

Chester Historical Society



The Chester Historical Society is a non-profit membership organization that exists to promote the study of the history of Chester, the preservation of history through the collection and protection of historical matter, and supports the continuing education of the community of the Town's ever evolving heritage.

This year, we initiated a new fund raising event, the Historic House and Garden Tour. It was held on August 8th and was a great success. The weather was more than cooperative, and our guests were welcomed to the homes and gardens of Cathy and David Rand, Tom and Linda Robitaille, Holman House – Laura Wolfer, and Nicholas Dunwoody, Frances and Gary Van Geyte, Peter and Lucinda Borrone, Jackie and Don Brown, Sylvia and Webster Anderson, the Neville's Garden, and of course, Stevens Memorial Hall. Thank you to all the homeowners who slaved over their gardens and homes to create a showcase for our guests. We look forward to making this a Bi-Annual Event, so look for it again in 2011.

Again, we welcomed presentations from the New Hampshire Humanities Council. We were enlightened and entertained by:

Robert Goodby, Digging Into Native History in New Hampshire's Abenaki Indians
Edie Clark, Baked Beans and Fried Clams: How Food Defines a Region
Rebecca Rule, That Reminds Me of a Story: Yankee Humor and the New England Storytelling Tradition.

All these programs were terrific, so if you see them elsewhere in the state, take advantage of the opportunity and go. We, of course, will be planning more presentations from NH Humanities again this year, so check our website for future events, which will include our participation at the Chester Town Fair.

We also played host to a Statewide Cemetery Tour Workshop, a program offered by the NH Historical Society, and NH Humanities Council. On July 10, 2009, we welcomed 25 participants from all over the state. We provided the research material for some of the "notable" in our Village Cemetery, and the participants, after a welcoming speech from David Watters, Cemetery Historian, and Sharon Wood of the Claremont Historical Society, and NH Humanities Council, put together their own presentation of our notables, then performed them for us during a tour of our Village Cemetery. This day was a very prestigious mark for the Chester Historical Society, as it was noted that we had been hosting a Cemetery Tour for 10 years and could bring experience to the table, not to mention, we got to show off two of our National Historic Sites, Stevens Hall, and the Village Cemetery. We look forward to hosting similar workshops in the future.

Speaking of prestigious events, Stevens Memorial Hall, which turned 100 years old in 2009, will be celebrated with a three day event commemorating it's original dedication to the Town, and a re-dedication from our current residents. Mark your calendars for Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, May 20-21, 2010. The list of events are as follows:

- Thursday, May 20
 - Open house 5-7, exhibition of organizations past and present, and light refreshments
 - Selectman's meeting, 7 PM in the auditorium, current selectmen, meeting of historical events

- Friday night, May 21
 - Open house 5-7, exhibition of organizations past and present, and light refreshments
 - Charlie Lindsey's Local Vocals 7 PM
 - Rebecca Rule, "Humorist" and Yankee Storyteller, 7:30 PM,
 - Chester Dancers, 8:15 PM, period dance recreation
 - Orchestra and vocals, 8:30 PM, Featuring Charles Lindsey, Jeff Woodruff, Beverly Manning, and a number local notables entertaining us with music and song of the period.

- Saturday, May 22
 - Vintage Parade, 1 – 1:30 PM
 - Historic Renditions from Chester Revisited 2:00 PM
 - Melissa Rossetti Folini Poem, 2:15 PM
 - Rededication ceremony - 2:30 - 3 PM
 - Ice cream social 3 - 4 PM with entertainment in the auditorium, and outside (weather permitting, so keep your fingers crossed).

With the events over a three-day period, you can plan your calendar around one, two, and hopefully all three. Come in to see how fresh Stevens Hall looks now with restored horsehair plaster walls, tin ceiling and lighting in the dining room, the restored and painted ceiling in the auditorium, and the refinished floors throughout. The building looks beautiful! We hope to see you all there!

Another ongoing project is the restoration of the Town's Chickering & Son's Concert Grand Piano which is located in the auditorium of Stevens Memorial Hall. The piano was sold to the town from the Chickering Factory formerly located on Tremont Street in Boston in 1910. It was used at least 7 times per month for various meetings of the National Grange, Grange variety shows, school plays, and graduations, as well as for private functions, and other itinerant performers and dramas for almost 70 years. It has seen the test of time, although remaining in the same location at Stevens Memorial Hall in an area unaffected by significant climate changes, and needs restoration of the cabinet as well as the internal workings.

Once it is restored, it is our hope that it will be played during many a variety of performances as it was in the past. We have plans for operatic and classical recitals as well as hoping to hear it performed during local talent shows, school and organizational events. To this end, the Chester Historical Society has again pledged \$5000 of our own funds to this project, and placed the money in the Stevens Hall Restoration Fund. To date, we have hosted a Pancake Breakfast for the Piano and Silent Auction that generated another \$700, and with the help of Erin Newman of the Chester Fire Department, four grant applications have been submitted on behalf of the Town for piano restoration.

Our Annual Meeting and election of officers on Tuesday, November 17, 2009 brought to you new officers. As I stated last year, 2009 was my final year as President of the Chester Historical Society. I will remain as a member, the organizations Trustee to Stevens Memorial Hall, and the coordinator of the Re-dedication Events. It has been a pleasure to be at the helm of this organization. I am very happy that during my tenure, we were able to publish and distribute the history book "Chester Revisited," to find a permanent home at Stevens Hall, and create name recognition for this very worthy group. You will now find Mr. Webster Anderson as President of the Society. Web is well suited to the challenge, but please know that your joining as a new member will be a great deal of help to him. There is still a great deal of work to do to increase awareness of Chester's role in the history of the state, and to the country, and still more work to revive our archives documenting this history. Please join today, you will not be disappointed! Membership information can be found on our website at www.chesterhistorical.org.

Respectfully submitted at request of the officers,

Hilary Hall

President, Webster Anderson
Treasurer, Gary Van Geyte
Historian, Roy Noyes

Vice President, Michelle Broadhurst
Secretary, Laura Wolfer

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