The Cyrus Dallin Art Museum Marks its 20th Year
by Geraldine Tremblay, Museum Co-Founder

The Cyrus Dallin Art Museum opened with two galleries on a bright and beautiful Sunday, October 18, 1998. The gala attracted 200 visitors; not only Arlingtonians but Dallin family members. Jean Dallin Doherty, the family’s matriarch, Glenn Doherty, Ken Doherty, Crombie (Bob) Dallin and Judith Cutts, grandchildren and great grandchildren of Cyrus and Vittoria Colonna, joined the festivities for the ribbon cutting and reception in the Whittemore Robbins House.

In 1982, the Cyrus Dallin Committee was established to search the Town’s shelves and closets for artwork by the internationally known sculptor. I had been invited to join the Committee by my brother Stephen Gilligan, then Chairman of the Board of Selectmen. Jim McGough was looking for museum professionals to collaborate in establishing a museum. The day of the Museum’s opening, Stephen Gilligan presented a small-scale, pewter replica of Dallin’s Menotomy Hunter in recognition of the committee’s efforts. Bob Dallin surprised us with the gift of a portrait bust of himself, Crombie Sawyer Dallin, as a child.

Today, the Museum exhibits over ninety-three works of art, including sculptures, paintings, coins and medals. Personal items of Cyrus, Vittoria Colonna and their sons are in the collection because of the Dallin family’s generosity. Archival photos and manuscripts from Rell G. Francis, author of two Cyrus Dallin biographies, have been donated by the Francis family.

Great ideas and hard work from many talented people have established four galleries at the Jefferson Cutter House. This has been quite a challenge to our boards, volunteers and supporters, and well worth everyone’s effort and dedication.

Thank you for walking this path with the Cyrus Dallin Art Museum.

Lakota Youth Visit the Dallin Museum
by Heather Leavell, Director/Curator

On July 31st, Dallin Museum staff and volunteers were thrilled to host a group of Oglala Sioux, ages 10-15, from the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota for a tour of the museum and a sculpture workshop. The group was participating in an eight-day, fun-filled trip to the Boston area as part of the Lakota YouthStay Program. Based in Medford, Massachusetts, YouthStay provides Pine Ridge youth with the opportunity to explore the world beyond the reservation and build trusting relationships with non-Native host families.

Pine Ridge is considered one of the most underserved communities in the United States, with limited educational, cultural and social opportunities for young people. The YouthStay experience is meant to inspire its participants to feel hopeful about their futures and to continue to learn and grow to achieve their goals. We hope the YouthStay visit to the Dallin Museum will become an annual tradition!
The Dallin Museum has called the Jefferson Cutter House home for 20 years. This is all thanks to a generous donation by the Mirak family. In 1989, the Miraks donated the Museum’s building to the Town of Arlington to make way for the expansion of their car dealership. The family still plays an important role in sustaining the Dallin Museum, as well as many other organizations in Arlington.

Rob Mirak is the current Dealer Principal at Mirak Automotive, having taken over for his father Ed Mirak when he retired in 2007. Rob is a major supporter of the Museum’s annual Summer Soiree fundraiser. We sat down with him to talk about his family’s history of giving back to the community.

Dallin Museum: Tell us a bit about your grandfather, John Mirak, founder of Mirak Automotive.

Rob: John came to the U.S. around 1915 to escape the Armenian genocide, which had orphaned him. My grandfather didn’t graduate from high school, but he went to automotive school and was a hard worker. John had a job as a mechanic at Arlington Center Garage in the early 1930s and soon partnered there. He eventually started his own company, Mirak Chevrolet. He respected his community, and they respected him. He spent many days walking up and down Mass Ave, just talking to local community members and friends, deepening connections. John had tremendous gratitude for the fact that he was able to achieve the American Dream and was humble about his success. He was also a good family man. He loved to fish, and I have fond memories of summers spent in Maine.

Dallin Museum: It sounds like your grandfather started the tradition of Mirak Automotive giving back to the community. In addition to the Dallin Museum, what other causes does Mirak Automotive support?

Rob: Yes, we believe giving back to the community helps us have a strong relationship with the town and with our customers. We like to focus on giving to organizations that benefit kids and education. We’ve given to the Arlington Education Fund, Spring Fling, Arlington school sports teams, the soap box derby, and initiatives at Dana Farber, among others.

Dallin Museum: We are so grateful for your support. Why do you value the Dallin Museum?

Rob: Without arts, what would any community be? Plus, we have to celebrate this Arlington celebrity (Dallin). I think young students can have pride in their town when they learn about the legacy of Cyrus Dallin. The fact that the museum is housed in a historic building makes the experience that much more special. I also love how it has a space for local artists to exhibit their work. The museum put up an exhibition that included my grandmother’s art, which was a wonderful opportunity for my family. I think it’s just a great space for education, exploration, and growth.

Summer Soiree Recap

The Dallin Museum’s 2018 Summer Soiree was a great success! Thanks to everyone involved, we raised $23,000 to support museum programs, collections care, and operations.

This year’s new venue, the Woburn Country Club, was the perfect setting to expand on last year’s very popular French theme. The Soiree featured the tastes, sights, and sounds of a “Bal-Musette Parisien” (French social dance) in honor of the city that launched Cyrus Dallin’s career as an internationally acclaimed sculptor. Guests enjoyed a repertoire of iconic French standards developed exclusively for the Soiree by the talented musicians of Musette Suzette, while indulging in French-inspired hors d’oeuvres, desserts, and signature cocktails.

Arlington Selectman Kevin Greeley spoke from the heart about the importance of the Dallin Museum to the community, and his entertaining emceeing helped make our silent auction a big success.

Thank you to all of our sponsors, donors, guests, and volunteers for your commitment to the Dallin Museum!
Many talented and generous people have made The Cyrus Dallin Museum a reality over the past twenty years. But, the museum might not be here at all if it wasn’t for one burning question James McGough had, and the subsequent journey the answer led him on.

In the summer of 1970, Mr. McGough opened a barbershop opposite Arlington Town Hall. He was curious who created the iconic flagstaff adjacent to the Town Hall and asked customers about it. Board of Selectmen Member Arthur Saul discovered that the sculpture was by Cyrus E. Dallin.

James recalls, “I never heard of him… I suggested a plaque of some sort should be placed near the sculpture to let visitors know who [created it] and what the figures represent.”

It wasn’t until 1979, with funds from the state lottery, that the town was able to commission the plaque. During this process, Arlington created the Cyrus Dallin Committee to search town buildings and inventory any works of art it found. James served as committee chair.

Board President Geri Tremblay recalls that the committee found an astonishing number of artworks, all in various states of disrepair. While the committee raised funds to restore and conserve these treasures, James even stored a Dallin sculpture at his barbershop!

Once roughly $35,000 was raised, restoration began. As James McGough puts it, “What a privilege an uneducated, shy, introvert, who was simply a barber, received when he was able to bring broken, dirty, severely damaged sculptures to the world-famous Fogg Museum of Art at Harvard University in Cambridge”

Who is to say where the body of work of this famous sculptor would be today, if it wasn’t for a curious barber named James McGough?

“The sculpture workshop was challenging and fun,” Maikole Carlow, Age 12

“My favorite is the one where the native is holding a long bow…I like to shoot bows and arrows,” Chris Red Owl, Age 15

“I liked] that Dallin was an artist and he reminds me of my dad who is an artist,” Quinton Maldonado, Age 12

“Amazing! It’s nice to see my culture in a public museum,” Jessie White Face, Age 12

“I love the way that he explains how Native people are important,” Carteechia Jumping Eagle, Age 12

“All of the sculptures [were my favorite]. They’re all amazing,” Tsenesa Ducheneaux, Age 13 (left)
During this season of charitable giving, we once again call on your generous spirits!

Our ambitious plans for the coming year include:

- Expanding the group tour program
- Increasing our newsletter from twice to four times a year
- Installing a new exhibit featuring Cyrus Dallin's paintings
- Employing new forms of technology to improve the visitor experience both within the museum and outside our walls

Art on the Green 2018 by Charles Luca

Each September, during Arlington's Town Day celebration, the Dallin Museum hosts the Art on the Green (AOTG) event. AOTG continues Cyrus Dallin's vision of integrating art into the local community. AOTG features a host of local artists and artisans to sell their handmade works to the many visitors who came through the Whittemore Park during that day.

Arlingtonians love to come by to meet the local authors that Dick Haley brings to the event, to listen to the classical music that Robin Henzer and her musicians play, to enjoy the Poetry Readings in the Garden with Arlington Poet Laureate, and to browse and buy the special handworks of artists.

We are grateful to the John Mirak foundation for its generous sponsorship of Art on the Green.

Bring Your Group to the Dallin Museum!

We welcome groups of all ages and interests to experience the beauty of Cyrus Dallin’s sculptures and the fascinating stories behind them with a knowledgeable, friendly docent. If you belong to, or know of, a group that would enjoy a private tour, please contact Nancy Blanton at nblanton@dallin.org or 781-641-0747. Tours are a $10 per person suggested donation and last approximately one hour. Ample metered parking is available in the municipal lot behind the museum.