The Creation of "New Hampshire's Temple of History," 1900–1911

James L. Garvin

THE NEW HAMPSHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY building is one of the finest structures of its era in the United States. Designed by a prominent American architect, given a symbolic frontispiece by the foremost American sculptor of the early twentieth century, and constructed to specifications that often seemed impossibly strict even in an era noted for high architectural standards, the building remains one of the best small-scale examples of classical design and granite construction in the United States. Yet the ideal of Edward Tuck, the philanthropist, and the design of Guy Lowell, the architect, were not realized easily. The classical serenity of the building gives no hint of the toll that the structure exacted from its builders in time, labor, money, and patience.

From the outset, the New Hampshire Historical Society building was to be no ordinary structure. At the building's dedication, Edward Tuck recalled that from his earliest involvement with the idea of such a structure he had "decided to provide for the erection of something more monumental and ornate than a simple library building." From the first, Tuck had intended that the building "should be, in its perfection of artistic design and of material execution, a source of gratification and pride for all time to the people of New Hampshire."[1]

The Society's building could not have been constructed, or even contemplated, without Tuck's dedication to these ideals. But underlying Tuck's commitment to undertake so exacting a project were the strong wills of two other individuals. One of these men died before the cornerstone was laid; the other was destined to oversee the construction of the building to its completion.

In his *Unwritten History of the New Hampshire Historical Society Building*, Charles R. Corning has related the story of the touching correspondence between Edward Tuck and the first of these men, William C. Todd (1823–1903) of Atkinson, New Hampshire. Todd, a Dartmouth graduate, had spent his life as an educator, earning only a modest salary. By the careful investment of a small capital, however, Todd had gained a considerable fortune, most of which he had already given away by the turn of the century to aid public education and welfare.

In 1900, serving as the Society's president and approaching the age of eighty, Todd pledged $5,000 toward a fireproof addition to the Society's old building on North Main Street if a like sum should be promised by others.[2] By this challenge, as Corning notes, Todd "cast a coin into the placid waters, creating the circle that, enlarging as it journeyed, finally touched the shores of France."[3] A year later, Todd wrote to Edward Tuck in Paris concerning the Society's hopes for a new addition and received in turn an invitation to write "further in detail as to what you think needs to be done to relieve the Society from its present distress, to assure its further existence, and to provide comfortably for its installation in a suitable new building."[4]

Now gravely ill, Todd wrote again to Tuck in 1902, receiving from the philanthropist the encouraging reply that

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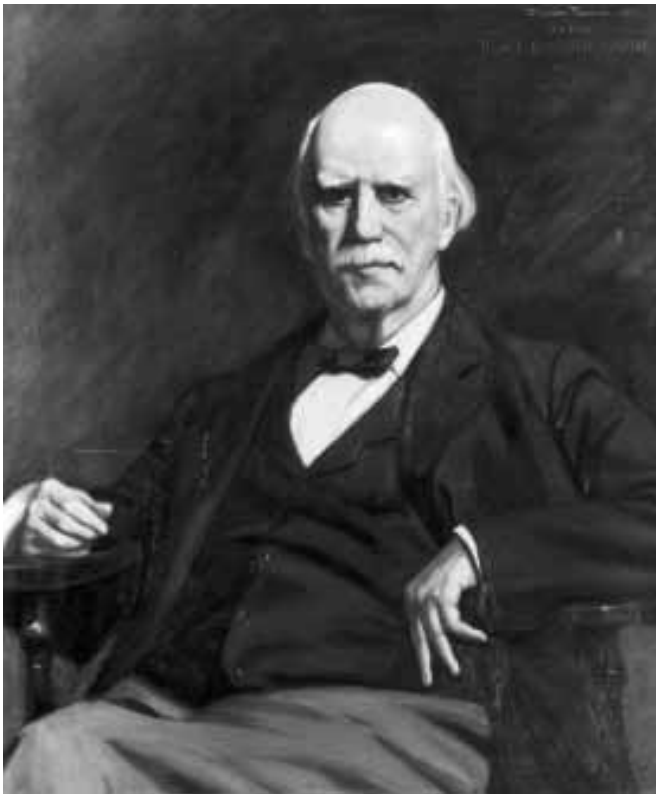
> It may be that I can some day make a contribution with others to aid in bringing together the necessary funds for the construction of the new building. . . . Not the least among the reasons which would impel me to make a liberal contribution [to the Society] for this good purpose is the fact that you yourself have labored so disinterestedly in its behalf, and at the present time, even on your sick bed, are endeavoring to enlist the cooperation of myself and others in accomplishing the desired result.[5]

At the same time, Todd sought the aid of Benjamin Ames Kimball, the second man destined to inspire Tuck's support. Nearly seventy, nine years older than Tuck, Kimball had served as the Society's president between 1895 and 1897, but had been prevented by a strenuous business life from devoting his full energy to the institution even when he led it. A long career in railroading had endowed Kimball with a straightforward manner and a purposeful nature—attributes that Tuck respected and would soon rely heavily upon.

Tuck and Kimball had known of one another before the beginning of their common involvement with the Society's new building. Like most other prominent figures in the affairs of the Society at the turn of the twentieth century, both men were faithful alumni and strong supporters of Dartmouth College, and Kimball was a trustee of that institution and chairman of its finance committee. Despite this slight acquaintance with Tuck, however, even the fearless Kimball felt the need to rely upon a third party to ease his first communication with the philanthropist on the subject of a new building for the Society.

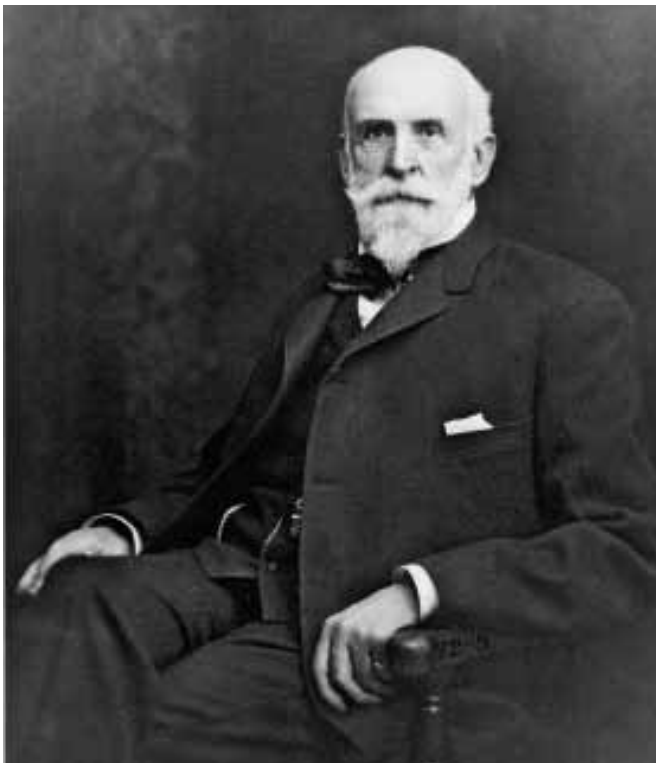
Kimball enlisted the aid of Society member Henry Webster Stevens, who had married a niece of Edward Tuck. In October 1901 Kimball wrote Stevens a detailed six-page letter describing the history and prospects of the Society and strongly urging the abandonment of the old building and site:



William Cleaves Todd (1823–1903) of Atkinson, oil on canvas, by Marion Powers, 1907, after Robert Gordon Hardie, 1902. As president of the New Hampshire Historical Society from 1899 to 1903, Todd actively promoted building expansion, though he did not live to see the cornerstone laid. New Hampshire Historical Society, gift of Samuel C. Eastman.

> The Society has now reached another important turning point in its history. Its present building, seventy-five years old, is very antiquated, inadequate and unsafe, with but little basement room and that low and dark. Only one room in the building can be warmed and made habitable in cold weather. Its library is so crowded as to render some of its contents practically inaccessible, and the building is generally inadequate for the uses of the Society.[6]

Although ostensibly sent to Stevens, Kimball's letter was clearly meant for Tuck's eyes. In a second letter of the same date, Kimball wrote to Stevens to reiterate his preference for a new site near the state house and to argue for a specific architectural style: "I should like to see a building erected in Greek Architecture, if that were possible. My ideas



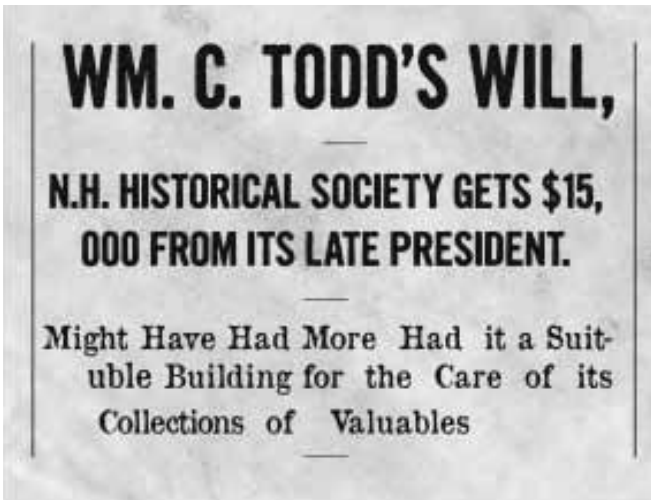
Benjamin Ames Kimball (1833–1920), photographed by J. E. Purdy and Co., Boston, c. 1900. The dedication, business sense, and uncompromising standards of the chairman of the Society's building committee contributed immensely to the quality of the completed structure. New Hampshire Historical Society.

may be pitched a little too high for our latitude, but hope not. I believe the best is none too good for New Hampshire."[7]

Three days later, Stevens dutifully wrote to his "Uncle Ned" in Paris, noting that "what [Kimball] says about the location of the library is correct . . . and when the Society builds, it should be in a more accessible place."[8] With Stevens's letter as an introduction, Kimball wrote directly to Tuck in the autumn of 1902, repeating his conviction that the Society should strive to construct an entirely new building rather than adding to the old one, and that this building should be located near the state capitol.[9] This was a point that meant much to Kimball, who had played an important role in locating the state library and the federal building close to the state house, and was one to which he would return again and again in letters and personal visits to Tuck.

Todd died in June 1903, without ever knowing the eventual success of his early appeal. Yet Todd's struggle during his last illness to find help for the Society clearly touched Edward Tuck deeply, moving him to become the sole donor of the new building and to permit no financial involvement from others except in the purchase of the land for the structure. As Tuck later said, "I was much impressed with Mr. Todd's passion, as I might call it, for the Society, and I was inspired by his example . . . to accomplish on a grand scale what he had to leave undone at his death."[10]

By the annual meeting of 1905, Kimball had pursued the matter with Tuck so much further that he could report "a possibility of a large gift for building and endowment." Two years later, the essential details of the building program had been settled, and the annual meeting of 1907 confirmed the appointment of a building committee with Kimball as its chairman. Though in the eighth decade of his life, Kimball would labor as hard on the new building as any of his younger associates, giving generously of his energy and wealth to ensure that the Society's building would be as perfect as the art and technology of the time could make it.

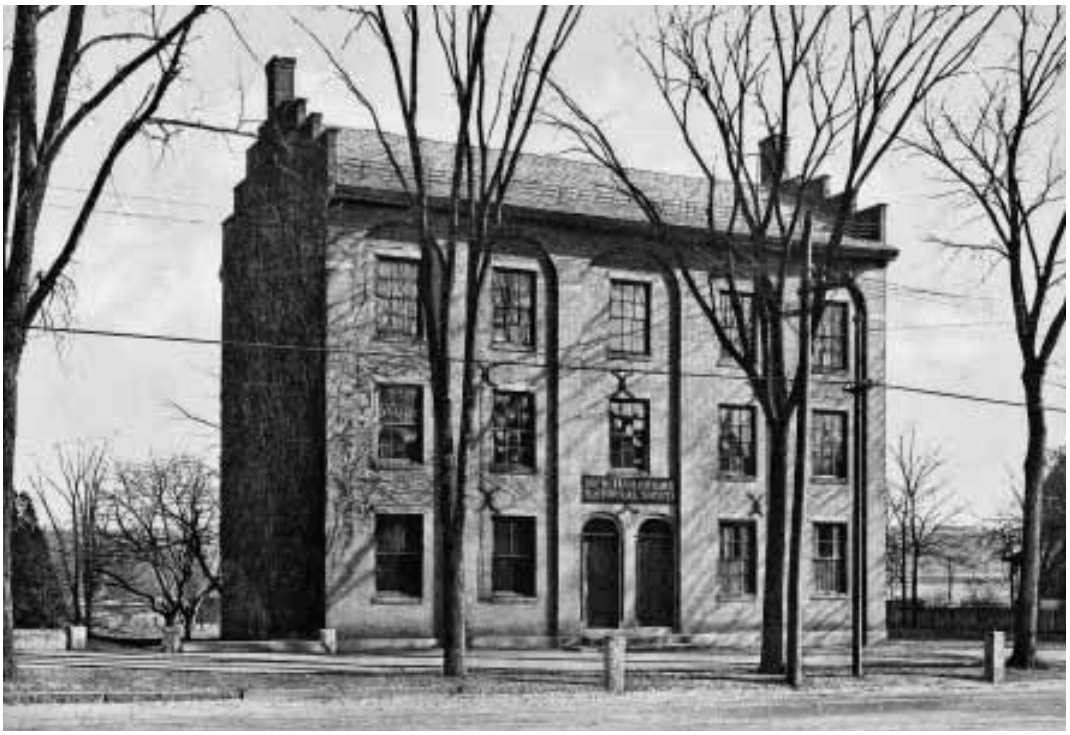


WM. C. TODD'S WILL,

N.H. HISTORICAL SOCIETY GETS $15, 000 FROM ITS LATE PRESIDENT.

Might Have Had More Had it a Suitable Building for the Care of its Collections of Valuables

Concord Evening Monitor, *July 2, 1903. Courtesy of the New Hampshire State Library.*



The New Hampshire Historical Society's former headquarters on North Main Street, photographed by the Kimball Studio, c. 1900. Erected in 1826 to house the Merrimack County Bank, this handsome building, designed by local architect John Leach, had been the Society's home since the 1840s and was extremely overcrowded by the turn of the twentieth century. New Hampshire Historical Society.

Panoramic photograph taken 1908–9 showing the commencement of construction work on the Society's new home, as well as its strategic location on Park Street, with the state library, state house, and federal building (legislative office building) just beyond. When finished it would be praised as "a notable addition to the unique group now known as Concord's 'civic center'" (Concord Daily Patriot, *November 23, 1911). New Hampshire Historical Society.*

Interior at North Main Street, photographed after the removal of the book collection to the new library, c. 1912. The walls of this building were brick, but its interior was combustible. Although a fireproof vault had been built about 1895, plans were developing by 1900 for a large fireproof addition at this site. New Hampshire Historical Society.

SPLENDID SITE.

LAND ACQUIRED FOR N.H. HISTORICAL SOCIETY BUILDING

Almost an Entire Square Purchased, Upon Which Beautiful Marble Structure Will be Erected by Generosity of Hon. Edward Tuck of Paris.

Concord Evening Monitor, *April 21, 1908. Courtesy of the New Hampshire State Library.*

Benjamin Ames Kimball (1833–1920) received his bachelor of science degree from Dartmouth in 1854. Following college, he rose from draftsman to superintendent of the mechanical department of the Concord Railroad, designing a number of advanced locomotives. Leaving after eleven years to establish a successful foundry business, Kimball returned to railroading as an executive in 1873, becoming president of the Concord and Montreal Railroad in 1895. Kimball's later career was filled with service as a director of many New Hampshire corporations, as the supporter of numerous civic improvements in Concord and Boscawen (chief among them being his superintendency of the building of the state library in 1894), and as a trustee of Dartmouth College. At the time of his supervision of the construction of the Society's new building, Kimball was simultaneously the president of a railroad, a bank, and an electric company; part owner of a foundry; a member of the board of directors of an insurance firm and a silverware company; and chairman of the finance committee of Dartmouth College.[11]

To such a man Tuck entrusted the completion of the Society's building. So great was the donor's faith in the integrity and high standards of the Society's representative that, as Corning pointed out, "from the beginning to the day of dedication no written promise, condition, contract or agreement ever passed between Edward Tuck and Benjamin A. Kimball."[12]

Kimball's first action, even before assuming chairmanship of the building committee, was to ensure that the Society could acquire choice building lots that would give the new building a setting worthy of the organization. From the turn of the century, Kimball had envisioned the Society's taking its place as an equal among the great institutions and buildings of Concord. The site he fixed upon was at the corner of Park and North State Streets, adjacent to the state library and supreme court building (1893–94), facing the United States courthouse and post office (1884–89), and diagonally behind the state capitol, which was destined to be doubled in size and given an impressive western front at the same time that the Society's building was rising. Early in his discussions with Tuck, Kimball pledged that the Society and its supporters would acquire this site.

Guy Lowell (1870–1927), the architect both of the New Hampshire Historical Society building (1907–11) and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (1906–9). Photograph from Dedication of the Building of the New Hampshire Historical Society, *1912.*

Not surprisingly, the lots on this important corner were already occupied by a number of substantial houses; adjacent lots, filling out the city block, were occupied by a large brick dwelling that housed the Episcopal bishop and by a small wooden church. To acquire enough land for the projected building, Kimball and his fellow trustee Samuel C. Eastman began quietly to purchase properties, pledging their personal credit to obtain a bank loan after the Society's available cash of $23,000 was used up.[13] In time, many others would contribute to the fund, foremost among them being Edward Tuck himself, who gave $10,000 to purchase one house near the corner of Park and Green Streets and another $14,000 to buy the small wooden Second Advent Christian Church at the corner of Green and Centre.

Meanwhile, in September 1907, the Society's building committee had chosen Guy Lowell (1870–

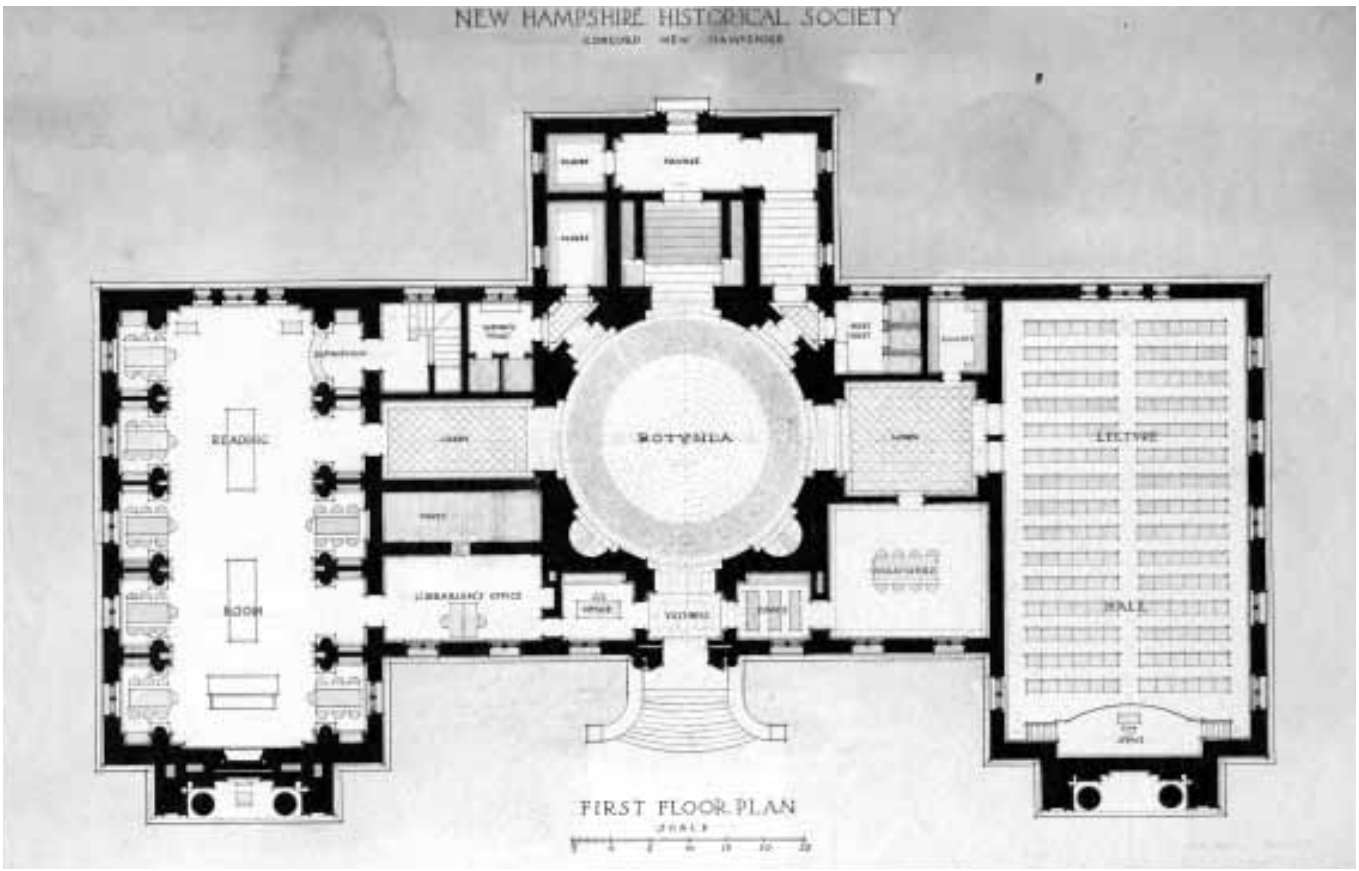
Huntington Avenue façade of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, December 1909. Guy Lowell's master plan for the Museum of Fine Arts, which opened to the public at its new location in November 1909, was carried out in several stages. Lowell was involved with the museum's architectural development from 1906 to 1928. Photograph ©2011, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

1927) of Boston as its architect, and Kimball had asked Lowell to prepare preliminary sketches of a new building. Lowell had opened his office only about seven years earlier but was superbly educated and had already received many important commissions. A graduate of Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Lowell had spent an additional four years at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, then the world's preeminent center for architectural training. Although Lowell had designed buildings at Phillips Andover Academy, Harvard, and Brown before his connection with the Society, his greatest commission by far was Boston's monumental Museum of Fine Arts (1906–9), still rising as the architect began his plans for the Society's building.[14]

We cannot now know what form Lowell's initial sketches took, but Kimball's later reminiscences suggest that they depicted a dignified classical structure of brick, perhaps not unlike the building Tuck had already donated to Dartmouth for the Amos Tuck School of Business Administration. From 1901, Kimball had imagined a building of "Greek Architecture." Looking about the site he had selected for the new edifice, Kimball saw no public building of brick except the Concord City Hall; all the rest were of granite.

After much thought, Kimball took advantage of one of his annual European vacations to present the idea of a more monumental building material to Tuck. According to Kimball's reminiscence,

> After a few days discussion with Mr. Tuck, Mrs. Tuck said, "I think we had better say to Mr. Kimball that the best construction and design is none too good. We ought to have the best." Mr. Tuck said, "All right, I agree." This important decision made it necessary to make changes in the design to a more permanent form both in construction and design. At this time it was



Original first floor plan, New Hampshire Historical Society, ink on paper, signed "Guy Lowell, Architect," reproduced in printed form February 17, 1909, as part of a special supplement to the Concord Evening Monitor. *The supplement offered the public its first look at the planned building and also included the perspective view reproduced here on page 61.*

> decided that the building should be pure Greek in design. I informed Mr. and Mrs. Tuck that this would entail many more technical details not heretofore considered and could increase the cost very materially. They said, "Correct, we will build this building the best of its kind and you will proceed to erect it as suggested, avoiding publicity as far as possible."[15]

Architect Lowell now had the freedom to elaborate his earlier sketches. On July 30, 1908, the building committee accepted the architect's final plans and elevations of the structure (except for the doorway, which evolved separately in conjunction with sculptor Daniel Chester French's designs). Lowell's designs called for a perfectly symmetrical building, not unlike the architect's Museum of Fine Arts in concept but much smaller in scale. Both buildings derive their proportions, symmetry, and bold façades from principles long taught at the École des Beaux-Arts. Like the museum, the historical society building was designed to serve a particular purpose; only after that purpose was fulfilled through the provision of both ceremonial and utilitarian spaces was the building clothed in a specific architectural dress.

In deference to the wishes of Kimball and Tuck, Lowell gave the Society's building a Greek character, but this character was not achieved through the creation of a classic Greek temple. Rather, the building expresses its nature through architectural orders, sculptural devices and moulding profiles that are unique to Greek architecture.

Lowell, Kimball, and Tuck gave special consideration to the interiors of the building. As it stands, the structure reveals careful thought, fluent design, and unwavering adherence to the finest of materials in every public space. No other part of the building, however,

A plaster model of the proposed rotunda, photographed by Thomas E. Marr, Boston, probably 1909. The appearance of the model, intended for Kimball to take to Paris and share with Tuck, is known today only through surviving photographs. New Hampshire Historical Society.

can match the great central rotunda and its adjoining staircase for dramatic geometry and richness of materials. Lacking Lowell's original sketches of the building, we can only guess at the more modest design the architect at first offered the building committee. According to Kimball's reminiscences, this space had originally been far more contracted in design, its walls finished with Keene's cement (a hard wall plaster used elsewhere in the building) and limestone rather than marble. As Kimball later related,

> I suggested to Mr. Lowell the idea of enlarging the dome and the rotunda by making an extension to the north, which would make it possible for the enlargement of the rotunda and [would] increase the importance of the grand staircase, together with a dome that would be beautiful and grand. . . . After long study, I made up my mind that the rotunda and the grand staircase and gallery should all be of marble, supported by marble arches; their greatness would add to the beauty and grandeur of the building. To which Mr. Lowell said, "Yes, they would be grand, but do you understand, Mr. Kimball, all of this will cost money, and are you prepared to pay the difference in cost?"[16]

Kimball could give no answer to Lowell's question without a visit to Paris. In preparation for his trip, Kimball and Lowell had a plaster model of the proposed rotunda prepared, with electric illumination to illustrate the effects of changing light. Probably at Lowell's suggestion, Kimball settled upon old convent grey Siena marble, quarried for centuries by Italian monks and always in limited supply, as the proper sheathing for the vaulting of the rotunda. Acting with his usual decisiveness, Kimball promptly "secured an option on all of the blocks of [this] marble that the agents in this country had on hand, for this job, in case Mr. Tuck should authorize it."[17] As in the decision to use granite for the exterior of the building, Julia Tuck seems to have settled the question of marble for the rotunda when she said, "Edward, let's have this the best."[18]

The building committee, the architect, and the donor considered several types of granite for the exterior of the building, including a dark Maine stone. Finally, under the influence of local quarryman

Timothy P. Sullivan (1844–1926), construction overseer, "whose large experience in the granite business amply assured the building committee . . . that the result would be as nearly perfect as human hands could make it" (Concord Daily Patriot*, November 23, 1911*). *Portrait from the* Granite Monthly, *1922.*

Carving and stonework detail. In his specifications for the Society, Guy Lowell named John Evans or Hugh Cairns of Boston to execute the building's carving. New Hampshire Historical Society.

CONTRACT AWARDED

And Work on Historical Society Building Will Begin at Once.

The contract for the new building in this city of the New Hampshire Historical society with the Central Building company of Worcester, Mass., has been signed and the work will begin at once.

The granite will be from the Concord quarries of the New England Granite company.

Concord Evening Monitor, *March 27, 1909. Courtesy of the New Hampshire State Library.*

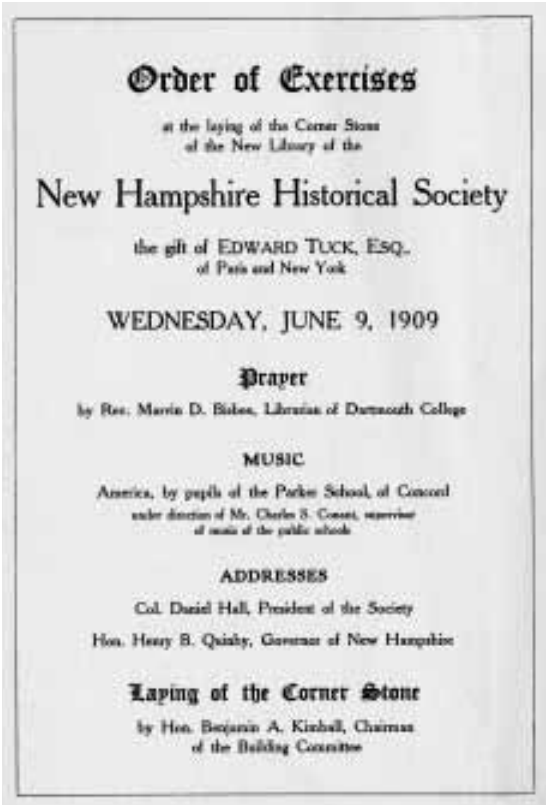
Timothy P. Sullivan, all parties agreed on Concord granite, the same stone that had been used for the state house and the federal building across the street.

The exceptional quality of the exterior of the Society's building derives from two features of the stonework, both of them essential to the realization of Lowell's design yet destined to cause great difficulty between the Society and its contractors. The first is the unusual fineness and perfection of the smoothing of the plain granite walls, necessary for the full expression of the blue-white color and fine grain of the Concord stone. The second is the delicacy and complexity of certain parts of the Greek Doric order that encircles the building; these details taxed the skill of stonecutters and sometimes exceeded the cohesive strength of the granite.

To oversee this exacting work, the Society turned to Timothy P. Sullivan (1844–1926). A native of Ireland, Sullivan had come to the United States at about sixteen and learned granite cutting at Quincy, Massachusetts. Soon moving to Concord and becoming an expert stone carver, Sullivan sought partners and opened a small granite business. Securing the granite contract for the United States courthouse and post office in Concord, Sullivan's firm soon began to supply stone for similar buildings and to purchase several quarries. In the 1880s Sullivan became the agent of New England Granite Works of Westerly, Rhode Island, to quarry Concord granite for the Library of Congress. Upon completion, the library was the largest granite building in the world, establishing the national reputation of Concord granite as a material and of Sullivan as an expert on stone. Sullivan was later employed as inspector for the massive dry dock at the Portsmouth Navy Yard and for the Senate Office Building in Washington. In January 1909 Sullivan agreed to work for the Society as its inspector at five dollars per day; within a month, an engineer at the Brooklyn Navy Yard tried in vain to entice the quarryman to New York at fourteen dollars a day.[19]

In March 1909, with the new building's foundations

The cornerstone laying ceremony, June 9, 1909. "The stone, which was laid at the southeast corner of the new structure, was without the usual copper box, by reason of the fact that the building, absolutely fire-proof in every detail of its construction, is a box in itself which will preserve its contents for all time" (Concord Evening Monitor, *June 9, 1909*). *New Hampshire Historical Society.*



Order of Exercises

at the laying of the Corner Stone
of the New Library of the

New Hampshire Historical Society

the gift of EDWARD TUCK, ESQ.,
of Paris and New York

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 9, 1909

Prayer

by Rev. Marvin D. Bisbee, Librarian of Dartmouth College

MUSIC

America, by pupils of the Parker School, of Concord
under direction of Mr. Charles S. Conant, supervisor
of music of the public schools

ADDRESSES

Col. Daniel Hall, President of the Society

Hon. Henry B. Quinby, Governor of New Hampshire

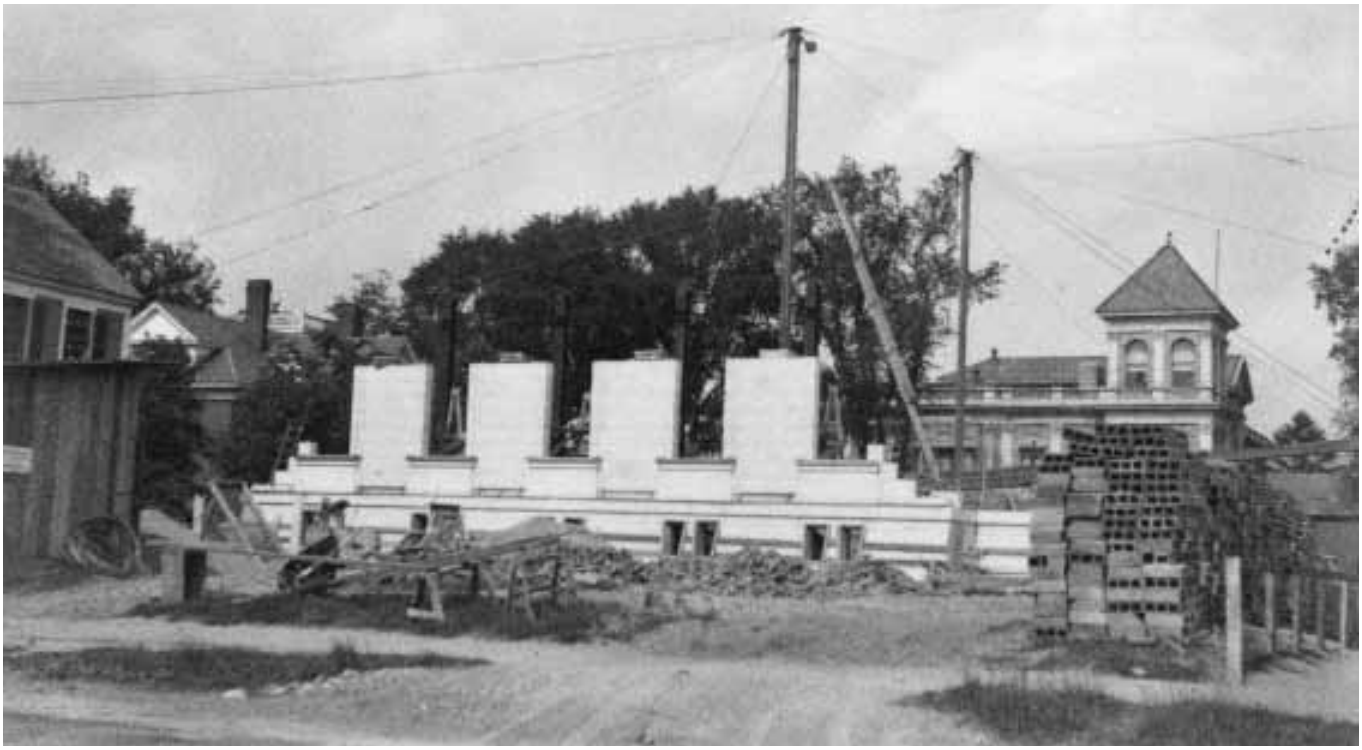
Laying of the Corner Stone

by Hon. Benjamin A. Kimball, Chairman
of the Building Committee

well underway, the contract for erecting the remainder of the structure was awarded to the Central Building Company of Worcester, Massachusetts, as general contractors, for a total price of $204,740. The New England Granite Works of Rhode Island was chosen as the supplier of granite. This firm owned a Concord quarry that it had purchased from Timothy Sullivan in preparation for the Library of Congress job, and its president, James G. Batterson, was a recognized expert on the New England granites. The Lautz Company of Buffalo, New York, was selected to supply and set the marble for the interior.

It was not long before tensions began to develop, centering mainly on the Society's strict interpretation of architect Lowell's granite specifications. These had called for all exterior ashlar to be "ten cut work," with a surface finish achieved through the cutting of ten fine striations per inch across the surface of the stone. This treatment produced a virtually smooth but unpolished texture when viewed from a distance of more than a few feet. The specifications permitted

Work underway on the foundation, spring 1909. During the cornerstone laying ceremony, Kimball expressed the hope that "this building of granite, marble, steel and bronze [may] exist forever," yet a series of problems seemed to threaten its completion. New Hampshire Historical Society.



The walls beginning to rise, summer 1909. Before long, disputes over the quality of the granite cutting and a resulting labor walkout delayed the work until a compromise could be reached. New Hampshire Historical Society.

no stone to reveal the slightest cupping, depression, or unevenness on its face. Lowell arranged to have a stone with the required finish available for all bidders to examine; when the contract was awarded, half of this sample was kept on the job and half was taken by the stone supplier to the quarries as a standard of workmanship.

In June 1909, with the walls of the building laid only up to the first floor level, Edward Miner, president of the Central Building Company, and James Batterson, president of the New England Granite Works, traveled to Concord to complain personally to Benjamin Kimball about Timothy Sullivan's strict oversight of the granite cutters and setters. Batterson brought with him new samples of finished stone, requesting that these be substituted for the original sample as a new standard of workmanship.

Lowell would have none of it, noting that "it would be distinctly inadvisable to accept any new standard for the granite cutting or surfacing," and reiterating Timothy Sullivan's authority to reject any stones that did not conform strictly to the established standard.[20] Within days, fifteen stonecutters had picked up their tools and quit, stating that "they could not and would not try to cut the work as called for by Inspector Sullivan." Batterson, who had employed Sullivan years earlier to superintend the cutting of granite for the Library of Congress and to inspect the stone for the Senate Office Building, now

Work on hold for the winter, 1909–10. Progress during the fall was slow, and, despite warnings from Lowell, the roof was not capped before cold weather arrived. In the spring the tarpaulins were thrown aside, and the walls again began to rise toward the cornice. Rough blocks of granite appear over the doorway where the sculptural group is today. New Hampshire Historical Society.

Detail of the Doric cornice with its fragile guttae. "Under Mr. Sullivan's careful supervision, ... no detail was too trifling to be overlooked, and his painstaking inspection, while necessitating slow progress, made the work when completed a model of excellence" (Concord Daily Patriot*, November 23, 1911).*

found himself lamenting to Kimball that "we are up against it if we are to be held up on inspections on the rest of the building as we have been on the [work up to the] water table."[21]

An uneasy truce was arranged, with Batterson agreeing to send four huge blocks of stone from Concord to Westerly so that the company's best men could be employed in cutting them into monolithic Doric columns for the two front pavilions of the building. In turn, Lowell instructed Sullivan to allow the contractors to set certain stones in the building's walls and to do "very slight surface trimming" later.

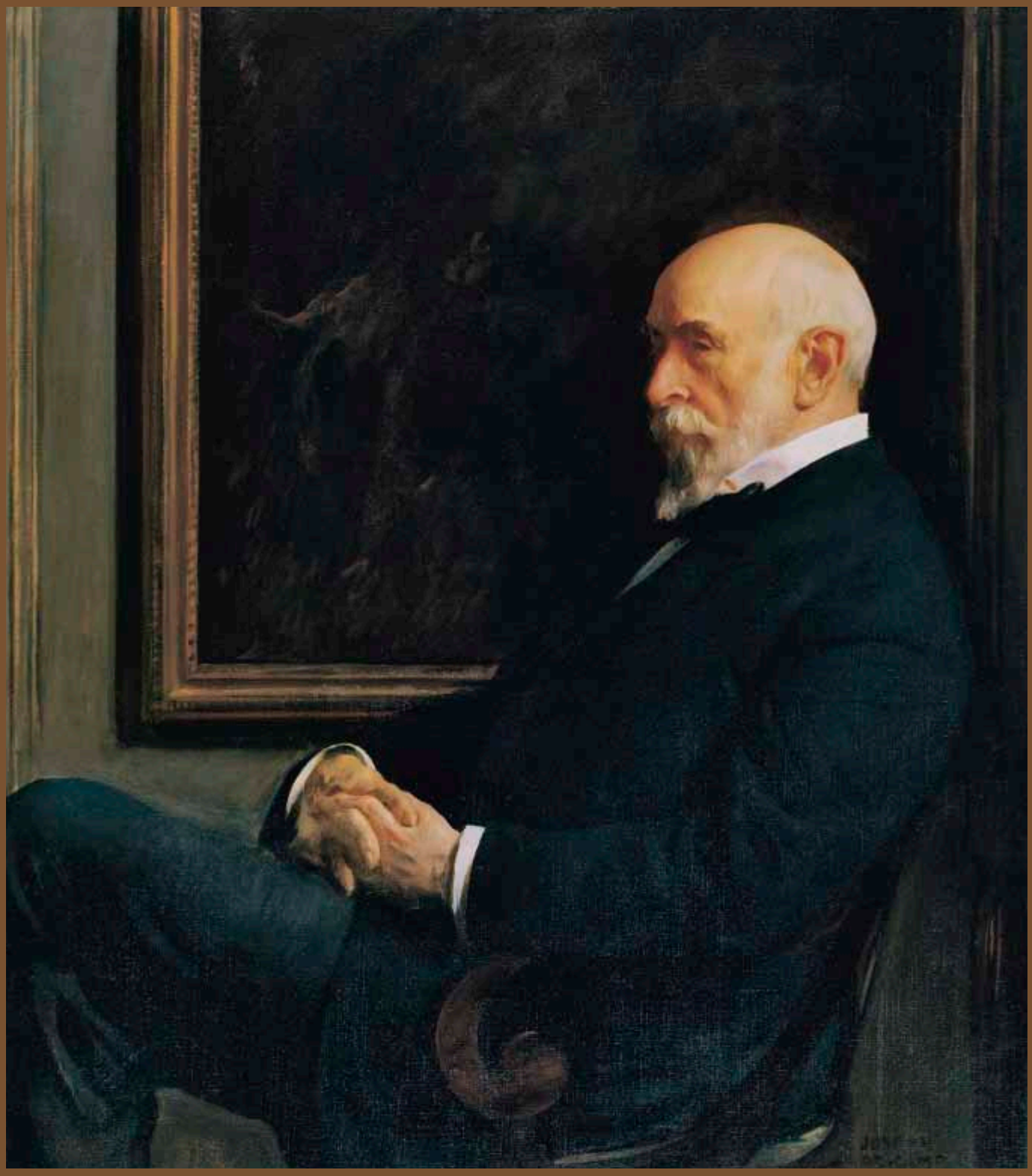
These adjustments allowed the walls to continue to rise, but the exacting work proceeded slowly and cold weather loomed long before the building was ready to receive its roof. Central Building Company also held the contract for the western addition to the state house, which was rising at the same time as the Society's building. From the Society's perspective, the firm seemed to give preference to that job, which was completed by the autumn of 1910. New England Granite Works continued to lag in supplying cut stone that would pass Sullivan's rigorous inspection.

In September 1909 Lowell formally notified the Central Building Company that a breach of contract would occur if the building were not roofed before winter. By early December, with the walls only four feet above the second floor level, Sullivan discovered the masons laying granite when the temperature stood at only twenty-two degrees, and setting blocks without the support of a proper backing of brickwork, in clear violation of specifications. When, at the middle of the month, Sullivan saw contractors "putting lumps of frozen sand, unmixed, as large or larger than your fist, into the [concrete] mixer," Lowell ordered all work halted and the building's uncapped walls protected by tarpaulins for the duration of the winter.[22]

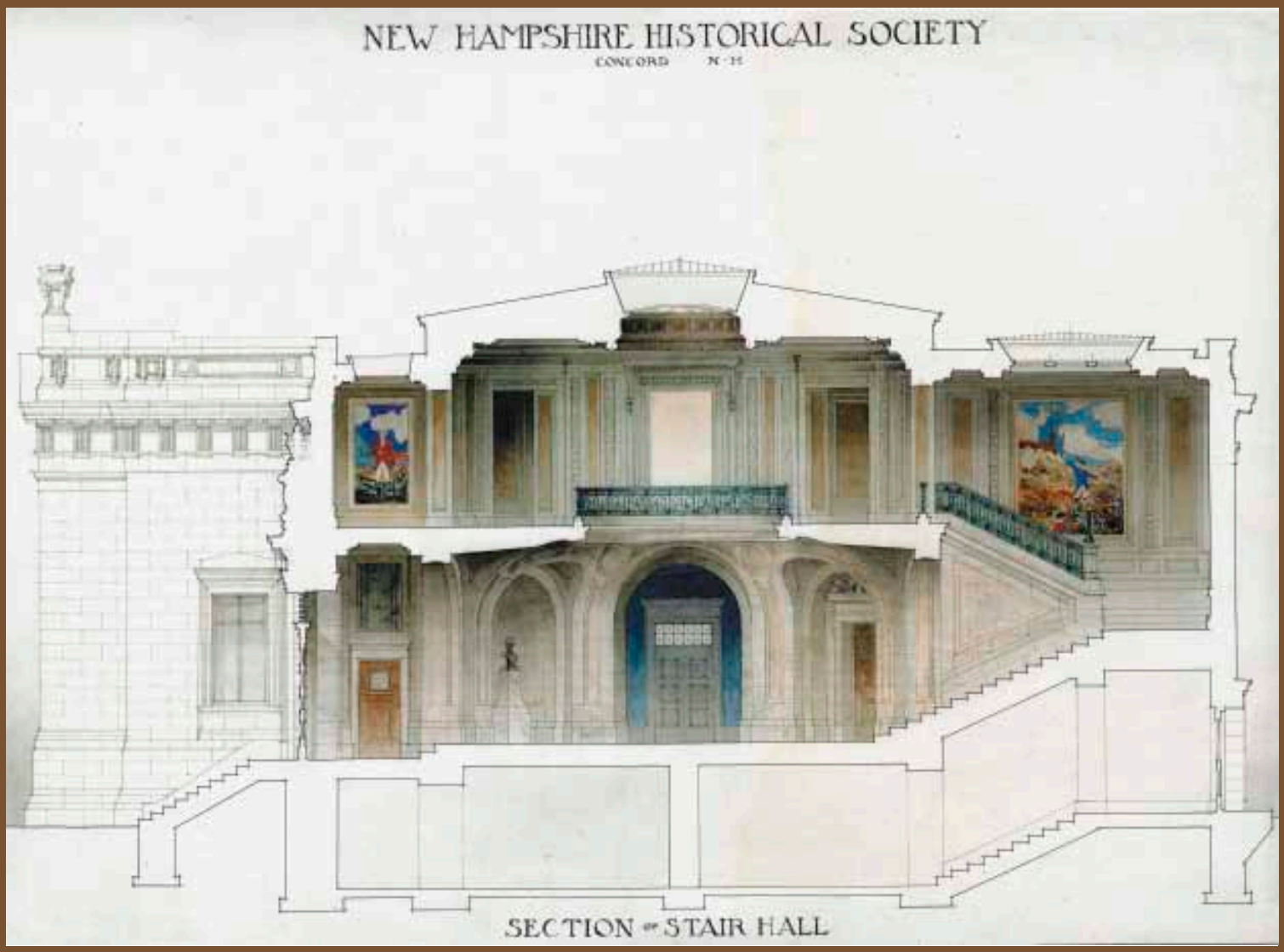
The Society's granite problems were far from over. With the return of mild weather in the spring of 1910, the walls again began to rise toward the cornice of the building. Among the characteristic elements of the Doric cornice are square projecting blocks called *mutules*; the bottoms of these are studded with a multitude of discs called *guttae*. In the cornice of the Society's building, each mutule has eighteen guttae, which are spaced closely and are only about an inch in diameter. Each of the massive stones of the cornice includes one full mutule, two half mutules, and the heavy crown moulding above them.

The stonecutters quickly discovered that the guttae were inclined to shear off after being cut, spoiling otherwise perfect cornice stones. In some instances, the cutters proceeded to reattach the broken discs with brass screws. The lynx-eyed Sullivan identified and condemned thirty-three stones with mended guttae, scornfully denouncing the patching technique as "done after the dentist's trade." Admitting that the New England Granite Works was likely to lose from ten to fifteen thousand dollars on the strictly enforced stonecutting contract, Sullivan nevertheless advised Kimball that "if the bars are let down on this item, every other sub-contractor and the general contractor will take it as an excuse to try and cheapen the remaining work."[23]

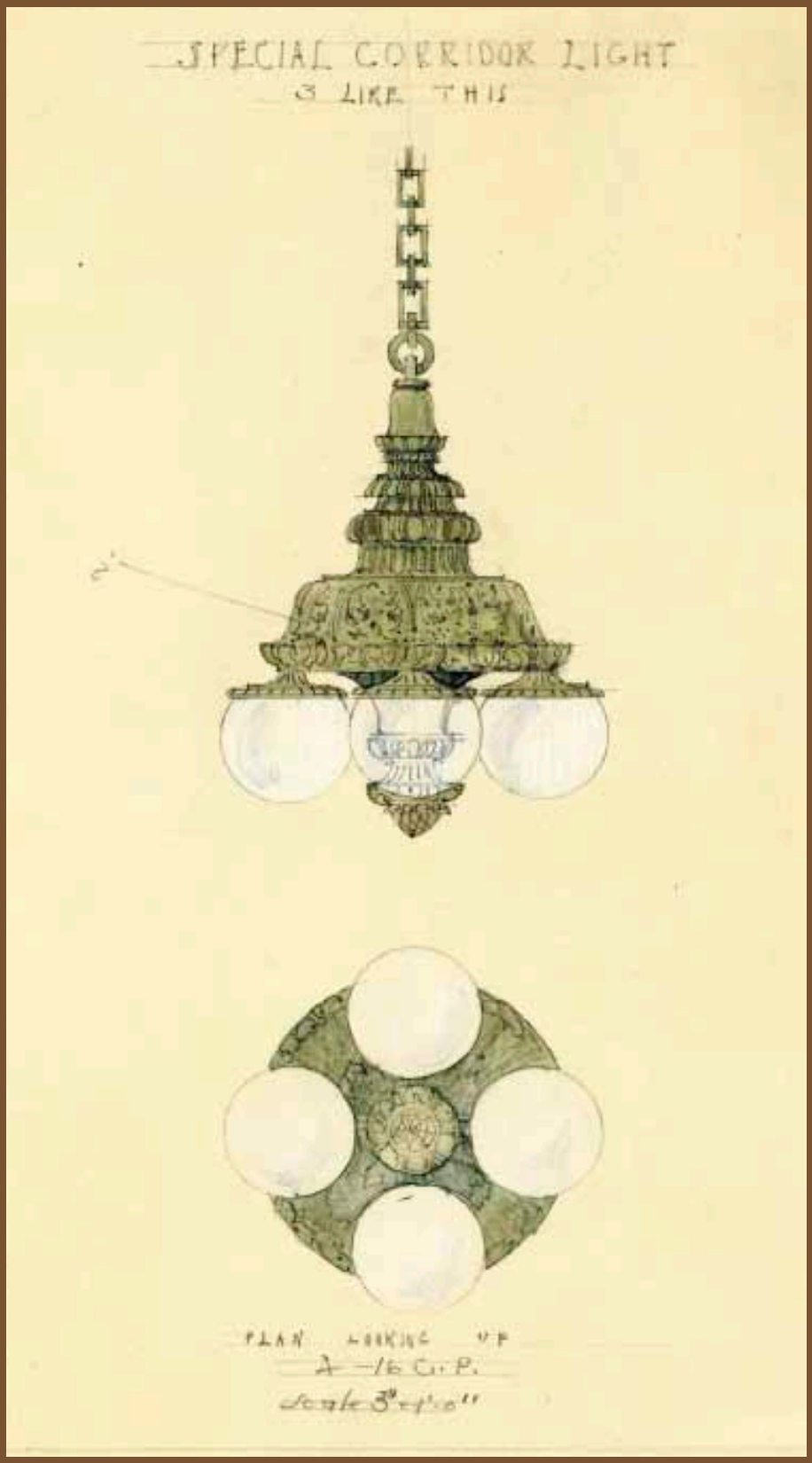
In the end, the problem was solved through Edward Tuck's generosity. In order to maintain the



Portrait of Benjamin Ames Kimball (1833–1920), oil on canvas by Joseph Rodefer DeCamp (1858–1923), c. 1904. The business-like chairman of the Society's building committee saw eye-to-eye with Edward Tuck and Guy Lowell, but sculptor Daniel Chester French's artistic temperament offered more of a challenge. Courtesy of the Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire; gift of Benjamin A. Kimball, Class of 1854.



Cross section of rotunda and grand stand case, ink and watercolor on paper, c. 1909. Among Guy Lowell's many floor plans, elevations, and technical drawings relating to the new building that survive in the New Hampshire Historical Society's archives, this is the only architectural rendering in full color. New Hampshire Historical Society.



Design for lighting fixture, ink and watercolor on paper, 1909–10. "The electric fixtures, all especially designed, in keeping with the character of the building, are of bronze" (from Dedication of the Building of the New Hampshire Historical Society, *1912). Use of electricity for aesthetic effect was a novelty at the time and, on the evening following the building's dedication, the Tucks, Kimball, French and four others made a special visit to the new building after dark to "stud[y] its beauties under the softening influence of the electric light"* (Concord Evening Monitor, *November 24, 1911). New Hampshire Historical Society.*

The main entrance, stairway, and reading room, color postcards, c. 1911–12. Concord's Kimball Studio photographed the building's special features, inside and out, soon after construction was completed. Their photographs appeared in color as postcards as well as in sepia in the volume that the Society published in 1912 to commemorate the dedication. Color postcards were extremely popular around the time that the Society's new building opened. New Hampshire Historical Society.

Detail of marble. The marble for the building was cut and carved in Buffalo, New York, in the shops of Lautz Company, the marble contractor. As with the granite, the Society's representatives had to inspect the work rigorously to ensure its quality.

highest of standards while easing the contractor's distress, Tuck agreed to contribute a certain proportion of the value of the labor entailed in recutting most of the imperfect stones. New England Granite Works calculated the cost of replacing twenty-nine of the cornice pieces at $2,100; Tuck eventually paid $1,300, or $50 for each of twenty-six stones that were re-cut.[24]

Meanwhile, comparable problems had emerged with the vaulting and marble sheathing of the building's first-story rotunda. The design of the lower rotunda called for the pouring of a concrete dome, to be covered with a heavy veneer of Siena marble. In May 1910 the results of the contractors having mixed and placed concrete in freezing weather became apparent. As Sullivan reported,

> The contractors have commenced to pick away the loose concrete of the dome work done last December, and I find in some places after going through the top surface, that the stuff is nearly all loose sand and stone with here and there a piece of solid concrete about three or four inches through, and the frost not quite out yet, as it gets damp in the sun. These few pieces lay like boulders in a bank. I am afraid that a large part of this dome concrete . . . would be unfit to do the work the concrete dome is expected to do.[25]

Sullivan further recalled that as the dome was being poured the previous December, "almost the entire cement in this part of the dome was allowed to run through the dome to the basement. . . . The clear cement ran all day into the floor beneath and from there down the basement stairs, so that I think that there is no cement left in a large mass of this stuff."

The defective dome was only part of the problem. By late fall 1910 the windows of the building, not yet glazed, were covered with cloth screens and the boilers fired up to provide heat for the marble setters and plasterers. Marble for the rotunda, floors, and trim of the building was being cut in the Buffalo shops of Lautz Company. But it quickly became apparent that only a fraction of the needed marble was being prepared, and in late October Lowell threatened to exercise his contractual right to discharge the marble contractor and substitute another in his place.

The Lautz Company promised to speed its work without compromising quality. In January 1911 Lowell traveled to Buffalo to inspect the marble being prepared for the lower rotunda and found the stone "excellent." Within a month however, Kimball was forced to telegraph Lowell, "Lautz Company foreman has set this morning a patched stone that was rejected by . . . Sullivan."[26] This was followed by a flurry of disputes over patched marble, with Lowell sending an assistant to Concord to try to mediate between the contractors and the ever-alert Kimball and Sullivan.

The battle over patched marble continued for several months. Because the variegated nature of Siena marble creates a tendency for pieces to break during final finishing, Lowell finally agreed to permit certain stones, properly patched at the marble works, to be set in the walls, but only when approved by Sullivan. Even this concession did not solve the problem, and by early March 1911 there was a possibility that the Lautz Company was "prepared to throw up the work and enter into a legal battle on the point."[27] The marble subcontractor continued to set condemned stones in defiance of Sullivan's inspections and

Rotunda floor tiles. Lowell specified marble tiles in the rotunda, Grueby art tiles in the library, and brick-like Mercer tiles in the second-floor gallery. A large number of tiles needed to be reset due to shoddy workmanship detected by Kimball and Sullivan.

Lowell's orders. Finally, on March 21, Lowell ordered all marble work on the building halted. Within a week, Lautz Company sent representatives from Buffalo to the job, ordered all condemned pieces of stone removed, and began to comply fully with Lowell's specifications.

New marble problems emerged during the summer of 1911, and Kimball's continuing frustration in dealing with recalcitrant contractors evolved into a well-founded anxiety that the structure would not be finished in time for Edward Tuck's long anticipated trip from Paris to dedicate the building in the autumn. By August Kimball noticed a hollow sound as he walked over some of the marble floor tiles then being set. Kimball sent Sullivan to Boston to compare this work with the tiling at the Museum of Fine Arts, reporting to Lowell that when Sullivan returned and "walked over our floors which are like a sounding board, he came to me full of wrath."[28]

Fully exasperated with the Central Building Company and their marble subcontractor, Lowell and Kimball decided on a radical course of action. The original contract had called for the building to be completed by May 1, 1910. Now, there was a serious question whether the structure could be completed even a year and a half after that date. Knowing that the Central Building Company was facing financial difficulties, the two proposed that the New Hampshire Historical Society would discharge the company, paying it a small profit. The Society would assume full control of the job and deal directly with those subcontractors or individual craftsmen who could be trusted to meet the highest standards of workmanship. Having already lost much money on the job due to the Society's unwavering adherence to Lowell's specifications, Central Building Company agreed to relinquish their contract in return for payment of outstanding charges for completed work, plus a $500 profit.[29]

The Society now had a little more than two months to complete the building before the Tucks, whose ship was expected at the end of September, would be obliged to take return passage to Paris. The full burden of overseeing the work fell upon the shoulders of the seventy-eight-year-old Kimball.

Still greatly vexed over the hollow-sounding floor tiles that Lautz Company had set, Kimball had a marble setter lift some of the tiles. Beneath the bedding mortar, Kimball found "half to three-quarters of an inch of spent lime dust where all those hollow tile appear." Lowell had officially condemned only fifteen of these improperly set tiles during final settlement with Central Building Company. With no other recourse, Kimball agreed to pay from his own pocket the cost of re-setting the remainder— twelve hundred in the auditorium alone.[30]

Nor was this Kimball's only contribution in money to the perfect completion of the building. Early in 1909 Kimball had begun arrangements to obtain a monumental bronze tablet that would commemorate Edward Tuck's generosity. Seeking the advice of Lowell and of the Gorham Company of Providence, Kimball at length chose a composition supplied by Gorham and had the tablet cast at his own expense. Lowell designed an elaborately carved marble enframement at the landing of the grand staircase, where the tribute is seen through the massive vaulting and illuminated from above by a skylight.

As the day of the building's dedication neared, the

William H. Jackson Company of New York, bronze subcontractors for the building, offered to set Kimball's tablet free of charge. Kimball found himself unprepared for this kindness, almost unique in the troubled three years since construction had begun. "It has been so unusual for any contractors to offer to do any little extra work gratuitously," wrote Kimball, "that I hardly know how to express myself for this act of courtesy on your part."[31]

Above the fireplace in the Society's reading room is a marble tablet bearing a somewhat cryptic dedication to the "Contributors in Historical Research for the Maintenance of this Building and the Purchase of the Land Upon Which It Stands." Easily overlooked by users of the library, this tablet cost much in time, trouble, and money. Kimball went so far as to describe the stone as "one of the finest individual pieces of art construction in the building, and perhaps next in importance to the Daniel Chester French design over the entrance."[32]

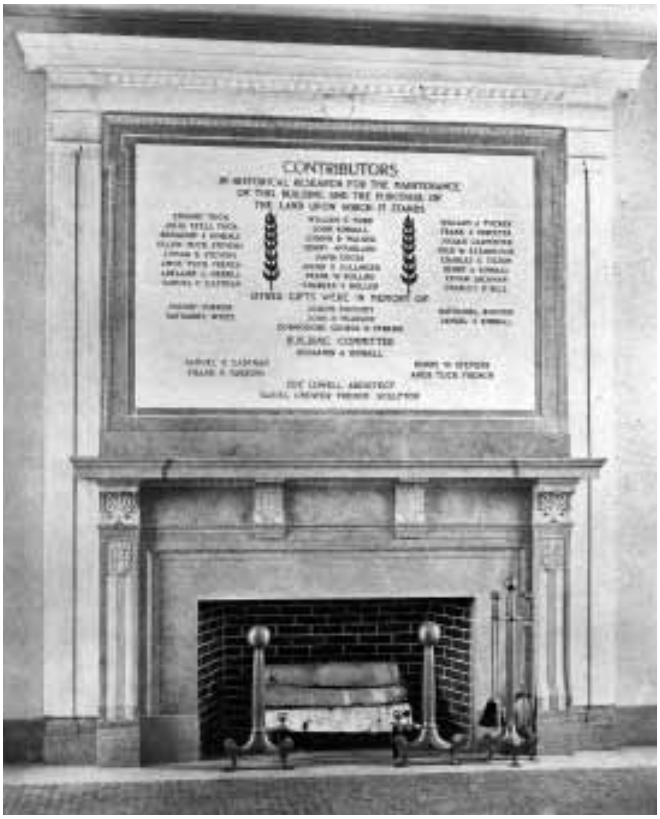
The tablet resulted from Kimball's long campaign to obtain contributions for the purchase of the several properties that made up the Society's lot. In order to interest potential donors, Kimball had Lowell draw up a design for the tablet, then had that design reduced to pocket size so that it could be shown to prospective contributors at any opportunity. Eventually, Kimball obtained pledges of at least a thousand dollars each from more than thirty donors.

Lowell's concept for the contributors' tablet called for a single piece of flawless stone to be bordered by a marble architrave above the library fireplace. Set into this stone would be letters of cast bronze, each requiring a precisely cut recess. As late as the summer of 1911, only four months before the dedication of the building, no appropriate stone had been found. When one promising type of Vermont marble proved to have too greenish a cast, Lowell suggested to Kimball that the tablet would probably have to be fashioned from three separate pieces of foreign statuary marble of the proper color. Kimball resigned himself to the situation with a phrase that had become his virtual motto through years of tribulation: "What cannot be helped must be endured."[33]

At the last possible moment, however, Timothy Sullivan located a perfect piece of marble in New York. Kimball had the stone rushed to Boston for the inlaying of the letters by bronze specialists T. F. McGann and Sons. But a new problem loomed. As Kimball later recalled,

> When the work was one-half finished, the workmen wanted to give up the job on account of their eyes failing. I got in communication with them and offered them a few days off every week and full pay to rest their eyes so they could go on to completion. The men accepted my offer and after some weeks the tablet was finished.[34]

Bronze tablet, produced by the Gorham Company of Providence and set within a marble enframement at the head of the grand staircase, c. 1910. Benjamin Kimball personally commissioned this tablet in honor of Edward Tuck. New Hampshire Historical Society.



Contributors' tablet. Problems involving the production of the marble tablet over the reading room fireplace, with its inlaid bronze lettering, were among the last of many faced by the building committee as dedication day drew near. New Hampshire Historical Society.

Now, all was ready for the official opening of the building. On November 23, 1911, at the last possible moment before the Tucks had to meet their ship for the return to France, the New Hampshire Historical Society building was dedicated with impressive orations and ceremonies that were memorialized in a book-length publication. That publication, like the building itself, is a polished and perfect product of its era. Neither edifice nor book betrays the slightest hint of the long-sustained struggle embodied in the Society's home. In completion, as Edward Tuck said, the New Hampshire Historical Society's building stood "in its perfection of artistic design and of material execution, [as] a source of gratification and pride for all time to the people of New Hampshire."[35]

The symbolic key to the building was passed from the hand of Edward Tuck to that of Benjamin Kimball. Kimball delivered the token of "New Hampshire's Temple of History" to president Daniel Hall. Tuck then turned the eyes of the Society away from the trials of the past and to a bright future. "It is my expectation," said the philanthropist, "that the Historical Society, in its home which we are dedicating today, will take on new life and usefulness, that an awakened interest in it throughout the State will be made manifest by an increasing membership, and that its precious possessions will be largely added to now that their security and preservation are permanently assured."[36]

Some years later, when Judge Corning asked for Kimball's and Tuck's memories of the "unwritten history" of the Society's building, Tuck paid tribute to Kimball's essential role in the creation of the structure:

> It was only my faith in your wonderful taste and knowledge in artistic and architectural matters, and in your fidelity and zeal, heart and soul, in the work, that made me willing to place such a great sum of money in such an object. I can truly say that I consider it perhaps the happiest inspiration of my life to have gone into this enterprise, and to have brought it with you to so magnificent a conclusion, of which we and our successors will never cease to be proud.[37]

Notes

1. *Dedication of the Building of the New Hampshire Historical Society: The Gift of Edward Tuck* (Concord: New Hampshire Historical Society, 1912), 36.
2. "An Important Communication from the New Hampshire Historical Society," printed circular, July 16, 1900.
3. Charles Robert Corning, *The Unwritten History of the New Hampshire Historical Society Building* (Concord: New Hampshire Historical Society, 1920), 6.
4. Ibid., 21; Edward Tuck to William C. Todd, September 18, 1901, Edward Tuck Papers, New

Hampshire Historical Society, box 1, folder 3.
5. Corning, *Unwritten History,* 27; Edward Tuck to William C. Todd, December 9, 1902, Edward Tuck Papers, box 1, folder 3.
6. Benjamin A. Kimball to Henry W. Stevens, October 19, 1901, Edward Tuck Papers, box 1, folder 3.
7. Ibid.
8. Henry W. Stevens to Edward Tuck, October 22, 1901, Edward Tuck Papers, box 1, folder 3.
9. Benjamin A. Kimball to Edward Tuck, October 31, 1902, Edward Tuck Papers, box 1, folder 3. Also published in Corning, *Unwritten History*, 29–30.
10. Edward Tuck to Charles R. Corning, July 30, 1918, quoted in Corning, *Unwritten History*, 32.
11. Ezra S. Stearns, ed., *Genealogical and Family History of the State of New Hampshire*, 4 vols. (New York: Lewis Publishing Co., 1908), 1:7–10.
12. Corning, *Unwritten History*, 44.
13. Benjamin A. Kimball to Charles R. Corning, undated memorandum on contributors' tablet, Edward Tuck Papers, box 1, folder 5.
14. *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, 32 vols. (New York: James T. White and Co., 1898–1945), 21:47–49.
15. Benjamin A. Kimball to Charles R. Corning, July 16, 1917, p. 5, Edward Tuck Papers, box 1, folder 5.
16. Benjamin A. Kimball to Charles R. Corning, undated memorandum on the rotunda, Edward Tuck Papers, box 1, folder 5.
17. Ibid.
18. Benjamin A. Kimball to Charles R. Corning, July 16, 1917, p. 8, Edward Tuck Papers, box 1, folder 5.
19. "Timothy P. Sullivan, A Modest Citizen of Concord, Who Has Done Things," *Granite Monthly* 54 (September 1922): 306–16.
20. Guy Lowell to Benjamin A. Kimball, June 25, 1909, New Hampshire Historical Society Archives, Series 3, "New Hampshire Historical Society Building." *Unless otherwise cited, the following correspondence is from the same collection.*
21. James G. Batterson to Benjamin A. Kimball, July 6, 1909.
22. Guy Lowell to Central Building Company, December 4, 1909; Timothy P. Sullivan to Guy Lowell, December 6, 1909; Benjamin A. Kimball to Guy Lowell, December 17, 1909; Guy Lowell to Central Building Company, December 21, 1909.
23. Timothy P. Sullivan to Benjamin A. Kimball, March 17, 1910.
24. New England Granite Works to Guy Lowell, May 16, 1910; Benjamin A. Kimball to Guy Lowell, October 14, 1910; New England Granite Works to Henry W. Stevens, October 27, 1910.
25. Timothy P. Sullivan to Guy Lowell, May 16, 1910.
26. Guy Lowell to Benjamin A. Kimball, January 2, 1911; Benjamin A. Kimball to Guy Lowell (telegram), February 9, 1911.
27. Guy Lowell to Benjamin A. Kimball, March 8, 1911.
28. Benjamin A. Kimball to Guy Lowell, August 1, 1911.
29. Agreement between the Central Building Company and the New Hampshire Historical Society, September 1, 1911.
30. Guy Lowell to Benjamin A. Kimball, September 9, 1911; Benjamin A. Kimball to Guy Lowell, September 11, 1911; "Timothy P. Sullivan," *Granite Monthly* 54 (September 1922): 314.
31. Gorham Manufacturing Company to Benjamin A. Kimball, February 16, 1909; Gorham Manufacturing Company to Benjamin A. Kimball, July 15, 1909; Gorham Manufacturing Company to Benjamin A. Kimball, March 3, 1910; William H. Jackson Company to Benjamin A. Kimball, November 18, 1911; Benjamin A. Kimball to William H. Jackson Company, November 21, 1911.
32. Benjamin A. Kimball to Charles R. Corning, July 16, 1917, p. 7.
33. Benjamin A. Kimball to Guy Lowell, August 1,1911; see also, *Historical New Hampshire* 28 (Fall 1973): 219–20.
34. Benjamin A. Kimball to Charles R. Corning, undated memorandum on contributors' tablet, Edward Tuck Papers, box 1, folder 5.
35. *Dedication of the Building of the New Hampshire Historical Society*, 36.
36. Ibid., 37.
37. Corning, *Unwritten History*, 14.