



# AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE MUSEUM

## *The Broadside*

The American Independence Museum's  
Fall 2015 Newsletter



### **American Independence Festival draws big crowds**

Nearly a year of planning and hundreds of volunteer hours resulted in another "home run," according to Executive Director Julie Williams when asked to sum up the 25th Annual American Independence Festival this past July.

"With a unique emphasis on history and the chance to interact with hundreds of re-enactors, the Festival provides an experience like no other," she said.

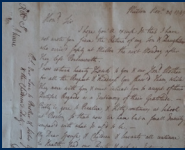
Williams cited corporate support as not only critical to the Festival's success, but that of the Museum, too. "Net Festival revenues support our schoolyear educational programming for more than 1,000 children yearly--sponsors make an impact," she said.

In addition to a significantly expanded Craft Marketplace with more than 30 vendors, this year's Festival featured a new "Ampitheater" section where re-enactors described their lives in rich detail through their characters.

"We hope anyone who visited us this year had the chance to experience history in a deeper and more meaningful way," Williams said. "History can be fun and relevant."

## Exciting Acquisitions at the Museum

We recently received several incredible donations to the Museum, including:



### Letter from Reverend John Taylor to Rev. Faylers

Gifted to the AIM by Vicki Donlan in memory of Jane Gilman Hopkins.

The letter is written by John Taylor, the father of Anne Taylor (who married Nicholas Gilman Sr. in 1752). The letter gives us a rare glimpse into her early life about which very little has survived.



### Portrait of Joseph Cilley

Gifted to the museum by Richard Rugh Stifel, the great grandson of Joseph Cilley.

This is the first oil painting of Joseph Cilley the Museum has obtained. It will be a welcomed addition to our collection of items owned by Joseph Cilley, as well as add to our collection on the original members of the Society of the Cincinnati.



### A Dictionary of the English Language

Gifted by Joan Pirie in memory of Dorothy Gilman Adams, daughter of Joseph T. Gilman

This dictionary, dating to 1786, was owned by the Gilman family. What makes this dictionary so special and a terrific addition to the Museum's collections are the signatures of Nathaniel, Nicholas, John Taylor, and Mary Olivia Gilman found within its pages.

## Currency Exhibit makes "Cents" at Museum

In May, the Museum received a \$1,000 gift from Optima Bank & Trust that enabled staff to properly frame and display 15 Colonial bills that had been stored at the Museum for years, but were unable to be shown due to concerns regarding their care and maintenance. The exhibit, titled "The Currency of Colonial America: the Struggle for Economic Independence," has been a big hit.

"It's been very exciting to engage students and people of all ages with these artifacts," said Rachel Passannante, who helps curate the Museum's collection. "The currency tells a story we could not tell before."



## A Landscape Transformed

In the past several years, the American Independence Museum has been very fortunate to receive several grants that have provided the means to improve the infrastructure of its Ladd-Gilman House. In May, the Museum received an unexpected boost from the community to beautify its landscaping.

"It's completely transformed the look and feel of the Museum's exterior," said Executive Director Julie Williams, who credited several sources of support. "We received a donation from the Exeter Garden Club, tons of help from individual community members and the folks at the Inn by the Bandstand.

She said Volunteer Karen McDonnell "led the charge."

"None of this would have happened without the dedication, hard work, sweat and excitement of Karen," added Williams. "We cannot thank her enough."



## Special events driving Museum growth

Events like the Museum's Art en Plein Air and after-hours lecture series in which authors visit to discuss their books and lesser known bits of history have proven wildly popular. According to Board President Susan Desjardins, such programs help position the Museum "squarely in the center of the community."

"Part of our mission is to engage people of all ages and encourage everyone to view the Museum campus as a community resource," she said. "These events provide value and a place to gather for people who might not even know the Museum."

In addition to Tavern Nights at Folsom Tavern, other events this fall include Constitution and Citizenship Day and a special Halloween event with costumed re-enactors and maybe some "ghosts."

## By the Numbers...

### Did you know?

So far in 2015, we have seen:

- 1) More than 1,300 visitors to our Museum tours, including nearly 200 veterans
- 2) 1,000+ students through our educational programs
- 3) 225+ visitors at special events, including lectures and seminars
- 4) 1,000+ visitors to our annual American Independence Festival



## The Museum Needs You!

Approximately 80% of the Museum's income comes from donations, which underscores the importance of members. Their financial support enables us to offer a variety of educational programs to people of all ages as well as properly care for our vast collection of historical artifacts.

Consider becoming a member and help strengthen our commitment to history and education. Individual memberships are just \$35 and family memberships are \$50.

To learn more, visit [www.independencemuseum.com](http://www.independencemuseum.com).



## Beer, music, games, magic and history?

In May, the American Independence Museum launched Fridays at Folsom in partnership with Redhook Brewery, an initiative that has attracted hundreds and helped energize an entire community.

"It's been an incredible opportunity to invite people into the Museum in a way that wasn't previously possible," said Museum Operations Manager Rob Levey. "We are very thankful to have the support of Redhook Brewery, which is a partnership we have cultivated for years."

At these events, which take place on the first Friday of every month through December, the Museum invites visitors into Folsom Tavern to enjoy beer from Redhook Brewery, live music, children's games and magic shows courtesy of Dana Holleran Houdana. Fridays at Folsom are part of a Town.Exeter.Arts.Music (TEAM) initiative known as "First Fridays: Extown Walks." In addition to featuring original art at the Seacoast Artists Association Gallery and Town Hall Gallery, live music takes place at the Bandstand, sponsored by Exeter Arts Committee in partnership with TEAM.

As for the purpose behind the monthly events, Executive Director Julie Williams said it is two-fold. "We want to create additional revenue streams and invite people into the Museum that might not ever otherwise visit," she said. "Fridays at Folsom are our way of opening up our campus to a wider audience and to make the tavern a tavern again."

Noting the events have helped raise thousands to support the Museum's educational programming, she said she looks forward to "tweaking" its format in 2016. "You have to visit us this fall to find out," she said.

The Museum's upcoming Friday at Folsom events take place on Friday, October 2, November 6 and December 4. To learn more, visit [www.independencemuseum.org](http://www.independencemuseum.org).

## Reaching out to veterans

A \$2,500 gift from Two International Group and \$2,500 from AutoFair enabled the American Independence Museum to again provide free admission to active, retired military or veterans as well as immediate family members who attend with active, retired military members or veterans or immediate family members. Julie Williams, executive director at the Museum, said the gift supports an important objective.

"The Museum was founded with the help of the Society of the Cincinnati, the nation's oldest veteran's organization," she noted. "This gift is timely, important, and forward thinking. I cannot thank Two International Group and AutoFair enough for this investment, which will take us through the entire 2015 season."

2015 makes the second year in a row the Museum has offered free admission to active and retired military, veterans and families.

"We have some items here, including an original Purple Heart awarded by George Washington himself, that really mean something very special to those who have served or are still serving," Williams added. "So far, nearly 400 visitors have enjoyed this benefit."



# Educational Programming taking off

## New manager provides immediate boost

In an effort to further engage kids and youth, Abigail Pietrantonio was hired this past winter as Education Manager, a newly created position at the Museum that quickly paid dividends.

"Abby has done an amazing job outreaching schools, enhancing existing programming and getting new kids into the Museum," said Executive Director Julie Williams. "It is so important we engage our young people and encourage their interest in history."

Pietrantonio said she is excited to be part of "the team." "It's great to see where we can take our educational programs," she said. "I want the Museum to be seen as a trusted partner in school systems statewide."



## Grant will send Museum "packing"

As part of its emphasis on educating more youth, the Museum recently applied for and received a grant from the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation to support a "Traveling Trunk" program.

Featuring replica items from the colonial period, including currency, clothing, flags, maps, games and more along with a resource binder for teachers, the "Traveling Trunk" program will provide a museum quality experience for students.

"Students will be able to literally 'touch' history," said Education Manager Abigail Pietrantonio. "Experiential learning opportunities like this can bring the Museum right into the classroom."

Board President Susan Desjardins said she likes the program because it aligns with some of the Museum's long term goals within its 5-year strategic vision. "Educating children and promoting civic engagement are both very important aspects to what we want to achieve at the Museum moving forward," she said. "I am very pleased at the direction the program will take us. I applaud the staff in helping develop this concept and the foresight of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation to help fund it."



## College Interns make an impact

As has become the custom at the Museum, summer college interns took center stage this past August when they presented on topics that provided a unique glimpse into America's Revolutionary History. This year, topics included: New Hampshire Men and the Saratoga Campaign, Native Americans in the Revolutionary War, Smallpox and the American Revolution, Samplers and Embroidery in the 18th and 19th century, Economic Impact of the Revolution on Individuals and Families, and Secret Spy Rings of the American Revolution.



"This was a chance for our interns to form their own tours, research an area of interest and work with the public," said Executive Director Julie Williams. "They played a critical role at the Museum this summer in a number of different capacities, so it was very rewarding to see them present on their topics and close out their time here with great success."

This year's college interns were Phoebe Lamont-Rosemont College; Ian Norton-St. Anselm College; Haley Wallace-Boston College; Kirsten Goodwin-Elon University; Alison Rush-University of Guelph; Hunter Moskowitz-Cornell University; and Taylor Foland-University of St. Andrews. "Without their assistance each and every summer, we would not be able to either hold our Festival in July or achieve other mission critical objectives," added Williams. "Their infectious enthusiasm is also great to have on campus."

## Lecture series welcomes authors, historians

In April, a lecture on little known aspects of Benedict Arnold's life by George Morrison, longtime researcher of unpublished primary sources, launched what proved to be a busy season for the American Independence Museum.

"It was wonderful to have these distinguished scholars visit us," said Education Manager Abbey Pietrantonio. "They were able to provide a unique perspective on history that Museum members and non-members really appreciated...I cannot wait to see who we bring in 2016."

Other visiting authors included Deborah Child and Glenn Knoblock. To learn more about the lecture series, visit [www.independencemuseum.org](http://www.independencemuseum.org).

## Sponsors, volunteers make a difference at this year's Festival

The 2015 American Independence Festival was made possible through the dedication of dozens of volunteers, many of whom commit themselves for several months to help plan the all-day event. Corporate sponsors are equally critical, as their respective financial support enables the Museum to plan and implement the Festival in its entirety with proceeds that support its educational programming for kids.

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Special thanks to Kimberly Davis Photography for photographing the Festival