



The Gilbert Stuart Birthplace and Museum

Fall 2009

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

PRESERVATION OF THE HAMMOND FAMILY CEMETERY

"Graveyards of North Kingstown", published in 1992 by Althea McAleer and others, contains a listing of the names and locations of over 170 historic cemeteries in North Kingstown. The Benjamin Hammond cemetery, listed in Althea's book, includes the family names and the age and date that each died. The cemetery's location is described as being "behind the Snuff Mill" but "not yet located". Were it not for the childhood memories of Carl Barksdale, the site of the Benjamin Hammond family cemetery would probably still be unknown. Harriet Powell remembered her son, Carl, talking about playing near an old graveyard in the woods behind the Gilbert Stuart Birthplace some 50 years ago. Home on leave from the U.S. Navy in the summer of 2008, Carl was able to find the Hammond burial ground, despite the fact that a tree had toppled each of the three gravestones and littered the area with branches and leaves.

The discovery prompted Peggy O'Connor to call for volunteers to clean up the site. That's when Bart McNeil, Dave O'Connor, Clark Bridgman and others went to work. The first step was to clear all the debris from the area taking care not to damage the fallen gravestones or any that were not visible. The three gravestones uncovered were those of Benjamin Hammond, his wife Ruth, and their son Wilbour. Each of the gravestones was in remarkably good condition, considering the fact they had been toppled and buried for some 40 to 50 years. With the guidance of Paul Hartley from the Quidnessett Cemetery, the stones, which had been broken off from their bases, were brushed clean and set to one side. The heavy bases for the monuments were then removed, cleaned and reset on a bed of crushed rock. The next step was to carefully set and seal each of the three gravestones into their respective bases using hydraulic cement mixed with water. Finally, posts were installed around the cemetery's perimeter, the area seeded, and a white plastic chain link strung through holes in each of the posts. The cemetery is now officially identified as "Rhode Island Historic Cemetery # 183" with a sign provided by Evelyn Wheeler.

In addition to the Hammond gravestones, the site also contains four sets of small, unmarked head and footstones that appear to be grave markers of infants. We are currently researching records to determine the names of these children and the period that they lived. Future plans call for a

sign at the cemetery telling the history of the Hammond family for visitors to read as they hike the Museum's trails.

Clark Bridgman



Restored Hammond Family Graveyard



Cemetery Project Coordinator Clark Bridgman

OLD MILL DAY / FAMILY DAY

Sunday, October 18 ~ 1:00 - 4:00

\$5 / \$2 / Members \$3

Come and join us for our exciting closing day event!

Corn Grinding in the Hammond Mill

Jonnycakes, Popcorn, Indian Pudding

Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream (arrive early, limited supply!)

Cider ~ Coffee

Colonial Activities ~ Woodworking Display

Nature Trail ~ Birthplace Open House

President's Message Fall 2009

Dear Members,

I certainly hope you were able to join us at our formal kick-off to raise the roof at the Birthplace. We were very fortunate to have a talented and dedicated Special Events Committee to be able to pull off such a successful event. My personal thanks to each and every one of them.

Our efforts thus far have enabled us to raise approximately 10% of the \$300,000 needed to do the job and bring the Birthplace and other buildings up to snuff. As I stated in my brief talk at the event, \$150,000 needs to be raised immediately for structural work to the Birthplace and for replacement of the roof. We are applying for grants and are hopeful that a few will come to fruition. We recognize that times are tough for charitable foundations and individuals. I remain optimistic that with your continued help and a favorable response to some of the grants, we will be able to meet our objectives.

A warm thank you to our Artists-in-Residence for their beautiful artwork on display in our gallery and to the many donations for the silent auction at Raising the Roof. Special thanks for the generosity of our Honorary Chairman Mr. Harley Bartlett, who represented himself and fellow artist and friend Maxwell Mays with style and grace at the event. Harley is certainly one of Rhode Island's leading artists! He graciously donated his time and a beautiful rendition of the Museum. Signed, numbered prints of Harley's painting are available in the Museum office. I would like to personally welcome Harley and other new members to the Gilbert Stuart Community this year and offer a special wish for a speedy recovery to Maxwell Mays. Last but not least, thanks so much to our Executive Director Peg O'Connor who continues to amaze us all with her energy, talent, and enthusiasm.

Enjoy the rest of the summer; hope to see you at one of our fall events.

Dan Bell

President of the Board of Trustees

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

Carol A. Breslin
Dr. Joseph Dowling, Jr.
Patricia D. Fuller
Curtis V. Givan
Dale M. Grogan
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



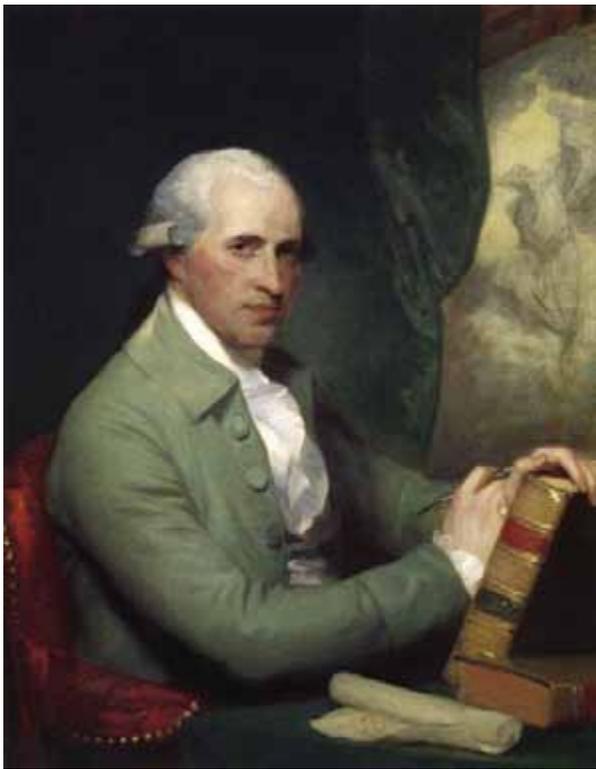
**Harley Bartlett, President Dan Bell, and Ed Ekman
at "Raising the Roof"**

Raising the Roof

A good time was had by all at the August 7th event. Our Honorary Chair Harley Bartlett set the tone for the evening with an exhibit of his stunningly beautiful paintings. After speaking in honor of RI artist Maxwell Mays, Harley displayed further artistic talent. Borrowing a banjo, he jammed with the band, the Sidewalk Stompers! With ticket sales, sponsorships, donations, proceeds from the silent auction, and art sales from the Artists-in-Residence exhibit, Harley's original oil "The Gilbert Stuart Museum", and 6 of the limited edition prints of Harley's painting, the event raised over \$10,000 to help "cover the cost to cover the roof!" Many thanks to the event co-chairs Dan Bell and Curtis Givan and to the event committee for their tireless efforts.



"Anne Stuart" (aka Katie Bell) talks to Ken Woodcock, winner of the 2008 Preserve RI Auction item: a catered dinner for six in the Birthplace of Gilbert Stuart. The evening included a presentation on the paintings of Gilbert Stuart, a guided tour by "Anne Stuart", Gilbert's sister, and dinner by candlelight in the Keeping Room of the Birthplace! Thank you to Preserve RI for including us as a partner in your auction.



Benjamin West by Gilbert Stuart 1783 – 1784

The Benjamin West Portraits

Destitute, hungry, and alone in London in December of 1776, Gilbert Stuart wrote to Benjamin West asking for help. He knew that West, an American painter favored by King George III, often helped younger painters. The artist gave Stuart money and put him to work painting the draperies in the backgrounds of West's large religious paintings. Later he was given the use of a painting room in West's studio.

The older artist was generous in giving instruction to younger painters, teaching what he had learned in his studies in Italy. West taught by demonstration and by positive criticism. Stuart was taught about the properties of color, how they affected one another, and the use of color glazes.

Gilbert Stuart now began to reject the accepted practice of initially drawing subjects on the canvas. Instead, he preferred to begin with brush and paint because it did not interfere with his visualization of the completed painting. In fact, Stuart was not good at drawing and so did not draw. Instead of seeing linearly, he saw in three dimensions, and so his portraits do not have hard edges. The faces of his subjects are modeled with shading, as in the tradition of Flemish painting.

When Benjamin West sat for a portrait in 1781, which was to be a gift to his wife, Stuart experimented with his new concepts. West is shown in a 3/4 pose, silhouetted against a drape that is pulled aside to show a section of one of West's biblical paintings for the king. He is looking slightly upwards, a pose, which implies a higher source of inspiration for West's paintings.

Gilbert Stuart made decorative use of color and texture in this portrait. The coat is simple with a rich olive color and the lining is satin. In painting the gold embroidered vest, Stuart raked the paint with a palette knife to suggest the texture. The frills on West's shirt have raised dots. West's features are less fully defined but instead implied by the



"Mr. Stewart, painting Mr. West's portrait" by Benjamin West 1783

skillful use of beautiful flesh colors. All these techniques showcased the artist's painting skills.

In 1781, this portrait was hung in the Royal Academy's annual show. Stuart was in very good company; Thomas Gainsborough and Sir Joshua Reynolds also had portraits there. An art critic of the time declared that there was no better portrait in the room than that of Benjamin West.

After this success, Gilbert Stuart was no longer thought of as a mostly self-taught colonial but a portraitist with distinctive strengths. He began to receive more commissions not just referrals from West. Later that year he completed his striking portrait of William Grant: "The Skater".

The relationship between Benjamin West and Gilbert Stuart remained close and two years later, in 1784, Stuart completed another, quite different portrait of West. An interesting aside to this painting is the sketch made by West of Stuart while he painted. A pot of snuff was near to Stuart's hand.

Gail Shields



Benjamin West by Gilbert Stuart 1781

“Why Should We Care About Preserving the Past?”

Since 1931, when a dedicated group of local citizens banded together to purchase the home where Gilbert Stuart was born in order to preserve it for posterity, preservation of its historic buildings has been a priority for those who followed in their footsteps. Each year, the Museum and its members make sure their founders’ vision is carried on. This year, to continue to preserve the Birthplace, extensive work is needed to replace its roof, repair chimneys, and repair structural supports. We felt it would be interesting to see what leading lights in the preservation community felt about the philosophy of historic preservation and its value to all of us.

We, the undersigned, feel the Gilbert Stuart Museum, and other such organizations that seek to preserve the genius, ingenuity and artistry of earlier generations, maintain an important link to our past. Reaching out, we asked the question, “*Why should we care about preserving the past?*” of four leading preservationists, one of whom is devoted to preserving his own historic home. They are, in alphabetical order: Henry L.P Beckwith, well-known local historian, member of the NK Historic District Commission and other RI Historic Preservation organizations and long-time member of the Gilbert Stuart Museum, Tim Cranston, historic preservation activist and weekly contributor to the NE Independent on the importance of preserving North Kingstown’s historical structures, Tom Greene, member of the East Greenwich Historical Society, who lives in a home built by a famous relative nine generations ago, and Edward Sanderson, Executive Director of the RI Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission. Here are their responses:

- I believe that Historic Preservation should strive to address the core interests of as many as possible of the ethnic and political constituencies in Rhode Island to the end that it builds community among us. We share common property in our past, and should use that to unify wherever and whenever possible. This, I believe, is my strongest reason for supporting Historic Preservation. **Henry LP Beckwith**
- Active historic preservation is the concrete manifestation of the respect we hold in our hearts for those who dwelt in our pasts. It’s proof positive that we understand our responsibilities as advocates for those countless souls who paved the way for us through their determination and perseverance. We owe our predecessors nothing less than to remember them and honor their trials, tribulations, and triumphs through the preservation of the places that they held so dear. **Timothy Cranston**
- “In his farthest wanderings still he sees it;
Hears the talking flame, the answering night-wind,
As he heard them,
When he sat with those who were but are not.
Happy he whom neither wealth nor fashion,
Nor the march of the encroaching city,
Drives an exile from the hearth of his ancestral

homestead.” **Thomas Casey Greene**, with a quote from H.W. Longfellow’s poem, *The Golden Milestone* (which reminds us of Stuart’s return visit to his birthplace a few years before his death and underlines Greene’s deep belief in the importance of preserving home and hearth).

- The heritage of America is located in local historic places. South County’s Gilbert Stuart Museum, Newport’s Bellevue Avenue mansions, historic seaport towns like Wickford and Bristol, mill villages in the Blackstone Valley, and Providence’s historic neighborhoods tell an American story as well as a Rhode Island story. America’s heritage is here, close-to-home, preserved throughout Rhode Island.

Edward Sanderson

We are sure that all members of the Gilbert Stuart Museum community would express similar reasons for supporting historic preservation in general, and our own Saunterstown gem, specifically. And, like us, are grateful to be allowed the opportunity to participate in the effort to do so.

The Newsletter Team:
Trustees Harriet Powell, Gail Shields, and Peggy Todd
and Executive Director, Peggy O’ Connor

~~~~~  
**Model T’s Visit the Museum**



**1913 Model T**

The Crankin’ Yanks, Connecticut Chapter of the Model T Club of America, visited the Museum on August 22<sup>nd</sup> during their 3-day tour of South County. Fifteen Model T’s in a variety of colors and styles ranging from 1911 – 1926 lined the parking lot and lawn in front of the Museum. All the T’s looked shiny and new, restored to perfection, not revealing that each is approaching their one-century birthday! The Connecticut club members were joined by members from Rhode Island, Florida, New Jersey, and Germany. Thirty-five members of the club toured the Museum.

The Artists-in-Residence exhibit and Sale continues through October 18<sup>th</sup>.

## Who is Harley?

Harley Bartlett, Honorary Chair and guest of honor at Gilbert Stuart's annual fundraiser, *Raising the Roof*, is an accomplished Rhode Island artist. He has restored and created murals for various clients including the RI State House, residences in Boston, New York, and Palm Beach, and several local restaurants. His murals have also been featured in several magazines including New York Magazine and RI Monthly. His fine art paintings are on exhibit in galleries in Rhode Island, including the Providence Art Club, and throughout New England.

In keeping with the theme of this issue's newsletter *Why Preserve...?* it was decided to interview Harley Bartlett. His painting of the birthplace was auctioned off at "Raising the Roof." He graciously donated the proceeds to the fundraiser's account. **THANK YOU HARLEY!** We wondered what inspired him and what are his thoughts about why preserve the genius, ingenuity and artistry of earlier generations to maintain an important link to our past. Mr. Bartlett graciously agreed to the interview. Below are the questions and his responses:

\*\*\*\*\*

1. What influenced/inspired you to paint the Gilbert Stuart Birthplace?

A: Gilbert Stuart influenced me as a student at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. There are several portraits by him in the collection. At the time, I thought that I would enter the field of portraiture. I studied what was written on his pallet and his technique of painting. I have had the pleasure of copying several of his portraits.

2. How would you describe yourself as an artist?

A: Like the artists of Gilbert Stuart's time, practical.

3. Gilbert Stuart was a portraitist. Your artistic skills range from murals to decorative art and fine art projects. Do you prefer one to another, one subject to another?

A: I enjoy many of the different fields of art/painting where my talents may be expressed. Like many artists of his day, he assisted other artists as an assistant. He helped Benjamin West execute some of his "hundred acre" canvases for the King of England before becoming successful as a portrait painter.

4. Can you tell of any defining moments when you recognized your talents?

A: I had talent as a young boy. Making a living was the challenge.

5. This upcoming newsletter's theme is *Why Preserve?* ... in terms of our past, its culture, people, contributions, influences, etc. Our mission at Gilbert Stuart Museum is to preserve the historic buildings and afford today's generation the value of our endeavor. With that in mind, could you please reflect on the question, *Why Preserve?*

A: To forget, or not preserve the past, is to forget who we are as a people or culture. People such as Gilbert Stuart contributed to who the American people are. He recorded

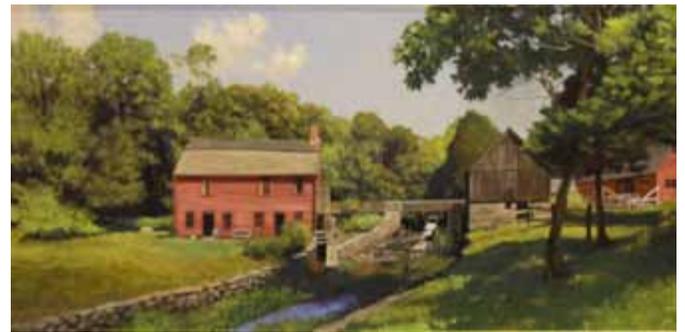
many important people of his time through portraiture. To not preserve where he came from, to not record the humble beginnings, which he rose from, would be a failure of American history.

\*\*\*\*\*

It is clear from Harley's responses that he has made an interesting and lasting connection with Gilbert Stuart, his talent, his beginnings, and challenges. Both of these talented artists dedicated/dedicating their talents to preserve this country's people and culture. Their contributions to this endeavor are our link to our past and present. That is what will be reflected, honored, and preserved in our future.

With deep and sincere gratitude, we thank and honor both these artists.

Peggy Todd



*Gilbert Stuart Museum* by Harley Bartlett

### PRINTS AVAILABLE

A limited edition of numbered signed prints of Harley Bartlett's original oil "Gilbert Stuart Museum" is being offered. Please stop in at the office to see these exquisite, matted prints in two sizes or call the office for further information. 401-294-3001

\*\*\*\*\*

*Mark your calendar!*

*December 4, 2009*

*Candlelight Celebration*  
*It's Gilbert's Birthday!*

**See the Birthplace by candlelight!**  
**Music**  
**Refreshments**  
**Seasonal Decorations**

**Watch for details for this exciting,  
first-time event.**

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***



**Connecticut Chapter of the Model T Ford Club of America visits the Museum. Model T's 1915 (left) and 1912 (right)**