

Lost Historical Bible Returned to Lyons Falls

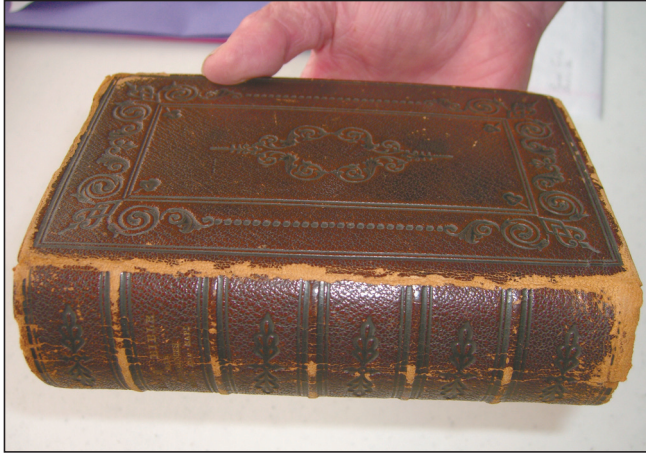
By Katherine Ziemke

LYONS FALLS - The trek of a 150-year-old Bible back to its origin in Lyons Falls began with but a simple e-mail transmission. A resident in Massachusetts, where the Bible had been found, knew that the origin of the historical Bible was Lyons Falls, New York, because of the following hand-written dedication on the second page:

**From: Mother
Nov. 20th 1862
Mary L. Lyon
Lyons Falls, NY**

Massachusetts resident Nance Moran searched online for an organization that might have interest in the Bible. When Nance located the Lyons Falls History Association's website, she e-mailed a note to the Village's unofficial historian, Shirley VanNest, saying, "My father was working in a local town waste dumping station and he pulled a Bible from the garbage piles... Do you know of any family members or historical society that would like this Bible?... I know I would like it if it were my family lineage."

Shirley received the message and began alerting the rest of the History Association that the Mary



The pictured historical Bible, was a gift given to Mary L. Lyon on her 21st birthday, November 20, 1862, from her mother, Mary B. Northrop Lyon.

granddaughter of Marrietta DuPont and Caleb Lyon. Mary's grandfather, Caleb Lyon, established the first permanent settlement at Lyonsdale in 1823. His son, Lyman R. Lyon, acquired large tracts of timber land in the western Adirondacks and developed the water power of the Black River, giving his name to the mill community of Lyons Falls. While a member of the state legislature, Lyman actively promoted construction of the Black River Canal as a regional transportation artery to

the Village of Lyons Falls marks the return of a local historical treasure to the community which was so appreciably affected by the Lyon family's contributions.

Clearly, by the hand-written inscription on the second page of the Bible, it was given as a gift to Mary L. Lyon by her mother. To the casual observer, the date is otherwise meaningless. However, because Mary L. Lyon was born on November 20, 1841 and the date the gift was given was November 20, 1862, it appears to be given as a 21st birthday gift. Because the gold guild on the pages is well worn and there were many passages marked within it, it can be surmised that the gift was a frequent and treasured companion of Mary L. Lyon's.

Because Mary L. Lyon Fisher was a devoted lifetime member of historic Forest Presbyterian Church, the Bible's return to Lyons Falls creates as much interest and excitement for members of Forest Church as it has for the History Association. When the ornately embossed brown leather-bound Bible was taken to be shown to church-goers a few weeks ago, the interest was intense, perhaps even passionate. Church-goers noted the small size of the Bible, approximately 5 inches high, 3 inches wide, and 2 inches thick. It was deduced from the petite size that the Bible must have been one that traveled with Mary Lyon. Church members noticed that Mary Lyon hand wrote her favorite Biblical passages in the back most pages of the book. They admired her neatly hand scripted notes in the margins throughout the Bible. They noticed that Mary Lyon had book-marked several pages, perhaps for

the purpose of swift effortless look-up. Some church members might have pondered whether the Bible's marked pages, scripted so lovingly and devotedly, are something that only occurred during bygone eras. Or perhaps, the return of this community treasure to its origin is a sign of things to come.

After Shirley VanNest received the inquiry and spread the news, she wrote back to Nance Moran asking for more details about how the Bible had been found. Nance responded that sometime between the years 1977 and 1978 her father, Lester Zakrzewski, was working as a heavy equipment operator in Wellesley, Massachusetts. The town had a special location for recycling, where many books were deposited. Lester spotted the Bible on top of the recycling pile and wondered, "Why would someone throw away a Bible?" He picked up the ornate leather-bound Bible and browsed through it. When he noticed the dated inscription on the second page, indicating its historically significant link to the Village of Lyons Falls, Lester decided to salvage it by taking the Bible home.

One might wonder how the historical Bible ended up approximately 300 miles due east of Lyons Falls in Wellesley, Massachusetts. Unfortunately there was no clear answer to this question, as no one knew what really happened. One rumor has it that a Lyon family member moved to Massachusetts. Another possibility is that it could have been inadvertently disposed of in an estate sale. Unfortunately, it is likely the truth will never be known.

As luck would have it Lester knew about the historic Village of Lyons Falls. Earlier in his life, Lester was employed as a truck driver hauling cars to dealerships to be sold. His route often took him through Utica, up New York State Route 12 to Watertown, and then on to the Thousand Islands region. Because Lester had driven through Lyons Falls many times, he thought he would return the Bible to the Village on one of his trips. Lester did not bring the Bible home to Lyons Falls because he never drove through the Village thereafter. Nevertheless, he stored the historical Bible for safekeeping, with the hope that he would be able to return it one day.

Nearly 20 years later, in

1996 after his wife passed away, Lester sold his home to his daughter, Nance Moran. Instead of clearing out his belongings, Lester left most of the contents of the house, including Mary L. Lyon's Bible, with his daughter.

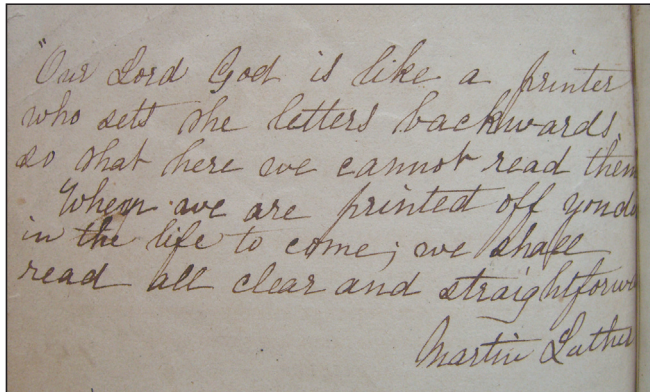
Nance found the Bible while cleaning out a closet a few years ago. She questioned her father about it and Lester relayed the same story. Instead of tossing the Bible away, Nance kept it. She says, "I read through Mary's notes about passages and her favorite quotes." Through the years, the Bible and its quoted passages became personal to Nance. She felt a yearning to connect with those who might have searched for the lost Bible.

Nance began searching online to learn more about Lyons Falls, its history, and its people. She searched for contact detail of a person or organization that could appreciate the value and who would be interested in preserving the historical Bible. Fortunately for Lyons Falls, Nance persevered and finally connected with the Lyons Falls History Association.

At long last, more than 30 years after it was found, the Mary L. Lyon Bible arrived via certified parcel post at the Lyons Falls Post Office a few weeks ago. Roy and Susie Hammacker, President and Secretary of the Lyons Falls History Association, respectively, picked up the treasure, and brought it to the Lyons Falls History Association Museum, where it is now displayed in a place of prominence.

A follow-up note from the finders arrived after the historical Bible had been returned. Nance wrote that she and her father were so happy that after all the many long years gone by, the treasured historical Bible had finally found its way back home to Lyons Falls where it belongs. As they were sentimental about the Bible, Nance and Lester began talking about coming to visit Lyons Falls and the History Association Museum soon after sending the treasure on its way. Needless to say, Lyons Falls Village, the Lyons Falls History Association and Museum, Forest Presbyterian Church, and the owners of the historic Mary L. Lyon Fisher homestead all welcome their visit with open arms.

Kathy Ziemke resides in Lyons Falls and was a town correspondent for the Boonville Herald



Pictured, a page from Mary L. Lyon's historical Bible, on which she recorded a favorite quote: "Our Lord God is like a printer who sets the letters backwards, so that here we cannot read them. When we are printed off yonder in the life to come; we shall read all clear and straightforward. Martin Luther"

L. Lyon Bible had been found. Within a single day, the historical community was buzzing with excitement about the fact that the treasure had been found and that it was destined to return home to Lyons Falls where it belongs.

The significance of the Bible's return to the community of its origin lies in the historical prominence of the Lyon family within the Village of Lyons Falls and the Town of Lyonsdale. Mary Lavinia Lyon was the daughter of Mary B. Northrop and Lyman R. Lyon, and

Rome and the Erie Canal. From her parents, Mary L. Lyon, who after marriage became Mary Lyon Fisher, inherited large and valuable timber holdings in and around the area. As a prominent land holder in the area, Mary Lyon Fisher actively managed her holdings from the late 1880s until her death in 1913.

The Lyon-Fisher family remained the region's dominant landowners and timber industrialists through several generations until the 1950s. Essentially, the return of Mary Lyon Fisher's Bible to