

The Gilbert Stuart

Birthplace and Museum

November 2022

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New Gilbert Stuart Dam a Marvel of Craftsmanship and Engineering

Many visitors to the Birthplace and Museum over the course of this past season will have either had the exciting opportunity to witness the repair and installation of our new dam or, during the final weeks of the season, they will have gotten a chance to see the new dam in operation.

Back in 2020, as part of the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management's regular dam inspection process, it was determined that the gates that comprise the primary spillway of our dam had deteriorated to a degree that was causing leakage and needed to be repaired.

These spillways constitute the largest area of out-flow for Carr Pond, they provide the motive force for the Hammond Grist Mill and its wheel, and they make up a substantial portion of our beautiful and iconic site. The necessary safety precautions meant that the main dam and gristmill wheel remained out of order, even as we reopened in 2021.

Through a generous grant from the Champlain Foundation, and the hard work of our director emeritus, Margaret O'Connor, we were able to commence work on this project in June of 2021. The engineering work for the project was managed by Pare Corporation, and the construction and fabrication works were done by millwrights Andy Shrake and Jessie Lambert. Andy and Jessie are intimately familiar with



View into the coffer dam, and through the removed gates

the Hammond Grist Mill and its dam, as they led the work back in 2013 to restore the mill itself to its full, authentic 18th century operations. The duo also offers us their expertise every April running the grist mill for our season opening Spring Fair.

The first step in the repair work involved building yet another dam, a coffer dam approximately five feet further upstream from the dam, to create a comparatively dry space in which to work. Once that was completed, the aged and leaking gates, along with the six uprights that frame the spillways, were carefully disassembled and taken down. New verticals carved from black locust wood were installed, a hardwood that is both exceptionally sturdy and rot resistant. The old gates, which were built of white pine, were carefully replicated in the Shrake workshop using cypress and hammered metal, to maximize resistance to future rot and deterioration. The dam controls were likewise removed, cleaned, re-painted and regreased.



Shrake Millwrights at work on the construction of the coffer dam

Annual Fundraising Appeal ~ Help preserve this Rhode Island treasure

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By mid-September, the dam had been entirely re-built and the coffer dam removed. Once again, we were able to run both mill wheels for visitors and continue demonstrating the revolutionary power of hydraulics to colonial era industry. Managing to be both historically accurate and prepared for the rigors that lay ahead, our iconic dam is ready to withstand the next ninety years of museum operation and beyond.

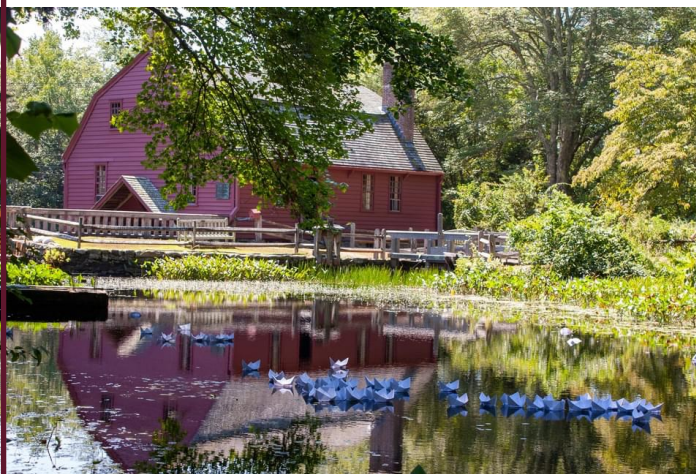


Congratulations!

This year saw the inaugural running of the Gilbert Stuart Museum's Paper Boat Regatta, an origami paper boat race across the museum's scenic mill pond

The opportunity to sponsor boats in the race raised \$1,400, split 50/50 between the museum and the winner of the race.

Congratulations to the winner and all participants for making this fun and lively event possible.



In Memoriam

This year the Gilbert Stuart Birthplace and Museum saw the loss of several longtime supporters and friends. It is with a heavy heart that we say goodbye to longtime supporter of the museum, Miriam Toloudis; long serving docent and volunteer, Louis Sansone; and dedicated board member and docent Ray Wertz. Each of them contributed to the life and legacy of this institution, and they will be truly missed.

We are profoundly grateful for the contributions each of these members of the Gilbert Stuart Museum family had made during their lifetimes. We are, moreover, grateful to those who have chosen to commemorate and celebrate the memories of their loved ones and friends through memorial donations to the museum.

It has been humbling and gratifying to see the many outpourings of love and celebrations of life from those who have chosen to memorialize their loved ones through gifts to preserve the Gilbert Stuart Museum.

Miriam Toloudis

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Louis Sansone

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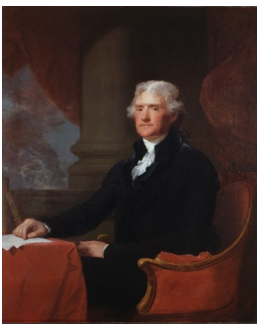
Ray Wertz

Two-Dollar Tom

While many know Gilbert Stuart is responsible for the image of George Washington that graces the one-dollar bill, it is less well known that the two-dollar bill is similarly based on the portraits of Thomas Jefferson produced by Gilbert Stuart during his life.

Jefferson's first sitting, in Philadelphia in 1800, was for a portrait commissioned by Jefferson himself. While Jefferson made prompt payment of one hundred dollars for the sitting, Stuart never delivered the completed portrait and it is not believed to have survived.

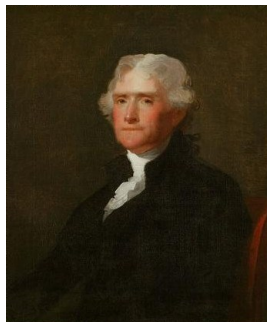
When Stuart moved his studio to Washington DC in 1805, Jefferson pressed the artist to deliver his portrait. He recounted that Stuart "not satisfied with it, and therefore begged me to sit again, and he drew another which he was to deliver me instead of the first..." From this sitting Stuart produced five known, distinct three-quarter view portraits of the third President (though only four survive).



Bowdoin Jefferson

The best known of Jefferson's portraits is the *Bowdoin Jefferson*, which was completed in 1807. James Bowdoin III commissioned the work in 1805 as part of a pair along with a portrait of James Madison. The largest and most elaborate of the portraits, this is also the only three-quarters length image of Jefferson that Stuart produced.

Soon after the 1805 sitting, Stuart also produced the *Madison Jefferson*, named for its first owner. It is a smaller, more subdued, half-length portrait of Jefferson, the pose, posture and modeling of which tie the *Madison Jefferson* closely to its larger, more elaborate sibling.

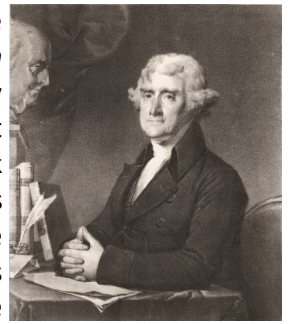


Madison Jefferson

Notably, as with Stuart's *Athenaeum Portrait* of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson did not receive the "original" painting – i.e. the one taken from life – that he had been promised at his 1805 sitting. The distinction of original and copy was of great importance to Jefferson, who identified both the *Bowdoin* and *Madison Jeffersons* as "copies". Jefferson pressed Stuart for his original painting, but Stuart "begged permission to keep it until he could get an engraving from it".

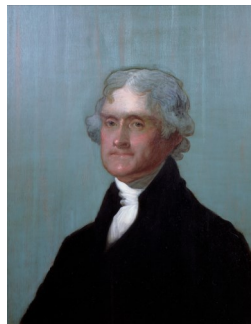
In 1820 Gilbert Stuart finally embarked on his plan, along with dealer John Daggett, to create reproductions of

Stuart's portraits of the first five presidents. The *Daggett Jefferson* was considered by contemporary critics to be one of Stuart's finest works—enough to spark speculation that it was Jefferson's desired original—even though the resulting lithographs lack Stuart's skill and brilliance. Sadly, the *Daggett Jefferson* was destroyed in a fire in the Library of Congress in 1851 and only survives in reproduction.



Daggett Jefferson
(lithographic copy)

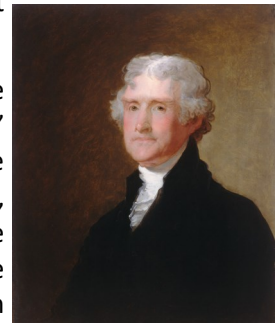
By 1821, Thomas Jefferson's patience was at an end.



Edgehill Jefferson

Jefferson arranged to take possession of his painting: "I have no doubt that Mr. Stuart's justice will think me entitled to the original, & not merely a copy." The result of this request was the *Edgehill Jefferson*. Jefferson was reported to have been satisfied with this conclusion to the commission. While Jefferson and Stuart maintained this to be the "original," Jefferson's daughter recalled that "the paint on the coat of the full-face portrait was still fresh."

Adding to the likelihood that the *Edgehill* portrait is not as "original" as Stuart claimed it was, is the completion of the *Gibbs Jefferson*, also in 1821. Both works are painted on wooden panel and are the only bust portraits of Jefferson that Stuart produced.



Gibbs Jefferson

Despite the long, drawn-out road to the completion of his portrait, Thomas Jefferson maintained a high opinion of Stuart and his artistic skills throughout. Jefferson long counted Stuart's as among his "official" likenesses, and these images have become as central to Jefferson's legacy as the *Athenaeum Portrait* is to Washington's.

-Michelle Lee Leonard



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President's Message

Dear friends,



As I think back over the 2022 season at the museum I am truly grateful for how far we have come in preserving and sharing the gem that is the Gilbert Stuart Birthplace and Museum. Visitors are back, and they come from all over the world! I always feel just a little bit proud when a visitor tells me that they are from a distant place and made a point to see the museum. Our exhibits were well received. Just one example, *The American Art Review* fall 2022 issue (Vol XXXIV, No 3 2022) featured an article written by Nancy Whipple Grinnell titled "The Art of Mabel Woodward" which prominently mentions the exhibit at Gilbert Stuart Museum.

The programs we presented were well attended. The first Sunday Afternoon Tea was so successful that another was added later in the season. There were waiting lists for both!

And we started a new tradition, the Origami Boat Race. Hats off to our director, Michelle Lee Leonard, for bringing these ideas to fruition. And we got the season off to a great start with the traditional Opening Day featuring freshly cooked johnnycakes and more. Michelle is already working on exhibits and programs for the 2023 season and beyond.

We couldn't do what we do without the support of our members, docents, and volunteers.

However, maintaining our historic buildings is an ongoing expense. Time, weather, and climate do take a toll on the grounds. Art exhibits are expensive to mount. The truth is that we need your financial help to preserve what we cherish at the Museum while continuing to present programming and exhibits that bring members and visitors to us.

The 2022 President's Annual Appeal is underway. A return envelope for the appeal is included with this newsletter. Please consider making a donation to provide us with the means to thrive in 2023 and beyond. Your gift will be greatly appreciated and will be used to preserve our past as we move into the future.

Thank you,

Jackie Lamoureux

President of the Board of Trustees

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