



## Press Release

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### **Free Community Wi-Fi At Old Stone House Museum & Historic Village**

**Historic Brownington Village, Vermont**—When you pull into the Old Stone House Museum & Historic Village’s guest parking lot at 109 Old Stone House Road now you can do more than park for a visit. Thanks to a grant from the Vermont Department of Public Service, all visitors can access high-speed internet completely free of charge.

“We’re grateful to the State of Vermont for their support of Orleans County,” Molly Veysey, Old Stone House Museum & Historic Village Executive Director, said. “Free access to the internet has become increasingly indispensable due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The holes in our local internet infrastructure has left members of our community in real need for high-speed internet just to do daily tasks. We’re happy to step-in and provide this service for our community.”

To access the internet, visitors can remain seated in their cars or sit outside the Alexander Twilight House. This building was home to Alexander Lucius Twilight, the African American leader who called Brownington the “home of his choice” through the mid 1800's and built the Old Stone House across the street. Visitors can access the public network called “Brownington Hotspot” and follow the prompts. We ask that internet users are respectful of the historic village. To this end, please only stay for as long as you might need the Internet. Please do not litter, refrain from idling and be aware that campfires or camping are both prohibited.

In the future, the museum plans to make additional services available to the public to better make use of this service and the other recreational resources outdoors and indoors in the historic village. Plans call for picnic tables located within range of the WiFi network and, if needed, expansion of the network to more of the campus.

The Vermont Department of Public Service is addressing gaps in service availability across Vermont by contracting for the rapid installation of commercial-grade outdoor Wireless Access Points at an additional 50 sites around the state of Vermont. The grant received by the Old Stone House Museum &



Historic Village provided the necessary equipment, professional installation service and a one-year software license. However, the museum will pay for any monthly fees and taxes out of its regular operating budget. [Donations to the museum's 2020 Annual Fund are encouraged to help defray this cost.](#)

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**About Alexander Lucius Twilight:** Born on September 23, 1795 Alexander Lucius Twilight graduated from Middlebury College in 1823, becoming the first African American graduate of any United States college or university. In 1829 he was hired to be principal of the Orleans County Grammar School and was minister to the Brownington Congregational Church. In 1836 he was elected to the Vermont House of Representatives, becoming the first African American to serve in a state legislature. Under his leadership, the Orleans County Grammar School thrived as a co-educational institution attracting both boys and girls from throughout New England who came from as far away as Boston and Montreal. Between 1834 and 1836 Mr. Twilight designed and built a four story granite dormitory, which he called Athenian Hall.

Mr. Twilight's father Ichabod was born in Boston in July 1765. Both he and Mr. Twilight's mother Mary were free and mixed race, most likely of African slaves and English colonists. Ichabod served in the Revolutionary War in a New Hampshire regiment and later moved with his family to Vermont where he and his wife were listed as "the first negroes to settle in Corinth" where they bought property, moving from Bradford on November 28, 1798.

Typical for children of his class, Alexander began working for a neighboring farmer when he was only eight. Reading and studying mathematics while performing farm labor, he was able to enroll in the Randolph Orange County Grammar School in 1815 at the age of 20. He enrolled in Middlebury College in 1821, graduating as the first known African American to receive a degree from any institution of higher learning in America in 1823.

In 1826 Mr. Twilight married Mercy Ladd Merrill from Unity, New Hampshire and taught in both New York and Vermont before assuming his position as principal at the Orleans County Grammar School. In addition to acting as minister for the Brownington Congregational Church, he led worship services and delivered sermons in numerous other churches. In 1847, he relocated to Quebec where he taught briefly. However, without his leadership the Orleans County Grammar School experienced declining enrollment. He was persuaded to return to Brownington where he resumed duties as both teacher and pastor. In 1855 Mr. Twilight suffered a stroke and retired. He died on June 19, 1857 and is buried along with his wife Mercy in the Brownington Congregational Church Cemetery.



**About the Old Stone House Museum & Historic Village:** Listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the Old Stone House Museum & Historic Village was established by the Orleans County Historical Society and has been operating as a museum since 1926. It has now grown from one building to become an impressive historic site with seven restored buildings and three neighboring structures, all dating from the early 1800s. Dedicated to its mission to preserve, educate and inspire, the Old Stone House Museum & Historic Village annually attracts nearly 10,000 visitors from across the country and abroad.

Education has long been a cornerstone of activity in Brownington. The former granite dormitory is not the only historic building at the museum to tell the story of progressive education and diversity. Alexander Lucius Twilight's 1830 Federal style home houses his books and letters, along with letters from his students, in an archival vault. Further up the hill an 1831 Federal-style Hall House stands as a testament to Samuel Reed Hall, a recognized pioneer in progressive education. Hall founded America's first teacher training college in 1823 in Concord, Vermont, invented the chalkboard and published the first teacher-training textbook in 1829.

Through unique educational programs that use select items from its permanent collection as teaching tools, the Old Stone House Museum & Historic Village embraces hands-on, experiential learning as a way of connecting individuals to a way of life that still has much to teach us. Notable past activities have included a barn raising with area vocational students and a tree trimming and replanting project that was incorporated into the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade science curriculum at the Brownington Elementary School. A thriving adult education program teaches such traditional crafts as blacksmithing, rug hooking, stone wall building and tree pruning. Spring and Fall Field Days for area schools, as well as its summer "Time Travelers Day Camp" emphasizes hands-on craft activities, theatre and the scientific exploration of the garden and grounds.

The Old Stone House Museum & Historic Village is located in the Brownington Historic District just off Hinman Settler's Road in Vermont's scenic Northeast Kingdom. The museum is open May 15 to October 15, 11:00-5:00 pm, Wednesday-Sunday. For more information, call (802)754-2022 or visit [www.OldStoneHouseMuseum.org](http://www.OldStoneHouseMuseum.org).