

An Unrecognized Portland Engraver

By MARTHA GANDY FALES

HERETOFORE, David G. Johnson has been listed in the standard works on engravers as being a portrait painter and engraver in New York City, 1831-1835, 1843-1845. However, the recent discovery of an engraving signed by him of the Portland Nautical Society has resulted in the knowledge that before going to New York, David G. Johnson worked for a few years in Portland, Maine.

The Portland Nautical Society membership certificate is a handsome and inventive design (Fig. 1). In the upper section is a scene of three ships off Portland Head Light. The central section is a scrolled membership certificate superimposed on a chart of Portland Harbor and a mariner's compass, surmounted by a fish and flanked by a swag of kelp and shells on the left and trophies of spears, trident, rope, and oars. Below is a cluster of a globe, telescope, quadrant, and hourglass, and a cannon and anchor. The print is also signed "A. Scot Del." who was listed by Groce and Wallace in their *Dictionary of American Artists* as an artist, possibly of Boston, who in 1803 painted a copy of the State House portrait of the Reverend John Wheelwright (1594-1679).

Proof that Johnson worked in Portland was found first in an advertisement in the *Eastern Argus* published in Portland on January 4, 1825:

ENGRAVING—The subscriber informs the Public that he has taken an office at No. 4, Market Square in Gilbert's block, directly under Beethoven Hall, where he will execute the above business, in all its various branches, with neatness and despatch. Orders from a distance promptly attended to. Copperplate printing

neatly and reasonably executed. D. G. Johnson. Portland Dec. 20, 1824.

Eighteen twenty-five was the same year in which the Portland Nautical Society published its Constitution and By-Laws through the printers Shirley & Edwards. Evidently the society was short-lived as even its existence had escaped present-day scholars of maritime history. This publication not only listed its members but also described the seal of the society as being an exact imitation of the mariner's compass card, with the title of the society expressed in the margin, and a representation of a star in the center.

A copy of this pamphlet, as well as the advertisement of Johnson, was found at the Maine Historical Society where a check of the Portland City Directories was also made. The 1827 edition listed D. G. Johnson as an engraver at the exchange over the Cumberland Bank. The 1831 edition, however, produced a second example of Johnson's work as a Maine engraver, in the form of a Plan of Portland (Fig. 2). The map shows the city of Portland, Mount-Joy, part of Westbrook, Bramhall's Hill, and Cape Elizabeth, as well as Portland Harbor, and a key to the city's churches, courthouse, academy, customhouse, and theater.

A very similar plan of Portland had been done for an earlier directory by Abel Bowen of Boston, which Johnson simply reworked, adding new buildings and roads, and subtracting some, adding the Cumberland and Oxford Canal, and making other changes such as the deletion of the hospital in the Mount-Joy area.



FIG. 1. MEMBERSHIP CERTIFICATE, PORTLAND NAUTICAL SOCIETY,
ENGRAVED BY DAVID G. JOHNSON

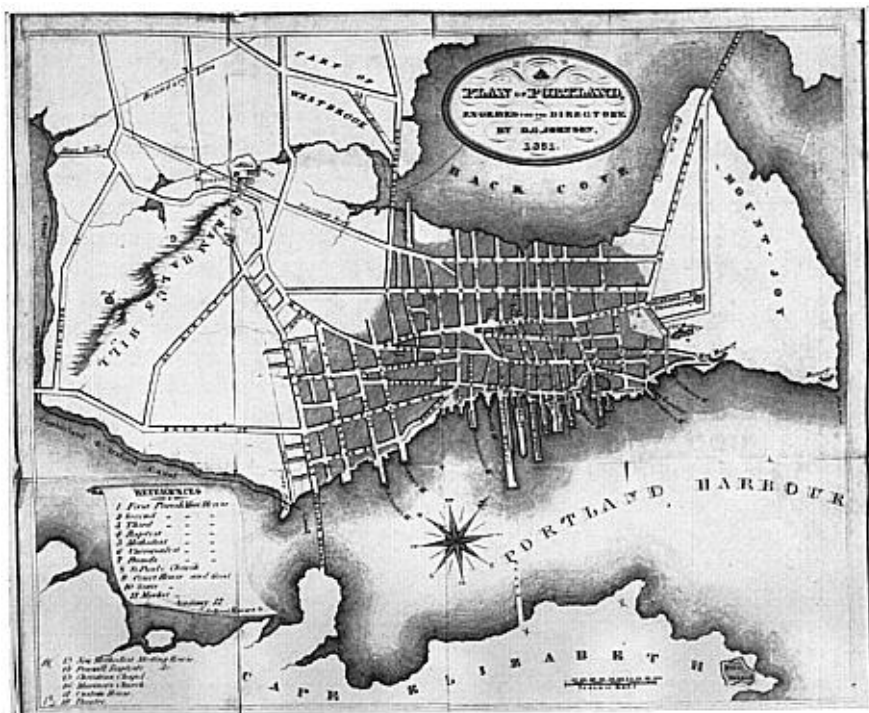


FIG. 2. PLAN OF PORTLAND, MAINE, ENGRAVED BY D. G. JOHNSON, 1831

The 1831 edition of the City Directory in which his plan appears does not list Johnson, and since he appears in the New York City Directories after that year, it can be assumed that his working

dates in Portland were from about 1825 to 1830, but while short-lived, D. G. Johnson's career as a Maine engraver resulted in at least two important and informative documents of Portland's past.

Announcement of New Appointment

The Trustees announce the appointment of William Endicott II as Associate Director on January 1, 1967. After graduation from Harvard College in 1933 he joined the Nashua Manufacturing Co., textile manufacturers, where, at their Lowell plant, by combining work and study he received in three years' time a diploma in Textile Engineering at the Lowell Technological Institute. Following several years with the Wellington Sears Co. he moved to their Wellington Mill at Anderson, South Carolina, and subsequently devoted three years to service in the United States Air Corps at Wright Field in Dayton, Ohio, where he was concerned entirely with experimental parachutes and parachute fabrics. During these years he married Miss Helen H. Mason.

In 1959, at a time when textiles were moving south, he became Business Manager at the Brooks School in North Andover where he remained for five years and where he initiated a new business program. In bringing to the Society his knowledge of financial and business procedures, Mr. Endicott's chief concerns will center naturally in the clarification of finance and budgetary controls, insurance matters, oversight of Preservation Management, and the Society's relationship to various community developments.