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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

PIRATES OR PATRIOTS? Being Performed at Strawberry Banke Museum

Play is a pilot for new direction in programming at Strawberry Banke

Portsmouth, NH-July 28, 2008 – Strawberry Banke Museum is piloting a “History Theater” project as it expands its interactive experiences for visitors and brings the stories of Portsmouth and the history of America to people in new and exciting ways. As a first step in the pilot project, Strawberry Banke and Harbor Light Stage have partnered to offer the play, PIRATES OR PATRIOTS?: The Private Wars of Capt. John Paul Jones and Col. John Langdon.

PIRATES OR PATRIOTS? is a half-hour performance commissioned by Strawberry Banke and was specifically designed to be played in the Tyco Visitors Center. The opening performance for the play will take place on Saturday, August 9th at 11:30am. “We’re very excited to work with Harbor Light Stage to bring this story to visitors of Strawberry Banke,” states Strawberry Banke Museum president, Larry Yerdon. “Strawberry Banke Museum is a collection of four centuries of stories, and this play represents an exciting new direction in how the museum tells the stories that have helped shape Portsmouth’s history.”

The play was written by Kent Stephens, founder of Harbor Light Stage, a professional theatre in southern Maine. Stephens has written acclaimed plays about Orson Welles (ORSON WELLES REHEARSES MOBY DICK) and Allen Ginsberg (ANGELHEADED HIPSTER), and was awarded the Roger L. Stevens' award from the Kennedy Center for his script MRS. MACKENZIE'S BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO THE BLUES, co-written with Patty Lynch.

Stephens’ play cleverly weaves together scenes of disputes between the historic title characters and contemporary quibbling among historians themselves. "Arguing about history is sport in New England," says Stephens, "When we determined that the performance would take place in the Tyco Visitors Center, an interpretive center, it became obvious that the perfect frame to view these characters through would be the always contentious business of interpretation of the record."

Behind the schoolbook saga of John Paul Jones and his heroic raids against the British lies the more private drama of the struggles between the “Father of the American Navy”, and the man who built his ships, appointed his officers, and caused him endless aggravation: Portsmouth merchant, local hero, and future Governor of New Hampshire, John Langdon. PIRATES OR PATRIOTS? brings that private drama to a public stage at Strawberry Banke, and, in its portrait of the clash between these two titanic figures of the Revolutionary War era, also dramatizes the exquisite tension of historical narrative itself: how the same facts and artifacts, in the hands of two different interpreters, can yield two very different perspectives. Was Jones an arrogant upstart or the hapless victim of a

Portsmouth prejudice against those from “away”? Was Langdon an unprincipled capitalist interested only in protecting his own trade, or a crafty New Hampshire patriot who initially supported John Paul Jones and then, when he came to know him, regretted the decision? Audiences will no doubt be arguing these questions long after the curtain rings down.

Performances will be offered on Saturdays and Sundays at 11:30am, 1:30pm, and 2:30pm starting on Saturday, August 9th and run every weekend through Labor Day. Admission for the performances is free with general museum admission or \$5.00 for those wishing to attend the performance only. For more information, please visit www.harborlightstage.org or call the Tyco Visitors Center at Strawberry Banke Museum at 603-433-1107. The “History Theatre” project at Strawberry Banke Museum has been made possible with support from the Fuller Foundation, Inc. and the Davis Family Foundation, Inc.

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About Strawberry Banke Museum

Connect with the Past! Step into 400 years of living in our neighborhood. Strawberry Banke provides the opportunity to see how people lived for four centuries of New England history. Through restored furnished houses, exhibits, historic landscapes and gardens, and costumed role players, Strawberry Banke interprets the living history of generations who settled in Portsmouth, NH, from the late 17th century to the mid-20th century.

Strawberry Banke Museum in Portsmouth, NH, is open May 1 through October 31, 10 to 5 daily; and November through December for guided walking tours and special events. Call 603-433-1100 for more information or visit www.strawberrybanke.org.