

BATH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

EST. 1989

A DAY IN THE HISTORY ROOM

The unpredictable quality of a day in the History Room is one of the pleasures of working there. On July 30th of this year, I had two out-of-state visitors to the History Room. The gentlemen told me that they were trying to contact St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church to correct some historical information on the church's website. When I asked how I could help them, they reached into an envelope for some photographs to show me. Looking at the images of a large silver vessel and cups, I suddenly knew exactly what they were and just who the visitors must be because of some earlier research, research for events that suddenly seemed very real and not so long ago.

When delving into assorted sources for a talk on the Irish in Bath, it seemed to me that much of Bath's Hibernian experience revolved around the burning of the South Meetinghouse, during the course of a riot apparently sparked by the preaching of a Know-Nothing-Party supporter in July of 1854. In his history of Bath, Henry Owen wrote of the heroic actions of one man, Oliver Moses, at that time. As discussed in the talk last March, the period newspapers were less clear on his role during the violence, but clearly the Catholics of the time felt that he was a champion for their fight for religious freedom. Owen wrote, "Many manifestations of friendly kindness ... were acknowledged by the presentation of a beautiful silver service to Mr. Moses which is still a valued possession of his grandson and namesake." This possession is still valued by his descendants who were

visiting the library that day, as one could tell from the photographs of the newly refurbished silver water tankard and cups, still declaring gratitude to Oliver Moses in the vessel's inscription, "Presented to Oliver Moses by his grateful friends, the Catholics of Bath, Maine. Nov. 3rd 1877."



Presentation Silver

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Officers: President, Victoria Simpson; Vice President, Lisa Holley; Secretary, Virginia Bartlett; Treasurer, Peter Goodwin

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Newsletter Editor: Sandy Whiteley, sandywhiteley@hotmail.com

History Room Manager: Peter Goodwin, (207) 443-5141, ext. 18

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Deeply involved with the development of this city, Oliver Moses (1803-1882) arrived in Bath in 1826. He and his brother William began a tinsmithing business, also owning a foundry that was purchased by Thomas Hyde and evolved into Bath Iron Works. Oliver Moses was instrumental in the construction of a large number of business blocks in Bath's downtown, while also being involved in local banking and shipbuilding.

Visitors Richard Moses and his son Michael left the photographs with the History Room, to be shared digitally with the local parish, which has been done. In subsequent communications, the Moses family has provided copies of photographs of later Moses family members and a particularly interesting letter written by

Father Peter McLaughlin to Oliver Moses in July of 1855. In the letter McLaughlin requests Moses' assistance in purchasing land in Bath for a church, explaining the reluctance of local landowners to sell land to the society at a reasonable price and, therefore, needing the help of an intermediary. These assorted items provide information on an important Bath family, a significant event in the state's political and religious history, and the cultural attitudes of a growing nation.

This visit of the Moses family brought the distant past unexpectedly to vibrant life in the middle of a hot afternoon.
—Robin Haynes

A BATH FAMILY

The box that the mail carrier left on our porch last spring was addressed to "The New Owners of 376 Front Street." Inside was a photograph of Minnie Brown as a girl and a Class Day book from Yale University that had belonged to her brother David. These items were sent to us by a couple who had previously rented our house, the former home of the Brown family.

The father of Minnie and David, Harry Brown, was an immigrant from Russian Poland. He moved to Bath in the 1890s, where he owned a pawnshop and tailor's shop at 183 Front Street (where Brackett's is today). He also owned a "tenement" at 261-267 Front Street and the Eagle Hotel at 12 Front Street. [See the article in the current issue of *The Times of Bath* for more information about this hotel.] Harry was one of the founders of Bath's Beth Israel Synagogue and served on the Bath City Council. His wife Celia Epstein was born in Vilna, Poland (today in Lithuania); they married in 1897. They lived with their five children, at first over or near the store, and then from 1921 at 376 Front Street (which at that time had the address 2 Pearl Street). Harry died in 1925 and Celia in 1955, both of them in Bath. They are buried at Beth Abraham cemetery in Auburn.



Minnie Brown in 1919, age 9

Their oldest son Arthur worked in Atlanta, Georgia, and then for Bath Iron Works, and never married. He died in 1972. Oldest daughter Bessie worked for the Pejepscot Paper Company and BIW and was unmarried. She died in 1967. Both of them lived in the family home most of their lives. Their sister Mary was a teacher at the Dike School for many years. In the mid-1950s she married Herbert Marston and moved to Gardiner. She died in 1980 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

David moved to New York City after graduating from Yale in 1928 and was a correspondent for Reuters during World War II; he was on the USS Missouri when Japan surrendered. Later he was Chief of the European Office, Press Service, United States Information Agency, headquartered in Paris. In this position he traveled in the press corps with Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy and with senatorial and congressional delegations. He married Paulette Vallot, a Belgian who still corresponds with our neighbor Gene Moll; they had no children. He died in Paris in 1989.

Minnie, the youngest, also worked at BIW and was secretary for Defense Housing at Lambert Park. She never married and continued to live in the family home until her death in 1997 at the age of 87. Gene Moll describes Bessie as fun, with a great sense of humor. According to Gene, the three siblings had pooled their resources during the years they lived together. Minnie left a sizeable estate. She willed money to Beth Israel Synagogue so that they were able to purchase their education building at 609 Washington Street, named the Minnie Brown Center in her memory, and create an endowment fund. She also left more than \$500,000 to the Patten Free Library, which at the time had come up short in its fundraising for the second addition to the building. This gift enabled the library to complete its building project.

Minnie was buried at Mt. Sinai Cemetery in Portland, where Bessie and Arthur are also interred. On Sunday, July 11, 2010, a headstone was unveiled for Minnie Brown at Mt. Sinai. Beth Israel's Cantor Daniel Leeman led a ceremony to commemorate the event. John Voorhees, the executor of her estate, had arranged for the purchase of the headstone. At the conclusion of the ceremony Mr. Voorhees presented a 7-branch menorah that belonged to Minnie Brown to the congregation.

There were members of this Brown family in Bath for more than 100 years but they left no descendents. Today we remember them when we see the two buildings in the Washington Street area that they helped to fund. And my husband and I are reminded of them when we see the historical marker on our home reading "Minnie Brown House."
—Sandy Whiteley

SESQUICENTENNIAL HISTORY

A few copies of *The Sesquicentennial of Bath, Maine 1847-1997*, are still available in the History Room at the Patten Free Library for \$15.

To order by mail, send a check made out to the
Bath Historical Society
for \$18.00 (which includes \$3 shipping and handling)

to

Bath Historical Society
33 Summer Street
Bath, Maine 04530

“GOIN’ TO THE STORE” – THE NEIGHBORHOOD GROCERY STORE PROJECT



Harry J. MacDonald behind the counter of his H.J. MacDonald grocery store at 932 High Street. The market was open from 1940 until 1961.

Bath Historical Society Archivist Kerry E. Nelson and local history researcher Dr. Charles E. Burden are gathering photographs, information, and stories about neighborhood grocery markets in Bath. They have documented 198 stores throughout the city between 1900 and 1970. Some lasted only a year or two; others were open for decades. Many had multiple owners. Other markets were passed down through families.

The information gathered will be stored as a collection in the Society archives. A program based on the research is planned for 2011. If you have photographs to share, please put them in an envelope marked “Bath Grocery Stores” and include your contact information (name, address, and telephone number). Drop them off at the Patten Free Library History Room which is open Tues. – Fri., 12:30 to 4 and on Sat. from 10 am to 1 pm. The images will be scanned and the originals returned to you, unless you wish to donate them to BHS. If you have information to share, contact Kerry at 207-443-5118 or at sabinosam77@yahoo.com. You may also contact Dr. Burden at 207-737-2243 or at seabird@charlieburden.com.

SAGadahoc HISTORY ROOM, PATTEN FREE LIBRARY

The History Room needs the following for its collection—might one be in your attic? The library would greatly appreciate the gift or the chance to photocopy. Thanks for looking.

MORSE HIGH SCHOOL YEARBOOKS

1918, 1920, 1921, 1923, 1924, 1926, 1928, 1950, 1953, 1954, 1955, 1956, 1974, 1981, 1988, 1991, 1996.

BATH AREA DIRECTORIES

1869-70, 1873, 1875, 1878-79, 1881, 1882, 1885-86, 1889, 1890, 1891, 1894, 1895, 1898, 1903-04, 1908, 1909, 1910, 1911, 1913, 1915, 1916, 1917, 1918, 1921, 1930, 1948, 1969-70, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1976, 1978

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings to you all! It's a pleasure to be a part of Bath Historical Society and to work with so many folks who are also interested in the history of this great city.

Once again this year we were happy to co-sponsor, with Patten Free Library, the popular Town History Series on Saturday mornings in January and February. In March we had an informative Talk and Tour at the Sagadahoc County Courthouse, led by John Voorhees. In April, at our annual meeting, Dr. Charles Burden and Sue Fitzgerald gave a fascinating talk about growing up in Bath in the 1940's. This Fall we welcomed Jay Robbins who gave an interesting talk about the history of Lincoln County when Bath was still a part of it. We truly appreciate the time and effort given by the presenters of all of these talks.

This fall we were also happy to be able to contribute to the purchase of a large glass display case, located on the first floor of the Library, near the entrance to the children's department. Be sure to check out the historical displays there.

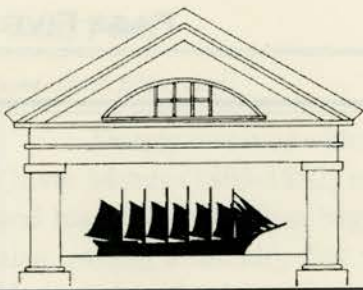
In 2011 the Town History Series will continue, with the first one on Saturday, January 22nd, and continuing for six consecutive Saturdays. In the Spring we will be having a Talk and Tour at the Hyde School, with Anne Marsh giving us a history of The Pine Tree Society, which was located at the Hyde mansion from the late 1940's until the mid 1960's.

We are always interested in the donation of old photos of people and places in Bath, so call Pete in the History Room if you have something you think we may want to have or to copy. All of our donations are accessioned by Kerry Nelson, our Archivist, who needs special thanks for all the excellent work she does for us.

I hope you enjoy this edition of our Newsletter. It is the first one to be edited primarily by new board member Sandy Whiteley who we are happy to have on board. We also appreciate the years of writing and organizing done by former editor, Nathan Lipfert!

Most of you should have received your annual appeal letter and I would encourage you to join Bath Historical Society, if you have not done so. We depend on your membership fees to cover our printing and postage expenses. Thanks again to you all for your support of Bath's history!

Vicki Simpson, President



Bath Historical Society

33 Summer Street, Bath, ME 04530 - 2632



Janice Povich
3 Mill Pond Drive
Bath, ME 04530-4229