Friends of the North Leverett Sawmill LETTER OF SUPPORT

MA 250 Grants Program hosted by the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism (MOTT).

SLARROW SAWMILL programming

9 August 2024

To The Executive Office of Economic Development (EOED) through the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism (MOTT)

The Leverett Historical Commission supports the Friends of the North Leverett Sawmill (FONLS)’s innovative program which has a direct connection to the American Revolution in Massachusetts, through a creative approach to celebrating the nation’s semiquincentennial in 2026 and increasing tourism in the western part of the state.

The FONLS grant proposal will focus on the lives of Major Richard Montague (Washington’s Continental Army) and Capt. Joseph Slarrow (Leader of Leverett’s Revolutionary War Militia) through a reenactment at the Sawmill property Heritage Park and a staged reading at the Sawmill of the two men talking. It will be written by local Pioneer Valley residents and performed at the mill and Baptist Church (across from the sawmill) location using archival material from the Leverett Historical Society, the Baptist Church and research by Will Melton, Dave Palmer, and others and filmed for inclusion in the museum and on-line to raise awareness of the Pioneer Valley’s importance to the revolutionary cause.

Maj. Montague was a founder of the Baptist Society of Montague and Leverett, while Slarrow was a Presbyterian in a town and colony where Puritanism ruled. The performances will emphasize the importance of the timber industry and mill to the ongoing development of the local economy as well as the passion and commitment to new forms of community, New England’s primacy as a model for western migration, its economic vitality, revolutionary political and social relationships that were unique to America.  At the January 11, 1777 Leverett Town Meeting, those present “*voted unanimously we Risqué our Lives and Fortunes in Defense of our Rights and Liberties wherewith God and Nature hath made us Free…”* The Massachusetts 250 program will bring additional tourism by highlighting this period of our nation’s history to mill enthusiasts and the general population.

The Leverett Historical Commission has recently sponsored several presentations of our historical sites each with a virtual component consisting of slides, video, and expert speakers with subsequent on-site visits in a series call “A Sense of Where You Are, Finding and Interpreting Mill Foundations in the Landscape”. 60% of those attending both the Slarrow Sawmill presentation and the presentation about the Graves Iron Works, the area proposed to become the Heritage Park, were from outside Leverett. Much of the history of these two sites has been documented as a result of these programs. This includes the current state of the sites and their artifacts as well as historical maps, deeds and other public records that trace their history. As a result, residents have become excited about ways to make their history more accessible to all both locally and more distantly.

Through the New England branch of the Society of Industrial Archaeology, the Friends of the North Leverett Sawmill are looking to participate in a collaborative effort to bring the public to historical industrial sites both digitally and physically through the national leadership of SIA. <https://industrialhistorynewengland.org/> The idea of an “industrial history” trail in Massachusetts and surrounding states, based on a successful initiative in Germany is under discussion and planning.

The Commission’s mandate is to educate, engage, and promote knowledge of Leverett historical assets through interpretive programs, documentation, and community outreach. We believe that the distinct character of Leverett today is shaped by its past; that our history helps inform Leverett’s identity and can provide a guide to its future. We support this project because it will increase interest in Leverett’s, Massachusetts and American history at a moment in time in which “Witness Properties” are increasingly rare.

Thank you for your support of this worthy proposal!

Respectfully,

**The Leverett Historical Commission**