

Report for the Annual Meeting of the Hanover Historical Society
October 20, 2026

Webster Cottage Museum:

The Cottage was open Wednesday afternoons from May 27-Oct. 7. Many thanks to the docents who gave their time and welcomed visitors to Webster Cottage! Our docents this year included: Gary Barton, Susan Boyle, Sarah Buckey, Alan Callaway, and Betsy McClain.

This has been a challenging year for HHS President Cyndy Bittinger, who has served as president for the last twelve years. Although Cyndy has been battling cancer, she has still guided the organization, and with the help of many volunteers, the HHS continued to host programs and visitors. About 90 Ray School students and teachers toured Webster Cottage this year, along with an additional 62 visitors who were offered tours by our volunteer docents. We welcomed a wide range of visitors, including Dartmouth students and their parents and grandparents, history buffs, newcomers to Hanover, and long-time residents. We look forward to welcoming even more visitors next year!

In the spring, volunteers helped prepare the Cottage for visitors before opening:

Safety Review: In April, Betsy Gonnerman, Tim Bent, Tabitha Sabky, and Sarah Buckey met at the Cottage with Josh Merriam, Hanover fire marshall, and Ryan Borkowski, Hanover building inspector. Improvements made following their suggestions include:

- *Tim Bent installed a new fire/carbon monoxide detector in the basement.

- *At our request, Dartmouth removed the boards that prevented the back door in the kitchen from opening.

- *Both the front door and the back kitchen door were marked with exit signs.

Ryan also suggested we make a ramp available at the entrance so the cottage will be more accessible to mobility-impaired visitors; we will work to get a ramp from Dartmouth.

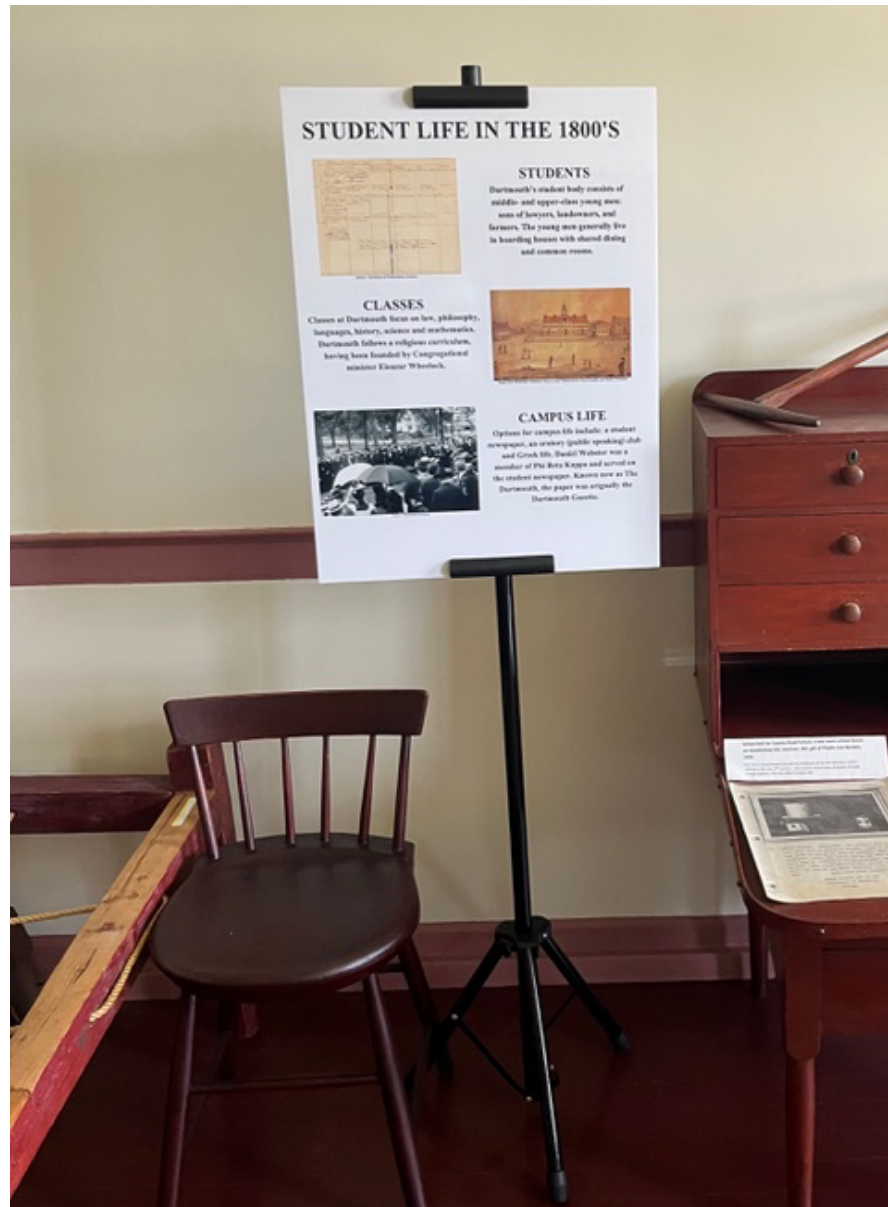


Tree Planted: Tim Bent arranged for a new crabapple tree to be planted in the front yard of Webster Cottage. The new tree replaced a previous tree, given in honor of HHS former President Sylvia Nelson, that Dartmouth had removed because of disease. The new crabapple was paid for by HHS and installed by Dartmouth.

Clean up: Tabitha Sabky organized a clean-up meeting at the Cottage to put away extra chairs and arrange and straighten displays; Betsy Gonnerman organized a housekeeping service to tidy the Cottage first at the beginning of the year and again in the middle of the season.

New Exhibit: Alan Callaway and Tabitha Sabky received new articles from the Hood to exhibit, including Revolutionary War era items to celebrate America's 250th. Tabitha wrote descriptive cards for each item and made room for the glass display cases in the kitchen.

New Posters: Sara Linsay, HHS summer intern, Tabitha Sabky, and Sarah Buckey made three new posters for the museum, highlighting and explaining the building's architecture, Daniel Webster's life, and student life at Dartmouth.



Educational Programs:

Again this year, the Hanover Historical Society worked with World Story Exchange's Scott Miller and Lindsay McClure Miller to offer programs for Ray School fourth and fifth graders. The World Story Exchange programs were made possible by a grant from Dorothy Byrne.

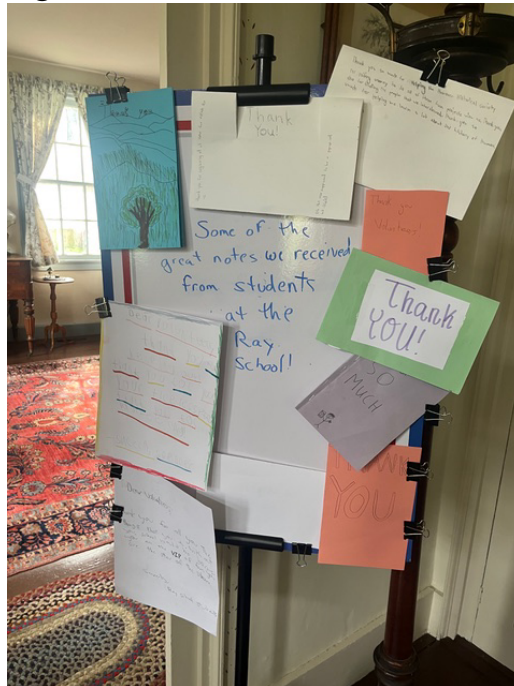
Fourth Grade:

World Story Exchange hosted study tours of Webster Cottage for each of the five Ray School fourth grade classes. Each class met with Scott and Lindsay three times. The first session was an introduction to the history of Hanover. For the second session, the students walked from the Ray School to Webster Cottage, where they toured the cottage, and each child chose an object to sketch and study. For the third class, the students wrote about their experiences.

Fifth Grade:

For the fifth grade, 83 students learned skills so they could interview selected elders who grew up in Hanover 50 – 70 years ago. Betsy Gonnerman found several community members who had grown up in Hanover to interview, and she herself was interviewed along with Betsy Hutchins, Margaret Carpenter, and Sandy Chivers.

Both the fourth and fifth graders were enthusiastic learners!

**High School Scholarship:**

Every year, the Hanover Historical Society awards a scholarship to a Hanover High senior or seniors who excel in social studies. On behalf of HHS, this year Betsy Gonnerman presented the \$1,000 Social Studies Scholarship to senior Jacobi Marotti.

Community Programs:

Along with the Hanover Conservancy, HHS co-sponsored, “East of Moose Mountain,” a talk at Howe Library on August 3rd by architectural historian Andrew Cushing. The program explored the history of the Rogers-Pressey House and the Tunis Brook Mill Site.

Along with Howe Library, HHS will be co-sponsoring a talk by Margo Burns, an associate editor of *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt* (Cambridge Press, 2009) before the HHS annual meeting on October 20. Burns’s talk, “The Capital Crime of Witchcraft,” is offered through New Hampshire Humanities.

Celebrating the 250th:

To help celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Tabitha Sabky, Sara Linsay, Alan Callaway, and Sarah Buckey worked with Howe librarians to help provide research on historic Hanover sites. Librarians Sam Milnes and Jared Jenisch put together a fun historical scavenger hunt in honor of the 250th, and Webster Cottage is featured in the hunt. Although the scavenger hunt is now over, the map is available for free for visitors at the Cottage.



Pictured: Our HHS tent with Frankie Eikel, high school volunteer.

Fourth of July celebrations:

Gary Barton and Alan Callaway marched in the Hanover 4th of July parade with the new HHS banner, designed by Tabitha Sabky. We had lots of people stop by the HHS table on the Green after the parade, where children made 4th of July wreaths, with the help of Cyndy Bittinger's granddaughter, Frankie Eikel. Grownups tested their knowledge of history with a fun quiz, and everyone was offered a free copy of the Declaration of Independence to take home.

Halloween:

Last year at Hanover's "Trick or Treat on Allen Street," HHS members in costume handed out Halloween pencils and candy and spread the word about the historical society. This year, we'll be celebrating with the community again at "Trick or Treat on Allen Street" on Friday, October 30th, 5-6:30 pm. We'll be offering candy for trick-or-treaters and information on HHS for parents. Volunteers are welcome!

Curator's Report by Alan Callaway:

The Society acquired several small items during the year which have been added for display in the Webster Cottage. Most of the items have been placed in display cases that were provided on loan from the Norwich, VT, Historical Society.

One year ago, we received a private donation of what was reported to be a snuff box owned by Daniel Webster. We obtained a deed of gift for this item because of its potential value. It's in the desk in the Webster room of the cottage.

More recently, our historical society received a number of small items granted to us from the Hood Museum in Hanover. These included powder horns and pouches, a wood and leather canteen, military buttons, insignia and belt plates. Although the items didn't date quite back to the Revolutionary War, we felt some of the things such as the powder horns and the canteen, were very similar to what would have been very important gear to soldiers in the Revolution. Another interesting item received was called a "hackle" which was a large combing device used in processing flax for linen production. The hackle fits in nicely with the spinning wheels we already have in the cottage. Some of the discussions we have as docents involve talk about textiles and their role in the domestic, and later, the national economy. Any items relating to textiles are therefore very important to us.

Another recent gift donation was an author signed book by Alice Van Leer Carrick. It is her best-known book, "The Next to Nothing House." She and her husband were the last people to live in the Webster Cottage before it was made into a museum by the Hanover Historical Society.

During the past year, we have made some additions, deletions and rearrangements in the Webster Cottage. The Society might want to consider new photos of the rooms of the cottage to provide an updated virtual tour of the cottage on our web page.

We look forward to the coming year. We welcome gifts, especially if they can fit into the Cottage for display.