



# The Weathervane

Winter

A Quarterly for and from West Gardiner

2020

## Thank You for Your Service, Michael Stratton by Debra Couture



I recently had the pleasure of interviewing Private Michael Stratton. Mike has lived in West Gardiner most of his life and is a 2019 graduate of Gardiner Area High School (GAHS). He is one of only 5 students in his class who entered the United States military upon graduation. Mike played football and lacrosse while at GAHS. He had thought about attending UMO and majoring in Marketing and Business, but his desire to serve his country drew him to the military. Mike said his dad had wanted to join the US Marines but changed his mind because he was a single parent and was determined to devote his life to raising his son. Michael wanted a challenge and to also join a branch of service that was considered the “hardest”, so he chose the US Marines. Mike enlisted under a delayed entry program and reported to boot camp at Parris Island, South Carolina on October 23, 2019. He graduated on January 17, 2020 in the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Delta Company, PLT (platoon) 1006. He was home on leave for 10 days and then reported to Camp Geiger, North Carolina on January 28, 2020 to complete MCT (more combat training). After a month of training at Camp Geiger, Mike will report to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri to train in his MOS (military occupational specialty) of 3500. His MOS 3500 is motor transport. Michael plans on taking online college courses and completing his degree while in the Marines to and also plans to make a career of his military service. In addition to his dad, Mike thanks his teachers for all their help and encouragement. He especially wanted to thank Mr. Wing for all his help with classes, guidance, and the encouragement to follow his dreams; and Ms. Emily Collins, his Latin teacher, who was always there to talk with him after school and give him encouragement and guidance in his decisions for his future.

Michael is an impressive young man who knows what he wants in life. He is polite, intelligent, and has strong ethical values. He is very happy that his step mother, Sarah, has recently adopted him and he admires, respects, and loves his father and new mom very much. Mike, we are all very proud of what you have accomplished and what you will accomplish in the future. Thank you for your service and stay safe.



## An Invitation to all West Gardiner Residents

The West Gardiner Historical Society invites you to participate in Maine’s Bicentennial celebration by joining us for a Community Pot Luck Lunch. March 14, 2020, 11:30-1:30 at the West Gardiner Fire Station. The Historical Society will supply drinks and paper products. We ask you to bring a dish to share based on the first letter of your last name! A-K– Main Dish, L-O– Salad, and R-Z– Dessert. Come out and celebrate with us for Maine’s 200th birthday!

## Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post #9 Voice of Democracy 2019-2020 Winner

Shawn Jiminez, a West Gardiner resident and freshman at Gardiner High School placed first in the Voice of Democracy competition for VFW Post 9, Gardiner, Maine. The topic for this year's speeches was "What Makes America Great". Shawn won at the Post level and at the VFW District level, which covers Kennebec County. He was presented with awards at the VFW State awards ceremony on January 11, 2020 and at GAHS on January 31, 2020. Congratulations, Shawn. Job well done!



## Helen Thompson School's New Playground Equipment

Historically, the HTS PTA has raised funds for speakers, plays, and many other activities for the students at HTS. Last year, they wanted to make a grand gesture and give the students new playground equipment. The 5<sup>th</sup> grade has a leadership group that meets every month to discuss what is going on in the school. All 5<sup>th</sup> graders are invited to be part of and attend this group and its meetings. One of their projects last year was to write a survey to be given to all students. This survey asked the students what kind of new playground equipment that they wanted on their playground. They presented the results of this survey to the PTA. The PTA took their advice into consideration when purchasing the new equipment.

One piece that was high on the survey results is called a glider. It could not be purchased this past year, but the students are hopeful that it will be added to the playground equipment in future years, as more funds are raised. The new equipment is wonderful, and we thank the HTS PTA and the West Gardiner community for all their support in helping to purchase this equipment. A special thank you goes to the members of the HTS PTA for their many days of hard work last summer in assembling and setting up the equipment in time for the new 2019-2020 school year

## The Outdoors Man

by Kathy Fellows

To be the wife of an outdoors man is a challenge to me. For if I was a fish or a deer, a prize I would be. That's the first thing on their mind. What season is it and what will they find. Never home at the crack of dawn. Always in the woods too long. The stories you need to hear. About their challenges with fish or deer. Surely if I could be as important as this game. He could still love the fish and deer just the same. Set the alarm before it gets light. Go back to sleep and finish the night. I have hobbies I love too. Accept it! It's the only thing to do. For I really know if it came down to the fish, deer or me. In his heart I would be.



## Eagle Eyes by S.E. Costell

Ice begins to creep onto lakes and streams, signaling that the winter chill is well in place.

Our national bird, the majestic Bald Eagle, struggles to survive as its main food source, the fish lurking beneath the ice, are safely hidden from its talons. In the late 60s, the Bald Eagle was placed on the Endangered Species List (ESL). Concerned about their survival, locals like Raymond Fellows offer direct aid, enabling birds who do not migrate to feed throughout often brutal northern winters by providing accessible food.

When the temperature is well below zero and most of us cozy up to the hearth, you can bet that Raymond forges out on to the frozen Cobbossee, hauling a sled full of meat scraps from West Gardiner Beef.

Because of people like Raymond, as well as cleanup of toxins and protected hunting/nesting areas, the eagles were removed from the ESL in 2007. They remain protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Act of 2015 and by the state as a "species of special concern."

There is a delicate balance we must preserve in Nature and we must remain consciously considerate stewards. Our footprint matters! Let's keep it small.

I give thanks to Raymond and others like him who care enough to ensure that eagles will continue to soar.

## From the Porch

## "Chestnut Revival"

by Mike Wing

A towering canopy of trees, the American Chestnut, dominated the east coast in 1900 and extended up to Maine. Then the blight, an Asian fungus, began in New York and destroyed about four billion of these trees, a chestnut epidemic. In a short period of time, the source of nutritious food and rot-resistant wood almost entirely vanished from America. Recently, with the past 30 years, an effort is succeeding to revive the American Chestnut in a blight-resistant way. No one I have asked can recall ever seeing an American Chestnut in West Gardiner. Some remember the Horse Chestnut with its buckeye single nut that feels so smooth when you palm it. No relation, wicked to taste, but beautiful in the yard. We were given a Horse Chestnut seedling that grew like gangbusters at our former home. The American Chestnut is equally beautiful, quick growing, sturdy, and bears pods of three nuts. It eats sweet. The Horse Chestnut offers no practical use other than shade while the American species produces strong straight-grained lumber for floors, cabinets, musical instruments and caskets. To revive the tree, nurseries in Winthrop, Readfield and Phippsburg now grow seedlings and perform tests for blight. From one of these nurseries or larger commercial Fedco, Susan and I will purchase at least two, but probably more, American Chestnut trees. The acidic and loamy soil should support them, and they will pollinate and bear nuts within 7-10 years. Perhaps we can supply some to family or friends with a bit of land. These trees traditionally reach 100 feet with a 14-foot girth. Just imagine that beauty. Mid-winter is early to be dreaming this project, but four months will pass quickly. We will dig the hole, mulch and water, and stand back, wait, and hope for the future.

## "Mornings in Maine" by Valerie Kenney

"Good Morning." Most people hear that saying and think, "Boy... another day of getting out of bed way before I normally would and going to a job where I deal with people I don't like." What if I said it means something else? What if I told you it means that the world was still asleep, and the day had only just begun? Some people find it comforting to wake up early because it gives them a moment alone with the world to take a deep breath and see the beauty of a good morning.

When the sun begins to rise, it's like a wakeup call for all the plants and animals. Imagine the sun yawning as it waves to the moon, saying it can take the day off. Imagine the trees are stretching their long limbs, attempting to break their wonderful slumber. Imagine the rivers getting a sinking feeling, knowing they have a full schedule. Not only are people waking up for a groggy day of work, but so are the trees, birds, and flowers. Instead of thinking negatively in the morning, try imagining the sun rising as another chance for a good day, one you can handle with ease. If you happen to wake up before the sun rises, step outside and watch your surroundings and realize how peaceful the world really is. Instead of worrying about the work you face, try counting how many times the sky changes colors, noting the exact shades. The sky is like your emotions: you can wake up happy, sad, mad or, literally, blue. Focusing on what colors and how many times the sky changes can relax and distract your mind from all the negativity you harbor. Think of the sun rising as a new chance to make your day positive and block out the negativity you carry overnight. A simple change in the way you think about a sunrise can change your perception and brighten your day.

## Cobosseecontee Snowmobile Club News

As a thank you for allowing the snowmobile club to use your land for snowmobile trails, landowners and their immediate family are invited to a Landowner Appreciation Supper, Saturday, April 25th 5:00-7:00 at the Auxiliary Hall. To help us plan for the food, please RSVP with the number attending to Charlene McFarland 582-7239 by Tuesday, April 21st.

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## Mowers and Blowers

by Mike Wing

Last March, David Duquette left Rhode Island and settled in West Gardiner to open a small engine repair service. He has been busy ever since, mainly with lawn equipment and snow blowers, but a customer's four-wheeler sat on the lift when we were there. David said one reason for increasing calls was his offering pickup and delivery.

The business name comes from his mechanical mentor and father whom people called "Duke." David's early background included law enforcement as a bodyguard and security officer. Though not an officer at the time, he stopped on 95 to assist a motorist and was struck by a vehicle, resulting in the lost of his leg from the knee down. You would never know it.

David likes the pace of life here, especially the people who need his help. When scouting for a place to settle, he commented on downloading dispatches and finds mostly misdemeanors and well-being checks in West Gardiner. He had his taste of major crime and hoped for a more peaceful, useful life. The shop sits back off the road, just over the line coming out High Street. Stop in and see David when his flag is out or call or email. He's off to a good start in our community.

The West Gardiner Rod & Gun Club has a very active archery program. Target shooters practice Monday nights from 6-8:00PM and cost \$8. Junior Olympic Archery Development (JOAD) youth beginners practice Tuesdays from 5:30-6:30PM. Advanced youth practice Tuesdays from 6:30-7:30PM and cost \$10 per night. Hunters practice on Wednesday from 6-8:00PM and cost \$8 for the evening. Open practice is every Saturday morning from 9-1 and costs \$10. You are NOT required to be a member to participate in the archery program. The hall is heated, well-lit and the kitchen is open. The club also has a secure 100-yard target shooting range which requires membership and a code to access.

Club meetings are held the first Thursday of the month at 7:30, preceded by a potluck supper at 6:30. A working session is held the 3rd Thursday at 6:30. Cost to join the club is \$55 including the first year's dues and \$25 a year thereafter. You must be sponsored by a club member and present your application in person.



**West Gardiner Happenings & Events- Kim Greenleaf**

There will be primary elections in March and June. For absentee ballot requests and deadlines call the Town Office.

Presidential Primary & Special State Referendum Election: March 3, 2020 8:00 am to 8:00 pm at the WG Fire Station.

- Referendum Question: Do you want to reject the new law that removes religious and philosophical exemptions to requiring immunization against certain communicable diseases for students to attend schools and colleges and for employees of nurse schools and health care facilities?
- West Gardiner Annual Town Meeting will be held Saturday, March 21, 2020  
Town Voting 8 am - 12 pm & Town Meeting 1:30 pm
- Chris McLaughlin and Steve McGee are running for the open Selectman's position
- New Animal Control Officer: Cliff Daigle Cell: 207-215-9647 Please leave a voice message with your name and number if he is unavailable to answer. He will call you back when he is available. No text messages please
- West Gardiner Garden Club is a diverse group who enjoy our gardens and community. Several of us have been planting one thing or another for years— annuals, perennials, vegetables, herbs and fruits. We have acquired a lot of knowledge and can tell you what fertilizer work best, when to plant, how to put gardens to bed, as well as, pests and how to manage them. We photograph our gardens and make beautiful cards which we sell at plant sales and at the WG fire station on voting days. We also proudly provide an annual scholarship to a West Gardiner high school senior who may be going into a related field using the proceeds from the plant and card sales. Meetings are held the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 1:30 at the Auxiliary Hall. We encourage new membership and are looking for candidates for our 2021 Garden Tour. For more information contact: Charlene McFarland 582-7239 or June Zellers 582-5248

**1820...Then and Now at GPL and GAHS**

by Susan Emmet

Looking backward to see the present and future more clearly? Consulting old maps, photos and documents from established archives, attics, trunks, and family and historical society collections? These two questions guide the work of the 1820 Project. Celebrating Maine's Bicentennial is the work of various groups, including Gardiner Public Library and now Gardiner Area High School. It all began at the library months ago as part of a \$3500 Maine Bicentennial Commission grant to be matched by the Gardiner Library Association. Its goal is to track properties that existed in 1820 in six member communities. An independent study class is presently offered at the high school, led by five teachers/librarians and five students, three of whom are from West Gardiner, to aid the research. The goal is to compile an inventory of the "built environment" in 1820 with attention to residential, farm, commercial, religious and public buildings that exist today. When possible, the project will also inventory roads, cemeteries, dams and other built structures. A book of 50-75 properties will be produced. Students learn how to perform authentic research, understand 1820 architecture, read and understand maps, take pictures, and do research online and in the library Archives. They learn how to trace a property's history and how to read cursive writing. Focusing on social, economic, political and cultural influences at play in the Gardiner area prior to and after 1820, students will present their findings at both REACH and GPL showcases at semester's end. If you have access to diaries, letters, Bibles, newspapers, glass plate or stereoscope images, or old photographs that could be copied and returned, contact Gardiner Public Library for full information. The *Weathervane* will update residents about this project in the spring. It's heartening to know that curiosity about the past can track into the present and future and teach so much about who we were and are.



WEST GARDINER NEWSLETTER

*The Weathervane**A Quarterly For and From Our Town*

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**The Weathervane is a non-profit quarterly informational newsletter intended to be unbiased, non-denominational, non-partisan, accurate, and enjoyable.**

*Schedules of town events, organizations and activities as well as local businesses will be listed in the spring issues.*

***The Weathervane welcomes story ideas from our readers.***

*Call 441-9752 or write coleneoneill1@gmail.com*