



**OLD NORTH
ILLUMINATED**
LET HISTORY LIGHT THE WAY

*The
Revolution
started
HERE
AND IT
NEVER LEFT*

2025 Annual Report

Dear History Lovers,

For most of the nation, the Semiquincentennial, America's 250th anniversary, began in 2026. Here in Boston, where the American Revolution was arguably conceived and launched, our "250s" began several years ago with the Boston Massacre and the Boston Tea Party. In April 2025, Old North Illuminated collaborated with a large network of partners to commemorate the 250th anniversary of Paul Revere's lantern signal and midnight ride on the eve of the Battles of Lexington and Concord.

On the night of April 18, 1775, Old North Church was the site of one of the most famous acts of resistance in our nation's history. 250 years later, Old North Church has stood through every test of the American experiment. It has witnessed the failed promises of Reconstruction and the brutal betrayals of Jim Crow; the long fight for women's suffrage; the exclusion of Chinese immigrants; the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II; the Civil Rights Movement; the Vietnam War; 9/11 and the wars and reckonings that followed. Each era brought fear and division. Each tested whether the nation's stated values would be extended to all or hoarded by some.

As we commemorate this series of 250th anniversaries, it's tempting to treat history as something settled — to celebrate triumphs without reckoning with costs. But Old North's story resists that comfort. The lanterns did not light the path toward a swift victory and a unified nation. They symbolize courage, community, and hope during times of painful division. Democracy still demands those things of us. It requires passionate debate and strategic compromise. It requires vigilance, civic participation, and a willingness to stand beside neighbors with whom we may disagree. Above all, it requires the stubborn belief that liberty and justice for all are not relics of the past, but obligations of the present.

Here at Old North Illuminated, we are proud that Old North Church continues to spark dialogue about the founding values of our nation. When Ken Burns spoke at Old North on April 16, 2025, he said, "The American Revolution is our epic song, our epic verse — giving ourselves the opportunity to ask ourselves questions central to the creation of the United States. What is the role of government? What responsibilities come with the privileges of citizenship? What would I be willing to risk to do in the service of my country and my principles? What am I willing to die for?"

We couldn't agree more. At Old North, we teach the history of the American Revolution for many reasons: to provide essential context for where we have been as a country; to challenge our visitors to interrogate the values they hold closest; and to inspire adults and children to take action and create positive change in their communities. Through new additions to our exhibits, online Speaker Series talks with leading historians, and educational curricula used by thousands of students across the country, we spent 2025 fostering dialogue about what it means to pursue liberty and justice for all. We invite you to join the conversation in 2026 and beyond.

In partnership,



NIKKI STEWART
Executive Director, Old North Illuminated



ANGELA JOHNSON
Board Chair, Old North Illuminated



CELEBRATING 250 YEARS OF THE AMERICAN EXPERIMENT



Thousands gathered on the Paul Revere Mall to watch a costumed reading of the original play *Revolution's Edge*.

After much anticipation, the 250th anniversary of Old North's famous lantern signal and Revere's midnight ride finally arrived in April 2025. We welcomed special guest speakers, local friends, and visitors from around the world to commemorate, celebrate, and reflect on the legacy of the American Revolution.

On April 16, we were honored to present celebrated filmmaker Ken Burns with the Third Lantern Award at Lanterns & Luminaries. The award recognizes those who embody the values of leadership, courage, hope, tenacity, and active citizenship. Guests at Lanterns & Luminaries enjoyed a sneak peek of Mr. Burns's new documentary, *The American Revolution*, which premiered on PBS in November. In addition to the keynote address from Mr. Burns, Massachusetts Senator Ed Markey and Governor Maura Healey also delivered stirring remarks that connected the legacy of the American Revolution to the present moment.

On April 18, the actual anniversary of Revere's ride and the lantern signal, Old North Illuminated and the City of Boston hosted a special costumed reading of *Revolution's Edge*, the hit play written by Patrick Gabridge, commissioned by Old North Illuminated, and produced by Plays in Place. Thousands of people gathered on the Paul Revere Mall to watch the free performance and listen to speeches from Governor Maura Healey, Mayor Michelle Wu, and other elected officials. At the end of the event, two lanterns were lit in Old North Church's steeple as Paul Revere walked by on his way to cross the Charles River by rowboat and set off on his ride.



On the same night, our partners in the Old North Church congregation held a Lantern Service modeled on the service offered for the American Revolution's 200th anniversary in 1975, during which President Gerald Ford presented the church with the Third Lantern. Dr. Heather Cox Richardson, acclaimed author and professor of history at Boston College, delivered a fascinating and inspiring speech. She reflected on how the lantern bearers at Old North Church didn't know that their actions would change the course of history; they simply "honored their friendships and their principles and did the next right thing." While most struggles for human self-determination are lost to history, they still "move the story forward, even if just a little bit." Dr. Richardson concluded: "And once in a great while, someone will light a lantern — or even two — that will shine forth for democratic principles that are under siege, and set the world ablaze."

SCAN THE QR CODE to
watch the *Lantern Service*.



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UNEARTHING CHILDHOOD

300 YEARS OF NORTH END KIDS



in May 2025, Old North Illuminated opened a free exhibit, *Unearthing Childhood: 300 Years of North End Kids*. This exhibit, designed for children and families, explores the stories of seven real children of diverse backgrounds who lived in the North End in the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries. Through archaeological artifacts, videos, and hands-on activities, visitors learn about childhood in the past and consider the ways in which childhood in the 21st century is both similar and different. *Unearthing Childhood* is located in the Clough House, a historic brick building located behind Old North Church at 21 Unity Street. The Clough House was built on pastureland around 1715 by Ebenezer Clough, the master brick mason who built Old North. Before he began work on the church, Clough built this house for his family as well as five other houses like it on Unity Street. Ebenezer's daughter, Susana, is one of the seven children profiled in the exhibit. The Clough House is one of only three remaining brick structures that date to the first decades of the 1700s in Boston, making it quite unique today.

While it was originally constructed as a home for the Clough family, the house has served many purposes over time: a single-family home, a tenement for many families, and a house museum. The Clough House witnessed all the changes in its surrounding neighborhood over the past 300 years, while it too changed to meet the needs of the community.





Since opening, the *Unearthing Childhood* exhibit has been visited by thousands of families who have stopped in to read the stories of the children, examine the archaeological artifacts, and play with 18th century toys. The children's stories have resonated with visitors in different ways, such as the story of Adolfo Dondero, an Italian immigrant who lived in the Clough House during the tenement era. As a teenager, Adolfo could speak English, but his parents could not, and he most likely acted as a translator for them. In May 2025, one of our staff members shared this experience from the exhibit:

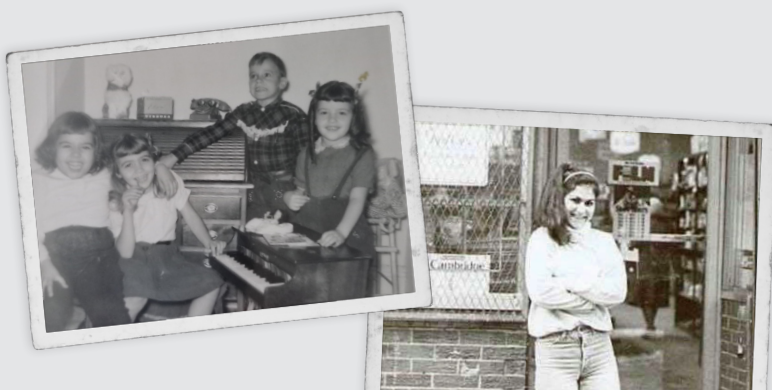
"I was at the exhibit answering questions and ushering people in from the courtyard. There was a family who came in together: mom, dad, and a teenage son. They started by reading the stories on the wall, starting with Adolfo. I pretty quickly realized that mom and dad were speaking Russian, and the teenage boy was translating the exhibit signage from English into Russian for them. It was this very sweet moment of this boy reading a story to his parents about another teenage boy from a completely different time and place doing the exact same thing he was doing in that moment for them."

Another impactful story from the exhibit is that of Ruth Humphries, a free Black girl who was a parishioner at Old North in the 1750s. Ruth's family

entered the poor house after her father's death left them without sufficient resources. At 6 years old, she was indentured out to a member of the congregation. Many visitors to *Unearthing Childhood* were initially unfamiliar with the historical practice of removing impoverished children from their families and placing them in indentured servitude. While Ruth's story may be unfathomable to many, immigrants living in the U.S. may have faced similar unfair child labor practices in their home countries or fear family separation. These parallels between past and present have been sparking fascinating conversations among visitors to the exhibit.

In addition to panels with each child's story, *Unearthing Childhood* features archaeological artifacts on loan from the city of Boston's archaeology lab. Historic artifacts like toy soldiers, dolls, dice, and medicine bottles offer a tangible and unique way to engage with the material culture of the past. Five short videos, available on a monitor in the exhibit, offer supplementary information about the history of play, the work of archaeologists, and evolving concepts of what it means to be a child. The exhibit also features conversation prompts and a hands-on activity to encourage cross-generational learning and bonding.

Unearthing Childhood is presented in partnership with the City of Boston Archaeology Department and was made possible by a grant from Mass Humanities, which provided funding through the Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC), a grant from the Cabot Family Charitable Trust, and an anonymous donor. A Community Partnership Grant from the Massachusetts Convention Center Authority helped us staff the exhibit and keep entry free for all visitors.



OLD NORTH'S SPEAKER SERIES



Since 2014, Old North Illuminated has offered a Speaker Series that brings renowned historians and authors to our audience of history lovers. In 2025, we hosted a number of talks that dealt with important questions: who decides how history is remembered, and how do we reclaim what has been forgotten?

In July, we hosted Dr. Alexandria Russell on Zoom for a fascinating lesson about how African American women have organized to create memorials commemorating Black women across history. Russell argued that Phillis Wheatley, the first African American woman to publish a book of poetry, was the most memorialized Black woman in America during the Jim Crow era. Dr. Russell detailed the remarkable efforts of Black women to honor Wheatley with public memorials despite facing widespread discrimination and limited resources.

THE LEGACY OF PHILLIS WHEATLEY
FROM BOSTON, MA TO ALBUQUERQUE, NM



BOOK CHAT: JOHNNY TREMAIN



Our September Speaker Series was an online “book club” about the classic historical fiction novel, *Johnny Tremain*. Written in 1943 by Esther Forbes, *Johnny Tremain* is among the best-selling children’s books of the 20th century. The novel tells the story of Johnny Tremain, a 14-year-old boy who becomes a messenger for the Sons of Liberty and gets swept up in pivotal moments from the American Revolution. Dr. Patrick O’Brien led the discussion, which examined the themes of the book, what they mean as we approach the Semiquincentennial, and how the World War II-era context of the book’s writing shaped its portrayal of the Revolution.

In October, we hosted Dr. Liz Covart, host of the popular *Ben Franklin’s World* podcast, for an excellent online talk about the “first drafts of the United States” — the early experiments with American unity that mostly failed spectacularly. While we sometimes think of America’s founding as inevitable, Dr. Covart demonstrated that the path to union was anything but straight. Some of the forgotten “rough drafts” covered in her talk included the New England Confederacy’s bold 1643 experiment, the authoritarian disaster of the Dominion of New England, William Penn’s visionary continental congress proposal, and Benjamin Franklin’s ahead-of-its-time Albany Plan.

THE FIRST DRAFTS OF THE UNITED STATES:
EARLY EXPERIMENTS IN AMERICAN UNION



To wrap up the year, we organized a special in-person screening of a segment from Ken Burns’ new documentary, *The American Revolution*, in December. The special 25-minute screening reel explored the intersection of faith and freedom in the Revolution. Following the screening, a panel of experts discussed the role of religion in the Revolution and the legacy of religious liberty in the United States. Panelists included The Rev Dr. Matthew Cadwell, vicar of the Old North Church; Dr. Lori Rogers-Stokes, an independent scholar and public historian; and Dr. Jonathan Chu, Professor of History Emeritus at the University of Massachusetts Boston. Over 200 people joined us for this memorable event.

SCAN THE QR CODE
to watch recordings of
online Speaker Series talks.





TEACHING THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION WITH HISTORY MYSTERY

In 2025, thousands of students across the country engaged with *History Mystery*, a three-part educational video series developed by Old North Illuminated. *History Mystery* explores the events leading up to the Battles of Lexington and Concord through the lens of Old North Church. Designed for upper elementary school students – specifically the 3rd and 5th grade history frameworks – the series is completely free for teachers, homeschool parents, and afterschool programs.

Perfect for the 250th anniversary year, *History Mystery* delves into the origins of the American Revolution, the true story behind Paul Revere's ride, and the "history mystery" of who held the lanterns in Old North Church's steeple.

In Part One, students learn about Old North and the events that contributed to increasing tensions in colonial Boston. Topics covered include Parliament's taxes, colonial protests, and the concept of "Patriots" and "Loyalists." In Part Two, students learn about the Boston Tea Party, the Intolerable Acts, the Sons of Liberty, Revere's Ride, and the Battles of Lexington and Concord. Finally, in Part Three, students examine source materials and build an argument about who held the "two if by sea" lanterns on the night of April 18, 1775.

As they watch the videos, students play detective and learn to think like historians — asking important questions like: What bias might an author have? What are their credentials? What sources did they draw on? What is fact and what is opinion? At a time when misinformation runs rampant online, *History Mystery* helps students develop critical reasoning skills. When students learn to think like historians – when they are filled with both curiosity and healthy skepticism – they are inoculated against fabrications and "fake news."

Requests from teachers to bring *History Mystery* to their classrooms surged in 2025. At the end of 2024, the series had reached 2,350 students, and by the end of the 2025 school year, the video series was being watched by 7,988 students across 39 states! Kyla Roark, a 5th grade teacher in Kentucky who used *History Mystery* with her class, shared her enthusiasm for the series:

"I loved the resources that went along with the mystery. Those helped students dig into the information and got them thinking. My students felt like they had gone on a field trip there instead of a boring assignment. They love being detectives."

Scan the QR code to learn more and watch a preview of the video series. Please help us reach all 50 states by sharing this information with your children's teachers and the educators in your network.

SCAN THE QR CODE
to learn more and watch a
preview of the video series.



PREPARING FOR A REVOLUTIONARY SUMMER



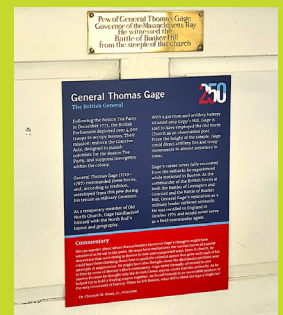
While 2025 marked the anniversary of Paul Revere's Ride, another milestone year was just around the corner! Old North Illuminated staff devoted significant time in 2025 to planning for America's 250th birthday in 2026.

Our Education team began developing new programming to interpret Old North Church's many connections to the American Revolution. The Spotlight Panels in our award-winning exhibit, *Sparking Revolutions*, were enhanced with commentary and analysis from prominent historians like Heather Cox Richardson of Boston College and Chernoh Sesay of DePaul University. This expert commentary adds important context to panels profiling figures from Old North's history who participated in – or fought against – the Revolution, such as General Thomas Gage, the Military Governor of Massachusetts, or Robert Newman, the church sexton who held one of the lanterns on April 18, 1775.

The ONI Education Department also began work on a digital quiz that reveals where our visitors might have fallen on the political spectrum during the

To help bring the history of the American Revolution to our younger visitors, we started writing a new children's audio guide. Narrated by Prince, a friendly black cat who used to frequent Old North Church, the 20-minute audio adventure tells the stories of the church's congregants who lived through the Revolution. Real-life characters include Paul Revere, Jr., the teenage son of Paul Revere; Rebecca Byles, the daughter of Old North's Loyalist minister who was forced into exile; and Cato, the man enslaved by the Byles family who was forced to leave his wife and children behind when the family evacuated Boston. Designed for visitors ages 7 to 12 and their families, *Prince's Revolutionary Tale* is now available in both English and Spanish.

The fall of 2025 marked the kickoff of an ambitious accessibility project on our campus, which has continued into 2026. The project includes building a ramp to bypass the stairs behind the church, adding a ramp to allow wheelchair access to the crypt, reconfiguring the entrance ramp on Salem Street, and repaving walking surfaces with ADA-compliant pavers. Our campus and the Freedom Trail will be more accessible for wheelchair users and those with mobility issues by the close of 2026.



Would you have been a
Patriot or a **Loyalist**?

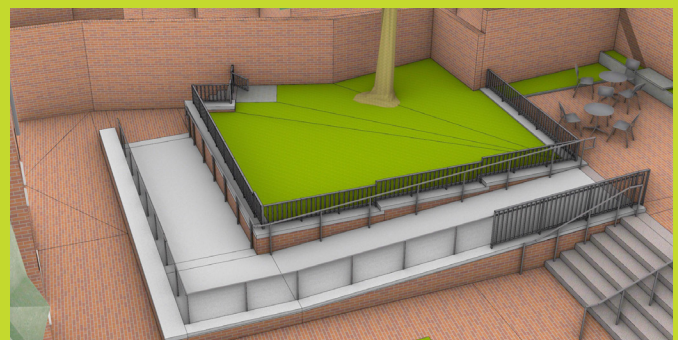


Take this quiz to find out!

Revolutionary era. Would you have been a Patriot who supported independence or a Loyalist who prioritized stability for your family? Scan the QR code on this page to take the quiz for yourself!



SCAN THE QR CODE
to take the quiz for yourself!



USPS RELEASES OLD NORTH AND MIDNIGHT RIDER STAMPS

In anticipation of America's 250th birthday, USPS introduced two Forever Stamps in 2025 that highlight the special role of Boston in the American Revolution: one of the Old North Church and one of a “midnight rider” on horseback. Our team was given the privilege of reviewing the artwork and providing input before the intaglio-printed stamps went into production.

On August 15, Old North Illuminated and the Old North Church hosted a joint gathering celebrating the release of the new postage stamps. We were joined by friends, partners, parishioners, and members of the press. Representatives from USPS presented enlarged commemorative versions of the Old North stamp. These beautiful stamps are now available in post offices across the country and on the USPS website.

Paul Revere is a fitting image for a U.S. postage stamp, as Revere himself was a trusted courier for the Sons of Liberty. Not unlike modern-day mail carriers, Revere traveled far and wide to share correspondence and sensitive information with his fellow Patriots. Whether it is 1775 or 2025, unrestricted, reliable communication is an essential ingredient for a thriving democracy.

In solidarity with those currently fighting for democracy, Old North Illuminated filmed a reading of Longfellow’s famous poem “Paul Revere’s Ride” in many languages that reflect the diversity of our community, including Spanish, French, Haitian Creole, Arabic, Croatian, Swedish, English and American Sign Language. Scan the QR code to watch the video!



SCAN THE QR CODE
to watch the video!



The Year in Numbers

Old North Illuminated Statement of Financial Position for December 31, 2024 and December 31, 2025

The Statement of Financial Position for December 31, 2025 reflects the completion of the restoration of 20 cherub murals in Old North's sanctuary, as well as the beginning of a major construction project to build three accessibility ramps across Old North's campus and install ADA-compliant pavers for a smooth walking surface. Additionally, two grants received in 2024 supported 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.

Assets	2025	2024
Current Assets:		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 2,360,593	\$ 1,441,950
Current portion of grants and contributions receivable	66,560	70,800
Inventory	83,488	80,106
Prepaid expenses and other current assets	18,554	25,997
Total current assets	2,529,195	1,618,853
Other Assets:		
Investments	1,231,006	1,179,132
Operating Lease Right-of-Use Asset	54,616	108,218
Property and Equipment, net	3,204,047	2,325,490
Total assets	\$ 7,018,864	\$ 5,231,693
Liabilities and Net Assets		
Current Liabilities:		
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$ 155,319	\$ 176,462
Current portion of long-term debt	3,412	3,308
Current portion of operating lease liability	74,616	74,534
Conditional grant advance	1,221,865	—
Total current liabilities	1,455,212	254,304
Other Liabilities:		
Operating Lease Liability, net of current portion	—	73,684
Long-term Debt, net	143,816	146,692
Total liabilities	1,599,028	474,680
Net Assets:		
Without donor restrictions:		
Operating	3,072,493	2,225,672
Board designated	392,680	395,912
Total without donor restrictions	3,465,173	2,621,584
With donor restrictions	1,954,663	2,135,429
Total net assets	5,419,836	4,757,013
Total liabilities and net assets	\$ 7,018,864	\$ 5,231,693

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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We make every effort to maintain accurate records. Should you notice an error, please contact development@oldnorth.com.

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, 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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Facilities Assistant

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Visitor Experience Manager

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Marketing and Communications Manager

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