

—Slug:.....COMM-0875.rock.mtg_house_pilgmge
—Contributor.....
—Contributor email.....
—For section..... Town and Village
—Format..... News - no byline
—Dateline..... Rockingham
—Article Number:.....43984

Notes from editor (not for publication):

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

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1 Rockingham Meeting House Pilgrimage to commemorate
2 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of
3 Independence

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5 TEXT BODY:

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6 The Rockingham Meeting House Association invites the
7 public to join in the Annual Pilgrimage to the historic
8 Rockingham Meeting House as the community continues to
9 commemorate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the
10 Declaration of Independence.

11 This year's Pilgrimage is especially meaningful,
12 organizers wrote in a news release, because it takes place on
13 Sunday, Aug. 2 — the very day, 250 years ago, when members of
14 the Continental Congress began signing the parchment copy of
15 the Declaration of Independence.

16 While July 4 marks the adoption of the Declaration's text,
17 it was Aug. 2, 1776, when most delegates gathered to sign the
18 document. By signing, they publicly pledged "their Lives, their
19 Fortunes and their sacred Honor" in support of American
20 independence.

21 The Rockingham Meeting House Pilgrimage will
22 commemorate this historic milestone through a program of
23 remembrance, music, storytelling, and community fellowship set
24 against the backdrop of one of Vermont's most important
25 Revolutionary-era landmarks.

26 The program begins with a fife and drum group who will
27 muster visitors to the Meeting House cemetery. There, the
28 community will honor Rockingham's Revolutionary War veterans,
29 including local men who fought at the Battle of Bunker Hill,
30 paying tribute to the courage and sacrifice of those who helped
31 secure the nation's independence.

32 Inside the Meeting House, Revolutionary-era music will
33 set the tone for a public reading of the Declaration of
34 Independence, allowing visitors to hear the words that inspired a
35 revolution on the very anniversary of the document's signing.

36 The program will also feature "A New American—The
37 Tale of Deborah Sampson," a dramatic presentation celebrating
38 the extraordinary life of the only woman to receive a military
39 pension for 18 months of service in the Continental Army. Born
40 into poverty and determined to make her own way in the world,
41 Sampson became a teacher, a skilled weaver, and ultimately a
42 soldier disguised as a man to enlist in the Continental Army.

43 After the war, she became one of America's earliest
44 female public lecturers, sharing her remarkable story at a time
45 when women's voices were rarely heard on the public stage.

46 The Pilgrimage concludes with a community sing-along
47 of familiar patriotic songs celebrating freedom, unity, and the
48 enduring ideals of the American Revolution.

49 The Annual Pilgrimage has long been a cherished
50 Rockingham tradition, bringing together residents and visitors to
51 reflect on the nation's founding while celebrating the Meeting
52 House's place in Vermont and American history. This year's
53 observance offers a rare opportunity to commemorate a
54 milestone that is often overshadowed by Independence Day
55 itself.

56 The event is free and open to everyone. Lifelong
57 residents, students of history, and visitors to the Rockingham
58 Meeting House for the first time are all warmly invited to
59 participate in this memorable community celebration of the
60 people, principles, and sacrifices that gave birth to the United
61 States.

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