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Museum & Memory House

Old Webster Courthouse
(behind Plymouth Town Hall)
Open Saturdays 10 AM to 1 PM
and by chance and appointment

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This rug picturing Plymouth is now on view – see page 6 to learn more

A Message from the Plymouth Historical Society President

This year, everything is NEW at the Plymouth Historical Society Museum. We have a new president, me! We welcome five new board members: David Kent, Terry Fifield, Katharina Kelsey, Steve Rand and Mary Kietzman. They bring in fresh energy, abundant creative and innovative ideas and technical expertise and it's such a pleasure working with them.

Thanks to John Christ and Mary Baldwin, who worked with me tirelessly this past winter to give the museum a new facelift before we opened in mid-March. The space reconfiguration has received commendation from visitors new and old. If you haven't come in this year, please do!

Special requests for private openings is another new feature that we have started

this year. We've opened our museum to community groups, alumni reunions, tour stops and private viewings. The numbers of new visitors have exceeded over 200 by the end of July. Some come as far as Scotland.

You may ask what else is new this year? Trivia Game Night and Heirloom Show-and-Tell are two new and fun programs we introduced this year.

Not everything is new – we are a historical society after all. We are open to new ways and new ideas to showcase our history and we welcome your input and involvement as we move forward. Making history and new memories is what we plan to do as we approach our 50th anniversary next year. Please join us in planning for this celebration.

- Stacey Yap

Kudos to Louise McCormack

Louise Samaha McCormack, Plymouth Historical Society’s past president and Memories Program coordinator and host, was recently awarded Plymouth State University’s Faculty/Staff Award of Excellence through its Alumni Association. The award is granted to recognize the many video interviews Louise has conducted with Plymouth State retired faculty and staff, hear their stories and help expand PSU’s history.

This recognition gives PHS our own opportunity to highlight all the gifts this Plymouth native has given to our community. Louise was born, raised, and educated in the Plymouth Community. A member of the Samaha family, she lived above the Samaha store on Main Street. Worked there, too! She joined the Plymouth Historical Society in 2011 and held positions as member, Vice-President and two terms as President. Louise collaboratively wrote the book ‘Five More Decades’ for Plymouth’s 250th anniversary. She is currently working on two volumes of the Stories of Plymouth – short stories of Plymouth and the surrounding communities. Her on-going project for the historical society has been the Memories of Plymouth, a seven year old commitment where she interviews town folks in their elder years at our Pemi-Baker TV station. To date she has conducted more than 50 interviews from locals, past and present. You can view the videos on our website www.plymouthnhhistory.org.

She is married to Phillip McCormack. Their two children, Brenten and Devin-jean, live in Oregon and Texas.

Louise is passionate about the good fortune of living and working in our beautiful town. She exemplifies the university’s motto, Ut Prosim (That I may serve). When you see Louise, please give her a shout-out!

Gratitude

Joyce Bruce has served on the PHS Board since 2019 and managed our Facebook page. She created it, updated it, posted articles and answered folks who left questions on our homepage. Now, stepping on to other loves, we want to acknowledge how delightful she has been to work with exhibiting her love of Plymouth’s and local communities history.

Thank you Joyce!

Building Forward

As we look forward to the year ahead and our 50th anniversary, we continue to grow. We have plans to build a new storage annex and to acquire improved display cases for our exhibitions. Please consider becoming a member and joining our efforts to preserve and share local history.

Annual Meeting

Our Annual Meeting is on October 10th at 6:30 PM and for the first time it will be combined with an Heirloom Show and Tell event. All are welcome to join the conversation, to bring an artifact for the event, to learn more about our organization, and to get involved in fulfilling our mission of telling Plymouth’s story for generations to come. We look forward to seeing you there!

FINANCIAL REPORT 2022-2023

INCOME

Membership Dues and Donations . . .	\$4,255
Gifts and Grants	\$ 768
Retail Sales	\$ 492
Fundraising	\$ 180
Other	<u>\$2,035</u>
TOTAL	\$7,730

EXPENDITURES

Programs/Publicity	\$1,648
Operating Expenses	\$1,184
Utilities	\$3,131
Storage	\$1,080
Dues & Fees	<u>\$ 200</u>
TOTAL	\$7,243

Young Ladies Library Association Exhibit

In 1873, a group of 14 Plymouth women in their teens and early twenties decided that their town needed a public library. They founded the Young Ladies Library Association, and got to work.

An exhibit of the Association's history is currently on display at the Old Webster Courthouse, in celebration of YLLA's 150th anniversary. Thanks to a generous donation from Pemi Glass of glass tabletop exhibit protectors, the exhibit is able to include fragile memorabilia of great interest, such as New Book lists from the late 19th century.

The exhibit is arranged in four segments. The first gives brief biographies of the founding members, by all accounts a visionary and determined group. Three community members were so impressed by them that they stepped forward to help: Plymouth businessman Jim Langdon gave temporary space for the library in his downtown building; John Blair moved a dilapidated building on South Main Street to Court Street, refurbished it, and donated it to YLLA; and summer resident John Bertram contributed \$500.00 start-up money. The building donated by Blair was no ordinary building. Built in 1774 on the order of King George III, it served as an area courthouse for many years, then as a schoolhouse, a paintshop, and a wheelwright shop before becoming the Plymouth Town Library.



A cake and more await visitors at the reception!

Having secured a building and funding for the library, four of the founding members graduated from Plymouth State University's ancestor, the State Normal School; one, a member of Wellesley College's inaugural class, became an Associate Professor of Cryptogamic Botany at Wellesley and taught there for many years. Several of the Young Ladies spent their lives in Plymouth and remained

active members of YLLA, working on fundraisers, adding a card catalog in 1885, traveling to Boston to buy books, and making sure that the library served the town well.



A fragment of the larger exhibition

The second segment of the exhibit covers 1914 to 1990. In addition to overseeing the library, YLLA members conducted interviews with returning World War I veterans, donated books to the branch of the Civilian Conservation Corp that worked in West Campton during the Depression, and sent books to soldiers fighting overseas during World War II. In 1960, the Association received a bequest from the Daniel Webster Burrows Trust, and in 1982, a bequest from Charlotte Pease, a long-time resident of Plymouth and member of YLLA. The money was invested wisely, enabling YLLA to give the town significant financial support when it became clear that the town needed a more spacious building for its library. Documents from the intensive planning that preceded the groundbreaking for the new library on June 22, 1990, are displayed, along with photographs.

The third and fourth segments of the exhibit cover the years from 1991 to the present, with photographs, documents, and architectural drawings of Pease Public Library and its expansion. When the Town Library's contents were moved to Pease Library, and the building was again vacant, YLLA and the Plymouth Historical Society agreed that it would be fitting for PHS to use the building to deepen the community's knowledge of its history.

To view this fascinating exhibit, please visit the Plymouth Historical Museum and Memory House, open on Saturdays from 10 to 1.

YLLA Appreciation

With the Young Ladies Library Association exhibit on view and with tremendous appreciation for the continued use of the Old Webster Courthouse, the Plymouth Historical Society demonstrated their gratitude to the YLLA:

The Plymouth Historical Society and its Board of Directors congratulate the Young Ladies Library Association on your 150 years of service to the town of Plymouth and we wish to express our deepest gratitude for your continued stewardship of this historic building. We are honored to call the Old Webster Courthouse our home and to showcase our shared history in a place with such a storied past. From courthouse to library and now museum and memory house, this modest building has long remained a place to seek justice, knowledge, and enrichment in Plymouth. It is with a sense of duty to the past that we carry on this tradition into the twenty-first century.

With our sincerest appreciation,
The Plymouth Historical Society Board of Directors

Pictured below is Mary Baldwin as she reads the Board of Directors' statement at the YLLA reception.



Historical Walking Tour held on July 22, 2023

Historical Walking Tours

Our monthly walking tours have been popular. In addition to our publicly scheduled tours, we have received requests for private walking tours and we look forward to leading these groups in the future. As we research and prepare for tours, we continue to discover new insights into Plymouth's buildings. For example, while the County Courthouse (presently Town Hall) was constructed in 1891, Rounds Hall was constructed at the same time by a different architect using the same Richardsonian Romanesque architectural style. The color and pattern of the bricks are somewhat reminiscent as

well. We wonder how many other civic buildings in New England were constructed at this time using the architectural style pioneered by H.H. Richardson. Trinity Church in Boston comes immediately to mind and there are many more. We also learned about the old bank vaults placed in the Pemigewasset National Bank building built in 1885, which was another of our amazing finds.

PHS Programs October 2022 – November 2023

In this year's programs PHS explored historical topics ranging from athletics to Lafayette to the Young Ladies Library Association. We were finally able to meet in person again for most of the presentations. We thank Pease Public Library and the Plymouth United Church of Christ for providing space some of the time, and we are excited to be back in our historic Webster Courthouse Museum for most future programs. We partnered with Pease Public Library for six New Hampshire Humanities to Go programs, enabling both PHS and PPL to expand their audiences.

In October 2022 Dr. Marcia Schmidt Blaine presented "THERE USED TO BE FARMS HERE – How Our Areas Was Transformed." She explained the challenges small northern New England farming towns faced in the 19th century as so many people moved west to new farms or south to the mills. She presented a fascinating study of how these changes affected Sandwich in contrast to the outcome in Plymouth.

In November famed storyteller Dr. Jo Radner helped us prepare for the holidays with "Family Stories: How and Why to Remember and Tell them." Dr. Radner shared foolproof ways to jog memories and interview others for meaningful stories, giving examples of fascinating stories that had been unearthed. She also gave tips on telling family stories in ways that would be most treasured and enticing.

In January 2023 PSU Professor Rebecca Noel broadened our concepts of "gym class" by tracing the attempts to improve the physical fitness of students all the way back to the Renaissance and continuing up to today. Changes in ideas about manners, morals, and gender roles resulted in substantial changes to what was desired and allowed in physical education and in the concept of physical fitness. We looked at parallels between our own time and periods like the Enlightenment when concern grew about the sedentary lives many people live. We shared stories of our own gym experiences, a few sad, others hilarious.

In February local historian Ronald W. Collins introduced us to Sgt. John Ordway, who grew up in

neighboring Hebron in a section that was once part of Plymouth. Ordway was third in command of the Lewis and Clark Expedition and kept a detailed daily journal of their progress and challenges. His childhood education gave him the skills and character noticed by Lewis and Clark, who named him third in charge despite his being only a sergeant. He was lauded for his equanimity and ability to keep good relations with the numerous Native American groups the expedition encountered. If not for his actions, the expedition may have failed.

In March PSU History Professor Emeritus John Allen presented New Hampshire on Skis, a look at the unique history of skiing in NH. Professor Allen, also the historian for the New England Ski Museum in Franconia, showed how Scandinavian and Austrian immigrants, the Dartmouth Outing Club, the Cannon Mountain Tramway, and other factors led to the Granite State's skiing culture, including the importance of ski jumping and the mechanization of skiing.

In April PSU professor Abigail Goode helped us understand the history of the concept of "sustainability" in American life, and how American literature has shaped our understanding of the concept. We discussed how Jefferson's agrarian vision has been used by different groups to promote both concern for the environment and food security, but also a suspicion of urban life and distrust of the "other." We explored what versions of sustainability might best fit our current environmental situation.

In May the focus was on many activities celebrating the 150th Anniversary of the Young Ladies Library Association, which owns the Webster Courthouse and collaborates often with PHS and of course Pease Public Library. Before our modern library was built, the Plymouth Library was in the Webster courthouse. We of a certain age remember it as small but cozy, a great place to meet, a home away from home for many in Plymouth. Congratulations to the YYLA!

In June Steve Taylor, who for 25 years was our state's Commissioner of Agriculture, showed us

how New Hampshire dealt with its “paupers” through poor houses and poor farms. New Hampshire followed the lead of England’s 1601 Poor Law, imposing compulsory taxes on each town for maintenance of the poor. Sympathy for the “helpless, honest poor,” was mixed with contempt for the “vagrant, vicious poor” but the distinction was often not easy. Most of the institutions set up to house the poor developed into a dark chapter in NH history, which reformers eventually shut down.

Did you know that several earlier bridges over the Pemi from Plymouth to Holderness were named after the Marquis de Lafayette? In June we learned why he was held in such esteem by so many, including Plymouth notables Nathaniel Peabody Rogers, William Webster, and Arthur Livermore. In 1824 they and several others built a bridge they then named “Pont Lafayette” in honor of the French hero, not only for his Revolutionary War exploits, but also for his defense of human rights worldwide. In July historian Alan R. Hoffman detailed the breadth of Lafayette’s commitment to human rights and how that commitment influenced the nobleman’s 1824 - 1825 triumphant return tour of the United States, including a stop in Concord, NH.

Upcoming programs:

September 13: Author Michael Tougias will discuss new scholarship that shows more clearly how we avoided disaster during the Cuban Missile Crisis in “13 Days in October. PPL, 7pm

October 18: Author Margo Burns, a 10th generation great granddaughter of Rebecca Nurse, who was hanged as a witch in Salem in 1692, explores the methods and practices of the Salem Courts in “The Capital Charge of Witchcraft.” Burns focuses on Salem but also examines a variety of other cases against women in New Hampshire and other New England states. PHS, 5:30 pm.

November 15: Author and poet Jeffery Zygmunt offers a selection of Frost’s nature poems in “Walking in the Woods with Robert Frost: Seeing nature through the eyes of America’s most loved poet”. Alongside each poem he provides background on Frost’s life. Do you know which poem Frost wrote about a Plymouth hill? Why did he come to teach at Plymouth Normal School and what happened next? PHS, 5:30 pm.

Donations and Research Requests

Requests have been coming in at a steady pace. While some are locating descendants and where they were buried, others are related to old sawmill sites and houses they used to reside. Most notable was finding the official sources to use on writing a report about the event of the 1712 Indian Massacre happening on the crossing of the Pemigewasset and Baker Rivers; the start date of the Keniston-Freeman concert band formed in Plymouth; the start and end date and activities of the Asquamchumakee chapter of DAR.

We have received numerous boxes of old Record Enterprise newspapers and town reports from various donors. We also received a lard can (circa. 1910-1920) from the Rand Store, which was located in the Tufts Block on Highland St. We received carpentry and woodworking tools from various donors, including John Bartlett and Dan Heyduk.

Plymouth’s Traveling Rug

As some of you may know from visiting the Old Webster Courthouse recently, we now have on display a beautiful hand hooked rug depicting three of Plymouth’s historic buildings that were prominent in 1861 - the Court House, Holmes Academy and Congregational Church, as well as a Concord Coach. This rug has a unique story in that it has traveled to the Virgin Islands and back!

George Clark (1877-1957) was an ardent lover of Plymouth history and is responsible for many of the town’s photographs on display at our museum. The Clark farm on Route 25 stood where Harris Family Furniture is today. His housekeeper, Mrs. H. M. Cilley, hand hooked the rug in 1934 for Mr. Clark where it remained until being sold at his estate auction. The mystery remains as to how it ended up in the Virgin Islands. What we do know, however, is that we have the late Bertha Klose to thank for its acquisition and sisters Margaret and Winifred Stiles for its donation in 1984. The rug has recently been cleaned in keeping with the wishes of the late Bill and Betty Batchelder, long-time supporters of the historical society.

The rug can be seen in reproduction on the cover of this newsletter.

Your annual membership contributions to the Plymouth Historical Society are key to our success!



Many thanks to the following 2022-2023 donors:

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