

## FAMILY HISTORY

Abner Coburn was born on March 22, 1803 in that part of Canaan which is now known as Skowhegan. Although he was the second oldest of 14 children, he outlived all his other siblings. His father, Eleazer Coburn, was the great great grandson of Edward Colburn who, at just age 17, arrived in America from England in 1635 on board the ship “Defense”. Abner Coburn’s mother was Mary Weston Coburn, the granddaughter of Joseph Weston, who died of exposure while guiding Benedict Arnold’s expedition through Maine to Quebec.

As a child, Abner’s mother spun and wove her own blankets, sheets and towels, made her own butter, cheese, candles and soaps, and knit her family’s hosiery. Abner’s father was a farmer and surveyor and was very involved in civic and other business activities.

Abner Coburn grew up on the Back Road in then Bloomfield, now Skowhegan. He received some education at the Pitts School on the Back Road (below left), and attended a few terms at Bloomfield Academy on Main Street (below right).



from [Skowhegan on the Kennebec](#)



Courtesy of Skowhegan History House



from postcard

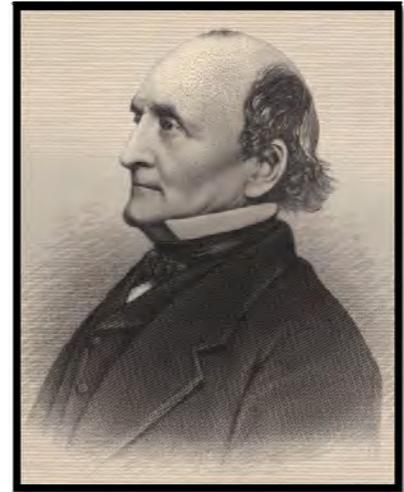
Right next door to Bloomfield Academy on Main Street is the church that Abner Coburn’s family attended, the First Baptist Church. The Coburn family, including Abner himself, had strong moral convictions. Abner Coburn never smoked tobacco or used alcoholic beverages.



Courtesy of Skowhegan History House

**Abner Coburn never married and had no children. In 1848, he built a mansion on the top of Main Street. He resided there for the rest of his life.**

**He resided at the mansion with his brother, Philander. Philander and Abner were business partners for 37 years doing business as A. & P. Coburn. Philander was involved in many business, civic and philanthropic ventures and causes. He was a teacher at the district schools for several terms. He became a skillful surveyor under the guidance of his father. Philander and Abner owned pretty much everything together and even had a common bank account. Together they accumulated tremendous wealth from vast land holdings, lumbering and many other investments. Philander never married, nor had children. He was elected to serve in the Maine Senate in 1853. Philander died in 1876.**



from [Genealogical and Family History of Maine, Volume 1](#)

**A sister, Elvira, was homemaker for Abner and Philander at the mansion until she died in 1867.**

**The oldest brother and Coburn child, Nahum died when he was only 21 in 1822.**

**A sister, Fidelia, received an education at Winthrop Academy and became a teacher. Later, she became involved in the anti-slavery movement and for seven years served as a missionary for fugitive slaves in Canada. She died in 1849, of fever on a missionary trip to Africa.**

**A sister, Eliza, married Isaiah Marston and had 8 children. She died in 1874.**

**A brother, Alonzo, was a lawyer and Harvard Law School graduate. He formed a law partnership with his brother, Stephen, in Skowhegan, doing business as A. and S. Coburn, but soon left the practice to do farming. He was married, but had no children. He died in 1882.**

**Another brother, Samuel, was educated at Waterville College, now Colby. He taught school and farmed, having a specialty of raising Durham cattle. In 1859, he took a cargo of Durham cattle to his brother Sylvanus' ranch in California sailing by way of the Isthmus of Panama. He stayed in California until 1852, and then returned to Maine. He was married and had 5 children. He died in 1873.**

**Abner's brother, Stephen, graduated from Waterville College and taught school on a plantation in North Carolina for one year. When he returned to Maine, he became the principal and teacher at Bloomfield Academy. He was a member of the Maine Board of Education from 1848 to 1850. He was instrumental in bringing about the consolidation of Bloomfield Academy and Skowhegan High School. He attended some lectures at Harvard Law School and became a lawyer in 1845. He was a law partner**

with his brother, Alonzo, for a short time, and when Alonzo left the practice, he became law partners with Henry Wyman, doing business as Coburn & Wyman until Wyman died in 1867. He then acted as attorney for Maine Central Railroad at a time when his brother, Abner, was President of the Railroad. In 1860, he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives to fill out the term of Israel Washburn, who became Governor of Maine. He stood near Abraham Lincoln when Lincoln was inaugurated as our 16<sup>th</sup> U.S. President. He also served as Postmaster for Skowhegan from 1868 to 1877. He was married and had 5 children, including author, Louise Coburn. He drowned in the Kennebec River in 1882, along with his only son who was trying to save him. At right is a photo of Stephen and his daughter, Louise.



Courtesy of Skowhegan History House

A brother, Eleazer, was a farmer and lumberman in Skowhegan. He was married, but had no children. He died in 1845 when he was only 30 years old.

Another brother, Charles, graduated from Waterville College and served as principal at Bloomfield Academy, but died in 1844 at age 22, unmarried and without children.

A sister, Mary Weston, served as preceptress at Bloomfield Academy for several years. She later lived with her brothers, Abner and Philander, in the mansion, being their homemaker. She died in 1874.

A brother, Sylvanus, went to California for the Gold Rush of 1849 and engaged in mining until 1854. He later bought a ranch in Santa Clara, California, and went into the thoroughbred Durham cattle business. Later, he formed a stagecoach and livery business with his nephew, E.W. Marston. He died in 1874, unmarried and without children.

Sylvanus' twin sister, Sarah, only lived to be 5 months old.