

Maine Historical Society – Library Research Center
Survey by Dr. Carol P. McCoy (June 2001)

On June 6 and 14, 2001 I visited *The Center for Maine History, Library Research Center*, 485 Congress St., Portland, Maine 04101. I have an annual membership for \$30.00, which allows me free admission to the MHS Research Library. Non-members can conduct research for \$2 an hour or \$10 a day. The Library is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. from Tuesday through Saturday.

I chose this library because it has been my spiritual home since I became more interested in genealogy in the late 1990's. I would like to acknowledge the help of Nicholas Noyes, Director of Library Services, who was very helpful in answering my questions.

Genealogy and History Collection. As stated at the Maine Historical Society web site¹, "The Library constitutes the world's premier collection of printed materials on Maine history. The collection includes 125,000 books, newspapers, and other printed items, as well as 2 million manuscripts documenting Maine's social, economic, political, and cultural history." While the focus of the MHS Library is Maine, there are also many books on New England. Since Maine was originally part of Massachusetts, there are excellent resources on Massachusetts. For instance, the MHS Library contains many of the series, *Vital Records of Massachusetts to the year 1850*, which was produced by the New England Historic Genealogical Society, such as *Vital Records of Westport Massachusetts To the Year 1850*. In addition, there are journals and books on a range of states, and several volumes on US and world history in general.

To my delight, I was able to read about one of my ancestors, Colonel John Evans, in Callahan's *Genealogical and Personal History of the Upper Monongahela Valley, West Virginia*². There are also many genealogies and family histories, which cover people who were prominent in Maine, New England, and other parts of the US.

Family Histories. As mentioned, there are numerous family histories at the MHS Library. I chose to examine *The Boynton Family. A Genealogy of the Descendants of William and John Boynton, Who emigrated from Yorkshire, England, in 1638, and settled at Rowley, Essex County, Massachusetts* compiled by John Farnham Boynton and Caroline Harriman Boynton. The Boyntons based their family history on work started by another ancestor, Edmund Boynton, who in the mid 1800's had hired a researcher to go to England to research the Boynton line, but who died before completing the work³. In the Introduction, Caroline Harriman Boynton explains that John Farnham Boynton began to compile the information in the 1880's but that he also died before finishing it. C.H. Boynton, who completed the compilation, claims that they had researched many letters and English wills and searched many genealogies and town

¹ www.mainehistory.com/about.html.

² James Morton Callahan, "The Evans Line," *Genealogical and Personal History of the Upper Monongahela Valley, West Virginia under the editorial supervision of Bernard L. Butcher, Vol. III.* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1912), 1316-1321.

³ John Farnham Boynton and Caroline Harriman Boynton, eds., *The Boynton Family. A Genealogy of the Descendants of William and John Boynton, Who emigrated from Yorkshire, England, in 1638, and settled at Rowley, Essex County, Massachusetts.* (Groveland, MA: JF. Boynton & C.H. Boynton, 1897), ix.

histories, “and wherever the name Boynton was found, it has been copied.”⁴ On occasion the compilers cite primary town records, however, frequently they do not identify their sources. On the other hand, I appreciated that the book provides details of the family’s life, not just information on birth, marriage, and death. I was particularly interested in the reference to my great-great-grandfather, Charles H. Wiskey and my great-great grandmother, Louisa Boynton, daughter of Paul Boynton. Without citing any sources, this book provides the following information:

“VII. Louisa⁸ b. Sep. 20, 1829; m. Charles H. Wiskey, Apr. 8, 1852. Children: Charles M. 8, b. 1853. Musical Director in Brooklyn, NY; Frank E. ⁸, b. 1856.”⁵

The compilers state that in the “records of Lancaster” “Paul Boynton and Anna Man, both of Lancaster, entered their Intentions of marriage on Dec. 22d, 1775; also that Paul Boynton of Winchendon and Abigail Fairbank of Lancaster, entered their Intentions of marriage Sept. 10, 1777.”⁶ Nevertheless, most of the material on Paul Boynton is not backed by any specific sources.

Bibliographies of Family Histories. While the Research Library does not have the latest copy of Kaminkow’s *Genealogies in the Library of Congress* (1986), it does have an early version of *Genealogies in the Library of Congress* (1919). Mr. Noyes pointed out that maintaining this bibliography is very expensive and it is possible to obtain the information from the Internet. The Research Library did have a number of other bibliographies, e.g. Filby (1983; 1987); Hoffman (1997); New England Historical Genealogical Society Vols. 1 and 2 (2000); and Tuttle (1998).

Histories of Falmouth and Cumberland County Maine. Falmouth, Maine, where I now live, is part of Cumberland County, Maine. The town of Falmouth was once included in greater Portland, which at one time was called “Falmouth.” The Library holds a substantial volume, *History of Cumberland County Maine* (1880), which has a section on Falmouth. Another large volume is William Willis’ *The History of Portland, A Facsimile of the 1865 Edition*, which also includes information on Falmouth. There are no books dedicated to the history of the town of Falmouth, Maine, however, there are three pamphlets, published on significant dates: *A Portrait of Falmouth: Celebrating 275 Years 1718-1993*; *E Pluribus Unum: A Story of Falmouth, Maine* (1976); and *Falmouth, Maine 250th Anniversary 1718-1968* (1968).

Genealogical Periodicals. According to Nicholas Noyes, the Library regularly receives about 40 genealogical and historical publications, which concentrate primarily on New England, but which also include other genealogical periodicals as well, including, the *National Genealogical Society Quarterly*, *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record*, and *Family Chronicle*. I chose to examine Volume 33 no. 4 (March, 2001) of *The Connecticut Nutmegger* published by the Connecticut Society of Genealogists, Inc. Not surprisingly this journal focuses on Connecticut. It includes queries, articles, and book reviews. I discovered that this quarterly

⁴ Ibid., Introduction.

⁵ Ibid., 117.

⁶ Ibid., 116.

periodical begins its year in June and concludes its year in March. The March issue had an index to all of Volume 33 as well as an issue index to queries. I also looked at Vol. 25 no. 1 (June 1992), and it appears that each issue has an index to queries, but not an index to all names cited in the issue. There is an overall Index to the *Nutmegger* compiled by Ullmann (1996.)

Indexes to Periodicals. The Library provides Internet access to PERSI. Other periodical indexes owned by the MHS Library include: Munsell's Index (1899); *Indexes of the New England Historic and Genealogical Register* (Rayne, 1989; Fiske, 1995) covering volumes 1-148; Towle's (1962) *Genealogical Periodical Annual Index*; several versions of indices by Jacobus (1933-1944; 1932-1953; and Boyer's (1983) updated index by Jacobus; Ullman's Index to *The Connecticut Nutmegger*, Vol. 1-28 (1996) and Worden's (1983) *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record 113 Master Index 1870-1982*.

Newspaper Collection. The Library has a substantial collection of Maine newspapers going back for more than 200 years. According to Mr. Noyes, the Library has the original issue of the first newspaper published in Maine, the 1 January 1785 issue of the *Falmouth Gazette* (later called the *Cumberland Gazette*.) The library has many originals as well as microfilmed copies of approximately 100 different newspapers. Researchers interested in looking at copies of *The Portland Press Herald* and *New York Times* can view back issues of these newspapers on microfilm at the nearby Portland Public Library, which is also on Congress Street.

Manuscripts and Special Collections. According to the Library's web site ⁷, the Library has "2 million manuscripts documenting Maine's social, economic, political, and cultural history. The Library also contains 3,500 maps and atlases, 70,000 photographs, and 100,000 architectural and engineering drawings. Of particular note is the Fogg collection of autographs which includes a complete set of signers of the Declaration of Independence and one of only 25 known original printed copies of the Dunlap version of the Declaration of Independence." Mr. Noyes mentioned that the special collections includes letters, diaries, ships logs, proprietors' logs, and major architectural drawings. I asked him to identify his favorite holdings. While he had a hard time choosing, Mr. Noyes selected the *Fogg Autograph Collection* as well as the *Kennebec and Pejepscot Proprietor's Papers*, which include manuscripts and maps from the early 1700's.

Library Resources. Users can locate Library holdings in a card catalog, which is filed according to the Dewey Decimal System. Holdings are indexed by author, subject, and title. The manuscripts are also catalogued. The Library expects to have approximately 25% of the holdings catalogued on-line on a new computer system, *Minvera*, a web-based catalog of the Maine library.

There is a microfilm reader-printer as well as a microfiche reader-printer. There is one photocopier. Copies are \$.15 per page, and the Library allows people to pay the librarian after completing copying for the day. While the copier is unreliable (it was out of order on the 6th, but working on the 14th of June), the honor system is a convenient way to pay compared to having to purchase cards or constantly insert money into copiers. Unfortunately, the library does not participate in interlibrary loan.

⁷ www.mainehistory.com/about.html.

The Library has one computer, which can be used to view CD ROMS and to connect to the Internet. Currently the Library has a small collection of about 50 CD ROMS, which focus primarily on New England and which include other non-Maine subjects as well. For example, they have the CD ROM, *Massachusetts 1850 Census Images*. They also have several other census indexes and as well as *Griffith's Valuation of Ireland*, and *Passenger and Immigration Lists Index 1538-1940* on CD ROM.

The MHS Library also has microfilm copies of the United States Census for all Maine counties from 1790-1920. It also has a good collection of many of the Maine City Directories for major cities in Maine as well.

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