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## **OYHS ACQUIRES 1713 MCINTIRE GARRISON IN YORK**

York, Maine—Old York Historical Society (OYHS) has acquired Maine’s earliest-surviving structurally-unaltered house, the McIntire Garrison on Cider Hill Road in York (built 1713). The property was transferred to OYHS by Malcolm (Mal) Davis, Daniel Davis, and James Davis, the heirs of Mary McIntire Davis, a direct descendant of Micum McIntire. The property comes with a fund of \$50,000 from Mary McIntire Davis’s estate to be used for short-term maintenance. Real estate attorney David Ballou of Ballou Law in York volunteered his time to draft the deed of transfer.

The two-acre McIntire Garrison property includes the house, a barn known as the “Cider House” (built 1808), and a carriage shed. It is surrounded by 240 acres of farmland, a McIntire family cemetery, and salt marshes, now known as the Smelt Brook Preserve. The York Land Trust acquired the Smelt Brook Preserve from the McIntire-Davis family between 2009 and 2011. The Garrison property and the preserve are bounded by Maine Route 91 and the meandering York River. According to OYHS trustee Tom Hardiman, “The preservation of this historic natural setting is nearly unparalleled in the United States. There are very few first period American colonial houses in their undeveloped original settings.”

The property has passed through eight generations of McIntire family ownership. And while the house has not been occupied for more than a century, it has been cared for meticulously. About his ancestral heritage in York, Mal Davis reflected, “My family settled in the colonies about 375 years ago. There is a straight line back from me and my brothers to our forebearer, Micum McIntire. This is an amazing journey. Many family members are buried in the McIntire cemetery which sits several hundred yards from the garrison—grandparents, aunts and great-aunts, an uncle, and others whose burials I distinctly remember attending. It is important to our family to maintain this connection, which we will continue to do through our association with OYHS.”

The acquisition of the McIntire Garrison is a transformative moment for OYHS. “This generous gift by the Davis family greatly enhances our ability to share the history of early Maine,” says Joel Lefever, OYHS executive director. “Our interpretation of York’s colonial history has—until now—been centered on the Old Gaol. Once it is open to the public, the McIntire Garrison will be an authentic environment for museum visitors to experience the lifestyle of early Maine.”

Historian, archaeologist, and York resident Emerson “Tad” Baker, who helped OYHS evaluate the historic property, says “I am incredibly excited that Old York is the new steward of the McIntire Garrison. It is likely the earliest standing house in Maine and it is extremely well preserved as it was last lived more than a hundred years ago. The garrison and its grounds provide us with a unique opportunity to learn much about York and Maine 300 years ago.”

## **OYHS PLANS FOR THE GARRISON**

The Board of Trustees of OYHS has enthusiastically supported the acquisition of the McIntire Garrison since the Davis family approached the institution in early 2023. According to Suzanne Little, president of the board, “Old York’s first priority is to honor the history of the McIntire family in York. We are humbled to become stewards of this singularly important property, and share stories of the McIntire family’s settlement, tenacity, and continuity with the public.”

Because the property has remained relatively untouched during the past 311 years, it is a virtual gold mine for historians and archaeologists. Everything—from the land and plant materials to the archaeology, structures, and architectural fragments—need be studied and stabilized before the buildings can be opened to the public.

A committee made up of OYHS board, staff, and community members will be established to advise on various stabilization and study projects and funding opportunities. As a National Historic Landmark, the McIntire Garrison qualifies for grants and funding often unavailable for undesignated sites. Additionally, OYHS is establishing a restricted McIntire Garrison Endowment Fund dedicated to the ongoing maintenance and staffing of the property.

## **THE MCINTIRE FAMILY AND GARRISON**

Micum McIntire (1625–1705) was a Scottish highlander, who became a prisoner-of-war following the Battle of Dunbar in 1650. Like many other prisoners of the Scottish uprising, he was deported to Massachusetts. McIntire was sold as an indentured servant to a New Hampshire sawmill owner, and afterwards obtained land in York’s Scotland District in 1668. His son, John McIntire (1677–1771), built the current house in 1713.

According to recent scientific analysis (dendrochronology) of the logs used in the structure, it was constructed using trees felled in the winter of 1712–1713, making the McIntire Garrison the earliest scientifically dated house in Maine. Long thought to be one of the state’s most significant early structures, the house was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1968. The Garrison, along with the Old Gaol, are the two earliest nationally landmarked buildings in Maine, and both are now under the care of OYHS.

## **HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GARRISON**

A garrison is defined as a fortified building that houses soldiers. In colonial New England, garrisons often were little more than a wooden house surrounded by a palisade that served as a refuge for nearby residents during turbulent times. While the McIntire Garrison was not an official military garrison, its thick log construction would have protected its occupants from musket fire during a surprise attack. By the time the McIntire Garrison was built in 1713, colonists in northern New England had been in a state of nearly continuous conflict with the French in Canada and their native allies, since the beginning of King Philip’s War in 1675. Being on the edge of settled territory, York’s residents particularly were vulnerable to attacks. In February 1692, much of York Village was destroyed as a result of a coordinated attack by the French and Wabanaki, commonly referred to as the Candlemas Raid.

The McIntire Garrison is the most architecturally significant house surviving from colonial Maine. The two-story house with central chimney is constructed of logs with dovetailed corners. The walls of second-floor overhang the first floor on all sides. These overhangs, known as “jetties,” are evidence of a medieval building tradition originating in the British Isles. While houses of this type once were relatively common in southern Maine and New Hampshire, only a few survived into the 19th century: the Old Garrison in Newmarket, New Hampshire, the Field-Meserve Garrison in Dover, New Hampshire, and the Junkins Garrison in York. These three examples fell into ruin by the end of the century, and are now known only from paintings and photographs. Other than the McIntire Garrison, no other unaltered houses with full second-floor overhanging jetties appear to have survived into the 21st century.

**Joel Lefever will present a webinar on the McIntire Garrison and its historical context, on Wednesday, September 25, at 6pm.** Details available at [oldyork.org](http://oldyork.org).

### **ABOUT OLD YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Located at the heart of York Village, Old York is a vital part of the community. The organization maintains 16 buildings and 20 properties; has 3 full-time and 25 part-time employees; more than 20,000 artifacts and 50,000 archival materials in the library; and serves thousands of people annually through tours, educational programs, and special events. For more information, please visit [oldyork.org](http://oldyork.org).

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