



## Old Stone House Museum & Historic Village

### **For Immediate Release**

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### **Vermont Legislature Designates Alexander Twilight Day on Juneteenth**

**Historic Brownington Village, Vermont** - On Friday, June 19, 2020, a concurrent resolution sponsored by Senators John Rodgers and Robert Starr and Representatives Vicki Strong, Brian Smith, and Lynn Batchelor will be announced by the Vermont State House. The resolution will designate Wednesday, September 23, 2020 as Alexander Twilight Day in Vermont.

The Board of Trustees of the Old Stone House Museum will also mark Juneteenth with a statement recognizing that black lives matter not just now—but that they have always mattered to our nation. Before recent nationwide protests began, the museum planned educational programs, online workshops, and a birthday celebration focused on Mr. Twilight. We invite the public to celebrations of Mr. Twilight's 225th birthday on September 20, 2020.

“Our board of trustees stands with those protesting today,” Michael Murphy, Old Stone House Museum Board of Trustees President, said. “To this end, we plan programs and exhibits on our campus and online that will educate not just about how much black lives matter now but about how much they have always mattered. Not the least of these events will be the celebration we plan for Mr. Twilight's birthday.”

The Old Stone House Museum believes systemic racism, built on the backs of each succeeding generation of African Americans, has no place in our society. We also believe ending systemic racism in the United States means educating others about African Americans who, like Mr. Twilight, have made our nation what it is today.

“We need look no further than the example of our founder to chart a path forward that ends the pervasive inequalities that persist in our society today,” Carmen Jackson, Old Stone House Museum Board of Trustees Vice President, said. “He was one of Vermont's earliest and most noteworthy African American leaders, and he provides a guiding light during these trying times.”

The Old Stone House Museum will also acknowledge Juneteenth with the launch of the first day of our Kids' Friday educational program for preschool to elementary school aged children in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont. A key part of this program—which



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provides a weekly free lunch, lesson plan, and take-home heritage activity kit each week during Summer 2020—will be multiple lessons that focus on the life and history of Mr. Twilight.

Similarly, the museum launched virtual programs in May 2020 that include workshops focused on topics such as racism in the United States and the readings of Frederick Douglass. We also plan online text, audio, and video content that highlights the life of Mr. Twilight and his important legacy.

For the full text of the Board of Trustees statement [please click here](#).

The Old Stone House Museum is located in the Brownington Historic District just off Hinman Settler's Road in Vermont's scenic Northeast Kingdom. For more information, call (802)754-2022 or visit [www.oldstonehousemuseum.org](http://www.oldstonehousemuseum.org).

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**ABOUT ALEXANDER LUCIUS TWILIGHT:** Born on September 23, 1795 Alexander Lucius Twilight graduated from Middlebury College in 1823, becoming the first black graduate of any American college or university. In 1829 he was hired to be principal of the Orleans County Grammar School and was minister to the Brownington Congregational Church. In 1836 he was elected to the Vermont House of Representatives, becoming the first African American to serve in a state legislature. Under his leadership, the Orleans County Grammar School thrived as a co-educational institution attracting both boys and girls from throughout New England who came from as far away as Boston and Montreal. Between 1834 and 1836 Mr. Twilight designed and built a four story granite dormitory, which he called Athenian Hall.

Mr. Twilight's father Ichabod was born in Boston in July 1765. Both he and Alexander's mother Mary were free and mixed race, most likely of African slaves and English colonists. Ichabod served in the Revolutionary War in a New Hampshire regiment and later moved with his family to Vermont where he and his wife were listed as "the first negroes to settle in Corinth" where they bought property, moving from Bradford on November 28, 1798.

Typical for children of his class, Alexander began working for a neighboring farmer when he was only eight. Reading and studying mathematics while performing farm labor, he was able to enroll in the Randolph Orange County Grammar School in 1815 at the age of 20. He enrolled in Middlebury College in 1821, graduating as the first known African American to receive a degree from any institution of higher learning in America in 1823.



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In 1826 Mr. Twilight married Mercy Ladd Merrill from Unity, New Hampshire and taught in both New York and Vermont before assuming his position as principal at the Orleans County Grammar School. In addition to acting as minister for the Brownington Congregational Church, he led worship services and delivered sermons in numerous other churches. In 1847, he relocated to Quebec where he taught briefly. However, without his leadership the Orleans County Grammar School experienced declining enrollment. He was persuaded to return to Brownington where he resumed duties as both teacher and pastor. In 1855 Mr. Twilight suffered a stroke and retired. He died on June 19, 1857 and is buried along with his wife Mercy in the Brownington Church Cemetery.

**ABOUT THE OLD STONE HOUSE MUSEUM:** Listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the Old Stone House Museum was established by the Orleans County Historical Society and has been operating as a museum since 1926. It has now grown from one building to become an impressive historic site with seven restored buildings and three neighboring structures, all dating from the early 1800s. Dedicated to its mission to preserve, educate and inspire, the Old Stone House Museum annually attracts nearly 10,000 visitors from across the country and abroad.

Education has long been a cornerstone of activity in Brownington. The former granite dormitory is not the only historic building at the Museum to tell the story of progressive education and diversity. Mr. Twilight's 1830 Federal style home houses his books and letters, along with letters from his students, in an archival vault. Further up the hill an 1831 Federal-style Hall House stands as a testament to Samuel Reed Hall, a recognized pioneer in progressive education. Hall founded America's first teacher training college in 1823 in Concord, Vermont, invented the chalkboard, and published the first teacher-training textbook in 1829.

Through unique educational programs that use select items from its permanent collection as teaching tools, the Old Stone House Museum embraces hands-on, experiential learning as a way of connecting individuals to a way of life that still has much to teach us. Notable past activities have included a barn raising with area vocational students and a tree trimming and replanting project that was incorporated into the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade science curriculum at the Brownington Elementary School. A thriving adult education program teaches such traditional crafts as blacksmithing, rug hooking, stone wall building, and tree pruning. Spring and Fall Field Days for area schools, as well as its summer "Time Travelers Day Camp" emphasizes hands-on craft activities, theatre, and the scientific exploration of the garden and grounds.