

Maine Historical Society COLLECTING - PRESERVING - PRESERVING THE HISTORY OF MAINE

Summer 2004

AMAZING! MAINE STORIES



Dave Glovsky (Dave the Guesser) working at his summertime passion, guessing people's weight at Old Orchard Beach, c. 1988.

ARE YOU TIRED OF THE SAME OLD HISTORY? Have you been looking for excitement? Do you need to make

Have you been looking for excitement? Do you need to make new friends? Then it's time to see *Amazing! Maine Stories*. It's a new exhibit that will introduce you to characters curious, famous, and unknown — all of whose lives illuminate Maine history in unexpected ways. It opens to the public Friday, June 25, 2004, at the Maine Historical Society Museum.

Curator John Mayer has plumbed the depths of MHS collections and gone far afield to tell these stories, which stretch from the 18th century to the present, from the pulpit to the junkyard, from Casco Bay to the shores of Tripoli. There are Native Americans and Yankee inventors, proto-feminists and old-time

railroad men. There's Handkerchief Moody of York, and Toy Len Goon of Portland; "Steamboat" Jonathan Morgan of Alna, and Dave "The Guesser" Glovsky of Old Orchard Beach.

For each of these figures, and many more, the show unfolds a quirky, tabloid-style story backed up by careful scholarship, thorough labels, and a range of extraordinary artifacts, paintings, photographs and manuscripts. It is in fact one of the purposes of the exhibit to remind us that history is always latent, always hidden in the objects we save, in the lives they represent, and in the decisions museums make to bring them forth or not. Finding the little known story, spotting the telling detail, showing evocative objects for the first time, telling old stories in new ways — all can lead to a revitalized sense of history and a new appreciation for the peculiar shape of individual lives. It's time to open the doors.

The exhibit will be on view through December 2004. Stay tuned for further announcements of special programs and family activities.



Persis Sibley, diarist, housewife, and domestic artist, with her daughter, 1844. Painting on ivory by Caroline Hill Wardwell.

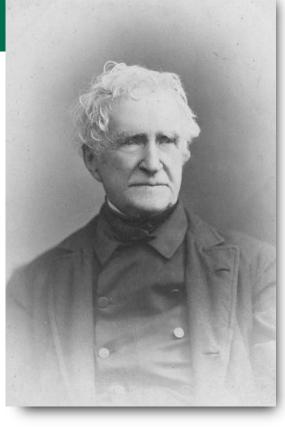
Jonathan Morgan, inventor, author, and lawyer at the age of 91. Photo by Marquis Fayette King.

John Neal Collection Comes to MHS: A Figure of National Scope

The Society is delighted to announce the recent gift of original letters, drawings, articles, pamphlets, clippings, photographs, and books by and about Portland native John Neal (1793-1876), sometimes called America's first art critic. The gift has been made by Neal's direct descendants, Henry F. Picking and his sisters Frances P. Helyar and Elizabeth S. Hamill, former MHS curator. The collection, filling five archival cartons, is a gift of national significance, complementing holdings at Harvard and other repositories, and greatly expanding materials already at MHS.

In his lifetime John Neal was a multi-faceted character: art critic, gymnast, phrenologist, novelist, architect, poet, quarryman, boxer, women's rights advocate, attorney, editor, politician and writer. Among the first to praise and publish Edgar Alan Poe when he lived in Baltimore, he was also a friend of Longfellow, Greeley and Rembrant Peale, and influenced the young Nathaniel Hawthorne. His short-lived literary publication, *The Yankee and Boston Literary Gazette* (1828-29) was an important national forum for the spread of new cultural ideas. In Europe he acted as secretary to the philosopher Jeremy Bentham; in Maine he was largely responsible for creating a viable and rich art scene around Portland landscape painter Charles Codman.

Indeed, Neal's reputation has grown stronger with time. He has been the subject of numerous essays and two literary biographies, *That Wild Fellow John Neal and the American Literary Revolution,* by Benjamin Lease (1972), and *John Neal,* by Donald A. Sears (1978). His art criticism has been reprinted many times. The noted art historian John W. McCoubrey employed Neal's essays in *American Art,*



1700-1960: Sources and Documents (1965) and praised Neal's call for a return to straightforward realism in painting. Together with his essays, John Neal's real masterwork is Wandering Recollections of a Somewhat Busy Life: An Autobiography (1869), recently chosen as one of Maine's 100 most significant books.

MHS is honored to receive the John Neal collection. It is being processed now and should be available to scholars within the year.

Portland's Waterfront: A History and Walking Tour

Join MHS Trustee
Jim Millinger for a slide
show and discussion
about the history of
Portland's waterfront,
followed by a walking
tour of Portland's
working Union Wharf
led by Angela Clark.

Saturday Morning, July 24

At-Risk Kids: On the Waterfront with MHS

Maine Historical has undertaken an exciting project with Lyman Moore Middle School in Portland. A group of 14 at-risk eighth graders has been involved in an intensive two-month study of Portland's working waterfront, past, present, and future. The students are examining the waterfront from many angles: industries and occupations; buildings, wharves, and bridges; the people who work, live, and visit.

"The goal of the project is to get students into the community, to find people, places, and stories that will pique their interest, and to help them explore their own connections to Portland and their heritage," says Steve Bromage, MHS Director of Education. And the community is pitching in. MHS Trustee Jim Millinger talked to the students about the history of the waterfront, shared slides with them, and has been an ongoing resource for the project. Jeff Monroe, the Director of the Port of Portland, led a discussion about the practical details of running the Port on a daily basis. Susan Kimball and Dennis Doyle from WCSH led a hands-on session about conducting and filming interviews.

MHS staff, who help develop similar projects in communities around the state, worked closely with teacher Ray St. Pierre and the students themselves to set project goals, identify topics, make community connections, and carry out the work. According to St. Pierre, "These are kids with difficult academic backgrounds. My hope was that getting them out into the community would help them see that learning is active, relevant, and, yes, even fun. And to have them create and 'own' their own projects. I've been amazed how they've responded."

To complete the project students will create an online exhibit on the Maine Memory Network, a documentary video about their work, and, in early June, a special exhibit in the Showcase Gallery at Maine Historical. Here's to you, Lyman Moore!

STUDENT COMMUNITY HISTORY GALLERY GOES ONLINE

An important new feature has been added to the Maine Memory Network: it's called the Community History Gallery, and it's designed to share, celebrate, and learn about student history projects around Maine. Every community in Maine has its own unique historical resources and stories to tell. At all grade levels, exploring local history is a great way to enhance classroom learning, get students involved in their community, and develop a broad range of important skills. It's also a great opportunity to build relationships with historical organizations within a community.

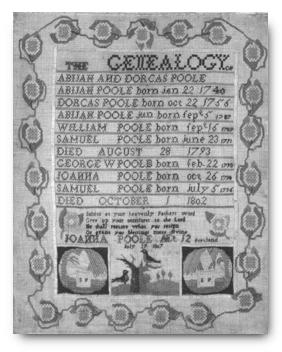
An excellent example is the work of the Skowhegan Area Middle School, where students worked for nearly two years with MHS staff, school advisors, and volunteers from the Skowhegan History House. They created 15 online exhibits and did all the work themselves: picking topics, background reading, research in local archives, scanning historical material, interviewing people in the



community, and writing their exhibit texts. They explored a diverse range of topics from the history of the Skowhegan Grange, to Benedict Arnold's march up the Kennebec, to the story of a 19th century doctor from Skowhegan.

To see Skowhegan's exhibit on the Grange, or the exhibits of Norridgewock Elementary, Greely Jr. High, or Oxford Hills High, go to: www.mainememory.net/schools_community. We hope you'll come away with at least two ideas about the Community History Gallery: students can make an important contribution to our knowledge, and combination of local history, community involvement, and technology can make an important contribution to classroom learning.

Skowhegan Grange Hall, c 1894. Middle School Student Eric Axelman, from the website: "This historic building was the home of community meetings, theatrical plays, different kinds of musical dances, and traveling performers. In Skowhegan, this Grange building may be closed down."



Joanna Poole of Portland, Maine completed this genealogy sampler in 1807 when she was 12 years old. It is typical of the kind of samplers produced in the female academies in Portland at that time.

"A Peace of Work Performed by Me"

A new exhibit will open in the Maine Historical Society Showcase Gallery on July 9, 2004. A Peace of Work Performed by Me: Historic Fiberarts from the Collection will feature over 20 embroidered samplers and memorials dating from circa 1755 to 1860, including a group of family register samplers. Samplers were a central component of schoolgirls' curriculum, and were generally stitched from patterns designed by the girls' teacher. While the spelling might be creative, as in the 1755 title piece by Mary Jones, pride of accomplishment always shines through.

Also on view will be fine examples of beadwork, lace, Victorian hair-work, sewing tools and supplies, and a magnificent coverlet made in 1818 by Delphos Turner of Palermo, Maine. Acquired in 2002, this coverlet has never before been exhibited at the Maine Historical Society.

This exhibit is part of *The State of Fiber 2004*, a yearlong, statewide celebration of 115 exhibitions, educational programs and other special events organized by Maine Fiberarts to celebrate and promote the work of Maine fiber artists (quilters, papermakers, weavers, lacemakers, spinners, knitters, rugmakers, and others) past and present. The exhibit also coincides with the 25th Anniversary Celebration of the Southern Maine Chapter of the Embroiderers' Guild of America. For more information about *The State of Fiber 2004*, please call 207-721-0678 or visit www.mainefiberarts.org to see a full schedule of events.

NEH Grant Supports Conservation Planning

In January, the National Endowment of the Humanities awarded a \$5,000 Preservation Assistance Grant to Maine Historical Society to support the creation of a Conservation Plan. John Mayer, Curator of the Museum, wrote the grant application and is the director of this project, but all staff who work with the library, museum, or Longfellow House collections are involved.

A conservation plan is a list of prioritized actions to be accomplished that will improve preservation of and access to the collection. At MHS, developing a conservation plan involves a survey of current conditions in all three buildings on the campus, a careful review of past collection care efforts, and an understanding of current plans and projects that will affect the collections. Conservator Ron Harvey of Tuckerbrook Conservation in Lincolnville, Maine is conducting the survey and working closely with staff to write the plan.

Expectations are high for this document. With the wide range of environments and different types of activities planned and underway in each of our buildings, MHS staff needs to be confident that work is progressive and meeting our high standards for collection care. The plan, scheduled for completion in June, will identify and sequence projects ranging in scope from HVAC improvements to basic collection rehousing and storage improvement. If you have any questions about this project or would like information about conservation planning, please call John Mayer at extension 224.

Ed Bearss, Noted Historian, star of Ken Burns' *Civil War* to Speak

Noted historian and Civil War expert Ed Bearss will give a talk at Maine Historical about Maine's legendary Civil War Regiment, the 20th Maine. Bearss, a National Park Service Historian for 40 years, was a featured commentator in Ken Burns's Civil War. Bearss will speak in the Shettlesworth Lecture Hall at noon on Thursday, June 10. Free and Open to the Public.

CONSERVATION:

A New "Bombardment of Tripoli"

In preparation for our next exhibit, MHS has sent an important painting depicting the naval battle of Tripoli to conservator Nina Roth-Wells of Georgetown, Maine, to be cleaned and restored. While our object file contains some information, there is still much to learn.

The painting shows the 1804 "Bombardment of Tripoli," including the U.S.S. Constitution in action under the command of Commodore Edward Preble. It was an extremely important event for the young American Navy, and a heroic victory for Commodore Preble against the Barbary pirates. The painting is not dated, but it is signed on the back by "J. Proctor, Portland," and was donated to MHS in 1891 by the antiquarian and collector Charles Bearce. The medium is oil on wood panel, in what appears to be the original gilded, gesso-on-wood frame, suggesting a date in the early-to-mid 1800's. At the moment almost nothing is known about Proctor, if indeed he (or she) is the artist: no other works have been identified, nor have we found direct records of an artist by that name in Maine or New England. Portland City Directories list a John E. Proctor in various occupations from 1858 to 1869, but none seem right. If you have a lead please let us know!

The painting was in very poor condition to start. It was extremely dirty and there were several areas of paint loss to the image. Ms. Roth-Wells has carefully removed the surface dirt, coated the painting with a protective varnish, and touched up areas of paint loss. The treatment is not quite finished, but so far the results are dramatic. The fully conserved painting will be on view in the upcoming show.

Funds to support conservation of the painting are from the Friends of Collections. Please contact Leslie Hahn if you would like some additional information about the Friends or if you would like to make a contribution to support the conservation of MHS art, artifacts and archival treasures.



The painting "The Battle of Tripoli" on an easel while being cleaned in the studio of conservator Nina Roth-Wells.

Collections Initiative

PETTICOATS, TOP HATS AND TOASTERS: IN PROCESS



Curatorial Assistant Ryan Nutting displays a black top hat constructed of black beaver fur on the outside with a thin black silk ribbon and bow around the base. The interior crown features a gold stamped logo on red lining. The hat originates from J. G. Hayes in Portland circa 1840. MHS received this object from the Westbrook College Costume Collection.

Much has been accomplished in the museum since the start of the Collections Development Initiative in October. In particular, work has begun on two immense unprocessed collections: costumes and the historical artifacts of the Central Maine Power Company. Curatorial Assistant Ryan Nutting started work on the costumes by examining and creating an inventory of the many boxes of unprocessed and unaccessioned material in the collection, primarily consisting of collars, handkerchiefs, undergarments, costume jewelry, stockings, fans, and infant clothing. That completed, he moved on to the vast collection of men's, women's and children's hats. Next in line: shoes. Each item is researched to reveal donor information, and establish how the piece relates to Maine history.

Recommendations on which items to retain in (or add to) the collection are based on the results of this research and the review of a six-person advisory committee that meets monthly. In addition to staff and trustees, the committee includes Jacqueline Field, former Curator of Westbrook College Costume Collection and independent textile scholar, Tom Johnson, Curator, Old York Historical Society and Ellie Vuilleumier, Registrar, Portland Museum of Art. By June Ryan estimates he will have inventoried over 2,000 articles of clothing and be a third of the way through the project. The end result will be a refined collection of costumes and accessories with documented ties to the State of Maine.

Work has also begun on the voluminous Central Maine Power historical collections, which were given to the Society in 2002 by CMP and its parent company FPL Energy. The collection, consisting of archives and artifacts (yes, toasters and other home appliances, along with early light bulbs, meters and a diesel generator or two) tells the full tale of rural electrification and all it implied for the State of Maine between 1898 and the present. The collections are currently stored in the Augusta area, and that is where Museum Consultants Jane Radcliffe and Ron Kley have begun to organize, assess, and catalog these materials before selection and the move to Portland.

SPRING CLEANING in the Longfellow Garden

It's never too early to start learning about our favorite poet while tending the family garden.

Thanks to about twelve student volunteers from the New Hill School – and the fine coordination between the Longfellow Garden Club and the MHS Education Department – rakes went into action and bags got filled with garden debris on Friday, March 26th. It wasn't just about hard work and cleaning up: the children read and discussed a few Longfellow poems before heading back to the classroom, where drawing pictures of their garden experience closed the day.



Emma Jordan, age 8, of the New Hill School tackles the garden debris of early springtime.

State Preservation Honor Comes to MHS

This year's State of Maine Historic Preservation Award has gone to MHS in recognition of its work on the Wadsworth-Longfellow House. The award was made this April at the Maine Historic Preservation Commission's meeting in Portland. In making the presentation, Commission Chair Thomas Johnson noted that the Wadsworth-Longfellow restoration and re-interpretation encompassed all aspects of the cross disciplinary nature of historic preservation, including historic research, scientific analysis, conservation treatments, and the use of traditional materials and craftsmanship as well as modern technology. MHS Director Richard D'Abate accepted the award for the Society and spoke about the importance of integrating historic preservation into the larger fabric of community interests. (A second preservation award was made to the Westbrook Housing Authority for its work in converting the old Westbrook High School into housing units.) We are extremely proud of this honor and have placed the plaque on our wall, right beside our 2003 Preservation Honor Award from the statewide citizens group Maine Preservation — also for the House. *Thank you all.*

Preserve America's HISTORY TEACHER of the YEAR

Maine Historical Society has joined a national effort to recognize outstanding K-12 teachers of American history. In partnership with Preserve America and the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, the Maine Historical Society is coordinating the Maine competition for the Preserve America History Teacher of the Year Award.

The winner of this competition — a K-12 teacher who will have demonstrated a career-long commitment to innovative history education — will earn a \$1,000 award, a teaching collection of primary documents for their school, and the chance to compete with state winners from across the country to be recognized as the national History Teacher of the Year. Preserve America is a White House initiative established with the cooperation of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the The Gilder Lehrman Institute, a New York based educational foundation with ties to the New York Historical Society.

"Participating in this program is a nice opportunity for MHS to identify and recognize teachers around the state who make history meaningful and engaging for their students," said Steve Bromage, MHS Director of Education. "It's just the kind of program we'd like to be involved in and it seems especially appropriate now, given the expanded statewide audience for our education programs."

The winner of the Maine competition — selected by a panel of historians and educators — will be announced in June and recognized in an awards ceremony in their school. The national winner will be announced in the Fall. For more information contact Steve Bromage, 774-1822 ex. 223.

WOMEN & HEALTH IN MAINE: From Midwifery to Modern Health Practices

The Maine Historical Society presents "Women and Health in Maine: From Midwifery to Modern Health Practices," a small display in the Research Library in conjunction with the "Women, Health and Representation" conference of the Maine Women Writers Collection at University of New England.



Dorothea L. Dix, circa 1860, from the MHS collections

From midwifery to modern health practices, women have been practicing medicine in Maine throughout the centuries. These collections of the Maine Historical Society Research Library will introduce how women have learned their practice and shared their methods within their communities.

Items in the exhibit include photographs, printed materials, trade cards, broadsides, and manuscripts, and cover midwifery, 19th century medicine, nurses and nursing education, female physicians, social reform for the mentally ill, spiritual healers, war-time nurses, and patent medicines.

On view through the end of the summer, the display is open during library hours. The show is free and open to the public.

A QUARTER NORTH Down the Shore The Faces of Maine's Coastal Fisheries Roberta (Gomez) Ric

MHS MUSEUM STORE

Members always receive a 10% discount at the museum shop and online store: www:mainehistory.org

> Stock up for all your summer reading needs, including these new titles:

> "West by North" by Roberta Ricker and "Down the Shore" with photographs by Nance Trueworthy.

"The love of learning, the sequestered nooks, and all the sweet serenity of books..."

Morituri Salutamus, 1874, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

What Is It? Update

The object featured in the Spring 2004 newsletter remains unidentified, but not for lack of trying! Suggestions regarding this object's function ranged from a book binder's press,



to a food or horticultural press, to a leather belt clamp, but a lack of documentation means this object remains a mystery. Thanks to Tom Armstrong, Bon Fulton, Nick Dean and Bill Arnold for their suggestions. If you have any further information to share, please contact Holly Hurd-Forsyth, Registrar, at extension 210, or e-mail her at hhurd@mainehistory.org.

Who Is Col. Green?

Can you help identify this man? The words "Col. Nathaniel Green from Winslow" are written on the back of this photograph, but that is all we know about him, as research attempts to learn more have been unsuccessful. When was he a colonel? What else did he do? Is he from Winslow, Maine (as we assume), or another state? If you have any information that you can back up with documentation, please send it to Stephanie Heatley, care of MHS, or e-mail her at sheatley@mainehistory.org. The first person to provide us with documentation confirming who Col. Green is will win a copy of the book, *Tales of New England's Past*.





Steven Atripaldi — **WELCOME!**

After a careful search, MHS has hired a new Facilities Manager. Steven, whose Italian grandparents settled on Munjoy Hill, grew up in the Portland area and has been in the property management and building trades for fifteen years. His familiarity with local contractors and

vendors is already proving helpful as he works to contain costs while improving building conditions.

MHS takes great pride in the care of its buildings and grounds. We are pleased to have found someone who not only has high standards but also brings expertise and creativity to problem solving. Spring rains coupled with a few vulnerable spots in our buildings helped complete Steven's training program at MHS by presenting him with just the right challenges!



MAINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Incorporated 1822

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Maine Memory Network

Daniel Kaplan, Director Candace Kanes, Historian Kathleen Amoroso, Outreach Coordinator Frances Pollitt, Cataloger Rick Asam, Outreach - North Patricia Hanson, Outreach - Downeast

SUMMER HOURS Maine Historical Society

MHS Research Library (ext. 209)

Tues-Sat 10-4:00 Closed Sat, May 29, July 3, Sept. 4

Wadsworth-Longfellow House Mon-Sat 10-4, Sun 12-4

Closed Mon, May 31, Sun July 4

Museum/Center for Maine History Mon-Sat 10-5, Sun 12-5 Closed Mon May 31, Sun July 4

Museum Shop (ext. 208) Mon-Sat 10-5, Sun 12-5 Closed Mon May 31, Sun July 4

MHS Administrative Offices
Mon-Fri 9-5:00 Closed Holidays

Tel: (207) 774-1822
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Websites:

www.mainehistory.org www.mainememory.net

Upcoming Events at The Maine Historical Society

Ongoing The Wadsworth-Longfellow House

Tours Mon-Sat, 10:00-5:00 p.m.; Sun, 12:00-5:00 p.m. \$7.00 Adults, \$6.00 Seniors & Students, \$3 Children, members free

Women and Health in Maine: From Midwifery to Modern Health Practices

Monday, May 3 – Friday, August 27, MHS Research Library Lobby

Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

June 182nd Annual Meeting, Maine Historical Society, "All Aboard!"

Saturday, June 5, 10:00 a.m. at the Boothbay Railway Village, Boothbay.

\$25.00 members, includes lunch & full use of the museum

Maine's Legendary Civil War Regiment, the 20th Maine

Thursday, June 10, 12 noon. Lecture by Ed Bearss, noted historian, Free & Open to the Public

Portland Book, Print & Paper Show

Sunday, June 20, Preview 8:30 a.m., \$15.00; General admission: 10:00-3:30 p.m., \$5.00

Portland Exposition Building, 239 Park Avenue, Portland

Amazing! Maine Stories

Friday, June 25, new exhibit opens featuring curious and famous Maine people.

Mon-Sat, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Sun, 12 noon-5 p.m. Admission: \$4.00 Adults, \$2.00 Children

July A Peace of Work Performed by ME: Historic Fiberarts from the Collection

Friday, July 9th, MHS Showcase Gallery exhibit opens

Portland's Waterfront: A History and Walking Tour

Saturday morning, July 24. Slide show & discussion, Jim Millinger, walking tour led by Angela Clark. More details to follow

August Down East Magazine's 50th anniversary Day at MHS

Sunday, August 15th, Down East subscribers tour our house and museum at NO CHARGE

The Maine Historical Society, founded in 1822, is a charitable, educational, non-profit corporation which devotes its resources to the discovery, identification, collection, preservation, and interpretation of materials which document the history of Maine and its people.

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