circumstances, Mr. I. suggested that Mr. Lancaster present as cheerful a aspect as possible. The result was the whole of that most lugubrious hymn that Isaac Watts ever wrote - a lengthy sermon and prayer in harmony therewith. Perhaps you have met with the hymn alluded to - "Hark from the tombs a doleful sound, mine ears attend the cry - ye living men come view the ground: where you must

shortly lie" etc. Probably the venerable pastor would not think a burial perfected that did not send forth that warning note. It is a blessing to have outlived those dark, dismal views.

I have "looked backward" a long way and offer you, perhaps in too many words, the thoughts I have collected by the wayside of memory. They are for your special edification. There may not be an iota of any value for the purpose you wished, but if there is an occasion to use a crumb, you can do so on the strict proviso that neither by name or inference I am to be connected with it.

It was a lonesome route to travel alone and I have wished for some one who had been over the ground with whom to discuss salient points and brighten the picture. But you must accept it with its imperfections. I think I prefer to look forward in anticipation of future joys and reunion with

friends, rather than traversing those forsaken fields.

I note the incident you refer to in your address, and I think had we heard the remark of Mrs. Selton, from herself, at the time, the phraseology would have been a little different from what has come to us 80 or more years later. Sharp sayings lose none of their acidity by travel.

To return to the meeting house, I would add it was painted white, with roof, doors and steps a deep reddish brown. The inside was of the native wood guiltless of paint except on the pulpit, the table and seats in front of it which were painted white.

Accept my best wishes for your health and success in business affairs. Aim to make the world better for your having passed through it. Kind regards to your family also,
from your Aunt Almira McLaughlin,