It Was a Season to Remember!

The 2018 season at the Bidwell house was marked by thought-provoking new initiatives and loyal, enthusiastic visitors. History lovers came, as always, to hear the Bidwell story and learn about life in the 18th century Berkshires. But they also made the journey down Art School road to attend many of our new and updated programs. We introduced two new tours this year, in addition to the guided house tour. The first, a family tour, was aimed at families with children 12 and under and included some fun games along with a new tour format. The second was a new Native American Trail, which you can read more about on the following page.

Beyond tours, the Museum had fun introducing a number of new programs in July. The Bidwell Country Fair, a reimagined Townshp #1 Day celebration, brought back the baking contest, much to the joy of attendees that day and also thrilled visiting children with pony rides and friendly goats. The next day the Museum hosted the first annual Open-Mic Music Festival. Concert goers were treated to wonderful, impromptu performances from six local acts and then an energetic concert from fan favorite The BTU’s. The BTU’s perform at the July 8th Open-Mic Music Festival

Continued on page 7
Native Americans at the Bidwell House Museum

When you visit the Bidwell House Museum, you probably don’t think about this as a place to learn Native American history. I certainly did not… until a few years ago when Housatonic Heritage convened a group of cultural institutions and tribal representatives of the Mohican Nation. We found there was a great deal of local history that has been forgotten or purposely ignored. The Mohicans lived here successfully for many thousands of years before Europeans. They used the river valleys for their villages and agriculture, and managed these upland woodlands for hunting, foraging, making maple syrup, etc. The hills were crisscrossed with Indian trails used for local travels through the hunting grounds, as well as for long-distance trading and gatherings with other bands.

In 2018, the Bidwell House Museum collaborated with the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of the Mohican Nation, Housatonic Heritage, and other groups to create a self-guided Native American Interpretive Trail. The museum’s woodlands and meadows exemplify the ways the Native Americans used and adapted the landscape. Displays along the trail describe: archaeology and projectile points found in Monterey, herbal medicine, agricultural practices, a wigwam hunting village, woodland management, Indian trails, and maple syrup. This is an on-going process and the museum is planning to increase the number and content of the exhibits along the trail.

Also during 2018, the museum offered monthly guided interpretive walks that expanded on the self-guided tour. These walks were very well received, and even enjoyed by members of the Stockbridge-Munsee band who visited in May. We’re planning to continue these walks in 2019.

Telling the Native American story expands and amplifies the stories the museum has been telling for over 25 years about the English settlement of the Berkshires in the mid-1700s. The Indians’ history both predates and overlaps with the colonial period. The settlement story cannot be told properly without addressing their interactions – for good and bad. The Indians sold the settlers their land, taught them how to plant and tend the “Three Sisters” and other crops, to use the native plants medicinally, make maple syrup, and other valuable skills. The English taught some of the Native Americans how to read, write, and “live as good Christians” in English-style villages. However, after only a few generations, the Native Americans were forced to “relocate” further west. The interpretive trail explains some of the factors that led to the Indians’ removals.

Despite this, the Mohicans have endured and prospered in their current home in Northern Wisconsin. Members of their tribe are relearning their native language and continue practicing many of their ancient skills. But the Berkshires and Hudson River Valley remain their sacred homeland. We are pleased to be part of this mutual reawakening of knowledge about and respect for the Native Americans. We look forward to seeing you in 2019 to share more of what we have learned.

—Rob Hoogs, President of the Board of Trustees
Welcoming
Lesley Herzberg!

Over the summer we said good bye to Katie Connell when she made the move to Northampton for a full time teaching position. Following a brief search, we were very excited to welcome Lesley Herzberg as the new Administrative Manager. Lesley comes to the Museum with a wealth of experience after spending over nine years as Curator at Hancock Shaker Village. She received her BA in religious studies and anthropology from Kenyon College and her MA in art history from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Prior to joining the staff at Hancock, Herzberg held posts at the Biltmore Estate, the National Gallery of Art, the Jewish Museum of London, and the Decatur House Museum in Washington, DC. Additionally, she has worked on the business side of the art world as assistant curator to sculptor J. Seward Johnson, and as an appraiser of furniture and decorative arts at a Chicago auction house. She currently lives in Pittsfield with her husband and two sons. Lesley started in August and has been a great addition to the staff. She is in the office on Monday, Thursday and Friday, so feel free to stop by to say hello!

The Bidwell House Museum is a New England heritage site providing a personal encounter with history, early American home life, and the Berkshire landscape, through its land, house and collection. The Museum is a non-profit educational institution for the benefit of the community and today’s audiences of all ages, dedicated to preservation, scholarship and enjoyment of the landmark site.
Visitors enjoy the music of Diane Taraz at our season opening concert

The pollinator garden in bloom

Rob Hoogs leading a group on the new Native American Interpretive Trail

Bidwell Country Fair Pie Baking contest judges, L-R: Tumi Pitso, Rachel Portnoy, Culinary Institute apprentice, Michele Miller

Joanne Bell, Delight Dodyk and Katie Connell serving delicious pies at the pie baking contest

Cat Kowalski painting faces

Jen Salinetti, of Woven Roots Farm, and her daughter Noelia displaying their delicious harvest at the July 7th Country Fair

Gracious summer party hosts Martin and Jane Schwartz
Getting ready for a pony ride!

Dancing to the BTU’s at the July 8th Open-Mic Music Fest

The stone wall, skillfully rebuilt by the Greenagers in August!

Judith Kalaora as Deborah Sampson performing “A Revolution of Her Own!” in July

The gardens were in beautiful bloom in early September

The August 4th Summer party honoree Yo-Yo Ma and our summer interns, from left Joe Makuc, Elisabeth Enoch, Summer Docent Devon Hutchins, Marya Makuc, Justin Makuc and Jacob Makuc.
Welcome New Board Members

In May, the Board of Trustees voted to approve three new members to the Board, Brian Andreoli, Greg Gimblette and Samuel Herrup. Brian Andreoli, a former lawyer, resides in Westport, CT. He is a long time Museum supporter and very excited to bring his expertise to the Board of Trustees. Stockbridge resident Greg Gimblette and his wife Paula have spent 45 years collecting 17th, 18th and early 19th. c. Americana as well as overseeing historically accurate restorations in the area. He thought his collection and restoration experience would be a good fit for the Museum and was happy to join. Sam Herrup is a resident of Sheffield and has been an active antique dealer for the last 48 years. He is looking forward to working with the Bidwell House to preserve American material culture and promoting American history. All three new Board members have jumped right into their duties at various programs in the 2018 season and the Museum feels very lucky to have them on board!

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Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of the Mohicans, Bonney Hartley, speaks at our Fall Fundraiser on November 17

Richard Greene leading a hike along the Royal Hemlock Trail in September

THANK YOU 2018 VOLUNTEERS

A heartfelt thank you to the numerous helpers who so generously volunteered their time throughout the year! From planning parties to reaching out to donors or helping at our many events, the Bidwell House Museum would not be able to do so many wonderful programs without these dedicated friends:

Steve Adams, Brian Andreoli, Diane Austin and Aaron Nurick, Maureen and Michael Banner, Maggie and Don Barkin, JoAnn Bell and Doug McTavish, John and Virginia Demos, Delight and Paul Dodyk, Walter and Mary Jo Engels, L. Chapin and Kevin Fish, Charles and Joy Flint, Steve and Lorraine German, Greg and Paula Gimblette, Christine Goldfinger, Linnea and Peter Grealish, Ruth Green, Dr. Richard Greene, Sam Herrup, Cory Hines, Rob and Cindy Hoogs, Nancy Jones and Gil Schrank, Frank and Julie Kern, Dennis and Elaine Lynch, Paula Leuchs Moats, Kathryn and Marc Roberts, Tom Ryan and Katherine Waiveris, Linda Saul-Sena and Mark Sena, Jane and Marty Schwartz, Steve Seiser, Elizabeth Fletcher Walden, Rick Wilcox and Joyce Butler.

*If we have forgotten anyone, don’t blame the museum, blame the fallible staff!*
High School Students: Museum Offers Internships

Thank you to local Cultural Councils and generous private donors, the Museum will offer stipended internships in the summer of 2019. To learn more and apply contact the Museum at bidwellhouse@gmail.com or check the website in the spring.

Application Deadline: May 1, 2019.

THANK YOU
2018 EDUCATION PROGRAM SPONSORS!

Lawrence Birnbach and Beverly Hymen
Abbot Bronstein
George Cain
Jim and Cindy Deloy
William and Allison Edwards
The Esposito Family
Charlotte Fairweather
Sam Herrup
Hop Brook Community Club
Malinka and Kenneth Jackson
Margaret Joseph
Nancy Jones and Gilbert Schrank
Carol and Alfred Landess
Laura Litwin
Monterey Cultural Council
New Marlborough Cultural Council
Marsha Norman
Susan Popper and Rocky Greenberg
Karen Richards
Alice Roth
Morton and Teri Salomon
Martin and Jane Schwartz
Wilma Spice

Hartley said, “the fact that Mohican people were meeting in this time period in the very home where this bow was found, and that the bow is believed to not have been moved from the foundation of the home since the house was built, leads to the conclusion that the bow is attributed to Mohican people.”

Hartley said the bow is unparalleled; there are no known examples of any other Mohican bows in existence from this time period. In fact, a bow from this time period is extremely rare for the region overall. There is one 17th century bow from Sudbury, Massachusetts held by the Harvard Peabody Museum from an unknown tribe. The American Museum of Natural History in New York City has 15 bows identified as Eastern Woodlands associated, but none are from Massachusetts or Mohican affiliated, and only one is potentially as early as the Stockbridge Mohican bow—it is “said to be” from around 1750, purchased in Vermont, and identified as Algonkin. The Smithsonian Museum of the American Indian has only one bow that dates from this time period and it is from the Wappinger, is made from hickory, and is very similar in appearance to the Mohican bow.

Bonney Hartley reflected on the bow’s importance and ended by saying, “We feel it is very significant that the Stockbridge Mohican bow has survived since the 1750s, hidden by our ancestors for this very day to come.”

Editor’s Note: Author Kanum Vele is a direct line descendant of Chief Konkapot. His first name, Kanum, is a nickname that was given to his grandfather, Adrian (Kanum) Steven Vele, Sr. The name means “soup ladle” in the Mohican language.

Continued from page 1