



For Immediate Release
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Old Stone House Day 2021: The Year of Local History Through Art

Historic Brownington Village, Vermont—Old Stone House Day has brought people from all over New England and beyond to Historic Brownington Village for almost a century. Last year, the day was virtual. This year, it will kick off in-person at 10 AM Sunday, August 8 with live music by Michael Hahn Quartet, master harpist Bill Tobin & The Highland Way Trio and dulcimer-player Vicki Moore & Friends.

There will be the traditional kettle coffee and roasted corn—as there has been many of the past hundred. Pies can be entered and bid upon during a live pie auction for the region’s best bakers. And, of course, heritage arts and crafts, food, vendors, free museum open house tours and activities for families with children including horse-drawn wagon rides to Prospect Hill.

Early bird tickets are on sale now for \$4 for all those over age 12 but cost \$5 the day of the event. Old Stone House Museum & Historic Village members are invited to enter free, with an Annual Meeting held 2:00-4:00 PM in the Orleans County Grammar School. (Details at <https://www.oldstonehousemuseum.org/old-stone-house-day/>). To enter a pie in our auction, please contact publicprograms@oldstonehousemuseum.org.

“We’re celebrating local history through art,” Molly Veysey, museum Executive Director, said of this year’s celebration. “We invite families and folks of all ages to join us for the fun, all are welcome.”

Art plays a central role in the work of the museum this year in more ways than one. Keynote speaker, Middlebury, VT artist Katie Runde, has been commissioned to paint a portrait of African American Alexander Lucius Twilight that will grace the Vermont State House.

Teaching artists are encouraged to apply for up to \$12,500 in stipends to engage community and animate the museum’s Alexander Twilight Educational Trail thanks to a \$33,200 Northern Forest Destination Development Initiative grant. This funding was made possible by the Northeastern Vermont Development Association, Northern Forest Center and Northern Border Regional Commission. (Apply at:



<https://www.oldstonehousemuseum.org/open-for-interpretation-competition-call-for-teaching-artists/>)

Finally, Pawlet, VT artists Eve O. Schaub and Stephen Schaub created art and a documentary film that depicted Mr. Twilight in their work, *The Home Of My Choice*, an official selection of the 2021 Queens Underground International Black and Brown History Month Film Festival. (More at <https://evensteve.com/>)

Mr. Twilight indelibly shaped Brownington, a place he called “the home of my choice,” and was recognized at the museum with a state day last year on his 225th birthday. He will again be celebrated this coming September 26 with the museum’s Alexander Twilight Day Apple and Cheese Festival.

Purchase a museum membership between now and Old Stone House Day and the museum will give you a free ticket to its 2021 summer raffle! (Details at <https://www.oldstonehousemuseum.org/summerraffle/>)

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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 museum annually attracts nearly 10,000 visitors from across the country and abroad.

Education has long been a cornerstone of activity in Brownington, Vermont. 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 3rd 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 Mid-May to Mid-October 11:00-4:00 PM on Wednesdays through Sundays. For more information, call (802)754-2022 or visit www.OldStoneHouseMuseum.org.