Cabinetmaking in Rural New England
Redesigned Militia & Firearms Exhibit
2017 Fall Calendar of Events
Interns at the Village
Christmas by Candlelight
A Year of Change at Old Sturbridge Village

Jim Donahue, President and CEO

This has been a year of changes and new opportunities at Old Sturbridge Village, and I am excited to share some of them with you in this issue of The Visitor. Exhibit galleries are receiving updates and new installations, a new school is opening this fall, and so much more will take place.

As you will read in this issue, we are changing several of our exhibits. Glass in New England has received an update thanks to our American Foundation for Curatorial Fellow, Amy Griffin. First installed more than 60 years ago, the exhibit has not been updated in many years. The new installation incorporates innovative technology and a reorganized display. New England’s Changing Landscape, first installed in 2006, has been retired. In its place is an excellent exhibition about cabinetmaking in New England, a topic that has been underrepresented at Old Sturbridge Village in recent years. The Militia Exhibit is being reinstalled, and Derek Hedemann, Coordinator of Historic Trades, has revised the content and layout to highlight a variety of themes about 19th-century militias.

We are also opening the first public charter school at a museum in Massachusetts. Old Sturbridge Academy begins its inaugural year this fall with 150 students and talented teachers and administrators. As you will read, we have had a busy summer preparing for the first day of school, but we are thrilled to have this opportunity to nurture young minds and offer an attractive alternative school to the region.

Favorite events return this fall and winter. The Craft and Winter Market events of previous years have been combined into one exciting weekend, and several of the artisans are highlighted in this issue. The Headless Horseman will ride again at Halloween, and an expanded Bounty program will take place in November before the season ends with the beloved Christmas by Candlelight. New features and partnerships are being developed; it will be an exciting end to a wonderful year.

We could not accomplish all that we do here at Old Sturbridge Village without the assistance of our dedicated volunteers and supporters. One of them, Charlie Peters, Chairman of the Overseers, graciously agreed to an interview for this issue. I hope you will enjoy getting to know Charlie and learning why the Village is so important to him. He is often found working in the gardens at the Freeman Farm, and I encourage you to say hello the next time you see him.

I hope that you enjoy this issue of The Visitor and that you will join us in the coming months to experience all that is new at the museum.

Sincerely,

Jim Donahue
OSV President and CEO

Welcome to the FALL/WINTER EDITION of our VISITOR magazine. We hope that you will learn new things and visit the Village soon.

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Cover photo: Tilly Mead by John Ritto Penniman.
Photo by Gavin Ashworth.

Volume LI, No. 2
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MEMBERS ENJOY:
• Free, unlimited daytime admission
• 25% discount on guest admissions
• 15% discount on museum shop
• 15% discount on food services
• 15% discount on purchases of gift memberships
• Discount at partner living
• Free monthly members-only program
• Annual members reception event
• Advance notice of Village programs and events
• Members rates for all fee-based events
• Members rates at the Old Sturbridge Inn and Riccardi Family Lodges
• Priority e-mail and information updates on Village happenings
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e-mail membership@osv.org

• Members-only Dog Days
• Updates on Village happenings
• Annual members recognition event
• Free, unlimited daytime admission
• Discount at partner living
• Members rates for all fee-based events
• Members rates at the Old Sturbridge Inn and Riccardi Family Lodges
• Priority e-mail and information updates on Village happenings
• Members-only Osgoode Ditson
• Members-only events

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Old Sturbridge Village, a museum and learning resource of New England life, invites each visitor to find meaning, pleasure, relevance and inspiration through the exploration of history.
## A Closer Look at the Village’s Newest Exhibition

**Shelley Catheart, Assistant Curator**

Since Old Sturbridge Village opened in 1946, it has addressed the historic trade of cabinetmaking in various ways: hands-on demonstrations by costumed interpreters, furniture in historic homes, and changing exhibitions in Visitor Center gallery spaces. According to Samuel Chamberlain’s 1951 guidebook, *Old Sturbridge Village: A Photographic Impression*, the Village had three buildings demonstrating woodworking methods at that time – the Wood Working Museum, the Wood Turner’s Shop, and the Cabinet Shop. Although it started out with three separate shops, over time the Village moved its woodworking demonstrations into the building now known as the Hands-on Craft Center. After 1986, the Cabinet Shop ceased operation and the building was renamed and repurposed for broommaking. Even though the museum has gone through several iterations of furniture-making demonstrations and exhibitions, it no longer actively interprets cabinetmaking methods or traditions in its presentation of everyday life in New England. But one phone call about a portrait of a rural cabinetmaker has helped to bring a permanent exhibition exploring and examining the trade back to the Village.

In Spring 2016 Curatorial Director Carlin Emery Avenis was contacted by Trustee Jane Nylander about two important oil-on-board portraits painted by renowned artist John Ritto Penniman that had recently come on the market. The portraits, featured in a previous issue of *The Visitor*, depict Hardwick, Massachusetts, cabinetmaker Tilly Mead, and his wife, Caroline Hathaway Mead. Thanks to the efforts of several generous donors, the Village was able to acquire the portraits. The acquisition served as the impetus for a new exhibition at the Village, *Planed, Grained & Dovetailed: Cabinetmaking in Rural New England* which opened June 7, 2017.

Making objects from wood has always been both a necessity and an occasion for creativity for the region’s craftsmen. Using a range of techniques and tools, 19th-century New England cabinetmakers (especially in rural areas) produced a wide variety of everyday and exceptional objects. In America, port cities such as Boston, Newport, Providence, and Portsmouth were the stylistic centers for New England furniture. Rural craftsmen drew inspiration from their urban counterparts while catering to the needs of their environment and clientele. Sumptuous veneers, intricate inlay, delicate legs, elaborate carving, and decorative painted surfaces illuminate the versatile oeuvre of the region’s craftman. New England cabinetmakers embodied the notion of “Yankee Ingenuity” and business prowess by participating in a variety of occupations to fund their lifestyles and support their families. They varied their income through farming, architectural repairs, or general carpentry in addition to cabinetmaking.

In general, a cabinetmaker is a woodworker who makes furniture and other items. Forms could range from a turned Windsor chair or simple grain-painted table to an extravagantly carved sideboard or mahogany veneered and inlaid chest of drawers. Receipts, letters, probate inventories, advertisements, and account books identify the diverse output of the rural cabinetmaker. They made not just chairs and case pieces but also cradles, coffins, oars and boat frames, drum sticks, beds, looking glass frames, agricultural implements, and more. Furniture could be crafted by an individual or through partnerships, be bespoke or ready-made, purchased from a single cabinetmaker in his shop or from warehouses in cities, such as Worcester or Athol. With shifts in consumer taste and technological developments in the 19th century, warehouses gradually began to replace the shops of individual cabinetmakers for the sale of furniture to rural residents.

Knowledge of the trade was carried from one generation to another through a system of masters and apprentices. A young man typically began his apprenticeship in his mid-teens and usually finished by the age of 21 (or earlier). Term limits varied, especially in rural communities, but the typical duration was about four to seven years. Bound by contract or another less formal agreement through a master craftsman, either from a nearby town or a larger city, the young apprentice learned the necessary techniques to create a piece of furniture. Upon completing an apprenticeship, he could open his own shop, work as a day laborer or journeyman, become employed in another furniture maker’s shop, or create a partnership with another cabinetmaker.

*Planed, Grained, and Dovetailed* is neither all-encompassing nor narrowly focused on a particular town or maker. It is designed to provide visitors with an introduction to the vibrant and long-standing craft of cabinetmaking in rural New England. Encompassing depth and breadth, the collection of historic furniture at the Village contains an array of marked pieces from well-known and lesser known cabinetmakers from New England. The Village’s collection also contains lathes and workbenches as well as hundreds of pre-industrial tools, some owned by known makers such as the Sandwich, Massachusetts, craftsman Samuel Wing or a lesser known cabinetmaker and carpenter from Norwell, Massachusetts, James N. Sparrell, whose lathe is currently on view in the exhibition.

Inside the newly renovated gallery space, the exhibition explores the tools, products, and livelihoods of rural cabinetmakers in the early 19th century through three main themes: processes, forms, and people. Through an examination of tools and techniques used by early 19th-century cabinetmakers, the process section displays the implements of construction – saws, chisels, gouges, and planes – and platforms on which they...
were used to create the wide range of objects shaped by the hands of the rural cabinetmaker shown in the form section. Visitors are welcomed into the minds of curators and scholars and invited to ask how they decode the names inscribed on tables, chairs, and chests. What do these marks and inscriptions mean? Do these marks belong to the maker, owner, or decorator? What can they tell us about the period?

A short video demonstrates several aspects of pre-industrial cabinetmaking: prepping wood, constructing joints, turning on a lathe, and finishing processes. Rarely-seen objects from the Village’s collections are displayed in unique ways inviting the visitor to examine construction details, decorative processes, or inscriptions. For example, one can view the inscription from the underside of a card table, peer inside a tool chest owned by Mendon, Massachusetts carpenter William Torrey Metcalf, or gain an up-close view of a grain-painted dome-top box. Stories of two rural craftsmen – Samuel Wing (1774-1854) and Tilly Mead (1794-1849) – are examined through a comparison of primary source material and physical evidence, and the characteristics of their creations are contextualized with those of other New England cabinetmakers. The cabinetmaking exhibition was a team effort. The Development Department secured the funds, Maintenance renovated the gallery space, Interpretation assisted in moving the objects, and Marketing promoted the exhibit and assisted with the layout and design of the labels and signs. All members of the Curatorial Department along with their fearless volunteers were a part of the exhibition in every aspect from conception to completion. Most important, Old Sturbridge Village is grateful to The Felicia Fund, The Americana Mortise & Tenon Magazine, to be published in 2018, for their generous support of Planned, Gained, and Doverted.

Research continues, and recent developments on the standard in Europe, allowed American craftsmen to pursue additional work across the fields. As families increasingly demanded store-bought goods, they needed additional income to pay for their purchases. Many farmers, like Pliny Freeman, built houses and made shoes in addition to tending crops and livestock.

To Follow a Trade

Tom Kelleher, Historian and Curator of Mechanical Arts

Receipt for a coffin signed Oliver Wight from the town of Sturbridge, Massachusetts, December 10, 1804, 168.35

ENDNOTES
1 Samuel Chamberlain, Old Sturbridge Village: A Photographic Impression (New York: Hastings House, 1952), 63-65. It appears that the Wood Working Museum was located is what is now the Hands-on Craft Center and that The Cabinet Shop was located in what is now the Fuller Conference Center.
2 In the 1957 revised edition, Chamberlain notes that the structure that was once named The Wood Working Museum is now renamed The Cabinet Shop. It seems that the Museum Shop moved into the previous space (now known as the Fuller Conference Center) that once occupied The Cabinet Shop. For several decades the building we now recognize as the Hands-on Craft Center was known as the Cabinet Shop. But in the 1983 Village Guidebook, the Cabinet Shop was renamed simply “Woodworking.”
4 McCallum, Furniture Makers and Retailers in Worcester County, Massachusetts, Working to 1850, The Magazine Antiques 143, no. 5 (May 1993), 786.
7 Jack O’Brien and Derrik Brown, “Shaped by the Sea: Cabinetmaking in Southeastern Massachustts,” in Harbs & Home: Furniture of Southeastern Massachusetts, 1710-1830, Bruce Jose, Gary R. Sullivan, and Jack O’Brien, eds. (Latham, N.Y.: University Press of New England, 2009), 28. The age at which apprentices started their terms (usually between the ages of 14 and 17) and the duration of apprenticeships varied, but typically young men ended their apprenticeships by the age of 21.
9 McCullum, Old Sturbridge Village, 96; Evans, Winsor-Chair Making in America: From Craft Shop to Consumer, 7.

The 1830s was a time of great change. As America embraced industrialization and urbanization, many of the old rules of life and business became outdated and irrelevant. Travel became faster and easier, expanding the marketplace and bringing new opportunities and challenges that did not exist for earlier generations.

Trade work – a major job market of the time – was in a period of flux. Some trades, like that of the redware potter, were waning in popularity as the more durable and fashionable tinware and imported ceramics replaced their humble products. Other trades were on the rise, including the manufacturing of tin goods and shoes. New trades emerged with industrialization, such as making and repairing machinery. Older trades like coopering or blacksmithing remained viable into the second half of the century before seeing a downturn. The reasons behind the rise and fall of trade work varied.

In the countryside, farming remained the most common occupation. But as French visitor Alexis de Tocqueville observed in 1835, “Almost all the farmers of the United States combine some trade with agriculture.” A lack of medieval trade guilds, as was the standard in Europe, allowed American craftsmen to pursue additional work across the fields. As families increasingly demanded store-bought goods, they needed additional income to pay for their purchases. Many farmers, like Pliny Freeman, built houses and made shoes in addition to tending crops and livestock.

Blacksmithing was one of the most common trades in early New England. Most towns had several smiths. Some worked full time and some smithed on the side, including many farmers such as Henry Jenkins Gray of Andover, Massachusetts. Most of Gray’s work was bespoke; he made hardware and repaired vehicles and tools as neighbors requested. Gray devoted most of his time to his substantial farm, with his smithing limited in both geography and scope. In more than 20 years as a smith he had only 22 customers, and he did no farrier work (shoeing livestock). Indeed, Gray routinely paid others to shoe his own horses and oxen. Smithing was not farmer Gray’s only sideline; he also did bespoke carpentry, and owned a sawmill and a large cider mill.

Gray did not begin smithing until he was 33 and gave it up in his late 50s because of crippling rheumatism. We do not know how Gray learned smithing. Records do not survive to show that he was apprenticed to the trade, and he may have learned by assisting others without a formal apprenticeship agreement. Isaac and...
Samuel Abbot, orphans taken in by Henry Gray’s father and virtually raised as his brothers, became smiths and did blacksmith work for Gray before building their own shops. Gray also learned from reading published material; his diary includes scores of useful tips copied from unidentified publications, including how to temper butcher knives, recut dull files, and make solder.

In contrast to Gray, blacksmiths in busy center villages often had enough demand to work full time at their trade for a good part of the year, and did some full-time manufacturing for distant markets. In 1837, a smith in the tiny town of Wales, Massachusetts, made 1,044 hatchets and axes in his one-man shop; he doubtless spent much of these tradesmen’s time was spent making things for people they would never meet. Tinners who made local goods to storekeepers, and engaged an army of peddlers to sell wares hundreds of miles away. Urban publishers paid rural printers, who were closer to paper material; his diary includes scores of useful tips copied

The early 19th century was a time of significant changes. By the end of the Civil War, the traditional apprenticeship was moribund, surviving in name only, if at all. The early 19th century was a time of significant changes to traditional systems of work and production. As mechanization and increasing global production systems evolved, craftsmen and women adapted their ways of life. New goods and distribution networks as well as shifting populations presented both challenges and opportunities for craftsmen and communities. The Village’s trade shops, households, and mills serve as illustration and interpretation of this period of change.

ENDNOTES

The Firearms Exhibit at Old Sturbridge Village has been a favorite of many visitors since its installation. The “GUNS” sign over the door and the trophy case of arms are iconic images that visitors often remember. As the Village begins to redesign the exhibits in Gallery Row, the Firearms Exhibit is one of the top priorities. For the past several months, the Historic Trades department and the Curatorial staff have been working together to develop a new exhibition focusing on firearms and militia history in New England.

The citizen militia was an important part of civic life in the colonial period and in early 19th century New England. All able-bodied men from 18 to 45 were required to serve in their town’s militia. They had to provide their own weapons and equipment and had to attend at least one training day per year. The new exhibit will bring more detail to this story and have four distinct themes within the context of New England:

- Armed and Equipped: The citizen militia, firearms technology, firearms manufacturing, and sport shooting.
- Uniform coats from the Old Sturbridge Village collection to be displayed in the new exhibit.
- The militia at the ready during Militia Weekend exercises.
- Uniform coats from the Old Sturbridge Village collection to be displayed in the new exhibit.

Uniform coats from the Old Sturbridge Village collection to be displayed in the new exhibit.

The gun-making industry in New England during this period is an important theme as well. The Village’s collection includes a variety of firearms made by local gun makers, including Gibbs Tiffany & Co., which was located in Sturbridge in the 1830s. Firearms by Gibbs Tiffany and other local gun-makers will be on display, as will some of the tools used to manufacture them.

Armed and Equipped will open on Labor Day weekend (September 2-4) to coincide with the return of our militia training days at the museum.

The glass-making industry in New England exhibit turned 60 this year, and the curatorial department gave it a makeover for its birthday. At the new Glasshouse Gallery, you will find old favorites blended with rarely seen treasures from the Village Collection, all in a refurbished, modernized gallery. New features include blacklight demonstrations, glassblowing videos, and a case examining the Wells family’s connection to glass industries. Visitors are encouraged to look closely at details and consider the bigger picture of this ancient craft that has transformed everything from our appearances to our scientific understanding of the world. The new gallery is guaranteed to delight and amaze visitors of all ages.

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OSV Visitor Fall/Winter 2017

SEPTEMBER

September 2-4 | Militia Weekend & Opening of Armed and Equipped
In the 1830s, all male American citizens from 18 to 45 were active members of their local militia companies. Labor Day weekend will feature all the sights and sounds of the training days that these companies took part in at least twice a year. Visitors will see cannon and musket demonstrations, listen to martial music, witness mock battles, and even see live firing of muskets at targets. Make sure to tour the new exhibition of historic equipment and uniforms on this opening weekend.

September 16 | Annual Old Sturbridge Village Gala
Don’t miss the 10th Annual Old Sturbridge Village Gala, with Master of Ceremonies Susan Worriick, formerly with Boston’s WCVB-TV. The Village’s largest fundraising event of the year, the Gala features fabulous cocktails and elegant food stations, with live and silent auctions. Learn more at www.osv.org or call 508-347-0210.

September 23-24 | Festival of New England Makers
At this celebration of artisans across the centuries, the Village’s talented craftpeople and interpreters will showcase trades from the 19th century and today. Join the blacksmith, potter, tinner, cooper, printer, and others as they explore more challenging items created by artisans of the time period. From fiber arts to metal work, experience “handmade” from the past and the present.

September 27 | OSV Speaker Series:
“First Ladies of Resilience” with Jacqueline Berger
America’s First Ladies are iconic examples of resilience, courage and emotional agility—and Jacqueline Berger should know, as she’s written a two-volume series about these remarkable women. An engaging and inspiring speaker, Jacqueline Berger invites us into the lives and times of these women with an insider’s familiarity, earning her a national reputation as “The First Ladies Lady.” Learn more about Jacqueline at www.firstladieslady.com.

September 30 | Friends’ Day
Old Sturbridge Village invites valued Members and Friends to celebrate a day full of exclusive members-only programming throughout the museum. Activities for the day will include special programs and the Annual Friends’ Day Meeting with the Village’s President and CEO Jim Donahue. Upon arrival at the Visitor Center, pick up a day will include special programs and the Annual Friends’ Day Meeting with the Village’s President and CEO Jim Donahue. Upon arrival at the Visitor Center, pick up a
complementary ticket to win Village-made prizes. Members will also SAVE 25% on their shop purchases on this day only.

OCTOBER

October 7-9 and October 14-15 | Apple & Agriculture Days
Ripe and red apples are a favorite sign of fall in New England. Come tour our orchards, help pick apples, and taste some nearly-forgotten heirloom apple varieties. Celebrate the harvest and the beautiful New England autumn at the height of fall color. See a display of flowers, fruits, and vegetables grown by local gardeners. Visitors can even make their own sachet of mulling spices to take home.

October 26 | OSV Speaker Series:
“King Philip’s Indian War” with author Michael Tougias
NY Times bestselling author Michael Tougias will give an illuminating slide presentation on the war between the Colonists and Native Americans in 1675-76.

OCTOBER / NOVEMBER

October 29 | Village Trick-or-Treat
Visit the Village after hours for a family-friendly evening of trick or treating on the Common. Show off your best Halloween costume in the Costume Parade, hear spooky tales, enjoy a bonfire, take a hayride around the Common, and more! Throughout the evening, children can trick-or-treat at nine stops on the Village Common. This is an evening event and is not included in daytime admission. Old Sturbridge Village closes at 4:00 pm on this day to prepare for the event.

November 1-5, 8-12, 15-19, 22-26 | Bounty: A New England Thanksgiving
Spend some time at the Village learning an historical craft. These adult workshops vary from blacksmithing to textiles, coopering, foodways, and more. Workshops are held in the Country Bank Museum Education Center. All class registrations close three days prior to the event. Register online at osv.org, or call 508-347-0290.

November 11 | Veterans Day
All active, veteran and retired members of the military and their families (up to 6 people) receive free admission on Veterans Day. See how lead musket balls were cast in the Small House, and get your initials stamped on your own musket ball at the Blacksmith Shop. See how American military uniforms and weapons have changed over the past 300 years and view demonstrations of the weapons.

DECEMBER

December 2-3, 8-10, 15-17, 22-23 | Christmas by Candlelight
Our highly anticipated holiday event returns this December with new features! Escape the commercial frenzy of a modern Christmas with an enchanted evening of gingerbread, roasted chestnuts, music, dance, and a sleigh ride (weather permitting). Meet Santa & Mrs. Claus, and be sure to bring your camera! Tickets on sale November 1st at osv.org

December 27-30 | National Marionette Theater
Bring the kids during the holiday vacation week for very special performances by the National Marionette Theater. Each day the puppets will present a different children’s classic tale, and the historic Village will be open for exploring. Tickets on sale November 1 at osv.org
Crafts and trades are an important part of Old Sturbridge Village, and many of the skills and techniques of 19th-century crafts are still practiced today. The Festival of New England Makers on the weekend of September 23 and 24 is a celebration of craftsmanship from the 19th century to today. Featured artisans, along with the Village’s dedicated craftsman and interpreters, will come together to educate and display their intricate and traditional crafts, including crafts that are not typically on display at the museum.

All of the artisans have a passion for the traditional elements of their trade and for bridging techniques between the past and the present as well as sharing their talents with visitors. Three of the talented artisans participating in the festival shared their thoughts on the importance of preserving traditional crafts.

Jim Martin is one of several members of the New England Lace Group who will be attending the event. He will be returning to the Festival for his third year to demonstrate his talents with bobbin lace. Jim enjoys the festival because seeing artisans at work encourages visitors to explore “the possibility of creating things on their own that they may have thought was beyond their reach. I believe that people no longer desire to simply go and see historical sites or items; they want to be actively engaged in a learning or discovery experience.”

John Baron specializes in woodworking and has been displaying and crafting his works at the Festival since its inception. At five years of age, he visited the Village and immediately fell in love with the child-sized furniture on display. From 1975 to the early 1980s, John was a full-time interpreter, and later a museum teacher, at the Village, where he learned to be a cooper and cabinetmaker, and helped build the Fennos barn. He found a hobby in repairing old furniture. It was during his time as an educator that he met his wife, who was working as the Curator of Collections. He presented her with a copy he made of a 17th-century Wethersfield Saultflower Chest as a wedding present. For Baron, “one of the most rewarding experiences I have demonstrating woodworking for the public is answering a casual question that can lead to an in-depth conversation with the person who asked the question, and involve other visitors as well.”

Rose Anne Hunter, a member of the Historical Society for Early American Decoration, has exhibited her talents in traditional rug-making at the Village since 2005, and has taught rug-making techniques from the Village period. She found her interest in early rugs when she bought a farmhouse 50 years ago and decided to make rugs to decorate it. Hunter finds this type of craft to be very important, especially in today’s society: “it is all about recycling and repurposing and making things into utilitarian folk art pieces. The repetitive stitches are relaxing and slow one down from the hectic pace of things.”

The New England Makers Festival gives people the opportunity to take a step back from their busy lives to focus on a simpler time and to understand the importance of these crafts and their relation to modern life. Visitors observe how much effort and time goes into these hand-made pieces, and we hope that learning about the craft will encourage them to think in innovative and creative ways.

Rachel Middaugh Research Librarian, Interpretation

For Rachel Middaugh, delving into and investigating history is a way of life. Growing up in Michigan, her parents made frequent expeditions to historic locations and museums including the Henry Ford Museum and Historic Greenfield Village. Her love of historic studies led her to pursue a B.A. in History at Andrews University, with minors in both Accounting and German. When asked why she chose to intern at the Village for a second time, she said, “to me, OSV makes history come to life for all guests…the internships are personal and tailored to the individual.”

While at the Village, Middaugh can be found in the research library cataloging and photographing the eclectic collection of maps. “What’s impressed me is the extensive variety of maps we have at the museum. I think there’s value for our guests in seeing how New Englanders in the 19th century saw the world, and what the world looked like to them.” She also enjoys the costumed interpretation aspect of her internship, and can be found making butter and cheese and gardening around the Village.

After this summer, Middaugh will complete her undergraduate degree and begin researching graduate programs. She will have plenty of time to decide whether to study museums or public history in graduate school as she works as an assistant gardener in Austria in the upcoming year.

James Connally Administration

James Connally can pinpoint the exact moment when he realized his future would involve the past. “In college, while pursuing a career in law, I found myself wandering the halls of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the local museum, to relax. It was in September 2009 when I noticed the sarcophagus in their Egyptian wing. To the ancient Egyptians, the eyes on the sarcophagus were functional for the mummy within to observe the world. Suddenly, history was not just a pretty object in a curio cabinet—it was living, breathing, and still active today. It spoke to me so much that I had to change courses.”

From there, he transferred to the University of Virginia, graduated with his degree in History, and is now studying at the Cooperstown Graduate Program for an MA in Museum Studies with a focus in Administration. “I do not think there is a better place than Old Sturbridge Village to learn how to be a nonprofit administrator.” Connally chose the Village not only because it makes history come alive for visitors, but also because of the many different facets of administrative life at the museum.

During the work day, Connally can be found at Langdon House preparing reports, writing policies, conducting visitor surveys, and working with different administrators. “This internship allows me the opportunity to make the Village a better place for those who hopefully will have the same experience I had with the sarcophagus.” After school, he plans on working in the museum industry in an administrative capacity, and hopefully one day as a director.
Interns with an Impact

Kate Ouimette
Interpretation
For Kate Ouimette, working at Old Sturbridge Village is a family tradition. “Working in the research library, I just recently found a photograph of my grandfather [Walter Barrett] building the blacksmith shop in the 1950’s.”

Indeed, the tradition continues as Ouimette loves to “take my nieces and nephews to the museum whenever I get the chance.”

Born and raised in Sturbridge, Ouimette appreciates that Sturbridge residents have free admission: “it makes life easier to be a visitor at the Village; it allows my family and me the opportunity to come here as frequently as we can.”

Ouimette is currently working on getting her degree in History with a minor in Museum Studies and a certificate in Indigenous Studies at Mount Holyoke College. In addition, she volunteers for a Bavarian certificate in Indigenous Studies at Mount Holyoke College. “I get the chance.”

After graduate school, Ouimette plans on finding a job at either a living history museum or going back to school for a degree in Library Studies.

Sydney Gay
Education
Growing up in Marlboro, Massachusetts, Sydney Gay remembers the exact moment when she decided to pursue a life in historical studies. “I was 14, and I remember interacting with the interpreter at the Asa Smith Store. We engaged in a conversation about the age in which girls married in New England in the 18th century. My grandfather [Walter Barrett] building the blacksmith shop in the 1950’s.”

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After graduate school, Ouimette plans on finding a job at either a living history museum or going back to school for a degree in Library Studies.

Zachary Hill
Interpretation
Born in Lancaster, Massachusetts, Zachary Hill is a familiar face around Old Sturbridge Village. Since age four, he has been involved with the Village’s activities including summer camp, being a junior intern, working as a volunteer, and now as a college intern. “I always loved the Village; it has a way of transporting you back in time, back in history.”

Hill is currently studying history at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York. He is particularly fond of the ancient Romans, especially the waning years of the empire: “once I discovered the ancient Romans, I just couldn’t read enough about them, even to this day, I read as much as I can about their civilization.” For his internship, Hill works as an interpreter on the farm, in the mills, and at the Shoe Shop. His favorite aspect of the internship is talking to visitors about the past, and “making history come to life through hands-on experience.”

After he graduates from Vassar, Hill plans on continuing his education, and working in academia. “I plan on getting my PhD, then working as a college professor, teaching students ancient Roman history.” He credits Old Sturbridge Village as a primary inspiration for him to teach history to others.

Alyssa Zajan
Interpretation
The Burlington, Vermont native, Alyssa Zajan, has always been fascinated by exploring the unknown. As a result, Zajan just finished completing her undergraduate degree from Barnard College at Columbia University in Astrophysics with a minor in Medieval History. “I always loved the exploratory aspect of space… there is so much that we have yet to learn.” Indeed, she believes the study of History and Astrophysics are inherently linked: “the two fields are very similar- both involve understanding who we are and where we come from.”

Zajan chose Old Sturbridge Village because she wants “hands on experience and to disseminate history to visitors through experiences, and OSV allows me to literally feel history.” As an intern, she works in the District School teaching to enthusiastic children, as she is passionate about education. She loves seeing enthusiasm for history especially in the young children eagerly performing recreations in the school house.

After this summer, Zajan plans on spending time away from academia only to return to pursue a higher degree. Ultimately, she wants to enter “museum work or education, as I want to help people who learn differently.”

Emily Allen
Interpretation
Born in China, but raised in Hollis, New Hampshire, Emily Allen is fascinated by the human element to history. “To me, history is all about people, stories, and how connected we all are despite living in different cultures.” Allen is currently pursuing her undergraduate degree in History at Stonehill College in Massachusetts, where she studies “an eclectic collection of cultural histories from America, to Africa, to China.”

She is thrilled to be interning at Old Sturbridge Village this summer, because she is allowed to practice history, and “to know history, you need to know about everyday life…how people cooked and did chores…what better place to do this than at the Village?” Allen enjoys working at the Fitch House where she cooks, knits, plays games, and “makes history exciting to the visitor by bridging 19th-century New England to today.”

After she completes her undergraduate degree, Allen hopes to work as an archivist at a museum. “I would love to work for an institution like the Tenement Museum, where a wide array of diverse groups are represented.” Ultimately, Allen wants to continue to learn about how different cultures share in the human experience.

To Petter, buildings are more than just structures: “buildings reflect culture, individuals, and values…when we lose a building we lose a part of ourselves.” This summer, he is thrilled to be involved in the construction process of the piggery: “it’s incredibly valuable to me and my studies to not just witness, but also participate in the process of building an historic site.” He plans on spending time away from academia only to return to pursue a higher degree. Ultimately, he wants to continue to learn about how different cultures share in the human experience.

Kyle Petter
Interpretation
Kyle Petter first encountered Old Sturbridge Village at South East Missouri State University, where he is currently working towards his degree in Historic Preservation with minors in Architectural Design and History. “I was amazed how Old Sturbridge Village operates and preserves its buildings while functioning as a living history museum,” he said.

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Christmas by Candlelight

The holiday season is right around the corner, and what better way to celebrate it than by experiencing New England traditions firsthand at our annual event, Christmas by Candlelight? With numerous festivities to observe and participate in, there is something for the whole family to enjoy. Walk through our Village winter wonderland while surrounded by glowing lanterns, the cheerful songs of Victorian carolers, civil and school group performances, and welcome the holiday with roasted chestnuts and warm cider.

Christmas by Candlelight celebrates the rich history of Christmas traditions some of which originated in the early 19th century such as holiday carols, or the modern image of Santa Claus figure. The current American version of Santa first appeared in 1823, when a New York newspaper published a poem called "A Visit from Saint Nicholas." Christmas trees were brought to America by German immigrants who saw them as a Christmas symbol of rebirth, and the trees became popularized with so many activities to get you into the holiday spirit. This year, make Christmas by Candlelight at Old Sturbridge Village a holiday tradition for your family! Make a reservation for decadent feasts at the Holiday Bounty in the Bullard Tavern or the Holiday Buffet at the Oliver Wight Tavern. If you are traveling from a distance, you will find peaceful accommodations for a good night’s sleep at the Old Sturbridge Village Inn and Bender Family Lodges.

Christmas by Candlelight

Old Sturbridge Academy’s FIRST DAY

This fall, administrators and eight teachers will arrive for the first day of school at Old Sturbridge Academy Charter Public School (the Academy). They will pull into the parking lot just after sunrise, at about the same time as the Village’s agricultural interpreters who tend to the livestock and crops at the Freeman Farm. The Academy staff will greet the 160 incoming kindergartners through third graders as they enter the newly constructed classrooms for their first day at the Academy.

Many people have been working nonstop to prepare for the Academy’s first day, and it has been rewarding to see each new step along the way. Early in the spring, the incoming class of students was selected through a lottery. Since then, the accepted students and their families have been filling the Academy administrative offices with excitement. They are dropping off forms, meeting with school leaders, and spending lots of time in the Village. Some families have been visiting Old Sturbridge Village for years, while for some, this summer has been their first experience seeing the 1830s communities all over New England. You can experience all these traditions and more at Christmas by Candlelight. Join us for sleigh rides, nightly Christmas tree lighting, puppet shows, holiday crafts - even meet Santa! Enjoy cookies and hot chocolate at Mrs. Claus’ Bake Shop and visit the magical North Pole Village with Tinsel the Talking Christmas Tree. Guests can also enjoy the annual display of the Little Town of Bethlehem Nativity depicting different parts of the biblical narrative, and take part in the annual Gingerbread Contest. Step into the world of Charles Dickens with the story of A Christmas Carol, or see the train set from the Oscar-nominated movie Joy, starring Robert De Niro and Jennifer Lawrence.

As anyone can see, the modern, American traditions of Christmas come from a variety of cultures and developed over many centuries. There is something for the whole family to get involved in at Christmas by Candlelight with so many activities to get you into the holiday spirit. This year, make Christmas by Candlelight at Old Sturbridge Village a holiday tradition for your family!
Our local communities. It's time to go back to school! An educational resource for New England, and Old Sturbridge Village is just around the corner. The Village has always been a place of learning where the students can showcase both what they have learned and made. Each LTE unit will end with a school-wide presentation of work where the students can detail the different parts of an apple tree.

A highlight of each week will be the Learning Through Experiences (LTE’s) – Wednesday afternoon excursions into the Village led by costumed historians. The first unit will be “Meet My Museum,” during which students and teachers will explore the Village and learn how to act around the farm animals and interpretive spaces. This is a critical step for the new students to establish a relationship with the Village, especially for students who may have never been to a museum before. In the next unit, students will move onto Materials, studying wood, fiber, clay, and metal from their source all the way through a finished product in the Trade Shops. Each LTE unit will end with a school-wide presentation of work where the students can showcase both what they have learned and made.

This type of interdisciplinary, hands-on and engaging learning is the foundation of Old Sturbridge Academy, and we could not be more excited that the opening day is just around the corner. The Village has always been an educational resource for New England, and Old Sturbridge Academy will deepen that relationship with our local communities. It’s time to go back to school!
Originally built in Willimantic, Connecticut circa 1737, the Fitch House has been a staple on the Old Sturbridge Village Common since arriving at the Village in 1939. In fact, it was the first house to officially arrive at the Village. The house recently reopened after being refurbished by the Interpretation and Curatorial staffs. The house will once again demonstrate the life of the 1737, the Fitch House has been a staple on the Old Village in 1939. In fact, it was the first house to officially arrive at the Village. The house recently reopened after being refurbished by the Interpretation and Curatorial staffs. The house will once again demonstrate the life of the center village middle-income mechanic’s family who are not engaged in agricultural activities. (Many rural farmers often practiced a trade in addition to farming.) The 1828 Webster's Dictionary defines a mechanic as “a person whose occupation is to construct machines, or goods, wares, instruments, furniture, and the like.” While the Fitch House will be specifically interpreted as the home of a 19th-century printer, mechanic could refer to any number of other occupations, including tanners, cabinetmakers, or other skilled artisans. The majority of households in central Massachusetts were engaged in agriculture as their primary means of income, but households involved in skilled trades as the principal source of income represented a significant minority. The Fitch House, originally a one-room home grew over a period of about 90 years to its current configuration. What started out as a modest dwelling, like the Small House, grew with the family’s needs as their income allowed. At the Village, the house is set up to reflect an “average” early 19th-century family of a mother, father, and five or six children. Although the family would not be undertaking significant farming activities, they would certainly have a modest kitchen garden for their culinary needs as well as a few animals such as chickens, a pig, and perhaps a cow or even a horse and wagon for business purposes. Without day-to-day farming chores taking up much of the family’s time, the children had more time to regularly attend school when it was in session, or more leisure time to engage in play.

Household management, mending and sewing, cooking, laundry, cleaning, and other chores would still dominate the daily household routine for the lady of the house. Visitors will notice distinct differences between the Fitch House and other households in the Village. Elegant furnishings in the formal parlor such as a fashionable sofa, portraits, gilded mirror, and fancy chairs with decorative turnings resembling bamboo highlight the family’s awareness of current fashions as well as the importance of maintaining a stylish space for entertaining guests and business associates. As a member of a respected family in the community, the lady of the household might be involved with various groups with a charitable or improvement focus such as a maternal association or a women’s charitable society. Unlike the Freeman Farm, with its single, multipurpose parlor for entertaining guests as well as for family activities, the Fitch House has two spaces—a formal parlor for entertaining and a sitting room for family meals and family activities like knitting and sewing in the afternoons. This highlights the increasing popularity in the 19th century of distinguishing public from private spaces within a household.

Other decorative touches, such as a more formal dooryard, an ornamental children’s garden, and curtains adorning the windows of both front rooms, were more common in center village households than in countryside households. Denizens of the more populous center villages would likely be more concerned with current fashions and the outward appearance of their home. The Fitch House, inside and out, reflects a family whose financial situation allows them to invest in the home, and whose social situation necessitates elegant furnishings and décor, especially in the formal parlor. The family would also have aspirations of bettering their economic and community standing through their business. The household furnishings and décor reflect those aspirations.

As a printer and his family, the Fitches would have been familiar with 19th-century advice literature espousing a variety of progressive ideas, including proper household management, cooking and remedies, and principles of child-rearing, from the likes of well-known authors such as Lydia Maria Child and Esther Howland. Thus, a bright “modern” kitchen at the back of the house is filled with “gadgets” such as a tin reflecting oven, and a “dumb Betty” or washing machine stands at the ready in the girl’s room. These innovative devices reflect the family’s willingness to adopt “new,” labor-saving household tools. An ironing settle, as recommended by author Catherine Beecher, suggests the family’s enthusiasm for embracing advice literature. Fancier or more labor-intensive receipts (or recipes) would be more common, particularly dishes meant for entertaining guests.

The house will be bustling with activity from day to day. Visitors may encounter costumed historians cooking with the reflector oven or engaged in other household activities such as washing with the dumb Betty or ironing on the ironing settle. Each afternoon as the household activities shift to the sitting room or parlor, guests will be invited to join in sewing, knitting, playing games, sketching, or practicing their penmanship.

New barriers will enable visitors to walk through the formal parlor. Guests will be able to see the parlor furnishings from an entirely different perspective and feel as though they are being invited into a space typically reserved for special occasions and formal entertaining. Visitors will be able to get a closer look at the furnishings in the room, including portraits of author Esther Howland and her husband, Southworth Howland, a Worcester, Massachusetts, printer--fitting portraits indeed for the Village’s interpretation of a printer’s home and family. Come and explore the printer’s home and join us for family activities at the Fitch House!
2017 HOURS OF OPERATION
August - October
Open Wednesday - Sunday
9:30 am - 5:00 pm
Also open:
Monday, September 4 (Labor Day)
9:30 am - 5:00 pm
Monday, October 9 (Columbus Day)
9:30 am - 5:00 pm
November 1 - 26
Open Wednesday - Sunday
9:30 am - 4:00 pm
November 27 - December 1
CLOSED
December 2 - 23
Open evenings for Christmas by Candlelight only:
December 2 & 3, 8 - 10, 15 - 17, 22 & 23 | 3:00 - 9:00 pm
December 24 - 26
CLOSED
December 27 - 30
Open Wednesday - Saturday
9:30 am - 4:00 pm
December 31, 2017 & January 1, 2018
CLOSED

MEMBERS’ SHOPPING NIGHTS
December 2-3 | 4:00 - 9:00 pm
The Old Sturbridge Village Museum Stores invite Village Members for special nights of shopping. Members receive 25% OFF their in-store purchases, December 2-3 only. Members also receive FREE gift-wrapping of their shop purchases. On these nights, each Member will receive one FREE drawing ticket and an additional ticket for every $10 spent in the Museum Stores. Winners will receive a selection of Village-made items; winners will be notified via phone or email the following week.

Can’t make the sale? The 25% OFF Member Sale is extended to our online store on the same dates at shop.osv.org. We will email a special code to Members before the sale to activate the discount. Online sales are not eligible for the prize drawing.