



Volume 37

Spring Newsletter

May 2012

Lowell Historical Society's Annual Meeting Featuring a Presentation on

Charles Dickens and the Lowell Mill Girls

by

**Dr. Natalie McKnight, Boston
University**

Date: May 27, 2012, 1:00-2:30

Location: Boott Mills Events Center, Second Floor,
Lowell National Park, Boott Gallery,
Boott Cotton Mills Museum, 115 John
Street, Lowell, MA

Dr. McKnight will be talking about Dickens and the Lowell mill girls, and with a particular focus on how and why Dickens was so impressed with the Lowell factories and particularly the women he met there. Dr. McKnight will emphasize Dickens' high regard for the journal the mill girls produced, *The Lowell Offering*. She will suggest ways in which his visit to Lowell shaped his attitude and approach toward his own role



Natalie McKnight, Professor,
Associate Dean, Director of the
Center for Interdisciplinary Teaching
and Learning, Boston University.

as author for the rest of his career.

Dr. McKnight has published three books on Victorian fiction, *Idiots, Madmen and Other Prisoners in Dickens* and *Suffering Mothers in Mid-Victorian Novels* (St. Martin's/Palgrave) and *Fathers in Victorian Fiction*. She is Co-Editor of *Dickens Studies Annual* and Archivist and Subscription Manager of *Dickens Quarterly*.

Available both before and after Dr. McKnight's presentation is the Exhibit:

Dickens and Massachusetts: A Tale of Power and Transformation

This major exhibit was co-curated by Diana Archibald, Associate Professor of English at UMass Lowell, and David Blackburn, Chief of Cultural Resources and Programs, Lowell National Historical Park. It is being held at the same location as Natalie McKnight's presentation in the Boott Gallery (first floor in the Lowell National Historical Park. This interactive exhibition will open on March 30, 2012 and run through October 20, 2012. It features a rich collection of rare Dickens artifacts, on loan from the Charles Dickens Museum of London, Boston's Museum of Fine Arts, the American Antiquarian Society, the New York Public Library, the Fellman Collection at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, the Perkins School for the Blind and other institutions. In this exhibit, an iconic 1842 portrait of the young Dickens, painted by Boston artist Francis Alexander, will receive its first public display in over 30 years.

The Dr. McKnight's program and the Dickens and Massachusetts exhibition are free to the public.

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Lowell National Historical Park,
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JOHN STEINBECK'S FAMILY TIES TO LOWELL

BY: KIM ZUNINO

Linking famous literary icons to Lowell is nothing new; Kerouac was born and raised here, and Dickens made a well-documented trip to Lowell during its industrial heyday. Now we can add another name to the list: John Steinbeck. Although he was never reported to have stepped foot in this city, his fascinating family history begins in 19th century Palestine and has ties to an old community burial ground right here in Lowell. The Steinbeck family connection to Palestine was first explored by Dr. Yaron Perry, an Israeli historian specializing in the history of nineteenth-century Palestine, in a 2004 article featured in *Steinbeck Studies* Vol. 15.1.

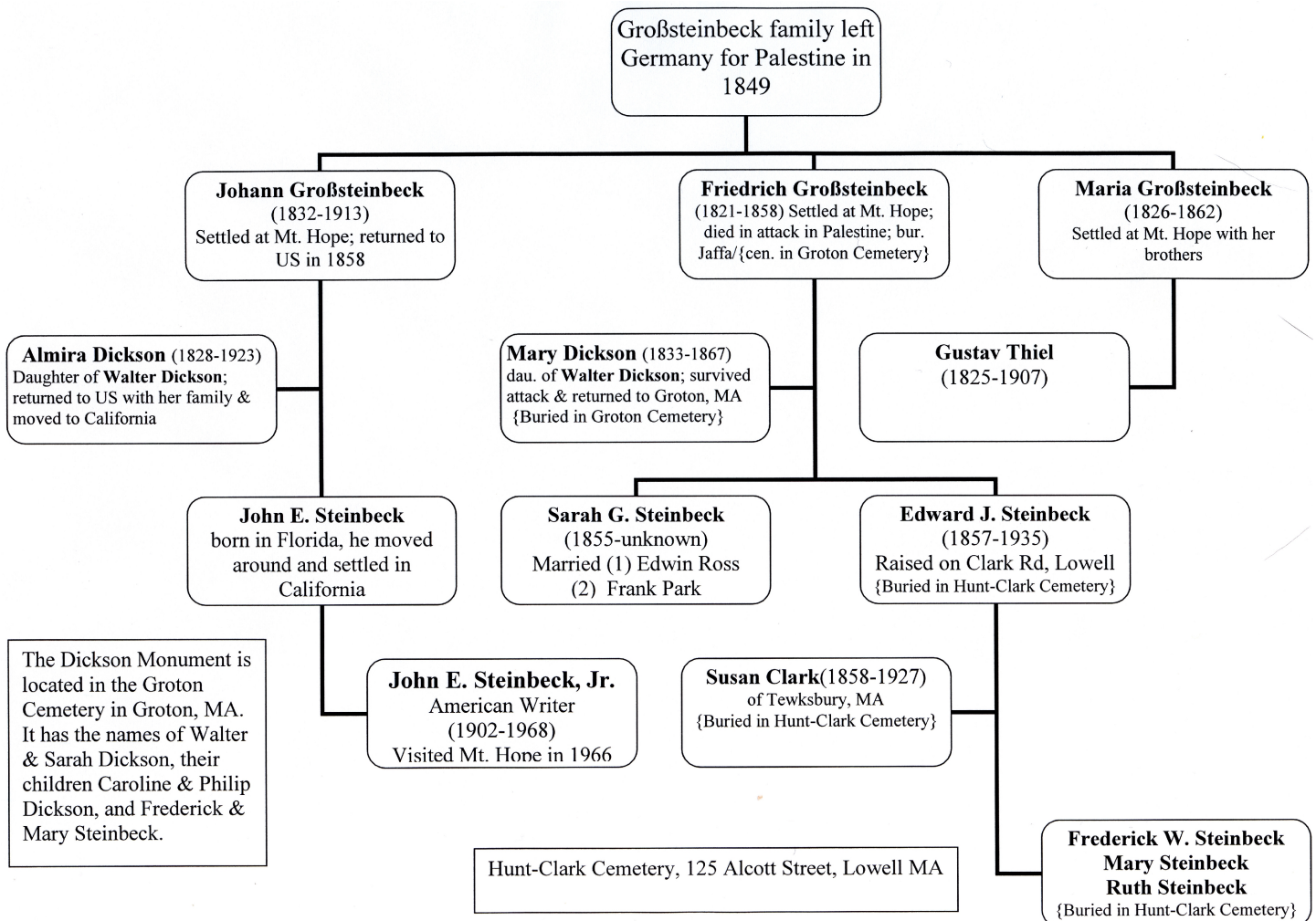
John Ernst Steinbeck, Jr. was born in Salinas, California on February 2, 1902. His family history begins in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany, where his paternal grandfather, Johann Adolph Großsteinbeck (1832-1913) left the family farm in the town of Heiligenhaus to begin missionary work in Palestine. The year was 1849, and traveling with him were his siblings Friedrich Wilhelm (1821-1858) and Maria

Katharina (1826-1862) and her husband Gustav Thiel (1825-1907).

Their destination was ultimately Jaffa, Palestine, where they met Christian settlers led by an American named Clorinda S. Minor (1806-1855). Influenced by the 19th century religious movement of Adventism, she was left disappointed by the failed prophesy of Christ's return in 1844. Minor went to Jaffa hoping to prepare the Jewish inhabitants for His return by teaching agricultural skills to the Arab natives. Their settlement was named Mt. Hope, and the Großsteinbeck family settled in a homestead on the outskirts of Jaffa.

An American family from Groton, Mass joined the settlement in 1854. Walter Dickson (1799-1860) brought his wife Sarah (1800-1878) and their four children to Mt. Hope, including John Steinbeck's grandmother Almira Dickson (1828-1923), who married Johann within the year. Philip Dickson, son of Walter, had been in Jaffa but succumbed to illness in 1853 before his family arrived. Mary Dickson (1833-1867) married Johann's brother Friedrich, and both brothers pledged allegiance to the US Consulate and changed their name to Steinbeck.

After Clorinda Minor died of cancer in 1855, the settlement dwindled in size until the only families left were the Dicksons and Steinbecks. Mary Steinbeck, who was "fair of skin and hair", was often accosted by



locals, and Friedrich moved her and their small children, Sarah and Edward, into the Dickson houses for protection. Tensions mounted between the Arabs and the settlers, but with the support of the United States Consulate in Jerusalem they continued their missionary work. When writer Herman Melville (1819-1891) visited Jaffa in January of 1857, he noted the gloomy atmosphere and thankless work of the missionaries.

On the night of January 11, 1858, a group of Palestinian men came to the Dickson home. Young Caroline Dickson's testimony reveals that the men shot Friedrich and injured Walter Dickson then brutally assaulted Mary and her mother Sarah in front of Caroline and the Steinbeck children. The events caused outrage in America and abroad, and four of the five men were caught and convicted of murder with the aid of the American Embassy in Constantinople.

The Dickson and Steinbeck families returned to America in September of 1858. Johann and Almira Steinbeck went first to Florida before coming back to Massachusetts after Johann enlisted in the Civil War. They later settled in California. The Dickson family returned to Groton with Mary and the children. In the Groton Cemetery is the Dickson Monument dedicated to those who were attacked. The name of Walter and his wife Sarah are inscribed on the west side, and Frederick and Mary Steinbeck are listed on the north side. The names of Philip Dickson and his sister Caroline are also inscribed on the monument.

Friedrich Steinbeck's body was buried on Mount Hope in the Settlers' Cemetery alongside Clorinda Minor and other missionaries. That burial site is now under the Shevah Mofet School in South Tel-Aviv. John Ernst Steinbeck (1902-1968), grandson of Johann Steinbeck and Almira Dickson, came to the hill while visiting Jerusalem in 1966. Many scholars argue that his family history influenced his writings, as they show a struggle between good and evil, as well as characters that take risks to achieve their goals. Although John never met his great-uncle or grandfather, he was aware of the story.

The three young children who survived the attack returned to Groton in 1858 with the family. Caroline Dickson (1847-1942) ended up in Hollister, California where she was involved with the Women's Christian Temperance League. Mary Steinbeck had passed away in 1867, leaving a daughter Sarah (1855-19??) and son Edward (1857-1935).

Edward J. Steinbeck lived in Tewksbury, Massachusetts with the Timothy Hunt family in the 1870s and was naturalized in 1878. By 1880 he was working in the Dakota Territory as a civil engineer. In 1884 he married Susan Clark, whose family settled Tewksbury in 1737. The family lived in Chicago, IL between 1890 and 1920. In the 1930 U.S. Census for Hollister, San Benito, California is listed the household of Caroline (Dickson) Danks. Living with her was her

widower nephew Edward J. Steinbeck and her widowed niece Sarah (Steinbeck) Park.

Edward J. Steinbeck, his wife Susan, and three young children are buried in the old Hunt-Clark Burial Ground in Belvidere, not far from the Clark and Hunt homesteads on Clark Road. The house where he grew up still stands at 204 Clark Road, in an area annexed from Tewksbury to Lowell in 1906.

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:

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We would like to add the listing of your company here in the future.

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

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 Lowell, MA 01853

J.C. Ayer & Co. During the Civil War
Part Three
Plantations in the South
by Cliff Hoyt

In 1890, D. Hamilton Hurd included the following information in an article on J.C. Ayer in his *History of Middlesex County*:

“Shortly after the capture of Port Royal and the Sea Islands by Admiral Dupont, in November, 1861, J. C. Ayer and Company obtained four plantations on Hilton Head, one of the islands that bound that bay, and engaged in the cultivation of cotton by free black labor. The first experiments were unprofitable, but later experiments met with success. The enormous crops of cotton picked since the elevation of the slaves to the condition of hired servants, have dispelled all doubt that cotton can be cultivated with abundant success by free labor. Had John C. Calhoun believed such crops possible without slavery, his grandson says, there would have been no war.” (D. Hamilton (Duane Hamilton) ed. Hurd, *History of Middlesex County, Massachusetts, with biographical sketches of many of its pioneers and prominent men* (Vol II) page 101, 1890.)

This article implies that the medicinal company J.C. Ayer and Co. from Lowell deserves a prominent position in dispelling one of the chief arguments in favor of slavery. But it does not convey even part of the real story. The story I did find was that Admiral Dupont secured the sea islands off the coast of South Carolina as part of the effort to blockade the South. Dupont immediately found himself in charge of 76,000 acres of land, much of it being cotton plantations abandoned by owners. Additionally there were thousands of slaves, now contraband, that had to be accounted for. Six months after Dupont secured the sea islands, a federally approved group of missionaries came to the Sea Islands. The missionaries initially came from Boston and New York. Their task was to provide management of the plantations and the Negro contraband living on those plantations. The missionaries would pay the contraband for their labor and provide food and education. This missionary work as well as the federal government activities became known as “The Port Royal Experiment”

All the land taken by the military remained in the hands of the military until the first sale of land in March 1863. (*This time frame does not seem to meet the article's claim that J.C. Ayer & Co purchased the land “Shortly after....November, 1861.”*) The government sold 16,000 acres of land. Half of the land was sold to one of the original missionaries named Edward Philbrick. He purchased the land for a Boston joint-stock company. Philbrick believed that the only way to make the plantations successful was strong management hiring the freed slaves. Philbrick purchased plantations on St. Helena Island, not on

Hilton Head. So it is questionable if the Ayer story was propagated by Ayer being a member of Philbrick's joint-stock company. About 2,000 acres of the land were purchased by cooperative groups of freed slaves who pooled their money and planned to work the land as their own. Lastly about 6,000 acres were sold to private citizens other than the missionaries. It is possible that the J.C. Ayer & Co. invested in this acreage. Regrettably, according to researchers at the National Archives in College Park, MD, no mention of the name Ayer appears on land survey and ownership maps for Hilton Head Island for the period 1862-1870. I have no doubt that the story may have some grains of truth but as of this time, I could not find any link between the Ayers and land ownership on Hilton Head Island. Certainly it does not seem likely that J.C. Ayer & Co. was the guiding hand in the movement to have freed slaves work the cotton plantations but they certainly could have been part of the overall movement.



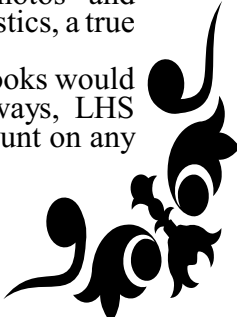
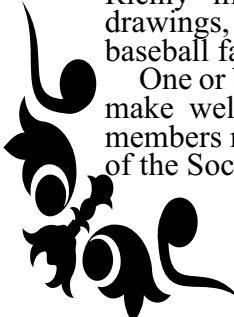
FROM THE BOOKSHELF

by Pauline M. Golec

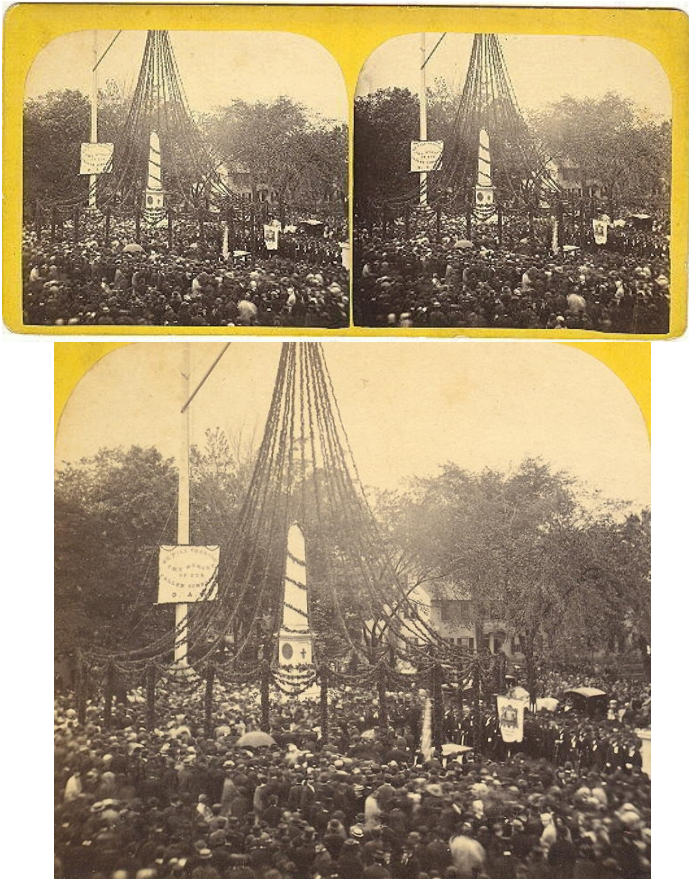
Ah, spring! Lowell Cemetery is a fine walking venue during any season, but the fresh green trees and blossoming flowers make it particularly appealing in the spring. Consider buying a copy of *Mourning Glory* written by Catherine Goodwin and published by the Lowell Historical Society. This solid history of the cemetery, enhanced by photos and a map, is an interesting and knowledgeable companion on a walk through this historic spot.

This spring also brings the start of baseball season and the 100th Anniversary of Boston's Fenway Park (another green gem). Lowell also has a baseball story, one stretching back to the 1870s. A Lowell Historical Society publication tells the history of the game and its players in our mill city. *Bricks and Bats*, written by Chaz Scoggins, noted Lowell Sun sports writer, focuses on key players on a variety of early Lowell teams (my favorite being Alexander Bannwart, AKA Al Winn, of the Lowell Tigers). Richly illustrated with photos and drawings, it also contains statistics, a true baseball fan's delight.

One or both of the above books would make welcome gifts. As always, LHS members receive a 10% discount on any of the Society's publications.



EBAY Auctions of Lowell Interest



Stereoview of the dedication of the Ladd & Whitney Monument, May 29, 1869. This stereoview was published by S. Towle, Lowell, Mass. Luther C. Ladd and Addison O. Whitney (both of Lowell) were among the first four Northerners killed in the Civil War when their regiment (the 6th Massachusetts) was mobbed in Baltimore on the 19th of April 1861 while marching to Washington. Price realized was \$38 including shipping and handling.

Father John's Medicine Wooden Crate Lowell Mass. 12.25" x 8.75" x 9.75" deep. Used for shipping two dozen small Father John's medicine bottles. This box is larger than the common box used for shipping one dozen of the large bottles. Price realized was \$102 including shipping and handling.



1882 US \$5 National Currency, Second Charter, Value Back. Union National Bank of Lowell MA. According to *The Official Red Book, US Paper Money Guide*, the 1882 Second Charter Value Back is extremely Rare. Only 8 of these type notes are known to exist from all the notes issued by all the banks for the 1882 \$5 notes. Price realized was \$397 including shipping and handling.

Harvard Brewing Co. Fluted Beer Glasses. A rare pair of 1940's Harvard Brewing Co. fluted Pilsner Beer glasses. They measure approximately 7.5" high and are in good condition with clean graphics and no chips or cracks. Price realized was \$32 including shipping and handling.



Lowell Trivia

By Martha Mayo

1. Who was the first principal of the Lowell State Normal School?
2. Many of Lowell's Portuguese immigrants from what islands?
3. What is the oldest art association in the U.S.?
4. Pawtucketville was originally part of what town?

Answers are on the Page 6.

Lowell Historical Society
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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://www.lowellhistoricalsociety.org>.

Center for Lowell History

The Center for Lowell History, 40 French Street, currently is open on Monday through Friday from 9 am to 5 pm. For Saturday from 10 am to 3 pm. The contact point for information is Martha Mayo, 978-934-4998. The Center's web address is: <http://library.uml.edu/clh/>

Calendar of Events

Program: LHS Annual Meeting, Exhibit and Lecture.

Exhibit: Dickens and Massachusetts 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



Answers to Trivia Questions

1) Frank F. Coburn, 2) Azores, 3) Lowell Art Association, 4) Dracut.