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## LOWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

### WINTER 2024, Volume 57, Number 1

The mission of the [Lowell Historical Society](http://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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#### 2024 Membership Drive

Thank you to everyone who has renewed membership for 2024!

If you have not yet renewed for 2024, please take the time to make your donation [via our website with PayPal, or a Debit/Credit Card by clicking here](#). If you prefer to pay by check, just print a copy of the form available [here](#), or [on the website](#) and mail it with your donation to:

Lowell Historical Society  
P.O. Box 1826  
Lowell, MA 01853

To check your membership status, please contact [membership@lowellhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:membership@lowellhistoricalsociety.org).

Need to reach us? Call 978-319-4631, or email [contact@lowellhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:contact@lowellhistoricalsociety.org).

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Photo credit: Lowell Historical Society

## Becoming "Annie"

By Walter V. Hickey

Edgar Allan Poe didn't just **write** mysteries, his life and death abound in them.

Walter Hickey found the answer to one of the lingering mysteries while raising others.

And as we know, there is **always** a Lowell connection.

[Click here to see the article and newly discovered documents about this "mystery"](#)

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54 Fletcher Street (undated)

This photograph is from the private collection of Artemas L. Brooks's great great great granddaughter Kathryn "Kate" Knudsen. Thanks Kate!

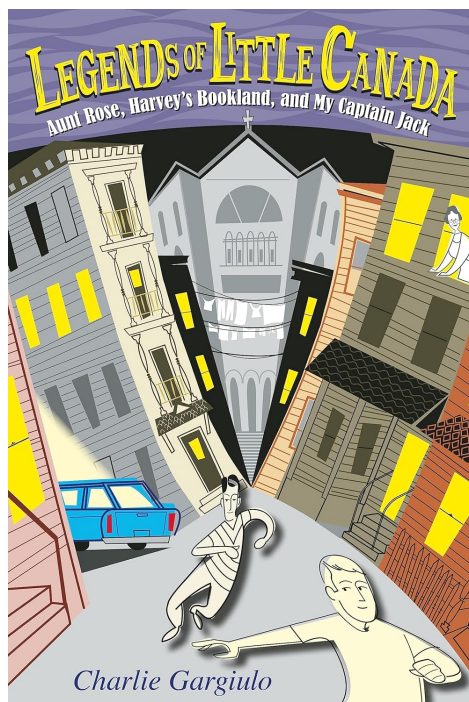
A. L. Brooks (1803 - 1878) was a businessman, inventor, and abolitionist. His house was a stop on the Underground Railroad and had a "secret place" to hide enslaved persons and help them on their journey to freedom in Canada.

[Click here for more about Artemas L. Brooks](#)

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## FROM THE BOOKSHELF

By Pauline M. Golec



**Legends of Little Canada:  
Aunt Rose, Harvey's Bookland, and My Captain Jack**  
(Loom Press, 2023)  
by Charlie Gargiulo

Being from the Centralville section of Lowell, my hazy young impression of Little Canada was limited to multiple tenement dwellings along a canal. Reading Charlie Gargiulo's book, LEGENDS OF LITTLE CANADA, gave me an appreciation of the rich community life of this neighborhood until it was destroyed by Urban Renewal.

Charlie explores this community in a memoir detailing his brief, but busy, time as a boy (approximately 12-13 years old) living in this mostly French-Canadian neighborhood in the early 1960's.

Forced to leave Dracut after his father abandons the family, Charlie and his mother face challenges in their new home - mother copes with alcoholism and a late-night job in a bar while Charlie dreads leaving their small tenement for fear of being bullied and beaten.

But Charlie prevails - teaches himself boxing skills, and meets new friends and a few kind adults. The owner of Harvey's Bookland provides Charlie with comics and kindness. Charlie's Aunt Rose, who also lives in Little Canada, offers needed comfort, and an understanding nun eases his time in a new school.

Charlie's memoir reveals him to be funny, daring (sometimes too much so), honest, compassionate, and brave (tackles bullies and degrades the iconic Rochette's beans, a Little Canada favorite).

But it is in the experience of the extinction of his neighborhood, that we see through Charlie's eyes, the false hopes and heartbreak that accompanied the demolition of Little Canada (completed in 1964).

The appealing comic book style of the cover illustrated by Gary Destramp appropriately complements Charlie's love of comics.

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

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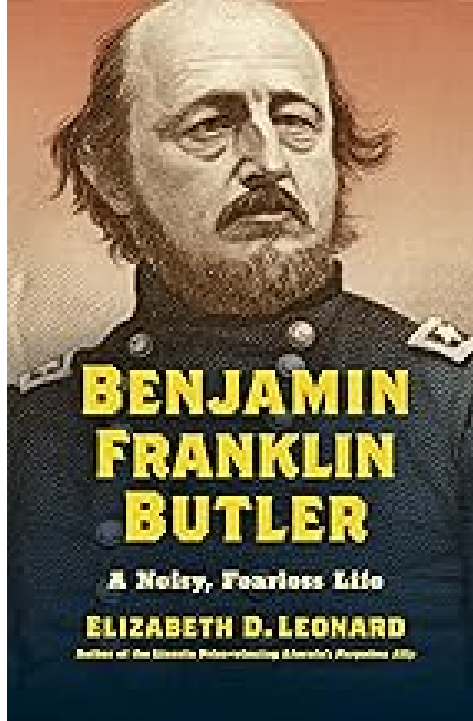
Charlie Gargiulo will speak about his book and how the destruction of Little Canada led him to found Coalition for a Better Acre:

Wednesday, February 7  
4:00 - 6:00 PM  
UMASS Lowell's Coburn Hall, 850 Broadway Street, Room 255  
More info at: <https://www.uml.edu/calendar/events/43827665>

Charlie will also be presenting one of the Parker Lectures:

Sunday, April 7  
2:00 PM  
Lowell National Historical Park Visitor Center  
More info at: <https://www.parkerlectures.com/category/years/2023-2024/#1046>

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**Benjamin Franklin Butler: A Noisy, Fearless Life** (Civil War America)  
By Elizabeth D. Leonard (2022)

Reviewed by Joe Orfant

In addition to being a comprehensive book review, Joe has included additional information about General Butler's years in Lowell. The more we learn about the *real* Benjamin Butler the more we realize what a great man he was, ahead of his time, and working to create a better country for all.

Click here to read the  
review

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

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**And more from Joe Orfant -**

**SAVE THE DATE**

Sunday, April 7

2:00 PM

Talbot Chapel, Lowell Cemetery

Presenter - Joe Orfant

**The Sad, Curious Death of Mary Ann Birmingham**

She was just a month shy of her twenty-seventh birthday on that beautiful, clear crisp Fall day, October 21, 1861, when the young and beautiful Mary Ann Birmingham died in a "paroxysm of spasms" at her father's house where she lived with Alexander C. Peters, her physician husband and eighteen-month-old son, Samuel. The young family had only moved to Lowell from New York City in the past year or so . . .

Join us to learn more and visit the Birmingham family burial plot in the historic Lowell Cemetery

More information to follow





Photo Credit: Kevin Harkins

### **Photos from the special tour of the private Hildreth Family Cemetery on Sunday, October 15, 2023**

On Sunday, October 15, 2023, the Lowell Historical Society held a special tour of the private Hildreth Family Cemetery, and attendees were treated to a unique and informative experience. Led by board member Kim Zunino, the tour highlighted the fascinating history of the cemetery's most famous resident, Civil War General Benjamin Butler, as well as other notable figures buried there, including General Adelbert Ames and Brigadier General Philip Hildreth Reade.

Located behind the public Hildreth Cemetery, the private Hildreth Family Cemetery is only opened once a year to honor its most distinguished denizen. The cemetery is the final resting place of the seven heirs of Dr. Israel Hildreth and his wife Dolly Jones Hildreth, whose descendants went on to distinguished careers in law, medicine, and education.

From Benjamin Butler's impressive 15-foot granite monument with bronze sculpture relief to the small slate gravestone for John R.C. Hildreth, the infant son of Dr. Israel and Dolly Hildreth, the monuments in the cemetery offer a glimpse into the lives of the Hildreth family and their extraordinary achievements.



Photo Credit: Kevin Harkins

Thanks to Kevin Harkins for these photos of the event. For additional photos of the Cemetery and the tour, please visit [the photo gallery on Kevin Harkins's website](#).

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## **The Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War's ceremony honoring General Benjamin Butler**

The Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War conducted a memorial ceremony honoring Union General Benjamin Franklin Butler at the Hildreth Family Cemetery on Sunday, November 5, 2023.

The memorial ceremony echoed the original Grand Army of the Republic ritual of rededication, and included Civil War era uniformed members conducting the commemoration, prayers and the reading of a brief biography of General Butler and General Adelbert Ames at their grave sites. A rifle squad performed a salute and a bugler played "Taps".

It is fitting and proper that Benjamin Butler's amazing life and historic deeds be honored and celebrated, and that his memory and legacy be passed on to succeeding generations.







General Benjamin Butler's funeral procession in Lowell. January 16, 1893.

Photo credit: Ames Family Papers, Sophia Smith Collection,  
Smith College Special Collections

[Click here for a closer look at this photograph. Can you tell where it was taken?](#)



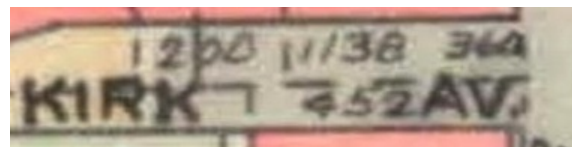
On November 4, 1926, a city-owned steamroller being used by a work crew on Lincoln St. went out of control and crashed into a building on Gorham St.

No one was hurt and the building still stands today.

There were no photographs of this front-page story in the newspaper. But photographs from the City Engineers Collection help tell the story.

[Click here for more on the steamroller rampage](#)

## Where was Kirk Avenue?



A photograph survived for 111 years in the City Hall attic. But what is it a photo of?

Hints:

It is still there, but it is not a public road.

It doesn't fit the description of a typical avenue - it was 14 feet wide.

It is not called Kirk Avenue anymore.

You could get free air for your tires in 1922.

[Click here for the photo and the location of Kirk Avenue](#)





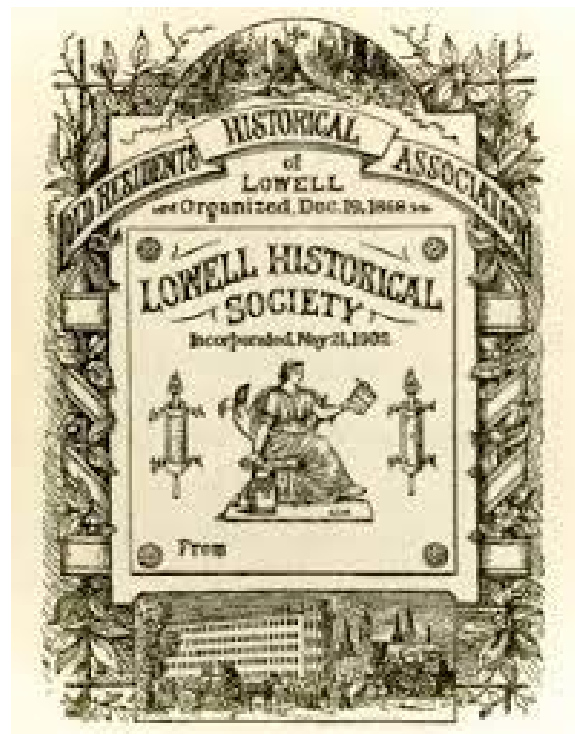
A closer look at a Greek Coffee House and a lot more  
in a building on Market Street.

[Click here for more about this coffee  
house](#)



Read Eileen Loucraft's blog post -

[Lowell Squares in 1914](#)



We have added two new categories of  
membership - . High School Students  
and College students.

We invite high school and college

[illegible]

This is a black and white aerial photograph showing a city, likely New Orleans, completely inundated with floodwater. The water covers almost the entire landscape, leaving only the roofs of houses, the tops of trees, and some industrial structures visible. In the upper left, a large body of water, possibly a river or bayou, is visible with some boats. The city's layout is discernible through the clusters of buildings and the network of streets and waterways. The overall scene depicts a catastrophic failure of coastal defenses.

[Click here for a larger version of this photo and a current photo of the area.](#)



## Hot off the press!

Read the Friday Evening, December 14, 1827 edition of the Lowell Journal.

[Click here to read the 1827 newspaper](#)

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## 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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