



Calvin Coolidge
CALVIN COOLIDGE PRESIDENTIAL FOUNDATION

Chairman's Report

Annual Meeting

July 3, 2018

Report of the Chairman to the Members, Annual Meeting 2018

If the spirit of liberty should vanish in other parts of the Union, and support of our institutions should languish, it could all be replenished from the generous store held by the people of this brave little state of Vermont. – Calvin Coolidge

Long ago, the board and members of the Calvin Coolidge Presidential Foundation undertook to “go national.” That is, to task our Foundation, which had so long served the memory of President Coolidge in Vermont, with the additional work of elevating the name, values and historical record of the thirtieth president across the nation. Many Americans can find inspiration in Coolidge’s habit of bipartisan civility. As Washington confronts its fiscal challenge, Coolidge’s record of budgetary probity couldn’t be timelier.

There are two ways the Calvin Coolidge Presidential Foundation is going national. The first is to develop programming at Plymouth Notch that draws people from across the country to the Notch. The second is to go to the customer. That is, to expand our programs outside of Vermont so that adults and young people in the 50 states learn about Coolidge, and find themselves drawn to Coolidge, his ideas, or the place he started out, Plymouth. Because resources are scarce, we cannot reach all. Therefore we emphasize young people, especially policy-oriented pre-college teens, who are natural multipliers.

Before delineating our programs, we must mention our partner, the State of Vermont. Especially key to this partnership is William Jenney, who is in his thirtieth year serving as site administrator for the President Calvin Coolidge State Historic Site. This year Mr. Jenney curated a special exhibit about the Coolidge summer white houses. Year round, Mr. Jenney collaborates with the Foundation executive director, Matt Denhart, in planning and executing complex events. In addition, we thank Laura Trieschmann, Vermont’s State Historic Preservation Officer. Together with Ms. Trieschmann, the Foundation developed a holiday ornament produced by Vermont’s own Danforth Pewter, which is sold in our stores. Our vice-chair Jim Douglas, who served four terms as governor of Vermont, has proven an invaluable leader to the Foundation. We appreciate all Vermonters’ support and are eager to strengthen this already-substantial partnership. In 2017, Senators Alison Clarkson, Alice Nitka and Dick McCormack along with Representative Charles Kimbell sponsored a concurrent resolution honoring the Foundation’s scholarship work.

The Foundation’s work to draw visitors starts with seasonal events at the Notch. This year the Foundation plans to offer several new events. On July 3, **fireworks** will come back to the Notch after a long hiatus. Our annual Coolidge summer gala also takes place July 3, with State Historic Preservation Officer Laura Trieschmann as keynote speaker.

Coolidge prized citizenship. As Coolidge said: “Whether one traces his Americanism back three centuries to the *Mayflower*, or three years of the steerage, is not half so important as whether his Americanism of to-day is real and genuine. No matter by what various crafts we came here, we are all now in the same boat.” On July 4, we will host our fifth annual naturalization ceremony with Judge J. Garvan Murtha presiding as America welcomes twenty new citizens. Jennifer Sayles Harville, the great-granddaughter of President Coolidge will sing the National Anthem and Castleton University’s Bill

Wiles will lead all in singing all the stanzas of "God Bless America." Also on the Fourth, the Vermont National Guard will again join us to lead a procession to the cemetery for a wreath-laying ceremony.

Old Home Day takes place August 4. The Foundation will be sponsoring its annual **reenactment of the 1923 Homestead Inauguration**. All are encourage to attend.

Come autumn, the Foundation and Site host the **First Annual Coolidge 5K** on October 6 at the Notch. The event will also include, of course, the 'I Do Not Choose to Run' one-mile walk option (start time, 10:00 a.m.). The race kicks off the annual Plymouth Notch Apple Fest, organized by the Division for Historic Preservation. For more information, see the Coolidge website or contact debate director and race chairman, Jared Rhoads, at jrroads@coolidgefoundation.org.

Under the leadership of education director Diane Kemble the Foundation continues to host hundreds of Vermont school children each year on **History Exploration** visits to the Historic Site. The Education Director report, below in Appendix A, nicely summarizes education program activities this year. We thank Diane for all her efforts, and we also thank the volunteer docents for their tireless support, especially Marvie Campbell, Nick Cassone, Mary Dumas, Pat Graves, Terry Gulick, Dennis Hagan, Kathy Jacob, Kathy Lynds, Bob Snarski, and Joan Wise.

Calvin Coolidge loved **debate**. The shy boy found his footing through the sport. The formality of competition electrified the young man. "Perhaps my dress suit lent me inspiration as it was the first time I ever wore one," he wrote after a banquet at which he spoke while still in college. "There is nothing in the world gives me so much pleasure as to feel I have made a good speech." This year marks the sixth summer of Coolidge debate and the fifth of debate at the Notch solely under the auspices of this Foundation. Our debates are nonpartisan. They focus on Constitutional principles and economics, the emphases of President Coolidge. All debaters learn something about Calvin Coolidge, and most argue from briefs that include his principles. This year, for the third time, the Foundation hosts the annual Coolidge Cup, with a \$7,500 scholarship prize for the winner. Nearly 60 debaters will come from across the country and get to know the Notch. Topics in the past have been immigration and tariffs. The topic this year is Capitalism vs. Socialism. A good share of these debaters come to the Notch on scholarships provided by the Foundation via your gifts.

To introduce young people to the Notch, we also host one-day debate clinics for individual schools. This year we hosted, for the third time, Salisbury School in Salisbury, Connecticut. Come August, Coolidge plays host for the fourth time to ProVizion School, a school based in Houston. Expanding our clinics, this year we also hosted Excel Academy, a Boston charter school. All tested the wares of the Plymouth Cheese Factory.

The Coolidge Foundation has also expanded its debate work outside the Notch substantially. We conduct preliminary debates in various cities. In January, some 200 debaters participated in the Coolidge Cup qualifying tournament in New York City, and in February more than 20,000 debaters across the country debated the Foundation-sponsored public forum debate topic on tax policy using briefs and research materials provided by the Coolidge Foundation. This was possible thanks to a partnership with the National Speech and Debate Association.

This past winter the Coolidge Foundation launched a new undertaking: creating a league. Our partners are the schools sponsored by philanthropist and entrepreneur Bob Luddy in Raleigh, North Carolina. Children from these charter, independent and parochial schools of Raleigh, N.C. are educated in the classroom and after school by our instructors, learn about Coolidge, and debate the topics he loved. Four Coolidge Debate tournaments have been hosted in Raleigh since last October.

Our second large program is the **Coolidge Scholarship**. The Coolidge Scholarship is a full-ride four-year scholarship for academic merit to any accredited American college or university a candidate chooses. The logic behind such a scholarship is twofold. The first goal is to introduce Coolidge to young people in a way they will remember. The scholarship honors Coolidge values, especially an interest in debate, civil bipartisanship, and an appreciation for federalism and restrained government. The second intention of the Coolidge Scholars program is to highlight the importance of academic merit, a principle dear to the president. We aim for this scholarship, nicknamed “the Coolidge,” to be on par with Oxford’s Rhodes Scholarship when it comes to prestige. Sticklers will be pleased to note recipients of “the Coolidge” are selected based purely upon academics and a demonstrated interest in public policy. Coolidge himself held back when it came to athletic pursuits. “I held the stakes,” he said wryly once, describing to someone how he participated in sports as a youngster. We pour what resources we have into the scholarship itself, rather than marketing or market research. The wager is that the sheer value of the scholarship will sell itself.

As it turns out, that is proving a good wager. In our third year, we saw proof of concept. Some 23,000 young people registered to apply for the 2017 Coolidge Scholarship, of which 3,200 completed the entirety of the application process. The application itself is rigorous: Candidates must read Coolidge’s *Autobiography* (for sale in our gift shop), pen two essays (one of them about the *Autobiography*), elicit two recommendations, and supply their transcripts and resumes.

It has been clear both this year and last that not only the money but also the Coolidge connection attracts the students. As one candidate wrote in 2016: “My current teacher refers to Coolidge as an insignificant president, but, for me, a president willing to uphold America’s moral principles is unforgettable.” Wrote another: “Calling this opportunity the Coolidge ‘Scholarship’ is quite humble, as it carries not only the financing of college education but real world values that cannot be obtained anywhere else.”

Handling this many candidates well and respectfully takes incredible work. The Coolidge Foundation staff, led by executive director Matt Denhart, conducts a rigorous, multi-stage review process. Ten semifinals juries – held in Houston, Memphis, New York, Boston, Woodstock, Palm Beach, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C., and Chicago – met to evaluate the top 100 candidates. These juries and the Foundation then recommended one finalist each to the finals committee. That committee was led by former governor Jim Douglas. Also judging in the final round were Coolidge Trustee Rick Hough (a cofounder of another scholarship venture, the Children’s Scholarship Fund, Professor Wilfred McClay of the University of Oklahoma, Judge Edith Jones of the Fifth Circuit, former Judge Janice Rogers Brown of the D.C. Circuit, Coolidge Trustees and University of Baltimore President Kurt Schmoke, John W. Childs, and founder of the National Notary Association, Milt Valera. All of the finalists, this year 12, spent a weekend at the Notch – with a parent. They declaim in Coolidge’s church and write an onsite essay about an aspect of Coolidge’s legacy. Currently, finalists who do not win the Scholarship itself receive a \$5,000 award, so that they leave the Notch, and Coolidge, with knowledge they are deeply appreciated.

We are proud to announce that the 2018 Coolidge Scholars include: Phillip Meng of Vancouver, Washington; Matthew Muellner of Omaha, Nebraska; Katherine Sylvester of Bethesda, Maryland; and Alison Xin of Solon, Ohio. Last year's winners were Neha Seshadri of Michigan, Elissa Morgan of Georgia and Joshua Kim of California. The pioneer class of scholars were Regan Brady, Samuel Reddick and Joshua Moriarty. Regan and Josh attend Harvard University and Sam attends Rice University. Neha will attend Harvard, Elissa will attend Grove City College, and Josh Kim will attend the University of Chicago. For the Fourth of July, our winning Scholars will be at the Notch—please greet them when you see them. They are also getting a thorough tour of New England, including a visit to the Massachusetts State House led by Coolidge vice chair Robert Cerasoli, and a hike at Mount Washington.

Choosing among the Coolidge candidates proved so difficult that two years ago the Foundation developed another new program for our top 50 competitors, Senators' Weekend in Washington. In August, we bring as many of the top 100 finalists as we can fund to learn about our government in the nation's capital. Our students stay at the Willard Hotel, the Coolidges' home during the vice presidential period, visiting the U.S. Capitol, Supreme Court, Decatur House, and, of course, Mt. Vernon. They learn in detail about the Coolidge presidency and hear from entrepreneurs about business and Washington. This year students will hear from Commonwealth Attorney for Arlington County and the City of Falls Church, Theo Stamos. Among their tour guides last year was former congressman Robert Carr. Please consider sponsoring a Senator (\$1,800 each) so he or she can join this memorable trip to Washington. The weekend is a way to connect youth to Coolidge – forever.

One sign that we are succeeding in creating a connection between Coolidge, the Notch and young people is that a number return to the Notch for the Fourth. Additional events of the Foundation outside the Notch include hosting our juries across the country – trustees and friends of the Foundation as far away as San Francisco have opened their homes or offices to Coolidge semifinal judges. Our Christmas gala in New York hosted nearly 200 last December, with Coolidge trustee and entrepreneur Bob Luddy speaking on the Coolidge theme of entrepreneurship. This year's gala will take place at the Union League Club in New York on December 10. The speaker is Robert Zimmer, the president of the University of Chicago.

Representing Coolidge ourselves is also part of our work. In the past two years, on the Foundation's behalf, I have spoken in many places across the nation on Coolidge, including Santa Maria (Ca.), Santa Barbara (Ca.), Asheville, N.C, Cullowhee, N.C., Boca Grande, Fla., Birmingham, Raleigh, Dallas, Grand Rapids, Hartford, Seattle and Geneva, Switzerland. This year an essay on Calvin, Jr.'s death by me appeared in the White House Historical Association's special issue of its Quarterly, "Death in the White House." One way we keep in touch with readers is through the Coolidge Quarterly, whose recent issue featured the history of tariff's in Cuba's day, including an interview with Latin America expert and *Wall Street Journal* columnist Mary O'Grady. Recently Oxford University Press published "When Life Strikes the President," a volume on presidents confronting personal crisis, to which I contributed a chapter on the loss of Calvin, Jr., the president's son, during the time at the White House. Executive director Matt Denhart has spoken repeatedly on Coolidge around the country, most especially on Coolidge's policy in an area of Matt's expertise, Coolidge and immigration. The sense the staff gets on our forays is that the country is only waiting for this president. We hope to expand our work outside the Notch while remaining true to our base.

In keeping with our local-national theme, the Foundation features both local and national trustees. Among New Englanders we count Heidi Eldred of Hanover, Roby Harrington of Dorset, Art Crowley of Rutland, Governor Jim Douglas (Middlebury), Tom Lovett (headmaster of St. Johnsbury Academy), Bob Cerasoli (Boston) and Christopher Coolidge Jeter (Connecticut and Plymouth). Professor John Tomasi, of Brown University was born, grew up, and returns often to Vermont. The same is true of Professor Thomas Cooley, former dean of the NYU-Stern School of Business. We are pleased to welcome as new national trustees Alan Hassenflu of Houston, Jenny McCain of Birmingham, and E. David Coolidge of Chicago.

One reason we are able to undertake so much is the work of executive director Mathew Denhart. Former intern Rob Hammer, an alumnus of Matt's own Ohio University, now serves as program manager. Recently Jared Rhoads, a scholar of health policy and graduate of Dartmouth's Master's program in Public Health, joined our staff to lead debate and activities. In addition, office administrator John William Ferrell is here to serve you and Coolidge. Joining us shortly as administrative help will be part-timer Angela Shepherd. Educator Diane Kemble continues, year after year, to inspire hundreds of Vermonters through our education programs. Please greet these Coolidge team members when you see them.

Board members and supporters will be around for the weekend. We at the Foundation would like to thank not only members of this board, but also the town of Plymouth and the state of Vermont, for their tremendous support. The Coolidge family, including Jenny Sayles Harville, John Sayles, Christopher Coolidge Jeter and Edward Jeter, have been supportive at every turn. Thanks to the work of many friends present and future, we are confident that the Foundation can do yet more in coming years.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Amity Shlaes".

Amity Shlaes
Chairman, Board of Trustees

APPENDIX A: Education Director's Update

“Thank you so very much for facilitating and leading our wonderful visit to Plymouth Notch. My students feel a deep connection to and pride in Calvin Coolidge now.”

Kate Kane, Bellows Falls 4th Grade Teacher

The addition of user-friendly vintage desks takes visitors back in time when they visit the Plymouth Notch Schoolhouse. One new information panel tells of the schools Coolidge attended and another shows school photographs from Plymouth. As well as hands-on activities, exhibits in the schoolhouse include *Coolidge and Civil Rights* as well as *The Flood of 1927 and Coolidge's Vermont is a State I Love* speech, coming up on its 90th anniversary this September. All students visit the Schoolhouse and it is open during special event days and Thursday and Saturday afternoons, staffed by volunteers. 45 students, including 15 from Spain, took part in on-site programs last fall, 307 students, their teachers and parents visited this spring. 85 students participated in Outreach Programs and 50 students are scheduled so far this summer.

Special event days such as July 4th, Old Home Day, Antique Apple Festival, and Holiday Open House are wonderful opportunities to draw in visitors of all ages to learn about Coolidge's life and times. It's terrific working with Bill Jenney and CCPF Staff on programs. Many thanks to volunteer docents, Marvie Campbell, Nick Cassone, Mary Dumas, Pat Graves, Terry Gulick, Dennis Hagan, Kathy Jacob, Kathy Lynds, Bob Snarski, and Joan Wise as well as CCPF Office Staff, who join me in leading History Exploration Visits at the Coolidge Site.

Diane Kemble, Education Director

6/30/18