

# The Tuck Library at the New Hampshire Historical Society

By Sherry L. Gould

[The New Hampshire Historical Society](#) was founded in 1823, making it the fifth oldest state historical society in the country. In the early 1900s, Edward Tuck (1842-1938), a successful international financier living in Paris, along with his wife Julia, donated funds to build a new library. Guy Lowell, who designed the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, was engaged to design the library for the Society and the classical building opened in 1911. The Society's [Tuck Library](#) in Concord, New Hampshire has the largest collection of New Hampshire historical information available in northern New England.

There are thousands of original source materials located in the Tuck Library, many of which can be found nowhere else. Researchers that depend primarily on genealogical information found on the Internet must realize that there is no substitute for the original records. Even those items that have been transcribed and published cannot be depended on for accuracy and completeness. And many of the library holdings may never be transcribed, let alone scanned and placed on the Internet!

## **Tuck Library Holdings**

The Tuck Library's printed collection contains about 50,000 items focusing on local history and genealogy including:

- About 5,000 genealogies of New England families, many unpublished
- About 2,000 state, county, and town histories from New Hampshire
- About 3,000 state, county, and town histories from around New England and New York
- About 500 compilations of cemetery and vital records from all parts of New Hampshire
- Printed vital records of other New England states, including about 300 volumes from Massachusetts
- Over 1,000 volumes of town reports from New Hampshire prior to 1940
- About 200 original volumes of New Hampshire church records
- Over 500 New Hampshire city directories, most published before 1950
- Over 800,000 pages of New Hampshire newspapers (1756-1900), both originals and microfilm
- Over 3,000 publications on American fine and decorative arts, architecture, and music
- Over 30,000 profiles of New Hampshire notables indexed from biographical dictionaries, histories, obituaries, etc.

The library's manuscript collection consists of about 1.5 million pages of manuscripts collected since 1823. These items cover differing aspects of the history of the people of New Hampshire and are dated from 1620 to the late twentieth century. The subjects covered include:

- Figures of national importance like Daniel Webster, Franklin Pierce, Mary Baker Eddy, John Parker Hale, and William E. Chandler
- Revolutionary War and Civil War figures like Gen. John Stark, Gen. John Sullivan, John Langdon, and John Badger Bachelder
- Political leaders and public officials like George H. Moses, Jacob H. Gallinger, Charles Doe, and Frank R. Kenison
- Local families like the Frenches of Chester, the Kimballs and Jenkins of Concord, and the Frosts and Sawyers of Dover and Portsmouth
- Everyday people like farmers, mill girls, physicians, soldiers, and children
- Artisans and craftsmen like masons, blacksmiths, shoemakers, tailors, coopers, and weavers
- Societies and clubs, groups devoted to music, anti-slavery, literature, and charity
- Businesses like banks, schools, retail stores, manufacturers, railroads, and hotels

Special collections include:

- More than 200,000 photographs of people, places, and events connected to New Hampshire from 1840 to the

present

- An extensive collection of maps from the early 1700s to the present, including state, county, and town maps, US Geological Survey topographical maps, railroad maps, and manuscript town lot plans
- Broadsides, ephemera, sound and video recordings, including greeting cards, business cards, tickets, menus, and "First-in-the-Nation" presidential primary memorabilia

### **Prepare for your Visit**

So let's say you have decided to make the trip to aid in your family search. As with any research trip it is recommended that the researcher make some preparations before arriving. The first matter is to review the areas of your research that you will want to expand. Prepare research aids for the trip, either on paper or stored on your laptop. (Tuck Library has modem ports and electrical outlets at each desk to aid the technologically savvy researcher.) Be sure to be outline specifically and concisely just what information you are looking for on each family.

Items to bring for your research trip include:

- Research aids discussed above
- Printouts of items to be reviewed - found in the online search
- Pencil, always best when working with old rare volumes to avoid permanent unintended marks
- Paper or laptop for taking notes
- Magnifying glass to aid in looking at difficult-to-read items

### **Search the Online Catalog *Before* your Visit**

Next you should search their [online catalog](#) ahead of time to see what information may be available to review upon your arrival. If you do not have access to the Internet, this search can be conducted on the terminals located at the library for just this purpose. Like most libraries, they have largely replaced their old card catalog with computer terminals - three in the main reading room and two in special collections. (Not that they will discard the cards. There are some very good reasons for not doing that.) If you wish access to any items in their special collections and you will be visiting on a Saturday, be sure to call ahead to ensure your item will be available, as the special collections staff is not available on that day.

It is useful to take an in-depth look at the library catalog. In 1996 the catalog became "fully" automated - meaning that they have not added any cards at all since then. With an automated catalog, you can perform many types of searches that are not possible with cards. Say you want to find some recent books on the history of New Hampshire. In the old catalog, you would look under "New Hampshire-History" as a subject and find 272 items. Then where could you go? You could decide to work in a smaller universe and look under "New Hampshire-History-Colonial Period," and see 123 items. The only arrangement available is alphabetical by author.

However, with the new catalog, you may utilize a function called "sort." This is really just a way of changing the arrangement of the items. If you sort by the date the item was published, you can instantly locate the most recent works on a subject. You can do the same with genealogies. A search for books on the Smith family reveals that there are sixty-eight in the library. However, let's say you researched Smith ten years ago in the library, so you only want the most recent works. Use "sort by date," and the most recent books appear at the beginning of the list of results.

The other way automated catalogs can be searched is by keywords. This is especially handy if you have an unusual word. Say your friend has told you about a book called, she thinks, "Grandmother's Stories, Tales of my Grandmother, or something like that - I can't quite recall." Use "grandmother" as a keyword and you will find just four items, which you can instantly call up on the screen. You can also use more than one keyword at a time. Say you want a book, and you think the title is "The Lost Family." With a card catalog, you would not find this book, because the title really is "The Family I Lost." "Lost" and "Family" are both pretty common words in titles, but search the two together, and you'll find the item quickly.

### **Librarians are your Friends!**

The library staff is an important resource in locating all appropriate materials at the library. Bill Copeley is the head

librarian of the New Hampshire Historical Society. He has held this position since the mid-1970s. His expertise in New Hampshire families and library holdings is invaluable. Technical services librarian Philip Abbott joined the library in 1993. Philip's specialty is in computers, his background is in history, and he has orchestrated the conversion of the card catalog to the electronic version used today. In addition to the paid staff, trained volunteers are available to assist library visitors. When requesting assistance it is important to keep the concise queries prepared for the trip in mind. Though the researcher may be fascinated with lots of details about the history of the family, the staff only needs to know enough to direct you to the appropriate area of the library. Long side trips are likely to confuse the matter at hand.

For those who cannot make a trip to the library, search services are available. You may request searches by phone, letter, or email. The first fifteen minutes are free and the fee for additional time is \$20.00 per hour. Photocopies are limited to copyright restrictions as well as condition of the original and number of pages requested. The cost is twenty cents for members and twenty-five cents for non-members per page. The Reprographic Services Department is equipped to reproduce historic maps, photographs, broadsides, and other images for you. If your request requires professional research, a list of New Hampshire researchers can be provided.

### **Location, Location, Location**

The Tuck Library is located at 30 Park Street in Concord, New Hampshire, 03301-6384. The phone number is (603)228-6688 and they can be reached by [email](mailto:library@nhhistory.org) at [library@nhhistory.org](mailto:library@nhhistory.org). The hours for the library are 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday. The Special Collections Department operates 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Tuesday through Friday. Visitors to the library who are not members of the New Hampshire Historical Society are charged a \$6.00 library user fee. There is no fee for members, full-time students, or visitors who only want to search the catalog terminals.

To get to the library take Interstate 93 to exit 14. Northbound - turn left at the light at the end of the exit ramp; Southbound - turn right at the light at the end of the exit ramp. Move into the left lane in order to take a left onto North Main Street. Take the next right onto Park Street (a one-way street that goes up the right side of the State House). At the stop sign, continue straight; the New Hampshire Historical Society's Tuck Library is the large granite building on the right. Metered parking is available on surrounding streets. Library researchers and visitors are encouraged to take advantage of free parking at the Museum of New Hampshire History just three blocks away.