



New Hampshire Writers' Project Celebrates Twenty Years

By Carla Gericke
Program Manager, NHWP

This October, the New Hampshire Writers' Project (NHWP) launches its 20th anniversary celebrations by bringing a three-day literary festival to Portsmouth as part of the New Hampshire Writers' Trail. On October 23, 24, and 25, 2008, the Portsmouth Literary Festival will showcase the vibrant literary community of New Hampshire's Seacoast region with readings, walking tours, shows, panel discussions, and a few fun new ways to explore the craft of writing.

Portsmouth is the fifth location on the New Hampshire Writers' Trail, a statewide "literary meander" that highlights the accomplishments of writers within a specific New Hampshire region and brings nationally acclaimed visiting writers to the Granite State. In the past, the New Hampshire Writers' Trail has been to Wilmot to host the 2006 Kearsarge Poetry Festival, to Keene in summer 2006 to celebrate the work of Ernest Hebert, and to Claremont and Laconia in 2005, to explore the literal and fictional worlds of Sarah Josepha Hale and Ruth Doan McDougall. This year, the Trail travels to Portsmouth, the town where NHWP began.

In 1988, the New Hampshire Writers' Project started in the Button Factory on Islington Street in Portsmouth. "In the winter," said Kathy

Wurtz, Executive Director of NHWP, "it was so cold the staff had to wear mittens. Things have, fortunately," she added with a smile, "warmed up since then."



The nonprofit organization has grown to include more than 750 members throughout New Hampshire and the surrounding states. NHWP fosters writers at all levels of development—from beginners to Pulitzer Prize winners and U.S. Poets Laureate—as well as readers who appreciate great writing and books. Now they are ready to celebrate.

NHWP, working with community partners such as Strawberry Banke, South Church, The Music Hall, RiverRun Bookstore, the Portsmouth Athenaeum, Seacoast Repertory Theatre, the Press Room, and the *Wire*, will present three days of jam-packed excitement.

"The involvement of our local part-

ners," said Wurtz, "is testament to the Seacoast's dynamic literary community. Their dedication and enthusiasm in shaping this event are immeasurable. *This* is what NHWP is about, building community, reaching out, sharing the literary arts with others."

Wurtz said she is particularly proud to have more than twelve Seacoast writers involved in the festival. "It shows the wealth of writing talent on the Seacoast, and, with other New Hampshire writers on board as well, within the whole state."

On the evening of Saturday, October 25, the Portsmouth Literary Festival will culminate with an on-stage interview with visiting novelist **Tom Perrotta**. Perrotta, dubbed "an

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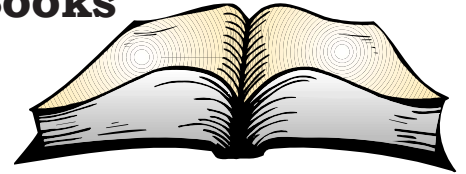
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New Hampshire Books

By Donna Gilbreth



I was curious to explore the continuing appeal of a New Hampshire novel that seemed like a bit of fluff.

Why are people (mostly women) still excited about *The Cheerleader* by Ruth Doan MacDougall after more than 30 years? Excited enough that the author has written three more novels in the series about a small-town high school cheerleader? So, I read the novel and was swept into a time and lifestyle long departed.

The Cheerleader is a coming-of-age novel about a perky and bright teenager named Henrietta “Snowy” Snow. We first meet her as a sophomore at Gunthwaite High School in 1956. The story chronicles the events and emotions experienced by Snowy and her friends as they progress towards graduation – marking many “milestones” along the way. Snowy’s list of goals is formidable: she wants to be a varsity cheerleader, she wants to snag football player Tom Forbes as her boyfriend, and she wants to go to an elite women’s college after graduation. Her desire to succeed is strong: “She wanted to be one of those fabulous varsity cheerleaders cheering at a game that mattered, for the boys who mattered, the crowd caring passionately, and she herself one of those who led them.” To high school students these things matter enormously, desires we dismiss as trivial as we age and encounter all the issues of adulthood.

Snowy was a typical teenager of the 1950’s, striving to conform to her image of a popular girl, but she was also working toward the unusual goal of going to college and having a career. As a sophomore her image was all-important: “Snowy strove to conform, to wear the same clothes as the popular girls, to wear her hair fashionably, to carry her books and speak the slang and know the hit songs all absolutely correctly.” Yet her underlying ambition to obtain a scholarship to Smith or Mt. Holyoke College set her apart from the other girls, who were mostly just trying to get engaged to be married.

Much of the novel concerns the agonizing interactions between boyfriends and girlfriends, and the effect on friendships. An overwhelming concern for girls then was how far to go on a date, whether (or when) to allow your boyfriend to Get Fresh, as Snowy and her friends referred to it, or actually reach the Big Milestone of sexual intercourse. There were “rules” for these relationships: “then, horrified, she realized she was letting him Get Fresh on their third evening together, and you weren’t supposed to until you were going steady.” Sexual mores of the 1950’s are very much part of the novel, from dates at soda shops or movie theaters to the popular “parking” destinations. All of this sexual experimentation takes place while the seemingly clueless parents are at home in bed.

MacDougall captures the flavor of the 1950’s in a small town perfectly, right down to the songs being played at school dances or on the car radio while the kids are “parking.” She meticulously describes the wardrobes of the girls, knowing that being dressed just right was very important in

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Thomas Bailey Aldrich

by Mary A. Russell

In *The Story of a Bad Boy*, Thomas Bailey Aldrich begins his tale by describing his hero, which he based upon himself:

"I may truthfully say I was an amiable, impulsive lad, blessed with fine digestive powers, and no hypocrite. I did not want to be an angel and with the angels stand; I did not think the missionary tracts presented to me by the Rev. Wibird Hawkins were half so nice as *Robinson Crusoe*; and I failed to send my little pocket-money to the natives of the Feejee Islands, but spent it royally in peppermint-drops and taffy candy. In short, I was a real human boy, such as you may meet anywhere in New England" (1914 Riverside Press edition, p. 4)

Aldrich's creation of a novel for young people about a real boy, as opposed to the idealized version of boyhood perfection typical of literature at the time, was his most lasting mark on American letters. This novel was an inspiration for Mark Twain's *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. Children's author was only one aspect of the career of Thomas Bailey Aldrich, however. In his day Aldrich was esteemed as a writer of short stories, a minor novelist, and was considered by his contemporaries to be an important poet. As editor of *The Atlantic Monthly* he lived at the center of a literary renaissance and his editorial vision guided the magazine to critical, though not financial, success. The fashions of literature, like all fashions, change firmly and frequently and following his death in March 1907, Aldrich's writings, which did not challenge social or moral conventions and depicted characters with a generally positive outlook, fell out of favor with readers and critics.

Aldrich was born in Portsmouth, New Hampshire on November 11, 1836. He was the only child of Elias

Taft Aldrich and Sarah Abba Bailey Aldrich, both of whom were descended from Colonial New England families. The family moved to New York when Thomas was five and then to New Orleans in 1846. In 1849 Thomas returned to Portsmouth to attend the school of Samuel De Merritt in preparation for attending Harvard, where he planned to study under Longfellow. That same year Elias Aldrich died of cholera, leaving his family in limited financial circumstances and making Harvard an impossibility for Thomas.

When he was sixteen, Thomas Aldrich had his first published poem in the *Portsmouth Journal*. In 1852 he took a job in the New York City commission house of his uncle, Charles Frost. By this time Aldrich's poems had appeared in various periodicals. In 1855 he published the poem "The Ballad of Babie Bell," which brought him enough attention as a writer that he was able to leave the business world and focus on his writing. He worked as a journalist during this period, including as the junior literary critic on the *Evening Mirror*, as sub-editor of *Home Journal*, and as associate editor of *Saturday Press*. His first book, *The Bells: A Collection of Chimes*, had also been published in 1855. Aldrich was part of the lively literary scene that was New York City at that time: his companions included Edwin Booth (brother of John Wilkes Booth), the sculptor Launt Thompson, and Walt Whitman. Bohemian New York didn't entirely suit Aldrich's New England temperament though, and he visited both Portsmouth and Boston regularly.

When the Civil War broke out Aldrich became a war correspondent for the *New York Tribune* attached to General Blenker's division of the Army

of the Potomac in Virginia. His horrific wartime experiences would influence his later writings. In 1862 he left Virginia and returned to Portsmouth. Over the next several years he wrote and published poetry and short stories, served as managing editor of the *Illustrated News*, and divided his time between New York, Boston, and Portsmouth. On November 28, 1865 Aldrich married Lillian Woodman – whom he met through the Booths – and the couple moved to Boston. This suited Aldrich, who said, "Though I am not genuine Boston, I am Boston-plated."

In September 1868, just before the birth of his twin sons, Aldrich finished *The Story of a Bad Boy*, which he had begun while visiting Portsmouth – the Rivermouth of the book – where he typically spent his summers. The novel first appeared serially in *Our Young Folks* beginning in January 1869 and was published as a book in England and the U.S. with an 1870 imprint date. Aldrich published other novels, including *Prudence Palfrey* (1874) and *The Stillwater Tragedy* (1880), but *The Story of a Bad Boy* was the one that left a lasting mark on American literature.

In January 1870 *The Atlantic Monthly* reviewed the book:

"Mr. Aldrich has done a new thing in – we use the phrase with some gasps of reluctance, it is so threadbare and so near meaning nothing – American literature. . . . No one else seems to have thought of telling the story of a boy's life, with so great a desire to show what a boy's life is, and so little purpose of teaching what it should be; certainly no one else has thought of doing this for the life of an American boy. The conception of such a performance is altogether his in this case; but with regard to more full-grown figures of fiction, it is that of the best and

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Letters About Literature *Read. Be Inspired. Write Back.*

Letters About Literature is a reading and writing promotion program of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, presented in partnership with Target Stores and coordinated in New Hampshire by the Center for the Book at the New Hampshire State Library. To enter, young readers wrote a personal letter to an author explaining how his or her work changed their view of the world or themselves. Readers select authors from any genre—fiction or nonfiction, contemporary or classic. There are three competition levels in the program: upper elementary, middle school, and secondary. The contest theme encourages young readers to explore their personal response to a book and then express that response in a creative, original way.

In 2008 there were 220 letters received from New Hampshire students. Twenty-five semi-finalists were selected at the three competition levels by a panel of judges working on

behalf of the Library of Congress. These letters were reviewed by a panel of judges here in New Hampshire and letters by Angela Wang of Nashua, Sydnie Spencer of Durham and Livie Lane of Dover were selected as the New Hampshire *Letters About Literature* winners for 2008.

The deadline for 2009 entries is December 6, 2008. Entries will be assessed on three criteria: content, or the writer's achievement in addressing the contest theme; exposition, or the writer's use of language skills; and voice, the writer's style and originality of expression.

State winners will advance to national competition and the first-place winner for New Hampshire at each competition level will receive a \$100 cash prize plus a \$50 Target gift card redeemable at any Target Store or at target.com. A panel of judges for the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress will then select six na-

tional winners (two per competition level) and 12 national runners-up (four per competition level). Each national winner will receive a \$500 Target GiftCard. In addition, they will win a Reading Promotion Grant of \$10,000 for their school or community library. National winners will be instrumental in deciding how the library funds will be spent. The 12 national runners-up will win a \$100 Target GiftCard, plus they will win a Reading Promotion Grant of \$1,000 for their school or community library.

To obtain the required entry coupon visit the New Hampshire Center for the Book web site at <http://www.state.nh.us/nhsl/bookcenter/programs/letters.html>. Complete contest rules, a teaching supplement to guide students through the reading-writing process, a list of books that inspired last year's semi-finalist essays, and winning essays from previous years are also available on the web site.

Author David Elliott's Reflections on Judging LAL

One person's trash is another person's . . . well, you know the rest. It's reinforced, in one way or another, nearly every day of our lives. "What?! You like that shirt?!" Or, "My god! What did you do to your hair?" But perhaps the aphorism is nowhere better demonstrated than in the world of writing. Consider this rejection of a collection of poems: "They are quite unremarkable for defects as for beauties and are generally devoid of true poetical qualities." Oh, I forgot to mention the author. You might have heard of her: Emily Dickinson. Here's another, for Tony Hillerman's *The Blessing Way*: "If you insist on writing, get rid of all that Indian stuff." And my favorite for Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windemere's Fan*: "My dear sir, I have read your manuscript. Oh, my dear sir."

I, too, have received my share of rejections, not quite as cruel as these (thank Heaven!) for books that went on to do reasonably well. (And some for manuscripts that didn't go anywhere, except back into the drawer.) But I was most recently reminded of this trash/treasure business when I was asked to fill in for a judge at the National Letters About Literature Contest. While it was difficult to select the letters I thought the best, it was far easier to spot the worst. One of the first I put into the "no" pile was a letter that, as far as I was concerned, demonstrated every error that young writers can make. To my ear, it was overwritten. Sentimental. Full of easy, predictable truths. The kind of thing which sounds good first time through but on closer inspection was empty of real meaning. What my friend Wendy would say was "mutton dressed as lamb."

You might imagine my surprise then, when another of the judges chose this very mutton as her favorite. If memory serves, her comments were something like, "When I read the letter, I just knew she had to win." I was floored. I wanted to write the other judge a letter: "My dear madam, I have heard of your decision. Oh, my dear madam." In the end, a series of negotiations ensued. The letter didn't win. But it did place in the top three. And really, it's good that it did. Why not? After all, another judge found it praiseworthy.

In the end, no one person (even me!) could or should make the sole judgment about what makes a piece of writing good. Not an editor. Not a reviewer. Not a judge. Not a librarian. Just think. If that were to happen, we might be denying ourselves the very deep pleasure of reading the next Emily Dickinson, however unpoetical she may be.

New Hampshire's Literary Community

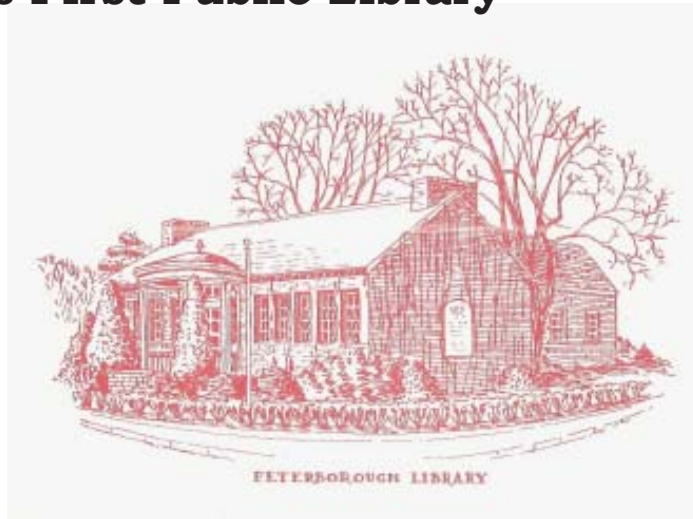
America's First Public Library

*By Brian Hackert
Reference Librarian,
Peterborough Town Library*

America's first public library was founded by a heretic. That momentous event happened 175 years ago, in 1833 in Peterborough, New Hampshire. Reverend Abiel Abbot, who was kicked out of the Congregational Church in Connecticut, became Peterborough's first Unitarian minister and was the primary motivator in the town's creation of a library using public funds. Reverend Abbott's unconventional thinking amounted to heresy for the Coventry Congregational Church; however, in Peterborough the minister's progressive views were admired, and they helped start a national public library movement that benefits all Americans to this day.

As reference librarian at the Peterborough Town Library, I receive a wide range of questions, but one of the most frequent topics of inquiry is the library itself. Whether it's by a local student in person or someone emailing from California, I'm commonly asked if my library's famed reputation as the first of its kind is true.

We were indeed the first public library in the United States, though multiple libraries can claim a "first" status of some sort or another, and a subset of those correctly claim "first public" status with varying quali-



fications. Basically, in today's sense of the term, Peterborough had the first "public library" in the United States (and arguably in the world) because the town used public money to start and maintain a reading collection, the collection was open to anyone without charge, and residents could borrow books to read at home. Nobody operated with that combination of elements before.

The Boston Public Library's claim to the title is qualified by size; one section of its website calls it "the first large free municipal library in the United States." Including any size library, the dates of establishment clearly indicate that Peterborough's 1833 library was founded before Boston's 1848 library.

Because there are other "first public libraries" by differing criteria, Peterborough frequently distinguishes

itself with the description "tax-supported free public library." However, many other American institutions flirt with the titles of oldest library and first library. Let's take a look at some of the contenders.

The Library Company of Philadelphia was probably the first library in America, yet it was not open to the general public, but rather was patronized by individuals who purchased subscriptions. The Darby Free Library in Pennsylvania may have been the first lending library, allowing patrons to take material home, but it also was comprised of a private membership, although it is today a public library. The private Redwood Library and Athenæum in Rhode Island also claims the title of first lending library, in addition to "oldest library building in continuous use."

The Franklin Library in Massachusetts was open to the general public, but its financing was from private sources and not from the town until many years later. The Salisbury Children's Library in Connecticut started with public funds, but private funding sustained it afterward, and it

1732 - The Library Company of Philadelphia
1743 - Darby Free Library
1747 - Redwood Library and Athenæum
1778 - Franklin Public Library
1803 - Salisbury Children's Library
1822 - Dublin Free Library
1833 - Peterborough Town Library
1848 - Boston Public Library

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20 Years of the NH Writers' Project

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American Chekhov" by the *New York Times*, is the author of several books, including *Election* and *Little Children*. Both were made into major motion pictures. Perrotta was nominated for an Oscar and a Golden Globe for his adaptation of *Little Children*. He will read from his latest novel, *The Abstinence Teacher*, and answer questions from the audience.

"Leading up to this exciting finale," said Wurtz, "are several events sure to inspire the writer and reader in all of us."

In *Poetry, People, and Place: Creating Poetic Consciousness*, Maxine Kumin, Patricia Fargnoli, and Elizabeth Knies will discuss the role of poetry in community. These three poets laureate have raised the poetic consciousness of the United States, New Hampshire and Portsmouth. Their readings and panel discussion, which will be moderated by Marie Harris, will be followed by a Q&A.

Hero Award winner Valerie Cunningham and historian JerriAnne Boggis will lead a panel discussion on *History is Now: Discovering Portsmouth's Black Heritage*. Afterwards, attendees can join Valerie Cunningham on a guided walking tour of Portsmouth's Black Heritage sites.

In *Ink Chronicles: History Across Genre*, children's author Julie Baker, novelist Robert Begiebing, poet Martha Carlson Bradley, and historian J. Dennis Robinson will reveal the discoveries they have made about writing on their journeys back through time.

For the younger crowd, *Punk-Rock Poetry! A Workshop for Teens* will

show teens ages thirteen through seventeen how to create razor-sharp poems.

Gain new perspectives on writing at *Speak Easy: From the Page to the Stage* when Genevieve Aichele, Roland Goodbody, duo M. Marguerite Mathews & Greg Gathers, and Pat Spalding perform original works and discuss the intricacies of performance-based writing.

"The involvement of our local partners is testament to the Seacoast's dynamic literary community. Their dedication and enthusiasm in shaping this event is immeasurable."

--Kathy Wurtz

"Feeling adventurous?" asked Wurtz. "Then join us on Friday night at the Press Room for the first ever *NH Literary Idol*." Ten hopefuls, armed with their best 500-word flash fictions, will face a panel of Idol judges: Jim Kelly, Mike Kimball, and Katherine Towler, with a special appearance by Rebecca Rule.

Writers' Happy Hour at RiverRun Bookstore provides an opportunity to mingle with local and visiting authors. Attendees can enjoy scintillating conversation, good food and have books signed. RiverRun Bookstore will also present scheduled readings throughout the festival. For the visually inclined, there is *Wildcard Movies @ The Music Hall*. And a tour of the *Athenaeum*, the oldest cultural organization in Portsmouth, is also being offered.

The *Word Fair* at South Church will connect writers, publishers, readers, and literary nonprofits. The fair features information booths, raffle prizes, informal discussions, and an open mike.

The festival's informative and fun literary map allows attendees to *Explore the World of Words: Self-Guided Literary Walking Tour*. This eight-page guide includes a program of the weekend's events, fascinating facts about literary sites, and an easy-to-follow map. The map and program will be available at local Portsmouth stores and in the *Wire* in the weeks leading up to the festival.

"We want you to gain new insight into writing," said Wurtz. "We want you to be inspired, to be ready to write, to read and to celebrate the rich literary heritage of Portsmouth, the Seacoast, New Hampshire, and New England. Come celebrate the craft—and joy—of writing with us."

The NHWP Portsmouth Literary Festival is made possible in part by generous support from Lincoln Financial, RiverRun Bookstore, RiverStone Resources, New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, New Hampshire State Council on the Arts, and Plaidswede Publishing.

Don't miss this historic event!
New events are still being added, so visit www.nhwritersproject.org for up-to-date festival information and to purchase tickets, or call 603-314-7980.

NH Books

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high school: "Then she selected her best white nylon underpants, her newest bra and white wool socks, and dressed herself in these and her brown wool slacks and the yellow short-sleeved pullover she'd washed last night. She put on her buff-colored loafers." The author recreates this 1950's town in detail, allowing the reader to feel like a resident of the town and high school. From the basement tunnels in the school, to the drive-in theater and football games, we are part of the story as we watch Snowy grow up and graduate high school.

Author Ruth Doan MacDougall is a native and resident of New Hampshire. The daughter of author Daniel Doan, she grew up in Laconia, the inspiration for the mythical Gunthwaite. Like Snowy, she aspired to go away to college and become a writer. *The Cheerleader* was first published in 1973 (G.P. Putnam's Sons) and was reissued in 1998 (Frigate Books), on its 25th anniversary.

The popularity of the novel, and the desire of readers and the author to find out "what happens next," led the author to continuing Snowy's saga in succeeding novels. *Snowy* (St. Martin's Press, 1993) follows Snowy from her first year at Bennington College through marriage, motherhood and a mid-life crisis. *Henrietta Snow* (Frigate Books, 2004) covers the years 1987 to 2000, as the high school friends enter their 60's. And MacDougall recently penned *The Husband Bench* (Frigate Books, 2007) to chronicle the story of Snowy's best friend Bev.

For a trip into a nostalgic past, which tells a story still relevant today, pick up *The Cheerleader* by Ruth Doan MacDougall.

A Celebration of the *Kalevala*

By Pat Frisella
President, PSNH

The *Kalevala*, the Finnish National epic, was compiled by Elias Lönnrot in the 19th century from folk tunes or runo songs. The meter of these songs is trochaic tetrameter, made familiar to us by Longfellow, a contemporary of Lönnrot, in his *Song of Hiawatha*. Tolkien based his lyrical language of Middle Earth's elves on the Finnish he read in the *Kalevala*. The themes of the *Kalevala* are typical of such stories and follow the lines of Joseph Campbell's hero's journey, with the birth of the hero, the battles between good and evil, the pursuit of a sacred object (the Sampo), shape shifting, demons, and magic. However, the heroism celebrated in this epic comes not from physical strength but through magical songs.

The Poetry Society of New Hampshire (PSNH) will celebrate the *Kalevala*, with poetry and music, Runeberg's tarts and other Finnish pastries on October 11th beginning at 6PM at Artstream. The event is free and open to the public. Artstream gallery is a wonderful gallery and studio in downtown Rochester which supports contemporary

artists through shows which provide plenty of space and light for each featured artist. In addition they sell fine art, offer art classes, and web design. For more info visit <http://www.artstreamstudios.com>. Music for the celebration will be performed by the Maine Kanteles on Finnish lapharps, the national musical instrument of Finland. The Maine Kanteles formed the nonprofit Kantele Laulu, Inc. (<http://www.kantelelailu.com/ME%20Kanteles.htm>) a 501(c)3 with a mission to promote education in and awareness of the kantele and its significance in Finnish culture. They have performed throughout New England and in Canada and Finland.

The Poetry Society of NH is a non profit, statewide membership organization dedicated to the promotion of poetry. The society publishes the quarterly journal *The Poets Touchstone*, sponsors poetry contests and hosts poetry readings and workshops. The society also publishes anthologies, most recently *The 2008 Poets Guide to NH* and *The Other Side of Sorrow, Poets Speak Out About Conflict, War and Peace*, and the occasional chapbook. The society can be reached at poetrysocietyofnh@gmail.com

34th Annual New Hampshire Antiquarian Book Fair

Sunday, September 21, 2008

9:30 am - 4:00 pm

Everett Arena, Concord, NH

Exit 14 off Route 93

Admission \$3

**Bring this coupon for \$1 OFF Admission
courtesy of the NH Center for the Book**

Award Notes

New Hampshire is home to several book awards and details about each of them, including links to their web sites, are included at www.nh.gov/nhsl/bookcenter/literacyc/awards.html

The Flume: NH Teen Readers' Choice Award

New Hampshire students in 37 public and high school libraries voted once again to make Stephenie Meyer the winner of the Flume Award: NH Teen Readers' Choice. Having won the 2007 Flume Award for *Twilight*, this year Meyer garnered the most votes with her novel *New Moon*. The nominees for the 2009 Flume Award, which is sponsored by the NH Library Association, are available on the Flume web site.

Great Stone Face Award

The 2008 NH Great Stone Face Book Award was won by Cynthia Lord (a NH author) for her book *Rules*. Children in grades four to six voted at their public libraries and schools. Voting for the 2009 Book Award will take place during Children's Book Week in April 2009. The new list for the 2009 award can be found on the GSF web site.

Sarah Josepha Hale Award

The Trustees of the Richards Free Library are pleased to announce that renowned filmmaker Ken Burns will receive the 2008 Sarah Josepha Hale Award on November 8, 2008, at 7:00 p.m. at the Newport Opera House. A cinematographer and a writer, Mr. Burns is best known for his work as a director of documentary films, including *The Civil War*,

Baseball, Lewis & Clark: The Journey of the Corps of Discovery and *The War*.

Isinglass Teen Read Award

The Isinglass Teen Read Award for 7th & 8th graders announced that Natasha Friend has won for 2008 with her book *Perfect*. She will be coming to New Hampshire this fall to accept her award in person at a local middle school. The current year's list, along with podcasts of booktalks, a bookmark order form, and nomination criteria, can be found on the Barrington Public Library's web site.



Ladybug Picture Book Award

New Hampshire children from preschoolers to those in third grade are invited to vote for the 2008 Ladybug Picture Book Award during November 2008. Details on the award, including printable ballots and tally sheets and an order form for stickers, are available on the Center for the Book's website. Tally sheets must be received at the State Library by December 1, 2008.

Peterborough Town Library

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didn't serve a representative cross-section of the community.

Our neighbor the Dublin Free Library was established by private funds; however, it served the general public and claims the title of first free lending library. This may be accurate, since its predecessors either loaned only to private members or allowed public use of material only in a reading room. The Peterborough Town Library allocated public funds to establish a book collection, then voted as a community to sustain the library with tax revenue, and allowed any resident to borrow material without a lending fee. Fifteen years later, Boston Public Library did the same thing, only bigger.

The whole issue of who had the original public library came up early on, and in 1884 researcher Nathaniel Morison declared that Peterborough was number one. Incidentally, the library did not have its own building until 1893, 60 years after the founding. The term "library" meant a collection of books rather than a special room or building that held books. Until 1893, the Peterborough book collection was kept at various places around town, including the post office in the general store. Consequently, there are libraries that call themselves "oldest public library," and mean in the same building or on the same property, creating yet another layer in the American library chronology.

Using the modern definition of the term "public library," I think Peterborough residents and New Hampshireites can legitimately boast of having the first public library in the United States, so I say go ahead and boast.

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<http://www.nh.gov/nhsl/bookcenter>

The Big Read: Southern NH Reads *The Great Gatsby*



By Steve Viggiano
Manchester City Library

Next spring, people from all over Southern New Hampshire will come together to read, discuss and celebrate *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel of the dark side of the American dream. The Northeast Cultural Coop will be organizing the event as part of a larger, nationwide program, The Big Read, an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). In partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services and in cooperation with Arts Midwest, The Big Read is designed to restore reading to the center of American culture.

What prompted this program is a study the NEA conducted in 2004 on the reading habits of American adults. The results, published in *Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America*, paint a grim picture. Reading for pleasure is in decline across all demographic groups, especially younger people. The study also found a positive correlation between reading for pleasure and volunteerism, charity work, and attendance at sporting and performing arts events. In other words, people who read are more likely to be engaged citizens involved in their

communities: a necessary component of a functioning democracy.

The Big Read tackles this problem by providing grant money and books to nearly two hundred organizations nationwide, including two here in New Hampshire. The Northeast Cultural Coop chose F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, one of twelve American novels being discussed this year. Starting next March, libraries, schools, and other organizations throughout the Granite State will participate by holding book discussions, film screenings, and other events related to *The Great Gatsby* and the American dream.

Published in 1925, *The Great Gatsby* is a tragic love story and social commentary on the decadent lifestyle of the wealthy during the Jazz Age, a dizzying period of innovation, prosperity, and changing social mores immediately following the first world war. Through the eyes of narrator Nick Carraway, a Midwestern native out of place among the Long Island elite, we meet his neighbor, young self-made millionaire Jay Gatsby. As Nick and Gatsby become acquainted, Nick discovers that everything about Gatsby—his wealth, his mansion, his decadent parties — is intended for a single purpose, a single dream: to win back the love of Daisy Buchanan, whom he lost years ago.

Planning for The Big Read: Southern New Hampshire Reads *The Great Gatsby* is still underway, and details will be available at www.neabigread.org. The communities on board so far include Amherst, Auburn, Bedford, Deering, Fitzwilliam, Francestown, Goffstown, Hooksett, Manchester, Milford, and New Boston. Programs are expected to begin in mid-March.

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**Center for the Book
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The Poetry Place

Suggestions for Hopeful Poets

By Patricia Fargnoli,
New Hampshire Poet Laureate

As NH Poet Laureate, I've been privileged these two years to travel around the state doing readings and talking about poetry. Often, after an event, someone who's been writing poetry (perhaps for years) in the privacy of their homes will approach to ask how they might connect with other poets or get recognition for their work. Or they'll ask my opinion of their poems or those of a relative.

Therefore, I thought it might be helpful to offer a few suggestions to hopeful poets:

1. First, I urge you to keep writing. Whether or not poems get "published," the process of writing is joyful. It is a fine thing to try to get this big, complex life into words, and to communicate the world we see (that specific "world" each of us perceives) to others. And it is a fine thing to pay close attention, to "see" a thing as if it has never been seen before.

2. Secondly, if you want to write good poems, you must, must, must read the poetry of others. Certainly, the old masters, but also widely among the many contemporary poets. Buy poetry anthologies, buy books by individual poets, but read continuously. Study the rhythms and strategies. Absorb them into your own body and mind.

3. Thirdly, consider buying one or two good poetry instruction books. (See #6)

4. Connect with others on the same journey. Join or start a writer's critique group or a writer's group. Go to poetry readings. Go to an open poetry reading and read your poems.

5. Understand that it takes more than talent and deeply felt emotions to write poetry well. You must learn the tools of craft, much as the violinist must learn how to hold his/her instrument, how to move the bow. And this takes study, time, practice. Mary Oliver says it takes 25 years to become a poet. I believe her. But the process itself is enriching; it can change your life! And the poems that get written along the way are often very good and sometimes publishable poems.

6. A few resources to start you on the path.

Craft

- *A Poetry Handbook*, Mary Oliver (Harvest Books, 1994)

- *The Poetry Home Repair Manual: Practical Advice for Beginning Poets*, Ted Kooser (Bison Books, 2007)

- *Writing Poems*, 7th edition, Michelle Boisseau, Robert Wallace, Randall Mann (Longman, 2007)

Reading Poetry

How to Read a Poem And Fall in Love with Poetry, Edward Hirsh

(Doubletake Books, 1999)

Publishing Your Work

2008 Poets Market, Nancy Breen (Writer's Digest Books, 2008)

State Writer's Groups

Groups are open to writers/poets of any level; membership fees are minimal.

- The New Hampshire Writer's Project provides teaching, learning and networking experiences.

<http://www.nhwritersproject.org/>

- Poetry Society of New Hampshire is a nonprofit, statewide (and beyond) membership organization dedicated to the promotion of poetry: poetrysocietyofnh@gmail.com

- The Seacoast Writers Association holds a writer's conference, offers poetry workshops, contests, and networking opportunities.

<http://seacoastwritersassociation.org/default.aspx>

- The Monadnock Writer's Group offers fellowship and support to professional writers and to those actively engaged in developing their writing skills.

<http://www.monadnockwriters.org/>

T. B. Aldrich

Continued from p. 3

oldest masters of the art of story-telling; and it is one that will at last give us, we believe, the work which has so long hovered in the mental atmosphere a pathetic ante-natal phantom, pleading to be born into the world — the American novel, namely."

In 1881 he became the editor of the *The Atlantic Monthly* where he published the work of many of the finest writers of the day including Longfellow, Thomas Hardy, and Henry James. Under Aldrich *The Atlantic* developed a reputation as one of the finest literary journals in

the English language.

Aldrich left *The Atlantic* in 1890 and spent his time after that writing and travelling with his family. In 1901 his son Charles was stricken with tuberculosis and died in 1904. His son's death marked the end of Aldrich's writing, and his own death followed shortly in March 1907.

A bibliography on Thomas Bailey Aldrich is available as part of our Spotlight on NH Authors series on our website at www.nh.gov/nhs1/bookcenter

The Big Read: *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

By Michelle Moon
Director of Education,
Strawbery Banke Museum

Strawbery Banke Museum has received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to host The Big Read in Portsmouth. Their programming will focus on Mark Twain's *Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and will take place this winter. They are one of 208 organizations to receive a grant to host The Big Read between now and June 2009. The Big Read gives communities the opportunity to come together to read, discuss, and celebrate one of 23 selections from American and world literature.

The Museum is partnering with the Portsmouth Middle School, the Portsmouth Public Library, and



RiverRun Bookstore in creating their Big Read. Their celebration will kick-off at First Night Portsmouth and during January and February will include book discussions; author visits; programs on childhood adventure; outdoor play (snowshoeing anyone?); and boys & girls, good & bad. Portsmouth was the birthplace of Thomas Bailey Aldrich, the creator

of the prototype bad boy, which made this book a natural choice for this community.

“With this latest round of grants, I am proud to say that The Big Read has supported more than 500 public library partnerships,” said Anne-Imelda M. Radice, Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the NEA’s lead federal partner for The Big Read. “Through this program, public libraries continue to demonstrate their value in communities as centers of engagement, literacy, and lifelong learning. I am particularly delighted by the innovative public programming born out of library and museum collaborations.” For more information about The Big Read, including details of events as they are scheduled, please visit www.neabigread.org.

Granite State Readers Recommend

We invite readers from around the state to tell us about a book that they would recommend to others. Here is a selection of the recommendations that we received recently. Please check out the complete list of Granite State readers' recommendations and tell us about a book that you would recommend by visiting our web site at www.nh.gov/nhsl/bookcenter/programs.

Farmington, NH

Patricia Frisella

Chaos of the Senses by Ahlam Mosteghanemi, translated from the Arabic by Baria Ahmar. On the surface this is a love story set in the political chaos of Algeria in the 1990's. The protagonist is a married woman, a writer, who creates an ideal lover who then appears in her life. Between the confusion of the civil war and the misty boundary between what is imagined and what is real in the story, the reader gets a true feeling of the chaos experienced by the protagonist.

Goffstown, NH

Michael York

New Hampshire State Librarian

David McCullough, one of the most popular American historians of the last 40 years, often referred to as “the master of the art of narrative history,” has written about American leaders in numerous award-winning books. His voluminous treatment of Harry Truman in his Pulitzer Prize-winning history I think is his best.

At more than 1,000 pages, McCullough covers Truman's life in detail from the machine politics of Kansas City in the Twenties and Thirties, to his winning the presidency on his own against all odds, defeating Governor Dewey in 1948. No one tells the story better than David McCullough. If you have not read any of David McCullough's books you need to. If you have not read *Truman*, check it out at your public library. As we get immersed in the politics of today it is interesting to look back to the Square Deal and get a sense of what was happening to America as it emerged from World War II as the most powerful nation on earth.

Peterborough, NH

Willard Williams

Co-owner, Toadstool Bookshops

Coal Black Horse by Robert Olmstead. A 14-year-old boy, accompanied by the protective black horse given him as a gift, is sent, on his mother's premonition, to bring his soldier father home from the battlefields of the Civil War. In this novel,

Olmstead's depiction of the incomprehensively violent world the boy finds himself in feels frighteningly vivid and historically accurate. Robert Olmstead grew up in western New Hampshire, the setting for several of his previous books including the short story collection *River Dogs* and his memoir *Stay Here With Me*. He now teaches at Ohio Wesleyan University.

Wilmot, NH

Sondra Vanderploeg

Librarian, Colby-Sawyer College

Here If You Need Me by Kate Braestrup. This memoir recounts Braestrup's life as she coped with the death of her Maine State Trooper husband and decided to pursue his dream of becoming a Unitarian Universalist minister and chaplain to the Maine Game Warden service. The writing is lively and engaging — including humorous anecdotes about her four young children, introspective episodes about grief, life, and God, and gripping tales of search & rescue missions.



Center for the Book
at the New Hampshire State Library
20 Park Street Concord, NH 03301

*The mission of the
Center for the
Book at the NH
State Library
is to celebrate and
promote reading,
books, literacy,
and the literary
heritage of New
Hampshire and to
highlight
the role that
reading and
libraries play in
enriching
the lives of the
people of the
Granite State.*

Library of Congress Organizes Eighth Annual National Book Festival

The 2008 National Book Festival, organized and sponsored by the Library of Congress and hosted by Mrs. Laura Bush, will be held from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 27, rain or shine, on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., between 3rd and 7th streets. The festival is free and open to the public.

Among some 70 authors and illustrators participating this year are Marc Brown, Doreen Cronin, Betsy Lewin, Judy Sierra, Tony Horwitz, Walter Isaacson, Cokie Roberts, Paul Theroux, Neil Gaiman, Katherine Paterson, R. L. Stine, George Duran, Jon Scieszka, Philippa Gregory, Brad Meltzer, Salman Rushdie, Daniel Schorr, and Geraldine Brooks. Kay Ryan, recently named U.S. Poet Laureate, will be reading in the Poetry Pavilion. "I invite you, your friends and your family to join us on Sept. 27 as we all celebrate our shared love of reading," said Librarian of Congress James H. Billington. "Come and be a part of this wonderful national experience."

The festival authors, illustrators and poets will discuss their work in pavilions dedicated to Children, Teens & Children, Fiction & Mystery, History & Biography, Home & Family and Poetry. PBS characters and NBA/WNBA players will appear at the festival including NBA Legend and Hall of Famer Bob Lanier. Downloadable podcasts of interviews with popular participating authors will be placed on the Library of Congress web site at www.loc.gov/bookfest. The Pavilion of the States, sponsored by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, will highlight reading, literacy and library promotion activities in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and several American trusts and territories. The Center for the Book at the New Hampshire State Library will have a table in this pavilion.

The artist for this year's festival is beloved children's author and illustrator Jan Brett, whose poster of animals and birds on the National Mall will be available at the festival. Brett, who has written and/or illustrated more than 30 books and has more than 33 million books in print, will be among the authors and illustrators speaking in the Children's Pavilion.