

**BREWER HISTORICAL SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER
“TODAY’S NEWS IS TOMORROW’S HISTORY”**

WINTER AND SPRING 2021

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T.C. Hanna , editor (989-2245)



Postcard of the Second Congregational Church on South Main Street. The church is on the *Brewer Register of Historic Places*

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YOU MAY MAIL THEM TO BREWER HISTORICAL SOCIETY PO BOX 602 BRWER, MAINE

INDIVIDUAL.....\$20.00

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(YOU CAN CHECK WITH TC HANNA AT THANNA51@YAHOO.COM IF ANY QUESTIONS)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR IMPORTANT SUPPORT

The City of Brewer and the Brewer Historical Society

The Brewer Historical Society would like to recognize the important contribution from the City of Bangor to help fulfill our mission of preserving and promoting the historical heritage of Brewer. The Brewer City Council adopted a Resolution in May of 2011 recognizing the Brewer Historical Society as the official designated community historical society and its role in supporting Brewer's cultural and historical links.

Each year Brewer makes a significant contribution to the organization both in financial and supportive measures.

The City Council provides an annual liaison to the Historical Society. That liaison acts as an important ex-officio member of our Board of Directors. In addition, the Council created a *Brewer Historical Resource Advisory Committee* to oversee and authorize sites for *the Brewer Register of Historic Places*. When the ten year Brewer Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2015, the Historical Society was represented and a section on history was included.

Brewer City Departments provide an important part of assisting the organization.

Brewer Parks and Recreation provides space and set-up for our annual "Brewer Days" Brewer Historical Society spaghetti supper, promotes events, and aids with maintaining the flag at Chamberlain-Freedom Park. It was responsible for placing the Brewer cemeteries along with the Joseph L. Ferris Community Center on the *Brewer Register of Historic Places*. They are always willing to help with our events.

Brewer Public Works is always available to provide emergency services to the Chamberlain-Freedom Park and the Clewley museum.

The City Assessing office is invaluable in helping research deed ownerships in determining the dates on historic homes.

The Brewer Public Library is a major resource in servicing research queries and is a partner with the Brewer Historical Society in archiving books and publications.

We are very grateful to the City of Brewer and its commitment to the Brewer Historical Society.

The Following article was written by Darren French, Director of the Brewer Public Library.

Postcards to Sunset

The Collection of Edna Knowlton, 1906 -1912

Over the last few years, Brewer Public Library archivists have gone through the boxes in the library's basement, cataloging and organizing nearly two-hundred years of Brewer history. Among the photographs, letters, account books, and other documents, they found two albums filled with postcards. At first, the books seemed unremarkable. The red floral covers were stained and pockmarked, and no record remained as to who owned the albums and who donated them to the library. As we searched for clues, however, we quickly discovered that the postcards belonged to Edna Lenora Knowlton Barbour. Edna's collection acts a window onto her life and the people she cared about—people who tied her to Brewer and one of the City's largest shipbuilding businesses.

Born in Malten, Massachusetts on June 24, 1899, Edna Knowlton spent much of her youth in a section of Deer Isle, Maine known as Sunset. The Knowlton family had called Sunset home since at least 1816, but most of the Knowltons, including Edna's father Richard Warren Knowlton, worked at the Knowlton Iron Works in Everett, Massachusetts. This caused Richard to be frequently away from home, leaving Edna with her stepmother and two brothers. Perhaps because of this, Edna began collecting the postcards she received from her father and other family and friends. However it happened, starting sometime around 1906, when she was only seven, Edna Knowlton began what would become an extensive collection of more than one-hundred postcards.

Most of the postcards were addressed to Edna from close family members, but they came from all over the eastern seaboard of the United States. Her grandma Mary Wooton sent a few cards a year from Pennsylvania, Edna's older brother Carroll kept in touch from Massachusetts, and numerous cousins sent messages from Portland, Maine, Hartford, Connecticut, and Providence, Rhode Island. The bulk, however, were from her father, who wrote short, one or two sentence notes, always signed "Papa."

The messages on the postcards aren't revelatory in any deep way, but they do provide a few hints as to the kind of person Edna might have been. There are even two cards written by Edna to her Aunt Lottie in Bangor, in which she asks to have her backpack and toothbrush returned to her; she'd left them at Lottie's house on a recent overnight visit. In another postcard, grandma Wooton writes that she would like to take Edna clothes shopping at Strawbridge & Clothier but that they will "have to be satisfied with looking and that is a pleasure."

What the collection doesn't reveal, however, is as interesting as what it does. The year after the collection began, a tragedy hit the Knowlton family. In 1907, Edna's mother Lydia Margaret Smith Knowlton passed away. This must have been a traumatic time in Edna's life, but even

though she received several postcards that year, none of her correspondents mentions the tragedy. This is probably because her family and friends either sent her letters of condolence or gave their sympathies in person, but whatever the reason, the only remembrance to her mother that Edna marked in her collection are three postcards sent to Lydia by Richard the year before Lydia died.

Edna's postcard collection stops in 1912, but some of the rest of her life is still knowable using census records, yearbooks, and City directories found in the Brewer Library's Research Room archives. These materials inform us that in 1920 Edna lived with her sister Mabel in Middlesex, Massachusetts, where she worked as stenographer in the machinery industry. It is likely during this time that she met her future husband Robert Henry Barbour, with whom she later moved to Brewer, Maine.

Although Edna lived in Brewer until she passed away in 1956, her husband Robert had the larger connection to this riverside city. The Barbour family immigrated to the United States from Ireland in 1718 and were closely connected to the sea for much of the next two-hundred years. Robert's grandfather Samuel Henry Barbour (1839 – 1896) was a mariner who eventually started Barbour Boats, a Brewer shipyard that produced steamers and schooners. Robert himself was an engineer for Bangor Hydro Electric Company, a job he held until his retirement in 1969. He also entered World War I when he was barely 18 years old, where he was injured during the Second Battle of the Marne on July 20th, 1918. He was honorably discharged on April 5th, 1919.

Incredibly, the catalyst for the research that uncovered these facts and stories was a deceptively simple postcard collection kept by a young girl in the early decades of the twentieth century. These stories are perhaps not remarkable, but they are an interesting window onto Edna's life. We still don't know exactly when the albums were donated to the library or who donated them, but we do know why: with her husband by her side, Edna lived most of her life in Brewer. Still, Sunset was not forgotten. Robert and Edna visited Deer Isle every summer, where members of the Knowlton family congregated throughout the twentieth century. And besides, Sunset was always no more than an album away.

The Brewer Public Library is currently open to five patrons at a time. No appointment necessary! The John and Millie Goodness Research Room, where we keep the Knowlton postcard collection and other Brewer treasures, is open during our normal business hours. For questions, call (207) 989-7943 or email public-library@brewermaine.gov.

THE BREWER PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE 1950s

(The following article was written by Barbara St. Clair, a new member of the Brewer Historical Society. Barbara was born and raised in Brewer as were her parents Lorraine Hewes Beatham and Roland Beatham-along with many aunts, uncles and cousins. She presently lives in Cape May, New Jersey. Cape May is considered America's first Seaside Resort and was the summer White House for several presidents in the 1800s. Barbara has written extensively over the years

about the history of Cape May County and Southern New Jersey, both as a journalist and freelance writer. Barbara donated several Brewer High School yearbooks and family genealogical information to the Brewer Historical Society archives. You can contact Barbara at writeimpressions3@comcast.net)

Mary Haskell personified the title librarian. Her shoes were sturdy, her attire practical and I doubt that she wore little, if any, make up but she always smiled. She walked with somewhat of a limp and I always noticed the uncomfortable way she held a pencil.

And, by the way, she was **Miss** Haskell to everyone, including this 10-year-old patron.

The Brewer Public Library was a small but certainly an adequate place in the mid-1950s. More importantly, the safe, small-town atmosphere allowed me to ride my bike, a hand-me-down from an older cousin, to the library every week or two, about three miles from my house on Elm Street.

Almost every week or so on Saturdays in good weather I would return my three borrowed books and carefully select three new titles to pile in my bike basket for the ride home. Miss Haskell made the rules and rule number one was no more than three books. I never asked if I could borrow four books but I learned to use a card catalog and understood the basics of the Dewey Decimal System, thanks to her.

My library card was some shade of orange, as I recall, with my name, a column for the due date of each book with a column to right labeled returned, allowing for a more or less permanent record of any transgressions such as late returns or, heaven forbid, a lost book. My motivation to return books on time was not quite as compelling as Abraham Lincoln's but it was rare, if ever, that I had an overdue book.

My trips to the library started to wind down a few years later as I became more involved with school, sports and other activities. When I started high school in 1960 and walked into the Brewer High School library, there was Miss Haskell at the librarian's desk, exactly where she should be.

I still go to my local library every week or so – but I don't ride my bike.

As an aside, Miss Haskell's father, Ernest Haskell, was my senior English teacher.

What are your Covid-19 Experiences? We are archiving them for future historians.

We are truly living in a time that is unlike anything before. The Brewer Historical Society would like to record the experiences of Brewer residents and Historical Society

members. What has been your experience during the COVID-19 pandemic? You can share them on the Brewer Historical Society Facebook page.

You may also email your experiences to: David Hanna for a record that we are developing for Brewer Historical Society archives. You can contact David at: thanna51@yahoo.com

(Disclaimer: These posts will be saved as a historical record. However, please do remember that Facebook is public. Please do not include any identifying information that you would not be willing to share with a stranger [example: home address, phone number, etc.])

Brewer Register of Historic Places

Oak Hill Cemetery



Oak Hill Cemetery is built on land donated by John Brewer in 1825. John Brewer and many other famous families are buried here. A listing of cemetery plots is available at City Hall or the Brewer Historical Society. The cemetery was placed on the *Brewer Register of Historic Places* by the Brewer Cemetery Committee and Brewer Parks and Recreation.

DO YOU HAVE ANY STORIES FOR OUR RECORDS?

The KKK in Brewer

The Brewer Historical Society received a request this February for information regarding a lecture by Grand Wizard of the KKK, Hiram Wesley Evans in Brewer during the 1920's. The request was by Thomas MacMillan, a PhD student at Concordia University, researching the KKK in Maine.*

The KKK had a strong presence in Brewer as noted in Richard Shaw's "Images of America-Brewer." A photograph of the KKK marching along South Main Street in the mid-1920's shows the participants in traditional white hoods and flowing robes. Shaw notes that 150,000 Maine residents belonged, "rivaling any Southern State." He continues, "Because of the Scarcity of African-Americans in Maine the organization was mainly anti-Catholic and anti-Jewish."

Thomas MacMillan followed up a request from the Brewer Historical Society for any information he might have by sending a copy of a newspaper article stating that a KKK lecture on "Americanism" was presented at Brewer City Hall during the 1920's, attended by the Mayor of the time, John B. Stuart. Mayor Stuart then vetoed a resolution allowing future lectures, indicating that they were KKK lectures under a different name and were inappropriate for a public City Hall venue. He suggested that a private venue would be more appropriate.

The Brewer Historical Society would like to obtain more information on this part of Brewer History. Because the KKK was active into the 1940's, it would seem that we could obtain memories of these activities. If you have any stories or remembrances that would be appropriate, please send them to the Brewer Historical Society email account (brewerhistoricalsociety@gmail.com) or mail them to the Brewer Historical Society, PO Box 602, in Brewer.

** (Thomas MacMillan's MA Thesis regarding KKK activities in Portland can be viewed on the Brewer Historical Society web page (brewerhistoricalsociety.org) and under "Resources")*

BREWER "TRIDENT" YEARBOOKS NOW AVAILABLE ON-LINE !!

The City of Brewer Education Department has scanned all the available Brewer High School "Trident" yearbooks (with the exception of the last 5 years) and they are now available on-line at www.breweredu.org

They are missing yearbooks 1909, 1910, 1911, and 1913

There was apparently no yearbook for 1919 because of World War I. There was also no yearbook for 1944 because of World War II. However, in 1944 the class created their own Yearbook "Witches Tales". That is available at the Brewer Historical Society.

If you have any information about the missing yearbooks, please contact Charity Rogers-Blanchard (Data Specialist) at the Brewer School Department (989-8638)



Do You Remember Robert L. "Bobbie" Campbell

Brewer High School Class of 1967

Robert L. Campbell became amateur Lightweight Champion of New England.

"Memories of Maine" magazine will do an article on Robert Campbell this summer. Do you have any stories or information about him? Please give us your information on our Facebook page.