



The Gilbert Stuart

Birthplace and Museum

November 2020

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www.gilbertstuartmuseum.org

Happy Trails



Eagle Scout candidate Liam Gannon leads members of Troop 152 in clearing and marking the museum nature trails

Liam Gannon, a junior at North Kingstown High School, had visited the museum many times with his family as a child. The Gannon family gathered at the museum each May to remember Liam's Uncle Paul. Paul, an artist, felt a connection with Gilbert Stuart, and enjoyed being on the beautiful grounds of

Stuart's birthplace. Paul became ill while a student at RISD and passed away in 1995. Paul's mother, Anne Gannon, and his four siblings planted a memorial cherry tree and installed an engraved dedication stone at Paul's beloved Gilbert Stuart Birthplace. The Gannon family visits the museum each May on Paul's birthday / Mother's Day to celebrate and remember Paul.

Liam, a member of North Kingstown Boy Scout Troop 152, explored possible projects that he could direct in order to earn his Eagle Scout Award. Thinking about the May family gatherings to remember his uncle, Liam became interested in helping at the museum and in finding a worthwhile project that would be beneficial to the museum to earn his Boy Scout Eagle Award.

We had several meetings with Liam to discuss possible projects. One potential project, the weeding of cattails and brush from the mill race and stream bed, was not accepted by the Scout board. Liam's second proposal, clearing and making signs to mark the nature trails at the museum, was accepted and he proceeded to plan for the workdays.

Liam visited the site several times and carefully planned all aspects of his project. The scouts met at the museum on Saturday and Sunday, October 17 and 18, 2020. Under Liam's direction, the scouts painted and installed signs on the nature trails and cleared the trails and two cemeteries on the museum property.

Thank you Liam Gannon and Troop 152 North Kingstown!



The Gannon family helps to keep the wheels turning...

Bill Gannon, Liam's father, had attended the meetings with the museum director and knew how important the stream clearing project was to the museum. Bill wanted to help. He organized a gathering of his family members to help clear the streambed.

On Sunday, October 18th, when Liam and the scouts finished the Eagle project, the Gannon siblings and family gathered to support Liam and to remember their brother Paul by working together as a family to help the museum.



Bill was joined by his three siblings, brother-in-law, his mother Anne, and sons Liam and Patrick. Bill, Eddie and Mark readily jumped into the stream, pulled cattails, weeds, and trimmed back bushes and piled them on the bank. Sharlene and Karen cleared the rocky area next to the dam. Anne loaded the brush into the cart for removal.

The result: After three hours of steady work the stream was able to flow on a clear path through the millrace.

Thank you to the Gannon family!



Annual Appeal ~ End of year giving to help preserve this Rhode Island treasure

Donations via website: www.gilbertstuartmuseum.org (on the membership page under "donate")

Donations via mail: Gilbert Stuart Museum, 815 Gilbert Stuart Road, Saunderstown, RI, 02874

UNSUNG HERO: Founding Father Nathaniel M. Vose

If Nathaniel Vose had not built a summer retreat on the Upper Pond of Narrow River in the 1920's, there would never have been a Gilbert Stuart Birthplace and Museum.

Nathaniel Vose's business was art. He and his family owned and operated the renowned Vose Art Galleries in Boston and Providence and the galleries had brokered sales of works by Gilbert Stuart.

Vose would roam the old Stuart site, which was just down the road from his camp. He became intrigued with the idea of creating a memorial to Stuart, the "Father of American Portraiture," by restoring Stuart's birthplace and mill and creating a park-like setting. The Stuart house and buildings on the property had been neglected for decades and were in ramshackle condition. Their current owner was not interested in preservation and wanted to sell the property for development. If a rebirth of the Stuart homestead were to happen, action had to be taken quickly.

Vose, a member of the South County Art Association, pitched his idea to the members of the group. Enthusiasm for the project grew after members visited the site and plans for the project took shape. Herbert Cross, Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Greene, Caroline Hazard, Norman Isham, and Vose formed a committee to develop the project. After extensive fundraising, they were able to purchase the Stuart house and property by the summer of 1930.

The GILBERT STUART MEMORIAL INC was incorporated on February 2, 1931. The first official meeting was held soon after.

The unsung hero and driving force for the founding of the ninety-year-old museum is NATHANIEL VOSE!

By David O'Connor



"Stuart House" and Gristmill c. 1925



"Stuart House" and outbuildings c. 1927



Gilbert Stuart Birthplace c. 1937

Milling Around at the Museum

Thank you! We are very grateful to the following friends, donors, and grantors:

- **Society of the Cincinnati** for 2020 grant of \$1500 to update reproduction paintings and exhibits
- **Town of North Kingstown Municipal Grant** of \$5000 to replace deteriorated fences on the property
- **Four anonymous donors** for 2020 donations of over \$6,000
- **David O'Connor** for devoting numerous volunteer hours to the immaculate care of our lawns, grounds, and trails
- **Clayton Field and the crew of Field Building Company, Inc.** who have completed every project on time and below budget!! and for special help and consideration in completing the latest project at the museum, Phase II of the cottage restoration and the handicapped ramp
- **Liam Gannon and the Boy Scouts of Troop 152 North Kingstown** for clearing and labeling the museum's nature trails
- **Bill Gannon and the entire Gannon Family** for volunteer hours clearing the millrace and stream bed
- **Plum Beach Garden Club members and team leader Betsy Coghlin** for their enthusiastic care of the Colonial Herb Garden

**Thank you to all who support the Museum
with your yearly membership, donations, and your valuable time and spirit!
As a private non-profit organization, we rely on our friends who keep the Museum vital.
You help to preserve this National Historic Landmark for future generations.**



Keeping the Wheels Turning

From the Executive Director

Our eighty-ninth year at a museum has been a quiet one. With no tours, we have been busy with projects both inside and on the grounds. We were delighted to rent our grounds for several joyous celebrations, and we were excited and incredibly grateful for some fabulous volunteer projects.

We have tightened our belts and dramatically cut back on expenditures and services, but we still have ongoing expenses that must be paid whether we are open or not. Although we have had some rental income and donations, it has not been enough to cover the loss of revenue from admissions and from a drop in 2020 membership donations.

We would be more grateful than ever for your contribution to the President's 2020 Annual Appeal at this critical time. Your donation, in any amount, will be much appreciated. Thank you for your friendship and support.

We look forward to 2021, our 90th year as a museum, with renewed resolve. We are working to find innovative ways to adapt our operations to make the museum relevant, accessible, and safe for all.

Peggy O'Connor

Milling Around at the Museum ~ Happy Celebrations

Although we have not been open to the public for tours, we have had some exciting and innovative socially - distanced rentals of the grounds at the museum.



Left: "Elopement Wedding." Two former Junior Docents returned to the museum to share their wedding with their family. **Center:** "First Look" photography session. A former junior docent, daughter of former museum President Dan Bell and his wife Pat, and her fiancé see each other for the first time just prior to their wedding ceremony. **Right:** Wedding proposal: The sunset scene included luminaries, fairy lights, a heart shaped stage, and beautiful guitar music. All set the romantic background for the proposal. Family members attended the wedding proposal. The young lady said YES!

Help to preserve this Rhode Island Treasure!

President's Message

November 2020



Dear Friends of the Museum:

All of us here at the museum hope you and your family are healthy and safe during this year of unprecedented events.

At a time when many things seem uncertain, it is comforting to know some things at the museum remain constant. Take a few moments to think of what the museum means to you. I find comfort in the timeless beauty of the museum grounds, in the soothing sounds of the waterwheels as they turn, and in the rich history that tells the story of Gilbert Stuart and his family. I sincerely hope that the museum and all

it has to offer gives you comfort as well.

As President of the Board of Trustees, I am personally reaching out to you. Due to the necessary closure of the museum in 2020, we have not been able to have admissions, programs, or fundraising events to help support our budget.

Can you help to Keep the Wheels Turning here at the Gilbert Stuart Museum?

Your contribution to our 2020 President's Annual Appeal is more important than ever before. Please know that your gift, at any level, is deeply appreciated.

Thank you for being a loyal member of the Gilbert Stuart Birthplace and Museum community.
Your support is critical to us.

Sincerely,

Peggy Todd

President of the Board of Trustees

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Officers: Peggy Todd, President; Jacquelyn Lamoureux, Vice-President; Sandra Makielski Lindstrom, Secretary; Wheaton Vaughan, Treasurer, **Trustees:** Betsy Coghlin, Karen Lucas, Robert Sgroi, Ray Wertz, David Wrenn **Trustees Emeritus:** Henry L.P. Beckwith, Daniel Bell **Executive Director:** Margaret O'Connor

MISSION STATEMENT:

The Gilbert Stuart Birthplace and Museum preserves the birthplace of Gilbert Stuart and its surrounding acreage. Focused on history, art, and nature, the Museum is charged with directing and supporting its operation as a National Historic Landmark and with the conservation of its natural setting.

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