

The Bickford Family Collection: A Generous Donation to the Gordon-Nash Library



History 8/16/2021

By donation of Kent Bicknell, current Curator of Special Collections at [Gordon-Nash Library](#), New Hampton School has acquired an extensive collection of personal items of the Bickford family. The archive consists of handwritten letters, postcards, daily journals, essays, photographs, New Hampton School ephemera, and a wealth of ancillary material such as records of the bed and breakfast the Bickford sisters, Ina and Grace, started in the 1930s—The Pillars.

Director of the Gordon-Nash Library and School Archivist Jerrica Blackey says, "it is the largest and most substantial archive the school has received in my memory."



An Intimate Family History

The collection contains over one thousand pieces of Bickford family personal items that, when viewed, paint a vivid picture of what life was like in New Hampton in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Excerpts from early journals include references to happenings throughout the town and to New Hampton School buildings and personnel. In 1900 Emma Grace Bickford led successful efforts of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) to install a Clapp Fountain – for the use of horses, dogs and people – in the center of the Village. The fountain still stands today. This attempt to keep men out of saloons while their horses watered is captured in correspondence between Emma and the Clapp Foundry in Concord, NH. A note from Ina on April 8, 1912, that makes reference to future Head of School, Frederick Smith (Class of 1910):

Windy and cold. Papa [Rev. Lewis Bickford] and I worked at the library during the morning, after he came back from the sap house. I finished accessioning the books. Frederick Smith spent the day in town and came in a few minutes and played to Annie [Bickford] on the mandolin.

Susan Bickford Tsiatis, a great-niece of Ina Bickford, says of the collection, "I am thrilled to know that my family's archive is now part of the Gordon-Nash Library. Their lives truly wound through the history of the library, the school, and the town. Their photos and memorabilia will bring color to the story of New Hampton's past. They were real people, and I am so proud to be part of their heritage."

The Bickford family was prominent in New Hampton School, Gordon-Nash Library, and the town of New Hampton affairs from the 1870s through the 1950s. Reverend Lewis P. Bickford and his

daughter, Ina, were both directors of the Gordon-Nash Library for its first 50 years, both Ina and Grace taught at New Hampton School, and their parents, Rev. Lewis and Emma Fox, served on various boards and committees in town.



About Our Generous Donor

Kent Bicknell began his relationship with New Hampton School as a child, living on campus with his siblings, and father and mother, who taught at New Hampton School and New Hampton Community School, respectively. After graduating from NHS in 1965, Kent attended Yale University where he finished as a Scholar of the House. He holds a B.A. from Yale University, an M.A. in Early Childhood Education from Goddard College (VT), and an Ed. D from Boston University. Kent helped found Sant Bani School in Sanbornton, New Hampshire in 1973 and served as Head of School for the next 44 years – through 2017. With a passion for the New England Transcendentalists, in 1995 Kent acquired an unpublished gothic thriller by Louisa May Alcott, *A Long Fatal Love Chase*, and saw it through publication to the New York Times Bestseller List. Kent was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award from New Hampton School in 2021.



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