

Maine History

Volume 41
Number 3 *James Berry Vickery III, 1917-1997*

Article 4

10-1-2002

Henry Bailey (1822-1894): Capturing the Likeness of Maine Life after the Civil War

Earle G. Shettleworth Jr.
Maine Historic Presevation Commission

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/mainehistoryjournal>



Part of the [United States History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Shettleworth, Earle G.. "Henry Bailey (1822-1894): Capturing the Likeness of Maine Life after the Civil War." *Maine History* 41, 3 (2002): 215-224. <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/mainehistoryjournal/vol41/iss3/4>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UMaine. It has been accepted for inclusion in Maine History by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UMaine. For more information, please contact um.library.technical.services@maine.edu.



Fuller and Capen Sewing Machine Shop, Water Street, Augusta, c. 1875. Stereo View Card. (Maine Historic Preservation Commission Collection.)

HENRY BAILEY (1822-1894): CAPTURING THE LIKENESS OF MAINE LIFE AFTER THE CIVIL WAR

BY EARLE G. SHETTLEWORTH JR.

OF THE SEVERAL hundred Maine photographers who made stereo view cards between 1860 and 1900, few were as prolific in their production as Henry Bailey of Augusta. These cards featuring two images of the same view taken slightly apart were placed in stereoscopes with a pair of lenses that merged the pictures into one and created the effect of three dimensionality. Looking at stereo view cards was a widespread entertainment in Victorian America, and Henry Bailey and his fellow Maine photographers responded to this popular pastime by marketing large numbers of town and city views of the state. Once common, these now rare photographs provide the single most comprehensive pictorial record of Maine during the second half of the nineteenth century. To date, approximately 150 of Henry's stereo view cards of the capital city have been located along with more than 150 of his pictures of other locations in the central and coastal regions of the state. These cards are found at the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, the Maine Historical Society, the Kennebec Historical Society, the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, the American Antiquarian Society, and in private collections.

Born in West Gardiner, Maine, in 1822, Henry Bailey was the youngest of Timothy and Betsy Bailey's nine children. He grew up on the family farm in a Quaker household, although he became a Methodist in his adulthood. According to his daughter Eunice Bailey Shorey, "he devoted his early life to preparation for Bowdoin College, which he never reached. During the years he attempted to 'fit for college' at Litchfield and Bowdoinham academies, he worked as a cobbler, peddler, and jack of all trades."¹ Henry settled on shoemaking, a trade he pursued from the 1840s through the 1860s. During this period, he was located primarily in Brunswick, but also lived variously in Bowdoinham, Richmond, and Yarmouth, Maine.

In 1856 thirty-four-year-old Henry Bailey married Elmyra Gray of



Henry Bailey, c. 1865. Ambrotype. (Maine State Museum Collection.)



Henry Bailey's Photograph Saloon, Water Street, Augusta, c. 1870. Stereo View Card. (Maine State Museum Collection.)

Hallowell, Maine, on her sixteenth birthday. The couple had two daughters, Etta in 1858 and Eunice in 1864. The marriage ended with Elmyra's death at the age of twenty-seven on 14 March 1867. After his wife was buried in the Friends Cemetery in West Gardiner, Henry went to Hallowell to live with his wife's sister Sarah Gray Morse and her husband Augustus F. Morse, a portrait, landscape, and stereo view photographer. Henry's younger daughter, Eunice, was sent to live with family members at the Bailey homestead in West Gardiner, while Etta stayed with her father and the Morses.

The death of his wife Elmyra Gray Bailey and his resulting move to Hallowell marked a significant turning point in Henry Bailey's life. As early as 1851 Henry had written from Bowdoinham to his brother Alvah

Bailey that he was experimenting with photography, which at that time would have meant working with a daguerreotype camera. This latent interest was given expression after his wife's death when he moved in with his brother-in-law, who offered training in photography, by then a wet plate process using glass negatives. Henry rapidly acquired his photographic education from Augustus, and in May 1867 he purchased a "photograph saloon" on Water Street near Winthrop Street in downtown Augusta and opened his own business. Augustus recorded this sequence of events in his diary:

May 10, 1867. I went to Augusta with Henry and Etta to see saloon.

May 11, 1867. Henry bought a saloon

May 13, 1867. Henry commenced to fix his saloon in Augusta.²

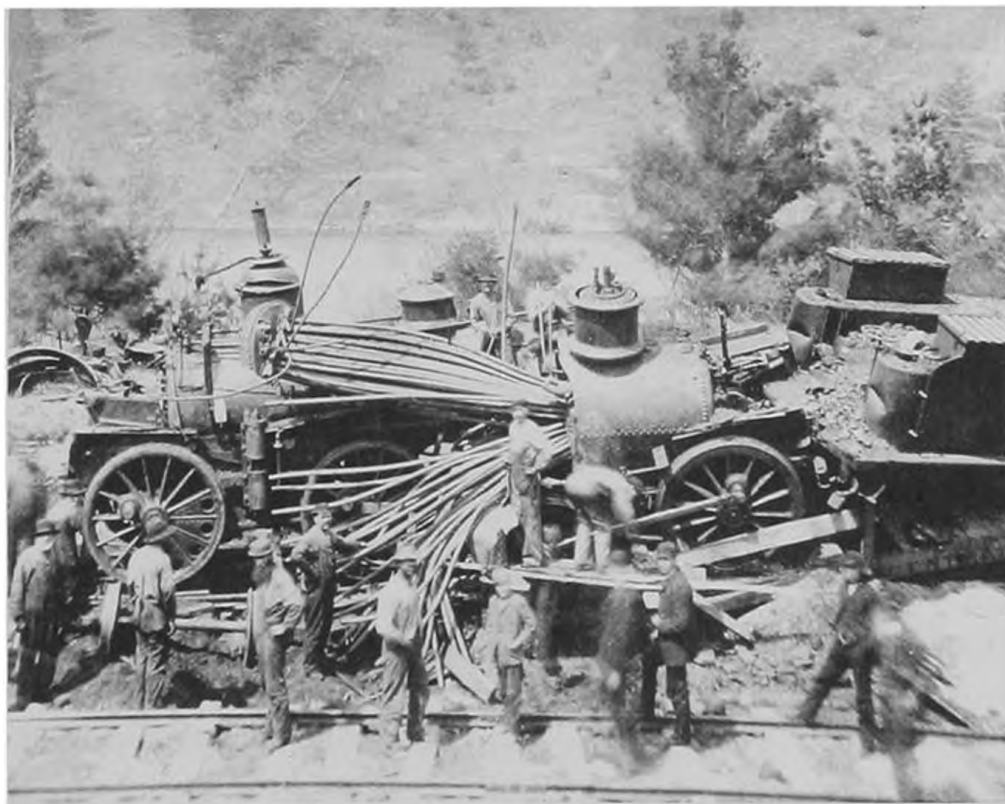
Conveniently sited adjacent to Augusta's railroad station, Henry Bailey's small one story wooden building featured a board and batten facade with an overhanging gable roof trimmed in bargeboards. This attractive shop contained a display space at the front and a studio with a skylight and a dark room at the rear. Glass cases of tintypes as well as framed tintype portraits hung on the exterior at either side of the entrance door. The modest scale of Henry Bailey's building was echoed in others along Water Street, where one-story frame structures mingled with more substantial brick blocks in a commercial district still recovering from a devastating fire in 1865.

Henry Bailey conducted business at this location until May of 1877, when he received notice that he was being displaced by the construction of North's Hotel. So Henry moved his saloon to the north end of Water Street near the railroad bridge, where he continued to operate until April 1885. That month he sold his building to Mr. and Mrs. Frank Gaslin for a millinery and fancy goods store. From that time until his death in 1894, Henry used the home he had purchased in the 1870s near the foot of Winthrop Street as his studio, spending his summers taking tintype portraits in a tent in downtown Bar Harbor, Maine's most famous tourist destination. A 28 March 1888 article in the *Kennebec Journal* indicates that he passed the winter in Jacksonville, Florida, where he also may have taken photographs.

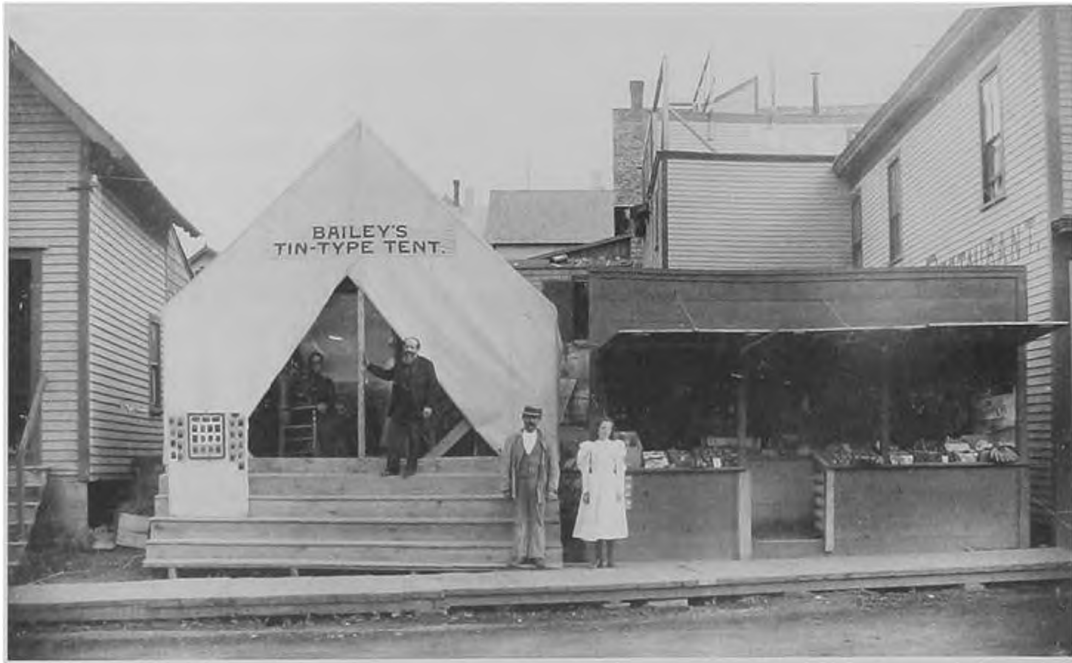
Of the more than 300 known stereo view cards by Henry Bailey, approximately half of them depict Augusta. These photographs capture the transformation of Maine's capital city in the post-Civil War period. State government is represented in pictures of the State House, the Augusta Mental Health Institute, and a militia encampment in Capitol Park.



Maine State Museum,
State House, Augusta, c.
1870. Stereo View Card.
(Maine Historic Preser-
vation Commission
Collection.)



Maine Central Railroad train wreck, Riverside, Augusta, 1883. Stereo View Card.
(Maine Historic Preservation Commission Collection.)



Henry Bailey's tin-type tent, Bar Harbor, showing Etta Bailey Richards seated in tent, c. 1885-1895. Photograph. (Colonel and Mrs. Richard Hawkins Collection.)

Other local subjects range from panoramic views and street scenes to the exteriors and interiors of public buildings, churches, commercial blocks, and residences. Some thirty cards document the newly established federal veterans' home at Togus in nearby Chelsea, Maine. Among the specific events depicted are an 1875 military parade on Water Street and the 1883 train wreck at Riverside. Such topical views of current happenings represent a public demand for journalistic pictures in a time when newspapers and magazines could not reproduce photographs.

Much of the balance of Henry Bailey's stereo views of Maine reflect his practice of photographing coastal resorts and religious camp grounds during the summer months. His pictures indicate that he visited such early vacation retreats as Boothbay Harbor, Capitol Island, Harpswell, Monhegan Island, Mouse Island, Ocean Point, Popham Beach, Portland Harbor, Pemaquid, and Squirrel Island. In the major resort towns of Boothbay Harbor and Bar Harbor, Henry operated his studio from a tent in which he took tintype portraits and sold stereo views. An advertisement in the 29 July 1882, issue of the *Squirrel Island Squid* describes his services:

PHOTOGRAPHS.

Sittings for Photographs can be obtained at the
TENT PICTURE SALOON, BOOTHBAY.

After the 8th of August I shall be prepared to print negatives made previous to that date. Tin-types can be obtained now, but the apparatus for printing Photographs has not yet arrived. Stereoscopic Views of groups, landscapes, and buildings taken, and pictures for an 8x10 frame made to order. Stereoscopic Views of Squirrel Island and vicinity on sale. Soliciting patronage, and thanking you for that of former years, I am

Yours Respectfully,
H. BAILEY.

A similar notice appeared in the *Mount Desert Herald* for 10 July 1885:

TINTYPES.

Parties wanting tintypes, large or small, please call at my

PICTURE TENT

on MOUNT DESERT STREET opposite Prescott & Rollin's Livery Stable, and I warrant to suit you.

Shall also make views of Residences, Landscapes, etc.

HENRY BAILEY.

Henry Bailey practiced photography commercially for almost thirty year from 1867 until his death in 1894. Thirty R. G. Dun & Company credit reports on Henry's business made between 1868 and 1885, the period in which he conducted his photograph saloon in Augusta, indicate



Augustus F. Morse, c. 1865. Ambrotype. (Maine State Museum Collection.)

that he was engaged in a constant struggle to survive financially. The first report on 25 May 1868 set the tone for those that followed: “Small means. Makes tintypes. Only may be good for a small bill. Not entitled to much credit.”³ The balance of the reports consistently characterize Henry’s business as “small” and caution against extending credit to him. One bright spot appears in the 16 September 1874 entry: “Done good business last summer and estimated worth \$500 to \$600. Credit fair in a moderate way.”⁴ This observation reflects how Henry benefited from the rapidly expanding coastal tourist trade after the Civil War.

After Henry Bailey closed his studio on Water Street in 1885, his summer excursions to Bar Harbor became even more important as a source



Monhegan Light, Monhegan Island, c. 1880. Stereo View Card. (Maine Historic Preservation Commission Collection.)

of income. Entries from Augustus F. Morse's diaries for the summers of 1887, 1893, and 1894 reveal that the two veteran photographers worked together in Henry's tent to take tintype portraits of vacationers. Sometimes Henry's daughter Etta Bailey Richards, an accomplished photographer in her own right, assisted them.⁵ Daily receipts in 1887 ranged from \$1.50 to \$25.20. In 1893 Augustus noted in his diary: "We get up at 5 in the morning and have a long day to work (until) about 7 in the evening when we get done work."⁶ For such extended hours, Henry paid Augustus two dollars a day.

In 1893 Augustus observed in his diary that Henry was "rather poorly," and the following summer he remarked that "Henry not so

well.”⁷ During the summer of 1894 Henry spent only July and August in Bar Harbor, returning to Augusta in the company of his daughter Etta on the first of September and leaving Augustus on his own to take pictures for another month. Henry’s health was failing rapidly from tuberculosis, from which he died on 6 November 1894 at the age of 71. Two days later the *Kennebec Journal* eulogized Henry Bailey as a “well known and respected citizen. For years he was a photographer, a business he followed until his last illness came upon him.”⁸ Henry was laid to rest in the Friends Cemetery in West Gardiner next to his wife Elmyra, who had died twenty-seven years before. On his stone is engraved the fitting passage, “I shall be satisfied when I wake to behold his likeness,” as though the image of God himself might be captured by the photographer’s camera.

NOTES

1. “Henry Bailey Photographed Augusta Seventy Years Ago,” *Kennebec Journal*, 4 February 1941.
2. Augustus F. Morse Diary for 1867, Colonel and Mrs. Richard Hawkins Collection, Augusta, Maine.
3. R. G. Dun & Company Collection, Baker Library, Harvard University Graduate School Of Administration, Boston, MA.
4. Ibid.
5. The evidence for Etta Bailey Richards as a photographer is from a striking close-up photograph of the USS *Maine*, probably taken in Maine waters prior to 1898 that bears the stamp “From E. B. Richards, Amateur Photographer, Augusta, Maine.” This image is in the collection of the Maine Historic Preservation Commission.
6. Augustus F. Morse Diary for 1893, Hawkins Collection.
7. Augustus F. Morse Diaries for 1893, 1894, Hawkins Collection.
8. *Kennebec Journal*, 8 November 1894.