The Rufus Porter Museum

SPRING 2019 NEWSLETTER AND 2018 ANNUAL REPORT

The 2018 Season: Bridgton History, Helicopters, and More!

Our 2018 exhibit centered on the 250th anniversary of the settling of Bridgton. Our special exhibit, “250 Years: Bridgton in Art and Artifacts,” celebrated the artists and artisans who lived in Bridgton and produced a wide variety of goods including art inspired by the natural beauty of the area, practical inventions needed to make work more productive, and decorative items for personal wear and home décor. Popular artifacts were a painting of the Moose Pond area by Joseph Hahill, where it is said Rufus Porter’s family lived, as well as brass work models loaned from Bridgton Academy.

Our first ever “Camp Invention,” in collaboration with the National Inventor’s Hall of Fame, was held in July and was a huge success. Led by local teachers, the program help develop creative problem-solving skills, identifies inventors as role models, and assists with confidence building. 41 local grade school students each produced self-designed prototypes of his/her dream house and designed and built an “optibot” dog. As an added bonus, well-known local inventor Frank Howell arrived on the camp playground via his helicopter and shared with the kids his inspirational “failure bag” of inventions that didn’t work.

Our Curious Arts Series: “Paint! Sculpt! Invent!” provided a week-long series of classes and lectures inspired by Rufus Porter’s publication “Curious Arts.” From wood-carving, to a quilt show and luncheon, to learning to paint like Rufus Porter himself, to hearing about the art of inventing and inventions, participants became immersed in the interests and teachings of Porter through local artisans and professionals.

On August 10th, the museum held its major fundraiser of the year. “Making Maine Memories,” a live and silent auction, held at the Bridgton Highlands Golf Club. Over 80 attendees enjoyed great food, the opportunity to bid on a wide variety of Silent Auction items donated by local vendors and individuals and a Wine Grab. The highlight of the evening was a Live Auction, with our engaging auctioneers, Jim Cossey and Bill Graham - affectionately known as the "Blues Brothers" because of their shirt color choice! Thanks to all who attended and contributed; it was our most successful fundraising event to date.

The museum was privileged to have the help of four interns. Matthew Beckshaw and Laura Friedman were our full-time interns, quickly taking the reigns at the beginning of the summer. From giving tours to helping to organize events, these two were instrumental in the success of our 2018 season. Zoe Silva and Corey Wallace joined us for a short period of time but their projects have long-term effects. They assisted us in creating promotional materials and brainstorming ways to make the museum more attractive to young people. We wish all of the interns well in their future endeavors.

Exterior work on the Church House continued in 2018 thanks to a generous grant from the Kendal C. and Anna Ham Charitable Foundation. Unfortunately, due to a winter season that started a lot sooner than expected, applying new siding to the front of the house was not completed before the end of the year. However, our very talented facilities committee managed to secure the exterior of the house before the snow really started to fly and will be well protected through spring.
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**2019 Dorothy W. Sanborn Summer Intern**
Katie Greene

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**Volunteer**
and make a difference at this growing museum!
For more information visit: rufusportermuseum.org

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**Mission:**
The Rufus Porter Museum celebrates the life and times of a remarkably creative American genius who worked throughout Maine, New England and beyond.
MESSAGE FROM OUR NEW MUSEUM DIRECTOR-CURATOR

I am honored to be the new director of the Rufus Porter Museum. While I have only been on-board for a short time, the heart and dedication demonstrated by the volunteers that “make this place tick” has been overwhelmingly apparent. It is a privilege for me to be part of this wonderful organization that is growing by leaps and bounds.

A big thank you goes to Caroline Grimm, former director, for guiding the museum through the 2018 season and setting the stage for my transition into the position.

Being in the off-season does not mean that the museum is not “on.” We have been working hard, preparing for an impressive 2019 season which will include a new exhibit, “Art Meets Science,” as well as special presentations and events. I am particularly excited about a presentation that will coincide with the new exhibit: artisan Tony Castro of Tony Castro & Company of New Gloucester will be lending both his artistic and scientific expertise in mural restoration on a panel by Jonathan Poor that is owned by the museum (see page 8 for more details.) Also, back by popular demand, the 5th annual History/Mystery House tour, our major fundraising event for the summer, will be held on Saturday, August 10th. This tour opens doors to a number of important locations that otherwise might not be seen by the public.

While it has been nice to acclimate to my new position during the quiet time of the year, I am eager to jump right into the season in June and to meet all of you who have helped make the work of the Rufus Porter Museum possible. Thank you all for your support and I look forward to seeing you this summer.

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

INTRODUCING CO-CHAIR THERESE JOHNSON

Beth Cossey is delighted to welcome Therese Johnson as Co-President. Therese replaces Margaret Sanborn. The board and staff are eternally grateful to Margaret for all of her years of dedication to the Museum. She will continue to serve on the board and focus on special events.

Therese and her husband David moved from Massachusetts to Bridgton ten years ago. She graduated from the Boston City Hospital School of Nursing and later returned to college attaining a bachelor degree in Social Work from Bridgewater State University and a masters degree from Boston University. Therese worked as a Registered Nurse and Licensed Clinical Social Worker before retiring in 2014. Her practice areas included homelessness, mental health/substance abuse services, veterans’ issues and access to health care. At present, she volunteers with a number of local non-profit organizations including Rotary, Friends of the Bridgton Public Library, the Lake Region Substance Awareness Coalition and as a Medicare counselor with Southern Maine Agency on Aging. Her hobbies include reading, gardening and caring for their two golden dodos.

Do you have a seasonal address that we should have on file? Please update your contact information by emailing info@rufusportermuseum.org or call us at (207) 647-2828.
**Shelby Bryant: Museum Assistant**

Shelby Bryant has served as Museum Assistant since February 2019. She earned her B.A. in History from Ursinus College in Collegeville, PA in May 2018. While in college, she developed her administrative, customer service, and museum skills as Project Ambassador at the First Amendment Museum in Augusta, ME; Communications Intern at the National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia, PA; and as a student worker working directly with the collection at the Berman Museum of Art at Ursinus College. A native of Maine, Shelby returned to her home state after graduation and has been working as a museum assistant at the Yarmouth Historical Society since July 2018. She splits her time between Yarmouth and Bridgton, utilizing her detail-oriented skills to further the missions of both of these historically important institutions in Maine. When not working two jobs, Shelby enjoys golfing, photography, and traveling.

**Katie Greene: 2019 Summer Intern**

Katie Greene is the Rufus Porter Museum’s summer intern for 2019. A soon to be graduate of Wheaton College in Norton, MA with a B.A. in American History and English Literature, Katie has extensive experience in museum collections management having served as an archives assistant at Wheaton as well as an intern at the Osher Map Library and Smith Center for Cartographic Education at the University of Southern Maine. She is also a prolific writer, having co-authored a textbook with the English Department at Wheaton College. Katie plans on attending graduate school in the fall, focusing on archives and collections. A native of Casco, she was drawn to the internship program at the Rufus Porter Museum due to our mission as well as the fact that we immerse our interns in all functions of the museum, including tours, special events, and general operations. In what little spare time she has had as a student (her words), Katie enjoys reading.

**Karla Leandri Rider: Director-Curator**

Karla Leandri Rider is our new Director-Curator as of November 2018. Originally from Connecticut, Karla graduated from Boston University with a B.A in Art History and a minor in Music. In 2014, she completed a Master’s degree in American and New England Studies at the University of Southern Maine. Karla comes to the Rufus Porter Museum with a wide range of museum and history experience including positions with the Old York Historical Society, Maine Preservation, Bates College Museum of Art, Victoria Mansion, the Kennebec Historical Society, and Museum L-A. Her diverse experience includes database management, customer service, event planning, grant writing, museum collections management, volunteer coordination, and social media, to name a few. Karla is also passionate about animals. She and her husband have four cats and two dogs. When not at the museum, Karla can be found mountain biking or road biking with her gal pals, or hiking with her husband.
The financial report for 2018 shows continued, new growth and stability for the Rufus Porter Museum. The main sources of revenue for operations continue to be donations and gifts, admission, membership, fund raising, museum store, education and grant revenue.

The retail income from the museum continues to pay for itself. We will continue to see continued growth in this area. We have an attractive and high quality museum store. We hope to see a level where the sales support general maintenance and operations of the buildings. We will be expanded our opening hours of the museum this year.

Business scholarships for 2018 made it possible to present the Curious Arts series, Camp Invention, and Making Maine Memories. Norway Savings Bank was the underwriter for the Making Maine Memories auction. We thank Bridgton Highland Golf Club for staging the event along with all the local businesses that contributed items and baskets for the live and silent auction.

Other sources of income were: Amazon Smile; Clynk Bag bottle redemption program; Hannaford’s Bag 4my Cause: Hannaford Helps; annual Harvest Supper; Making Maine Memories; and a month of bottle redemption at the Bridgton transfer station.

Capital projects in 2018 included commencement of the restoration of the exterior of the Church House, which will continue into 2019, thanks to the generous support of the Kendal C. and Anna Ham Charitable Foundation.

The Rufus Porter Museum applied for 3 grants at the start of 2018 and received funding from all three sources: The Kendal C. and Anna Ham Charitable Foundation (exterior work on the Church House), the Davis Family Foundation (interns), and the Margaret E. Burnham Charitable Trust (exhibits).

**Funding News**

- The Rufus Porter Museum received a $40,000 gift from the former National Museum of Decorative Painting in Atlanta, Georgia. After 36 years of operation with the purpose of collecting, preserving, and displaying the art of decorative painting, the National Museum of Decorative Painting made the difficult decision to close its doors in 2018. The funds will be used toward acquisitions and operational costs.

- The Peter and Elizabeth Tower Foundation donated an unrestricted donation in the amount of $5,000 through a Trustee Discretionary Grant in November 2018. The gift was included in the 2019 Annual Fund.

- Thanks to the generosity of Drew and Margaret Sanborn, the Dorothy W. Sanborn Internship program was established in February 2019. The fund will maintain a balance of $3,000 annually to support one intern every summer. Anyone is welcome to contribute to this fund. Dotti Sanborn was an accomplished writer and teacher in Bridgton who had a keen interest in local and regional history.
THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

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Kendal C. & Anna Ham Charitable Foundation  
Davis Family Foundation  
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Barbara and Ron Yates

The Circle of Friends members are a society of loyal donors who support RPM at the highest level with a 3 to 5 year commitment of $1,000 or more. They help to ensure the success of RPM for years to come. Their support seeds innovation, bridges funding gaps and builds a solid foundation as we increase programming and outreach in the community. 10% of COF annual pledges goes into the Collections / Acquisitions Fund to aid the development of RPM’s collection.

2018 Event Photos
An observer noted that there was an exhalation of “oh’s” and “ah’s” that permeated the basement of Therese and David Johnson as artisan Tony Castro from Tony Castro & Company removed the burlap coverings on one of the “Burbank” murals, part of the collection of the Rufus Porter Museum, back in January of this year. This moment has been approximately forty years in the making and signifies a huge step for the Museum.

As part of the Rufus Porter Museum’s 2019 exhibit, “Art Meets Science,” Tony Castro will be utilizing his scientific knowledge and art expertise to restore one of the six mural wall paintings in the Museum’s collection removed from the Silas Burbank House in Mt. Vernon, Maine. Silas Burbank was a physician who built his house in 1820. Ten years later, he hired Rufus Porter’s nephew, Jonathan D. Poor to paint the walls of the parlor and another adjacent smaller room. As time progressed, the importance and value of the murals appears to have declined as they were papered over sometime in the late 1800’s. It wasn’t until new owners purchased the house in 1967 that the paper was removed and the murals re-exposed.

Fast forward to the early 1980’s when the Burbank House’s status and future came into question. Thanks to the expertise of Cunningham-Adams Conservation LTD, the walls were saved and removed from the house. Eventually one of the larger panels was acquired by the National Heritage Museum (now the Scottish Rite Masonic Museum & Library) in Lexington, MA. The Rufus Porter Museum acquired six of the panels from the Old Schwamb Mill, where they had been stored, in Arlington, MA in 2015. Due to space restrictions at the Museum, the Johnsons have very generously housed the murals and will continue to do so until the Museum is able to expand its museum campus.

The Rufus Porter Museum is excited to welcome back Tony Castro & Company to continue to help the Museum preserve its collection for generations to come. Thanks to a generous grant from the Kendal C. and Anna Ham Charitable Foundation, the Museum was able to employ the expertise of Tony Castro last August to re-adhere the loose area of the mural wall plaster in the main parlor of the Nathan Church House. With over 25 years of experience, Castro has been involved in many important projects throughout Maine including the Joshua Chamberlain House in Brunswick, First Parish Church in Yarmouth, and Cumston Hall at The Theater at Monmouth.

The Museum will be documenting Castro’s work on the panel and he will talk about the project himself at a lecture scheduled for Wednesday, June 26th. Stay tuned for more information on this exciting project.

The Rufus Porter Museum invites you to join our team of guides, retail clerks, art enthusiasts, history-lovers, handicraft makers, gardeners, and mechanically-oriented folks! Come find out more about RPM and volunteering opportunities at our open house.

Tuesday, June 12, 2019 (rain date: June 13)
Volunteer Open House 1 pm – 4 pm
Rufus Porter Museum,
121 Main Street, Bridgton

No experience in museum work is necessary. Friendly, active individuals with an appreciation for museums and working with the public would enjoy the range of activities and projects at RPM.

Great for well-motivated high schoolers, retirees, and anyone in between. Flexible schedule. Clean, air-conditioned environment. The buildings are partially ADA accessible.

The museum is open Wednesday through Saturday from 10-4 pm until October 12, plus special event dates. For more information about the museum please visit: www.rufusportermuseum.org or email info@rufusportermuseum.org.

Unable to make the Open House?
Setup an appointment by contacting director@rufusportermuseum.org
Ginny and Don Eilertson have been involved with the Rufus Porter Museum for many years in every way possible. Ginny was drawn to the Museum as an admirer of Porter’s extensive use of stencils. Ginny had her own custom stenciling business for thirty years so she was well aware of Rufus Porter’s work. She first served as a docent, then began to help out in the gift shop. When the museum bought the Webb house, Ginny and Don scoured the old kitchen, first painting it, and then Ginny got to work with her stencils and transformed the area. Eventually, this space became Ginny’s wonderful Rufus Porter Gift Shop. She works tirelessly selecting interesting items, creating the best gift shop in Bridgton! In addition, Ginny has served as a member of the Board of Trustees for eight years. She is a talented artist, craftswoman, teacher and organizer. We can always count on Ginny, regardless of the occasion or event.

Don began helping as “Mr. Fix-it.” This morphed into a position on the Facilities Committee; Don soon became chair of the committee and joined the Board of Trustees. During Don’s tenure, he and his committee transformed the Webb House from a dilapidated building to a beautiful museum space. No words could describe the transformation this team made. He then became instrumental in moving the Church House down the hill to its home behind the Webb House. While Don decided to retire as facilities chair a few months ago, he continues to work with the committee as they restore the exterior of the Church House. Don’s wit and puns have kept us in high humor for years. When Ginny found out that Don had wriggled through the crawl space under the back ell, she was not that happy with him. But Don had seen a need and he carried through!

Don and Ginny’s tireless efforts on behalf of the Rufus Porter Museum speak volumes about the kind of people they are. Although they officially live in Massachusetts, their hearts are those of true Mainers.

**Photo Highlights from the Making Maine Memories Auction, August 2018**
June
15 Opening Day
26 Burbank Mural Restoration: Tony Castro

July
8-12 *Camp Invention* (K – 6th)
17 Quilt Show and Luncheon
20 RPM at *Art in the Park*

August
10 *Mystery/History House Tour*

September
21 Harvest Supper at Narramissic Farm and Smithsonian Museum Day (free admission)

October
12 Last Day of the Season

November
23 - 23 Ladies’ Day Out (gift shop open)

December
7 Holiday Open House (gift shop open)

For up to date information on programs, events, and talks go to: [rufusportermuseum.org/events](http://rufusportermuseum.org/events)

Camp Invention July 8 - 12
*For students K - 6th grade*
In partnership with the *National Inventor's Hall of Fame* and Stevens Brook Elementary School.
The camp is a hands-on program for kids learning about science, technology, engineering and math. Innovative and fun!
*Registration forms and information are online: [rufusportermuseum.org](http://rufusportermuseum.org)*

*Mystery/History Tour*  
Saturday, August 10
YOUR SUPPORT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

This newsletter wouldn’t be full of such amazing things if it wasn’t for your support and dedication to the Rufus Porter Museum. We’re so happy to have members that are eager to engage in art, science, history and culture.

Did you know that donations to the Annual Fund aren’t the only type of support you can give? This year there are so many ways that you can continue to support the museum!

Thank you for all you do to help us grow. We’re excited to see where 2019 takes us.

Volunteer
We’re looking for the following volunteers:
Facilities—Docents—Gift Shop Clerks

Donate
Donations help cover the annual costs of the operations at the Rufus Porter Museum.

Shop with Amazon Smile
Shop online with Amazon Smile for a convenient and fun way to contribute to the Rufus Porter Museum.

Clynk Bags
Bag it, Tag it and Drop it!
Pick up Clynk bags in the Museum’s gift store and drop them off at Hannaford Supermarket.