

# Appendix A

## **THE LEAGUE OF NH CRAFTSMEN: 73 YEARS OF CRAFT-MAKING HISTORY**

The League of New Hampshire Craftsmen, founded in 1932, had its beginnings in the 1920's in two small towns in Carroll Country - Sandwich and Wolfeboro. For years the women of Sandwich had been passing the long hours of cold New Hampshire winters by crafting woven rugs, lace, and embroidered items to sell at summer fairs. In 1926, Mary Coolidge, a summer resident of Sandwich, was so impressed with the handiwork of these talented women, that she helped to establish the first Sandwich Home Industries shop to sell their rugs, woodwork, baskets, candles, dresses and corn husk doormats.

At about the same time, in the neighboring town of Wolfeboro, a metal-worker named A. Cooper Ballentine had started a program of craft classes, and he suggested to Mrs. Coolidge that they join forces to promote both the awareness and appreciation for fine crafts. Together, they formed a committee to provide educational programs that trained people to make crafts, and to help them market their work by establishing outlets similar to the one in Sandwich.

In 1931, this crafts committee sought official state support for craftspeople by submitting a report to New Hampshire's Governor John Winant. The report stressed the values of hand, versus machine, work and emphasized the need "to raise New Hampshire crafts and craftsmanship to the highest aesthetic level...to provide gainful occupation for men, women and youth of the state in home industries, native hand-crafts and the arts...and to promote this philosophy adequately through the development of confidence and state pride in local ability and creative power."

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Governor Winant lent his official support to this committee by establishing and funding the New Hampshire Commission of Arts and Crafts, thereby making New Hampshire the first state in the union to support craftmaking.

Soon after, in February of 1932, the committee founded the League of New Hampshire Arts and Crafts and opened the first official League shop in Wolfeboro at the entrance to Camp Kehonka (the first girls camp in the United States) where Ballentine had already been teaching many of his crafts workshops. In addition to the Sandwich shop which was already operating, four more League shops were soon established in Concord, Conway, Meredith and Wolfeboro.

In 1933, the fledgling League timidly embarked on its first Craftsman's Fair held at the Crawford House in Crawford Notch. The barn was used for demonstrations of pottery, weaving, vegetable dyeing, basket making and woodcarving. The blacksmith shop was used for ironworking. The horse stalls were used for exhibitions and sales, and the lawn was used for entertainment and chorus singing of old songs and country dancing. The Fair's success exceeded everyone's expectations with sales totaling \$2,698. It was decided then to make the Fair an annual event.

A new era for the League began in 1938 when David Campbell became the director. For the next twenty-plus years, he was the driving force for the League's growth and development, successfully preserving the art of traditional craftsmanship while embracing the rise of contemporary designer-craftsmen. He established summer craft schools, traveling craft exhibits, scholarship programs for craft apprentices, and co-sponsored the founding of the New Hampshire Art Association. He devoted himself to searching out craftsmen throughout New England, encouraging them to move to New Hampshire and offering, where possible, positions in teaching or on the League staff.

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Working closely with the League were the New Hampshire craft guilds for jewelers, potters, handprinters and weavers who offered co-operative workshops, demonstrations, films and lectures. Local League-affiliated craft councils were formed to offer a market for juried craftspeople through League-affiliated shops, and to present instructional courses on craft-making techniques for craft enthusiasts, and provide master classes for craft professionals.

In 1968 the League formally changed its name to the League of New Hampshire Craftsmen, and for the next thirty years, the League continued to grow in membership and scope. Through the efforts of dedicated staff and volunteers, this non-profit organization expanded its educational programs and scholarships for the training and refinement of craft skills, and instituted a state-juried system that, to this day, is nationally recognized for its high standards. To promote the sale of these fine crafts, the League continues its affiliation with seven shops located in Concord, Hanover, Littleton, Meredith, North Conway, Center Sandwich and Wolfeboro Falls.

The annual Fair, which started so modestly in Crawford Notch 66 years ago, has traveled to a variety of locations throughout the state in the years hence, including the Hancock Town Hall and Church Vestry (1935), the UNH Field House in Durham in (1939), the Holderness School in Plymouth (1940), Dartmouth College in Hanover (1941), the Belknap Recreation Center in Gilford (1948-1960), and Brewster Academy in Wolfeboro (1962). In 1964, the Fair was moved to the Mt. Sunapee Resort in Newbury and, due to its tremendous growth there, has remained to this day. Today, it is a nationally-recognized event that attracts craft buyers, craft makers, and craft enthusiasts from all over the country.

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