



South End Historical Society Newsletter

www.southendhistoricalsociety.org



An 1852 map of Boston shows where the original Everett home on Blake's Court existed. (Image courtesy of the Norman B. Leventhal Map Center, Boston Public Library).

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Life and Pursuits of the Middle-Class in 1850s South End: The Everett Family

By Corinne Zaczek Bermon

On 15 December 1854, Otis Blake Everett, an American merchant in Calcutta, India, reminisced about his beloved childhood home in the South End in a letter to his mother. While gazing at a picture of their

These letters highlight the concerns and everyday life of the middle-class living in the South End

home, Otis Blake penned, "I suppose I shall find many alterations in all the families as well as in the appearance of the neighborhood on my return home."

Otis Blake was right in his assessment.

In the few years that Otis Blake was on the other side of the world working as a merchant much changed in the South End. Between 1851 and 1859, the Everetts freely discussed engagements, marriages, and deaths of their family and friends, their servants, and the trade business in the 167 letters written between Otis Blake Everett and his parents, Otis Everett and Elizabeth Blake Everett.

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Editor: Lauren Prescott
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Lauren Prescott

The SEHS newsletter is a benefit of membership to the historical society; a nonprofit organization dedicated to recognizing, preserving and recording the historical buildings, monuments, parks and artifacts of Boston's South End and through advocacy, documentation and education to preserve them for future generations.

Individual membership is \$25 per year, Family/Dual memberships are \$40, and opportunities to support the organization at the Supporting (\$100), Patron (\$150) and Benefactor (\$250) levels are also available.

The opinions expressed by the contributors to the newsletter are not necessarily those of SEHS. Ideas for stories and manuscripts are welcome. Unsolicited manuscripts submitted for possible publication and not used will be returned if they are accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Those interested in reprinting articles must obtain written permission from the editor.

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From the Executive Director

After a long, humid summer, my favorite season has finally arrived. The air is crisp, the leaves are vibrant shades of red and yellow, and South End stoops are delightfully decorated for fall.

Our feature article is about the Everetts, a middle-class family that lived in the South End in the 19th century. Decades ago, SEHS's founding president Richard O. Card was told of the existence of a bunch of old letters stored in a shoe box in an attic of a South End house. He purchased the letters, and later donated them to the South End Historical Society. Card found that the letters were written between 1851 and 1859 and contain correspondence between Otis and Elizabeth Everett in Boston and their son Otis Blake Everett who was working in India.

Recently, Corinne Bermon has created a web exhibit for the Society, titled *The Everett Family: Middle Class Life in Boston's South End, 1851-1859*. The digital exhibit examines the Everett family and middle-class life in Boston in the 1850s as they observe societal changes and discuss business, socializing, marriages, and deaths with their son. Before immersing yourself in our first web exhibit, Corinne has introduced the family in this newsletter. To visit the exhibit and immerse yourself into the Everett family, please visit theeverettfamilyletters.com. Enjoy!

Lauren A Prescott

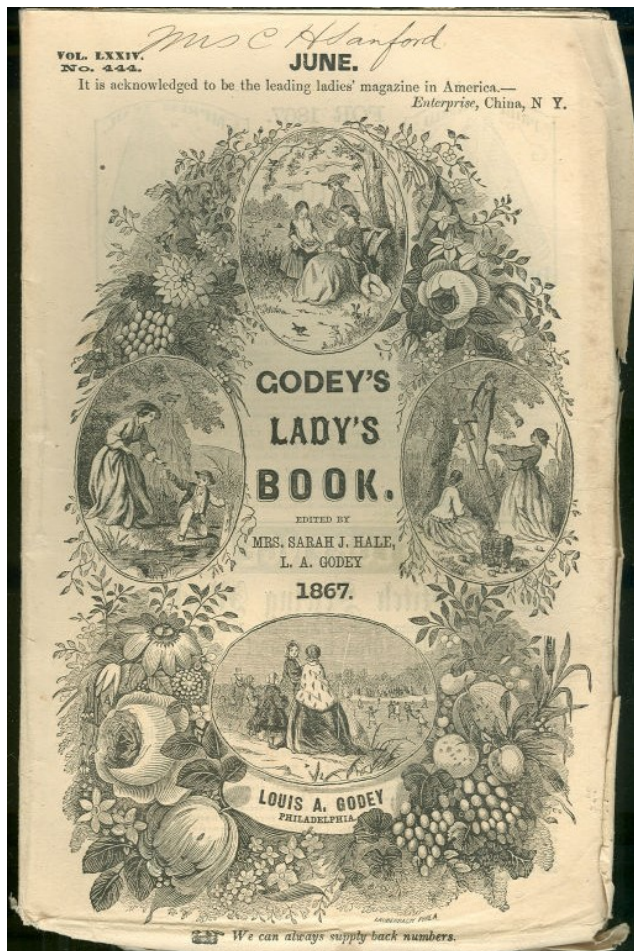
Lauren Prescott
Executive Director



Rutland Square, October 2017

(continued from page 1)

These letters highlight the concerns and everyday life of the middle-class living in the South End and the life of a Boston man living and working in India.



Godey's Lady's Book instructed middle-class women on behavior, dress, femininity, and morality. (Wikimedia)

Before the United States had the white collar-blue collar dichotomy of the twentieth century, there were the commercial pursuits and the mechanical trades of the nineteenth century that defined the classes. The newly emerging middle class was no longer exhausting themselves in manual labor but had not moved up into the executive level jobs that the upper class elite possessed.

The middle class life, especially for the Everetts in the South End, saw differences in how they made their lives distinct from both

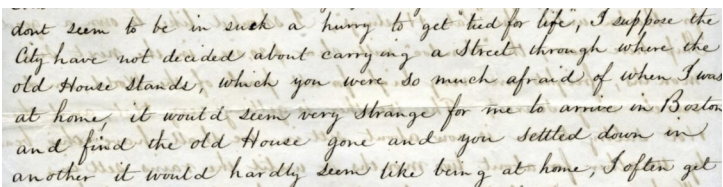
Each Everett family member exemplifies the emerging middle class in Boston in the 1850s

the upper class and the working class. Their rate of goods consumption increased as

the middle class began furnishing their homes with carpets, curtains, and furniture. Although the middle class did not have the opulent furnishings of the upper class, they were able to emulate them. The middle class also saw their homes increase in size and include indoor plumbing, a luxury not afforded to the working class in tenements around Boston.

In the following biographical sketches, each Everett family member exemplifies the emerging middle class in Boston in the 1850s with their discussions of purchases made and their merchant business. Patriarch Otis Everett was born into the early middle class on 5 June 1803 in the town of Sharon, Massachusetts to Otis Everett, Sr. and Hannah (Ross) Everett. In picturesque Sharon, Otis received a common school education that prepared him for industrialized society rather than an agrarian life of his forebears. This foundational education allowed for Otis to join the counting house T. and E. Motley on India Wharf as a bookkeeper. Through his work as a Motley bookkeeper, Otis was able to accept an

apprenticeship position at the East India Trade Company. During this time, he met and married Elizabeth Lowell Blake, daughter of Thomas and Mary (Barnard) Blake. After serving his apprenticeship, Otis established his own firm, Everett and Curtis. The company on Central Wharf owned ships that were used for foreign and domestic trade.

A snippet of a handwritten letter in cursive script, showing a portion of the text discussed in the adjacent paragraph.

Otis Blake to Elizabeth Everett, 1 April 1854.
(Everett Family Letters, SEHS)

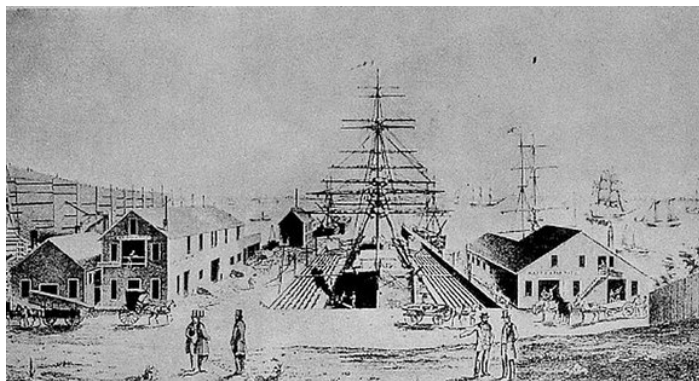
[...] I suppose the city have not decided about carrying a street through where the old house stands, which you were so much afraid of when I was at home, it would seem very strange for me to arrive in Boston and find the old house gone and you settled down in another it would hardly seem like being at home, [...]"

A few years later, Everett and Curtis dissolved and Otis began to work for the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company, where he remained until he retired.

Elizabeth (Lowell) Blake Everett was born on 21 November 1803, in Boston to parents Thomas and Mary (Barnard) Blake. She married Otis Everett on 25 October 1827 and lived in the South End in the house built on Blake’s Court by her father, Thomas Blake. We do not know the circumstances which brought Elizabeth and Otis Everett to establishing their home there but they stayed until 1858 when they sold the house on Blake’s Court. The family moved to 478

Shawmut Avenue and the houses on Blake’s Court were demolished to make a public highway and an extension of Union Park Street in 1860. Elizabeth gave birth to and raised four children: Otis Blake Everett, Thomas Blake Everett, Louisa Everett, and Percival Lowell Everett. Throughout the letters, Elizabeth remarks on contemporary issues facing Bostonians, such as the slave rendition cases and railroad development in the South End without appearing political.

On 26 March 1829, Otis and Elizabeth Everett’s oldest son, Otis Blake Everett, was born. Raised with a middle-class education in Boston, Otis Blake was destined for a life as a merchant. After his schooling was complete, Otis Blake began to work for the East India Company, Tuckerman, Townsend & Co., and lived in Calcutta, India from 1851 to 1859.

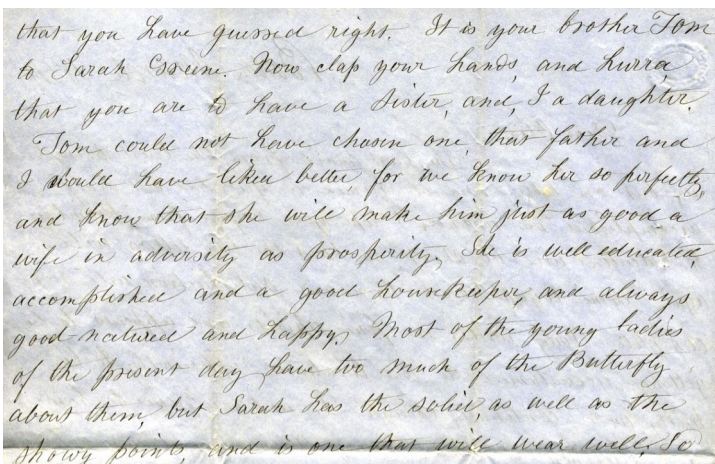


Artist rendering of Tuckerman, Townsend & Co. in 1855

Tuckerman, Townsend & Co. was located on Long Wharf, the main entrance point for cargo from the East Indies and by the 1850s, the company was heavily involved in trade with India, China, and the Mediterranean and had ties to ports in Sicily, Singapore, Penang, and Calcutta.

Otis Blake purchased goods such as wine, cream of tartar, fruit, licorice, past, and linseed, then coordinated shipments back to Boston. Unfortunately, Otis Blake died in Calcutta, India on 20 June 1859. Although there is no information on his death or a death certificate, the suspected cause is cholera. The third epidemic of cholera hit Bengal in 1859 and reached far beyond India's borders because of international trade.

Otis and Elizabeth Everett's second child, Thomas Blake Everett, was born on 13 March 1831. After completing his schooling, he became a clerk on India Wharf and then later partnered with family friend, Frank Hodgkinson in a merchant firm. Thomas Blake married Sarah Elizabeth Greene on 19 October 1854 after a courtship that began around 1852. This match was celebrated by all of the Everetts, particularly by Thomas's mother. Sarah Elizabeth was described as "well-educated, accomplished, a good housekeeper, good-natured, and happy" by the Everett matriarch.



March 1854 Letter from Elizabeth Everett to son Otis
(Everett Family Letters, SEHS)

In March 1854, Elizabeth Everett announces son Thomas Blake's engagement to Sarah Greene:

[...]Now for a new engagement!!! Guess who it is; don't turn over the paper to see the name, until you are satisfied that you have guessed right. It is your brother Tom to Sarah Greene. Now clap your hands and hurra that you are to have a sister, and I a daughter. Tom could not have chosen one that father and I should have liked better, for we know her so perfectly and know that she will make him just as good a wife in adversity as prosperity. She is well educated, accomplished, and a good housekeeper, and always good-natured and happy. Most of the young ladies of the present day have too much of the butterfly about them, but Sarah has the solid as well as the showy points, and is one that will wear well.

Louisa Everett was the third child and only daughter of Otis and Elizabeth Everett. She was born on 1 May 1832 and died on 5 March 1840 at age seven from consumption. The South End had a disproportionate number of active tuberculosis cases from 1820-1840 compared to other neighborhoods in Boston. Approximately 15% of all deaths in Boston were from the disease and a vast majority of them lived in the South End. Although the disease typically affected the poor more than the upper classes, industrialization increased infectious diseases in urban areas, thus making a young girl like Louisa more susceptible.

Percival (Percy) Lowell Everett was the third son and youngest child of Otis and Elizabeth Everett. He was born on 28 June 1833 and is the most well-known Everett. His distinguished career was long and diverse. Percy was educated at the Chauncy Hall School (now known as the Chapel Hill-Chauncy Hall School), a boarding school in Waltham, Massachusetts. In 1853, Percy joined the merchant house of Augustine Heard & Co. and traveled to Canton, China. Otis Blake notes in his November 1853 letter aboard the *Arabella* bound for Calcutta, that his parents must be lonely with two of their sons gone. Percy stayed abroad for eight years where he purchased and dispatched vessels with assorted cargo to the United States. He returned permanently to Boston in 1860 and became a special agent for the company.



Artist rendering of Augustine Heard & Co. in the 1850s

Augustine Heard & Co. was one of the four major American firms of commission agents in Canton, China and became a primary trader of opium between Bombay and Canton, as well as sending goods like silk and tea to the port of San Francisco.

After returning to the US, Percy married his first wife Elizabeth Davis Williams Weld on 30 June 1863. They had three children: Louisa Otis, born 4 February 1866; Otis, born 16 September 1868; and Elizabeth Lowell, born 30 July 1870. The family lived at 8 Newbury Street before Elizabeth Weld Everett died on

These are just brief biographies of each family member as they represent a typical middle class family

22 February 1875. Percy and his children then moved to 103 Beacon Street in the

Back Bay and moved to several residences on Beacon Street throughout the years. Percy remarried on 8 November 1882 to Elizabeth Russell Fisher, a young woman twenty years his junior. They had one child, Maud, born on 5 March 1884.

These are just brief biographies of each family member as they represent a typical middle class family living in the South End. As members of the merchant class, they had servants and could afford luxuries that the working class could not. For a more in-depth examination of the Everett family, Victorian Era living in Boston, and to see digital copies of the letters please visit **theeverettfamilyletters.com**. To see the letters in person, please contact executive director Lauren Prescott at admin@southendhistoricalsociety.org to arrange an appointment and review restrictions on viewing.

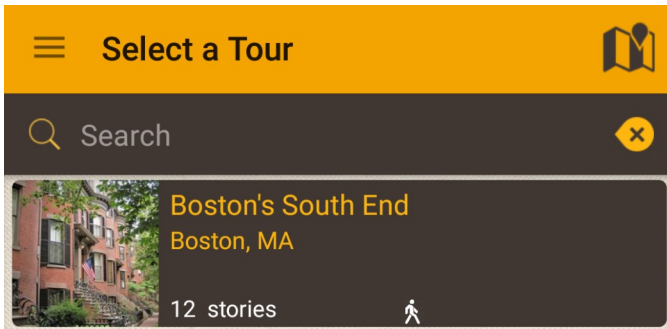
The Everett Family Web Exhibit



Corinne Bermon has created a web exhibit for the South End Historical Society, titled *The Everett Family: Middle Class Life in Boston's South End, 1851-1859*. This digital exhibit follows the Everett family's experience living in the South End, a unique Boston neighborhood, during the 1850s.

Please visit theeverettfamilyletters.com to learn more.

Self-Guided Audio Walking Tour



Now when you visit the South End, you can learn more about its history with an audio tour created by the South End Historical Society and UniGuide. Starting at SEHS in Chester Square, the walking tour takes you through 12 points of interest in this historic neighborhood (such as the Porter House, Blackstone & Franklin Square, and Union Park).

UniGuide is a free smartphone app that provides you with hundreds of audio tours across the United States. Access all tours in a single app, stream them or download ahead of time to save data.

Get the app for your phone and listen to a wonderfully curated tour of the South End.

Visit <http://uniguide.me/> to download the app

Pictures from SEHS Collection Available for Reproduction

Pictures from the South End Historical Society's collections are available for reproduction. Fees vary depending on the photograph and the intended use.

Most reproduction requests ask for images from our popular 1972 South End Streets Survey. The Streets Survey includes over 3,000 images taken by the South End Historical Society in 1972 documenting every extant South End building. These images were used in the historical society's application to place the South End on the National Register of Historic Places, which was successful. Image reproductions from the South End Streets Survey carry a fee of \$30 each for a 300dpi digital copy.

If you are interested in reproducing a SEHS image for personal, commercial, or research purposes, please email us at admin@southendhistoricalsociety.org for more information about our image collection, fees and policies.



Image from the 1972 Streets Survey Collection

The South End Remembered

Our Facebook (facebook.com/southendhistory) followers often leave remarks and reminiscences about locations and people visible in photographs that we post from our collections. Here's what they say:



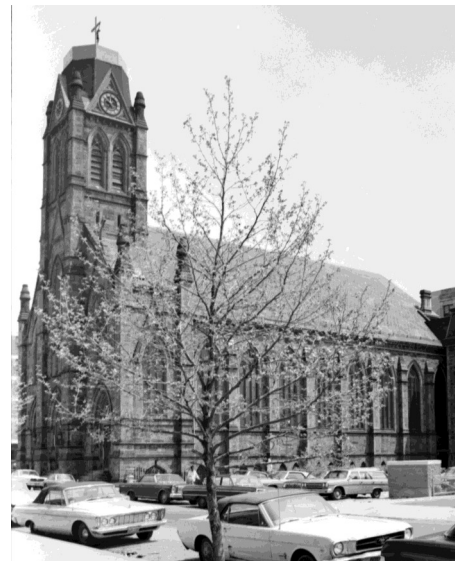
Washington Street Elevated on last day of operation,
April 30, 1987

Russ Lopez: Great photo! But it doesn't capture the noise, the rickety swaying, and strange dripping liquids that made the old elevated such an adventure.

Laurel A. Vincento: Great memories riding into Boston with my grandmother from Egleston Square. That train was so tippy!

William Martin: My grandfather went there six days a week. (Didn't like to go on Sundays. Church was too crowded). I opened my novel, *THE RISING OF THE MOON*, there.

Lorraine Havlin: My church as a little girl. Lived a few doors down. Used to take my little sister to the statue, and tried to teach her prayers.



Holy Trinity German Catholic Church, 1972



42 Bradford Street, 1972

Patricia Salem: That is my great grandmother Emmie!

Melinda Shea: It brings back such great memories and flood of emotions of my great grandmother. She was an incredibly strong and loving woman. I loved her so much! Emmie scoping out Bradford St. with her good friend I believe. My mom will be so excited tomorrow when I share this with her. I was 5 years old and living in W. Roxbury when this was taken.

Bob DeCosta: My friend Fred Howe lived there in the 50s.



Louie's Lounge, located at 1788 Washington St. in 1972

Mary Allendorf: Loved the music coming out of there, Skippy White's, and Basin Street back in the early 60s when I got off the train at Northampton St. to go to work as a 13 year old candy-striper at Mass Memorial Hospital. Remember Buffalo at Joe & Nemo's? Best hot dogs!

Mildred Littles: Spent a lot of time there. Great times! Joe and Nemo was right next door, served the best hot dogs.

Peggy Higgins: I remember spending time in the small garden on the side of the church!

Frank Roshinski: On the eve of Christmas, mass was at midnight. Everyone would go.

Carl Green: I learned to be an altar boy there by Brother Labelle.



Immaculate Conception Church, 1972



Mass School of Barbering located at 1246 Washington Street in 1972

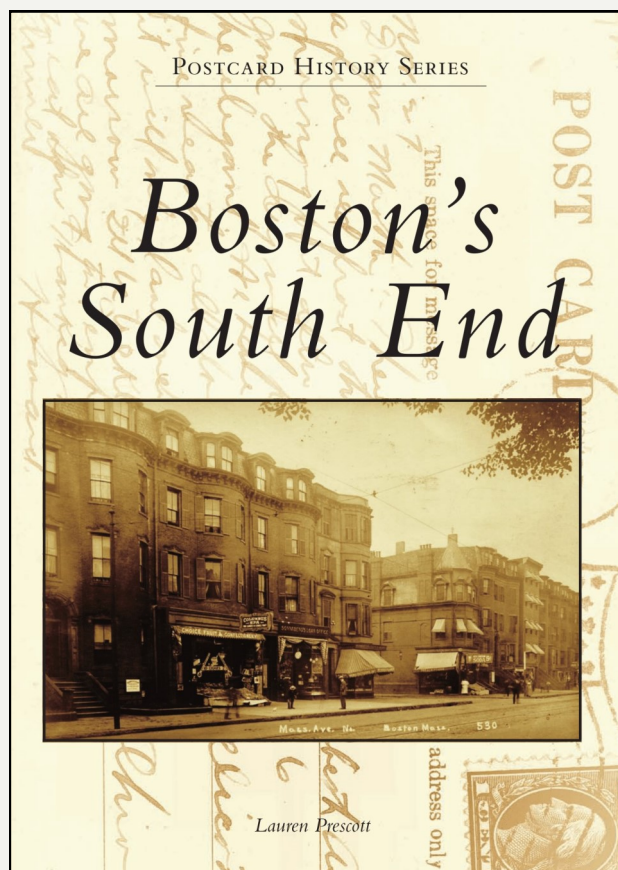
Paulette Nolan: Near there was a St. Vincent De Paul thrift store. I would go daily and then would like to have lunch at Premier Deli

Bob DeCosta: The barber school haircut always a bargain

Charles Haddad: When I was a kid I got all my hair cuts there

Forthcoming Publication about the South End

We are excited to announce the upcoming publication of a new book, *Boston's South End*, on January 8, 2018. Written by our Executive Director Lauren Prescott, the book highlights SEHS's rich collection of postcards and images to bring the history of the South End to life. The *Postcard History Series* is published by Arcadia Publishing & The History Press. Stay tuned for more details about the book and its upcoming launch on our website and Facebook page.



Volunteer Opportunities

Want to become more involved with the South End Historical Society?

We always need new volunteers! We have opportunities for volunteers in the SEHS newsletter, the House Tour, collections, preservation, history related projects, programs and events.

Interested or have questions?

E-mail Lauren Prescott at admin@southendhistoricalsociety.org or call 617-536-4445

Membership Reminder

Our membership runs from January 1 to December 31. If you have not yet renewed for 2018, please do so soon. Individual memberships are \$25 and family/dual memberships are \$40. Additional opportunities to support SEHS include the supporting membership at \$100 (\$60 tax deductible), the patron membership at \$150 (\$110 tax deductible), and the benefactor membership at \$250 (\$210 tax deductible). Checks for membership payment can be made out to the South End Historical Society and sent to 532 Massachusetts Avenue, Boston, MA 02118. Or you may visit our website at southendhistoricalsociety.org/membership and renew online with a credit card.

A Year in Review

SEHS organizes programs and events for members every month. These are just a few of our events from 2017.



Kate Larson lecture on Harriet Tubman, April 2017.
SEHS partnered with USES to organize program.
(Photo courtesy of Nikki Stewart)



Neighborhood Walk with Ken Kruckemeyer
through Southwest Corridor Park, August 2017

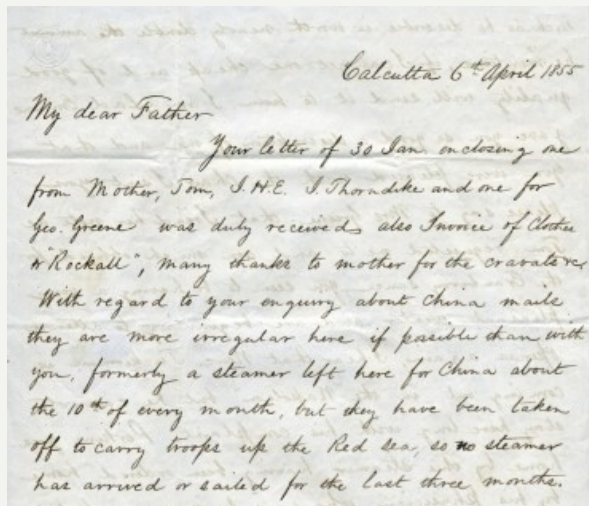


Pride Parade, June 2017



Lynne Potts Book Talk, March 2017

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