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Friends of the Maine State Museum

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The Maine State Museum seeks to share what is meaningful about Maine and its place in the world, in order to inspire people to discover Maine's past, understand its present, and imagine its future. Visit mainestatemuseum.org.

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Fly Rod Crosby's Rifle Finds a New Home at the Museum

A legendary rifle owned and used by one of Maine's most celebrated outdoorswomen, Cornelia 'Fly Rod' Crosby, was recently donated to the museum by Joe and Denise Francouer. The Francouers also donated a hunting jacket that Crosby had given to Joe's grandfather, Guy Hunter; the black bear head mount and outfit from Joe's 1976 hunt; and correspondence, gifts, and photographs shared between Crosby and the Hunter family.

A celebrity of the Maine woods, Crosby was born in Phillips, Maine on November 10, 1854. An accomplished sportswoman, she was a legendary angler, the first registered Maine Guide, and outdoors advocate. As a journalist, Crosby worked tirelessly to promote Maine through her newspaper column "Fly Rod's Notebook."

She organized Maine's exhibits at sportsmen's shows in New York and Boston, drawing national awareness and tens of thousands of visitors to Maine.

From the quantity and quality of her catch to her marksmanship with a rifle, Crosby's

adventures in the woods were reported across the country. Her fame brought many gifts to her, including the Winchester Model 94 .38-55 rifle. Engraved 'Fly Rod 1896,' the rifle was presented to her at the 1896 New York Sportsmen's Exposition at Madison Square Garden.

Crosby used the trusty Winchester in her famed, successful Aroostook caribou hunt in 1897. Often misstated as being the last legally shot caribou in Maine, Crosby's take did coincide with the



*Fly Rod with her Winchester, ca. 1897
(Image courtesy of the Phillips Historical Society)*

(continued on page 2)

A Whale of a Talk at the Annual Meeting

On October 24, the Friends of the Maine State Museum had the pleasure of welcoming Dan DenDanto of Allied Whale as the featured speaker for their annual meeting. Dan walked the audience through the work he has been doing to prepare two whale skeletons, an adult female humpback and calf, for an awe-inspiring new exhibit that will be part of the museum's reopening in early 2026. Vector, as the adult whale is known to the scientists that tracked her activity for years, will be the centerpiece of *Vector: A Whale's Life in the Gulf of Maine*. The exhibition will provide the opportunity for the museum to explore such subjects as Vector's life story, whale behavior and biology, and the past, present and future of the Gulf of Maine, including the whales that live there. The informative evening was held at the historic Viles House in Augusta.



Dan DenDanto

Reopening Now Within Sight

The Maine State Museum is creating 10,500 sq. ft. of new exhibits for its long-anticipated reopening, now within sight. The museum will reoccupy its portion of the Cultural Building in early 2025 and initiate a phased public reopening in early 2026. We are developing four new exhibits: *The Lunder Education Center*; *Meet Maine Here*; *Vector: A Whale's Life in the Gulf of Maine*; and *Maine Quilts: Comfort and Community*. Planning for these exhibits is about 70% complete overall. That means space and exhibit design, object selection, graphic design, interactive development, and the writing of texts and informational panels is nearing completion. Then we can start building the exhibits as soon as we return to the building.

“Heightened technology and interactive engagement will introduce a striking new world of visual, emotional, and educational stimulation to the museum.”

The highlights of the Lunder Education Center, aimed at students and families, include the Bryant Pond telephone switchboard in a multi-generational display about communications; materials from the Revolutionary War ship *Defence* and

an innovative digital touch table allowing visitors to experience what it is like to be an archaeologist; and a magnificent display of Maine birds. *Meet Maine Here* will feature a series of mini-exhibits, each linked to a person in Maine history, exploring the preservation of Maine's environment, history of Maine tourism, past and present immigrant communities, racial attitudes and experiences in the Spanish-American War, revival of Native languages, and other subjects. Most of the objects will be exhibited for the first time, like Maine Guide Flyrod Crosby's hunting rifle. *Vector* will feature an extraordinary 45-foot humpback whale skeleton, a smaller calf, and displays addressing whale biology, whale migration, the past, present and future of the Gulf of Maine, and the prospect for whale survival and recovery in our waters. *Maine Quilts* will present Maine's largest quilt exhibit ever, with 60 examples from the early 1800s to the present, most never shown before.

Many of these exhibits are planned to change frequently, providing a constant flow of new experiences. Heightened technology and interactive engagement will introduce a striking new world of visual, emotional, and educational stimulation to the museum.

Getting Ready to Build-a-Bird

Maine State Museum educators migrated to eight libraries around central Maine for February and April school vacations to present the All About Birds! program. These outreach events allowed museum educators to test activities that may be used in the museum's new Lunder Education Center, which will be a feature of the reopened museum. One of our most popular activities was Build-a-Bird, created by exhibit preparator Ryan Walker.



We Need You for the Grand Reopening!

The Friends of the Maine State Museum is starting to gear up for all the fun and festivity that will surround the museum's reopening, and we are looking for a few good people – to serve on the board, to serve on event planning committees, and to volunteer during events. In January we will begin planning in earnest for the publicity and programs building up to the day we've all been waiting for, the day the museum opens its doors again in early 2026. There will be hoopla, there will be merriment, and most importantly, there will be spectacular new exhibits.

■ If you are interested in helping celebrate the return of your beloved museum, let us know! Please contact Ellen Dyer, Director of Membership and Development at ellen.dyer@maine.gov or 207-287-2304.

Fly Rod (continued from page 1)

exodus of Maine's woodland caribou, albeit a year before the close time on caribou hunting commenced in 1899. An important accomplishment for any hunter and celebrated throughout the Northeast, the story grew over time like a good fishing tale, becoming more myth than fact.

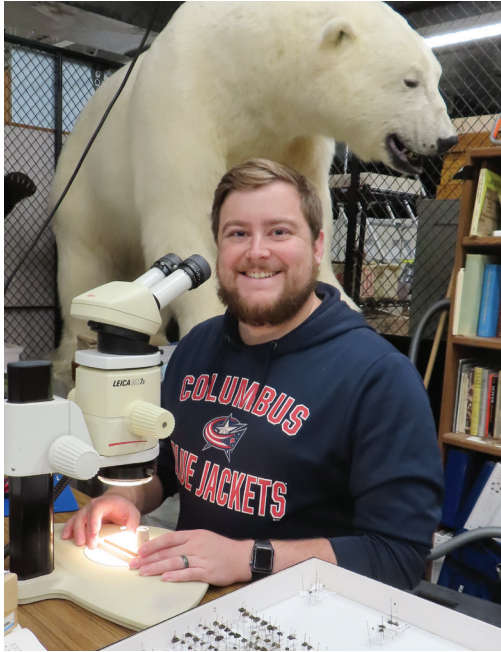
In time Crosby passed the rifle to Guy Hunter, whom she had taken guardianship of as a child living in a Lewiston orphanage and remained close to throughout her life. Guy gave the rifle to his grandson Joe, an avid hunter, who last used the Winchester in a black bear hunt on Comstock Mountain in 1976. Knowing the rifle's historical significance, he never fired it again and set it aside for safekeeping.

The rifle and other important materials donated by the Francoeurs join Crosby's 'Maine Views' photograph album that she gave to former Maine Governor Percival Baxter, who later offered it to the museum. The Maine State Museum is grateful for these donations that tell the rich, remarkable story of one of Maine's most noteworthy women.

Museum Welcomes Natural Science Collections Manager

Chase Gagne of Fairfield has been hired as the museum's first permanent natural science collections manager, following a year-long temporary appointment.

Chase brings a range of experience and education to the position. He has an M.S. in Entomology and a B.S. in Wildlife Ecology from the University of Maine. Among many other academic activities, he served as a teaching assistant, curated the insect collection, and initiated a scientific reference collection for entomological research projects.



Natural science collections manager Chase Gagne

At the museum, Chase has become a key participant in planning the upcoming whale exhibit, while researching and organizing natural science collections for the new Lunder Education Center. Chase is also a great support to the volunteers working on the museum's insect collections and has developed a database of related collections held elsewhere in the state. He has also continued organizing the museum's extensive biological specimens and plant materials.

The variety of the museum's collections is a big plus for Chase. "Here at the museum," he noted, "I have the opportunity to become the well-rounded naturalist I have always wanted to be." The advantages are mutual, as Chase's efforts will benefit the museum, volunteers, and visitors for a long time to come.

An Educational White Pine Tree Grows

Museum staff are sculpting a 16-foot tall and 7-foot-wide white pine tree. The finished tree will be installed in the Lunder Education Center's early learning area, where children can explore inside and around the tree and learn about the animals and plants found in a white pine forest. The area will also feature a colorful mural and animal sculptures by Maine artist Rebekah Raye, whose work on the project is funded through grants from the Fisher Foundation and Elsie and William Viles Foundation.



Exhibit preparator Ryan Walker (left) and exhibit designer Brewster Buttfield (right) smooth and shape plaster "bark" on a white pine tree sculpture planned for the museum's new Lunder Education Center.

Museum Educators Answer the Call... For Interactive Exhibits

Museum educators have created a new game that will replicate the experience of working as a telephone switchboard operator. The Lunder Education Center will feature the magneto switchboard from Bryant Pond, which had America's last hand-crank phone system. Education center visitors will be able to plug in cables and connect phone calls on a simplified version of a switchboard, allowing players to experience a fictional day in the life of an operator helping with a local emergency. Museum educator Kate Webber and consultant Anita Clearfield recently worked with museum staff and voice actors at a recording session to record the script that will be used in the new game.



Consultant Anita Clearfield (left) and museum educator Kate Webber (right) at the switchboard interactive recording session.

Time for the End of the Year Appeal

■ Please watch your mailbox for the Friends of the Maine State Museum's end of the year appeal. Your donation this year will help us prepare for the final stretch – planning all the activity surrounding the museum's reopening in early 2026 and improving our communications about what is to come. We're almost there! ■ You may send your donation to **Friends of the Maine State Museum**, 83 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333-0083 or give online: bit.ly/SupportFMSM. **Thank you!**

Maine Republican Party Born in Strong

The Maine State Museum recently acquired a sign that hung on the building where the Maine Republican Party was formed in 1854. It hung outside the office of Judge Philip M. Stubbs (1805-1876) of Strong, Maine.

Judge Stubbs's office was the place where members of three political parties joined forces to form the Maine Republican party on August 7, 1854. The parties were: the abolitionist wing of the Whig party; the Free Soil party, which advocated that all future states would be free states; and a group of Democrats in favor of the Maine law restricting alcohol consumption. The representatives met in Stubbs's office to negotiate a political platform for a new party. They received approval of the platform from their separate parties, then met on the town common to hold Maine's first Republican convention, nominating candidates for a full Franklin County Republican ticket.

In 1884 Judge Stubbs guided the organization in a 30th anniversary



The museum purchased this P.M. Stubbs sign from his great grandson, Robert G. Stubbs, Jr. of Hallowell. 2024.7.

celebration of the Strong convention to commemorate what he viewed as the origin of the national Republican party. Sixteen trains brought over 5,000 people to Strong to hear leading Maine Republicans speak, including Presidential nominee James Blaine and former Vice President Hannibal Hamlin.

Three rival cities - Ripon, Wisconsin; Ottawa, Illinois; and Jackson, Michigan - all vied with Strong to be named as the party's hometown. Today, the Republican party recognizes Ripon, Wisconsin - which held an organizing meeting about four months before Strong's - as its official birthplace.