

20th Annual HISTORY MEETS THE ARTS

Keeping History Alive Through Art, Conversations, & Camaraderie

by Karen Hendricks

“IT’S BEEN A LIFE-LONG FASCINATION... I’ve been interested in American history from childhood—I followed it, studied it, and ultimately painted it... professionally, since 1963,” says artist David Wright, known as “the artist of the American frontier.” Interpreting history through a paintbrush sounds easy—“I paint history,” Wright says. But the intriguing paintings captured on canvas only emerge after painstaking research, to be sure that every detail and nuance is historically accurate. “I have a saying I’ve lived by for a long, long time,” Wright continues. “I owe it to today’s people and to future generations to paint as correctly and accurately as possible.”

Wright is one of nearly 30 historical artists participating in the 20th Annual History Meets the Arts (HMTA; HistoryMeetsTheArts.com) show and sale, June 9-11, 2017 in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania—proclaimed “the most famous small town in America” due to the pivotal role the Battle of Gettysburg played in the outcome of the American Civil War. HMTA, produced by Lord Nelson’s Gallery, and held at Gettysburg College, offers attendees the rare opportunity to meet artists and artisans, talk to them about their works, see art coming to life through demonstrations, and much more.

“It’s one thing to see an historical painting, a powder horn on a shelf, a bronze sculpture on a pedestal, or a flintlock rifle above a mantel. But at HMTA, you can learn how the artist made it, why they made it, the story and the anecdotal information behind it. The artists are here, and can shed light on it,” explains show director Philippe du Bois of Lord Nelson’s Gallery.

As the event’s milestone 20th anniversary approaches,



Erich Steinhagen of Steinhagen pottery demonstrating at HMTA.



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organizers and artists alike offer a behind-the-scenes preview, while offering insight into the unique blend of talents required of historical artists.

David Wright: "We all have an image in our mind's eye that we start with."

Wright enjoys painting scenes depicting the American frontier, chronicling the east-to-west expansion and development of America. "I focus on the time period between 1750 and 1840," Wright explains. "As civilization moved west, so did the people who trapped and hunted. The country was pristine at that point; I find it a fascinating, intriguing time period to paint."

Working from a home studio in Gallatin, Tennessee, Wright's scenes usually tell stories about early American civilian life—hunters, trappers, frontiersmen, or Indians. One painting that brings him great satisfaction is "The Captives."

"We all have an image in our mind's eye that we start with," Wright says. "That one was a long time in my mind before I ever started painting it.... It came out very much like I envisioned it, in terms of color, composition—it's one of the most symbolic images I've done. The Indians are tawny and the captives are white, with the canoe in front of a large black cliff, so there's a lot of contrast. Based on research, more than likely the men were tortured and killed; women were adopted into a tribe or made slaves. There are black stains coming down over the face of the cliff towards the boy because he will most likely lose his life."

Wright has appeared at HMTA nearly every year since its inception. "Something developed in the artists over the years, in the core group of eight to 10 artists," he reflects. "We have always had a great relationship—a camaraderie—we help and critique each other. I only do two major shows a year including HMTA. I particularly look forward to it and

Below-Left: Detail of a longrifle by Brad Fountain. **Below-Right:** Detail of a powder horn by John Barrett with quilled strap.



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Left-to-Right: John Buxton, Robert Griffing, Jane Wright, David Wright, & Kyle Carroll.

can't say enough about Lord Nelson's Gallery – they're first class. And it's a great location—Gettysburg as a town is so rich in history."

Dale Gallon: "Painting has been a lot of fun—I've never had to get a job."

One of the few artists who doesn't need to travel to HMTA is Gettysburg's resident painter, Dale Gallon. That's because he relocated to Gettysburg 35 years ago in order to pursue a career as an historical artist. After concentrating on Civil War scenes for many years, he recently set his sights on a new, nautical focus.

"Growing up in southern California, sailing on the water, I've always wanted to paint naval scenes. Through my historical interest in the Civil War, I combined the two, and began painting 18th and 19th century naval subjects," Gallon explains.

With close to 20 naval works completed depicting subjects such as Baltimore clippers, early American naval vessels, as well as privateers, Gallon says he will debut a new work at this June's HMTA.

"The subject is the *USS Constitution* fighting two British warships after the War of 1812 was over. With the ships being at sea for months on end, they

didn't know the war had actually ended, and they engaged in a conflict in the eastern Atlantic," Gallon says. "A painting may take three or four months to complete, but at least half that time is spent doing research."

Gallon's artistic talents have always been apparent. "I began painting at the age of six," he says with a laugh. "Painting has been a lot of fun—I've never had to get a job."

Coincidentally, he attended college with several other HMTA regulars, including John Buxton. "We went to the Art Center College of Design in California, a four-year art school in Hollywood... his career paralleled mine in that we both started in commercial art and then turned to historical art."

Philippe Du Bois: "HMTA allows artists to share their knowledge

Detail of small scrimshawed horns by Tim Sanner.



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Detail of a quilled bag by Shawn Webster.

better knowledge of what happened and how things may have looked during that time period. The artists love painting these scenes, so that others can engage in conversation and discussion. HMTA allows artists to share their knowledge and passion for history directly with the public," du Bois explains.

Some of this year's showcased artists and artisans include John Buxton, David Wright, Robert Griffing, Kyle Carroll, Pamela and Bryant White, Steve Auvenshine, Shawn Webster, Steve Lodding, John Barrett, and Selinda Kennedy. The artists and accoutrement makers—those who craft historically-accurate powder horns, knives, flintlock rifles and pottery — hail from more than a dozen states. Du Bois says most of the artists and artisans focus on 18th and 19th century subjects, the French and Indian War, the Colonial Era, Revolutionary War, plus the opening of the American West. However, HMTA also features painters who focus on wildlife, landscapes, and other non-historical subjects.

and passion for history."

HMTA itself is making history this year by celebrating its 20th anniversary. "We started HMTA in 1998, with the idea that we could give people a reason to come; gathering some of the nation's best historical

artists in one place for one weekend makes an impact," says du Bois.

"Historical art is always going to be appreciated by those who have an interest in history. In the art world it brings historical events into a visual form, which helps the public gain a

Patrons Ken and Linda Grimes (left) with artists Bryant and Pamela Patrick White.

PHILIPPE DU BOIS



"People enjoy the diversity of HMTA," explains du Bois.

Patrons also enjoy the diversity of price points that make artwork affordable, according to du Bois. "Thankfully there are patrons who support the artists by purchasing the work and bringing it into their homes, which helps the artists continue what they're doing. At HMTA we really do offer something for everyone—a \$20 signed book, a \$30 art print, handmade Colonial pottery from \$20, a small scrimshawed powder horn for \$200, and original paintings and sculpture that range from \$300 to \$15,000-\$25,000."

HMTA admission is free on Saturday and Sunday; Friday's opening preview party requires a \$35 ticket.

As organizer of the show, du Bois says the end results are always rewarding. "One of the things I love the most... if the artists leave the show happy, and the patrons leave the show happy, then I feel like we've done our jobs to the best of our ability."

Jeff Shaara: "I love telling people



Artist Lisa Crews produces period style pottery based on 18th century styles.

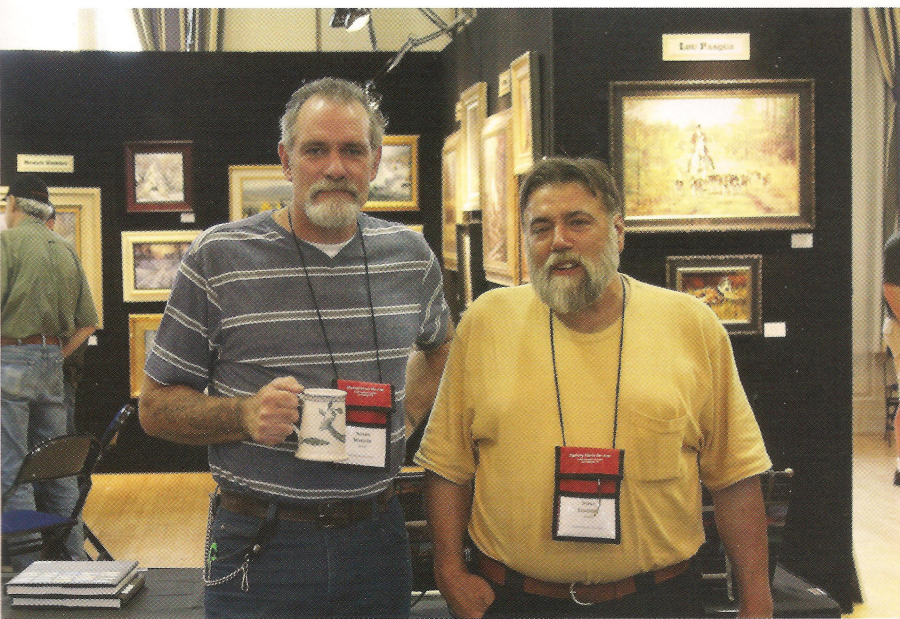
stories they don't know."

While author Jeff Shaara's work doesn't produce art, the research and methodology that goes into each of his historical novels parallels that

of HMTA's finest artists. A featured author at HMTA for several years, the New York Times bestselling author says he enjoys sharing his books with new audiences—especially

Steve Lodding's table showcases a variety of his work - A talented gunsmith, hornsmith, and maker of accoutrements.





Left: Artists Shawn Webster (left) and Steve Lodding (right). **Below-Left:** Artist Jonathan Stasko sketching at HMTA.

H. DAVID WRIGHT



H. DAVID WRIGHT

those who become friends.

"HMTA is very different than what I normally do," Shaara says. "My publisher sends me out through the country, to bookstores and libraries. What happens at a book shop is fairly anonymous—I'll sign books and then it's over. But at HMTA, I've made friends. I've met people and had great conversations."

Shaara, whose previous books delved into historical topics ranging from the American Revolution through World Wars I and II—including seven books on the Civil War—is releasing his 16th book in late May. *The Frozen Hours* explores new historical territory—the Korean War.

"It's very exciting because much like World War II, there are living veterans out there who were enormously helpful in providing material," Shaara explains. While *The Frozen Hours* is a novel, Shaara says he was careful to accurately portray those characters who are actual historical figures. "I'm really proud of the historical accuracy. I love telling people stories they don't know. And Korea is a story most people do not know."

"I focus on Inchon and Chosin Reservoir. Inchon was probably Douglas MacArthur's finest moment. Reservoir is an extraordinary story of survival. We were outnumbered six or eight to one and then the weather... it was the coldest weather to hit Korea in years... it produced the kind of heroism that needs to be told. People will be surprised at what these young men went through—they survived overwhelming odds and felt the sense of victory that comes from living to see another day," Shaara summarizes.

Shaara, a resident of Gettysburg, says HMTA has a reputation for showcasing the "best of the best.... The customers and the public have a high bar of expectation. I hope people will read my books and feel the same way."

"I found my books are being used to teach history in high school, and I was floored by that," says Shaara. "It adds to my responsibility to get it right. That integrity applies to every one of the artists that come to HMTA—to me that's a really positive thing."

Ken Grimes: "HMTA keeps history alive."

For the past five or six years, Ken Grimes of Ohio has put HMTA on his calendar every June, enjoying the 400-mile trip to Gettysburg with his wife, often bringing friends. "I love history, especially the time period through the French and Indian War and Lewis and Clark Expedition."

After the first visit, Grimes says he was hooked. "This sounds so cliché but there's something there for everybody at HMTA.... You don't have to know anything about art to enjoy it; they value artists but they also value authors, artisans and craftspeople; it's the only show I've been to that has that mix of people... a powder horn maker, potter, someone who makes knives—their craft is on balance with the artists," Grimes says.

He and his wife have a unique approach to their purchases. "She's the one who's knowledgeable about art; I'm the one who's knowledgeable about history, so we have a running joke that if we both love something then we have to buy it. I guess you could say we're the perfect match," Grimes says with a laugh.

"We have a room in our house that has become the HMTA room, our living room. Let's see, there are five paintings, two sculptures... quill work, powder horns. When I come home every day, I truly enjoy the artwork," says Grimes.

Grimes, a salesman who spends a lot of time on the road, incredibly, had never been to Gettysburg before attending HMTA. "We go for three days and do the whole thing. We've also visited the battlefield—there are so many cool historical things to do nearby. Last year I scheduled a business trip around it."

One of the facets of HMTA that Grimes most appreciates is its historical accuracy. For example, Grimes deeply admires the way Pamela Patrick White captures George Washington in her paintings. "There's no way you could paint him from life, but her paintings are his likeness; she's done her research—his clothes, accoutrements.... When you look at her work, you not only appreciate it for her talent but you appreciate it for all her homework. All the details are correct; HMTA absolutely keeps history alive."

Pamela Patrick White and Bryant White: "If you can connect to emotions, then you can pass along history."

Husband and wife, painters

Bryant and Pamela Patrick White both focus on 18th century American history including the French and Indian War, Colonial America, and the Revolutionary War.

"We focus on the untold stories of history... holes in history," Bryant says.

Married in 2001, the couple met through a shared interest in historical reenacting. Coincidentally, it wasn't until later that they learned they were both artists. Pamela was a book illustrator at the time, while Bryant was a graphic artist.

"After we married, we wanted to focus on historical art, so we changed careers and began painting what we truly loved," says Pamela. The couple paints together in a home studio in Bedford, Pennsylvania.

For Pamela, HMTA holds special meaning. "I've been doing the show about 15 years, and for many years, I was one of two women in the show which made it a little different for me. Typically, historical artwork is done by men, and I like to show other women that this is a viable career," she says.

As mentioned, she frequently paints George Washington. "He had a lot of dental problems," she explains. "Going through the war with that many dental problems—it was horrific. You read about his quiet side, the foods he ate... it all relates to the fact that the man had terrible teeth. He ignored his own physical pain in order to lead our country."

Pamela says Washington's situation would be alleviated today by something as simple as a trip to the dentist. "It's interesting to talk to people at HMTA about the hardships people endured, shown in our paintings. People constantly

say, 'I never knew....' If you can connect to emotions, then you can pass along history."

"That's really what we try to do—stir up interest from the public," Bryant agrees. "We very much enjoy the conversations with people at HMTA, sharing our knowledge to spark other folks' interest of what our ancestors and forefathers went through to create this country, from those signing the Declaration of Independence to those who sewed uniforms together for the army—everyone had a part in it."

Currently, Bryant is working on a new piece titled "The Veterans" that he'll be bringing to HMTA this June. "It features soldiers who are essentially looking towards the battlefield they've just left. What's important about this painting to me—the models I used are 11 reenactors who are actual veterans of our modern military, representing every branch of current service. I had the idea, but it's been years in planning and execution; I thought it was a way to honor both the military veterans of the Revolutionary war as well as our modern veterans. I haven't told all of them—it's going to be a surprise."

Even after 20 years, HMTA holds surprises for long-time attendees and new visitors alike, finding creative ways to celebrate American history in one of her most hallowed locations. **M**

History Meets the Arts

June 9-11, 2017

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