

Foreword

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO this November New Hampshire's "Temple of History" was dedicated. For a small state sometimes overshadowed by its larger and wealthier counterparts, this remarkable edifice was a departure from the usual pattern: in it New Hampshire had the best of its kind anywhere. Inextricably linked with the story of this structure are the individuals responsible for its creation. Their backgrounds and circumstances varied widely, but all shared the conviction that history's rightful place is at the center of our civic life. The grandeur of the building has been ever since a fitting symbol of the place and power of history in shaping our identity.

The story of how the New Hampshire Historical Society's landmark headquarters and library building came into being, occurring over a period of ten years, is worthy of a stage drama. The leading man is Edward Tuck, a wealthy New Hampshire native and expatriate living in France. Evidence of Tuck's beneficence toward his home state abounds, most notably at his alma maters, Phillips Exeter Academy and Dartmouth College, and—fortunately for us—at the New Hampshire Historical Society.

Working with Tuck was a fascinating cast of supporting actors, beginning with the poignant figure

of Society President William Todd, the initial advocate for an expanded home for the Society, who died six years before its cornerstone was laid. Guy Lowell, designer of the renowned Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, was chosen as architect; Benjamin Ames Kimball and Timothy Sullivan, building committee chair and project superintendent respectively, oversaw the construction; and prominent sculptor Daniel Chester French created the building's monumental portal sculpture. The endeavor was marked by transatlantic voyages, labor discord, disputes among the principals, a corporate near-bankruptcy, and the death of the Society's president, all set against the backdrop of the extraordinary generosity of Tuck, the artistic genius of Lowell and French, and the dogged determination and sheer stamina of Kimball and Sullivan. Tuck's wife, Julia, was a quiet force, always believing that the building should be "nothing but the best" in every respect.

At center stage, surrounded by the supporting human cast, stands the building itself. Of classical design, with perfect symmetry, constructed of Concord's enduring Rattlesnake Hill granite, decorated with exquisite Siena marble, and completed with meticulous attention to detail, the



The doors at 30 Park Street were opened for the first time one hundred years ago on November 23, 1911.



New Hampshire Historical Society leaders and invited guests seen outside the rear entrance of the newly expanded state house as they headed for the dedication ceremony about to take place at the Society's new building. Prior to the dedication, a reception was held in the governor's office, "at which Governor Bass and Mr. and Mrs. Edward Tuck received [w]hile strains of music issued from an ante-room" (Concord Daily Patriot, November 23, 1911).

structure is a testament to the aspirations of its creators. We are fortunate that Tuck apparently heeded the admonition of fellow philanthropist Andrew Carnegie: "The millionaire should not figure out how cheaply [a] structure may be built, but how perfect it can be made."

The one hundredth anniversary of the building's dedication is being commemorated in several ways, including this special issue of *Historical New Hampshire* (in both print and audio versions). The Society has joined with New Hampshire Public Television and the New Hampshire Humanities Council to also produce a documentary called *Tuck's Gift*, which will premiere at the Society on November 19, 2011, almost one hundred years to the day after the dedication ceremony. Additional public showings will occur over the ensuing weeks. The documentary will be aired on New Hampshire Public Television and is also available online. Rounding out the commemorative offerings is an exhibition drawn from the Society's extensive collections, called "Icons

of History—Objects That Define New Hampshire," on view at the Society's galleries during the centennial events. A selection of objects from the exhibition can be seen online.

This centennial celebration comes at the right time. Now more than ever our nation *needs* history. An observer of the apparently dysfunctional state of affairs in our current political life might ask, "Where is the common ground?" The answer to that question is to be found in our shared history. Historical institutions—the ideas they represent and the values they hold—are our national touchstones. The New Hampshire Historical Society and other places like it are essential to our continued national health. Tuck and his collaborators understood this and made their understanding manifest in choosing to create a place of such symbolic power.

WILLIAM H. DUNLAP

Executive Director

New Hampshire Historical Society

Tuck's Gift

This multi-faceted program of the New Hampshire Historical Society, presented in documentary, printed, audio, and online versions in collaboration with the New Hampshire Humanities Council and New Hampshire Public Television, is generously supported by the following organizations:

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