

Course Title: Ephemera & Detritus: Local History in New London's Archives

Course ID: F22 / 04

Prerequisites: None

Dates: 5 weeks. Tuesdays, September 20 to October 25; 9:30 to 11:30 AM.
No class on October 18, 2022.

Location: AIL Classroom, Lethbridge Lodge at Colby-Swayer College.

Format: Class lecture and discussion.
Enrollment limited by classroom capacity / distancing requirements.

Instructor: James M. Perkins

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Description: Archival collections and research have risen from obscurity to mainstream in recent years, and professional archivists are now employed in all sectors — from traditional government, library, and education settings to non-traditional private, non-profit, and corporate entities where they may collect and preserve anything from Converse® All Star sneakers to bootlegged Phish concert recordings.

This course provides an overview of archival practice, historic material types, and research methods using the collections at New London's Town Archives as a teaching resource. There is no required reading, but each class includes a bibliography of printed and online materials for reference or entertainment.

Objectives: Students completing this course should get a basic understanding of archival materials and research practices, and gain insights into local history as it has been collected, preserved, and interpreted at the New London Town Archives.

Logistics: Classes will meet for up to 2 hours, depending on the weekly topic and level of discussion.

Each class will include: (1) an introductory lecture on the history and archival requirements of that week's material type; (2) an overview of its significance and representation in local archival collections; and (3) examples of research into facets of local history gathered from the week's materials.

The course syllabus includes a brief bibliography for each topic. *This is NOT required reading!* While most of the books target a general audience, a few are technical references used by archivists or conservators. Free online resources are noted (and linked in the syllabus PDF) where available.

Also noted on the syllabus are past presentations whose underlying research made use of specific material types in the Town Archives; portions of those talks may be reprised during the course.

Instructor: Jim Perkins is an archivist, historian, and historic preservation consultant living in New London, New Hampshire, since 1993. He is a graduate of Dartmouth College and previously worked for 25 years as an investment manager in Boston.

Jim was appointed Town Archivist in 2009, joining a dedicated group of volunteers at New London's Town Archives. He has edited, annotated, and published *Judith Maria Burpee* (2009) and a new edition of *Reflections in a Millpond* (2020), and he has presented over 40 talks and conducted countless research inquiries using archival collections. He also holds a master's in Historic Preservation and has taught graduate courses in historic methods and materials of construction and in the assessment of historic structures.

Jim Perkins is a past president of the New Hampshire Archives Group and the New London Historical Society and is an Honorary Fellow of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

DATE	TOPIC	CLASS DESCRIPTION & REFERENCES
Sep. 20	1. Imposing Order	<p>Archival concepts and practicalities</p> <p>Overview of archival collections. Role of history committees and the public library in establishing New London's Town Archives. Review of organizing principles and collections policy governing acquisitions.</p> <p>References:</p> <p>Lubar, S.D., and S. Lubar. <i>Inside the Lost Museum: Curating, Past and Present</i>. Harvard University Press, 2017.</p> <p>Pettegree, A. and A. der Weduwen, <i>The Library: A Fragile History</i>. Basic Books, 2021.</p> <p>Resources:</p> <p>The AABC Archivist's Toolkit — Archives Association of British Columbia</p> <p>How Archives Work — "Doing History" interview with Peter Drummy</p> <p>Presentations:</p> <p>2021 – <i>New London's Town Archives</i></p>
Sep. 27	2. Keeping Count	<p>Town, church, school, and business records</p> <p>Purposes and evolution of record keeping from ancient times to the present. A look at early town and church records and their content. A history of the town report.</p> <p>References:</p> <p>Duncan, D. <i>Index, A History of The</i>. Penguin, 2021.</p> <p>Flanders, J. <i>A Place for Everything: The Curious History of Alphabetical Order</i>. Basic Books, 2020.</p> <p>Kurlansky, M. <i>Paper: Paging Through History</i>. W.W. Norton, 2016.</p> <p>Resources:</p> <p>The Social History of the Archive — "Past and Present" journal article</p> <p>Municipal Records Retention Policy — Town of New London</p>

DATE	TOPIC	CLASS DESCRIPTION & REFERENCES
<p>Presentations:</p> <p>2015 – <i>The Levi Harvey Mill Controversy</i> 2015 – <i>Factory Village: A History of Scythe-works in New Hampshire</i> 2018 – <i>Whipple Memorial Town Hall Centennial</i> 2018 – <i>Mrs. Jane Tracy: The Westside Social Club & other ideas, 1890–1938</i> 2022 – <i>Frederick Law Olmsted and the Garden at Tracy Library</i></p>		
Oct. 4	3. Real Property	<p>Grants, deeds, estates and subdivisions</p> <p>Grants and proprietorships in New Hampshire. Settlement patterns, subdivision & development. Oddities among the deeds. Taxation of property.</p> <p>References:</p> <p>Shorto, Rusell. <i>The Island at the Center of the World</i>. Vintage, 2005. Winchester, Simon. <i>Land: How the Hunger for Ownership Shaped the Modern World</i>. Harper, 2021.</p> <p>Resources:</p> <p>Merrimack County Registry of Deeds — searching is free, not retrieval!</p> <p>Presentations:</p> <p>2009 – <i>The Alexandria Addition: An Early History of New London</i> 2019 – <i>New London on the Map: A Cartographic History</i></p>
Oct. 11	4. Family Matters	<p>Diaries, memoirs, letters, scrap books, and Bibles</p> <p>Personal writing as a source of historical information. Difficulties of interpretation. Archival challenges posed by mixed media, albums and scrap books.</p> <p>References:</p> <p>Lepore, Jill. <i>The Secret History of Wonder Woman</i>. Vintage, 2015. Wilkerson, Isabel. <i>The Warmth of Other Suns</i>. Random House, 2011.</p>

DATE	TOPIC	CLASS DESCRIPTION & REFERENCES
		<p>Resources:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The Smithsonian Folklife and Oral History Interviewing Guide</i></p> <p>Presentations:</p> <p>2011 – <i>In Their Words: Selections from New London Archives</i> 2015 – <i>The Rocking Chair Brigade: Vacationing at the Brocklebank</i> 2016 – <i>The Life and Alleged Crimes of Bad Man Carr</i> 2019 – <i>Hauling Stone on Morgan Hill</i></p>
Oct. 18	No Class	
Oct. 25	5. Capturing Light	<p>Photographs and transparencies</p> <p>History of photography, stereography, lantern slides. A look at the visual record of New London and early professional photographers. Postcards and tourism.</p> <p>References:</p> <p>Gustavson, T. <i>Camera: A History of Photography from Daguerreotype to Digital</i>. Sterling Publishing, 2014.</p> <p>Pyne, L. <i>Postcards: The Rise and Fall of the World's First Social Network</i>. Reaktion Books, 2021.</p> <p>Watson, R., and H. Rappaport. <i>Capturing the Light: The Birth of Photography, a True Story of Genius and Rivalry</i>. St. Martin's, 2013.</p> <p>Resources:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Eastman Museum Videos</i> — a dozen photographic processes demonstrated</p> <p>Presentations:</p> <p>2016 – <i>Photography & Virtual Reality in the Archives</i> 2017 – <i>Digitizing the Jane Tracy Glass Lantern Slide Collection</i> 2017 – <i>Mrs. Jane Tracy: Travels in Asia, 1914–1915</i></p>