

# “Opium: The Business of Addiction” Opens at Forbes House Museum

*Innovative Collaboration Connects the 19th Century to Present*

MILTON, MASSACHUSETTS, UNITED STATES, July 7, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Forbes House Museum, at 215 Adams Street, welcomes visitors to its new exhibition, “Opium: The Business of Addiction.” The exhibition traces the Forbes family’s involvement in the 19th century opium trade, the trade’s links to the current opioid epidemic, and its lasting impact on US-China relations.

“We hope this exhibition sheds new light on a period of history that’s often misunderstood or overlooked. While the museum’s collection offers a tangible link to the China Trade, this is the first time we’ve focused on the opium trade. We invite visitors to explore how extensively it has shaped the world we live in today,” said Heidi Vaughan, executive director of the museum.



Opium: The Business of Addiction tells the story of the Forbes family's involvement in the 19th century opium trade, its links to the current opioid epidemic, and its lasting impact on US-Sino relations.

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*Heidi Vaughan, Executive Director of the Forbes House Museum*

In collaboration with the Milton Public Library and The Milton Coalition, an organization dedicated to addressing substance use and promoting mental health, the exhibition begins with the early 19th century, when many New England traders moved from slave-trading to selling opium to the Chinese. The merchants exchanged the opium for tea, a prized commodity, along with silk, porcelain, lacquer, and other products coveted in western markets. The extended network of the Forbes family and other prominent Brahmin Bostonians like the Cabots, Peabodys, Delanos, Endicotts and Coolidges were involved in the China Trade from 1784 to 1887, in Guangzhou (then known

as Canton), Shanghai and Hong Kong. The fortunes made drove the American economy for decades to come.

Just as arts and cultural organizations around the country are reinterpreting their collections to address current social and political realities, the Forbes House Museum exhibition raises and addresses moral and ethical questions about the China Trade in historical context. Visitors will learn about the background of the Forbes family and other New England traders; Chinese history, material culture and symbolism; and the long-term effects of China's "Century of Humiliation." The exhibition continues in the Historical Resource room at the Milton Public Library, with a focus on current events, including the latest facts on the opioid epidemic, the impact of the COVID pandemic on those with substance use disorders, and research into new treatments. Information about the current drug trade is also highlighted.

Complementing the exhibition is a series of author talks and related programming. This summer the

museum is offering a four-week-long Vipassana meditation series. Vipassana meditation has been shown to relieve stress, reduce anxiety, improve mental wellness and promote brain plasticity. Studies have also shown it can be helpful in treating addiction. In the fall Dane Morrison, author of "True Yankees" and "Eastward to Good Hope," will discuss the role of New England traders and the impact of their accumulated wealth on the newly emerging American economy.

"Opium: The Business of Addiction" will run through February 26, 2023. Guided hour-long tours are available Fridays and Saturdays from 10am to 3pm and Sundays from 12pm to 3pm. Registration is encouraged.

The exhibition and related programming were made possible in part by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities: Democracy demands wisdom and the Institute of Museum and Library Services: IGSM-249469-OMS-21 and ARPML-250857-OMLS-22. Additional funders include Mass Humanities, Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital - Milton, The Milton Coalition, Courageous Conversations Toward Racial Justice, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and



Docent-led tour throughout the house telling the story of the Opium Trade and Forbes Family history (Ellen Rogers Photography).



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#### About the Forbes House Museum:

Inspired by the Forbes family legacy of entrepreneurship, social action and philanthropy, the Forbes House Museum fosters discourse around civic engagement and cultural awareness. Built in 1833, the Greek Revival home at 215 Adams Street in Milton has been a museum since 1964 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1966.

#### About the National Endowment for the Humanities:

Created in 1965 as an independent federal agency, the National Endowment for the Humanities supports research and learning in history, literature, philosophy, and other areas of the humanities by funding selected, peer-reviewed proposals from around the nation. Additional information about the National Endowment for the Humanities and its grant programs is available at: [www.neh.gov](http://www.neh.gov).

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Media Inquiries:□

Forbes House Museum

617-696-1815

[info@forbeshousemuseum.org](mailto:info@forbeshousemuseum.org)

Heidi Vaughan

Forbes House Museum

+1 617-696-1815

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