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LOWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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The mission of the [Lowell Historical Society](https://www.lowellhistoricalsociety.org/) is to collect, preserve, and publish materials related to Lowell and to encourage and promote the study of the city's history.



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Detail from photo - "Lowell boys try to keep warm at 5:30 am while waiting for coal on Feb. 24, 1923."

Warren G. Harding and the Lowell Coal Crisis

In February 1923, temperatures in Lowell, were in the double digits below zero . . . **and** there was a coal shortage due to earlier strikes.

Read about the efforts of Lowell citizens to inform President Harding of the seriousness of the situation and advocate for help.

Thanks to the Ohio History Connection for the blog and the photos of 1923 Lowell

[Click here for the blog and the photos](#)



While the revered "Ghost Signs" of Lowell are fading, most are in full view.

Here is a Ghost Sign that is both spectral and mostly hidden.

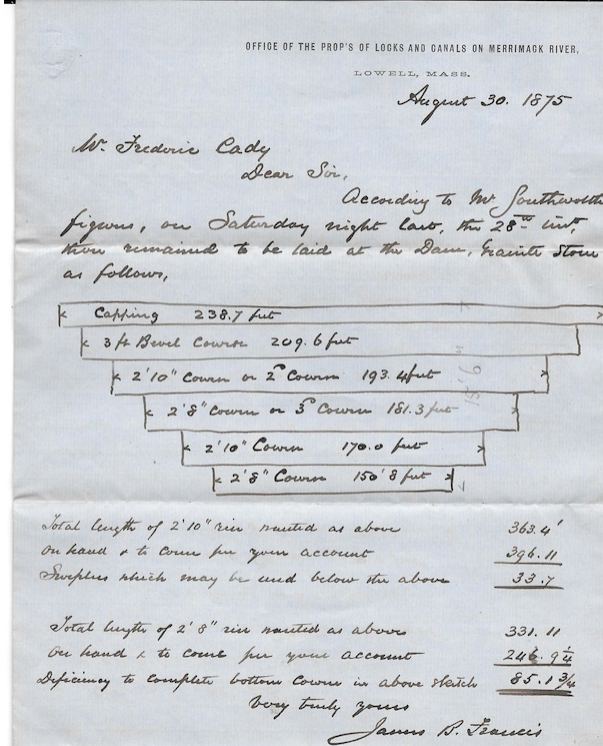
Where is this "Ghost Sign"?

What was it advertising?

Why is it mostly hidden from public view?

[Click here to learn more about the sign, what it advertised, the story of building it is on, and photos of the building and its neighbors](#)

In the mail . . .



We all love to get surprises in the mail, right?

Well, the Society got one recently from Don Shanks of Tryon, North Carolina. Born in Lowell, Don sent us a collection of original documents left to him by his late uncle, Clarence Hildreth (also of Lowell).

The material, dated 1875, includes plans and correspondence related to the Dam on the Merrimack River.

Of great interest are the letters and notes signed by Locks and Canals Chief Engineer, James B. Francis (1815 - 1892).

These are great additions to our collection. Thank you Don, for preserving these wonderful pieces of Lowell history!

[Click here to see some of the items in this collection](#)



Lowell City Engineers Collection [UML]

Where was . . . Maiden Lane?

What is there today?

[Click here to see photos
and maps of Maiden
Lane](#)



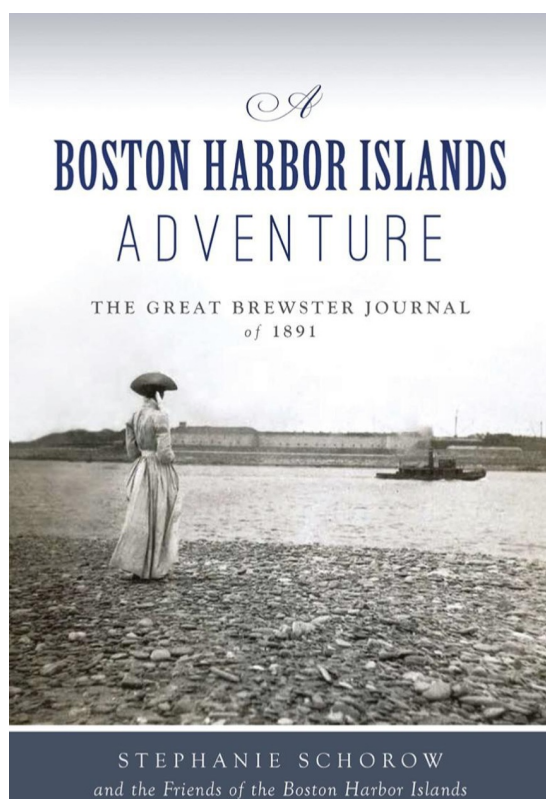
Lowell history at auction

Items from Lowell's history were on
the auction block in New York City
in September

[Click here to read more
about these items](#)

FROM THE BOOKSHELF

By Pauline M. Golec



From the moment I saw the elegant cover picturing a woman facing an island in Boston Harbor, I was hooked. A BOSTON HARBOR ISLANDS ADVENTURE - THE GREAT BREWSTER JOURNAL OF 1891 does not disappoint. This book written by Stephanie Schorow and the Friends of Boston Harbor Islands (including Martha Mayo, Lowell historian) is rich and comprehensive.

At its core, it features a journal hand written (also conveniently transcribed) by 4 Lowell women who spent 17 days on Great Brewster Island in the summer of 1891. They called themselves "The Merrie Trippers," and their journal names were "Ye Autocrat", "Ye Aristocrat", "Ye Acrobat", and "Ye Scribe". The journal does not mention their families or current events; it lists their meals and details of their daily chores and activities. I was delighted to see references to their nightly reading. They included literary quotes and lines of poetry in their journal as well as their own lovely water colors and relevant photos.

But there's more than the journal in this book. An introductory section identifies these Lowell women. Of particular interest is "Ye Scribe," Helen Augusta Whittier (among her many accomplishments was running a Lowell mill).

And there's even more. This book includes a brief history of Great Brewster Island and a solid listing of reference sources.

Copies of this book are available at [lala books](#) in downtown Lowell.



Photo credit: Kevin Harkin

Author Stephanie Schorow recently spoke about her book at an event sponsored by the Lowell Historical Society, the Pollard Memorial Library, and the Lowell Cemetery. The event was held in the Talbot Chapel at the Lowell Cemetery on Sunday, September 24, 2023. Attendees were treated to an engaging discussion that shed light on the inspiration behind the book and the fascinating historical context it presents. For more photos of the event, visit [Kevin Harkin's website](#).





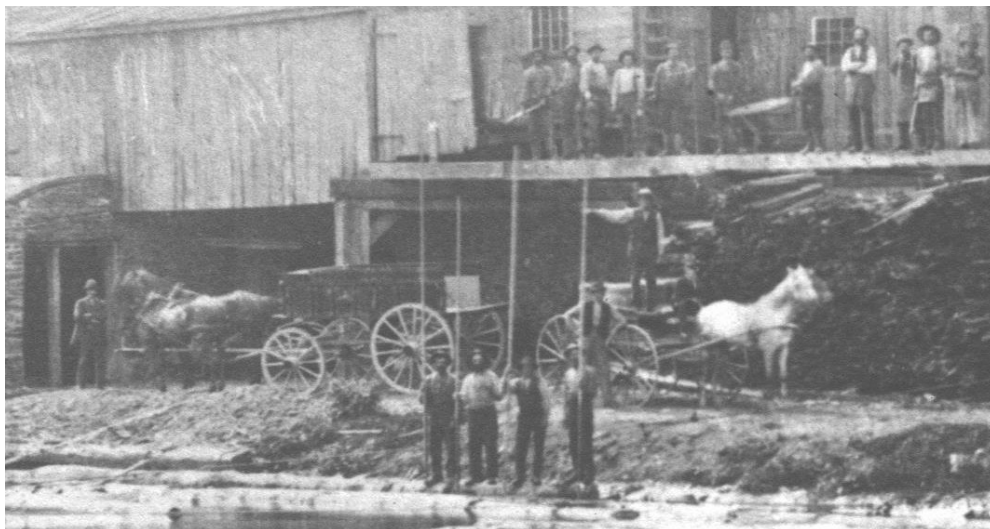
Take the Lowell Cemetery Veterans Tour online or on-site with the Google Map created by Richard Howe. [Click here for more information and links to the maps.](#)



James B. Francis lived in Lowell with his wife Sarah and his six children on Worthen Street. The house was previously the home of George Washington Whistler and was the birthplace of James McNeil Whistler. Today it is the Whistler House Museum.

Francis is buried in the Lowell Cemetery. His gravestone is built out of granite like the canals, and the stones are laid similarly to the canal granite.

The plot is in on Oberlin Ave, Lot 1392



The image above is a detail of a photograph of the Brooks Saw Mill from the private collection of Artemas L. Brooks's great great granddaughter Kathryn "Kate" Knudsen.

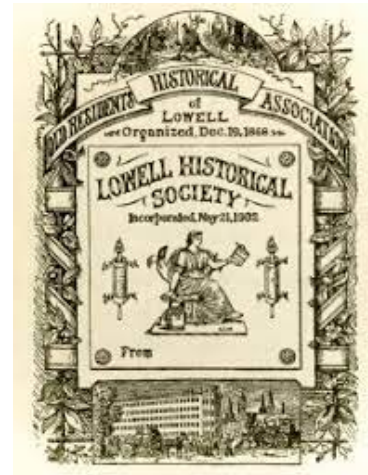
Kate grew up in Brockton and lives in Mechanicsburg, PA. More photos from her collection will appear in future newsletters. Thanks Kate!

A. L. Brooks (1803 - 1878) was a businessman, inventor, and abolitionist. This saw mill was just one of his many investments in Lowell.

[Click here to see the photograph and read more about this saw mill](#)



[Click here to visit the LHS Blog page for blogs about Lowell History](#)



Become a member! We welcome all of those interested in history and Lowell to join, and all contributions are tax-deductible. [Click here for more information](#)

Read the past newsletters -

The 2005 - 2023 newsletters of the Lowell Historical Society are available online!

[Click here to see the past newsletters](#)

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