



RETIRED MEN'S ASSOCIATION OF GREENWICH, Inc. (RMA)

Invites you to its meeting **June 1, 2016** at
First Presbyterian Church, Greenwich, CT.

Heather Ewing

“The Smithsonian Institution and its Fascinating History”



We all know the Smithsonian Institution, established in Washington DC in 1846, as a much loved treasure house of Americana: home to the Star-Spangled Banner, Abraham Lincoln’s top hat, Dorothy’s ruby slippers, and more. But did you know that an Englishman who never set foot in the United States founded this place we call “the nation’s attic”? James Smithson (c. 1765-1829), the illegitimate son of the first Duke of Northumberland, was a talented scientist who spent much of his life living and working in a Europe torn by revolution and war. Though he never visited the United States, he left his estate to us to found “at Washington, under the name of the Smithsonian Institution, an establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge.”

Today the Smithsonian has grown to become the world’s largest museum and research complex, encompassing 19 museums—for American history, natural history, American art, Asian art, African art, design, air and space, and more. Much less known is its scientific research. There are hundreds of scientists working around the world and nine research stations, from a tropical research station in Panama established over 100 years ago to one of the world’s great astrophysical observatories, operated in partnership with Harvard University.

Heather Ewing will tell the story of this fascinating man and of today’s remarkable place for tourists and scholars. Ewing, an architectural historian, has written several books, including *The Lost World of James Smithson: Science, Revolution and the Birth of the Smithsonian* (Bloomsbury, 2007); *Guide to Smithsonian Architecture* (Smithsonian Books, 2009); and *Carrère and Hastings, the Masterworks* (Rizzoli, 2011), about the architects of the New York Public Library who also designed a number of buildings in Greenwich. She also contributed the research for Richard Kurin’s *The Smithsonian’s 101 Objects of American History* (Penguin, 2013). Most recently she published *Life of A Mansion: The Story of Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum* (Cooper Hewitt, 2014).

Heather Ewing is the Executive Director of the Center for Italian Modern Art, a new nonprofit research and exhibition center in New York. Previously she worked as a research associate and consultant to the Smithsonian Institution. She received her BA in Art History from Yale University and MA in Architectural History from the Courtauld Institute of Art in London. She lives in New York, and is the daughter of Greenwich RMA member Ted Ewing.

The Greenwich Retired Men’s Association offers a free program every Wednesday that is open to the public, both men and women; no reservations are required. Our social break starts at 10:40AM followed promptly by our speaker at 11:00AM. Programs are at the First Presbyterian Church, 1 West Putnam in Greenwich. For additional information see www.greenwichrma.org or contact info@greenwichrma.org