

Hillsborough Historical Society

Fall-Winter 2019 Newsletter

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The Christmas Trains Are Comin'

The 5th annual Christmas Gardens display will open in the Hillsborough Heritage Museum (behind Butler Park) on the town's Old Fashioned Christmas celebration-- December 7th, 9 a.m. to noon and 4-7 p.m. Throughout the holidays, it will be open Wednesdays and Saturdays 9 a.m.- noon.

Nothing can get you in the mood faster than a visit to the delightful Christmas Gardens at the Heritage Museum. Co-curators Christina Chadwick and Gary Sparks are both mad for model trains that speed along tracks through lighted towns and snowy countryside, toot and whistle and click-clack. They put their hearts into these displays, letting loose their inner children and winning yours. This year's train fantasia will be open on December 7, just in time for the town-wide Old Fashioned Christmas.



Don't Miss the One-Horse Open Sleigh

Part of the Christmas exhibition at the Heritage Museum will be this original sleigh, made in town in about 1880. At that time, cutters – sleighs like this which accommodated two passengers and were pulled by one horse - were a common sight during the winter months in Hillsborough. The 1923 scene (pictured on pg.2) shows snow-covered Main Street with several sleighs in view. The builder's plate on our sleigh clearly reads: S.D. Hastings/ Maker/ Hillsboro Br. NH. We know that Samuel D. Hastings (1829-1901) a native of Chelmsford, Massachusetts, grew up in Deering and learned the wheelwright's trade in Clintonville, Massachusetts. He came to Hillsborough in 1856 and opened a shop at the Foundry where he practiced his trade as a wheelwright and a carriage and sleigh builder. He later moved his business to the Bridge Village where he also became an undertaker. Hastings and his wife Rebecca were active members of the Methodist

What IS a Christmas Garden?

by Gary Sparks, Heritage Museum Co-Curator / President pro tem, Hillsborough Historical Society

One of the best-known holiday traditions is a Christmas Garden at the foot of the family Christmas tree. Originating in the mid-Atlantic area, today's fanciful miniature Christmas villages are thought to have grown out of the Pennsylvania-German custom of the nativity landscape.

In 1904, Baltimorean Claud Shaffer, an apprentice machinist, and his brother added moving parts to the tiny landscapes. At about this time, manufacturers like Lionel and American Flyer began producing increasingly realistic and affordable toy trains. Before long, trains became a significant part of the Christmas Garden tradition. Animated Christmas Gardens with moving trains and lighted villages were built not only in parlors and family rooms, but in public. Larger and more elaborate Christmas Gardens were installed at fire stations, police stations, and department stores.

Today, many families carry on the tradition of a Christmas Garden (or Christmas Village or Christmas Train Garden, as some are now known). Many civic groups build them in firehalls, stores and shops, clubs, and museums. The custom is strong in the mid-Atlantic region, especially in Maryland and Pennsylvania. The Baltimore area alone features dozens between Thanksgiving and the New Year. Thousands of people, both young and old, visit these fantasy worlds. Today, New York City hosts intricate displays at Grand Central Station, the New York Historical Society, the Botanical Gardens, and the New York City Transit Museum. In recent years, a large Christmas Garden has been on view at holiday time in Boston's South Station.

Church and the Harmony Lodge A.F. and A.M. Our sleigh came to the Hillsborough Historical Society through the generosity of Mrs. Norma Hubbard. She and her late husband Dave, long-time directors of Hillsboro's Food Pantry, acquired the sleigh from the Abbott Downing Historical Society, then also known as the Concord Coach Society. Before that the sleigh had been owned and preserved for many years by Herman and Verna Whipple of Hillsborough.



Up and Coming: DISASTERS

For several months, Heritage museum workers have been researching and compiling a large, dramatic exhibit on some of the catastrophes our town has suffered – natural and unnatural, permanently damaging and near-misses. Some may remember the floods of 1936, the hurricane of 1938, the plane crash in 1981, the burning covered bridge in 1985, and not to be forgotten: the threat of becoming a nuclear waste dump site in 1986. (That was one we escaped by an all-out town-strong grassroots effort. Dumpbusters will remember it well)

Look forward to a celebratory opening in spring 2020. Come and see the photos, the relics, watch home movies, and you'll remember it all.



The Macks are Back

Worth a detour – there's a new red garage in Kemp Park on River Street, and "Big Bertha," a yellow Caterpillar plow truck has joined big "Black Beauty", and both machines under cover are ready to be admired through several big windows.

The kids, the tourists, the whole town will love it and enjoy the view from riverside Kemp Park, which also holds the stone barbecue oven built for an exciting rally there in August 1852 to celebrate the nomination of local boy Franklin Pierce to the highest office in the land. (BTW, it was said to be an enormous party!)

Renovation

When Mack collector Richard Kemp died, he left the town the parkland and two vehicles. Atty. Douglas Hatfield organized the renovations, supported by a generous donation from Jay Crowley, and with significant help from Billy Goss (and highwaymen Miles Carter, Dennis Yeaton and Jim Card), Chris Seig and others.

The result is a great thing for the town. "I think it's wonderful," says neighbor Kelly D'Errico. "I hope it will become a maintained park with grass for picnics," says Hatfield.



Reminder about Membership dues

Please use the membership form to send your payment. Make checks payable to Hillsborough Historical Society at PO Box 896, NH 03244-0896

Now pay online at <https://shop.hillsboroughhistory.org> via credit card or PayPal. *Thank you for your support.*

A Significant Addition to the Collection

Archibald Lavender Smith died at age 28 in France during the First World War, but his mark on our town is indelible. A fashionable young man before he put on an Army uniform, he grew up in what's now the Fuller Library, and later wore an elegant top hat and carried a gold pocket watch. We now welcome those items, and others, into the Museum collection thanks to a generous donation by Amanda Maloney, great-granddaughter of Archibald's youngest brother.

Who Were The Smiths?

John Butler Smith (1838-1914), once state governor and Archibald's father was a man Hillsborough still reveres. His former mansion on School Street houses our library, the church he attended and supported, (named in his honor), the Smith Memorial, holds the town clock and stands proudly on West Main Street. John B. Smith came to town at the age of nine, was schooled here and later at Harvard. As a young man he became interested in manufacturing and established a mill on the Contoocook in Hillsborough, incorporated in 1882 as the Contoocook Mills Company, where he served as president and active managing officer. He participated in state politics and from 1893-1895 was NH's 44th governor. In 1883 he married Emma Elizabeth Lavender, and their son, Archibald Lavender Smith, was born in six years later. Tragically, Archibald Smith enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1917 (just three years after his father's death), was shipped overseas, and died suddenly in Tours, France, in August 1918. His son, also named John Butler, was born 19 days before he died. A colorful stained glass window in the Smith Memorial Church is a memorial to Lieutenant Smith.

Where did this gift come from?

Just this month, Amanda Maloney, a descendant of Lieutenant Smith's younger brother, Norman Butler Smith, contacted the Heritage Museum and donated a treasure trove of Smith family possessions. It includes family papers, letters, and photographs, as well as some of Lieutenant Smith's personal possessions: a top hat monogrammed ALS, a pocket watch, a pocket knife, an ornate silver baby cup engraved to Archie and given to him by his father's associates in the state house, and a set of luxurious monogrammed linen tablecloths and napkins. The



Emma Smith (Mrs. John B. Smith) with son Archibald

donation also includes some of John B. Smith's addresses and state papers.

An exhibition of the new Smith material will be displayed at the Heritage Museum, and also, even sooner, at the Fuller Public Library. Stand by for announcements.



Still Intriguing: Exhibit on "A Woman's Place . . ."

This Museum exhibit, featuring local women who left their kitchens for creative lives, includes Lotte Jacobi, Beatrice Trum Hunter, Amy Beach, Alice Knight and more. It's drawn a lot of visitors. One woman who just stopped by, concert pianist Virginia Eskin (right, in top photo pg.4), stayed to share info about Amy Beach and made a great contribution to the museum and the town with a commemorative bronze plaque. (See notes on annual meeting for details.)

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Lively Annual Meeting Well Attended

Beautiful music played at the annual meeting of the Hillsborough Historical Society in the Gilbert Room at the Fuller Public Library on Tuesday, October 29.

The composer? --- Amy Beach, our own world-famous symphonic genius, the dean of American women composers, who lived in town for years and taught some of our great-grandparents to sing in her Hillsborough Beach Clubs for children (postcard, pg. 3). Beach is also one of the local women featured in the current museum exhibit entitled "A Woman's Place." Come see it before it's gone.

The occasion? --- The presentation of a bronze plaque portraying Beach, presented to the town by Virginia Eskin, a Boston and New Hampshire resident, who is a versatile solo pianist and a fervent champion of the works of American women composers.

Present were more than 50 members of the Historical Society and the public. Eskin reminded them of Amy Beach's significance in world music, her natural talent (she wrote her first waltzes by the age of four), her symphonic accomplishments, and her importance as a symbol of women's creative power.

The plaque can be seen at the Hillsborough Heritage Museum at 5 Central Street. Its permanent location is still to be decided.

Also at the annual meeting, Laurie Jutzi, one of the hard-working volunteers behind last August's History Alive! followed with a slide show of some of the fun had on Hillsborough Center's hilltop. Looking forward to next summer, Jutzi and other committee members are already meeting to plan History Alive! for 2020, and welcome input and volunteers.



Membership in Hillsborough Historical Society:

Individual \$25 Family \$40 Student/ Senior \$15

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