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UNH's Center For The Study Of Community Welcomes New Orleans Scholar

Contact: [Erika Mantz](#)
603-862-1567
UNH Media Relations

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DURHAM, N.H. -- The Center for the Study of Community, a collaborative program of the University of New Hampshire and Portsmouth's Strawberry Banke Museum, recently welcomed its first visiting scholar, a New Orleans historian displaced by Hurricane Katrina.

Lydia Breen comes to the center from the Algiers Historical Society where she focuses on maritime history and the Algiers neighborhood, which is located in the bend of the river which gave the Crescent City its name. In particular she has been researching the impact of the shipbuilding industry on the neighborhood, which led her to look at the people who lived there and where they came from. Breen is tracking the immigration patterns in a GIS database and creating multi-layered maps of the community.

The position of visiting scholar is unpaid, but Strawberry Banke Museum is providing Breen with living and working accommodations for the fall. She is expected to give some public talks about her work, but is still trying to locate her collaborators in the geography department at the University of New Orleans.

"Lydia and I first talked earlier this summer when her work led her to Portsmouth," said Thad Guldbrandsen, director of the Center for the Study of Community. "She was looking at where the people in the Algiers neighborhood in the 1800s came from, and she discovered Daniel and Peter Marcy of Portsmouth, who were living in New Orleans as privateers and possible Confederate sympathizers. I e-mailed her the day after Katrina hit, and one thing led to another."

Guldbrandsen said Breen's research has interesting implications for Strawberry Banke Museum, which is interested in developing a similar GIS project for the Puddle Dock neighborhood.