



The Gilbert Stuart Birthplace and Museum

Spring 2010

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www.gilbertstuartmuseum.org

PRESERVATION OF THE BIRTHPLACE 2010

We knew that the floors in the 260-year-old Birthplace were a bit crooked, but would they support a busload of tourists? Would the roof last another year? What about the weeping stone walls in the basement? To find the answers to these questions, we called on the person who knew these walls intimately, Ray Clidence of 18th Century Woodworks. We asked Ray to do an inspection and structural analysis of the Birthplace building and Gristmill. Additional consultants were called: Carrigan Engineers, Tom Paske, and experts from Newport Restoration Foundation. All agreed that the Birthplace needed additional support in the ceiling joists in the common room and in the summer beam, and that we did indeed need a new roof immediately. They also discovered a few other problems: moisture was causing damage including rot, crumbling walls in the basement, and peeling paint, the chimneys were crumbling and in need of repair, and the house was pulling apart causing bowing in the south wall.

With estimates in hand, we had to raise the funds to do this crucial work to preserve the Birthplace. The moneys were raised through generous grants (listed on page 5), sponsorships, contributions, and donations by loyal members and friends to the Raising the Roof fundraiser and the President's 2009 Appeal.

Ray Clidence is certainly familiar with keeping the 1750 Birthplace and grounds up to snuff. Since 1987, much of the restoration work on the museum buildings, snuff mill, dam, and woodworking projects has been done by 18th Century Woodworks, and the masonry and dam work by Boettger Masonry. Some of these projects include: building and installing replacement snuff mill waterwheels in 1987 and in 2005, rebuilding both the south and west dams, spillways, sluice gates, foot bridges, building a masonry island and wheel pit for the gristmill, removing and replacing the main floor of the Birthplace, replacing window frames and sashes, building a forebay frame for the gristmill wheel, changing the bearing beam for the gristmill, and reroofing the gristmill.

Staging was erected for the current projects in December of 2009 and the work began. During January and February, Sam and Ray Clidence began the roof prep, and worked in the unheated Birthplace bracing beams and the roof, preparing steel fitch plates for additional support in the summer beam, cellar joists, and straps to stabilize the joists in the attic. Blessed with some sunny and warm days, the roofing project was well underway during the month of March.

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Off with the old roof



On with the new roof – note high water from recent rains

SPRING FAIR AT THE BIRTHPLACE

Sunday, April 25 ~ 1:00 – 4:00

\$5 / \$2 / Members free

Come and join us for our exciting opening day event!

Corn Grinding in the Hammond Mill

Fish on the Run presentation by DEM/underwater camera

Jonnycakes, Coffee, and more

Art Exhibit and Sale: "Images and Inspiration"

18th Century reproduction furniture

Wooden furniture, bowls, burl, and gift items.

RI Spinners Guild spinning and weaving

Fair traded jewelry, pottery, woven items for sale

Rug hooking and other demonstrations

Nature Trail ~ Birthplace Open House

President's Message Spring 2010

Dear Members,

It's hard to believe that we are four months into the New Year and fully back to work to ensure another successful season. We are thrilled with the progress of the renovation and stabilization of the Birthplace. The job is fully underway and we are pleased to report that we have not experienced many unexpected problems. The work that Ray Clidence and his crew are doing has been first rate and thoughtfully implemented so as to maintain the historic character of the building and assure that the Birthplace will stand the test of time. The new changes include the new roof, the interior facelift, and the new brick foundation behind the snuff mill apparatus. There are other things that you won't see, like the many hidden steel plates and supports used to perform the much-needed stabilization of the structure, that are critical to the long-term stability of the Birthplace.

I commend Peg O'Connor and Curtis Givan for their dedication to the project and for the enormous amount of additional time spent on site to keep it on track and on budget. It is extremely exciting and interesting to be involved with the uncovering of Norman Isham's work and to have seen the unique discovery of some original signatures from the workers who performed the first restoration in 1931. We have asked that Ray and Sam Clidence and our trusty mason, Nathan Boettger, leave their mark for future craftsmen to uncover before we close it up for another century.

The extensive work on the Birthplace would not have been possible if not for the extraordinary generosity of the Champlin Foundations, the Ida Ballou Littlefield Memorial Trust, the Robertson Foundation, Washington Trust Bank, all of the donors to the 2009 President's Annual Appeal, and all of our members and friends who supported our fundraiser "Raising the Roof"! Many thanks to all for your support, and I hope to see you at the Museum this year.

Dan Bell

President of the Board of Trustees

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Save the Date:

Friday, August 6, 2010

Support the Museum's
continued restoration effort
and join us for our Fundraising Gala:

"In the Mood!"

"Take Five"

Enjoy Jazz and Big Band tunes

Wine

Catered light supper

Desserts

Event Chairs Dan Bell and Dennis Stark and
the event committee have an exciting evening planned
for your enjoyment!

Don't miss **"In the Mood"!**

Needed: Donations for the Silent Auction

Are you a gourmet cook? Do you have a vacation home?
Can you donate an item, gift certificate, or tickets?
We are looking for volunteers to offer goods or services for
unique Silent Auction items to raise funds for
the Phase II restoration effort.

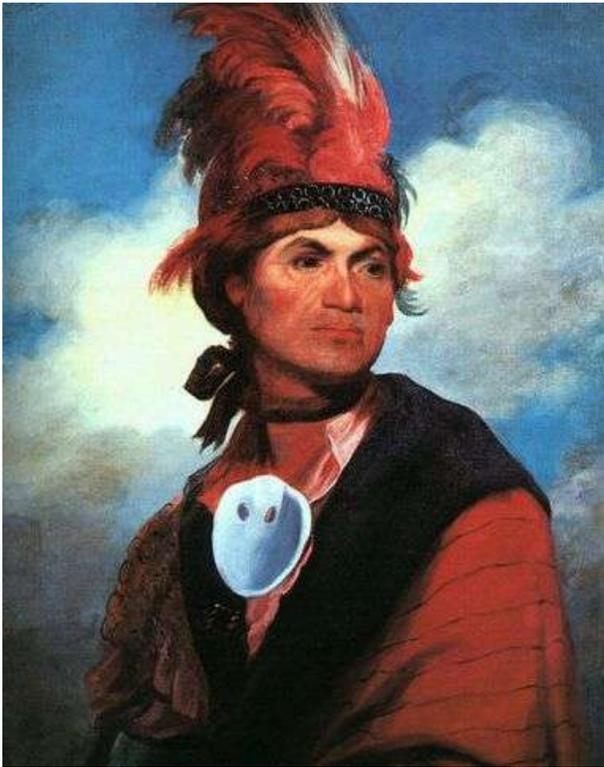
Please contact the office for information: 401-295-8574
or email info@gilbertstuartmuseum.org

Artists-in-Residence Week ~ July 15 – 19

Come and paint or photograph on the beautiful grounds of the Museum



Artists Susan Medyn and David Formanek



Joseph Brant by Gilbert Stuart

The Joseph Brant Portraits

Among the portraits of traditionally dressed 18th Century women and men painted by Gilbert Stuart, one stands out - a man wearing a feathered headdress and a brilliant red garment. It is Joseph Brant, chief of the Mohawk Indians. How did a Native American come to sit for Gilbert Stuart, one of the leading artists of his century who had been called the Vandyck of his time?

Joseph Brant was not an ordinary man. He was born Thayendanega in northeastern Ohio territory and grew up among the Mohawks in central New York. As a boy, he was recognized to be intelligent and eager to learn, so when he was 18 he was given a scholarship to Parson Wheelock's school for Indian Boys in Lebanon, Connecticut. Plunged into an alien culture of prayers, lessons and dormitory living, Joseph thrived. Besides learning religion and decorum he also mastered mathematics, reading, writing and classical languages.

Upon returning to his tribe in 1763, he planned to become a missionary but was soon drawn into the ongoing wars that the Mohawks and the larger Indian confederation, the Iroquois, were fighting along side the English. He was valued as an interpreter and a spokesman for his tribe.

In 1775 Brant was sent to England with Sir Guy Johnson, the royal commissioner of Indian Affairs, to deliver a message to King George III. His demeanor and intelligence combined with his unique standing made him an immediate celebrity in London. Joseph Brant had an audience with the king, met his family and was presented with a small silver gorget (throat piece) bearing the royal arms. While in London, he was inducted into the Freemasons and had his portrait painted by George Romney - not Gilbert Stuart.

When did Stuart paint the much-celebrated Joseph Brant? Not for another eleven years! Brant returned to



Joseph Brant by Gilbert Stuart

England in 1786 to petition the King for help in protecting the Mohawk's territory and to get the pension due him for fighting with the English.

In the same year, Gilbert Stuart was greatly in need of money. His habit of living beyond his means was catching up with him. The Duke of Northumberland, Hugh Percy, became a patron of the artist. The Duke had his and his family's portraits painted and convinced others to engage Stuart, thus keeping the artist afloat.

Percy wanted a portrait of his friend and former ally during the revolution, Joseph Brant. Francis Rawden-Hastings, Earl of Moira, a fellow officer of Brant's also desired to have a portrait of his Indian friend. Each commissioned Gilbert Stuart to paint a portrait of the famous Mohawk Indian. Two quite different portraits resulted.

The Duke of Northumberland's shows Joseph Brant against a cloudy sky. He is wearing a black and red cap with a tuft of feathers and a dark shawl. His necklace of silver rings, the silver gorget and armband contrast with his somber clothing. Brant looks directly at the viewer with a steady gaze.

The Rawden-Hastings portrait is the eye catching one. Suggesting that Joseph Brant was not at home in a drawing room, Stuart painted him against a bright blue sky studded with white clouds. Here the headdress is of flaming red feathers as is the blanket he wears under a black scarf. His dominance is portrayed by having his feathers go off the top of the picture. At Brant's neck is a primitive gorget made of a large shell. He is gazing resolutely off into the future. This portrait of Brant is forceful and perhaps romanticized.

Joseph Brant's daughter said that of all the portraits that were done, this is the most accurate likeness of her father. It is considered the finest portrait of a Native American done in the 18th Century.

Gail Shields

Candlelight Celebration

In the fall of 2009, Kathy Romeo and Gail Shields proposed an event at the Birthplace to celebrate Gilbert Stuart's birthday. What the duo envisioned was showcasing five events in the life of the artist, the setting being the birthplace, where he was born on December 3rd, 1775, having actors play the roles, and inviting the public to attend and observe these vignettes.

Gail wrote the scripts for the actors. The first role was for a small child to play Gilbert at 6 who greeted and led the guests from the Meeting Room to the Birthplace. This role was shared by Damien Beecroft and Sophie Davis. In the Birthplace itself, four of the rooms were devoted to separate views of Gilbert's life as he grew older. Gilbert at 16 was played by Gabby Sanchez, Gilbert at 31 was played by Brandon Stephenson, Ray Wertz played Gilbert at 44, and Gilbert at 70 was played by Lou Sansone; Gilbert's daughter Jane, played by Peggy Todd, acted in this last vignette as well.

Approximately 100 visitors turned out for the event. The Museum was beautifully decorated and luminaries lighted the visitors' way into the Meeting Room and from the Meeting Room to the Birthplace. Mulled wine and cider and homemade gingerbread were served to the guests after completion of the tour of the Birthplace.

An unexpected guest turned up about halfway through the evening when General George Washington strode through the door of the Meeting Room. When asked why he had attended, he said he was "looking for the artist. He owes me a picture." He turned out to be Ron Sullman, a Lieutenant Colonel and Executive Officer of the Varnum Continentals, who bore an astonishing resemblance to the "Father of Our Country," tricorn hat, powdered wig, capacious black cape, colonial uniform, and all.

The consensus of the visitors was that they had participated in an outstanding event which had enlarged their understanding of Stuart and his life and times and which they had thoroughly enjoyed. Our thanks to Kathy and Gail and the others that helped to make the evening of December 4th a resounding success!

Harriet Powell



Gilbert Stuart and daughter Jane played by Lou Sansone and Peggy Todd



Luminaries at Candlelight Celebration

Save the Date!

The Gilbert Stuart Birthplace and Museum presents



**Tuesday, July 20, 2010
7:00 p.m.**

**"Norman Isham and Historic Restoration over Time:
The Gilbert Stuart Birthplace"**

**Arnold Robinson, AICP
Preservation and Planning consultant**

Limited seating. Please call or email for a reservation.

**"Stories to Tell: Architecture and Local Lore"
A Culture Coalition Event**

Milling Around at the Museum

Isham papers: Norman Morrison Isham (1864-1943), was an architect and renowned authority in early American architecture and preservation and member of the board of incorporators of the Museum. With scrupulous attention to detail, he developed the plans for the restoration of the Gilbert Stuart Birthplace. We have often been asked if we have these plans, but they had been lost over the years and their whereabouts were unknown.

Due to the lack of insulation and climate control, very little was stored in the attic of the Birthplace building. Two boxes of old guest logbooks were removed from the attic prior to the restoration work planned for this winter. At the bottom of one of the boxes, beneath newspapers dated 1954 was a priceless discovery: Norman Isham's plans for the 1931 restoration of the Birthplace and his correspondence concerning the restoration of the snuff mill. The papers were dried, archivally preserved, and will be digitalized and added to our archival system. These plans have been an invaluable tool for the current restoration.

Betsy Hartigan: Come and visit the new "lady of the house" – our portrait of Betsy Hartigan! Elizabeth (Betsy) Pollock Hartigan was the wife of Dr. William Hartigan, surgeon and professor of anatomy at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland. In 1791, while living in Ireland, Gilbert Stuart was severely injured in a coaching accident. Dr. William Hartigan treated Stuart's wound and saved the arm, which saved Stuart's career. When Stuart returned to the United States, he carried with him a letter of introduction from Dr. Hartigan to his brother-in-law George Pollock. This introduction led to as many as eight portraits of the extended Pollock family (including the famous portrait of "Mrs. Richard Yates") and helped Stuart become established as the important portraitist in the country. This unsigned painting has been attributed to Gilbert Stuart. **Hartigan research contributed by David O'Connor**



Betsy Hartigan

River Herring: On March 19th the first of the river herring arrived at the museum's fish ladder. The herring run will continue until mid-may.

Archival and storage project: Funded by a grant from the Kimball Foundation, the small attic space above the office has been insulated, plastered, heat and air conditioning installed, and storage shelves built. The area will be used for evaluation, registration, and storage of artifacts. It is amazing how much this little space holds. The registration process will be facilitated by the purchase of "Past Perfect", museum software for registration of artifacts and management of membership and contacts, a new computer and a printer.

Website: Visit our new vibrant and informative website designed by Images Design Studio. This project was funded by a 2009 grant from the Society of the Cincinnati and a private donation. www.gilbertstuartmuseum.org

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

GRANTS

We greatly appreciate the generosity of the following grantors for their very generous support of the Museum.

- * **Society of the Cincinnati: \$1000 (2009) for Website development**
- * **Society of the Cincinnati: \$1000 (2010) for reproduction portraits for museum interpretation**
- * **Legislative Grant / Senator Lenihan \$2000 (2008) for development and production of our new brochure**
- * **Legislative Grant / Senator Lenihan \$2000 (2009) for improved lighting in the gallery / meeting room**
- * **The Horace A. Kimball Foundation: \$6000 (2009) for a finished climate-controlled small attic space in the office building for archival storage and an archival recording system (Past Perfect software, computer, printer)**
- * **Robertson Foundation: \$2500 (2009) for structural repairs and a new roof for the Birthplace**
- * **The Ida Ballou Littlefield Memorial Trust: \$5000 (2009) for structural repairs and a new roof for the Birthplace**
- * **The Champlin Foundations: \$132,400 for structural repairs and a new roof for the Birthplace**
- * **Washington Trust: \$1000 (2010) for structural repairs and a new roof for the Birthplace**
- * **We wish to thank three private donors for their generous \$1000 donations.**

Thank you

Continued from page 1

Nathan Boettger and Derek Wallingford of Boettger Masonry Construction began the task of removing the bricks from the smaller chimney and rebuilding it in January. During the inspections, there was a concern with cracks and deterioration of the corner chimneys in the Birthing Room and Family Bedroom. Then a startling discovery was made: these chimneys were not adequately supported and the beams beneath them were severely deteriorated. Hydraulic supports were immediately put into place and Nathan and Derek began an unanticipated additional two-week project - design and build support for these chimneys. The challenge was to design the support behind the snuff mill waterwheel gears and to leave room for the shaft to the outer waterwheel and its maintenance. Using 18th century bricks, Nathan designed a stunning arched support system that looks like it has been in place for 260 years! Then it was back to the repair of the larger chimney and other masonry repair.

Norman Isham's original plans and drawings of the 1931 restoration have been a valuable resource in the current work. Ray, Sam, and Nathan have repeatedly referred to Isham's plans and drawings of the beam configurations, doorways, and fireplaces.

When removing boards, Ray and Sam made a surprising discovery - signatures from men who worked on the original 1931 restoration were found under beams, behind boards, and behind the doorjamb. "Charles E. Lawton Allenton, RI September 3, 1931 age 64 years" and "Chas Lawton" were found behind the south plate and "Built By Joseph H. Bullock and A Strickland 3-23-1931" was found behind the doorframe. Ray, Sam, Nathan, and Derek have signed their own names and left them for discovery when the Birthplace is again repaired in another 79 years!

As the newsletter goes to press, the work by this dedicated and talented crew continues. Stop by the museum to admire their masterful handiwork!

Peggy O'Connor



A spring day



Sam Clidence



Left: Nathan Boettger works on the chimney supports



Right: Museum President Dan Bell and Ray Clidence

Gilbert Stuart Museum Calendar 2010

- April 1 – April 24 Grounds closed due to construction
- April 25 (Sunday) Spring Fair at the Birthplace 1-4 P.M.
- May 3 (Monday) Museum and Gallery open for the season
- May 22 (Saturday) Bird Walk (Reservations please)
- June - September "Stories to Tell: Architecture and Local Lore" at Culture Coalition sites www.culturecoalition.com
- July 15 - 19 Artists-in-Residence Week
- July 20 (Tuesday) Talk by Arnold Robinson AICP
"Norman Isham and Historic Restoration over Time: The Gilbert Stuart Birthplace"
- August 6 (Friday) Gala Fundraiser and Art Sale 5:30-7:30p.m.
- October 2009 Limited Museum hours ~ Call for days and times
- October 10 (Sunday) Old Mill Day / Family Day
- October 11 Museum closes for the 2010 season.
- December 3 (Friday) "Gilbert Stuart and his Times" Exhibit at Wm. Vareika Fine Arts, Ltd.

For more information (401) 294-3001
Web site: www.gilbertstuartmuseum.org
Email: info@gilbertstuartmuseum.org



Snow, rain, extreme cold, floods, and spring sunshine did not stop Ray and Sam Clidence of 18th Century Woodworks and Nathan Boettger and Derek Wallingford of Boettger Masonry Construction from work at the Museum.

COLONIAL GINGERBREAD AND A LITTLE "BITE" OF HISTORY

The spicy treat we call gingerbread has a rather long but interesting history. Medieval Crusaders returning from the Middle East brought back a number of unknown foods – spices, sugars, almonds and citrus fruits. Catholic monks began to bake gingerbread for saint's days and festivals. They were often molded into theme "cakes" depicting saints, religious motifs, and later lord, ladies, soldiers, castles, etc. Their shapes were molded on carved "cookies boards". As time passed, gingerbread was made available to more people. The tasty "breads" could be bought at English Fairs from the Gingerbread Woman for just a coin or two.

There were varied recipes of gingerbread from the English, French, Italian, German, and the Dutch. All of them used as their main ingredients ginger, allspice or cloves, aniseed, or honey. Some added nuts and dried fruits and some were almost candy-like in texture. Different kinds of boards and molds were created to mold the gingerbread. The Dutch baked their treats in shapes of windmills, farm animals, and farm men and women.

In Colonial America, New Englanders continued to bake gingerbreads. Slowly the cookie breads were replaced with cookie cutters. In Pennsylvania, they were shaped by hand into little pudgy men. The English cut them from rolled dough with a glass or teacup. By the 19th century, the shape of the cutters became more than "Gingerbread Men".... birds, stars, moons, sun, toys, and eventually a Santa figure. And then, of course, finally the Gingerbread House was created.

Gingerbread as a bread or cake is part of the gingerbread family. Today we can buy gingerbread mixes but nothing quite compares to the wonderful aroma of homemade gingerbread baking in one's home.

Below are two recipes to try and enjoy!

Colonial Gingerbread

Ingredients:

2 cups all-purpose flour	1 egg
1 cup molasses	1 teaspoon baking soda
3/4 cup buttermilk	1 teaspoon ginger
1/2 cup sugar	1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 cup softened butter	1/2 teaspoon salt
	powdered sugar

Directions:

Preheat oven to 325 F. Grease and flour 9" square baking pan. Into large bowl, measure all ingredients except powdered sugar. With mixer at low speed, beat until blended, constantly scraping bowl. Increase speed to medium and continue beating for 3 minutes. Pour batter into pan and bake 1 hour or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool completely on wire rack. Sprinkle top with powdered sugar.

Spice Cake with a Boiled Raisin Sugar Mixture

Ingredients:

1 cup water	1/2 teaspoon salt
2 cups raisins	1/8 teaspoon nutmeg
1 cup brown sugar	2 cups cake flour
1/3 cup shortening	1 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon	1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon allspice	1 cup chopped pecans (optional)

Directions:

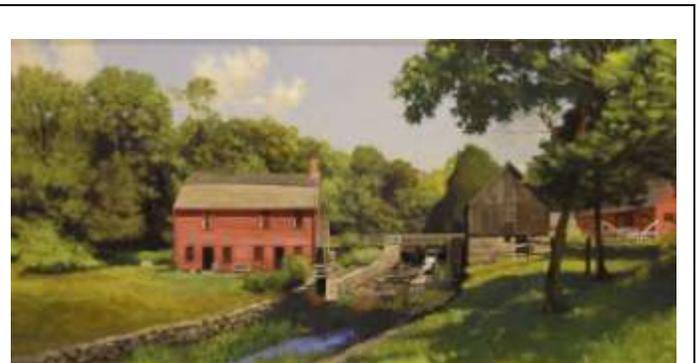
In saucepan, combine water, raisins, brown sugar, shortening, cinnamon, allspice, salt, and nutmeg. Bring to a boil and boil for 3 minutes. Let cool.

Sift the flour, with baking powder and soda; stir flour mixture gradually into the cooled mixture. Beat the batter until smooth. Stir in the chopped pecans, if using.

Bake the cake in a greased 9-inch tube pan in preheated 325-degree oven for 1 hour or more, until a wooden pick or cake tester inserted in center comes out clean.

Enjoy your gingerbread creations!

Peggy Todd



Gilbert Stuart Museum by Harley Bartlett

PRINTS AVAILABLE
HELP FUND PHASE II OF THE RESTORATION

A limited edition of these stunning numbered signed prints of Harley Bartlett's original oil "Gilbert Stuart Museum" is available in two sizes.

Here is your chance to own a spectacular view of the Museum and help fund the Phase II restoration of the campus, including the much needed work on the gristmill.

Order now! Please stop in at the office to see these exquisite, matted prints or call for further information. 401-294-3001

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New roof in progress. March 2010