

## **Hobbs - Mason Photo Collection Introduction**

**Joyce Mason served the Town of Pelham in many capacities. She loved the Town of Pelham and was intrigued by its history.**

**She was an active member of the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee and a dedicated member of the Pelham Historical Society.**

**Shortly after her death, the creator of the Hayes-Genoter Online History and Genealogy Library was contacted by Judge J. Albert Lynch, a founding member of the Pelham Historical Society. Judge Lynch indicated that he wanted to do something to honor Joyce, who had served him and the Town of Pelham as the Clerk of the Pelham Municipal Court from 1982 to 1992.**

**A few weeks later, Joyce's family donated one of Joyce's prize possessions to the Historical Society---a 73 plate collection of glass negatives depicting Pelham scenes from the 1890s to the 1920s.**

**Converting the glass negatives to paper and digital formats proved to be an expensive undertaking. It required the work of a highly specialized photo laboratory. Eastern Photographic Services, Inc, 5 Webber Street, Lowell, MA was found to have the equipment and skills required to provide paper prints and digital copies from glass negatives. Because of the large number of negatives and because the work was to be performed for the Historical Society, Eastern gave the Society a 50% discount.**

**Even with the discount, the reproduction and framing of the 73 photos was beyond the resources of the Pelham Historical Society. Judge J. Albert Lynch came forward and assumed the entire expense in memory of his Clerk of Court, Joyce Mason.**

**The paper photos are displayed in the Ruth Sherburne Sturris Art Gallery located in the Historical Society Building, a State Historical Landmark.**

**Digital copies of the photos are available at this web site location. Initially, we have placed the photographs on line without captions. Many of the photos are easy to recognize. Others pose their own little mystery. The public is invited to comment on each on line photo. When enough information has been gathered, a paragraph will be prepared and placed on line, providing information on each photograph.**

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Subsequent to the writing of the above introduction, the Lowell Sun Newspaper published an article soliciting the public's help in identifying the photos and in identifying the photographer. A photograph, picked at random by reporter John Collins, was run with the article.

Rita Bennet Ducharme, a long time resident of Pelham Center, tentatively identified the women in the photo, run by the Lowell Sun, as the late C. Frances Hobbs, the author of *Old Days and Old Ways* published by the Pelham Historical Society in 1974.

A few days later, the founder of the Hayes-Genoter History and Genealogy Library found himself in line for a flu shot, standing next to Charlie Hobbs, a nephew of C. Frances Hobbs. She was known to him and most Pelham natives as "Aunt Kina". He confirmed that she was the subject of the photo picked randomly by the Lowell Sun Newspaper reporter, John Collins.

As the line moved slowly along, he provided the history of the glass plate negatives donated to the Historical Society by the children of Joyce Mason. He said that his aunt, Mary Hobbs, Pelham's Librarian for more than 50 years, had become fascinated with photography while still a teenager. She had her own glass plate camera, tripod and equipment for developing the glass plate negatives and printing paper photographs.

Mary, known to everyone as "Aunt Molly", took most of the 73 pictures between 1896 and 1920. When she died, about 50 years ago, the plates were passed on to Aunt Kina. Aunt Kina left the glass plates to Charlie, who was a friend of Burt Mason, husband of Joyce Mason.

Burt was also a photographer and the only person in Town capable of making paper prints from the glass plates. Burt acquired the plates from Charlie and left them to his wife Joyce. When Joyce died, her children donated the glass plates to the Pelham Historical Society, which now occupies the building in which Aunt Molly, the photographer and librarian, worked for more than 50 years.

Through the generosity of Judge J. Albert Lynch, who used to hold court in the Aunt Molly's library, the current home of the Pelham Historical Society, Aunt Molly's photographs now hang on the walls of the building where she labored with love for more than half a century.