

Letter from MHS Director



We have been living in an historic moment that will shape Mainers for generations.

Maine's much anticipated Bicentennial gave way to the health and economic crisis of the pandemic, urgent equity issues, and a discouraging political climate.

Historical organizations in Maine and across the country are beginning to think about documenting this moment and have been collecting materials and stories from 2020. Now is the time, as Maine's historical community, to consider how we can work together to preserve Mainer's response to this seminal year and support the efforts of future historians.

Many of us are looking to 2021 and beyond with a sense of optimism, as vaccines are widely distributed and, we hope, the pandemic gradually wanes.

Where does that put us? Focused on the future, and Maine's third century as a State.

Historians and historical organizations will be essential in efforts to address fallout from 2020 and prepare Maine for the next century.

What dreams do we have for Maine going forward? What assets and opportunities will drive a strong economy and create prosperity for people and communities throughout the state? How will we address challenges like climate change and social, economic, and geographic inequity? How will we preserve and strengthen Maine's sense of place?

Every aspect of Maine today is fundamentally shaped by history—our economy, environment, demographics, and sense of place.

As historians, we need to be creative and committed to the relevancy of our historical interests, research, and knowledge, and the role we can play in nurturing understanding and dialog today. We need to speak up, and to lead.

The stories that MHS and partners throughout Maine preserve and share—the stories of your communities—provide a road map of how we got here, and of what makes Maine "Maine." They provide the context and information needed to unpack challenging legacies, and keys that can help us build a vibrant, forward-looking Maine.

The articles in this issue of the *Journal* do just this kind of work: exploring changes in the paper industry and Maine's evolving economy; abolition and unresolved issues of racism; and John Gould and the forging of Maine's identity.

Steve Bromage