



Norway Museum & Historical Society

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From the Board of Trustees:

Thanks to Sue Denison for mastering a huge shift in technology, we were able to hold our three summer programs very successfully on zoom. We are fortunate that these programs, which focused on historic topics in art and music, are still available to view on our YouTube channel. If you missed them or wish to review them, you can still access them through our website.

Looking ahead to the winter months, we expect to remain open to the public on Saturdays from 9:00 am to 12:00 noon. And we have lined up several projects for the winter which will be going on behind the scenes



The Beal Block in the 1920s.

Look for the article about the Beal Block on page 5. The Beal Block on Main St. is currently the home of Widdershins Antiques and Pick A Lily Revival.

Our “faithful four” volunteers will continue the “annals” project, which they started last winter, scanning the old newspapers for the highlights of Norway news from 1923-2000. We hope these will ultimately be published in book form to celebrate the town’s 225th anniversary in 2022.

Three other new volunteers are indexing 81 of the old scrapbooks in our collection. This will make the contents available for researching people and town history.

We are also continuing to expand our Oral History project begun last year. If you have memories of Norway during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, we are especially interested in interviewing you. We also welcome written comments if you prefer. Please contact the NMHS with a phone or email message if you would like to participate.

From the above it is clear that we depend on and value our volunteers. Thanks to all of the many people who devote their time and efforts to maintain an active appreciation of Norway’s interesting and rich history. We will celebrate them further at our annual meeting to be held on January 25, 2022. Everyone is welcome to join in this event. We hope for an in-person meeting but if not, we will Zoom.

Ann Siekman, Chair

My Favorite Things

By Susan Denison

I'm amused by this interesting 1904 photograph showing three employees in an office of The Norway National Bank. At the time, the bank was in the Opera House where Brick & Mortar is today. According to a note on the back, those pictured from left to right are "Lulie" Tuell Bowker, Howard D. Smith and Stella Pike. We can tell you Ms. Pike worked for the bank for more than 30 years, resigning in 1917. Mr. Smith served as the bank's cashier for 44 years before becoming bank president in 1919. Unfortunately, the only information we can find for Ms. Bowker is a notice that in 1904, Lulu E. Tuell, age 34, married Irving Bowker in West Paris.

You can see that the wall behind them is decorated with calendars. Lots of calendars. They all indicate it is July, 1904. It must have taken all day to change them when a new month rolled around and all week when a new year arrived.



From the Collection

Dumb Bell Ringer Mystery Follow Up

In our Spring newsletter, we showed you this old photo that seemed to defy reasonable explanation. It was marked “Dumb Bell Ringers, Junior Exhibition 1908, Norway, ME” and we asked for any insight.

Noted historian, former NMHS officer and longtime friend Larry Glatz took an excellent stab at it. To quote Larry:

“Regarding the ‘Dumb Bell Ringers,’ it's very hard, if not impossible, to say; but I think the note on the back may have been meant as a joke.

The young women are almost certainly in their high school gymnasium outfits. And if the photo was taken between September and December of 1908, the then current juniors would have been members of the Class of 1910. So maybe that explains the ‘10’.

At the time in question, there were a number of ‘Bell Ringer’ groups on tour. It seems to have been a popular entertainment of the day. One of those groups was the ‘Dunbar Bell Ringers.’ They appeared nationally from about 1902 until well into the 1920s. These musicians, however, were not young women. They were four or five adult males. The ‘Dunbar Bell Ringers’ did appear in Maine--along with several other bell-ringing ensembles. The *Bridgton News* mentions their appearances in that town in March of 1914 and March of 1915. (However, I didn't find any references to them in the *Oxford Democrat* at the Library of Congress website.) So maybe with regard to your photo, the person who wrote the note on the back was doing a ‘fun’ mash-up of ‘Dunbar Bell Ringers’ and the junior class's group of ‘dumb-bell’ exercisers. Or...

A bit earlier (1901), there appeared in *Punch* magazine a joke which seems to have tickled the funny bones of a number of editors, since it was copied in quite a number of papers nationally. In the piece, an apparently simple-minded housemaid is asked how she found the recent entertainment at the parish hall, to which she replied, ‘Oh, lovely, sir. The dumb-bell ringers was beautiful.’ So, again, the simultaneous popularity of bell-ringers and dumb-bell exercising seems to have been the basis of the joke.

But there remain two flies in the ointment of this ‘joke theory.’ First, ‘junior exercises,’ as far as I've been able to discover, were almost universally of a literary nature. The event involved readings, orations, etc., by a few of the top members of the class. And secondly, ‘junior exercises’ appear to have been a feature of high school graduation ceremonies, almost always held in June. Obviously, your photo reveals no hint of literary activities; and in June of 1908, the ‘juniors’ would have been members of the Class of 1909, not 1910. But who knows, maybe the photo was taken of a group of juniors in December of 1908 (when P.E. classes were being held indoors), and the author of the note thought ‘junior,’ ‘dumb-bell’ and ‘exercise’ still made for a good joke.”

Thanks Larry. We'll probably never know for sure, but this makes a lot of sense.



News from the Past

If you were asked which U.S. President passed through Norway while in office, who would you guess? JFK? FDR? Perhaps 14th president Franklin Pierce because he was from New Hampshire?

On Tuesday, August 2, 1921, President Warren Harding, his wife and some close friends were vacationing at a mountaintop lodge near Whitefield, NH. Newspapers stated the president intended to play golf, get “real rest” and noted he was four miles from the closest telephone.

On Friday, August 5, the *Lewiston Evening Journal* reported the president and his party would be leaving Whitefield the next day, stopping at Poland Spring for lunch and a round of golf before departing for Portland in the evening.

On Saturday the 6th, the *Journal* reported the president arrived at Poland Spring at 2:18 pm, had lunch, played golf, had an early supper and left for Portland immediately after.



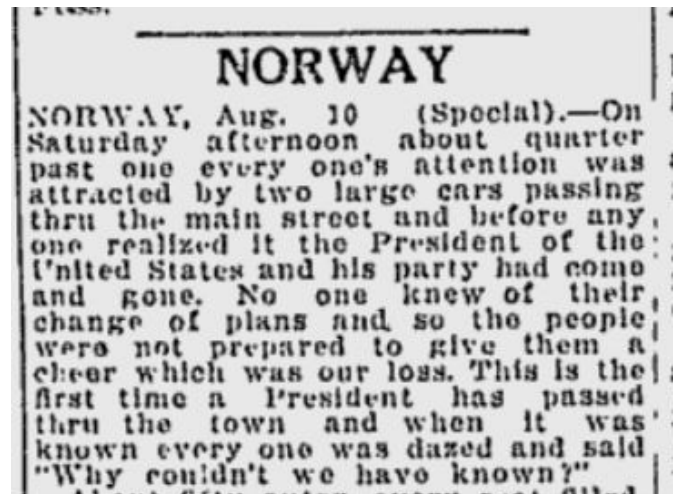
From the August 6, 1921
Lewiston Evening Journal

The folks in South Paris were told the president would pass through their town on his way to Poland Spring:

Great excitement in town for a few minutes Saturday noon! A grapevine message came here that President Harding and his party, who had been at Dixville Notch on Friday, would go through South Paris between 12 and 1 o'clock on their way to Poland Spring and Portland. Talk about news spreading! There were very few persons in town who didn't hear of it within a few minutes. The news that the party had gone through Bridgton about the time they were supposed to be here was a little slower about spreading, but it got disseminated, and things resumed their normal aspect in the burg.

From the August 9, 1921 *Oxford Democrat*

Evidently, the presidential party decided to come to Maine through Fryeburg rather than Bethel and the citizens of Norway didn't know anything about it.:



From the Norway column in the August 10, 1921
Lewiston Evening Journal

More News from Bygone Days

Researched by Ed Staples

For his Historical Society project, Ed Staples reads the Society's extensive collection of old local newspapers in search of articles of historical significance, human interest, and those that are just plain fun. Ed transcribes the articles he finds and his transcriptions are now part of the Society's collection. The article below, transcribed by Ed, is from the Oxford County Advertiser, October 8, 1920.

A Little History (about the Beal Block)

Called forth by the sale of the Beal Block, is a little history that is of special interest to the older inhabitants. The old Beal Block which has been in the family for over a century and which has just changed hands, having been purchased by Charles G. Verenis, the Greek fruit dealer, who occupies the main store.

This is one of the oldest buildings in town. It was purchased from Mr. and Mrs. Frank Horne of Allston who are relatives of the Beal family.

The block was built by Ezra F. Beal who was born in Norway in 1797, the year Norway was incorporated as a town under the name of Rustfield. Mr. Beal was a contractor & carpenter and his work was well known throughout the State. In Portland, many buildings stand today as examples of his thorough workman-ship. Among them are the Falmouth Hotel and the Park Street Block. He was also the builder of the old Grand Trunk depot, the original Merchants' Exchange, and the United States Hotel as they were then known, besides many private dwelling houses. He also constructed the old Glen House at the front of Mount Washington and the Alpine House at Gorham, N. H.

Mr. Beal was a progressive man & took an active part in all public activities which pertained to the interest of the town, county and State. He was one of the first promoters of the Oxford County Agricultural Society and was one of its first trustees. He was also one of the founders of the Norway Savings Bank. Mrs. Kate Crockett Brown of Whitefield, a relative, was the first depositor & still holds her deposit in the bank. Mr. Beal was its second president.

Not only was Mr. Beal prominent in building activities, but in transportation facilities he was a leader, being one of the chief promoters in connecting the St. Lawrence River and the Atlantic Ocean by rail and was one of the first Board of Directors of the Atlantic and St. Lawrence Railroad and continued in that position until the road was merged into the Grand Trunk Railway. He had charge of all the construction of buildings on the line and adjusted all the damages involved.

His efforts did not stop with these big projects but he was alike interested in his local town in building houses of worship. He was a strong Universalist and when the need of a church was felt, he rebuilt the old edifice which was formerly owned by the Baptist society in 1829. A beautiful memorial window was placed in the church several years ago to commemorate the memory of him & his good wife. He built a commodious residence in the center of the village which he occupied for 32 years. His last business act was the remodeling of his home into a hotel & it was called Beal's Hotel. When the present proprietor, F. Robert Scavey, bought the place, he changed the name to Beal's Tavern, and is a thoroughly up to date hostelry. The last in the line to bear the Beal name are his two grand-daughters, the Misses Elizabeth & Agnes Beal, who make their home in Norway.

It is of passing interest to note that in the Beal Block, Harry Lane has carried on a tailoring business for nearly 40 years and Dr. Harry P. Jones' dental parlors on the second floor were occupied for the same purpose by his father, making a continuous occupancy by father and son for over 50 years.

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The Beal Block in 1971. See article on page 5.

Our Mission:

The mission of the Society is to bring people together to share, celebrate and learn about Norway's heritage, by collecting, caring for and exhibiting Norway's historical treasures; by facilitating the collection of and research into family and local history; and by providing programs that make our history meaningful that engage

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