

A CENTURY IN SALEM

Salem history has long been dominated by the traditional narratives of the Salem Witchcraft Trials and the maritime industry. These narratives neglect much of Salem's rich history, including its industrial and commercial past, ethnic groups and immigrants, recreation and entertainment, and educational institutions.

These images, culled from some of the unique collections that can be found in the Archives, represent a century of Salem history from the 1870s through the 1970s. The Salem State University Archives and Special Collections actively collects such material. The Salem History Collection began with a large donation from local collector Nelson Dionne. The Nelson Dionne Collection serves as the backbone of our Salem collections; indeed, it is still growing with continuing donations from Mr. Dionne. In addition to the Dionne Collection, the exhibit features photographs from the Mr. and Mrs. Alfred T. Beaupre Collection, the Louis Gerber Collection, the Hawthorne Hotel Collection, the Salem Woman's Friend Society Collection, the George J. Bates Collection, and the William H. Bates Collection.

While we welcome the community to visit us on the ground floor of the library, we're also dedicated to making our materials accessible through digitization. You can find many of our resources on Digital Commons and the Archives Flickr page.

EXHIBIT CREATED BY
SALEM STATE UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS
SUSAN EDWARDS AND JEN RATLIFF
MARCH 2019



001 – Washington Street, 1970s

After Salem's shopping district waned in the 1960s, the City looked for ways to modernize. In 1968, Salem leveled 25 buildings downtown to create a better traffic flow and provide more parking. After considerable backlash and a series of articles by New York Times' architectural critic Ada Louise Huxtable, the City shifted to rehabilitation and became the first city to use Urban Renewal funds for historic renovation rather than demolition.

Nelson Dionne Collection



002 – Lafayette Street in the winter, c. 1890

At the turn of the 20th century Salemite Frank Cousins sold souvenir photographs such as this at his shop, Frank Cousin's Bee-Hive, which was located at 170-174 Essex Street. According to advertisements from the late 19th century, the "Bee-Hive" offered over 500 images of Salem and the surrounding area. The photographs cost \$.25 each with the option of buying a dozen for \$3.00.

Mr. and Mrs. Alfred T. Beaupré Collection



003 – Salem Willows Promenade, c. 1890

In 1858, 35 acres of waterfront on Salem's Neck was designated as a public park. The park was named Salem Willows due to the white willow trees that had been planted in that area in 1801. The trees originally offered shade to smallpox patients as they were treated by the nearby hospital for contagious disease. When the hospital closed, the trees and waterfront created a great escape from the city's summer heat for locals and tourists alike.

Mr. and Mrs. Alfred T. Beaupré Collection



004 – Restaurant Row at Salem Willows, c. 1890

Starting in the 1870s, a group of restaurants opened along the Willows' north shore. This stretch would become known as Restaurant Row and gained national attention for the "shore dinners" that were featured at the restaurants. Restaurant Row was anchored by Chase House, Swenbeck's, and Ebsen's, all of which specialized in seafood and ocean views. After nearly eighty years in operation, these restaurants began closing their doors in the 1940s. On July 15, 1952, a fire consumed Chase House; it was the first in a series of fires and storms that ultimately destroyed Restaurant Row.

Mr. and Mrs. Alfred T. Beaupré Collection



005 – Officer Marshall McDonough directing traffic on Washington Street, c. 1927

As automobiles began to dominate Salem’s downtown, a traffic stand was installed at the intersection of Washington Street and Essex Street (Town House Square) on July 15, 1927. Initially the stand consisted of a simple block of wood and an umbrella, but it was updated a few months later to the style seen in this photograph.

Nelson Dionne Collection



006 – Witch House under Restoration, 1945

In the 1940s, the Witch House and neighboring Bowditch House were slated for demolition in an effort to widen North Street for automobile traffic. The formation of Historic Salem, Inc. saved the structures and preservation of the Witch House was overseen by Gordon Robb, a Boston architect. An attached shop was removed, and the building was moved 35 feet back from its previous location. The Witch House was renovated to reflect how it was thought to have appeared in the 17th century and the gables were rebuilt. In 1948, the Witch House opened as a city run museum and continues to operate as such.

Nelson Dionne Collection



007 – Lucy E. Moten, Class of 1875

Lucy Ellen Moten was born in 1851 to free black parents in Virginia. They moved to Washington D.C. for better educational opportunities for her. She started out in Howard University's normal department before transferring to Salem Normal School in 1873. She graduated in 1875 and taught in schools before taking the position of principal at Miner Normal School, a training school for black elementary teachers. In 1894, she began studying at the Howard University Medical School, where she received her M.D. in 1897. She then expanded Miner's curriculum to include coursework on health and hygiene. Miner's graduates were sought by state superintendents throughout the country. Moten left Miner in 1920; it is now part of the University of District Columbia. She died in 1933. There is a Washington, D.C. elementary school that bears her name.

Photograph Collection, Salem State University Archives and Special Collections



008 – Salem Savings Bank on Washington Street, c. 1926

The Salem Savings Bank began in January 1818 as a mutual savings bank. Mutual savings banks catered to everyone, not just the wealthy. The records of the bank give us insights into the lives of Salem women, immigrants, and African-Americans that may not be found in other collections. The Salem Savings Bank continued operations until 1981, when it merged with First East Bank of Lynn. It eventually reorganized as Eastern Bank in 1989. In 2017, the Ledger Restaurant opened in this former bank building and over 200 ledgers and boxes of documents belonging to the Salem Savings Bank were donated to Salem State.

Nelson Dionne Collection



009 – Daniel Low on Washington Street decorated for Massachusetts Bay Colony Tercentenary, 1930

In July 1930, cities and towns across Massachusetts celebrated the Commonwealth's 300th anniversary. Businesses such as Daniel Low decorated their buildings in patriotic fashion.

Nelson Dionne Collection



010 – Principal Daniel Hagar and Salem Normal School Faculty, c. 1883

Daniel Bernard Hagar served as the third principal of Salem Normal School from 1865 to 1896. The school underwent many changes during Hagar's 31-year tenure. The Broad Street campus expanded in 1871 to accommodate increased enrollment and the idea of the Model Training School was also conceived of by Hagar. He did not live to see the introduction of a training school on the new campus in South Salem.

Pictured:

(Top Row, L to R): Chase Palmer, Principal Daniel Hagar, Mary Plumer

(Middle Row, L to R): Lizzie Herrick, Ellen Dodge, Elizabeth Jones, Adelaide Towle

(Bottom Row, L to R): Caroline Cole, Harriet Martin, Sophia Driver, Mary Godden.

Photograph Collection, Salem State University Archives and Special Collections



011 – Group of Salem Normal School Students, c. 1886

Prior to 1894, students were not required to have a high school diploma before entering the Normal School. In 1886, around 40% of students had graduated high school and the average age was twenty, although some students were as young as fifteen. At the time, tuition was \$10 per term. The student body was all women at the time this photograph was taken. In 1898, Salem Normal School accepted its first male students. Michael Burke from Chelsea and Ralph Munroe from North Reading entered the program in September.

Photograph, Salem State University Archives and Special Collections



012 – Silent Film “Java Head” being filmed on Hardy Street, 1922

The silent motion picture *Java Head*, released in February 1923, was based on the 1919 book by Joseph Hergesheimer. The story chronicles the tragic marriage between Salem ship captain Gerrit Ammidon played by Alan Roscoe and a Chinese princess portrayed by Leatrice Joy. *Java Head* was filmed at many locations in Salem that were mentioned in the book, including Derby Wharf, Central Wharf, the Custom House, Hardy Street and Salem Common. Like 75% of silent films, *Java Head* has been lost. Only a few still photographs exist.

Nelson Dionne Collection



013 – Empire Theater on Essex Street, 1925

On August 29, 1907, Julius Cahn unveiled his nearly 1,500 seat cinema at 285 Essex Street. The Empire Theatre was built on the previous site of Mechanic Hall, which had been lost to a fire only two years prior. By 1908, Julius Cahn had nearly 300 affiliated theaters in the Northeast and Midwest. The Empire Theatre hosted both films and plays until the building was razed in 1955. The site is now a public parking lot adjacent to Essex House, a condominium complex.

Nelson Dionne Collection



014 – Charles F. Whitney instructs the Art Club, 1924

Salem native Charles Frederick Whitney became an art instructor at Salem Normal School in 1890. Whitney graduated from the Normal Art School (now Mass Art) and published several books. He frequently took the Art Club to nearby Devereaux Beach to practice their drawing and painting.

Photograph Collection, Salem State University Archives and Special Collections



015 – Salem Train Depot on Washington Street, c. 1880s

Built in 1847 for the Eastern Railroad, the Salem Depot long dominated the downtown skyline. The castle-like granite structure was designed by Gridley Bryant, a well-known Boston architect and stood at the intersection of Washington and Norman Streets. The razing of the Salem Depot began in the Fall of 1954 and was completed in the Spring of 1955. In 1958, the site was paved over and became the Riley Plaza we see today.

Nelson Dionne Collection



016 – Employees dancing inside Naumkeag Steam Cotton Co., c. 1930s

The Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company, popularly known as the Pequot Mills, opened in 1847 and was famous for its sheets and pillowcases. The company predominantly employed Salem’s immigrant population, especially Poles and French Canadians. The mills were almost entirely destroyed in the Great Salem Fire of 1914. Naumkeag was the site of a major wildcat strike in 1933, initiated because of poor working conditions. The company remained in Salem until 1953 when the company moved to South Carolina. The site is now known as Shetland Park.

Nelson Dionne Collection



017 – Electric streetcar at Essex and Washington Square c. 1930s

Salem’s first street railway was incorporated in 1862. This horse car railway system or “horse railroad” continued to grow and by 1887 had 105 cars, 390 horses, and 30 miles of track. In the 1890s, the railway system slowly became electrified. This change required heavier tracks to be laid and electric cables to be hung over them. As cities were electrified, horses and horse cars were transferred to outlying areas that still used the old system. Buses began to replace streetcar lines in Massachusetts as early as the 1920s, reaching Salem in 1931. Salem’s conversion to an all bus system was complete by 1937, with the last streetcar traveling to Beverly on March 1st of that year.

Nelson Dionne Collection



018 – Model Training School students studying a cat, 1904

The Model Training School at Salem Normal School began in 1897 in the Sullivan Building. An agreement with the City provided another grammar school for South Salem's growing population and allowed Salem Normal School students to observe classrooms while training to teach. In 1913, because of growing training school enrollment and the need for more space for the Normal School, the state and city agreed to build a new school (the former Horace Mann School) on land adjacent to the Normal School.

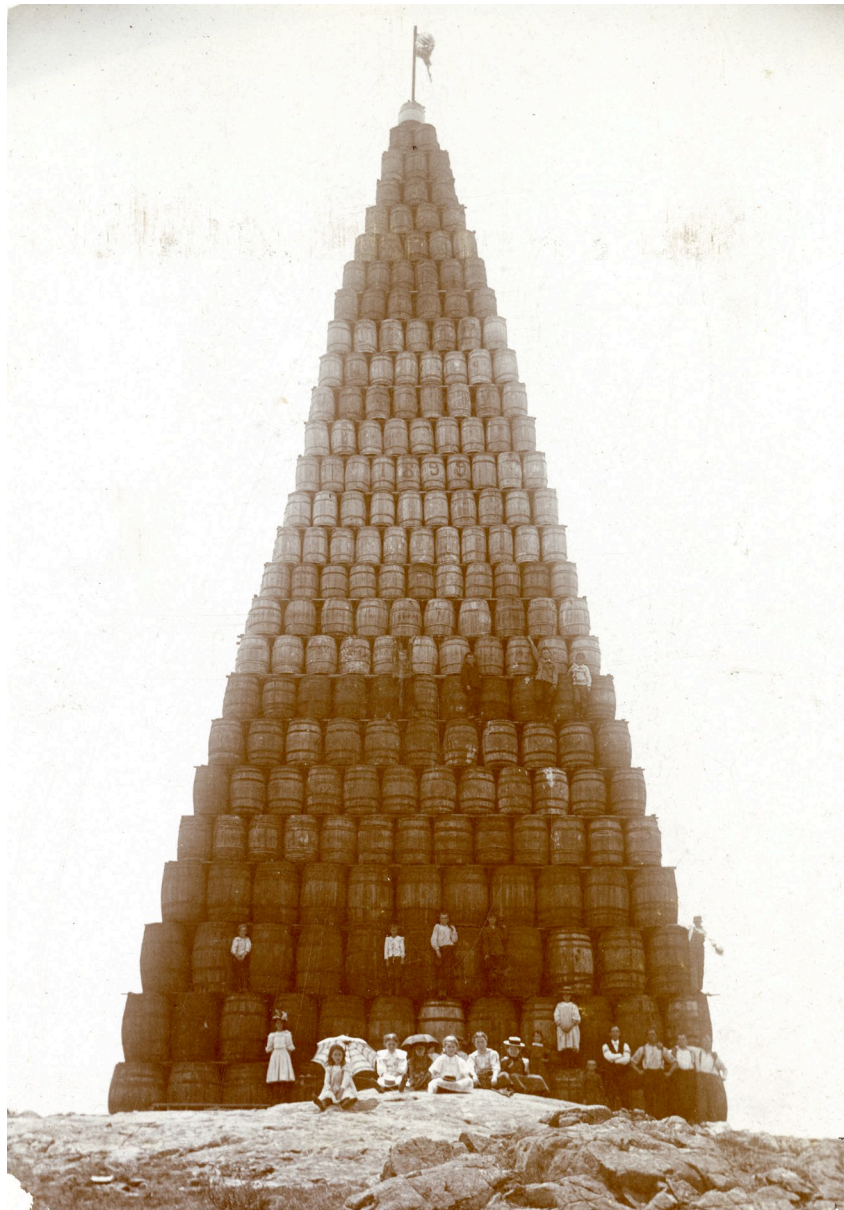
Photograph Collection, Salem State University Archives and Special Collections



019 – Hawthorne Hotel opening day, 1925

Incorporated on August 27, 1923, the Salem Hotel Corporation began with a 52-member committee consisting of Salem business owners and philanthropists who all believed in the importance of building a hotel in the city. In July of that year, fundraising for the new hotel kicked off with a group of 175 volunteer businessmen. \$500,000 was raised on the first day, more than half of the original \$750,000 goal. The Hawthorne Hotel opened to much fanfare with a multi-day celebration beginning on June 21, 1925.

Hawthorne Hotel Collection



020 – Fourth of July Bonfire, 1899

Today most towns and cities celebrate the 4th of July with fireworks; in the early days of the Republic many towns built bonfires. Salem earned a reputation for the unrivaled bonfires it held every July 3rd. Each year a pyramid of barrels, some as high as 90 feet, was built and set ablaze to commemorate "America's birthday." There were usually competing bonfires on both Lookout Hill and Gallows Hill.

Nelson Dionne Collection



021 – Custom House, c. 1900

The Custom House on Derby Street was built in 1819 for use by the Custom Service to assess arriving cargo and vessels in Salem Harbor. The Customs Service utilized the building until the 1930s, when it was transferred to the National Park Service for the creation of Salem Maritime National Historic Site. The Custom House is most notable for its connection to Nathaniel Hawthorne, who worked there from 1846 to 1848.

Nelson Dionne Collection



022 – Essex Street from Town House Square, c. 1880s

At the turn of the 20th century, Salem was a shopping destination. Many would travel by train to visit shops such as a Daniel Low and Almy's on Essex and Washington streets. Salem's retail dominance began to decline in 1958 with the opening of the North Shore Mall in nearby Danvers and the demolition of Salem's grand train depot at Riley Plaza.

Nelson Dionne Collection



023 – Crowds on Lafayette Street after the Great Salem Fire, 1914

On June 25, 1914, the Great Salem Fire began in the Korn Leather Factory on Boston Street and spread to Salem Harbor, leveling Salem's Point Neighborhood. When the fire ceased more than 1,600 buildings 250 acres were lost and more than 14,000 Salemites were displaced. On the day following the Fire, an estimated 1 million people visited Salem to see the ruins.

Nelson Dionne Collection



024 – Ruins in the Point Neighborhood after The Great Salem Fire, 1914

On June 25, 1914, the Great Salem Fire began in the Korn Leather Factory on Boston Street and spread to Salem Harbor, leveling Salem's Point Neighborhood. When the fire ceased more than 1,600 buildings over 250 acres were lost and more than 14,000 Saemites were displaced. Many of the inhabitants of the Point, having lost both their housing and their employment, left Salem for mill towns throughout New England and Canada.

Nelson Dionne Collection



025 – Customers at the counter of Gerber’s Restaurant, c. 1940s

In 1942, Louis Gerber and his brother Joseph opened Gerber’s Restaurant at 114 Washington Street in Town House Square. Gerber’s Restaurant quickly grew a following and was frequented by locals, lawyers, judges, politicians, and even visiting celebrities, earning the nickname “Little City Hall.” Louis Gerber sold the restaurant in 1970 and it was destroyed by fire in 1971.

Louis Gerber Collection



026– Woman’s Friend Society on Elm Street (Now Hawthorne Boulevard), c. 1900

The Woman’s Friend Society grew out of a town meeting proposal made in 1875 to aid poor and displaced women and girls in Salem. The Society provided room and board, job placement, workshops and training, and the area’s first visiting nurses. Their records, housed at Salem State, provide a detailed account of working-class women in the late 19th and early 20th century, many of whom were newly arrived immigrants. The Woman’s Friend Society still operates on Hawthorne Boulevard.

Woman’s Friend Society Collection, Salem State University Archives and Special Collections



027 – Hello Day celebration on Salem Common, 1971

In 1971, Mayor of Salem Samuel E. Zoll proclaimed Saturday, May 1st to be “Hello Day.” The event was one in a series of month-long initiatives to celebrate the inauguration of new Salem State president Frank Keegan. Zoll saw a wane in neighborliness with the rise of mass media and automobile travel and hoped “Hello Day” would better unite the community. At noon on May 1st, fire stations rang their bells and residents gathered in the streets to greet each other. On Salem Common, a rock band performed while a plane circled to take photos.

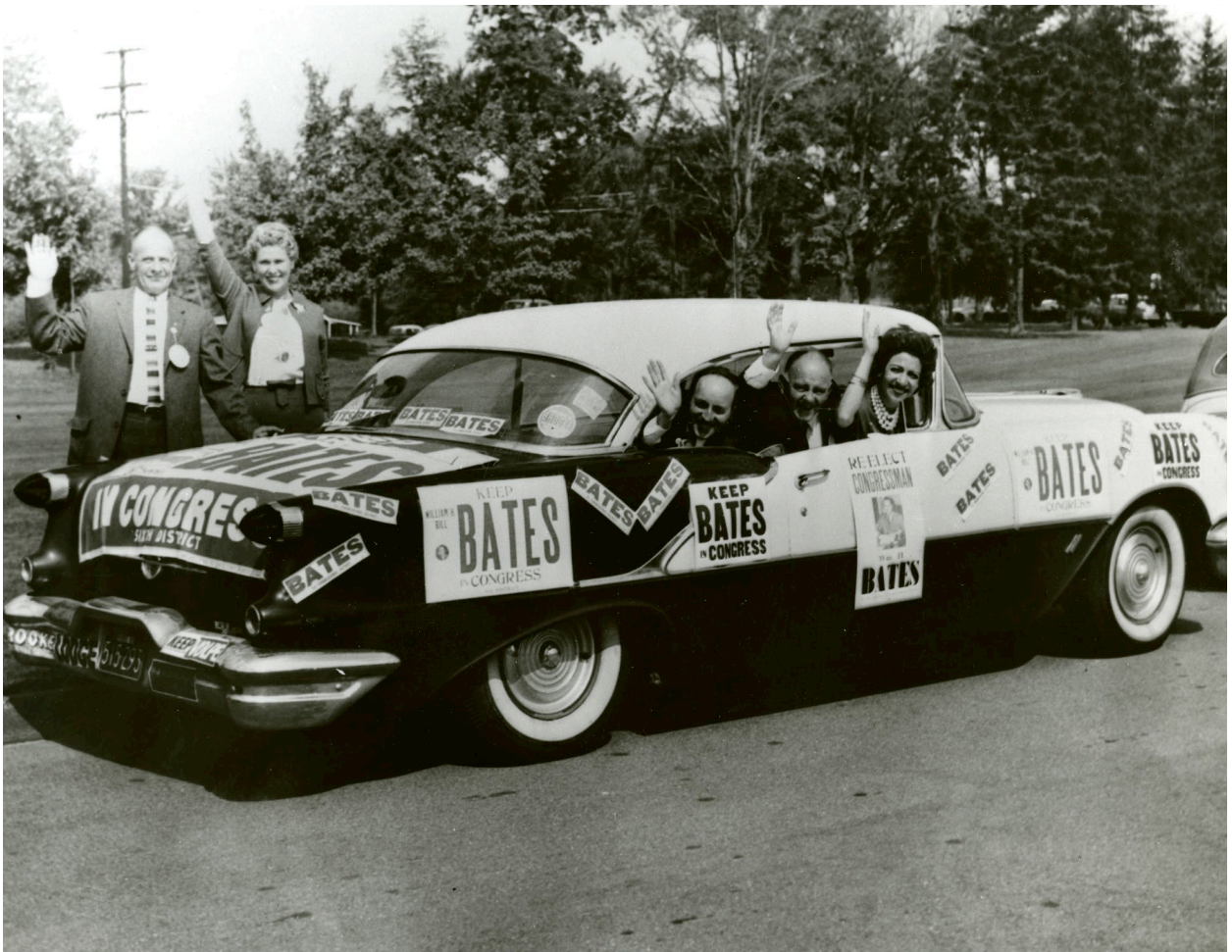
Photograph Collection, Salem State University Archives and Special Collections



028 – Congressman George J. Bates views atomic bomb testing, 1946

George J. Bates was elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives in 1918. In the House he served as chairman of the Committee on Municipal Finance and became known for his understanding of the budget difficulties faced by cities. This expertise, along with his general popularity among the people of his hometown, led to his election as mayor of Salem. He served in this position from 1924 -1937. While mayor, Bates was asked to run for the empty Sixth District Congressional seat and won in 1936. In 1946, he was selected to witness the two atomic bomb tests at Bikini Atoll.

George J. Bates Papers



029 – Congressman William H. Bates re-election campaign, 1952

William H. Bates of Salem had intended to make the Navy a career until the untimely death of his father, Congressman George Bates, in an airplane accident in November of 1949. Soon after the death of the elder Bates, the Lynn Item called for the election of his son William. Because of Navy regulations, Bates was not allowed to campaign for himself; a committee to elect Bates was formed and campaigned in his stead. Bates was the overwhelming winner and resigned his commission in the Navy and began his tenure in Congress. He served for two decades until dying of stomach cancer in 1969.

William Henry Bates Papers



030 – Salem Normal School Basketball Team, 1898

The first organized team sport at Salem Normal School was women's basketball, which was first played at Smith College in 1892. Though there may have been an earlier team, the first documented team at the Normal School was formed in 1898. The original rules of the game called for five players, but by the turn of the 20th century the Salem Normal School team consisted of nine players (three forwards, three guards, and three centers) so that "a pretty game can be played with little or no fatigue."

Photograph Collection, Salem State University Archives and Special Collections



031 – Model Training School students studying Sir Galahad, 1904

When the Salem Normal School moved to what is now the Sullivan Building on North Campus in 1896, the building's hallways and classrooms were quickly filled with copies of classic works of art. Many of the items were loaned or gifted by the community and alumni for study by the Normal School and Model Training School students.

Photograph Collection, Salem State University Archives and Special Collections



032 – Blizzard of 1978

The storm formed on Sunday, February 5, 1978 with most of its snowfall occurring between the morning of February 6th and the evening of February 7th. In total, the Greater Boston area received an average of 27 inches of snow. The damage for the effected Northeast region was more than \$520 million (estimated to be \$1.95 billion today.) Salem took weeks to recover and the National Guard was brought in to help clear roads, assist emergency personnel, and aid in search and rescue missions.

Photograph Collection, Salem State University Archives and Special Collections