

SEBAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESENTS

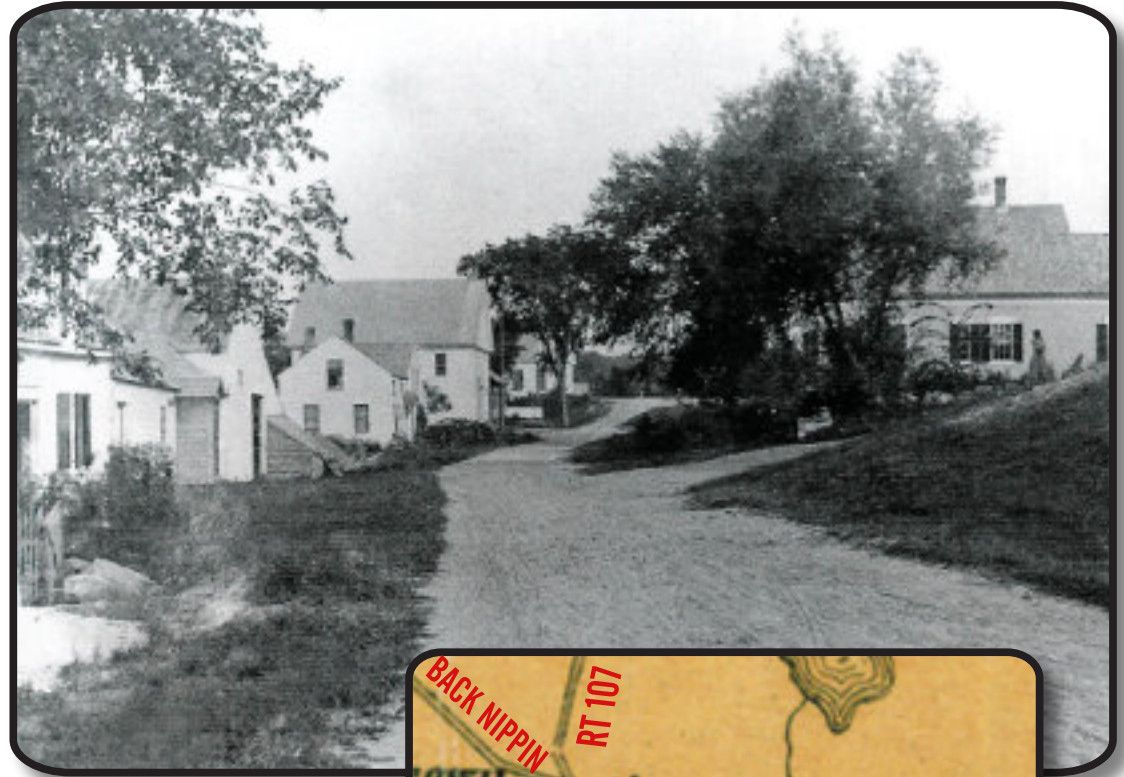


NEIGHBORHOODS OF SEBAGO
MUD CITY 2026

ON THE COVER: *At the Union Church, 1909. Back row, left to right: Alex Chessey, Miss ? - Teacher, Emma Lombard, Winnie Thorne, Florence White, Lena Burnell, Alice Miller, Harry Meserve, Harold Decker, Bethesda Bosworth, Mildred Sanborn, Beulah Fitch, Harold Bickford, Orin Chadbourne, Austin White, Raymond Harnier*

January 2026

The area of Sebago along Bridgton Rd from the Brick Schoolhouse down the hill to Convene Rd has been called Mud City since time out of mind. The name was coined before 1870, when the Bridgton News started publication; they used it as a well-known place name. It's easy to imagine how it got its nickname: think of the old dirt road running along the base of Douglas Mt., with the drainage from all the surrounding hills racing toward the wetlands and Marriner's Pond, which lie just below the road. During spring run-off, or any rainy spell, the road must have been deep in mud. The road was not paved until the 1930s, after this photo was taken in 1925. It looks south along Bridgton Rd, with the back part of Stacy's house on the left and the Principal's House on the right. The tall building just left of center is the Old Town Hall, with the church poking out behind it.



In the 19th century, Mud City was a commercial strip, with stores and shops on both sides of the road – grocers, shoemakers, coopers, post office. All are gone today, but some of the storekeepers' houses remain.

Approximate locations of structures in this issue, shown on the map of Sebago from 1857:

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|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ❶ Squire Fitch's House (Feb) | ❹ Potter Gym (July) |
| ❷ Potter Academy (March) | ❺ Principal's House (Aug) |
| ❸ Community Church (Apr) | ❻ Emma & Benn Douglass (Sept) |
| ❹ Gordon Irish House (May) | ❼ Durrell House (Oct) |
| ❺ Old Town Hall (June) | ❽ Sanborn House (Nov) |
| | ❾ Stacy's Store (Dec) |



February 2026

Squire Fitch House

William Fitch, Esq., known as "Squire Fitch," originally owned much of the land around Mud City. Tracing the deeds for all the properties in this calendar always leads back to Fitch. He built this grand home here in 1811, a landmark for the town while it was still part of Baldwin. Town meetings were held here, and it was the polling station where the men of the town voted on seceding from Massachusetts.

Squire Fitch later sold it to his son, William Jr., who bequeathed it in 1881 to his daughter Lydia, who had cared for him in his old age. She had a new barn built next to the house in 1888.

Lydia lived here with her brother Luther H. and widowed sister Lizzie Nelson. After Lydia's death in 1919, it went to her nephew Charles E. Fitch and his wife Sara, then to their daughter Harriet and her husband Emory Martin in 1933.

In 1941, during a very dry, windy spring, the house and 20 acres of surrounding land burned, but the barn was spared and is still standing today. A new house was built, and Sara continued to live there with the Martins until shortly before her death in 1961.



Above: the house and Lydia's barn @ 1930. Below: Lewiston Evening Journal article about William Jr, 8/15/1874

Harriett did laundry for Camp O-At-Ka in the summer months in the laundry building that still exists to the left of the house. Local women and girls earned money working with her.

The house has been owned since 1997 by Trudy and Glenn Wilson.

SEBAGO.—The News says that Mr. William Fitch of Sebago, more than eighty years of age, has a valuable four-year-old colt, which he mounts and rides with all the sprightliness and nonchalance of a youth of fifteen. "The other day he rode down for his mail to the post office, which is kept by his son L. H. Fitch. He asked some of the bystanders to please hand him out his mail. They jokingly invited him to "help himself." "All right," replied the veteran; and touching the whip to the side of his nag he charged up the short flight of stairs into the office, received his mail matter, dashed out the door and down the steps, *a la* Putnam, and galloped away.

Potter Academy

March 2026

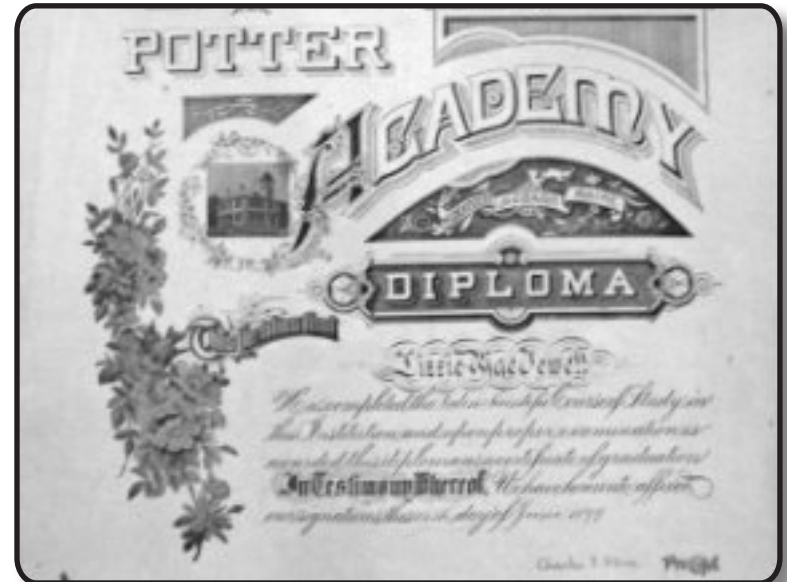


Joseph Fitch Potter, the son of Squire Fitch's sister, Sybil Fitch Potter, was born and raised in Sebago and went on to find his fortune as a physician in Cincinnati, Ohio. At his death in 1868, he left money to build an academy in Sebago Center for students of Sebago to attend free of charge. The school was erected in 1895 on the hill above Mud City, and opened with an enrollment of 40 students. Over the years that number fluctuated, with up to 80 students attending at times, many from Sebago but also a number from away who stayed in dormitories nearby.

Potter Academy was Sebago's high school for 72 years, from 1895 until 1967. It closed when Sebago joined the Maine SAD 61 in 1967. Ownership passed to Dr. Lowell Barnes, who leased the building to Elan I, a private school for troubled teens affected by drug abuse and/or crime. A portion of the building was destroyed by fire in Jan 1974, and the rest was later demolished.

Left: Potter Academy in 1948.

Below: diploma for Lizzie Jewell, 1899.



April 2026

Sebago Community Church

William Fitch, Jr. donated the land and Dr. Joseph Fitch Potter donated the bell for the first Meeting House, which was incorporated in 1857 by Congregationalists and Baptists together. They held joint services and pooled their resources to support a minister. The map of 1871 shows it as a Free Will Baptist church, but by 1885 it was known as the Union Meeting House. By 1895, members of other denominations in Sebago wanted to see a new church organized here, so a "Union Congregational Church of Sebago" was formed in November of that year. Services were limited to the summer months until 1906, when a furnace was installed.

The Ladies Circle was also formed in 1885 to raise funds, to serve the community, and to spark interest in the church. It continues today, serving refreshments after funerals, and luncheons during hunting season and other occasions.



The church as it appeared around 1940.

Gordon Irish House

This house, on the east side of Mud City, sits on a piece of land with a complicated history. It was part of a large lot owned by Squire Fitch, who sold 11 acres of it to Reuben Cook in 1840. His son James Cook carved out a 1.25 acre lot, which he sold to William Bickford in 1844. Bickford built a house and the first store there. The property passed through five different owners, with different stores, before coming back to his brother Samuel Bickford in 1873.

Below: Mel's Station, next to the barn, run by Gordon Irish's brother Melvin.



After Samuel's death in 1884, his widow sold it to Joseph B. Brown, who sold it to William Poor. Lizzie Poor Shaw inherited it from her father and sold it to Mary Fitch in 1936. A year later Mary sold the

lot to her grandson, Gordon Irish.

Some of you will remember the small building next to the house as Mel's Filling Station.

The house is now owned by Brendan Baba and is undergoing renovations.



Gordon's wife Valma and son Oliver (Sonny) in the early 1940s. Sonny later became the automotive teacher at Lake Region High School.

June 2026

Old Town Hall

Right next door to the Irish house was the old Sebago Town Hall. The land was once part of a large tract owned by Joseph Ridlon, then by Almon and Peter B. Young. By 1871 there was a general store on the property, which was owned by James M. Young.

At some later date the town of Sebago acquired the building and used it for town meetings and dinners, while the Potter Academy boys and girls teams played basketball on the second floor. Around 1940, Potter Academy converted it to a girls' dormitory, adding several bedrooms on the second floor and a bathroom. The Home Economics rooms were on the first floor, where the girls learned to cook and sew.

In the 1970s it was used by PROP (Peoples Regional Opportunity Program, a community action agency) and later as a co-op. It was eventually torn down due to its age and disrepair.



Potter Academy's first girls basketball team, 1931. They used the second floor of the Town Hall for practice. First row, left to right: Lucretia Decker, Edith Robinson, Belle Hale, Dorothy Merrifield, Elizabeth Durrell, Dolly Dolloff. Back row: Harold Dodge (Coach), Olive Dolloff, Elizabeth Trumbull, Eleanor Thombs, Rachel Brown, Arline Burnell.

Potter Gym

July 2026



In 1945, an extension was added to the building for the fire department, which still houses a fire truck today.



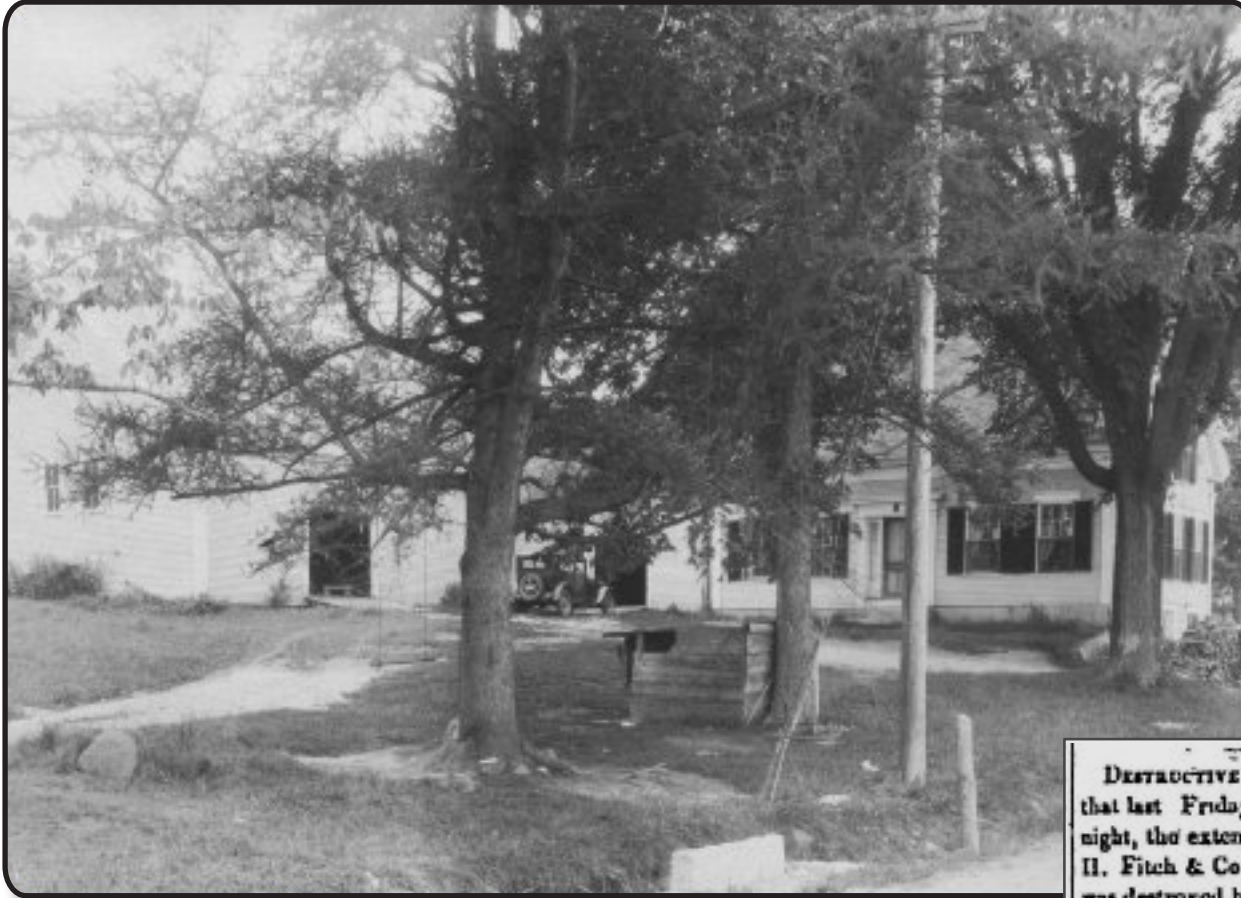
In 1941, with a large donation from Dorothy Spaulding and a lot of local volunteer labor, the Potter Gym was built. In the ground floor were industrial arts classrooms where students learned woodworking and drafting. Later on, electrical and metal working facilities were added. Upstairs featured a full basketball court and a small stage.

When the Town Hall across the street was refurbished to be the Potter Academy girls' dormitory, the town offices moved to the basement of the gym as well. They stayed there through the 1990s, until the new

municipal building was erected on the site of the old Academy, and the town office moved up the hill. The basement space is now used for public suppers and meetings. The town uses the upstairs for voting and large town meetings, while the court is home to pickup basketball and pickleball games.

August 2026

Principal's House



Next door is the former Principal's House of Potter Academy. It was built in the late 1850 by Peter and Almon Young, who bought the land from William Fitch. They ran a retail grocery there. The house was then sold to Luther H. Fitch, son of William Fitch, Jr. Luther ran a store, post office, and cooper shop there in the 1870s. In 1873, a fire spread from an overheated brick oven, destroying the post office and many town records. The town of Sebago bought the property to be used as the Principal's House and boys' dormitory. In 1970,

after Potter Academy had closed, the house was sold to Dr Lowell A Barnes, who leased it to Elan 1 when the organization acquired the academy building. After a number of other owners, it is now the property of Bill and Melissa Brown.



DESTRUCTIVE FIRE IN SEBAGO.—We learn that last Friday evening, just before midnight, the extensive and valuable store of L. H. Fitch & Co., at "Mud City," Sebago, was destroyed by fire. The entire stock was consumed, together with a part of the books of the firm, and also some of the town books and papers, and the whole contents of the post office—which was kept in the building—Mr. L. H. Fitch being postmaster, town treasurer and clerk, and his brother William, first selectman. The loss of the Messrs. Fitch is estimated at \$8,000, on which they have an insurance of \$4,000. Samuel Dickford also lost about \$200, in sewing and pressing machines. The fire is supposed to have caught from the chimney.

Above left: the house @ 1910.

Above right: the house in 1976.

Left: Bridgton News article on the fire, 2/7/1873.

Emma & Benn Douglass House

September 2026



Below: Late in his life, Emory Martin owned this house. Here he is as a young man in 1918, skating on Mud City Pond with his aunt Dora and her son Elmer (Bunk) Martin.

Next door to the Principal's House is this home, built by Simon Davis, a shoemaker, in the 1860s. He had a shop next door, where he made shoes and boots.

Later on it was owned by Ellis and Charles Fitch, who sold it to his sister Emma and her husband Benn Douglass. Emma was awarded the Boston Post Cane as the oldest resident of Sebago in 1971. In her later years she lived up the road in the house on the former Squire Fitch property with her niece Harriett Martin and Harriett's husband Emory. Shortly before her death in 1974 she deeded this house to them.

Peter and Marsha Traill owned it for a while, then a number of owners later it was bought by Ron and Pauline Curran, who allowed the Sebago Historical Society to tour it one summer. Beautiful beadboard ceilings and walls were featured in the living room and dining room. In 2016, the Currans sold it to Anthony and Jennifer Skinner, who live there now with their children.



October 2026

Durrell House

Found Dead.

East Baldwin, Me., Sept. 10.—Dennis Tinsman of Sebago was found dead today in an out of the way place here, and it was at first thought his death was due to foul play. Tinsman had been missing since last Saturday. The day before he came to East Baldwin and received an express package, which in the light of subsequent developments must have been strong drink. He started on the Bridgton road for his home Saturday afternoon and since then had been missing. It was ascertained today that Tinsman had not returned to Sebago and a searching party was organized by employes of the corn shop here, and the search resulted in the finding of the man's body.

It was plainly evident that Tinsman had drunk to excess, as four empty whiskey bottles were on the ground near him, and this over indulgence, combined with exposure, was sufficient explanation as to the cause of death. The man had these sprees occasionally. He was a blacksmith and is survived by a wife and a daughter. His age was 54 years.

Coroner Perry of Portland was summoned. He was of the opinion that death was due to exposure, but as much excitement was occasioned by the finding of the body he ordered an inquest. A jury was gathered and after viewing the body adjournment was taken to Saturday, Sept. 24, at 2 p. m. No evidence of foul play was found. A bruise over the left eye was no doubt caused by a fall.

In the 1890s, the Emma Douglas house was owned by Ellis Fitch and his son Charles, and its lot went all the way to Convene Rd. Ellis carved off a piece of the land for his daughter, Helen Fitch McDonald in 1896. Helen and her husband George built this house, the first on the left as you head up Convene. They sold it in 1902 to Jane Tinsman. Jane's husband Dennis was a blacksmith and a trial justice in the Bridgton Court. He operated his smithy on this property until his untimely and sensational death, as reported in the Bridgton News in 1904.

The property changed hands twice more before being bought by Granville and Nina Durrell. Nina passed it to her son E. Norman Durrell in 1952 after Granville's death. Norm was one of the colorful characters of Sebago who many may remember for his eccentric necktie collection. He lived here with wife Ellen and their daughter Jane. It was sold after Norm passed and was bought in 2014 by Tyler Gibbs, who lives there now.

Durrell house in 1932.



Sanborn House

The first house on the right going up Convene Rd. was built on land that Simon Davis and Oliver Dike bought from William Fitch. It was then sold to William's son Ellis, who together with his son, Charles Fitch, sold to brother-in law Benn Douglass. It remained undeveloped until Benn's failing health forced him to sell. He and wife Emma sold the land to Elwyn (Jigg) and Doris Sanborn in 1937. They began building their house around 1940, and lived there with son Wayne.



Jigg was a member of the fire department and driver for one of the Mud City fire trucks. One of the firemen in the 1980s said that coming down Poor's Hill riding with Jigg, who was in his 70s at the time, was the scariest part of the firefighting experience.

Jigg died in 1990, then after Doris's death the property was sold to Phil Strike in 2003. He and his wife Michelle live there and run their business, Mud City Dive, from this location.

Left: An early pumper truck. We don't have a date on this photo, but it looks like one that Jiggs might have driven.

Below: the Sanborn House in the 1990s.



December 2026

Stacy's Store

At the foot of Convene Rd and across Bridgton Rd lies another piece of property originally part of William Fitch's land. Reuben Cook bought a large tract from him on the east side of the road, which included Fitch's Pond, now Marriner's Pond. The Bickford family bought part of it later and built a house. Father John Bickford was a potter, and the land behind the house was rich in clay. Son Joseph Bickford ran a stage coach line, and son Samuel Bickford had a grocery store. In 1909 Harry Meserve acquired the land and houses, and sold them to Harold (Stubb) and Barbara Stacy in 1922. The Staceys ran a store there, making grocery deliveries around the neighborhood twice a day. They put an ice house on the side, which they stocked with ice they cut from Marriner's Pond. Cars coming along the curve in the road a little too fast occasionally ended up inside the ice house.

Stubb was known to imbibe a little too much at times and was accused more than once of cutting a hotdog in half or biting off the end if it ran over a pound.

David Heath bought the property in 1978 and ran Mud City Pottery there. It is owned today by Peter Nunn.



Left: Betty Usher in front of Stubb Stacey's store, 1949.



Below: The house in the early 1980s. The "bump out" on the left front was Stacey's Store.

Watercolor painting of Sebago Community Church by Gwendolyn M. Trefethen. Gwen was a graduate of Colby College, a Phi Beta Kappa member, and a teacher for Waldoboro High School and the YMCA in Bangor before coming to Potter Academy in 1943. She taught English, French, Latin and Spanish here until 1949.

She painted this scene in 1948.



Coming for 2027 Douglas Hill

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, Sherrill Brown Susan Cummings and Nancy Sosman, would like to thank all those who invited us into their homes and opened their photo albums, telling us the stories behind the pictures.

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