



THE HISTORIAN



VOLUME FOUR, ISSUE FOUR

SPRING 2018



Jacob Thompson House 1811



Fuller House 1869

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings:

On April 15, we had our spring open house at Jacob Thompson house and it turned out to be a very well attended event. Visitors kept coming the entire four hours the house was opened. Everyone seemed to have questions about everything, from trains, to Silver Street, to Monson china, etc. We had several donations of artifacts and monetary donations also. We were able to purchase a photographic collection during the open house which we have included on the new acquisitions page. Thank you to Tamara, Bill and Denis for all the behind the scenes work to make the open

house a success. I would also like to thank Mary for creating the Monson souvenir china display and all of the associated information.

As soon as the weather changes we will be finishing the heating and air-conditioning at Thompson house and the paint job at the Fuller House on Green Street.

We have been awarded a grant from the Grace Makepeace Trust for Historic Preservation to purchase more archival storage material.

Under this edition's "Where Is This?", we are looking for your guess about something we did not even know ever

existed in Monson.

I hope everyone is enjoying our stories in each newsletter. I can't tell you how much we enjoy doing the research, digging up the material to back up the facts and learning more about each subject as we go. All of this work makes us realize that we are on the right track in our goal of having searchable archives available now and for the future.

And one more thing ... it is May and that means it is membership renewal time. Please see page 11 for information on renewing your membership.

Dennis

Officers:

President – Dennis Swierad
Vice President – Tamara Cabey
Secretary – Leona Brahen
Treasurer – Kevin McNabb

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Denis Duquette (2018)
William Dominick (2018)

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William Hatton
Emma Ladd Shepherd

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Annual Meeting – Denis Duquette
Building Restoration – Dennis Swierad
Collections Manager – Mary Swierad
Editor/Technology – Leona Brahen
Historian – Dennis Swierad
Membership – Denis Duquette
Rental Manager – Tamara Cabey

Mission Statement

To obtain and preserve historical data and articles pertaining to the town of Monson, Massachusetts, and to encourage and develop the pursuit and expression of such interests in all suitable ways.

Visit us on the web at
www.monsonhistoricalsociety.org

Email us at
monsonhistoricalsocietyinc@gmail.com

Do you need information about the history of Monson? Write, call or email us. We may be able to help.

WHAT USED TO BE THERE?

By Dennis & Mary Swierad

The site we are going to explore in this edition of the newsletter is the vacant lot between 3 and 7 Fountain Street or, as it was originally called, "Bank Street".

In 1830, the First Congregational Church found itself in the midst of a controversy over the issue of free Masonry, known as the anti-Masonic excitement. These were fearful times; families, churches and communities were separated by what appeared to be irreparable breaches. The Rev. Alfred Ely and about seventeen of the church's most influential male members belonged to the Masonic order, to which other church members were violently and unalterably opposed. It was proposed, therefore, to erect a conference house, which could be



used for the old society, or by a new one, in case a division should occur. "At a meeting of the Inhabitants of the First Parish in Monson called to consider the expediency of erecting a Conference House for the use of said Parish, held on Tuesday evening December 7, 1830 at the house of Amos Norcross." The meeting was called to order by Rev. Ely; Joseph L. Reynolds was chosen Moderator and Andrew W. Porter was chosen Clerk. The following was voted:

"Vote that it is expedient to make an attempt to erect a Conference House for the use of said Parish."

"Vote to choose a committee of seven to draft a plan for

the house, ascertain where it can be located, estimate the expense, suggest ways and means for defraying the expense and make a report at the adjourned meeting. Luther Carter, Pearly Truesdell, A. W. Porter, Joel Tucker, Uriah Ward, Horatio Lyon and Franklin Newell were chosen said Committee."

"Vote that this meeting be adjourned to Monday the 24th



meet at early candle light at this place."

At their next meeting held on December 24, 1830, it was decided to accept the lot offered by Rufus Flynt at no charge. Also, the expense of the building was to be paid for through the selling of shares at \$5.00 a piece. Members could purchase as many shares as they chose, but each shareholder was allowed only one vote.

Apparently, the Proprietors of the new house wanted to keep the building and property completely separate of the church.

At the February 24, 1831 meeting, it was voted to accept the report of the building committee that stated that they had obtained subscriptions to the amount of \$1415. and had contracted Luther Carter to build said house.



Vestry - building on left with steeple 1879

At the meeting held on December 6, 1831, it was “Resolved That the Building that has heretofore been designated as a Conference House shall hereafter take the Name of Vestry.” The top floor being known as the Upper Vestry and the first floor being known as the Lower Vestry. The reasoning for the name change is not evident. Over the years it was referred to by many names, some of which were the Conference House, the Vestry, The Congregational Chapel and the Congregational Conference House.

Many groups and organizations used the Vestry for meetings. While the new church was being built, church services were held there on Sunday and Thursday evenings. The Infant Sunday School met in the Lower Vestry. The Women’s Christian Temperance Union met there. Lyceums met there. There was a singing school. It was used by the town as a replacement for the original No. 1 School which stood at the base of Ely Road and was

condemned. The Foreign Mission Society had their meetings in the Vestry. It was rented by Monson Academy for a time. It was used by the Hampden County No. 1 District Committee of the Republican Party for their conventions. The original Monson Cemetery Association which was formed September 9, 1867 met there. It was also rented by the Seamen's Friends Society.

One of the renters that you might find of interest was the Monson Thief Detecting Society. A newspaper clipping from the local newspaper dated March 21st, 1905 tells the story. We are printing it in its entirety, for your enjoyment.

“Passing of a Monson Institution.

The years of the eighteen hundred sixties and seventies were noted in Monson for an unusual amount of thieving. Nothing out of doors or in the barn was safe; but horses, harness, blankets and with robes were especially favorite booty. One re-

sultant of a state of things which had become quite intolerable was the organization, in April, 1867, for mutual protection of its members, of the Monson Thief Detecting society. Among the original members were Hon. Reuben A. Chapman, Hon. Timothy F. Packard, Hon. William N. Flynt, Cyrus W. Holmes, Rice M. Reynolds, Alfred Norcross, Edward F. Morris, Austin Fuller, Rufus F. Fay, Edwin E. Towne, Daniel G. Potter, Rodolphus Homer, Amasa King, Horatio Lyon, Austin Newell, Charles C. Tobey, Edward P. Newton, Joshua Tracy, Dr. John A. McKinstry, Leonard G. Cushman, Charles Fuller, Edward P. Keep, Samuel K. Foster, George E. Grout, Rev. Charles Hammond, Harvey H. Park and Joel B. Williams. Hon. Timothy F. Packard, Edwin E. Towne and Daniel G. Potter each served sundry terms as president, and Edward F. Morris has served as treasurer from the date of organization. If a member sustained loss by theft, it was the duty of the society to employ detectives to recover the property and apprehend the thieves; and some

society has been production of lessening thieving in town it is not possible to say, but for many years a better condition of things has prevailed, and the society has been inactive. A meeting of the surviving members of the society was held on Tuesday of this week. As but a small number are now living, it was deemed proper that the funds on hand should be disposed of and the society dissolved. The funds had always been kept on interest, which latter amounts to more than the principal, the whole sum being \$207.63. The following resolution was on motion adopted, to wit:

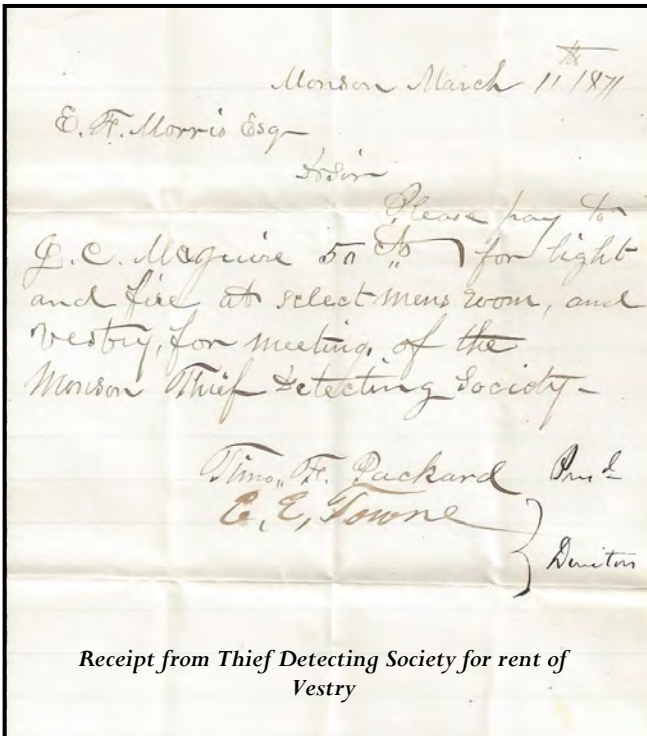


“Resolved, That Edward F. Morris, treasurer of the Monson Thief Detecting society, be directed, on and after April 1st, next, to withdraw all funds of the society on deposit in the Monson Savings bank, and pay over the same to the treasurer of the town of Monson, Mass., to be kept on interest, and both principal and interest to be used, when the town shall so determine, in erecting a new tomb in its No. 1 cemetery.”

We suspect that the new tomb was the winter burial chamber that is located at the rear entrance of Hillside Cemetery.

After the new church was completed in 1873, it was decided by the Prudential Committee to auction the Vestry. Found amongst a group of letters in our archives about the Vestry is the following:

“This is to certify that by order of the proprietors of the Vestry of Monson Mass. I have this day (after having duly advertised the same to be sold at Public Auction) sold at Public Auction the premises above described being the House and lot known as the Vestry property situated in Monson Mass, Rufus F.



Receipt from Thief Detecting Society for rent of Vestry

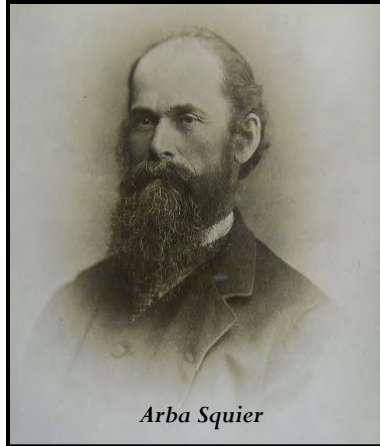
very satisfactory work was the result. How far the work of the

Fay being the highest bidder. I sold the same to him for the sum of Nine hundred and Fifty dollars, and he has this day in my presence assigned his interest in the same to E. F. Morris of said Monson.

Monson Mass August 26th 1873

*Geo. H. Newton
Licensed Auctioneer”*

We are not exactly sure what transpired during Mr. Fay’s ownership of the building, but in 1884, Arba Squier purchased it and re-erected it on Squier Avenue for use in his lumber business. The building still stands today selling the same lines of merchandise and using the same name.



Present location of the Vestry and home of Squier & Co., 5 Squier Avenue, Monson

It is a bit ironic that it seemed the whole reason for building the Vestry and doing so in an “expedient” manner was due to the anti-Masonic excitement, and yet there is no evidence that the Masons ever met there. In fact, the Monson Lodge disbanded soon after the building was completed and did not reorganize for thirty years.

Bibliography

History of Monson Massachusetts Compiled by Monson Historical Society 1960

The First Church of Monson, Monson, Massachusetts 1762-1962

Treasurer’s Book of the Vestry

Records of the Proprietors of the Conference House in Monson

Records of the Monson Cemetery Association 1867

Convention Records of Representative District No. One Hampden County

Records of the Monson Thief Detection Society

Records of the Vestry

Squier & Co. website

history.rays-place.com website



*top - Records of the Proprietors
right - Convention Records
bottom - Treasurers Book
left - Cemetery Association Book*

NEW ACQUISITIONS



*Monson Theatre card;
 photograph of Lord Nicholas Monson;
 unidentified baby photographed by A. N.
 Gaouette, Monson photographer;
 Masonic Insurance Claim Postcard
 Purchase*



*Monson Illustrated Book 1897;
 Photographs of the Dedication of
 the Soldiers' Monument July 4,
 1884; G. A. R. Members on front
 steps of Memorial Hall; G. A. R.
 Members marching in Memorial
 Day parade 1906; Centennial Cel-
 ebration of Monson Academy
 1904; Monson Bank; Green
 Street; Dr. George E. Fuller
 House; 1860's view of downtown
 Monson; Hattie Merchant No-
 ble's family photos 1930's-50's;
 James Pendergast Store
 Purchase*



MONSON HISTORY ONLINE

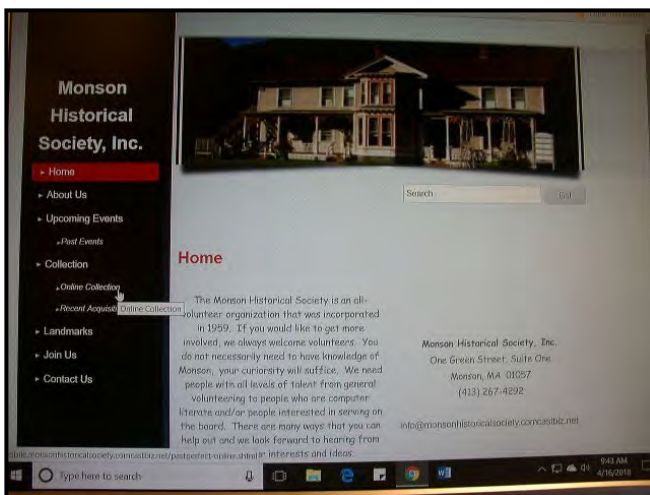
By Mary Swierad

We did it! The Monson Historical Society has moved into the 21st century. Like all new endeavors, we are taking this in small baby steps. Let me explain.

In our Winter 2017 newsletter, I wrote an article titled “What happens to all that Monson stuff?”, which was about how we archive our collection of artifacts. I explained that we are using a computer program called PastPerfect Museum Software which is a searchable database. I am proud to announce we made the leap into the world of online access. Anyone with an internet connection now has the ability to explore and research any of the artifacts I have been able to enter into PastPerfect, thus far, whether you are on your computer at home or using your smart phone on the go.

I would like to take this opportunity to briefly show you how it all works.

First, go to the Historical Society’s website homepage www.monsonhistoricalsociety.org

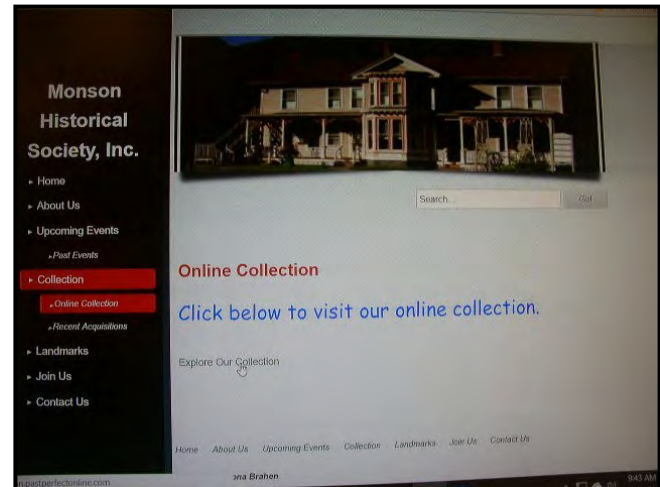


Scroll down the left column to Online Collection and click.

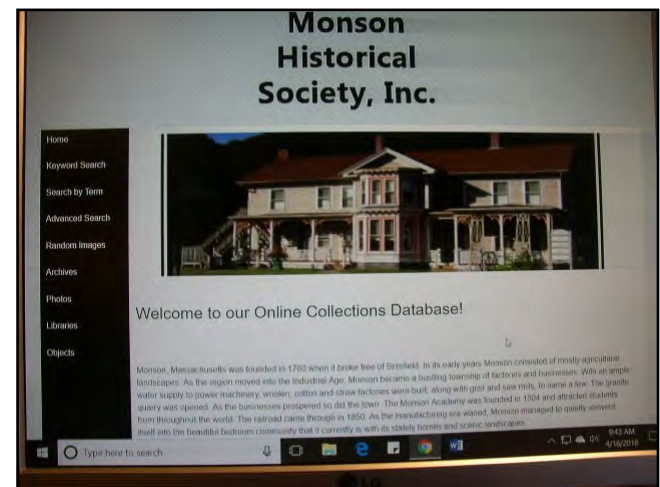
This will take you to the Online Collection page. Click on

“Explore Our Collection”.

This takes you to the home page of our Online Collection

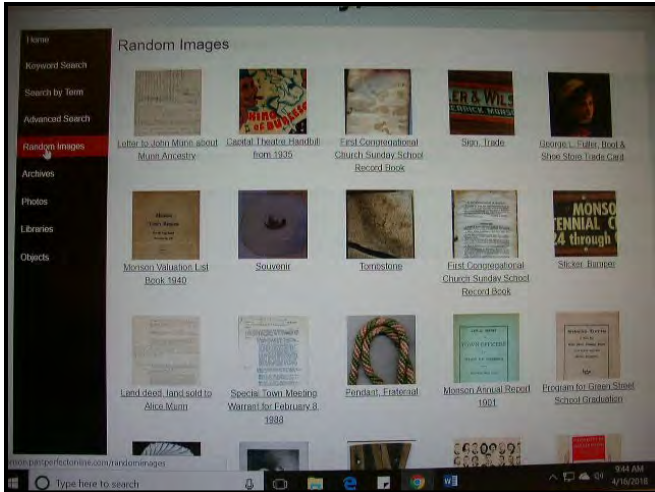


Database powered by PastPerfect. On the left side of the screen is a list of options you can click on to explore the archives. If you are just curious as to what we have in our

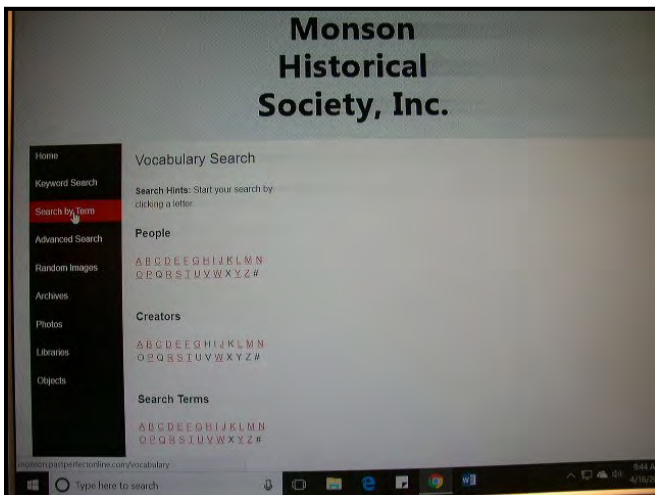


collection, I would suggest clicking “Random Images”.

This will bring up a screen that contains thumbnail images of the items archived. If one catches your eye, click on it and more information about that item will come up.



If you are looking for something in particular, click on “Search Terms” in the left hand column, which will bring you to the page where you can search for a person’s name under “People”. The “Creators” section will allow you to search for a person who created things in town, i.e. pho-



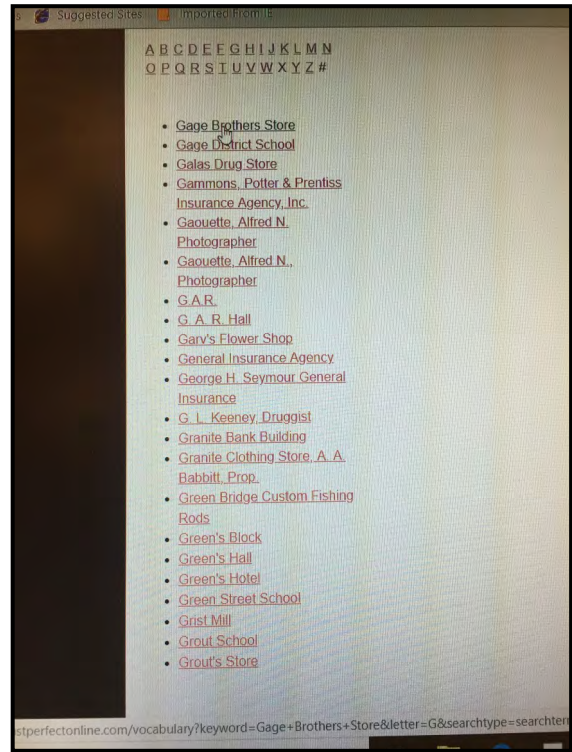
tographer, artist, etc. and the “Search Terms” section on this page contains names of public buildings, businesses, schools, churches, events, locations in Monson, etc.

Let’s explore what can be found if you were to search for information about the Gage Brothers Store that was once in Monson.

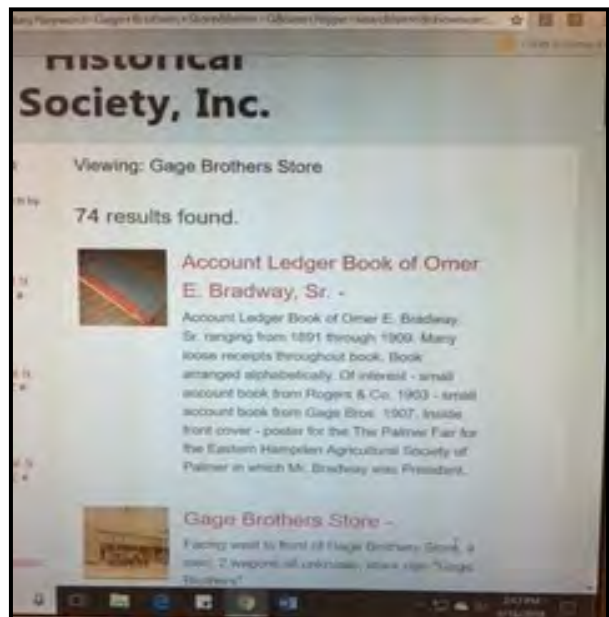
You would click on the “G” in search terms where a list of terms starting with “G” would appear be-

low. You would then click on “Gage Brothers Store”.

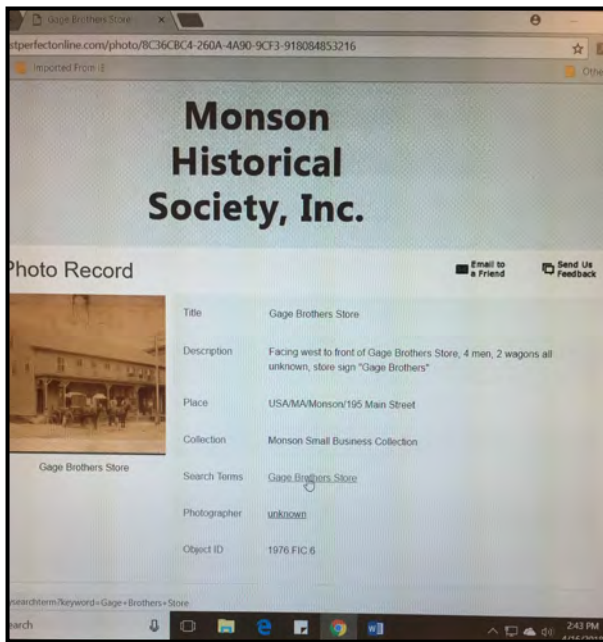
That would take you to the page that tells you that, at this time, there are 74 results found for your search of



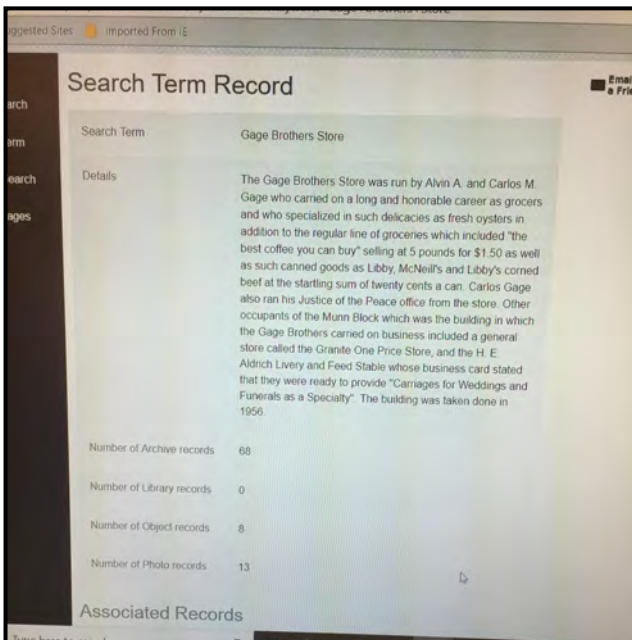
Gage Brothers Store. You can continue scrolling down this page, seeing a thumbnail photograph of each of the 74 items along with a brief description. Let’s say the sec-



ond item, the photo of the Gage Brothers Store, caught our interest. Click on either the Photograph or the Title.

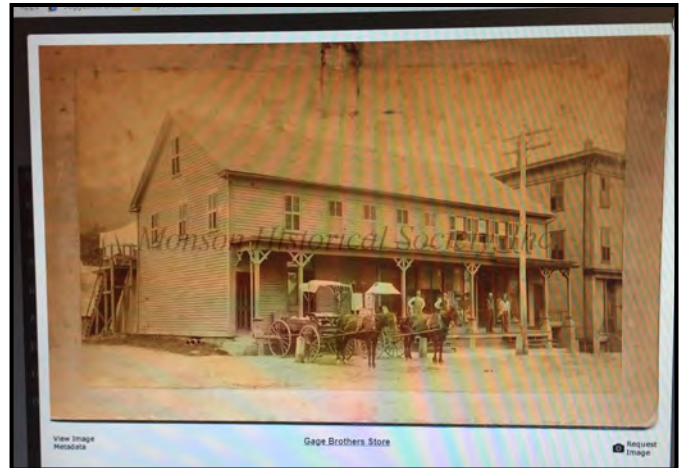


The Photo Record page will appear with the full description. You will notice that there is a category "Search Terms" on this page and Gage Brothers Store is to the right of it. If you click on it, it will bring you to the Search Term Record page which contains detailed information about the Store.



It also tells you how many of the 74 items are archives, objects, photos or published books.

If you would like to see a close up of the photograph, all you need to do is click on the thumbnail photograph that appears on the original Photo Record screen.



I hope you will take the time and explore our online collection. As I explained at the beginning of this story, I have just started uploading artifacts onto the web. I plan to add more and more items on a regular basis. In the near future, a google link will be added to our website making it unnecessary to type in our web address to access our online collection, as this will open it up to the entire world for viewing.

Check back often to see what new discoveries of our Monson history lie just a mouse click away.

ITEMS FOR SALE

1960 History of Monson Book CD

The History of Monson, written in 1960 for the Bicentennial of the formation of the town, is now available in PDF format on a CD.

If you are currently a member of the Monson Historical Society, the fee to obtain the CD is \$15.00. For non-members, the fee is \$20.00, which includes one year free membership and our quarterly newsletter *The Historian*. Shipping costs for the CD are included in the fee.



Please include whether you are a member or not and mail your request to:

Monson History CD
Monson Historical Society, Inc.
One Green Street, Suite 1
Monson, MA 01057

Please include your email address to receive the newsletter. Make your checks payable to **Monson Historical Society, Inc.**



Also available is the 12-page booklet about the W.N. Flynt Granite Co. Cost is \$3.00 which includes shipping.

WHERE WAS THIS?

Answer to Last Month's "Where Was This Moved?"

The answer to the last newsletter "Where Was This Moved" to is: Sometime before 1959, the State Line Train Station was bought by the Quaboag Country Club and moved to where it stands today between 84 and 90 Palmer Road, Monson.



This Month's "Where Was This?"

On May 15, 1767, it was voted at a Town Meeting in Monson "to build a pair of stocks, so that the inhabitants of Monson could not escape with just a penal judgement, but should be confined in the stocks for two days." Where were the stocks located?



***** MEMBERSHIP *****

Membership Renewals occur on May 1st of each year and are good through April 30th of the following year. (For example, a "5/1/2019" membership means you are a paid member from 5/1/2018 to 4/30/2019).

For Postal Mail Recipients of Newsletter

Check the date on your mailing label. If it reads "**5/1/2019**" (or a later date), your membership is **current**. If it reads "**5/1/2018**" (or an earlier date), it is time for you to renew.

For Email Recipients of Newsletter

Check the "Subject" line in the email. If it reads "**Monson Historical Society Newsletter**", your membership is **current**. If it reads "**Monson Historical Society Newsletter/Renewal**", your membership has expired and you will need to update it. Please read the text in your email for renewal instructions.

NOTE

Until we get set up on the Historical Society's email account, please be aware that the newsletters will be sent from this email address: DCDuquette@msn.com (Denis Duquette).

Check your "Junk" email folder, in case it gets sent there.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL INSTRUCTIONS

**Please take the time today to complete the membership form and mail it back to the address listed on the form, along with your check.
Your membership will be updated.**

MONSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC. MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Address _____ Town _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email Address (for newsletter) _____

(PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY!)

Indicate a membership category and enclose a check made out to: "**Monson Historical Society, Inc.**"

(Note: Membership renewal is May 1st of each year)

_____ Individual \$10⁰⁰ _____ Family \$20⁰⁰

_____ Life Membership \$250⁰⁰

Return to: MHS Membership - One Green Street, Suite One - Monson, MA 01057

Any information you provide us will be kept in strict confidence and will NEVER be given out or sold at any time.

*And as always, we **THANK YOU** for your continued support of the
Monson Historical Society, Inc.!*