



# The Cannon

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GENERAL HENRY KNOX MUSEUM  
WINTER 2020

## 2020 Annual Appeal

Support for the Annual Appeal is what keeps the lights on at the General Henry Knox Museum. It has been especially true this year: the year of Covid-19, the year the museum's doors have been closed to visitors and volunteers, the year the museum has had no earned income. Our supporters have made it possible for the museum to weather the storm, just barely, but weather it, nevertheless.



As we were preparing to send our Annual Appeal this year, we felt a simple letter would not do. Too much has happened since the beginning of the year and we wanted to better inform you of what you've made possible for us to accomplish during this year of the pandemic. Despite being closed, we've been busy preparing for the day when we can welcome you and visitors from around the world back into the museum. Annual contributed income has made this possible.

This year, especially, our Annual Appeal is more critical than ever to our short- and long-term viability. Every donation in every amount is meaningful. We appreciate your thinking of us as you make your year-end charitable gifts. Please know that we could not have endured the challenges of 2020 without you. We are grateful.

## Thomaston Cavalry Banner

Henry Knox was a monumental figure, beloved by his community and celebrated for his many contributions to Midcoast Maine. Among these was a commitment to supporting and organizing militia groups, including the Thomaston Cavalry, whose name is borne by this spectacular silk standard.

The Thomaston Cavalry Banner was presented to the Knox Memorial Association in 1932 by the Lady Knox Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Over the course of the 20th century, condition and mounting issues took their toll on the fragile piece. It was saved through extensive conservation efforts, and returned to the Knox Museum public exhibits in 2004.

This standard is one of few truly significant textiles in the collection. A demonstration of its painter's deft hand, it is whimsical in its ornamental design, and striking in its palette and scale. Its preservation has ensured the survival of

There are several ways you can keep the legacy of Major General Henry Knox and his role in the founding of America alive.

- Go to [www.knoxmuseum.org](http://www.knoxmuseum.org) and click on Support. Scroll down to Donate Today. Click the yellow button, Donate.
- Consider a recurring gift which makes it easier to raise your level of giving by paying over a period of months. You may choose to contribute through a recurring gift on our website or by emailing [dallen@knoxmuseum.org](mailto:dallen@knoxmuseum.org).
- Contribute appreciated assets like stocks or donor advised funds. You may not need to pay capital gains tax.
- For those aged 70 ½ and over, you can make charitable contributions through your IRA, avoiding capital gains tax. Gifts must be made directly to the charity.
- For any questions regarding the various ways to contribute charitable gifts, consult your financial advisor.

The Board joins me in thanking you in advance for your thoughtful consideration and we look forward to welcoming you back into the Museum as soon as possible!

*Anne E. Perkins, Chairman of the Board of Trustees*



*Thomaston Cavalry Banner (Detail). Painted silk, ca. 1800-20.*

not only a beautiful work of art, but also a relic of local history and a tribute to Knox's lasting impact on the Thomaston community. It is our hope to present this historic piece of art to the community in 2021.

## Board of Trustees

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## Message from the Executive Director

I am thrilled to be the new Executive Director at The General Henry Knox Museum! As the former Education Director and Curator of 18 years at the Owls Head Transportation Museum, I bring my experience in developing educational programs, docent training, and exhibitions for visitors of all ages.



As a museum, education is among our principle functions, and by reinvigorating and reinventing the programs and offerings we make available, we stand to better serve not only audiences from afar, but also draw visitors from our own backyard. Expanding and diversifying programming will invite and entice our home community, a segment that is so important to our sustainability, by providing encouragement for this audience to embrace the cultural offerings in their own hometown, while fostering repeat visitation and membership.

A top priority will be creating a strategic plan for the museum. This fundamental, guiding document will provide the roadmap that will lead the Knox Museum into its next 100 years. We have assembled a team of board and committee members who will help us create the framework necessary to provide a long-term plan to ensure the success and growth of the organization while preserving and improving the wonderful assets we have now as well as those we anticipate for the future.

Of course, we can't accomplish this on our own, we need your help! As we expand and grow, we must expand our volunteer base, the lifeblood of an organization like ours, to accomplish these goals. Below, you will see a more detailed call to action. I hope you will consider joining the ranks of our volunteers as we continue to celebrate the life and times of Henry Knox and the heritage of Montpelier, and look forward to meeting and working with you.

*Ethan Yankura, Executive Director*

## Lights Over Montpelier – A Sparkling Experience

Atop the hill overlooking Routes 1 and 131 in Thomaston this holiday season, Montpelier will be decked out in pine, evergreen and lights! We invite families to join their friends and neighbors beginning at dusk each night for a sparkling drive-through experience at the Knox Museum beginning December 5, 2020, and running through January 9, 2021.

In lieu of Knox Museum's annual Holiday Open House, where visitors are invited inside to view the beautifully decorated rooms, this outdoor display of lighted trees, garlands and candles will provide a complementary bookend to Thomaston's illuminated trees in The Mall on the southern end of town. We hope you will enjoy the experience from the warmth of your car and invite you to return many times throughout the holiday season. Happy Holidays from Henry and Lucy Knox and all of us at the General Henry Knox Museum.



## In Memoriam



*The General Henry Knox Museum mourns the death of its primary benefactor, **Doris Buffett**, who*

*passed away on August 4, 2020. The museum is all the better for her sage advice, her passion for history, and her financial support through the Sunshine Lady Foundation.*

## Finance Committee Report

As all of us know, the year 2020 has been a challenge for the world, and the museum is no exception. Due to the illness that has been with us since March, the museum had to close for the year, suspend events and programs, restructure staff, and rework the annual Knox Lecture, our principal fundraiser. But it is with great pride that I am able to tell you that due to the hard work of many and the solid support of members and donors like you, we have exceeded our fundraising expectations.

The museum's focused fundraising emphasis began 18 months ago with a goal of generating operating excesses to enable us to reserve funds for long neglected and much needed capital projects. That emphasis allowed us to increase museum reserves at the end of 2019 by approximately \$25,000, or 19.6%.

In 2020 our goal was again to increase reserves to take on the big project of making much needed museum roof repairs. However, two big events got in our way. Obviously, the first was Covid-19 and the necessary adjustments needed to keep our staff, volunteers and patrons safe, but the second was the failure of our 40-year-old boiler. In addition, as dedicated as our volunteers might be, it became clear that the museum needed an Executive Director to run day-to-day operations and establish a robust education program. Due to the success of the annual Knox Lecture and generous individual and foundation contributions we were able to pay for the boiler replacement and hire an Executive Director.

As of the end of September we had \$60,000 more in our coffers than we did at the end of September 2019. But that success was still not enough to take care of the failing museum roof. Hence, the board made the decision to sell the Cole House and move all operations into Montpelier. That transaction has been completed and the sale will take care of the cost of a new roof, plus establish a reserve against future capital and infrastructure projects.

In summary, while we have kept the museum in the black for the past three years, financially we are only just beginning to turn the corner from our near closure three years ago. We have doubled down on our efforts to raise the funds necessary to sustain the growth and outreach of the museum. With a new Executive Director and a strong and talented board, we are more confident than ever in our strategic goal of making The General Henry Knox Museum a destination for learning and a prize of Thomaston and Knox County.

*Philip T. Wright, Finance Committee Chair*

## Infrastructure Committee

With funding now available from foundations, individual donors, and the sale of the Cole House, the Knox Museum is moving forward with the work of protecting and preserving our 90 year-old replica of the original Montpelier. It should be noted that in 1853 when the last of the Knox children, Lucy Knox Thatcher died, the mansion was in such a state of disrepair that none in her family would claim it.

Lest history repeat itself, we must be diligent in observing and reacting to the age-related deterioration of this noble structure. Plans and specifications have been prepared and bids have been solicited from contractors for the repair of the roof-gutter-downspout system, last done in 1988. This work will be accomplished before the museum opens in 2021 and includes any needed restoration of the balustrades, railings, and cornice trim. Additional projects that we will be working on include repair/replacement of the front porch, restoration or replacement of the building's 63 windows and shutters, and interior repairs to correct water damage.

*Dave Edfors, Infrastructure Committee Chair*



## The Signature Society

As art historians, we are fortunate to live just five miles downstream on the St. George River from splendid Montpelier, an outstanding example of Federal Style architecture and a tangible monument to Henry Knox, a true American hero. We know the important obligations of maintaining an historic building and providing programs that inform the public about early America. We chose to support the museum at the *Signature Society* level with regular monthly payments of \$85.00. The current Board and staff are doing a terrific job in these difficult times. Please join us in supporting the Knox Museum's annual fund at the highest level that you can.



*David and Pat Farmer*

## Volunteer Opportunities

There are many opportunities to volunteer at the General Henry Knox Museum. And it is fun! Are you interested in training to become a Docent and leading tours and educating visitors? For more information email [eyankura@knox-museum.org](mailto:eyankura@knox-museum.org) with the subject line Docent Training.

We need volunteers interested in serving on museum committees. For more information email [info@knoxmuseum.org](mailto:info@knoxmuseum.org) with the subject line Volunteer Opportunities.

- Development (fundraising) Committee
- Finance Committee
- Infrastructure Committee
- Collections Committee
- Education Committee
- Events Committee
- Publicity/Marketing Committee
- Landscaping and Grounds Committee
- Gift Shop Committee

Or perhaps you would consider volunteering to work with administrative staff to help with mailings and general administrative tasks. Please let us know. Email [dallen@knox-museum.org](mailto:dallen@knox-museum.org). We welcome you.

The Collections Committee is seeking new volunteers to assist with collections care, records management, research, writing and digitization. To learn how you can help, please email [bri.brophy@gmail.com](mailto:bri.brophy@gmail.com).



## Knox Reading Circle

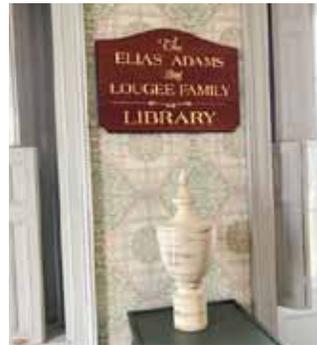
The Knox Reading Circle began in 2002 with an emphasis on the Founding Fathers, the Revolutionary War, and the building of our nation. Over time, the reading list expanded to include books on exploration, indigenous people, profound social movements, the growth of technology in communication and transportation, wars and diplomacy, and economic engines such as whaling. The stories of our nation became deeply interwoven as we devoured book after book. In our discussions, book club members tackle conflicting versions of the same events; discuss historical events in light of ever-shifting modern political and ethical standards; and wonder what future generations will say about our own choices, heroes, conflicts, and culture. The Knox Reading Circle meets monthly, year-round. Everyone is welcome. Leave each meeting with a sense of sheer pleasure from an hour and a half spent with lively, knowledgeable companions with diverse points of view. For more information please email [www.info@knoxmuseum.org](mailto:www.info@knoxmuseum.org) with the subject line Knox Reading Circle.

## On Refurnishing the Knox Museum

After a period of closure and with many of Montpelier's rooms in varying states of transition and disassembly, the Knox Museum is looking to its most valuable asset—historic records—to envision its path forward. In preparation for reopening to the public, the Collections Committee is undertaking an evaluation of the house and object records that have been fastidiously saved by the generations of staff and volunteers who have supported this institution.

By uncovering, chronologizing, and simultaneously digitizing the 18th-20th century records of Montpelier and its contents, three primary goals can be achieved. First, the museum can confidently design a long-term furnishing plan that reflects the original intent and lives of the Knoxes, and that best exhibits the current collection holdings. Second, historic records will be given a digital life—built out to facilitate research and expansion, and to increase public accessibility online. Finally, these primary sources will serve as the museum's guide as it creates a plan for future acquisitions that will elevate the collection in value and historic scope. Through this initiative, Knox Museum will modernize its operations while also restoring the grandeur and original vision of Henry Knox's beloved Maine home.

*Brianne Brophy, Collections Chair*



*The Elias Adams and Lougee Family Library has been relocated from the Cole House to the Thomaston Room at Montpelier.*

## Annual Knox Lecture 2021

We are honored to announce that Lindsay Chervinsky, author of *The Cabinet: George Washington and the Creation of an American Institution*, will headline our Seventeenth Annual Knox Lecture, Thursday, August 12, 2021, hopefully at The Strand Theatre in Rockland, Maine. Should we be unable to hold a live event, plans are to “live stream” Ms. Chervinsky from the Oval Room in Montpelier to our audience.



Ms. Chervinsky invites us into the world of the President's private advisory body where, as President George Washington's first Secretary of War, Henry Knox plays a prominent role.