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Contact: Sheri Leahan, Director

Norlands Receives Funding From General Mills to Conserve Washburn Family Portraits

Livermore, Maine – The Washburn-Norlands Living History Center in Livermore is pleased to announce that it has received a \$40,000 gift from General Mills through its foundation. The funds will be used to conserve up to 32 historical oil portraits of the Washburn Family.

The 19th-century portraits are one of the most valuable educational collections at the Norlands, which uses the paintings to share the Washburn family's incredible accomplishments after living in poverty on a hardscrabble farm in rural Maine. "We are thrilled to have such generous support from General Mills. Our historic ties to the company go back to its founding, with Cadwallader Colden Washburn and the Washburn-Crosby Flouring Mills. These amazing portraits are at risk, and treatment will enable us to continue using them as a resource for illustrating the family's struggles and achievements with our visitors," commented Norlands director Sheri Leahan.



Among the 11 children born to Israel and Martha Washburn of Livermore were: two owners of flour mills, two state Governors, four Congressmen, one U.S. Senator, two foreign ministers, a secretary of state, president of the Soo Railroad, a Major General, a banker, an inventor, and three noted authors. Three of their sons served in Congress at the same time representing three different states. No other American family has

produced an equivalent level of political and business leadership in a single generation than that of the Washburns from Livermore, Maine.

"A long-term goal," noted Sheri Leahan, "is to create a catalog and traveling exhibit to showcase the family's contributions to American history and sense of the values and character strengths which led to their remarkable leadership and success. The portraits help us to understand 19th-century Maine and the nation's heritage." In addition to being excellent examples of late 19th-century American portraiture painted by professional painters of the time such as George Peter Alexander Healy, the paintings are still housed in their original, elaborate gilded frames. The frames themselves are a testament to the success and significance of the Washburn family and will also be restored along with the portraits over the next twelve months.



The connection to General Mills in Minneapolis runs deep and is directly linked to the Washburns – one in particular – who grew up on a rocky little farm in Livermore, Maine. In 1866, at the age of 48, Cadwallader Colden Washburn built a mill at St. Anthony Falls in Minneapolis and hired his younger brother, William Drew, to manage it. After losing the mill to an explosion from flour dust in 1878, he not only rebuilt a larger mill, but adopted new technology available at the time, such as ventilation, to make mills safer. He also partnered with John Crosby, from Bangor, Maine, to form the Washburn-Crosby Company.

In 1880, Washburn-Crosby entered several brands of their flour in a contest at the Miller's International Exhibition in Cincinnati, Ohio, and won the bronze, silver, and gold medal prizes. The brand that won the gold was renamed "Gold Medal Flour" and is still an industry leader today. In addition to being an entrepreneur, Cadwallader Colden Washburn served as

a Congressman in Wisconsin, Major General during the Civil War, and as Governor of Wisconsin. He died in 1882 at the age of 64. General Mills was created in 1928 when Washburn-Crosby president John Ford Bell merged Washburn-Crosby with 28 other mills.

“Because General Mills’ rich history is so closely tied to the Washburn family, we are very pleased to have the opportunity to support this important restoration project at the Norlands. We are excited to see the difference it will make for the organization and its priceless collection,” commented Mary Jane Melendez, Executive Director of the General Mills Foundation.



For more information, to stay updated or to support the project, please visit www.norlands.org/latest-news.html or follow the Washburn-Norlands Living History Center’s Facebook page.

Photographs:

- A. An 1885 oil portrait of Cadwallader Colden Washburn by professional portrait artist William F. Cogswell will be the first painting restored with funds from General Mills. Bandages keep flaking paint in place and prevent further damage.
- B. Cadwallader Colden Washburn (b.1818 d.1882) served as a Major General during the Civil War. He was a politician and businessman. He and his business partner entered their flours in the Miller’s International Exposition in Cincinnati in 1880 where they won the bronze, silver and gold medal prizes. The grand prize winning flour was rebranded “Gold Medal Flour.”
- C. Another portrait that will be restored is this one of William Drew Washburn, painted by George Peter Alexander Healy. Cadwallader’s younger brother, William Drew, eventually settled in Minneapolis and managed his brother’s mills for a time, built canals and developed his own lumbering and saw mills. He also owned his own flour mill - Washburn Mill Co. which became Pillsbury-Washburn LTD. General Mills acquired Pillsbury in 2001.