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New England's Migration History Focus Of Conference Oct. 15-16

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DURHAM, N.H. – New England's migration history and its connection to contemporary community issues is the topic of a conference cosponsored by the Center for New England Culture at the University of New Hampshire and the Center for the Study of Community at Strawberry Banke Museum Oct. 15-16, 2004.

“Becoming American/Maintaining Identity: A Community Conference on Newcomers, Neighbors and Social Networks” will look at what it means to be American and how communities relate to newcomers, and explore what lessons can be learned from the past to help build better communities for the future. The conference will be at Strawberry Banke Museum Friday, Oct. 15, and at the Community Campus in Portsmouth on Saturday.

“From Plymouth in 1620 to Portsmouth in 2004, New Englanders have wrestled with the idea of community,” says David Watters, director of the Center for New England Culture. “How are our neighborhoods changing and how do our stories and lives change the meaning of community? This conference offers an extraordinary opportunity for conversation.”

The opening lecture by Thad Gulbrandsen and Nina Glick Schiller, UNH professors of anthropology, will look at the various ways migrants of the late 20th and early 21st centuries have moved across boundaries of nation states and maintained long-distance relationships, even as they become part of new communities. They will focus on their current research in Manchester.

In addition to lectures on migration history, there will be tours of Strawberry Banke, memoir writing and oral history workshops, access to an oral history recording room, musical performances, and panel discussions.

Mark Sammons and Valerie Cunningham will talk about their new book on Portsmouth's black history and research on Strawberry Banke's migration history and French Canadian migration in the area will be presented. The conference will end with a look at the contemporary climate immigrants are living in, particularly the ramifications of the Patriot Act and the Immigrant Drivers License Debate in New Hampshire.

The conference is free and open to the public, but registration is required by e-mailing sbergeron@strawberybanke.org or calling (603) 433-1106. A detailed schedule for the conference is available at www.studyofcommunity.org.

