

FROM THE COLLECTIONS:

John Williams Daniels' Paintings of North Anson

FIVE SMALL oil paintings of the village of North Anson were given to the Maine Historical Society in 1999. They meticulously illustrate a rural Maine village in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and as such are important additions to our painting collection, which is comprised predominately of marine subjects and portraits.

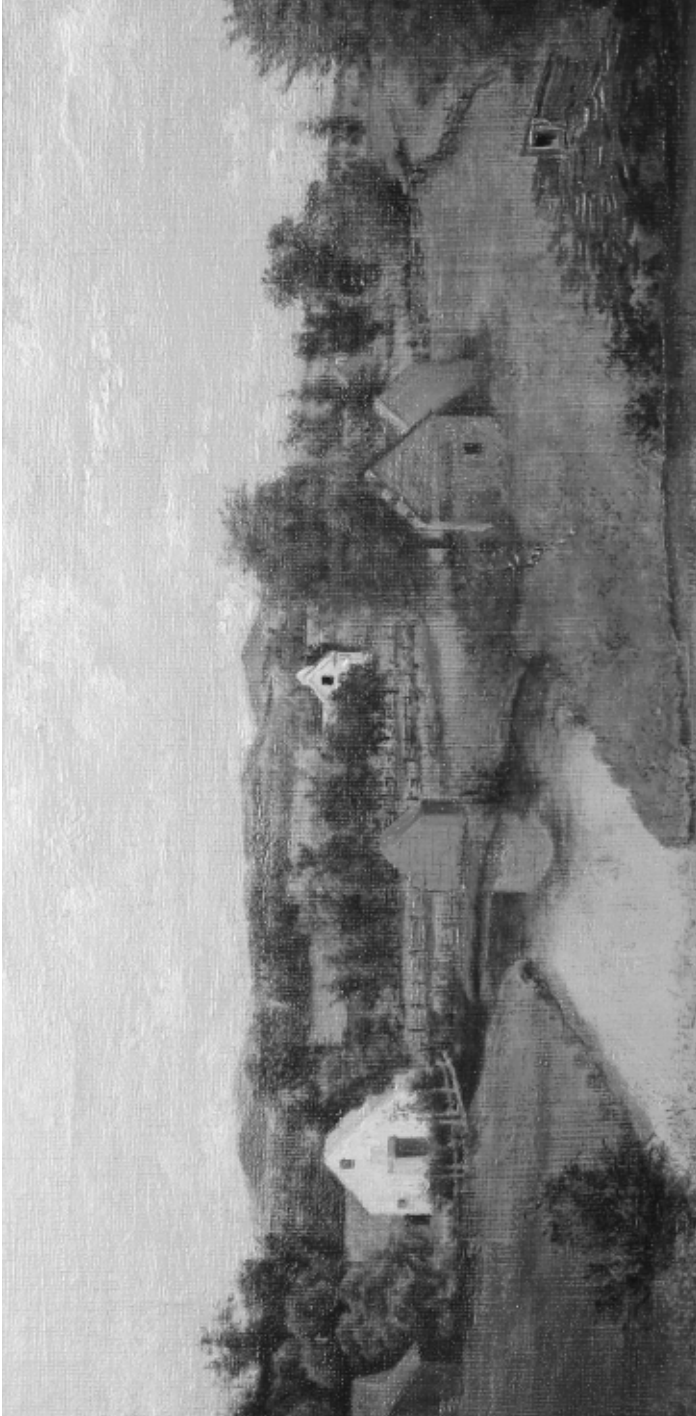
The paintings are attributed to John Williams Daniels (1845-1933), who married North Anson native Alice Steward (1846-1921), in 1876. Little is known about Daniels. He was born in England and graduated from Bates College. Painting was evidently his hobby and not his vocation, as he had a long career as an educator and school administrator in Maine, Idaho, Wyoming, and Oregon. The Daniels moved west permanently in 1881, so the paintings were probably finished between 1876 and 1881.

The village of North Anson is part of the Somerset County town of Anson. Located at the junction of the Kennebec and Carrabasset rivers, the town's fertile alluvial soil and direct river access attracted settlers in the mid-eighteenth century, and the town was incorporated in 1798. North Anson had its share of farms, but also served as the commercial trading center for the surrounding farming communities. It was the terminus of the Somerset Railroad.

This mix of agricultural and commercial pursuits is reflected in the series of paintings. Farmsteads and fields are depicted, as is Main Street, the commercial center of the village. The Steward mansion, where Daniels' wife grew up, appears in one painting. The artist's familiarity and affection for the town he would leave behind is evident.

Dr. John P. Steward of Palo Alto, California donated these paintings to the Maine Historical Society.

HOLLY HURD-FORSYTH
Registrar, Maine Historical Society



John Daniels painting, North Anson, ca. 1869. Courtesy of the Maine Historical Society.