Carrigain Map of New Hampshire 1816.

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New Castle Historical Society
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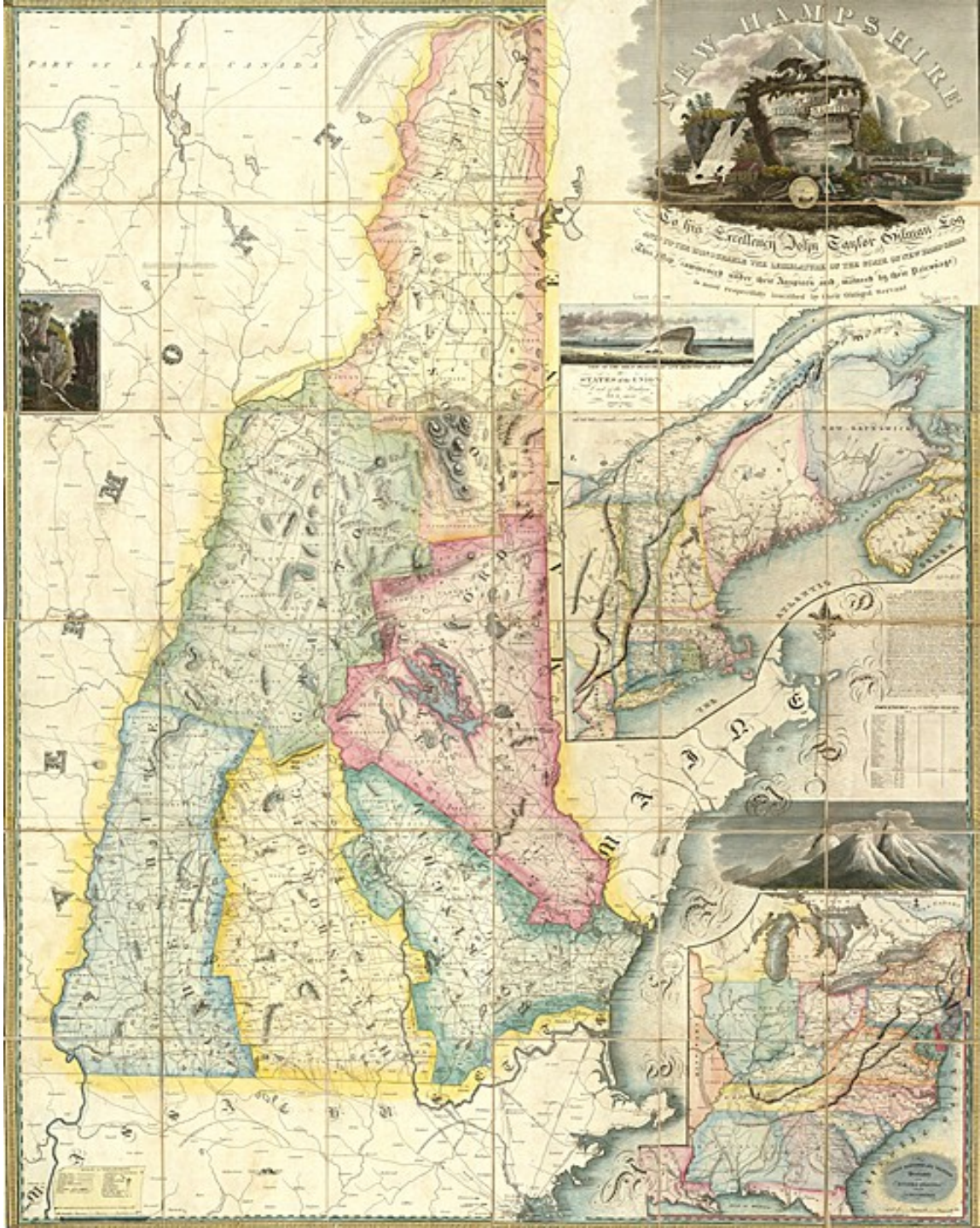
Carrigain map

(Rumsey copy)



UNH description, 2016

With detailed depictions of the White Mountains, etchings of geological landmarks and a wealth of information about life in early 19th-century New Hampshire, "This is a map you have to be awed by," says Hannah Hamalainen, geospatial and Earth sciences librarian.

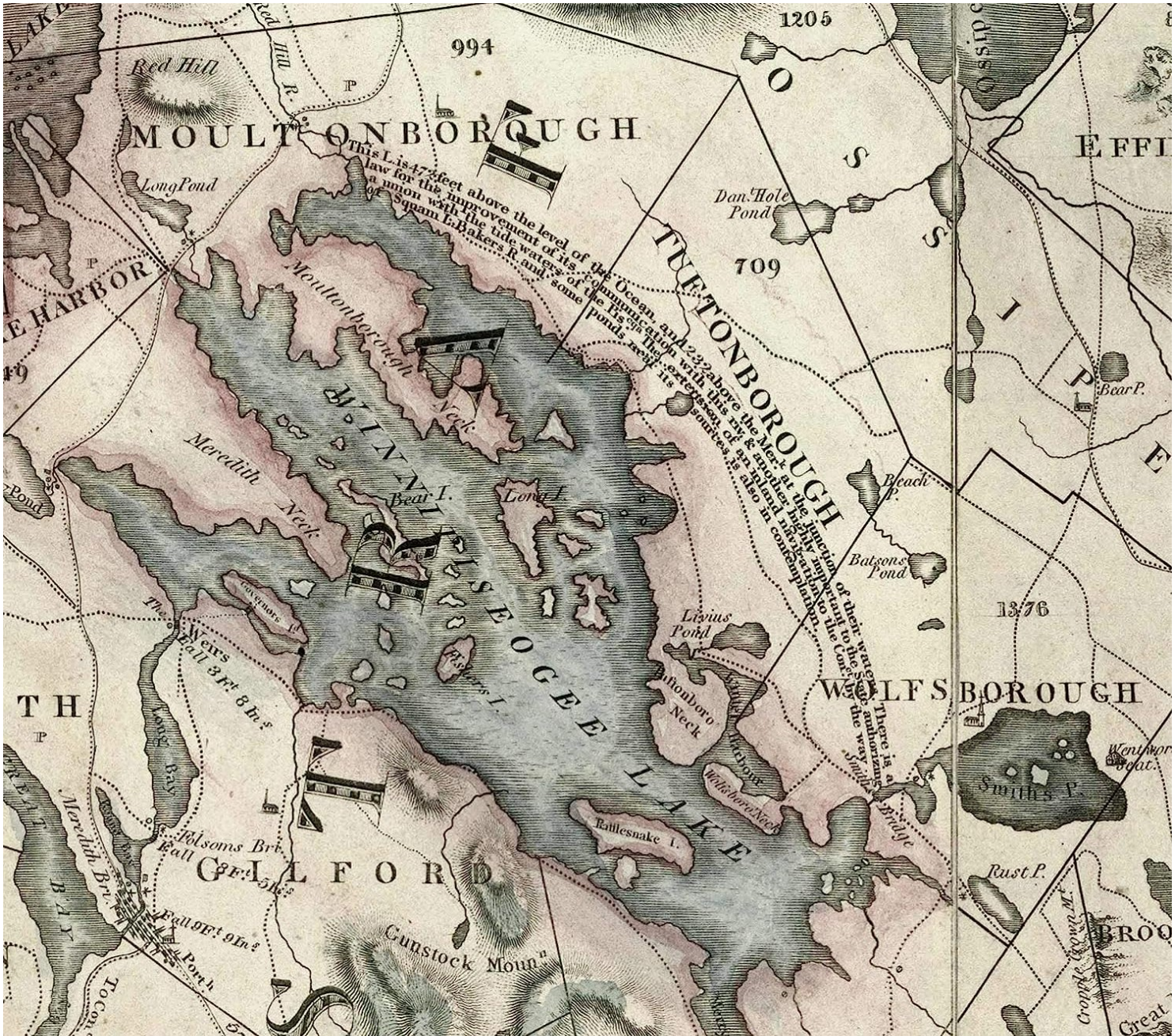
When Carrigain began his tenure as secretary of state in 1805, New Hampshire didn't have an official map. Town boundaries were in dispute, and much of the North Country and the White Mountains region hadn't been surveyed.

Legislators required every town to submit a map of its boundaries, roads and natural features. Carrigain was in charge of collecting the data and piecing it together. The whole process was supposed to take only two years; instead, it took more than a decade.

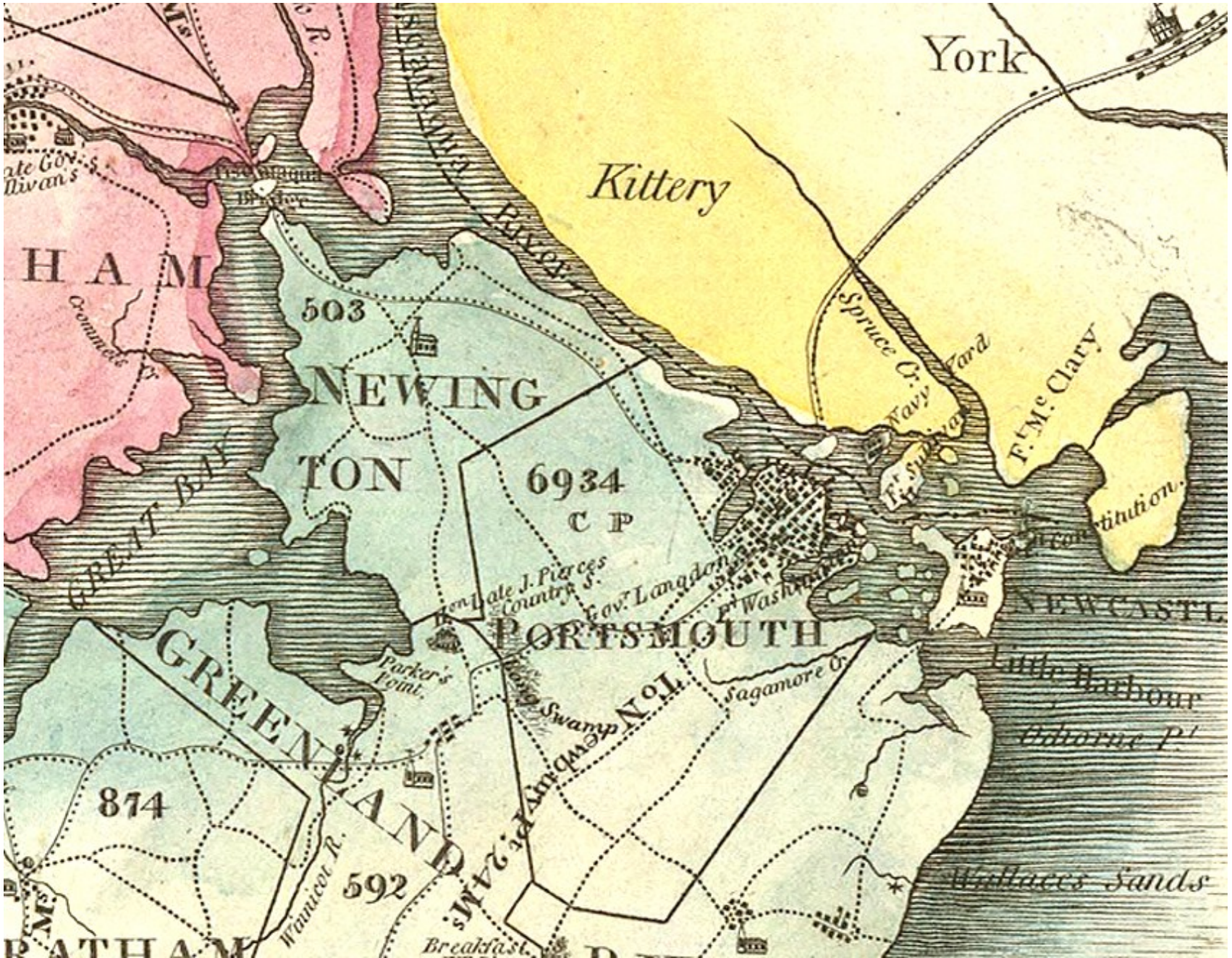
"You see the cartographic etchings of geological features engraved within the inset of the map, and it just wows you," Hamalainen says. "The quality of detail is amazing. It shows specific ranges in the White Mountains … and it does a great deal more than just give administrative boundaries."

The map is 5 feet tall and about 3.5 feet wide. Study the map and you'll see a snapshot of what life was like in New Hampshire in the early 1800s — the major roads, number of homes, public buildings and churches in each community — even notations about the judges who presided over the local court. The map is equally as concerned with the state's natural beauty. In its introductory text, the map declares New Hampshire's "lakes, cataracts and valleys furnishes a profusion of the sublime and beautiful. It may be called the Switzerland of America."

Winnipesaukee detail.



New Castle detail.



Phinehas Merrill, New Castle, 1806

Phinehas Merrill, New Castle, detail

Sources.

- Mevers, Frank C., and Stark, Mica B. [1974] *The Making of the Carrigain Map of New Hampshire, 1803-1816*, Historical New Hampshire, v. 52, n. 3-4, pp. 79-95.