



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FENIMORE ART MUSEUM AWARDED TWO GRANTS FROM THE ROBERT DAVID LION GARDINER FOUNDATION SUPPORTING NEW BOOK AND WORKSHOPS ABOUT THE FAMED HAMILTON-BURR LETTERS

COOPERSTOWN, NY—Fenimore Art Museum in Cooperstown, New York has received a total of \$70,000 from two grants awarded by The Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation. The grants will provide funding for new programs and a publication based on the museum’s collection of documents pertaining to the life and death of founding father, Alexander Hamilton, focusing predominantly on a collection of thirty-five letters exchanged between Hamilton and Aaron Burr, leading up to their fatal duel on July 11, 1804. These documents, although familiar to historians, have remained largely unknown to the public until recently when they were brought to light in the song “Your Obedient Servant” from the hit Broadway musical *Hamilton*.

“The documents related to the Burr-Hamilton duel housed at Fenimore Art Museum’s Research Library are a national treasure,” said Douglas Ambrose, the Carolyn C. and David M. Ellis ’38 Distinguished Teaching Professor of History at Hamilton College in Clinton, New York.

A grant of \$50,000 was awarded to fund the publication of a fully illustrated book on the final chapter of Hamilton’s life, presenting the letters in pictorial form for the first time. The content of the letters has not appeared collectively in a single volume since *Interview in Weehawken* (1960). The book will also provide insight on one of America’s most elusive founding fathers and a better understanding of how our democracy functioned in its infancy—enhancing awareness of how it works today.

“The story will not only deepen readers’ understanding of the personal rivalry that resulted in the most famous duel in American history, but also help those readers appreciate how contentious, divisive, and volatile American public life has been. Such an appreciation will help today’s readers put into perspective our own fractious political world,” added Dr. Ambrose who will also be the author of the upcoming book.

“We are extremely grateful for the support of The Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation. We propose to make this collection widely known and accessible for the very first time and this grant

is the first step in achieving that goal,” said Fenimore Art Museum President and CEO, Dr. Paul S. D’Ambrosio.

A grant of \$20,000 was also awarded to create related programming. The Fenimore plans to design a virtual gallery of the Hamilton-Burr Collection and offer four programs. Two of these programs, for professionals of small historical societies and libraries in Suffolk County with archival collections, will use the printed publication and digitization of the Hamilton-Burr duel letters as a case study. For teachers, the museum will provide lesson plans for inclusion on its free, online educational portal, *Harvest of History*, and offer two online distance learning sessions exclusively to social studies teachers in Suffolk County as a means to support and encourage active use of these dynamic resources in the classroom.

In addition to the two grants, The Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation continues to provide essential support for New York History Day—a year-long educational program sponsored in New York State by Fenimore Art Museum, which encourages students to explore local, state, national, and world history. Projects created by these students can be entered into a series of competitions, from the local to the national level, where they are evaluated by professional historians and educators.

“The Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation is delighted to have this opportunity to work with the Fenimore Art Museum to bring their archival treasures to the public. Enhancing the educational outreach of our historic stewards has become a strong focus of the Foundation. These awards will support this vision on multiple levels of engagement. The New York History Day educational program is always a gratifying experience. The in-depth research projects done by the young participants never cease to amaze. They bring history to life with their own contemporary creative interpretations. We are pleased to sponsor New York History Day,” said Kathryn M. Curran, Executive Director of the Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation.

About The Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation

The Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation, established in 1987, primarily supports the study of Long Island and New York State history. Robert David Lion Gardiner was, until his death in August 2004, the 16th Lord of the Manor of Gardiner’s Island, NY. The Gardiner family and their descendants have owned Gardiner’s Island since 1639, obtained as part of a royal grant from King Charles I of England. The Foundation is inspired by Robert David Lion Gardiner’s personal passion for New York history.

About Fenimore Art Museum

Fenimore Art Museum, located on the shores of Otsego Lake—James Fenimore Cooper’s “Glimmerglass”—in historic Cooperstown, New York, features a wide-ranging collection of American art including folk art; important American 18th- and 19th-century landscape, genre, and portrait paintings; more than 125,000 historic photographs representing the technical developments made in photography and providing extensive visual documentation of the region’s unique history; and the renowned Eugene and Clare Thaw Collection of American Indian Art comprising more than 850 art objects representative of a broad geographic range of North American Indian cultures, from the Northwest Coast, Eastern Woodlands, Plains, Southwest, Great Lakes, and Prairie regions. Visit FenimoreArt.org.

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