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Old Webster Courthouse
(behind Plymouth Town Hall)

Open Saturdays
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And by chance and appointment

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A Look Back As We Move Forward

A Message from the Plymouth Historical Society President

Two years ago, I recall writing an introduction on the possible effects COVID-19 would have on our country, state, local community, and historical society. Looking back, it was difficult to stop our in-house presentations and limit our time in the building with visitors. YET, we took advantage of the time we did have. We had several dedicated volunteers that worked weekly on cataloging artifacts that were

donated. Some helped with filing the flat items that never seem to stop. We had a few that inventoried our major cabinets. And of course, we found treasures! For some of us, it was the first time we had viewed correspondence more than 175 years old from the town's native sons. Even though the papers were well preserved, we know it is time to have these items digitized and catalogued. Our future might include an over-sized scanner for this project.

Our monthly tours are back. Stacey Yap and John Christ enticed townies and visitors alike to take an hour and a half tour of down-town. Meeting at the town Common, folks heard the history of the center of town. When townies went on the tour, they were encouraged to share their known history. This definitely added to the several conversations going on.

Marcia Schmidt Blaine and Mary Anne Hyde Saul headed the dozen virtual



Historical Walking Tour held on May 21, 2022

programs provided this past year. We thank the Humanities Council of New Hampshire (NH) for their support and listing of presenters from the state. As much as we enjoy these informative presentations, we look forward to the time we will gather again in the Old Webster Courthouse. Social interactions and yummy refreshments always are 'icing on the cake.' Hopefully, this will be sooner than not.

We thank you all for your continued support. Donations keep arriving. One of recent ones for a World War II scrapbook. Yes, we have received several over the years, but this was incredibly well preserved. Page after page, you will see state and local newspaper articles on who is serving, missing in action, on furlough, and no longer with us. Page after page, the names are so recognizable. We continue to thank our veterans!

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At this point in time, we ask our members: what more services can we provide? Our goal has always been to collect and preserve the history of our community. Our mediums used have been primarily in-house presentations and exhibits. Our current one, *Made in Plymouth*, has been well-received by visitors. It showcases artifacts made in our major industries from decades past. Our tours for the past handful of years and our PBTB Memories of Plymouth program focus on history of our town. Should we offer an in-house historical tea day, tour of the town's public cemeteries, a re-creation of the murder on our railroad? Please let us know how we can continue to share historical information of the town we so love.

“Made in Plymouth” Exhibit

Our exhibit committee members, Kathy Hillier - Chairperson, Mary Baldwin, Betty Batchelder, Lisa Lundari and Stacey Yap, were happy to meet again after a long hiatus due to COVID concerns.

Once we started brainstorming in May 2021, and meeting every other month thereafter, it quickly became apparent how remarkable Plymouth's manufacturing history is. In addition to the industries that grew out of necessity in the town's early days, we learned that Plymouth manufactured goods which were shipped across the country and around the world. Blue Star Brand shoe pegs, Draper and Maynard sporting goods, Norman Perry lamps, Sprague/Hitchiner electronic components and yes, even Kanka (!), each made their debut in Plymouth.

“Made in Plymouth” opened on March 26th of this year to an enthusiastic group, and attendance has been steady since then. The exhibit will run through mid-December, when the OWC closes for the winter. We invite you to stop in and have a look.

We would be remiss not to mention our late committee member, Betty Batchelder, who contributed so much to this exhibit through her donations of the Baker River brick, F. Batchelder photo, the spokeshave, a Norman Perry lamp and most importantly, her memories, stories and her passion.

Historical Walking Tours

As the days warmed and grew longer this spring, the historical society welcomed the sun by hosting a series of historical walking tours of downtown Plymouth. Each tour commenced at the Boy Scout sculpture in the Common, continued on for about an hour and a half, and drew large groups of guests both local and from further afield.

The success of these tours would not have been possible without the enthusiastic support of our guests. Stacey Yap and John Christ arrived prepared to spin stories of historic Plymouth and their guests brought their own stories and reminiscences adding welcome depth and character to our journeys in time. To all of you who so actively participated in our tours, we owe you a sincere thank you!

The tour took guests to Plymouth's many historic buildings, to works of art and sites on the National Register of Historic Places, and to historical markers and distant memories of those places no longer present in our landscape that nevertheless shaped the town's character. We learned about the authors, athletes, and tourists who came to visit the once majestic Pemigewasset House hotel, to inspect the wares of the Draper and Maynard Sporting Goods Company, or to just step off the train on their journey north to the mountains. We remembered the history of the bandstand, the New Deal post office with its mural, the Congregational Church, and Plymouth Town Hall with its notable architectural details and past uses. And of course as we



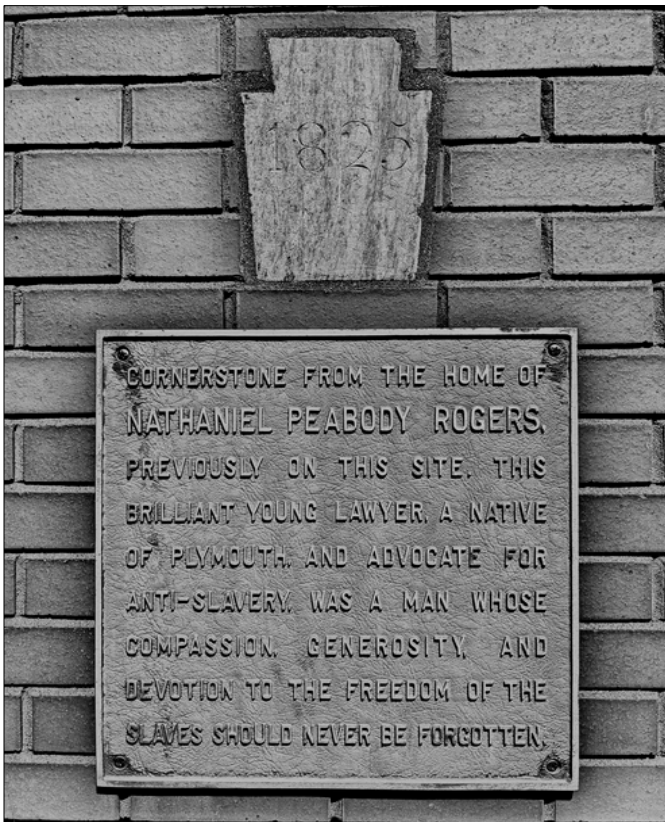
Installation view of “Made in Plymouth”

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passed Rounds Hall and the dutiful bronze of Robert Frost still busy composing verses we ended at our tour at the Old Webster Courthouse, our home and exhibition space.

In June, we took the opportunity to focus our tour on the remembrance and celebration of Juneteenth, a tradition rooted in Texas history that is now marked as a federal holiday. Held on the Saturday just prior to Juneteenth, we shined a light on the history of slavery, abolitionism, and the ongoing struggle for equality and justice in Plymouth. The timeliness of the event as the nation looks to a more inclusive future is underlined by the participation of thirty guests on this tour. In New England, we sometimes feel distant from the American history of slavery. And yet we know that African slaves arrived in New England ports and that southern cotton supplied northern mills with the cotton that served as the raw material for the American Industrial Revolution.



Keystone and historical marker at the Silver Center

Our Juneteenth tour highlighted especially the role of Plymouth native Nathaniel Peabody Rogers in the struggle against slavery as a vocal leader in the abolitionist movement. Little remains of his home,

which once stood where the Silver Center is now located, aside from the keystone to one of the arches, which is now placed alongside a historical plaque and a reproduction of a portrait in one of the entryway to the Silver Center. The memories of his house do remain, including those of the former slaves who took refuge in his home along the dangerous journey north on the Underground Railroad, even hiding behind a secret panel in his closet. Though Rogers would eventually leave for Concord to edit the *Herald of Freedom* journal and gain a larger international voice, his abolitionism shaped the Plymouth region, where he was instrumental in creating the Plymouth Anti Slavery Society and served as a trustee of Caanan's racially integrated Noyes Academy.

For this tour, we also delved deeper into the history of the Pemigewasset House and its many guests and proprietors. Nathaniel Hawthorne's fateful visit to the hotel is commemorated by a historical plaque and is a standard stop on our tour. Notably, his traveling companion was Franklin Pierce, the 14th President of the United States who influentially opposed abolitionism and appeased slave-holding states. And David Webster, proprietor of the Webster Tavern, the precursor to the Pemigewasset House, was a slave owner who put his two slaves to work maintaining his business.

His successor, Denison Burnham, renamed and expanded the hotel. Not only did he not own slaves; he became a noted abolitionist in town and coordinated with Rogers, then in Concord, to help run fugitive slaves north to Canada. As abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison wrote to Rogers of one of these freedom seekers: "On arriving at Concord in the stage, he saw you [Rogers], from whom he received a note, (which I have now in my possession), to Denison R. Burnham of Plymouth, and to Edmund Carleton, of Littleton, soliciting their friendly offices, etc." (As quoted in Michelle Arnosky Sherburne's *Slavery and the Underground Railroad in NH*) These stories of the struggle for justice in Plymouth are not just the stuff of our Juneteenth tour; rather they are foundational to the broader and fascinating story of Plymouth.

We look forward to meeting new guests on our autumn walking tours as the warm weather begins to give way to a sharper chill and then again as the sun breaks through to longer days again in the spring.

PHS Programs Nov. 2021 – Nov. 2022

Our presenters covered a wide range of historical topics from the very local to events around the globe. Most of the 2022 programs were sponsored in part by New Hampshire Humanities whose generosity grew during COVID, allowing libraries and historical societies to continue programming throughout the uncertainties of the pandemic. We also partnered with Pease Public Library for six of the NHH Humanities to Go programs, enabling both entities to expand their audiences. Aside from the quite successful historical walkabouts, led by John Christ and Stacey Yap, the last year's programs were all presented virtually. We are hoping to return to face to face programs for the October program, depending on COVID trends.

In November 2021 Louise McCormack and Marcia Schmidt Blaine delved into "Plymouth State and Plymouth: A Shared History," in conjunction with the 150th Anniversary of Plymouth's college. In a lively talk accompanied by historic photos, documents, and charts, the two PSU Emeriti Professors illustrated the evolving ways town and gown support each other even as they sometimes strain to define their roles. Throughout the evolution from Plymouth Normal School to Plymouth State University, a reputation for friendliness, hands on learning, and service have remained constant.

In January 2022 Dan Billin presented the eye opening "Abolitionists of Noyes Academy." He highlighted the important role of Plymouth's own Nathaniel Peabody Rogers in the founding of the first integrated school in NH in the 1830s and in sheltering some of the students after mobs attacked the school in Canaan, NH., eventually closing it down. The program was co-sponsored with Pease Public Library, which was the main host.

In February Abenaki poet Cheryl Savageau read and talked about her poems in "Pemigewasset and Other Poems from the Dawnland." An artist, educator, and writer, she brought alive the Abenaki influence in our area both historically and in the present day.

Also in February, Jenna Carroll presented "The Woman who Dares," about Jennie Powers, a humane society agent in Keene and one of the first women to become a deputy sheriff in New Hampshire. In 1906 she was cited by the Boston Post as having arrested more men than had any other woman in America.

Pease Public Library hosted this joint program.

In March art historian and educator Jane Oneail led us on an exploration of Norman Rockwell's wartime illustrations and paintings in "Heroes and Homecomings: Norman Rockwell and War." It was a treat and eye opening to examine his work closely for both its visual impact and historical context.

In April Jim Rousmaniere, former editor and president of the Keene *Sentinel*, showed us "How Fresh Water Has Shaped New Hampshire", including its agriculture, mill towns, arts and tourism as well as its settlement patterns and mix of people.

In May John C. Porter showed us how New Hampshire barn styles have changed to match agricultural developments in "The History of Agriculture as Told by Barns." A progression of barn styles has evolved to handle the increased productivity required to meet the needs of a growing population and respond to changes caused by the railroad and the industrial revolution.

In June Dr. Meg Mott led a discussion of "What Does the 1st Amendment Ask of Us" and presented the conflicting and changing historical views of what Freedom of Speech actually entails. We were challenged to think deeply about how to maintain free expression even when the social fabric of the nation is in danger. Pease Public Library was the main host for this joint program.

In July Marek Bennett, an award winning artist, cartoonist and educator, presented "Comics in World History and Cultures" a lively exploration of the various ways of creating and reading comics from many areas as well as what these comics tell us about the cultures in which they occur.

Please join us for our upcoming programs all starting at 7pm:

- Sept. 14: Dr. Carrie Brown will discuss the technological changes from "Guns to Gramophones" in a virtual presentation.
- Oct. 19: Dr. Marcia Schmidt Blaine will present "There Used to Be Farms: Plymouth and Manifest Destiny" in a face-to-face program.
- Nov. 9: Dr. Jo Radner will help us prepare for the holidays with "Family Stories: How and Why to Remember and Tell Them" in a virtual program. Invite your family to join!

Memories of Plymouth Project

Our Memories of Plymouth program has completed its sixth year highlighting the people of Plymouth and our nearby communities with their decades of memories living, working, socializing, or being educated in our town. The project continues to be spearheaded by the historical society's President Louise McCormack. It is a video time capsule featuring mostly local folks, often elders now in their 80s, 90s, and even 100s, who chose to share their stories. We thank all our participants for their willingness to share these first-person accounts of the Plymouth area. All interviews are aired on Pemi-Baker TV channel 1302 and on our Facebook page (facebook.com/plymouthnhhistory). To watch them on YouTube, search for Memories of Plymouth and the name of the person interviewed or follow the link on our website (plymouthnhhistory.org/videos).

Our 2022 interviews were conducted from April to September. In April, Steven and Gardner Hall described their lives growing up in Plymouth – their family, schooling in both Plymouth schools and Holderness School for Boys. The video provided an introduction to how Tenney Mountain ski area got started. Eleanor Jenness Plummer chatted about her life on Texas Hill Road. She included her education at a one-room schoolhouse, her life growing up, working with her father at the post office and delivering mail. We had the Hall brothers join us a second time with the hour devoted to the development of Tenney Mt. ski area. Many of our community folks can recall learning how to ski on the mountain in the 1960's – all without the use of water to produce snow when the weather failed to provide it on the mountain. Willis Merrill II, from Campton, joined us during the summer to share a snapshot of his life. Willy had Mrs. Batchelder, Ms. Cotton, and Ms. Spitzer as teachers in the Campton Elementary schools as many of us did in other local schools decades later. Although born in our Livermore Hospital, he worked in the area for the Doles. He moved to Henniker, NH to work at Sylvania Electronics for years before moving back home again to Campton where he retired. We finished our season of interviews with Anatole Paquette, Jr. of Meredith. With ties to Plymouth, he owned Paquette Signs and is well known as the lead singer of Annie and the Orphans. The band has performed throughout New England and beyond. Locals will recall this group is traditionally the last

band of the summer to perform at the gazebo at Plymouth's Common.

We are preparing for our spring 2023 interviews. If you are interested or know someone who would enjoy sharing their memories, contact Louise McCormack at 536-2337 or louisem@plymouth.edu. Prior to the interview, Louise will visit with each candidate to gather their stories. Questions are provided prior to the interview to assist in recalling the memories. Yes, it will be a fun experience! Your children, grandchildren and friends will appreciate your willingness to participate in sharing your Memories of Plymouth.

Streets of Plymouth

Most locations in town have formal street names, yet some are known to locals by informal names related to their historical heritage. Interestingly, some names have changed over the decades. For example, Stagecoach Road is now called Thurlow Street. Other street names (i.e. Pleasant, Main) can be found in thousands of other cities, towns, and villages across our country. Let us share a few of the formal and informal street names of Plymouth and some of the history behind these names.

Batchelder Street - Batchelder Street was named after Moses Batchelder. Born in 1866, Batchelder arrived in Plymouth in 1883. He became a town clerk from 1894 and 1900-1905. Initially, he procured a job as salesman in the D.B Keniston clothier shop. From 1906 forward, the firm was named Keniston & Batchelder. The business was located where the post office is today. Moses was a clerk for Sceva Speare and became a major financial supporter of our local hospital in Plymouth – Speare Memorial Hospital.

Emerson Street - Dr. Peter Emerson, son of Reverend Daniel of Hollis NH, was born November 7, 1749. He arrived Plymouth in 1770 and was a physician for eight years. In the summer of 1779, New Hampshire organized regiments of six companies to serve in the Revolutionary War for six months in Rhode Island. Emerson was commissioned as surgeon of the regiment from August 15, 1779, to January 11, 1780. He married in Plymouth on January 2, 1777 to Rebecca Hobart, daughter of Colonel David Hobart. She died August 25, 1778 at seventeen years of age. Her headstone is located at Lower Intervale Cemetery.

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Fairgrounds Road - The oldest agriculture fair in the state was in Plymouth on what is called Fairgrounds Road, north of the town. The fair began in 1820, reorganized in 1850 and met its demise by dissolving in 1998. Even today, people can see the farmlands that were used for the fair as one drives from the beginning to the end of the road. The memories of the fair (demolition derby, 4-H demonstrations, girly/girly shows, exhibit halls, sulky racing, amusement rides and yummy food) are often talked about when people gather.

Five Points - There are several stories that have been shared by town residents as to how the name, Five Points, came to be as a road in Plymouth. Historically, the best known "Five Points" was located in Lower Manhattan in New York City and was often described as a notoriously dangerous slum. The five-pointed intersection from which it earned its name and that inspired the movie *Gangs of New York* no longer stands.

Stearns's narrative book (p. 386) used the name in describing Plymouth. "The village of Plymouth had specific areas that the town was responsible for in case of a fire. This included the area referred to as Five Points. Down the Baker River to Boston, Concord & Montreal Railroad, thence southerly on said railroad to crossing at Five Points so-called." William Batchelder shared several years ago that the name derived from the intersection of *two* railroads (Boston & Maine and the Pemi Line), *two* rivers (Baker and Pemigewasset) and North Main Street, better known to us as Foster Street. Margaret Avery felt the name represented the five identical homes located by Foster's Peg Mill. You can find five peaked tops on the five building roofs on early Plymouth maps.

Folks in the area remember several families who lived in Five Points in the early 20th century who found employment at the Draper & Maynard Sporting Goods Factory. The factory alarm would ring at 6 am allowing the folks to 'rise and shine' to get to the factory on time.

Langdon and Merrill Streets - Woodbury Fogg Langdon, born in Concord on January 1, 1830, returned to Plymouth in 1869. He was in the express business with his father until 1881. At Woodbury's suggestion, his father turned his attention to the establishment of the Plymouth waterworks as Woodbury was the construction engineer. He was

the superintendent of the waterworks from 1881 until the plant was sold to the town in 1898. He was a dealer in real estate and conducted a market garden in both Plymouth and Holderness. He married Anne E. Merrill, in 1857. She passed in 1880. When you locate these two streets, you will note they intersect in location AND in marriage.

Thurlow Street, Stagecoach Road - Some folks in Plymouth are aware that the Pemigewasset Stagecoach ran from Concord to Haverhill via Plymouth in the early 1800's. This form of transport was important to the growth of the town. If one travels up Cummings Hill Road, one will come to the Walter Newton Trail parking lot. A half mile in one will find Rainbow Falls. Instead of returning to Plymouth via Cummings Hill Road, take the higher road so-named Brimstone Road by the locals.

Texas Hill Road - The only story that this author has heard about Texas Hill comes from Eleanor Jenness Plummer. "Some circus group from Texas wintered the troops up here. I do not remember if it was for just one year or several. The only thing I have seen to back this story up is that when they were remodeling the Sargent School house they found big posters for the circus attached to the inner walls of the school. Later some bright soul added the information that when the circus came here they brought the only hill that was in Texas with them, so therefore the name Texas Hill and that is why Texas is so flat. You can believe whatever you want."

Highland Street / Ward's Hill - The formal name is Highland Street, yet many of us reference the hill as Ward's Hill. Historically, Rev. Nathan Ward, was the first minister in Plymouth. He arrived in Plymouth with his wife, Tamasin Ireland, and their ten children. What the area looked like when the family arrived can only be imagined. One will assume when they arrived a meetinghouse was ready for his services on April 16, 1764.

Webster Street - It was the oldest street in Plymouth at one time, yet it no longer exists. It was located near the Plymouth Inn on Main Street which would now (2022) be across the street from the Lucky Dog restaurant. One could drive a car from Russell Street down to the Main Street. At some point the street was modified to a walkway. The Websters held important positions in the town.

Is your street named after someone? If so, the historical society would really like to know YOUR story.

Donations and Research Requests

Thank you all for your donations over the past several months. Current and past ‘townies’ dropped into the Old Webster Courthouse or sent items from many states where they now live. We continue to receive post cards from the past hundred years as well as Town and School Reports as early as the mid-1700’s and forward. We are working toward a complete set for our visitors to view.

Scrapbooks continued to arrive, and two that were recently donated focused on local newspaper articles of those serving in World War II. They were incredibly preserved, and names are still familiar with numerous town folks. We thank all for their service, regardless of those that served on either front – the European theatre against Nazi Germany and the Pacific War against Japan.

We were delighted to receive a beautifully glass framed Boston & Maine Railroad schedule from one hundred years ago. We must not forget the importance of this railroad system that helped to expand our town’s population, businesses, and services over the years.

Several Plymouth souvenirs (i.e., plates, sugar & cream sets, cups, pitchers) with pictures of Plymouth on them (i.e., Post Office Square, Main St., Birdseye View of Plymouth) arrived. Several souvenirs had our beloved Old Webster Courthouse as the focus when it was our public library. These items were made in Germany and Austria and were sold in main street businesses (i.e., T.A. Love, A.F. Burt) to tourists and locals alike.

A treasured Norman Perry Lamp was donated. This company was located where the Senior Center is now and was one of the largest industries in Plymouth at one time.

All donations were catalogued by item name, donor, date received and historical society recipient. Research requests continue to climb. Inquiries included history of historical homes/businesses in the area, genealogy of local families, along with Boston & Maine railroad inquiries.

Announcement of Annual Meeting

Our Annual Meeting will be held on October 11th at 9:30 AM. All are welcome to join the conversation, learn more about us, and get involved in fulfilling our mission to tell Plymouth’s story for generations to come. We look forward to seeing you there!

The Board of Directors

Plymouth Historical Society would like to extend a heartfelt thank-you to three long-serving board members: Judy Floyd, Katherine Hillier and Rondi Gannon. Judy is one of our co-founders and carries deep insights into our mission. She is also our liaison to the Young Ladies Library Association who gifted the Old Webster Courthouse for us to use. Kathy is a past president, an expert in saving and preserving artifacts, a superb organizer, and leads our exhibit committee and archival work group. Rondi has headed the school outreach program and has done outstanding research on the poor farm and school houses in Plymouth. They are stepping down but not stepping out. They will remain actively involved in various capacities in our organization.

Financial Report 2021 – 2022

<u>Income:</u> Membership Dues.....	\$3220
Membership Donations.....	\$ 815
Other Donations and Grants.....	\$1918
Retail Sales.....	\$1179
Fundraising.....	\$1758
Miscellaneous.....	\$ 949
Total	\$9839

<u>Expenditures:</u> Programs/Publicity.....	\$1264
Operating Expenses.....	\$ 866
Utilities.....	\$2708
Retail Production.....	\$ 747
Storage.....	\$ 465
Dues, Fees & Other.....	\$ 406
Total	\$6456

MORE THAN 2000 FOLKS VISIT
OUR FACEBOOK PAGE!!

The Year Ahead

As 2022 comes to a close and we emerge from the pandemic, we gaze ahead to an exciting year of growth. We are looking forward to a new year of possibility as we take a fresh look backward to share our stories of Plymouth to future generations.

John Christ has been working hard to edit our website and get it back up-to-date and filled with new material and programming reminders. Many thanks also to Joyce Bruce for continuing to expand our Facebook presence, increasing our active followers with her regular posts and fascinating photos. Our web presence will continue to grow in the coming year as we seek new ways to embrace our public to involve them in our endeavors.

Following an initial face-to-face program this fall, we plan to hold more in-person programs again in the upcoming year. Concurrently, we will continue to take advantage of the possibilities of remote programming that we and many others discovered during the pandemic. The return to in-person events will provide a welcome and much anticipated opportunity to reconnect with one another. And the ability to supplement these events with programs held via Zoom will allow speakers to share their knowledge and experiences with publics who might otherwise remain inaccessible.

Our historical walking tours have been a great success. In the coming year, we will continue to seek new ways to tell our stories of Plymouth. There's something especially enticing about the ability to share those stories with one another in the open air while examining the buildings that shape our everyday experiences of Plymouth to this day. And new times will continue to conjure new points of view from which to narrate that history.

Broadening our regional connections, we started a local historical society gathering three years ago at the cusp when COVID-19 was just emerging. One representative from each local society was invited to meet at the Old Webster Courthouse for a 'greet and meet' opportunity. Two more meetings have followed with each including discussions on issues that are common among all societies in New

Hampshire – how to encourage the younger generation to become involved, how technology can advance our collection and preservation of historic materials while sharing success stories of each group relative to programming, marketing and more. Currently we are exploring what type of support is available in the state for our local groups. The most recent meeting concluded in August of 2022. The group has grown in representatives, and the meetings will soon move from our Old Webster Courthouse to Campton in October. Instead of meeting yearly, we hope to gather a few times a year to assist all of us when moving each society forward to meet the needs of our community.

Following tremendous efforts in recent years, Old Webster Courthouse has been restored. With its fresh appearance, it is ready to take on another century of change. It calls us forth to service and reflection and so we turn to reconsider the organization of the interior space. We have devised a set of plans and goals to guide us in the coming year as we reshape the interior to better showcase our collection. Looking forward we envision our annual thematic exhibitions working in concert with a permanent display of historical artifacts to narrate our history and present a broader and more accessible introduction to Plymouth history. Beginning this fall, you will find up-to-date plans for this reorganization of our space on our website.

We look forward to seeing you in the coming year at Old Webster Courthouse. Come work with us and contribute to Plymouth Historical Society so that we may further our mission and continue to meet your needs. Help us to create an exciting space for exhibitions and programming to do justice to the past and rise to the demands of the future.

Do you believe in preserving local history? Are you a history nerd?

*Consider becoming a member or volunteer, and
please tell others about our presentations and our work.*

"...out of shared telling and remembering
grow identity, connection and pride,
binding people to a place and to one another.
These ties form the basis of community life."

—Thomas Rankin
Documentary Folklorist

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



Many thanks to the following 2021-2022 donors:

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PO Box 603, Plymouth, NH 03264
