



Volume 36

## Winter Newsletter

March 2012

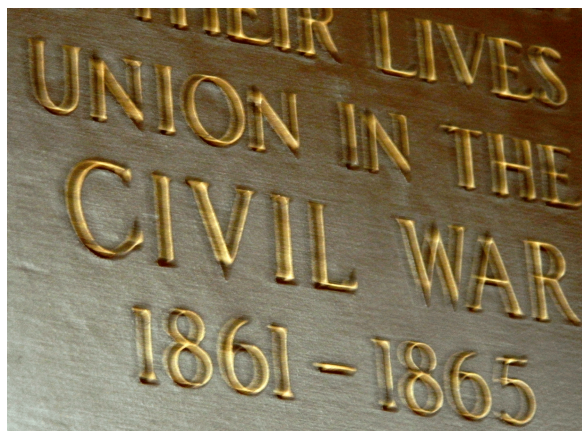


Photo Credit: Tony Sampas

The Lowell Historical Society  
cordially invites you to a  
**Civil War Exhibit,**  
**Lecture, and Reception**  
Sunday, April 15, 2012, 2pm – 4pm  
Patrick J. Mogan Cultural Center  
40 French Street, Lowell, MA

### Exhibit

#### **Lowell Remembers: The Civil War 1861-1865**

by

Tony Sampas, University of Massachusetts Lowell  
Martha Mayo, University of Massachusetts Lowell

Tony Sampas through his camera will look at the Civil War sites throughout Lowell. Following the deadliest war in American history, those left to carry on created markers and monuments as if to fashion something timeless. Photography captures how time works at these objects, as it does human memory: a chipped stone shimmers in the morning light, terra cotta soldiers take on the glow of sunset, and bronze inscriptions mature as the seasons continue in their courses.

### Lecture

#### **Making Sense of the Civil War**

By Richard P. Howe, Jr.

On Sunday, April 15, 2012, the Lowell Historical Society will present "Making Sense of the Civil War," a lecture by Richard P. Howe Jr. Mr. Howe will take a long-term view of the coming of the war as it played out in Lowell and vicinity. Because the city's economy was so dependent on cotton, there was a great deal of sympathy for the south and a hands-off attitude when it came to slavery. But simultaneously in Lowell, there was a very strong Abolitionist movement and the city served as a stop on the Underground Railroad. The presence of these two very different attitudes towards slavery within the same community created friction that manifested itself in a number of incidents. This "big picture" view allows an examination of the causes of the war through these incidents in a single community.

Richard P. Howe Jr. is the Register of Deeds of the Middlesex North Registry of Deeds. He is a graduate of Providence College and Suffolk University Law School and holds an MA in History from Salem State University. In the early 1980s, he served as a US Army Intelligence Officer in Germany.

Mr. Howe is the creator of richardhowe.com, a widely read blog about Lowell history and politics. He is a former president of the Lowell Historical Society and three years ago, he succeeded the late Catherine Goodwin as the official tour guide of Lowell Cemetery. He has lectured frequently on the American Civil War and its impact on the city of Lowell and surrounding communities.

### Sponsors

Lowell Historical Society  
Lowell National Historical Park,  
University of Massachusetts Lowell

# Relive History with Civil War Reenactors

When: Thursday, March 22, 2012, from 7-9pm  
Where: Coburn Hall Room 210 (southwest corner of  
Broadway and Wilder) UMass Lowell South Campus

War reenactors have a large task to take on in order to make their performances authentic and accurate. They use libraries and archives to find reliable resources to help them. Come hear from Civil War reenactors discuss the sources they use for researching the battles and historical figures they reenact. This program is funded by a grant from the American Library Association and National Endowment for the Humanities.

Parking: Wilder lot (northeast corner of Broadway and Wilder) will be open and student lot down toward the animal shelter on Broadway will be open.

Sponsors  
University of Massachusetts Lowell  
Lowell Historical Society



## The Mass. Memories Road Show in Lowell

The Tsongas Industrial History Center, a partnership of the UMass Lowell and Lowell National Historical Park, is celebrating 20 years of programs for school children, teachers, and the community. As part of our series of anniversary events, we are hosting **The Mass. Memories Road Show** in Lowell on Saturday, March 24, 2012.

We invite you to help spread the word and hope you will join us on this special day!

### What is The Mass. Memories Road Show?

The Mass. Memories Road Show is a state-wide project that documents the people, places and events in Massachusetts history through family photographs and stories provided by people in all of the 351 cities and towns that make up our state. The photos, stories, and memories contributed to a Road Show today will become tomorrow's history, a history that anyone can enjoy and learn from at the Road Show website: <http://www.massmemories.org/>.

### How can you participate?

Residents of Lowell and surrounding areas can come to the Road Show with up to three pictures that

they talk about (and have scanned) so that their photos and stories are included in the state database. Participants can go home with a keepsake photo of themselves (holding their photo/s) and can even have their stories videotaped.

If you have any questions about the event, e-mail [Ellen\\_Anstey@uml.edu](mailto:Ellen_Anstey@uml.edu) or call 978-970-5080.

*The Mass. Memories Road show is an initiative of the Massachusetts Studies Project in the University Archives & Special Collections Department of the Joseph P. Healey Library at the University of Massachusetts Boston and is co-sponsored by Mass Humanities.*

**Saturday, March 24, 2012, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.**  
**Tsongas Industrial History Center**  
**Boott Cotton Mills Museum, 4th Floor**  
**115 John Street**  
**Lowell, MA 01852**

## LHS Corporate Memberships

The Lowell Historical Society proudly acknowledge our 2011 Corporate members who demonstrated their organization'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:

Anstiss & Co., PC  
Ayotte Plumbing, Heating & A. C.  
CARSTAR Atlantic Collision Ctr.  
Dr. Evan Coravos, DMD  
D'Youville Senior Care  
Enterprise Bank  
Jeanne D'Arc Credit Union  
Lowell Co-operative Bank  
Lowell Five Cent Savings Bank  
Lowell General Hospital  
Mazur Park Apartments  
Washington Savings Bank  
Watermark Environmental, Inc.

## Lowell Trivia

By Martha Mayo

1. Where in Massachusetts did Francis Cabot Lowell build his first textile mill?
2. In whose memory was the city library named?
3. When was Lowell incorporated as a town?
4. Lowell is located at the junction of what two rivers?

Answers are on the Page 8.

**“The Notorious Nellie Ellis”: Domesticity,  
Wifely Behavior, and Female Deviance  
in Late-Nineteenth Century Lowell**  
(Third and Final in a Series)  
By Gray Fitzimons

**The Aftermath**

Nellie Ellis’ suicide in a Lowell boardinghouse in late June, 1885, just two days after a Superior Court jury in Cambridge found her guilty of “common night-walking,” provoked a very public display of grief, outrage, and fascination never before seen in a case of prostitution in the Spindle City. Residents clamored for more details about Ellis, her estranged husband, and the actions of the local police who had arrested her. Newspapers in Lowell, as well as in Boston, obliged their readers, printing numerous stories of “Notorious Nellie” that were part straight reportage and part morality tale. Virtually all drew from the same sources: courtroom testimony; writings from Ellis’ two suicide notes; interviews with her grieving husband, Carlton, of Potsdam, New York, and an unnamed childhood acquaintance from western New York, living in Lowell. In addition, reporters quoted extensively from a prepared statement by her physician, the wealthy and well-known homeopathic doctor, Augustin Thompson, founder of “Moxie Nerve Food.” All of these men concluded that, though this was indeed a poignant story and Ellis hardly fit the description of a “common nightwalker,” she was undoubtedly an immoral, even depraved, woman who had been fairly tried and convicted of the crime for which she was charged.

Reader response, however, reflected the seemingly contradictory accounts of the unfortunate woman’s life. To some she was an attractive, fashionably dressed woman who was well-spoken, cultured, and properly demure. They believed that charges against Ellis originated with her attempt to expose a corrupt police officer, whose fellow patrolmen and superiors conspired in her arrest to prevent a scandal from spreading within the police department.

Yet, to many others these same stories revealed that Nellie Ellis was a shockingly flamboyant member of Lowell’s demimonde, a contumacious pleasure-seeker who had turned her back on respectability and deserted a kind, supportive, and loving husband whose only transgressions were his advanced age, a retiring personality, and a deeply ingrained provinciality. The police, they maintained, had acted responsibly and legally in apprehending this wicked woman. Moreover, it signaled to those engaged in similarly licentious behavior that they would not be tolerated in the upright and industrious city of Lowell.

In hindsight, over 125 years later, it is certainly understandable why some residents were sympathetic to the plight of Nellie Ellis. She had escaped a loveless marriage, settling alone in Lowell where she

established a good reputation among her co-workers in a department store. She was bright, friendly, and feminine. Yet, she also challenged the power of patriarchal authority and, in the case of the Lowell policemen, who constituted a long-standing, exclusively male constabulary, ultimately overwhelmed her and extinguished her desire to live.

Certainly when some of the details of her suicide emerged, many more pitied her for sentimental reasons. One of her final writings was a letter to her father, Michael Gillen, who had all but commanded his daughter, while in her girlhood and despite her misgivings, to marry the much older family friend and fellow farmer Carlton Ellis. This had led to an irreconcilable break in their relationship. By her bedside, with lead pencil in hand, she wrote:

Lowell, June 24, 1885

Dear Father—If you are alive I hope you will forgive me for not coming home to see you for all these years that have gone by. Not but what I have thought of you all the while. Father, I hope you will forgive me if I am taking a wrong step, as you will probably hear of it. But I have been brought into the worst of trouble by some dogs of policemen on a put-up job. God in heaven knows I am innocent of it. It would take too long to explain it to you and I am so sick. I want you to have my things. In this letter is \$200 for you. I want you to have everything. There is my watch, neck chain, bracelets, rings, and a \$10 breast pin with the letter “E” on it. If I am carried home I want to be buried in the Ellis burying ground, and if not I don’t care where. Good bye,

Your Daughter,  
Nellie

It was Dr. Thompson who released to the press this letter and a second brief note from Ellis scrawled on the back of a card. Here, she stated her wish to be buried in the white dress she was wearing. But, in the words that followed, Ellis singled out her antagonist, Patrolman Herbert Streeter, and solemnly proclaimed, “Tell the people here that God will appear for me at the next term of the court, and I hope that Streeter will be the one that God will pronounce the sentence on.” In her final line she professed, “I am innocent of this, [signed] Nellie.”

Although Thompson did not unequivocally confirm her innocence, he declared, in a prepared statement that in his six years of knowing Ellis and serving as her physician, “I never learned anything in that time that led me to think she was an immoral woman.” Moreover, he pointed out that when he discussed her case with Deputy Police Chief Marshal Wood shortly after her arrest in May and Wood asserted that the charges were true “it staggered me somewhat.” Thompson had, in fact, helped to arrange her bail and secure her council. His reason for doing so, he claimed, was that he “pittied [sic] her friendless, unfortunate condition.” Thompson then noted that he had telegraphed Ellis’ family in



Potsdam, New York, notifying them of her death. He would assist Carlton Ellis, the husband of the deceased, upon his arrival in Lowell by train.

On the evening of Friday, June 26, within a day of receiving the news of his estranged wife's death, Carlton Ellis arrived in Lowell and took a room in the very boardinghouse where Nellie had ended her life. Dr. Thompson accompanied him to the nearby undertaking firm of J. W. Brooks, where Nellie's body was awaiting burial. Quickly, a swarm of reporters gathered and waited outside the funeral home. When Ellis emerged he was immediately peppered with questions about Nellie's background, their marriage, and Nellie's life in Lowell. Saying he was fatigued by his long journey and trying to come to terms with the horrific events, about which he was still learning, Ellis declined further comment. When reporters assured him, however, that they were not intending to impugn the character of his dead wife, the dark-suited Ellis, wearing a dark hat pulled low just above his eyes and sporting a mustache with close-cut chin whiskers, provided some information on Nellie, the Gillen family, and himself. He refused to discuss anything personal about his marriage, but defended Nellie's reputation as a "pure woman." Ellis offered no reason

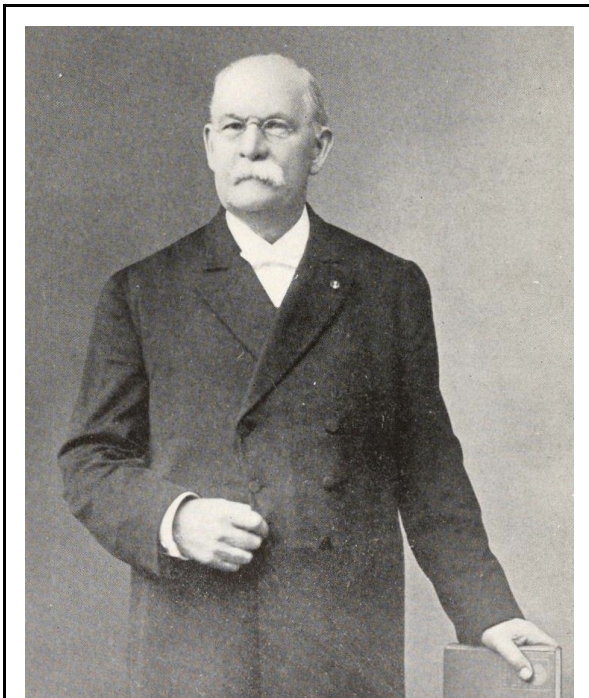
why she had written a farewell letter only to her father and said he had not yet decided where he would have his wife buried. He ended this exchange by claiming that there was no one other than himself to attest to his wife's good character and that he would do all in his "power to disprove the charges made against her."

For reasons one may only speculate, Ellis decided not to bring Nellie back to Potsdam and lay her to rest in his family's burial ground. Instead he had her interred in Lowell's Edson Cemetery and requested a private funeral. The Reverend George W. Bicknell of the First Universalist Church agreed to perform the service in the cemetery chapel. Sunday, the day of the funeral, was cloudy, quite warm, and humid. During the morning, hundreds of women and men, mostly curiosity-seekers, as one newspaper described them, filed into Brooks' funeral parlor to view Ellis' remains. And no doubt Carlton Ellis was astounded when nearly 600 people, mostly women and many bearing flowers, stood somberly outside the cemetery's small chapel. Inside a small gathering of Potsdam-area, friends who had settled in Lowell, joined the bereaved husband to hear the reverend's sermon.

Reverend Bicknell delivered a stern message stressing the importance of obeying God's commands and citing scripture which he tied to the theme that "the way of the transgressor is hard." He ended the 20-minute sermon proclaiming that the unfortunate Mrs. Ellis was not alone responsible for her transgressions and that God will judge all others who shared in this sinful conduct. A reporter noted the abundance of floral offerings left at Nellie Ellis' grave. Before noon the next day, Carlton Ellis, carrying his wife's money and possessions that she left for her father, boarded a train for home. He would live in Potsdam until his death in 1912, working the family farm with his twin brother, Carlos, and his sister-in-law Betsey, who was also a sister of the deceased Nellie. Carlton remained a widower to the end of his days.

### The Public Debate

The controversy that Nellie Ellis' suicide engendered did not subside with her burial. Members of the city's most prominent debating society, the Lawrence Debating Union, decided to consider the question of Nellie's character and the conduct of the police department in the Ellis case. A spirited discussion ensued over the course of four meetings, culminating in a large public gathering in Jackson Hall in late July. Occupying the chair was the union's president John Scarlott, a cotton carder at the Hamilton Mills, who gaveled the meeting to order. The resolution to be addressed read as follows: "Resolved, that it is the duty of the committee on police to investigate the Nellie Ellis case and to see if the police, or any of them, have done anything more than their duty in the case." From the outset, Scarlott had difficulty controlling the participants. A reporter in attendance observed that "the



This photograph of Reverend George W. Bicknell was taken in 1879, the year he began his pastorate in Lowell at the First Universalist Church. A Civil War veteran, born in Livermore, Maine, in 1837, Bicknell was one of Lowell's most popular and outspoken clergymen. He remained in the Spindle City until 1891 when he accepted a call to the First Universalist Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Bicknell died in 1916. Source: *History and Genealogy of the Bicknell Family*, (1913).

large majority was in sympathy with the affirmative of the question," but "a long and acrimonious debate," lasting nearly three hours, took place.

Dr. Nathaniel Allen, a highly esteemed, elderly physician in Lowell, spoke in favor of the resolution and was joined by several other men. They upheld the character of Mrs. Ellis, stating "she was not a disreputable woman," and argued strenuously that the manner in which she was arrested—breaking into her apartment at midnight, while she was in her own bed—violated the "principles of law and decency." Moreover, they questioned the fairness of her trial (which was based primarily on the testimony of Lowell police officers), supported Nellie Ellis' contention that "Officer Streeter was actuated by motives of revenge," and maintained that Streeter had "persecuted Mrs. Ellis to her death." Not only was Streeter the one whose morality was suspect, but "the committee on police had failed in its duty to investigate the matter and that "the police generally were in league to shield their brother officer." Advocates for Ellis and the resolution concluded that "public sentiment demanded an investigation into the circumstances connected with the whole matter."



Dr. Nathaniel Allen, a long-time and highly respected physician in Lowell, was one of the supporters of Nellie Ellis during the tumultuous public debate over her arrest, conviction, and suicide in the summer of 1885. Photograph from the U.S. National Library of Medicine.

Among the leaders of the opposition to the resolution was David Pickman, a long-time machinist at the Middlesex Mills and Scottish émigré whose son John J. Pickman had been the prosecuting attorney in the initial Ellis hearing in Lowell's police court. Pickman was joined by Patrick Falvey, secretary of the debating union and owner of a Lowell grocery store,

and Helen Frazier, the sole female speaker chosen for the debate. The opponents declared that Nellie Ellis "was known to be a woman of bad character," and she had received a fair trial and been "justly convicted." Patrolman Streeter, they proclaimed, "had always been an efficient and faithful officer [and] that nothing had ever been proven against his character as an officer or as a man." In sum, Pickman and his fellow members of the opposition argued that an investigation was unwarranted in light of the facts in the case.

It was at the very end of the meeting when bedlam erupted in the hall. Frazier was herself a married woman living on her own in the Acre neighborhood after having run a boardinghouse near the Middlesex Mills in the early 1880s. She continued to speak, despite the attempts of Scarlott to adjourn the meeting. Over piercing cries of "shame, shame on the woman that would so far demean herself," Frazier strongly condemned Mrs. Ellis and staunchly defended Officer Streeter. Soon after she finished speaking, Frazier was accosted by two women in the audience and they "severely berated her for arraigning one of her own sex before an audience of men." The verbal sparring suddenly became physical and one of Frazier's antagonists, Mary J. Smith, had to be pulled away from her. Although not bodily injured, an emotionally shaken Frazier filed charges of assault and battery, and Smith was subsequently arraigned in the police court.

Perhaps owing to the unsettling events at the debate's conclusion in Jackson Hall, officers of the Lawrence Debating Union asked Mayor Edward J. Noyes for permission to use Jackson Hall for one final meeting on the Ellis case. When Noyes refused, stating that "the public good did not require it," Nathaniel Allen wrote a letter to the mayor reiterating the request with a petition signed by 30 Lowell voters. (The petitioners were apparently all men whose ethnic-cultural backgrounds represented several different groups in the city including Yankee Protestant, Irish Catholic, and Russian Jew.) There is nothing to indicate that Mayor Noyes changed his mind.

As the summer wore on, Lowell residents turned their attention to other matters. Public mourning for the late President Grant, who had always enjoyed considerable popularity among Lowellians, culminated in one of the single largest gatherings on the South Common. Nearly 20,000 people listened to lengthy eulogies by Benjamin F. Butler, local politicians, and Civil War veterans. During the middle of August, as was customary in the Lowell, a number of mills closed for a few weeks and the city emptied out. Many workers enjoyed the short respite from their arduous toils. And members of the city's growing middle class escaped the city heat, settling in cottages and resort hotels by the refreshing seashore or in the cooling higher elevations of New England's mountains. Barred from meeting in Jackson Hall, the Lawrence Debating Union appears to have dropped the Ellis topic altogether for, after a

month-long break, the group met again in early September to address the question of female suffrage.

Despite the protests and appeals of several of Lowell's leading citizens, local authorities never investigated police actions in the Ellis case. The final legal action connected to the Ellis controversy was the police court hearing before Judge Samuel Hadley on Mary J. Smith's assault and battery charge. Although no testimony survives, Smith likely told the judge that she lived across the street from the late Nellie Ellis-Smith and Ellis were certainly acquaintances and possibly friends—and was, like Nellie, a dressmaker. It is possible that Smith also explained her reasons for standing behind the very woman Judge Hadley had sentenced to prison. If she had brought up the Streeter affair the judge would have undoubtedly tapped his gavel and cut short any further comments. Perhaps because of a lack of evidence, a desire to put the matter to rest, or compassion for the defendant, Hadley declared Smith not guilty and dismissed her.

### Epilogue

Unless further historical sources are uncovered, we will never know for sure if the Massachusetts courts erred in convicting and sentencing Nellie Ellis for prostitution in Lowell. Clearly a number of the city's leading citizens believed that such a terrible error had been made. Yet many others believed that justice was served and, however sad her circumstances were that led to her demise, her wicked ways were rightfully ended. Each of these views had been expressed very publicly during the turbulent exchanges in Jackson Hall. And nothing was ever brought forward in a court of law to reverse the legal decision against Ellis. Ellis' appeal ended with her suicide.

Yet, drawing upon the few primary sources turned up through extensive historical research, the case against Nellie Ellis, in the view of this writer, was founded largely on hearsay evidence and questionable conclusions drawn by the testifying patrolmen who had observed her evening peregrinations on the city streets prior to her arrest. The officers' claims that Ellis had "no visible means of support" were based on their impressions from tailing her on perhaps a dozen nights, at most, over the course of five months. On the other hand, Dr. Thompson had publicly stated that, as her physician, who saw her regularly for a half-dozen years, he knew something of her good character and her background, including, undoubtedly, her employment in ladies' fashions in two Lowell department stores. He also observed that she always seemed to have plenty of money. (It is not clear, in fact, why Thompson, having helped arrange her bail and legal counsel, did not testify on Ellis' behalf at either trial. Perhaps it was due to the stress that the middle-aged doctor, married with adult children, was himself suffering. This was a result of business pressures, but also from an illicit affair he was having with a young, tempestuous, aspiring actress.) In addition, as was pointed out by Nathaniel Allen and others, the arresting officers broke into her apartment to arrest her, expecting

to catch her in the act of illegal sexual activity. Instead, they found her alone. The police never attempted to arrest her on the street, while watching as she allegedly propositioned men on numerous occasions.

In looking at the full extent of what is known about the Ellis case, it appears that her guilty verdict was a miscarriage of justice within the Massachusetts courts. It is also clear that Nellie Ellis was courting the terrible trouble that destroyed her. Most notably, she rather conspicuously violated powerful Victorian-era beliefs and values associated with female domesticity and wifely behavior. She refused to remain trapped in a marriage to a man she did not love, even though social convention demanded that women be selfless and obey their marital duties. Of course, this compact was not inviolate under all circumstances. If the husband could be shown to have legally transgressed—cruelty, adultery, habitual drunkenness, and desertion, were the most common kinds of wrongdoing—a wife was entitled to a divorce. But Carlton Ellis had done no such thing. Not only had she deserted her faithful husband and a wholesome rural home, but Ellis moved into a city by herself, where she unabashedly socialized with other men and disregarded all appearances of propriety.

Her most egregious action, however, was to become romantically involved with two of Lowell's more prominent businessmen who were married and had families. Both men were downtown merchants and each was undoubtedly dazzled by Ellis' beauty, charm, and cultivation. They had lavished her with gifts, including jewelry, and very possibly money. Ellis apparently exercised care in keeping these affairs quiet, but she reportedly enjoyed the affections of these men and passionately importuned them to continue to see her. One of her married paramours finally severed their relationship by moving with his wife and children away from Lowell.

Although police never revealed any of this during Ellis' trial, in part to shield these well-respected men from public embarrassment, it was Captain Howard who ordered the patrolmen to tail Nellie Ellis in the evenings because the two aggrieved wives, after discovering their husband's infidelities, had discreetly met with the Howard and angrily demanded that he put an end to Ellis' sinful behavior. The police captain, already put off by Ellis' haughtiness in calling for an investigation into the brutish demeanor of his officer, Herbert Streeter, then met with City Marshal Jacob Favor who told Howard that "if he could get evidence enough to convict her, [he] would get a warrant from Judge Hadley."

It is not known if Ellis informed her attorneys about her relationships with these married men. If she did so and if this had been brought out during the trial, it would have perhaps demonstrated that Ellis was not a prostitute, but merely a party to adulterous relationships. Yet even this defense, while reflecting the reality of Nellie Ellis' personal affairs, was perilous. She would have then faced charges of illegal fornication, which carried a three-month prison sentence, along with



adultery. Naming these married men would have at best, added to the docket in the Superior Court. Sadly for Ellis, once arrested, there was simply no way out.

Certainly it would have been of small consolation to Ellis had she lived and discovered that the man she considered to be the source of her troubles, Officer Streeter, subsequently had his own day in court. He was charged in separate instances with police brutality, followed by drunkenness, for which he was suspended from duty. In November 1887, a few months after being stabbed and seriously wounded in a vicious fight at the corner of Paige and John streets, Streeter offered his resignation, which the Lowell police department gratefully accepted. He later moved to Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where he found employment as a night watchman, and then to Lawrence, Massachusetts, where he worked sporadically as a painter while his wife toiled as scrubber, the lowliest of occupations in a textile mill. In 1922, Streeter, listed as a teamster, died alone in a Manchester, New Hampshire, lodging house having married twice and twice been a widower.

One of the other principals in the case, Dr. Augustin Thompson, who had supported Ellis during the last terrible weeks of her life, soon faced his own public scandal. Unbeknownst to his wife and closest friends, Thompson had bestowed his affection and money on a young, stage-struck woman named Myra Moriarty, from Vermont. Like Nellie Ellis, Moriarty was of Irish parentage and had been born and raised in a remote farming village. By all reports her vivacious qualities were far more impressive than her acting skills.

Thompson learned that the irrepressible 26-year-old Myra had thrown him over and married James Beals, a wealthy Bostonian nearly 40 years her senior. He rashly wrote to the elderly groom, detailing some amorous exploits she had enjoyed with him. Thompson also sent angry missives to young Myra, demanding she repay him the money he had given her. Beals at once sought to annul the marriage and, in turn, Myra sued Thompson for alienating her husband's affections. In a court case that made national headlines and featured sordid excerpts from the doctor's letters, the plaintiff, Myra Beals, received an award of \$10,000 from defendant Thompson. Believing he was the aggrieved party, Thompson initiated a series of legal actions that dragged on for years. Thompson and his wife remained married until her death in 1899. Whether he ever thought about Nellie Ellis during his personal struggles over the Beals affair will never be known.

Apart from Carlton Ellis, it is not known how other family members and relatives of Nellie responded to the news of her life and death in Lowell. Carlton Ellis' obituary in a local Potsdam paper, was somewhat lengthy for a modest farmer who was noted primarily for his devotion to his twin brother and his furthering of his family's agricultural interests. It made no mention of his deceased wife. It noted, however, that he had died peacefully in his sleep of heart failure. Perhaps the most touching legacy connected to Nellie Ellis, *nee* Gillen, occurred in the rural Minnesota home of her brother John and his wife Nora. In early spring, 1888, they welcomed a baby daughter into the world and named her Nellie.

## FROM THE BOOKSHELF

by Pauline M. Golec

Charles Dickens, literary luminary, is coming to Lowell - again. The great English novelist, born 200 years ago, visited our city in 1842, and according to various sources, found that there was a lot to like about Lowell.

In 2012, the spirit of Dickens returns to Lowell. His life and work will be celebrated in a variety of ways. University of Mass Lowell has already hosted a birthday party in his honor, and in partnership with Lowell National Historical Park and many community groups, including the Society, will recognize Dickens in the largest bicentenary celebration in New England. The DICKENS AND MASSACHUSETTS EXHIBIT at the Boott Gallery in the LNHP Boott Cotton Mills Museum promises to be an outstanding tribute.

Lowell and New England join the world in marking the 200th birthday of an author who made an impact on readers as diverse as Queen Victoria, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and, possibly, ourselves. A master storyteller, Dickens crafted memorable characters, explored and exposed social issues, and fought for writers' copyrights.

For more about Dickens in Lowell events: tel. 978-934-2957, email [dickensinlowell@uml.edu](mailto:dickensinlowell@uml.edu).



Nellie Ellis' gravestone in the Edson Cemetery. Hundreds attended her burial in July, 1885. Photograph by William Morton.



The preservation of Lowell history depends heavily on your membership. If you have not yet sent in your membership renewal for 2012, 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 Tuesday and Wednesday. The site telephone number is 978- 970-5180 or on the Web at:  
<http://ecommunity.uml.edu/lhs>.

## CENTER FOR LOWELL HISTORY

The Center for Lowell History, 40 French Street, currently is open on Tuesday through Friday from 9 am to 5 pm. For Saturday hours call 978-934-4997.

The contact point for information is Martha Mayo, 978-934-4998. The Center's web address is:  
<http://library.uml.edu/clh/>

### Answers to Trivia Questions

1) Waltham, 2) Samuel Pollard, 3) 1826, 4) Merrimack and Concord Rivers.

## Calendar of Events

**Program:** Civil War Reenactors.  
**Date:** Thursday, March 22 from 7-9pm  
**Location:** Coburn Hall room 210 (south west corner of Broadway and Wilder)  
UMass Lowell South Campus.

**Program:** Civil War Exhibit, Lecture, and Reception  
**Exhibit:** of the photography of Tony Sampas -- Lowell Remembers: The Civil War 1861-1865.  
**Lecture:** by Richard P. Howe, Jr.-- Making Sense of the Civil War.  
**Date:** Sunday, April 15, 2012, 2pm - 4pm  
**Location:** Patrick J. Mogan Cultural Center, 40 French Street, Lowell, MA

**Program:** LHS Annual Meeting, Exhibit and Lecture.  
**Exhibit:** Dickens and Massachusetts  
**Lecture:** By Natalie McKnight, Boston University -- Dickens & the Mill Girls  
**Date:** May 27, 2012, 1:00-2:30  
**Location:** Boott Mills Events Center, Lowell National Park, Boott Gallery, Boott Cotton Mills Museum, 115 John Street, Lowell, MA