About that letter

It’ll be from us. When it comes it will probably be mixed up with bills, catalogs, political appeals, and all the usual junk. The temptation to throw it out will be great. Perhaps it will go in the 'What am I going to do about this?' pile. I hope you will take a minute to look at it again (or to contact us for another, if it happens to disappear). Yes, we are asking for money—a contribution to the MHS Library campaign. But why MHS when there are so many other causes to support? My first thought is to tell you what a fine organization we have and how this project will advance all the good work we’ve undertaken. True, but you’ve probably heard that before. I can really only think of two compelling reasons to give. First, libraries matter; they embody the work of human understanding, and with your help our library will soon become one of the finest in Maine. Second, the work of history matters—in families, communities, states and nations; it helps establish the identities and continuities that give all of us the confidence to face the future. We need your help to reach the goal and meet the challenge—another million dollars by the end of this year—but please remember that your gift to Maine Historical Society is a gift in support of these two priceless communal values: knowledge and self-awareness. It’s on their behalf we do our work, and on their behalf we gratefully accept your contributions. Please be generous.

Richard D’Abate
— Executive Director

ON THE COVER—
REBECCA HILL MCCOBB, 1818; BENJAMIN GREENLEAF (1769 – 1821)

Rebecca Hill McCobb lived in Phippsburg with her husband, Parker McCobb, a prosperous shipbuilder and sea captain. Benjamin Greenleaf painted this portrait on glass—a style he is known for.

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The Art of the People
– Folk Art in Maine

Exhibit opens Friday, June 27

What can a quilt, a sampler, or a portrait painting tell us about Maine history? Volumes, according to curator John Mayer. These beautiful and historic artifacts provide a window into our past.

For centuries the people of Maine have made objects such as quilts, samplers, rugs, carvings, portraits, and other types of decorative and useful objects as a way to express their feelings and record important moments in their life – a marriage, the birth of a child, the death of a loved one, or some other event whether monumental or personal. The materials they used, their artistic style, technique, and sense of design are the essence of these objects, and often reflect a distinctive time and place in Maine history, and are charged with the personal emotions and experiences of the maker.

The Art of the People – Folk Art in Maine is a new exhibit and features the collections of Maine Historical Society. Over 70 objects will be on view in the museum gallery, featuring powder horns, quilts, samplers, portraits, and other paintings spanning three centuries of Maine history.

The exhibit is part of a statewide collaboration of eleven museums that have created the Maine Folk Art Trail and are presenting exhibits of their collections during the summer and fall. A special catalog including objects from each collaborating museum is available in the MHS museum store or upon request. On September 28, a daylong symposium will be held at Bates College featuring expert speakers on folk art. For a complete schedule of exhibits and events visit the web-site www.mainefolkarttrail.org.

Carved and Painted Eagle, c. 1861; Emery Jones (1827 – 1908).

Emery Jones carved this eagle in 1861, just around the start of the Civil War. Jones was an accomplished carver who made figureheads, name boards, and other decorative elements for ships built in Freeport and Portland.

Man and Woman Nut Dolls, 1840.

Toys are evocative and illustrate much about childhood and social history. The heads of these two dolls were made from nuts, their body and clothes from readily available materials, and their costumes represent the fashions of the time. The dolls descended through the Libby, Wyer and Jackson families until they were given to MHS in 1963.

Burning of the Second Parish Church, 1866; Woodbury Hatch (1829 – 1904).

The great Portland fire of 1866 devastated much of the city and caused hardship for many city residents. Local ornamental (or commercial) painter Woodbury Hatch recorded the burning of the Second Parish Church, which stood on Middle St., and captured the chaos caused by the inferno.
Native American Experiences at MHS

The recent MHS exhibit, Gifts from Gluskabe: Maine Indian Artforms from the Hudson Museum, provided area teachers and students with expanded – and exciting – learning opportunities. A Maine law requires that Wabanaki studies be incorporated in all grade levels, but southern Maine has very few artifactual resources. MHS education staff were happy to fill that gap.

Educators were invited to a workshop, introduced to the main themes of the exhibit, given classroom lesson plan and craft activity ideas, and had an early opportunity to sign their students up for trips to the museum.

A special two-hour exhibit program, unprecedented at MHS, was offered to students. One hour was spent in the exhibit, exploring the artifacts in small groups - a bundle of sweetgrass, a piece of birchbark, a stick of ash wood used in basket-making, and more. For the second hour, groups rotated through three activities: creating a woven bookmark, trying a crayon etching incorporating double curve designs traditional to the Penobscots and often used in birch bark objects, and playing the game waltes (there is a 19th century version in the exhibit).

In conjunction with Gifts from Gluskabe, MHS offered its sixth session of “Local History/Local Schools”, a partnership program with Portland 3rd and 4th grades. There was an unprecedented level of interest with more than twenty teachers applying to sign up for the eight available slots, chosen on a first-come, first-served basis. MHS educators visit the classes twice, and students work throughout the two-month program on a final project. This semester, students created digital films by narrating and illustrating a Gluskabe story. The student films premiered at the program’s final celebration on May 6th.

Carolin Collins
— Director of Education
Maine Jewish History Initiative Begins

The historical record is always fragile. If it isn’t valued, preserved, examined and written about, it disappears. That’s the driving motivation behind the Maine Jewish History Initiative (MJHI), a joint project of Maine Historical Society and Documenting Old Maine Jewry, a volunteer, web-focused group led by Harris Gleckman and many other Jewish community members from Maine.

The MJHI has been given its start through the generous gift of Kenneth Nelson and his brothers Leonard, Andrew and Bruce, with additional help from Dr. Harold Osher. The project has three key goals:
1) To promote the preservation of historical materials that illuminate the history of Jews and Jewish community life in the State of Maine.
2) To encourage cooperation between existing repositories of Maine Jewish material to ensure greater public awareness and access; and
3) To serve as a model for the treatment of historical materials relating to a broad range of Maine ethnic, racial, and religious groups. A state-wide advisory board for the MJHI is being planned, along with a drive to increase endowment support and project funding.

To begin, MHS has engaged Susan Cummings-Lawrence, an experienced community consultant, as the project coordinator, along with Abe Peck, Scholar in Residence at the USM Sampson Diversity Center, as project advisor. Susan’s first task will be to conduct a statewide inventory of Jewish historical collections and resources. This should lead to an assessment of preservation and access needs; the development of working relationships with public and private collectors; the creation of a network of supportive community partners; and the indication of next steps. A report will be issued.

The MJHI continues the Society’s decade-long attention to issues of diversity. “This project has great potential for history in Maine,” says MHS Director Richard D’Abate. “It’s a proactive approach, and we expect a significant outpouring of new information and interest. It will enrich our idea of what Maine was and is.” If you’d like more information about the project, or wish to offer help, please contact Susan Cummings-Lawrence at MJHI@maine.rr.com. For more information about the fine work of Documenting Old Maine Jewry, please see their web site www.mainejews.org.

The Library and Garden: WOULD YOU LIKE TO NAME A PART?

The last issue of the newsletter focused on the very generous anonymous gift that led to naming the MHS Research Library after General John Marshall Brown and his wife Alida Carroll. That name, as we said, was thoughtfully planned and lovingly given. It pointed to the fact that the decision to name is less about ego and possession than about the desire to connect our memories, or the memories of those we love, to good things that ultimately outlast us. Naming is a very important personal decision, but it also means a great deal to MHS: it is a sign of special commitment.

A number donors have already taken naming opportunities, but many are still available, and at many different levels of giving. Here are a few categories and suggestions.

- Fine chairs in the main reading room: .................................................. $500
- Special equipment and furniture: .................................................... $1,000 to $10,000
- New reading tables and service desks: ........................................ $25,000
- Places, paths, features in the Longfellow Garden: ........ $25,000 to $100,000
- Offices, conference rooms, and public spaces: ........ $100,000 to 250,000
- Main reading rooms and work complexes: ......................... $500,000 each.
- The new wing: ................................................................. $750,000
- Endowments for key staff positions: ......................... $500,000 to $1,000,000

We would be glad to discuss your interest in any of these opportunities in detail: the nature of each item in the current plan, design, location, recognition, and availability. Please give it some thought. To set up an appointment, call our development office at 207-774-1822. And remember, the history of Maine, in the final analysis, is made, preserved and treasured by individuals like you. A naming gift will make that clear, and it will last.
Alternative sources of energy are a frequent topic of conversation in these days of high oil prices and concern about the environment. But the discussion is nothing new. Tide mills – submerged water wheels that run machinery – were used in Maine at least by the eighteenth century.

For nearly 90 years, the idea of harnessing ocean tides on a larger scale, to generate electricity, has been debated in Maine. The most prominent – and often controversial – plan has been the Passamaquoddy Tidal Power Project. One appeal of using ocean tides is that they occur so regularly, unaffected by droughts or other such disturbances.

In 1920, Dexter P. Cooper, a young engineer who had worked with hydroelectric power, came up with a tidal power plan for Washington County. His initial plan was international, damming both Cobscook and Passamaquoddy bays to create the pools necessary to feed turbines. He had a powerful supporter, Franklin D. Roosevelt, who owned a home on nearby Campobello Island, and endorsed the idea during his 1920 campaign for vice president.

Through the 1920s, Cooper worked on the project. Initially, New Brunswick agreed to the plans. The stock market crash halted the project. At the same time, Canadian fishermen worried about hurting fish stocks and railroads about damage to the tourist industry in New Brunswick.

When FDR became president and initiated the New Deal, he and Cooper and others pushed for federal investment in the project, arguing that it would provide much needed economic recovery to Washington County. Critics said there was no market for power generated in Eastport, a fact that would make the project too expensive.

In 1935, the Passamaquoddy Bay Tidal Power Project received $7 million from the Public Works Administration, funds Roosevelt could allocate without Congressional approval. The money was spent on two dams across Cobscook Bay, a two-way navigation lock, a gate structure, a main generating station, and permanent and temporary housing at a nearby site named Quoddy Village.

The project faced a variety of political challenges and opposition from several sources in Maine and in Washington and was not refunded. Work was stopped in August 1936.

The National Youth Administration moved into some of the buildings, providing a job-training center for young men. During World War II the Seabees used the facilities, which they renamed Camp Lee-Stephenson.

Cancellation of the project left Eastport in a difficult situation because the town had invested in efforts to attract industry to the area. Eastport declared bankruptcy in 1937.

Discussion of reviving the Passamaquoddy Tidal Power Project has surfaced every few years, with studies undertaken and debates renewed. Each time, most people agree that the engineering plan is sound: the project could be built and it would work. Other considerations, however, have kept the project from being resumed.

Candace Kanes
— Maine Memory Network Historian

Quoddy Village, 1936. Quoddy Village was built to house and support workers for the Passamaquoddy Tidal Power Project, which was abandoned in 1936. (Contributed by National Archives: Northeast Region)
President Franklin Roosevelt looks at models of the Passamaquoddy Tidal Power project. The photo was taken July 30, 1936, about the time the project was halted. (Contributed by National Archives: Northeast Region)

Employees of the Quoddy Village Hospital, which served workers on the Passamaquoddy Tidal Power Project. (Contributed by National Archives: Northeast Region)

Plan for the temporary buildings to house workers and facilities to support them at Quoddy Village. The John Calvin Stevens-John Howard Stevens architectural firm of Portland drew the plans. (Contributed by Maine Historical Society)
McArthur Library, Biddeford

- May Baskets, a Dog, and a Party for Children

A series of photos taken by amateur photographer and part-time Biddeford Pool resident Robert Henry Gay in 1917 have long carried the label, “War Relief Party, Biddeford Pool, 1917.” Summer residents of the Pool and others held many parties to raise money that summer for aspects of the World War I effort. The U.S. had entered the war on April 6, 1917, prompting civilian efforts at assistance.

When McArthur Public Library Archivist Renée DesRoberts searched through 1917 newspapers to find out more about the series of eight images of the lawn parties, she found no reference to this party at the “Foster” residence, although there were plenty of stories about other war relief parties. But she did find another article that might explain the photos. In the Biddeford Daily Journal on August 17, 1917, and in the Biddeford Weekly Journal on August 24 was a short item entitled “Gave Children a Party.” The party at the “attractive summer home of Mrs. T.K. Niedringhaus of St. Louis” for 22 children followed one some weeks earlier given by Mrs. Foster, “another summer resident at the Pool.”

The parties were given to make reparation to the children for a “rather humorous incident” that occurred the previous May. Mrs. Niedringhaus was spending the night at Mrs. Fanny C. Foster’s home on Main Street. They heard a knock at the door and, “fearing burglars, the house dog was loosed and he chased whoever the party was across the golf links and far away.” The next day, the women discovered two May Baskets hung on the door by children. As an apology for the chase, each woman held a party for the children. The article concludes, “There are those among the children who aver that they would gladly be chased across the golf links again for another such good time.”
When There’s a Will … There’s a Way

One of the goals of family history research is to prove the family relationships of ancestors, especially as they connect generation to generation. First, there are vital records, followed perhaps by census records. The problem with these records is that relationship is not often stated before 1870 (census records), or in the case of some state vital records, before 1900. How else to establish proof of family relationship? Probate records can hold the answer. Probate records include wills, inventories, letters of administration, and guardianships. Wills are often a rich resource.

There are two basic categories of probated wills: those of people who died testate (leaving a will) and those who died intestate (leaving no written instructions on how to divide property and belonging). Both kinds may contain a wealth of information. Not only is there information about the property and belongings owned by the deceased, but also the names of children, spouse, parent, in-laws, and children’s spouses and children. For example, in the will of a man who bequeathed items to his married daughter, who is listed with her married name, will be the key proving that he is her father, and it will also reveal her husband’s name.

For example, the will of William H. Brettum of Augusta (see excerpt) reveals that in 1837 he bequeathed “unto my daughter Clarinda Strickland wife of Hastings Strickland of Bangor, the sum of two thousand dollars…” He goes on to mention his wife, another daughter, a son, and a granddaughter. What a find! The search can now proceed for a marriage record for Clarinda.

It is important to be cautious of the relationship terms used. Often “cousin,” “nephew,” and “son-in-law” are used. “Cousin” doesn’t necessarily mean first cousin. Any of these terms could mean stepson or stepdaughter or any other close relationship outside of the family circle. Further research is necessary to find out how those individuals connect to the family group.

To find probate records one must know the county or other court probate district where the ancestor resided and where the estate was most likely probated. At the probate office or Register of Probate an index of “testators” (the person who made the will) may reveal the pertinent information. Many probate record indexes and abstracts have been published; these records may be found at local historical societies or online. For example, Maine Wills, 1640-1760, compiled by William M. Sargent is one source available at MHS. Ancestry.com (also available at the MHS library) has over 300 court record indexes and abstracts in their database.

Looking for the missing link? Remember to check out wills to confirm a family relationship.

Kathy Amoroso,
— Director of Digital Projects
New In The Library:
Valuable 1784 Kittery Document

The MHS recently accessioned a 1784 document from Kittery, Maine. Its official name is lengthy:

A List of the Polls and of the Estates Real and Personal of the Several Proprietors and Inhabitants of the town of Kittery in the County of York taken Pursuant to an Act of the General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts entitled an act for inquiring into the rateable estate of this Commonwealth passed in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty-four by the subscribers and Assessors of the said Town duly elected and sworn.

The document is a tax valuation list created by Kittery in response to a law from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, “An Act for Inquiring Into the Rateable Property of This Commonwealth,” passed on July 8, 1784. The act was signed by Speaker of the House, Samuel A. Otis, President of the Senate, Samuel Adams, and Governor John Hancock. Some of the items included as “rateable property” in Kittery include dwelling houses, iron works and furnaces, ropewalks, ounces of silver, “distill and sugar houses,” “horses and mares three years and upwards,” “superficial feet of wharf,” acres of fresh meadow, and “number of black persons.” In 1784, there were five black people living in Kittery and three of them were listed under Captain Dennis Fernald. There are six Fernalds listed on the document, two captains and one deacon. According to Old Kittery and Her Families, however, Captain Dennis Fernald earned his living as a farmer and was simply called “Captain.” 141 Kittery residents paid property taxes. Fifty-five other towns in Maine also complied with this act, but it is unknown how many of the original copies of other towns' tax valuations remain in existence.

Similar acts were passed by the Great and General Court of His Majesty’s Province, State of Massachusetts Bay, and later the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 1760-1761, 1778, 1780, and 1792.

In 1784, Dennis Fernald was the town clerk of Kittery. The selectmen were Joshua Hubbard, William Lewis, Thomas Thompson, Mark Adams, and Captain Benjamin Parker and the Kittery Representative in the General Court was John H. Bartlett.

Michelle Smith
– Research Volunteer

Letters of Maritime Historian Donated to Library

MHS is pleased to receive a collection of 90 letters and 144 postcards from the late maritime historian, writer, photographer, and adventurer Nicholas B. Dean (1933-2005) of Edgecomb. Most of the correspondence was written to William David Barry between 1992 and 2004. The Dean Letters (Collection 2320) were inventoried this summer by Debra Verrier Barry and given to MHS with the “enthusiastic consent” of Zibette Dean, Nick’s widow. Artist Robert Solotaire added three superb negatives of Nick taking photos of downtown Portland for the 1972 book Portland (Greater Portland Landmarks). (see photo above)

A major figure in the American maritime community, Nick was instrumental in returning the bow of the Snow Squall to Maine from the Falkland Islands in the 1980s and had a close relationship with MHS. The correspondence covers a period when the historian was engaged in key book projects including The Portland Marine Society, 1796-1996 (with John K. Moulton) and his master work, Snow Squall: The Last American Clipper Ship (2001).

Nick’s letters offer rare insight into the daily thoughts of an important regional writer and researcher, layered with his ever-present sense of humor. Included in the letters is journalist Bill Caldwell’s delightful offhand remark: “Oh hi, Nick, over-researching again?” (Letter of Jan. 23, 1999) Such little gems need to be remembered.
So begins **England’s Homage to Longfellow** as Edward Connery Lathem traces the history of this endeavor. Published by MHS and the Whittemore Foundation, this handsome book retails for $30. Available in our museum shop and online at [www.mainehistory.org](http://www.mainehistory.org).

"In England, the news of Longfellow’s death at Cambridge, Massachusetts, on March 24, 1882, was reported by the press not only extensively, but with expressions reflective of the special regard that existed there for the poet and his works. It was within the context of such esteem and as a manifestation of it that less than five months after the poet’s death, a movement was initiated in England to provide what would prove to be an unprecedented tribute: the provision of a bust of him to be accorded a place of honor in the nation’s most historic shrine and place of worship, Westminster Abbey."

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**Sail the Rhine and Moselle Rivers with MHS!**

**9-Day Cruise – October 9-21, 2008**

Enjoy small ship sailing aboard Uniworld’s Grand River Ambassador. With only 64 state rooms and 168 passengers, this voyage visits the ports of Cologne, Koblenz, Rudesheim, Speyer, Strasbourg, Breisach, and Basel, followed by an extra day in Lucerne before flying home from Zurich.

Visit medieval wine towns, quaint half-timbered buildings, enchanted castles, majestic cathedrals, historic cities, and of course the region’s natural beauty.

Whether you’re a veteran traveler with MHS or new to our trips, we invite you to join us. You’ll meet other members of the Maine Historical Society and forge friendships and memories while traveling and dining together. We look forward to traveling with you!

From $4,914 per person double occupancy. Fare includes airfare, meals, taxes, transfers, and a number of shore excursions. A $1,000 deposit is required when making your reservation.

For more information or to make your reservation, contact either Eric Baxter at Hewins Travel at (800) 370-0888 ext. 1209, ebaxter@hewinstravel.com, or Elizabeth Nash at the Maine Historical Society at (207) 774-1822 ext. 206, enash@mainehistory.org.

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**Vivent les Français**

MHS is pleased to have two interns from France working in the library for several months. Marion Miller and Pauline Poupon are third year students at The University of Burgundy in Dijon. Their school’s project management program includes website building, community outreach, information science, and library science. They were excited to find the Maine Memory Network: “We think it is absolutely amazing!” says Marion.

Pauline works primarily in the library preparing information on maps and architectural drawings so they can be added to the online database. Marion is making records for both PastPerfect (the MHS collections database) and Maine Memory Network. She has also been attending many of the Maine Heritage Project meetings, another MHS project relevant to her field which brings local schools, libraries, and historical societies around Maine together to explore and celebrate local history.

Marion and Pauline chose Maine because of Maine Memory Network and because historically many French have settled here; thus Maine would be very “French friendly.” They like Portland because it is small enough to find all the things you need without getting lost. “Everyone here is happy to help you,” says Pauline. She looks forward to visiting the Grand Canyon, while Marion has just bought tickets to go to New York City.

**Bienvenu au Maine, Marion et Pauline**
Progress!

Thanks to photography by friends at Acadia Trust, next door to MHS at 511 Congress St., here’s a final view of the chasm to the left of the historic MHS library. The steel for the new addition will be going up quickly in the next few weeks.

ONLINE GIVING – NEW AND IMPROVED!

We’ve made a few improvements to our website, making it easier to renew your membership or provide support for Maine Historical Society online. From our homepage, www.mainehistory.org, just click on the quick link Join/Give Online. You can join or renew your membership, make a donation to the Annual Fund, or help us meet the Kresge Challenge by supporting the Library Campaign. With your help, MHS can continue to lead the way in preserving history, engaging minds, and connecting Maine communities.

If you’re not a member, we invite you to join MHS! Whether for you, your family, or as a gift, your membership dollars help MHS collect and preserve Maine history and make it accessible to you in person and online. The daily operations of MHS depend upon the essential support of our members. Your dues help add new resources for our collections and publications, conserve and house the largest collection of documents and artifacts on Maine history in New England, and sustain the reference staff who answer your questions about history and genealogy.

“I’ve always enjoyed the Maine Historical Society. I used to visit it when I was a teenager, working in Portland (Auntie Leoni’s Pizza on Pine Street). Whenever I get back home, I always visit the historical society... and grab an Italian sandwich, of course.”

— Sumner G. Hunnewell, Arnold, Missouri, MHS member since 1988

Visit www.mainehistory.org/membership or call our membership office at (207) 774-1822. Individual ($40) and family ($50) memberships available.