



Dear History Lovers,

Those of you who are longtime readers of our annual reports and email newsletters will know that these last four years have brought a lot of change and evolution to Old North Illuminated. In late 2020, we started drafting a new strategic plan, aiming to expand our site's programming, interpretation, and identity in ways that authentically and honestly present an inclusive picture of our past and inspire a more equitable future. We identified a new mission for our organization: *Old North Illuminated inspires active citizenship and courageous, compassionate leadership by interpreting and preserving Old North Church Historic Site.* The five-year plan aimed to make these important changes to coincide with two major historic anniversaries: Old North Church's 300th birthday in 2023 and the 250th anniversary of the lantern signal and Paul Revere's midnight ride in 2025.

Your support over the last few years has fueled remarkable progress. We have crafted multi-disciplinary and multi-media curricula that are used in classrooms across the country and, increasingly, internationally. We conducted important research into the lives of Old North's early Black and Indigenous congregants and shared our findings with a new permanent exhibit and audio guide in the church's sanctuary, a new *Hidden Histories* tour, and a free public history video series on YouTube. At the same time, we have embarked on major preservation and restoration projects in Old North's sanctuary and crypt that have revealed long-hidden elements of the church's craftsmanship and history.

When you are in the middle of a journey, it can be hard to appreciate all of the progress you have made. In 2024, we saw the projects and initiatives we have been working on come together in a cohesive and powerful way. Most notably, Old North Illuminated received a major award from the American Association of State and Local History in September 2024. This recognition of our new programming at a national level was incredibly validating and encouraging, as it demonstrated that historians and experts from around the country consider our work to be meaningful and impactful.

As we march ahead in 2025, we are not resting on our laurels. Instead, we are feeling reinvigorated by the big anniversary of "two if by sea" — a moment in time when more eyes were on Old North Church than ever before. The 250th anniversary in April 2025 provided a unique opportunity for Old North Illuminated to reposition the legacy of the church in America's national memory. In the strategic plan we laid out four years ago, we identified a big vision that our organization is working toward: *a future in which everyone will see their stories, struggles, and hopes reflected in places of prominence and our shared American history.* We are excited to redouble our efforts to create an Old North Church where all are welcome, engaged, and inspired. We hope you will join us.

With gratitude,



NIKKI STEWART
Executive Director, Old North Illuminated



ANGELA JOHNSON
Board Chair, Old North Illuminated



Old North Illuminated Receives AASLH Leadership in History Award

In September, Old North Illuminated team members Nikki Stewart, Catherine Matthews, and Emily Spence traveled to Mobile, AL for the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) Conference. ONI was presented with a 2024 Leadership in History – Award of Excellence for our new programming.

For nearly 80 years, the AASLH Leadership in History Awards have been the most prestigious recognition for achievement in the preservation and interpretation of state and local history. In 2024, AASLH conferred 47 national awards. The winners represent the best in the field and provide leadership for the future of history education.

ONI's award-winning project, "Expanding History at Old North Church," encompasses the major additions to our programming that we made over the previous two years:

- ***Illuminating the Unseen*** is an 11-episode video series written and presented by Dr. Jaimie D. Crumley that is available for free on YouTube. Dr. Crumley, a professor at the University of Utah, joined ONI for a year-long research fellowship in 2022-2023 that focused on using primary sources and archival materials to recover the stories of Black and Indigenous people who were part of Old North's early history.
- ***Sparking Revolutions: Lanterns, Leadership & the Evolving Legacy of Old North Church*** is a new permanent exhibit that incorporates best practices in accessible design. Exhibit panels offer visitors an opportunity to

"The AASLH Leadership in History Award is one of the highest distinctions in the public history field. The peer-reviewed process honors projects that make a contribution to the field and embrace difficult history, demonstrate the relevance of history, and strive to be accessible to a wide audience. Old North Illuminated's project did just that — deepening the understanding of the church's culpability in slavery, helping visitors find contemporary relevance in the content, and providing points of entry for all visitors."

KRISTIN GALLAS, Public Historian and Museum Consultant



engage with an inclusive and comprehensive narrative of the church's history and its people.

- ***The Old North Audio Guide*** incorporates Dr. Crumley's work and weaves a cohesive narrative of Old North's 300-year history. In this 35-minute audio tour (available in English and Spanish), visitors hear the stories of Black and Indigenous congregants and consider how the architecture of the church reinforced social hierarchies.



REVEALING OLD NORTH'S HIDDEN ANGELS

For well over one hundred years, visitors to Old North Church have experienced a fairly austere white interior. In the fall of 2024, however, the views from the pews started to get a lot more interesting. On September 30, ONI embarked on a 9-month mural restoration project to reveal some of the church's colonial-era artwork.

"In contrast to the monochromatic décor that you see today, for its first two hundred years, Old North Church's sanctuary was a feast for the eyes," said Catherine Matthews, ONI's Director of Education. John Gibbs, an accomplished painter and congregation member, completed the first major interior decoration of the church. Beginning in 1727, he painted 20 winged angels on the gallery arches; painted the lower columns a stone color; and the gallery fronts, upper columns, and the arch edges were given a faux-cedar wood treatment. Later generations added more and more decorative elements.

For reasons we don't fully understand, the interior of the church was painted white in 1912, and all of this intricate artwork was covered. "It is possible that the congregation chose to whitewash the sanctuary because the existing artwork was losing its luster and restoring it would have been prohibitively expensive," said Matthews. "Another theory is that Old North's stewards mistakenly believed that a simple, white interior was more true to the original 'colonial look' of the church. In reality, simple design was a hallmark of Puritan churches, not Anglican churches like Old North."



It was unclear whether the church's 18th-century artwork still survived under the white paint. However, a paint study conducted in 2017 revealed that the lost angels still exist. Conservators painstakingly removed layers of white paint to partially uncover one of the angels painted in 1727. Old North's team nicknamed this angel "Howard" in honor of a beloved advocate and supporter of the church who had recently passed away.

In the fall of 2024, a new team of preservation experts picked up where the 2017 paint study left off. Led by Gianfranco Pocobene, an expert conservator, the team set out to fully restore Howard and 19 more angels in the arches of Old North's gallery, along with the decorative festoons between each angel. Pocobene said that the first step of the project was carefully testing materials and methods to remove the paint. Through testing, Pocobene and his colleagues determined exactly how long to leave solvent gels, which swell and soften the layers of white overpaint that cover the angels. Next, the conservators used soft spatula-like scrapers and hand-rolled cotton swabs to delicately remove the white paint and reveal Gibbs's angel paintings. After each angel was revealed, an isolating layer of varnish was applied before artists retouched the paintings to improve areas where there were losses or damage.

A wonderful surprise was that each angel was painted with a unique face and personality. "They all have their own character — they're not copies," said Pocobene. "The artist, John Gibbs, painted them individually, and

they're all in different poses, which gives them a really wonderful rhythmic kind of pattern across the surface of the church."

Visitors to the church have loved watching history being revealed before their eyes. When a visitor from Connecticut, who is being treated for cancer, saw the angels, she had an emotional reaction, which she shared in a note to our team. "As I stood beneath the angel paintings at Old North Church, a gentle wave of awe washed over me," she wrote. "Their serene expressions felt like a quiet conversation with my soul, whispering of hope, resilience, and the timeless threads of faith woven into the heart of this sacred space."

The restoration work has been supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund, a program of MassDevelopment and the Massachusetts Cultural Council; The Freedom Trail® Foundation Preservation Fund; and two anonymous funders.

For Gianfranco Pocobene, the project has been a dream come true. "I've been doing this work for something like 40 years now," said Pocobene. "And this is one of the most amazing projects I've been involved in."

SCAN THE QR CODE

and watch a recording of Gianfranco's Speaker Series talk about the angel restoration.



The Return of REVOLUTION'S *EDGE*

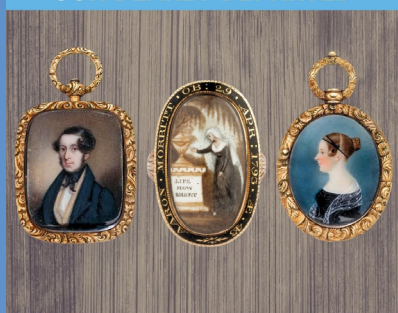
The critically acclaimed play *Revolution's Edge* returned to the Old North Church over the summer. Written especially for Old North by Patrick Gabridge, directed by Alexandra Smith, and produced by Plays in Place, this gripping historical drama was once again a smash hit.

For the play's second year, two casts performed alternately throughout the 10-week run. Stetson Marshall and Joshua Lee Robinson both played the role of Cato, an African man enslaved by Old North's rector, the Rev. Dr. Mather Byles, Jr. Robinson noted the irony that while white Patriots and Loyalists argued about the meaning of freedom, they largely ignored the desires of enslaved people like Cato, who desperately wanted to stay in Boston to be with his family instead of fleeing north with his enslaver. "The concept of freedom is very literal to Cato at this point," said Robinson. "But there is also a duty that he has as a father and as a husband that I think is being purposefully overlooked by the people in the scene with him." A pivotal and emotional moment in the play comes when Cato delivers a monologue directly to the audience after Old North vestryman Capt. John Pulling, Jr. asks him if he wants to go to New Hampshire with Rev. Byles:

"Captain Pulling asks a question that should not be asked. People don't ask slaves what they want to do or where they want to go. Not the people who rule over me and my family...Do I want to go? Did I want to come to America in a ship full of death and disease when I wasn't even seven years old? Seems like they forgot to ask me. And now they keep forgetting to ask me about anything..."

More Than a Decade of Speaker Series Talks

OUR DEARLY DEPARTED



A HISTORY OF MOURNING JEWELRY

Did you know that Old North has offered a Speaker Series since 2014? With topics that range from the Salem Witch Trials to preservation at Old North; from the art of writing historical fiction to the "wild women" of Boston; from the French Revolution to the life and legacy of Black abolitionist David Walker, Speaker Series talks allow for a deep dive into a historical issue. These events are part of Old North Illuminated's commitment to thought-provoking programming that encourages consideration of new perspectives on history.

SCAN THE QR CODE

Join us on Zoom for an upcoming event or watch a recording of one of our past events.



Illuminating the Unseen for CLASSROOMS

Illuminating the Unseen is an award-winning video series produced by Old North Illuminated that reveals the stories of some of the Black and Indigenous Bostonians who were affiliated with Old North Church and the North End neighborhood in the 18th- and 19th-centuries. Written and presented by former Research Fellow Dr. Jaimie D. Crumley, the series dives into archival documents to shine a light on those who have often been excluded in the church's broader historical narrative. Dr. Crumley is an Assistant Professor in the Ethnic Studies and Gender Studies Divisions of the School for Cultural and Social Transformation at the University of Utah. She joined Old North Illuminated in 2022 for a one-year research fellowship. *Illuminating the Unseen* received a 2023 Preservation Achievement Award from the Boston Preservation Alliance.

In the fall of 2024, Old North Illuminated launched a new *Illuminating the Unseen Teacher Guide*, a curricular unit for high school classrooms. Designed to accompany the *Illuminating the Unseen* video series, this guide helps teachers adapt each episode to the classroom and foster discussions around topics of race, gender, and colonialism. Each episode guide includes watch-along questions, discussion questions, transcriptions of sources, and a glossary of key terms.



The *Teacher Guide*, which is offered at no cost to teachers thanks to the support of our donors, is designed to help students explore big ideas and use critical thinking skills. Here are some of the questions students encounter after watching the first episode of the series:

- 1 What do you think Dr. Crumley means when she refers to the social constructions of race, gender, and religion?
- 2 Explain Dr. Crumley's research process. What kinds of documents or sources does she use? Dr. Crumley says that she "seeks out the stories that the archives do not readily reveal." What information do you think may be left out of sources like newspapers, diaries, letters, and meeting notes?
- 3 How might the people in these untold stories have contributed to the church's success as a faith community and historic site?
- 4 What are other examples in history where voices were unrepresented? Whose voices? Why might it be important for people today to know about "overlooked" stories from history — stories that "the archives do not readily reveal"?

SCAN THE QR CODE

Learn more about the video series and the accompanying teacher guide.





COMMANDER BILLIE J. FARRELL OF *USS CONSTITUTION* RECEIVES THE THIRD LANTERN AWARD

On April 11, 2024, Old North Illuminated presented Cmdr. Billie J. Farrell with the Third Lantern Award in recognition of her work as the 77th Commander and first female leader of *USS Constitution*.

The Third Lantern Award is presented annually to someone who embodies the spirit of Old North's famous lantern signals: leadership, courage, hope, and active citizenship. With her impressive legacy of breaking down barriers and sharing the history of *USS Constitution*, the world's oldest commissioned warship afloat and America's ship of state, Cmdr. Farrell was an obvious choice.

Since graduating from the Naval Academy, Cmdr. Farrell has dedicated her 20-year career to national service — deploying multiple times to ships stationed in the Baltic and Red Sea regions. In 2022, she became the first woman to command *USS Constitution*. In this role, she worked to preserve the ship's 1812

sailing culture while ensuring her active-duty crew of 80 members were prepared to serve in the 21st century.

"During my first visit to Old North Church, I remember being in awe of the preserved building and how the stories of the national landmark represented our nation's founding ideals," said Cmdr. Farrell. "While Old North and *USS Constitution* represent a different time in our nation's history, the lessons through their stories are still applicable today. There is no future without our past. I'm humbled to receive this honor."

Lanterns & Luminaries was an inspiring and lively evening. We ate, we huzzah-ed, and we sang more than a few sea shanties with our incomparable musical guests, Tripp and Toddy. Most importantly, we raised funds to continue Old North Illuminated's important educational and preservation work — bringing 300 years of history to a diverse audience in order to unite, inspire, and spark change.



GETTING READY FOR

250!

Big anniversaries call for big celebrations! In anticipation of the 250th anniversary of the lantern signal and all of the other 250th milestones to come, Old North Illuminated staff devoted significant time in 2024 to planning for several major events and projects. Preparations for Lanterns & Luminaries 2025 began in mid-2024 when Ken Burns was announced as our 2025 honoree. ONI's staff and host committee developed an event that would both celebrate Mr. Burns's extraordinary body of work and offer a sneak preview of his upcoming multi-episode film, *The American Revolution*. Simultaneously, ONI began seeking partnerships and funding for a second commemorative event: a free, public reading of *Revolution's Edge* to be held on the actual anniversary of the lantern signal – April 18th, 2025 – on the Paul Revere Mall behind Old North.

With an increased number of families expected to travel to Boston to be a part of the commemorations, ONI applied for and received funding to develop a new exhibit for and about children – specifically, seven children with ties to Old North in the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries. Working with the City of Boston Archeology Program, a team of advisors, and consultant Kristin Gallas of MUSE Consulting, staff spent the fourth quarter of 2024 fleshing out plans for the exhibit, researching the seven children's lives and seeking feedback from important stakeholders – local schoolchildren.

There have been a number of preservation and accessibility projects at Old North over the past several years, and 2025 will be no exception. Beginning in the summer, a major construction project will be underway to install accessibility ramps at the Salem Street entrance to the church, the crypt entrance, and the section of the Freedom Trail that traverses stairs as it passes through the Old North campus. Staff have been working with the National Park Service, the Freedom Trail Foundation, and a team of consultants to prepare for this transformational work.



The Year in Numbers

Old North Illuminated Statement of Financial Position for December 31, 2024 and December 31, 2023

The Statement of Financial Position for December 31, 2024 reflects the beginning of a major capital project, the restoration of 20 angel murals in Old North's sanctuary. Additionally, two grants received in 2024 will support the development of a new exhibit in 2025. These projects represent both an investment in the preservation of the historic site and enhancements to the visitor experience that will increase ticketing revenue for years to come.

Assets	2024	2023
Current Assets:		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 1,441,950	\$ 1,259,351
Current portion of grants and contributions receivable	70,800	79,666
Inventory	80,106	77,090
Prepaid expenses and other current assets	25,997	23,429
Total current assets	1,618,853	1,439,536
Other Assets:		
Investments	1,179,132	1,140,485
Grants and Contributions Receivable, net	-	50,000
Operating Lease Right-of-Use Asset	108,218	160,896
Property and Equipment, net	2,102,871	2,157,149
Construction in Process	222,619	-
Total assets	\$ 5,231,693	\$ 4,948,066
Liabilities and Net Assets		
Current Liabilities:		
Current portion of long-term debt	\$ 3,308	\$ 3,207
Accounts payable	165,637	41,185
Accrued expenses	10,825	14,951
Current portion of operating lease liability	74,534	59,227
Total current liabilities	254,304	118,570
Other Liabilities:		
Operating Lease Liability, net of current portion	73,684	146,669
Long-term Debt, net	146,692	146,793
Total liabilities	474,680	412,032
Net Assets:		
Without donor restrictions:		
Operating	43,828	(8,557)
Board designated	395,912	379,139
Property and equipment	2,181,844	2,096,040
Total without donor restrictions	2,621,584	2,466,622
With donor restrictions	2,135,429	2,069,412
Total net assets	4,757,013	4,536,034
Total liabilities and net assets	\$ 5,231,693	\$ 4,948,066

The Lantern Society

Lantern Society Members are partners, supporters, and advocates who support the mission of Old North Illuminated with an annual gift of \$1,000 or more.

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Old North Illuminated (formerly “Old North Foundation”) is a 501(c)(3) exempt organization. Our EIN number is 04-3120688. Gifts can be made via check, credit card, stock transfers, or Donor Advised Funds. To learn more, contact Nikki Stewart, Executive Director, at nstewart@oldnorth.com or 617-513-5999.





OLD NORTH ILLUMINATED, formerly the Old North Foundation, was established in 1991 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit secular organization independent of the Old North Church Congregation.

OUR VISION describes the world in which we want to live: a future in which everyone will see their stories, struggles, and hopes reflected in places of prominence and our shared American history.

OUR MISSION statement describes how we are going to contribute to creating the world in which our vision is realized: by inspiring active citizenship and courageous, compassionate leadership by interpreting and preserving the Old North Church & Historic Site.

OUR CORE BELIEFS articulate the guiding principles on which our programmatic work, operations, and partnerships are based and carried out:

- Bravery, patriotism, and active citizenship come in many forms. These acts can inspire both large-scale and local change.
- Education and respectful dialogue are key to building a more perfect union that reflects the promise of liberty and justice for all.
- Becoming an anti-racist organization will require active engagement with the legacy of slavery at Old North Church and the ongoing burdens of slavery and racism in our country.
- By preserving and sharing history, space, and stories, we shape our future.

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Jason Fishman
Marketing and Communications Manager

Julius Hobert
Visitor Experience Manager

Catherine Matthews
Director of Education

Brian Punch
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Emily Spence
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