

# Houlton Staged Memorable Program On Its Centennial

## Much Planning Devoted To Two - Day Event Held Here In August 1907

The Town of Houlton took appropriate and prideful notice of the arrival of its 100th birthday in the year of 1907. The townspeople prepared and carried out a program late in the summer that was many months in the planning and arranging and exceeded anything ever held here up to that time.

The town at its annual meeting in March appropriated the sum of \$500 which was to be expended for the purpose of promoting Old Home Week in connection with the centennial observance and the various committees were soon at work with their plans.

The Houlton Merchants Association had already become interested in the idea of observing the town's centennial and, late in December, 1906 held a meeting to discuss the suggestion. At that meeting a committee composed of J. A. Crowne, Simon Friedman and Charles H. Wilson were appointed to make a preliminary study and prepare the way for further planning.

### MASS MEETING HELD

At a mass meeting of citizens, called by the merchants association early in April, John B. Madigan was elected president of the committee with A. T. Putnam, treasurer, and Charles H. Fogg, secretary.

The first step taken by the committee was to issue an appeal for the addresses of all former citizens. These were to be left at the office of the Aroostook Times so that invitations could be sent to these Houlton natives to return for the observance of their home town's centennial. As the time grew near, meetings were held every week and various attractions were announced as plans were completed.

The idea of a work horse parade was suggested by one of the committee members, who had seen such an event in Boston some years before. Prizes "in money" were to be offered for the best horses and equipment.

It was also planned to have a baseball game each day of the celebration between Houlton and other teams in the "potato" league.

Early in July it became evident that other areas in Aroostook County were taking an interest in the venerable age attained by the County Seat and its plans to make due observance of its centennial.

### EDITORIAL COMMENT

The Presque Isle Star-Herald was moved, in its editorial columns to comment in this fashion: "The coming centennial celebration of Houlton is an event of much interest. Houlton, in its thrift and enterprise, is typical of the county of which it is the oldest and in many respects, the leading town. Having spanned nearly a century, Houlton combines the attractions of an old and well-established community with the freshness and vigor of a flourishing town in the

### An Address of Welcome 50 Years Ago

John B. Madigan, president of the Centennial committee, and one who worked prodigiously for the success of the Town of Houlton's observance of its 100th birthday, was chosen to make the address of welcome to visitors on the afternoon of the first day of the celebration.

A gifted orator as well as an interested student of the history of his town, the future judge was brief but eloquent in a memorable discourse the full text of which was carried in the Aroostook Pioneer. It is well worth repeating here for its significance in this, Houlton's Sesquicentennial year:

"One hundred years ago after a tedious journey over swollen waters and through almost trackless forests, a small but intrepid band pitched their camp on yonder hill. Side by side, father and mother, son and daughter, in cold and in heat, in sunshine and in shower, wrought and toiled to wring from the bosom of the wilderness the hamlet which on the brow of our dear old State sparkles as a gem whose luster knows no dim.

"Step by step towering pine gave way to settler's cabin, and amongst those humble dwellings learning and religion each had their shrine. When in times more fruitful the day seems long and the burden heavy, with retrospective glance let us but

view the toils and struggles of those early days. Freely from their common store did they sustain the common burden—feed the hungry, succor the helpless, harbor the homeless and educate the young.

"Those yet living hold in grateful memory the first academy and the broad square in which we stand is an ever enduring monument to their foresight and public spirit.

"If from eternal rest, in spirit, they may today return, with what pleasure must they view the scene. Six thousand souls of different creeds in peace and concord in the fairest village in all New England. Modern schools overflowing with bright youth, public buildings of grace and beauty, substantial stores, beautiful homes that bespeak taste and comfort, and, through the bright foliage that borders the broad streets, lofty spires that point in gratitude to the Giver of all gifts.

"Priceless heritage their virtues bequeathed us. The youth of today who shall be the men of tomorrow, from their lives may gleam the precept that in industry, thrift and integrity are the parents of success.

"Well may we commemorate this day. To the stranger within our gates, to all who are endeared to us by ties of friendship, love and affection, we bid most hearty welcome."

pioneer stage of its existence. No village or city in Maine has a larger percentage of comfortable and attractive homes, and no other community in the state has a greater measure of refinement and intelligence. The place has culture and ripe attractions that belong to age, and with these combines all

the business push and hustle of a new and young town.

"There is not a citizen of Aroostook but has just reason to be proud of what Houlton represents and what it has achieved, and the whole County will share in the enthusiasm of its centennial celebration.

"Houlton worthily reflects and represents Aroostook — by all odds the best county in Maine — and Houlton has everything to stimulate pride and satisfaction, and kindle public spirit and town loyalty in connection with its approaching celebration."

Another commentary on the proposal by Houlton to celebrate its Centennial appeared early in the year in the Fort Fairfield Review, whose editor said: "Houlton will next summer celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of its founding. It does not need to be said here that Houlton is an enterprising place, a substantial town, a most excellent community to live in, with a beautiful city — even if she does modestly refrain from calling herself a city. She will mark her centennial in a manner impressive and appropriate, and some of us will be there to attend the ceremonies—if we are invited."

### MORE MONEY NEEDED

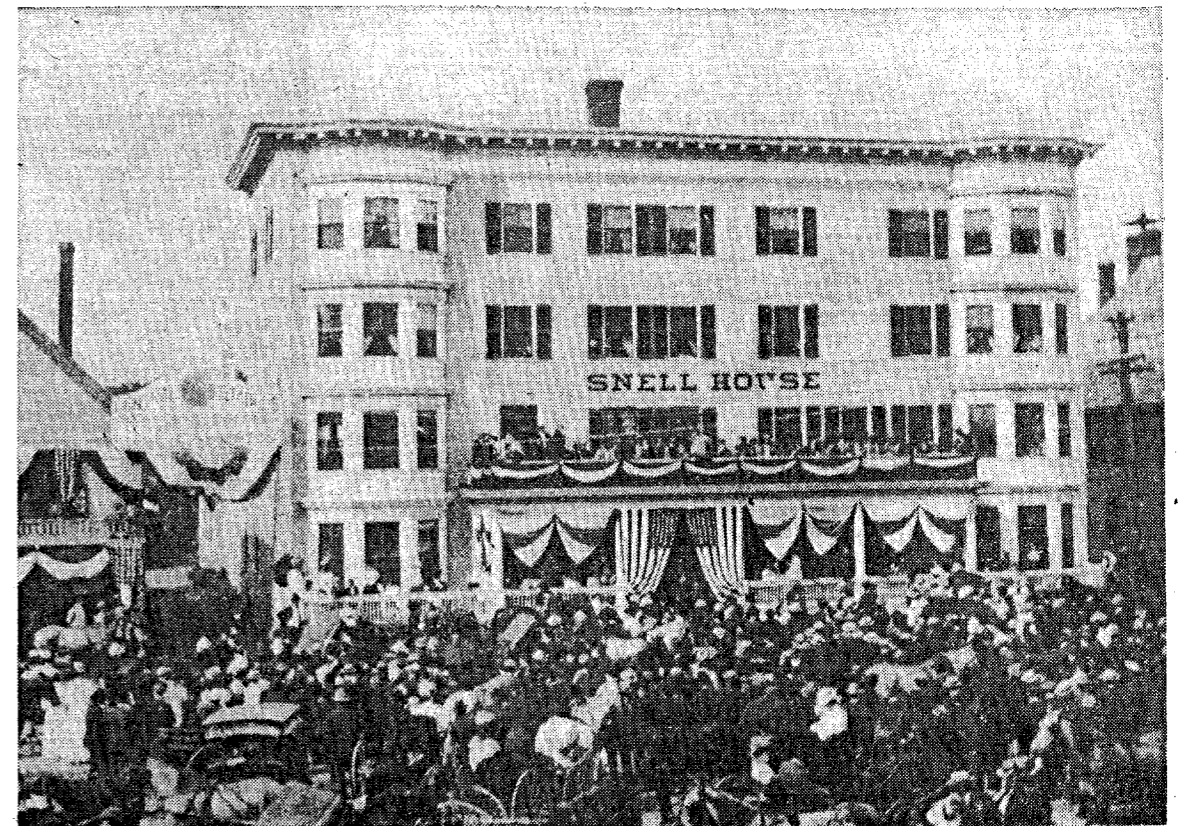
The need was soon seen for additional funds with which to underwrite the program and, early in July, a citizens' meeting was held to take a look at the prospects. The outgrowth of that meeting was the appointment of a committee to solicit funds to be combined with that the town had already advanced, to insure a "first class celebration."

Civic pride was appealed to through the newspapers and it was pointed out that the town could only have as good a celebration as the money then available could produce. The consequences of failure to the reputation of the town, were emphasized and every one who was approached was requested to respond liberally.

In the meantime Crescent Park at Nickerson Lake was being especially refurbished for the occasion by Mr. and Mrs. Fred Stephenson, the proprietors. Music for dancing was planned in the newly erected pavilion.

A musical treat was announced

## As Houlton Celebrated Its 100th Birthday



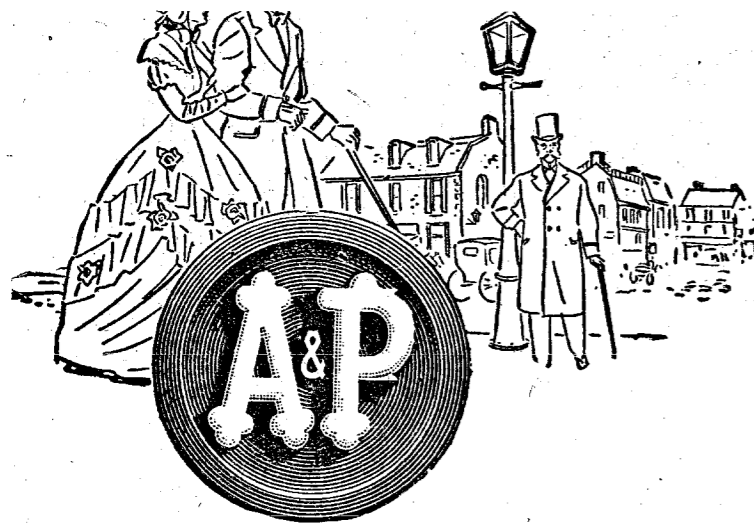
This is Market Square as it appeared at the height of the Centennial August 21-22, 1907 when the people packed the business section with horses and buggies and stores as well as the famous Snell House, then the social center of the community, took on a holiday air with banners and bunting.

The Centennial parade winds up through Union Square. This section was John Deere farm machinery exhibited by the James S. Peabody Company. Driving the manure spreader in the foreground is Nehemiah Seeley, and the third is being driven by Cecil McGinley. Flags and bunting adorned the laundry and Cates Garage in rear and Gillin's Market, right.



late in July, to be part of the program. An organ and piano recital was scheduled by Benjamin Whelpley, organist in Dr. Edward Everett Hale's church in Boston, a widely known and much appreciated business attractive for visitors. Decorating was urged and it was explained that, "Along this line a great deal can be done at a small expense to make the town look cheerful and have a welcoming appearance." promised cannonading at dawn, the day's festivities were concluded with a reception in Mansur's Hall, where all gathered and where Old Home Week visitors met former friends and associates.





# Looking Back . . .

Everyone is so busy these days coping with present problems and looking ahead to the future that there is relatively little time left to reflect on the past. But once in a while, at least, it's a satisfying experience to scan the pages of history and evaluate the progress that has been made.

We know that the citizens of Houlton can reflect with pride upon the contributions that have been made to the social and economical development of this community down through the years.

A&P, like the Town of Houlton, had a modest beginning. Our first store was opened in New York City back in 1859 by the late George Huntington Hartford — a man of great vision — born and reared in Maine. Down through the years, A&P has continued to progress by adhering to the principals of fairness and efficiency laid down by Mr. Hartford.

So, the men and women of A&P, like the citizens of this community, reflect with pride upon the achievements of today and the accomplishments of the past.

*The Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Co.*



pley, organist in Dr. Edward Everett Hale's church in Boston, a widely known and much appreciated author and composer of music. He was to be assisted by Miss Mamie Obeys, local vocalist, just returned from abroad.

At this point the committee was especially careful to assure the citizens that everything that was advertised, would be produced.

The dates of August 21 and 22 having been set aside for the Centennial observance the committee came out with its complete program almost a month in advance.

## BALLOON ASCENSIONS

One of the headline features of the occasion was to be a balloon ascension and a parachute drop and the committee announced with some pride, about mid-July, that it had finally been able to engage the services of Prof. B. S. Tirrell of Brockton, Mass. to make four ascensions and parachute drops, two of which were to be "the famous double parachute drop."

The committee somewhat modestly revealed that "Prof. Tirrell is second to none in his line in New England."

It was also able to announce at this point that its campaign for additional funds had met with a favorable response from the townspeople and it was now in possession of sufficient funds to warrant "a first class celebration."

The curtain was then lifted slightly to permit the populace a glimpse at what they might expect in the way of a program. The danger that any resident might oversleep and miss a part of the day's program was removed by the proposal to start each day with "ringing of bells and booming of canon at six o'clock."

The grand parade would consist of National Guard, fire companies and apparatus, pony teams, automobiles, draft horses, gentlemen's driving horses, secret societies, calathumpians, etc. The Houlton and Woodstock bands were both engaged to furnish music. In addition, Bryson's orchestra would be on hand to provide music for the reception to be held in Mansur's Hall. Each day would be climaxed with a grand display of fireworks.

## LOW RAILROAD FARES

As a lure to attract additional crowds to the two day event, the committee had persuaded the Bangor and Aroostook and the Canadian Pacific Railroads to provide special low rates to Houlton August 21 and 22. They also exhorted the townspeople to cooperate in making their homes and places of

great deal can be done at a small expense to make the town look cheerful and have a welcoming appearance."

Just to make it easier for their edict to be complied with the committee took the precaution to invite in representatives of two of Boston's leading decorating firms to take orders for decorations for either homes or places of business. The result was contracts for almost every business place in town with the most elaborate job of all being engaged for the Elks home.

## PROGRAM AT LAKEWOOD

Nearby resorts were not slow in responding to the demand for a varied program and Hubert Smith, proprietor of Lakewood at Nickerson Lake, made extensive arrangements for a big water carnival to be the top attraction for Friday the 23rd. He promised the grandest illumination floats ever seen in this section. Prof. E. J. Morrell, a tight wire and parachute artist of considerable fame, who was then living in Houlton, was engaged to perform his repertoire of stunts on the high wire. A band was advertised for the afternoon and Bryson's full orchestra for dancing in the evening.

Some disagreement arose over the site from which the balloon ascension and parachute drops would originate. Most wanted the start to be from Market Square. It was reluctantly agreed that if this could not be arranged, the stunt would be held at Maple Grove.

The merchants of the town were not to be caught unawares when a promise of trade was in the offing. Two weeks prior to the Centennial days, they held a meeting and voted to remain open both nights.

## RECORD CROWDS ATTEND

The first day at last dawned and when the crowded program had been completed, Houlton people could feel secure in the knowledge they had more than adequately acknowledged their first 100 years of history. Reports of the affair fail to reveal a discordant note or an untoward incident to mar the full enjoyment of the crowd. There was not a single arrest either day. And, the report adds, the event drew the largest crowd ever seen in the town. It was estimated that between 8000 and 10,000 were on hand.

Frank M. Hume, Captain of Co. L., later Colonel, acted as marshal of the long parade and the Woodstock and Houlton Bands enlivened the procession as well as creating a holiday spirit. Beginning with the

Hall, where all gathered and where Old Home Week visitors met for mer friends and associates.

The second day proved equally enjoyable to all. There was variety from the first day with an automobile parade being the feature at traction of the morning, followed by a sham battle in Market Square between two detachments of Co. L.

## PARACHUTE PERFORMER

The balloon ascension also provided a switch when E. J. "Van" Morrell substituted for Prof. Tirrell and soared aloft "almost beyond the reach of the eye". Afterwards Morrell told friends he could see the St. John River plainly from the height he reached. He either did not hear or failed to heed the sound of the cannon summoning him to descend, staying aloft much longer than was customary, as the crowd gasped.

When he did start his drop he performed tricks and feats on the trapeze on the way down. He made a most successful landing in front of the Aroostook Hospital.

The great event closed with "the grandest display of fireworks ever seen here and many of the set pieces were roundly applauded."

Of the appearance of the town, the Aroostook Pioneer made this fulsome comment: "Too much praise cannot be given the business men and citizens for the manner in which they took hold of the idea of decorating their business blocks and homes . . . The business section never looked brighter and more attractive than it did for this occasion with its trimmings of American flags and the tri-colored streamers. It presented a picture of welcome that will long be remembered by the townspeople and visitors."

The speeches for the occasion were commented on and the author of the story of the event concluded with the hope that "the ideas embodied therein take deep root in our hearts and be productive of most excellent results for the town and the community in which we live."

The post office, which was removed after the fire to the Philbrick building west of the Snell House, has been fitted up in good shape by Postmaster Boyd for the distribution and delivery of the mails. One hundred new lock boxes, and a desk for registering letters, and transaction of other business connected with the money order department have been added, which better serve the convenience of the public.—Aroostook Times, Sept. 11, 1879.