

Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum honors Black History Month with special tours, costumed interpreter

In honor of Black History Month, the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum in Wethersfield will offer a special tour focusing on the enslaved and free African Americans who lived in town during the 18th century, as well as a performance by a costumed interpreter who will take on the character of a former Wethersfield slave.

On Feb. 9 and 23, the museum will host tours that provide a unique look at the struggles and triumphs of the African Americans who resided in Wethersfield, including in the Joseph Webb and Silas Deane houses.

Visitors will hear the inspiring stories of many African Americans, such as Quash Gomer, who was captured in Angola and became a slave in Wethersfield. He later bought his freedom from his owner, married Elenor Smith and had 10 children. The tour will also reveal the Revolutionary War's impact on slavery.

Tammy D. Richardson, a storyteller/teaching artist and performer, will debut her new character of Clo Pratt, a Wethersfield slave who was given her freedom upon the death of her master, on Feb. 23 at 2 p.m. in the Silas Deane house. Richardson will provide an intimate look at a woman who earned a living making and selling cloth and working in the homes of Wethersfield's most affluent residents.

Growing up, Richardson spent countless hours with her mother (a former enslaved person) and grandmother, both of whom lived past their 100th birthdays. Both of these women were known storytellers and passed the gift to their granddaughter.

Richardson specializes in reenactments of the lives of important – yet little-known – women in history. She plays a variety of characters, including Bessie Coleman, the first internationally licensed pilot in the world, and Elizabeth Keckley, a former enslaved woman who became a dressmaker and confidant to Mary Todd Lincoln. She also works as a museum educator at the Connecticut Historical Society and the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum, where she instructs children through stories about Colonial life, slavery and Native American history.

The tours will take place from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Feb. 9 and Feb. 23. Tours leave every 30 minutes; the last tour begins at 3:30 p.m. A 2 p.m. performance will be held Feb. 23. The cost for the three-house tour is \$8 for adults, \$7 for seniors over 60, AAA members and those active in the military, and \$4 for students and children ages 5-18. \$20 per family (two adults and children). The performance by Tammy Richardson costs \$20. This price includes the performance, a tour of the museum and a dessert reception. Reservations are required. Call 529-0612, ext. 12 to reserve a seat. The tours will take place at Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum, 211 Main St., Wethersfield.

For more information, visit www.webb-deane-stevens.org or call 529-0612.