

Winter Garden, a wood engraving by Herbert Waters, represented New Hampshire at the 1939 New York World's Fair. (NH State Library Collection. Photo by Gary Samson, UNH Instructional Services.)

New Hampshire Arts Sampler



This stamp, designed by Alice Cosgrove to honor the Old Man of the Mountains, was issued the year that President Dwight Eisenhower visited New Hampshire. (Photo courtesy of Mary Louise Hancock.)

In the nearly 200 years between the ratification of New Hampshire's Constitution and the legislation that created a state agency for the arts, artists and patrons, both private and public, created a rich, cultural legacy for the agency to inherit and build upon. The work of the artists — whether natives; transplants from other countries or states; summer, student, or year-round residents — ranks along with the state's natural wonders in making New Hampshire a desirable place to live, work, and play. Each of the state's six tourism regions, identified by mountains, lakes, seacoast, and river valleys, boasts destinations defined by the arts before 1965:

White Mountains Region. A visit to the White Mountains in 1828 by the landscape painter Thomas Cole sparked a whole school of painting. The Boston-born artist Benjamin Champney found the scenery in North Conway so beguiling that, in 1853, he purchased a residence near what's come to be known as Artists Falls. The rocky stream, soon dubbed Artist's Brook, fascinated Champney with its "sparkle, its amber color, and its gray rocks broken with patches of green moss." About 40 artists made up what came to be known as the White Mountain School. Their landscape paintings attracted many tourists to the region, leading to the construction of grand hotels. Some painters actually worked as artists-in-residence for these hotels. Besides the entertainment value of watching an artist at work, guests could purchase paintings of their own to take their memories home. The Crawford House Artist Studio of 1880 where Frank Shapleigh worked still stands, although the grand hotel that built it was demolished in 1977.

Dartmouth-Lake Sunapee Region. In 1885, the sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens visited the Cornish and Plainfield area in the Connecticut River valley. Encouraged by Charles Cotesworth Beaman, Jr., a successful New York lawyer and arts patron, he decided to purchase a house and land in Cornish. The site, known as Blowmeup Farm or Aspet, became a focal point for Boston and New York artists and patrons. Some of the better known artists were: illustrator Maxfield Parrish, architect Charles Platt, and landscape architect Ellen Shipman. The 40-year influx of visual artists, novelists, musicians, theater artists, poets, playwrights, critics, essayists, and arts patrons like President Wilson and his family helped the area move out of a sagging agricultural economy. As they refitted old farm houses, created commercial enterprises, supported town libraries, and fostered community theater events, the Cornish Colony improved the area's economy. Saint-Gaudens' home is now an historic site in the national park system. The Plainfield Town Hall with its Maxfield Parrish stage backdrop is another site that was recently restored and opened to the public.

Monadnock Region. In 1896, the composer Edward MacDowell and his wife Marian purchased property in Peterborough. Eleven years later, the MacDowell Colony was formally established, making it the oldest active artist colony in the nation. Offering temporary seclusion and concentrated intellectual exchange to creative artists, this special place has nurtured Colonists to create new music, painting, films, books of poetry, fiction or critical thought, plays, and more. Some artists like Aaron Copland and Thornton Wilder used the region's character directly in their work. All who come to MacDowell are inspired by the natural beauty of the site. Some artists settled in the Mt. Monadnock area permanently after their residencies. This culturally receptive atmosphere led to the early founding of other still active arts organizations like Peterborough Players (1933) and Sharon Arts Center (1947).

Seacoast Region. The poet Celia Thaxter brought the Isles of Shoals into the arts scene of post-Civil-War America with her home on Appledore Island. "She could make the musician play his best, the poets and scholars say their best...", John Albee wrote. Thaxter's list of summering artists included: John Greenleaf Whittier, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Robert Lowell, Child Hassam, Sarah Orne Jewett, and Harriet Beecher Stowe. In 1873, the publication of her book *Among the Isles of Shoals* recorded the

"Knowledge and learning, generally diffused through a community, being essential to the preservation of a free government...it shall (therefore) be the duty of the legislators and magistrates, in all future periods of this government, to cherish the interest of literature and the sciences...to encourage private and public institutions, rewards and immunities for the promotion of agriculture, arts, science..."

New Hampshire Constitution, Part 2, Article 83

Early Sketches



Augustus Saint-Gaudens models a portrait relief of Mrs. Grover Cleveland in 1887. (Photo courtesy of the Department of Interior, National Park Service, Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site, Cornish, NH.)

Respecting its 18th-century Constitution, New Hampshire's government has encouraged, supported, and promoted the arts in a number of ways. As early as 1780, a craftsman, wanting to establish a glass-making enterprise in Temple, successfully petitioned the New Hampshire legislature to hold a lottery to help him raise funds. In 1818, people celebrated the installation of the state's first public art — a six-and-a-half-foot eagle designed for the State House dome. The ceremony that marked the raising of the eagle included the drinking of toasts amid

loud cheers and artillery, including: “To the Fine Arts and Architecture” and to “... (the) arts and sciences...promoters and historians of (the nation's) glory.”

During the Great Depression of the '30s, government turned to the arts for their economic, as well as their inspirational, value. In 1931, anticipating some of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's measures, Governor John Winant, a Republican, used emergency funds to lend state support to Randolph and Mary Coolidge's home industries project in Sandwich, giving birth to the League of New Hampshire Arts and Crafts. “The League” soon received funding directly from the Legislature.

A few years later another governmental boost for the arts in New Hampshire came through Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration (WPA). In addition to artworks commissioned for public buildings, such as the mural, *New Hampshire Sugar Camp*, in the Wolfeboro post office, the WPA offered funds to allow artists “the freedom to experiment and to develop their art technically.” From 1935 - 1943, Omar T. Lassonde was in charge of New Hampshire's administration of this “Federal Arts Project.” Herbert Ogden Waters was one of the artists who, for an hourly wage, taught art classes and produced a minimum number of artworks each week. None of the artists had any restrictions placed on the content or style of the work they produced. Waters used this time to explore different print-making techniques, finally settling on a distinctive wood engraving style. Lassonde also organized a number of exhibitions featuring the works produced by New Hampshire artists. In a little over a year, over 20,000 people visited 23 of these Federal Art Project exhibitions held throughout the state. Two veterans of these traveling shows — painted panels by Margaret Masson featuring native New Hampshire wild flowers — now hang in the Concord Public Library.

Beginning in 1936, the WPA's Federal Theater Project brought touring vaudeville and dramatic shows to towns like Claremont, Rochester, and Franklin where they played in Opera Houses and Grange Halls as well as in places like the state reformatory for children in Concord. It also established a small theater in Manchester where different plays were performed each week. In the first year alone, Manchester audiences enjoyed 113 performances of such plays as *Your Uncle Dudley* and *The Scandal Monger*.

Another, less well-known, project from this time was the Index of American Design. This project employed artists to identify and record indigenous American designs found in the early decorative and folk arts of their states. In New Hampshire, artists recorded

character of New Hampshire's small, but significant, connection with the sea. The cosmopolitan charms of Portsmouth, the state's harbor city, also attracted many artists from 18th-century visiting portrait painters, such as John Singleton Copley, and furniture makers to the idealistic artists of the early 1960s who founded Theater-by-the-Sea.

Merrimack Region. In 1906 Robert Frost, hoping to earn a living for his family, moved to a farm in Derry, situated along the fertile Merrimack Valley corridor. As a farmer in an economy shifting into industrial gear, Frost failed, but his struggles with apple harvests, haying, and fence mending stayed with him as deceptively simple, rural metaphors for his life observations. The Derry farm where he lived is now a state park. Other New Hampshire sites on the Frost pilgrimage include his farm in Franconia, now a living museum for poetry, and two schools where he taught between poems, Pinkerton Academy and Plymouth State College. With industrial development along the Merrimack River, more urban cultural institutions appeared such as the Manchester Institute of Arts and Sciences (1898), the Nashua Symphony (1923), the Capitol Theater (1927), The Currier Gallery of Art (1929), and the Community Players of Concord (1949).

Lakes Region. In 1931, Francis Cleveland (son of President Grover Cleveland) with his wife and other actors began touring the area as the Barnstormers. After awhile, they converted an old feed store in Tamworth into a theater. Productions true to Cleveland's artistic vision still delight audiences in one of the oldest summer theaters in the nation. In 1952, the Spielers started a music camp on Melody Island in Lake Winnepesaukee. They brought a professional orchestra there to work with students and perform for the public (who arrived for the concerts by boat). A year later the orchestra incorporated as the NH Music Festival. Its concert home for the '90s is at the Silver Cultural Arts Center in Plymouth. The house in Silver Lake village where the poet e. e. cummings died in 1962, after spending a lifetime of summers there, marks another spot on New Hampshire's cultural map.

such things as cigar store Indians, blown glass, Shaker rugs, quilts, and carved wooden eagles.

When WPA funding ended in the early '40s, small-scale works produced for the Federal Arts Project, such as Waters' prints, were placed in the State Library for safe keeping. It was one of the ways that public support for the arts persisted. Even before the WPA funding stopped, one action that Omar Lassonde and other artists took to preserve a statewide presence for the arts was to establish the New Hampshire Art Association in 1940. The Art Association, although limited to the visual arts, led the way in recognizing the need and providing for an ongoing statewide network of support for artists.

Through the '40s, '50s, and early '60s, public funds contributed to the strength of the arts in New Hampshire in other indirect ways, too. For example, the state-funded university and colleges still attracted top quality artists to teach their students. One notable artist who settled into teaching at Plymouth State College (where, in 1911, poet Robert Frost also taught), was enamelist Karl Drerup, who immigrated to this country from Nazi Germany. The University of New Hampshire (UNH) was a major source of dramatic activity. Besides mounting award-winning performances by students, UNH, through its extension service, held annual contests for the best production of one-act plays in granges around the state.

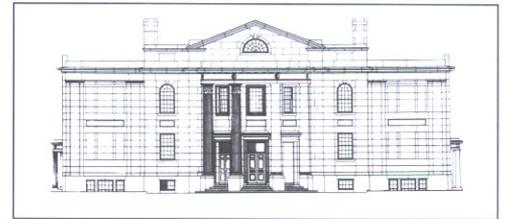
In the late '40s and '50s, the New Hampshire State Planning and Development Commission employed an official state artist, Alice Cosgrove, who designed, among other things, posters to promote tourism. In 1964 the state park system and the League, both recognizing the value of the arts to tourism, settled on Mt. Sunapee State Park as the permanent site for the League's "oldest in the nation" crafts fair.

Through the efforts of Dr. Alice Baumgarner, the Arts Consultant at the State Department of Education (DOE), the importance of arts education in public schools maintained a high profile during this time. In the early '60s, Dorothy Bartholomew, an artist from Newport, began negotiating with the State DOE to allow professional artists to teach in public schools without first getting formal teacher certification.

In these early, publicly funded efforts are the seeds for a single New Hampshire state agency devoted to the arts. Before 1960 only two states, Utah (1899) and Florida (1955) had such agencies. Then Governor Nelson Rockefeller, who as a member of the Eisenhower Administration had favorably reported on establishing a national arts agency, oversaw the creation of the New York State Council on the Arts. Momentum grew as people began to take the idea of a federal arts agency seriously and more states followed New York's lead. Thanks to a young legislator from Hanover, New Hampshire was one of the first.



Founder of the League of NH Craftsmen, Mrs. J. Randolph Coolidge, sells crafts at the 1939 Durham Craft Fair. (Photo courtesy of the League of NH Craftsmen.)



1898 architectural design for the Manchester Institute of Arts & Sciences.



State Artist Alice Cosgrove created this Fall Foliage tourist poster in 1958. (Photo courtesy of Mary Louise Hancock.)