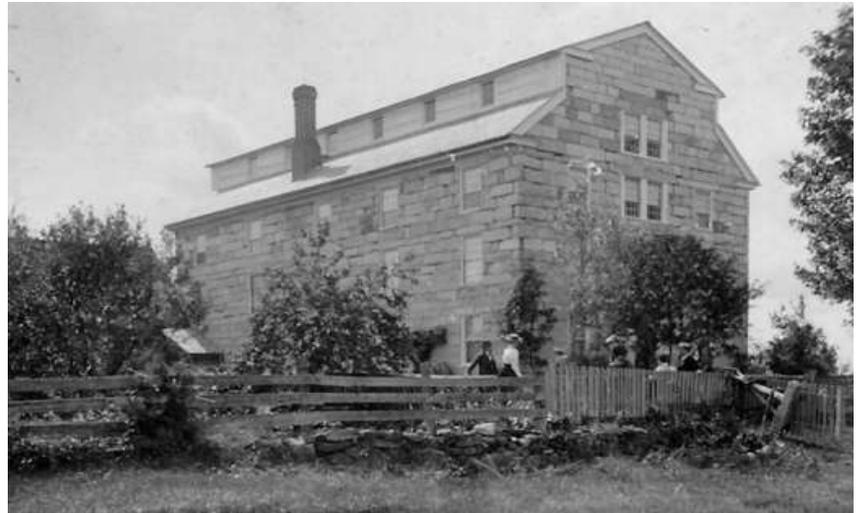


Old Stone House



Self-Guided Tour

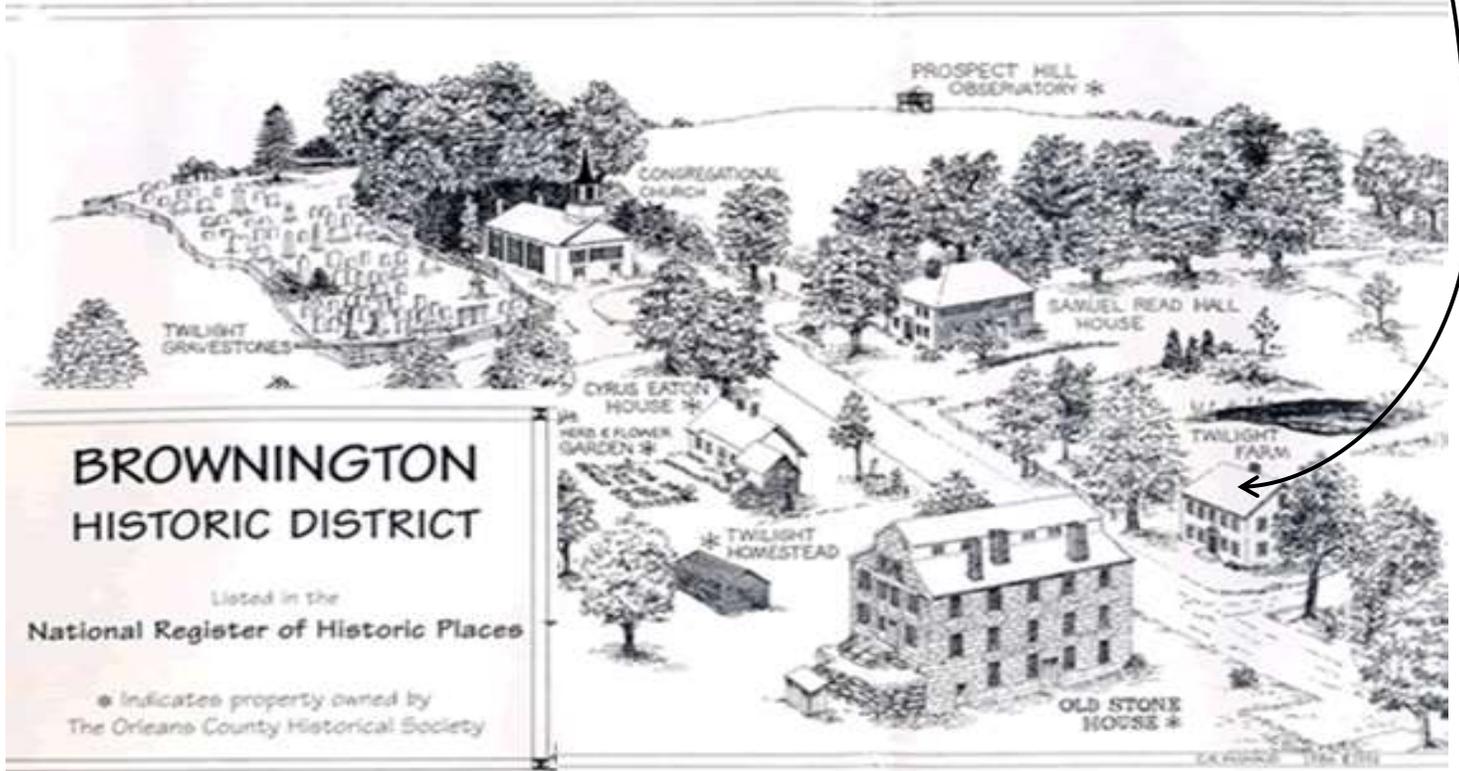


Alexander Lucius Twilight

The first African American in the United States to graduate from college, Alexander Twilight was born on a farm in Corinth, Vermont to a white or fair-skinned (believed to be one-quarter African American) mother, Mary Twilight, and a mixed-race father, Ichabod Twilight, who had served as a private in the American Revolution. The young Alexander was forced to work as an indentured servant on a farm neighboring his parents' farm from the ages of eight to 21. Nonetheless, he managed to graduate from Middlebury College in 1823, after which he taught school in Peru, New York, where he studied for the Congregational ministry and, in 1826, married Mercy Ladd Merrill. Called successively to pastor congregations in Vergennes and Brownington, Vermont, Twilight also became the headmaster of the Orleans County Grammar School. To meet growing enrollment needs, he designed, raised funds for, and built the first granite public building in Vermont, Athenian Hall, which contained classrooms, a kitchen and a dormitory.

Elected to the Vermont General Assembly in 1836, Twilight became the first African American to serve in a state legislature in the United States. In 1847, after conflicts with the Orleans County school administrators, Twilight moved to Quebec, Canada for five years, but then returned to serve as headmaster in Brownington. He died on June 19, 1857 and is buried in the Brownington churchyard. His historic Athenian Hall, renamed the Old Stone House, now serves as the Orleans County Historical Society and Museum.

1. The self-guided tour begins in the front room of the home of **Alexander Twilight** (Refer to Introductory Manual and wall plaques for historical information).



As you walk across the road to the Old Stone House you will notice a four story granite building. Twilight asked a farmer for stones from a nearby field. Of course the farmer was delighted to give them to Twilight. The stones are 12" H, 10" W, and average 2' – 6' feet except for the ones around the windows and doors. They are about 8 feet or longer. There are approximately 1,500 stones, the average weight is 307.7lbs and the building is 36' x 66' and 4 stories high. If you look closely you will notice the bore holes that were drilled to "square-up" the stones.

2. Use the side entrance of the Old Stone House (**Athenian Hall**) and begin on the first floor in the Kitchen.

Note: *The Attached barn was built in the original footprint using original techniques in 2012. Children from the area who helped whittle the pegs were able to write their name on the peg to become a part of this living history!*

Kitchen

Upon entering, the focal point is the fireplace to the left.

- Note the special place on the side kept for heating and holding heated water - unusual for the period.
- **Students staying here could pay additional for board** - All food would have been prepared here in this main fireplace.
- Someone would have been employed to work here to cook and take care of the students on a regular basis.
- Note the small bread oven on the right side of the fireplace (A flashlight is helpful here to see its depth and domed inner ceiling). A wooden door was originally in front of this small oven (notice the empty hinge marks to the right).

Other items of interest:

“Washing Machines”



Butter Churn



Fly Trap



Incubator



Indoor Water: An archaeological dig on the landing behind the building led to the discovery of a cistern which would have collected rain water and then gravity-fed inside the below storage space inside of the kitchen. The dig also uncovered this jug (the only piece truly original to the kitchen) hidden inside of the buried cistern.



Pottery/Glassware Cabinet: The left side is primarily Bennington Pottery; the right side is English Majolica ware. These examples are much nicer than the simpler ware that would have been used in the dormitories but are great period pieces.



Majolica, also spelled **Maiolica**, tin-glazed earthenware produced from the 15th century at such Italian centers as Faenza, Deruta, Urbino, Orvieto, Gubbio, Florence, and Savona. Tin-glazed earthenware—also made in other countries, where it is called faience or delft—was **introduced into Italy from Moorish Spain** by way of the island of Majorca, or Maiolica, whence it derived the name by which it was known in Italy.

The majolica painter's palette was usually **restricted to five colors**: cobalt blue, antimony yellow, iron red, copper green, and manganese purple; the purple and blue were used, at various periods, mainly for outline. A white tin enamel was used also for highlights or alone on the white tin glaze in what was called bianco sopra bianco, "white on white."

Coin-Silver Spoon Rack: This silver, though not sterling silver, has 10% added copper for strength. Coins of the period also had 10% added copper for strength, hence its name.

Spoons such as these would have been greatly prized by housewives of the period.



Scarring on the kitchen floor: Created during the 1940s when lightning struck the ceiling, causing a fire on the upper floors which burned through, dropping hot timber coals here. Luckily, the flames were seen and help came before it could do further damage.



Long Room

Starting to the left of the doorway and working around to the opposite end - Items of Interest:

A nineteenth century cabinet [future] housing a rock/mineral collection from the same period. Geology would have been among the subjects taught at the Brownington Academy.



Needlepoint Samplers from Brownington and Craftsbury (1830 & 1846). Needlepoint may have also been done by students at the Academy.



Abenaki Canoe: Though not original, this was created in the original style used by the Abenaki and it would have been used for trapping along the southern bay of Lake Memphramagog.



Remnants of partitioning: These marks on the floor show where removable walls once were. The room could be partitioned into smaller rooms for study halls or music rooms or possibly used as a mess hall.



Button Palace: Believed to be built and adorned during or shortly after President McKinley's administration based on his bust topping the creation. The plaques provide great information. Note the stairway hidden behind the small front door that can be opened.



Uncle Tom's Cabin Minstrel Show poster: This was most likely from a traveling minstrel show when posters would be glued to the side of a barn for display. The only way to preserve it is to take the wall with it, which you can see has been done here. If you look closely, you can see "Newport" on one of the ships.



Two-drawer blanket chest: Found in Derby. This is a great example of early Vermont-made furniture.



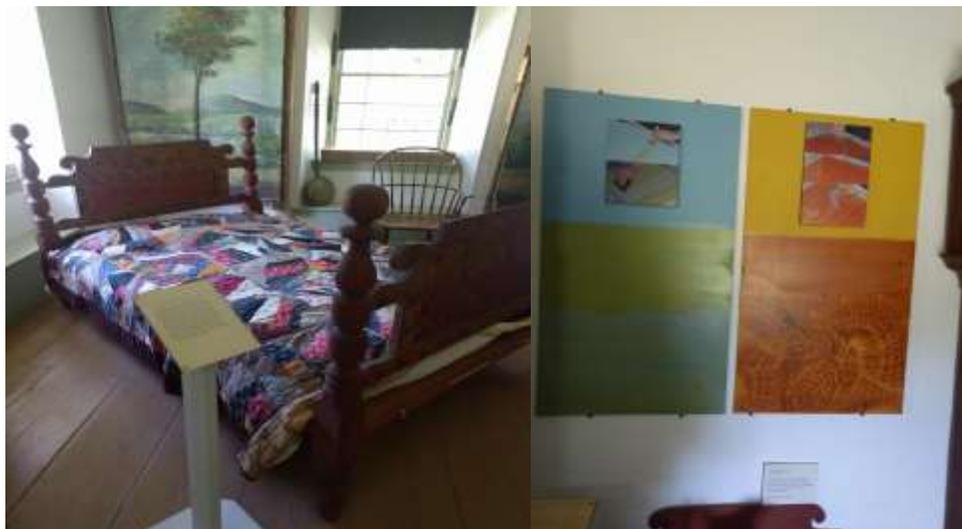
Burleigh Woodard carvings: VT-native Burleigh Woodard is considered among the best folk art artists and his detailed carvings can be found in many places, including the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, D.C.



Rufus Porter murals: These murals were painted roughly around the same time as Athenian Hall would have been built. They were painted directly onto the wall by the artist Rufus Porter in the **Adams Female Academy in Dairy, NH** where Mary Lyon taught (Mary Lyon went on to found Holyoke College). Porter, as well as being an artist he was also an inventor and the founder of **Scientific America Magazine**. Perhaps most notably, he **invented the mechanism for what went on to become used for the Colt Revolver - He sold his patent to Colt for \$5.**



Painted and stenciled furniture: On the table (not pictured) are the tools that would have been used for creating the pattern as seen in the wood here on the bed frame. There are also examples of this on the wall to show how it may have been done.



Spencer Clock: Owned by Erastus Spencer who was an early settler in VT. There is significant craftsmanship with inlaid wood and burnt sand decoration.



School Room

These were the original desks used in the grammar school. The art on the wall was made by students using **charcoal and marble dust** (Using a flashlight is helpful to show how these would have sparkled in the candlelight during the time period). The signage around the room is very interesting and informative.



Early pipe organ from Mount Vernon, NH. Although this organ was not originally here, the church organ was taught at Brownington Academy.

You will notice many organs in the museum!



Second Floor Girl's Dormitory

The **second floor** was used as the **Girl's Dormitory**. Note the *braziers* in the rooms.

At the **top of the stairs**, turn around and start in the **Twilight Room** which houses the few remaining items personally belonging to Alexander Twilight, including his catskin trunk, his furniture, and books, and the static electricity generator that was used in the school. If you look closely to the encased Bible, you can see the pages speckled with Twilight's chewing tobacco that splattered when he sneezed during one of his sermons. Also note the teaching globes used in the 1830s and the list of student Bylaws.



Directly outside of the room is the original **ox yoke** used to build Athenian Hall. **Note the terrible ending for the ox as described on the wall!** Also note the Alumni wall which is filled with students who went on to be ministers, senators, and other prominent members of society.



Student Room

This room is staged as it might have looked when a student stayed here with a hay-and rope bed and a small cooking fireplace (brazier) where they may have cooked their own food to save money on boarding. The cannonball on the windowsill was used by the boys upstairs on the third floor to roll on the floor to annoy the girls below them.



Joslyn Room: This room is dedicated to Joslyn who was born in Brownington and went to the Academy. All the photos in this room are either of him or taken by him. The drums are original Civil War drums and the other items belonging to Joslyn are in cases.

Hallway: Here is the pump organ, still playable, although the pipes are primarily for show. The Victrola (1925) can be played if you change to a new needle for every play. These and the other musical instruments may have been made in Brattleboro. Also note the evidence left behind on the floor from the lightning strike discussed earlier.



“Medicine Room”: The pharmaceutical items, including the original cabinet/case and everything inside were donated by the Austin Drugstore in Orleans. The wicker “casket” was the nineteenth century version of a body bag. The handles on top would have been used with rope to lower the basket from higher building floors.



The Trade Room holds tools of all trades such as coopers (barrel makers), carpentry, blacksmith, and cobbling.

Westmore Room: This room homes a prize-winning 30lb lake trout caught in 1967, a model of the Mountain Maid which belonged to Elmer Darling who also owned the Burkland Mansion. The painting is of the Willoughby gap, which can be seen from the window in this room between the two large trees off in the distance on a clear day.



Toy Room: This room is filled with original Victorian period toys, such as the toy piano in the corner made with real cast iron. There is also an early baby walker and an American-made cuckoo clock. The portrait is of a boy known to be from Brownington.



The connecting doorway separates the girls dormitory away from the stairs to the boy dormitory. This door would be locked at night so they could not fraternize. Note

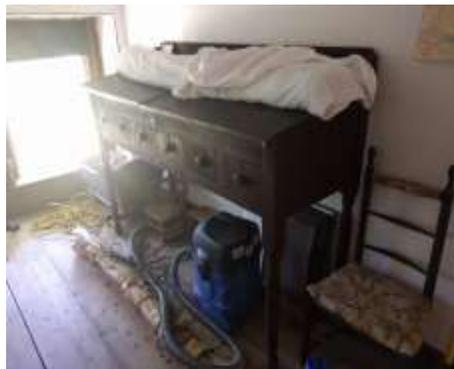
however, that each boy and girl side has an exit to the outhouses in the back where they may have planned to meet when the door was locked.



Third Floor Boy's dormitory

This floor was used as the **boy's dormitory**. Note it has many more rooms than the girls' floor - as was the count of female to male ratio for students. Here you may want to urge your visitors to take a peak in these rooms as they would like. Some items of interest:

The Hinman Desk built and used by Timothy Hinman who built the Hinman-Settler Road.



Hair wreaths: It was common for friends and loved ones to exchange and share locks of their hair. These hairs were then used along with wool or other fibers to create these collectible hair wreaths.



Desk of Portus Baxter - son of Will Baxter who gave money to build the grammar school. This desk was used in the House/Senate and given to each Senator to take home when the building was being revamped.



Telephone



Operator Switch



Civil War Recruiting Poster



19th century rock/mineral collection in collector's original showcase



Note the piece of wood from the house Brigham Young lived in; Whittingham Vermont. Both Joseph Smith (first Mormon prophet, founder and president) and Young were born in Vermont and were 1st and 2nd presidents of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons)

Fourth Floor

Gala Room: While the Athenian Hall building was mainly a dormitory, this fourth floor was used as an assembly hall for students possibly for lectures or recitals.

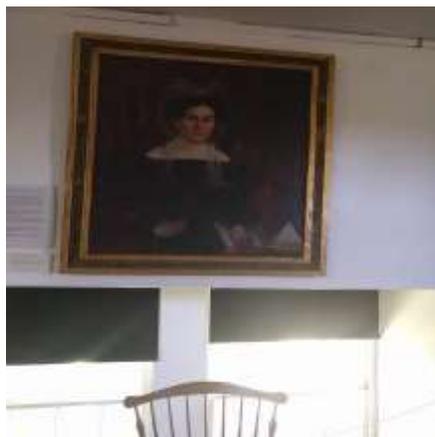
This room is full of furniture built in Vermont and New England as well a great collection of period clothing, early American glassware and copper lusterware.

Other items of interest:

Portrait of Timothy Hinman and wife (discussed earlier) Timothy Hinman was a pioneer road builder who constructed the Hinman Settler Road in Orleans County, Vermont. He also operated a dry goods store and tavern in Derby. [



Theda Grout Wellman portrait: This woman's husband was a minister (shown on wall across from her) and if you stand in a particular spot, you can make out the obvious shape and detail of a **child held in her arms. Speculation may say it is a ghost child!**



Early-period glassware, including a whale oil lamp.



This particular chair is a good example of reworked/altered furniture. The piece was intended to mimic an earlier piece but upon closer inspection, you can see it is a forgery by the mixed woods (both in type and age).



Hallway: This is art drawn by Charles Kerin in the 1950s and published in The Post Magazine. Notice there is not only **no mention of Twilight's mixed race** but he is also drawn entirely fair-skinned here.



Library: The final room on the tour housing local portraits from Orleans County and many antique books, including the original hymnal books from the chapel. Some other items of interest:

More Burleigh Woodard carvings. Not pictured is a look-alike carving below the window done when the grammar school was moved to its present location.



Anthemis Sign from a
Lake Memphremagog steamboat



Weathervane from the
Methodist Church



An original fur-bearing trout



It is the mission of the Orleans County Historical Society to share our unique history through preservation, education and inspiration.

Thank you for visiting our wonderful campus!