

Maine Historical Society Quarterly

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THE SOCIETY

The 152nd Annual Meeting of the Society held at Colby College this year was well attended, and the new Bixler Art and Music Center proved ideal for the program. Herbert T. Silsby, II of Ellsworth was reelected President of the Society, Martial D. Maling of Portland was reelected Vice President, Harry W. Rowe of Lewiston, Secretary, and Arthur T. Forrestall of Portland, Treasurer. Elected to the Standing Committee (governing board of the Society) for the first time were Miss Josephine Cobb of Cape Elizabeth and Roger C. Taylor of Rockland, Maine.

A revision to the 1969 Bylaws passed by those assembled at Annual Meeting reduced the number of years a member of the Society may remain on the mailing list without payment of dues from two years to one. This revision was introduced by last year's Standing Committee to curb the Society's losses in publications and mailing expenses.

Annual Reports were submitted and read by President Silsby, Treasurer Forrestall, Director Morris, and Chairman of the Wadsworth-Longfellow House, Mrs. William J. Murphy. Financial anxiety, so much a part of life today, particularly among non-profit organizations, was a constantly recurring theme.

The President, Herbert T. Silsby, said, in part: "The past year has been an unusual one for this Society. We have had our reconstruction project going on in Nichols Hall [the manuscript stack annex] and the street in front of the Longfellow house has also been reconstructed, both resulting in considerably curtailed use of our facilities. The Standing Committee felt that it was not feasible to delay the Nichols Hall project any longer even though the project has presented troublesome financial problems. The Society could not continue to carry on its services without the reconstruction of Nichols Hall. We had simply run out of room.

"The Standing Committee felt, and I think very properly so, that the project should go ahead and arrangements were made to borrow the necessary funds to complete the renovation this year. Of course, this necessitates budgeting for repayment of the loan and causes an even greater spread between our income and budgeted expenditures.

"We will have a substantial deficit in our budget this coming year if the budget recommended by the finance committee is adopted. The Committee believes that it is better to continue our services at the same level at least for one more year and that we take vigorous action to increase our income by various means. Two means are quickly apparent. One is to ask for an increased State subsidy and the other is to attempt to increase our membership and gifts.

"Our financial problems are not unique. Every other institution is having the same difficulty in these times of inflation. We are fortunate in that we have a much sounder financial structure than most

"Although this report may be a little depressing since it deals with a rather serious problem of finances, we do not need to be entirely disheartened. I am sure that in all

its long history, the Maine Historical Society has never offered better or more services to its members and the people of Maine than it has in the past several years. It is important that these services be continued and I ask each member to do his or her bit to get new members and to make their gifts as substantial as they can."

In an attempt to come to grips with the problems outlined by President Silsby, the Standing Committee subsequently made a number of policy decisions and prepared groundwork for two projects aimed at bolstering the Society's membership and financial picture.

First, it was voted that, upon reopening the Library last August, a "Library Use Fee" of one dollar per day, would be adopted for non-members using the Library for research. In past years fully one-half of the researchers using the Society Library have been non-members; therefore, it seemed only fair that a minimum charge should be made in return for increasingly costly services. Other State historical societies and non-profit research institutions have already been forced to face financial realities and have adopted fee systems. Exceptions will be made at the Maine Historical Society for high school students whose communities regularly appropriate grants to the Society, and in cases of genuine inability to pay. Since the month of August, as a direct result of this new policy, the Society has gained a considerable number of new members; and this, of course, was precisely the kind of support being sought.

Another policy decision by the Standing Committee affects the distribution of the Society's Maine History Bibliographical Guide Series, which will no longer be sent free to the entire membership list (numbering well over 1500). It is not reasonable to expect that every member would want each title in the series; so that this seemed a very good way to cut down substantially on our spiraling printing and mailing costs. It was decided

however that members who do wish to continue receiving the series be allowed a discount. Members may order any title in the series for two dollars (includes postage and handling) as opposed to the current price of four dollars for the public. It will please be noted that two completely new titles are available to members this fall: William A. Baker's *Maine Shipbuilding: A Bibliographical Guide* and Ronald F. Banks' *Maine During the Federal and Jeffersonian Period: A Bibliographical Guide*. They may be ordered directly from the Society for two dollars each at any time.

The initial membership project, authorized by the Standing Committee, got off to a confused start in October—the One-to-One Membership Campaign. It was hoped that if each member of MHS were provided with a Membership Invitation form that surely, during the course of two years, our members would come across at least one person who might have an interest in joining the Society. This slow, but constant renewal and enlargement of the Society's membership is vital if it is to survive financially in these extremely perilous times. It is not inconceivable that membership in the Society might make an appealing Birthday or Christmas gift.

In the past, the Society's year end appeals for gifts have been conducted very informally indeed, consisting of nothing more than an added slip of paper enclosed with the annual dues notice. Response to this very "low-key" appeal has been most heartening with as high as twenty percent of the membership adding two, five, or ten dollars to their dues. It convinced the Membership Committee that MHS has an extremely loyal membership. In dollars and cents, however, it must be admitted candidly, that the return has been about as modest as the appeal!

In January, 1975, members will receive a separate, more elaborate Annual Appeal mailing, the purpose of

which will be to renew our efforts to ease serious indebtedness on one project—the manuscript stacks renovation in Nichols Hall referred to in President Silsby's Report. Following the Annual Appeal, on February 27th (which marks the date the Society's building first opened in 1907) an open house and reception will be held for all contributors to the project, past and present.

It is hardly necessary to wait for the reception to visit the Society Building of course; and we invite all members to come in to see the completed project for themselves. The renovation is impressive, expanding in a most economical and pleasing manner the Society's manuscript capacity by 2000 linear feet. The hot, humid weather which ended last summer provided an extreme test for the new climate control system. A constant 60 degrees with 50 percent humidity was attained throughout the test period.

Prize Essay Contest: Kenneth M. Morrison of Millinocket, Maine, was winner of the 1974 Prize Essay Contest, as announced by Committee Chairman, John W. Hakola at Annual Meeting. Mr. Morrison, whose essay is published in this issue of the *Quarterly*, received his Masters degree at the University of Maine, Orono, and is pursuing research toward his doctorate as a graduate fellow at the Newbury Library in Chicago.

Members of the Judging Committee, Dr. Roger L. Grindle of Fort Kent and Dr. Joel Eastman of Portland, agreed with their Chairman that the quality and variety of this year's entries were perhaps the most impressive since the contest began five years ago. Also, for the first time, the great majority of entries represented scholars from the State of Maine. We are pleased to present a complete list of entries this year as an indication of the areas of research on Maine history presently being undertaken: Lindsay Bates of Bridgewater, Massachusetts: *Thomas Oxnard and Unitarianism in Portland*; Sherwin

Bowie of Lisbon, Maine: *The Personal Liberty Law: Maine's Strike Against Slavery*; Sheldon Christian: *La Pere Sebastien Rale: Considerations of Orthography*; Mrs. Virginia Chute of Mt. Vernon, Maine: *Maine Pioneer Women: Surviving "Alone"*; Mrs. Margarita M. Daniels of Cape Elizabeth, Maine: *What Role did Germans Play in the Colonization of Maine: The Early History of Waldoboro*; Sharon Earley of Melrose, Massachusetts: *Walter Scott Wyman and the Survival of Five Maine Textile Mills, 1927-1933*; Linwood S. Elliot of Falmouth, Maine: *Copperhead, Abolitionist and Those Between*; Mrs. Alfred Gammon of Livermore Falls, Maine: *The Three Daughters of Israel and Patty Washburn*; Mrs. Richard Leonard of Cumberland Center, Maine: *Colonel Thomas Westbrook*; Barry J. Lohnes of Augusta: *A New Look at the Invasion of Eastern Maine, 1814*; Kenneth M. Morrison of Millinocket, Maine: *Sebastien Racle and Norridgewock, 1724*; Richard A. Savage of Leicester, Massachusetts: *Bar Harbor: the Summer Colony, 1880-1885*; Rebecca I. Warren of Scarborough, Maine: *Revolutionary Fiasco: The Penobscot Expedition, 1779*; Mrs. Carl A. Wilbur of Portland, Maine: *George Patten's Brickyard at Sullivan, Maine, 1897-1904*.

Wadsworth-Longfellow House: Although by no means the disaster anticipated by most historic houses and museums last summer, attendance at the Wadsworth-Longfellow House declined by about a thousand visitors from normal years. This was consistent with figures reported by other institutions in the region. Nevertheless, the House was almost self-supporting financially during the four-month season, and it was unnecessary to reduce staff at mid-season.

The House was opened specially on October thirteenth for a Members Reception in honor of author H. Draper Hunt for his history of the *Blaine House* published jointly by the Society and the New Hampshire Publishing Company.

Toward the Bicentennial: Plans for the commemoration of the nation's Bicentennial are underway in numerous Committees at work within the Maine Historical Society.

On the State level, the Society has received a grant from the Maine State Bicentennial Commission to create and publish an *Historical Atlas of the State of Maine*. An Executive Committee for this project is being set up under the leadership of John W. Hakola, Chairman, Professor of History at the University of Maine, Orono. Members of the Executive Committee for the Atlas are being chosen to represent a wide spectrum of talent from all over the State of Maine. The Atlas is scheduled for publication in the fall of 1976.

The Society also received a grant from the Maine State Bicentennial Commission to fund and administer, on behalf of the Maine Academic Historians (representing the colleges of Maine) a series of three Symposiums, featuring an historian of national prominence, on the subject *New England and the Revolution* to be presented in Portland, Augusta, and Bangor-Orono. These Symposiums to be held in the fall of 1976 will be open to the public.

On a more local level, plans are being made for a special meeting of the Society, open to the public, to commemorate the bombardment of Portland (Falmouth) by the British on October 18, 1775. This will be in addition to the Annual Meeting of the Society which will also be held in Portland on June 14th.

Beginning July 4, 1975, the Society will display its complete collection of autograph letters of all Signers of the Declaration of Independence (there are fewer than forty complete sets extant, and the John S.H. Fogg Collection at the Society is one of the finest). The set will be displayed Colony by Colony, at intervals of two days for each Colony, so that all autograph letters will be pre-

sented during a cycle of 26 days. This same cycle will be repeated beginning July 4, 1976.

Oral History Workshop: Actually the Society's programs looking toward the Bicentennial began last October in Camden, Maine, when a workshop was jointly sponsored with the Northeast Folklore Society entitled *Oral History and the Bicentennial*. Under the leadership of Northeast Folklore Society's Director, Edward D. Ives, it was a tremendous success, way over-subscribed, drawing participants from Canada to Connecticut. Obviously there is an urgent need for such workshops, and the directors of both Societies were encouraged to try it again at any early date.

The Northeast Folklore Society Archives was designated by the Standing Committee as the official repository for any tapes or oral history projects which come under the auspices of the Maine Historical Society. It was felt that when such an excellent program exists in the State of Maine that it would be foolish for the Society to try to duplicate efforts in this highly specialized, costly field. The Northeast Folklore Archives has agreed to act on Maine Historical's behalf in the field of oral history.

Honors: Two members of the Maine Historical Society received national recognition in the month of November for their contribution to local history as recipients of the American Association for State and Local History's annual Awards of Merit.

Miss Elizabeth Ring, a member of the Standing Committee, and for many years Vice President of the Society received her Award of Merit "For five decades of teaching, researching, writing and promoting Maine history." Outside the classroom Miss Ring is perhaps best known to the scholarly world for her work as research editor for the Historical Records Survey which resulted in the only manuscripts survey of the State of Maine, subsequently

published by the University of Maine in the Maine Studies series. Most recently, for the Maine Historical Society, she has written *Maine Bibliographies: A Bibliographical Guide* (see review by Robert E. Moody in the *Quarterly*, Vol. 13, page 222).

Mr. William A. Baker, naval architect, and author of many distinguished books in the maritime field, was honored by AASLH specifically for his recent *A Maritime History of Bath, Maine and the Kennebec River Region*, published by the Marine Research Society of Bath (better known, perhaps, as the Bath Marine Museum). A review of this extraordinary book by Dr. Robert G. Albion appears in this issue of the *Quarterly*. The Maine Historical Society is indebted to Mr. Baker for his *Maine Shipbuilding: A Bibliographical Guide* which has just come off the press.

NEW MEMBERS

FROM MAINE Augusta Mr. Barry J. Lohnes, Mr. William P. Viles *Bridgton*: Ms. Esther B. Gyger *Brunswick*: Mrs. Carmel Davenport *Bryant Pond*: Lt. General James D. Alger *Camden*: Mrs. Lucile P. Hary *Cape Elizabeth*: Ms. Inez L. Brennick, Mrs. John D. Johnson, Mr. Milo A. Matrazzo *Cumberland*: Miss Ruth Trappan *Ellsworth*: Miss Paula D. Silsby *Falmouth*: Mrs. Everett K. Goddard, Mrs. Helyn G. Pinkos, Mr. Felix E. Pinkos *Falmouth Foreside*: Miss Anne L. Detmer *Franklin*: Mr. David H. Knights *Freeport*: Mr. Reid M. Potter *Georgetown*: Mr. Norman G. Swift *Gorham*: Ms. Edith H. McCauley *Gray*: Mr. Byron L. Hanson *Lincoln*: Mr. Dudley Doane *Newfields*: Mrs. Carl H. Olson *Orono*: Mr. Richard S. Sprague *Penaquid Point*: Ms. Cordelia D. Hood *Portland*: Mr. William D. Barry, Mr. William Bunting, Mrs. Josephine M. Conley, Mr. John Dougherty, Mrs. Ramon L. Douglass, Mr. Richard D. Frost, Mr. John R. Houghton, Mr. Najeeb S. Lotfey, Mrs. Barbara C. Philbrick, Mr. Craig S. Robinson, Mr. Ronald Romano, Jr., Mrs. Lois L. Stone, Mrs. Donald M. Varney; Mrs. Abraham L. Venner, Mrs. Carl Wilbur *South Portland*: Ms. Doris V. Chapman, Mrs. C. Mildred Jordan, Ms. Adeline S. Stack *Waterville*: Mr. Jon F. Hall, Mr. Kermit S. Nickerson *West Baldwin*: Mr. Kenneth L. Laughlin *Westbrook*: Mrs. Richard M. North, Mr. Henry W. Saunders *Whitneyville*: Dr. John C. Bodger *Windham*: Mr. Lawrence N. Dolly, Sr. *Yarmouth*: Mr. Stephen B. Crafts.

Other States CONNECTICUT No. Grosvenordale: Ms. Donna Castner *GEORGIA Marietta*: Mrs. Richard N. Eckert *ILLINOIS Evanston*: Mrs. Alger G. Johnson *MARYLAND Silver Spring*: Mr. Andrew J. Wahall *MASSACHUSETTS Boston*: Mrs. Vivian Powers *Chelmsford*: Mrs. William L. Ary, Mr. Clyde N. Bowen *MICHI-*

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Columbia, Maine

Mr. Julian W. Philbrick
Natick, Massachusetts

Miss Rebecca H. Stanley
South Portland, Maine

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