

# Gilbert Stuart Birthplace & Museum

## Newsletter Autumn/Winter 2025

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## Even More Time to Explore the Gilbert Stuart Birthplace: Six extra weekends in 2025 to discover history, nature and art



For the first time, the autumn newsletter is going out while the Gilbert Stuart Birthplace and Museum is still open and welcoming visitors. This year, instead of ending our season on Indigenous People's Day and Columbus Day, we have remained open for an additional six weekends.

Even with a reduced, weekends-only schedule, the cooler weather and colorful foliage have drawn many visitors to the site, making autumn one of the museum's most picturesque times of year. Extending the season has allowed guests, both new and returning, to experience the mill, trails, house and gallery during the fall season, and allowed even more people to enjoy the museum at its most beautiful.

The extended season also supported our ever growing program of events and experiences. We took advantage of the evening closing in to launch our immersive performance, *Blood at the Birthplace*. In the early evening twilight Beth Berry, in the role of Gertrude Crandall, took visitors through the true story of the 1891 shooting that took place in the entrance to the historic Gilbert Stuart Birthplace.

The changing leaves and cooler temperatures also provided the ideal setting for the third installment of our series of whiskey tastings, this time exploring the history of Bourbon spirit in the United States of America.



Beth Berry, in her role as Gertrude Crandall, demonstrates bullet trajectory from police records and eye witness statements in *Blood at the Birthplace*.



Becky Gardiner guides visitors through America's history of whiskey in *Revolutionary Spirits: American Bourbon Whiskey Tasting*

### Board of Trustees

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# Faces of the Future: Talent shines at the inaugural Gilbert Stuart Portraiture Prize



Among the Gilbert Stuart Museum's great successes this year was the launch of the Gilbert Stuart Portraiture Prize. In this first year the contest was open to high school aged artists living or studying in North Kingstown.

More than fifty works were submitted for consideration, demonstrating a rich pool of artistic talent. The twenty works chosen as finalists were placed on display in our exhibition gallery to be enjoyed by visitors from around the world. The inaugural class of prize winners, pictured here, give a heartening glimpse into the vibrant future of the genre of portraiture.

**Prize Winning Portraits, clockwise from top left:**

*Graduation with my Childhood Self*, Willow Hauver  
Gilbert Stuart Prize

*Ebbs and Flows*, Olivia Hesford  
1<sup>st</sup> Prize

*Empty Minded*, Teagan Barry  
Honorable Mention

*Self Portrait on the Sea Wall*, Lillian Borkman  
Honorable Mention

*Skye Rose*, Emma Harding  
Honorable Mention

*Distorted*, Kaia Thompson  
Honorable Mention

*Very Sweet*, Juana Castellanos  
Honorable Mention



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# Meet our Gilbert Stuart Education Fellow



The Gilbert Stuart Museum is excited to announce that we have hired a grant funded Education Fellow for the 2025 summer through 2026 winter season. This fellowship marks a significant step forward in strengthening the museum's role as a community learning resource and expanding the educational opportunities we offer.

Our Education Fellow, Elizabeth "Betsy" Motyl, is a versatile educator and curriculum designer with experience in middle-school STEM and literacy instruction, adult education, environmental education, and horticulture. She has taught in diverse settings—urban and rural, formal and informal, public, private, and charter—where she integrates hands-on, cooperative, standards-aligned, place-based approaches to learning.

Betsy also has extensive experience with environmental education and preservation non-profits throughout Rhode Island, including Save the Bay, the RI Wild Plant Society, URI's Master Gardener program as a school garden mentor, and as a water quality tester with URI's Watershed Watch and the Narrow River Preservation Association.

With her background in environmental science and education, she is advancing two of the museum's long-term goals. She is expanding the field trips and educational offerings we provide to schools, aligning programs with evolving curricula, developing pre- and post-visit materials, and broadening the range of offerings we can make available.

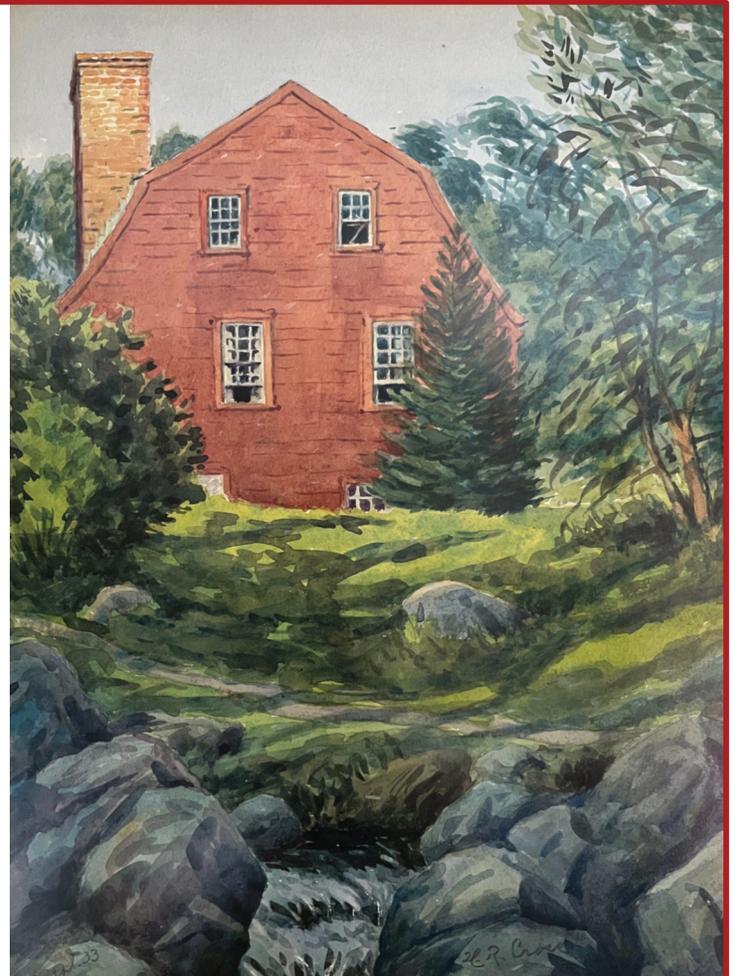
She is also helping us expand educational opportunities for visitors. Her science background allows us to better use the museum's 23 acres of reforested land, offering ways to explore the region's unique geology and habitats. She is also developing programs related to our position at the headwaters of the Narrow River to highlight ongoing scientific work and the importance of this water supply to both historical and contemporary communities.

## Generous Addition to the Museum's Collection

The Gilbert Stuart Museum maintains a growing collection of artworks. In addition to the portraits by Gilbert Stuart and his daughter Jane, the museum has a collection of paintings of the birthplace itself - a popular subject for centuries of artists - and paintings by the museum's founders, many of whom were accomplished artists. The newest addition to our collection is the first to fall into two of those categories: this 1933 painting of the southwest face of the Gilbert Stuart birthplace painted by Herbert R. Cross.

This painting has entered the museum's collection through the generosity of Mrs. Susan W. Greisbach and her family. She grew up with the painting in her home, which had been presented to her mother, Mrs. Chester Hathaway, in 1946. Mrs. Hathaway was the regent of the Pettaquamscutt chapter of the DAR until her family moved out of the state. At her resignation, this painting of the Gilbert Stuart birthplace was presented to Mrs. Hathaway by the chapter.

We are so grateful to the family of Mrs. Hathaway and are thrilled to be able to return this painting to the Birthplace that inspired it, and to the museum inspired by the work of Cross, its painter.



# Help us to Preserve this Rhode Island Treasure



## *Letter from the President*

Dear Friends,

We are wrapping up a great season at the Museum! This is the first year we are staying open until just before Thanksgiving. Since she came on board as Executive Director, Michelle Lee Leonard has wanted to extend the open season. Noting the many disappointed visitors turned away after Columbus Day, we stayed open on weekends through November 23. To paraphrase, 'If you build it, they will come.' Visitors loved being here in the autumn season. Next step, open weekends in April 2026.

Another initiative that was a big success was the inaugural Gilbert Stuart Portraiture Prize competition for local high school students. The finalists were featured in the opening exhibition this year, and the competition will be expanded in the future. Also new this year, the *Blood at the Birthplace* event in October and additional attractions at the Spring and Fall Fairs.

As exciting as all these offerings are, they highlight the need for us to increase the resources we can draw upon. Each event requires planning and preparation. The Trustees are so appreciative of the work done by our staff members as well as our docents, members, and volunteers. Continuing to expand experiences for our members and visitors requires more financial and personnel resources. Your generous financial gifts make this possible, as do volunteering to assist with these events or acting as a docent..

Another challenge is caring for our beautiful historic buildings and extensive grounds. Buildings from the 1700s need constant (and expensive) upkeep. My biggest disappointment this year was not being able to run the water wheel on the Grist Mill. Both the wheel and the roof need repairs. Even when grant money is available for major repairs and renovations, the Museum often needs to match funds. And we must continue maintaining and improving this Rhode Island treasure.

You can help by supporting the 2025 President's Annual Appeal. You will find a return envelope for the appeal in this newsletter. Or contact Michelle to learn about growing our endowment fund or about planned giving. We are thankful for your past generosity and are grateful for your support going forward.

Thank you, and enjoy the holiday season!

*Jackie Lamoureux*

President of the Board of Trustees

## Annual Fundraising Appeal

Electronic Donations: [www.gilbertstuartmuseum.org/support](http://www.gilbertstuartmuseum.org/support) or use the QR code  
Donations via mail: Gilbert Stuart Museum, 815 Gilbert Stuart Road, Saunterstown, RI, 02874

