

## Letter from the President

Dear Members and Friends,

2020 has been anything but normal. Here at the New London Historical Society we greatly missed seeing summer visitors and were disappointed having to cancel all of our planned summer events and programs. The safety of our volunteers and community were our primary concern, but that does not mean the decisions were made lightly.

As COVID-19 continues to present challenges, the Board of Directors is committed to finding creative ways to keep the New London Historical Society relevant to our community. We are working on educational programs that might allow students to learn about 19th century history remotely. And for those who are learning remotely and/or homeschooling, we hope to provide an opportunity for small field trips or walking tours when weather permits spring 2021.

Often out of great challenges, innovative alternatives are born. The NLHS Board of Directors is ever mindful of continuing to preserve our special history and collection while using this opportunity to consider new ways to interact with our community.

Be well,

Rosanna Eubank-Long

NLHS Board of Director President

## 2020-21 Membership Drive is Still Underway

As a member of the NLHS you are

- ◆ Supporting the preservation of our community
- ◆ Providing cultural and educational opportunities for all ages
- ◆ Collaborating with neighbors, friends and local businesses to enrich the New London community

Membership benefits include

- ◆ Unlimited FREE admission to the Village
- ◆ Two guest passes to the Village
- ◆ Discounts on tickets to special events, building rentals and gift items.



## 2020 Business Partners

Ausbon Sargent Land Preservation Trust

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Better Homes and Gardens RE -  
The Milestone Team

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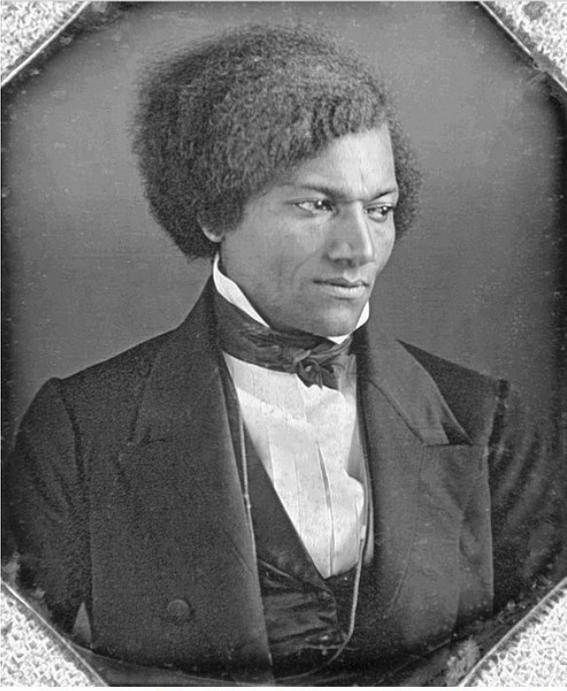
Pelletieri Associates, Inc.

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Custom Window Treatments

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## Frederick Douglass Slept Here, *Maybe*.



*The abolitionist in his twenties, how he may have looked when he came here*

So much of New Hampshire's Black history has been unearthed by scholars in recent decades that you may wonder, as I do, about New London's early Black residents. I won't keep you in suspense—there were none. At least, per Jim Perkins, Town Archivist, no record has yet been found of any permanent Black residents of New London prior to the 20th century.

But census records, then as now, were not definitive. The life of many of New England's first Black residents, especially in rural areas, was one of toil in isolation. Whether enslaved or free, many were restricted to menial work as domestics or farm hands, and were often the only non-white person in the household, if not the entire community. The 1850 census lists only two "Free Colored" for all of Carroll County. So few in number, Black residents may have been missed by the census, not included on tax rolls, or simply left out of town histories by white authors. All we can say with certainty is that, if New London had early permanent Black residents, they weren't counted.

The first transient Black resident of New London to appear in the historical record is Minister Edward Mitchell, biracial, bilingual son of a French man and Martiniquan woman, who once taught school in New London during a break from college. Incidentally, he was the first Black person to be admitted to (1824) and graduate from (1828) Dartmouth (the next Ivy to graduate a Black person, Harvard, did not do so until 1870. Go NH!) Mitchell was hired to minister by the Baptist Church in Sutton, and resided there briefly, but he likely

lived in New London while he taught here. The frugal custom of the time was for an auction to be held and for the visiting teacher to be boarded at the home of the lowest bidder, or simply "boarded round", each student's family playing host for a week or two at a time. The poor man!

A keyword search of Myra Lord's 1899 history of our town reveals two tantalizing mentions of visits to the homes of New London abolitionists by none other than renowned orator and social reformer, Frederick Douglass. One has Hugh B. Clough "bringing Frederick Douglass to his home" in 1842, the other states that lawyer Walter P. Flanders "...was in active sympathy with the Anti-Slavery movement, receiving as personal guests Frederick Douglass, George Latimer, and others."

Until recently, Jim Perkins was not convinced either visit ever happened. Other abolitionists certainly spoke here, and such was the fervor over the issue of anti-slavery among certain members of the First Baptist Church that it caused a schism, resulting in, per Lord, "...the exclusion of the troublous elements." But Douglass spent the entire year of 1842 engaged in speaking in New York and Massachusetts, so it is unlikely he popped in for a visit then. (Per Douglass in 1842, "There were no railroads in New Hampshire in those days...") So much for the Clough claim.

In re-examining his speaking itineraries, however, Jim Perkins learned that Douglass did in fact visit New London, Bradford, and Henniker, sometime between February 12 and 19, 1844. The recently transcribed Micajah Morgan journal—Morgan, whose family gave its name to Morgan Hill, was a 19th c. farmer and deacon, and served the town variously as road surveyor, juror, and hogreeve (look it up!)—contains a reference to an antislavery meeting Morgan attended on February 15, 1844. Bingo! The speakers' names were not noted, but it does seem very likely that Douglass was among them, that he spoke in New London, even if he didn't spend the night.

What might Douglass's experience have been like? Let's hope New London played better host to him than did another part of the county two years earlier. Per "Colorphobia in New Hampshire," a section of Douglass's 1881 autobiography, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, he received a "cool reception" in Pittsfield in 1842. When he arrived from Massachusetts, after riding on top of the stage, "...for no colored person could be allowed inside," his host did not come downstairs to take tea with him. He did not even offer him a ride in his phaeton to Douglass's all-day engagement at the town hall the next day, which he himself attended. After speaking till noon on Sunday, Douglass was not invited to lunch. At three he was refused a meal with the n-word at a local hotel, so

he sat alone and hungry in the graveyard under a drizzle, while people in their “comfortable homes around” watched him as a child would “a bear prowling about town.” At least in death, Douglass reflected, “...there was an end to all distinctions between rich and poor, white and colored, high and low.”

The story ended on a happier, if puzzling note when, after his 7:30 pm speech, another family asked for the privilege of hosting Douglass, and the two wives argued over who would take him home that night. Douglass agreed to stay with his original host, mainly because that is where he left his carpet-bag, and found “...the atmosphere wondrously and most agreeably changed.” A testament, certainly, to the power of Douglass’s oratory over racist ideas, or as he delicately put it, “in healing diseases of that type.” Reading this shameful account, white New Englanders might be tempted to pat ourselves on the back for how far we’ve come, but today’s headlines demur. Judging by the large turnout at the Black Lives Matter rally on Main Street this summer, the ideas of Frederick Douglass are as relevant today as ever. “No man can put a chain about the ankle of his fellow man without at last finding the other end fastened about his own neck.” — Frederick Douglass ...

For more about Black History in New Hampshire, check out Portsmouth’s [blackheritagetrailnh.org](http://blackheritagetrailnh.org). Frederick Douglass’s autobiography and Myra Lord’s history are searchable at [archive.org](http://archive.org).

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## Thinking about a Year-End Gift to NLHS?

As 2020 comes to an end, some of you may be thinking of making year-end charitable gifts to non-profits such as the New London Historical Society. There are two relatively simple and tax-advantaged ways to do this:

The first way is not new but is very advantageous for people who have stock investments with substantial capital gains. You may be one of the fortunate ones who have benefitted from the huge run-up in the stock market the last few years. If so, consider giving some of that appreciated stock to NLHS or another charity of your choice. If you were to sell that stock, you would owe capital gains tax on the difference between its cost and its current value. However, if appreciated stock is given directly to a charity, it is valued at its then fair market value and no capital gains tax will be owed as a result of the transfer. Gifts of appreciated property may be particularly advantageous in 2020, because it is likely that under a new administration the capital gains tax rates will increase, perhaps substantially, so that sales of appreciated property will incur a greater tax after this year.



Second, consider making a Charitable IRA Rollover directly from your IRA account. To take advantage of this benefit:

- You, the IRA owner, must be at least 70 ½ on the date of the gift,
- The transfer must go directly from your IRA to a qualified charitable organization and
- The gift must be completed (delivered to the charity) by December 31 of this year.

You can transfer up to \$100,000 to charities using this method. Like all IRA withdrawals, charitable gift withdrawals count as part of your annual minimum distribution requirement. However, they don’t count as charitable deductions for purposes of the income tax limits on charitable deductions, leaving you freer to make additional charitable gifts from non-IRA assets if you wish; and they are not considered IRA withdrawals subject to income tax. The Charitable IRA Rollover can also be used by taxpayers who don’t itemize deductions.

The Charitable IRA Rollover offers an excellent, income-tax advantaged way for an IRA owner to make a substantial charitable gift, particularly if he or she does not need all of the income the minimum distribution rules require the IRA owner to withdraw, and at the same time to provide much-needed support to charities such as the New London Historical Society.

A word about NLHS’s financial situation: For a number of years, NLHS has benefitted from rentals of our property for weddings and other private events. That revenue has been a substantial part of our income. In the past two years, the cachet of barn weddings has dimmed, and our wedding revenue has decreased markedly. On top of that, COVID-19 has forced us to cancel all of this year’s planned programs, further reducing our income. The NLHS Board would be most grateful for any donations you might make as this year winds down. We look forward, with you, to a much better 2021.

## New London Historical Society

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## Update on Raise the Roof

Your generous donations have allowed us to complete the historically correct red cedar roof on the School House during this last year. Recently, siding, trim work and painting have been done on the Country Store. Work has also begun on the Violin Shop and the Fire House this summer and fall. Yet, the necessary upkeep and maintenance on our extensive collection of historic buildings is never ending.

We are fortunate to have a core group of volunteers called the "Tuesday gang." They meet on Tuesday mornings and tackle the needed painting, siding and general carpentry work. They also help keep the grounds looking pristine. Even so, during these difficult times, the exterior work has been able to continue in a safe and productive manner.

The "gang" could always use extra hands and of course, would always welcome additional volunteers next spring.

The town of New London is very fortunate to have such a unique grouping of historical buildings which contain numerous artifacts and antiques from the past. It is important to keep history alive and preserve our valuable asset. With your financial support, we can be assured that our campus will be enjoyed and cherished for many generations to come.

