Extraordinary gift will establish the Museum of the White Mountains at Plymouth State University

PLYMOUTH — An extraordinary gift of history, art, and culture is helping Plymouth State University to launch a new initiative to recognize, preserve, and celebrate the White Mountains. Just a few months prior to his passing in February, the late Daniel Noel, of Intervale — lifelong state resident, and White Mountains photographer and collector — gave to PSU a one-of-a-kind collection that he had been building for decades. With Noel's gift, PSU will establish on its campus the Museum of the White Mountains.

"We are truly honored and humbled that he chose to make us the beneficiary of his knowledge of and love for the White Mountains. Now, thanks to his thoughtful and generous gift, we will be able to make his collection available to New Hampshire residents and visitors for generations to come," said Sara Jayne Steen, PSU President.

The donated materials include thousands of archives and images, including rare glass-plate photographs, stereoscopic images, hotel ledgers, postcards, early and first edition books about the region, bird's-eye views and maps, framed Bartlett prints, paintings and other miscellaneous items. Catherine Amidon, Director of the Drerup Gallery at Plymouth State, will curate the Noel collection.

"Collectively, these materials bear the imprint of Dan's passion for and expertise in the White Mountains, not to mention his joyous, irrepressible personality," said Ms. Amidon.

Before his death in February, Mr. Noel said it's the most appropriate location for his collection to be displayed.

"When assembled, as I believe Plymouth State University plans to do, this jigsaw puzzle of words and images and artifacts will provide a valuable insight into not only our past but our present and future," said Mr. Noel. "We have a wonderful history that surrounds us with precious few aware of it. I hoped to play a small part, along with others, in changing that status."

"We are so privileged to be stewards of Dan Noel's life's work, and to have the opportunity to gather these materials in one location at Plymouth State University," said Stephen Barba, Executive Director of University Relations at PSU. Mr. Barba, longtime managing director of The Balsams, in Dixville Notch, is himself an avid collector of White Mountains materials, and plans to follow Dan's example by committing his own extensive trove to PSU.

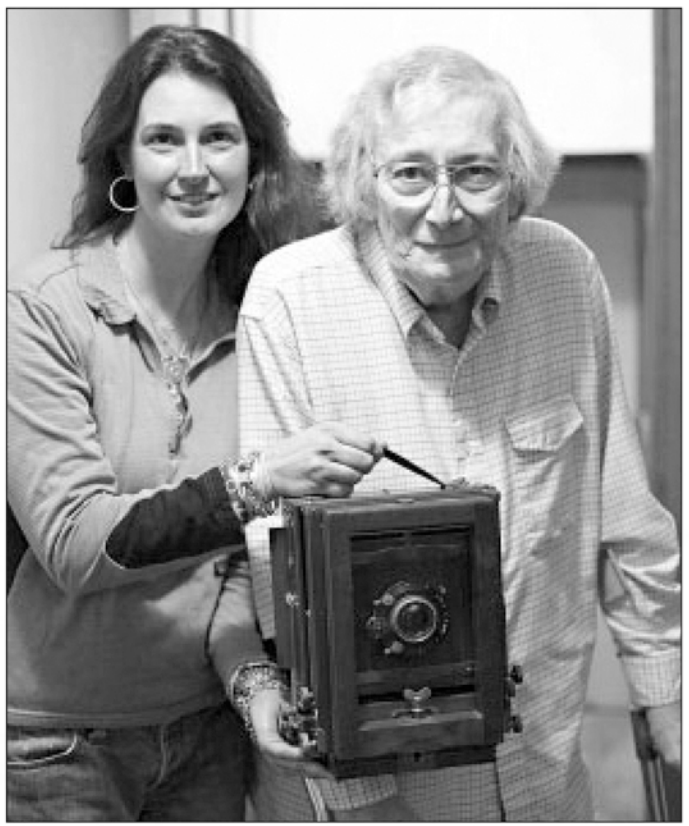
"It was Dan's hope and vision that the White Mountains Institute would become a place where other collectors would choose to direct their collections, to further enrich and expand the White Mountains legacy," Mr. Barba said.

According to Julie Bernier, Provost at Plymouth State University, the mission of the White Mountains Institute (WMI) at PSU is to celebrate the significant heritage of the region and to create a premier center for research and programming on the White Mountains. Through the multi-faceted WMI, PSU will take advantage of the spectacular outdoor "natural laboratory," building on the University's strengths in environmental studies and sustainability, ecotourism, historic preservation, the arts, adventure education and the advancement of culture and economic development in rural communities.

The Museum of the White Mountains will be a major focus of the White Mountains Institute; a permanent, year-round place on campus for study and research of White Mountains history and culture; and an intellectual home and historical archives for the preservation of White Mountains collections of art, memorabilia, maps, photography, ephemera, books, curios, and other significant materials.

"Plymouth State has always had a special connection to the White Mountains and has long served as a natural gateway to the region," said Ms. Bernier. "Our students, faculty, staff, and alumni hold in their hearts a true love of the region. For generations, they have studied local history and culture, explored the surrounding natural wonders, and discovered the personal transformation that comes with time spent in the shadow of the mountains. Establishing the White Mountains Institute here at Plymouth State is a logical next step, thanks in large part to Dan Noel's generous gift."

Future plans for the White Mountains Institute may include a White Mountains hostel for adults and families and a summer college experience for high school students. In all cases, the Museum of the White Mountains is expected to play a key role of program development, research, and recreation and to contribute substantively to PSU's mission as a regional comprehensive university.



Daniel Noel of Intervale, seen here with his daughter, donated his collection of White Mountain artifacts to Plymouth State University prior to his death. This generosity has enabled PSU to establish the Museum of the White Mountains.