Painting Images of OSV

Curators’ Favorite Artifacts

A Discovery in “Bucket Town”

OSV’s Costumed Historians

Health Care Hazards in the 1800s

OSV Mills Harness Water Power

Heirloom Gardening at OSV
Growing Success
Planting the Seeds of Knowledge

It’s spring again here in New England and as the days grow warmer, gardens are planted—sown with seeds that will, with nurturing and proper care, become beautiful flowers or delicious vegetables and fruits in time. It’s easy for me to think of our educational programs offered through the Village as a “garden,” too. We sow the seeds of learning, providing our youngest generation with an important understanding of our country’s past. We use this knowledge in many ways—by offering a fantastic educational experience to more than 65,000 schoolchildren who visit the Village each year and through special programs we take to their schools, like History on the Road.

As an example of just how big our “garden” is, I recently had the chance to visit the Crane Country Day School in Santa Barbara, California, with Deb Friedman and Tom Kelleher, for their Colonial Fair. This school, located more than 3,000 miles away, brings its fifth grade class to Massachusetts for a week every year to learn about American history, including a full day at the Village. During our visit, the students learned how to churn butter and about 19th-century cooperative techniques, among other aspects of the Village that were shared with them. It was a day that I look upon proudly as our expert staff shared our museum and our collective history with students from across the nation.

Closer to home, in nearby Providence, Rhode Island, a Catholic school has its junior high students work on individual buildings, learn about architecture and history, and then visit the Village for the day to see if their work was accurate. I had a chance to visit this school a few years ago and I can assure you the results of this project were impressive. The Village also has vocational partnerships with Tantasqua Regional High School and Killingly Vocational—allowing students to learn their trade while supporting the ongoing maintenance efforts here at the Village.

These examples remind me of how important it is that we continue to nurture and grow educational opportunities around history both at the Village and in our schools. As I reflect on these efforts, I’m also grateful, as these educational opportunities would not be possible without the support of the many businesses and foundations which give generously to ensure these programs continue. Our Country Bank Education Center, perhaps the best example of this support, is celebrating its 40th anniversary of hosting schoolchildren who visit the Village. As we head toward warmer and longer days, let’s remember how important tending our gardens is there at the Village. During our visit, the students learned how to churn butter and about 19th-century cooperative techniques, among other aspects of the Village that were shared with them. It was a day that I look upon proudly as our expert staff shared our museum and our collective history with students from across the nation.

Each year, Memorial Day through Labor Day, a stirring display of flags greets visitors as they enter the Village. Because of our generous members and donors, the Field of Flags campaign allowed for 4,305 military members and their families to visit OSV for free in 2013, a value of $104,040. Let’s top that in 2014! Every $25 donation allows for one flag to be planted and provides support for complimentary daytime admission to military members.

Please send your gift in the enclosed envelope today.

Welcome to the SPRING EDITION of our VISITOR magazine. We hope that you will learn new things and come to visit the Village soon. There is always something fun to do at Old Sturbridge Village.

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Please send your gift in the enclosed envelope today.

Volume LI, No. 1
Spring 2014
On the Cover: Interpreter Ron Lyon plays the fife.

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.

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Renowned Artist Paints Images of OSV

Dinotopia Creator James Gurney Captures Village Blacksmiths at Work

Millions of people love the work of author and illustrator James Gurney, best known for the realistically rendered fantasy world depicted in his beloved Dinotopia book series. The first book, A Land Apart from Time, published in 1992, went on to sell more than two million copies. Today, there are more than 20 Dinotopia books in print. Despite their popular success, the Dinotopia series is just one of Gurney’s many artistic endeavors. Others include magazine articles and illustrations, lectures, art exhibits, videos, blogs, and plein-air painting, which is what brought him and fellow artist Garin Baker to Old Sturbridge Village on a recent painting excursion. He featured the Blacksmith Shop painting session in a video and on his blog, the Gurney Journey. Read a few excerpts on the opposite page.

The Many Challenges of Painting in a Blacksmith Shop

By James Gurney

A blacksmith shop in a living history museum is a challenging location for plein-air painting. It’s dark, gritty, noisy, and crowded. Worst of all, the blacksmiths are in constant motion: hammering, working the bellows, and leaving the building for breaks. But my friend Garin Baker and I were determined to take a swing at it.

Motivation. I thought it would be like a time travel experience to paint people working at authentic historical trades in period costumes using traditional tools and methods.

Design Strategy. I approached the portraits of the two blacksmiths separately, since the workers kept changing places and taking breaks. My strategy was to include just enough of the background to convey the atmosphere of the setting and the color temperature of the two main light sources.

Materials. I used flat and round brushes and casein, a water-based paint, which has tremendous opacity and flows off the brush more easily than acrylic. When a layer dries you can paint over it without the dry paint lifting up. That allowed me the flexibility to glaze or scumble over dry layers.

Challenges. The biggest problem I had was a lack of light to see my work. Of course, I also faced the difficulty that no one held still, so I did my best to retain each pose in short-term memory.

ABOVE: Gurney’s painting is in oil, 14 x 27 inches. It was amazing to watch him do it, an impressive feat of concentration. He says: “From the moment you suggested going to Old Sturbridge Village to paint on the spot, a flood of memories came back to me.”

LEFT: Author and illustrator James Gurney (left) and fellow artist Garin Baker (right) paint OSV blacksmith Derek Holdmann (center left) and OSV volunteer Al Curboy at work.

A Conversation with James Gurney

Q. Why do you enjoy painting at Old Sturbridge Village?

A. Sturbridge is a favorite because there is so much to draw—so many people doing things in an authentic way. And there is so much artificial light in the modern world, it’s rare to get natural window light, and it has such a special quality. A visit to the Village is a unique chance to get in the time machine and go back.

Q. What do you enjoy most about sketching?

A. My sketchbook is always with me. I’ve always loved anything about the 19th century and sketching is a form of observation rooted in the 19th century. Sitting, observing, and drawing slow down the clock—something you don’t get to do through the lens of a camera. And animals and kids don’t pose—you have to be fast to capture them! Making a picture is a magical thing—or making anything is magical—starting with a raw material and transforming it into something different.

Q. Are more Dinotopia books planned?

A. Yes, Dinotopia: First Flight—we are doubling the length and bringing it back in 2014. I’m also working on new videos, diving into e-books—animated sketchbooks where you can push buttons to get video—sketchbooks brought to life.

LAUREL HOLMES Learn more about James Gurney and his work at www.jamesgurney.com. To view the video of Gurney’s OSV visit, scan this QR code with a mobile device or visit http://gurneyjourney.blogspot.com/2013/12/painting-in-blacksmith-shop.html.
THIS SMALL AUTOMATON or “sand toy” contains a dancer mounted on a wire behind glass. When users turned the box counterclockwise twice and set it down, the sand hidden inside would fall through mechanisms moving the wire, causing the jointed figure to spring into motion, dancing back and forth on her toes. This toy continues to captivate today with its timeless trick.

– Kate Swisher, Old Sturbridge Village—Decorative Arts Trust Curatorial Fellow

AS A QUILTER MYSELF, the OSV quilt collection is particularly special for me. One quilt that stands out was made by seven-year-old Clarissa Moore (1820–1912) of Eastford, Connecticut. She pieced an eight-pointed star pattern, meticulously stenciled delicate designs around each star, and also stenciled her name and the date “1837” in the center of the quilt. Carefully preserved and passed down through the family, it is one of the “stars” of our collection of more than 250 antique quilts.

– Rebecca Beall, Collections Manager and Curator of Textiles

THE RESEARCH LIBRARY contains more than 35,000 books and documents. I have many favorites. One that I consider a cover to cover read is Solomon Northup’s narrative, Twelve Years a Slave, recounting his life as a slave on cotton and sugar cane plantations in 1840s Louisiana. Northup poignantly describes living in slavery and struggling with the memories of family and freedoms he had in New York. This book is the basis for the Oscar-winning film of the same name.

– Jeannette Robichaud, Library Assistant

A CABINETMAKER’S SON, Edwin Smallwood continued his father’s trade. His drawing book contains wonderful watercolors of stylish furnishings. While showing high-style furniture, some notations have a personal quality, including a Grecian sofa with this inscription: “A couch on which to take a nap after dinner.” The cover is inscribed “Edwin Augustus Smallwood’s Drawing Book… Drawn at Mr. Peabody’s Academy, December, 1840.” With vibrant colors and fine details, this sketchbook is a jewel in our collection and shows that treasures sometimes are found in unexpected—and petite—places.

– Christie Jackson, Senior Curator of Decorative Arts

ONE OF THE NEWEST ADDITIONS to the Old Sturbridge Village collection is a one-horse hay wagon, still displaying most of its original “Prussian blue” paint. Now on exhibit in the Salem Towne barn, this remarkably well-preserved vehicle spent its working life on the Hamilton-Wright-Locke Farm in Winchester, Massachusetts. Hay to feed livestock through the winter was the most important crop on early New England farms. With its open, flared body, this wagon made moving that hay from the fields into the barn a bit easier.

– Tom Kelleher, Curator of Mechanical Arts
Famous Mural Artist Led an Inventive Life

The Fascinating Story of Rufus Porter

By Tom Keller, Curator of Mechanical Arts

W hat do the murals painted on the walls of the Old Sturbridge Inn (aka the Oliver Wight House), Scientific American magazine, a revolving rifle, and transcontinental air travel have in common? All sprang from the fertile mind of New England's own Rufus Porter (1792–1884): artist, inventor, entrepreneur, author, and publisher.

In 1801, Tyler and Abigail Porter sold the family homestead in Boxford, Massachusetts, and moved their family—including nine-year-old Rufus—to the Maine frontier, eventually settling in what is now Bridgton. After district school, Rufus spent six months at the Fryeburg Academy studying the classics and learning to play the violin before returning to his father's farm. Young Rufus restless longed for more than farm life offered, however, and spent time writing poetry, playing his fiddle, and inventing labor-saving gadgets. After moving to Portland, Maine, he earned his living playing violin at country dances and painting houses. In an age before pre-mixed paints, painting was considered a skilled trade, and included painting faux wood grain and marbling surfaces, as well as painting vehicles and signs.

When the War of 1812 broke out, the 20-year-old painter served on the coast with his militia unit and painted gunboats and later military drums. His musical ability allowed him to become a fifer, drummer, and musical instructor. After the war, Porter spent a few terms teaching school, and then exercised his mechanical aptitude by building windmills.

In 1815, Porter married, but instead of settling down he began an itinerant existence—despite remaining a devoted husband and father of 10 children. Porter opened a dancing school in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1816, and the next year he embarked on a trading voyage to Hawaii, where he grew as an artist.

Upon his return to New England in 1819, he resumed painting portraits and cutting silhouettes, which soon necessitated continued traveling. Porter built a camera obscura that could project images onto a surface, allowing him to paint portraits and cut silhouettes more quickly and precisely. The itinerant Porter soon grew bored with portraiture and moved on to painting landscapes, usually as murals. He advertised “Those gentlemen who are desirous of spending the gloomy winter months amidst pleasant groves and verdant fields, are respectfully invited” to hire him. Porter promised to “paint walls of rooms, in elegant full colors, [with] Landscape Scenery, at prices less than the ordinary expense of papering.” His murals often drew upon memories of the Maine coast and from his extensive travels. Among those who hired Porter was Sturbridge cabinetmaker and tavern-keeper Ebenezer Howard, who, beginning in 1815, owned what is now the Old Sturbridge Inn, originally built in 1789 for Oliver Wight and his wife. Harmony. Since many of his customers were innkeepers, Porter supplemented his painting fees by playing his violin at country dances.

In 1825, the enterprising Porter published A Select Collection of Valuable and Curious Arts, and Interesting Experiments, which he peddled on his travels. In it, he gave directions for making colored and invisible inks, paint and varnishes, metal finishes, laughing gas, pyrotechnics, and even a copying machine. It went through six editions.

By the mid-1840s, the restless Porter was drawn from painting into publishing, and the recently invented field of electrotyping (electro-chemically making exact reproductions of art and the printed word). In 1843, he founded the American Mechanic magazine in Boston, and two years later founded the Scientific American in New York, where he made electrotypes.

Although Porter sold the Scientific American in less than a year, he stayed on as editor, often writing editorial poetry and articles about recent inventions and discoveries that fascinated him, as well as articles on humor and the economic, social, moral, and religious issues of the day. Porter continued writing and publishing on various topics into his eighties. Porter was not just interested in the discoveries of others but was an active inventor himself, taking out more than 100 patents over the course of his busy life. In 1836, he sold gun maker Samuel Colt his design for a revolving rifle. As early as 1820, he began thinking about turning hot air balloons into practical means of transportation, building a series of working models between 1833 and 1853. The last one was 22 feet long.

After gold was discovered in California in 1849, Porter envisioned a steam-powered airship, an “aerial locomotive,” as a faster and safer way to cross the continent. When he failed to secure federal funding, he sold stock in the scheme instead. Although his full-sized airship was never completed, for the rest of his life Porter remained convinced that it was possible.

To learn more about Rufus Porter, attend the OSV Overseers’ Distinguished Speaker Series luncheon talk on Saturday, April 26. The featured guest will be Linda Lefko, coauthor of Folk Art Murals of the Rufus Porter School: New England Landscapes 1825–1845. To register, call 508-347-0285.
**Hingham’s Hersey Workshop**

Discovering a Lost Treasure

*By Christie Jackson, Senior Curator of Decorative Arts*

Imagine unlocking a rusty-hinged door to a forgotten, vine-covered shed and discovering a treasure trove inside—rare handcrafted artifacts untouched for 100 years...

That’s just what happened to Peter W. Hersey, who opened the door to a time capsule on his family’s farm in Hingham, Massachusetts. The farm was originally established by renowned toy and boxmaker Reuben Hersey in 1776. Many early outbuildings still stand on the 18-acre property, including a mid-19th-century workshop that was used by Reuben’s descendants who continued the family’s tradition of toy and boxmaking. Sealed for over a century, the shed contained handcrafted toys, personal artifacts, and tools left as if the artisan had just stepped away from the workbench more than 100 years before.

This small workshop brings to life Hingham’s legacy as “Bucket Town,” the affectionate nickname for the town known as the woodenware capital of the country for more than 300 years. Hingham’s sturdy pails and piggins were staples in New England homes and traveled as far as Canada and the West Indies starting in the mid-1600s. By the 1770s, enterprising coopers had begun to produce miniature versions of these goods to sell as keepsakes and novelties. From their shops emerged the first and largest community of professional toymakers in America. Their miniatures are charming—from a one-foot-tall highboy; to a rocking chair that could fit comfortably in the palm of your hand.

This summer, Old Sturbridge Village will open an exhibit celebrating the rich traditions of both toymaking and coopering in Hingham, Massachusetts, over the last four centuries. Coinciding with the exhibit is a new book published by the Hingham Historical Commission: *Bucket Town: Woodenware and Wooden Toys of Hingham, Massachusetts, 1635–1945*.

Members of the Hersey family were among the first craftsmen in Hingham. In addition to items made by the Hersey family, the OSV exhibit will include handcrafted toys and woodenware from dozens of Hingham’s master coopers and toy makers. Out in the Village, visitors can see these traditions continue today in our cooper shop. Reproduction of various Hingham woodenwares will be used by our interpreters to show how these utilitarian objects were used in everyday New England life.

As a child, Peter W. Hersey tried in vain to look in the dust-covered workshop windows to see what was inside. “We weren’t allowed in the shed, and as kids, my father and uncles weren’t allowed in there, either.” With the rediscovery of the Hersey workshop, we are invited into its story, that of the only surviving preindustrial toymaker’s shop in America.

**NEW EXHIBIT AT OLD STURBRIDGE VILLAGE**

*Bucket Town: Four Centuries of Toymaking and Coopering in Hingham*

June 21, 2014 through January 18, 2015

**CURATORS:**
Derin Bray and Christie Jackson

**FOR EXHIBIT INFORMATION:**
www.osv.org/artifacts/exhibits

**FOR LODGING:**
Old Sturbridge Inn and Reeder Family Lodges
774-304-1011 or 508-347-5056
www.osv.org/inn
Bringing History to Life:

OSV’s Costumed Historians

By Greg Dixon, Vice President of Marketing and Communications

Becoming one of Old Sturbridge Village’s costumed historians might appear to be as simple as putting on period clothing and reading some history books, but in fact, becoming a great interpreter requires rigorous training, ongoing study, expertise in history books, but in fact, becoming a great interpreter requires rigorous training, ongoing study, expertise in history. “Interpretation,” notes Kelleher. “It’s a calling that is hard to duplicate elsewhere.” As Kelleher notes, “It’s a profession, not just a job,” and an occupation that has unique rewards.

“Visitors now want a more active experience—they want to do what the interpreters are doing, rather than just watching and listening,” says Deb Friedman, senior coordinator for crafts and lead interpreter for pottery, who agrees: “Helping visitors to experience and explore history through the sounds, smells, images, and rhythms of the past—a truly visceral history—is an experience only a museum such as ours can offer. It’s what we do best!”

“We used to be more interested in entertainment options available to modern consumers. But there was a time when this wasn’t so, and interpretive programs at the Village—and at museums nationwide—were passive experiences.”

“Visitors now want a more active experience—they want to do what the interpreters are doing, rather than just watching and listening,” says Deb Friedman, senior vice president of public programs at the Village.

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“A passion for creating a positive visitor experience and for sharing history is a common trait among OSV’s costumed historians. “I love to connect the modern life of our museum’s visitors with that of a 19th-century craftsman,” says Rob Lyon, lead interpreter in the Moses Wilder Blacksmith Shop, and an OSV employee since 1972. “Helping them better understand where their modern world came from by showing the technology of the past makes me feel good about what I do.”

“Ryan Beckman, a 14-year OSV veteran and assistant coordinator of households and women’s crafts, agrees: “I love working with visitors of all ages, using verbal, visual, and hands-on techniques to illustrate the past. If I can get at least one of our visitors, youth or adult, to have an ‘Aha!’ moment on a given day that makes me feel like I have accomplished something very special.”

According to Friedman, the biggest challenge for any costumed historian is to quickly make a connection with a visitor. “Within moments, interpreters have to ‘read’ visitors and find the best way to engage them, while simultaneously trying to interpret. And when a guest asks a question they’ve heard a thousand times before, they must respond as if it’s the first time they’ve ever heard it.”

It’s often hardest for new interpreters to know when it’s time to let a visitor move on, and the best advice on this subject is passed along to new interpreters by longtime OSV interpreter Betty Frew, now age 85, who still works part-time in the Asa Knight store and in the Parsonage.

To judge when a visitor wants to move on, Frew says, “Don’t watch their faces, watch their feet”—good advice that author Stacy E Roth included, along with many other tips from Frew, in her classic text, Past into Present: Effective Techniques for First-Person Historical Interpretation.

Friedman says most new interpreters go through three phases on their way to mastering the profession: “Phase one is stage fright and being overwhelmed. In phase two, the interpreter often tries to tell every visitor everything they know. Then, after several months, they realize that each visitor is unique and they develop an understanding of how to read a visitor.”

After several days of training, OSV’s costumed historians go through one to three more days of additional training for each exhibit they work, as well as seasonal and skills training sessions. They also attend lectures on customer service, communication techniques, and historical topics on everything from 19th-century economics to religion, and learn more about life in the early 1800s from reading books and papers, and by examining OSV’s antiques with their curatorial colleagues.

OSV interpreters say it’s a calling that is hard to duplicate elsewhere. As Kelleher notes, “It’s a profession, not just a job,” and an occupation that has unique rewards.

“When I have an in-depth conversation with a visitor, it makes my whole day.” OSV potter Jeff Friedman, assistant coordinator for crafts and lead interpreter for pottery, agrees: “Helping visitors to experience and explore history through the sounds, smells, images, and rhythms of the past—a truly visceral history—is an experience only a museum such as ours can offer. It’s what we do best!”

What makes the Old Sturbridge Village experience unforgettable?

Ask our visitors, past and present, and most often you will find that it is the costumed historians who bring it to life. History, in their hands, comes alive. We step over a threshold, where the daily business of living fascinates us. How different it all was nearly 200 years ago, yet how remarkably the same.

When you visit OSV, an entire working village is presented. But it is the people and their daily routines, demonstrated by costumed historians, which bring it all to life.

Help us keep our costumed historians ever present, making the visitor experience memorable for a lifetime. Send your donation to the Support Our Costumed Historians program in the enclosed envelope, or make your gift online at www.osv.org/donations.
In Jean’s opinion, “The problem with modern cooking, is done in front of a fire, and we use simple implements such as well as specific temperatures. “At OSV, all cooking is presented as requiring complicated techniques and tools, daunting to us today. Cooking today, for example, is often discussed, and not just talk about them. she found she could do the tasks they you go to school?” Here in the Village did you eat? What did you wear? Did the inhabitants of the period by asking: giving his students insight into the life of took the subject beyond dates and facts— to transfer. [Image 52x526 to 534x738] incredibly enough, Jean Contino, our current coordinator of households, began at Old Sturbridge Village as a staff accountant in 1984 in response to an ad in the newspaper. During her first year and a half, she worked on the Village’s taxes and balanced many bank statements, but she fell in love with the charge of the costumed historians and submitted an application to transfer. She attended Anna Maria College in Paxton, Massachusetts, where she received a bachelor of business administration in accounting, but her love of history was not new. At North Brookfield High School, she had a history teacher who took the subject beyond dates and facts— giving his students insight into the life of the inhabitants of the period by asking: “If you were a person in that era, what did you eat? What did you wear? Did you go to school?” Here in the Village she found she could do the tasks they discussed, and not just talk about them. Beyond sharing her love of history, Jean loves empowering visitors to try these tasks at home. Many of the skills so common in the early 19th century seem daunting to us today. Cooking today, for example, is often presented as requiring complicated techniques and tools, as well as specific temperatures. “At OSV, all cooking is done in front of a fire, and we use simple implements such as a whistle made of birch twigs to make whipped cream.” In Jean’s opinion, “The problem with modern cooking, is that we don’t use our sense of touch anymore—we just push buttons.” When Jean isn’t working at the Village, she has her own hands-on project dating to a much later period. For the last four years, she and her father have been repairing a 1929 Ford Model A Tudor. The automobile sat in a barn for 40 years and was really just a rusty shell when it came to them. To restore it, Jean and her father had to take it apart down to the frame, sand it, have it repainted, rebuild the roof, reupholster the seats, and replace the engine. She says they recruited her mom, sister Carol, husband Will, and many friends to work on the car. “We couldn’t have done it without everyone!” After putting in a rebuilt 1929 engine, they had to drive the car 25–30 mph for the first 500 miles to break in the engine and loosen the parts. “I think we’ve driven all the back roads in Worcester County by now.” Look for Jean, her family, and their beautiful Duchess blue Model A at the Old Sturbridge Village Antique Car Rally June 7, 2014. OSV Visitor spring 2014
n ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” is as true today as it was when Benjamin Franklin first published this saying in 1735. But whereas today’s health headlines focus mainly on the skyrocketing cost of health care, early New Englanders were more concerned about the quality of their health care—and whether or not intended “cures” might kill them!

Early doctors were often poorly trained, and without knowledge of germ theory or antibiotics, they often did more harm than good. In her 1832 book The American Frugal Housewife, author Lydia Maria Child cautioned that remedies from the day were precarious. One white child out of every four or five would not survive from birth to maturity … the death of at least one child in a family was a commonplace and expectable occurrence,” Larkin wrote.

At the time, most orthodox medical practitioners ascribed to the “humural” theory taught by second-century Greek physician Claudius Galen based on the four elemental humors: air (blood), water (phlegm), fire (yellow bile), and earth (black bile). They believed that illness was the result of an imbalance among the humors. Treatment involved removing excess fluids through bleeding, raising blisters, and giving patients laxatives to restore “good humor.” “Blood, pus, vomit, fevers, sweat, or urine were the tangible evidence that the dose had ‘operated,’” Larkin wrote.

Philadelphia’s Dr. Benjamin Rush (1745–1813), a signer of the Declaration of Independence, took humoral theory to extremes with “heroic” medicine, according to OSV Curator of Mechanical Arts Tom Kelleher. Called “the founding father” of American medicine, Rush thought all disease resulted from excessive systemic excitability. He advocated massive bloodletting, along with blistering, purging with laxatives, and puking to rid the body of excess fluids and “excitement.” Doctors prescribed massive doses of calomel (mercurous chloride), a toxic drug that caused salva to pour from the mouth—and also caused acute mercury poisoning that led to hair and tooth loss.

Applying leeches was thought to be another way to relieve the congestion of “excess” blood. These fresh-water parasites were applied to the body—even internally and around the eyes, nose, and mouth. According to Wolverton, an estimated 200,000–250,000 leeches were used by consumers each year from the Delaware River were used by consumers each year in the 1830s. Apothecary shops displayed leech jars in their windows to advertise availability.

As the fascination with electricity came into vogue in the 19th century, city directories included “electricians,” who treated illness with electricity. According to Kelleher, these “electricians” were often medical doctors who combined electrical procedures with bleeding, cathartics, and other standard treatments of the day.

This “elemental fire” was used to treat dyspepsia, fevers, hemorrhoids, bruises, measles, asthma, rickets, drowning, diabetes, hysterics, consumption, and, of course, madness. As Kelleher observes, with such extreme measures used in the name of medicine in early New England, it is little wonder that only the strongest patients survived both their illness and their “cure.”
Harnessing Water Power with Ancient Technology

By Tom Kelleher, Curator of Mechanical Arts

hen George Wells suggested that his father, A.B. Wells, build “a village, a live village, one with shops operating” to showcase A.B.’s antiquities collection, George wisely noted, “It is essential to have water power.”

American Optical Corporation executive A.B. Wells originally planned a series of galleries to display his artifacts in July 1936. But within a week of his son’s suggestion to build a village, the family purchased a farm that once included water-powered mills on the Quinebaug River in Sturbridge. First called “Old Quinebaug Village,” it opened 10 years later as Old Sturbridge Village.

The first building moved to the site was an old sawmill from Gilead, Connecticut, later replaced in 1984 by our working replica of the c. 1820 Nichols-Colby sawmill. The first active exhibit in the new museum was our current Gristmill, built in 1938–39 on the foundations of a long-gone 19th-century gristmill. New England’s last remaining water-powered carding mill was moved to OSV in 1963 from South Waterford, Maine.

All of these mills take advantage of the mill site built by farmer David Wright prior to 1795. All are based on ancient designs, but use dramatically different types of waterwheels to harness the energy of falling water.

In the first century B.C., the Roman architect Marcus Vitruvius described grain-grinding machinery almost identical to machinery inside the OSV Gristmill. Our Gristmill uses a more efficient waterwheel than the simple undershot wheel familiar to Vitruvius, though, a design called a breast wheel, which dates to the late Middle Ages. Instead of simple paddles, the breast wheel has enclosed troughs or buckets on its rim. Water fills the buckets at the mid-point—or breast—of the wheel. The falling water’s dead weight trapped in the buckets causes the wheel to turn.

Unlike an overshot wheel, in which the buckets are filled by water directed over the top of the wheel, a breast wheel can operate over a wider variety of water levels both upstream and downstream. This large-diameter wheel can generate a great deal of torque—twisting power. Its size means it cannot turn very rapidly, however, and so machinery that needs to run at higher speeds must use gears to increase the speed of rotation. But gears add cost, increase maintenance, and rob some power. Yet its versatility and moderate efficiency made the breast wheel the workhorse of American factories in the early 1800s.

Carding machines were about as new in the 1830s as color television is to us today: not ancient but not cutting-edge technology either. But the tub wheel in the backyard of the OSV Carding Mill is a much more ancient design. In its simplest form, it is just a vertical wooden shaft with paddles projecting horizontally from its base. A stream of falling water directed against those paddles makes it turn, like blowing on a pinwheel. While it does not generate a great deal of power, its relatively small diameter (usually less than six feet) allows it to operate at moderately high speeds, reducing the amount of gearing required. It also fits conveniently under the mill, protecting it from the elements. Finally, tub wheels are easy to build and maintain, making them common in small neighborhood mills in the 18th and 19th centuries.

“Up and down” sawmills like ours were developed around 1200 A.D. in Europe. The twin waterwheels that power the OSV Sawmill, however, were something new in the 1830s, when many Americans were experimenting with new waterwheel designs. One of these was Calvin Wing of Maine, who patented his design in October 1830.

Called outward flow reaction wheels, they are hollow cast iron disks with horizontal paddles making the wheel turn—like blowing on a rotary lawn sprinkler, the wheel turns in reaction to the force of exiting water. Reaction wheels, like modern water turbines, operate on water pressure. They have about 50 percent efficiency (greater than today’s automobile engines), can operate over a wide range of water levels, and run fairly well in flooded conditions, and the cast iron wheels will not rot like wooden wheels. They are also compact and generate considerable power and speed, eliminating the need for costly gearing. But they require precise manufacturing and were therefore more expensive than wooden waterwheels.

Early millwrights and mill owners had to consider their particular needs, budget, and mill site when deciding which of many available waterwheel designs best suited their mill.
Preserving Living Artifacts:

Heirloom Gardening at Old Sturbridge Village

By Amy Murray, Coordinator of Horticulture

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OSV Heirloom Seeds, On Sale in April

Each spring, heirloom gardeners look forward to the arrival of Old Sturbridge Village seeds—and this year they go on sale in early April. For many, the best part is the wonderfully descriptive old-fashioned names. Here’s a sampling: FLOWERS: Cupid’s Dart; Love in a Puff; Love Lies Bleeding; VEGETABLES: Tennis Ball Lettuce, Long Island Cheese Pumpkin; Turk’s Turban Squash; HERBS: Feverfew; Lovage; Wormseed.

Heirloom Plant Sale, May 17

On this day, heirloom plants grown by Village horticulturists will be offered for sale at prices ranging from $3 to $5, depending on size. Visitors to the Village will also receive a free heirloom tomato plant grown by horticulturists (tomatoes are free with museum admission, while supplies last), to celebrate the arrival of old Sturbridge Village seeds—and this year with several new varieties, including Bassano beets and Danvers’ Half Longs. For many, the best part is the wonderfully descriptive old-fashioned names. Here’s a sampling:

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VEGETABLES: Tennis Ball Lettuce, Long Island Cheese Pumpkin; Turk’s Turban Squash.

HERBS: Feverfew; Lovage; Wormseed.

Agricultural Exhibition, September 13–14

Be sure to enter this year’s Old Sturbridge Village Agricultural Exhibition September 13–14. Show off your gardening success by entering your heirloom herbs, vegetables and flowers. Youth (ages 5–12) and adults (ages 13+) may contribute as many entries as they like. For more information about OSV seeds and the Agricultural Exhibition, call 508-347-0335 or email amurray@osv.org.

Garden Thyme: Monthly Workshops for Members

On the third Saturday of each month, our gardeners welcome OSV Members to the Village for an engaging and educational series of workshops on a wide variety of topics. Workshops meet at the Visitor Center at 10:00 a.m. before going to the workshop site. To learn more, call 508-347-0335 or email amurray@osv.org.

Here’s what’s coming up:

April 19 Preparing the Seed Bed
Where do carrot seeds come from? Learn about biennial plants (beets, carrots, parsnips, onions, turnips, cabbages, and more) and how to save seeds using a seed bed.

May 17 Plants to Dye For
Color your world using plants that not only beautify your garden, but also act as natural household dyes.

June 21 Good Bugs, Bad Bugs
How do you differentiate friend from foe in the garden? Learn how to attract beneficial insects into your garden and repel pests.

July 19 Current Events
Red currants were a staple of the 19th-century table and pantry. Learn how to grow and use this small fruit.

August 16 Parlor Bouquets and Immortal Flowers
Learn how to make beautiful parlor bouquets, the basics of floral design, and how to preserve beautiful blooms with “immortal flowers.”

September 20 Preserving the Harvest
How do you keep your harvest bounty fresh through the winter? Learn about root cellars and 19th-century preservation techniques.

October 18 Gardening Indoors
Looking for something green in the dead of winter? Prepare bulbs for winter blooms indoors using forcing techniques.

November 15 Preparing Small Fruits for Winter
Prepare for next year’s success by pruning small fruits. Learn the how, when, and where of pruning.
Upcoming Events
Spring Comes Alive at Old Sturbridge Village

Patrons’ Day — April 21
Celebrate the legacy of the New England patriots and their role in our nation’s birth with fife and drum music, militia drills, and musket demonstrations.

Discoveries Adventures!
(For ages 5–11)
April 22–25, 28 June 23–August 3
Give your children a history lesson they’ll never forget. Discovery Adventurers dress in 1830s costumes and explore aspects of everyday life in the 19th century. Militia participants learn marching, drilling, camping, cooking, and fife music.

April Vacation Week — April 19–25
Spend some time outdoors when the kids are out of school. Enjoy baby farm animals, spring blossoms, hands-on activities, and Patriots’ Day activities (April 21). Or sign the kids up for two-, three-, or five-day Discovery Adventures programs.

Distinguished Speaker Series:
Linda Lefko — April 16
Author and historic decorative painter Linda Lefko, coauthor of Folk Art Murals of the Rufus Porter School: New England Landscapes 1825–1845, will present an in-depth look at the work of acclaimed itinerant painter Rufus Porter (1792–1864) and other New England wall mural artists. Lunch included; served at 12:00 p.m.

Take a Closer Look — May 20
Join our experts for these Members-only, behind-the-scenes explorations of our museum. Coming up, our specialists will inspect highlights from our tool collection, and a recent reproduction of a gown from our collection.

Distinguished Speaker Series:
Nathaniel Philbrick — May 24
Award-winning historical nonfiction writer Nathaniel Philbrick will discuss his latest book, Bunker Hill: A City, A Siege, A Revolution. Presentation at 7:00 p.m.

Mother’s Day — May 11
Help us celebrate mothers of today and the 1830s and learn what has changed (and what hasn’t) in parenting over the centuries. Moms get free admission!

Wool Days — May 24–26
See how wool is transformed from a sheep’s coat to your scarf and the many steps that 19th-century families took to make their clothing.

A Pound of Cure: Health Care in the 19th Century — May 31
Meet costumed historians depicting medical experts of our early years, and learn how they made their clothing.

OsV Sunday Brunch
Enjoy a sumptuous dining experience at the Oliver Wight Tavern featuring omelets made to order, applewood-smoked bacon, sausage, buttermilk pancakes, and waffles, seasonal fruit, a carving station, tempting desserts, and much more. Brunch is offered each Sunday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Pricing is $38.95 for adults, $17.95 for seniors (age 65 and up), $9.95 for children 12 and under, and free for children 3 and under.

Don’t miss our special Easter Brunch on April 20, featuring an expanded menu with selections that are sure to please. Pricing for Easter Brunch is $38.95 for adults, $34.95 for seniors (age 65 and up), $12.95 for children 12 and under, and free for children 3 and under.

Please call 508-347-0363 to make a reservation, which is highly recommended. For more on the dining experiences available at the Village, visit www.osv.org/ourtavern or follow the Oliver Wight Tavern on Facebook at www.facebook.com/oliverwight.

Old Sturbridge Inn and Reeder Family Lodges
Enjoy a spring family getaway to Old Sturbridge Village with our April School Vacation Family Fun Package. This package includes a one-night stay at the Reeder Family Lodges, admission for two adults and two children to Old Sturbridge Village, two vouchers for hands-on crafts for the kids at the Old Sturbridge Village Craft Center, and cookies and cocoa. Take home four redware mugs made by OSV’s potters, chocolate chip cookies, and hot chocolate mix.

This fun family experience is available April 18–27, 2014, with pricing starting at $139 per package. Call 508-347-5056 to book today.

For times and details on all upcoming events at Old Sturbridge Village:
www.osv.org/events; 800-SEE-1830.

Garden Thyme — April 19 & May 17
Village horticultural and agricultural staff lead programs and workshops for Members on a variety of plant-related themes and topics. In the coming months these workshops will examine how to prepare the seed bed, and how to grow plants used to make household dyes.

OSV Visitor Spring 2014
OSV Visitor Spring 2014
MUSEUM
OPEN YEAR-ROUND
hours vary seasonally

Open daily,
April through October

Open Tuesday–Sunday,
November through March

Open select evenings only
in December

Open all Monday holidays

800-SEE-1830

Visit www.osv.org

A Field of Flags:

As a Blue Star Museum, Old Sturbridge Village offers free daytime admission for active duty military, National Guard, Reserve military personnel, and career-retired military members and their families. Our Field of Flags is displayed from Memorial Day through Labor Day, and will include your name or the name(s) of someone you wish to honor with your donation. Every $25 donation equals one flag planted and provides complimentary daytime admission to military members.

Please send your gift today in the enclosed envelope. OSV and the many military families who visit the Village thank you for your support!