Berkshire Museum presents third annual Berkshire Awards
Award presentation and reception scheduled for Friday, March 13, 2015

[PITTSFIELD, MA] — The Berkshire Museum will present the third annual Berkshire Awards to three honorees who have made significant contributions to creating, keeping, and promoting artistic, historical, and natural heritage in the Berkshires. They will be honored at an awards ceremony on Friday, March 13, 2015, at 5:30 p.m., at the Museum. The honorees are Lila Berle, Churchill Cotton, and Mary Rentz.

“For the third year, we at the Berkshire Museum are proud to recognize three individuals who have contributed significantly to the preservation of our culture and heritage,” says Bill Hines, president of the Berkshire Museum Board of Trustees. “The presentation of the Berkshire Awards exemplifies our mission of exploring and sharing the worlds of art, history, and science with the larger community.”

“Our community is an extraordinarily creative one, with a rich tradition of innovation,” says Van Shields, Berkshire Museum’s executive director. “It is an honor to celebrate those people who, through their service, have made an indelible impact on this place and have inspired others through their example.”

Sponsorships and tickets for the Berkshire Award are now available. For more information, visit www.berkshiremuseum.org/berkshire-awards or call Bill Blaauw at 413.443.7171 ext. 313 or by email at wblaauw@berkshiremuseum.org.

Lila Berle
Lila Berle has been a lifelong leader in farming, preservation, and land conservation in the Berkshires. Her Sky Farm includes pasture land in Great Barrington, Stockbridge, Egremont, and Alford and provides grass-fed, hormone-free food to many area
restaurants. In the 1970s Mrs. Berle was instrumental in preserving The Mount, Edith Wharton's historic estate, and organized the first Board of Trustees of Edith Wharton Restoration, Inc. She served as the organization's first Board Chair, a position to which she was reelected in 2012. She was a member and president of the Board of Trustees for the Norman Rockwell Museum for many years and, in 1993, helped the museum make its transition from downtown Stockbridge to its current 36-acre site overlooking the Housatonic River Valley. Mrs. Berle has been active in more than thirteen nonprofit organizations, ranging from the Berkshire South Regional Community Center, the Trustees of Reservations, Chesterwood, Simon's Rock, Sculpture Now, and the Laurel Hill Association to the Foxhollow School, Lenox Library, Children's Health Program, and Berkshire Hills School Committee. She has been an active member of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Stockbridge since 1960.

**Churchill Cotton**

Churchill Cotton, preservationist and community leader, has served the Berkshires in numerous ways. He has been a trustee of the Samuel Harrison Society since 2004, and is currently its president. The mission of the society is to restore and preserve Reverend Harrison's homestead and use it as a platform from which to advance knowledge and understanding of African-American heritage and history in the Berkshires. Mr. Cotton is currently a Pittsfield City Councilor at Large, and was a member of the Pittsfield School Committee from 2007-2010. He is a member of the Second Congregational Church and is the former chairperson of the Westside Neighborhood Initiative. Mr. Cotton is a graduate of the Berkshire Leadership Program and has also served as a Berkshire United Way Board member, a Pittsfield Master Plan Committee member, and chairperson of the Pittsfield Bike Path Committee.

**Mary Rentz**

Artist Mary Rentz has been an active community organizer and promoter of public arts in the Berkshires for decades. She has been involved with many of Pittsfield's citywide cultural initiatives over the last decade, including Sheeptacular, Art of the Game, the annual juried Pittsfield Art Show, and Pittsfield 250. In the late 1980s she was part of a community effort to preserve land around the Richmond Pond Girl Scout camp by
working directly with city leaders and developers. She has been honored for her work in
the Berkshires by many organizations including Pittsfield Rotary Club, Western Mass Girl
Scouts Council, Downtown Pittsfield Inc., the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of
Women and more. She is currently the president of the Berkshire Art Association. Mrs.
Rentz is a longtime volunteer for Hancock Shaker Village. She has served on its Board
since 1992, chairing it twice, as well as its successful Simple Gifts Campaign in 2000. In
2013 she was honored with the Hancock Shaker Village Leadership Award. She is an
active member of South Congregational Church in Pittsfield, helping lead its recent
steeple restoration efforts and volunteering with its food ministry.

About the Berkshire Museum
Located in downtown Pittsfield, Massachusetts, at 39 South St., the Berkshire Museum, a
Smithsonian Affiliate, is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and
noon to 5 p.m. on Sunday. Admission is $13 adult, $6 child; Museum members and
children age 3 and under enjoy free admission. For more information, visit
www.berkshiremuseum.org or call 413.443.7171.

In association with the Smithsonian since 2013, Berkshire Museum is part of a select
group of museums, cultural, educational, and arts organizations that share the
Smithsonian’s resources with the nation.

Established by Zenas Crane in 1903, Berkshire Museum integrates art, history, and natural
science in a wide range of programs and exhibitions that inspire educational
connections between the disciplines. In the galleries, If/Then is on view January 24
through May 3. Objectify: A Look into the Permanent Collection is ongoing. Little
Cinema is open year-round. Spark!Lab, Feigenbaum Hall of Innovation, Worlds in
Miniature, Aquarium, and other exhibits are ongoing.