

# In the passing

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BY HOPE ULLMAN  
Staff Writer

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In fact, the longtime Lewiston resident was never one to toot his own horn.

Barrows died in March at the age of 87, just five days after the death of Jean, his wife of 40 years.

*... a passing on of human spirit and life work*

There was no public announcement or memorial service at the time.

That is how Barrows wanted it.

A devout Christian Scientist, he believed that "passing on" is simply a stage, not an end.

A respected architect, historian, artist, photographer and family man, Barrows seemed to achieve his greatest joy through the life-long act of giving of himself to others in countless ways.

That act of giving will continue through Barrows' vast body of work, much of which documents the architectural heritage of Lewiston and Auburn.

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A respected architect, historian, artist, photographer and family man, Barrows seemed to achieve his greatest joy through the lifelong act of giving of himself to others in countless ways.

That act of giving will continue through Barrows vast body of work much of which documents the architectural heritage of Lewiston and Auburn.

Determined to honor the spirit of generosity that Barrows embodied, as well as preserve his stepfather's work and ensure free public access, Barrows' stepson, Erik Bradford Stocker of New York City, has donated much of his stepfather's work to the Lewiston Public Library.

"It's going to be a tremendous research facility for anybody who wants to study the architecture of Lewiston," said Gracia Eiseman, who is president of the Lewiston Historical Commission.

Comprised of architectural photographs of every major building in the Twin Cities, the collection includes 5,244 color slides and more than 600 prints, as well as Barrows' personal historical and architectural files for Lewiston and Auburn.

The collection will likely be open to the public in May. Plans for a celebration of Barrows' life and photographs are also in the works.

"It will be a permanent and valuable record of what Lewiston and Auburn looked like in the last quarter of the 20th century," Maine Historic Preservation Commission Director Earle G. Shettleworth Jr. said of the collection.

In addition to this bounty, Stocker donated many of Barrows' own architectural designs and drawings to the Maine Historical Society in Portland.

This is the way his stepfather would have wanted it, he said.

"It's been a labor of love," said Stocker, who worked with Shettleworth over the summer to sort through all the material and ensure its proper placement. "This outcome would have made him happy; and nothing can make me happier."

### **A true gentleman**

Born in New York and raised in Massachusetts, Barrows worked in the Boston office of what is today known as Harriman Associates. Several years later, Barrows relocated to the firm's Auburn headquarters.

The fact that he wasn't a native Mainer didn't seem to matter a bit when it came to his capacity for caring and giving to the community.

"Clearly, he really fell in love with the area, and became committed to its well-being for the rest of his life," said Shettleworth, who "had the privilege" of knowing Barrows for more than 25 years.

"He is really a shining example of an individual who went beyond his personal concerns to give generously of his professional talents to the community in which he lived."

Perhaps even more stunning than the tangible legacy that Barrows left behind, was Barrows himself, and the extraordinary manner in which he lived his life.

By all accounts, he was a true gentleman who possessed a seemingly boundless enthusiasm and love for life, his fellow man, his community and church.

"He possessed an unlimited amount of energy," Lewiston Public Library Director Rick Speer said. "He was one of Lewiston's strongest proponents and cheerleaders and he just never gave up on that."

Whatever the endeavor, Barrows always dove right in and gave it everything he had.

In his earlier years, before moving to Maine, Barrows embarked on a sea of adventures, which included traveling around the world on a freighter as a seaman; honing his painting skills in New York City; working as a plasterer's apprentice; and meeting and working with some of the leading mural painters of the day.

During World War II, Barrows served in the Pacific Theater as a director of carrier fighter operations. He advanced to the rank of lieutenant commander and earned 12 battle stars.

In the late 1940s he worked as a draftsman for a prestigious architectural firm in New York City, before returning in 1952 to Harvard's Graduate School of Design, where he earned a degree in architecture.

While working at Harriman Associates in Auburn, Barrows served as principal designer on a number of major projects in Maine, which include:

- Grace Lutheran Church, Auburn.
- Schaeffer Theater and Lane Hall at Bates College, Lewiston.
- First Church of Christ Scientist, Auburn.
- John and Sylvia Lund residence, Augusta. (This is now headquarters of the Maine Supreme Court.)
- Muskie Federal Building, Augusta.
- Blake Street Towers, Lewiston.

Following his retirement in 1978 from Harriman Associates - where he enjoyed a distinguished career for more than two decades - Barrows devoted his time, energy, talents and knowledge to his community and to his church, The First Church of Christ Scientist in Auburn.

A tireless promoter of local architecture, history and the preservation of historic buildings, Barrows gave countless presentations to local school children on those subjects. He led architectural walking tours of Lewiston for folks of all ages and served on numerous local committees aimed at promoting and preserving the area's architectural heritage.

Often described as an "invaluable resource" and "font of information," Barrows possessed an unquenchable thirst for knowledge, which he loved to share with others.

"Very few weeks went by that Gridley wasn't in the library at least twice a week, if not daily," Speer said. "He just never stopped learning. He'd be in here looking up information, checking facts or digging up something or other."

Fellow members of his church and the committees on which he served also marveled at Barrows' uniquely steadfast devotion.

"He never missed a commission meeting, right up until the (end)," Eiseman said. "He was a very active gentleman. There's no doubt about that. He's given Lewiston a lot"

"Right up until one week before he passed on, he was still coming to church," said fellow church member and friend Louise Griffin. "I can't think of any capacity he didn't serve in. He was one of our most devoted people. He was just a pillar of the church."

He was also the architect who designed it.

### **Quiet givers**

A meticulous, tall, distinguished gentleman, who most often wore suits and bow ties, Barrows' possessed a down-to-earth quality and unusual knack for connecting with people from all walks of life.

"He was as beloved a man as I've known personally," Stocker said. "What made him unique was his caring, his kindness and his great generosity of spirit, among other things."

Even Stocker said he did not realize the full scope of Barrows' generosity until he passed on. That's when Stocker discovered the extensive list of charities that Barrows and his wife supported.

"They really did put their money where their mouths were, very quietly," Stocker said.

Equipped with a knack for seeing the good in people and in life, Barrows always strove to make the world around him a better place, Stocker said.

"He was always willing to help any individual or group that wanted some assistance, said Barrows' longtime friend, neighbor and fellow historian, Geneva Kirk, of Lewiston.

A Harvard graduate whose professional accomplishments and personal deeds brought him much recognition, and made him a beloved local legend, Barrows was a modest man without pretension, Stocker said.

He seemed to have a natural warmth and ability for r bringing out the best in others.

"He was wonderfully outgoing," Stocker said. "I went to Exeter and I can remember walking down a path with him and passing the director of alumni affairs. He practically threw his arms around Gridley." The two, it turned out, had once rowed on a crew boat together.

That was a common reaction to Barrows. It was the kind of effect he had.

Stocker saw it again firsthand when he traveled to Lewiston this past summer. Whether the teller at the bank, the car mechanic at the shop or the man who came to read the meter, it seemed that everyone Barrows met "had some experience of him that left a good taste in their mouth," he said.

Over the last few months, word of Barrows' death has slowly gone through the community.

Though saddened by word of his passing, the many who knew him have been eager to share good thoughts and fond memories of Barrows.

And in life, "Everywhere we seemed to go, people were so happy to see him," Stocker said. "He had a wonderful, infectious, kind spirit. He was a very loving man."

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Lewiston, Maine, Sunday, November 28, 1999

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## **A brief Look at Barrows' life**

Born in New York in 1912, and raised in Massachusetts, Gridley Barrows moved to the Lewiston-Auburn area in 1956.

Long before his arrival in Maine, he traveled the world and had a wealth of adventures.

After graduating in 1929 from Phillips Academy in Andover, Mass., Barrows worked as a seaman, traveling around the world on a freighter.

In 1930, he entered Harvard University, where he received a degree in fine arts.

He later traveled to New York City to hone his painting skills. His interest in fresco painting led to a job as a plasterer's apprentice, as well as work on WPA mural projects in New York City and Cambridge.

He met and worked with some of the leading mural painters of the day including Lewis Rubenstein, Rico Lebrun and Jose Orozco.

During World War II, Barrows served in the Pacific Theater as a director of carrier fighter operations. He advanced to the rank of lieutenant commander and earned 12 battle stars.

In the late 1940s he worked as a draftsman for a prestigious architectural firm in New York City, before returning in 1952 to Harvard's Graduate School of Design, where he earned a degree in architecture.

Recruited to join the Boston office of what is today called Harriman Associates, Barrows moved to Maine several years later to work out of the firm's headquarters in Auburn, where he enjoyed a long and distinguished career as an architectural designer. He retired as senior design partner in 1978.

He is one of the few Maine architects ever named a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, which is one of the profession's highest honors.

While working at Harriman Associates, Barrows served as principal designer on a number of major projects in Maine, which include:

- Grace Lutheran Church, Auburn.
- Schaeffer Theater and Lane Hall at Bates College, Lewiston.
- First Church of Christ Scientist, Auburn. (Barrows also was a member of this church.)
- John and Sylvia Lund residence, Augusta. (This is now headquarters of the Maine Supreme Court.)
- Muskie Federal Building, Augusta.
- Blake Street Towers, Lewiston.
- Lake Auburn Towne House.

Barrows lived with his wife, Jean, near the Bates College campus at 35 Ware St. in Lewiston for the last 30 years of their lives. They were married for 40 years. Jean died five days before Gridley, in March.

Known for his tireless efforts in promoting Maine architecture, local history and the preservation of historic buildings in Lewiston and Auburn, Barrows gave numerous presentations to local school children on these topics, and led architectural walking tours of the city for all to enjoy.

He also served on numerous committees, which include:

- The Lewiston Historic Commission
- The Lewiston Historic Preservation Review Board
- The Androscoggin Historic Society

According to fellow committee members who served on the; boards, Barrows was a most active and enthusiastic contributor, who never missed a meeting.

While serving on the Lewiston Historic Commission, Barrows assisted with the research and production of five historical booklets and co-authored three titles on Lewiston's architecture, fire department and city government.

The legacy that Barrows left behind doesn't end there.

Barrows' stepson, Erik Bradford Stocker, recently donated to the Lewiston Public Library "The Gridley Barrows Collection," which comprised of architectural photographs of all the major building in the Twin Cities.

In addition to 5,244 slides and more than 600 prints, it include; Barrows' lecture notes; several decades worth of newspaper clippings that he collected; historic, booklets; a complete set of documentation for area buildings that are on the National Register of Historic Places; and reports from various Lewiston-Auburn committees that worked to preserve and promote the area's cultural and historic resources.

***Information provided by the Lewiston Public Library, Harriman Associates in Auburn and Barrow stepson, Erik Bradford Stocker.***