



The Nashua Historical Society

Preserving the Past for the Future

Issue No. 1 Spring 2021

www.nashuahistoricalociety.org

Greetings, everyone!

While I certainly don't want to jinx the gradual progress we seem to be making lately in our quest to put this darn COVID-19 thing in the rear-view mirror and watch it fade to a mere dot in the distant background, I must say I've joined the growing band of "cautious optimists" who see good things on the horizon.

Why certain folks – a lot of whom, unfortunately, are in positions of leadership – insist on jumping the gun with such directives as dropping in its entirety the mask mandate and welcoming restaurants, bars, places of recreation and such to tear up their booklets of safety guidelines is beyond me.

But this hasn't been, nor will it become – at least on my watch – a forum for waxing political or launching partisan volleys across the proverbial bow. That said, how uplifting it is, I'm sure you'll agree, to be receiving relatively good news regarding the status of the pandemic, and even better news when it comes to the real progress being made on the vaccination front.

That trend in the right direction prompted Gov. Chris Sununu, on March 11, to issue an updated set of guidelines that relaxes some of the restrictions previously in place for all kinds of establishments. Our organization, which comes under "Museums & Art Galleries," benefits from this update in several respects, allowing us to take steps toward reopening to the public, hosting programs and exhibits, and giving tours.

This is also great news for our small army of dedicated volunteers, most of whom have had to stay away for the past year, which seems like 10 years to the staff and directors. All the modified guidelines are still subject to

limitations and restrictions, but they are not as strict as before.

We're totally looking forward to welcoming all of you back beginning on Tuesday, August 3. On that day, the Speare Museum will re-open for self-guided tours and appointments to tour the Abbot-Spalding House can be made. This date is subject to change if the guidelines from the state change. We chose this date to give us time to complete some projects and a new exhibit.

Now, add to that good news the several days of above-average temperatures – that sweet taste of spring that we here in the land of the four distinct seasons begin looking forward to not long after we're done with the holidays.

And speaking of welcoming cool things, we're very pleased with our brand new, ergonomic shelving system that was installed in late February and unveiled at the March board meeting. While board members were excited to see such an improvement, the folks who will be using them on a regular basis – our staff and volunteers – are, or will be, downright thrilled to finally have them in place.

I want to take a moment to express to everyone how grateful I, as well as Beth and Eileen and the officers, are for the work our recently-named treasurer, Jeannine T. Levesque, put in on crafting the fiscal 2021-22 budget. A stressful, often daunting undertaking for even the most experienced number-cruncher, constructing the budget was the first time Jeannine had tackled the process, but she persevered, and for that we express our gratitude.

Sincerely,
Dean Shalhoup
President

**Officers and Board of Directors
2019-2022**

Officers

Dean Shalhoup	President
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Staff

Beth McCarthy	Curator
Eileen Herring	Administrative Assistant

YouTube Channel is Live!

If you missed one of our past programs or want to see it again, please check out our YouTube channel! Simply go to <https://www.youtube.com> and type Nashua Historical Society in the search bar and the list of programs will appear. More videos will be added so be sure to subscribe.



Re-Living the Civil War - Nov 2014

Placemats Now Available

In the past, placemats were given as a thank you gift to our volunteers. They are now available for purchase at our gift shop. There are four different 12"x 18" placemats, each with a photo from Nashua's past and a description of the photo on the back. To see them all go to <https://www.nashuahistoricalociety.org/shop>.



What Has The Nashua Historical Society Been Doing During Covid-19?

If you have been wondering how the staff and volunteers have been spending time during Covid-19, the answer is quite a lot. You may recall that the office and museums were closed for several weeks during spring 2020. The museums remain closed, but the office has been open for the staff and for a limited number of volunteers since May. So, what have we been doing?

New Storage System

In the President's Message, Dean mentioned the new storage system that was added to the basement. To make way for the shelving everything in the basement needed to be moved to the second floor. Here are some photos showing the progression. The new shelving will be a tremendous help in storing items and books safely and in an organized way. The question is how long it will take us to fill the shelves.

Needless to say, clearing out the basement was a huge task plus we had some other projects that we needed assistance with to accomplish. Fortunately, the Society was contacted by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Their young adults were not able to participate in their regular mission projects and asked if they could help the Society with volunteer projects. We were happy to say yes!

In addition to moving everything out the basement, these volunteers helped with a variety of other projects, i.e., cleaning out the basement of the Abbot house, organizing our items for sale, taking photographs for an upcoming exhibit. They completed all the tasks with skill and enthusiasm. Although it was unfortunate for them that their original plans had to be changed due to Covid-19, the Society is very grateful that we were able to have them as volunteers.



Items had to be moved upstairs.



Then the room was ready for the new shelving.



The room is so different that only by looking at the support pole can you tell this is the same room.

Updated Website



We completed updating our website! We are very proud of the result. We could not have done the update without the skill and patience of Rose Lowry at Beechleaf Design, <https://www.beechleafdesign.com>. We invite you to check out the new features. The address for the website is the same: <https://www.nashuahistoricalsociety.org>

New Photo Montage

A photo montage has been framed and hung in the stairway. The photos show different buildings and events that have taken place in Nashua. When the museum reopens, please stop by and see how many photos you recognize.



Vase Receives Tender Loving Care

One of the vases in front of the Abbot House was in need of some TLC. Thanks to Gate City Monument and our vice president, Roland Fisher, the vase was cared for and repainted (see photo). It will return to its place in front of the Abbot House in the spring.



Siding Replaced

The siding on the front of the Abbot House has been repaired.

Goodbye to Friends

We were saddened to learn recently of the passing of two of our members. Jeanne Phaneuf was one of our newer members and was serving as a member of our Board of Directors. Nancy Twaddell was a very active and committed director and committee chair. Their contributions to the Society will always be valued and appreciated.

Be a Part of Nashua History

The Nashua Historical Society is collecting stories from Nashuans about their Covid-19 experiences and remembrances. These stories will be placed in our archives and shared with the public in a future exhibit or during commemorations of 2020.

If you would like to submit a remembrance, please limit your story to 400 words. Please include your name, address and telephone number. This information will not be shared with the public but will be only for our records. You are welcome to submit a photo of yourself or a photo of something related to your story. Please email your story and if you choose to submit a photo to nashuahistorical@comcast.net. If you need help writing your story, please contact Eileen at the historical society.

City Farm and House of Correction

by Deborah A. Carl

While Donnalee Lozeau was mayor, she published a brochure for a walking tour of historic Nashua in conjunction with Great American Downtown. In it she mentioned that the Nashua Country Club on Fairway Street “started out as the Nashua Poor Farm established in 1858.” But the 1850 census shows that the city already had a well-populated poor farm in the area.



Photo from the Frank M. Ingalls Collection colorized using MyHeritage.com

The poor are always with us and as human beings, we cannot stand by and allow them to starve. In ancient Israel, the law allowed farmers to go through their grain fields to harvest once, anything missed or dropped was left for the poor to pick up. In England, local authorities would use taxes to build poorhouses and purchase materials to put the able-bodied to work. Those who were able but refused to work could be jailed.¹ These values and laws came to the United States with the colonists.

Typically, anyone unable to work was supported by their family. In the event that no family was available, the town would pay another family to care for the individual. But those who could work were expected to. By 1866 New Hampshire required the counties to provide for the poor but Nashua continued

to use its established poorfarm. The idea was the residents would work the farm and be self-sufficient. None of the New Hampshire farms attained that goal as the residents were a mix of the elderly, the disabled, the mentally ill, the sick, orphan children, those just down on their luck, and criminals.

In 1850, the Nashua poorhouse had three staff members, the housekeeper’s 5-year-old daughter, and seventeen paupers. Dustin Gilson was mentally disabled, Esther Robbins was there with her son, Eliza Connier was either a 7-year-old orphan or another child of Esther Robbins; John Rimming, a laborer/pauper was there with his wife and daughter, Calvin Davis, a shoemaker/pauper, was there with his wife, daughter, and son; and four residents ages 66 to 90. Then there were Rebecca Fisk age 45 born in New Hampshire (her father, age 90, was also living in the home) and Newell Adams, laborer/pauper, age 43 born in New Hampshire.

Ten years later, Ira Reed, his wife and daughter are still running the farm, his farmhand has changed and they have added a washerwoman. There are now 26 paupers (including seven children ages 2 to 16 and two infants), and three convicts. Five of those paupers were there in 1850 – Betsy (77) and Newell (50) Adams, Dustin Gilson (40), Rebecca Fisk (60) and Esther Robbins (34).



Photo taken April 2021 by John C. Carl The long driveway is gone and a wing has been added to the building.

¹ John E. Hansan, Ph.D. Poor Relief in the Early American <https://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/programs/poor-relief-early-amer/>

In 1870, the farm is under new management – John L. Morrill age 56, his wife and two children, John L. Morrill age 24 (farm laborer), Timothy Malony age 48 (farm laborer) and his wife Bridget (domestic servant) and their son. The extra help was needed because there are only four paupers (ages 80, 81, 61 and 58) and three criminals. By 1880 the farm is called the City Farm and House of Correction on the census and is again under new management – James Parker and wife, and his brother-in-law Enock Barker and wife with a new farm laborer and new domestic servant. There are three prisoners, Thomas Burns (47 - married), Eugene McCarthy (47 - widowed), and

Harry McCarthy (39 - single). Also living at the farm are six McCarthy children ages 1 to 9. The other three paupers are John McTye (70 – widower), Mary Pettergill (60 - widow), and Lilian Jones (22 – married).

Poorhouses were notorious for out-of-wedlock births, corruption, untimely deaths, and crime. Much as today's homeless hesitate to go to a shelter, the poor would hesitate to go to the farm. In 1900, Nashua used the City Farm and House of Correction to house 5 paupers, 19 prisoners, and 9 boarders with 6 staff members. Eight years later it was closed.

Eugene McCarthy and His Children

Residents of the Nashua Poor Farm and House of Corrections

Eugene McCarthy and his wife, Hannah Dunn, most likely left Ireland and went to Canada. They probably came as children as their families fled the potato famine. From Canada, Eugene and Hannah went to New Hampshire. They were living in Nashua in 1870 with their five children. Eugene was working as a blacksmith and their oldest son, Daniel, was going to school and working as a lock maker.

But life changed when Hannah died in 1879 leaving Eugene with six young children at home. Eugene had gotten into trouble with the law and was incarcerated at the Nashua Poor Farm and House of Corrections and was listed there in 1880 with his children -- Kate (9), John (7), Steven (6), Nellie (5), Charles (3), and James (1). It is interesting that Patrick (14) was incarcerated in a youth detention home.

James died the following year of a bowel complaint. Patrick died in 1884 of consumption. Steven was living in Nashua when he married Mabel Hunt in Newburyport, Massachusetts in 1896. It is not clear where the other eight children ended up and more research is needed.

Nashua Historical Society

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