



NEWS RELEASE

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19th-Century Children's Circus at Dickinson Museum July 1

AMHERST, Mass.—The Emily Dickinson Museum will celebrate the 150th anniversary of The Evergreens from 1 to 4 p.m. on Saturday, July 1, with “‘Creatures of Bliss and Mystery’: A 19th-Century Children’s Circus and Open House.” The festivities are free and open to the public. During the event visitors will also be able to take the museum’s new visitor tour, “This was a Poet” at half-price.

The museum’s circus attractions will include tightrope walking, stilt walking, a ring toss, face painting and a magic show by historical magician Robert Olsen, who will perform famous feats from the 19th century.

“Inspired by a traveling circus, the Dickinson children put together their own version of a backyard circus with the help of their friends. The tree swing easily became a trapeze, the neighborhood pets became the circus menagerie, and a board laid across barrels turned into circus horses,” Jane Wald, the museum’s director of resources and collections, explained. “Our program, which coincides with the museum’s annual Amherst Day, will honor the spirit of the children, while educating the public about the collections and importance of The Evergreens to the Dickinson legacy.”

The Evergreens was built by Edward Dickinson, Emily and Austin’s father, on the occasion of Austin’s marriage to Susan Gilbert, which took place on July 1, 1856. The home, just west of the Homestead, was designed by well-known Northampton builder and architect William Fenno Pratt. The Evergreens is one of the earliest and best-preserved examples of Italianate domestic architecture in Amherst, and under the direction of Susan Dickinson, the home became a center of the town’s social and cultural life, reflecting the wide-ranging aesthetic and intellectual interests of the entire family.

“This was a Poet,” a new visitor experience introduced this year, is an introduction to Emily Dickinson and her poetry. The new tour is suitable for families with children and for visitors whose interest in Dickinson is just beginning. Visitors tour The Homestead to learn about the poet’s daily life and to experience the power of her work. Roughly 30 minutes long, the tour concludes outside with a short poetry reading under the Homestead’s oak tree.

The Emily Dickinson Museum, 280 Main Street, comprising the Dickinson Homestead and The Evergreens, two historic houses in Amherst, is devoted to the story and legacy of poet Emily Dickinson and her family. Merged into a single museum in 2003, both properties are owned by the Trustees of Amherst College. For more information Please visit the Emily Dickinson Museum’s website.

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