



# Norway Museum & Historical Society

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## President's Message

### Granted Again

The Norway Museum & Historical Society is fortunate once again to have been awarded a grant to continue our building improvements. In September we received \$6,900 from the Belvedere Fund of the Maine Community Foundation for energy efficiency updates. With these funds this winter we are adding insulation, replacing old light fixtures with LEDs, and installing a heat pump on the second floor to stabilize the temperature in this area. We especially look forward to opening the second floor with new exhibits. Watch for an event to celebrate this in the spring.

### Docents Wanted!

In 2020 we would like to expand our volunteer efforts into a new area and invite members of our community to become "museum docents." These are trained museum guides who will assist during hours that the Museum is open. It is our hope that, with this cadre of special volunteers, we will be able to increase the number of hours we are open and increase the number of people visiting our exhibits. There will be more information available in the spring and an Open House to introduce the program at that time.

## Contributors

Ann Siekman (*President's Message, p. 1*) is President of the Norway Museum and Historical Society.

Charles Longley (*Minnie Leona Upton, Norway's Unsung Poetess, p.2*) is the Society's long-time Curator/Researcher.

Susan Denison (*My Favorite Things, p. 4*) serves as the Society's Curator/Collection Manager.

Ed Staples (*Fast Driving, p.1* and *New Moving Picture House, p.5*) is a member of the Society's Board of Trustees.

## Norway History Trolley Tour



*Passengers, pictured above, board the trolley for the Fifth Annual Norway History Trolley Tour. This year's tour of the Waterford Three Tiers led by Susan Denison was our most successful Trolley Tour/ fundraiser yet!*

## Fast Driving

From: The Norway Advertiser  
January 20, 1849

**Mr. Thomas Witt** (Editor of the Norway Advertiser):

You will confer a great favor on the people in this village, and especially the writer of this article, by calling the attention of those persons who drive horses through the streets on the Sabbath at the close of meeting to the fact, that it is a great annoyance to those on foot, and particularly females, to be under the necessity of watching for their lives, and being obliged to jump first on one side of the street and then the other, to save being run over by horses at full speed.

In a place like this, where there are no sidewalks (in winter, when females are poorly pre-pared for wading in the snow) ought to be allowed to walk in the most comfortable path for travel, even if it be in the middle of the street, as there is always plenty of room for a horse and sleigh on either side. With a little care on the part of drivers, people on foot would not be under the necessity of exposing their health by wading in the snow and water or their limbs by being run over on account of furious and careless driving.

# Minnie Leona Upton: Norway's Unsung Poetess

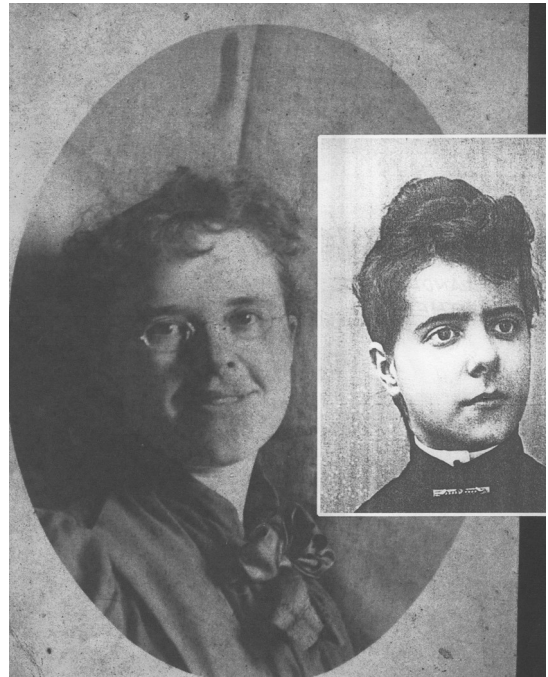
by Charles Longley

Norway has produced or been the home of a number of authors well known across the country at the height of their careers: C.A. Stephens, (1844-1931) and the "Old Squire" stories; Hugh Pendexter, (1875-1940s) recognized authority on the United States' westward expansion and one of the fathers of the 'American Western'; Sylvanus Cobb, Jr. (1823-1887) short story writer and novelist. All were published nationally and were widely recognized authors in their time.

One Norway writer of exceptional talent not known at all, is Minnie Leona Upton, poetess, lyricist, and short story writer. Regularly published in the Boston and New York periodical press, her complete works have never been collected and published, or listed in a bibliography, but 67 poems and short stories have been found in 19 different publications.

There is no biography of Minnie Upton. She was born in 1867 in North Norway, the 10<sup>th</sup> and last child of Uriah Holt Upton and Isannah C. Noble, Uriah being the son of Mica Upton, the person upon whom "the Old Squire" was drawn by C.A. Stephens in the 'Old Squire' stories. Uriah Upton was a brother to Harriet Upton, C.A. Stephen's mother. Minnie would have attended the one-room school in District 10, the same school attended by C.A. Stephens, depicted so affectionately in the Old Squire stories, located just down the hill from the Upton farm, almost at the intersection of Upton Brothers Road and Round The Pond Road, and it would seem likely that she also attended Norway High School, formerly the Norway Liberal Institute.

The first glimpse we catch of Minnie is in the Norway Town Reports; she taught school for one summer term only, in 1888, at the Pierce School, School District 11 on the northern end of the Dunn Road. It is not known when she located to the Boston area or what might have been her occupation, or whether she lived entirely by her pen. There is some suggestion that she lived in Brookline and perhaps later in Newton. Her death record states that she died at the Worcester State Hospital in 1947.



A glimpse toward Minnie Upton appears in letters written to her by her Grand-Niece Violet Upton, beginning in October 1922, when Violet was 9. Violet was then living with her grandparents on the old Mica Upton farm. She wrote 16 letters to her Great-Aunt, from 1922 to 1925, copies of which are on file at the Society. The first letter begins:

"Dear Great Aunt Minnie,

You will wonder who in the world I am. My papa is Carl [Upton]. I have come to Grandma and Grandpas house to live.... ".

Violet goes on to hope that Great-Aunt Minnie will come home to Maine for Thanksgiving, as her Grandmother has suggested she might. Violet's letters never indicate she did.

The earliest item found so far published by Minnie Upton appeared in the Century Magazine (NY) in 1895; The Eternal Feminine. She may have been publishing as late as 1940. She wrote Lyrics for patriotic songs during the 1<sup>st</sup> World War.

We are left to turn to her work to catch further glimpses of Minnie Upton:

### **To Each His Own**

*by Minnie Leona Upton*

You roll along in your limousine, I suffer  
the dust you fling,  
As over the footpath I blithely fare, where the  
glad-heart vespers ring;  
Riding is good, and I like not the dust, but this I  
tell you true:  
For all your cushioned and careless ease, /  
*Would not change places with you.*

You glance through a window casually, and  
Note that the trees are green: Questing,  
I joy in the wee nest hid midst the  
hedgerow's sheltering screen;  
An instant you see the squirrel's pose, on the  
trunk of a grand old tree;  
I stop for a friendly argument, and he shares  
my nuts with me!

You fret at the tricksy, sun-shot shower that  
dims your crystal pane;  
I stand bliss-bound in the fragrance loosed by  
the fingers of the rain!  
You catch a glimpse, as you whirl! along, of the  
wide shy's blue and white;  
I thrill to the sweep of its loveliness, its mar-  
velous breadth and height!

To some engagement you hurry past, with  
small thought of the way;  
I loiter on, from friend to friend, at the close  
of a toil-filled day;  
You ride, over rather a boresome road, as  
swiftly as may be;  
I walk, in a wonder-world - and yet, *you* would  
not change with *me*!

### **The Eternal Feminine**

*by Minnie Leona Upton*

Sweet Mistress Summer's message traced  
O're all the land,  
Came finally to sad "Good bye,"  
Written in tears as she turned to fly  
From the Frost King's couriers, coming in haste,  
A roistering band.

But, pausing once in her flight, she faced  
Each rude newcomer;  
And wrote, in calm, defiant mood,  
Her afterthought on field and wood ...  
In earth and sky her postscript placed:  
Lo! Indian Summer!

## **NMHS News**

### **Celebrating Success**

Many of you attended the programs and events at the NMHS in 2019 and were probably as amazed by each of these as we have been. The three events of this past year: Fish Chowder Fest, Marigold Tea Room, and the Trolley Tour were enjoyed by more than 350 people with great food and a fascinating introduction to the Waterford Three Tiers in North Norway. We are extremely grateful to all of the many supporters, suppliers and attendees of these events that raised more than \$4,000 for the historical society. Restaurants and bakeries supplied the chowder and desserts for the Chowder Fest, individuals and bakeries provided pies for the Marigold Tea Room, and 30 businesses donated funds to hire the trolley. Thank you all for your participation!

### **Outdoor Recreation: Then and Now**

Never before have we presented so much newly researched information in our four summer programs as we did in 2019. More than 175 people attended these programs that were developed and presented by nine different people. We applaud and thank these program creators for their original research: Lee Dassler on Shepard's Farm, Stuart Goodwin on the Norway Country Club, Sue Denison on the Panama Boy Scouts Camp, Pat Dugan on Bass Island Camp, Dick Penley and Cushman Andrews on Cinnamon Camp, Marcy and Dennis Gray on Witherell Park, Deborah Partridge on Pennessewassee Park, and John Crumpton on Ordway Grove. If you were unable to attend, you might catch the program video on NPC-TV. It is well worth checking out these little known but fascinating tidbits of Norway's past.

### **Museum Exhibits 2019 and 2020**

As the Norway Museum & Historical Society moves toward expanding our role as a Museum, we are providing more exhibits on a rotating basis that showcase aspects of Norway's special history. In 2019 we created displays of Business Advertising Memorabilia, Business Signs, Norway High School Class Rings, and a tribute to Norway artist Vivian Akers. For these exhibits we pull related items out of storage so the public can view and learn about our historical story. Sue Denison, the NMHS volunteer curator of Collections, has the job of creating these exhibits. For 2020 you will have the opportunity to take a look at some of the many posters in our collection and bottles of Brown's Relief (made in Norway) and other patent medicines.



# My Favorite Things

by Susan Denison

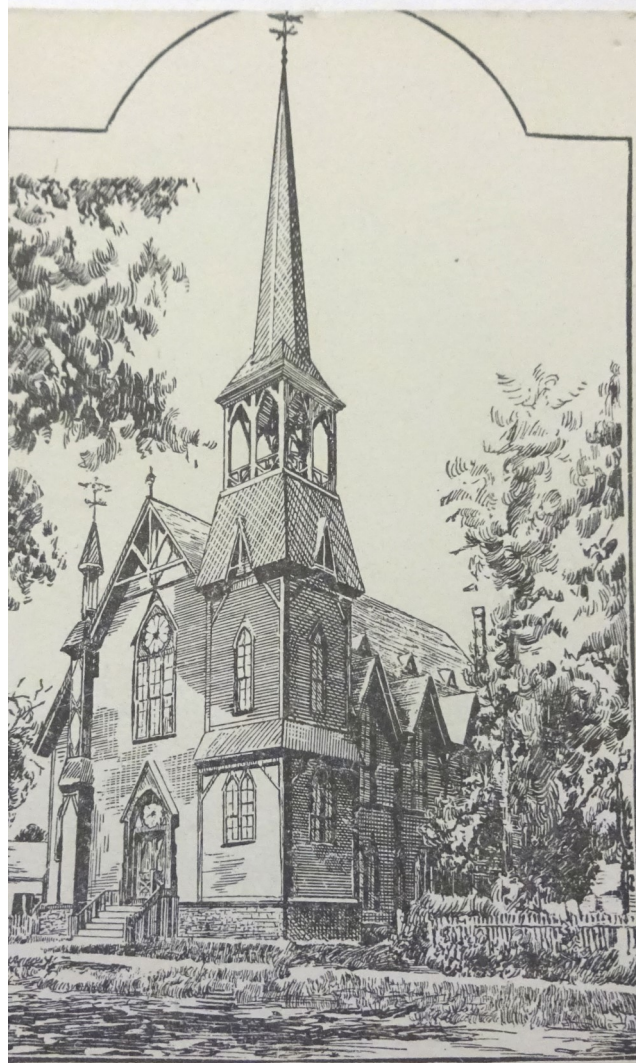


Our museum has an enormous variety of artifacts that tell the story of Norway's history in many different ways. Naturally, some objects catch one's fancy more than others. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to talk about some of my favorite things.

Anyone familiar with Norway has probably heard of "The Great Fire of 1894," which destroyed a large portion of Main Street. On the south side of Main Street, most businesses and residences were burned flat, starting just east of the building where The Tribune bookstore is now located, all the way down to the area near Aubuchon Hardware. The fire jumped to the north side of the street at about Lynn Street and likewise, everything between there and Fair Street burned down. One of the buildings on the north side of Main Street was the Second Congregational Church, built in 1876. The church stood near the current hospital. That large structure, and everything in it, was lost in the fire.

The artifact pictured above is remains of the church's bell that melted in 1894. It is a strangely-shaped glob of metal about 5 inches long, 3.25 inches wide and about 3 inches tall. It weighs two pounds, and is testimony to the heat generated by the fire. It was given to the museum in 1985 by Mr. & Mrs. Theodore Chandler, from the estate of Walter Chandler. We don't know how the glob was originally acquired, but we do know Walter was 22 years old in 1894 and worked in the Norway shoe factory. Perhaps he helped with the massive clean-up after the Great Fire and kept a piece of the melted bell.

This fragment may be the only thing remaining from the 1876 church and it is definitely one of my favorite things.



# 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. "Fast Driving," printed on page one of this newsletter, definitely fits that last category. Ed transcribes the articles he finds and his transcriptions are now part of the Society's collection.

The article below, transcribed by Ed, "New Moving Picture House," describes the opening of Norway's first movie theater.

## New Moving Picture House

From: The Oxford County Advertiser  
March 6, 1914 Page 1

The new moving picture house which John A. Woodman commenced to build last year and layed off work in the fall after the outside was completed, is now being finished on the inside. Woodbury Russell has charge of the carpenter work and Joe Cole of Paris, the mason work.

The building is 38 ft. 4 in., by 73 ft. and the main room is 37 ft. by 52 ft. by 17 ft. with a seating capacity of 400. The floor is inclined with a drop of  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch to the foot making a total drop of 3 feet. The stage is 12 X 24 with a dress-ing room on either side 7 X 10.

At the entrance of the hall is the ticket room, office and closets and over these rooms is a balcony 12 ft. by 37 ft.

The hall is to be well ventilated by two ventilators; one 5 ft. in diameter in the center of the hall and one 3  $\frac{1}{2}$  ft. over the balcony.

It has been wired for electric lights from the ceiling and walls. In the fall Mr. Woodman plans to put in a steam heating plant.

The hall is now being lathed and will soon be plastered. It is expected to have it completed by the first of May when it will be occupied by Frederick P. Obrey & John W. Dunn of Portsmouth, N. H., who will run a moving picture and vaudeville show.



*The Rex Theater on Cottage Street, seen above, is now Don's Redemption Center. This early photo is a good depiction of how the theater originally looked. In later years, the theater had a brick facade.*



*Photographed in 1940, above, theater goers waited for the Rex Theater to open its doors and lined up amid snow drifts almost to Main Street.*

## Mark Your Calendars!

Norway Museum & Historical Society

Annual Meeting & Lunch

At noon Saturday

January 25, 2020

# Norway Museum & Historical Society

## ***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 people of all ages.*

## **Museum Hours:**

Visit the Norway Museum & Historical Society at 471 Main Street to learn more about Norway's history. The museum is open to the public year round on Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., during the summer on Tuesdays from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., and by appointment by calling 743-7377. Admission is free. Also visit the museum's website at: [www.norwayhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.norwayhistoricalsociety.org) or the Norway Historical Society's page on Facebook.

## **Board of Trustees:**

Ann Siekman, President

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Charles Longley, Curator/Researcher

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