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NEWS FROM THE NEW HAMPSHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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PHOTOGRAPHS AVAILABLE

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NEW HAMPSHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY CELEBRATES CENTENNIAL OF ITS LANDMARK BUILDING; DOCUMENTARY FILM CHRONICLES THE CREATION OF NEW HAMPSHIRE'S TEMPLE OF HISTORY

CONCORD, NH· November 2011 marks the 100th anniversary of the New Hampshire Historical Society's landmark headquarters and library building at 30 Park Street in Concord. This milestone will be commemorated through the new documentary film, *Tuck's Gift*, produced in collaboration with New Hampshire Public Television and with support from Merrimack County Savings Bank and the New Hampshire Humanities Council. A public showing of the film and a birthday party for the building will be held at the Society on Saturday, November 26, at 2 p.m. Admission is free.

Inextricably linked with the story of this structure are the individuals responsible for its creation more than 100 years ago. 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 New Hampshire's identity.

The story of how the New Hampshire Historical Society's building came into being, occurring over a period of 10 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 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 structure is a testament to the aspirations of its creators. 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 documentary film *Tuck's Gift* is part of a multi-faceted centennial celebration program that includes a special issue of *Historical New Hampshire* (in both print and audio versions) and an exhibition drawn from the Society's extensive museum and library collections called *Icons of History: Objects that Define New Hampshire*. In addition to the public showing at the Society, *Tuck's Gift* will be aired on New Hampshire Public Television on November 21-24, and November 28-29, 2011. Check nhptv.org or your local listings for program times. All components of the centennial celebration program, including the film, print and audio publications, and the exhibition will be available online at nhhistory.org and nhptv.org.

Tuck's Gift is made possible through funding by Merrimack County Savings Bank; the New Hampshire Humanities Council; the McIninch Foundation; Rath, Young & Pignatelli, P.C.; New Hampshire Antiques Dealers Association; Swenson Granite Company; Unitil; Capital Offset Company; the Gertrude Couch Trust; the H.L. Turner Group; and the Ann DeNicola Trust.

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 its programs and services are made possible by membership dues and contributions. For more information visit nhhistory.org or call 603-228-6688.

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Calendar listing

A 100th anniversary birthday party for the New Hampshire Historical Society's landmark building and a public showing of the documentary film *Tuck's Gift*, chronicling the building's creation, will be held at the New Hampshire Historical Society, 30 Park Street, Concord, on Saturday, November 26, 2011, at 2 p.m. Admission is free. For more information visit nhhistory.org or call 603-228-6688.