

The Gardner Museum Fall 2026 Events

!!! **RESERVATION is required for every event, unless otherwise noted (email preferred) !!!**

Sep
02

Fall/Winter Exhibit: Toys – Past & Present 1-4 pm - no reservation needed

Step back in time and rediscover the joy of play! On display during regular museum hours through the end of the year, the exhibit features vintage toys and games alongside artifacts from the museum's collection. From cherished childhood favorites to items that younger generations may have never seen; the display offers a nostalgic look at how play has changed over the years. And yes—believe it or not, even an Atari is now considered a vintage toy!

Sep
17

Johnny Appleseed – Man and Myth 7-8 pm after a museum-hosted reception at 6:30 pm

Historian, author, and returning speaker Mark Bodanza explores the fascinating life of John Chapman, better known as Johnny Appleseed, separating historical fact from enduring legend. Learn how this MA native became a frontier pioneer, environmental visionary, and religious missionary whose life inspired one of America's most beloved folk heroes. The presentation will likely include a Johnny Appleseed re-enactor, and signed copies of Mark's books will be available for purchase. He previously presented the museum's popular program on *Women in Abolition* (2023) and returns with another engaging look at an iconic figure from US history.

Sep
24

Great Southern New England Storms of the 20th Century 7-8 pm after reception at 6:30 pm

Join renowned meteorologist Harvey Leonard for a look at three of New England's most memorable weather disasters: the Hurricane of 1938, the Worcester Tornado, and the Blizzard of 1978. Through historical accounts, video remembrances, and weather analysis, Harvey will explain what made these storms so significant and how the atmospheric conditions behind them developed. He will also discuss the likelihood of similar events occurring again and examine the potential influence of climate change on future storms. Harvey, WCVB Channel 5's Chief Meteorologist Emeritus and a longtime leader in New England weather forecasting, is widely recognized for his accurate forecasting, including his early prediction of the historic Blizzard of 1978.

Oct
1

Making of a silver spoon 7-8 pm after a museum-hosted reception at 6:30 pm

Peter Erickson, Gardner's last handwrought silversmith, returns for a special presentation in the museum's replica silversmith shop, where he will demonstrate the traditional process of crafting a silver spoon using historic tools and techniques. Known for his signature rings, and decades of fine craftsmanship, Peter will share insights from a lifetime at the bench. He will be joined by his apprentice and successor, Erin Kiewel, offering a unique opportunity to see both tradition and continuity side by side as the craft passes into the next generation. Please note that seating is limited.

Oct
8

Veterans Roundtable 7-8 pm after a museum-hosted reception at 6:30 pm

Join us for an evening of conversation, reflection, and learning. Moderated by Alan Dernalowicz, the program features local veterans and representatives from organizations serving the veteran community. This year's special guest is Kara Fossey, Executive Director of the Fort Devens Museum and the Groton History Center. (Many will remember her engaging 2022 presentation at the museum on the many roles American women played during World War II—from military service to civilian and volunteer efforts—with special emphasis on Fort Devens and women from MA.) Whether you are a veteran, have a family connection to military service, or simply want to learn more, this annual program offers a fresh perspective each year and welcomes everyone.

Oct
15

Teeing up History 7-8 pm after a museum-hosted reception at 6:30 pm

Returning to the museum after his popular 2022 talk on the history of the Delay Memorial Golf Tournament, author and longtime sportswriter Jay Gearan celebrates the 90th anniversary of Gardner Municipal Golf Course. Based on his hot-off-the-press book *A Course Called Gardner*, Jay will share the story of the course's beginnings as a 9-hole layout in 1936, its expansion to 18 holes in 1967, memorable championships and champions, and the people who shaped one of the city's most cherished public assets. Signed copies of the book, featuring more than 100 historic photos, will be available for purchase. As a special complement to the program, the museum will display from its collection the historic driver used by Mayor Timpany to dedicate the opening of the course in 1936 and again by Mayor Landry for the dedication of the second 9 holes in 1967.

Oct
22

Stars, Stripes & Songs 7-8 pm after a museum-hosted reception at 6:30 pm

Back by popular demand, musician, songwriter, and history enthusiast Jon Waterman returns to the museum with another installment of his acclaimed Live Music Making History Live series. Jon, along with Li Waterman, performs as Sultana, a duo known for bringing history to life through music and storytelling. Created in recognition of America's 250th anniversary, this brand-new program combines live music, historical storytelling, and a slideshow to explore the people, events, and ideas that shaped the US. Whether you have attended one of Jon's previous performances here or are experiencing his unique edutainment for the first time, this special presentation promises an enjoyable journey through American history. The program is supported in part by a grant from the Gardner Cultural Council, a local agency supported by the MA Cultural Council.

Oct
29

The Many Schemes of Harry Bartlett 7-8 pm after a museum-hosted reception at 6:30 pm

Retired corporate accountant and author Bob Ainsworth returns to the museum with yet another scandal to investigate. After bringing our audiences tales of art theft, Ponzi schemes, sports cheating, and assorted fraudsters in recent years, Bob is back with the latest installment in his popular Harry Bartlett mystery series: This year's program explores the books *PONZI'd*, *DUPED*, *CONNED*, *SCAMMED*, and his newest novel, *THE LAST UNINDICTED MAYOR*. Bob will discuss the real-life frauds, scandals, and historical events that inspired his stories, offering a behind-the-scenes look at the creation of the series and its colorful cast of characters. Just when you think everyone has been caught, Bob Ainsworth finds another fraudster!

Nov
10

Music and Memory - 10 am: a special Tuesday morning at the library

Dr. Randi Lebar presents a 90-minute illustrated program about her mother, pianist Elaine Lebar (b. 1928), who gained viral attention on TikTok in 2020 while living in a memory care unit in Buzzards Bay. Through video clips and personal storytelling, Dr. Lebar highlights the power of music in dementia care and its ability to preserve connection, identity, and moments of joy even amid cognitive decline. She also reflects on caregiving, meaning, and the evolving relationship between parent and child. The program is designed to be educational and uplifting for general public, caregivers, families, and professionals working with dementia. Presented in cooperation with the library; held at the Heywood Memorial Library at 55 W Lynde St.

Nov
11

21st Festival of Trees - no reservation needed

Celebrate the holiday season at the museum! Our beautiful building will once again be filled with decorated Christmas trees and festive raffle items generously donated by local individuals, families, organizations, and businesses. Open to the public Nov 11–Dec 5. Hours: Wednesdays

& Thursdays: 1–4 pm; Fridays: 1–7 pm; Saturdays & Sundays: 10 am–4 pm. Tickets: Cash only. Join us for this beloved community tradition and enjoy the festive spirit of the season.

**Nov
11-
15**

Veterans' Appreciation Door Prize

As the Festival of Trees opens on Veterans Day, we are honored to recognize and thank those who have served our country. Veterans visiting the museum during this special week are invited to enter a drawing for an exciting surprise gift basket filled with holiday décor, gift cards, scratch tickets, and other festive treats. One lucky veteran will be selected in the drawing on November 15.

**Dec
05**

Festival of Trees – Drawing Day

Last day to purchase tickets: 10 am – 2 pm. Museum closes at 2 pm to the public for winner drawing at 3 pm. Winners will be notified following the drawing.

**Dec
06**

Festival of Trees pick up day

Winners can pick up their trees or other items 10 am – 4 pm.

**Dec
18**

Last day open before winter break

The museum will be closed until March 2027

The Gardner Museum

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All above programs are scheduled to be in-person. We urge all visitors to check our website and Facebook page for possible cancellations or postponements.