



**PILGRIM SOCIETY &
PILGRIM HALL MUSEUM**
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NEWS RELEASE

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Pilgrim Hall Museum to Restore Monumental Masterwork

The nation's oldest continuously operating public museum, Pilgrim Hall Museum, announces receipt of a Commonwealth of Massachusetts grant that will fund the restoration and conservation of their trademark monumental historic artifact, *The Landing of the Pilgrims* by Henry Sargent, a work of national significance. The 3-month project, considered the largest painting restoration project in the South Shore region's history, has an anticipated completion date of June 30. The Museum plans to welcome the public to witness the process over the course of restoration to lectures, presentations by the conservation artists and museum tours, concluding with a triumphant unveiling event in July.

At 13 by 16 feet, *The Landing of the Pilgrims* is one of the America's first monumental paintings and one of the earliest efforts to depict a key moment in the history of the new nation on a grand scale. The painting played a role in establishing the Pilgrims as "forefathers" of America, the landing a central story in the greater narrative of the founding of the United States. In doing so, Sargent contributed to the creation of U.S. national identity. Once completed, the early American masterwork will be preserved for the enjoyment of future generations.

Funding has taken more than seven years and multiple grant applications, eventually supported through a \$215 Commonwealth grant secured in 2014. Massachusetts Senate President Therese Murray championed the grant. "This painting is a very special piece of American history, and of Pilgrim Hall Museum's history as well. Not only does it tell an important story about the Pilgrims, but also of our common heritage as Americans," shares Senate President Murray. "We need to make sure it is restored and preserved in time for the town's 400th anniversary in 2020, when millions of visitors will be coming to Plymouth and Massachusetts from all over the world to celebrate this momentous occasion."

The conservation of *The Landing* has been one of Pilgrim Hall Museum's top priorities since the interior climate was stabilized in 2008, resulting in optimal conditions for artifact preservation. "It is an exciting way to promote the importance of Plymouth Colony as we head towards the 400th anniversary of the subject of Sargent's painting—*The Landing of the Pilgrims*," explains Museum

Executive Director Patrick Browne. “All of us at Pilgrim Hall Museum are deeply grateful for the support of Senate President Murray and the Commonwealth.”

A major expansion and renovation of the Museum in 2008 years ago provided significant improvements to the Museum exterior and interior spaces. Browne looks at project as a landmark moment for the Museum’s treasured collected works. “We need to be as aggressive as possible in preserving our artifacts for future generations,” says Browne. “With this project, we are on the cutting edge of historical art and artifact preservation by securing conservators at the forefront of conservation science. We hope to continue restoration throughout our entire collection over time, many that are nationally recognized.”

The Landing of the Pilgrims features a massive ornate frame by John Doggett, and has been on display in Pilgrim Hall Museum since the building opened in 1824. Sargent, a Massachusetts native, completed the painting between 1818 and 1823, originally placing it at Pilgrim Hall on loan. He donated the painting to the Museum in 1834. Sargent’s treasured works are found in the collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. His paintings are noted for their influence by Dutch masters, visible in his use of atmospheric lighting.

The Landing has hung for 186 years on the east wall of Pilgrim Hall Museum’s Upper Hall, which was first climate controlled in 2008. Subjected to heat, humidity, dirt, grime and salt air over the years, the canvas became darkened and soiled. Additionally, the unlined canvas was has become brittle, with flaking paint and sagging at the lower edge. Even the gilt frame’s surfaces and ornamentation are blackened, with some details damaged or missing.

Nationally recognized Olin Conservation Inc. from of Great Falls, VA, has been secured for conservation. Chief Conservator David Olin is renowned for his work on the nation’s most historic works, including portraits of early U.S. Presidents at the Smithsonian Museum, the National Archives and at the nation’s Capitol.

Because of the enormous size of the framed work, treatment must be primarily conducted on site, presenting a unique opportunity for the Museum and public. Following a short departure for lining at the conservator’s studios in Virginia during late April and early May, programs open to the public will be offered. Interpretation and education on the conservation process and the importance of the historic painting will be conducted on site for visitors to the museum.

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Pilgrim Society, founded in 1820, built Pilgrim Hall Museum in 1824. It is the oldest continuously operating public museum in the country and America’s museum of Pilgrim possessions. Pilgrim Hall’s extraordinary collection of 17th century artifacts, some of which arrived on the *Mayflower*, illuminates the story of the founding of Plymouth Colony. Pilgrim Hall Museum is located at 75 Court Street (Route 3A), Plymouth, Massachusetts 02360

Information: 508-746-1620; Web site: www.pilgrimhallmuseum.org

Hours: 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. 7 days a week. The Museum is closed on Christmas Day, New Year’s Eve and the month of January.

Admission: Adults \$8.00; seniors (62+) \$6.00; Children (5-17) \$5.00; Families (2 adults with their children aged 5-17) \$25.00. Residents of Plymouth, Massachusetts are admitted free.