



Volume 28

Spring Newsletter

April 2009

JUSTICE EXAMINED

A panel discussion on Commonwealth v. Roy Smith, the subject of Sebastian Junger's *A Death in Belmont*, and the Boston Strangler cases. Reception to follow.

Date: April 30, 2009 (Please R.S.V.P., see below)

Time: Panel: 5:00 to 6:30 pm

Reception: 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm

Place: Panel: O'Leary Library, Room 222

Reception: Charles Allen House, University of Massachusetts Lowell, South Campus, Lowell, Massachusetts (map available at:

<http://www.uml.edu/maps/directions.htm>)

Panelists: Hon. Kenneth J. Fishman

District Attorney Gerard T. Leone, Jr.

F. Lee Bailey

Sebastian Junger

Moderator: David E. Meier, Esq.

Seating is limited. Please R.S.V.P. by e-mail to Bonni Dinneen at:

bonni.dinneen@jud.state.ma.us.

\$10 per person donation for the reception is requested, to be collected by the Greater Lowell Bar Association at the door.

Growing Up In Lowell IX

Some Early Experiences of Madeline Bergeron

[In November 1985, Pat Cobel interviewed Madeline Bergeron as part of the Oral History Collection created as a joint project between the University of Massachusetts Lowell, and the Lowell National Historical Park. The following article represents a small segment of the information on Madeline Bergeron as edited by Cliff Hoyt. The full text is on the website for the Center for Lowell History, University of Massachusetts (<http://library.uml.edu/clh>). It can be found under "Oral History" then "Working People of Lowell." Note: at the request of Madeline Bergeron most of the details on her father were omitted from the transcription.]

I, Madeline Bergeron, became the second living child of an Irish father and French Canadian mother in 1897. From the age of five months to the age of twenty I lived at 138 Cross St. in Lowell. My home was just two blocks south of the North Common and two blocks East of School St. The three story building contained nine tenements. My family lived on the first floor at the back. The living space included two bedrooms just off the kitchen, a living room/parlor, and the front bedroom off the parlor. The apartment contained a toilet in a room off the kitchen but no bathtub. Baths took place on Saturday using the same large wooden tub used on Sunday for the laundry. On Saturday the tub sat in front of the large black stove that served as central heating and for all cooking. Water was heated and I took the first bath and my sister the second. Hair was washed in the sink at the same time. We used Octagon soap for our bath and also for washing the clothes. On Sunday, the clothes were washed using a wash board in the big wooden tub. My sister and I alternated turning the wringer to take the water out of the clothes. The clothes were then placed in a smaller tub where they were then rinsed and again we would apply the ringer. For the sheets and the pillow cases,

Volunteers Needed For Lowell Cemetery Tours Catherine Goodwin

There is a need for individuals that would like to train for and provide Lowell Cemetery Tours. Please call Catherine Goodwin at 978-256-6240 to make arrangements.

Mourning Glory The Story of Lowell Cemetery

mother used a big boiler that she put on the stove. I remember she'd put a little potash into the water to bleach them, you know, so they'd get nice and white. The laundry had to be dried out back using the clothes lines all year round, including winter. The clothes lines were shared by all residents and Monday was our day. Mother began hanging the clothes on the lines in the backyard at 2:00 Monday morning because she had to be at work by 6:00. My mother would also iron all the clothes using two irons that were heated on the stove. She had this frame, a steel frame and there was room for two irons. So she'd put the two irons there, and mother had a handle that she clapped on to the iron. That's the kind of irons we had in those days. Their handle was separate. And when she'd take it out of there, she had to put the handle down and lift up a little clamp like. And ya, when it got cold she'd put that one back and take the other one out and continue ironing.

We kept the ice box for in the front hall. During the warm months, the ice man, Daniel Gage, would come when we put the green card with his name on it in the window. Usually he came about twice a week. We did not need ice in the winter because mother closed off the front of our home which remained cold enough to keep our food fresh. During the cold months, we only used the kitchen and two bedrooms in the back. My sister and I were in charge of bringing up the coal and wood for the kitchen stove. We also dusted, shook out the rugs and later helped cook. We had to take the garbage down to the basement. The trash people picked it up only once a week and oh the smell was awful.

Mother started working in the mills after they took my father away. I was eight. She ran eighteen looms. She was short like me and they had to build platforms for her all around her looms so she could reach to draw in the threads if they broke.

I started school at the Cross Street School at the age of five and then starting at age eight I attended St. Joseph's parochial school. For parochial school mother made all our clothes. She made the panties for us, our petticoats. And then I had to have like a separate apron we wore over our dresses in those days. The girls could wear any dress but we all had to have the bib aprons with the ruffles down below our knees. We also wore black stockings, and black high shoes. I was proud to have special button shoes, instead of ones that laced up. I had a little hook to button them. My aunt had bought those for me. And oh did I wear those shoes.

When we were young, I had a beautiful doll. That was the last gift my father bought me. After school there were quite a few kids around there you know. And we'd all get in the backyard and jump rope, play hopscotch, and throw the brick, try to hit you know one, two, three, four, five and if it went outside the line you were out.

When I was ten years old I almost went blind. I had abscesses in my eyes. My mother would take me to the emergency hospital. She was working in the Boott, and she had a pass to go to this emergency hospital, because

she didn't have the money to pay the other people, a doctor. So we went there in the emergency. And after a week you couldn't see my eyes anymore because of the powder he was putting in my eyes. Then mother took me to Doctor Meigs, and he cleared it up. He cleared it right up, but I had to stay in the bedroom for three months with a comforter in the window so there wouldn't be no light at all. And mother would bring me my meals in the room, for three months. Then when I went back to school they gave me green glasses. I had green glasses, and the nun had put the drops in my eyes. But my eyes got better and I never had any other problems with my eyes.

We had small special things we did for holidays. The last years at Christmas time I remember we had two little trees, but outside of that we didn't, but mother had branches. She would take her ironing board, and she'd put it on the sewing machine, and she had a red table cloth, and she'd put the branches on top of that, and then she'd put our gifts there for my sister and I. One year I got a doll and my sister wanted a sled and she got a nice big sled. We got gifts that we wanted, a few toys, not too many. For Christmas dinner, mother's two sisters, they'd come over, and my aunt Emma with my uncle, but they wouldn't bring their children. My mother would always have a nice big chicken. Sometimes, mother'd make a pudding, plum pudding. And she'd put the sauce on it. For Easter we would have ham and eggs. Of course we also boiled eggs and colored them. Mother would hide the eggs around the house and we would hunt for them. She'd hide them in back of the couch, or in back of the picture frames for my sister and I to find. Early on we believed that the Easter Bunny hid the eggs.

I had an aunt in Tyngsboro. She had a big farm there, and that's where my sister and I would go in the summer, when we were small, because mother was working. Mother would come Saturday and Sunday to see us out there. Mother would take the trolley from Lowell for five cents.

We went to church every Sunday at Saint Jean de Baptist! It was an easy walk. From Cross St. all we had to do was cross the North Common then go up a little street called Decatur Street, and there's the church. For Sunday dinner mother would sometimes make a roast. We would have duck with apple stuffing. My mother used to make lemon drops. They were like little flat cakes with a pointed top. She'd cut the point off. She'd put bananas in the middle. That was Sunday, bananas and jam, and then she'd cover it up with the other piece she took off, and she'd put whipped cream on the top. That was a treat for Sundays. Mother baked all her pies. She baked all her breads. She worked very hard. Mother could cook anything, but during the week my sister and I took turns. She'd peel the potatoes, and put them on. So when mother got home the potatoes were cooked. Mother only had to cook the meat.

After I graduated from St. Joseph's, I went to one year of high school. After that first year my mother got bursitis in her back and she couldn't work anymore. I had to leave high school and go to work in the mills when I was about fourteen. I managed to continue high school in the evenings. I started working at Lowell Weaving working 54 hours (ten hours each week day plus four on Saturday) a week for five dollars a week. After three months and I done good, so they gave me a dollar raise. I began work at 6 AM. After work, I walked home to Cross St., washed up, ate and then went to night school from 7 to 9 PM. I got home around 9:45 and did my homework for the next day. After three years, I graduated from high school. I was only seventeen and still had to take care of my mother. My sister got married and I was the only support.

We had our milk delivered. Mother's cousin delivered for years, a LeBlanc from Dracut. Then I think we changed to Burbecks, and we had Burbecks for years and years. Our meat and vegetables came from Keefe's market on Broadway, he was our store man. During the week if my sister and I needed something, we had a book and we'd go and buy what we needed, and he'd put it in the book, and mother would pay him on Saturday.

At sixteen I started to go out with fellows, but I wasn't allowed to go out nights. I only went out in the afternoon. These were fellows I met at church and through neighbors. I went out with four or five fellows before I got married. Just go for a walk. We'd go to the Boulevard. Mother, on Saturday afternoon she'd let me go to the theater, you know with my boyfriend. Not at night. We weren't allowed to go out, my sister and I, just in the afternoon. On Saturday afternoons, we'd go to the theater at Merrimack Square, and then sometimes we'd go to the Opera House on Central Street if there was a nice play. We couldn't go out on Sundays. Sunday was a sacred day for us. Mother, she was very strict. Well she had to bring us up you know. I'd have my friends in on Sundays, and we'd play games. We played Parcheesi and cards like Old Maid, and all them games. On Sunday's that's what we did.

By the time I met my future husband my mother and I were living on Moody St. His family was French Canadian and lived next door. For four years, he had lived next door on the same floor as us, the first floor, and we had never spoke. During those four years he'd be going by and I didn't know him. So in those days you didn't advance yourself, you know, but I'd say hello to his two sisters. I knew the two sisters to say hello. After four years, he went to work in New York. He was in construction. There was no work here. So his uncle sent for him in New York. And while he was in New York he was lonesome. So one rainy day, I was on my porch and his sister was on her porch.

She says to me, "Could I come over? I'm scared of the thunder."

So I told her to come up. So to entertain her I thought I'd show her my hope chest. I use to embroider

a lot and it was all full of towels and pillow cases, sheets, everything was embroidered.

She thought that was nice. So she said to me, "My brother's in New York and he's so lonesome. Would you write to him?"

I asked her, "What do you want me to say to him?"

She replied, "Well he'd, he'd like to get news you know. Maybe he wouldn't be so lonesome."

I thought that he was kind of cute from seeing him on the street, so I wrote him a few lines. First thing I know I got a letter. I still have my letter. The day after I got his letter, he was home. He asked me to go to the theater. Mother wouldn't let me go on the first date. Instead, we stayed home and played records. Soon after, mother let us go out on Saturday. We'd go to the show on Saturday, and Sundays we'd play the records. I went out with him just one year and then we were married in 1925 when I was twenty-seven.

During the first five years of marriage we had three daughters all born in the Hospital. Our last three daughters were born at home because of the great depression. When my last daughter was due, my husband wanted a boy so bad. He wouldn't go to work before she was born, he was so sure it was going to be a boy. And when he run up the stairs, and the doctor says sorry, another girl, he turned around. He didn't even go look at the baby, he turned around. And my brother-in-law said he cried all day. Well I'm proud of my six girls. I don't think I'd be living if I didn't have those six girls. They're so good to me.

Living through the depression was hard. My husband was in construction and there was no construction for eight years. At first we made money by going to Boston and buying coffee and tea by the bail. We'd then put it in the bags, and he'd walk door to door with his suitcase selling tea and coffee. Selling tea and coffee door to door that's how we lived then. Later he sold insurance John Hancock for three years. Then he went to another insurance company. Finally, work in construction picked up, so he went back to his trade. And the last years, the last twenty-five years he worked for Mr. Sherman, a big contractor in New York. He traveled a lot. He'd be home every Friday night. He'd leave Sunday morning. He built all over the country. It was a lonely time bring up six girls mostly by myself. For twenty years out of twenty-five he traveled like that. That's just the way it was.

Answers to Trivia Questions:

1) Tom Mix, 2) The County Jail, 3) Abraham Lincoln, 4) Father Armand Morrisette.

LHS Corporate Memberships

The Lowell Historical Society proudly acknowledge our 2009 Corporate members who demonstrated their organizations's commitment to the preservation of Lowell's past and the dissemination of information to keep Lowell's heritage alive in the future. The following organizations have made this commitment:

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 Lowell Five Cents Savings Bank
 Lowell General Hospital
 Mazur Park Apartments
 Washington Savings Bank
 Watermark Environmental, Inc.
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We would like to add the listing of your company here in the future.

2008 Corporate Membership

Enclosed is a \$100 tax deductible gift for a Lowell Historical Society Corporate Membership.

Name of Company: _____

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Send to Lowell Historical Society, PO Box 1826,
 Lowell, MA 01853

Lowell Trivia

By Martha Mayo

1. What western movie star drew a crowd of 100,000 to the South Common in 1929?
2. What was the Keith Academy building before becoming a school?
3. In 1848, which well known Illinois Congressman visited Lowell?
4. Who was "Spike"?

Answers are on the Page 3.

Lowell Historical Society Board

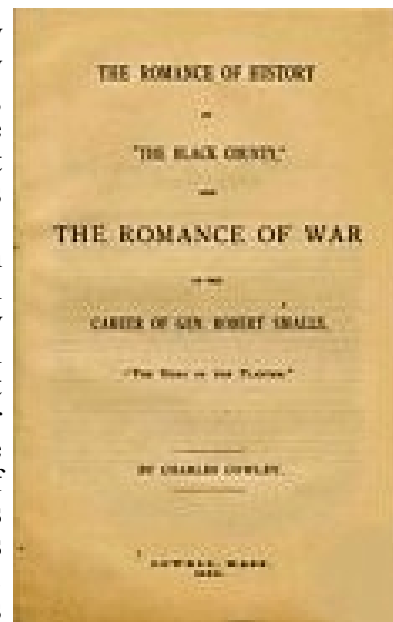
The current members Board of the Historical Society includes:

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| Denise Cailler, Pres. | Jack Perry |
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| Martha Mayo, Librarian | Tom Langan |
| Phil Belanger | John Goodwin |
| Paul J. Sheehy | Matthew Sepe |
| Walter Hickey, Genealogist | |

EBAY Auctions of Lowell Interest

Civil War Pamphlet About African-American Gen.

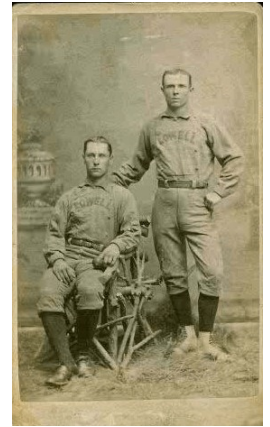
Robert Smalls – A 5.5" x 8.75" pamphlet by Charles Cowley published in Lowell, Ma. in 1882. The twelve page pamphlet describes the exploits of Gen. Robert Smalls. In 1862, Smalls, an African-American slave, was employed by Confederates in Charleston, S.C. as pilot of a transport steamer named Planter. In the early morning hours of May 13 the ship was loaded with armaments for the rebel forts. Contrary to regulations the white captain and crew were ashore for the night. At about 3 a.m. Smalls commandeered the 147-foot vessel. He and his crew sailed to a nearby dock, collected family members from another ship and headed toward sea. Smalls donned the captain's broad-brimmed straw hat and assumed the captain's typical stance in the pilot house. As he passed each rebel fort he gave the correct whistle signal and was allowed to pass. Smalls raised a white flag when he approached the Union blockade and surrendered. A Congressional bill signed by President Lincoln awarded prize money to Smalls and his associates. Smalls served as a representative from South Carolina for three terms in the U.S. Congress between 1875 - 1886. The pamphlet sold for \$44.89 plus shipping of \$5.65.





LOWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ANTIQUES APPRAISAL EVENT
Sunday, May 17, 2009 11:30 to 3:00

Location: St. Anne's Episcopal Church,
Edson Hall, 8 Kirk St., Lowell.



Short LHS annual meeting to be immediately followed by verbal appraisals at 11:45 am. On-street parking available. Cost for LHS members is \$5 per item. For general public, appraisals are \$7 per item. There is a two-item limit.

Come and take part in the appraisals.
They are interesting, entertaining, and educational.

Event Information: Cliff Hoyt at 978-458-6575 or choyt48@comcast.net

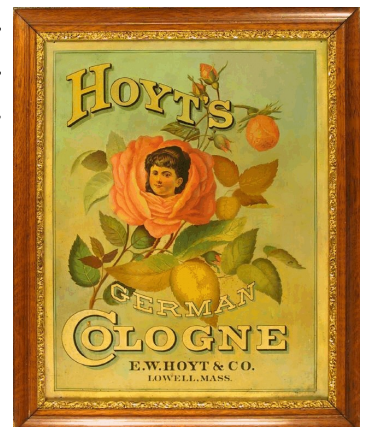
Appraiser: Joe Bayles' Auctioneering & Appraising, Wilmington, MA. Joseph Bayles has over 20 years of experience in appraisals. He offers services such as: estate sales and auctions, antiques purchases and appraisals, fundraisers, and consignment/thrift store sales. His website is: www.sellmeyouritems.com.

This is a great opportunity to get up to TWO items expertly appraised. Items that will not be accepted due to time constraints and research considerations include: jewelry, coins and stamps, and ancient archeological artifacts. If you

have larger items that you want appraised such as a room size oriental carpet, a large painting or a piece of furniture, or a large sculpture or garden statuary, etc., please bring multiple photographs and dimensions to the appraisal event in place of the actual item.



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The preservation of Lowell history depends heavily on your membership. If you have not yet sent in your membership renewal for 2009, please do so as soon as possible.

Lowell Historical Society

The Lowell Historical Society's Mission is to collect, preserve and publish materials related to Lowell and to promote the study of the history of the City. We are located at the Boott Cotton Mills Museum, 115 John Street, Fourth Floor, Downtown Lowell Massachusetts 01852.

The office is open 9:00 am to 12:00 Noon on Monday and Wednesday. The site telephone number is 978- 970-5180 or on the Web at:

<http://ecomunity.uml.edu/lhs>.

Center for Lowell History Hours Reduced

Due the fiscal cut backs at the University of Massachusetts Lowell, hours for the Center for Lowell History, 40 French Street will be significantly reduced. Effective February 9, 2009, the Center for Lowell History will only be open on Tuesdays from 9 am to 9 pm and by appointment. To arrange an appointment outside of these scheduled hours, please contact: Martha Mayo, 978-934-4998 or Patricia Noreau, Director of Libraries, 978-934-4556.

Calendar of Events

Program: A panel discussion on Commonwealth v. Roy Smith, the subject of Sebastian Junger's A Death in Belmont, and the Boston Strangler cases. (See page 1)

Date: April 30, 2009

Panel: 5:00 to 6:30 pm

Reception: 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm

Location: Panel: O'Leary Library, Room 222
Reception: Charles Allen House (2 Solomont Way. (R.S.V.P. required)

Program: Antiques Appraisal Event- two item limit (\$5 each for LHS members and \$7 for nonmembers.) Appraisals provided by Joe Bayles. Items that will not be accepted due to time constraints and research considerations include: jewelry, coins and stamps, and ancient archeological artifacts.

Date: May 17, 2009, 11:30 to 3:00

Location St. Anne's Episcopal Church, Edson Hall, 8 Kirk St., Lowell.