

# *The Gilbert Stuart*

## *Birthplace and Museum*

April 2025

815 Gilbert Stuart Road  
Saunderstown, RI 02874  
Phone 401-294-3001  
Fax 401-294-3869  
[www.gilbertstuartmuseum.org](http://www.gilbertstuartmuseum.org)

## Inaugural Gilbert Stuart Portraiture Prize

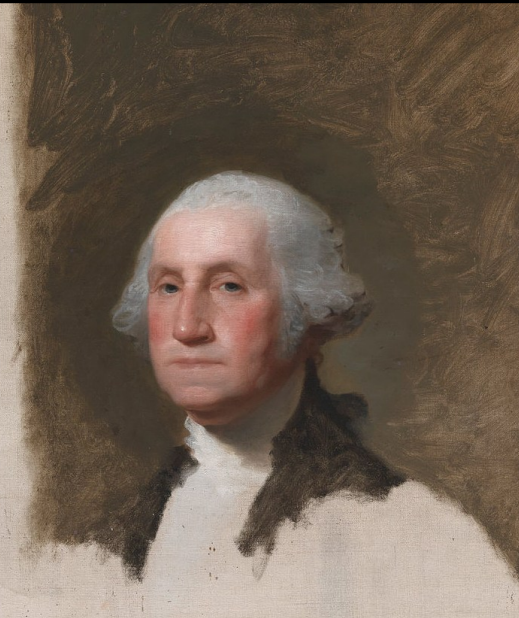
April 27—June 1, 2025

“His object was to counterfeit the soul – to throw the intelligence of expression into the face of the picture – to catch the thoughts... the disposition, and with such elegant touches, that at a glance his copy is sufficient to afford an understanding of the mind of the original.”

- John Nagle, student of Gilbert Stuart, 1828



*Gilbert Stuart*  
Birthplace & Museum



In 1769, at only 14 years old, Gilbert Stuart produced his first professional painting. By all accounts, he had shown exceptional skill throughout his youth. According to one story, he learned how to depict human faces from an enslaved African man called Neptune Thurston. He had already won awards for his drawing and painting skills at school and, according to his friend Benjamin Waterhouse, had already begun to focus on his favorite subject matter, the human face.

Evidence of Stuart's early skill was what brought him to the attention of Dr. Hunter who commissioned the young artist to paint a picture of his spaniels. The resulting painting, *The Hunter Spaniels*, was hardly the height of Stuart's artistic career, but it was nonetheless a vital marker, beginning Stuart's professional career and leading to the start of his formal training with Cosmo Alexander.

Since its founding in 1931, the primary mission of The Gilbert Stuart Birthplace and Museum has been “the perpetuation of the memory of Gilbert Stuart, famous American portrait painter”. As we are approaching the 250th anniversary of the founding of America, and then the 100th anniversary of the museum's founding, we are looking for new and innovative ways to continue promoting Stuart's legacy. Thus, this year we are

launching the Gilbert Stuart Portraiture Prize.

In the competition's inaugural year, we have limited the competition to students at North Kingstown High School. The overwhelmingly positive response we have received thus far is deeply encouraging. In honor of Stuart's own early recognition, next year we will be opening the competition to high school aged students throughout the state of Rhode Island.

For the completion of *The Hunter Spaniels*, Dr. Hunter paid the young artist with professional materials and supplies. In recognition, Blick Art Materials has generously contributed a \$100 voucher to support our grand prize. Likewise, generous sponsorship through the United Way's 401Gives Day has enabled us to offer generous cash prizes in recognition of our grand prize and honorable mention works.

In addition to prizes, the best of the works entered will be hung in the Gilbert Stuart Museum's Bell Gallery. We are promoting the legacy of Gilbert Stuart by recognizing artists of exceptional skill who, like Stuart before them, possessed the innate dedication to capturing the world around them with pencil, paint and paper. Hanging these young artists' work alongside Stuart's own paintings, we look to find and celebrate a new generation of genius.

## Annual Membership Drive ~ Help preserve this Rhode Island treasure

Memberships can be purchased on our website at [www.gilbertstuartmuseum.org/support](http://www.gilbertstuartmuseum.org/support)

Memberships can also be purchased by mail using the enclosed envelope



## Gilbert Stuart Summer Concert & Picnic by the Pond

Saturday, July 12, 2025  
5:00—8:00 pm

There's something about a summer evening that makes live music even better. So this summer, on Saturday, July 12, pack up a picnic basket, grab your lawn chairs and head to the Gilbert Stuart Birthplace to enjoy the vibes.

The Narrow River Band will be playing their signature acoustic rock sound, specializing in a wide range of music from classic tunes of the 60s and 70s right up to inspired songs from emerging musical talent of today. Rich vocal harmonies combine with acoustic guitar, bass, drums, ukulele and mandolin to form a rich full sound that satisfies all tastes.

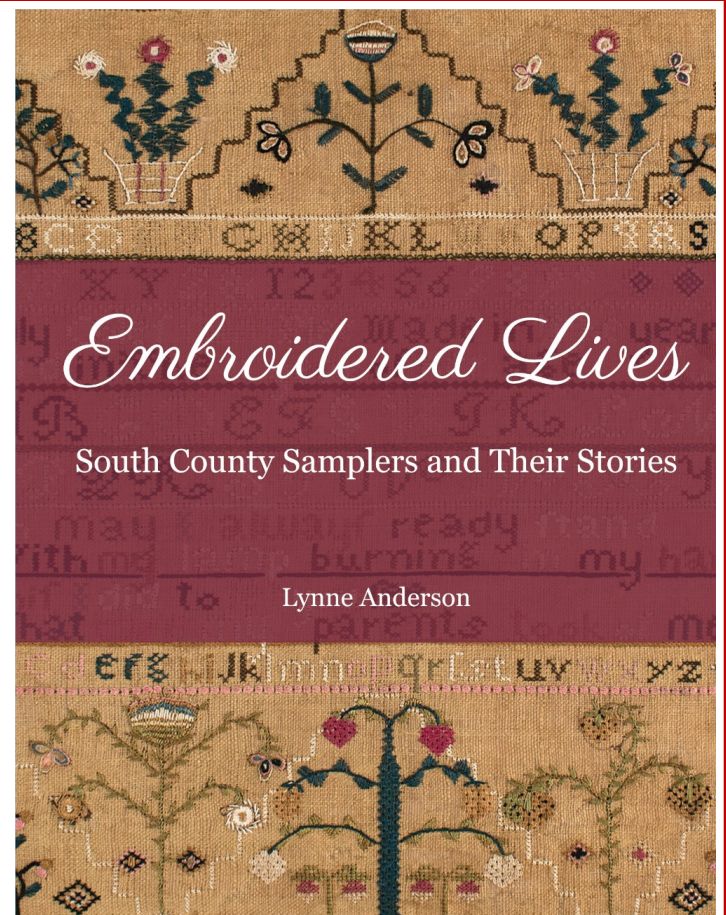
Admission to the Birthplace grounds is free for this event. Come and enjoy the Birthplace's beautiful, idyllic scenery while you dance the evening away.

Fun for the whole family!

## New in the Gift Shop the *Embroidered Lives* catalog has finally arrived

You can relive the beauty of this exhibition with this fully researched, 160 page exhibition catalog. Beautifully illustrated with full page images of all the samplers in the exhibition along with several additional works. The catalog contains both research and samplers that could not be included in the exhibition itself.

This catalog has been a labor of love. We have sought to highlight each sampler as the unique work of art that it is while also embroidering the life of each work's creator with a narrative providing insight into her life.





## Student Projects: Improving Accessibility at the Gilbert Stuart Birthplace

Artists aren't the only young people whose work will be taking center stage at the Gilbert Stuart Birthplace in the 2025 season. Two high school seniors have undertaken major projects with the museum that will help visitors for decades to come.

Stephen Larson, a senior at East Greenwich High School, has opted to do his senior project at the museum, adding an audio component to self-guided tours of the museum's historic buildings. Taking advantage of QR codes placed around the Hammond Gristmill and Stuart Birthplace, visitors to the museum enjoying the self-guided tour option will be able to use their mobile phones to access additional audio material.

Adding an audio component to the self-guided tour will allow visitors with a wider array of learning styles to discover all that the Birthplace has to offer. Likewise, visitors with mobility difficulties who find themselves unable to visit all parts of the birthplace, can take advantage of the audio material to enjoy more of the history of the site at their own pace.



Stephen Larson, East Greenwich High School class of '25

Best of all, the flexibility of a QR code based audio tour leaves open the possibility of adding additional material or even other languages.

You may recognize Abby Rogers as a tour guide or from the museum's front desk. A senior at Chariho High School and Senior Girl Scout, she has been working with the museum on her Gold Award.



Abby Rogers, Chariho High School class of '25

Inspired by some of the most frequent questions asked of her by visitors, Abby's project involved developing and installing a robust system of external signage to help visitors navigate the property. Working as an analog to the internal signage that made self-guided tours possible in the wake of the pandemic, the new signs will help visitors to navigate the property on self-guided tours. The signs both identify and provide background and contextual information about the historic buildings, water wheels, eel ramp & fish ladder, and the historic dooryard garden.

In addition to the passion and drive of these young students, the funding for Abby's signage project was provided by a generous grant from the family of Robert and Patricia Fuller. The Fuller family's gift, along with the passion and dedication of Stephen and Abby, will ensure that the Gilbert Stuart Birthplace and Museum is accessible to all of its visitors long into the future.

Dear Friends,

The warmer days may not yet be with us yet but the herring have started running and the days are starting to get longer. So I'm sure you can imagine that preparations for our Spring Fair and 2025 summer season are heating up, and there is so much to get excited about!

We are thrilled that 2025 will see the launch of our Gilbert Stuart Portraiture Prize. North Kingstown High School has proved an inspiring source of young artists for our first year, with both enthusiasm and talent evident in the entries received. Our goal is to continue to offer resources and recognition to local artists working to follow in the footsteps of Gilbert Stuart. This year's selected works will be hung in the Bell Gallery, and the competitive prizes will be awarded as part of our Spring Fair opening celebration.

Another exciting first for the Birthplace this summer is our *Picnic by the Pond*. On Sunday, July 12, at 5:00 pm visitors are invited to pack a meal and a picnic blanket and enjoy live music by the Narrow River Band while enjoying the beautiful natural surroundings of the millpond and Birthplace lawn.

In addition to all that is new this year, plenty of favorites will be returning. Our ever popular Tea in Elizabeth Stuart's Herb Garden will be back this June. Similarly, our watercolor workshops with Doug Johnson will be back with even more opportunities to unleash your artistic side.

As always, these events are made possible by the continued support of our members. By becoming a member of the Gilbert Stuart Birthplace and Museum, you'll enjoy exclusive access to a world of creativity, history and thought-provoking exhibitions, all while supporting our mission to bring art, history and nature to the community.

I look forward to welcoming new and returning members to the Birthplace for the 2025 season. Together we can continue to foster creativity, learning and a deeper appreciation of the arts in Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

Michelle Lee Leonard, PhD  
Executive Director

# 2025 Spring Fair

April 27, 2025

12:00 - 4:00 pm

Opening of the 2025 Gilbert Stuart Portraiture Prize  
Live music by Farm Dog  
Appearance by Gilbert Stuart  
Herring & Eel Run  
Fresh Jonnycakes  
Family Crafts & Scavenger Hunt  
& Loads More!

*Gilbert Stuart*  
Birthplace & Museum



Admission  
\$10 Adults  
\$5 children  
\$0 0-6 years