

SEBAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESENTS



NEIGHBORHOODS OF SEBAGO CONVENE 2024

ON THE COVER

Convene residents pose for a photo taken around 1891, probably by James F Haley. Many of these people's stories are told in this calendar.

Back row: Charles Davis, Andrew Robinson, Alvin Gray, Jennie Whitney

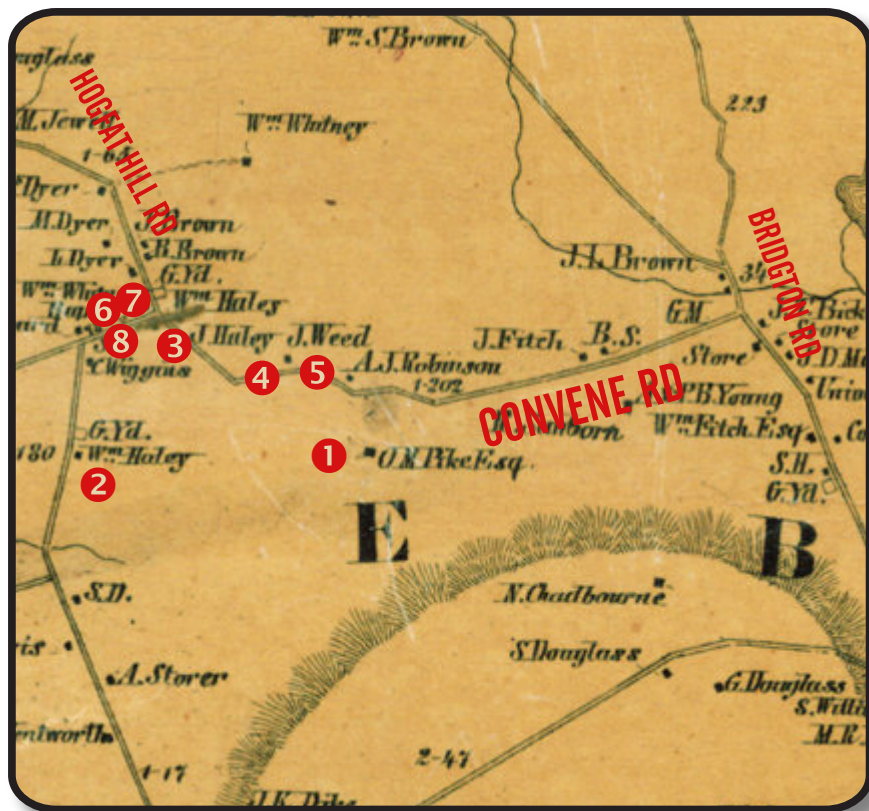
2nd row: Mrs. Robertson, Delphina Weed, Rose Gray, Berta Lombard, Carry Lombard, ? Lombard, Rachel Dyer, ?, Nellie Haley, ?

Front row: Herbert Gray, Henry Weed, Charles Haley, Eva Whitney, Ella Pike, Lon Richardson, Lucy Pike, Sarah Haley

January 2024

The Convene area, roughly defined as the land and houses along the road to Hiram between Orchard Road and Robinson Hill Road, is the focus of this year's calendar. Originally it was called New Limington after early residents who came here from Limington. Settlers began arriving in the early decades of the 1800s, and by 1820 ten families were established in the area, headed by Nicholas Davis, Daniel Dyer, William Haley, William Irish, John Libby, Oliver Pike, John Pugsley, John Shaw, Amos Storer and Francis Strout. When the first post office was established for the area in 1892, the Postal Service required a new name; there were too many New Limingtons elsewhere. The committee for choosing a new name struggled, and after several inconclusive meetings, one of them said, "We are about to convene again, and are no nearer a name than the first time we met." "That's it!" said someone else, "Convene!" And so it has been Convene ever since.

Approximate locations of the buildings discussed in this calendar are shown on this excerpt from the 1857 road map.



- ① Oliver Pike House (February/March)
- ② Haley Farm (April/May)
- ③ McKenney Home (June)
- ④ Gray House (July)
- ⑤ Weed House (August)
- ⑥ Freewill Baptist Church (September)
- ⑦ Whitney House/Maple Grove Grange Hall (October/November)
- ⑧ New Limington Schoolhouse (December)

February 2024

Oliver Pike House

Oliver Pike was born in Cornish in 1788 and came to Sebago around 1815. He acquired a large tract of land on the side of Saddleback Mountain and built a cabin on the northwest slope. His wife, Sarah Page from Ep-ping NH, soon joined him. The cellar hole of this cabin is still visible in the upper left field of the property, as is the pipe running from the spring that supplied the house with water. In the early 1820s Oliver began construction on a larger house for his growing family, quarrying the huge foundation stones from the hillside above. As the family grew, so did the house. The original two-story Federal style house came to have ells and

sheds and a barn. The farm prospered, and as Oliver Sr became increasingly involved in town affairs, his law practice and his seat in the Maine state legislature, he turned the management of it over to Oliver Jr around 1850. Oliver Jr lived in the home until his death in 1899. By that time, his children had built lives for themselves elsewhere, and there was no one to carry on the family farm. The property was sold as a summer home to Laura Miles of New York, who summered her with her four children. She made many renovations and improvements to the property, but after eight years she sold it. Two owners later, it was for sale again.



*Pike House
circa 1880,
showing the
ells, shed and
barn*

Woodside Farm

In 1923, the Old Pike Place was up for sale again. Margaret and Neal Woodside Allen of Portland purchased the farm and land as a summer retreat. Margaret's father was the well-known architect John Calvin Stevens, who spent time here in Sebago at his daughter's new place. The property became known as Woodside Farm. When the elder Allens died, they left the property to their grandchildren. The farmhouse has remained in the Allen family since then, with a fifth generation of Allens now playing in the fields and picking blueberries, apples and pears around the house. A number of

family members have built houses on the land, keeping the whole farm in the family.

The Pike Cemetery is on the land near the original cabin, and a separate Woodside Cemetery is next to it, where Allen family members are interred. Richard Allen, grandson of Neal and Margaret, and his son David live there now.

Much of this information came from a booklet written by Richard's late wife Margaret, a historical society member.



In the photo above, taken from the back of the house in 1901, you can see that the shed has been removed, but its faint outline remains. By 1923, when the photo on the left was shot, a porch had been added where the old shed used to be.

April 2024

Haley Farm



William Haley, a contemporary of Oliver Pike, was born in 1796, and like Pike he came to Sebago around 1815. With his wife Polly, William built a home near the corner of Hogfat Hill Road. He was a deacon of the church and one of the leading men in the community, and a blacksmith by trade.

In 1849, his son William Jr married Miriam Pugsley, and took over this house, which had been her father's

property. It became known as the Haley Farm. Their son John F Haley took up photography in the early days of that profession and became well known for his work. Many of the photographs in our collection were made by John and his sister Sarah.

Sarah was the last Haley to live in the house, and after her death in 1945, the property was sold to Fred and Isabel Usher.



In 1945, the Haley Farm was bought by Charles F. ("Fred") and Isabel Usher. Fred ran a general store in the ell between the house and the barn from 1946 to 1968. Then it was shut down and all remaining merchandise was sold at auction.

Fred was known to be thrifty. Folks say that when you walked into the store, it was blacker than the inside of your pocket. All you could see was a little red glow in the back, from Fred's cigarette. He only turned on the light when a customer came in.

a few hands before it was acquired by Rich and Sarah Parrott Bianculli. The 200-year-old house and barn are in excellent condition today thanks to their efforts.

An article in the Bridgton News from January 1963 reports on a robbery of the store by a young man who had originally requested that a check be cashed. After Fred refused to cash the check, the young man pulled out a rusty revolver and demanded all the money. Fred handed him \$45 from the cash drawer and \$6 from his wallet. The culprit got away, but was eventually arrested. What the robber did not know was that Fred kept another wallet hidden, with a lot more money in it. The incident became known as "Fred fooled 'em."

After the Ushers sold out in 1972, the property went through

COUNTRY STORE

AUCTION

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 23rd. 10 A.M.
At the **FRED USHER STORE, CONVENT, ME.**
3 mi. from Hiram. Auction Arrows displayed
from Rte. 107, Sebago Ctr.

STORE GOING OUT OF BUSINESS
Owner has retired and everything must go including
groceries, ammunition, very large assortment of
boots, shoes, shirts, pants, underwear, caps, gloves,
socks, towels, blanket remnants and notions.
Large 6 x 8 walk-in cooler, snow blower, chain
falls, store scales, platform scales, electric cash reg-
ister, fishing supplies and much, much more. Space
does not permit a full listing.

SALE POSITIVE — INDOORS CATERING
SPACE LIMITED — PLEASE COME EARLY

NELLIE WARD
Maine's Lady Auctioneer
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June 2024

McKenney House



William Haley's son James, a blacksmith like his father, bought 45 acres from his brother William Jr in 1849. After James' death, the property passed down to his son James R Haley. It was purchased in 1928 by his nephew Herbert Gray and Herbert's wife Elsie. Herbert farmed the land until 1940, when he was killed in a tragic horse-drawn mowing machine accident.

The property passed from Herbert and Elsie to their daughter Herberta and her husband Harry McKenney. Herberta and Harry and their daughter Dorothy lived here for many years. Herberta stayed in the house until her death in 1998.

This house, which once had a barn attached, sits on part of the original James Haley farm, but it is not known if Haley or a later owner built it. The house is currently owned by Jeff and Belisa Harriman.

Alvin Gray House

July 2024

James Haley's daughter Rose married Alvin Gray when she was not quite 16 years old. In 1885, they borrowed money to buy land from Charles Davis and to build this house.

Alvin was the school agent for the New Limington School, satisfying the Superintendent with his good relations with parents and earning praise for his work, but apparently he had no head for money, and he suffered financial woes all his life. He was forced to raise money through a string of mortgages and re-mortgages on this property throughout the next decade, and worked through one foreclosure before regaining title to their home. He and Rose had to spend one winter at the town farm in Denmark before moving back to to live with their son Herbert and his wife Elsie.

The story is told of a particularly bad thunderstorm in the 1940s, when a bolt of lightning went in one living room window and out another.

The last of the Gray family to live here was daughter Alice, a Hiram school teacher, and by the 1960s it was in such disrepair that it wasn't livable. The house burned in 1992. The Mike Vacchiano family have a new house there now.



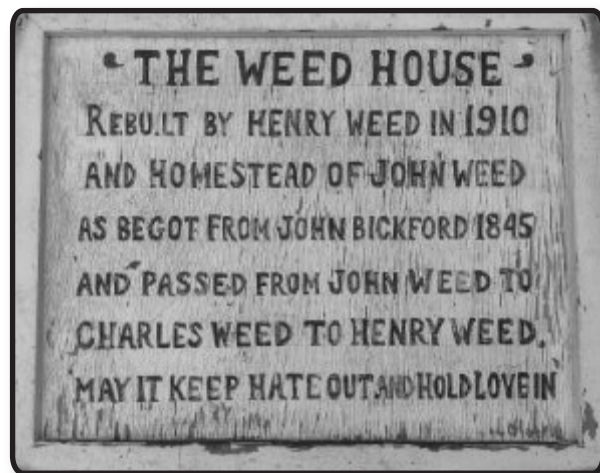
August 2024

Weed House

In 1845 John Weed and his wife Mary Bickford bought 62 acres from Mary's brother, part of it land that was formerly owned by William Haley. They built what became known as the Weed Farm. The property passed to their son Charles and his wife Delphina, who raised their son Henry here. Charles died suddenly in 1907 at age 63, and Delphina followed within the year, after which Henry and his new wife Cora Belle White took over the farm and built a new house, which stands there today.

Among Henry and Cora's children was a daughter, Doris, who married Merle Douglass and lived with Henry and Cora at the farm. In 1959 it passed to Clayton Douglass, grandson of Henry and Cora, who cared for his grandparents until their passing. June Douglass Allen, a long-time member of the Historical Society, lived here as a child.

The house has passed through many hands since the Douglass family sold it, once being owned by the Philip Harnden family, who lived across the road. Today it is the home of Sandy Shriver.



Top: the original Weed Farm. Below: the "new" house, built next to the original. Left: sign hanging in the Weed House.

Freewill Baptist Church

Convene's Freewill Baptist Church came together in 1821, when Elder John Stevens arrived from Limington to preach here. He later wrote that he was nervous about preaching to such eminent men as Oliver Pike and William Haley. The church was formally organized on November 19, 1826 with eight members. They met in the New Limington School, just west of the present church building.

William Haley was on the fence, so to speak, about whether to join or not. His wife Polly was a member, but he chose to sit on the doorstep and listen to the sermons, unsure if he wanted to participate or not. A sudden downpour one Sunday with huge claps of thunder and lightning drove him inside – he took this to be a sign that he should join the church. He was soon elected to be a deacon and often preached when there wasn't another pastor available. He was one of the men spearheading the effort to build their own church. This building was erected in 1844 and was home to the Freewill Baptists for almost a hundred years.

In 1941 Rev. Alma Fields, pastor of the church, brought the remaining members of the Baptist church into the Church of the Nazarene. They remained in this location until 1990, when their new church

September 2024



Church of the Nazarene summer Bible School, 1947

was built. In 1996 the Sebago townspeople purchased the former Nazarene Church as a permanent home for the Sebago Historical Society.

The church as it looked around 1940, in its last years as the Freewill Baptist Church



October 2024

Whitney House

In 1855, James Haley sold a small plot of land abutting the Freewill Baptist Church, along with its buildings, to William H Whitney. William went to California as one of the original "49ers" searching for gold, later coming back to Maine to a cabin in Aroostook still looking for gold. He became a recluse, changing his name and letting people think he was dead, but someone from Sebago happened to see and recognize him.

In 1868 he sold the land and house in Conve to his wife Hannah. Hannah left Sebago for Boston and sold the property to Seth Pugsley in 1874. His widow Rachel lived there until 1880, when she sold the house and all her personal property to Isaac Brown for \$300, with the stipulation that he take good care of her and provide her with good food and medical care until her death. Isaac moved her into his home where she lived with his family, but her death came less than six months later.

Isaac's neighbor Charles Davis was a member of the Maple Grove Grange, and on the committee to find a permanent home for the organization. There must have been some back-fence conversations between the two. In December of 1880, less than a month after he bought it, Isaac sold the house and stable to the Maple Grove Grange for \$250.00.



We have no photo of the house before Maple Grove Grange owned it. This is the earliest picture we can find, taken sometime between 1908 and 1920. The man in the wagon is unidentified.

Maple Grove Grange Hall

Maple Grove Grange bought this building in December 1880 and had their first meeting there a month later. They began interior renovations in 1894, and added fifteen feet on the left end in 1908. Birch flooring was laid down on the second floor in 1909, and they started holding public dances there soon after. Members came from all parts of town, and a new stable was built in 1909 to accommodate their horses. A second extension was added in the early 1920s, right on the corner of Hogfat Hill Rd, before the heater piece was added to facilitate traffic flow. After over 100 years of use, the building burned in 1979.

November 2024



The Grange hall in 1922, when the second addition was being built.



A dance evening at the Grange, sometime after 1909.

December 2024

The first schoolhouse in New Limington was built in the early 1820s, and was also used by the Freewill Baptists before they built their own church. Something happened to that building – fire, perhaps – because there is a record of Convene's pupils meeting in a room at William Haley's house in 1839. Soon after, a schoolhouse was built next to the Freewill Baptist Church, and in 1847 it was replaced with a new building across the road. That school burned in 1873, and was replaced yet again with the existing structure, which remained in use until 1951, when the Sebago Elementary School opened. The town sold



New Limington Schoolhouse



the empty schoolhouse to Edson and Edith Brown in 1955. After a succession of owners, it became the home of Roberta Douglass, who lived there from 1983 to her death in 2023. Her grandson Henry Douglass has purchased the schoolhouse and plans to live there.

*Above:
Pupils and teacher at New Limington Schoolhouse, 1909*

*Left:
New Limington/Convene Schoolhouse*



We are indebted to John F Haley (1852-1921) and his sister Sarah D Haley (1859-1945) for their many photographs of Sebago in the late 19th and early 20th century. John is with the camera in the picture on the upper left, and one of his sisters, Elzira, is taking the photo on the right.

Lower left: This wonderful picture of a horse-drawn grader was taken by John.

Coming for 2025 East Sebago

If you have pictures and stories to share of your family's home in the last century, please contact a member of the Sebago Historical Society, send a comment to our Facebook page or email us through the Contact page of our website www.sebagohistoricalsociety.org



The Calendar Committee, Sue Cummings, Nancy Sosman and Sherrill Brown, would like to thank all those who invited us into their homes and opened their photo albums, telling us the stories behind the pictures. A special thank you to June Allen for her personal knowledge of this area and the folks who lived there.

All information is as accurate as can be determined at the time of printing.