



**PILGRIM SOCIETY &
PILGRIM HALL MUSEUM**
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NEWS RELEASE

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Pilgrim Hall Museum to Receive \$215,000 from Commonwealth for Restoration of Monumental Painting

Pilgrim Hall Museum in Plymouth, which exhibits the largest collection of Pilgrim belongings, will receive \$215,000 in funding to conserve *The Landing of the Pilgrims* by Henry Sargent. The painting is, according to Pilgrim Hall Museum Executive Director Patrick Browne, “the largest artifact in the collection and a work of national significance.” Legislation signed by the Governor on August 13, 2014 includes funding for the restoration.

Senate President Therese Murray (D–Plymouth) commented, “This painting is a very special piece of American history, and of Pilgrim Hall Museum’s history as well. Not only does it tell an important story about the Pilgrims, but also of our common heritage as Americans. We need to make sure it is restored and preserved in time for the town’s 400th anniversary in 2020, when millions of visitors will be coming to Plymouth and Massachusetts from all over the world to celebrate this momentous occasion.”

“*The Landing of the Pilgrims* by Henry Sargent, being one of the first monumental paintings rendered in the United States, is not only a significant artifact; is a key symbol of our young country’s desire to create a national identity that was uniquely their own, and played a major role in making the arrival of the Pilgrims an iconic moment in American history,” said Browne. “We have a wonderful opportunity to preserve a national treasure and, given that the painting will be conserved on site, to provide a superb educational experience. It is an excellent way to promote the importance of Plymouth Colony as we head towards the 400th anniversary of the landing of the Pilgrims in 2020. We are so grateful for the support of the Senate President and the Commonwealth.”

The Landing of the Pilgrims by Henry Sargent has been on display in Pilgrim Hall Museum since the building opened in 1824. Sargent completed the painting between 1818 and 1823. Sargent originally placed *The Landing* on loan at Pilgrim Hall. He donated the painting to the Museum in

1834. At 13 by 16 feet, it is one of the America's first monumental paintings and one of the earliest efforts to depict a key moment in the history of the new nation on a grand scale.

Sargent's painting played a role in establishing the Pilgrims as "Forefathers" of America and the landing as a central story in the greater narrative of our country's founding. In doing so, he contributed to the creation of a national identity for the young United States.

Henry Sargent (1770-1845) was born in Massachusetts, studied with Benjamin West and John Singleton Copley in London and served in the Massachusetts militia during the War of 1812. His works are found in the collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

The Landing has spent 186 years on the east wall of Pilgrim Hall Museum's Upper Hall, which did not have climate control until 2008. Subjected to nearly two centuries of heat, humidity, dirt, grime and salt air, the canvas has become darkened and brittle. The gilt frame's horizontal surfaces are blackened. The rest of the frame and ornamentation are covered with a layer of dirt and grime, and some areas are damaged or missing. Climate control was installed in the Museum during its expansion and renovation in 2008. The conservation of *The Landing* has been one of Pilgrim Hall Museum's top priorities since the interior climate was stabilized.

An assessment of the condition of the painting and frame was conducted in 2008 and recommended treatment includes cleaning, consolidating and relining the canvas, assessing and possibly replacing the stretcher and cleaning, repairing and re-gilding the frame. Because of the enormous size of the framed work, treatment must be conducted on site, presenting a unique opportunity for Pilgrim Hall Museum.

Interpretation and education on the conservation process and the importance of the historic painting will be conducted on site for visitors to the museum. As the work progresses, treatment will be documented visually through photographs and video and shared through print and online media. The process is estimated to take between 10 to 12 weeks. After the project is completed, a short video depicting the conservation process will be installed next to the restored painting.

Once finished, the early American masterwork will be preserved for many future generations. It will be completed in time for the 400th anniversary of the subject of Sargent's painting—*The Landing of the Pilgrims*.

Browne added, "All of us at Pilgrim Hall Museum are deeply grateful for the support of Senate President Murray and the Commonwealth."

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Pilgrim Hall Museum is located at 75 Court Street (Route 3A), Plymouth, Massachusetts 02360.

Information: 508-746-1620; Web site: www.pilgrimhallmuseum.org

Hours: 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. 7 days a week. The Museum is closed on Christmas Day, New Years Eve, and the month of January.

Admission: Adults \$8.00; seniors (62+) \$7.00; Children (5-17) \$5.00; Families (2 adults with their children aged 5-17) \$25.00. Museum members and residents of Plymouth, Massachusetts are admitted free.