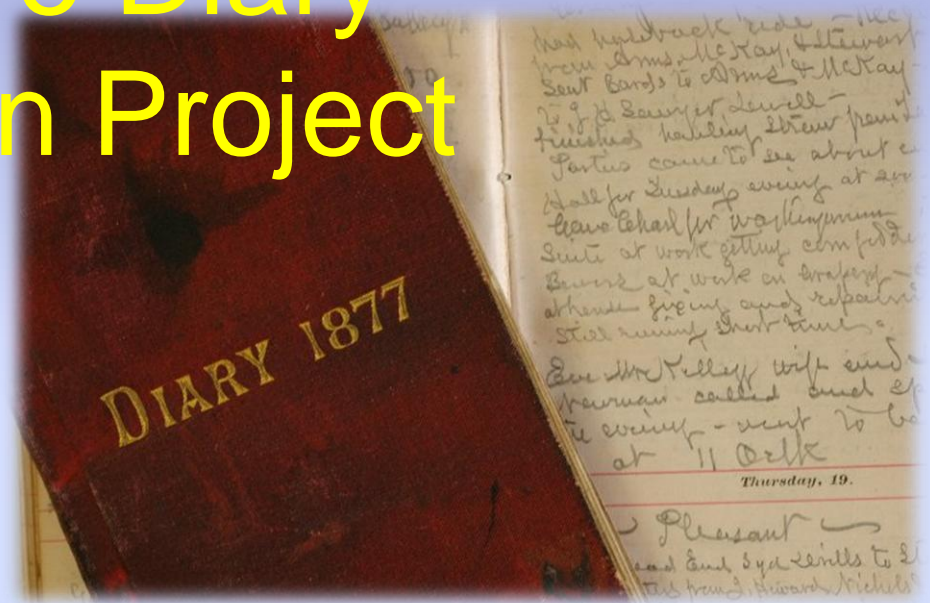


# George Nye Diary Transcription Project



Ken Skrivseth with Jeri Witt

# Why George Nye and his Diaries Are Important To Us

- George H. (Henry) Nye was the superintendent of the Laurel Cotton Mill for more than 7 years - 12 years after the end of the Civil War, and 7 years after Laurel was chartered as a town.
- His diaries reveal daily life for a well-off Laurel citizen of the period.
- They also provide critical information on the operations of the Laurel Cotton Mill.
- An unsurpassed resource from that time period.



# About George Nye (1828-1908)

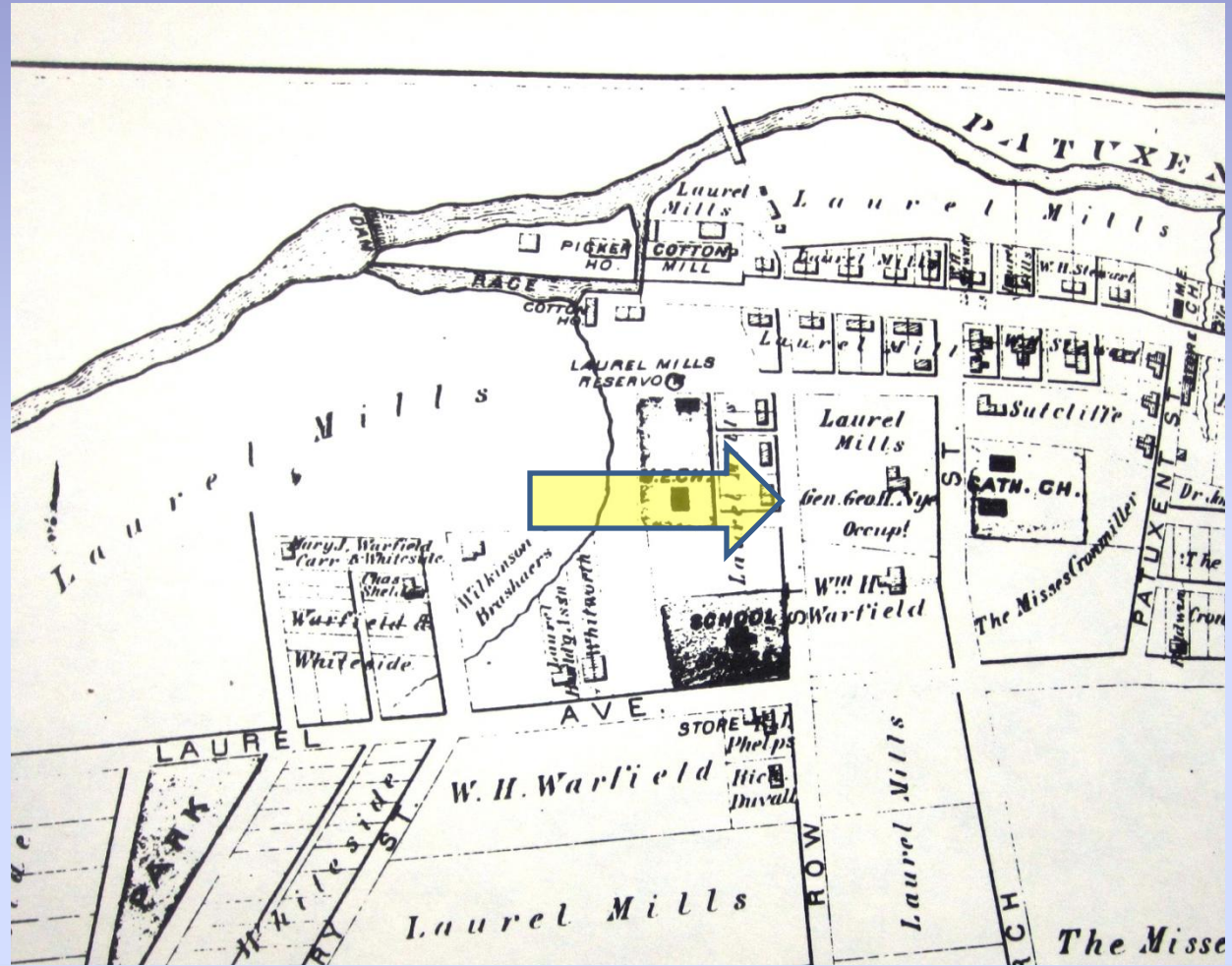
- Born in Hallowell, Maine
- Worked in Textile Mills for much of his life, managing operations in several of them.
- In the Civil War he was an officer and soon commanded Infantry Units:
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Maine, 10<sup>th</sup> Maine, 29<sup>th</sup> Maine Veteran Volunteers
  - Stationed nearby for a time - in Washington; Patterson Park, Baltimore; and Annapolis Junction
  - Fought at Cedar Mountain, Antietam/Sharpsburg, the Red River Campaign, and Cedar Creek; wounded several times
  - Named Brevet Major General at the end of the war
- He came to Laurel with his wife and five children.
- His wife died here in Laurel, in 1883.
- After Laurel, Nye moved to South Natick Massachusetts

# George Nye in Laurel

- Superintendent of the Laurel Cotton Mill 1877 – 1885
  - Transferred from Hochelaga Cotton Mill where he was superintendent, near Montreal, Canada
  - Recruited by James A Gary, manager of a number of mills in Maryland over a period of years.
- His Family:
  - Wife Charlotte “Charlie”
  - Son George “Georgie”
  - Daughters Clara, Charlotte “Lottie”, Gertrude “Gertie” and Grace “Gracie”

# How We Got the Diaries

- The 1878 Hopkins Atlas map of Laurel shows “Gen Geo H. Nye, occupt” Brandon Gill and Ken Skrivseth at the museum did early search ~1998 and found some leads. Prior to that time we had no knowledge of George Nye and his role in Laurel.



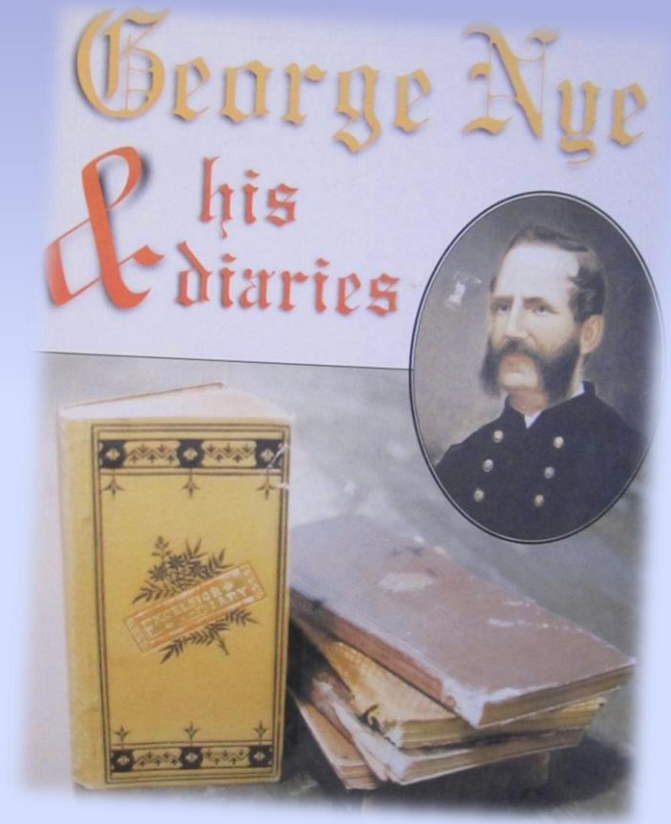
# Acquiring the Diaries

- We learned that Nick Picerno, avid Civil War collector of 1<sup>st</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> Maine memorabilia, held many diaries and papers of George Nye.
- Contacted Nick, who told us he had diaries from 1877, 1878, 1879, 1880, and 1882, plus other papers. These were acquired for the museum after funds were raised. Later the 1885 diary was also acquired.



# First Steps With Diaries

- An early diary review revealed information on many local activities and connections to national events.
- A 1998 -1999 museum exhibit focused on the diaries



# First Steps with the Diaries

- The early review of the diaries also revealed over a hundred names including local citizens, business associates, social and military friends – many previously unknown.
  - **An Excel file incorporating these names was created.**
  - **A printout is available to the public in the LHS library**
- Microfilm was made including Xerox copies of all the diaries, generously donated by Octo Publishing Corporation, a local Laurel business. This protected the fragile diaries and provided better access to their content.

*Full transcription was always a dream and goal.*



# The Transcription Process

- Additional diary copies were made from the early Xerox to allow research and aid in transcription.
- Transcription to Microsoft Word file is initially done looking at the diary copy, not the original.
  - One or two persons, diary copy and a computer.

# The Transcription Process

- Word processor text uses the same line breaks as the original diary, to facilitate further review and revision.
- Handwriting can be difficult to read (not infrequently).
  - These places are marked for further review ‘\*\*\*\*\*’

Monday, August 19, 1878  
 ~ Pleasant ~  
 Commenced leaving mill \*\*\*  
 on ¼ time - started up at  
 7 Oclk - water plenty  
 Recd letters from Kimpton & Jordan -  
 Recd first number of Montreal Weekly ( ) \*\*\*\*\*  
 from Willie J Anderson - subscribed  
 for the Laurel Gleaner for Stewart for  
 one year - sent letter to Fillebrown  
 with my note for 272.62 payable  
 on 3% of ( ) at 8% to pay premium  
 of 272.62 on new policy in ( ) \*\*\*\*\*  
 Montreal Life Insurance Co that  
 comes due the 23 ( ) - Recd Laurel  
 Mills - money loaned 114.46 \*\*\*\*\*  
 went to colored camp meeting with  
 Charl Lottie - home at 7.30  
 Bed at 9 Oclk

Tuesday, 20.  
 ~ Pleasant ~  
 Gave Charlie 50.00  
 Recd letter from JS Davis - and ans same  
 Gave Lottie 10x, Gertie 10x = 20x  
 Hired two weavers from the Savage in  
 payment of two they hired from me  
 on Monday - Recd bbl of pt bottles  
 of Lagor of Reese today -  
 Charl - Clara & Grace called  
 on the Coffins - mill stopted  
 at 4.30 making 8 ¼ hours  
 time - goods are selling  
 a little better and we  
 shall hardly run short this day  
 Eve at home - sat up  
 and read till 9 Oclk  
 then to bed -

Monday, August 19, 1878  
 ~ Pleasant ~  
 Commenced running mill  
 on ¼ time - started up at  
 7 Oclk - water plenty  
 Recd letters from Kimpton & Jordan -  
 Recd first number of Montreal Weekly Witness  
 from Willie J Anderson - subscribed  
 for the Laurel Gleaner for Stewart for  
 one year - sent letter to Fillebrown  
 with my note for 272.62 payable  
 on 3d of Nov at 8% to pay premium  
 of 272.62 on my policy in Union  
 Montreal Life Insurance Co that  
 comes due the 23d inst - Recd Laurel  
 Mills - money loaned \$ 114.46  
 went to colored camp meeting with  
 Charl & Lottie - home at 7.30  
 Bed at 9 Oclk

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 and read till 9 Oclk  
 then to bed -

# The Transcription Process

Last review & revise steps involve handling the original diaries using museum gloves and often a magnifier, a painstaking process for two people.



# Transcription Format

- A side-by-side diary copy page and the transcribed text appear on the each page.



# What Sort of Person was George Nye?

## [ George Nye's Characteristics Based on the Diaries ]

- Friendly, sociable, meticulous, endearing, personable, worldly, interested in technology, forward looking, responsible, well off, knowledgeable, family man, a leader, into politics - Republican, fun-loving, devout, superstitious, sentimental, introspective, ...
- And a misspeller with sometimes sloppy handwriting!

# Repeated & Frequent Diary Entries

- A combination of “Daytimer” and Diary -

- Mill Workers hours, wages, hiring and firing
- Dam maintenance, high water, low water and debris clearing
- Steam Power backup - expensive
- Equipment Upgrades and Maintenance
- George Nye Consulted on Design of Mills
  - Anniston, Alabama; Danville, Virginia; Mexico
- Birthdays, and anniversaries from Civil War
- Organizations – Civil War (MOLLUS, GAR); Temperance; Social (Our Social Union),....



# Day to Day Occurrences

- Subscriptions – Harpers, Laurel Gleaner, Baltimore American, Hallowell Register,....
- Purchases – cigars, newspapers, train tickets, telegrams, stamps, household expenses, oysters, groceries (Bond, Heath, and others), carriage hire, horse and harness, &c
- House affairs – varnishing, painting, decorating, planting crops, gathering ice, ice house maintenance, fence repair, chickens, pets, dealing with helpers, etc.
- Evening Social Meetings, Card Games, and always an entry “Went to bed at \_\_\_\_\_ Oclk”

# Communications and Travel

- George Nye received and sent an incredible number of communications every day, wherever he happened to be.
- 2 or 3 letters, 3 or 4 cards, and occasional telegraph messages, often sent and received on a single day.

Letters like email ? Cards like Twitter ?

- Frequent travel by train, buggy, and occasional steamship
- Nye bought 2 telephones in ~1879, \$5 each

# Notable Occurrences

- George Nye first arrives in 1877, takes stock of mill
- 10 Percent Pay Reduction to Workers 1878
- Temperance comes to Laurel in 1878.
- Nye participates in Republican politics, James A Gary runs for office, Mr. Coffin of Muirkirk in Beltsville
- Friend of Admiral Ammen of Ammendale, and George Kellogg, Commissioner.
- A scandal in Laurel!
- Nye was intensely involved with the local school board and the Academy of Music
- Two of Nye's daughters, Clara and Grace meet and marry two local men (Shields Burr and Harry Steiger) [The Steigers later named one son George Nye Steiger]

# Temperance Comes to Laurel

[ CHAPTER 485, Laws of Maryland, 1878, p. 817 ]

“AN ACT to prohibit the sale of spirituous or fermented liquors or lager beer in the town of Laurel, Prince George's county, Maryland, and at any place in Prince George's county, Maryland, within one mile of the present site of the office of the Commissioners of Laurel.

“SECTION 1. *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Maryland*, That hereafter it shall not be lawful for the Clerk of the Circuit Court for Prince George's county, Maryland, to issue a license to any person or persons whatsoever to sell spirituous or fermented liquors of any kind or lager beer at any place within the town of Laurel, Prince George's county, Maryland, or at any place in said county within one mile of the office of the Commissioners of said town of Laurel, as now located.

“SEC. 2. *And be it enacted*, That any person or persons who shall after the first day of May, in the year one thousand eight hundred and seventy-eight, sell any spirituous or fermented liquors of any kind or lager beer as a beverage, to any person or persons whatsoever at any place within the above described limits, shall be liable to indictment in the Circuit Court for Prince George's county, and on conviction thereof, shall be fined for each and every offence not less than twenty dollars, nor more than one hundred dollars, in the discretion of the State, the fines herein incurred to be collected as similar fines are now collected by law.

“SEC 3. *And be it enacted*, That this act shall take effect from the date of its passage.

**Approved, April 5, 1878”**

# Some Mills, Arts and Education

- Hopkins Atlas – George Nye subscribed to Hopkins Atlas of 1878.
- Avondale Mill – Col. Wheeler offered to Laurel Mills for \$5500 in 1882
- Guilford Mill – small cotton mill just off Guilford Road near Columbia, associated (through James A Gary) with the Laurel Mill & Alberton Mill
- Savage Mill – trading of spare parts – and possibly workers –with Laurel Mill
- Bond Mill – lumber, bone dust, groceries, etc.
- Grist Mill – old building from ~1811 still existed on Laurel Mill property
- Assembly Rooms – preceded the Academy of Music, both in use in 1882
- Academy of Music – Nye subscribed and was present at laying of the cornerstone 10/7/1879
- Schools and Schooling
  - George Nye was part of the local school board.
  - Nye's daughter Clara married Shields Burr, whose mother ran a private school near what is now Whiskey Bottom Road and the B&O railroad tracks.
  - Georgie and Gertie went to private schools in Sandy Spring
  - Clara went to the Corcoran Gallery of Art to study
  - At least one child took music lessons from "Prof Perebeau"

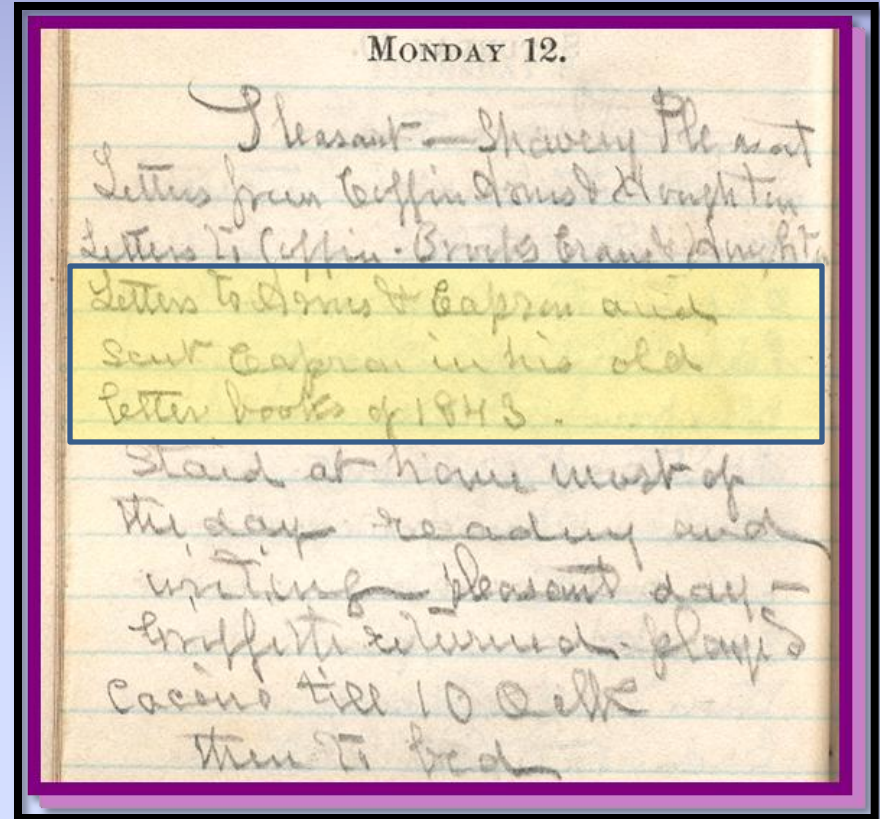
# Some Names in the Diaries

- George P. Tiffany, previous mill superintendent
- James A Gary Mills Manager in Baltimore
  - Residences in Mt Vernon and Catonsville
- Stebbins, Stewart, Kingsley, Kimpton, Shaw, Arms (business)
- Col. Wheeler (Avondale Mill)
- Civil War / business associates: General AL Tyler, CB Fillebrown, JM Gould,....
- Many Laurel area personages GW Kellogg & LA Ellis (Commissioners), Fairall, Farwell, Miles, Haslup, Shaffer, Sadler, Snowden, Cronmiller, Steiger and Burr families, Admiral Ammen of Ammendale Maryland, CE Coffin of Muirkirk Iron Works, Phelps & Shaffer, Warfield, Whiteside, Talbot, Brashears, Waters, Heath, AP Gorman



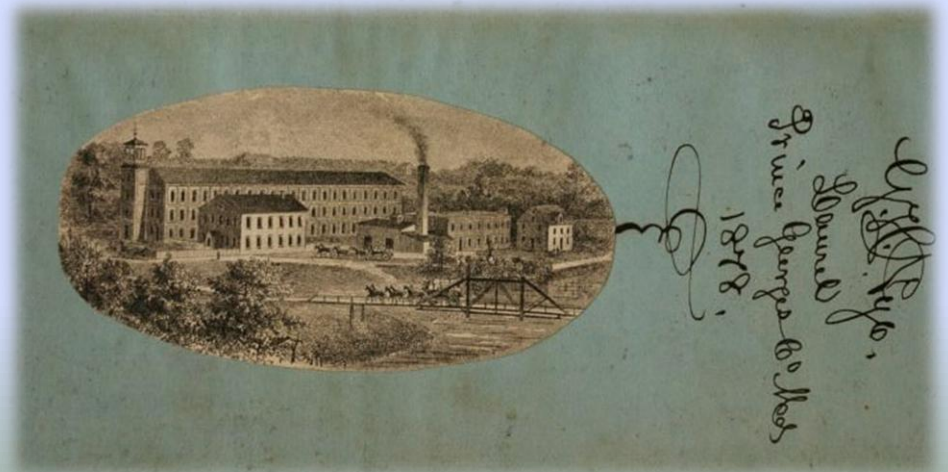
# Some Names in the Diaries

- Nye met with mill founder **Horace Capron** in Washington, DC in early 1885 (MOLLUS), and a few days later sent Capron his old letter books from 1843 shortly before Capron died.
- Capron died in part because of he was a dignitary at the dedication of the Washington Monument.



# Next Steps

- Complete the transcription
- Post on website
- Publish
- Further research using the information contained in the diaries



# Audience Viewing of Diaries and Transcripts

Questions?

