

The Gilbert Stuart

Birthplace and Museum

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

Fall 2012

Who Visits the Museum?

Visitors came from our community and state, across the country, and around the world!
All were surprised and the beauty and depth of what we have to offer.



Students from Davisville Middle School enjoy a hands-on program

DAVISVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL SEVENTH GRADERS!

This past May, one hundred sixty-four seventh graders from Davisville Middle School spent two days at the Museum learning with hands-on activities in the picturesque environment. Although many students had visited the museum in the past, this time they participated in unique activities giving them a new perspective on history.

The students attended five workshops that were designed to enhance their understanding of the Rhode Island "slave experience," the role snuff played in the Triangular Trade, and the connection Gilbert Stuart had to this time period. In the Common Room, one workshop included the facilitator speaking to the students in Swedish and demanding that they do various tasks typical of the 1700's. Frustrated by their lack of understanding, students quickly made the connection to how slaves might have felt because of a language barrier and a lack of understanding of the culture. While sitting in the Master Bedroom, students wrote poetry to help process these feelings. In the Keeping Room, students made self-portraits with torn pieces of colored paper. Students strived to achieve personality and individualism in their self-portraits as modeled in the portraits painted by Gilbert Stuart.

Students were given an in-depth tour of the Grist Mill and Snuff Mill by Museum docent Peggy Todd. Finally, students looked at how humans impact the environment through the creation of dams.

The students of Davisville Middle School left the museum with a greater appreciation of the art of Gilbert Stuart and a better understanding of the Rhode Island "slave experience." The field trip was made possible through major funding support from the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities, an independent state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Sandra Makielski



Some of our 2012 visitors include a biking group from NY, Girl Scout bridging ceremony, the Belles of Beechwood, and the Kingston Hill Gardeners.

President's Message Fall 2012



Dear Friends,

We all share in our support and love of the Museum and grounds. I am preaching to the choir when I repeatedly reiterate the importance of preserving this beautiful and important historic site. We all need to

continue to spread the word about our little gem in the woods of Saunderstown.

When visitors come to the Museum for the first time, they are usually surprised by how much we have to offer and are delighted with the experience. I am pleased to report that the number of visitors to the Museum is trending upwards.

Our Junior Docent program is a huge success in both the education of our young people and in the delight of our visitors who are always very enthusiastic about their interaction with the young docents. We also need to thank the very dedicated adult docents and volunteers whose knowledge, enthusiasm, and love of the Museum come through to the visitors.

As promised, there was no Annual Appeal last year, and no plans to resume this important part of our revenue stream until we have met our goals with the "Picture This..." Capital Campaign. We are pleased at where we are at this point and recognize that we have a way to go, but we are committed to seeing the project through and completing the renovation of the Welcome Center. When this is done, we will have accomplished our goal of ensuring that the Museum will survive and thrive for the generations ahead.

This Museum is an important piece of our country's history and we intend to do a better job of telling the story. When the Welcome Center is completed, we will be able to do just that. With the much needed handicapped access and restroom, a secure area to display period artwork and artifacts, and the ability to offer a variety of themed exhibits, we will increase our offerings. This will make our Museum a destination not to be missed and will attract many visitors and new members, which will give us greater security moving forward.

Sincerely,

Dan Bell
President of the Board of Trustees

Capital Campaign Update

As of September 2012, we are one year into our three-year "Picture This..." Capital Campaign. We have made progress towards our goal of \$350,000. With donations, pledge payments, fundraisers, quilt raffles, and other events we have received over \$100,000. We are hoping to hear positive responses from grant applications to several foundations.

Thank you so much to all who have donated/pledged. Your contributions and support show your love for our beautiful Museum. If you have not donated and wish to do so, please send your donation to the Museum. You may contact the office for further information.

Peggy Todd
Capital Campaign Chair



We thank the North Kingstown Arts Council for sponsoring "Meet the Reveres: Paul and Rachel Revere Ride Again," a special presentation at our Spring Fair by Jessa Piaia and Lee Riethmiller.

Gilbert Stuart Birthplace and Museum

Board of Trustees

Daniel A. Bell, President

Peggy Todd, Vice President

Harriet E. Powell, Secretary

Wheaton C. Vaughan, Treasurer

Betsy Coghlin

Cathy DiColo

Dr. Joseph Dowling, Jr.

Barrie Ekman

Patricia D. Fuller

Curtis V. Givan

Carol H. Hueston

Thor S. Johnson

Lillian C. Patterson

Alan R. Post, D.C.

Kathleen Romeo

Louis R. Sansone

Kathleen Romeo

Robert J. Sgroi

Gail Shields

Russell R. Shippee

Dennis E. Stark

Cathleen A. Studley

M. Ray Wertz

Alice B. Westervelt

Joseph B. White

Trustee Emeritus

Henry L. P. Beckwith

Executive Director

Margaret M. O'Connor

Margaret M. O'Connor

Gilbert Stuart Birthplace and Museum Mission Statement

The Gilbert Stuart Birthplace and Museum preserves the birthplace of Gilbert Stuart and its surrounding acreage. Focused on history, art, and nature, the Museum is charged with directing and supporting its operation as a National Historic Landmark and with the conservation of its natural setting

JOHN ADAMS at 90

John Quincy Adams, in 1823, wanted Gilbert Stuart to paint a likeness of his 89-year-old father, John Adams. He wrote to the artist in Boston to commission a portrait of the former president. Stuart demurred. He did not want to make several trips out to Quincy to paint the aging Adams' picture. The artist was suffering from the constant pain of gout by the time he reached his late 60's and it added to his reputed crankiness. He dreaded the 10-mile trip to Adams' home, which would have taken over an hour, jostling his gouty joints. Stuart had several excuses. There was no easel there. And no room "properly adapted to the light." But finally he acquiesced and promised he would go to Quincy and take with him his "best brush."

This would be the second time that Adams had sat for Stuart. The first being in 1800 when the artist made portraits of the president and his wife Abigail. Now John Adams was nearing the end of his life and the artist realized that he was painting a "picture of affection, and of curiosity for future times."

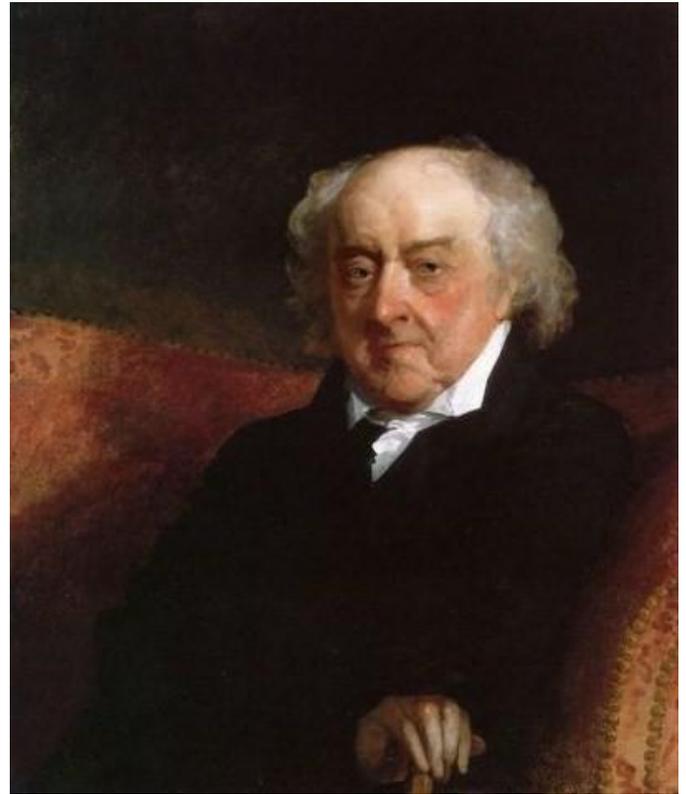
John Adams had little use of the arts and rarely wanted to have his portrait painted. "No penance is like having one's portrait done... But I should like to sit to Stuart from the first of January to the last of December, for he lets me do just as I please and keeps me constantly amused by his conversation." And possibly the flow of brilliant conversation between the two old men also helped Gilbert Stuart to forget about his pain.

Josiah Quincy was present at the sittings and reported that during the conversations Stuart would "call up different emotions in the face he was studying." With his skill and genius, he used the most characteristic expressions to animate the picture.

Adams was posed in the parlor of The Old House, sitting on a rose damask camel back sofa trimmed with brass studs. When you visit the Adams Historic Park in Quincy, you will still see the sofa in the front room. Stuart chose a dark background for the portrait instead of showing the parlor's light walls. The sunlight from a nearby window bathes the aged Adams in luminous light. His arms are folded in front of him as he leans slightly forward engaging with the viewer, his hands lightly resting on a cane. One's gaze is immediately drawn to Adam's intense, intelligent eyes. Although by this time in his life Gilbert Stuart's brushwork had softened, becoming less precise, John Adams' countenance commands one's attention.

This was not just a portrait of an old man so that we could remember him. It was a masterful presentation of John Adams, patriot, president and statesman. Josiah Quincy later said that

"a faithful representation of the extreme age of the subject would have been pitiful in inferior hands. But Stuart caught a glimpse of the living spirit shining through the feeble and decrepit body. He saw the old man at one of those happy moments when the intelligence lights up the wasted envelope."



John Adams (at 90 years of age) Gilbert Stuart
c. 1825 oil on canvas 30"x 25 1/8"
Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

After the sittings in Quincy, it took Gilbert Stuart almost a year to finish the portrait and it was thus completed in John Adams' ninetieth year. The portrait can be seen in the American Wing of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. In 1826, President John Quincy Adams commissioned a copy of his father's portrait which is a more expressive but less finished rendition. It can be seen at the National Gallery of Art in Washington.

Gail Shields



John Adams Gilbert Stuart
c. 1800 oil on canvas 29"x 24"
National Gallery of Art,
Washington, D.C.

Milling Around at the Museum



Carr Pond: Boat rentals were brisk this year. Boaters enjoyed rowing and fishing the scenic and peaceful 68 acres of Carr Pond. Also known as Pausacaco Pond, these waters contain largemouth bass, chain pickerel, bluegill, yellow perch, and crappie. Our members caught some whoppers. Check out this largemouth bass caught by Paul Smith! Photo courtesy of Paul Smith

On the Lawn: Our June 16th gala was a hit! Thank you to all of our sponsors and friends who attended and enjoyed an evening of wine, music, and great food! We thank our Honorary Chair Harley Bartlett and our sponsors including our Platinum Sponsor GREENVALE VINEYARDS for their support of the museum. Over \$6000 was raised for our Capital Campaign special project: the addition of a handicapped accessible entry and rest room in the Welcome Center.



Thank you to our friends: Thank you to all who support the Museum with your yearly membership, donations, and your valuable time and spirit! As a private non-profit organization, we rely on our friends who keep the Museum vital. You help to preserve this National Historic Landmark for future generations.



Kayla and Lauren Harrington take a break from their Junior Docent duties.

Volunteer Appreciation Day: Over 60 of our volunteers and their families gathered at the Museum at 2:00 pm on September 30th to enjoy an Ice Cream Social. The event was planned to celebrate and thank our wonderful volunteers: 23 junior docents, 17 adult docents, 5 greeters, a registrar, and many additional volunteers who help with events and special projects. Many thanks to Brickley's Ice Cream for providing the ice cream for this event! We thank and appreciate all of our friends for their love and support of the Museum.

South County 'Scapes: The wet afternoon weather did not dampen the spirits of the ninety guests at the August 10th opening wine and cheese reception for the Artists-in-Residence exhibit and sale. Over ninety works picturing scenes from South County were on exhibit.



Top row: Artist Theresia Wenish and husband, Artist Tracie Seed and husband, Betsy and Tom Coghlin with Artist Bee Givan (center)
Bottom row: Artist Dan Urish and President Dan Bell, Ray Wertz, Joe Dean, and Artist Jane Dean, the Sobans and Blinks enjoy the evening.



Thank you to Joan A. Gardiner and Sue Adams for the donation of their beautiful handmade quilt to benefit the special Capital Campaign project: the addition of a handicapped entry and admission area to the Welcome Center. Sales for the "Ramp it Up" Quilt Raffle were brisk, raising over \$1000 for the cause. Congratulations to quilt winner Betsy Coghlin!



Caroline Hazard and the restored snuff mill at the Gilbert Stuart Birthplace

Saving the Gilbert Stuart Birthplace

In 1930, a group of distinguished Rhode Islanders saved the house where Gilbert Stuart was born from falling "into decay", in the words of Committee Chairman and President Caroline Hazard. After purchasing the house and grounds, the group subsequently raised sufficient monies to restore the buildings and to open the newly dubbed *Gilbert Stuart Memorial Incorporated* to the public, making available to all the site of the birthplace of one of America's foremost portrait painters and documenter of the likenesses of six of the first Presidents of the United States. As many are aware, a facsimile of Stuart's Washington portrait graces the face of our current one-dollar bill.

To celebrate the 81st year of the acquisition of Stuart's birthplace, we are asking the public to help us to learn some of the names of original 1931 attendees who were recorded on a small piece of 8mm film from the opening of the Museum. A number of still photographs of people on the film will be displayed for easier identification, thanks, in part to the East Greenwich Photo Studio and Soozie Sundlun.

To that end, the Gilbert Stuart Museum and historian Tim Cranston are holding an "identify your relative" night at the North Kingstown Free Library on Wednesday, October 24, 2012 from 6:30 to 8:00pm. If you think your parents (if you're around 60 or older, or if younger, your grandparents), may have attended the Museum's opening event, please come to the Library and view our film (if you miss the event, there may be other opportunities at the Museum later on). One of the Museum members found his grandparents on the film and was able to give us their hitherto unknown names. To assist you in deciding if one or more of your relatives might have attended, a list of their names is posted on the Gilbert Stuart website Programs page under *August 1931 Visitor List* and we will provide the library with a list as well.

As part of our celebration/identification agenda, Tim Cranston plans to tell the story behind the 1931 rescue of this critically important local historic site. This recently discovered film from the August 29, 1931 "Housewarming" celebration and its intriguing guest sign-in book will all be on display at the October 24th event. The efforts made to save the Birthplace of our nation's premier portrait artist will be discussed in the larger context of the race to save the past that occurred all over New England at the start of the 20th Century. Were your grandparents or great-grandparents there on the day that the future of the Gilbert Stuart's Birthplace was secured? Check the list of attendees and see if someone in your family is on the list.

Harriet Powell

From "The Gilbert Stuart Birthplace"

A booklet published in 1935 which includes "A brief History of the Birthplace, its Purchase and Restoration, the forming of the Corporation, and Future Projects" by Caroline Hazard



"Passing of the Deed" L to R: Architect Norman Isham, Caroline Hazard, Nathaniel Vose, Joseph Greene, Mrs. Greene, Sr.

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| 1927 | Nathaniel Vose sends an appeal to save the birthplace |
| July 1930 | First thousand dollars raised for the purchase of the birthplace |
| September 30, 1930 | Entire amount raised for purchase |
| October 4, 1930 | Property sold by Mrs. Hazel Green Henniger and held by the Wakefield Trust Company until incorporation |
| January 31, 1931 | Articles of Incorporation drawn up and signed for the GILBERT STUART MEMORIAL INC |
| August 29, 1931 | Housewarming Open House Celebration |
| June 11, 1932 | Snuff mill waterwheel runs for the first time |

P. O'C.

Save the Date:

Wed. October 24, 2012 ~ 6:30 - 8:00 pm
North Kingstown Library

"Saving the Gilbert Stuart Birthplace"

OLD MILL DAY / FAMILY DAY

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2012

What better way to end our busy 2012 season than a celebration for the community and grinding corn in the Hammond Mill!

Our caretaker Bart McNeil was at the helm in the gristmill on Old Mill Day. Bart was ready for a solo run after studying the operation and nuances of the mill with master miller Andy Shrake. Bart did a wonderful job of "keeping his nose to the grindstone", assuring that the mill ran smoothly. The Hammond Gristmill was brought back to life in May of 2007, grinding corn for the first time in 100 years. We grind corn as a special event and attraction several times a year.

What would Old Mill Day be without jonnycakes! Everyone sampled delicious jonnycakes made by our caretaker Heidi McNeil! They were so good that many visitors went back for more!

"Farm Dog" added a lively note to the festivities. "Farm Dog" members Doc Wood and Jon Dember played traditional and period music on a variety of instruments throughout the event. Visitors and volunteers, young and old, were seen bobbing, swaying, and singing to the music.

Members of the RI Spinning Guild were on hand, giving fascinating demonstrations of spinning and weaving on their own looms and spinning wheels and on the Museum's great wheel.

Junior Docents regaled visitors with stories of Gilbert Stuart, details about the snuff mill and daily life in 1750, and taught and demonstrated colonial games. How many of you were successful with the cup and ball toy? Visitors enthusiastically hunted down the items on the Scavenger Hunt. Where are the ice skates, the mouse, the candle snuffer, and the green metal wheel? Look for them on your next visit. The Museum will open for the 2013 season on the last Sunday in April.

