

For Immediate Release

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**National Heritage Museum Recent Acquisition:
Pocket-Sized Memo Book Offers Look
Into the Life of Oliver Arthur Pennoyer**

Even an object smaller than a deck of cards can offer a window onto a past life.

The National Heritage Museum recently acquired for its permanent collection, a pocket-sized, silver memo book decorated with Masonic symbols that once belonged to a gentleman named Oliver Arthur Pennoyer. The elements that Pennoyer chose to decorate the front of his memo book, which include a date and an engraved image of Niagara Falls are all clues that reveal much about this man who lived more than a century ago.

In his 20s, Pennoyer moved to Penn Yan, New York, where he worked in the county clerk's office. In 1854 he joined William Morris in running a downtown jewelry store. Their ads proclaimed they sold "the fullest and most complete stock of watches, clocks, jewelry and fancy goods that has ever been offered to the citizens of Yates County." Although the partnership lasted only months, it appears that the business associates formed a more enduring connection. Pennoyer married Margaret Morris on June 13, 1854. Although we do not know where the couple spent their honeymoon, a trip to famed Niagara Falls, 130 miles away, is an intriguing possibility.

Pennoyer's memo book may have been a gift to mark a new chapter in his life. Or perhaps he designed the book himself and had it fabricated by associates in the jewelry business. Articles in the local paper noted that Pennoyer practiced "rare and beautiful penmanship." Flourishing designs on the memo book may allude to Pennoyer's calligraphic skills. Politics also captured Pennoyer's attention. He represented the Whigs at an 1854 county convention. Although records of his Masonic affiliation are elusive, the symbols on the book show that Freemasonry was important to Pennoyer. With many interests, he doubtless needed to track his engagements. The ivory pages of this memo book gave him a place note an appointment in easily erased pencil.

In 1855 a contemporary described Oliver Pennoyer as an “affable and gentlemanly man.” This elegant accessory fits that description. Its owner must have cherished it as a precious reminder of the year he embarked on many new ventures.

Anyone interested in donating to the National Heritage Museum’s collection or supporting the museum’s acquisition fund, are encouraged to contact Hilary Anderson, Director of Exhibitions and Collections at 781-457-4121.

The National Heritage Museum is dedicated to presenting exhibitions on a wide variety of topics in American history and popular culture. The Museum is supported by the Scottish Rite Freemasons in the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction of the United States. The Museum is located at 33 Marrett Road in Lexington, at the corner of Route 2A and Massachusetts Avenue. Hours are Monday through Saturday from 10 am–5 pm, and Sunday, noon–5 pm. Admission and parking are free. Heritage Shop and Courtyard Café on site. For further information contact the Museum at (781) 861-6559. For more information, visit our web site at www.nationalheritagemuseum.org.