The collections of the Historical Society of Cheshire County contain about 150 pieces of Stoddard glass, made in that town in the mid-1800s. The collections also include factory records, photographs, bottle molds, and other equipment used in the manufacturing process in Stoddard. The dark green and amber bottles produced in the town’s factories are now eagerly sought by bottle collectors, who are willing to pay between $50 and $50,000 for a single piece of Stoddard glass for their collection.

Five glass factories operated in this town in the northeast corner of Cheshire County during the 31 years between 1842 and 1873. During those years the factories turned out millions of common utilitarian bottles for the markets of the Northeast. The factories employed hundreds of Stoddard residents, playing an important economic role in this community of failing farms. Stoddard had readily available raw materials for the industry, including sand that could be melted to create the glass and forests of wood that was used to fire the glass furnaces. All the bottles were made by hand, blown through blowpipes using the lung power of the glassblowers. Glassblowing was a skilled profession. Many of the blowers in Stoddard were natives of Europe, having immigrated to the United States to find better jobs to support themselves and their families. Although the blowers were often well paid, this was difficult work. The men worked long hours under difficult conditions, spending their workday near the furnaces that were kept heated to about 1500 degrees to melt the sand.

In addition to the glassblowers, many others were employed in related occupations. Carrying-in boys worked in the same hot factories, moving bottles within the building. Other residents supplied the wood and sand for use in the factories. Box shops made wooden boxes to ship the glass, warehouse workers packed and shipped the bottles, and teamsters transported it by wagon to local and distant markets. Furthermore, numerous residents were employed weaving rattan or willow casings onto many of the larger bottles.

These factories made a wide variety of bottles for an assortment of products. Stoddard bottles were used to hold whiskey, beer, wine, medicine,
pickles, preserves, chemicals, stove blacking, ink, spring water, and more. Although the glassblowers could make several hundred bottles per day, it was the off-hand pieces that illustrated the skill and beauty of the glassmaker’s art. These were non-production pieces that were crafted from excess molten glass from the furnaces. Off-hand pieces included pitchers, cream and sugar sets, hats, rolling pins, goblets, bowls, and many other forms.

The production of the glass companies suggests the impact of the firms on the town of Stoddard. In 1850 the Granite Glass Works had eight furnaces and 38 employees, who were paid a total of $8,000 for the year. Raw materials cost $1950 and fuel, in the form of 2100 cords of wood, cost $2600. The company made 500,000 bottles that were sold for $16,230, or about 3½ cents each. Granite Glass Works made a profit of $3600 in 1850. During the same year the South Stoddard Glass Manufacturing Company turned out 750,000 bottles that were sold for a total of $26,000.

To learn more about this important local industry, visit the Historical Society to view an exhibit of Stoddard whiskey flasks currently displayed in the society’s lobby.

Granite Glass Works billhead, 1854

Finding Home in New Hampshire: Then & Now

Finding Home in New Hampshire: Then and Now
Exhibit open until December 16th.

Tavern Keepers

The Tavern Keepers are supporting the Historical Society’s most important artifact, the Wyman Tavern (1762). Tavern Keepers contribute $300 specifically towards the operation and stewardship of the Wyman Tavern. With gratitude, we list below the Tavern Keepers in 2022 and 2023.

Thomas and Susan Abert
Harry and Angeline Ackerman
Eleanor Ball
Carol and Lewis Barnes
Wayne and Becky Barton
Rusty Bastedo
Larry and Tammy Benaquist
Jay and Lisa Blanchard/Keene Monument
Chris J. Booras and Mary J. Booras
Megan Burke Kidder
Homer and Lucy Bradley
Charles and Nancy Butterfield
Deirdre Chretien and Dominique Perkins
Mike and Betty Christiansen
Rick and Betsey Church
John Cooney
Irene and David Davis
Mary Delisle and George Foskett
Jay and Toni Dinkel, Jr.
Dick and Pat Dugger
Sybil Dupuis
Alfrieda and Robert Englund
Rhonda Fowler
Joslin Kimball Frank
David Frechette and
Sydney (CeeCee) Croteau Frechette
Mike Giacomo and Rachel Eschle
Tom and Elke Hanna
Roger and Nancy Hansen
Richard High and Joyce Clark (in memoriam)
J. Robert and Joanne Hof
John and Lynda Hunt
Martha Hunt
Jeff and Lori-Anne Ingram
Carl and Ruth Jacobs
Cornelia, Peter, and Catherine Jenness
Jane and Gregory Johnson
Connie Joyce
Jay and Cheryl Kahn
Jane Kennedy
Claire Kluskens
Paul and Suzi Krautmann
Walter and Barbara Lacey
Susan Landers Gilbert and Sarah Handford
Howard and Elaine Lane
Steven and Jane Larmon
Marion LeFrancois
Karen and Bob Lyle
Jacqueline Lyon
Daniel and Michal Mariaschin
Tim and Ann McCann
John and Susan McGinnis
Brian and Lois Merry
Monadnock Garden Club
Susan and Gary Murata
Lee and Paula Page
Mike Pappas, Pappas Contracting
Chris and Gaynelle Pratt
Jay and Jean Prior
Thomas and Barbara Putnam
June Rawlings
Dr. and Mrs. R. Winfield Raynor
Michael Remy
Marilyn Wyman Riley
Jim and Sharon Roussaniere
Art and Lynn Simington
Edwin “Smookey” and Sharron Smith
David and Jane Stabler
Robert Stephenson
Jeannie Sy
Richard Talbot
Kimball and Maria Temple
Rob and Lianne Therrien
Anthony and Barbara Tremblay
Larry, Madeline, and Ryan Ullrich
Paul and Nancy Vincent
Ken and Pam Walton
Phil and Janet Warren
Bob and Joanne Webster
Jan Weekes
Rebecca and Wayne Whippie
Francis Williams
Jeanne Williams
Peter and Martha Wright
Robert and Lisa Wyman
Margaret (Gretchen) Ziegler

Stoddard Glass (Continued from Page 1):
Holiday Closures at the Historical Society of Cheshire County

The Historical Society will be closed on Friday, November 11th for the Veterans’ Day holiday. The Society will also be closed on Thursday and Friday, November 24th and 25th, for the Thanksgiving Day holiday.

On Saturday, December 3, the Exhibit Hall only will be closed for a private event. The Museum Store and Library will still be open from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm.

Regular hours will be observed from December 27th to December 30th; however, the Historical Society will be closed from January 3rd through January 13th for yearly staff preparation time.

Leadership Circle

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. Thank you to our Leadership Circle donors.

Robert and Deborah Aiber
Jay and Lisa Blanchard
George and Ann Colony
John and Pat Colony
John Cooney
Richard and Patricia Dugger
Dayton and Dianne Duncan
Joslin Kimball Frank
David Frechette and Sydney (CeeCee)
Croteau Frechette
Mike Giacomo and Rachel Eschle
Peter, Cornelia, and Catherine Jenness
Elizabeth and Peter Hansel
Carl and Ruth Jacobs
Richard and Judith Kalich
Walter and Barbara Lacey
Steven and Jane Larmon
Peter and Sharon Mangan
Daniel and Michal Marioschin
Lee and Paula Page
Norma Jeanne Pinney
Chris and Gaynelle Pratt
Jim and Judy Putnam
Brian and Reinette Reilly
Tracy Roettiger
Judy and John Rogers
James and Sharon Rousmaniere
JC and Josephine Russell
Valerie and Lawrence Santilli
Katherine Snow
Jeanne Sy
Rob and Lianne Therrien
JB and Lauren Wright

October events honor Tavern Keepers, Life Members, and Leadership Circle Donors

Tavern Keepers gathered at the Bruder House and Wyman Tavern on October 8, for Soups and S’mores, but the balmy weather meant that no sweaters were needed.

(Top by Aaron Lipsky)

Richard Lederer entertained Life Members and Leadership Circle donors on October 20, at the Historical Society.

(Photography by Peter Kelleher)
Covered Bridges of the Monadnock Region
November 30, 2022, 6:00 pm
246 Main Street, Keene

Nestled in the southwest corner of the state, the Monadnock Region is home to seven covered bridges. Kim Varney Chandler will present the rich histories of Winchester's two bridges: the Ashuelot and the Coombs, as well as Swanzey's four covered bridges: the Thompson, Slate, Carlton, and Sawyer's Crossing.

Kim Varney Chandler is the author of Covered Bridges of New Hampshire, an engaging, illustrated history of the remaining covered bridges in the Granite State. The 288-page, full color, softcover book features the author's own current day photography of all sixty-four covered bridges, paired with historical photos in a then-and-now theme. Kim partnered with bridgewrights, timber framers, bridge engineers, historical societies, town offices, libraries, state and national organizations, and community members to compile extensive histories of each bridge.

Kim is a researcher, amateur genealogist, photographer, bird watcher, and dog lover. She is a two-time graduate of the University of New Hampshire. Kim works as a high school counselor at Fall Mountain Regional High School and commits an inordinate amount of time to volunteer work for a variety of national organizations, and community members to compile extensive histories of each bridge.

Wednesday, December 14, 7:00 pm
246 Main Street, Keene

Italian Neighborhood Community History Project

On Wednesday, December 14, at 7:00 pm, in the Exhibit Hall, the Historical Society of Cheshire County will host the Keene Heritage Commission for a presentation on the history of Keene's Italian neighborhood, sourced from residents past and present. The presentation will explore the stories and history gathered as well as the methodology behind the undertaking. This project was funded in part by New Hampshire Division of Historic Resources, CLG (Certified Local Government) Grant funds.

For more information on the Italian Neighborhood History Project, go to: https://comdvlpt.wixsite.com/keeneheritage/italian-neighborhood-history-project