

## RARE WHITE HOUSE CHINA DONATED TO THE SOCIETY

The New Hampshire Historical Society has one of the nation's largest collection of materials related to U.S. President Franklin Pierce, including documents, portraits, clothing, furniture, accessories, and memorabilia. Now, thanks to the generosity of Trustee William W. Upton, the Society also has a cup and saucer from Pierce's presidential china set. Last spring Upton learned the set would be sold at auction in Pennsylvania, where he successfully purchased it for the Society's collection.

Every presidential administration has used a set of china for formal dining, and its design helps convey a presidency's style and traditions. In 1817 James Monroe became the first president to order a china set specifically intended for official presidential use. Subsequent presidents would either reuse china inherited from previous administrations, add to an earlier set, or commission their own dinner and dessert services.

In July 1853 Franklin Pierce dedicated the opening of the Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations in New York, also known as America's Crystal Palace Exhibition. While there he admired porcelain displayed by retailer Haughwout and Dailey. This New York firm imported blank porcelain pieces from France in order to decorate and sell them. Pierce selected one of the patterns on display and ordered a 287-piece service for \$536.24.

After Pierce left office in March 1857 an undetermined portion of the service was sold or given away. Since 1797 Congress has appropriated funds for incoming presidential administrations to use in furnishing



the White House. Congress also authorized them to sell off furnishings considered worn, outdated, or unusable. This included china, and for nearly a century, successive administrations sold off some White House articles, showing more interest in the funds raised than in the items' potential historical value. China sets, including Pierce's, were broken up and dispersed among former White House staff, fans of the administration, and buyers of high-quality china at public auction who were not necessarily aware of the original owner's identity.

Only in 1889 did that sentiment begin to change. First Lady Caroline Harrison, after searching the White House to find and identify examples from various presidential china sets, became the first to publicly express frustration at the lack of furnishings from her predecessors. However, it was more than a decade later before First Lady Edith Roosevelt began to publicly

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NEW HAMPSHIRE  
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William H. Dunlap

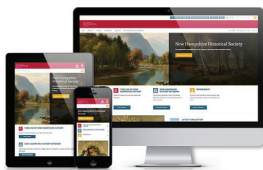
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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As you read this we will be in the heart of winter, with the shortest and coldest days on the calendar. Every year about this time, my wife, Sue, observes that I am crankier than usual, which she attributes to winter fatigue. (In the old days they called it “cabin fever,” now it is “seasonal affective disorder.”) I retort that she’s the one whose disposition is showing the effects of too much cold and not enough sunshine. Possibly we both are right.

Of course, phone calls from friends and relatives in Florida cheerfully providing updates on the daily weather there don’t help the situation. The rejoinder from us in the frigid north is that we love the changes of the seasons in this part of the world. While I use that argument myself, if I were completely honest I might say that I love three and a half seasons: spring, summer, fall, and the first 50 percent of winter. Then I’ve had enough. And this is from someone who loves to ski.

In recent winters our outlook was further burdened by the pandemic, as well as the spiraling downward trend in civic discourse (accelerated by the lamentable rhetoric of some national leaders). But I am tired of thinking about all of that, so will move on from it, at least for the rest of this column. As a respite from the grind of current events, of late I have been doing some reminiscing, for the edification of my grandchildren, about the New Hampshire winters of my childhood. Of course, human memory can be gauzy, air-brushing away unpleasant facts and leaving us with an idealized residue. Still, indulging in nostalgia now and then can be a tonic.

I was born in Concord in the early 1950s and grew up in the town of Hopkinton, population (then) around 2,000, a Norman Rockwell sort of place. For a boy living in a small town, life revolved around the outdoors in all seasons. We especially loved winter, and, as far as I can remember, never had a second thought about it.

I recall the excitement—even euphoria—when we greeted the first snowfall of the year. The good times were about to roll! Our house in the village had a small hill in the front yard, and when there was sufficient snow cover we spent hours and days designing and building twisting mini-bobsled runs, which we hurtled down on metal “flying saucers.”

There was a small pond across the street—the “Frog Pond.” Black ice would form, marking the beginning of pond hockey season. Hours were spent there as my friends and I chose up sides, placed a couple of boots or mittens to mark goals at each end of our rink, and skated until dark. Sometimes a dad would rig up a spotlight in a tree to illuminate the ice sheet, and we could resume our games after supper, until our parents finally shut things down at bedtime. When we got a little older we joined

the youth hockey league in Concord. That was fun, too, but there was something pure about the time spent by ourselves—no adults around—on the pond.

During recess time at school we built elaborate snow forts, with the construction process often taking several days. Epic snowball fights took place. We informally sorted ourselves by grade, with, for example, second graders taking on third or fourth graders in these battles. I recall being among the younger kids, overmatched by the larger and stronger older ones. Then, when all hope was lost and our snowy redoubt about to be overrun, some sixth graders would swoop in to the rescue, like cavalry reinforcements in an old western movie. We would return to the classroom with sodden mittens and frozen hands and feet, exhilarated nonetheless.

In all of these activities we were largely self-governing, setting rules and refereeing, without adults around to oversee us. Occasionally things got out of hand, but mostly we succeeded in organizing ourselves. We seemed to work out the principles of self-governance in spite of—or because of—the absence of adults. Call this the “free-range” theory of childhood.

Personal reminiscences are like small oral histories. As I recount stories from my childhood to my children and grandchildren, I am brought back to memories of my own father, who was born in 1918 and came of age during the Great Depression. Just as I listened to his stories, now they are listening to mine. You might say I have become a “tribal elder.” The task of historians is to record and document the stories of people and events, and to pass these accounts on. Family stories are a form of historical record-keeping, informal but still valuable, sources of both edification and enjoyment. Perhaps someday I’ll write all of it down.



Neighborhood hockey games, sledding, skating, and snowball fights are some of the many winter activities enjoyed by New Hampshire children, past and present. Undated postcard, New Hampshire Historical Society, gift of the estate of Edith Greenwood.

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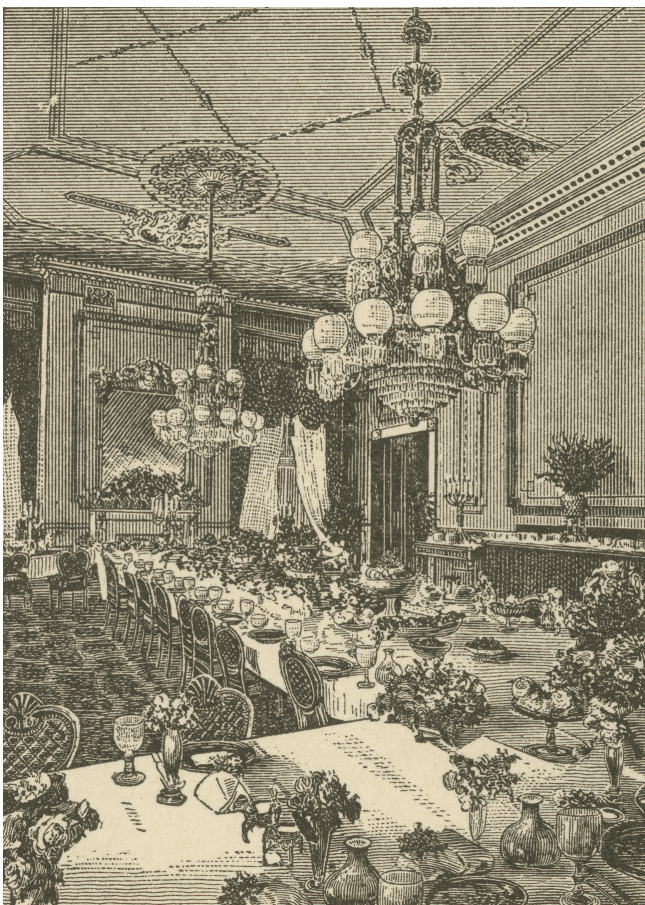
Benjamin H. Wilson  
*Hopkinton*



## WHITE HOUSE CHINA (cont. from page 1)

seek gifts and loans of examples of White House china from all past administrations and ordered that cabinets be constructed for displaying them.

Today the White House has a designated China Room showcasing examples from each administration. But much of the White House china from the 19th century is lost or in private collections. The Society is fortunate to now be among a handful of organizations, including the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Corning Museum of Glass, to have examples of Pierce's presidential china. While it's impossible to know whether Pierce himself ever used this exact cup and saucer, it was undoubtedly a mute witness to many state dinners during the Pierce presidency.



State Dining Room of the White House during the Franklin Pierce administration (1853–57) from *Reminiscences of Sixty Years in the National Metropolis* by Benjamin Perley Poore, 1886. According to Poore, “During the sessions of Congress there was a state dinner once a week, to which thirty-six guests were invited, and on other week-days half-a-dozen guests partook of the family dinner, at which no wine was served.” New Hampshire Historical Society.



Skier dolls in a chairlift, made by Annalee Mobilitee Dolls, Inc., Meredith, 1962–63, New Hampshire Historical Society, gift of Annalee Thorndike (1915–2002). The exhibition, “New Hampshire Ski History with Annalee Dolls,” on view at the New England Ski Museum in North Conway through March 1, 2024, explores the history of Annalee Dolls and the company's role in promoting the state's skiing industry. The display includes ski-themed dolls on loan from the Society's collection and the Thorndike family.

## AUCTION BENEFITS NONPROFITS

The New Hampshire Historical Society is one of 50 nonprofit organizations selected by the Omni Mount Washington Resort to benefit from its “Lift Up Our Community” auction of vintage Bretton Woods ski lift chairs. The 50 two-person chairs from the resort's original B-Lift were manufactured in 1973 by Heron-Poma and installed that same year at the Bretton Woods Ski Area. In 2018 the beloved chairlift was retired to make way for the Bretton Woods Skyway Gondola. The online auction continues through March 4, 2024, and the public is invited to bid on a piece of ski history to benefit a good cause. To learn more and to place a bid, visit [www.brettonwoods.com/auction](http://www.brettonwoods.com/auction).



## WINTER PROGRAMS & EVENTS

*In-person programs will be held at the New Hampshire Historical Society, 30 Park Street, Concord, unless otherwise noted. For the most up-to-date information on programs and events, visit [nhhistory.org](http://nhhistory.org) and sign up to receive the Society's e-newsletter.*

### **Music and Lecture: “No Foolish Play”: Celebrating New Hampshire’s Shakers Saturday, February 3, 2024, 2 p.m.**

In 1774 a band of eight religious refugees arrived in New York from Manchester, England. Their leader, Mother Ann Lee, preached a radical new religion, derisively called “Shakerism.” Over the next 20 years converts to this new faith established 19 Shaker communities in the East and Midwest, including vibrant Shaker villages at Canterbury and Enfield, New Hampshire. Known for their simple yet elegant style of living, the Shakers also made racial and gender equality, stewardship of resources, honesty in business, celibacy, and pacifism hallmarks of their communal life. This program celebrates the anniversary of the Shakers’ arrival in America and explores the sect’s legacy through a talk by Shaker scholar and musician Mary Ann Haagen, with a performance of Shaker music by the Canterbury Singers under the direction of Kathryn Lundahl. Admission is free for New Hampshire Historical Society members; \$7 for nonmembers. No registration required.



“Gymnastic exercise” at Canterbury Shaker Village, detail from a stereograph by Willis G. C. Kimball (1843–1916), New Hampshire Historical Society. A program marking the 250th anniversary of Shakers in America will be held at the Society on February 3.



Sample automobile license plate, 1971, New Hampshire Historical Society, gift of Stanley A. Hamel. By the time the 1969 law replacing the word “Scenic” on license plates with “Live Free or Die” became effective, the regular series plates for 1970 had already been manufactured with “Scenic.” The state’s motto has appeared on all passenger vehicles since 1971. Learn about the ensuing legal controversy in a virtual lecture on February 7.

### **Virtual Lecture: Live Free or Die: The Contested History of the Words on Your License Plate Wednesday, February 7, 2024, 7 p.m.**

In 1969, when New Hampshire officials decided to put the state’s motto—“Live Free or Die”—on its license plates, many citizens viewed the act as an endorsement of the deeply unpopular war being waged in Vietnam and protested by covering up or altering the motto. In response, authorities cracked down hard: arresting, fining, and sometimes even incarcerating those who engaged in duct-tape dissent. People appealed their convictions, sparking a legal contest over the First Amendment that went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. In this multimedia presentation, historian and former newspaper reporter Dan Billin tells a uniquely New Hampshire tale illustrating the genius—and the fragility—of the First Amendment. This virtual lecture is offered through the Humanities to Go program of New Hampshire Humanities, and admission is free. Register through Zoom.

### **Family Program: New Hampshire Hands at Work Saturday, February 10, 2024, 2 to 4 p.m.**

The Industrial Revolution will come alive for kids as they experience for themselves the transition from human-made to machine-made production in New Hampshire. Kids will be able to try out different methods of making a product and will even get a chance to work on a simulated conveyor belt. Geared for kids ages 7 to 11, but all ages are welcome. This is a drop-in program, and registration is not required. All children must be accompanied by an adult. Admission is free thanks to a generous contribution from Concord Pediatric Dentistry.

**Granite State Stories: Part 1****Saturday, February 17, 2024, 2 p.m.**

In honor of the New Hampshire Historical Society's 200th anniversary in 2023, Society staff have been touring the state and sharing a collection of stories that capture the iconic spirit of New Hampshire. After visiting libraries and local historical societies around the Granite State, we're bringing this program back to the Society itself. This first talk in the series will explore stories of Mount Washington and the Concord coach. Admission is free for New Hampshire Historical Society members; \$7 for nonmembers. No registration required.

**Lecture: Late in Arriving: How Electricity Changed Rural New Hampshire****Saturday, February 24, 2024, 2 p.m.**

Many people in rural New Hampshire did not have access to the transformative benefits of electric power until World War II. For thousands of households, the introduction of electricity meant relief from the drudgery of the wood-fueled cookstove, the washboard, and the kerosene lamp. Presenter Steve Taylor will explore how these developments changed civic and social life in New Hampshire's countryside. This lecture is offered through the Humanities to Go program of New Hampshire Humanities, and admission is free. No registration required.

**Virtual Lecture: A Recipe for Success: Finding Women through Community Cookbooks****Wednesday, February 28, 2024, 7 p.m.**

Community and church cookbooks are treasures that give us a glimpse of female social networks, encapsulated in a place and time. Besides providing delicious treats, these recipe books can also be a springboard to genealogical adventure. Join librarian and researcher Erin Moulton as she looks at recipes and the women who created them. Admission is free for New Hampshire Historical Society members; \$5 for nonmembers. Register through Eventbrite.

# 603 HISTORY HUNT

**NEW HAMPSHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Learn about the Society's successful statewide history scavenger hunt and how to develop one for your organization at a workshop on March 6.

**Granite State Stories: Part 2****Saturday, March 2, 2024, 2 p.m.**

In honor of the New Hampshire Historical Society's 200th anniversary in 2023, Society staff have been touring the state and sharing a collection of stories that capture the iconic spirit of New Hampshire. After visiting libraries and local historical societies around the Granite State, we're bringing this program back to the Society itself. This second talk in the series will explore stories of the Society's rare Revolutionary War flags and the circa 1870 John Badger Bachelder painting of the Battle of Gettysburg. Admission is free for New Hampshire Historical Society members; \$7 for nonmembers. No registration required.

**Virtual Workshop: Creating a History Scavenger Hunt****Wednesday, March 6, 2024, 7 to 9 p.m.**

In the summer of 2023, the New Hampshire Historical Society organized a statewide history scavenger hunt that got Granite Staters out of doors and exploring the state and its history. Dubbed the 603 History Hunt, it garnered attention from major media outlets in the region and introduced hundreds of people to the organization and its work. Join Society staffer Mary Adams, one of the key members of the 603 History Hunt team, to learn how to create and manage a scavenger hunt for your own group. Discover tricks and tips to save money and time in developing a program that will inspire your entire community. The charge for this virtual workshop, co-sponsored by the Association of Historical Societies of New Hampshire (AHSNH), is \$20 for members of either the New Hampshire Historical Society or the AHSNH; \$35 for nonmembers. Register through Eventbrite.



**Book Talk: *Monadnock Originals, Colorful Characters from New Hampshire's Quiet Corner*  
Saturday, March 9, 2024, 2 p.m.**

Often referred to as New Hampshire's quiet corner, the Monadnock Region is known for its historic villages and beautiful natural landscape. But it has not always been quiet. Join historian and author Alan Rumrill for a glimpse into his book, *Monadnock Originals*, which shares stories of fame, fortune, and scandal, as well as of the Yankee characters who have given the region its personality. Copies of Rumrill's book will be available for purchase. This is a free program; no registration required.

**Virtual Lecture: *Diplomats at Sea: Junior Officers of the U.S. Navy, Manliness, and International Law, 1861–1865***

**Wednesday, March 13, 2024, 7 p.m.**

In the 19th century, U.S. naval officers on the high seas were frequently called on to interpret the law of nations. The Civil War complicated matters, launching junior officers into the most difficult legal situations they had yet encountered. Using four case studies, Benjamin Roy argues that manliness was a critical factor in officers' decision-making, as they sought to glorify themselves, preserve their professional reputations, and project American power on an international stage. Roy is a doctoral student in history at the University of Georgia, and a 2023 recipient of a New England Regional Fellowship, which brought him to the Society to do research. Admission is free for New Hampshire Historical Society members; \$5 for nonmembers. Register through Eventbrite.



Postcard to Andrew L. Felker of Meredith from his wife, Eva, who was in Portsmouth during the Russia and Japan Peace Conference, dated August 29, 1905, New Hampshire Historical Society. Eva writes, "Peace is declared. We were out playing croquet when all the church bells began to ring." Learn about the diplomacy that led to the Portsmouth Peace Treaty and a Nobel Peace Prize for U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt at a talk on March 23.



**Family Fun Day**

**Saturday, March 16, 2024, 2 to 4 p.m.**

Bring the whole family to the Society for an afternoon of games, crafts, and storytelling. Explore the historic building, tour the exhibitions, test your knowledge of Granite State trivia, and make a New Hampshire-themed craft to take home. Introduce your kids to the special things that make New Hampshire a wonderful place to live! Family Fun Day is geared for families with kids ages 6 to 10, but all ages are welcome. This is a drop-in program, and registration is not required. All children must be accompanied by an adult. Admission is free thanks to a generous contribution from Concord Pediatric Dentistry.

**Lecture: *Teddy Roosevelt's Nobel Prize***

**Saturday, March 23, 2024, 2 p.m.**

In August 1905, diplomats from Russia and Japan met in Portsmouth to negotiate an end to the Russo-Japanese War, which had been raging in the Far East for more than a year. Although few might remember this war today, it foreshadowed in many ways the modern warfare that came to characterize the 20th century. President Theodore Roosevelt orchestrated the talks that led to the signing of the Portsmouth Peace Treaty and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his involvement. Join Chuck Doleac, the founder of the Portsmouth Peace Treaty Forum, to learn about this fascinating chapter in international diplomacy and the role New Hampshire played. Admission is free for New Hampshire Historical Society members; \$7 for nonmembers. No registration required.

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The independent nonprofit that saves, preserves, and shares New Hampshire history.



The John Swenson Granite Company, founded in 1883 and one of the state's iconic commercial enterprises, was operated by four generations of family members until its sale in 2016. Kurt Swenson, the company's last family-member CEO, had the foresight to keep the company records intact and arrange their donation to the Society. In addition to the records, the Society received several company-related objects, including this painting by Arch McDannell (1909–78). A native of Franklin, McDannell lived most of his life in Concord and was nationally recognized for the accuracy of his paintings of steam locomotives and train stations. The painting was commissioned by the Swenson Granite Company around 1976 and hung in its Concord offices. New Hampshire Historical Society, gift of Kurt Swenson and Kevin Swenson and all of the former owners of Swenson Granite Company from October 18, 1883, to September 16, 2016.