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Guide to The Maine Historical Society Library

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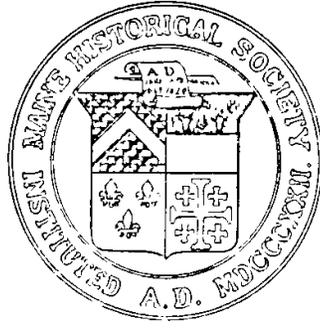


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Maine Historical Society
Library

*GUIDE TO THE
MAINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY LIBRARY*

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The Maine Historical Society was chartered by the State in 1822 for the purpose of collecting and preserving books, manuscripts, and artifacts illustrating the history of Maine. Since that time, the Library collections have grown steadily so that today, the Society houses the largest repository of materials for the study of Maine history in the State.

These holdings are particularly rich in source materials for town histories, family histories, early business histories, and cultural and religious institutions. Since 1922, when the *Maine Genealogical Society* merged with Maine Historical, the library has been unexcelled for resources in genealogy.

One does not find an extensive collection of Maine Literature or Maine imprints in this Library. These areas of interest are served well by the State Library at Augusta, the large Public Libraries, and various College Libraries throughout the State.

The Maine Historical Society is a private, non-profit institution. Funds for support of the Library come from a variety of sources: memberships in the Society, contributions from State and local governments, individual gifts, bequests, and endowments.

Hours: The Library is open to the public year-round from 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., Monday through Friday, *except for State and National Holidays*. During the academic year only (October through May) the Library is also open on Saturdays from 12:00 Noon to 5:00 P.M.

Restrictions: Since the Library is intended to serve researchers, all books and manuscripts must be available within the building at all times. Hence, a very limited circulation of books (for which there are duplicate copies) is restricted to members of the Society. Free access to the stacks is also a privilege reserved for members.

THE SOCIETY

The Maine Historical Society, fourth oldest historical society in the United States, was incorporated on the fifth of February, 1822. The first meeting of the Society was held in the old State House at Portland, Governor Albion K. Parris presiding. It was agreed that headquarters of the Society should be located in Brunswick, and the library and museum cabinet were housed at Bowdoin College until 1881. During these early years, the Society became intimately associated with the life of the College and Annual Meetings were held there at commencement time for a hundred years.

The relocation of the Society to Portland was brought about through the energetic efforts of a number of prominent Portland citizens who became members shortly after the Civil War. At first the collections were housed on the third floor of the old City Building. When the new Portland Public Library was completed in 1889, they were moved to rooms provided by James P. Baxter. Finally on February 27, 1907, the one hundredth anniversary of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's birth, the Society opened its present headquarters at 485 Congress Street. Located on the property of the historic Wadsworth-Longfellow House (received through the bequest of Anne Longfellow Pierce) the building was constructed specifically to house the Society's large collection of rare books, manuscripts, and Maine memorabilia. For the first time in its eighty-five year history, the Society claimed its own building, and was not forced to accommodate its collecting aims or its activities to the needs of a host institution.

In addition to the museum cabinet collections, the Maine Historical Society has collected some sixty thousand books and one million manuscript items since 1822. As a comprehensive collection, it constitutes the richest source for the study of Maine's history in the State. Since 1831, the Society has published forty-six volumes of *Collections*, twelve volumes of the *Newsletter*, eleven volumes of *York Deeds*, five volumes of *Province and Court Records*, and half again as many single works.

Although the external changes have been many during the past one hundred and fifty years, the Maine Historical Society remains remarkably faithful to its original aims and purposes: "to collect and preserve, as far as the state of their funds will admit, whatever, in their opinion, may tend to explain and illustrate any department of civil, ecclesiastical, and natural history, especially of this State, and of the United States."

USE OF THE LIBRARY

Registration: For reasons of security and for record purposes, members as well as non-members using the Library are required to register. Registration cards are available at the Reference Desk.

Calling for material: Call slips for books and periodicals are provided on the counters at the entrance to the stacks. Please copy the *entire call number* appearing on the upper left-hand corner of the catalog cards. In addition it is usually advisable to make note of the author's last name and an abbreviated title. The Librarian on duty at the Reference Desk will be happy to fetch the books for you.

Please do not attempt to reshelve books. The classification systems in use at Maine Historical Society are extremely complicated, and you will be doing the staff and your fellow researchers a tremendous favor by not attempting to reshelve books, even when you feel reasonably sure as to their proper location. *Simply leave books on the counters at the entrance to the stacks and they will be reshelved at the end of the day.*

Manuscripts: Manuscripts are obtained and used under the direct supervision of the Curator of Manuscripts. Special Request Forms for the use of manuscripts are located on the second floor. For those desiring to use manuscripts on Saturdays or when the Curator of Manuscripts is not on duty, it will be necessary to make prior arrangements to insure that the materials will be available for use.

Copying and Photo-reproduction services: A chemical type of copying machine is available for use on the premises at twenty-five cents per exposure.

Photo-reproduction services are extremely limited in this Library since they are available only outside the building. Arrangements must be made with the Librarian on duty for commercial handling. Rates and request forms are available at the Reference Desk.

LOCATING MATERIALS

The contents of the Library collections are listed principally in three catalogs:

The General Catalog lists most of the book collections in the Library and is located under the counters at the entrance to the stacks. Here you will find the traditional Author, Title, Subject listing in alphabetical arrangement.

The Genealogical Catalog listing books (and a few manuscripts) about families and individuals is located in the wooden case to the left of the *General Catalog*. Please note that formal, published biographies are listed in the *General Catalog*, rarely in the *Genealogical Catalog*.

The Manuscript Catalog is located on the second floor and should be consulted with the aid of the Curator of Manuscripts. The catalog is of necessity rather general in its coverage, relying on a series of inventories to fill in the details. Many genealogical resources can be found here however.

The distinction between an imprint and a manuscript should be noted by users of this Library. Imprints include published works, that is, works which have been produced in multiple copies, usually commercially. Manuscripts are unique, unpublished works, rarely available in multiple copies. This includes typescripts as well as hand written works.

If, for example, one were looking for a master's thesis, a speech, or an unpublished genealogy, the *Manuscript Catalog* would normally be the proper place to begin search.

Special Indexes

A Catalog of Scrapbook Materials is located directly beneath the *Genealogical Catalog* and locates various items, principally newspaper clippings, on people, houses, towns, etc., in the State of Maine. (There are extensive vertical file holdings, which should be used with the aid of the Reference Librarian.)

The Newspaper Catalog is located under the *Genealogical Catalog* which gives an indication of holdings housed in the basement. This catalog is undergoing complete revision so that it is not always reliable.

A Map and Chart Catalog with an approximate listing of holdings is available and should be used with the aid of the Reference Librarian. Much of the collection is extremely fragile, and it is not always possible to grant ready access. Prior arrangements for extensive use of this collection is necessary.

Periodicals: A Visible File of periodicals to which the Library currently subscribes is available at the periodicals table. Defunct periodicals are listed in the *General Catalog*.

Microfilm: Microfilm copy is available for selected categories of materials. A complete list of holdings is available at the Reference Desk where arrangements for use of the Microfilm Reader can be made.