

The Nashua Historical Society

Preserving the Past for the Future

Issue No. 3 Fall 2023

www.nashuahistoricalociety.org

President's Message

I guess I was a little naive back a few years ago when I believed that joining the society's board and later becoming an officer would give me license to spend as much time as I desired playing with really cool artifacts and browsing endless folders of historic Nashua photos and other ephemera.

What I didn't see coming was the sudden dose of reality that holding office, especially that of president, entails duties of a far more clerical nature than I'd expected.

Alas, I complain not; I'm very grateful to have the support of the board and membership -- especially the committee chairs who do 90 percent of the legwork required to identify issues that need attention so we don't end up meeting each month on a vacant lot where the Speare Memorial Museum once stood.

Still, the job does indeed have its perks, and it was just recently that I enjoyed one of them: Doing my part to interview and hire Mary Coe Foran, a recently-retired career Nashua school teacher who succeeds Eileen Herring as our administrative assistant.

Being able to bring Mary on staff helped mitigate the loss we all felt with Eileen's resignation in July for family reasons. So if you're in the area on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday, pop in and welcome Mary!

On a recent Monday, I had the honor of being a guest on United Way of Greater Nashua president Mike Apfelberg's weekly radio show, "Community Connections," which airs Mondays at 9 a.m. on WSMN 1590 AM and (better reception) 95.3 FM. I spoke about the society's upcoming programs and exhibits and encouraged listeners who had a family member who served in World War II to contact us to participate in our oral history project.

Mike recently sent out the link to the podcast from the radio show, the easiest way to find it is through the UW's Facebook page.

Finally, I'd much rather be welcoming the arrival of summer -- but I'll have to settle for welcoming fall, which I may like more if it wasn't followed by winter.

Best to all!
Dean Shalhoup, President

Stitch In Time

Bring your craft for a relaxing morning in good company. All are welcome.
Florence H. Speare Memorial Museum
10 am to Noon, Tuesday, October 10 & 24, November 14, and December 5
Open to the Public
Donations Appreciated

Abbot-Spalding House 1 Nashville Street/1 Abbot Square Nashua, NH 03064
Florence H. Speare Museum 5 Abbott Street, Nashua, NH 03064-2119
(603)883-0015, fax (603)889-8515
nashuahistorical@comcast.net

200th Anniversary of the Nashua Manufacturing Company

In 1822 Daniel Abbot (the original owner of the Society's Abbot-Spalding House Museum), Joseph Greeley, Moses Taylor, and others formed an association to build cotton mills in Nashua and purchased all lands between Mine Falls and Main Street. This association took on the name, Nashua Manufacturing Company. First, the mills would be powered by water so a canal was dug "three miles long, fifty feet wide, and ten feet deep, with a fall of thirty-six feet" to bring the water from Mine Falls. "Work was begun on the machine shop in 1824 ... [and] Mill No. 1 was built in 1825 and went into operation in 1826...Mill No. 1 was one hundred and fifty-five by forty-five feet on the floor, and five stories high with steep roof...The company not only provided a mill for work, but they built homes and boarding-houses for the workers. They built and stocked a store for the sale of family supplies and a meeting-house for worship."

More mills were built - #2 in 1827, #3 in 1836, and #4 in 1844. Mill #1 burned in 1856 but was rebuilt. Eventually, the mills were connected into one and was run by eight turbines. "For many years its production was coarse and heavy cotton shirting and sheeting. It now produces over one hundred kinds and grades of cotton flannels and blankets...and employs 1,500." The population of Nashua doubled in the first ten years the mill was in operation. In 1947 the mill shut and part of the original mill is now the Clocktower apartments.



Quotes are from History of the City of Nashua, N.H. from the Earliest Settlement of Old Dunstable to the Year 1895 by Edward E. Parker, published in 1897. Illustration is from the Library of Congress, item 99614040, *Great conflagration of the No. 1 Nashua Manufacturing Company, New Hampshire*, drawing, appeared in Frank Leslie's illustrated newspaper, vol. 2 no. 32 (19 July 1856), p. 89.

Continued on page 3

200th Anniversary Continued



Open House at Clocktower Place

As part of the commemoration, the Nashua Historical Society opened the Abbot-Spalding House Museum to the public, and the City of Nashua opened the 1886 Gatehouse at Mine Falls Park. Restoration on the gatehouse was done between 2000 and 2007.

Also, Dean Shalhoup and Paula Lochhead hosted an information booth at the Clocktower Place Open House.

NaNoWriMo aka National Novel Writing Month

The Historical Society will celebrate NaNoWriMo with an exhibit of historic writing objects, and an invitation to writers to come to the Spere Museum for a day of writing on Saturday, November 18, 2023 from 9:30 am to 3:30 pm. The Abbot-Spalding House Museum will be open at 11 am for participants to tour the building free of charge. Attendees are invited to bring their own lunch. Light refreshments will be provided. A donation of \$5 would be appreciated.

NaMo Rebels (those writing something other than a novel) are also welcome.

Also, during one of the storms in August, our black walnut tree dropped over 500 hull-covered walnuts, perfect for making ink. Making Abbot Ink was the brainchild of member Paula Lochhead. A 2 oz. bottle of walnut ink can be purchased at our gift store for \$12, a 5-foot roll of rice paper is available for \$2.50, and an ink brush costs \$2.50.



Nashua Authors

Thinking about NaNoWriMo brings to mind Nashua authors. Here at the Historical Society we immediately think about Gary Ledoux, a Nashua native who worked for the Amherst Volunteer Fire Department before work took him away to Florida and then California before he retired to Florida. He has written *Nashua's Finest: This History of Law Enforcement in Nashua NH* and *Nashua's Bravest – The History of Firefighting in Nashua NH*. And Robin Ann Peters, another Nashua native, wrote *Nashua* for Arcadia Publishing's Then and Now Series.

But there are many more published Nashua authors. Here are a few that you can check out on Amazon:

An Elf's Journal written by 10-year-old Pallavi Vipin
Under the Southern Cross by George W. Adams
Jilted: A Wolf Shifter Paranormal Romance and other books by Azaaa Davis
The Shaman and other books by Joseph Carrabis
Cursed Objects: Strange but True Stories of the World's Most Infamous Items and other books by J. W. Ocker

Healing PCOS by Amy Medling
25 Years in India: A Personal Story of Upheaval, Culture Shock, Survival, and Transformation, by Elma E. Vaidya
Behemoth and other books by David Meyer
Raw Footage: Dream-Tipped Memoir, by William Michael Philion
Accepting the Challenge! by Scott Jaquith

New Roofs



The construction of two new roofs at the back entrance of the Florence H. Speare Memorial Museum has been underway since the beginning of the summer.

One of the two new roofs, which is over the handicapped entrance ramp to the Florence H. Speare Museum, has been completed. We are delighted with the results of this new roof as it provides extended coverage from the elements of weather and improved lighting to the

back entrance of our Museum.

Construction of a second and larger new roof has commenced. Located adjacent to the new roof over the handicapped ramp, it will cover the expanse over the heating and air conditioning equipment housed outside.

Upon its completion a new fence enclosure will be built underneath this roof to offer improved security for the equipment and better aesthetics to the back of our Museum.



Edmund M. Keefe Memorial Scholarship Recipients

Edmund Keefe lived to be 101 years old and lived most of his life in Nashua. In 1929 he was a history teacher at the Nashua Senior High School, then in 1945 he went on to be the principal, before becoming the Superintendent of Schools for the City of Nashua in 1958. He was also a volunteer at The Nashua Historical Society, and his favorite job was to escort elementary school students through the museum and explain the exhibits.



Maribel Gutierrez and Alexis Abreau

Maribel Gutierrez

Maribel is interested in elementary education and was a preschool intern at Panther Preschool where she helped the children develop their fine and gross motor skills. She was also a volunteer with the reading program at Immaculate Conception Church.

She also participated in Letters for Rose, a program founded during the COVID-19 pandemic and staffed by high school student volunteers, with over 400 chapters across the world. School age children write letters and create artwork for residents of senior homes “to hopefully make the senior citizens of our community feel cherished and valued.”

Alexis Abreau

Alexis is attending Southern New Hampshire University, majoring in Social Studies Education. She has been interested in history since she was about ten years old and plans on becoming a high school history teacher. She is especially interested in the role history plays in our personal lives.

She was a member of the Human Rights Club which “is a place for people to discuss and bring awareness to current humanitarian issues both globally and in our community.” The club was involved in fundraising for charities, educating fellow students, and volunteering for local and national organizations.

Officers and Board of Directors 2023-2024

Officers

Dean Shalhoup	President
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Maggie Harper	Penny Pardoe
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Mary Kirkwood	John Sadd
Paula Lochhead	

Staff

Beth McCarthy *Curator* Mary Coe Foran *Administrative Asst.* Sarah Jauris *Collection Technician*

Eileen Herring: Recently Retired as Administrative Assistant After Seven Years with the Nashua Historical Society



Q: Eileen, what were some of the most challenging issues or incidents that you faced as administrative assistant?

A: The most challenging issue I shared along with my colleagues was water: pouring through the

walls of the basement and coming down from the cupola. I now know what a backflow valve is and why the Society has two.

An ever-changing issue is related to Facebook, including setting up an account and then continually figuring out how to update it. Similarly, I learned how to update the website, and once Sarah arrived, we had way too much fun improving it.

Another important one is that I learned what to do when someone gets stuck in the elevator.

Q: What was one of the most memorable donations you remember?

A: The most memorable donation was a portrait and information having to do with a World War I soldier. The family did not know what to do with the information and was on their way to the dump when someone suggested that they stop at the Society. We were very happy to have them drop by. We were able to share the information with the VFW and be able to have the information become part of our

collection. In addition, we brought one item to the Northeast Documentation Conservation Center for treatment. These items were treasures.

Q: What was one of the strangest times you remember?

A: After taking some time off, I was catching up at my desk and one of the clocks in the library chimed. I knew Beth had said that she had not wound the clocks for years as it took a lot of time to keep them running. Thinking she had changed her mind while I was off, I walked into the library and looked at the clocks. None of them had been wound.



Q: Please share a memorable moment with us.

A: We had many wonderful events with members and visitors, but the one that stayed with me was one of the scholarship presentations. The family of one of the recipients had been through several difficult years. The recipients and family members were asked if they wanted to say anything. The father of one of the recipients got up and talked about some of the difficult times the family had been through and how proud he was of his daughter and how she had handled those difficult times. There was not a dry eye when he was finished.

Thank you for sharing your memories, Eileen, and for your efficient and excellent work on behalf of the Society.

Society's New Administrative Assistant

While Beth and Sara tried to keep up with Eileen's responsibilities after she retired, they were both relieved when Mary Coe Foran was hired as the new Administrative Assistant.

Prior to joining the Society staff, Mary was a social studies teacher in the Nashua School District and has a certificate in genealogical research from Boston University. In 1998 she founded the Student Historic Preservation Team at Fairground Junior High School. Among other historic projects, the club members raised funds to help the city buy a machine that uses water,



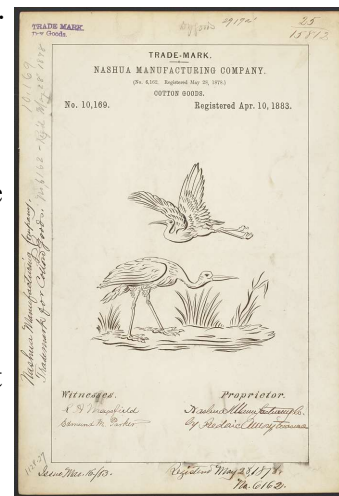
compressed air, and baking soda to remove graffiti without abrading the bricks and mortar. The machine was used in 2000 to remove graffiti from the Nashua Manufacturing Company gatehouse at Mine Falls Park.

Working at the Mill

Melendy Gagnon was 13-years-old when she went to work in the Nashua Manufacturing Company as a bobbin girl in 1911. Bobbin girls would replace the empty spools or bobbins of thread or yarn with full ones. She probably worked 12 to 14 hours a day with other teenagers who contributed to their family's income. Melendy worked there in different roles until the mill closed.

Dieudonne DeLacombe started in October 1885 when he turned 12. He worked in the spinning room oiling spindles for 59 years. He would get to the factory at 5:30 am and light the gas lights and his starting pay was \$2.40 a week. He was probably living at home at the time because the men's housing, which included board, was \$3.50 a week.

Robert Levesque worked third shift and at one point was supervising so many machines, he told his boss he would need roller skates to get to them all in a timely fashion. To make the Purrey blankets, there were about 100 spools of varying colors. The threads would break a couple times a night and the machine would have to be shut down while the thread was fixed. Levesque worked for the mill for several years before going to serve in World War II and then another 33 ½ years after he returned.



Trademark registration by Nashua Manufacturing Company for Two birds logo brand Cotton Goods, 1883, Library of Congress (<https://www.loc.gov/item/2022672233/>).

Stories about mill workers from Eileen Kennedy's, "Looking Back at a Century of Work," *The Nashua Telegraph*, Sunday, 27 June 1999, p. A-7.

Nashua Historical Society

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Whispers of the Departed: Unveiling Local Gravestones and Their Symbolic Stories

Hailee Attorri, a high school history teacher and member of the Association of Gravestone Studies, will discuss the stories and symbols of local gravestones on Tuesday, October 17, 2023 at 7 pm at the Florence H. Speare Memorial Museum.

