



November 2015

EXCITING ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE SHELDON MUSEUM

The Henry Sheldon Museum of Vermont History in Middlebury is pleased to announce an alliance with Historic New England that brings enhanced benefits to members of both organizations. A two-year memorandum of understanding was recently signed outlining the terms of the alliance.

History and missions of both organizations:

The Henry Sheldon Museum was chartered in 1882 by the State of Vermont as the Sheldon Art Museum, Archeological, and Historical Society. It serves the public by preserving the region's historic memory, by heightening the public's awareness and enjoyment of Vermont's rich cultural legacy, and by encouraging the study of history and art. It is the oldest community-based Museum in the country and operates at One Park Street, Middlebury, in the Judd-Harris House, built in 1829 by marble merchants. The house showcases a wealth of objects depicting small town life in nineteenth and early twentieth century Vermont. The Museum complex also consists of the contiguous two-story Cerf Gallery (1992) where revolving exhibits are displayed and the three-story Stewart-Swift Research Center (1972), which houses one of the state's premier archival collections, documenting the history of Middlebury, Addison County, and the Mid-Lake Champlain region. A two-story barn (circa 1890), and a period garden lovingly maintained by the Middlebury Garden Club complete the campus.

Founded in 1910, Historic New England is the nation's oldest and largest regional heritage organization. It serves 200,000 visitors each year at thirty-six historic house museums in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island. Historic New England preserves and shares with the public buildings, landscapes, objects, documents, and stories dating from the seventeenth century to today to keep history alive, and help people develop a deeper understanding and enjoyment of New England life and appreciation for its preservation.

The Alliance:

The formal alliance between the two organizations, both devoted to historic preservation, history and art collections, and heritage interpretation, caps a multi-year collaborative partnership in exhibitions - *Take Me to the Fair* (2012), *From Diary to Doorstep* (2013) and *Lost Gardens of New England* (2014) - that originated with Historic New England's traveling exhibitions. They were displayed at the Henry Sheldon Museum, together with supplemental Vermont material from its collections. During the exhibition partnership, staff members, trustees, and the general public learned about the

strengths and benefits of the respective organizations, which led to the alliance, promising to be mutually beneficial to members, to the growth of the organizations, and to the communities they serve.

Through the alliance, Historic New England will expand its public outreach into Vermont where it presents programs but does not currently operate a historic site museum. The alliance will help the Henry Sheldon Museum unlock its potential by increasing its audience, bringing broadened nation-wide visibility and recognition. In addition, Historic New England offers the Henry Sheldon Museum professional expertise in building and collection preservation and in archival conservation and digitization, thereby enhancing the Henry Sheldon Museum's preeminent roles in the collection of community history, historic preservation, art and history exhibits.

The primary benefits to members:

Members of the Henry Sheldon Museum will receive free admission to Historic New England's thirty-six historic sites across the region, member rates at fee-based Historic New England programs, and 10% discounts at Historic New England's museum shops and online.

Members of Historic New England will receive free admission to the Henry Sheldon Museum, member rates and discounts to Henry Sheldon Museum activities, and shop discounts equal to those of Henry Sheldon Museum members.

In addition, of interest to historic property owners in Vermont, a Historic New England staff member will be based at the Henry Sheldon Museum with responsibility for sharing information about the Historic New England Preservation Easement Program, which currently protects ninety-eight privately owned properties, and other heritage program opportunities. Interested Vermonters will be able to seek advice to ensure that their historic houses and landscapes are protected from insensitive alterations or neglect.

Through the alliance, both organizations will gain a deeper understanding of each other's potential with the ultimate goal of determining if a longer-term arrangement is mutually beneficial. After two years, a collaborative decision will be made about next steps.

On behalf of the trustees and staff of the Henry Sheldon Museum, I welcome your questions and comments. Cheers and thanks.

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