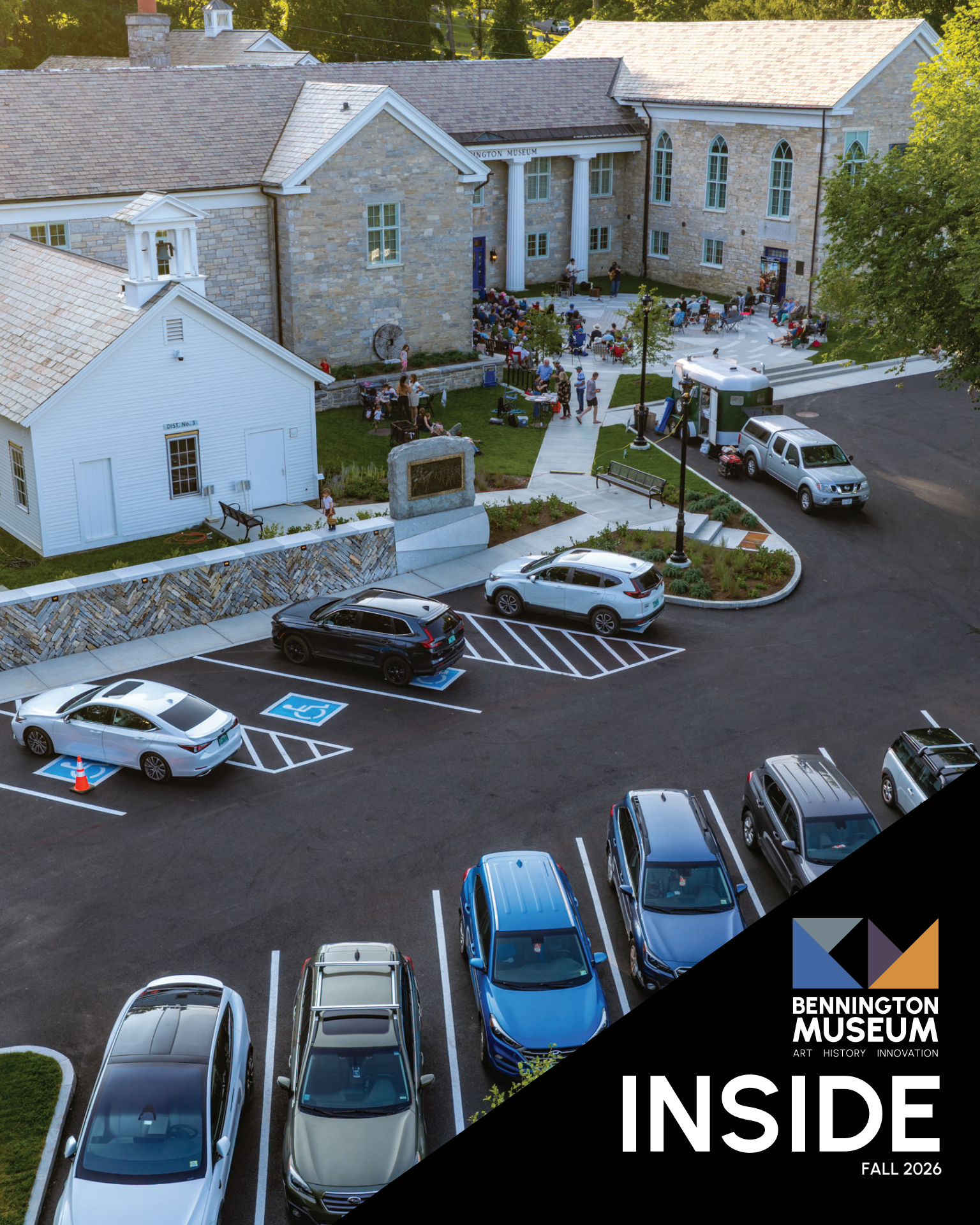




BENNINGTON MUSEUM

DIST. No. 3



**BENNINGTON
MUSEUM**
ART HISTORY INNOVATION

INSIDE

FALL 2026

SINCE WE LAST WENT INSIDE ...



Tattoo Living Exhibition: We were left in awe by the stories and details of the art our locals carry with them every day. More details in this issue!



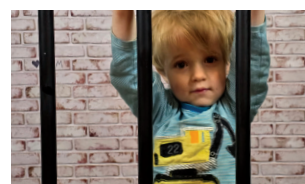
NBOSS: We walked our beautifully renovated campus and enjoyed some outdoor sculptures.



Speaking Up for Culture: U.S. Representative of Vermont, Becca Balint, visited the Museum with her son.



Concerts in the Courtyard: We enjoyed music, pizza, fudge, beverages, and good friends every Friday evening out in the courtyard!



Jail and Bail Fundraiser: Vermont Vice viewers were taken into custody and released on bail in an effort to raise funds for the Museum.



Monument Society: We enjoyed tea at historic Ventfort Hall in Lenox, MA.



Martin Mahoney
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



SHOW YOUR SUPPORT!
Scan the QR code to donate today!

Dear Friends, Neighbors, and Museum Supporters,

We have come so far this year. Thank you for sticking with us through it all.

Despite constant construction noise, circuitous and everchanging paths to the entryway, and complete lack of parking in front of our building, you showed up. In fact, we are amazed to report that over the nearly 10 months of construction we have had only 200 fewer visitors compared to the same time period last year, prior to the start of Project 1. Is it a testament to our programming? Perhaps... *Vermont Vice* is indeed an intriguing dive into the dark hollows of the Green Mountains, and *Concerts in the Courtyard* have had a rain-free run, drawing record-breaking crowds. However, we think it is the dedication of our Bennington family, coming to say hello, checking on the progress, and wishing us well. You booked events here even though you knew you couldn't wear nice shoes to cross the gravel, you brought your kids to see the bulldozers in action, and sometimes you even brought us donuts to keep our spirits up.

It has meant a lot.

AND NOW, we are nearing completion. The Courtyard with the signature basketweave centerpiece is bright, inviting, and open; visitors can park in all spaces and use the walkways to safely access the Museum; the grass and native shrubs are taking root and thriving; Green Mountain Transit riders have a comfortable waiting bench; and our doors are newly painted a bright Bennington Museum blue!

What is left, you ask?

In order to complete this fabulous "visitor welcome sequence," over the next month we plan to install EV chargers near the bottom of the Aiken Trail, a shelter for our waste bins, more light posts to illuminate the parking areas further away from the Museum, and custom-designed ADA compliant railings for the walkways.

By November we hope to have completed Project 2: The Grandma Moses Schoolhouse renovation (a dedicated bathroom, upgraded windows and doors, insulation, new lighting and shelving). Looking into 2027, we have plans for the interior of the Museum (both lobby renovations and major gallery changes which we will delve more into later in this newsletter) and we will be adding finishing touches to outdoor gathering spaces on our campus pending final permitting approvals.

Our journey isn't finished yet, but for now, we invite you to come appreciate the progress that you have made possible!

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UPCOMING EVENTS THROUGH DECEMBER

FREE EVENT SERIES

Bennington Historical Society: Sundays @ 2pm
Supported by Nexus Consulting and Casella Waste

September 20: Villainous Vermont

October 18: Winter's Time

November 15: Bridges of Bennington County

Music at the Museum

Made possible by Alison Nowak and Robert Cane

October 10: Left to Their Own Devices, 7pm

Museum ABCs: Saturdays @ 10:30am

Supported by The Bank of Bennington

October 10: Preschool Printmakers

November 14: Toys of Long Ago

For preschoolers and their families in partnership with the Bennington Free Library.

White's Stoneware,
image courtesy Flying
Pig Auction

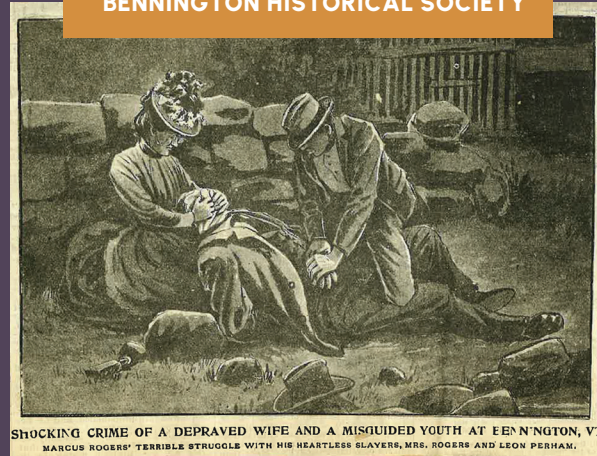


FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11
Pursuit of Happiness Gala
6pm

Join us for our annual winter gala—the party of the year.

Proceeds from this fundraiser will support the transition of the Battle of Bennington Gallery to its new home.

BENNINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY



SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20
Villainous Vermont

2–3pm

Author Lawrence Gooley reveals shocking discoveries made while researching *Villainous Vermont*, his collection of 32 true murder stories from the past. Learn about the murderer later cited as a Montpelier icon, unpunished vigilantes, the stomach-churning secrets behind a young girl's death, the worst criminal incident in Vermont history, and more.

Lawrence Gooley is an award-winning author with a lifetime love of research, writing, and history. He has authored 22 books on regional history and true crime, penned a weekly history column in the *Adirondack Almanack*, and, with his partner, founded Bloated Toe Enterprises that has published over 100 titles since 2024.

SPECIAL EVENTS

September 18: White's Stoneware, Turned and Molded, 3:30–5pm

October 25: Bennington Centre Cemetery Tour, 1–3pm

November 17: Pursuit of Happiness Artist reception, 4:30–6:30pm

December 5: Family Day, 10am–4pm

December 11: Pursuit of Happiness Gala, 6pm

December 31: Noon Year's Eve, 11:15am–12:15pm

Barrel Roll with dancer,
Surabhee Arjunwadkar



MUSIC AT THE MUSEUM

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10
Left to Their Own Devices

7–9pm

Part performance, part interactive sound experience, "Left to Their Own Devices" features a series of interactive musical mechanisms that invite and respond to audience interaction. Wander the Museum at your own pace, in your own path, and engage with the devices and performers.



Scan the
QR code for
information
on upcoming
events and
tickets.

THE DEVICES

Tintinnalogia—a mechanical carillon—is inspired by the British tradition of change ringing in which the permutations of eight bells are exhaustively rung out. The chaotic-sounding results are often heard in wedding bells.

Extant uses the sextant the artist's grandfather used as he sailed to Tahiti. The sextant, a classic navigation tool, is based on imprecise science, relying on where you thought you once were to predict your current position. *Extant* uses the ancient tool and modern sensors and surround sound to create an immersive installation about celestial navigation amidst rising tides.

Heterodyne is inspired by the inventor Leon Theramin's dance platform, called the Terpsitone, and his 1936 visit to Bennington College. *Heterodyne* translates movement into sound, using one soundwave to "read" another—technology used in early spy devices and in the theremin, a contactless electronic musical instrument named for its inventor.

These are just some of the unique and interactive devices that will be part of this engaging musical experience.

Nicholas Brooke creates music across disciplines, from collages of recordings with live theater, to home-built instrumentariums inspired by gamelan. Brooke's works have been featured across the U.S. and Europe, at Mass MoCA, HERE, Merkin Hall, Baryshnikov Arts Center, the MATA Series, and the Spoleto Festival. He has received Guggenheim and Rockefeller Foundation awards. Originally a clarinetist, he is also an avid instrument builder and researcher of early musical automata. He teaches at Bennington College.

UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS

Through November 2: Vermont Vice
November 19–December 31: Pursuit of Happiness: 250 Years Later, Regional Artists Exhibit
January 23–March 7, 2027: Annual Student Art Show



Scan the QR code for information on upcoming exhibitions.

THROUGH NOVEMBER 2 Vermont Vice

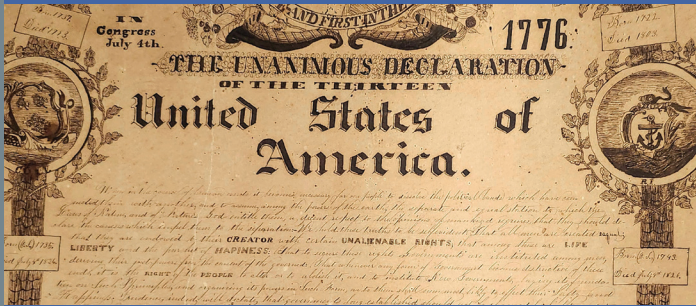
Throughout its history, Vermont has grappled with vice in many forms. Behind its idyllic image are stories of counterfeiters, Prohibition-era rumrunners, drug dealers, illicit gambling, sex work, and violence.

What constitutes “vice” has shifted with changing laws, cultural values, and social attitudes. Behavior condemned in one era may be tolerated in another, revealing how porous the line between respectability and transgression can be.

As you explore these stories, consider: *How do Vermont’s vices complicate our understanding of the state’s carefully cultivated image of virtue and wholesomeness?*

This exhibition is supported in part by TERRIGENOUS Landscape Architecture.

NOVEMBER 19–DECEMBER 31 Pursuit of Happiness: 250 Years Later Regional Artists Exhibit



250 years ago, America declared its independence from Great Britain. The first sentence of the second paragraph from that declaration has become one of the most memorable and quoted lines in the English language: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” The last of the “unalienable Rights” listed—“the pursuit of Happiness”—has always seemed unusual and slightly out of place in this context, though certainly not unwanted. What did the right to “the pursuit of Happiness” even mean then, and what does it mean now as we continue to struggle to attain the ideals outlined for our country 250 years ago. Approximately two dozen regional artists have created artwork in an attempt to answer that question.

This exhibition is supported by Hayden Plumbing & Heating.

JANUARY 2027 Reimagining the Revolution: A New Home for our Battle of Bennington Gallery

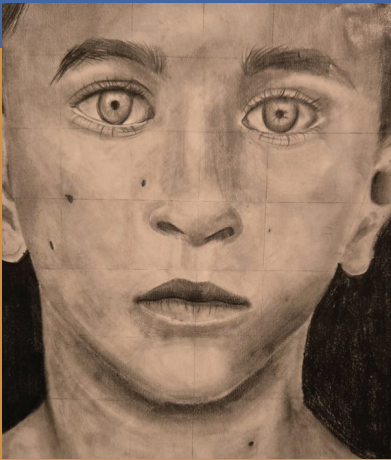
This past month, Bennington Museum received \$25,000 in funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities. This grant supports a re-location, re-interpretation, and exhibit

expansion for the Museum’s extensive historic collections relating to the Revolutionary War in Bennington and the surrounding region in honor of the 250th anniversary of the signing of our Declaration of Independence, July 4, 2026 (1776), and the Battle of Bennington, August 16, 2027 (1777). The new exhibit is

planned to open in the spring of 2027 and will be titled “The Affections of the Country: Vermont and the American Revolution.”

The 250th anniversary of the American Revolution is a major milestone for our country, our community, and our Museum. We intend to build on this momentum by presenting the events of the past in new and engaging ways and examining them with a broader lens across time and via different perspectives to understand why the American Revolution remains relevant today. Creating a new permanent exhibit in the Museum is a multi-step process. This past year we began this journey by moving objects out of the former gallery on the first floor and either temporarily locating them in the lobby exhibit, or sending them out for conservation treatments. This made space for the new “Folk and Craft Gallery” that visitors have been enjoying this year.

In January of 2027 the Museum will de-install the “Gilded Age Gallery” (you may know it as the “WASP” Gallery for the 2 ton car that occupies the central position,) and re-install it as the major battle exhibit by the end of February 2027. This larger central space will allow visitors to view key pieces including swords, military equipment that was used in the battle, printed accounts (including Ethan Allen’s bar tab from the Catamount Tavern), General Stark’s Flag, the Durnford Map, cloth fragments, powder horns (and attempted fakes), portraits and landscapes from that era, the “Fillmore flag,” and post-date artistic renderings including the famous mural “Prisoners taken at Bennington Battle, August 16, 1777” by Leroy Williams, and the model plaster statue of General Stark.



JANUARY 23–MARCH 7, 2027 Annual Student Art Show

The annual display of artwork by students in preschool through high school examines the process of artistic development and includes work from a dozen area schools. Grouped by grade, the work demonstrates how art teachers move students through the basic elements of art to more complex principles of design, use famous artworks and works from an array of cultures and time periods, and introduce students to a variety of media and materials. The Annual Student Art Show celebrates the continuing tradition of art education in the region.

This exhibition is supported by Hayden Plumbing & Heating.



Tattoo Living Art Exhibition

On July 18, Bennington Museum came alive with color, conversation, and creativity as the Tattoo Exhibition returned for the Museum's fifth Living Art event. An enthusiastic crowd filled the galleries for an evening celebrating the artistry and stories behind body art, with models sharing the meaning of their tattoos, artists displaying their work, and visitors voting for their favorite pieces. Here is a look into some of the personal stories behind the designs.



Winner: Emilee Morse
A DRAGON IN BLOOM

When Emilee Morse participated in the Living Art exhibit, she stepped well outside her comfort zone. Morse, an early childhood educator, chose to model in appreciation of the tattoo artists behind her work, created in Ballston Spa, New York.

For Morse, body art offers confidence and agency over her appearance. Her tattoos commemorate milestones, honor loved ones, cover insecurities, and express core values. Others bring joy simply because she finds them beautiful or cool. Her collection includes dragons, mermaids, serpents, roses and a small blue car named Sandy on her right leg.

The commanding centerpiece is the large dragon tattoo covering much of her back, winner of Favorite Body Art at the exhibit. For Morse, tattooing can be both story and restoration—a way to transform the body into a living record of growth, memory, healing, and joy.

Melissa Poirot
A CLOSE ENCOUNTER IN INK

Melissa Poirot approaches each tattoo with one guiding question: *Who am I, and what do I truly enjoy?* That question has shaped her collection since she received her first tattoo at age 20.

A Pownal resident who works in social services and advocates for harm reduction, Poirot has traveled throughout the Northeast to work with tattoo artists. Her first piece honors her heritage through a symbol associated with the Tohono O'odham and Akimel O'odham peoples of Arizona. She also designed a tribute to her father and their shared love of fishing.

Poirot's entry highlighted the UFO tattoo on the back of her lower leg.



Alainah Dowding
A TESTAMENT IN LIVING COLOR

Alainah "Ali" Dowding, originally from Georgia and now living in Bennington, displays a collection that reflects the bold forms and colors of American traditional tattooing.

Dowding describes being tattooed as both therapeutic and spiritual—a way to reclaim her body and transform emotion, memory, and experience into living art. Rather than allowing difficult experiences to define her, she has turned them into a record of resilience and grace.

That philosophy comes vividly to life in the large piece spanning her back—a beautiful canvas that evokes motherhood, endurance, and strength.

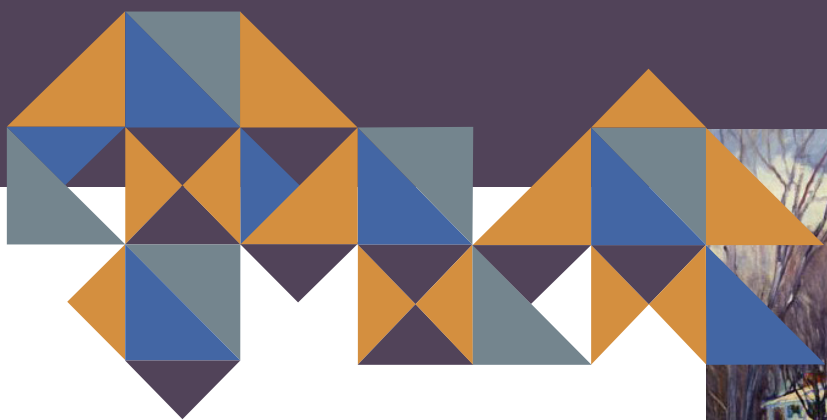
Wendy Nelson-Burke
TURNING SCARS INTO ART

For Wendy Nelson-Burke, tattoos form a visual autobiography of family, spirituality, and resilience—proof the body can carry difficult history while also being a place of strength, beauty, and renewal. A lifelong educator who has taught sixth grade in North Adams for nearly 20 years, she carries stories on her skin that are every bit as instructive as they are beautiful.

Her first tattoo was designed by her daughter following the death of Wendy's aunt from melanoma. Another, her "Sword of Strength," represents sobriety, spirituality, and motherhood. She received it on the day she learned she had breast cancer, and it became a symbol of courage throughout treatment. After emerging cancer-free, she added a flowered warrior.

The chest piece transformed Wendy's mastectomy scars into art, helping restore her confidence and sense of self. The design turns a site marked by surgery into something vividly new and unmistakably her own.





COLLECTION HIGHLIGHT

The Henry Bridge, ca. 1950, Gilbert Smith (1882-1958), Oil on Canvas; Museum Purchase



Gilbert Haven Smith (1852-1958) retired from the ministry in 1945 and moved to Shaftsbury, Vermont, where he dedicated his time to painting the Vermont landscape.

Smith grew up in Maryland and was awarded a scholarship to study art at Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia. He met his future wife, Nora Potts, there and became engaged to her on a visit to Dorset, Vermont in 1907, where her father had a summer home. After graduating from the Bryn Athyn College of the New Church Theological School, he spent his professional life as a Swedenborgian minister in the Chicago area. He continued painting, but presumably needed more income to support his family, which grew to include eleven children.

The Smiths made regular summer visits to Vermont, and when Gilbert retired, they moved permanently to Shaftsbury. They opened a shop on what is now Route 7A named "Ben-Arling," being halfway between Bennington and Arlington. The shop primarily catered to tourists and also sold antiques, candy, and gifts. When the couple moved to Dorset in 1955, he

set up a similar shop in Dorset Hollow named the "Art Shop by the Road." Both shops featured a display of paintings in front and a sign saying "If you have a minute." He reported selling nearly 100 paintings a year.

"Painting nature is much too hard for most of the so-called modernists, so they paint in the abstract," he stated to a *Bennington Banner* reporter in 1952. His specialty in natural landscapes was also inspired by their popularity with tourists looking for quaint, nostalgic scenes of rural Vermont. In addition to being lucrative, his preference for representational art was shared by Bennington Museum director John Spargo, who purchased several paintings for the Museum's collection in the 1940s and 1950s.

Smith had competition from similar artists in the area, and his was not the only roadside stand catering to tourist traffic. Although he did not achieve fame or fortune, his appealing covered bridges and rolling hills are still appreciated today. Two paintings from the Museum's collection will be highlighted next to the front desk in September and October.

Painting nature is much too hard for most of the so-called modernists, so they paint in the abstract."

—Artist Gilbert Smith, in a 1952 *Bennington Banner* interview



RUN THROUGH HISTORY: Bennington Museum's First Half Marathon

On Saturday, May 15, 2027, history will be on the move as runners gather for the inaugural Bennington Museum 250th Half Marathon. Beginning at 8 a.m., this chip-timed, 13.1-mile race will start and finish at Bennington Museum, taking participants on an unforgettable journey through Bennington's landscape and Revolutionary past.

Created in honor of the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution, the course retraces the initial movement of General John Stark and his troops from their headquarters at the Catamount Tavern before the Battle of Bennington in 1777. That hard-won militia victory paved way for American triumph at Saratoga and became an enduring symbol of Vermont's independent spirit and self-reliance.

The race offers runners an exciting physical challenge and an opportune history lesson. The opening mile circles around the Bennington Battle Monument before turning onto Route 9 for a long, gradual descent toward the historic Silk Road Bridge. Nearby Harwood Hill is where the Green Mountain Boys camped in the rain on August 15, 1777, after marching down from Manchester.

From there, the course climbs through the beautiful Bennington College campus and continues through the center of North Bennington. Runners will pass the Park-McCullough House on Park Street before descending

toward the Henry Bridge. This section of the Walloomsac River is where Revolutionary troops are believed to have crossed on their way to the battle site in New York.

Near the halfway point, participants will pass Breakenridge Farm—sometimes called the "birthplace of Vermont." In 1771, Bennington residents successfully defended James Breakenridge's land from an attempted New York eviction, an event that helped establish the independent character that would eventually define Vermont.

The challenging Austin Hill mile carries runners away from the river and toward the airport. The course then passes the former site of Dimmick's Tavern, where Stark's troops camped before the battle, as well as Colgate Park and the prerevolutionary Hubbell Homestead. After circling the Monument once more, runners can look forward to an exhilarating downhill final half-mile back to Bennington Museum.

All event proceeds will benefit programming at Bennington Museum, helping the Museum preserve and share the art, history, and stories of our region.

Runners may register traditionally—\$80 for Bennington Museum members or \$100 for Not-Yet-Members, or choose the Fundraising Bib option. With a Fundraising Bib, participants can cover their entry by raising a minimum of \$250 prior to race-day instead of paying the standard registration fee.

Bennington Museum's 250th Half Marathon promises to be a fascinating journey through 250 years of Vermont history. Sign up today to run, volunteer, or sponsor this inaugural event.



Scan the QR code
to register or volunteer.

The Arnold Ricks Award

This award is presented by the Museum to an individual or organization in recognition of exceptional contributions to the Bennington community and Bennington Museum.

This year, we are pleased to honor Tom Dee, recently retired President and Chief Executive Officer of Southwestern Vermont Health Care. Under his leadership, the health system achieved twelve consecutive years of positive operating performance, became an institutional member of Dartmouth Health, and earned state and national recognition for quality of care, community leadership, and workplace excellence.



Throughout his tenure, Tom also directed SVHC's philanthropic priorities toward efforts that made a local difference at Bennington Museum and across the region. He has also helped advance economic development in Bennington through the repurposing of the former Southern Vermont College campus and renovations to the downtown Putnam building. With his late wife, Rita, he gave countless hours of advocacy and volunteerism to equine and animal rescue, Catholic charities, and arts and culture.

"Tom has stewarded a truly transformational change in the way people in this area experience health care," says Martin Mahoney, Executive Director. "More than that, he understands that a healthy community is built through strong partnerships. His exemplary vision has helped organizations like ours begin bold projects, make new connections, and dream bigger for the benefit of the entire region. For that, we are deeply grateful."

PAST ARNOLD RICKS AWARD RECIPIENTS

- John and Michele Pagán, 2022
- Bob Tegart, 2023
- Frances Holbrook, 2024
- Joe Chirchirillo, 2025

ANNUAL MEMBER AND DONOR ROLL

Members are the backbone of Bennington Museum. Your support helps us achieve our goals and secure grant funding. Your input helps shape our programming and exhibitions in the coming year.

All Museum members are recognized in the donor roll on the following pages with an M asterisk, but here we will take a moment to recognize our highest level Museum members. Your commitment and investment makes it possible to engage our visitors and our community with our region's diverse arts, rich history, and culture of innovation. Thank you.

Monument Society

- Thomas Ascher and Maria Salem Ascher
- Jane Childs
- Kelly and Olive DePonte
- Susan and Terrence Dermody
- Perez and Elizabeth Ehrich
- Tom and Jennifer Fels
- Claudia and Peter Kinder
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- Terrigenous Landscape Architecture
- Donald Trachte and Michel Kimball
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- The Yoga Place

Hospitality

- The Knotty Pine Motel
- The Four Chimneys Inn

DONOR ROLL

Donations listed represent cumulative giving throughout FY26, ending June 30, 2026, including Annual Fund donations, donations to specific projects, grants, sponsorships, event support, gifts to the endowment, bequests, memorials, memberships, and ticket purchases. Cumulative totals include both cash and in-kind gifts. We do our best to compile a complete listing, but if you have any questions, please let us know!

M = member | * = volunteer

\$10,000 and above

- Anonymous
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- Thomas Ascher and Maria Salem Ascher M*
- James Betts M
- Robert Cane and Alison Nowak M
- Kelly and Olive DePonte M*
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- Jenny Wren
- David and Hannah Wright
- Susan Wright M
- William Wright
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- American Legion Auxiliary Unit 13
- Arlington Animal Hospital M
- Frederick Baum and Catherine Cech M
- Julia Berkeley
- Celia and Christopher Berks M
- Lucy Biddle
- Brown's Brewing Company
- Burr and McCallum Architects
- Brian Campion and Eric Hatch



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