

Mooers' Memoirs



A Newsletter for Members of the Mooers Family

Winter, 2006-07

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Mooers Family Member:

After an eight year hiatus, during which I have pursued some time-consuming volunteer activities and other interests, I again take up my love for family history and my enjoyment in sharing family stories with both close and very distant relatives.

During this hiatus, I have continued to research, when time permitted, everyone with the name Mooers and those closely connected to them. Much of my information has expanded and some relationships clarified. However, as many of you experience, the frustrations are numerous and many Mooers families evade clear identification. The parents of my own great grandfather, Joshua Mooers, continue to elude me.

In this issue of the Mooers Memoirs, I share two stories promised eight years ago - the story of Henry Mooers and his "side-hill plough" and Capt. William Mooers and the first American flag to fly in a British port. The continuation of the third story promised - General Benjamin Mooers - must be delayed. During the eight years, I have moved my professional office twice and moved my genealogy collection from my office to my home. In the process I have mislaid some material, including my copy of the autobiography of his war experiences written by Gen. Benjamin Mooers at the request of his children.

Enjoy and please share your stories with me.

Dan Mooers

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FLYING THE STARS AND STRIPES

Nantucket Sea Captain Shows the Colors

NOTE: From "Shipbuilding on North River," published by the Norwell Historical Society, Inc.

Ichabod Thomas built a vessel, which became famous and was the first vessel that carried the American Stars and Stripes into a British port. She was greeted with great consternation upon her arrival in Britain, as probably no other vessel ever before or since.

This was the "BEDFORD" [owned by William Rotch]. The "Bedford" was first sent to Philadelphia [after purchase by Rotch], and arrived in Nantucket from Philadelphia, with a cargo of flour, under Capt. Thomas Bunker, when she registered at Nantucket. . . . The "Bedford" lay at Nantucket several years [during the Revolution], and in Sept., 1782, the "Maria" came new from Ichabod Thomas. She was not completed, and the old Quaker merchants had private information that a peace was coming, and as the "Maria" could not be despatched in time they hauled down the Bedford and sent her to London. She arrived Feb. 6, off Trinity, with the Stars and Stripes flying. Custom House officers had to apply to lower solicitors to know what to do with her. She entered, and that was the first U. S flag ever displayed in Europe. Her appearances was thus chronicled by an English magazine of that day.

"The Bedford, Capt. Mooers belonging to Mass, arrived to the Downs on the 3rd of February, passed the Gravesend the 4th, and was reported at the Custom House, the 6th instant. She was not allowed regular entry until some consultation had taken place between the Commissioners of the Customs and the Lords of the Council, on account of the many acts of Parliament yet in force against the rebels in America. She is loaded with 488 butts of whale-oil, is American built, manned wholly by American sea-men, wears the rebel colors, and belongs to the Island of Nantucket in Massachusetts. This is the first vessel which has displayed the 13 rebellious stripes in any British Port. The vessel lies at Horsely Down, a little

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below the Tower and is intended to immediately to return to New England.

Capt. Wm. Mooers, the master of the "Bedford," and afterwards master of the "Maria," was traditionally reported as one of "nature's noblemen," and his prowess as a whaler was familiar to all acquainted with the whaling industry. Erect and commanding in appearance, standing over six feet, and weighing more than two hundred pounds, he would have been a marked man in a thousand. He died in 1819, in France, where he was then doing business as agent of Wm. Rotch & Co.

The first publication of the terms of the peace treaty was Jan. 28, 1783, in a postscript of the London papers, about a week before the arrival of the "Bedford." The King's proclamation was not published until the 15th of February, twelve days after her arrival. The news was first received in Boston, April 23rd, but the treaty was not signed until September. It is, therefore, no wonder that when the master of the "Bedford" appeared and demanded to enter the vessel at the Custom House, with her cargo of oil, coming from a country and people who were still considered rebels, his appearance created astonishment.

HOW ARE THEY CONNECTED?

William Mooers (1745-1819) was the son of Jonathan Mooers Jr (1725-1795) and Mary Watson. William's grandparents were Jonathan Mooers (1702-1740) and Elizabeth Odar who left Newbury, MA to settle on Nantucket Island. William was the great-great grandson of Edmund Mooers, the immigrant ancestor. The Mooers of Nantucket were Quakers. William's son Benjamin, along with other Mooers of his generation, left Nantucket and settled in Pittston, Maine. Others of that generation left the Island and settled along the Hudson River in New York State, changing the spelling to Moores.

Edwin Demarest Mooers was the son of Frederick N. Mooers, the drug store clerk turned gold mining millionaire, one of the three prospectors who discovered the famous Yellow Aster Mine (featured in the Autumn 1998 "Mooers Memoirs"). Edwin was once married to DeSacier Mooers, the famous silent film star (featured in the Summer 1999 "Mooers Memoirs"), with whom he had a son, Douglas F. Mooers. More on this family in the next issue of the "Mooers Memoirs."

Henry Mooers remains more of a mystery. Although his life is well documented in several publications, his ancestry remains unclear. In a letter he wrote late in life, he indicated he was one of five sons. His brothers may have included the equally mysterious Michaiah Mooers, who settled in Broome County, New York, and Jonathan Mooers, who settled first around Ithaca and then later joined his son, Thomas Jonathan Mooers, in Pennsylvania. Like Henry, they were in the foundry business. More in the next issue of the Mooers Memoirs.

PROFESSOR SUES CORNELL STUDENT Edgar Kay Demands \$25,000 from E. D. Mooers for Alienating His Wife's Affections

Ithaca, New York, was on edge as the trial began. The faculty of Cornell was pressuring their fellow teacher to drop the suit. Town residents eagerly awaited more gossip about those ivory tower occupants up the hill. It was the biggest scandal to hit Ithaca in many a year, if not in all of its history.

The story, repeated regularly in the local newspapers, began months earlier when Edgar Kay came to Cornell as a university instructor. He and his wife, "who was a pretty, vivacious and young wife," "lived in a cozy cottage on 'the hill' and apparently were happy." A change came when another young woman from Mrs. Kay's home town of St. Louis arrived in Ithaca to study at the Conservatory of Music. Referred to as "Miss Coons," the St. Louis young woman was either a prior friend or a relative of Mrs. Kay but it is clear her presence led to an end of Mrs. Kay's marriage.

Soon after the beginning of school in 1898, twenty year old Edwin Demarest Mooers and his friend, the son of a former Congressman from Binghamton, N.Y., began calling at the Kay home to visit Miss Coons. Although the "boys" were known around Ithaca as "high-rollers" who spent most of their time in "Dutch kitchens and on the road driving drags and four-in-hands", these visits to the Kay home, and later discreet appearances in public, caused no "local talk" since it was assumed that Mrs. Kay was acting as a chaperone. People did observe that Edwin was spending a lot of money, reportedly having a monthly allowance of \$800.00.

Within a short time, the "discreet" appearances in public became more bold and open as the four young people began riding around town in an open drag, enjoying champagne and each other's company. Tongues wagged all over Ithaca about these scandalous activities.

The relationships reached a point where the four young people planned a few days in New York City where Edwin's mother resided. They had booked seats on the train to the City departing on the November 16th 9:30 P.M..

Fate always seems to play a role in such matters and there was no difference here. The former Congressman from Binghamton came to Ithaca to look in on his student son. A visit to the university uncovered the fact that no one there had seen his son for several weeks. Returning to the New Ithaca Hotel, the former Congressman stood in front of the big windows in the hotel's lobby long after dark on the 16th contemplating what to do next. He absently watched as a hack pulled up in front of the New Ithaca. What occurred next was described in the local paper:

"The hilarity of the occupants of the hack, attracted the father's attention, when lo and behold, one of them was the object of the old man's search. It is needless to say that the irate father was not long in reaching the hack, and with more force than ceremony, dragged the surprised young man from the hack, much to the chagrin and discomfiture of

the occupants, who drove rapidly to the station, where other difficulties were encountered."

The "other difficulties" were primarily the fact that word of the planned New York City trip by his wayward wife had reached Mrs. Kay's husband, Edgar, and he paced the station's platform waiting for the arrival of his "pretty, vivacious and young wife."

As soon as the trio alighted from the hack, the irate husband confronted his wife. Edwin Mooers stepped in, strong words were exchanged, blows followed, with Professor Kay receiving the worst of it. His wife boarded the train, then left the train and then again boarded the train just as it pulled away from the station. Professor Kay was left "standing with transfixed eyes, riveted to the rapidly disappearing train" with his wife and Miss Coons in the company of Edwin Mooers

**Continued in the next issue
of "The Mooers' Memoirs"**

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If you have any family stories or memoirs you would like to share with other members of the Mooers family, please send them to me so they can be considered for publication.

Do you have any Mooers Family Bibles you can share with other Mooers family members?

HENRY MOOERS

Did His Invention Fund Cornell University?

Henry Mooers was an imaginative iron founder. Over his life he invented at least three important apparatuses. One of his inventions may well have led to the founding of Cornell University.

The invention was Henry's so-called "side-hill plow." It was very popular at the time, and Henry sold patent rights for specific territories. One of the takers was Ezra Cornell, who bought the patent rights for the states of Maine and Georgia. He was excited about the "Barnaby-Mooers Side-Hill Plow" and in 1842 Cornell traveled to Maine to market the product. Interest in the plow was intense, Cornell wrote to Henry Mooers. Cornell's Maine travels brought him in contact with F.O.J. Smith, publisher of the "Maine Farmer," and the developing friendship paid huge dividends for Cornell very shortly.

After his Maine sales trip, Cornell made a similar trip in 1843 to the state of Georgia to market the side-hill plow. But Cornell was called back to Maine by F.O.J. Smith with an offer to become associated in the infant telegraph industry. Very quickly Cornell designed and built a machine to lay a test telegraph cable underground, using a plow device looking remarkably similar to the patented Barnaby-Mooers side-hill plow. Samuel F. B. Morse himself visited Maine for a demonstration of the telegraph pipe-layer and it won Morse's approval. Before the end of the year, Cornell was in the telegraph industry, laying telegraph lines in Washington, D.C. and Baltimore, and he went on to build telegraph lines all over the east and mid-west.

In the meantime, Henry Mooers was having problems. Henry had employed a man named Hardy, as his agent, to sell the side-hill plow rights. Leaving his late partner, Vail, to settle up their business, Henry started to look after Hardy, who had been very successful in disposing of the territory, and had realized a large amount of money. These funds Hardy appropriated to his own use, and Mr. Mooers again found himself without any means, except his

house in Ithaca. This was not the only time Henry had to start over.

Henry was born, October 21st, 1806, in Lansing, near Ithaca, Tompkins county, New York. His father was a native of New Jersey, and a miller by trade. The family removed to Cayuga county when Henry was about five years old, and his father operated a grist mill, in the town of Genoa, for about two years. The family then removed to a farm, on what was then known as the "Crocker Land," in Tompkins county, where the family remained for about three years. After that the family moved to the neighborhood of Kingston, Canada, where Henry's father managed a grist-mill for about one year, and thence moved into Kingston, where he obtained employment in unloading vessels and doing other labor. After passing about a year in that town, Henry's father decided to return the family to New York, and stopped a year at Sodus Bay, near Owego. Finally, the family returned and settled in Ithaca, where Henry's parents afterwards died.

Henry passed two years in working in summer on a farm, and attending the school during the winter months, this being about all the education he acquired. He had been reared to hard work, and chopped wood; when only twelve years old, his usual task was one cord per day. When sixteen years old he went to work in his brother-in-law's foundry (King's), where he remained two years, acquiring a knowledge of the mechanical part of the business. He next was engaged at Coffin & Dennis' foundry, at Ithaca Falls. Henry was appointed foreman by the firm, and placed in charge of their foundry and machine-shop, at what was then considered a high salary, fifty dollars per month. He continued in this capacity for about eight years, enjoying the entire confidence of the firm, and originating many valuable improvements in the equipping and running of their various

works, refusing at one time to receive full pay, during a season when their business was unusually dull, being contented with forty dollars per month.

While foreman of the foundry, in about 1830, he conceived the idea of a concave mould-board plow, instead of the convex form then in use; and he had some made and sold with this new pattern. They rapidly came into use, and the invention became public property, as Henry had neglected to apply for a patent and no plow manufacturer has been able to monopolize that feature since. Henry was gifted with an innate mechanical ingenuity, and at that time was recognized as a skillful and energetic manager. He was both industrious and economical, and made his home with his parents, assuming the burden of their support when helpless from disease. In 1836, having saved about three thousand dollars, besides owning a good house and lot, he decided to go into business for himself. His attention was attracted towards the anthracite coal region of Pennsylvania, then beginning to be systematically worked, and he went to the Beaver Meadow region to start a foundry, and removed there with his family. He was proposing to associate one of his brothers in business as a partner, and intrusted him with the greater part of his money, to purchase iron and materials. Through the misconduct of his brother the funds were all lost, and Henry was left almost without resources. Determined, however, to carry out his enterprise, he succeeded in starting a small foundry, run by horse power, and very soon was doing a profitable business in making car-wheels, and doing other work for the coal companies. He remained there only about two years, however, taking advantage of an opportunity to sell his foundry for good profit so he could return to Ithaca. While at Beaver Meadows he made a very important improvement in car-wheels, casting them with a solid hub--instead of the former mode of casting in two sections--and for which he was granted letters patent, March 10th, 1838.

Hon. Samuel D. Ingham, for some time Secretary of the Treasury under the Jackson administration, was then the president of the Beaver Meadow and Hazleton Coal Company, and undertook to contest Henry's claim to this invention, and a long and expensive series of law suits was the result. Henry was engaged in defending his claim for between two and three years after leaving Pennsylvania, and expended all the profit he had gained there. Finally, Henry was successful in substantiating his claim, and held his patent.

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After returning to Ithaca, he was employed for some time as a foreman, and in 1840, joining a fellow-workman, named Benjamin C. Vail, purchased a small foundry in that town, which they operated for several years successfully, with one of the products they manufactured was the Barnaby-Mooers side-hill plow. They erected a new shop, and were doing a very profitable business, only to have their works catch fire and entirely destroyed. Their liabilities were \$45,000, and the entire amount was liquidated, chiefly from the collection of accounts due them, but their capital was entirely swept away by the disaster. After unsuccessfully chasing his former employee Hardy to regain the money Hardy took from selling patent territories, Mooers somehow succeeded in leasing the Conrad foundry in Ithaca, which he occupied for several years manufacturing car wheels, threshing machines, and other farm implements.

CONTINUED in the next issue of the Mooers' Memoirs



MISSING LINKS



According to the town records of Dalton, Massachusetts, **OLIVER MOOERS** lost three children and a wife in a three week period in 1850. First, he lost his nine year old daughter Persey on September 22, 1850; then his three year old son, Andrew, on September 26, 1850; then his five year old daughter, Emily, on October 3, 1850. Oliver's wife, Pamela, died just a week later on October 10th. The children and their mother are buried in the East Main Street Cemetery in Dalton. There is not record of Oliver being buried there. Does anyone have any information regarding Oliver or his family?

Newbury Town Records show the birth of **EDMUND MOOERS** on April 03, 1693, a son of Edmund Mooers and Sarah Cooper. Edmund's siblings include, according to the town records: i. Edmund Mooers, born December 05, 1677; ii. (Unknown) Mooers, born February 10, 1678/79; iii. Sara Mooers, born December 09, 1681; iv. John Mooers, born July 07, 1682; v. Mark Mooers, born February 09, 1687/88; died August 04, 1771 in Rowley, MA.; vi. Martha Mooers, born August 20, 1691, married Thomas Look February 13, 1716/17 in Newbury, MA. Does anyone have any research relating to Edmund (1693)?