



**For Immediate Release**  
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### **Expanding Educational Services: \$376,000 Awarded**

**Historic Brownington Village, Vermont**—The Old Stone House Museum & Historic Village was awarded \$376,000 in Congressionally Directed Funding thanks to United States Senator Patrick Leahy in the federal spending bill signed by United States President Joe Biden on March 16. These funds will allow the museum to hire additional educational staff to offer in-school and afterschool programs year round as part of its new “Home of Choices Studies” program.

“First and foremost, we thank Senator Leahy’s team and Senator Leahy himself, along with United States taxpayers,” Molly Veysey, museum executive director, said. “We also thank all those who helped us submit a successful application, including the community, nonprofit, business and individual partners who wrote letters of support.”

“These funds are truly a game changer for us, at a time when we have already been growing as an institution,” Veysey added. “We can finally begin offering schools throughout the Northeast Kingdom and Northern Vermont unique opportunities to learn their own community’s history through a hands-on, engaging program that will take place both at school and on our beautiful campus.”

The “Home of Choice Studies” program derives its name from African American Alexander Lucius Twilight who declared the village of Brownington to be “the home of my choice.” The funds will be used to support existing on-site educational programs at the museum while also enabling the hiring of an in-school education director. The person in this new position will develop a menu of workshops offered to schools and manage a staff of Americorps members who will deliver programming in afterschool and in-school enrichment formats.

Funds will also support archival and collections work aimed at developing curricula for the “Home of Choice Studies” program. The curricula will offer a menu of learning opportunities from which teachers, administrators and families can choose.



“The entire museum community is committed to a vibrant and rich educational program,” Carmen Jackson, museum board of trustees president, said. “We believe this new program will positively engage students throughout Northern Vermont.”

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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 the children 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. 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 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, theater, 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](http://www.OldStoneHouseMuseum.org).