

# Nashua Historical Society

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NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION  
[www.nashuahistoricalsociety.org](http://www.nashuahistoricalsociety.org)

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# Nashua Historical Society

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[www.nashuahistoricalsociety.org](http://www.nashuahistoricalsociety.org)

## AN EVENING TO REMEMBER



Scottish Piper Kirk Brunson plays as President Terry Romano is escorted into the Society by Jim Cunningham, 1st Vice President.



President Terry Romano, Mayor Donnalee Lozeau, Joe Bellavance Sr., Mary Bellavance and John Viliesis.

November 29, 2012, proved to be a very exciting night for the Nashua Historical Society. For the first time in the history of the Society, over 170 guests, during a four hour period, attended a gala celebration at the Society's Speare Memorial Museum. The guests were personal friends of newly elected President Terry Romano and were there with the sole intent of honoring Terry and introducing the Nashua Historical Society to prospective new members.

A fun and festive evening was enjoyed by all including Mayor Donnalee Lozeau who honored Terry with the event's opening remarks and a paid membership to the Society in honor of her. Many of our City Aldermen were also in attendance, as well as David Fredette, Treasurer of the City of Nashua and of the County of Hillsborough, many of the City of Nashua's Directors and Department Heads, prominent Nashua business owners, Executive Directors and Staff of many of Nashua's non-profit organizations as well as many dear personal Nashua friends of Terry's who did not know the Society existed, many of whom are now members of our organization.

The evening started with Terry being escorted to the Society by first Vice President Jim Cunningham and authentic Scottish Piper Kirk Brunson who also played for the guests during the course of the evening. The Piper was a gift from Francis & Imelda Murphy, cherished friends of Terry's, in her honor. Entertainment was also provided by another dear friend, Betsy Smentek, who played many wonderful melodies on the Society's piano.

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### Nashua Historical Society Spring Programs 2013

Heads up! This is what you can enjoy in March, April and May...

**Tuesday - March 19** Have you ever wondered what to save and what to throw away, especially if you are considering downsizing or breaking up a house? Wolfeboro antiques dealer, Charles Wibel, will be here to tell us about some of the "treasures" which you may have that you may not be aware of. Charlie will speak about the valuable items and show us some examples. You may have a fortune and don't even know it.

**Tuesday - April 16** The history of commercial radio in Nashua. A nostalgic look back at the beginning of radio in Nashua, what it has meant to the community and the importance of covering local events and keeping the community connected. Ed Lecius, a broadcaster for many years, will speak about the early days and his dad's on air contributions. Matt Perreault, General Manager of WSMN AND WGAM in Nashua, will speak about the contemporary business and its future in our local market.

**Saturday - May 18** The Nashua Historical Society is pleased to host the members of the Nashua Garden Club's Annual Plant Sale from 8:00am until noon for this annual fundraising event. See [www.nashuagardenclub.org](http://www.nashuagardenclub.org) for more information.

**NASHUA HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**



Dear Officers, Directors, Staff, Volunteers, Members and Volunteers who helped at the gala on November 29, 2012.

First, I would like to wish you all a very Happy New Year filled with many blessings for you and your families in the coming year.

We are off to a great start in 2013, as was seen on January 12, 2013, at our member's holiday party and I am very excited for all that is planned at the Society this year.

I would like to take a moment and reflect on some of the events of 2012 since I have been elected President.

Our Adopt-an-Artifact Project has taken off and many artifacts have already been adopted. This is an extremely important project for the Society as it will not only insure the protection of our artifacts but will preserve them for our future generations. If you are interested in viewing first and then adopting any of our precious artifacts, please call the Society's office at 603-883-0015.

Our annual College Scholarship Fund event was held at the Society in August 2012. The Society grants a scholarship, and I also grant one in my dear Sister's memoir. These scholarships enable a Freshman college student financial aid to be used at their discretion for tuition or other college needs.

A tree dedication was held at the Society at the end of the summer. Local arborists Kevin Fredette of Gate City Tree Service and Ted Sayce of Sayco Tree and Landscape donated and planted two heritage sugar maple trees on the Society's grounds. The event was well attended by the Officers, Directors and Members at which I was honored to preside over. The Society and I personally want to thank Kevin Fredette and Ted Sayce for their generosity.

When I assumed my role as President of this great Society, one of my three goals was to increase membership. I am happy to report through my efforts 34 new members have joined our Society, many emanating from the President's Gala, and many more are in the pipeline. I would like to ask for your assistance in introducing our Society to your family and friends in hope of garnering new members.

As I close, I am personally asking for your remembrance of Cathy Valley, who died this past December. Cathy was a long time member of the Society, a former Director, Officer, and friend of the Society, as well as a loving friend of long time members Marvis and Frank Mellen.

Warmest Regards,  
 Terry Romano  
 President



**Railroad**

The first railroad line in the State of New Hampshire was the Nashua and Lowell Railroad line. It became a reality through the successful efforts of Southern New Hampshire citizens who petitioned the New Hampshire legislature for an extension of the Boston and Lowell Railroad which was incorporated in 1830. The first trains of the Boston and Lowell railroad line began running on June 26, 1835. Then the State of Massachusetts Legislature authorized the construction of a connecting line from Lowell to the state line. Both the Massachusetts and the New Hampshire railroad lines merged into one corporation. The first trains in Nashua came to a temporary train station which was located at Temple and Amory Streets. As the railroad line was extended the need for building several more railroad stations arose and they were built including Union Station, the central hub of Nashua's strong railroad Transportation Industry.

From the 1920s through 1963, this porcelain New England Telephone and Telegraph Company, American Telephone and Telegraph Company Sign hung on the upper area of the brick wall south of the east entrance and lobby door of Union Station. This was Nashua's main railroad station where many travelers passed through on their way to many destinations, some of which were far away and some were close by. This sign represents a connection to Nashua's rich railroad history as it was viewed by many a weary traveler as a warm, welcoming, informational item with a goal of providing assistance to many.

Nashua's Union Station was designed by Edward Dow, (1820-1894), a native of Lemington, Vermont. Edward Dow grew up in Newport, New Hampshire. In 1847, he settled in Concord, New Hampshire and he commenced work as an architect in 1854. As an architect he designed structures within New Hampshire such as the Tilton Arch, paid for and built by Charles E. Tilton. He designed several New Hampshire Town Halls including the Halls for the town of Newport and the City of Concord. He designed New Hampshire's 1878 State Prison. He designed the 1894 Nesmith, Conant and Thompson Halls at the University of New Hampshire and Nashua's Union Station. Records showing when Union Station was designed or built are not locatable. Union Station was torn down sometime soon after July 1, 1967. In its place a contemporary fast food restaurant was built. Many Nashuans refer to the Union Station as their most missed Nashua building.

**Member Exhibits**

Do any of our members have a small, portable collection of historical items that you would like to display either at a meeting or for a short term exhibit at the Speare Museum? If so, we'd love to hear from you! Half the fun of a collection is sharing it and showing it off! And...we love those "what is its?" too..

**What is it?**

Round bowl, feels like iron. 7 3/4" diameter. 2" high



## Avoiding the Ash Heap: How members saved a collection by Jackie Walker

In 2008, I was hired to research and catalog the Frank M. Ingalls Collection. Having very little knowledge of Nashua's history, I asked who was Frank M. Ingalls, and how did the society acquire this collection? The staff and volunteers had similar responses. Frank Ingalls was a prominent Nashua photographer, who was a member of the society. In 1956, when Ingalls passed away, his collection was donated to the society. With my initial questions answered, the story of this collection started and stopped there, or so I thought.

As I cataloged, the collection developed from just a box of stuff to images that captured the city and people of Nashua. About 7,000 images later, the collection was researched and cataloged. Getting this part of the collection complete was a monumental task not only because of the sheer volume of images but also this collection is one of the most comprehensive and complex collections that the society owns. Interestingly, once the images were completed, the next step was to go through the archival documents, where five pieces of correspondence set the record straight on how this collection came through the Society's door.

The correspondence revealed the truth. In 1954, Frank Ingalls was 91 years old and was moving to Claremont, Florida. Before leaving Nashua, Ingalls wanted to find a home for his collection, and he contacted and offered various sources the option to purchase his collection. On May 4, 1954 Ingalls wrote to Albert Davis and offered his collection, "for \$100.00 (or perhaps best bids)."

On May 18, 1954 the Society responded, "The Society has never purchased any articles ... Several individuals in the Society have, however, expressed a willingness to contribute toward the purchase of your pictures and we have raised forty dollars (\$40.00)."

As a last resort, on May 26, 1954 Ingalls contacted George Melcher and wrote, "As I dislike to see my valuable Collection of Nashua History Negatives go to the ash heap, I have decided to ask you to raise \$10.00 more," than what the society was offering Mr. Clancy. Mr. Speare, Mr. Davis, Mr. Melcher, Miss DeLong, Mr. & Mrs. Gage, Mr. & Mrs. French, and Mr. Jeffery were the members that came together and raised the money to save the collection.

For years, there was miscommunication about this collection. The collection was not donated in 1956 when Ingalls passed away, but, instead the collection became the first purchase made by George Melcher and other members on behalf of the society. The five pieces of correspondence demonstrated how a select group of members came together and truly "Preserve the Past for the Future."

"Nashua Through the Lens of Frank M. Ingalls" is on exhibition at the Nashua Historical Society.

May 4, 1954

Mr. Albert Davis,  
Dear Sir:

We are leaving Nashua for the next 2, 3 out weeks, when we will sell our 2 of season 2, and move all household goods, to our summer home at Silver Lake, R.F.D., East Ware, NH, where we expect to live until Sept. (or so), then return to 945 Seventh St., Claremont, Florida, for the winter. (We are fairly well.)

What I am writing about is that I am offering all my Nashua History Negatives for \$100.00 (a best bid).

Could you spend an hour, or so, in looking over my said negatives here at 4 Beacon St. at your convenience, as I am here most every day of evening. Is there any possibility of the Nashua Historical Society (or any member thereof) raising the money you had found for Mr. Ingalls. (9/19/54)

Frank M. Ingalls

COPY

MAY 18, 1954

Frank M. Ingalls  
4 Beacon Court  
Nashua, N.H.

Dear Mr. Ingalls,

In referring to your pictures, we have talked the matter over with the officers of the Historical Society.

The Society has never purchased any articles but all of its historical items have been acquired by gift.

Several individuals in the Society have, however, expressed a willingness to contribute toward the purchase of your pictures and we have raised forty dollars (\$40.00) for this purpose.

The Society as you know, has a very small income and can do nothing in the matter officially.

If you would accept this offer of \$40.00 from individuals the pictures will be turned over to the Society.

Sincerely,

May 26-54

Dear Mr. Melcher:

As I dislike to see my valuable Collection of Nashua History Negatives go to the ash heap, I have decided to ask you to raise \$10.00 more, making my price only 1/2 what it formerly was. It is like giving the Nashua Historical Society \$20.00 dollars, I will let you have all 300 or more negatives, if you will pay this at once as we are trying to leave Nashua for our summer home by June 1.

Respectfully,  
Frank M. Ingalls  
4 Beacon Ct. (will be away until evening)

Contribution toward purchase of Ingalls pictures

Mr. Clancy	10.00
" Speare	10.00
" Davis	10.00
" Melcher	10.00
Miss DeLong	2.00
Mr. & Mrs. Gage	4.00
" French	4.00
Mr. Jeffery	2.00
	12.00

May 29, 1954

Receipts of Group Director  
Fifty Dollars (\$50.00)  
in behalf of the Nashua Historical Society for my collection of about 300 negatives of scenes in Nashua and vicinity

Frank M. Ingalls

Eveningcon't.

During the evening, an introduction of the Society's Adopt-an-Artifact project was presented sparking a desire by many to learn more about the project. Staff members and volunteers of the Society escorted the guests during the evening through the Speare Memorial Museum and presented to them the magnificent artifacts housed there. All were invited to return for a personal tour.

Many friends of Terry's volunteered their time, efforts and resources to decorate and entertain her guests. Christmas trees that were donated for the event aligned the entrance of the building and a variety of gourmet appetizers, main dishes and scrumptious desserts were the evening's menu.

Special thanks to the event's committee members and to Jim Cunningham, Imelda Murphy, Kate Prolman, Elizabeth and Richard Foemmel, Wayne Spence, Marianna Rosato, The Bellavance Family, Michael Coppola, Ellen Gregg, Betsy Smentek, and Nashua Community Service youth volunteers Grace King, Chloe Hennessy and Peter Brooks for their endless time and efforts in making this event so successful.

This was the first of many fund raising events for the coming year that our new President Terry Romano has planned for the Nashua Historical Society.

Happy New Year to all!



President Terry Romano, (center) chats with Imelda Murphy (left), and Kate Prolman (right).



Mayor Donnalee Lozeau with President Terry Romano



(Left to right) Betsy Smentek, President Terry Romano, Elizabeth and Richard Foemmel, Diane LoRe



Members Jack Clark and Bob Valade enjoying the evening.

## Manhole Auction

by Dean Shalhoup

The Historical Society's education fund is quite a bit healthier these days, thanks to another successful Triangular Manhole Cover sale we held in the fall.

The format was changed this time. Rather than sell the covers in an auction-style format, staff and volunteers decided the worth of each cover and priced them accordingly.

The society began collecting and selling these tri-cornered, unique-to-Nashua covers in 2007, when the city began replacing them with larger, and more traditional, round covers as part of ongoing street upgrades and repair projects.

Minus a nominal \$5 fee per cover, all the proceeds go to a society fund earmarked exclusively for history-related educational programs.

Thanks to a lot of help from recreation director Nick Caggiano, former superintendent of streets Scott Pollock and crews who loaded and unloaded the pallets, the society was able to get anywhere between a dozen and 20 manhole covers delivered twice a year - in the spring and fall.

Scott McPhie, myself and several others who stopped by after the latest delivery spent most of the day before the sale dragging the covers, which probably weigh around 200 pounds each, off the pallets and into some sort of order. A power-washer helped clean them up and skim chunks of asphalt or surface rust off for viewing purposes. Nobody knew quite what to expect at that first auction in May 2007. Would people come and bid on these things? How much are they worth? What will people pay for them?

We soon found out, and were pleasantly surprised to see the covers attracted such interest. Key to our success was the late George Michael, the veteran auctioneer from Merrimack who led bidding at several auctions before health issues interfered.

Also playing a major role in the success of the series of auctions was Stan Olejczak, who, understandably, goes by "Stan O." He was there with his utility trailer every time, gladly delivering manhole covers to those winning bidders who couldn't get them into their vehicles.

So where did these bulky, toe-threatening artifacts come from?



Stan Olejczak and Scott McPhie looking over the manhole covers for sale.



A prospective "buyer."

If there's a historical artifact, historians say, there's a fascinating story. The covers were introduced in Nashua almost a century ago, Nashua Foundry president Peter Lyons once told the society. They were the brainchild of a gifted engineer named Walter Ellis, who came to Nashua around 1919 from the shipyards of Maine to take over the local foundry.

manhole auction con't.

In Maine, Ellis figured prominently in design and construction of many types of vessels, many of them war ships.

In 1946, Lyons' grandfather, William Labombarde, bought the foundry from Ellis; it's been in the family since.

Shortly after Ellis arrived in Nashua, he began to notice that many of the city's round manhole covers rattled annoyingly when cars ran over them. He looked into it and noticed that all it took was a small stone, piece of asphalt or similar foreign object to slip between the cover and its frame for the rattling to start.

Being an astute engineer, Ellis knew that three-sided geometric shapes - triangles - wouldn't rattle like the circular ones. So he got to work at the drawing board, and soon, the first three-sided covers rolled out of the foundry furnace and into Nashua's streets.

When Labombarde took over the foundry in '46, he continued manufacturing the triangle covers and the city kept installing them.

The covers were produced right up until a decade or so ago, to replace worn and broken ones. They met their demise when regulations deemed them too small and, therefore, a hazard to workers in the event of an emergency.

So while the streets have gradually been sporting the modern, larger round covers, their historic predecessors are beginning to show up as part of residents' walkways, gardens, fish ponds and in other unique bits of landscaping.

### In Remembrance of Catherine M. Valley

Society member, Catherine M. Valley, 84, served as an officer of the Nashua Historical Society and on several committees. Cathy died December 30, 2012 after a period of declining health. Her husband, Norman, died in 1991. Cathy was a graduate of Nashua High School Class of 1945. She attended Rivier College and was active in the RISE program. During World War II she was a member of the Civil Air Defense. She worked for many years at the former J.F. McElwain Shoe Company in Nashua as an Administrative Secretary and later with Amica Mutual Insurance Company in Bedford, NH, until she retired at age 70. Cathy was a longtime member of the Hudson Sewer and Utility Committee and was a volunteer of Ann Marie House. She also served on the Nashua Bicentennial Committee in 1976 and the Board of Directors of the Nashua YWCA. An active Democrat, she was a volunteer worker at the Democratic National Convention held in Boston in 2004.

Marvis Mellen, a dear friend of Cathy's and a Nashua Historical Society member, delivered a eulogy at Cathy's funeral. Excerpts follow.

What do you say about a friend of almost 70 years? Cathy was a member of our family. So many memories we met in our junior year of high school and became good friends. It's ironic that it was a social studies class, because we disagreed on almost every issue. In fact, in our senior year class book, Cathy's motto was "I disagree." Somehow we got past all of that - we argued- debated- and attended political rallies together for both parties. My daughter Carroll thought of her as her favorite aunt. At her wedding, Aunt Cathy was assistant mother of the bride. My husband Frank and Cathy's husband Norm were best friends since childhood and enlisted in the Navy together at 17 years old.

What you don't see in her obituary is that she loved all animals - especially dogs and red setters - she loved to get dressed up - or that she loved to eat out, anywhere and everywhere- or that she loved to travel. So many memories. Our last visit before she left us, I tucked her in and kissed her cheek. She said, "Are you an angel?" I answered, "I always was - you just didn't always know it." I got my last big smile from Cathy for that one.

Thank you, Marvis, for allowing us to share this with our readers.