

# Summer Fellowship Program 2023 Update



Director: Barbara A. Mathews  
Assistant Tutor: Kirsten Dilger

## Summer Fellows and their Research Projects

**Basil Derry, Mt. Holyoke College, '23**

**Research Paper Title:** "Under the Shade of Deerfield's Elms: Memory Making and Community"

**Object Study:** Theorem Painting and Girls' Nineteenth Century Education, HD 2020.5.38

**Mairead Downes, Boston University, '23**

**Research Paper Title:** "The Silhouette of Classical Antiquity: Neoclassical Fashion and Ideals in an American Context, 1795-1815"

**Object Study:** Stitching the Divine: Examining Historic Deerfield's Jacobean Embroidered Bible, HD 2022.7

**Weronika Grajdura, St. Louis University, '24**

**Research Paper Title:** "'They Will be Rich Men': The Economic Integration and Assimilation of the Polish Community in Deerfield, MA"

**Object Study:** A Drink on the Go: An Object Study of a 1730s Delftware Flask, HD 2020.4.2



## Letter from John Davis, President



Greetings from Deerfield, where the scent of the hearth cook's fire is in the cool autumn air, and the leaves are just beginning to show their fall colors. As invigorating as Deerfield is this time of year, fond memories of the reunion this past July still linger in my mind, and I find that I am not quite ready to let go of summer!

For those of you who were able to join us in Deerfield for the reunion, I imagine you, too, are holding tight to those memories of a summer weekend filled with stimulating tours, insightful panel discussions, meaningful connections, and thoughtful celebrations of Deerfield and the enduring legacy of the Summer Fellowship Program. It was such a pleasure to welcome back Don and Grace Friary and Phil and Betsy Zea, who so enjoyed seeing all of you. Reunion attendance exceeded our expectations, with more than 110 alumni and guests joining in the festivities. It was inspiring to see a wide range of generations represented, from Richard Candee '62 to the current Class of '23 (with special kudos to Kayla Banks '22 of California who traveled the furthest to attend, and to the entire Class of '22 for perfect attendance!).

It was wonderful to see so many of you in person, and it was a delight to hear your stories and to better understand just how deeply a summer in Deerfield impacted so many of you. Whether you were able to attend the reunion or not, you are among our best ambassadors, and your interest and enthusiasm for all things Deerfield truly sustain us. Thank you for being such an important part of the Historic Deerfield family!

Speaking of sustaining and enduring... several alumni who attended the reunion suggested that the time is right for Historic Deerfield to consider a campaign to fully endow the Summer Fellowship Program and ensure a bright future for it in perpetuity. This keystone program, which is of vital importance to Historic Deerfield and to generations of students (past and future), is currently partially funded through a combination of grant funding and donations from alumni, but the lion's share comes from Historic Deerfield's general operating budget. While this model has proven resilient over the years, it is often a challenge to direct so much of our operating budget to the Summer Fellowship Program, given the many competing priorities. I think it is safe to say that we all would like to find a way to guarantee that the Summer Fellowship Program continues to operate at full strength for generations to come, with a generous financial aid policy to ensure that all students are able to attend, no matter their individual financial circumstances.

To that end, I am thrilled to share the news that we will be launching an endowment campaign among Summer Fellow alumni to ensure the future of this nationally-recognized program. More details will be revealed in the coming months,

## Summer Fellows and their Research Projects, continued

**Ella Kearney, Colorado State University, '24**

**Research Paper Title:** "The Life And Death Of An Abolitionist: A Study Of David Starr Hoyt Within The Abolitionist Movement And His Connections With Deerfield"

**Object Study:** Urge No Healths: Punch, Alcohol and Ceramics in the late 18th Century, HD 2020.16

**Emily Maddux, Newman University, '23**

**Research Paper Title:** "Life After Death: Deerfield's Autopsies of the 19th Century"

**Object Study:** The Village of Davisville (watercolor), HD 2020.5.48

**Natalie Warren, Centre College, '23**

**Research Paper Title:** "Womanhood and Artistry in the Life of Margaret Crowninshield Wilby"

**Object Study:** From Earth to Art: The Stoneware Gemel Flask of New Haven, HD 2020.5.19

**Nick Wendell, University of Vermont, '23**

**Research Paper Title:** "Wayfaring Painter: The Life and Career of Zedekiah Belknap"

**Object Study:** Late 19th-Century Stereograph, HD 2016.26



but in the meantime, I would encourage you to give some thought to how you might best support this initiative in a way that is personally meaningful to you. If you have thoughts to share, or if you would like to join a small but mighty committee of alumni who will be working on this exciting opportunity, please do reach out to me at [jdavis@historic-deerfield.org](mailto:jdavis@historic-deerfield.org) or Jesse Vanek, Vice President, Development and Communications at [jvanek@historic-deerfield.org](mailto:jvanek@historic-deerfield.org)!

Looking ahead, I am pleased to announce the hiring of Erika Gasser, Ph.D., as Historic Deerfield's new Director of Academic Programs, following Barbara Mathews's departure earlier this year. Erika, who started in Deerfield on September 25th, is a historian of religion and gender in early New England and the Atlantic World with undergraduate degrees from Brown University in American History and Educational Studies (Honors). At the University of Michigan, she received a master's degree in history and a Ph.D. in History and Women's Studies. In her most recent position as Associate Professor of History at the University of Cincinnati, Gasser developed and taught many courses, including Colonial America; The Young Republic, 1790-1840; Methods in Native American History; Conflict and Rebellion in Early America; and Witchcraft and Religion in Early America.

In 2020, Gasser received The Gene Lewis Award for Teaching in the History Department at the University of Cincinnati, and in 2004, while at the University of Michigan, she received the Sydney Fine Fellowship for Teaching Excellence in the History Department and the Rackham Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor Award. Her book, *Vexed with Devils: Manhood and Witchcraft in Old and New England*, was published by New York University Press in 2017.

As Director of Academic Programs, Gasser will lead Historic Deerfield's academic programming, which includes public lectures, workshops, and field trips for students and adults. She will also work with the museum's curatorial team to develop new programs and exhibitions that explore American history and material culture through the lens of Deerfield and the Connecticut River Valley. Of course, Gasser will also direct our beloved Summer Fellowship Program, which has trained advanced undergraduates for museum careers for over 65 years!

As the new Director of the Summer Fellowship Program, Erika needs to hear from you about your experiences and

your thoughts on how the program can best be positioned for future generations of students. To facilitate this, we will be holding several Zoom sessions just for alumni over the coming months so that you will have an opportunity to meet Erika and share your own thoughts on what makes the program so special. We also hope to schedule a few house parties in selected regions of the US to allow alumni to meet Erika in person and learn about our endowment campaign. Please do let us know if you are interested in learning more about any of these events.

In other news, I am very excited to announce that Historic Deerfield is collaborating with the American Folk Art Museum (AFAM) in New York City to bring the exhibition, "Unnamed Figures: Black Presence and Absence in the Early American North," to Deerfield. Including oil paintings, watercolors, prints, gravestones, overmantels, photographs, needlework, quilts, dolls, powder horns, ceramics, and sculpture, this multi-media exhibition explores the often unacknowledged presence of Black makers and subjects in the canonical visual and material culture of the 18th and early 19th centuries in the American North. The exhibition will be on view at just two venues – AFAM in NYC this fall and early winter, and HD in late spring and summer of 2024. I should add that I have especially enjoyed working with AFAM's Director, Jason Busch (Summer Fellow, Class of '95), to bring the show to Deerfield. I am sure I speak for Jason in wholeheartedly encouraging you to make a point to view this landmark exhibition at AFAM or HD - or better yet, both!

In closing, I want to thank you for your ongoing advocacy and support of the Summer Fellowship Program. You and your fellow alumni are forever a part of Historic Deerfield, and I look forward to seeing you (in Deerfield or elsewhere) sometime soon.

With appreciation and warm regards,

John Davis  
President & CEO

PS: You've heard from us... now we'd like to hear from you! If you have career or personal news to share, we would love to receive it (via email at [sfp@historic-deerfield.org](mailto:sfp@historic-deerfield.org)) so that we can compile submissions and share them with alumni in a future update.





## Save the Dates!

**November 10-12, 2023** Delaware Antiques Show  
Several HD staff and curators (and likely a few Fellows alumni, too!) will be attending the Delaware Antiques Show. If you are planning to attend, let us know via email at [development@historic-deerfield.org](mailto:development@historic-deerfield.org). If there is sufficient interest, perhaps we'll organize an informal meetup!

**January 17, 2024** Antiques in NYC reception at the American Folk Art Museum. Invitations to follow.

**Winter 2023/24 (Dates to be announced)** Zoom sessions with the new director of the Summer Fellowship Program, Erika Gasser.

**Spring 2024 (Dates to be announced)** Regional receptions to introduce Erika and share more about our Endowment Campaign.

**July 2024 (Date to be announced)** Summer Fellows Class of 2024 Paper Presentations and Closing Exercises.

Keep an eye on your inbox for more info about these and other opportunities to connect with your fellow alumni!



## The Wonderful and Chaotic Time of the Deerfield Summer Fellowship Program 2023

By Kirsten Dilger, Assistant Tutor

Oh what a summer it has been! This was my first “Deerfield Summer” along with the 2023 fellows and it was a joy to experience this with them. Crazy and exciting is an understatement to the events, places, and things that we did all summer.

From the beginning, I knew that this summer would be different from many of the other SFP programs. Coming down 5/10 from the Bradley Airport, the large cake outside showed me that we were celebrating the 350th of Deerfield. Beyond that, we started the first month of the fellowship with the antiques show coming to Deerfield again after many years. I for one had never experienced anything like it, and it was so much fun to look around and discuss it with the fellows. The antiques dealers were wonderful and answered all the questions that we had about what it was like to work with antiques.

From there the fun did not stop! We started the fellowship, the fellows gained their paper topics, and they started guiding throughout the houses in Historic Deerfield. At the very beginning, many of the fellows had such interesting topics and took the challenges of Deerfield head on. We had fellows working on topics in fashion, medical history, abolitionists, the arts and many more areas of interest that made fantastic papers. The fellows also got to decide if they wanted to do walking tours or create a gallery tour where they picked the topic and the artifacts to talk about in the museum's attic.

Throughout the summer we went on a few day trips to further enrich our knowledge of the New England museum field. This year, we went to Old Sturbridge Village, The Museum of Fine Arts Boston, and the King House Museum. The staff at all of these museums were wonderful and knowledgeable and gave us the insider view of their museums that no one else sees!

The fellows and I loved the trips throughout the summer and learning more about the museums close to Historic Deerfield. For me, it gave me a much better sense of the museum community in the Connecticut River Valley area.

The final very special thing that we got to do as the 2023 fellowship is participate in the Fellow's Reunion. This gave us the chance during our fellowship to meet alumni of the program, talk about our experiences and enjoy the two days. I am so thankful for everyone I met during that, and the stories I learned about Historic Deerfield and the history of the Summer Fellowship Program. It is also where many of the 2023 fellows got their first whole lobster since many of us were not from the New England area. It was such a fun experience that is unique to this year's fellowship.

After all of that, the fellows finally got to present their papers. I am proud to say that the 2023 fellows worked hard and had unique and wonderful papers in all different areas of interest.

It was amazing to see all their work come together at the end of the fellowship and to share it for the staff, guides and guests. They were able to relax and enjoy themselves so much on the coastal trip after a job well done.

As a 24 -year and counting resident of Ohio, I had only been to one out of the four cities that we visited on the week-long trip, so it is safe to say that I was so excited to experience this with the fellows. We started in Portsmouth, New Hampshire where we visited the Warner House and Strawberry Banke in the two days that we were there. We also had the pleasure of going to the Portsmouth Athenaeum, a members only library where we toured the reading rooms, and their archival materials. It was wonderful to start in Portsmouth where we experienced some of the best museums in the New England area and had time to explore Portsmouth itself. After all that, we were energized and ready to take on Salem.

From there we went to Concord and to the Concord museum. They recently changed their exhibit spaces and it was amazing to see how they expanded and improved. One of our favorite things to see was the interactive map and video projection that showed how the Revolutionary War started. I could have sat there and watched this probably seven more times while I was there. It was that good. The Concord Museum did an

amazing job with their exhibits and educational programs, as well as their willingness to listen to the community of native nations in their exhibit about Native Americans. We were all highly impressed with the work that they were doing.

Salem is the place that I already have been to, but I was excited to see all I can learn during the fellowship. On the first day, we started our walking tour with David Goss who was an expert on all things North Shore.

We went through the different neighborhoods of Salem, visited the House of the Seven Gables, and learned about the different monuments. David Goss answered every question that the fellows had and we ended our day with going to the Peabody Essex museum, seeing their Asian Exports, and the Yin Yun Tang House within their museum. We also got to see some elm trees, in which one of the fellows wrote their paper about.

Day two, we took another walking tour to talk about some of the challenges with preservations in towns, as well as look at some of the Federal style architecture in the area. We had the pleasure of touring the Witch House as well, and had a great discussion of the misconceptions of the Salem Witch Trials and how museums navigate that, especially during peak tourist season for them in October. On this day, we were so sad to go after learning so much from David Goss and everyone we met along the way, but it was time to go to our final destination.

Last but certainly not least, is Plymouth. We went throughout the town with Ritchie Garrison (a former director of the program!) and explored everything that it had to offer. We visited both museum houses and historic houses owned by private residences, saw Plymouth Rock, and walked all over Plymouth. It was so important to see preservation in action in Plymouth and how normal people were preserving hundreds of year old houses.

Our last stop on the trip was to the Robert Harlow House, where we visited the owner David Berman, saw all of his wallpaper he designed, talked about he historic items he collects, and finally listened to the organ that he built into what was once a porch. It was the perfect way to end the trip.

In ending this, I would like to thank Barbara Mathews for the opportunity to serve Historic Deerfield, Rose Marques for helping me through the summer, the staff of historic Deerfield, and of course, my fellows, for without them I would not have been able to do this position with joy and excitement.

Kirsten Dilger  
Assistant Tutor 2023



*Some of the 2023 fellows and yours truly sitting at our table with former fellows! We had so much fun with them!*

**[Support the Summer Fellowship Program](#)**





*The fellows after presenting their papers and having a delicious lunch!*



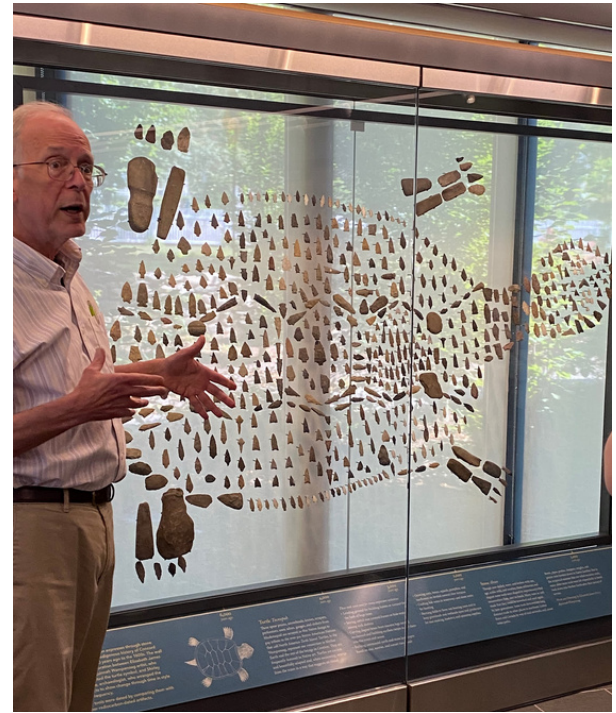
*Taking a very serious call at the Robert Harlow House. (The phone could still make and receive calls!)*



*Basil Derry with the elm trees. Their paper is titled "Under the Shade of the Elms: Memory Making and Community."*



*The Portsmouth Athenaeum was so beautiful.*



*Curator David Wood explaining a new exhibit on Native American Artifacts at the Concord Museum.*