

The History Corner

Walking West on Main Street in the Early 1900s

In these challenging times of driving by the names and faces of graduates, artfully placed in front of schools, here is a remembrance of commencement in the days of the horse and buggy. The students of New Hampton Literary Institute (NHLI) solemnly walk past the Gordon-Nash Library, dressed in their finest threads.

In this early 1900s photo (courtesy of the NHHS), the women are dressed in white – a tradition that went back at least 60 years. NHS student Sarah Stiles from Center Strafford, NH wrote to her mother in June of 1844 to report:

The school has examinations on Tuesday at the Institution and we have ours on Wednesday – at the Seminary. The girls all dress in white, and I do not know what I shall do, for I have not got a white dress... They have head-dresses here, made of beads, that they call bugge [bugel] beads, they are a small black bead, about half an inch long, and I think they are very pretty. I should not think they cost much. Miss Graves talks of having some and she wants me to have some, and I should like to know if you are willing, can we buy them here or send to Concord [for them]? If I had something to work with, I might learn to work with cruel [crewel] - very pretty.

Let us hope that Sarah was able to acquire a white dress in time for the ceremonies, as well as some bugel beads to work into a head-dress!



For more information on the history of the town, please visit the New Hampton Historical Society website at <https://www.newhamptonhistory.org/>

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