



*League of New Hampshire Craftsmen display at the 1939 Durham Fair. Photo courtesy of the League of New Hampshire Craftsmen.*

## State of the Arts: 1929-1934

New Hampshire's economic slide began in the 1920s with factory strikes, wage cuts, and firings. The number of industrial workers in New Hampshire was cut in half between 1912 and 1933, and, from 1924 to 1933, 109 manufacturing plants were lost. Farmers fared no better. Between 1910 and 1930, the number of farms was cut in half and 1.7 million acres reverted to forest.

Traditional local relief was inadequate to meet the needs of so many jobless workers. Governor John G. Winant (1925-27; 1931-35) began to use state powers to alleviate the crisis and was one of the first to take advantage of federal WPA programs.

Seeking to revitalize the economy, Governor Winant anticipated the WPA's Federal Art Project with a state program. In 1931, in response to a proposal from Mrs. J. Randolph Coolidge and A. Cooper Ballantine, the governor established and funded the League of Arts and Crafts, making New Hampshire the first state in the nation to publicly support arts and crafts as tools for economic development.

The League organized cottage industries, such as rug hooking, blacksmithing, and woodcarving, into a cooperative to produce and market high quality crafts more effectively and to teach handcrafts to others. In 1934, the League established what continues as the oldest craft fair in the nation. Now, hundreds of craftspeople exhibit and sell at the annual League Fair, drawing over 50,000 visitors a year to New Hampshire and making a significant contribution to the state's economy.