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## NEWS FROM THE NEW HAMPSHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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### PHOTOGRAPHS AVAILABLE

**CONTACT:** Wes Balla at 603-856-0605 or Brenda French at 603-856-0607

### Historical Society Exhibition Showcases New Hampshire Quilts

CONCORD, NH—With their beautiful colors and extraordinary patterns, quilts are both works of art and records of our lives. They are mirrors of the times in which they were made, and personal expressions of the people who made and used them.

A new exhibition of quilts, patterns, and quilt-related objects is on view at the New Hampshire Historical Society's museum, located at 6 Eagle Square, Concord. *Pieced Together: New Hampshire Quilts and Their Stories* is drawn from the Society's rich and varied collection of quilts and quilt-related items. The exhibition is organized into a colorful display by quilt types, patterns, designs, fabrics, and function. Domestic history, community history, moving West, the Civil War, frugality, memories, family tradition, textile manufacturing, and regional characteristics are among the themes and subjects explored through the stories of individual quilts and their makers.



The exhibition features an array of historic quilts and quilt-related items from the 18<sup>th</sup> through 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and more than 50 quilt patterns documented and preserved by Ellen E. Webster. Born in Hebron, New Hampshire, in 1867, Ellen Emeline Hardy learned quilting from her mother Sarah Diantha Fox Hardy. As she was growing up Ellen made about a dozen quilts for use by family and friends. After studying at schools in New Hampshire and Massachusetts, she taught school before marrying Clarendon P. Webster and moving to Franklin Falls, New Hampshire, in 1893.

Well educated and curious, Ellen Webster found outlets for her time and talents as a community leader, ornithologist, musician, writer, and lecturer. After the death of her husband in 1918, Ellen Webster returned to college, obtaining two degrees in religious education from Boston University by 1926. After retirement from teaching at Wheaton College, she lectured to women's clubs, churches, and community groups about quilts, religion, travel, and birds.

Influenced by the writings of popular quilt historians of the 1930s published in books and magazines, Ellen Webster created a collection of charts documenting quilt patterns for use in lectures. She found most of the patterns in New Hampshire and Massachusetts, but also collected them during travels across the rest of New England, New York, Illinois, South Dakota, and Virginia. Visiting small towns she sought them out in antique shops, fairs, and women's club lectures. "Charts" of quilt designs were made by Webster to save the patterns of antique quilts that she had seen personally. Ellen produced 162 quilt designs and notes. She cut pieces of cloth, tissue paper, and wallpaper, carefully gluing them to cardboard. Used as illustrations during lectures, she made pencil notes on the sheets about the provenance of the pattern, occasionally adding an interesting story about the quilt or its owner. The quilter's name, current owner, state of residence, block size, overall size, and sashing width were often included. Creative and inspired by her work, she also made some original quilt designs. Gladys Webster, her daughter, who inherited the charts, died in 1968, and her family donated the collection to the Society.

The exhibition, *Pieced Together: New Hampshire Quilts and Their Stories*, is sponsored by Merrimack County Savings Bank and Northeast Delta Dental. It will be on view through January 10, 2011.

The museum is open Tuesday through Saturday, 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday from noon to 5 p.m. Admission is \$5.50 for adults; \$4.50 for seniors; \$3 for children 6-18, with a family maximum of \$17. Children under 6 and members of the New Hampshire Historical Society are admitted free.

Founded in 1823, the New Hampshire Historical Society is the independent nonprofit that saves, preserves, and shares New Hampshire history. The Society serves thousands of children and adults each year through its museum, research library, educational programs, and award-winning publications. The Society is not a state-funded agency. All of its programs and services are made possible by membership dues and contributions. For more information visit [nhhistory.org](http://nhhistory.org) or call 603-228-6688.

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### **Calendar listing**

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