PROGRESS IN 2007

Our third year has brought many great strides forward to share with our members and supporters. Through grants from the Ham and the Lindberg Foundations, we have had professional staff for the first time with an office on the second floor of the Museum.

The Ham Foundation grant purchased a computer, power point equipment, and screen. The Lindberg grant provided funds to renovate and rewire an upstairs room, repaint both houses and fund the interns. Furniture donated from the Magic Lantern offices prior to demolition gave us desks, tables, chairs and a file cabinet to create a research center.

Dyer Excavation enlarged both parking areas by the Museum houses so we can accommodate more vehicles. As Rick Dyer is a Porter descendant, we appreciate his interest and contribution.

Through the combined efforts of Polly Polstein, Beth Cossey and Peter Sebeckis, the flower beds have been greatly improved. We will concentrate next year on leveling the grassed area.

Bob Dunning built a ramp for use by handicapped visitors, a major help this summer.

New additions to the collection are a working example of a leveler designed and framed by Rufus Porter; a copy of an original poster distributed by Porter advertising seats on his airplane flight to the West Coast in 1849; a pair of miniature watercolor portraits by Porter; a family register designed and printed by Porter; and a large oil painting of a snow covered mountain scene by Vivian Akers, a nationally recognized artist based in Norway, Maine the first part of the 20th century.

CULTURAL HERITAGE SERIES 2007

The second annual Series was held July 9-12 highlighted by our keynote speaker, Tom Johnson, on “Rufus Porter in Bridgton” and Robert Hall impersonating Rufus Porter. Twelve classes were held with many repeat students from last year. Plans for July 8-12 are in place for 2008, along with a national advertising plan to commence this fall. Bob Dunning and Nancy Smoak are to be commended for this outstanding contribution to Bridgton’s creative life.
WES T W O O D M U R A L S

The Westwood Murals went on exhibit in late July in the newly renovated Wales and Hamblen building on lower Main Street. We have a two year lease with George McGuire, the owner, so they will be protected with year round climate control, and also be available during the winter for viewing by special groups, tours or school classes. Call Beth Cossey at 207-647-3724 for information.

These murals, vital to recognition of being a focal point for study of Rufus Porter’s career and accomplishments, are signed and dated by him, and considered his finest artistic work. Having them available for muralists and students to study, and to realize his high quality of achievement in the Folk Art world, is important to our goal.

Bob Dunning, Herb Moulton and Greg Marston deserve recognition for the many times they moved these wall sized pieces during the reconstruction this past year, and help from Craig Jud, Don Heller, Kim Washam and our intern Peter Sebeckis who planned the final exhibit.

POWER POINT PRESENTATIONS

Our two summer interns, Peter Sebeckis and Valerie Friedman, have each produced presentations to enhance our offerings. Valerie wrote a computer presentation on the camera obscura to accompany the model built by Bob Dunning on display in the Museum. This will be available for visitors next summer to explain the history and theory behind the camera which Rufus Porter used to make thousands of miniature watercolor portraits during his lifetime.

Peter’s presentation, “Rufus Porter in Bridgton”, is designed for school age children. This program can be brought by Museum members to classrooms to give students more insight into the life and career accomplishments of Bridgton’s native son. It can be adapted to adults for use in programs throughout the area. This is a major step forward in our efforts to educate the children of Bridgton and environs about the heritage this incredible person gave to Bridgton, and how our scenery inspired the murals he left in hundreds of homes in New England.

Peter has begun a trial video focusing on the environs around Bridgton which inspired Rufus Porter. Scenes from his childhood abound in the wall murals he created, and we hope to produce a professional video once funds have been secured in order to share this area with folk art collectors across the country.

NEEDLEWORK EXHIBIT

Each summer our loan exhibit changes, and our Historic Needlework exhibit has been well received. Holly Ihloff, of Casco has given presentations to our docents, taught a class during the Cultural Heritage Series, and delivered three lectures for the public on the exhibit. Her final lecture will be on September 22, from 10 – 12 am, for a fee of $30. We have printed a catalog (designed and produced by Nancy Smoak) of the exhibit including notes on the 27 pieces of needlework. The catalog is available at the museum for $15.

ATTENDANCE

Our attendance figures continue to rise each year, with a 25% increase this year over last. Continued attention by the national press, including articles in the Antiques and Arts Weekly newspaper, the Boston Globe, Early American Life Magazine and numerous other newspapers, began to draw visitors from across the country in 2006. This continued in 2007 with the New England Antiques Journal and another article on Bridgton in the Boston Globe. Our local Bridgton News has been wonderful in including regular articles on our activities on a weekly basis.

NEW OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS

The Annual Meeting was held on August 14, with the following slate of officers elected: President, Beth Cossey; Vice President, Bob Dunning; Treasurer, Nancy Smoak; and Secretary, Laurel Cebra. Carolyn Stanhope is newly elected as a member of the Board, serving a three year term with Craig Jud, Greg Marston, and Herb Moulton.

DOCENTS

Our docent program continues to be the backbone of the Museum. Each docent receives updated training each year, and contributes at least two afternoons a season as a volunteer. Our need has increased this year with two venues open, and we are always seeking new volunteers.

MAINE FOLK ART TRAIL

The Rufus Porter Museum has been invited to participate in the Maine Folk Art Trail being organized by the Maine Historical Society and the American Folk Art Society during the 2008 season. Eleven museums are joining in this endeavor to exhibit the best of Maine folk art from July through October. They include: Bates College Museum of Art, Colby College Museum of Art, the Farnsworth Art Museum, the Maine Historical Society, the Maine Maritime Museum, the Maine State Museum, the Museums of Old York, the Penobscot Marine Museum, the Portland Museum of Art, the Rufus
Porter Museum and the Saco Museum.

As we are new to the scene, it is exciting to receive this national exposure. A hardbound catalog is being produced to include 10 pieces from each museum, to be marketed as part of a national advertising campaign. We have prepared our facilities to receive more visitors and press attention, and our curator, Julie Lindberg, has planned an exciting loan exhibit of the best of Western Maine folk art.

INTERNET AUCTION

In lieu of local fundraising efforts, the Museum is offering an internet online auction beginning in early September and continuing for three weeks. Please log on to the site: www.rufus porter museum.org and see what treasures are available.

We are grateful to Beth Cossey, Peg MacDonald, Valerie Friedman and Nancy Smoak for organizing, researching and writing descriptions; and for the following donors:

Bill and Beverly Chalmers
Bruce and Laurie Chalmers
Jim and Beth Cossey
Dan and Joanne Cohn
Dottie Dexter
Bob and Sally Dunning
Jack and Deborah Heffernan
Phil and Marlise Libby
Carl and Julia Lindberg
Bob and Peg MacDonald
Herb & Mary Lou Moulton
Norm and Eleanor Nicholson
Alton and Nancy Smoak
Tom and Elva Stone
Bruce and Sue Timberley

MEMBERSHIPS

Donations continue to be a major source of our funds needed to develop the Museum into a nationally recognized institution, and to move towards a professional staff. What we have accomplished with a volunteer staff is exceptional.

Our need to purchase the property and the Westwood murals continues to be our priority, and we rely on support from members nationwide. A form is enclosed if you wish to continue as a part of this endeavor. We will continue to pursue grants from charitable foundations, made possible by our receiving our 501(c) 3 approval last fall by the IRS. We thank Peg MacDonald, our grant writer, Beth Cossey and our Senator, Susan Collins, for their diligent and consistent efforts to achieve this recognition. We also want to thank the Bridgton Friends of the Arts for covering us for two years until we were able to receive our own tax number.

In the meantime, any donation you make to the Rufus Porter Museum will be gratefully received and appreciated as we cannot function without the support of our members.

Name: ___________________________________________ Telephone: ____________________
Address: _________________________________________ City: ______________ State: _____ Zip: __________
Email:  ______________________________________________________________________________________

Membership Level:

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Make checks payable to THE RUFUS PORTER MUSEUM, PO Box 544, Bridgton, ME 04009

MasterCard ___ Visa ___

Card # ______________________________ Exp Date ______________ CVV #

Signature_______________________________________

Cardholder’s name (printed as it appears on the card) ________________________________

The Rufus Porter Museum is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization.
Cultural Heritage Series 2008

Plans are currently underway for the 2008 Cultural Heritage Series. The series is scheduled for Wednesday, July 9 through Saturday July 12th. Many of our 2007 students requested Linda Lefko's 3-day Rufus Porter Style Mural Painting class and we are pleased to announce that this class is scheduled on Wednesday, Thursday & Friday during the series.

Returning from our 2006 series will be Betsey Ann Golon of Common Folk Farm. She will teach a hands-on class on Historic Herb Wreaths - each student will construct their own beautiful wreath to take home and enjoy for years to come. This class is scheduled for Wed, July 9th, 1 - 4pm.

New to the 2008 series will be Ginny Eilertson, Certified Stencilist, teaching a 4-hour class on Theorem Painting. Theorem painting is an early American Decorative Technique that dates back to the first half of the 19th century. A unified composition is achieved through a series of stencils cut in such a manner that no two areas are immediately next to each other. Thus, any theorem will require the sequence of two or more stencils or overlays. Your theorem painting will be on cloth.

Also new to the series will be Jackye Hansen, rug hooker extraordinaire. Jackye has spent many years researching the “Waldoboro” method of rug hooking. She learned of German settlers who arrived in the 1600s with colorful, sculpted rugs in floral designs. In Maine, these pioneer women hooked rugs from worn clothing and feed sacks, “hoving,” or raising, the piles of patterns reminiscent of their European rugs. They became known as Waldoboro designs and were made well into the 19th century. Jackye’s book on this method will be published in Fall 2007 - copies will be available during her class all day on Saturday, July 12, 2008.

Karen Koch will be teaching a class on broom making where each participant will take home 3 brooms of their own making. Karen last taught at the prestigious Schoodic Arts Festival. Her class is scheduled for Saturday afternoon, July 12th.

Series favorites Nelle Ely, Sandy Howe and Hugh Luck will be returning with new and exciting classes. Other classes are still be scheduled to present you with a full and stimulating roster.

We plan to publish the 2008 Series brochure by the end of October so look for yours in the mail, pick your favorite classes and sign up early. If you are concerned about being on the mailing list, email Nancy Smoak, series organizer, at nssmoak@verizon.net with your information or call her at 207-647-9304.