

PRESS RELEASE
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Willard House & Clock Museum
The Center of Early American Clockmaking
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Willard House & Clock Museum Brings Back Richard Potter's 19th Century Magic Show in Celebration of Simon Willard's Birthday

North Grafton – April 11, 2023 — In celebration of Simon Willard's 270th birthday, Willard House and Clock Museum is pleased to host *Richard Potter's 19th Century Magic Show* on **Friday, April 21st, from 1:00 to 3:00 PM**. Tickets are free but attendees should register at <https://willardhouse.org/events/calendar/2022/4/23/mr-potters-magic-show>.

"Willard is pleased to welcome back Robert Olson as Richard Potter to amaze our audience with his astonishing feats of magic. Robert has made it his life's devotion to study and perform as Potter and we are amazed at his passion", says Executive Director and Curator, Robert C. Cheney. "His prior appearance was standing room only", notes Cheney, "so register early."

Wearing 19th century costume, veteran magician, Olson, brings Richard Potter's 1800s magic to audiences, using original and recreated props (cards, coins, ribbons, and boxes) as well as costumes and the language that was used during that period--all to carry the audience back in time.

Having studied Richard Potter for decades, Olson explains, "It began as a hobby with a Mysto Magic Set I received as a Christmas present when I was eight years old." He adds, "The history part came later. I read the 18th and 19th century magic books, the broadsides, and advertisements that Potter put out; the diaries and letters from people who actually saw Potter perform. It was like he was whispering in my ear. He was the first truly successful magician born in America."

Potter was born in 1783, in Hopkinton, Massachusetts. His mother was black; his father was white. Potter traveled to England in 1799. He returned in 1803, working with Signor Manfredi, an Italian Acrobat. Potter learned his magic working for James Rannie, a magician and ventriloquist from Scotland. After Rannie left America around 1809, Potter began performing on his own. He continued amazing and entertaining audiences across the early nation, from New England, to Canada, to St. Louis, to Mobile, Alabama and back up the east coast to New England, until 1835, when he died.

Learn more about Richard Potter:
https://geniimagazine.com/wiki/index.php?title=Richard_Potter

Special Magic Show Sponsor – Millbury National Bank

Richard Potter's 19th Century Magic Show was made possible by the generous support of Millbury National Bank. “The museum approached us regarding support of the month-long programming effort”, explains Assistant Vice President of Millbury National Bank, Ashley Marcum, “and this period-appropriate performance seemed like a fun and engaging way to attract a family audience to the museum. Supporting Willard House & Clock Museum is very nice fit with the bank’s mission.”

About Millbury National Bank

Millbury National Bank was founded in 1825, and through fiscal integrity and fortitude, the bank has been led by a committed Board of Directors for over 195 years, currently with several multi-generational Directors. MNB’s focus is on serving small businesses within the Blackstone Valley, and maintaining its strong commitment to its customers, stockholders, employees and community. Every customer is treated like family by offering them a level of customer service that is second to none in the industry.



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<https://www.mnbonline.com/about-us/contact-us.html>

About Willard House and Clock Museum

Willard House & Clock Museum is celebrating its 50th anniversary.

Located at 11 Willard Street in North Grafton, MA, the Willard House and Clock Museum exhibits more than 90 Willard clocks in the birthplace and original workshop of the Willard clockmakers, along with family portraits, furnishings and other family heirlooms. Works by all three generations of Willard clockmakers, including famed clockmakers Simon Willard Jr. and Benjamin Franklin Willard, are also displayed. The Museum tour includes the original Willard House, built in 1740, the clock-making workshop, in addition to the galleries. Visit the Willard House and Clock Museum website at www.willardhouse.org

For more information about the program, please contact Beverly Snow, Program Coordinator, at 508-839-3500.

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