



For Immediate Release
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PRESS RELEASE

Historic Deerfield Announces Retirement of President John Davis

(Deerfield, MA) – Historic Deerfield today announced that its President and CEO, John Davis, will retire this fall after five years of distinguished leadership. Since assuming the role, Davis has guided the organization through a period of significant growth, innovation, and renewed commitment to its mission of preserving and interpreting the art, architecture, and history of Deerfield, the Connecticut River Valley, and beyond.

During his tenure, Davis completed a substantial number of transformative initiatives. He led the development and implementation of the institution's strategic plan, *Deerfield Unbound: Unleashing the Power of Storytelling at Historic Deerfield*, which has helped shape a more dynamic and inclusive approach to interpretation and engagement. Under his leadership, Historic Deerfield revitalized its exhibition program, introducing two to three new exhibitions annually. The collection grew substantially, with such standout acquisitions as the best-preserved suite of mural paintings by Rufus Porter and (following a successful fund-raising campaign) Madeline Yale Wynne's *Garden of Hearts* chest, a masterpiece of the Deerfield Arts and Crafts movement.

Davis also played a key role in reopening several historic buildings to the public, including the Barnard Tavern, the Allen House, and the Wilson Printing Office, restoring access to important elements of Deerfield's architectural and cultural heritage. His commitment to preservation extended to the launch of the comprehensive restoration of the Stebbins House and the successful renovation of the Deerfield Community Center, an early 19th-century church.

An advocate for stewardship and sustainability, Davis secured the permanent agricultural conservation of 50 acres of museum-owned land in Old Deerfield's North and South Meadows. He also strengthened the institution's financial foundation, growing the endowment by nearly 40 percent—an increase of approximately \$21 million—and leading a successful \$3 million endowment campaign for the Historic Deerfield Summer Fellowship Program.

Davis emphasized the expansion of the organization's reach and relevance. He oversaw the installation of 36 Witness Stones to honor the enslaved individuals who lived in Deerfield in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the launch of the Encountering Pocumtuck Walking Tour app, deepening public engagement with underrepresented histories. Additionally, he increased staffing across key museum departments and established new roles, including Musician-in-Residence and Printer-in-Residence, to enhance programming and interpretation. He also moved Historic Deerfield to an Open Access Policy, ensuring that its collection of 32,000 objects is available free and without restrictions across the globe.

“John's vision and strategic leadership have left an indelible mark on Historic Deerfield,” said Joseph Gromacki, President of the Board of Trustees. “He brought tremendous energy, sharp intellectual rigor, and a deep passion for history to his work. Thanks to his efforts and leadership, the organization is stronger, more vibrant, and better positioned to serve future generations. We are deeply grateful to John for his many important contributions and wish him all the best in his retirement.”

Davis came to Historic Deerfield with a distinguished career in museums and academia. Prior to joining Historic Deerfield, he served as Provost and Under Secretary for Museums, Education, and Research at the Smithsonian Institution; Executive Director of the Terra Foundation for American Art Europe in Paris; and Alice Pratt Brown Professor of Art at Smith College. A graduate of Cornell University, he earned his PhD from Columbia University and is the author, co-author, or editor of seven books on American art and culture.

Reflecting on his tenure, he expressed gratitude for the opportunity to lead the organization and strengthen and expand its programs at a critical moment in the organization's history. “It has been an honor to serve Historic Deerfield and work with its wonderful staff and Board of Trustees,” he said. “I am proud of what we have accomplished together and confident in the institution's bright future.”

Historic Deerfield has engaged the executive search firm [Museum Search & Reference](#) to conduct a nationwide search for the museum's next president.

To learn more about Historic Deerfield, visit historic-deerfield.org.

– 30 –

About Historic Deerfield. Historic Deerfield is a museum of early American life situated in an authentic 18th-century New England village in the Connecticut River Valley of Massachusetts. Its historic houses and world-famous collection of early American decorative arts open doors to new perspectives that inspire people to seek a deeper understanding of themselves, their communities, and the world. Visitors are invited to stay at Historic Deerfield's [historic inn](#), eat at its [restaurant & pub](#), and shop at its [museum store](#).