

## KEENE — ARCHAEOLOGY AND EDUCATION AT THE WYMAN TAVERN

— Martha E. Pinello (Principal Investigator, Monadnock Archaeological Consulting, LLC)

Nestled between Wyman Way and Bruder Street on Main Street in Keene stands the newly painted Wyman Tavern, built in 1762. The tavern, the oldest building on Main Street, is the site of a new vision for an historic house museum. The Historical Society of Cheshire County seeks to transition the property from a period house museum into a Cultural Heritage Center with expanded educational programs, events, and activities.

To implement this vision, the society staff invited other professionals to assist them — architects, an architectural historian, board members, engineers, and archaeologists. With its own funding, the society sponsored an archaeological field school in 2013, led by Martha Pinello of Monadnock Archaeological Consulting, to determine the nature of the buried historical resources of the property. The society made a strategic decision to invite archaeologists to participate early in project planning. The financial commitment for field school and concern for cultural resources above and below the ground clearly demonstrated to funding groups and the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources (NHDHR) the society's commitment for the preservation of the resources.

The society sought and received private donations, grants from the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance, the New Hampshire Land and Community Heritage Investment Program, and the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation for the building restoration and continued archaeological field, laboratory and archival study. These funds were matched by the efforts of community volunteers and students from the High Mowing School of Wilton, who donated long hours excavating, processing artifacts, and analyzing the site. The volunteers included other archaeologists; retired teachers; middle, high school, and college students; and NHDHR staff members. Since 2013, volunteers have continued their efforts on Wyman Wednesdays.

The archaeological finds were dramatic: a brick-lined cistern constructed after 1798, field stone foundations and more than 500 different ceramic vessels dating to the late-18<sup>th</sup> and early-19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Yet, the most exciting part of this project is the challenge that the Historical Society of Cheshire County is embracing. Director of Education Jennifer Carroll invited two students to be guest curators for an exhibit, *A Thirst for Knowledge: Archaeology of the Wyman Tavern*. The society staff and archaeologists were in new roles — assisting in selecting artifacts for display, creating hands-on activities and the opening reception, and editing panels describing the students' perspectives of field school. The exhibit panels were shared at Fall Mountain High School in Langdon and have been exhibited at the Historical Society of Cheshire County free to the public. The student-curated exhibit panels are now available for presentations and exhibit at society events.

A new vision and the courage to collaborate, share, and let others join in telling their stories gives a glimpse of exciting possibilities for a Cheshire County historical site.

