



# The Gilbert Stuart Birthplace and Museum

Fall 2010

815 Gilbert Stuart Road  
Saunderstown, RI 02874  
Phone 401-294-3001  
Fax 401-294-3869  
www.gilbertstuartmuseum.org

## The Old Gray Wall on the Hill

As a visitor to the Gilbert Stuart Birthplace strolls for the first time along a shady wooded path following the curves of the old Mettatumet River, his imagination takes him back to the early days of this quiet place. The well-worn path leads from one vista to another, here the river, there a hill, and a little further up, an old cemetery. He notices that it's alternately cool within the shade of the trees and warm in the open sunny spaces. Soon he comes to a solid relic of days gone by--an old stone wall. The mossy granite stones speak to a more demanding time, a time when a family's living came from the sweat of the brow and the dirt under foot. Stretching from the shore of the river to the top of the hill and beyond to the southwest, the wall begs our visitor to take pause, to rest a moment, to think how it came to be. In the mid 1700's the Cole family, new deed in hand, came to this place to see trees, brambles, and stones lying everywhere, in every direction. The man and his sons slashed and burned to create open fields and then built a crude wooden fence to keep the cows and sheep from the corn and beans. Many years later, the Hammonds came with yet a new deed and continued the work. Each year, when the harvest was in, they labored, carting and dragging more of the heavy stones from the field, to be thrown up along the wooden fence, out of the way. In time, the fence rotted and fell down leaving only the stones. The stones were made into a wall, making sure there were gaps for a wide gate to allow animal and wagon passage from one field to the other, and for foot traffic, one near the water and one near the road.

Today the farmers are gone and the fields are once more filled with trees and brambles. Only the wall remains to remind us of the people who lived and died here toiling in the fields for their daily bread. To think that the child Gilbert Stuart played in these same fields, climbed these same stones, and perhaps drew his first pictures.

Jim Hall

\*\*\*\*\*



Gilbert Stuart Birthplace 1886 lithograph



## OLD MILL DAY / FAMILY DAY AT THE BIRTHPLACE

\*\*\*\*\*

Sunday, October 10, 2010 ~ 1:00 – 4:00

(Rain date October 11<sup>th</sup>)

Adults \$5 Children (ages 6-12) \$2

### RAISE FUNDS FOR GRISTMILL RESTORATION

Come and join us for an exciting day at the Museum!

*Meet the artist Gilbert Stuart!*

*Gilbert (portrayed by David Ely) will be on hand to regale you with stories about his colorful life.*

- \*Corn grinding in the Hammond Mill
- \*Jonnycakes and more
- \*Famous Gilbert Stuart roasted hot dogs
- \*Colonial games and activities
- \*Scavenger hunt on the Nature Trail
- \*Face painting
- \*Art exhibit and sale / Wood working sale
- \*RI Spinners Guild spinning and weaving
- \*Beautiful hand-spun wool in all colors for sale
- \*Rug hooking and other demonstrations
- \*Birthplace Open House

## President's Message Fall 2010

Dear Members,

I like to think that things happen for a reason. There could be no doubt that our timing for the renovation of the Birthplace was perfect. We stood by helplessly as the horror of the flood of March 30, 2010 took place, inundating the dam and the grounds of the Gilbert Stuart Museum. Looking back, we know that if we didn't replace the roof on the caretaker's cottage, fix up the out buildings, and restore the Birthplace when we did, there could have been a very different outcome as to the extent of the flood damage. Thank you once again for your continued and unwavering support of this important Rhode Island landmark.

I hope you were able to attend our annual Gala, *In the Mood!*; it sure was a lot of fun and a very successful fund raising event. We thank all who contributed their time and treasure to make this a memorable and enjoyable evening to benefit the continuing renovation of the Museum campus. We were honored to have the renowned Rhode Island artist Richard Grosvenor as our Honorary Chair for the event. Dick was a big hit! His work is beautiful and his wife and daughter are lovely; a special thanks to the Grosvenors! We have been fortunate to have many talented RI artists to call upon and without hesitation answer our call for help.

Don't miss Old Mill Day/Family Day on October 10. It's a great time to show off our Museum and educate the many attendees on what life was like in Gilbert Stuart's time.

We have one final event planned for this year that is a must-see! William Vareika Fine Arts has graciously agreed to put on a special event at his gallery in Newport, which will feature original Gilbert Stuart works along with works from other prominent portrait artists. This show will be on the evening of Gilbert Stuart's birthday, Friday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>. This will be a great way to kick off the Museum's eightieth

### Gilbert Stuart Birthplace and Museum Board of Trustees

Daniel A. Bell, President  
Dennis E. Stark, President Elect  
Harriet E. Powell, Secretary  
Wheaton C. Vaughan, Treasurer

Robert H. Breslin, Jr.  
Cathy DiColo  
Dr. Joseph Dowling, Jr.  
Patricia D. Fuller  
Curtis V. Givan  
Dale M. Grogan  
Sue M. Hazlett  
Carol H. Hueston  
Thor S. Johnson  
Norine J. Keenan  
Lillian C. Patterson  
Alan R. Post, D.C.

Kathleen Romeo  
Louis R. Sansone  
Robert J. Sgroi  
Gail Shields  
Peggy Todd  
Alice V. Westervelt  
Joseph B. White  
Honorary Trustee  
Henry L. P. Beckwith  
Executive Director  
Margaret M. O'Connor



*In the Mood!* gala August 6, 2010:  
Executive Director Peg O'Connor, Museum President Dan Bell, Holly Grosvenor, Honorary Chair Dick Grosvenor, Margot Grosvenor

anniversary and help to continue to raise the funds needed to complete our restoration. Special invitations will be sent sometime in November. Please save the date for this extraordinary show. I hope to see you at one of the remaining events.

*Dan Bell*  
*President of the Board of Trustees*

\*\*\*\*\*



Volunteers help clean up after the March 30th flood.

Save the Date:

**Friday, December 3, 2010**

Special Gallery Event:  
The Works of Gilbert Stuart

**William Vareika Fine Arts**

**Watch for details.**

Please contact the office for information: 401-294-3001  
or email [info@gilbertstuartmuseum.org](mailto:info@gilbertstuartmuseum.org)



Honorary Chair Richard Grosvenor and Margot Grosvenor



Pam Mead browses the silent auction table

### Museum's Gala Fundraiser a Huge Success

Celebrated on the banks of the Museum's tranquil millpond on a beautiful summer's evening, the *In the Mood!* gala was a memorable event. The guests and the Museum were dressed in their finest! One hundred seventy-six guests enjoyed fine wine, lavish and delicious food, a perfectly organized and decorated array of silent auction items, a varied and imaginative selection of paintings and photographs (nine were sold), an outstanding display of artwork by Honorary Chair and nationally famous watercolorist Richard Grosvenor, as well as additional artwork by his son and his daughter Holly, enchanting music by the Joel Press Trio, and a surprise musical guest. The consensus, repeated many times, was that the event was "immense fun!"

The goal of the evening was to "Keep the Wheels Turning" and raise \$10,000 to support the restoration and rehabilitation of the Gristmill and the Welcome Center. We came very close to that goal, raising \$9,700 of the targeted amount!

Many Museum folks participated in this successful event. A special thank you to Richard Grosvenor for agreeing to be Honorary Chair and for donating his stunning watercolor of the Birthplace for our silent auction. Thanks are due to the Museum's Premier Sponsor, *Greenvale Vineyards* of Portsmouth, RI; Platinum Sponsors, *Gretchen Morgenson and Paul Devlin*; Gold Sponsors, *the Bell Family, North Kingstown Woman's Club, South County Eye Physicians and Surgeons, Inc., and Tavern by the Sea* of Wickford. Additional supporters were many, including Museum members, Museum neighbors, organizations, and well-wishers. Many thanks to the silent auction committee (Peggy Todd, Empie Davis, Joan Ann Gardiner, Susan Adams, and Pam Mead) for collecting, sorting and packaging the charming silent auction items that graced the footbridge leading to the millpond, to the food committee (Gail Shields, Christine Post, and Betsy Coughlin) who made sure the guests were sumptuously fed, to the beverage chair Curtis Givan, to committee members Ray Wertz, Pat Fuller, Norine Keenan, Harriet Powell, and Sue Hazlett, and especially to event chairs Dennis Stark and Museum President Dan Bell. Many thanks also to the many others who gave their time and energy to



Dennis Stark and Dan Bell



Curtis and Bee Givan

make this event so successful. Not to be forgotten is Peg O'Connor, Museum Executive Director, who oversaw the event from start to finish with such finesse and who worked so tirelessly to make sure that all ran smoothly.

Guests were immensely impressed by the display of watercolors by Richard Grosvenor. It was the consensus of those who viewed his work at the Museum's event that his fame is not only well-deserved but will be lasting. Those who wish to see more of Mr. Grosvenor's work are invited to visit Spring Bull Gallery & Studio; an artist's cooperative in Newport, located on Bellevue Avenue.

In closing, some attendees may be interested to know that among the guests on August 6<sup>th</sup> was noted jazz trombonist, George Masso. He was immediately recognized by the members of the Joel Press Trio and prevailed upon to retrieve his trombone and sit in with the trio members, increasing everyone's pleasure. Thanks to the Joel Press Trio and Mr. Masso and to all the others who made the *In the Mood!* evening on the millpond such a tremendous success.

**Harriet Powell**



Former Directors Deb & John Thompson visit with Museum volunteers.





*Dr. Hunter's Spaniels* by Gilbert Stuart

**How and when did Gilbert Stuart embark on a career as an artist?**

Before the family moved from North Kingstown to Newport when he was six, Gilbert Stuart reportedly drew on his wall with charcoal. This practice continued in his new home with drawings of animals, probably done on walls inside and out. One story tells how Gilbert learned to draw the human face from an African slave, Neptune Thurston. They used the head of a barrel to practice on. From that time on, Stuart found faces to be more interesting than any other subject. Even though they indulged their son in many ways, drawing materials were too expensive for the Stuart family.

There are two versions of how Stuart came to paint the portrait of Dr. William Hunter's spaniels. Some suggest that in 1768 Hunter introduced Gilbert to Cosmo Alexander, the Scottish portraitist who was in residence at Hunter's home while painting family portraits. Alexander began to teach the young artist, who then made the famous painting.

Others believe that Dr. Hunter had seen the wall drawings while he was treating a member of the Stuart family. (Hunter, a Scotsman, had most of the Scottish population of Newport as his patients.) Learning that the 13-year-old Gilbert had made them, he asked the boy to come to his house and do a painting of his two spaniels.

In either case, Gilbert Stuart went to the doctor's house in late 1769 and painted his two brown and white spaniels lying under a Townsend-Goddard side table. One of the dogs is sleeping while the other regards you with trusting, brown eyes. Never before had the young artist used oil paints, yet the use of color and detail presage his later work. Dr. Hunter was delighted with the painting and made Gilbert a present of the brushes and paints that he had used.

After Cosmo Alexander met Stuart in Hunter's house, the doctor requested that the portraitist give lessons to the younger artist. By the next year, Alexander had taken him on as an assistant. Stuart's job was to grind and mix pigments, clean brushes, prepare canvases and lay out the palette with the colors in a proper order. He was also given the task of copying some of Alexander's paintings. By observing his tutor's manner, Gilbert also learned how to

behave with the people of social standing who were having their portraits painted.

When Cosmo Alexander left Newport, Gilbert Stuart went with him. His career as a portrait painter had begun.

"Dr. Hunter's Spaniels" can be seen at the Hunter House on Washington Street in Newport.

**Gail Shields**

\*\*\*\*\*

**Artists-in-Residence Art Exhibit and Sale through October 11<sup>th</sup>**

Stop in to see the vibrant and diverse paintings and photographs that make up our current and most popular exhibit! We have sold nine works of art to date. Congratulations to 13-year old Anthony Anderson of Richmond who made his debut at our "In the Mood" event and sold both of his paintings!

Artwork will be on display and for sale until our closing day, October 11, 2010.



*Lobstermen, Galilee, RI* by Anne M. Norcross (on exhibit at the Museum)

\*\*\*\*\*



*Gilbert Stuart Museum* by Harley Bartlett

**PRINTS AVAILABLE  
HELP FUND PHASE II OF THE RESTORATION**

## *Milling Around at the Museum*

**Bird Walk:** On a beautiful spring morning (Saturday, May 22<sup>nd</sup>) twelve early-risers, including nature writer Bruce Fellman, arrived at the museum for the 7:00am bird walk. Led by Walter Berry and Barbara Sherman, the group walked the Museum's nature trails and streambeds to listen for and try to catch a glimpse of some of the many remarkable birds on the property. Twenty-eight species were heard or seen on the Museum grounds: the white-eyed vireo and red-eyed vireo, a male rose-breasted grosbeak, a great crested flycatcher, scarlet tanager, and a double-crested cormorant were among the birds that made an appearance. Thank you to Walter and Barbara for their informative and enthusiastic commentary and to Bruce for his wonderful article about the Museum and bird walk in the Standard Times.



Mycologists Joshua Hutchins and Bill Yule



Bird walk: Barbara Sherman plays a sample birdcall from her iPod.

**Computer Help Needed:** Do you have experience in joining two computers as a network? We are looking for a volunteer with just such experience to link our two office computers so that we can access the Past Perfect program on our main computer. Can you help us? Call the office 401-294-3001 or email [info@gilbertstuartmuseum.org](mailto:info@gilbertstuartmuseum.org)

**Facebook:** Become a fan of the Gilbert Stuart Birthplace and Museum on Facebook! Updates and new photos are posted regularly.

**Birthplace Restoration:** The project was completed in early May with the repair and painting of the plastered walls in the Bedroom and Keeping Room of the Birthplace. Painting was done by, who else but.... **GILBERT STUART PAINTING!** Many thanks to Walter Soban for his generosity, infinite attention to detail, and flexibility in completing the project.



Plaster walls repaired and painted to complete the restoration.

**Mushroom Walk:** The Museum hosted its first mushroom walk (mycological foray) on Saturday, August 21<sup>st</sup> at 10:00am. A hearty group of 10 hiked the Museum's nature trails led by mycologists Joshua Hutchins of Wakefield and Bill Yule of the Connecticut Valley Mycological Society. Despite the very dry conditions, the group found about 15 varieties of mushrooms on the Museum's trails. Bill and Joshua identified each mushroom and gave fascinating and informative explanations of the habitat, mushroom use, and lore. Thank you so much to Joshua and Bill for offering to lead another mushroom walk next September.

**March 30<sup>th</sup> Flood:** Thank you to Museum President Dan Bell for leading the massive repair and clean up of the damage to the Museum and grounds caused by the flood. Tons of gravel and fill were delivered and with many volunteers and some elbow grease, all of the eroded and washed-out areas were filled. Many thanks to caretaker Bart McNeil for his tireless work to repair the grounds and to all of the volunteers who came to shovel, sweep, clean, and polish to get the Museum ready for our April 25<sup>th</sup> Spring Fair!

### **River Herring:**

Below is the last 12 years of spawning stock size at Gilbert Stuart.

1999	259,336	2005	7,776
2000	290,814	2006	21,744
2001	254,948	2007	36,864
2002	152,056	2008	58,352
2003	67,172	2009	34,835
2004	15,376	2010	110,000

There was a dramatic decline from 2000-2001 with a low of 7,776 in 2005. The moratorium/closure went into effect in March 2006 and we have observed some improvement since 2005.

*Phil Edwards, Senior Fisheries Biologist, RIDEM Division of Fish and Wildlife*

### **Fundraiser Thank You**

*This year's fundraiser **In the Mood!** was enjoyed by all. The evening was a perfect combination of good weather, music, wine, and delicious appetizers and desserts. The food committee thanks all who contributed to the spread. It wouldn't have been possible without you.*

*Betsy Coghlin, Christine Post, Gail Shields*

## KEEPING YOUR NOSE TO THE GRINDSTONE

This year's fundraiser was "geared" to acquire funds for the restoration of the gristmill and a rehabilitation of Welcome Center. With that in mind, this article is a refresher about the gristmill and its history.

The Benjamin Hammond Grist Mill also called the Moffatt-Hammond Mill was built around 1757 according to the Historic American Building Survey. An earlier mill, built here by Thomas Mumford and his partners, was quite valuable to the settlers at that time. Part of the original Pettaquamscutt Land Purchase of 1656, about 120 acres were laid out and allotted for a mill in 1679.

In February 1702-1703, the land and mill were allotted to James Kenyon with a bond to keep up the mill. James Kenyon sold the mill to Joseph Smith. In 1711, disregarding the bond, Joseph Smith sold it to William Gardiner. Gardiner sold it to Elisha Cole in 1718 who died in 1729. His widow, Elizabeth, sold it to her son Edward Cole in 1746.

In 1751, a partnership was recorded in North Kingstown between Edward Cole, Thomas Moffatt, and Gilbert Stuart Sr. to "manufacture snuff and erect a mill at Pettaquamscutt". Also in 1751, the Gilbert Stuart House was built and the same year, Gilbert Stuart, Sr. married Elizabeth Anthony of Middletown, RI.

In 1753, Dr. Moffatt bought 270 acres of land from Edward Cole, and it is believed he also acquired the land where the Hammond Mill now stands. In 1757, the Gristmill was built. Moffatt's property was later confiscated by the state, and after a 20-year vacancy, the house and the mill, along with all machinery, were sold to Peter Burlingame.

In 1813, the mill, property, and house were purchased by Benjamin Hammond. Hammond was able to grind a flat, soft meal produced by the mill's fine-grained granite stones....the fine corn meal was in demand thus the mill became famous.

In 1834, Benjamin Hammond died and the Hammond sons, Wilbour and Gardner, continued to operate the mill. In 1885, it was sold to George Kenyon. Kenyon continued in the tradition of Benjamin Hammond and produced a fine corn flour of any "fineness desired".

The property, the mill, and the Birthplace changed hands a few times between 1891 to 1927. Nathaniel M. Vose made an appeal in 1927 for the restoration of the historic buildings. He was primarily involved in organizing the Gilbert Stuart Memorial, which in 1930 purchased the house, gristmill, and about three acres of land for \$11,000. Renowned architectural historian Norman M. Isham directed the restoration of the Gilbert Stuart House.

The Gilbert Stuart Memorial was incorporated in January of 1931, and on August 29, 1931 the house officially opened.

This brings us back to the beginning.....the gristmill.....the Gilbert Stuart Memorial Corporation under the direction of the Board of Trustees and Executive Director, Peggy O'Connor now place their focus and energies on the continued restoration of the Gristmill and the Welcome Center.

**Peggy Todd**



Benjamin Hammond Gristmill



Historic American Building Survey 1934 NE Elevation (G. F. A. Palmer)



Historic American Building Survey 1934 SE Elevation (G. F. A. Palmer)

## Boating on Carr Pond

All Museum members have the unique privilege of being able to rent our rowboats to enjoy the pristine 57-acre Carr Pond. With no other access to the pond, Museum boats are in demand by members to enjoy a relaxing morning or afternoon of fishing or touring the pond. It's been a great year for fishing! Several members have caught largemouth bass of six or more pounds. Check the Museum's Facebook page for more photos of the proud anglers and their catches! Museum boats are available until November 1<sup>st</sup>. Call the office 401-294-3001 now to make a reservation.



What a bass caught by Patrick (6/12/10)



John's big bass (7/15/10)



## Pasture Wall on Upper Property

An old stone wall runs from the river to the road across the seventeen acre hill owned by the Gilbert Stuart Museum.

The stacked, or pasture, wall is composed of *assisted stones* (too large to be lifted by one man) and *two-hander stones* (a single man lifts these with two hands). The wall begins and ends with *dribbles* and the complexity and height are greater at the center of the wall, which is a flat section at the top of the hill.

As was common at the time, the wall may have replaced a wood fence erected in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. As the fields were cleared, the stones were carted or dragged from adjacent fields to the fence line and stacked there. Later the stones were assembled into a wall which was used to control the movement of animals, probably sheep and cattle, as evidenced by barbed wire relics.

There is a 12 foot *barway* toward the middle part of the wall. A wooden bar would have hung across the opening and swung outwards to allow for the passage of animals and men.

There is also RI Historical Cemetery, North Kingstown No. 183 adjacent to the central span.

Since 1932, narrow parts of the wall have been removed to allow pathways for visitors to the Museum.

It is probable that some of the wall is from the original "Pioneering Stage" which is early 18<sup>th</sup> century and was upgraded during the "Established Farm" stage, which was from 1776-1783 to 1825-1835.

It can be speculated that Elisha Cole built the original fence and wall between 1718-1753 and the Hammonds maintained and improved it between 1813-1867.

Jim Hall

\*\*\*\*\*

*Thank you to all members, friends, and volunteers  
who support the Museum and  
Keep the Wheels Turning!*

Gilbert Stuart Birthplace and Museum  
815 Gilbert Stuart Road  
Saunderstown, RI 02874

NON-PROFIT ORG  
US POSTAGE PAID  
NORTH KINGSTOWN RI  
PERMIT NO 169

***RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED***



March 30, 2010