In the modern world of varied and rapid transport, signs are so ubiquitous in everyday life that we seldom think much about them. However, signs of differing formats have been used for about 20,000 years and a study of signage can be used to illustrate the history and development of business, technology, and social institutions over thousands of years. The Historical Society’s winter feature exhibit, Signs of the Times, will include 70 historical signs from across the region.

Commercial advertising signs have been in use for thousands of years and often come to mind first when we consider the history and impact of signage. Business signs from ancient to modern times were created for the same purpose – to attract the attention of potential customers. Business signs can advertise a specific business or a specific product.

The Industrial Revolution resulted in more products being available on the market and more competition between manufacturers and between retail establishments where these products were sold. The rise of the factory system, making use of large buildings with large machinery and large numbers of employees, coincided with the development of the railroad in America. This combination of expanding output and inexpensive transportation meant that many products were sold in nationwide or international markets.

This expansion and competition forced manufacturers and retailers to use more and more signs to inform customers about their products or their sales outlets. Signs were posted on factories, on stores, and on roadsides to constantly encourage and remind consumers to purchase specific products. A “Gurnsey’s Beverages for Health” sign in the exhibit is a good example of this. This store sign could be used to advertise a Keene-made product in retail outlets wherever Gurnsey beverages were sold.

Manufacturers eventually began to offer exterior signage to retail stores that also included the name of the manufacturer’s product for all to see. Most people are familiar with the large Coca-Cola signs attached to country stores. These signs included the name of the store along with a large advertisement for Coca-Cola, which one could purchase inside the store. An early

Continued on page 2:
Signs (continued from page 1):

example of this type of dual advertising sign is a wooden signboard for the “F. J. Marvin” store in Alstead, NH that also included a large ad for a product that Marvin sold – “H.W. Johns’ Asbestos Liquid Paint.”

In addition to advertising signs, the Signs of the Times exhibit will include directional, regulatory, warning, greeting, and memorial signs. This collection of colorful and artistic signs and the history behind them will be on display at the Historical Society beginning in November. Please join us in the Putnam Exhibit Hall at the Society for the opening reception for Signs of the Times on November 1st, from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. Refreshments will be served.

F.J. Marvin’s store sign, Alstead, NH
Spotlight on our Student Volunteers and Interns

In addition to our faithful cadre of weekly and event volunteers, the Historical Society is blessed each year with a group of student volunteers and interns. Their interests are diverse, as well as the institutions from which they hail, but they come together at the Historical Society to help us further the mission of collecting, preserving and sharing the history of Cheshire County.

This fall, we have seven student interns and volunteers whom we would like to introduce to our members.

Alix Dumont is from Chesterfield, New Hampshire, and is a senior at Keene High School. They intend to major in International Relations and minor in Anthropology and their future goal is “to succeed in college.” They are helping to prepare materials and programs for the upcoming winter exhibit, Signs of the Times. In the photo, from a visit to Portland, Maine, they are holding a cannonball from the Revolutionary War.

Traci Hays-Bryant is a Graduate student in her final year at the University of North Florida. Her bachelor’s degree was in Art History and she hopes “to work in a museum in the future, or possibly with antiquarian books.” Her project at the Historical Society is organizing the data from the Recovering Black History project. Traci lives in Marlborough, New Hampshire.

Tim Hastings is a 2nd year PhD student at UMass-Amherst, studying Early American History and Public History. His future goal is “to teach in some capacity, whether at a university or in a public-facing setting.” Tim is working on the Recovering Black History project, writing historical context essays for the BIPOC Monadnock website. Tim adds, “I’ve enjoyed my work with you thus far and am looking forward to the future.”

Mary Meagher is a senior at Keene State College majoring in Secondary Education and History with a minor in Holocaust and Genocide Studies. Her future goal is “to work in a European archive and curate collections from around the world.” Her project at the Historical Society is to create a Revolutionary War guide to our collections, including biographies on the minutemen from Cheshire County. Mary is from New London, New Hampshire.

Olivia Whittier is a junior at Keene State College. She is an Education Major, with a minor in Professional Writing. Her project at the Historical Society is to create content for the BIPOC Monadnock website which will launch in early 2024. Olivia is from Gill, Massachusetts.

Grace Furlong is a Masters student in the Archives Management program at Keene State College. She was an intern at the Historical Society last year and returned to process the Keene Rotary Club collections as part of her course work at Keene State.

Gregory Lesvesque is a History Major at Keene State College. He also was an intern last year and returned as a volunteer to help with cataloging the artifacts collection.
Recovering Black History in the Monadnock Region: Reed/Brook/Lord Family Update

By Gail Golec

The *Recovering Black History in the Monadnock Region* research has been an exciting project from day one. And here it is, three years on and the excitement hasn’t stopped! Even as the work enters into the next phase, new discoveries shed light on aspects and details of our Black residents’ lives we never dreamed were knowable. And no family’s story speaks better to that, perhaps, than that of the Reed/Brooks/Lord family of Walpole and Alstead, New Hampshire, and Westminster, Vermont.

What we know about this large, extended, intergenerational family seems to center on a woman named Eunice Reed Brooks (1806-1866). Eunice was born in central Connecticut but was living in Westminster, Vermont with her mother, Susannah Reed, by 1820 (though they likely arrived earlier, alongside many of the white Anglo-American settlers who moved to Westminster from the same part of Connecticut.) Around 1821, Eunice had a son, Joseph J. Lord and then she had a second son, Elnathan G. Robertson around 1827; about that time, she married Montgomery Brooks (1800-1842) in Westminster. With Montgomery, Eunice had 5 more children: Thaddeus E. Brooks (1831-1897), Harriet E. Brooks Williams (1832-1879), William H. Brooks (1837-1904), James J. Brooks (1837-1897) and Martha E. Brooks Williams (1840-1876).

The initial research from this project had already taught us a lot about the Reed/Brooks/Lord family. They seemed to move frequently throughout the early 19th century: first living in Westminster, then Rockingham, Vermont, then Alstead and Walpole, New Hampshire, before settling back in Westminster, Vermont, for good by the 1860s. We learned more specific and personal details: while living in Walpole in the 1840s-50s, they worked in a shoe factory and lived off of Mill Road; two of Eunice and Montgomery’s sons, James and William, served in the famous 54th Massachusetts Colored Infantry during the Civil War; and Eunice (through both her mother and father) was of African American and Indigenous descent (as members of the Brother-ton Indians of central Connecticut).

And as if this wasn’t enough, recent finds in the town meeting minutes for Westminster, have added a whole new layer to the Reed/Brooks/Lord family: the men voted. The “Freemans Meeting” for the election of 1876 (where free male citizens would vote for a slate of state and federal offices including president, governor, lieutenant governor, county senators and town representatives) shows us that among the list of voters participating in this election were: “Geo. A. Lord; J. J. Lord; James J. Brooks; and Thad Brooks”. (J.J. Lord, James J. Brooks and Thad Brooks were all Eunice Reed Brooks’ children; Geo. A. Lord was J. J. Lord’s son/Eunice’s grandson). Research into these records has just started in earnest but as early as 1856, Thaddeus began voting in town, state and federal elections in Westminster, VT. In fact, he even got a few votes to be the town representative in the state assembly in 1866 and 1876.

![1876 Westminster Town Meeting Minutes voting. Note the members of the Brooks and Lords families who voted.](image-url)
Tavern Keepers gathered on October 5, 2023, at the Wyman Tavern and Bruder House for an evening of cider-pressing, apple crisp, a Wyman Tavern tour, and socializing. The Historical Society Staff and Board of Trustees are grateful for their generous support of our buildings and programs.

Tavern Keepers support the Historical Society facilities through a yearly donation of $350. To become a 2024 Tavern Keeper, please go to our website (www.hscnh.org) to donate, or contact us at 603-352-1895.

Thank you to our 2023 Tavern Keepers and to all of our donors, sponsors, volunteers and members.
We hope you will stay on our newsletter subscription list!

Members of the Historical Society of Cheshire County receive a subscription to the newsletter as one of the benefits of membership. Now is the time to join or renew your membership for 2024. Memberships can be purchased at levels from life membership ($1,000 for individuals or $1,500 for couples) to individuals ($50 for individuals or non-profits or $40 with the senior discount). In addition to the newsletter, members receive benefits such as discounts at the museum store, invitations to special events, and the satisfaction of being a part of what we do to connect people with their own local history stories. To join or renew, go to hscenh.org/support/membership/ or call 603-352-1895 or scan the QR code below.

Note: If you would like to receive the newsletter by email rather than “snail mail” please notify us at hscc@hsccnh.org. Current and past newsletters can also be viewed on the Historical Society’s website, www.hsccnh.org.

Leadership Circle 2023

Leadership Circle donors have given $1000 or more in the calendar year toward the Annual Fund or other programs of the Historical Society of Cheshire County.

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Holiday and Winter Closings at the Historical Society

The Historical Society will be closed on the following dates:

- Thursday and Friday, November 23 and 24, for the Thanksgiving Holiday
- Tuesday, December 26, for the Christmas Holiday
- Tuesday, January 2 through Friday, January 12 for yearly staff preparation and development.

We make every reasonable effort to maintain our regular hours during the winter months, but if the weather is particularly hazardous, we may open late or close early. Please exercise caution in bad weather. If you are planning a trip to our facility, please call ahead to make sure that the Historical Society is open (603-352-1895).

Westmoreland Road near Summit, from the collection of the Historical Society of Cheshire County
HOLIDAY SALE*
NOVEMBER 13 THROUGH
DECEMBER 22, 2023
*10% off entire purchase
*20% off for Society members

THE MUSEUM STORE
AT THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CHESHIRE COUNTY

246 MAIN STREET, KEENE, NH
Open Tues, Thurs & Fri 9-4 and Wed 9-8, and
the 1st & 3rd Saturday of the month 9-12 pm or online at www.hscnh.org

THE MUSEUM STORE

Cozy up this fall and winter with some Society apparel.
Order anytime online at www.hscnh.org
pick up at Beeze Tees in Keene or ship items to your home.
Calendar: Complete list of events and descriptions at www.hsccnh.org

November 2023

Wednesday, November 1, 4:00 to 6:00 pm, Exhibit Hall, “Signs of the Times” Exhibit Opening Reception

Monday, November 13 through Friday, December 22, Museum Store Holiday Sale (see page 7)

Thursday, November 23 and Friday, November 24, Historical Society Closed for Thanksgiving Holiday

December 2023

Tuesday, December 26, Historical Society closed for Christmas Holiday

January 2024

Tuesday, January 2 through Friday, January 12, Historical Society closed for Staff Preparation Days