



**For Immediate Release**  
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## **Alexander Lucius Twilight Portrait Unveiled at Vermont State House**

**Historic Brownington Village, Vermont**—A new portrait was unveiled at the Vermont State House last Thursday, May 5 that celebrates the diverse heritage of the state's historic leaders. Alexander Lucius Twilight made his home in Brownington, VT and was the first African American to graduate from a US college (Middlebury College, 1823) and to be elected to a state's House of Representatives (VT, 1836).

Vermont Governor Phil Scott and Lieutenant Governor Molly Gray kicked off a two hour long list of speakers, all commemorating the first person of color (Mr. Twilight) to be represented in the halls of "the peoples' house." The work was commissioned by the Friends of the Vermont State House and completed by artist Katie Runde. Runde completed her research for the work after staying at the Old Stone House Museum & Historic Village in summer 2021, where the namesake granite Old Stone House was built by Mr. Twilight.

A contingent from the museum traveled to the Vermont Statehouse for the event. It included Board of Trustees President Carmen Jackson, Trustee Roger Shultz, Associate Director of Operations Bob Hunt, Associate Director of Collections and Interpretations Spencer Kuchle, Executive Director Molly Veysey and Advisors Eve Jacobs-Carnahan and Vicki Strong (who is also a Vermont State Representative). Along with members of Friends of the Vermont State House, the Vermont Curator's Office and state senators and representatives, they celebrated the unveiling of the portrait which now hangs in the main lobby.

"Alexander has been referred to as revolutionary," Carmen Jackson, Board of Trustees President, told the crowd of approximately 100 present. "I prefer to think of him as evolutionary. An example of what can be achieved when an individual puts no limits on his own possibilities and those around him place no boundaries on what he could do. He improved his own situation and favorably influenced thousands of others."

The Old Stone House Museum & Historic Village is widely recognized as Mr. Twilight's chosen home and the most important remaining legacy of his notable



life. Executive Director Molly Veysey invited the crowd to visit the museum and historic village in Brownington.

“Some Vermonters and Americans may just be learning about pioneer and trailblazer Alexander Lucius Twilight, and thankfully, the Old Stone House Museum & Historic Village has kept his valuable legacy alive and intact long enough for him to be properly celebrated and remembered,” Kesha Ram Hinsdale, Vermont State Senator, said. “Not only is the portrait and its story a triumph and critical step forward for representation of great Vermonters in the State House, but it is also a welcome addition to be able to gaze upon the Old Stone House in the portrait, a magical place that has been preserved so that we may know the same beauty that kept Alexander Twilight a proud Vermonter.”



*Photo 1 Caption: Left to right: William Hart (Professor Emeritus of Middlebury College), Bob Hunt (museum Associate Director of Operations), Katie Runde (portrait artist), Molly Veysey (museum Executive Director), Carmen Jackson (museum Board of Trustees President) and Kesha Ram Hinsdale (Vermont State Senator). Photo courtesy of Vermont Representative Katherine Sims.*



*Photo 2 Caption: The new portrait of African American Alexander Lucius Twilight which now hangs in the main lobby of the Statehouse building. Photo courtesy of Molly Veysey, Old Stone House Museum & Historic Village Executive Director.*

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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 African American graduate of any



United States 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 Mr. Twilight's mother Mary were free and mixed race, most likely the children 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. 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.

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 Congregational Church Cemetery.

### **About the Old Stone House Museum & Historic Village**

Listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the Old Stone House Museum & Historic Village 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 museum annually attracts nearly 10,000 visitors from across the country and abroad.



Education has long been a cornerstone of activity in Brownington, Vermont. The former granite dormitory is not the only historic building at the museum to tell the story of progressive education and diversity. Alexander Lucius 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 & Historic Village 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, theater, and the scientific exploration of the garden and grounds.

The Old Stone House Museum & Historic Village is located in the Brownington Historic District just off Hinman Settler's Road in Vermont's scenic Northeast Kingdom. The museum is open Mid-May to Mid-October 11:00-4:00 PM on Wednesdays through Sundays. For more information, call (802)754-2022 or visit [www.OldStoneHouseMuseum.org](http://www.OldStoneHouseMuseum.org).