



The Rufus Porter Museum

The mission of the Rufus Porter Museum is to increase the enjoyment, knowledge, and pride of our communities by bringing to life the world and the inspiring works of Rufus Porter—a remarkable American artist and inventor

Fall 2014 Newsletter



Yankee Ingenuity: A Look at the Past for the Future

Yankee ingenuity is improvisational design or problem solving. New Englanders faced numerous hardships in settling the area from the harsh weather to the rocky ground. Rather than leave and settle elsewhere, New Englanders made use of what little they had to improve their lot. They were born tinkerers, seeking to improve everything they used. More requests for patents were submitted and issued during the nineteenth century than at any other time in America. This period of invention was led by self-taught men and women unhindered by the boundaries of formal education. They saw greater reward in success than ridicule in failure. Not trying was the worse fate. Interestingly enough, even though improvements generally provided the tinkerer more time, it wasn't for leisure but to increase production.

Rufus Porter epitomizes Yankee ingenuity. He was constantly trying to improve what he was working on or with and thinking of ways to improve life. Thirty years prior to Jules Verne writing *Five Weeks in a Balloon*, considered by many a fantasy method of travel when written, Rufus Porter designed his aerial locomotive.

Twenty years prior to this story, he even had a flying model. Needless to say, Rufus Porter was well ahead of his time and later dirigible designers said as much in their writings. Many felt with the proper financial backing, Rufus Porter might have succeeded.

Everything he did was about the process. Even his mural and portrait painting had documented instructions on how to replicate his results, as if painting were a scientific experiment.

For 2015 season, the Rufus Porter Museum has chosen Yankee Ingenuity as its theme. Exhibits, classes, events and all other functions will give our patrons opportunities to experience Yankee ingenuity through Rufus Porter. These opportunities will not only be through viewing and reading about his accomplishments, but through actual hands on activities. Maybe you are the next Rufus Porter and will find a way to build upon his work or improve our world. Together we can make a difference in so many ways, so please stay tuned for updates over the winter!

From the Executive Director

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*Cooperstown Graduate
Program*

It was with great pleasure that I first became the interim executive director and then the executive director of the Rufus Porter Museum. It has been a whirlwind of activity this season, but I have had the opportunity to become a Rufus Porter fanatic and meet a great group of people while doing such! Having an amazing staff, a gung ho board and you, dedicated Rufus Porter supporters to work with has been wonderful and inspiring.

Before joining the museum I was aware of Rufus Porter, but not anywhere near to the extent I know of him today. He is the quintessential Mainah! Rufus Porter was an inquisitive, hardworking inventive man who supported himself and his family, no matter where it took him. He was a rich man in that way, not monetarily, but with a love of life. From the arts to science, Rufus Porter was at the forefront of American creativity, a true renaissance man of the 19th century.

I feel we should all be challenged by Rufus Porter. Over the years I have found animal treadmills fascinating. They combine animal power with simply machine technology to increase productivity. As I have studied them, I found many ways they were used and envisioned for use by others, but not one of these was for adding wheels and moving a house! Rufus Porter had, and his unique ingenuity should be revered, and he as a role model for each of us, especially our youth, to look at everything differently.

I look forward to doing my part to advance the mission of the Rufus Porter Museum and ask each of you to join me. Please help us, in any way you can, to build on Rufus Porter's legacy for future generations.

Sincerely,

John



*I would like you to join me in supporting the
Rufus Porter Museum.*

The **Rufus Porter Museum**
207.647.2828
67 North High Street, PO Box 544, Bridgton, ME 04009
rufusportermuseum@myfairpoint.net
www.rufusportermuseum.org



Enjoy some music while you read!

Scan the QR Code using your Smartphone or visit <http://www.lordstirlings.org/music.htm>.

We will be introducing QR Codes in next year's exhibit as way to provide more information for visitors about the artwork and displays.



Finding Folk Art in an Unusual Place

What constitutes “folk art” is an ongoing discussion in the museum and art world. The American Folk Art Museum partially defines it as, “Art created by people with no formal or academic training in the arts, though they may have received training through apprenticeships or family tradition. Folk art is not a single art form but includes a diverse range of visual expression, such as painting, drawing, sculpting, textiles and pottery.” Interestingly, most 19th century folk art had a utilitarian purpose. The painted fireboard, which was on loan to the museum this past season, is an exceptional example of this. It served the purpose of preventing drafts, while culturally enhancing the viewer’s life through the addition of artwork. Many everyday items conveyed meaning or value to the owner or community through their artistic embellishment during the 19th century.



One very unique work of 19th century folk art is gravestones. Unlike most folk art of the time, gravestones are found in their original setting and not out of context in museums or private collections. Gravestones can be experienced as they were intended, expressing meaning and value to the viewer just as they did for the deceased’s family and friends. You will be standing in the same footsteps where they stood a century or more ago.

Gravestone folk art manifests itself in many ways, through the lettering, shape, inscription, and sculpted reliefs. Beyond that, it can also provide a history lesson. One very fine local example, though worn from age, is William Gray’s gravestone located in the Tarr Cemetery on the River Road in Hiram, Maine. Sculpted with a Union flag at the top, the marker tells us that William Tarr was a Civil War soldier in Company K, 12 Maine, who died in the New Orleans Hospital on September 4, 1863 at age 51. The bottom of the gravestone is inscribed with the poem,



*“Rest Patriot, 'mid thy kindred,
Though hard to say farewell,
We'll trust thee in the hands of him,
Who doeth all things well.”*



Sculpted reliefs grace many 19th century gravestones. They were chosen by the family to visually symbolize some aspect of the deceased’s life or death. Each is folk art created by the craftsman carving the marker. Some were simple crosses or chains, while others were elaborate plants or hands. To find the meaning of many carved gravestone symbols a guide can be referenced at www.looktothepast.com/headstonecarvings.html.

A broken chain symbolizes that family unity is broken



A finger pointing up symbolizes that their soul has gone to heaven

Both are found in the Ridge Cemetery – Bridgton, Maine

As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblet so aptly said about folk art in her article, *The Role of Folk Arts and the Folk Artist in the Curriculum*, “They are everyday things made for daily use, which are appreciated for the skill and imagination required to produce them.” If you want to experience living folk art, cemeteries with gravestone folk art can be found throughout Maine, and probably within walking distance of your present location. While visiting a cemetery please remember the following:

1. Obey the posted rules.
2. Only visit cemeteries between sunrise and sunset.
3. Stay on all paths and do not walk or drive on graves.
4. Do not touch the gravestones as they are fragile.
5. Leave everything as you found it.
6. Remove all your trash.
7. Use your library voice.
8. Show respect for the deceased, mourners and funerals.
9. Dress appropriately.

Folk art differs from fine art in that it expresses local values rather than those of the artist.

2014 Season Recap

Education Programs:

Throughout the summer, the museum offered a variety of adult and children education programs, thanks to the work of our Education Interns, Kirsten Swartz and Mollie Fullerton and our part time Education Director Brian Cushing. One time programs included a camera obscura workshop, a painting making workshop, a poetry workshop and our popular event from last year, Wine and Westwood painting party. Recurring events also took place throughout the summer. Including a continued its partnership with the Bridgton Public library for the Books Alive! Series. The series looked at Rufus Porter's inventions and developed their own inventions. Our Education Interns also ran a weekly literature and science reading group that connected Rufus Porter's writings in Scientific American with other writers and authors, including Mary Shelley (Frankenstein) and Walt Whitman. For more information about the programs held during the 2014 season and to read about the Interns' experience over the summer, visit their education blog at <http://www.rufusportermuseum.org/#!/blog/ctu8>.



Along with programs held at the museum itself, the museum participated in several local area events, including the Naples Blues Festival, Fourth of July Parades, Gallery 302's Art in the Park and Denmark Art Center's Dam Jam. At each event, the museum provided educational entertainment for children and families that attended the event. At the Naples Blues Festival, a kite making workshop was held, along with coloring and other activities. At Art in the Park, the museum held an invention competition with entries from kindergarten age children to adults, and a camera obscura was available for people to test out.



Fundraising Events:

Our season was full of exciting events, with a wide range of community events and fundraisers. On June 18, the Rufus Porter Museum hosted an opening reception to introduce the 2014 Special, "Young Rufus Porter – The Art World Beckoning." The exhibit explores the art Rufus Porter might have encountered during his early itinerant career, influencing his style as he became one of America's preeminent miniature portrait painters. The event was a great success with close to 60 guests in attendance, special guests included the Chickadee Quilters



The Wicked Big Tim Sample Event, held on June 28th at Lake Region High School, was a wicked success. Laughter could be heard throughout the high school as Tim told story after story. The favorite line of the evening: "Anybody can come up with a snappy answer but a Maine geezer knows how to put you over the edge." Thank you to those who came to the event and showing your support for both the Bridgton Historical Society and the Rufus Porter Museum. A big thank you to our corporate sponsors, Norway Savings Bank and Chalmers Insurance Group who made the event possible.



Our last fundraising event this summer was our first annual Antique and Vintage Fair, held at Stevens Brook Elementary School. We had over 15 antique dealers offering a wide variety of items for sale and an antique appraiser ran an appraisal during the afternoon. The event was well attended for our first time with almost 200 people throughout the day. Thank you to our vendors for making the event successful and the staff at Steven Brook Elementary for their help setting up the event. Come see what we have to offer with next year's Fair.



September 25 After Hours Chamber Event

Pictured L-R: Madelyn Litz, President GBLRCC Board of Directors, Sue Mercer, GBLRCC Executive Director, John Michalowski Jr., Executive Director RPM, Judith Graham, RPM Board President and Samantha Scarf, Associate Director RPM

2014 Off Season Events

Thank you to the Chickadee Quilters of Bridgton, who have donated a handcrafted quilt for museum. The quilt was inspired by the works of Rufus Porter and features a beautifully crafted center panel based on a scene from the collection of murals from the Dr. Francis Howe House in Westwood, Massachusetts. Surrounding the center panel are traditional quilt squares representing industry and inventiveness of RP. The museum is selling tickets to raffle the quilt and the drawing will be held at next year's Preview Party. Tickets are \$5.00 per ticket and \$20.00 for a book of 5. They make great stocking stuffers. For more information about the raffle and to purchase tickets, call us at (207) 647-2828 or email us at rufusportermuseum@myfairpoint.net

We are excited to announce our work with the Local Stories Project to bring an amazing project to Stevens Brook Elementary School this fall. The third grade classes at SBE are researching local history, interviewing Bridgton residents and visiting the museum to see the Westwood Murals for inspiration. The classes will create a permanent mural to be displayed at the school and a performance based on that research. On November 13 at 6:00pm, the school will unveil the mural and the students will perform. All are welcome to this event— not to be missed! Join us in recognizing their hard work. A special thanks to Brian Cushing for continuing his role as Education Director through this project.



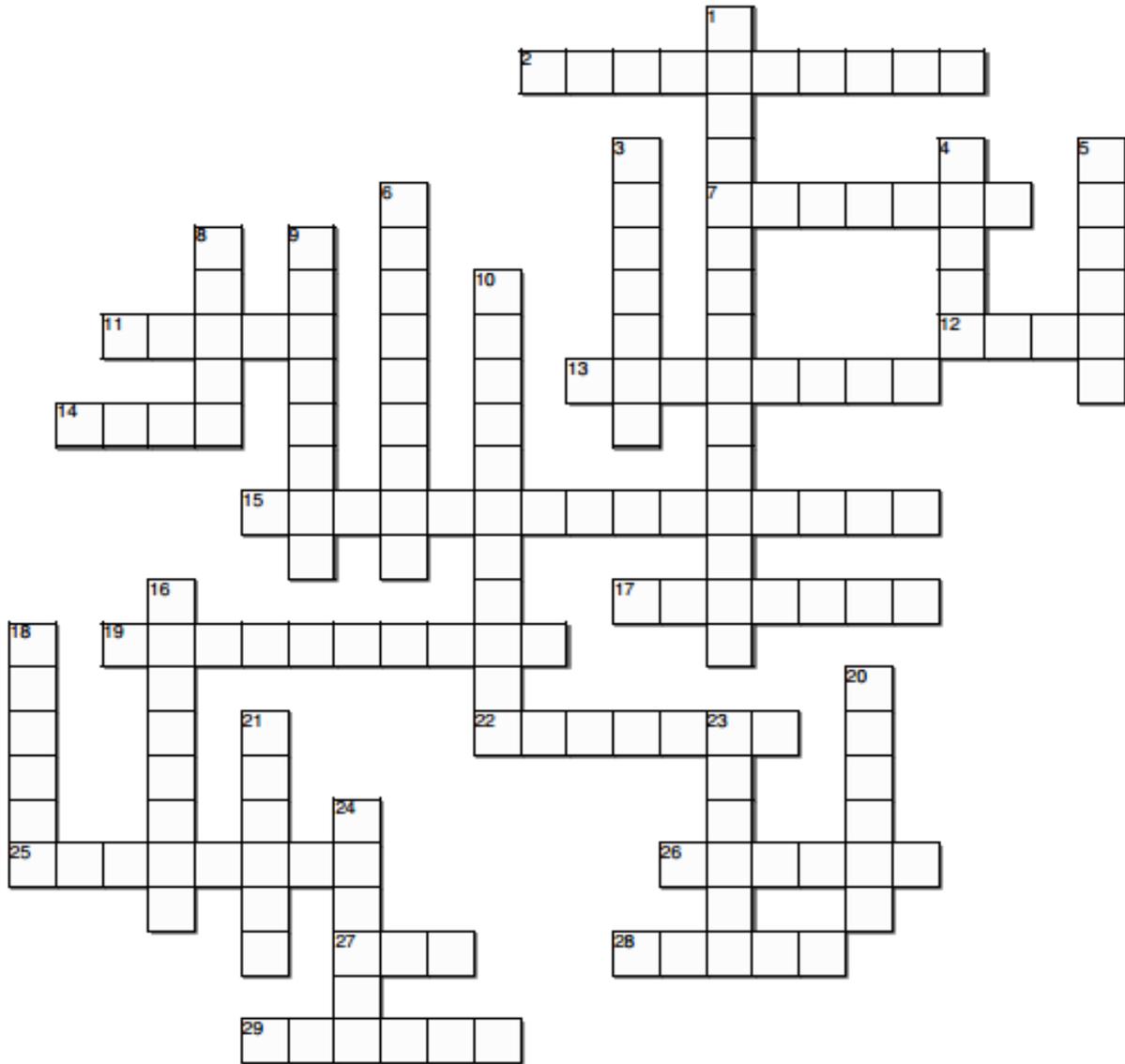
Volunteers and Docents

A big thank you goes out to all of our volunteers who helped make this season possible. Without the commitment and generosity of our volunteers, our season would not have been as successful as it was. Our docent program continues to grow with the addition of new docents to staff both the 67 North High St. location as well as the Wales and Hamblen building where the Westwood murals are located. We also welcomed new volunteers who assisted with office duties, the renovations of the Webb House and repairs to the current museum. If you are interested in becoming a docent or want to help us in other ways, please contact us at (207) 647-2828 or rufusportermuseum@myfairpoint.net. We would love to have you on our team.



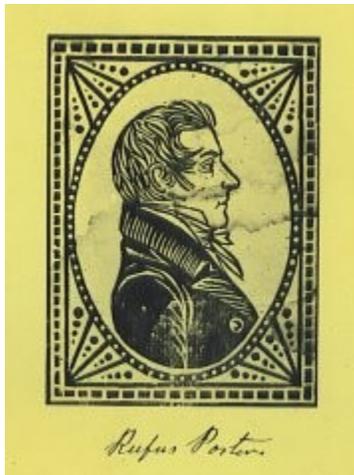
Docents at the Longfellow House on their Docent Appreciation Day. Pictured L-R, Back Row: Barbara Yates, Julie Lindberg, Drew Sanborn, Margaret Lindsey Sanborn, Frederica Baxter, Anne Snodgrass. Middle Row: Carol Davidson, Donna Canfield, Midge Curry, Ginny Eilertson, Bonnie Trafford, Marian Precht and Beth Cossey (Volunteer Coordinator). Front Row: Marcia Harris and Martha Cummings. Not Pictured: Carol Davis and Kathy Snyder.

Do You Know Rufus Porter?



Across

2. Who he sold his rifle design to
7. What type of camera did he use
11. His improvements to the cane
12. Most portraits views
13. Longest job
14. Instrument he played
15. Only formal education
17. War of 1812 rank
19. Furthest south he traveled
22. Number of Children
25. NY railroad design
26. She wrote first book
27. Number of wives
28. Powered his airship
29. Most famous for



Down

1. First Magazine
3. Favorite mode of transportation
4. Instrument he painted
5. First painting job
6. Porter apprenticed as
8. Philadelphia Painter
9. 1816 Location
10. Book's short name
16. Where he is buried
18. Did he or didn't he
20. Type of locomotive he invented
21. His editorial medium
23. First Wife
24. Last job at Scientific American

A New Benefit of Membership!

The Rufus Porter Museum has joined Time Travelers. Beginning soon, all of our members will receive a Rufus Porter Museum membership card which can be shown at over 250 museums nationwide for various discounts. We hope you will enjoy this benefit as you travel or decide to take a day trip in New England. For more information, please visit timetravelers.mohistory.org. If you click on "Institutions" you can search for museums to visit.



Membership Form

_____ **Yes! I believe in and want to be a part of forwarding the Rufus Porter Museum's mission. Enclosed is \$50.00 for my Membership Dues.**

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____

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

MasterCard _____ Visa _____ Discover _____

Card # _____ Exp. Date _____

CVV # _____

*The Rufus Porter Museum is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.
No goods or services were provided in exchange for your contribution.*

Business Membership

The Rufus Porter Museum is excited to announce a unique way for businesses to thank their valuable customers, recognize their employees and even provide their own family an exciting time for just a dollar a day. A \$365 Business Membership will do just that by allowing up to 4 adults and 4 students to visit us daily during our season, with the best part being that it can be used for separate families, couples or individuals, as long as no more than 4 adults and 4 students visit on any given day. That equates to over 250 adults and 250 students during our season and you also receive the following benefits:

- 1) Recognition for your Business in our all our newsletters.
- 2) Recognition of your Business on our website, including a link to your website.
- 3) Advance notice and discounts on classes and events.
- 4) 20% Discount in the Gift Shop.
- 5) An invitation to a special VIP day at the Museum.
- 6) A membership in Time Travelers that provides discounts at other museums.
- 7) Special sponsorship opportunities.

For more information about Business Membership or to become a business member, call us at (207) 647-2828 or email us at rufusportermuseum@myfairpoint.net



The **Rufus Porter Museum**
67 North High Street
PO Box 544
Bridgton, Maine 04009

2015 Folk Art Contest

The Rufus Porter Museum Folk Art Contest entries will be judged on their creative connections to our 2016 season theme, “The Year without a Summer.” 2016 will be the 200th anniversary of this weather phenomenon which caused untold hardship for Mainers. There was a frost every month that year and 10” of snow fell one day in June. Maine crops were so decimated that sawdust was added to bread recipes to make it more substantial. It was also the year that Rufus Porter left Maine to become a dance instructor in Connecticut. The Rufus Porter Museum challenges you to be inspired this winter and create your interpretation of this theme for potential 2015 display and use in a 2016 calendar. For more information about the year without a summer, visit:

history1800s.about.com/od/crimesanddisasters/a/The-Year-Without-A-Summer.htm

http://www.erh.noaa.gov/car/Newsletter/htm_format_articles/climate_corner/yearwithoutsummer_1f.htm

For rules and information about prizes, visit our website, www.rufusportermuseum.org. To submit your folk art, complete the entry form and send the appropriate entry fee to PO Box 554, Bridgton, ME 04009. Deadline for submission is May 15, 2015 by 3:00pm.

