

GHOST ARMY: COMBAT CON ARTISTS OF WORLD WAR II



Growing up in Marlborough, Keith McKane recalls a few of the stories his father shared with him and his two brothers about his time spent in World War II. “I remember him telling us that he would spend days building a wooden structure that looked like a row of trucks or tanks. Then [he would] cover it with a large canopy with leaves and colored materials to make it camouflaged. Then what they would do, after all of that effort, would be to take one shiny gas can and ‘accidentally’ leave it outside of that camouflaged structure.” Mickey McKane’s (1922-1990) war career was spent finding ways to trick the enemy into believing that they had spotted real army units in action. Meanwhile, the US army could strategize sneak attacks in other areas.

The Historical Society of Cheshire County’s summer exhibit is a special traveling show entitled *Ghost Army: Combat Con Artists of WWII*. Visitors will

top-secret “Ghost Army” unit was comprised of 82 officers and 1,023 men. The group was capable of simulating two whole divisions (approximately 30,000 men) by using visual, sonic and radio deception to fool German forces. Armed with nothing heavier than .50 caliber machine guns, the 23rd took part in 22 large-scale deceptions in Europe from Normandy to the Rhine River.

The exhibition will feature artwork and stories of some of the famous artists and engineers who participated in the Ghost Army. Some of these carefully selected artists included fashion designer Bill Blass, painter Ellsworth Kelly and photographer Art Kane. Local resident Mickey McKane served as well. Recruited as an art student at Pratt Institute, McKane joined the 603rd Camouflage Engineers with a specialty in color gradation and design.



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unhinged from the Army, McKane suffered a 50 year gag order, prohibiting him from making his contributions to the war effort public.

Following the war, McKane went on to have a career as an interior designer with works published in national magazines throughout the 1950s. He and his wife Priscilla raised a family in Marlborough before moving to Keene and running the Stage Coach Gift Shop on route 12 in Swanzey.

The exhibit has been traveling the country since the release of the 2013 documentary film and the demise of the gag order. Filmmaker Rick Beyer worked to create the Ghost Army Legacy project as a way of continuing to collect stories and artwork related to its special troops. "There are only 11 surviving veterans, and we want to get this done while they are still with us," said Rick Beyer, president of the Ghost Army Legacy Project. The exhibit was developed based on the growing collection.

The Ghost Army: Combat Con Artists of WWII will be on view at the Historical Society of Cheshire County headquarters at 246 Main Street in Keene, NH, from June 2 – September 2, 2021. Tickets can be purchased online and allow visitors a 30 minute time block in the exhibit. Space is limited to 20 people at a time. Tickets are \$7 for adults and \$5 for members of the Historical Society of Cheshire County. Youth under 18 and Blue Star families are free.

(Cover photo: Inflated Tank.. Photo courtesy of Ghost Army Legacy Project)



Mickey McKane

Photo courtesy of Keith McKane

Mountain as Muse: The Artists Who Painted Mount Monadnock

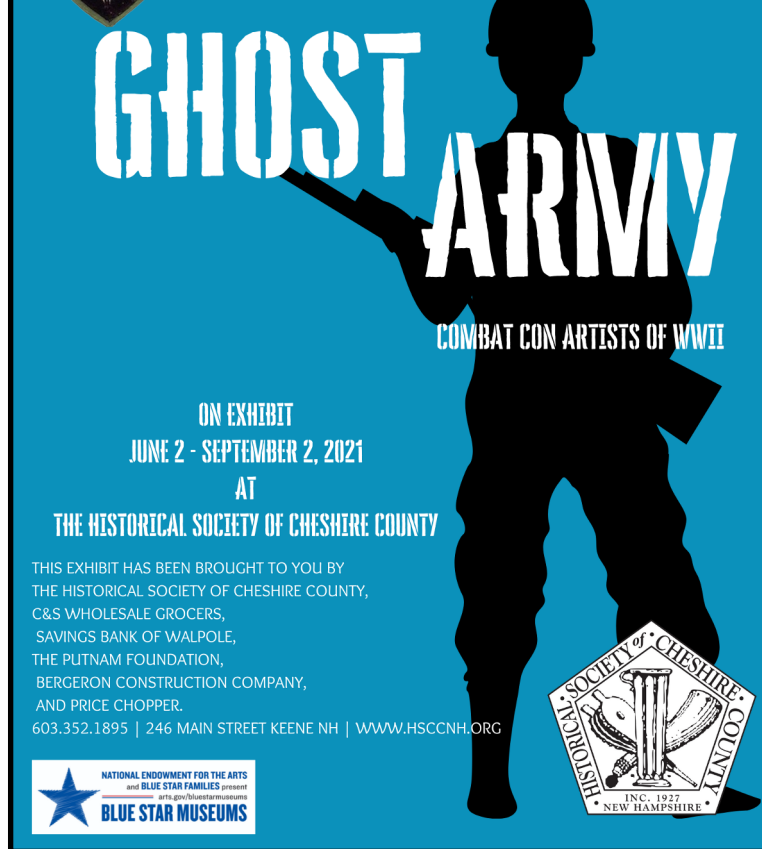
August 11 at 7:00 pm
Via Zoom

On August 11, 2021, Historical Society executive director Alan Rumrill will present a PowerPoint program entitled "Mountain as Muse: The Artists who Painted Mount Monadnock." The program will be co-sponsored by the Historical Society and the Harris Center for Conservation Education.



Mt. Monadnock with Cattle, by William Preston Phelps

The first published drawing of Monadnock was created by Charles T. Jackson in about 1840. Hundreds of subsequent artists were inspired by the mountain as a subject. Their work depicted the mountain in all seasons, from all angles, in a variety of styles, and told many different stories. The images created by these men and women have been enjoyed by countless viewers and served to advertise Mount Monadnock near and far. This presentation will share some of their stories and their



On Exhibit
June 2 through September 2, 2021
Historical Society Exhibit Hall

The staff at the Historical Society is happy to be open to the public again and to welcome a very special exhibit, “The Ghost Army: Combat Con Artists of World War II.”

The Ghost Army tells the true story of a secret U.S. Army unit of artists, whose job it was to trick the enemy during World War II. Local resident and Ghost Army veteran Mickey McKane will be featured.

Tickets for thirty minutes of time to view The Ghost Army exhibit are available on the Historical Society’s website, at www.hsccnh.org. Tickets are \$7 for adults and \$5 for members of the Historical Society of Cheshire County. Youth under 18 and Blue Star families are free.

A companion book, *The Ghost Army of World War II*, by Rick Beyer and Elizabeth Sayles, is available in the Historical Society’s Museum Store, for \$40.00.



Abbott Thayer as a boy. Photo courtesy of the New England Historical Society

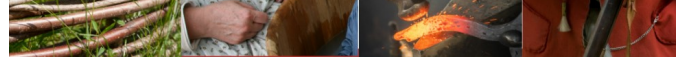
All is Fair in Art and War: Abbott Thayer Sets the Stage

Wednesday, July 28, 6:00 pm
Via Zoom

The life and work of Abbott Thayer (1849-1921)—Cheshire County resident, natural historian and a leading American artist in his day—act as prologue to the ideas underpinning the successes of the Ghost Army. Convinced that his perceptual skills as an artist led him to solve problems that scientists could not, he immersed himself in intense observation of Dublin’s woodlands and made revelations with far-reaching implications that landed on the desks of Churchill and Roosevelt during World War I. This richly illustrated presentation will take a deep dive into the lessons that this local artist, known around the world as the “inventor of camouflage,” learned from the local landscape and that forever changed the landscape of war.

April Claggett, who will present this talk, is an artist and art historian with a background in Environmental Studies. She lives in Dublin. She teaches art at Colby Sawyer College and Franklin Pierce University, and exhibits her

June 19, 2021 ~ Home Crafts 11:00 am – 2:00 pm



Learn more about the craftspeople who made everyday products 250 years ago. Emilia Whippie Prior and JJ Prior will portray 1770s siblings Mary and Abner Sanger of Keene. They will talk about getting dressed in the 18th century and the construction of clothing. Rebecca Whippie will demonstrate how to dye wool in a variety of colors for producing textiles like bedding and clothing. Janice Steinhagen will demonstrate cloth tape weaving. Erich Steinhagen will demonstrate making pottery on his pottery wheel.

July 17, 2021 ~ Metalsmithing 10:00 am – 3:00 pm

At the turn of the 19th century, specialized craftspeople like tinsmiths, blacksmiths, and pewterers played a vital role in the success of a community like Keene. Three metalsmiths will demonstrate their handicraft on the Wyman Tavern grounds: Larry Leonard, tinsmith (or “tinner”). Richard Wright, blacksmith. and Russ Spiess, pewtersmith.

August 28, 2021 ~ Rogers Rangers Garrison~ 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Robert Rogers’ Rangers began in 1755 as a company of provincial force in British North America. Rogers was very active in defense of the Colonies from the French. He chose to remain loyal to the Crown, during the American Rebellion. He was not trusted by the English, as he was American-born, he was not trusted by the “Rebels” as he remained a Loyalist. The Rangers will be in Garrison on the grounds of the Wyman Tavern, so no battles. They will demonstrate camp-life: accouterments for scouting, leatherwork, gun repair, etc. as well as mustering and practice drills.

These events are made possible in part by the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts and C & S Grocers. Tickets are available at www.hscen.org.

**State-of-the-art Technologies to Share
our Local History Stories**

We have often seen our public programs connect people with their own local history, provide relevance to today, and even transform people’s lives. When people couldn’t visit our museum during the pandemic, we pivoted from in-person to online programming, and we found that there is a great need in our society for providing historical context to current events. In many cases, what we found was an even larger audience base extending beyond Cheshire County.

Even as we transition back to in-person programming, we want to make our online presence permanent. This month, we are collaborating with **The Local Crowd Monadnock** to launch a crowdfunding initiative to acquire state-of-the-art technologies that will help us provide authentic educational experiences to anyone, anywhere.

For people who attend our programs in person, this will involve new high-quality projection and sound systems. And it will include the ability to broadcast our programs over the internet to those who can’t attend in person due to transportation or mobility issues, or distance from our facilities.

Our crowdfunding campaign can be found at monadnocklocal.org/tlc. Look for rewards such as a

Historical Society of Cheshire County mug accompanied by a pound of coffee from Prime Roast Coffee Company, or tickets to a Walldogs murals walking tour, or VIP tickets for the Wyman Tavern Brew Fest.

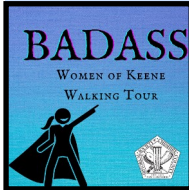
With your support, we can upgrade our audiovisual technologies and



tours and summer and fall in Keene. Register for tours on the Historical Society website at www.hscen.org. Each tour is \$10/person and is limited to 8 participants (youth under 18 are free.).

Walldogs Mural- Magical History Tours

In June 2019, over 200 Walldogs artists descended on the city of Keene to paint 16 historically-themed murals across its cityscape in a matter of 3 days. Let our tour guides share the story of that event and the stories behind the murals on this 2 hour walking tour in downtown Keene. Dates: June 6, June 9, June 12, June 13, July 17, July 18, July 24, August 8, August 14, August 28. See website for fall dates.

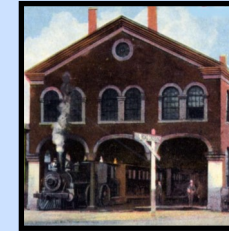


Badass Women of Keene Walking Tours

Delve into the history of the women's suffrage movement from a local perspective. This history-on-the-streets experience highlights empowered women from the community and shares one city's involvement with a national movement. Tours are 1 1/2 hours. Dates: July 10, September 19.

Railroad History Tour

How did the coming of the railroad impact New England communities like Keene. Walk the Cheshire Rail Trail through downtown Keene and learn about the arrival of Keene's first train in 1848. This 2 hour tour visits the sites where many industrial firms found success along the tracks in the downtown area. Dates: August 21, October 10.



The Historical Society website also has information about two self-guided walking tours in Keene: **A Walk Through Keene History**, an audio tour created by Franklin School 3rd graders, and a **Barry Faulkner tour**, about Keene's own world-renowned muralist. A third self-guided tour has been created about **Jonathan Daniels**. More information about the Jonathan Daniels tour is available on the Jonathan Daniels Center for Social Responsibility's website at <https://jonathandanielscenter.org>.



Wyman Tavern Brew Fest Goes Live Again on August 7

The Historical Society of Cheshire County is moving ahead with plans to host the **Wyman Tavern Brew Fest** in person again this year on the grounds of the Wyman Tavern Museum on **Saturday, August 7**. A VIP event will begin at noon, and general admission will run from 1:00 to 5:00 pm. VIPs get souvenir items and excellent access to meet the brewers before other visitors arrive. Tickets will be \$35 in advance, \$40 at the door, and \$60 for VIP tickets. Tickets are expected to be available on

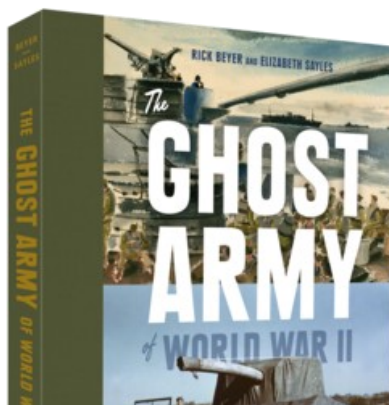
Eventbrite and the Historical Society's website by July 1.

The Wyman Tavern Brew Fest has earned a reputation over the years for featuring the finest craft brews, ciders, and distilled spirits of the Monadnock region, and for offering a backyard vibe that is hard to find at other brew fests. We are delighted to announce that some of New Hampshire's best brewers have already committed to attend: Brewers of Nye Hill Farm, Roxbury; Branch and Blade Brewing, Keene; Copper Cannon Distillery, West Chesterfield; Frogg Brewing, Marlborough; Granite Roots Brewery, Troy; Modestman Brewing, Keene; The Outlaw Brewing Company, Winchester; and West LA Beer Company, Swanzey. Expect to see even more brewers, as well as food trucks, live music, and cooking demonstrations by local chefs.

Many thanks to businesses who have already committed to sponsor the 2021 Wyman Tavern Brew Fest: Amoskeag Beverages, Bergeron Construction, Bulldog Design, Clark-Mortenson Insurance, Filtrine

Rusty Bastedo
 Catherine Behrens
 Larry and Tammy Benaquist
 Robert Bermudes
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 Sydney (CeeCee) Croteau Frechette
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 Gretchen Ziegler



THE MUSEUM STORE

AT THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CHESHIRE COUNTY

The Ghost Army of World War II, by Rick Beyer and Elizabeth Sayles, details the fascinating story of this top-secret WWII unit that used inflatable tanks, sound effects, and

Juliana Bergeron and Arto Leino
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 Barry and Carol Faulkner
 Charles Felix
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 Julie White
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 Martha and Peter Wright
 Susan M. Wright
 Anonymous

A life membership supports the Historical Society in perpetuity. The tax-deductible contribution goes into an endowment fund that is permanently restricted for operations. The income from the fund in effect covers your membership dues in perpetuity. Life members receive a lapel pin and an invitation to an exclusive event each year. Life memberships are \$1,000 for individuals and \$1,500 for couples. To become a life member, go to hscnh.org/support/memberships.

In Recognition of our 2021 Business Supporters — Thank you!
We are deeply grateful for the support we have received from about 50 businesses in the Monadnock region. You have been there when we needed you!

Major sponsors: Bergeron Construction, C&S Wholesale Grocers, Harrisville Designs, Keene Eye Care, Mascoma Bank, The Melanson Company, A Tecta America Company, Monadnock Broadcasting Group, Savings Bank of Walpole, Yankee Bottle Club

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Wed.: 9 am - 8 pm

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Collecting, Preserving, and Communicating the History of Cheshire County

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Calendar: Complete List of Events at www.hscnh.org

June 2021

Sat., June 19, 11:00 am to 2:00 pm. Wyman Tavern Grounds, 18th Century Living History Day: Home Crafts

July 2021

Sat., July 10, 10:00 am: Badass Women of Keene Walking Tour

Sat., July 17, 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. Wyman Tavern Grounds, 18th Century Living History Day: Metalsmithing

Wed., July 28, 6:00 pm, via Zoom, Program: “All’s Fair in Art and War: Abbott Thayer Sets the Stage”

August 2021

Sat., Aug. 7, 12:00 to 5:00 pm. Wyman Tavern Grounds, Wyman Tavern Brew Fest

Wed., Aug. 11, 7:00 pm, via Zoom, “Mountain as Muse: The Painters of Mount Monadnock”

Sat., Aug. 28, 10:00 am to 4:00 pm, Wyman Tavern Grounds, 18th Century Living History Day: Rogers’ Rangers Garrison.

Ongoing Events:

June 2 through September 2, Historical Society Exhibit Hall: Ghost Army Exhibit

Various Dates and Times: Walldogs Mural Tours (see page 5 or website for details: www.hscnh.org)

SAVE THE DATE

Auction of Historic Proportions

TO BENEFIT THE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CHESHIRE COUNTY

September 24, 2021 7:00PM

