

HAYES-GENOTER HISTORY AND GENEALOGY LIBRARY

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Pelham Historical Society, Pelham, New Hampshire

William T. Hayes & Karen Genoter

# Best town history site? Pelham may have it

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PELHAM — Student discipline in Pelham in 1858 was “excellent,” read an entry in that year’s annual Pelham School Report. “Corporal punishment has been resorted to in only a few instances.”

That interesting line item is just one of millions of historical statements, facts and figures contained in 120 annual school and town reports — totaling 12,000 pages — dating back to 1856 that

Pelham Historical Society Director Bill Hayes and Webmaster Karen Genoter added recently to what was already regarded as the most comprehensive town historical online portal in existence: [www.pelhamnhhistory.org](http://www.pelhamnhhistory.org).

“There’s not another single-town online library like it, probably in New England if not the country,” said Hayes, who happened to be feeding another 250-page annual Pelham Town Report into his home computer-digital scanner when he answered the

phone yesterday. “We’ve uploaded probably over a million pages of information to the site so far, but that’s only 20 percent of the material I have. The online library is still only in its infancy.”

Hayes, 68 and a lifelong Pelham resident, had originally planned to fill the Pelham Historical Society’s new brick-and-mortar headquarters inside the Old Pelham Library with photocopied historical documents and photo scrapbooks — a daunting task. Then Genoter came to the rescue.

“On her own, Karen set up the Web site and that’s when the light bulb went off for me,” said Hayes. “I realized the best place for the (historical) library is online because now I don’t have to sit there while the library is open, and pay for lights and turn the heat on.”

Aside from the annual town reports, the Historical Society’s exhaustive Web site includes links to town birth and death

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records going back to 1743; gravestone etchings from the town's six cemeteries; lists of Pelham soldiers and battles they fought in; town maps; a biography of Benjamin Day, a stone carver, who lived from 1783-1855; letters written by resident Angeline Barker in 1841 and '42; various reports on the 1903 Trolley Wreck; hundreds of historic photos, plus updated aerial shots of the town's signature buildings; and a full account of Pelham's 200th anniversary celebration in 1946.

"In 1946, it's interesting that year's Pelham police budget was listed in the Town Report as \$343," said Hayes. "Fifty years later, on the town's 250th (birthday) in 1996, it was over \$1 million."

The Web site also offers half a dozen town histories written by Augustus Berry, CW Hobbs. And — a genealogist's true feast — a 1750 Pelham residents list, showing who was there for Pelham's founding in 1746, plus historical bloodlines of the town's earliest settlers, including the Richardson, Baldwin, Butler, Noyes, Davis, Hamblett, and Snow families.

"I really should be on the payroll of the Pelham Public Library or town clerk for saving them hundreds of hours of research," said Hayes, only partly in jest.



Pelham historian Bill Hayes, shown entering the Pelham Historical Society, is co-founder of the Hayes-Genoter Pelham History and Genealogy Online Library. He's also lead caretaker of the town's historical artifacts and photos, which are on display at the Pelham Historical Society museum in the former Pelham Library. SUN/JOHN COLLINS

## HAYES-GENOTER HISTORY AND GENEALOGY LIBRARY

The frequent phone calls, e-mails and personal visits to Hayes, the town clerk, or public library from genealogists inquiring about their family histories have stopped completely since the Hayes-Genoter historical site went online. Well, almost.

"A few weeks ago, I was getting ready (for a Historical Society event) at the Old

*Library and a guy walks in saying he just drove up from Philadelphia and he was looking for the library to do some genealogy research,"* said Hayes. "He could have saved a lot of gas by going online. I told him, 'Everything you need is sitting on your desk in Philadelphia.'"

This newspaper article will soon be searchable among thousands of other Sun stories that mention Pelham residents over the past 130 years that Hayes and Genoter plan to scan and upload onto the Web site, said Hayes.

The cost of maintaining the Internet server space

needed to host the Pelham Historical Society's voluminous online library is about \$100 a year, according to Hayes. As an historian living at the dawn of the Internet age, Hayes regards his self-appointed task of converting all of the town's on-paper history to a digital format for

uploading to the Web as both an honor and a responsibility.

"There's a lot of people in Pelham who, when they die, a lot of valuable town history dies with them," said Hayes. "With this site, this information will live on for the next 200 years, long after I'm gone."