

The History Corner: #24

The Bickford Family Archive Project – Volunteers Wanted!

The Gordon-Nash Library has a large archive of letters, journals, photos and ephemera from the Bickford family, prominent in the town, church, local schools and the library from the 1870s through the 1950s. Rev. Lewis Bickford and his daughter, Ina, were directors of the library in its first half-century, and members of the family were embedded in the goings-on of the village. The collection holds 40 journals spanning a fifty-year period; 750 letters from the late 1800s through the 1930s; hundreds of postcards from the same period (and later); and numerous photographs, pamphlets, and brochures. Well over 1000 pieces paint a vivid picture of what life was like in New Hampton in the late 1800s through the mid-1900s.



Rev. Bickford and his wife, Emma, were alumni of New Hampton School, and after living some time in Michigan, returned to settle in town. Their four children, Grayce, Ina, John and Annie, became teachers, reporters, entrepreneurs, photographers, and even innkeepers (In December 1941, when my father was courting my mother, she stayed at the Bickford's Pillars Guest House) – and I am sure many of our readers remember Chaloner and Ann – and their daughters, Marianne and Susan.



The Pillars Guest House



Chaloner in Front of Pillars circa 1909

Library Director Jerrica Blackey and I are looking for volunteers who would like to help sort through the collection. If you are interested in our past (and happy to spend a short time working with us on how to treat archives) please send an email to me at kentbicknell@me.com. More information will be coming soon.

Kent Bicknell
kentbicknell@me.com
Historian, NHHS
Curator of Special Collections
Gordon-Nash Library at New Hampton School
January 28th, 2025