

Documentation

Hayes-Genoter History and Genealogy Library
Pelham Historical Society

The Hayes-Genoter History and Genealogy Library of Pelham, New Hampshire received the 2009 excellence award in the category of research/documentation for its work to digitize and make its collections on-line accessible to the public. The Hayes-Genoter 's digital library is one of the largest of any small town in New Hampshire. The Hayes-Genoter is affiliated with the Pelham Historical Society.

The Hayes-Genoter is a non-profit library that contains several hundred thousand pages of text, hundreds of photographs and historical documents pertaining to the history of Pelham, settled first in 1720. The idea to digitize the library's collections stemmed from a desire to provide historians, researchers, and the public "around-clock" electronic access to Hayes-Genoter's large volume of materials. The library now has twenty percent of its holdings on-line with plans to increase their offerings five-fold in the next five years. The digital collections include: vital records; town histories; family histories; and photography collection.

The library's digital collections can be accessed online, for free, at <http://www.pelhamnhhistory.org/library/onlineibrary.html>.

Collections Management

C. Christopher Pratt

C. Christopher Pratt is the recipient of the 2009 award for excellence in the category of collections management. Pratt has distinguished himself through his exemplary work in preserving the archives of the Sullivan Public Library. He has also been a strong advocate in promoting archival education throughout New Hampshire.

Pratt began his work with the Sullivan Public Library Archives in 1995 when he first volunteered to assemble and administer the Town of Sullivan's archives. He introduced professional standards and practices in the management of the archival holdings. And it was he who pushed in 1997 for the creation of the archives room in the library, where the collections are now housed. Pratt currently serves as the volunteer archivist and curator of the archives room.

Active on the board the New Hampshire Archives Group, Pratt has worked with other archivists in New Hampshire to educate staff members and volunteers at the local historical societies in the best practices in archival management. He has organized several workshops at NHAG. He recently taught a workshop on copyright and collections management at NHAG's Fall 2009 conference.

When not working in the archives, Pratt leads history/nature tours of the Town of Sullivan. He also writes a column on Sullivan history in the town's newsletter.

Education/Public Programs

Life in the 1890s

The Hancock Historical Society harnessed the natural curiosity of local fifth graders while furthering the study of the history of their community. The partnership between the historical society and the Great Brook School – along with countless hours of work by dedicated volunteers – enabled a group of eleven year olds to experience history in concrete terms while creating PowerPoint presentations and a large poster. In producing these professional-quality historic presentations, the fifth grade students contributed to the education of others – students and the general public alike.

The Hancock Historical Society accomplished this by bringing the students to the historical society to conduct original research using objects, written documents, oral histories and photographs. The same volunteers also traveled to Great Brook School to aid in further research through secondary resources and the internet. After the students' illustrations were assembled into a large poster, Life in the 1890s, and their PowerPoint presentations were saved into their electronic profiles, the students augmented their experience with a field trip to pertinent Hancock historic sites and a parent and community night.

Through the historical society's commitment to education, and collaboration with a local middle school, the Hancock Historical Society has left a lasting impression on a group of fifth graders by fostering an appreciation for local history and has created a model for other communities.

The Living History Event

A commitment to showcasing authentic and accessible history, strong partnership between the Hillsborough Historical Society and Hillsborough Pride, and thousands of hours of donated labor by over 100 volunteers made the August 21-23, 2009 Living History Event a major success.

This first-time event included six historical sites offering demonstrations ranging from pewter casting and braided rugs to carving and charcoal making, re-enactments by French and Indian War soldiers, and speeches by Lincoln, Greeley and others. A first-in-the-state town crier competition, Victorian American Lantern Theater presentations and music were additional features that drew hundreds of visitors from nearby and across New England.

The majority of local businesses as well as local charities embraced this positive opportunity to offer a connection to the past, and opportunity to come together, especially in this year of economic challenges.

Claremont Historical Society

This award recognizes the quality and effectiveness of Claremont Historical Society's public programs and the Society's generous and significant mentoring of other organizations.

Over the last five years of the organization's 45-year history, the Society's focus has expanded to present programs that teach local history through storytelling. In partnership with the Off Broad Street Players community theater group, annual Sprits of Claremont Cemetery walks have been researched, written and produced by an expanding group of volunteers. Gravestone carvers, mill girls, farmers, railroad tycoons and other 19th century Claremont citizens come alive in these well-received performances.

With support from the New Hampshire Humanities Council, Society members organized a hands-on workshop and instructional booklet on teaching local history through living history walks in 2007. That effort has led to projects in Marlow, Littleton, Charleston and Salisbury and student performances in Claremont.

The Society's members also write monthly articles for the local paper, and partnered with the Fiske Library to host Chautaugua performances.

Discover Portsmouth Center

The Portsmouth Historical Society's dedication to the city's cultural heritage extends beyond its history. With the creation of the Discover Portsmouth Center, the Society has succeeded in establishing a starting point for experiencing all that diverse cultural institutions have to offer both visitors and residents of the city.

In 2008, after having first won the recognition of Portsmouth as one of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's 108 Distinctive Destinations in the nation, the city's historical society rallied more than 20 non-profit arts, cultural and historical organizations around the concept of having a central information and orientation center for Portsmouth arts and culture. The Portsmouth City Council granted the historical society permission to create the Discover Portsmouth Center in the former library (housed in two National Register buildings). In the first year since its creation, the Discover Portsmouth Center is on track to serve more than 10,000 guests.

The Discover Portsmouth Center supplements the Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce general visitor services with an orientation site in the downtown area. The Center has galleries in which exhibits of local art, crafts and artifacts are showcased, as well as a theater that shows the historical society's "Welcome to Historic Portsmouth" documentary.

Because of this enormous undertaking of the Portsmouth Historical Society and the collaboration of many of the city's other cultural non-profits, both visitors and the community reap the rewards of increased visitation.

Lifetime achievement

Mr. Paul E. Holmes

Paul Holmes' extraordinary commitment to the study, documentation and stewardship of archeological artifacts has now spanned a half century.

Holmes traces his interest in archeology to his fascination with Native Americans and their culture when he was a young boy. He describes himself as an amateur, but his peers praise his professional practice as well as his generosity in mentoring others.

He is best known for mapping a possible shoreline of a salt water inlet that once covered most of Plaistow, and related discovery and documentation of nine Native American sites. One included evidence of a campfire from over 6,500 years ago.

Mr. Holmes, and his wife Thelma, are both charter members of the Plaistow Historical Society. Mr. Holmes has donated an impressive collection of arrowheads, stone tools and other Native American and Colonial artifacts to the Society, and serves as the collection's curator. The couple have also served as major leaders in, and contributors to, the N.H. Archeological Society.