

PORTSMOUTH

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Season's
GREETINGS!

DECEMBER 2025
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Caitlin Yankowkas, 2011 U.S. National Pairs Champion, skates with the Currier & Ives Vintage Skaters during the annual Candlelight Stroll at Strawberry Banke.

Photography:
David J. Murray,
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Siobhan Tully from North Hampton skates with the “Currier & Ives Vintage Skaters” during the annual Candlelight Stroll at Strawberry Banke

CURRIER CHARM AND CANDLELIGHT CHERRY

ICE DANCE INTERNATIONAL'S SKATERS TRANSPORT
AUDIENCES BACK IN TIME

ARTICLE BY ANN KATHRYN KELLY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID MURRAY, CLEAREYEPHOTO

“The performances
add a touch
of magic to
Candlelight Stroll.”



*Emma Clark from Rochester
glides into the season*

Imagine the scene: the smells of wood-smoke and hot apple cider drifting in the air. Shimmering lanterns twinkling. A crowd of families, friends, and neighbors gathering on a snow-dusted December night—bunching together—as the swell of a favorite Christmas song starts. A scrape of blades on ice, and magically, women in ankle-length, billowing velvet skirts glide into view, dancing across a frozen wonderland.

Sounds like the perfect nostalgic scene from a circa-1800s holiday card, doesn't it?

That's because, quite literally, it is an interpretation of classic Currier & Ives winter prints. The artistic director behind this living Christmas card recreation, enjoyed each year at Strawberry Banke Museum's beloved Candlelight Stroll in Portsmouth, is Douglas Webster, directing his professional company of skaters from Ice Dance International (IDI).

Now in its 12th season, IDI partners with Strawberry Banke Museum to reimagine the Labrie Family Skate at Puddle Dock Pond

outdoor rink, akin to a life-sized snow globe. Old-world charm and the spirit of the season live on, as costumed skaters twirl and transport audiences to an idyllic winter scene from the 1800s. IDI's "Currier & Ives Vintage Skaters" entertains Candlelight Stroll ticket holders to multiple evening shows over the first three weekends in December, featuring solo and ensemble performers in a theatrical dance on ice.

Strawbery Banke Museum's Director of Marketing and Communications, Veronica Lester, notes that the skaters are a highlight. "The performances add a special touch of magic to Candlelight Stroll, delighting visitors of all ages," says Lester. "As the audience experiences seasonal and holiday traditions through multiple time periods, from the 1700s through the 1950s, the skaters bring the season to life with their spirit and nostalgia."

North Hampton resident Siobhan Tully has been a Currier & Ives skater for four years. Before joining the troupe, Tully

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“I’m blessed to use not just my mind, but my heart, body, and spirit when I skate.”



Executive Artistic Director Douglas Webster, with L to R: Caitlin Yankowskas, Gillian Robidas, Caroline Mann, Emma Clark, Siobhan Tully, and Lydia Waldo



had been a fan in the audience. “I watched many performances and always loved how the music and the skaters’ interpretations brought us back to another century,” Tully explains. “It was magical and joyous, and I’m so honored to now be part of bringing this wonder to others.”

Growing up, Tully was a competitive artistic roller skater before she transitioned to ice skating 13 years ago. A software engineer by trade, her job requires analytical thinking. “Yet I’m blessed to use not just my mind, but my heart, body, and spirit when I skate,” she says. Tully connected with Webster while participating in IDI’s community classes, which she now occasionally leads. She was thrilled when, a few years after starting, Webster invited her to join as a performer.

The Currier & Ives ensemble—they call themselves “the Vintage Skating Sisters”—start meeting weekly in November each year at the ice arena in Dover to practice choreography that Webster creates. Tully and Webster agree that although the choreography highlights specific patterns, shapes, and moments, it’s especially meaningful when the skaters genuinely connect with the audience—whether through spontaneous high-fives with enthusiastic fans rink-side, or through warm smiles and waves.

And while audiences are accustomed to watching choreographed performances in much larger ice arenas, Webster says there’s something intimate and special about this rink. “The magic,” he points out, “is proximity. The skaters are within feet of the audience, and this helps our community feel like they’re part of the vintage holiday scene.”

Webster’s career in choreography is impressive. He was the artistic director of the acclaimed Ice Theatre of New York, and created ice dances for more than a decade

for Disney on Ice and Stars on Ice, as well as for Holiday on Ice in Europe. While still directing in New York City, Webster became a founding committee member in planning and building the Labrie Family Skate at Puddle Dock Pond in 2011. After leaving the Ice Theatre in 2014 and moving to the Seacoast, he founded and became Executive Artistic Director for IDI. Featuring national, world, and Olympic champions as well as community members like Tully, IDI spotlights the technical and theatrical artistry of ice dancing.

IDI’s Currier & Ives performances are livestreamed from Strawberry Banke each year through Boston and Maine Live to audiences around the world. “We reach thousands more viewers this way, which is really exciting,” Webster notes. Tully adds: “I’m especially touched knowing that some folks who may not be able to get out due to age or other reasons can participate in the season’s magic through the livestream.”

Webster shares that after weeks of rehearsals, the early mornings and late nights dedicated to the craft, what he loves even more than watching the skaters perform is watching audiences watch them. “I get to see the wonder unfold, brand new every time, through their eyes. It brings me a sense of love and light as our community gathers for this now-treasured tradition.”

Ready to journey back to a time of glad tidings with neighbors, nostalgia, and a nip in the air? There’s still time to get your ticket to Strawberry Banke’s Candlelight Stroll, with several special performances planned from the Currier & Ives Vintage Skaters.

**STRAWBERRY BANKE
CANDLELIGHT STROLL**
strawberrybanke.org/stroll

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Gillian Robidas, Caitlin Yankowskas, Siobhan Tully, Emma Clark, Caroline Mann, and Lydia Waldo dance a reel



Caroline Mann, Siobhan Tully, Gillian Robidas, and Emma Clark light up the night