

Maine Historical Society Quarterly

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THE SOCIETY

On May first the Society closed its doors to the public for three months while work crews prepare the building for an additional level of manuscript stacks, the culmination of the Society's *150th Anniversary Building Project*. Presently, both Reading Rooms and the hallways are piled high with cartons of books and manuscripts which were vacated from the construction area. The revised climate control has been installed, and if all other aspects of the project proceed as planned, our hopes for reopening on August first will be a reality.

Owing to the famous fuel shortage last winter, the Library was forced to abandon Saturday afternoon openings. Since the Society is dependent upon its neighbor, the office building next door, for steam, and since none of the offices are occupied on Saturdays, it now appears that we shall have to abandon Saturday openings altogether. We regret this loss when so many of our members, some from out of the Portland area, are unable to use the Library during the five day work week.

During the past five years while we have had Mr. Gaffney as full time curator, progress has advanced in the areas of cataloging, organizing, and preservation more rapidly than in the past fifty years. The volume of cataloging made necessary the addition of a new thirty-drawer card catalog; formal inventories and indices have been prepared for sixty-three collections; and the Society is in a position to report fifty collections to the *National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections* this year. By now, the great bulk of the manuscript collections (numbering well over a million pieces) has been transferred into new acid-free document cases and folders. Once the collections are arranged in their proper order (there was never room for this) in their new quarters, retrieval should become a pleasure instead of a pain.

Before the confusion of construction began, a highly important preservation project was completed, thanks to a matching grant from the Maine State Commission on the Arts and the Humanities. The John S. H. Fogg Collection of Autograph Letters and Documents, bequeathed to the Society in 1893, and one of the great treasures in the State of Maine, was completely reproduced in xerox form. These copies will now be used for study and further reproduction so that the originals, most of them very rare and fragile, can be spared further handling. The Collection, frequently in demand by scholars and other institutions because of the quality of documents and high percentage of notable authors it contains, is housed in fifty-nine documents cases, and consists of 13,075 pages ranging in time from 1492 (autographs of Ferdinand and Isabella) through 1886. Dr. Fogg collected letters of all members of the Continental Congress, Constitu-

tional Convention, the Colonial Governors, the Presidents and their wives, and notable figures of the period in politics, science, and literature. The Collection contains one of the finest complete, authenticated sets of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence known to exist. Preparations are now being made by the Society to build a special case with adequate security features to display the Signers portion of the Collection during the nation's Bicentennial.

The ability of the Maine Historical Society to resume collecting manuscripts with vigor is only weeks away. Judging from some of the unusual manuscript gifts received this spring, the new stacks will be available not a moment too soon.

A gift of twenty Wadsworth-Longfellow family letters was presented early this year by Mr. William C. Pierce of New York City. Twelve letters, covering a two year period, 1812-1814, were written by Stephen Longfellow, Jr. (1776-1849), father of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, to George Wadsworth, (1788-1816) a brother-in-law. Written during the War of 1812, these letters give an interesting insight into Stephen Longfellow's aversion to the Madison administration and to the war. On March 19, 1813, he wrote: "Every movement of our Government furnishes to my mind strong proof that they have no real desire of peace, or that their imperial Master will not permit them to express it if they have any." In another of August 11, 1814, Longfellow reflects upon the inability of Portland banks to make loans due to the fact that they had "exhausted their vaults by loans to the government to enable them to carry on this disgraceful war."

Also included in Mr. Pierce's gift are seven letters by

John Wadsworth (1781-1860), a son of General Peleg Wadsworth, to Stephen Longfellow. Two of these were written from Boston in 1804 while John was a student at Harvard, and contain references to the duel between Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr. Wadsworth disapprovingly wrote on July 17th: "It is an exit disgraceful — it is an exit which people have a right to demand of eminent characters to avoid, & which they need not render necessary & it amounts to conclusive evidence in my mind that Hamilton was conscious he had injured Burr materially & unwarrantably & that he had a right to demand the forfeit of his life. But whose situation is preferable Hamilton's or Burr's?"

Three letters were written in 1805 from Washington, D.C., where John had apparently accompanied his father who was then a member of the House of Representatives. They contain interesting accounts of the controversial impeachment proceedings then in progress against Samuel Chase, Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court, because of his alleged bias during the trials of John Fries and James T. Callender.

With the renewed interest in Maine's famous Cumberland and Oxford Canal, Maine Historical Society is pleased to note the recent accession of important manuscript documents relating to the canal which once provided a vital economic link between Sebago Lake and Fore River. Through the kindness of Mr. Philip I. Milliken of the Canal National Bank, historians are now able to examine the original records contained in four bound volumes. Covering the period from 1795 to 1881, the records include two minutes books, a journal, and ledger. They constitute

the most important single source of information now available on the Canal. They were recently “rediscovered” in the vaults of the Canal National Bank which was engaged in moving into its handsome new quarters on Middle Street.

This documentation on the history of the Canal was further complimented by the recent donation by Miss Josephine Cobb, of Cape Elizabeth, of an original survey of lands along the canal by E. Russell. Done around 1827, the survey has long been in the possession of Miss Cobb and her family. It is of great value in that it indicates owners of land along the Canal’s route.

The “rediscovery” of these canal documents raises hopes that much of what was once thought to be irretrievably lost might yet rest secure in Maine attics, barns, and cellars, and that the friends of Maine Historical Society will want to make them available to historians. Caution should be taken before consigning old papers and manuscripts to the dump. Much that might appear trite or commonplace is often of great assistance to the historian exploring Maine’s historic and variegated past.

In addition to the gifts already mentioned, the Society has also received a large collection of family and business papers, ca. 1820-1938, of the late Edward Woodman (1855-1939), of Portland, Maine. Given to the Society by Stuart Woodman, Pauline W. Ford, Bertha W. Hendal, and Katherine B. Woodman, heirs of Miss Hannah Woodman, of Portland, the collection should attract the attention of economic historians interested in late nineteenth and early twentieth century business history. Although now in the slow process of being organized, the Woodman papers should

prove to be a mine of information on light and power companies, various mining operations, real estate investments, and a host of other activities. Consisting of minutes of stockholders' and directors' meetings, personal and corporate letterbooks and papers, the collection will range in size from 60 to 75 linear feet when organized. The gift is a welcome addition to the collection of Woodman family papers which have long been in the possession of the Society. Although not a "Maine collection" in the strict sense, the papers reveal with unusual clarity the far-ranging scope of Maine entrepreneurial involvement in developing the nation's economy.

The *Wadsworth-Longfellow House* will open to the public on June third this year with new trees and a new brick herringbone sidewalk in front. Rather than risking another disaster with dutch-elm disease, the House Committee elected to replace with white birch. Indigenous to the State certainly, these pleasant trees have two great advantages: they will not obscure the view of the House upon maturity, nor will they result in a serious hazard to pedestrians and traffic when weighted with snow and ice.

The annual selection of hostesses proved difficult this year owing to the large number of highly qualified candidates. However, the House Committee finally decided upon five presented by Miss Hannah Adams, Chatelaine at the House. Those chosen were: Miss Margaret A. Bean of Gorham, Mrs. Rachel D. Dutch of West Bath, Miss Deborah A. Lawler of Portland, Miss Patricia E. Maher of Bangor, and Miss Helen Mahood of Watchung, New Jersey.

In light of the current fuel shortage many institutions have cut their summer time staffs by as much as thirty-percent in anticipation of a dreary tourist season. The House Committee chose to adopt a more positive attitude, and if the number of visitors fall woefully behind other years, the staff will be cut accordingly. We would like to urge members of the Society, particularly those who live in Maine, to visit historic houses and museums in their own State, including of course, the *Wadsworth-Longfellow House*! The special listing in this issue of the *Quarterly* will suggest a number of places you may not have visited in years.

The third annual meeting of the *Maine Academic Historians* will be held at Augusta on Saturday, October 5, 1974. William B. Jordan, Jr. will be the featured speaker on the subject of William Willis, noted Portland historian. Dr. Edward O. Schriver will be responsible for the commentary on Professor Jordan's paper. There will be a registration fee of \$3.00 this year, \$1.00 for students. The Proceedings for 1973 will be available at the meeting along with new listings for *Research in Progress in Maine History* and *Maine History Courses*. The Proceedings, featuring Dr. Allan R. Whitmore's paper on *William Chaney* will be mailed to the membership of Maine Historical Society shortly thereafter. Further information and listings for inclusion in *Research in Progress* should be sent either to Gerald E. Morris at the Maine Historical Society or to Dr. Joel W. Eastman, University of Maine at Portland-Gorham.

The *Northeast Folklore Society* and the *Maine Historical Society* are pleased to announce a jointly sponsored Workshop on Oral History: *Oral History and the*

Bicentennial to be held at Camden, Maine on Saturday, October 12, 1974. It will be an all-day session and registration will be limited to fifty in order to realize a true "work" session. The workshop will be conducted by Dr. Edward O. Ives principally, and is intended for people in local historical societies and libraries contemplating oral history programs for the Bicentennial. A modest registration fee will be required to cover cost of luncheon. Brochures will be available in late August from either the Maine Historical Society or the Northeast Folklore Society, South Stevens Hall, University of Maine, Orono, Maine 04473.

A dinner was held at Blaine House on May 16th by the Governor and Mrs. Kenneth M. Curtis on the occasion of the publication of *The Blaine House: Home of Maine's Governors* at which Dr. H. Draper Hunt, the author, was honored. This marked the official publication date of the book. The Society's author's reception will take place at the Wadsworth-Longfellow House on the first Sunday in October. Further announcement will follow in the next *Quarterly*. A review of the book is included in this issue in the Book Review section. The Society wishes to express its thanks to the Governor's Office, Mrs. Curtis and the Blaine House staff, and to the New Hampshire Publishing Company for their impressive cooperation in making this joint publishing venture a pleasure and a success.

Since members of the Society received their copy of Charles E. Clark's *Maine during the Colonial Period*, two more bibliographical guides have been commissioned for the series. Dr. Alice R. Stewart, Professor of History at the University of Maine, Orono is preparing a guide on the subject *Maine and Her Canadian Neighbors*. Dr. Richard S. Sprague, Professor of English, also on

the Orono campus has agreed to compile a bibliographical guide on *Maine Literature*.

CORRESPONDENCE

To: The editor, *MHS Quarterly*

Greatly enjoyed Professor David C. Smith's analysis of the shipping information in the *Christian Intelligencer* in Volume 13, number 3 of the *Quarterly*. Some of the shipbuilding data presented however, is at variance with the Custom House records to be found in the recently published *Maritime History of Bath*, by William A. Baker, some of the vessels which the *Intelligencer* attributes to Gardiner builders being listed as built at Hallowell, etc. Not of great moment, but worth keeping in mind for further checking should anything more be done with the data.

Although it is much later than the period covered by Professor Smith's article, John Leavitt's *Wake of the Coasters* treats the subject of life aboard the coasters which was probably not too much different seven or eight decades later, and thus deserves mention in any bibliography on the subject.

Professor Smith's discussion of the schooner rig (page 156) is at variance with my understanding of the subject — although I am not a professional historian or infallible. For example, most schooners "today" are two mast vessels with only one three-master, the *Victory Chimes* around these waters. A sail set on the upper foremast created a topsail schooner (some early schooners doubtlessly had square sails on both

topmasts). When you put square sails on both the upper and lower masts, the masts are constructed differently as well, that is, conversion of a schooner to a brig or brigantine or hermaphrodite brig is not so simple as he suggests.

Other than this little bit of nit-picking, I found Professor Smith's article most informative. The concept of Gardiner as a major source of supplies for whalers out of Massachusetts and southward is a new and very interesting one to me. I look forward to his examining similar interesting material in the future.

Charles E. Burden, M.D.
The Marine Research Society of Bath

NEW MEMBERS

FROM MAINE Augusta: Mr. John K. Butts, Dr. John H. Marvin *Bangor:* Mr. Ralph Lowe *Belfast:* Mrs. Helen W. Junkins *Brunswick:* Mrs. Carmel Davenport *Cape Elizabeth:* Miss Susan Brown, Mrs. Margaret Y. Hodgkins, Mr. Roger W. Hodgkins, Mr. James R. Palmquist *Chebeague Island:* Miss Carol J. Todd *Dryden:* Mrs. Owen P. Stinson, Sr. *Falmouth:* Mr. & Mrs. Daniel P. Johnson *Farmingdale:* Miss L. Evelin Grover *Freeport:* Mr. Earlington P. Chaney *Gardiner:* Mrs. Madeline E. MacDonald *Hallowell:* Miss Betty M. Berdan *Kennebunkport:* Mr. Robert S. Mandeville *Kittery:* Mrs. Roger L. Emery, Jr. *Mexico:* Dr. J. Edward Martin *Monroe:* Mr. Harold E. Barr *Mt. Vernon:* Miss Susan M. Stevens *Norridgewock:* Mr. Stephen Knight *Oakland:*

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