



## NEW HAMPSHIRE DIVISION OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES

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## THE STUDENT HISTORIC PRESERVATION TEAM OF NASHUA, N. H.

**I**N 2000, a group of students at Fairgrounds Junior High School in Nashua celebrated National Preservation Week by fulfilling a long-cherished dream of restoring one of the city's key industrial structures to its original appearance. On May 15<sup>th</sup>, members of the Student Historic Preservation Team assembled at the Nashua Manufacturing Company gatehouse at Mine Falls Park to try out a new technology for graffiti removal.

Since its founding in 1998 under social studies teacher Mary Coe Foran, the team had painstakingly searched for a gentle and



*Nashua Manufacturing Company Gatehouse (1886), Mine Falls Park, Nashua, N. H.  
(Photograph by James L. Garvin)*

environmentally safe method of cleaning the long-neglected brick structure, which was built in 1886 to control the flow of water to the city's textile mills.

Through a variety of fundraising activities, the team helped the city to buy a \$6,000 machine that uses a

combination of water, compressed air, and baking soda to gently wash away the spray paint that had disfigured the gatehouse. The low-pressure wash is designed to do its job with no danger of abrading the bricks and mortar.

After months of patient research, the team got a chance to see the new technology in action. Under the supervision of Tom Senter, representative for the company the sells the Armex™ cleaning equipment, staff of the Nashua Parks and Recreation Division quickly proceeded to wash away layers of accumulated graffiti. Several members of the Historic

Preservation Team had a chance to try their hands, as did teacher Mary Coe Foran and Nashua downtown development specialist Alan S. Manoian. By midday, half the building had been cleaned. The entire community celebrated Historic Preservation Week with a renewed pride in its industrial heritage.

The Team followed their original success with ever deeper involvement in the treatment and interpretation of the gatehouse. When federal funding was awarded for the enhancement of Mine Falls Park, Team members advocated for the compilation of a historic structure report on the building. They sat with the committee that selected a group of preservation consultants to write that report. They worked with the consultants, providing historical research and participating in the examination and structural evaluation of the gatehouse. They critiqued early drafts of the historic structure report, as well as

drafts of a master plan for Mine Falls Park.

Originally focusing on the gatehouse, the Student Historic Preservation Team soon assumed a statewide role. The team became a powerful Nashua-area advocate for the bill that created a Land and Community Heritage Investment Program for New Hampshire in 2000. Members collected hundreds of cards in support of the legislation and traveled to Concord to attend several legislative committee meetings. Team member Joanna Lubkin testified before the Senate Environment Committee, and team president Kevin Koo testified before the House Resources, Recreation, and Development Committee.

Closer to home, Team members worked with the Nashua Division of Public Works to design municipal signage. They make presentations to elementary school students to instill an early interest in historic preservation. In partnership with local

service organizations, they place American flags at the graves of 450 veterans.

In recognition of the pioneering role played by the Student Historic Preservation Team in encouraging a commitment to historic preservation and civic participation among young people, the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance honored the Team as the first recipient of the Elizabeth Durfee Hengen Preservation Achievement Award in 2000. State architectural historian Jim Garvin, who worked closely with the team in its early years, said, "the Student Historic Preservation Team is a model for the entire state to emulate. When we have such a team in every community, New Hampshire's legacy will be secure."