

Josiah U. Purington

Josiah Purington' (1847-1921) was well known in Bethel business circles during the last quarter of the 19th Century. In 1872 he was one of three partners in a co-partnership with Robert A. Chapman and E. W. Woodbury (1818-1899).

In 1884 the business had moved from upper Main Street and occupied new larger quarters next to the Grand Trunk Railroad tracks at the foot of Main Street. There the building housed a robust grain business under three owners until 1937 when it was purchased by Leslie Davis for a retail lumber outlet. It was later owned by Charles Merrill and Stanley Davis.

Josiah Purington was born in Brunswick, Maine April 30, 1847. His parents were Daniel T. and Paulina S. Marriner. In 1873, after coming to Bethel he married Fran-cetta Adelia, daughter of Hon. Enoch W. Woodbury. The Puringtons had five children: Alice E. born August 4, 1875; Bertha A., (1877-1897); Burton W., (1880-1886); Belle F. born November 15, 1882; and Harry J. born August 25, 1885.

Josiah Purington came to Bethel in 1869 where he became a clerk of Robert A. Chapman in his store. Chapman's store was on Broad Street overlooking the Common located between the O'Neil Robinson house (now Bethel Historical Society) and the Brick Block.

In 1872, Chapman, Enoch Woodbury and Purington formed a co-partnership named Robert A. Chapman and Co. (The following year Purington married Woodbury's daughter.) Three years later in 1875 Woodbury and Purington bought out Chapman. For the next three years Woodbury's son became a partner but after 1878 the company was known as Woodbury & Purington.

In 1881 the company moved to a new location near the Grand Trunk Railroad, a site pre-

viously occupied by Charles Mason.

Rosalind Chapman wrote: "Charles Mason (1827-1904) operated a store here in 1881; he was burned out that year and received \$3800 insurance. Woodbury & Purington, a partnership of Enoch Woodbury (1818-1899) and Josiah U. Purington (1847-1921), bought the lot in 1883, building a store which lasted into the early 1960s."

The main floor of the building had an office and general store plus flour, grain, mill-



Woodbury & Purington store and grist mill built next to Grand Trunk RR tracks 1883. Bethel Historical Society photo

feed, cement, fertilizer and farming implements. A modern grist mill was installed on the part of the property next to the railroad. Chutes from the grain bins above and an 15 h. p. engine was used to operate an elevator for quick unloading and unloading rail cars.

Milling capacity is 250 bushels a day. 10,00 bushels of loose grain could be stored along with 40 tons of bag material with two carloads each of flour and cement .

Also in July 1881, Enoch Foster sold their home on Main Street to Josiah U. Purington and moved to the Robinson/Robert A. Chapman house on Broad Street. For the time being, Enoch Foster's law office building remained on its Main Street lot. Foster had an agreement with Purington that he had one year to move the building.

In 1886, Mr. Purington was elected town auditor at the annual town meeting and in 1888 he was elected to the Board of Directors of The Bethel Chair Company.

10-30-1888 J. W. Penney of Mechanics Falls has been adding improvements to the engine in the mill of Woodbury and Purington.

December 1888 The Androscoggin Water Power Co. team passed through Bethel going to Gilead lumber camps. They take their grain and feed from the store of Woodbury and Purington

1889 Bethel Real Estate taxes

A. S. Bean	215
Samuel D. Philbrook	180
Ceylon Rowe	174
Edwin C. Rowe	167
Woodbury & Purington	142

In May 1890, at a gathering in the Congregational Church vestry the Sunday School Superintendent, Mr. Purington, received a comfortable easy chair for his eleven years of faithful service.

The Purington's Home

In this circa 1875 Bethel Historical Society photo, above right, the house second from the right was Judge Enoch Foster's home until he sold it to Josiah Purington in 1881. First building on the right is Foster's law office and Bethel Savings Bank. House on the left was Enoch Woodbury's during the years when he and Purington were partners in the store next to the railroad. After Woodbury's death in 1899, Purington being his son-in-law, seemed responsible for his estate and offered the house for sale in 1903 but it did not sell until 1911. The second house from the left is now the Cho Sun restaurant in 2014.

In September 1890, Deacon J. U. Purington raised his house eleven feet and put a new story under it. A Mr. Roberts of Hanover had charge of the work. Gilbert Tuell has charge of



the joiner work. Fassett and Thompson of Portland made the plans. The photo below shows the house today (2014) after being raised.



Bethel, January 12, 1892 (Oxford Democrat): The well known firm of Woodbury & Purington was dissolved last week. Judge Woodbury retires and Mr. Purington will carry on the business. Judge Woodbury leaves active business thus at the age of 74 years. For twenty years he has been in trade, and has always been numbered among the staunchest business men in the vicinity. The firm has done and Mr. Purington will continue to do, a large business in flour, grain and feed, besides keeping a full general stock. He will go this winter to Pennsylvania, where he will remain some time with his son Wesley, a prominent attorney.

1896

In March 1896, Gould Academy students put on an evening of entertainment of drama and music at Odeon Hall: Names of some of

the performers included Miss Alice Purington, Joan Stearns, Fred Merrill, Robert Foster, Will Bryant, Percy Bartlett, Cornelia French, Bertha Wiley, Edwin Gehring, Miss Eva Twaddle, and Ethel Richardson.

On May 29th the Oxford County Teachers' Association met at Gould Academy. Speakers for the program included A.E. Herrick of Bethel who gave the welcome, Helen Faunce, Norway; James S. Hutchins, Locke's Mills, Miss Alice Purington, Gould Academy, Bethel, Miss Twombly, Bethel.

Presenters were from other county towns as well. Some of the topics presented were Arithmetic in Rural Schools, Teaching Exercises in Language, Methods in Teaching Literature, Geography, Should We Have Written Examinations in Rural Schools, Teaching of English Grammar and The Ideal School.

Bethel's June 10 centennial celebration parade included 19 floats including Woodbury & Purington, grain, feed, groceries, etc. Josiah Purington was one of a three member committee to solicit funds for the event.

On September 1st 1896 Gould Academy opened with Mr. F. Flood, Principal and Miss Alice Purington, preceptress (teacher or instructor).

An Oxford County Congregationalist conference was held the last week of October in South Paris. Seven from Bethel attended. Those attending were: Rev. Israel Jordan, Enoch Woodbury, A. S. Chapman, Mrs. L. M. Valentine, Mr. and Mrs. Horatio Upton, Mrs. L. C. Chandler, Miss Chandler and Mrs. Josiah Purington.

The Christian Endeavor Society elected Miss Alice Purington, President. Gould Academy board members included Josiah U. Purington and Alice Emma Purington was a faculty member responsible for English, Literature, History and Astronomy.



Bethel Historical Society photo of the Woodbury & Purington general store. Photo from Bethel,, Maine An Illustrated History by Randall Bennett, 1991; photo below from the 1931 Special Edition of the Bethel Citizen, Goddard Studio.

May 1897, The Soldiers' Memorial Issue: A public meeting was called for at the Relief Corps room to consider the matter of erecting either a soldiers' monument or a memorial building to the memory of our fallen heroes.

At the meeting Hon. A.E. Herrick was elected chairman and appointed the following committee to consider the best method of devising a soldier's memorial in the town of Bethel. He is to report at a meeting called for June 10th. Those chosen for the committee were: E.C. Park, J.H. Barrows, G.A. Hastings, E.S. Kilborn, J.C. Billings, Ceylon Rowe, Josiah.U. Purington, I.C. Jordan and Dr. J.G. Gehring.

The Bethel Chorus organized to sing in the Maine Music Festival included Alice Purington and 29 others. In August the chorus made a trip to Norway to sing. (The chorus sang at the Portland Maine Musical Festival's performances in October 1897.)

Corporators for a Bethel electric power company met at the Bethel Savings Bank for an organizational meeting on December 30th. Corporators were: Enoch Woodbury, J.U. Purington, Seth Walker, E.C. Park, E.S. Kilborn, A.E. Herrick, J.M. Philbrook, C.D.

Hill, W.W. Hastings, Calvin, Bisbee, Ceylon Rowe, G.P. Bean, G.R. Wiley, Enoch Foster, and Ira C. Jordan. N.F. Brown, F.L. Edwards, J.H. Barrows, G.A. Hastings, J.C. Billings, E.C. Bowler, Henry Farwell and Edwin C. Rowe.

1898

The Congregational Church elected the following officers: L. T. Barker, moderator; J. U. Purington, clerk; Dr. F. B. Tuell, treasurer; assessors were – Dr. F.B. Tuell, H.N. Upton, and E.C. Chamberlain; F.B. Tuell, usher and organist was L. C. Hall.

Alice E. Purington will teach classes in history, rhetoric and literature as a member of the Gould Academy board of instruction.

1899

March 3 the members of Miss Purington's rhetoric class participated in a debate in the Gould Academy recitation room. The question: that a man's position in life depends more upon his natural ability than upon circumstances. Enoch Woodbury passed away in 1899.

1900

At the annual meeting of the Bethel Water Company January 1, Josiah Purington was elected a director apparently replacing Enoch Woodbury. Other directors included Edwin C. Rowe, William W. Hastings, Gideon Hastings and Fred Sanborn (publisher of the Advertiser).



Top: an identified photo of the Purington store taken after 1900; above: J B Ham, a Lewiston seed and grain company, purchased the Purington building in 1926 –1929. Photo from 1931 Citizen Special Edition



1968 aerial photo shows the rail siding where Woodbury & Purington shipments were loaded and unloaded. Later heating oil was delivered here by rail for Irving L Carver Co.

After Josiah Purington died in 1921, the store building was purchased by The Berlin

Grain Company in 1925 continuing the grain and feed business according to Mrs. Chapman's research of Main Street history. In turn the next company to operate in the building was J. B. Ham Co (Lewiston); in 1929 General Mills of Minnesota bought the building and in 1937 it was sold to Leslie Davis where he operated a lumber company followed by Charles Merrill building supply and wood working, then Stanley Davis who operated a wood working and furniture business. A fire in 1972 destroyed the building.

As to the Purington family and the Purington store activities after 1900, more information is available via newspapers, obituaries and census reports which will be added later.

Alice Purington married John V. Holt of Andover; Belle Purington graduated from Gould Academy in 1901 and Harry Purington graduated from Gould in 1904.

There are many sources: Rosalind Rowe Chapman's Historical Survey of Main Street Through History, 1997, published the Bethel Historical Society "The Bethel Courier" contained much information about the Woodbury and Purington homes on Main Street. William Lapham's History of Bethel, Maine; Randall Bennett's Illustrated History of Bethel; the Bethel News, Extra Illustrated Edition, January 6, 1904; the Oxford County Advertiser from 1886 to 1900 (and later); the Oxford County Democrat.

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