Steamboats on the Connecticut River

We usually picture Mark Twain and colorful tales of the Mississippi River when we think about steamboats in this country, but the Connecticut River was also navigated by steamers for more than a century. The 1820s and the 1830s were the golden age of steam navigation on the portion of the river that borders on the Monadnock Region.

Canals were built around dams and rapids, including one of the earliest canals in the country at Bellows Falls, Vermont. Boats would steam up to that point and beyond, carrying products and passengers. The first boat passed through the canal in 1802. During 1828, more than 100 boats, carrying more than 7000 tons of freight, passed through the waterway.

One of the most colorful local steamboat stories involved a boat called the "William Hall." The Connecticut River Valley Company built the steamer in 1831. The "William Hall" was a stern wheeler, probably 70 or 80 feet long. The new steamer made its maiden voyage up the river in the summer of 1831. On July 15, Keene's "New Hampshire Sentinel" reported that the "neat and powerful boat" had ascended the Enfield Falls and the Willimansett Falls near Springfield, Massachusetts, without difficulty.

The locks of the Bellows Falls Canal were only about 20 feet wide, however, and when the "William Hall" arrived there, it simply would not fit into the canal. The captain was undaunted. He docked his boat at the lower
Steamboats (cont. from page 1):

landing at Bellows Falls and hired eight teams of oxen. The oxen pulled the boat out of the river, up Mill Street, through the Square, and up Canal Street to the upper landing. The steamboat must have been an amazing sight rolling through the streets of the village.

It was launched at the upper landing and continued north. Farther upriver at Hartland, Vermont, the steamer once again was too wide for the locks. The "William Hall" turned around and sailed back down the river. As before, the oxen hauled the boat through the streets of Bellows Falls and it started the voyage back to Hartford.

The "William Hall" never went through Bellows Falls again and it wasn't long before all the steamers stopped coming to the village. The railroad arrived in the region in the late 1840s and the upper Connecticut River steamboat era soon came to a close.

To learn more about the history of the Connecticut River, please attend "The Connecticut: New England’s Great River," on Wednesday, September 13th at 6:30 pm. Details are below.

The Connecticut: New England's Great River

Wednesday, September 13, 6:30 pm

A Zoom Presentation

The largest river in New England rises in a small beaver pond near the Canadian border and flows over 400 miles through four states, falling 2,670 feet to the sea through America's only watershed-based national fish and wildlife refuge. Join us at the Historical Society on Wednesday, September 13, at 6:30 pm, to hear Adair Mulligan explore the great river’s history and natural beauty through the seasons and among the communities that have sprung up along its banks. Much more than a travelogue, this presentation explores the many issues involved in managing the health of this major river, and how citizens from all walks of life have created a vision for its future.

This presentation is supported by the New Hampshire Humanities. To register for this free program, go to www.hsccnh.org or call the Historical Society at 603-352-1895.
Alan Rumrill Award of Excellence Watch Party

On Friday, September 8, Alan Rumrill, Executive Director of the Historical Society of Cheshire County, will receive an Award of Excellence from the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH). Unfortunately for most of us, the award will be given at the AASLH Annual Conference in Boise, Idaho, so we won’t be able to be there in person to witness this honor. But, thanks to modern technology, the event will be live-streamed via Facebook Live. Join us for an “Award of Excellence Watch Party” in the Exhibit Hall of the Historical Society, beginning at 1:30 pm, on September 8, 2023.

You are invited to bring refreshments to share and to celebrate Alan’s success. Please RSVP by Tuesday, September 5, if you wish to attend. Call 603-352-1895 or email hscc@hsccnh.org. You can also watch in the comfort of your own home. Information for viewing on Facebook is available on our website (www.hsccnh.org) and on the Historical Society of Cheshire County Facebook page.

Newsletter available online and by email

To date, 59 members of the Historical Society of Cheshire County have signed up to receive their newsletters by email only. If you would like to receive your newsletter by email, please contact Kathy Schillemat at hscc@hsccnh.org. Current and past newsletters can also be viewed on the Historical Society’s website, www.hsccnh.org.
The Historical Society will host an event in appreciation for the 2023 Tavern Keepers on Thursday, October 5, 2023. Each Tavern Keeper donates $350 to provide for upkeep, operations, and programming at the Wyman Tavern as well as other facilities of the Historical Society of Cheshire County. To become a Tavern Keeper, go to hsccnh.org/support/donate or send a check to P.O. Box 803, Keene, NH 03431.

2023 Tavern Keepers
August 9, 2023

Thomas and Susan Abert
Eleanor Ball
Carol and Lewis Barnes
Rebecca and Wayne Barton
P. Russel Bastedo
Larry and Tammy Benaquist
Juliana Bergeron and Arto Leino
Jay and Lisa Blanchard
Chris J. and Mary J. Booras
Peter and Maria Bradshaw
Charles and Nancy Butterfield
Mike and Betty Christiansen
Richard and Betsy Church
John Cooney
Carolyn Davis
David and Irene Davis
Mary Delisle and George Foskett
Jay & Toni Dinkel
Richard and Patricia Dugger
Sybil W. Dupuis
Tom Durnford and Lisa Clouet
Robert and Alfrida Englund
Barry and Carol Faulkner
Rhonda and Luke Fowler
Joslin Kimball Frank
David Frechette and Sydney Croteau Frechette
Joshua and Katie Gallagher
Phyllis Gove & Steven Casad
Tom and Elke Hanna
Nancy and Roger Hansen
Joyce and Don Healy
Richard High
J. Robert and Joanne Hof
John and Jean Hoffman
John & Lynda Hunt
Carl and Ruth Jacobs
Cornelia and Catherine Jenness
Connie Joyce
Jay and Cheryl Kahn
Jane Kennedy
Megan Burke Kidder
Claire Kluskens
Paul & Suzy Krautmann
Walter & Barbara Lacey
Howard and Elaine Lane
Jane Lane
Jane and Steve Laron
Bob and Karen Lyle
Jacqueline Lyon
Jan Manwaring
Daniel and Michal Mariaschin
Tim & Ann McCann
Susan and John McGinnis
Brian and Lois K. Merry
Monadnock Garden Club
Susan and Gary Murata
Paula and Lee Page
Dominic Perkins and Dierdre Chretien
Norma Jeanne Pinney
Chris and Gaynelle Pratt
Thomas and Barbara Putnam
Raette Trombly
Win and Joan Rayner
Carolyn Rieth
Marilyn W. Riley
James Robertson
Marie Royce Ruffle
Dorothy Saks
Valerie and Lawrence Santilli
Edwin & Sharron Smith
Katherine Snow
David and Jane Stauber
Rob Stephenson
Jeanie Sy
Richard Talbot
Georgia Tasoulas
Kimball and Maria Temple
Rob and Lianne Therrien
Anthony & Barbara Tremblay
Larry & Madeline Ullrich
Ken and Pam Walton
Philip and Janet Warren
Jan Weekes
Rebecca and Wayne Whipple
Roger Wilken
Peter and Martha Wright
Bob and Lisa Wyman
Margaret S. “Gretchen” Ziegler

In Memoriam:
The following people passed away in 2022 and 2023 and were remembered by friends and family through contributions to the Historical Society of Cheshire County. We honor their lives.

Dorothy Arwe
Barbara Hurd Cowdrey
Wayne S. Fulton
Elizabeth Sadoques Mason
Veronica G. Pecora
Jane Reynolds
Jim Rousmaniere
Rosanne Snow

Attention
Wyman Tavern Keepers
Save The Date
October 5, 2023
4:30 PM
SEARCHING FOR A VENUE TO HOST YOUR NEXT EVENT?

Call or email for pricing and availability
Historical Society of Cheshire County
246 Main Street | Keene NH
Kathy at 603.352.1895 or email hssc@hscchnh.org
www.hscchnh.org

OUR FACILITIES ARE CONVENIENTLY LOCATED ON MAIN STREET IN KEENE NH WITH AMPLE ON-SITE FREE PARKING.
Historical Society Guided Tours

The Historical Society of Cheshire County now offers guided tours of the Walldogs Murals, Railroad History, Badass Women of Keene, Domestic Servants of Keene, the History of the Smallpox Epidemic and the Wyman Tavern. During the summer months, public tours are scheduled each month. Private tours can also be arranged by appointment.

**Walldogs Walking Tours:** Join us for a Magical History Walking Tour. Hear the stories behind many of the beautiful Walldogs murals in downtown Keene. Learn some of the amazing but true stories of the people, places and businesses that have contributed to Keene’s rich history and character.

**Scheduled Public Tours:** Saturday, September 2, and Saturday, October 7, at 10:00 am

**Domestic Servants Walking Tours:** Join historian and Historical Society of Cheshire County storyteller Becky Barton for a leisurely 1-hour stroll along the shaded sidewalks of South Main Street. Explore the true stories of people who contributed to the prosperity of the families they worked for in Keene. Who were the domestic servants? How long did they work? Which families benefited from their labors?

**Scheduled Public Tour:** Sunday, September 10, at 2:00 pm

**Smallpox, the Colonial Pandemic Guided Tours:** Learn about the effect that smallpox had on Keene residents in the 18th century with historian and storyteller Becky Barton. Visitors will take a guided tour of the Wyman Tavern Museum on South Main street and discover what steps were taken to keep the community safe, prior to knowledge about germ theory and transmission. This is a one-hour guided tour in a historic house museum.

**Scheduled Public Tour:** Thursday, September 21, at 1:00 pm

**Badass Women of Keene Walking Tours:** In 1920, women around the country won the right to vote with the passage of the 19th amendment. *The Badass Women of Keene* walking tour delves into the history of that occasion 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. The Badass Women of Keene walking tour provides visitors with an opportunity to link local history to national events, and to think critically about the history of women’s suffrage in all of its complexity.

No public tours are scheduled at this time. Call or email to arrange a private tour.

**Railroad History Walking Tours:** How did the coming of the railroad impact New England communities like Keene, NH? Walk the Cheshire Rail Trail through downtown Keene with Historical Society of Cheshire County executive director Alan Rumrill. Learn about the arrival of Keene’s first train in 1848. Visit the sites where many industrial firms found success along the tracks in the downtown area.

No public tours are scheduled at this time. Call or email to arrange a private tour.

The cost for each tour is $10/person. Private group tours can be arranged by calling 603-352-1895 or emailing Jenna Carroll at jcarroll@hsccnh.org. For more information or to register for a scheduled tour, visit our website: www.hsccnh.org.
Candlelight Open House
at the Wyman Tavern
Friday, September 29
7:00 to 9:00 pm

Experience the ambiance of the 1770s by candlelight on Friday, September 29th. Between 7:00 and 9:00 pm, the Historical Society of Cheshire County’s Wyman Tavern will be aglow with lanterns. Re-enactors from the Hinsdale Garrison will be on hand to play games of chance, offer cooking demonstrations, and fill the air with music. Local storyteller Greg Pratt will also share ghost stories during this free family-friendly event. No tickets required.

The Wyman Tavern Museum is located at 339 Main Street, Keene. Parking is available in the first 9 spaces along Bruder Street as well as along Main Street.

For more information, call 603-352-1895 or visit the Historical Society’s website at www.hsccnh.org.

The Case of the Robbery of the Savings Bank of Walpole

In July 2023, fifteen students embarked on a mission, delving into the case of The Robbery of the Savings Bank of Walpole in 1864. The Historical Society’s History Detective Camp is offered to 8-11 year olds each summer in partnership with Keene State College’s Kids on Campus program. This year junior detectives learned about the infamous gentleman thief, Max Shinburn, and his life of crime. Chesterfield sixth grade teacher, Mark Haley, worked as the Society’s curriculum consultant, taking Shinburn’s famous bank robbery and turning it into a series of lessons. The result was a week-long caper full of clues, allegedly left by Shinburn himself.

Each day students engaged with archival documents and with members of the community to solve puzzles that helped them locate Shinburn’s long lost safecracking tools. They created a codex wheel to turn clues into codes that could open a variety of locked boxes. They duplicated skeleton keys, read historic maps, learned about picking locks, and interviewed Savings Bank of Walpole staff as well as Lieutenant Nugent of the Keene Police Department. By Friday, the detectives had found the safecracking tools which they turned over to the Historical Society for safekeeping, followed by a filmed press conference with reporters. The Historical Society of Cheshire County wishes to thank the detectives for their hard work as well as those who sponsored the camp: Savings Bank of Walpole, Mascoma Bank, Keene Eyecare, and Gem Graphics.

Learn the true tale of the famed gentleman bank robber Max Shinburn and many other of Alan Rumrill’s Monadnock Moments on the Historical Society of Cheshire County’s YouTube Channel @historicalsocietyofcheshir1162.

Photos: Top: the locked chests containing letters and clues from Max Shinburn; middle: duplicated skeleton key; bottom: Dominic Perkins, HSCC Board President and Senior Vice President of the Savings Bank of Walpole, helps detectives find clues at the Marlborough Street Branch of the Saving Bank of Walpole.
Calendar: Complete list of events and descriptions at www.hsccnh.org

**September 2023**

- **Saturday, September 2**, **Exhibit Hall, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm**, Last day to view “Hello Mother Hello Father” Summer Camp Exhibit
- **Saturday, September 2**, **10:00 am**, Walking Tour: Walldogs Murals (see page 6)
- **Friday, September 8**, **1:30 pm**, **Exhibit Hall**, AASLH Award of Excellence Watch Party (see page 3)
- **Sunday, September 10**, **2:00 pm**, **starting at Bruder House**, Walking Tour: Domestic Servants (see page 6)
- **Wednesday, September 13**, **6:30 pm**, **Via Zoom Only**, Program: The Connecticut: New England’s Great River (see page 2)
- **Thursday, September 21**, **1:00 pm**, **Wyman Tavern**, Guided Tour: Smallpox, the Colonial Epidemic (see page 6)

**October 2023**

- **Friday, September 29**, **Wyman Tavern and Bruder House, 7:00 to 9:00 pm**, Candlelight Open House (see page 7)
- **Thursday, October 5**, **Bruder House, 4:30 pm**, Tavern Keeper Appreciation Event (see page 4)
- **Thursday, October 12**, **Place TBD, 9:30 am to 12:00 pm**, Monadnock Historical Societies Roundtable Meeting
- **Saturday, October 7**, **10:00 am**, Walking Tour: Walldogs Murals (see page 6)
- **Sunday, October 8**, **Keene High School, 9:00 am to 2:00 pm**, Yankee Bottle Club 54th Annual Keene Bottle Show and Sale