The Birth of America's Postal System

Island Eden
Maine's Bar Harbor and Acadia National Park

Practical Elegance
Portsmouth, N.H.'s Rundlet-May House

Preserving Your Family's Kitchen Table Conversations

The Story of Stamps
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BY GWEN SLOYOM
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From the President General

Did the cover photo of crashing surf colliding with the coast of Maine capture your attention? Our Spirited Adventures story explores idyllic Mount Desert Island, home to Bar Harbor, originally named Eden, and Acadia National Park, the first national park established on the East Coast. Like early Bar Harbor visitors, called rusticators, millions still retreat to the seaside outpost for its abundant beauty and sense of tranquility.

Although e-mail and other kinds of digital communication are increasingly supplanting greeting cards and letters, our postal system remains an indispensable service. It was not always so. In fact, as our “Mail Call” article recounts, it was not until Americans had ready access to a reliable postal system that writing letters became commonplace. Even more important, the early postal system helped unite a large republic by encouraging the ready dissemination of news and information. In a related story, we explore the beginnings of stamp collecting, a hobby shared by 6 million Americans.

Our Historic Home feature spotlights the ahead-of-their-time amenities of the Portsmouth, N.H., mansion built by James Rundlet in 1807. The wealthy textile merchant wanted to furnish his home with the latest innovations from Europe, such as a Rumford kitchen, which freed women or their servants from cooking in big pots and kettles over an open hearth. These and other surprising conveniences make the home a fascinating place to visit.

In Genealogy Sleuth, our writer describes the valuable experience of sitting down with her grandparents to capture their versions of old family stories. She gives advice on how to ensure those wonderful tales told around the kitchen table are preserved for future generations.

The Our Patriots article focuses on Michael Kovats, who became a Revolutionary hero far from his hometown of Karcag, Hungary. After sending a letter to Benjamin Franklin offering his military services, Kovats bravely made the journey overseas and went on to lead what eventually became known as the U.S. Cavalry. Kovats gave his life on the battlefield, yet his memory lives on not only in America, but also in his Hungarian hometown.

American Spirit brings you a little-known story of the graveyard quilt, a rare quilt that memorialized family deaths in a somewhat macabre way. Elizabeth Roseberry Mitchell’s lovingly designed example, the only known example of this type, was designed to represent her family’s distant graveyard in Ohio.

Our Whatnot section features several museum exhibits of interest, including a furniture exhibit at the DAR Museum featuring the late 18th-century works of carpenter John Shearer.
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Beth Iseminger’s job as a supervisor for the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has taken her to Alaska during fishing season, to Washington, D.C., for the inauguration of President Barack Obama, and to Houston to help in the aftermath of Hurricane Ike. But if you ask her what’s most interesting about her job, she’ll mention the typical day working airport security. “Theoretically the process is the same every day,” she says. “But actually no two days are alike.”

The variety is evident in the wide range of things passengers stuff in their suitcases. “It’s amazing to see what people travel with sometimes,” she says with a laugh.

Changing Directions

Ms. Iseminger has been with the TSA since the agency was formed following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. In search of a career change, Ms. Iseminger seized a new career opportunity when the Transportation Security Administration was formed.

Safer Travels

Beth Iseminger was among the 300 TSA officers deployed to Washington, D.C., for the inauguration in January 2009. She and another TSA officer worked with the Secret Service on logistics for screening attendees and participants in the Inauguration Parade and swearing-in ceremony. “People were very well-behaved,” she says. “There were almost 2 million people there, but it wasn’t rowdy, and I don’t think there were any arrests. People followed directions, and they were very respectful. It made me proud to be an American.”

A Different World

Growing up in Iowa, Ms. Iseminger longed to see how the rest of the world lived and wanted to explore ways of serving her country, so she joined the Peace Corps. She was assigned to the Philippines to help develop programs to improve the country’s physical fitness levels. But six weeks after she arrived, the country was placed under martial law. “We had a curfew,” she recalls. “I think I got all of the mail that was sent to me, but sometimes I think it was reviewed or opened, particularly the magazines. They would also detain people without any due process. It wasn’t scary, necessarily, but it really made me appreciate our Bill of Rights.”

Ms. Iseminger, a member of Cedar Falls Chapter, Cedar Falls, Iowa, says she owes her sense of patriotism to her parents. “My father was always a good citizen, working as a clerk on Election Day and always participating in the caucus process,” she says. “My mother was an avid genealogist who even wrote a book about the family’s heritage. “She taught me to always be proud of my genealogy.”

seen so many shades of grays, blues and whites before in my life."

When she’s not responding to seasonal needs, large-scale events or natural disasters dictate her next posting. Ms. Iseminger was among the 300 TSA officers deployed to Washington, D.C., for the inauguration in January 2009. She and another TSA officer worked with the Secret Service on logistics for screening attendees and participants in the Inauguration Parade and swearing-in ceremony. “People were very well-behaved,” she says. “There were almost 2 million people there, but it wasn’t rowdy, and I don’t think there were any arrests. People followed directions, and they were very respectful. It made me proud to be an American.”
National Treasures
Step inside the DAR Museum for a closer look at its fascinating collection.

Virginia Map Quest

MAP EXPERTS GENERALLY AGREE that the Fry/Jefferson map is the most important 18th-century map of Virginia. It was the first map to accurately depict the Blue Ridge Mountains and Colonial roads, and it also shows many of the most important plantations of the time. The map, printed in London in 1775, features original hand coloring. The scene in the lower right corner portrays the sale of tobacco, Virginia’s cash crop.

Joshua Fry and Peter Jefferson originally surveyed the area under orders of the London Board of Trade in 1750. Fry was a mathematics professor at the College of William and Mary, and Peter Jefferson (Thomas Jefferson’s father) was his assistant. They were chosen for the task because they had already completed important surveys of the Virginia Colony in the 1740s.

The DAR Museum example originally belonged to the French navy.

American Spirit • September/October 2010
Chris Fisk’s first teaching job when he moved to Butte, Mont., in 1994, was in special education, but he held onto a dream of teaching American history. “When a position opened up in my district at Butte High School, I jumped at the chance,” he says. Since he landed his dream job 12 years ago, he has become a specialist in Montana history and has been using that expertise, coupled with creative teaching techniques, to help his students get hooked on history.

Fisk claims that landing the history position was a “fluke,” but after listening to him talk about his philosophy on interactive instruction, it’s easy to tell that his career success results from more than a stroke of luck.

When he covers early American history, American Indians and westward expansion, Fisk goes to great lengths to create assignments that will make his students understand the relevance of American history—especially the history of the American West. He assigns projects like creating journals that replicate the ones Lewis and Clark kept during their journey, and planning for gemstones in southwestern Montana to mimic the methods used by Americans during the Gold Rush.

Like other history teachers, Fisk presents his students with original documents and asks them to personify historical figures of their choosing. But when it comes to some subjects, he takes hands-on teaching to a whole new level. Every year, Fisk invites his students to join him in the fields of Butte, and with the help of representatives from the Lakota-Sioux and Northern Cheyenne American Indian tribes, the group harvests a buffalo that has been killed for its meat.

“Some of Montana’s history might not be pretty, but that’s how we came to be,” Fisk says. “The American Indian history in this country deserves to be taught. In the end, we are the country we are today because of the good and the bad things that have happened.”

For Fisk and his students, harvesting a buffalo is a celebration of their state’s heritage. Using the methods perfected by Plains Indians hundreds of years ago, Fisk leads his students in drying buffalo meat, tanning the hide, bleaching the skull and making tools from other parts of the buffalo.

“We want to celebrate our state history—the American Indians and the pioneers responsible for westward expansion,” Fisk says. “American Indians were tough and used ingenuity to survive. So, when we harvest a buffalo, all of a sudden their lifestyle isn’t a story out of a book—it’s real.”

Fisk’s lesson plans zero in on the rich history of Butte, which was a copper boomtown in the late 19th century and early 20th century. With a downtown full of historic buildings, Butte is “a history teacher’s dream,” according to Fisk.

Every fall, his students participate in a ghost walk for which they don costumes and act out scripts they compose about historical characters. “A few years ago, more than 800 people turned out for our ghost walk,” Fisk says. “It’s a great project, because it teaches the students to participate in their community. The lessons of community are important and meaningful. “One teacher can’t do all of this alone; it takes a community to educate a child, and I’ve been fortunate enough to surround myself with incredible people,” Fisk says.
HOW THE BARBER OF BADEN BECAME THE BARBER OF MANHATTAN

We may never know if 29-year-old Friederich Detering cried as he waved goodbye to his wife and three children from the deck of the Nederland as it departed for America in 1882. But it couldn’t have been easy to leave them.

Yet less than a year later, that same ship entered New York Harbor again, this time with Friederich’s young family aboard. Their reunion, near the spot that would soon be home to the Statue of Liberty, must have been joyful.

Within a few years, Friederich and his family settled in and made a life for themselves in New York. And on a summer day in 1888, the barber from Germany became an American.

Three records can tell so much about one life. And there are billions of other records at Ancestry.com, ready to tell your family’s stories too. In fact, you don’t have to know what you’re looking for, you just have to start looking.

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Since 2000, the National Trust for Historic Preservation has showcased 12 unique cities and towns each year as its Dozen Distinctive Destinations. The trust recognizes destinations that offer authentic visitor experiences based on a dedication to historic preservation, diverse cultural activities that show historic character and charm, a dynamic downtown, sustainability and green efforts, and a commitment to heritage tourism.

This year for the first time, the public chose one of the Dozen Distinctive Destinations as a fan favorite. The 2010 winner, with more than 37 percent of the popular vote, was Marquette, Mich., a peninsula town known for its cultural events as well as 27 national- and state-designated historic sites. Visitors’ favorites include Donckers Candy and its 1950s soda fountain, the Getz Department store that’s been a downtown landmark since the 1880s, and the Landmark Inn, the European-inspired historic hotel that has hosted many famous guests, including Amelia Earhart and the Rolling Stones.

**Rounding out the Distinctive Dozen:**

- **Bastrop, Texas**—Only 30 miles from Austin on the banks of the Colorado River, Bastrop is home to two state parks, many festivals, an annual rodeo and the Southern culinary treats of Maxine’s on Main.

- **Cedar Falls, Iowa**—With its prize-winning Main Street, Cedar Falls features eclectic shopping, the Little Red School House Museum and the historic Oster-Regent Theater.

- **Chestnut Hill, Pa.**—This walkable town on the outskirts of Philadelphia is ideal for historic architecture lovers who can stroll along its Germantown Avenue.

- **The Crooked Road, Va.**—Comprising 19 towns along a 253-mile route, the trail promotes eight music venues of the Appalachian region and features performances at each stop.

- **Fort Collins, Colo.**—Close to the Rockies in north-central Colorado, Fort Collins is recognized as one of the nation’s greenest cities and is home to walkable, bike-friendly streets and locally owned businesses.
Huntsville, Ala.—A haven of Southern history, Huntsville’s attractions include former factories turned art galleries, the Huntsville Depot Museum and Alabama Constitution Village.

Provincetown, Mass.—Surrounded by the Cape Cod National Seashore, this seaport town features the site of the signing of the Mayflower Compact.

Rockland, Maine—Known for its August lobster festival, Rockland institutions like the Farnsworth Art Museum have made this town a cultural hub.

Simsbury, Conn.—Home to three state parks and a 350-year-old authentic New England village, Simsbury’s farmers’ market and many restaurants also make it a favorite stop for foodies.

Sitka, Alaska—Sitka lies in the middle of a national forest and the shadow of a volcano on the coast of Baranof Island in southern Alaska. The town has been heavily influenced by Tlingit American Indian and Russian cultures.

St. Louis—Along with its iconic Gateway Arch, St. Louis boasts a world-famous baseball team, architecture by Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright, and numerous city parks and museums.

For more information, visit www.preservationnation.org.

WhatNot

LITERARY - CORNER

Made in America

After William Henry Harrison prominently used a log cabin to connect him and the Whig Party to the common man in the 1840 presidential campaign, American politicians adapted the symbolism to curry favor as men of the people. However, as Pulitzer Prize-winning author Laurel Thatcher Ulrich points out in The Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the Creation of an American Myth (Knopf, 2001), handmade everyday objects have long been employed as emblems of essential American industry and virtue.

“Politics transformed pastoral affectation into a vision of an American republic sustained by rural virtue,” Ulrich writes in this fascinating survey of some of the most humble, yet evocative items of 19th-century daily life. These include spinning wheels and looms, coverlets and blankets, baskets and stockings.

The title of Ulrich’s book comes from a line in a speech given by the Rev. Horace Bushnell of Litchfield, Conn., on August 14, 1851, as part of the county’s centennial celebration. Bushnell, Ulrich says, challenged the conventional idea of history as a collection of big deeds by large figures: “The spinning wheels have done a great deal more than these,” he declaimed.

Bushnell celebrated the spinners and weavers as well as the hardy farmers and artisans in a clearer and more cohesive way than they ever had been described. In fact, Ulrich declares, he created a myth that day—one that took hold in the public mind and endures today.

The idea was not new: Early on, Americans viewed themselves as somehow more virtuous, hard-working and special than their Old World cousins. People reach for myths to sustain them in times of uncertainty, and the Colonies and later the United States endured plenty of those, especially in the 18th and early 19th centuries.

“The rhetoric of the Revolution and the War of 1812 emphasized household production, not only because it was an essential component of the nation’s economy, but because images of industrious, self-sacrificing and patriotic women domesticated and softened the often harsh realities of political conflict, economic uncertainty and war,” Ulrich writes.

Ulrich delves into the techniques and technologies of production, the sociology of home production in rural and small-town life, the aesthetics literally woven into practical items, and the political and philosophical means that raised them from useful to mythic.

The experiences of a wide variety of skilled men and women—white, black and American Indian—bring the subject to vivid life. Often the historical record is scanty, and Ulrich has to depend on wills, diaries, inventories and objects that belonged to or were made by the individuals to pull together a story.

The Age of Homespun is fascinating reading, and it will likely expand your appreciation and understanding of those precious family treasures whose lore inevitably includes the identity of the hands that made them.
The tale of Betsy Ross as a simple seamstress who created the first American flag has been passed down as a legendary episode in American history. Starting October 2, 2010, the Winterthur Museum will showcase an exhibit that presents a factual account of the life of Betsy Ross, providing an opportunity to better understand this hardworking Philadelphia upholsterer whom Americans have immortalized. The exhibition includes flags, fabricated cartridge cases, and curtains with handcrafted fringe and tassels as examples of the products of Betsy Ross’ five decades as an upholsterer, seamstress and flagmaker. For more information, visit www.winterthur.org.

Grass Roots: African Origins of an American Art
National Museum of African Art
Washington, D.C., through November 28, 2010

By tracing the artwork of coiled baskets from Africa to America, “Grass Roots” shows how African art and culture have influenced American life in the Southeast. The exhibition includes more than 200 objects such as African baskets, sculptures, paintings and photographs. For more information, visit http://africa.si.edu.

Crowning Glories: Status, Style and Self-Expression
Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History
Detroit, through September 2010

Covering the late 18th century to the present, this exhibition explores the historical tradition of African-American women adorning themselves with headwear. An integral part of the black woman’s heritage, the hats in this showcase create a timeline from enslaved African-Americans’ protective head coverings to the intricate hats of the Red Hat Society members. Also included are vintage drawings, photographs and information about internationally renowned hat designers. For more information, visit www.chwmuseum.org.

Facing Freedom
Chicago History Museum
Chicago, Ongoing

Under the overarching theme that the United States has fought and struggled for freedom throughout its entire existence, the Chicago History Museum explores stories and conflicts from the nation’s past—including women’s suffrage, school boycotts and Japanese internment—that have shaped our rights and liberties. For more information, visit www.chicagohs.org.

Betsy Ross: The Life Behind the Legend
Winterthur Museum and Country Estate
Winterthur, Del., through January 2, 2011

The tale of Betsy Ross as a simple seamstress who created the first American flag has been passed down as a legendary episode in American history. Starting October 2, 2010, the Winterthur Museum will showcase an exhibit that presents a factual account of the life of Betsy Ross, providing an opportunity to better understand this hardworking Philadelphia upholsterer whom Americans have immortalized. The exhibition includes flags, fabricated cartridge cases, and curtains with handcrafted fringe and tassels as examples of the products of Betsy Ross’ five decades as an upholsterer, seamstress and flagmaker. For more information, visit www.winterthur.org.
The Furniture of John Shearer, 1790–1820: “A True North Britain”
The DAR Museum, Washington, D.C.
October 8, 2010, through February 26, 2011

THE DAR MUSEUM presents an exhibition of inlaid furniture by John Shearer, a carpenter and joiner who worked in the backcountry of Northern Virginia and western Maryland. Shearer was one of many Lowland Scots who identified with England while maintaining their own Scottish identity, which explains why much of his work features pro-British symbolism. For example, an inlay memorial to famous British Admiral Horatio Nelson and his commanders who fought at the Battle of Trafalgar ended up on the chest of drawers of a young German-American woman. The exhibition provides political context for Shearer’s messages, showing that his customers were not secret loyalists but individuals living in a rapidly changing period of history, politically associated with a new country but culturally still aligned with the old.

Opening reception sponsored by SE
FOR THE PAST 20 YEARS, the Chandler Family Association has been compiling more than 80,000 genealogical records from Chandlers all over the world. Now, it is unveiling a new computer database that will help any Chandler individual trace his or her family history through the 400 years of Chandler family research that the database houses.

The database is expected to expand as more Chandler descendants participate in the research. Before the founding of the Chandler DNA Project that compared DNA “fingerprints” of male Chandler participants to group them into family lines, the paper-based genealogical records had been insufficiently and sometimes incorrectly grouped and categorized. The Chandler DNA Project has led to many genealogical discoveries, including the realization that some Chandler lines did not actually descend from the immigrant John Chandler, who arrived in North America in 1610.

Through the work of the Chandler DNA Project and the Chandler Family Association, the computer database now contains more than 60 distinct Chandler lines and can help Chandler individuals research their lineage easily. The association will present the database at the group’s annual meeting September 16–18, 2010, in Hampton, Va.

For more information, visit www.thecfa.org.
The namesake of Le Ray de Chaumont Chapter, Watertown, N.Y., was Frenchman Jacques Donatien Le Ray de Chaumont, who aided the Revolutionary cause with large monetary contributions from his personal wealth. He also appealed to the French government on behalf of the Colonies and gave Benjamin Franklin the free use of his chateau at Passy, France, during his diplomatic service. For nine years, the spacious house was the headquarters for all American diplomatic activities in Europe. The home has been pointed out to generations of American tourists as the Franklin house. De Chaumont’s financial position later grew perilous due to the U.S. government’s inability to repay the money he had loaned. With the assistance of his son, James, as well as Franklin, de Chaumont was eventually able to recover a portion of the funds.

The Bernard Romans Chapter, Columbus, Miss., is proud to bear the name of the distinguished Dutch-born botanist, engineer, mathematician, artist, surveyor, engraver, writer, cartographer, linguist, soldier and seaman. Romans, who explored the lands along the Tombigbee River with William Burtram in the early 1770s, is thought to be one of the first white men to visit the Columbus area. His most famous work, A Concise Natural History of East and West Florida, published in 1775, is a valuable reference about the region during the period of British control. Though employed as a surveyor by the British, Romans was a loyal American who, during the Revolution, became captain of a unit in Pennsylvania. In 1780 he was taken prisoner when the British captured the ship carrying him from New London, Conn., to Charleston, S.C. Held captive for the remainder of the war, Romans died aboard ship during his homeward voyage.

Newly discovered correspondence (left) dating to 1940 between Mary Holloway VanMeter, Organizing Regent of Hart Chapter, Winchester, Ky., and Chapter Historian Addie Martin reacquainted the chapter with its original namesakes. Chapter histories and newspaper articles cited various members of the Hart family as inspiration for the chapter name. But Mrs. VanMeter’s response to Ms. Martin’s inquiries about the formation of the chapter reveals the true namesakes to be brothers Thomas, David and Nathaniel Hart. The three were partners in Richard Henderson’s Transylvania Company, which established the short-lived colony of Transylvania, founded Boonesborough—one of the first fortified stations in present-day Kentucky—and organized a central government for the settlement. Former Chapter Regent Leslie Rogers Miller, Mrs. VanMeter’s great-granddaughter, had the privilege of serving as regent 100 years after her ancestor organized the chapter in 1908.

Does your chapter name have an unusual story behind it? E-mail a description to americanspirit@dar.org.
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Robert Rogers’ action-packed life is the subject of a new biography, and two contributing writers reveal the fruits of genealogical research.

A One-time American Hero

The capture and execution of Nathan Hale as an American spy is a story known to most schoolchildren, immortalized by his declared regret “that I have but one life to lose for my country.” It is less well-known that Hale’s captor was Robert Rogers—a fellow American, a hero of the French and Indian War, and arguably the father of today’s military special forces.

How Rogers came to find himself on the British side is wonderfully, and tragically, described by John F. Ross in War on the Run: the Epic Story of Robert Rogers and the Conquest of America’s First Frontier (Bantam, 2009).

The classic 1940 film “Northwest Passage” focused mainly on Rogers’ attack against an American Indian settlement during the French and Indian War. Its title referred to Rogers’ lifelong obsession with finding such a route from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The real Rogers’ life was even more exciting—and action-packed—than his celluloid counterpart’s.

The son of Scots-Irish immigrants, Rogers was born in Massachusetts and grew up in the forests of New Hampshire, hunting, fishing and traipsing over the countryside while unknowingly developing skills that would serve him well in the future. It was a hard life, helping his family coax a living from the soil, woods and waters, but he learned to improvise and adapt to sudden changes in fortune.

One of the most wrenching was King George’s War, which erupted in 1744 when France declared war on Britain. The French and their American Indian allies raided widely and, after one grisly attack near his home, the 15-year-old Rogers enlisted as a militia scout and ranger. Four years later, an American Indian raiding party destroyed the family farm, burning buildings and cutting down their orchard.

Bad luck seemed to haunt Rogers over the next few years, and he came close to imprisonment when, desperate, he became involved in counterfeiting. But the French and Indian War broke out just as the law would have closed its fist around him, and, as the captain of a 50-man company, Rogers was able to march off to battle.

Ross’ account of the war occupies much of the book, with Rogers in almost nonstop action, much of it involving savage, bloody fighting and considerable physical hardship. Having learned to stalk game as a youngster and observing from the American Indians how to fight in the wilderness, Rogers refined these lessons into his “28 Rules for Rangering.” These rules came to guide not only the training of 18th-century “special ops” warriors, but also their modern counterparts’ techniques and esprit.

Even while he fought for his life in the deep woods, Rogers carried a vision of an all-American continent—and a dream of finding the fabled Northwest Passage that could open the West to American settlement. He dreamed of leading the expedition that would locate the route and secure his fortune.

Rogers’ fortunes were often precarious. A man of his energy, talents and spirit could make powerful enemies. In 1767, he was falsely accused of being a spy for the French and imprisoned for a time after the war. He cleared his name, if not his reputation, of those charges.

Rogers met his match in Thomas Gage, commander of the British forces in America during the French and Indian War. Ultimately, Gage refused Rogers’ financial claims from the war, leading to the latter being thrown into debtors’ prison in Britain for nearly two years.

Freed in mid-1775, Rogers returned to an America in rebellion. Patriots suspected him of being a British spy, or at least a sympathizer. The final blow came when he was arrested on his way to Philadelphia on suspicion of being involved in an assassination plot against George Washington.

Rogers escaped jail and made his way to British lines, where he offered his considerable talents. He was ordered to raise a battalion of rangers and was looking for likely prospects when he spotted Hale. The young man’s demeanor apparently raised his suspicions and, disguising himself, Rogers struck up a conversation with Hale. He lured a confession out of Hale, inadvertently creating a martyr to the cause.

Ross argues that Rogers was at best a half-hearted Tory who served the British side because America had suspected and rejected him. Rogers would fight for the British and spend his last years in Britain. His was a hardscrabble life, filled with violence and fear, loss and wild hope, great potential and devastating defeat. Ross’ biography makes for gripping reading about a one-time American hero whose legacy lives on today.

— Bill Hudgins
In her career as a photo curator and genealogical researcher, American Spirit contributing writer Maureen Taylor has long been fascinated by the first generation of Americans—men, women and children bound together by having lived during the Revolutionary War. With the help of friends and fellow genealogy experts, Taylor spent six years finding images of the last survivors of the war who were still alive when photography emerged in the 1840s and in researching the stories behind the images. The results of that remarkable research can be found in her new book, *The Last Muster: Images of the Revolutionary War Generation* (Kent State University Press, 2010). The compilation of 70 images—primarily daguerreotypes, ambrotypes and carte de visite, or paper photographs—of the Revolutionary War generation features veterans, loyalists, American Indians, African-Americans, children who witnessed battles and aided soldiers, and women who nursed the wounded and even took up arms themselves. Accompanied by biographies, legends and quotes, the photographs allow readers to better understand the part that ordinary Americans played in the formation of our country. The book is available online at upress.kent.edu/books/Taylor_M.htm.

“The lesson of this book is for all of us... When a cause is right and just, it is honorable to take it up and fight to the death, and the simplest common person who does so is a hero forever.” —from the Forward by Joan Severa

In a quest to trace her genealogical roots, genealogist and American Spirit contributing writer Leslie Albrecht Huber followed the immigration journeys of her ancestors and chronicled those experiences as well as her family history in *The Journey Takers* (Foundation Books, 2010). Huber’s book presents the stories of her great-great-great-grandparents who lived in Germany, England and Sweden, and the three families that merged after immigrating to Utah. For example, Huber tells the German side of her family’s story through the eyes of Georg and Mina Albrecht, who, in 1880, gathered their nine children and traveled to Hamburg where they boarded a ship for the United States. Aided by thousands of hours of research, Huber traces her ancestors’ paths throughout Europe, wandering through her families’ hometowns and farms and describing how these encounters affected her. She weaves together thorough research, events in her own life and scenes from her ancestors’ lives to connect readers with an influential group of 19th-century European immigrants—and perhaps inspire those readers to take a similar journey.

The book is available through familychronicle.com/thejourneytakers.htm.
Spirited Adventures

Mount Desert Island, Home to Bar Harbor and Acadia National Park

by COURTNEY PETER
Each morning, the mountain peaks and pink granite cliffs of Mount Desert Island along the coast of Maine provide landfall for some of the earliest rays of sunlight to greet the East Coast. Coupled with the knowledge that Bar Harbor, the island’s premier town, was originally named Eden, and that Acadia, the name of the national park located there, means “heaven on earth” in French, it’s difficult to escape the conclusion that this is one idyllic island.

EARLY DAYS

Shell heaps left behind by American Indians help trace human history on Mount Desert Island back at least 5,000 years, to the Penobscot and Passamaquoddy American Indians, part of a group collectively known as the Wabanaki. Nicknamed “people of the dawn,” the tribes navigated the waterways in birch-bark canoes and moved seasonally to follow the available food supply.

Upon landing on the island during a 1604 expedition along the
Maine coastline, French explorer Samuel Champlain named it *Îles des Monts Déserts*, or “Island of Barren Mountains.” Nine years later, two French Jesuits and a group of about 50 settlers arrived to establish a mission. Angered by France’s settlement attempt, English colonists from Jamestown dispatched a warship to confront their rivals, who were completely surprised and easily defeated. Enterprising Frenchman Sieur de la Mothe Cadillac’s brief efforts in 1688 to launch a feudal state in coastal Maine also failed. The ongoing power struggle between England and France discouraged permanent settlement of the region.

Then, in 1761, Abraham Somes founded a town now known as Somesville on Mount Desert Island, and soon thereafter the Treaty of Paris awarded the British control of New England. Villages spread across the island, joined in 1796 by the town of Eden. (The name was changed to Bar Harbor in 1918.) Bar Harbor remained prohibitively remote, however, and until the mid-19th century it supported little other than fishing villages and local industries such as farming, lumbering, shipbuilding and granite quarrying.

The American public’s introduction to the area can be traced to an unlikely source. Two young artists from the Hudson River School of Painting, Thomas Cole and Frederic Church, journeyed to Bar Harbor in the mid-1800s to capture its magnificent vistas on canvas. Their works became popular among city dwellers who craved images of unspoiled countryside. Soon, merely looking at paintings of the coastal Maine landscape was not enough—people wanted to see it for themselves.

**FROM RUSTICATORS’ RETREAT TO A GILDED GETAWAY**

Most early Bar Harbor visitors, called rusticators, were artists, academics, scientists and writers who traveled to the seaside outpost in search of inspiration and tranquility. They eagerly claimed whatever rudimentary accommodations they could find, bunking in islanders’ spare bedrooms and attics for the chance to immerse themselves in the unique beauty of the area. Tourism increased in the 1850s, due in part to more reliable steamboat and rail transportation, inspiring local businessman Tobias Roberts to build the island’s first hotel, the Agamont House, in 1855. Bar Harbor initially relied on its natural attractions to satisfy tourists, stressing function over fashion and nature over nuance.

The History Journal of the Mount Desert Island Historical Society, 2001–2002. Its charms attracted prominent American families such as the Astors, Carnegies, Morgans, Rockefellers and Vanderbilts. According to the Bar Harbor Historical Society, “Bar Harbor, with its wealthy and powerful summer visitors, had become a rival with Newport, R.I., as the place to be seen and to play in the 1880s through the first part of the 20th century.”

Once again the summer visitors outgrew their accommodations, this time eschewing Bar Harbor’s hotels in favor of “cottages,” the falsely modest term the wealthy used to describe their extravagant shoreline mansions, which numbered almost 200 by 1896. Exclusive social and recreational clubs also popped up around the island. For the next several decades, opulence and refinement reigned in a town that had once relished its rustic character.

The Great Depression and World War II curtailed the lavish ways of the Cottage Era, and a devastating fire in October 1947 brought it to an end. When powerful winds intensified a seemingly benign fire, flames rapidly spread across the island. Neighboring fishermen ferried people to safety, and others fled via a smoldering make-shift roadway. By the time the blaze was extinguished in mid-November, it had burned more than 17,000 acres, destroying dozens of summer cottages, more than 100 homes and five hotels.

CONSERVATIONIST COTTAGERS

The cottagers’ lasting impact extends beyond the remaining mansions on Millionaire’s Row, thanks to a pair of summer residents—Charles W. Eliot, president of Harvard, and George B. Dorr—who initiated the movement to preserve Mount Desert Island as a national park.

In 1901, Eliot and Dorr established the Hancock County Trustees of Public Reservations, a land trust that set out to obtain property on Mount Desert Island to preserve for public use. Dorr led the land drive, collecting 6,000 acres by 1913. The federal government accepted the trustees’ donated acreage, and in 1916 President Woodrow Wilson established Sieur de Monts National Monument. Determined to see the preserve one day recognized as a national park, Dorr continued to accumulate property. In 1919, the monument officially became Lafayette National Park, and Dorr was named superintendent, a position he held for 25 years. The park was renamed Acadia National Park in 1929.

SMALL BUT MIGHTY

Acadia’s creation introduced a new type of national park. Not only was it the first one established on the East Coast, but the park is also smaller than most, at approximately 47,000 acres. Acadia is not hindered by its relatively small size, however; more than 2 million people visit annually.

Situated between Penobscot Bay and Canada in the Downeast Maine region of the state—named for a sailing term describing the area’s prevailing winds—Acadia National Park straddles the boundary between the evergreen and deciduous forests of North America. Wildlife and plants from the extreme reaches of each region mingle in the unique environment, creating a diverse ecosystem that’s further enhanced by the surrounding wetlands. The Gulf of

Upcoming Events

Acadia Night Sky Festival
September 9–12, 2010
www.nightskyfestival.org
Bar Harbor and Acadia National Park strive to ensure that the night sky remains clear and unobscured by artificial light sources. Through education, science and the arts, this community celebration promotes the protection and enjoyment of the spectacular night sky by hosting a special boat cruise, photography workshop and stargazing events.

13th Annual Mount Desert Island Garlic Festival
September 18, 2010
www.nostrano.com
Local restaurants, musicians, brewers and garlic growers celebrate the garlic harvest with a variety of foods, beverages and entertainment while raising thousands of dollars for local nonprofit organizations.

Mount Desert Island Marathon
October 17, 2010
www.mdimarathon.org
More than 800 runners are expected to enter this Boston Marathon qualifier race, held during the peak of fall foliage season and named “most scenic” by Runner’s World Magazine. A weekend full of special events, including Chili at the Finish, accompanies the marathon.

American Spirit • September/October 2010
Spirited Adventures

Maine is one of the world’s premier whale habitats, and as a resting point for migrating birds that also attracts seabirds, the park is a bird-watcher’s paradise.

Shaping the varied environment now known as a haven of serenity required considerable force. A collision of prehistoric land masses and, later, advancing glaciers supplied the muscle necessary to produce sheer coastal precipices, 26 mountain peaks and one well-known chunk of glacial debris. The 14-ton Bubble Rock reached its unlikely perch atop South Bubble Mountain after a 50-mile ride on a glacier.

Today, Acadia National Park covers almost half of Mount Desert Island; part of Isle au Haut, 15 miles to the southwest; the mainland’s Schoodic Peninsula; and a collection of small offshore islands. Its signature feature, the 27-mile Park Loop Road, leads travelers to must-see attractions. At high tide, the surf crashes into the natural inlet at Thunder Hole, sending water soaring up to 40 feet high with an impressive roar.

Despite the chilly ocean temperature, Sand Beach is another popular gathering spot, and climbers gravitate toward Otter Cliffs, which rise directly above the sea. Jordan Pond House, founded in the 1870s and famous for its afternoon tea, lures visitors with popovers and strawberry jam. But the highlight of the loop circuit may be the finale: Cadillac Mountain, which at 1,530 feet tall is the highest peak on the island.

Park Loop Road is not the only distinctive path in Acadia National Park. The park’s network of carriage roads, composed of granite quarried on the island, is an engineering marvel. More than 40 miles long and punctuated by 17 picturesque stone bridges, the broken-stone pathways were commissioned by John D. Rockefeller Jr. and built between 1913 and 1940 on what at the time was his private property. Later, they were part of the 11,000 acres Rockefeller donated to the park.

Biking, horseback riding or walking this labyrinth of wilderness roads reveals views of woodlands, mountains, lakes and the surrounding islands.

The roadways of Schoodic Peninsula provide an alternative route for bikers seeking less crowded paths. The remote Isle au Haut, just 6 miles long and 2 miles wide and home to about 65 year-round residents, boasts rugged trails, several inns and campgrounds, and Black Dinah Chocolatiers’ artisinal candies.

HARBOR TOWN

No longer exclusively a retreat for the wealthy, Bar Harbor now serves as the gateway to Acadia National Park, which borders the town on three sides. The coastal village with a year-round population of about 10,000 features plenty of its own attractions, too. Visitors can stroll to Bar Island, which at low tide is connected to the town by the sandbar that inspired both names. The town offers fishing expeditions, boat tours and spas.

A varied collection of museums (see sidebar) and numerous research institutes devoted to marine animals and native wildlife, including the College of the Atlantic, Mount Desert Island’s only university, provide learning opportunities. Local shops stock wares such as sweetgrass baskets woven by American Indian artisans and rare watermelon tourmaline, a multicolored variety of the state gemstone. (Many shops operate only during peak season, May–October, but some stay open year-round.)

But the best souvenirs are also the most fleeting: fall foliage, wild blueberries and Maine lobster, fished from the rocky bottom of the Gulf of Maine. September’s waning summer days herald the beginning of the area’s spectacular fall leaf display, which is amplified by the contrast between evergreens and deciduous trees. Leaf season usually peaks between October 13 and 22, though the timing fluctuates a bit from year to year. Maine lobster is available in many forms, such as on rolls, in stew or simply steamed. The state is also famous for its wild blueberries, the smaller, sweeter counterparts to their cultivated cousins.

Bar Harbor, Acadia National Park and island towns such as Northeast Harbor, Seal Harbor and Somesville ensure a memorable trip for every Mount Desert Island visitor. The only problem is deciding what to do first.

Courtney Peter traveled to Jackson Hole, Wyo., and wrote about its history for the May/June issue of the magazine.

Bar Harbor Museums

The Abbe Museum offers exhibitions and educational programs devoted to the heritage, culture, history and archeology of Maine’s American Indians. Through the end of the year, the museum presents “Headline News: Wabanaki Sovereignty in the 21st Century,” examining modern relations between the tribe and the government.

Learn more about the town’s extravagant Cottage Era at the Bar Harbor Historical Society, which manages a collection including Gilded Age photos, paintings and clothing.

Two local museums are dedicated to specific native species. The Bar Harbor Whale Museum focuses on whales and seals in the Gulf of Maine and works closely with local research institution Allied Whale. The Bar Harbor Oceanarium includes a lobster hatchery and lobster museum, in addition to marine exhibits and an outdoor salt marsh.

Another pair of museums focuses on the natural habitat of Maine. The exhibits at the George B. Dorr Museum of Natural History, located at Acadia National Park’s original headquarters, are produced by students at the College of the Atlantic. Sieur de Monts Spring and Nature Center uses hands-on displays and activities to teach visitors about the park’s plant and animal life.
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Next time you drop a letter in the mail or grab the latest issue of *American Spirit* from your mailbox, consider for a moment that the postal service we take for granted was in many respects as revolutionary as our war for freedom. In the years after independence, the postal system helped promote and instill the principles of republican government from the cities to the most remote farm village.

The notion that anyone could send or receive a letter or subscribe to a newspaper or magazine through the mail was almost radical to many 18th-century minds here and abroad—radical and possibly dangerous to the new government. To others, the easy dissemination of news and information among all citizens instead of a privileged few seemed essential to “keeping our revolution,” to paraphrase Benjamin Franklin. Thus, the postal system was an experiment within the great experiment of America itself.

*by BIL HUGINS*

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**MAIL CALL**

*The Birth of America’s Postal System*
“NEITHER SNOW, NOR RAIN, NOR HEAT, NOR GLOOM OF NIGHT STAYS THESE COURIERS FROM THE SWIFT COMPLETION OF THEIR APPOINTED ROUNDS.” – Herodotus

The unofficial motto of the U.S. Postal Service
SCATTERED MESSAGES

For much of the 1600s, the scattered Colonies had no organized postal system. That’s not to say people didn’t send and receive letters and documents—government officials especially needed to communicate with others—but there was no systematic approach to moving the mail.

People entrusted messages to travelers, neighbors, servants and slaves, sea captains, and even friendly American Indians, according to *The Early History Of The Colonial Post-Office* by Mary E. Woolley (Papers from the Historical Seminary of Brown University, 1894). Communities designated places where residents could drop off or pick up mail. These were usually taverns or inns, but private dwellings also were employed.

For example, on November 5, 1639, the Massachusetts General Court designated Richard Fairbanks’ tavern in Boston as “the place appointed for all letters, which are brought from beyond the Seas, or are to be sent thither.” Fairbanks could collect a penny from each addressee; however, no one was obliged to use his services.

Such a system obviously couldn’t hold to a schedule, which discouraged even officials from taking time to write their colleagues. In a 1652 letter cited by Woolley, Samuel Symonds of Ipswich complains to John Winthrop Jr. at Pequot, “I cannot say but its besides my intentions that I write not more frequently unto you: I can only plead this for my excuse (soe far as it will goe) … and the uncertainty when and how to convey letters.”

In 1672, New York Governor Francis Lovelace tried to start a regular monthly mail service between New York and Boston. The post rider sorted letters and other material into different bags according to their destination. Official documents went into a locked box. The rider not only had to deliver mail but also try to ascertain the best possible route and blaze the trail by marking trees.

The first rider left the settlement of New York at the tip of Manhattan in January 1673 and made his first stop at the village of Harlem. He dropped off the items for residents at the designated coffeehouse where they would be “well thumbed” before their recipients could pick them up, Woolley writes. As was the custom then (and into the 19th century), the recipients likely paid the fee upon delivery.

War with the Dutch and the ensuing takeover of New York ended this experiment. Service did not resume when England regained control of the area in 1674. The resumption of the service was discussed in the 1680s, but the idea never went anywhere. Mail moved, but not as part of a governmental scheme.

In the South, much of the population was spread out on large plantations far from areas where post offices would be located. Official documents and correspondence with Britain composed most of the mail. The Virginia legislature in 1660 had ordered that “all letters superscribed for the service of his Majesty or publique shall be immediately conveyed from plantation to plantation,” on pain of a fine of 350 pounds of tobacco. Other Southern Colonies followed this model.

A COLONIAL POSTAL SYSTEM IS BORN

In 1691–1692, King William and Queen Mary granted a royal patent to Thomas Neale, a member of Parliament and master of the British Mint, to set up a Colonial postal system. He appointed Andrew Hamilton, a Scottish immigrant merchant and governor of New Jersey, to run the system.

The individual Colonies were not required to participate in the system, and those that did negotiated their own rules. The Northern Colonies worked out deals, but Maryland’s leaders took the matter under consideration and never acted on it. Virginia showed interest, but stipulated that Neale had to shoulder virtually all costs; that public letters—the bulk of the mail—were postage-free; and that Neale would not have a monopoly. Not surprisingly, Neale declined.

The Internal Colonial Postal Union began weekly service on May 1, 1693. Rates for letters from New York to or from Europe, the West Indies and other foreign destinations were 9 pennies; from Virginia, 12 pennies, and to
or from any place not exceeding eighty miles from New York, four pence half penny.

From 1693–1697, postage collected totaled a bit more than 1,456 pounds, while expenses were 3,817 pounds. Neale had to make up the difference. As the system expanded and mail volume grew, revenue also increased. In “The Colonial Post-office,” (The American Historical Review, Vol. 21, No. 2. January 1916), William Smith notes that by 1699, revenue had risen enough to cover everything except Hamilton's salary.

Neale died in 1699, having assigned his rights to Hamilton and Robert West, an Englishman. The British government bought them out in 1707 and named Hamilton's son John as deputy postmaster general in America. The system continued to lose money. Smith notes that when there was a 200-pound deficit in 1709, Queen Anne kept it from getting bigger by refusing to pay her postmasters general.

The queen was not the only one unhappy with the postal system. Colonists criticized its service, reliability and limited geographic coverage, and complained that letters were opened and read by others en route.

In 1710, Queen Anne overhauled both the British and Colonial postal systems via the British Post Office Act of 1710. It created a deputy postmaster general for the Colonies and established uniform rates for carrying letters. The act significantly raised rates for transoceanic mail. Americans had been paying a penny or twopence for letters from Britain; the new law raised the postage to 1 shilling for a single-sheet letter weighing less than 1 ounce, and 4 shillings if it weighed as much as 1 ounce, according to Smith.

Virginia objected to the cost of the system—indeed, many colonists regarded the postal rates as an unjust tax—and blocked efforts to establish a post office. Virginia remained outside the Colonial system until 1732 when its governor, Alexander Spotswood, was named deputy postmaster general.

FRANKLIN MAKES IMPROVEMENTS

Spotswood's most important act was to appoint Benjamin Franklin as postmaster of Philadelphia in 1737. The brilliant and energetic young Franklin worked diligently to improve service and, in 1753, he and William Hunter, postmaster of Williamsburg, Va., were named joint postmasters general for the Colonies.

For the next 21 years, the Colonial postal service enjoyed something of a golden era. In 1737, it took up to six weeks for post riders to make the round trip between Philadelphia and Boston in good weather. Franklin and Hunter established a year-round, weekly schedule and cut the travel time from six weeks to three. With improved delivery and schedules, the system made its first profit in 1760. Further improvements, especially the use of night post riders, ultimately enabled a letter to go from Philadelphia to Boston in six days.

However, while service improved in the North, it lagged in the South, primarily because those Colonies refused to fund it, according to A Short History of the Mail Service (Smithsonian Institution Press, 1970) by Carl H. Scheele, associate curator in charge, Division of Philately and Postal History, Smithsonian Institution.

The British government fired Franklin in 1774 because of his increasing involvement in the growing independence movement. That same year, British authorities prohibited printer and newspaper publisher William Goddard from sending his newspaper, The Maryland Journal, through the mail. The outspoken publisher's opinions had angered the authorities, who were cracking down on dissent.

Outraged, Goddard hired riders to distribute his paper and warned his fellow patriots that "Letters are liable to
be stopped & opened by ministerial mandates, and their Contents construed into treasonable Conspiracies; and News Papers, those necessary and important vehicles, especially in Times of public Danger, may be rendered of little avail for want of Circulation."

Goddard had already sought support for an alternative system from several Colonial legislatures. By May of 1775, he had launched the Constitutional Post. He eventually set up 30 offices and made it possible for the Colonies to communicate securely during the run-up to revolution; for this reason, he became known as “the Father of the American Postal System.”

(Goddard’s sister, Mary Katharine, was also a printer and newspaper editor, first in Rhode Island, then in Philadelphia and Baltimore. In 1775, she became postmistress of Baltimore—one of the first in the Colonies. She earned lasting fame in January 1777 by printing the first copies of the Declaration of Independence that included all the names of the signers, which has become known as the Goddard Broadside edition. American Spirit featured her in its March-April 2006 issue.)

Goddard’s system operated until the Continental Congress assumed responsibility for the postal service in July 1775 and appointed Franklin postmaster general. Postmasters and post riders were exempt from military service. “During the War,” Scheele writes, “the most important task of the postal service was to maintain efficient and rapid communications between Congress and the armies. The regular service for civilian purposes became a secondary concern.” To ensure secure and reliable communications, Congress also set up a courier system in the North for government correspondence, while three “advice boats” connected Congress to the Southern Colonies, he adds.

The postal system underwent another change of authority in 1781 when the Articles of Confederation empowered Congress to establish post offices. Postmaster General Ebenezer Hazard served from 1782 to 1789, focusing on establishing service to the frontiers and also re-establishing regular service with Europe. He contracted with stagecoach companies to carry mail and reduced the time for mail to travel between New York and Philadelphia to as little as 22 hours.

UNITING THE NATION

The ratification of the Constitution in 1789 put the postal system under the control of the new federal government. At that time, there were 75 post offices—mostly in cities and major towns—and 2,400 miles of post roads serving about 4 million people.

As in so many other areas, the Constitution did not spell out details of the postal system. The responsibility for shaping it lay with Congress, which passed a series of acts defining rates, routes and other details. From the standpoint of nation-building, one of the most important was the Act of February 20, 1792. One of its key provisions—deeply discounted postage for newspapers mailed to subscribers—is credited with helping bond the fractious states into a nation.

One of the outspoken supporters for exempting newspapers from postage charges was the remarkable Dr. Benjamin Rush of Philadelphia, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, delegate to the Continental Congress, confidant of presidents and staunch supporter of a strong central government.

Rush’s “Address to the People of the United States” in 1787 had set forth a vision of what a widespread, readily available postal service could mean to the new nation. To adapt “the principles, morals and manners of our citizens to the republican forms of government,” it was “absolutely necessary” for the central government to distribute information throughout the land, Rush wrote. He believed the postal system was the only suitable medium for doing this.
Others feared an excess of citizen involvement would tear the infant nation apart. In the Federalist Papers, James Madison argued that America was too big for a democratic form of government. Her citizens could never be well informed to participate meaningfully.

“The very inability of the citizenry to secure the necessary information to create durable factional alliances, Madison explained, constituted an important key to the United States’ survival,” writes Richard R. John in *Spreading the News: The American Postal System From Franklin to Morse* (Harvard University Press, 1998). “Unable to secure access to information, the citizenry would find it impossible to establish enduring institutions that might contravene the common good.”

After much debate, Congress agreed to allow newspapers to go through the mail for a nominal fee, far less than that for letters. It proved to be a success, commercially and politically. “No other institution had the capacity to transmit such a large volume of information on such a regular basis over such an enormous geographical expanse,” John writes.

**POSTAGE PAID**

In *Democracy in America* (Penguin Classics, 2003), Alexis de Tocqueville described his astonishment at finding a high level of awareness of current events in the world even on the edges of the American frontier. Tocqueville attributed this to the efficient postal system, which distributed newspapers and letters across the land—and strengthened the nation’s sense of itself at the same time.

In the four decades between the adoption of the federal Constitution in 1789 and Andrew Jackson’s election in 1828, the American postal system expanded from the minor adjunct of a neocolonial bureaucracy to the central administrative apparatus of an independent state. John observed. “The postal system was the central government” for many Americans, he added. It was certainly its most regularly visible manifestation—both in delivery of mail and in the appointment of postmasters.

By 1824, the United States had 74 post offices for every 100,000 inhabitants, while Great Britain had 17 per 100,000 and France had only four per 100,000. The mail made citizens feel connected to the distant central government, and it was available to all.

At least, it was available if you could pay. In the early 1800s, postage for letters was based on how far the letter had to travel and the number of sheets of paper. After 1816, it cost 25 cents—then a significant sum—to send a single-sheet letter more than 400 miles, according to Scheele. Addressees, not senders, typically paid the postage. Most people went to the post office to retrieve their mail. Home delivery, rare even in large cities, cost an additional two cents per letter.

Not surprisingly, letter writers generally filled every bit of space on a sheet of paper, including the margins, and even turned the sheet upside down and wrote between the first set of lines. Some also tried to conceal messages in the cheaper-to-mail newspapers.

**REFORM BRINGS HIGHER VOLUME**

The high rates and a growing dissatisfaction with services prompted calls for postal reform. As telegraphy began to reduce the need to mail news from town to town, postal authorities were urged to reduce and reform letter rates to encourage greater use.

Starting in 1845, the Department of the Post Office switched to the now-familiar weight-based rating system and dramatically reduced postage fees on letters; rates still varied according to how far they had to travel.

The volume of letters increased, though slowly at first. In *The Postal Age* (University of Chicago Press, 2006), David M. Henkin writes that Americans had to develop a “postal culture”—just as many modern Americans have had to learn to use digital forms of communication. They had to develop the habit of writing letters and of depending on a reliable, regular system to send and deliver messages.

For most people up to that time, letters were rare and precious, and their delivery slow and uncertain. As Stephen E. Ambrose noted in *Undaunted Courage* (Simon & Schuster, 1996), letters connected friends, family and loved ones separated by great distances. Given the vicissitudes of early 19th-century life, neither sender nor recipient ignored the possibility that an accident or illness might befall the other before another exchange occurred. People saved correspondence, which is why a huge trove of letters is available to genealogists, historians, social scientists and others.
Americans posted only about 300,000 letters in 1790; in 1830, the number had risen to 14 million, or about one letter per free person. Thanks to the reforms, from 1840 to 1860 the annual number of letters carried rose from 27 million to about 161 million, or from about 1.61 letters per person to 5.15, according to Henkin.

**WOMEN’S CORRESPONDENCE**

Because most people still picked up their mail at the post office, the government agency went on a construction spree in urban areas. Major post offices quickly became bustling crossroads for all levels of society. The idea of street-corner mailboxes hadn’t yet taken root, nor had home and business delivery. So anyone who wanted to mail something or expected a letter had to troop down to the post office.

Social critics decried what they saw as an unintended consequence of postal reform. This shift toward a more anonymous and private mail system enabled women to send and receive letters without the close supervision of a husband, father or other male. Women had often relied on others to carry their correspondence—servants, relatives, friends. Now they could increasingly handle it themselves, and who knew what or to whom they were writing?

Not surprisingly, suspicion was often cast on women who frequently sent and picked up correspondence at post offices. Were they there on innocent errands, to further a clandestine relationship or, worst of all, to meet a lover?

Bizarre as this may sound now, there were some grounds for suspicion: Prostitutes and their customers regularly used the “drop mail” service—letters posted to and received at the same post office—to arrange liaisons.

The growing presence of women in the bustling urban post offices—which were nevertheless largely male preserves—also prompted architects to design separate entrances and vestibules for ladies. The consensus was that they needed shelter from the coarseness of common crowds, as well as pickpockets and other riffraff who frequented the crowded lobbies.

During the Civil War, proponents of separate facilities argued that they provided a modicum of privacy for women who received distressing or tragic news about a loved one away at war.

**STILL A BARGAIN**

Although electronic forms of communication increasingly supplant traditional mail, it is difficult to imagine life without the postal system. We complain about climbing rates and curtailed service—a proposal earlier this year to eliminate Saturday delivery was roundly panned—but the U.S. mail remains a comparative bargain.

For instance, it costs about 69 cents (€56 Euros) to mail a letter weighing less than 0.7 ounces within France, compared with 44 cents for a 1-ounce letter within the United States, and that includes Alaska and Hawaii.

Besides helping to knit the country together, our mail system played a role in getting people accustomed to communicating regularly over long distances out of simple friendship, not just a need to share important news. Growing literacy made this easier, certainly, but low cost and dependable delivery schedules encouraged it.

The greeting card industry owes much to this phenomenon. So do the digital offspring of the postal system: the Internet, e-mail, texting, instant messaging, social media—and the publishers of *American Spirit*. 

Bill Hudgins wrote about Minneapolis and St. Paul for the July/August issue.
Philately, or the collection and study of postage and imprinted stamps, is pursued mainly by older people who started collecting or were exposed to the hobby for a period of time during their childhood, says Ken Martin, executive director for the American Philatelic Society. “Even if you go back to the 1930s, there were very few stamp collectors in their late teens or 20s. Hobbies tend to be pursued when you have free time and resources,” Martin says.
Collectibles

A private New York City carrier called City Despatch Post issued the first adhesive stamps in the United States on February 1, 1842. The American Post Office Department bought the business from owner Alexander M. Greig and continued to use adhesive stamps to prepay postage.

On March 3, 1847, Congress authorized the creation of U.S. postage stamps. The first general-issue postage stamps—a 5-cent stamp depicting Benjamin Franklin and a 10-cent stamp picturing George Washington—went on sale in New York City on July 1, 1847. For nine years, the two Founding Fathers were the only faces to appear on U.S. stamps. In 1856 a 5-cent stamp honoring Thomas Jefferson was added, and in 1863 a 2-cent Andrew Jackson stamp was issued. The first president has appeared on more U.S. postage stamps than any other person.

Collectors began to seek American stamps as soon as they were available. "By the 1850s and 1860s, there were the beginnings of shows where dealers could buy and sell postage stamps. [The American Philatelic Society] was founded in 1886, so we celebrate 125 years next year," Martin says.

Many celebrities and famous historical figures have embraced stamp collecting as a hobby. King George V of England possessed one of the largest collections in the world, and President Franklin Roosevelt was such an avid collector that he even designed some U.S. stamps. Celebrities such as Freddie Mercury of the band Queen, John Lennon of the Beatles and tennis star Maria Sharapova have all collected stamps.

How to Start a Collection

To begin a collection of your own, ask family members and friends to save stamps that they receive. You can leave stamps attached to the envelopes or remove them by soaking.

The majority of stamps that people receive in the mail are called definitives. These are generally less than 1 inch square and are printed in large quantities. Rarer stamps include commemoratives, which are larger, more colorful and typically printed only once in smaller quantities; airmail stamps; and revenue stamps. For a different kind of challenge, you can start a collection of stamps from other countries.

To introduce variety to your collection or to locate harder-to-find issues, purchase stamps directly from a dealer or online. Some dealers own stores, which are some of the best resources for beginning collectors. Others create weekend marketplaces called bourses where stamps may be bought, sold or exchanged. In order to tell how much a stamp is worth before attempting to
buy or sell it, collectors often consult
catalogs available at stamp shops or
online. A stamp’s worth also depends
on its condition and rarity. Be sure to
save your duplicate stamps—these are
an important medium for exchanging
stamps with other collectors.

Getting Serious
If you want to become a more seri-
ous collector, decide which types of
stamps you want to collect. According
to the U.S. Postal Service, the most
popular American stamp purchased
without intention for use is the Elvis
Presley stamp. However, the most
famous and valuable stamps are much
rarer and almost legendary among the
collector communities.

One such stamp was an erroneous
version of the Curtiss Jenny, the first
U.S. airmail stamp issued in May 1918.
The Inverted Jenny featured two col-
ors, with a flying plane in the center.
“One sheet of 100 got turned around
at the second printing press, so that
the plane was flying upside down,” Martin
explains. “This sheet was purchased in
1918 for $24 and sold the next week
for $15,000.” Today a single stamp is
worth about $300,000.

The most valuable American stamp
is the 1-cent Z grill, issued around
1870. Only two copies are known
to exist. This 1-cent stamp featuring
Benjamin Franklin is worth about
$3 million in the stamp-collecting mar-
ket today. Other rare stamps include
the Treskilling Yellow, a Swedish
stamp that holds the world’s record
auction sale price for a postage stamp
(sold for $2.3 million in 1996 and resold
for an undisclosed amount in May
2010); the Penny Black, the world’s
first postage stamp; and the Bull’s Eye,
Brazil’s first stamp, issued in 1843.

Although you may never come across
such a rare stamp, you can tailor your
collection to specific varieties. Some
collectors choose to search for postage
stamps from certain countries, while
others focus on a specific type, such
as airmail. The most common trend
in modern philately is topical stamp
collecting, where the collector organ-
izes stamps based on theme. Popular
themes include animals, birds, famous
people, Disney and the Olympics.

Once collectors choose which types
of stamps to collect, organization and
preservation are imperative to main-
taining a valuable collection. A
few basic items—such as stamp
tongs or tweezers for handling,
a magnifying glass for discovering
fine details and an album for storing—can help collectors to
to better organize their stamps. To
attach stamps to the album, you
can purchase stamp mounts or
hinges. However, hinge marks
on mint-condition stamps can
reduce their value, so hinge-less
mounts are preferable.

Stamp collecting not only provides
an enjoyable hobby and challenge, it is
also a social outlet. In America alone,
thousands of clubs and organizations
dedicated to philately and stamp col-
lecting provide a forum for novices and
experienced collectors alike to swap
stamps, tips and stories.

To introduce more variety to your collection or
to locate harder-to-find stamps, purchase them
online or directly from a dealer.
For as long as I can remember, there have been some tall tales floating around my family. For starters, there are the ones about my maternal grandfather’s family owning a grocery store in downtown Youngstown, Ohio, during the Great Depression. Then there are others about my great-grandfather’s rise to the rank of a 32nd-degree Freemason. And finally—my favorite—there’s the one about my grandmother being distantly related to President Theodore Roosevelt.

From the time I was old enough to sit at the dinner table with the rest of the family, I can remember hearing these stories discussed over tea and dessert. But once I reached my mid-20s, I started questioning their validity.

Which of these really happened, and which had been stretched and distorted from years of being passed down through generations? As I grew older—and my grandparents did, too—I had only one choice: Collect and preserve their oral history, so our family can get the stories straight. Earlier this year, I spent a snowy afternoon sitting at my grandparents’ kitchen table with a cup of coffee and a digital recorder. For more than two hours, I asked questions about my grandfather’s childhood, career, marriage and family while he told me everything I needed to know.

What I thought was a unique desire to dive into our family’s oral history is shared by plenty of young women. Adopted at an early age, Darcy Arnold of San Francisco, Calif., started seeking her biological family’s history at age 16.

“For the past few years I’ve been researching my mother’s family, and after finding my father a year ago, I’ve become obsessed with his side,” she says.

Arnold says that she had always wondered about her “other half,” and delving into her history has taught her more about American history than she ever learned in school.

“I want to hear their stories about memories, families and culture. I’ve talked to my dad a lot about growing up in New Orleans,” she adds. “He went on to become a jazz drummer after spending most of his preteen years hanging out at music clubs in the French Quarter. I’m looking forward to learning more about him.”

When Mary-Elizabeth Watson of Kennesaw, Ga., started thinking about preserving her family’s history, she was following in the footsteps of her grandmother.
“My maternal grandmother has always made a great effort to keep our family history alive, and she shared those stories with me as I was growing up,” she says. “Studying my family is a way of making the events in American history personal.”

Watson has been dreaming up a long-term history project for the past few years. Her ultimate goal is to create a unique scrapbook that will include family stories, photographs and images of family heirlooms with the stories behind them. Recently, Watson’s project has taken on a greater importance.

“My maternal grandmother with whom I will be working on this project was recently diagnosed with Lou Gehrig’s Disease. It’s terrible to be working under the shadow of her illness, but it has created awareness among my entire family that our time to learn from her and other family members is extremely limited,” she says. “There is a finite window of opportunity in which to capture this information. Even if you don’t know what you’re going to do with the information, you have to get it while you still can.”

Fortunately, I have my family interviews backed up safely on my computer. My grandparents were able to answer my questions about our family’s tall tales, but what is most important to me is that I’ll always have important life advice that my grandfather shared with me while I sat across the table from him:

“Pick a job you love, marry a man you love, and make sure you love what you do every day,” he said. “You’ll never regret those decisions.”

That’s the kind of history I look forward to passing on to our family’s next generation.

Megan Pacella writes the Class Act column for the magazine.

3 Tips for Collecting Audio Interviews

1. Find the right equipment. Find a reliable digital recording device and take time to familiarize yourself with it. Once your interview is finished, back up the recording on a computer, or save it to a CD that you can share with family members.

2. Prepare in advance. Make a list of eight to 10 interview questions, but be aware that your conversation might take its own path. It’s important that your interviewee is able to recall memories freely, so you can capture important information.

3. Time is of the essence. Capture the oral histories of older generations before it’s too late. Prepare now to record audio testaments at the next family reunion or holiday get-together—or even make a special trip to family members’ homes.

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An Artful Way of Recording Death

By Gaylord Cooper
Of all the endless varieties and designs of quilts, one is truly unique—Elizabeth Roseberry Mitchell’s graveyard quilt (image on page 39). She began stitching it in 1836 in memory of her son, John V., who had died in 1836 at the age of 2. She later added her son Mathias (Bub), who died in 1843 at the age of 19, to the quilt. The graveyard depicted on the quilt top is in Monroe County, Ohio, explains Linda Otto Lipsett in *Elizabeth Roseberry Mitchell’s Graveyard Quilt: An American Pioneer Saga* (Halstead & Meadows, 1995).

**QUILT OF REMEMBRANCE**

The quilt was Mitchell’s attempt to ensure that her family, which had moved to Kentucky, would not forget the location of the graves of their two sons.

Mitchell was dissatisfied with the quilt top; she thought it had “design flaws” and that when her family grew larger there would not be room for everyone. She started another quilt, using the original quilt top as a practice piece. The practice quilt top is part of the collection of the Highlands Museum and Discovery Center in Ashland, Ky., and the second, finished quilt is part of the collection of the Kentucky Historical Society’s Thomas D. Clark History Center in Frankfort, Ky. Together, they are nationally known to be the only existing graveyard quilt top and quilt.

The quilt featured a “graveyard” of white or pale material surrounded by a fence and six-sided coffins, which are examples of typical mourning iconography. The small cloth coffins, black in color, were lightly basted along the outer edge of the quilt. When a child was born into the family, a coffin was added to the quilt. When a death occurred, a coffin would be removed from the edge and appliquéd into the graveyard area of the quilt, where it would be embroidered with the death date.

What’s interesting about this unique quilt is its traditional layout. The center medallion is surrounded by blocks of alternating eight-pointed stars and black printed fabric. This is known as a framed medallion construction. It was one of the most popular quilt layouts used in the first half of the 19th century, according to Alden O’Brien, DAR Museum curator of costumes, textiles and toys. “Mitchell was able to combine a typical layout and traditional pieced pattern with her own unique twist,” she says.

**AN ACTIVITY OF MOURNING**

Mourning was an important part of Victorian society, and Mitchell’s quilt is a unique expression of that. During the Victorian age, death and mourning became so ritualized that entire industries sprang up to cater to the “proper mourner,” and books were written on how to behave after the loss of a loved one. It has been said of this era that more distress was caused by not being able to adhere to the mourning rituals than by the actual loss of the loved ones.

After a woman’s husband died, Victorian society demanded that the widow retreat into near-seclusion for up to two years. Many of the activities that she would normally engage in were forbidden during certain states of mourning, but one activity that was actually encouraged was quilting with friends. In doing this she could socialize, catch up on the latest gossip and learn of promising prospects for remarriage. If a widow did not mourn properly, she could actually ruin her chances of a good marriage after the mourning period ended.

Gaylord Cooper explained how cemetery iconology can be used as a genealogical tool for a story in the November/December 2008 issue.
Consider membership in the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (NSDAR), a volunteer women’s service organization that honors and preserves the legacy of our Patriot ancestors. More than 200 years ago, American Patriots fought and sacrificed for the freedoms we enjoy today. As a member of the DAR, you can continue this legacy by actively promoting patriotism, preserving American history and securing America’s future through better education for children.

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DAR has 165,000 members in nearly 3,000 chapters worldwide, including chapters in 12 foreign countries. Since its founding in 1890, DAR has admitted more than 875,000 members.

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Preserving the American Spirit
www.dar.org
(202) 879–3224
Benjamin Franklin received a letter, written in Latin, dated January 13, 1777. It began, “Most Illustrious Sir: Golden freedom cannot be purchased with yellow gold.” The writer went on to identify himself as a “Nobleman” offering his services to the American cause of freedom. He signed it with the phrase, “faithful unto death.”

Michael Kovats de Fabricy, soldier on horseback, would become an American Revolutionary hero far from his hometown of Karcag, Hungary.

Michael’s father, Imre, and mother, Sara, lived in Karcag, a market town on Hungary’s Great Plains, where horses and horsemanship were prized. The town had been devastated by the Ottoman invasion and 160-year occupation.

Born in August 1724, Kovats grew up to be well-educated, versed in Latin and German. He later described him-
self as a nobleman. His wife, Franciska Merse of Szinye, would build a chapel in his honor after his death.

His Experience

Like other Hungarian volunteers, as well as the many other foreigners and immigrants who aided the cause of American freedom, Kovats brought years of previous military experience to the forces of General George Washington. A cavalryman by age 20, he had already served in the Hapsburg army during the war against Prussia, then in the French army, and also in the Austro-Hungarian army.

After 18 years of military service, he retired around 1776 as a hussar, or light cavalry, major and lived in Upper Hungary (now present-day Slovakia). There he trained troops who were organizing for Polish independence. He met and trained a young Casimir Pulaski, who would go on to become his superior in the American Army.

The Letter

In his 1777 letter to Franklin, written while in Bordeaux, France, Kovats offered his services to the cause of American freedom. “I am now here, of my own free will, having taken all the horrible hardships and bothers of this journey, and I am willing to sacrifice myself wholly and faithfully as it is expected of an honest soldier facing the hazards and great dangers of the war ... for the freedom of your great Congress.”

Kovats’ letter was not immediately forwarded to America. Nevertheless, Kovats set sail aboard the ship Catharina of Dartmouth on February 26, 1777.

Making His Mark

Thanks to a letter of introduction from Major General Joseph Spencer of Rhode Island, Kovats met Washington at his headquarters in Philadelphia. His initial application for service was rejected because of translation difficulties.

However, Kovats eventually joined the newly formed military unit of the German community of Philadelphia. He soon met Brigadier General Pulaski, whom Washington had charged with the establishment of a cavalry. Kovats became the cavalry’s training officer in January 1778, teaching them Hungarian hussar tactics.

In February 1778, Pulaski recommended that Kovats become commander of a permanent legion. On April 18, 1778, Congress appointed Kovats colonel of the Cavalry Legion, to be headquartered in Baltimore. He thus was the first commander of what would eventually become the U.S. Cavalry.

For the rest of the year, the cavalry served successfully in numerous battles along the East Coast. In February 1779, the legion was ordered south to the defense of Charleston, S.C. Despite losing some horsemen to smallpox along the way, the legion arrived to meet up with General Benjamin Lincoln on May 8, 1779. On the battlefield, riding ahead of his troops, Kovats and his horse were both mortally wounded and died on May 11, 1779. They were buried where they fell.

Hometown Accolades

Today Karcag, Hungary, is a town of about 23,000. The community, which contains a natural thermal bath, is located near a United Nations World Heritage Site—the nature preserve Horotobagy National Park.

Residents are proud of their connection with America and their hero, Kovats. In 1992, the elementary-middle school was named in his honor. The American flag and the Hungarian flag hang side by side in the entrance hall, and children learn about the role Kovats played in the American Revolution in history class.

There is also a symbolic house gate at the site of the house where he was born. Both of these places were dedicated after the fall of communism in 1990.

Kovats’ sacrifice is honored in commemoration ceremonies in America and Hungary every May 11, the anniversary of his death. On October 11, 2003, a statue titled “Fidelissimus ad Mortem,” or “Faithful Unto Death,” was dedicated on the grounds of the Hungarian Embassy in Washington, D.C.

The life-size statue depicts the moment Kovats and his horse gave their lives for American independence. A smaller replica of the statue was presented in Karcag on May 11, 2004. The Citadel Military Academy in Charleston honors him with a plaque and a field named after the hussar hero.

Gwen Solyom is Chapter Historian of the John Lynch Chapter, Lynchburg, Va.
practical elegance
INSIDE PORTSMOUTH’S RUNDLET-MAY HOUSE
By Margie Markarian
Built in 1807 by James Rundlet, a successful textile merchant and manufacturer, the elegant 14-room mansion features a white clapboard exterior, expansive windows, black shutters and a hip roof trimmed with railings. Flanking the back of the stately residence are numerous connected outbuildings and gardens with meandering paths designed by Rundlet himself, a farmer’s son.

Rundlet, who grew up in Exeter, N.H., and was among the first to attend Phillips (Exeter) Academy, was intimately involved in the planning and design of his home. An etching that maps Rundlet’s original vision for his estate still hangs in the front hall. There are also ledgers detailing expenses for construction, furnishings and plantings. Regardless of the cost, the home was clearly designed to draw admiration from passersby and show off Rundlet’s stature and wealth in his adopted community.

“James Rundlet built the house on a natural rise and owned all of the surrounding property; it was on the outskirts of town back then,” explains Elizabeth Farish, regional site manager for Historic New England, which owns the home. She notes that the entrepreneurial Rundlet accumulated much of his fortune during the War of 1812 thanks to government contracts for the cloth for soldiers’ uniforms. “The home gives the impression of sitting on top of a terrace. Rundlet could open his front door and look everywhere around him and see land he owned.”

“Modern” Kitchen Appliances

Inside, the home displays Rundlet’s elegant taste, as well as his practical interest in the latest technology. In fact, Rundlet installed one of the country’s first Rumford kitchens before official plans for such kitchens were commercially available. The original kitchen remains in such good condition that it was a focal point for the recent “Year of the Kitchen” exhibit sponsored by Historic New England, formerly the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities.

“The kitchen was utterly modern for its time,” says Farish, pointing out that most cooking during this era was done on big open hearths. “In the Rumford kitchen, there are separate chambers for different types of cooking.”

Among the most innovative components of a Rumford kitchen was the Rumford Roaster, located in the wall to the left of the fireplace. It features a round, cast-iron door behind which lie two racks for roasting meats and vegetables. Below the oven, also built into the wall, is a firebox for fuel and an ash pit to collect remnants of the fire. A system of knobs helps to regulate air and steam in the chamber.

“The idea of the Rumford Roaster was to cook at a moist temperature for a certain length of time and then suck out moisture to give whatever you were roasting a crispy crust while the center remained juicy,” Farish explains.

Another key component of a Rumford kitchen was the Rumford Range, or stew top. Rundlet installed the range along the side wall to the right of the fireplace. In some respects, the stew top can be considered a precursor to the circular burners of today’s stovetops. However, in a Rumford Range, the three burners are actually carved masonry holes into which the cook could lower and rest a pot during cooking. Each hole had its own firebox and ash pit for customized heat control. A sophisticated venting system allowed smoke from all the cooking devices to escape through a chimney to a smoke room on the top floor where meats were cured. Later generations covered the stew holes with the flat, removable, wood countertop that now hides them.
1800s-Style Energy Efficiency

By past and present-day standards, the Rumford kitchen was energy-efficient. It could be fired by either wood or coal, depending on which fuel source was most available, affordable or efficient based on how hot the fire had to be and how long it needed to burn. Since each cooking device had its own firebox, the Rundlets conserved energy by using only what they needed when they needed it. The shallow kitchen hearth was also more energy-friendly than the more customary deep hearth.

Although Rundlet was a wealthy man who employed several servants, it’s likely that his wife Jane was fairly involved in homemaking and cooking, according to Farish. She also surmises that because of its novelty and newness, “there would have been a lot of interest in a kitchen like this and a lot involved in learning to use it.”

From a practical standpoint, “the Rundlets had 13 children, and this property was a working farm with vegetable gardens, orchards, a pig sty and a barn with animals to care for. Everyone had to pitch in, even if servants were ultimately responsible for certain jobs,” Farish says. She estimates that the Rundlets had anywhere from two to five servants working for them at any given time. Servant bells can still be found in the kitchen and other rooms in the house, including the scullery.

Located in convenient proximity to the kitchen, the scullery was a center for food prep, washing clothes and warming bath water. It housed a much larger fireplace than the kitchen, mainly for boiling large vats of water for household use. It also featured another of the home’s technological innovations—a copper set-kettle on a masonry block with a firebox and ash pit below. This feature made it possible to have hot water readily available, which “was amazing for the time period,” Farish says. Set-kettles didn’t come fully into vogue until the 1840s.

Rundlet’s pragmatic nature and innovative leanings also prompted him to install three sources of water for the house. Not only was there an indoor well situated near the scullery, but there was also a hookup to the Portsmouth aqueduct system. In addition, Rundlet collected rainwater from the roof in a large cistern in the basement.

Descendants Proud of the Past

It is notable that four generations of Rundlets lived in the house, and that they demonstrated a reverence for keeping the house and its belongings authentic. The first-floor front rooms are very much a living example of the past. Many of the furnishings and decorative items that Rundlet handpicked more than 200 years ago were still there when his great-grandson, Ralph May, a scholar and Portsmouth historian, bequeathed it to Historic New England.

“The home came to us in 1971, and it is one of the finest examples of our preservation philosophy because we received the house intact,” Farish says. “It’s how the family left it, and it’s how we keep it today and talk about it to visitors.”

The parlor is among the home’s most well-appointed rooms. Located to the right of the front hall entryway, the room features the peach damask wallpaper Rundlet and his wife imported from England. One of two red settees Rundlet purchased for the room is also on display, although it has been reupholstered in black. The walls are heavily decorated with portraits of Rundlet’s descendants, as well as Girandole mirrors from the era.
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Among the home’s most frequently depicted family members are the Mays. Rundlet’s daughter Louisa Rundlet May returned to the house to raise her young son and daughter (twins James and Jane, named after her parents) after she was widowed, joining her single brother Edward, a doctor, and two older sisters, Harriet and Caroline, both of whom never married.

Across the hall from the parlor is the room the Rundlets would have used as a dining room, although later generations used it as an additional parlor. “This was a time period when rooms started to be referred to and designed for a specific function,” Farish says. In this case, Rundlet eventually found the room too small to accommodate dinners for his large family and circle of friends, so he extended it by pushing a wall back. “You can see the seam where the original floor, wall and ceiling were,” Farish points out.

Visitors can also catch a glimpse of the original “Green Worm” wallpaper on the front wall where a swath remains, mainly because it was covered by a large mirror for many years. Also on display in this room are framed silhouettes of James and Jane Rundlet, the only likenesses of the original owners known to exist.

Rundlet’s commitment to local craftsmen is apparent throughout the house. Much of the furniture was made by Langley Boardman, a prominent local furniture marker. Among the 32 Portsmouth-made pieces or sets from the Federal period are eight square-back dining chairs, a lolling chair, a serpentine-front chest and an easy chair, all designed by Boardman.

Another distinctive set of furniture is the 12 red-painted fancy chairs now located in various rooms throughout the house. “Although Gladys May (Ralph’s wife) had some of them painted white, it shows the family’s interest in maintaining the home’s original items,” Farish says. “Painting them white was a very Colonial Revival thing to do.”

A final testament to Rundlet’s fascination with new technology and the ways in which it could make life easier is the coal-fired, central heating system he installed. Located directly beneath the foyer, it forced hot air through a register in the floor by the staircase. Since the register was surrounded by marble, an excellent heat conductor, this area of the hallway would warm up quickly, and the heat would emanate throughout the house.

“If you were a party guest arriving here on a cold winter day, you would walk into a heated hallway,” says Farish. “You could warm your feet and get the chill out of your body by standing on the marble. It was unheard of at the time. People had fireplaces on the ends of their houses but no heat source in the middle.”

And of course, that’s precisely what James Rundlet wanted: to be ahead of the trend, impressing, innovating and, ultimately, enjoying the comforts hard-earned money could buy while also providing for his family for generations to come.

Margie Markarian is a freelance writer based in Franklin, Mass.
Are you concerned about being helpless in an emergency? Are you and your loved ones anxious about what would happen if you were unable to get to a phone? Have you considered moving out of the home you love and into some kind of assisted living because of these worries? If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, you are not alone. Millions of seniors are concerned about their safety. There are products out there that claim to help, but they are difficult to use and even more difficult to afford. Why mess with complicated installations and long term contracts when there’s a product that’s simple, reliable and affordable? The product is the Designed For Seniors® Medical Alarm. Read on and we’ll explain why every senior in America should have one.

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>FREE</td>
<td>NONE</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<td>FREE</td>
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**First of all, it’s simple**

First of all, it’s simple to install and use. Unlike other products that require professional installation, this product is “plug and play.” The unit is designed for easy use in an emergency, with large, easy-to-identify buttons.

**It’s reliable.** From the waterproof pendant to the sophisticated base unit, to the state-of-the-art 24/7 call center, the entire system is designed to give you the peace of mind in knowing you are never alone in an emergency. You get two-way communication with a live person in our Emergency Response Center, and there’s a battery backup in case of a power failure.

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