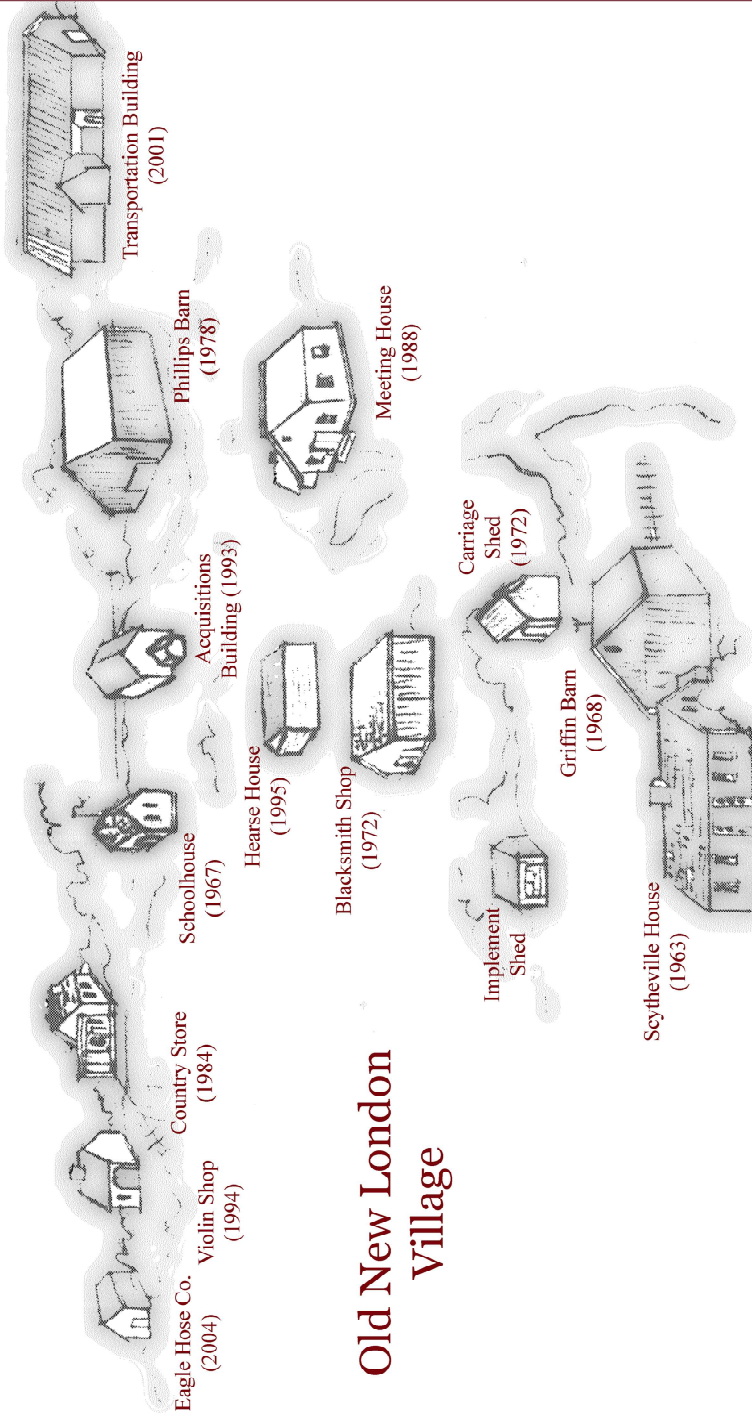


NEW LONDON HISTORICAL SOCIETY



**50th Anniversary
Retrospective**

1954 - 2004



Transportation Building
(2001)

Phillips Barn
(1978)

Meeting House
(1988)

Acquisitions
Building (1993)

Schoolhouse
(1967)

Hearse House
(1995)

Blacksmith Shop
(1972)

Carriage
Shed (1972)

Griffin Barn
(1968)

Implement
Shed

Scytheville House
(1963)

Country Store
(1984)

Violin Shop
(1994)

Eagle Hose Co.
(2004)

Old New London Village

50th Anniversary Retrospective of the New London Historical Society

1954 - 2004

Founders and Charter Members

Percy C. Bond
James E. Bewley
Mary A. Bond
Wilbur Breckenridge
Mr&Mrs Raymond Bristol
Lura Knowlton Butler
Frank H. Butler
Velma Champion
Norman Champion
Susan Colgate Cleveland
William P. Clough
Bertha H. Clough
Dura P. Crockett
Emma L. Colby
George S. Cricenti
Frank Cricenti
Myrtle G. Crockett
Benjamin L. Davis
Ervin P. Edmunds
Jeanette Fitzpatrick
Merle C. Gay
Ruth P. Granger
Clarence B. Granger
Helen Kidder Greenaway

Herbert S. Hayes
Pearl N. Holt
William F. Kidder
William M. Kidder
Addie M. Knowlton
Seth A. Lamson
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Evelyn D. Messer
Harold E. Messer
Helen S. Nelson
Amelia Olmsted Reid
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Florence Sargent
Warren E. Sargent
James Otis Seamans
Richard Fraser Seamans
Diana Fraser Seamans
Maitland C. Shepard
James E. Shepard II
Martha S. Sholes
Dorris M. Smith
James W. Squires
Dr. & Mrs. J. Duane Squires
Vernon T. Squires
Henry M. Stanley
Emma Stanley
Mr. & Mrs. Herbert D. Swift
Percy M. Thurston
Edward A. Todd
Julia E. Todd
Mildred Crockett Tunis
Elizabeth R. Waite
Robert T. Wallace
Kathleen H. L. Whitcomb
Alice L. Whitten
Herbert O. Williams

Forward

As the current president of the New London Historical Society, I am privileged to introduce this retrospective of the work of so many individuals. I am particularly mindful of my predecessors over the past fifty years. Each has helped build, often with hammer in hand, the Society we know today, and we are fortunate that so many remain actively involved:

Past Presidents of the Society

Maude Swift
Dorris Smith
Mildred Crockett Tunis
Lloyd Littlefield
Laurids Lauridsen
Carl Cochran
Frank Hammond
Carlton Bradford
J. Duane Squires
Wade Weathers
Douglas Atkins
Kathleen Belko
Deborah Stanley
Marilyn Kidder
Barbara Davis
Donald Sisson
Karen Hoglund
Sheri Ensign
Lynne Bell
Jeanine Berger
Richard Little
Laurie Lauridsen

As Mary Seale Petersen wrote in her introduction to the *Historical Sketches of New London, New Hampshire*, “May the town of New London continue to make lasting history through the generations of those to come.”

Happy 50th Anniversary.

Henry S. Otto, Jr.
President

Hank Otto

An Idea

After the Civil War, most New Hampshire communities celebrated their town and family histories by holding *Old Home Day* celebrations. The New London Historical Society was conceived during the August 1952 Old Home Day festivities as an appropriate way to mark the upcoming 175th anniversary of New London's founding. Old Home Day president Seth A. Lamson appointed a committee to "study the advisability of founding a *New London Historical Society*." This committee consisted of Dr. J. Duane Squires (chairman), Mrs. Herbert (Maude Fellows) Swift and Mrs. Emerson (Helen Kidder) Greenaway. They developed the concept over the next two years.

New London's 175th anniversary was observed over the weekend of July 31, 1954, and an organizational meeting of the New London Historical Society was held at the Town Hall. The following officers were elected: Maude Swift (president), Miss Julia Todd (vice president), Mrs. Helen Nelson (secretary), Clement Lovering (treasurer). They were assisted by five directors: Maitland Shepard, Seth Lamson, Robert Lovely, Warren Sargent, and Herbert Swift. The purpose of this new organization was to develop interest in the history of the area, to collect and preserve memorabilia and historically significant objects, and to educate and inform a growing population of the importance of our past to present day life.

Born in Otterville in 1883, Maude Fellows graduated from Colby Academy in 1902 and went to Boston, where she worked as a secretary and as a singer in musical shows. On a blind date she met and later married an MIT student named Herbert Swift. After working as a mechanical engineer in Detroit, New York, and Boston, Herbert retired from an MIT professorship in 1928, and the couple purchased the first of several houses in Elkins. Some were used for storing documents and collections of memorabilia, and one was reportedly used as a shelter for stray cats, rescued by Maude.

She had a remarkable memory for what and where everything used to be, and knew firsthand many of New London's residents from the turn of the 20th century. She thus brought to the Society a unique ability to launch the enterprise and guide its formative years. She died in June 1977, two months short of her 94th birthday. She was only the first of a growing cadre of talented and dedicated people committed to building on the founders' vision.

With no facilities at the outset, the Society held meetings in places like the Parish Hall at the Baptist Church and stored its nascent collection in the basement of Tracy Library. Within a decade, that would all begin to change.

“Old” New London



In 1961 Mrs. Swift, continuing her zealous interest in the development of the Society, offered to donate one of her Elkins houses (known as the “cat house”). It had been built in 1835 as a residence for employees of the scythe factory, then a thriving industry using the water power provided by the headwaters of the Blackwater River (Pleasant Lake). In 1962 a campaign raised money for moving

this building to some open farmland on Little Sunapee Road donated by Walter S. Bucklin. The following year the roof was removed, interior trim set aside, plaster stripped, and facades detached with windows and clapboards intact. A firm was hired to crane the pieces onto a truck and deliver them to the new property, where they were stored on a trailer until the original granite foundation could be moved and reconstructed.

With the **Scytheville House** reassembled and replastered, Society volunteers scraped the woodwork, hung wallpaper, and painted inside and out. The chimney was rebuilt and the three fireplaces restored. The house is now completely furnished with period pieces and offers an example of everyday life before the Civil War. It was the first structure on the new site and is a jewel of restoration and preservation that has set a high standard for the rest of the Village.

The next building moved to the Society's property was the **Pleasant Street Schoolhouse**. One of seven such one-room schools in the area, it stood on Pleasant Street near the head of Pleasant Lake and was used until 1906. In 1916 it was purchased by the Pleasant Street Helpers, a women's service organization which used it as a meeting place for the next fifty years. Maude Swift's grandmother, Maria Bunker Messer, had attended this school in the later 1830s. In 1966 the schoolhouse was given to the Society to be incorporated into the Village. In the summer of 1967 the Society moved the Schoolhouse piece by piece and re-erected it towards the rear of the grounds. Desks, blackboards and other furnishings were reproduced to replicate a rural one-room school of the 19th century.

Shortly after acquiring the Schoolhouse, the Society was given the **Griffin Barn**. Built by Jesse Dow, a Massachusetts Revolutionary War veteran who had moved to New London in 1790, the English style



barn stood near the intersection of Pleasant and Old Main streets. The barn and accompanying home were eventually purchased by Dr. Nathan L. Griffin, a physician in New London from 1906 to 1926. Dr and Mrs. Griffin had two daughters, Dorothy and Elizabeth. As the Village was beginning to take shape, the sisters offered the barn to the Society – provided that funds could be secured to move and preserve the building. In 1967 fund-raising began, partly as a memorial to the late Herbert D. Swift.

In the spring and summer of 1968 the barn was carefully disassembled, moved, and then reconstructed behind the Scytheville House. The barn provided the Society much-needed storage, exhibit, and meeting space, but the several carriages kept inside had to be moved out in order to make room for larger gatherings.



At about the same time, timber removed from an old barn in Sutton was re-cut and used to construct the woodshed ell connecting the barn with the house. In the summer of 1969, Charles Bucklin donated a handsome old weathervane showing the angel Gabriel blowing his horn. It was installed on the barn, adding much to its appearance. The weathervane was stolen in 1979 and replaced with the present running horse, given by Susan Irwin.

Next the **Blacksmith Shop** was added to the growing village. Once an out-building on the old Morgan Farm on King Hill, it was given to the Society in 1972 by Richard W. Chattelier, a longtime area resident. The building was taken down, moved, and reassembled by Society members on a granite foundation. A brick chimney and forge were built, and the bellows and anvil were later installed.



Every village needs a **Country Store**, and the Society once again received a building donation. Built in 1820, the Burpee Hill schoolhouse had already been moved twice by the time Mrs. Stephen Phillips purchased it from Bud Lauridsen on behalf of the Society. This former schoolhouse and antique shop is now a country store, modeled after the Asa Knight Store at Old Sturbridge Village (but first located in Dummerston, VT). In 1977 money was

raised to move the building and the conversion began. A porch was added. Shelves, drawers and counters were built. The storekeeper's office was constructed in one corner and a post office from East Andover in another. A soapstone stove from an old house on Sutton Road was installed. After seven years, the store was dedicated in 1984 to Mildred Tunis and Bud Lauridsen. It bears the name "Colby, Greenwood, & Seamans" – a merger of three of New London's earliest merchants.



In need of more space for carriages and sleighs, the Society acquired the 40'x60' **Phillips Barn** in 1978. It was dismantled in Penacook and reassembled in New London – also with the financial assistance of Mrs. Stephen Phillips. In the same year, a medicinal and culinary **Herb Garden** was donated and installed next to the Scytheville House by the New London Garden Club.

The next major building project was the **Meeting House**, long on the Society's wish list. A fund-raising campaign begun in 1986 enabled groundbreaking in April, 1987. The building was modeled after a meeting house in Wayne, Maine, and details and workmanship were replicated as faithfully as possible – including fine millwork, wide floor boards, cut nails and 12 over 8 windows. Work continued into 1988 with much of the labor supplied by Society members. Kitchen facilities were added, making the building useful for events like the popular dessert socials. Also in 1987, the Society was given 2.4 acres of an adjacent subdivided field by Edward Keith. Ample parking for the Meeting House was assured.



In 1993 the Society received what is now called the **Acquisitions Building** as a gift from Marilyn and Bill Kidder, on whose property it once stood. The building has a climate-controlled storeroom for clothing and textiles, space for

processing and cataloging new acquisitions, and a parlor for special exhibits. The house is dedicated to Ade and Bud Lauridsen, responsible for acquiring so many items in the collection.

An unusual permanent exhibit was constructed between 1991 and 1994. It depicts the work of New London native Claude Goings, who returned from

long service in the Civil War and resumed his prewar occupations of carriage painting and violin making. He worked at these trades until his death in 1913. The **Claude Goings Violin and Carriage Shop** was framed by participants in a five-day timber framing workshop in 1991 and allowed to weather for two years. Moved to a foundation next to the Country Store, it was completed by Society members under the leadership of Bud Lauridsen and Bill Roos. The shop has tools, jigs and parts common to violin making, and the Society now owns two Claude Goings violins in playing condition.



The **Harriet Kidder Memorial Hearse House** was built in 1995 to display the horse-drawn hearse formerly owned by the Town of Wilmot. It replicates a 19th century plan in which such buildings were commonly found adjacent to meeting houses.

During this period of building activity, the Society was also fortunate to obtain through gifts, bequests and purchases an impressive collection of horse drawn vehicles, which were exhibited in the Phillips Barn. As the collection grew and the Society invested further in vehicle conservation and restoration, members realized that a large, weather-tight, climate controlled building would be needed to properly protect and display the vehicle collection, especially the prized Concord Coach.

Accordingly, the Society embarked upon its most ambitious undertaking: the construction of a **Transportation Building**, with exhibit space large enough to display most of the vehicle collection in a temperature and humidity controlled environment. After three years of planning, a major capital fund drive was initiated in 1999 and concluded in record time. Excavation



began in the fall of 2000, and the professional contractors completed their work by spring. Exhibit designs and lighting were then finalized and volunteers constructed display platforms and wall partitions. It opened to the public in July 2001 and has since become the feature attraction for growing numbers of visitors.

The **Eagle Hose Company** is the latest addition to the Village. Built in New London around 1840, the Eagle Hose structure was framed as a corn crib, and much later it was moved down Pleasant Street and converted into a field office and tool shed by the Sewer Department. With wheels bolted on, it was pulled to the Society in November, 2001. The renovated building contains a collection of old firefighting equipment, including two hand pumpers.

Still being developed is a **Resource Center** and business office that will contain books, town reports, and other reference material for researchers. The small residence at 73 County Road, adjacent to the Society, was purchased in 2001 and is now being renovated for this purpose.



Vehicle Collection

The centerpiece of the Society's carriage and sleigh collection is the **Concord Coach**, placed at the forefront of the Transportation Building's exhibit floor.

An icon of the American West whose image is now a trademark of the Wells Fargo Company, these vehicles were built by the Abbott-Downing Company of Concord, NH. Between 1830 and 1900 the company shipped some 3,700 coaches, filling orders from all over the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, South America and South Africa.



Scytheville House, Ell, and Griffin Barn

Considered one of the finest vehicles in the world, the Concord Coach had an innovative suspension system of bullhide belts rather than steel springs, producing “an imposing cradle on wheels,” according to passenger Mark Twain. The smoother ride did not prevent motion sickness, but it was still preferable to the bone-jarring ride offered by coaches of other design. A new coach cost between \$1,000 and \$1,200, depending on capacity and other options. The decorative landscape paintings often added to the door panels cost another \$20.

Coach #425 remained in New Hampshire – first running in 1874 between Hopkinton and Concord. It had several New London owners until 1888, when Amos Whipple purchased the stage line between the Potter Place train depot and New London. The coach made summer travel to Mr. Whipple’s new Heidelberg hotel more convenient – just an hour’s trip for his five-horse team. Charles E. Shepard joined Amos Whipple as business partner around 1890 and drove the coach until 1911, when it was replaced by two Stanley Steamers.



Mr. Shepard engaged Bud Lauridsen (newly graduated from Yale University School of Art) to restore the coach in 1945, and two years later Mr. Shepard presented the refurbished product to Colby Junior College. In 1992 Charles Shepard’s son, Maitland, arranged for the coach, then sitting idle in a Colby-Sawyer barn, to be donated to the Society. The coach was displayed in the Phillips Barn until its professional conservation by the American Conservation Consortium in Freemont, NH. Its return coincided with the completion of the new Transportation Building. The Concord Coach is a local treasure and represents the culmination of hard work and concern of Society members.

Other notable conveyances on display in the Transportation Building:

Colby Chaise - owned and used in New London by Joseph Colby and later his son, Anthony, Governor of New Hampshire in 1849. It was restored at the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan in 1936 and shown by Colby Junior College on a number of occasions before Dr. Mather Cleveland gave it to the Society in 1969. The chaise was conserved in 2002.

Dr. Griffin's Sleigh - used in the New London area for his medical practice from 1906 to 1926. It was decorated by John Edmunds, a local decorative painter, and subsequently given by Mrs. Griffin to John’s granddaughter, Catherine Edmunds. She, in turn, donated the sleigh to the Society.

Boyden Collection - consists of a pair of two-seat carriages, one painted black and one natural wood, and two single-seat buggies. These were owned and used in the Lake Sunapee area by summer resident Frank L. Boyden, Headmaster of Deerfield Academy from 1902 to 1968. He kept a dozen more buggies and four horses back in Massachusetts and in 1953 wrote: "I am really quite lonesome as I go out, because I guess I am the last one with a driving horse." He never learned to drive his black Cadillac but in later years sped around the school's campus on a golf cart. The four carriages were bequeathed to the Society upon his death in 1972.



Bemis Gig - one-seat on a frame suspended by leather straps and originally used in the stable business in New London by Charles Shepard and his son, James. When the livery was discontinued, the gig was purchased at auction by William Bemis for use at his summer home in Soo-Nipi Park. Mrs. Bemis presented it to the Society in 1964.

"Gray Line" - carried passengers between Boston and Manchester. It could seat nine and carry freight as well, and its sturdy leaf springs reportedly insured a "comfortable" ride. For many years it sat in a Wilnot barn before the Society learned of it in 1970. Through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Ensign, this distinctive *brake* was purchased and given to the Society. In 2003, the vehicle was professionally restored to its striking black and red color scheme.

Albany Cutter - a two-seated sleigh with a graceful, curved dashboard made by the James Goold Company of Albany, NY, and given to the Society by the Bradford White family. It was originally owned by Willis White, grandfather of the donor. Brad fondly remembers many sleigh rides taken by the family on his grandfather's farm in Uxbridge, Massachusetts.



The **Edmunds Sleigh** - a utilitarian vehicle used commercially throughout New England in the early 20th century. This example was owned by Ervin P. Edmunds, a New London native who operated a general store for many years at the intersection of Main and Pleasant Streets. He used this sleigh in that business, hence the words neatly lettered on the sides: "Ervin P. Edmunds, Dry Goods and Groceries."

Littlefield Carriages - two single-seat, side-spring buggies with wooden undercarriage and leather upholstery. One was owned by Ira Littlefield, a local farmer and surveyor, and the other by his sister Dr. Anna Littlefield, who opened her medical practice in 1896 and for over fifty



years remained New London's only woman physician. The carriages were donated in 2003 by Ira's grandson, Lloyd Littlefield.

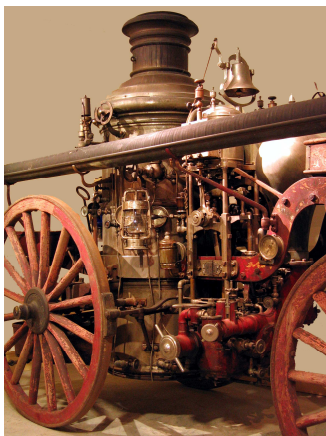
Steam Pumper "Hercules" - this firefighting apparatus was built in 1900 by the American Fire Engine Co. of Seneca Falls, NY, and first used by the New Rochelle (NY) Fire Department. Able to pump 600 gallons of water per minute, its systems were coal-fired, its "plumbing" complicated, and the platform heavily constructed – requiring a well trained team of strong horses to pull it and several men to operate it. After its second commission by the Palmerton (PA) Fire Department, it was acquired by Mr. Hyde Ballard. With the encouragement of Bud Lauridsen and Bill Kidder, Mr. Ballard gave the steam pumper to the Society in 1979, and it was restored to working order in Bud's garage. In 1987 it was loaned to the Franklin (NH) Fire Apparatus Museum. It now resides in the firefighting corner of the Transportation Building.

Other Collections

At the Town Meeting in March 1933, voters approved the formation of a *Town History Committee* in order to help plan future historical observances and maintain document archives. Renamed the *Town History and Archives Committee*, it focuses on the collection and preservation of documents, photographs, and other ephemera. The Society's own collection of historical photographs is entrusted to the archives.



Without a mandate to keep genealogy records and other documents, the New



London Historical Society has been able to concentrate its efforts on "historical hardware," which comprises not only buildings and carriages but softer things like hats, gloves, fans, clothing, linens, and even some items of unknown use.

In 2003, a new exhibit called **Almira's Parlor** was developed to showcase more of the textiles collection. Almira Williams was born in New London in 1816, moved to Penacook ten years later, and returned around 1855. With her mother, she operated a millinery and fancy goods shop in the parlor of their home on Colby Hill. This was not unusual, as many enterprising rural

women of the era imported hats, lace and other fancy goods in order to sell the latest fashions to friends and neighbors.

A unique acquisition is the **Shepard Trail Map**, displayed in the Transportation Building. During the 1930s, the Colby Junior College *Boot and Saddle Club* used the facilities of Charles Shepard's Riding School. He set aside the "Boot and Saddle Room" for club members to use as a meeting place, and Ruth Dyrud, an art instructor in 1932, painted the 10' x 8' wooden wall map depicting roads, bridle paths, hotels, and other landmarks of the New London area.

There are now thousands of individual items displayed in the historical context provided by the Village's buildings. A docent-led tour is the best way to truly appreciate the scope of Society's collection.

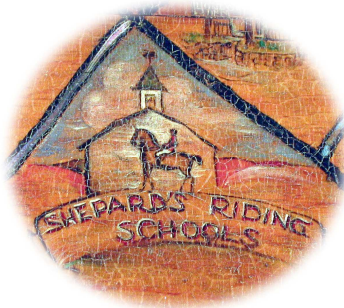
Programs

Over the years a wide variety of programs has been offered by the Society, both in an effort to meet our educational mission and to involve the community in its broader mission of collection and preservation.

Through the early 1980s, Concord Coach bus trips to such destinations as Historic Deerfield, Shelburne Museum, Peabody Essex Museum, Old Sturbridge Village, and Bennington Museum were an annual occurrence.

Benefit concerts and movies were held in the town hall. Old New London Day, Halloween Party, Harvest Pot Luck, Icing Day (now hosted by Musterfield Farm), and even Winter Carnival (co-sponsored with the New London Outing Club) appeared as recurring events on the Society's calendar. Those may have lapsed, but many of today's popular programs can be traced back for decades:

The **Annual Art Show** originated with the "Annual Daffodil Tea," a mid-May high tea held for several years in the Scytheville House or Griffin Barn. The 1979 tea raised \$85 towards "beautifying the grounds." In 1981 the "tea" was gone and renamed the "Daffodil Festival of Arts," and by 1990 the "daffodil" reference was also deleted – perhaps because the event was then being held in late June! Along with its growing importance to both the artists and purchasers of their



work, the Art Show has become the major annual fundraiser for the Society and an important contributor to its operating budget.

The **Holiday Open House** is held each year in early December and appears largely unchanged since its inception. It has grown along with the Village, but the same spirit prevails. The Scytheville House and other buildings are decorated as they might have been in the 19th century and opened to the public. Volunteers, dressed in period costumes, prepare foods like roast chicken and biscuits at the hearthside, and hot cider and other refreshments are served. Carolers perform in each building. The shelves and counters at the Country Store are filled with baked goods for sale. Teachers lead children's carols and read stories in the Schoolhouse. With a dusting of snow on the ground, it is easy to imagine yourself at a New England village Christmas in the 1800s.



"Modeling the Fashions" in 1984

As part of the Society's education mission, classes from area schools have regularly visited the Village for over twenty-five years. The most ambitious program by far was held each morning during the week of June 6, 1988. "The Way We Were" offered hands-on demonstrations, complete with resident livestock, and was open to children from pre-K through 6th grade.

In 1989, the one-day **4th Grade Open House** for the Kearsarge Regional Elementary School in New London was established. Arriving in 19th century costume, students adopt the identity of a specific town resident in the 1800s, learn about their personal history and then participate in activities like churning butter, cooking at the hearth, carding, spinning and weaving wool, bartering for goods, and playing vintage outdoor games with hoops and stilts. The visit supplements the 4th grade New Hampshire history curriculum.



Another program for local students is the **Young at Art Show**. Now held every other year, it started as an annual event in 1991. The show is intended to encourage artistic talent in area schools and is open to all young artists from pre-kindergarten through high school. Entries are shown in the Meeting House, and a panel of judges awards prizes according to age category and artistic medium. This event is accompanied by a Fall Festival that includes hearthside cooking, apple cider pressing, hayrides, and other family activities.

Finally, the Society hosts evening **Dessert Socials** and occasional afternoon teas, featuring local speakers on a variety of historical subjects.

These are informal sessions scheduled periodically throughout the year and are now held in the Meeting House. Although the format has changed over the years, the practice of offering lectures, slide shows, and panel discussions (or reminiscences) to area residents dates back to the Society's earliest days.

Volunteers

The New London Historical Society is staffed entirely by volunteers and funded almost exclusively through membership dues, planned giving, and other private donations. Members also donate untold hours of service on boards, committees, and work groups in order to further the Society's mission.



Visitors are most likely to see our docent volunteers, who have been trained in the history and significance of the buildings and the many collections held within. They provide guided tours for the growing number of individuals, families and other groups that visit the Society throughout its regular season from Memorial Day to Columbus Day.



Less visible to casual observers (but meeting every Tuesday morning, year-round), the "Tuesday Gang" tackles the multitude of tasks required to maintain the sixteen buildings now under our care. The occasional "work-bees" and seasonal "clean-ups" of the past might remain helpful for specific projects, but the breadth of our facilities now requires constant attention.

Almost unseen are the many more volunteers cataloging acquisitions, researching and preparing new exhibits, planning educational programs, developing the new resource center, coordinating private rentals, writing grant proposals, maintaining the web site, tending the herb garden, and baking for special events, to list just a sampling.

Without so many dedicated volunteers, we simply could not meet our obligation to those who have entrusted their money, buildings, vehicles, and artifacts to the New London Historical Society over the past fifty years. If you would

like to contribute your skills and interest to one or more of these activities, please contact the Society – we would welcome your help in preserving the past and educating for the future.

Acknowledgements

The New London Historical Society would like to thank the following area businesses for their generous financial support in underwriting this publication.



Demonstrating the loom at a Fall Festival.



Moving the coach for conservation.

This book was prepared by members of the New London Historical Society and draws on published sources, Society documents and newsletters, and personal recollections. All photographs and illustrations were selected from private collections and have been used with permission.



Buildings & Grounds
of the
New London Historical Society

