

Miss Beatham, Amos, and the Thanksgiving Postcard



NYHS members frequently claim that every item in a collection tells a story. Here's an example of how that holds true in the personal collection of NYHS Secretary, Dixie Hayes.

One hundred and eleven years ago a young teacher at the District 2 School house in North Yarmouth sent a colorful Thanksgiving postcard to seven-year-old Amos Gallison Lowe. Since the card was sent from Bangor, we might reasonably assume that Miss Mildred Ava Beatham had travelled home for a pre-holiday visit with her parents in Kingman, Maine. With a few years of teaching experience under my own belt, I can easily picture her scrambling to write and mail a card to each of her 19 students, maybe briefly wondering why she'd added one more thing to her already busy weekend!

According to the 1910 federal census, Miss Beatham lived on Gray Road, boarding with Perez and Lizzie Rideout, just down the road from Amos.

She earned \$9.50 per week, at a time when the Superintendent of Schools in North Yarmouth wrote about the challenges of "buying the services of a ten or twelve dollar teacher for nine dollars." Superintendent HM Moore's school report for the year ending on March 1, 1910 occupied 14 pages in the 48 page Town Report, suggesting that opinions about public education in Miss Beatham's day were as controversial then as in 2020. (A noteworthy difference is that in 1909 "No epidemic of contagious disease

or other forms of illness have interfered with the attendance at the several schools.")

But back to the postcard... In the 1990s, after reading a magazine article about collecting holiday postcards I was excited to spy a wonderful card with a Pilgrim image at a yard sale in Gray, Maine. I don't remember how much I paid for the card, it doesn't matter, but thirty years later I remember exactly how I felt when I flipped the card over and saw the address: Master Amos Lowe, c/o Cephas Lowe.

I knew Amos Lowe! I knew he lived in the lovely farmhouse which the Patrick Strawbridge-Kristi Wright family now occupies and, prior to his death in 1974, Amos shared a room at Sweetland's Nursing Home (now Brentwood) with my grandfather. *That card was supposed to be mine!*

The card was the first of a Thanksgiving card collection that I happily display every November. Granted, I am still grooming my family to enjoy the cards as fully as I do, but that could be because the cards led to collecting ceramic turkeys... and that's a different story!

Happy Thanksgiving, and Happy Collecting! ☺

For photos of Amos Lowe's house then and now, turn the page.