

THE LEAGUE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE ARTS AND CRAFTS

New Hampshire developed the first state-sponsored handicraft organization in the country - The League of New Hampshire Arts and Crafts.

Governor John G. Winant heard of the work being accomplished by Mr. and Mrs. J. Randolph Coolidge in Center Sandwich in establishing an enterprise whereby the people in that community were earning money through craft work. He too had a vision of what might be done by making a project of this sort state wide. Therefore in May, 1931, he appointed the first Commission of Arts and Crafts.

This Commission made a survey of the resources of the State to discover what raw materials were available for crafts, and recommended that a definite arts and crafts training program should be organized and developed in New Hampshire. The Commission appointed as director Frank Staples who served the League for five years, through its initial stages.

The League was incorporated May 27, 1932, as a non-profit organization whose purpose was to help residents of the state to develop native skill and originality by making salable articles at home, thus supplementing their incomes.

Groups were organized throughout the state and their affiliated membership together with the individual and associate members constitute the League. Shops were located in strategic locations.

One of the first groups to be organized was that in Concord, which was established in 1931 as Concord Home Industries, a name later changed to Concord Arts and Crafts. In 1932 this group opened a shop in the old brick building at 258 North Main Street, built in 1830, which for many years had been occupied by a firm of book publishers, Roby, Kimball and Merrill. Here, also, was located headquarters of the League of New Hampshire Arts and Crafts. In 1946, when plans for the Concord By-Pass threatened demolition of this house, the state League purchased its present building at 205 North Main, as its headquarters and as a shop and class center for Concord Arts and Crafts. Parts of this building date back to 1801, and it is known that from 1814 to 1840 it was maintained as a tavern, The Eagle Hotel. Under League ownership some remodelling has been done and extensive additions made.

Director of the League from 1938 to 1962 was David R. Campbell, of Hopkinton, who lead the organization through a period of growth and steady rise in the quality of its crafts.

The League of New Hampshire Arts and Crafts now operates shops in Bristol, Center Sandwich, Franconia Notch, Hanover, Manchester, Meredith, North Conway, Sharon and Wolfeboro, as well as in Concord, and offers classes in some twenty-five communities throughout the state. The annual Craftsmen's Fair - this year the 32nd - was held at Sunapee State Park in Newbury. League director is Joseph Trippetti, of Manchester, an enamellist and metalsmith, appointed to the position in 1962.

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