

Maine History

Volume 22 | Number 1

Article 2

7-1-1982

The Society

William H. Toner Jr.

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/mainehistoryjournal>



Part of the [United States History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Toner, William H.. "The Society." *Maine History* 22, 1 (1982): 3-19.

<https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/mainehistoryjournal/vol22/iss1/2>

This Reports, News, Announcements is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UMaine. It has been accepted for inclusion in Maine History by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UMaine. For more information, please contact um.library.technical.services@maine.edu.

THE SOCIETY

The 160th Annual Meeting of the Maine Historical Society, attended by approximately 110 members, was held at the Portland Public Library on June 5, 1982. During the morning business session, Election Committee Chairman Roger B. Ray announced that the following persons had been elected to serve terms on the board of trustees: Neal W. Allen, Jr., South Freeport; Robert H. Babcock, Bangor; Robert N. Bass, Cumberland; Priscilla F. Gray, Cumberland Center; Roger Howell, Jr., Brunswick; William B. Jordan, Jr., Portland; Nancy N. Masterton, Cape Elizabeth; Jane S. Moody, Falmouth; Mary-Kate Murphy, Yarmouth; Joseph N. Sewall, Old Town; James B. Vickery, Bangor. Mr. Ray also reported that the Society's members had elected the following officers for 1982-1983: Joan S. Hayden, president; Gordon F. Grimes, vice president; John E. Ham, Jr., secretary; Donald K. Saunders, treasurer.

During the meeting, Dr. Joel W. Eastman, representing the Publications Committee, announced that Reed M. Holmes, author of "G. J. Adams and the Forerunners," is this year's recipient of the James Phinney Baxter Award, presented annually to the author of the best article appearing during the volume-year of the *Quarterly*.

On behalf of the Society's board of trustees and members, President-elect Hayden presented the annual Elizabeth Ring Service Award to William Curtis Pierce, who had served as president of the Society from 1979 to 1982.

In the Annual Meeting's afternoon session, Dr. Robert H. Babcock, associate professor of history, University of Maine at Orono, presented the address entitled "The Rise and Fall of Portland's Waterfront, 1850-1920."

In the annual meeting's afternoon session, Dr. Robert H. Babcock, associate professor of history, University of Maine at Orono, presented the address entitled "The Rise and Fall of Portland's Waterfront, 1850-1920."

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I am very pleased to greet you at another annual meeting of the Maine Historical Society and to report on what has occurred since we met last June.

William H. Toner, Jr., our director, came to us at the time of last year's meeting. We feel that he has fully justified the confidence we placed in him when we asked him to join us. We are glad to have him aboard.

During the past year, we have established new hours for the library. In addition to our regular weekday hours, the library will now remain open on Thursday evenings until 8:30 and will be open to the public on the second Saturday of each month from 9:00 A.M. until 5:00 P.M. It is important to note, however, that the library will be closed on Mondays. The extended hours on Thursdays and Saturdays will, we hope, make our extensive historical and genealogical collections more available to a larger section of the public than has been the case in recent years.

Thanks to the hard work of the Collections Committee, we have recently adopted a formal written policy for the collection and disposal of items in our library and museum collections. The need for a written policy on the acquisition and disposal of items has long been apparent, and I am glad to say that it has now been met.

Our Maine Heritage Fund drive is continuing, and we have now raised over \$420,000, plus \$20,000 from the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, on our way to our goal of \$500,000. These figures do not include the \$100,000 already received in matching funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Our membership committee has been active during the year. Despite inflation, we have kept dues for our basic membership category at a minimum of \$15.00 in an effort to avoid discouraging membership. We have, however, raised other membership categories. As a result of this, dues income has increased from \$27,605 in the year ending March 31, 1981, to \$34,751 last year. We have also raised the one-time fee for life membership to \$2,500 and have established new categories for corporate membership. Nevertheless, inflation has continued to have its effects, and despite stringent efforts to economize, we expect to be forced to institute annual appeals in order to bridge the deficits.

We can be pleased with our fall and spring lecture series of this past year. Both series were well attended, and the talks, quite varied in their nature, were well delivered and well received. I believe it is fair to say that all of us who attended were very interested in what we heard, were delighted by the talks, and were glad we went. Our fall series gave us a broad view of the Indian land claims case and its settlement, and the spring series provided us with interesting background information on the Black, Irish, and Greek ethnic groups in Maine.

We continue to be very much indebted to the members of the Longfellow Garden Club for their devotion in making and keeping the garden such a pleasant refuge in downtown Portland. It is a quiet and pleasant spot to visit on a warm summer day and a grateful tribute to the man for whom it is named. I should also mention the friendly

cooperation received from the Tate House and the Victoria Mansion, who joined with us in issuing a new brochure on the three historic houses.

This meeting marks the end of my three years as president of the Society, a job I thoroughly enjoyed, thanks to all the help received from our hardworking staff, our board members, and our committees. I shall always have a great interest in the Society, and I extend my very best wishes to my successor as president. I hope the job proves as interesting to her as it has been to me.

William C. Pierce

TREASURER'S REPORT

We have received our auditor's report for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1982. For that period we adopted a budget calling for income of \$135,707 and expenses of \$168,592, anticipating a deficit for the year of \$32,885. The auditor's report, in contrast, shows that the excess of income and net transfers over expenditures came to \$19,538. This reduces our cumulative deficit to \$67,634.

The principal difference over budget as far as income is concerned lies in interest on money in the Heritage Fund, together with transfers from Heritage Fund principal. Dues and gifts income also were greater than we anticipated.

Most expenses of unrestricted funds on March 31, 1982, was \$983,755, an increase of \$143,085 over the figure for 1981, as a result of Heritage Fund increase, plus a sizable bequest. The balance of restricted funds was \$56,361, an increase of \$11,641, also mainly from a bequest.

For the fiscal year ending on March 31, 1983, the Finance Committee has recommended a balanced budget of \$340,500. Several items in it have been described as "soft money," implying that it presents a challenge to our abilities. It also must be emphasized that as Heritage Fund money is applied, interest income from that source will diminish.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to express my appreciation to the members of the staff for their cheerful and courteous help to me throughout the year.

Donald K. Saunders

COMPARATIVE STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENSE
for the years ended March 31, 1982, 1981 and 1980

	1982	1981	1980
Income:			
Interest and dividends:			
Unrestricted funds	\$ 87,968	\$ 54,090	\$ 46,401
Restricted funds	3,642	2,496	2,353
Longfellow House savings interest	211	414	353
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	91,821	57,000	49,107
Dues	34,751	27,605	22,163
Gifts	8,084	4,556	1,460
Grants	24,000	24,200	24,800
Longfellow House receipts	14,403	14,094	9,264
Book sales	3,117	3,149	6,063
Other	6,601	4,237	4,760
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	182,777	134,841	117,617
Expenses:			
Salaries, library	93,281	66,777	56,162
Salaries, Longfellow House	10,719	5,501	9,524
Longfellow House expense	6,422	6,826	4,452
Employees' retirement plan	3,808	2,655	1,633
Insurance	4,324	3,814	2,928
Utilities	9,626	9,511	9,108
Pensions	2,400	2,220	1,320
Repairs and maintenance	1,050	675	2,088
Supplies	3,110	2,896	3,043
Payroll taxes	9,138	6,468	6,903
Telephone	2,532	1,596	1,454
Quarterly, newsletter and printing	13,855	13,802	9,754
Postage and mailing service	4,597	4,553	3,455
Professional services	3,200	2,898	2,800
Custodian fee	1,820	1,860	1,293
Interest	-	369	1,549
Travel	508	530	418
Equipment purchased or rented	2,580	1,628	1,823
Expenditure of Restricted			
current funds	9,185	6,696	4,248
Miscellaneous	2,172	2,960	1,786
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	184,327	144,235	125,741
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Carried forward	(1,550)	(9,394)	(8,124)

	1982	1981	1980
Brought forward	\$(1,550)	\$(9,394)	\$(8,124)
Other disbursements and transfers:			
Program support from			
Heritage Fund principal	30,000	—	—
Life beneficiaries - Morton Fund	(3,600)	(3,660)	(3,960)
Transfer of unexpended			
Restricted current funds	(1,584)	100	(894)
Transfer of book sales			
to Moulton Fund	(1,549)	(2,280)	(4,587)
Transfer of book sales			
to Bicentennial Fund	(1,568)	(869)	(1,476)
Income added to principal			
of Conant Fund	(611)	(624)	(547)
	<u>21,088)</u>	<u>(7,333)</u>	<u>(11,464)</u>
Excess of income over expenses			
and transfers (deficit)	\$ 19,538	\$(16,727)	\$(19,588)

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

During my first year as director of the Maine Historical Society, I have tried to recognize that this has been a time for assessing the strengths and needs of the institution and for becoming better acquainted with the many individuals involved in the Society – trustees, staff, volunteers, library users, and others. It has also been a time for discovering what the institution has been, what obstacles it has encountered, and where it would like to be going in the future. Resisting the impulse to recommend significant changes before the end of a reasonable evaluation period has not been easy. While changes have been proposed and many have been adopted, the past year has not witnessed any fundamental alteration in the operation and programs of the Society.

In this past year I believe steps have been taken toward defining the Society's goals more clearly and setting priorities. The needs of the Maine Historical Society are substantial in many areas – staff, building maintenance, collections care and management, membership programs, and, not least of all, money. The Maine Heritage Fund has attempted to deal with all these needs, at least to some degree. What the Heritage Fund has given us most is some time to weigh our objectives, determine priorities, and set a course of action.

Arranging priorities is never simple, for everyone associated with the Society has a special interest, a special concern in relation to our operations, whether it is the Wadsworth-Longfellow House, genealogical holdings, publications, a particular museum collection, or simply a desire for more statewide activities. Do we want more space or more staff? Is collections care more important than acquisitions at this point? Should some programs or institutional goals be abandoned to salvage others? The choices are numerous, and the decisions made are bound to disappoint someone. In the coming year some of the more difficult choices will have to be made if we are going to make visible progress in pursuit of the Society's primary goals.

Membership: President Pierce has already commented upon last year's changes in membership categories and the excellent increase in membership dues income realized in 1981-82. During the past year the Society experienced modest growth in the number of dues-paying memberships, which now stand at 1,944. Whether or not our membership continues to grow may depend less upon traditional membership drives and more upon the willingness of individual members to be alert to opportunities to enlist friends and business associates on a year-round basis.

Staff: If members are the foundation of the Maine Historical Society, the staff members are the most visible representatives of the Society, responsible for day-to-day services and most programming. We were sorry to lose two experienced staff members last year, Reference Librarian Mary-Kate Murphy and Manuscripts Assistant Arthur Gerrier, both of whom had served the institution for more than two years. We are pleased, however, that we found qualified individuals to fill the vacancies. The new staff members are Reference Librarian Margaret McCain and Manuscripts Assistant Lisa Fink.

A long-standing need for a museum collections curator led to reestablishment of that position on a part-time basis. In May, Elizabeth Hamill, who had served the Society so well as a volunteer and trustee, was appointed curator of the Wadsworth-Longfellow House and museum collections. Her professional experience matched our needs, and her services are already enabling us to accomplish objectives that would be postponed in the absence of this curatorial position.

Julianne Irving has been appointed tour coordinator again this season at the Wadsworth-Longfellow House, and a talented and mature group of summer docents has been employed to assist Mrs. Irving and Ms. Hamill.

Staff requirements and individual positions are not immune to the change experienced by active institutions, and the Society, with its increased expectations with regard to programs, annual fund-raising, and membership services, has become even more in need of a staff that matches institutional goals.

Longfellow House: Although the Wadsworth-Longfellow House is, without doubt, costly to maintain and open to the public each summer, this historic property is an integral part and one of the chief assets of the Society. Our ownership of Longfellow's childhood home is the reason

for much of the support and attention the Society receives from members, the community, business, and foundations, as the Maine Heritage Fund giving has demonstrated.

During the 1981 season, the house-museum was open from June 1 to October 15, two weeks longer than usual, and almost eight thousand visitors toured the building. We expect 1982 admissions to be equally high. Although attendance figures are important, our goal for future seasons is to improve the quality of our tour program and site interpretation, while also finding ways to generate additional income without increasing admissions to a level that would dilute program quality and jeopardize the property itself. While trying to balance budgets, we cannot afford to lose sight of the Society's primary goal for the Wadsworth-Longfellow House – its preservation.

With the aid of the Maine Heritage Fund campaign and additional grant support from the Maine Historic Preservation Commission and the City of Portland Community Development Program, the second phase of Wadsworth-Longfellow House restoration began in January and will be completed this fall. Approximately \$70,000 will have been spent in this restoration phase, and the impact of those dollars is already quite visible. These improvements should encourage even wider support for this aspect of the Society's operations.

When the current work is completed, the Wadsworth-Longfellow House will be structurally stable, and that has been our first objective. We know, however, that interior restoration is also required, and that will be considered as the next step.

I join President Pierce in thanking the Longfellow Garden Club, for club members have continued to provide outstanding service to the Society and deserve all the recognition we can give their efforts.

Library Building: Matters related to the Society's two buildings have demanded much attention during the past year. As work proceeded on the Wadsworth-Longfellow House, we have not neglected our headquarters-library building. Planning of a library building repair project, for which the Maine Heritage Fund will provide \$50,000, has already begun, and before next winter arrives, we hope to have completed roof and cornice repairs, brick, repointing, and other elements of the project.

While we are taking steps to correct basic building problems, a small committee headed by Gordon Grimes has begun to investigate ways to improve library and museum storage and the arrangement of work areas throughout the library building. As anyone who visits our building can appreciate, a solution to space-use problems is sorely needed, and we will be working towards that solution during the next year. Until it is determined how we should resolve our space-use dilemma, limited measures are being planned in an effort to improve building conditions on a short-term basis.

Collections: The Society's historical collections are the heart of this institution, and collections acquisitions, cataloguing, use, and care deserve more attention than this report allows. However, I do want to thank now the many individuals and institutions who contributed to the Society's collections in 1981-82, for whether the gift was a document, a silver artifact, or a recently compiled genealogy, if it sheds additional light on Maine's history, the gift has strengthened the Maine Historical Society collections. Included among the recent manuscript accessions are the following: (1) nine volumes of diaries, 1843-1854, of Zelia (Lunt) Walker of Westbrook, Maine, recounting everyday events in the Prides Corner-Stevens Plains neighborhoods and activities at Westbrook College; (2) retreat records, 1930-1981, of the Brothers of the Way,

an organization of ordained ministers; (3) records, 1976-1981, relating to the planning for and construction of the new Portland Public Library; (4) records, 1970-1975, of the now-defunct Olde Port Museum Association of Portland, Maine; (5) diary, 1885-1887, of Willard Woodman (1865-1944), kept while a student at Bowdoin College, and an unpublished volume of Woodman family genealogy; (6) ninety-nine volumes of records, 1883-1938, of the Maine and New Hampshire Granite Corporation, including letter books, accounting correspondence, financial statements, ledgers, payroll accounts, quotations and estimates, invoices, order books, shipping books, cutting costs, project books, and curbing books; (7) twenty-six volumes of Athens, Maine, town records, 1824-1901, including state, county, and town tax assessments, selectmen's records, account books, daybooks, disbursement accounts, and school registers; (8) records of the proceedings of the organization of the 5th Regiment of Maine Militia in York County, 1789; (9) correspondence and memoirs of Caroline (Keene) Doughty of Hartland, Maine, containing interesting material relating to the family's emigration to Iowa and Minnesota in 1850, and to western Indian troubles; (10) ledger, 1909-1918, kept by George R. Chadbourn (1868-1923), a blacksmith in Waterborough, Maine; (11) three volumes of records, 1918-1922, of the Path Committee of the Bar Harbor Improvement Association; (12) account book, 1871-1877, of J. S. Winslow & Co., ship brokers, of Portland, Maine; (13) Wentworth-Merrill family records, 1796-1933, including correspondence, diaries, account books, survey books, deeds, hymnbooks, school books, and genealogical data relating to the Wentworth-Merrill family of Brownfield and Gray, Maine; (14) ten volume genealogical compilation by Andrew Walker on the descendants of John Walker (1692-1743) of Kittery, Maine; (15) twenty-eight volumes, ca. 1800-1831,

of poll, real estate, and personal estate tax assessments for Portland, Maine; (16) five volumes, 1860-1901, of Portland, Maine, Fire Department records, including minutes of the Board of Engineers, minutes of the Committee on the Fire Department, clerks' records of engine companies nos. 1 and 5, and a roll book containing data on members of the various engine companies; (17) roll book, ca. 1861, of Company G, 6th Regiment of Maine Volunteers, commanded by Captain Frank S. Hesseltine; and (18) one volume, 1788-1807, of the proceedings of the selectmen of Portland, Maine, including appropriations and expenditures.

The emergence of new historical societies and museums in Maine in recent decades and the increasing competition for funding have forced the Society to give serious thought to our collections objectives, and the new policy drafted by the Collections Committee will be valuable as a guide for the future. An important aspect of the new collections policy is its emphasis upon the care and security of the valuable historical collections acquired by the Society over 160 years. How we are preserving and using historical materials warrants as much consideration and budget support as the acquisition process.

Through the support of the Maine Heritage Fund and matching grants from the Maine State Commission on the Arts and Humanities, the Society has continued to attend to conservation needs of our fine collection of Maine-related art. Two portraits by John Brewster, Jr., and two Longfellow family portraits attributed to artist Eastman Johnson have all undergone treatment at the Williamstown (Mass.) Regional Art Conservation Laboratory. Two other works of art are now at the Williamstown laboratory awaiting treatment, and at least three other paintings are scheduled for conservation work in the coming year. Our on-going painting conservation

project led the Society to apply for membership in the Williamstown laboratory, and membership will help stretch conservation dollars a bit farther.

Until conditions in the Society's buildings permit more extensive exhibition of our collections, we will continue to seek opportunities to show works from the Society's collections at other Maine institutions. Objects from our collection, especially works of art, are currently on loan to Blaine House and the Maine State Commission on the Arts and Humanities in Augusta, the Maine Maritime Museum in Bath, the Portland Museum of Art, and other institutions around the state. Last year the Society made collection loans to the William A. Farnsworth Library and Art Museum in Rockland, the Payson Gallery of Art at Westbrook College, and the Fifth Maine Regiment Community Center on Peaks Island. Other institutions are becoming more aware of the importance of the Society's holdings, and requests for special exhibition loan seem to be increasing.

Promotion and Media Services: In the realm of promotional activities, our *Newsletter*, coedited by Joan Hayden and Elizabeth Hamill, has been redesigned, and the change has been received favorably. A new brochure about the Society was published in March and is now being distributed as an information and membership promotion piece. President Pierce has also mentioned the new brochure published jointly by the Society, Tate House, and Victoria Mansion.

News releases about the Society have been issued more frequently in recent months, and although the press rarely gives institutions all the coverage they may wish, the media have been generally receptive to our news items.

Preparations for the Portland 350 Celebration have brought the expected numerous requests for help from the Society's staff, and our staff has been assisting

newspaper and magazine editors and television stations as they search for historical material. WCSH-TV's messages on Portland history would not be possible without the assistance the station received from Thomas Gaffney, Arthur Gerrier, and Lisa Fink. Such cooperation with the media at all levels is one of the least visible but most time-consuming of the Society's many community services.

Publications: Although we have produced several new promotional publications, the Society published no new scholarly monographs last year. However, Thomas Gaffney, who continues as editor of publications in addition to serving as curator of manuscripts, has spent the year editing two manuscripts we expect to publish in the coming year.

Publishing recent scholarship in the field of Maine history remains an important function of the Society, for the institution's scholarly publications, including the *Maine Historical Society Quarterly*, have enhanced the Society's reputation. We must try for greater success in the sale and distribution of our publications, however, for sales generate the income needed to support additional publishing projects.

Fund-Raising: As already reported, the Society has made excellent progress towards our Maine Heritage Fund campaign goal, especially so in view of the limited fund-raising experience of the Society prior to 1979. Including \$100,000 in matching funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the more than a half-million dollars the campaign has raised to date have allowed us to begin meeting long-standing needs for endowment recovery, buildings repair and restoration, art conservation, staff salaries, and program support. The impact of the Maine Heritage Fund was very significant in relation to last year's budget, and the campaign will provide critical support in our effort to balance the 1982-83 budget.

We must all recognize, however, that the Maine Heritage Fund was launched to meet obvious, immediate needs and that completion of the campaign will not mark the end of Society fund-raising. To balance the 1982-83 budget, we must fund \$27,000 in new income beyond whatever further gifts we receive towards the Heritage Fund goal. The following year's budget will be even more of a challenge to balance, as direct support from the Heritage Fund tapers off.

It cannot be said too often that the Maine Historical Society is at the beginning of an endless fund-raising challenge that now faces virtually every non-profit institution, and the annual support of every Society member is required for us to meet this challenge. As federal and state agencies' budgets for support of the humanities are reduced, we, with most other non-profit institutions, will be asking individuals, corporations, and private foundations to contribute more and do so more often to keep educational programs alive.

The board of trustees and the director will be working to generate the required income and to manage our budgets effectively, but the fiscal well-being of the Society must be a common effort, involving the entire membership. If you are not directly involved in our fund-raising program, you can help create the climate needed for success by advocating support for the Society within your community and among your own friends and business associates.

With help from all our members, we are looking forward to another year that will bring further improvements, new members and donors, new programs, and, we hope, a balanced budget for the Maine Historical Society. In closing I wish to thank the trustees, committee people, and staff members who have been so cooperative during my first year as director. Although the names of

many volunteers have gone unmentioned here, I hope those individuals also realize how much their work has been appreciated by both board members and staff.

Finally, I have this opportunity to thank Bill Pierce who, during the past year, proved to be one of the most dedicated, energetic, and accessible trustees with whom I have ever worked. I suspect that most members are unaware of the time, including interstate travel time, that Bill spent fulfilling his responsibilities as president of the Maine Historical Society. Had he lived in the Wadsworth-Longfellow House last year, he could not have been any more available to help a new director or been more attentive to the needs of this institution. I look forward to working with the new officers and trustees, and I am sure they agree that, in many respects, their jobs and mine have been made a little easier because of Bill Pierce's many contributions.

William H. Toner, Jr.

