



COUNTY NEWS

Maine County Commissioners Association Newsletter

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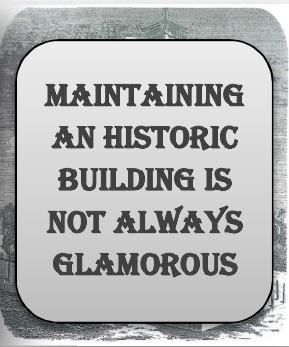
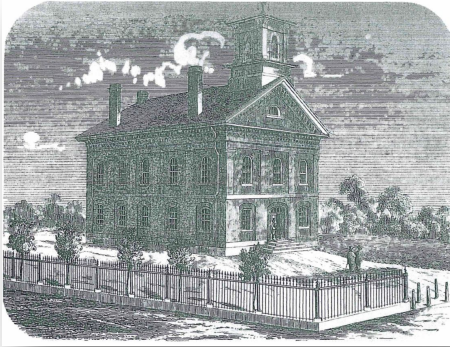
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Counties Bear the Brunt of the ▶ Substance Abuse Crisis ◀

Counties across the country are dealing with the fallout from a substance abuse crisis that has been on the rise for years — whether it means placing more kids in foster care when parents are absent, training librarians on how to administer Narcan or watching budgets get busted at the county coroner's office.

Drug overdose deaths topped 70,000 in 2017 and deaths involving opioids climbed to 47,000, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Over a span of 18 years, drug overdose deaths rose from 16,849 in 1999 to 70,237 in 2017. The highest OD death rates occurred in West Virginia, Ohio, Pennsylvania and the District of Columbia, the CDC reported. Deaths from synthetic opioids other than meth (fentanyl, fentanyl analogs and tramadol) increased by 45 percent from 2016 to 2017. Although opioids continue to grab headlines, many counties across the country continue to have their hands full dealing with the repercussions of cocaine and meth use.

The crisis hits all walks of life. Last year, President Trump unveiled a new website, CrisisNextDoor.gov, where Americans share their own stories about the dangers of opioid addiction. *Please click here to see the web version of the special issue of County News, which looks at solutions and challenges, and hears from county officials around the country. Or click here for the downloadable pdf version of the special issue.*



Washington County opened its Courthouse in 1855. For one hundred and sixty-four years it has been a landmark in the Washington County shiretown of Machias. For one hundred and sixty-four years it has weathered storms, snow, hail, and brilliant sunshine. All these have taken their toll on the materials used to construct the building from “back in the day”.

The Eastern District of what would become the State of Maine began its life as part of Lincoln County and was separated into counties on June 25, 1789. In 1798 a committee was authorized to purchase or build a separate courthouse for the county but no action was taken until the 1850s; a privately owned building served the purpose. The contract for construction was awarded on September 1, 1853. Construction began immediately and the building opened for business in 1855.

From the pages of The Courthouses of Maine, by Robert K. Sloane, comes the following: “The 1855 courthouse was built in the Italianate style, entirely of brick with heavy wooded dentils on the cornice and gable ends. It was the first brick structure in Machias...A square wooden cupola topped the gable end facing Court Street with its arched window. A pair of brass scales of justice crowned the top of the cupola. A bell was added in 1868, perhaps to notify the town of terms of court or to call jurors to duty.

In the interior of the new building a lobby or hall extended the length of the main floor. Off each side of the hall were county offices, protected by cast iron first doors. Fireproof shutters were stationed on the inside of the widows. Four fireplaces of oversized reddish-brown brick were provided to warm the offices. The fireplace bricks were carved with a flower design. Access to the second floor was by way of two sets of metal stairs on either side of the main entrance. Curving up to the second-floor landing, the stairs led directly to the courtroom...



...The new courthouse immediately became the center of activities in Washington County. It was also the place where the first woman lawyer in Maine began her practice; in 1872 Elizabeth Nash of Columbia Falls became the first woman to pass the bar in Maine.”

The courtroom was repaired following a storm in 1869 and renovated in the late 1800s.” Additions for a law library and offices were added in the mid-twentieth century. The building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976. The large addition to the building was completed in 2015 consisting of two additional courtrooms, meeting spaces, clerk's areas and file storage. The original courthouse space was remanded back to the County for office space and the Washington County Museum and Heritage Center.

As most counties are painfully aware, maintenance for a 164-year-old building is not easy, especially if the work is 60-plus feet in the air. The cupola was in poor condition. Several of the wooden dentils had rotted, the soffits were spongy, and a pigeon had found a way to get into the attic, the capture of same is a story for another time. Eight weeks it took to restore the dentils including milling out replacement parts and installing them. The cupola's posts were solid, but it needed replacement parts around the railings; some of the square nails were literally falling out of the materials. When the work was completed, the cupola was restored to its former glory and the original brass scales were once again visible from the downtown.

Next on the list is the cupola topping the Sheriff's Office and slate roof repairs. Nothing compares to historic brick buildings, even if their upkeep requires special skills and constant attention. Funding this work is not glamorous, but the responsibility to do so is paramount to a county's image.

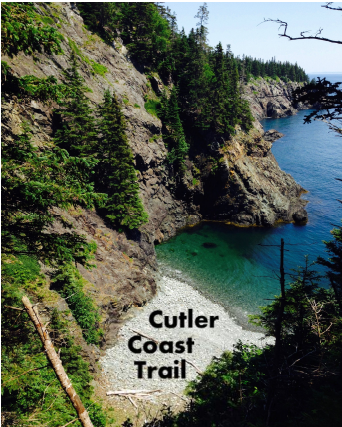
Staycation in Washington County

Washington County is becoming a destination for folks looking for a different kind of vacation. On the Sunrise Trail, one can follow the coastline from Ellsworth to Ayers Junction, a mere twelve miles from Calais. Non-registered vehicles can be used on the Trail. ATVs are popular, as are bicycles. Walkers abound, particularly in segments where the Trail closely follows the coastline. The Sunrise Trail is the longest access route on the eastern seaboard. There is the Ice Age Trail, the Sculpture Trail, the Fisheries Trail, the Bold Coast Byway, and what will become the Trail of History. Local chambers of commerce are a good source of information regarding the attractions of down east.

There are nature preserves with hiking trails for all ages. Probably the most dramatic is the Bold Coast, in Cutler; the Downeast Coastal Conservancy and the Downeast Salmon Federation also maintain trails.

What cannot be discounted are the state parks. There are

a number in Washington County that can provide a wide range of activities. Roque Bluffs State Park boasts a fresh water pond on one side and the beach on the other, separated by the road and a huge rosa rugosa hedge. There is playground equipment, rest rooms, grills and picnic tables. Cobscook Bay State Park is a secret wonderland with the falls that reverse with each change of the 24-foot tides. McLellan Park in Milbridge offers campsites, picnicking facilities and hiking trails.



Quoddy Head State Park in Lubec offers the extreme tides of the Bay of Fundy and scenic trails along the shore. Reversing Falls Park in Pembroke and Shackford Head State Park in Eastport both have hiking trails and picnicking facilities.

Staycations are becoming more popular every year. What might amaze people is the nearness of Washington County, which boasts of facilities, access, and the pockets of quiet solitude that people value... and great food.

