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Friends of the Maine State Museum

83 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0083

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.

Contributors to this issue include:

Andrew Beaupré
Ellen Dyer
Bernard Fishman
Victoria Levesque
Sheila McDonald
Joanna Torow
Kate Webber

Design by Casady Design

Broadside

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The Whales Have Landed

April was a time of significant milestones at the Maine State Museum as staff began to see glimmers of a reopened museum and the first evidence of the dramatic exhibits planned for the museum's gleaming renovated space.

And what better lead-in to the milestones than eight days of extraordinary work by the Maine company Whales and Nails, as its crew of five assembled and suspended the skeletons of two humpback whales. Both whales — a 35-year-old female humpback and a female

(continued on page 2)

▲ Dan DenDanto and one of his crew members work on installing humpback whales in the museum. The skeleton pictured here, from a 35-year-old female humpback, weighs approximately 3,800 pounds.

Students Bring their Stories to the Museum

Teachers from five Maine schools will be selected to test the "My Maine Museum" program during the 2025-26 school year. The program is designed to bring young voices and perspectives into the museum, while delivering a memorable educational experience to Maine students. They will practice doing the work of historians and curators by applying a historical lens to their own lives and families and considering how the present moment will become history.

Students will choose a person, place or thing from their own lives that tells a story about



Teacher Allison Poulin, adviser to the "My Maine Museum" program

the Maine experience. During the museum's first phase of reopening in 2026, students' projects will be showcased in a digital display in the museum and online. Classes will celebrate with a "museum night" at their school or at the Maine State Museum.

Allison Poulin, a teacher in Skowhegan, is working as an advisor to the museum and is creating a set of lesson plans to guide classes through the program. Students will gain skills, behind-the-scenes experience with museum staff, and the understanding that their lives are part of Maine's story.

Art for Your Sake

We are moving home. After over four years of wrestling with a difficult renovation project in Augusta's Cultural Building, moving thousands of objects, designing and planning new exhibits, learning how to engage the public through screens instead of with objects in cases, and raising money for our leaps into the future, we are leaving our temporary quarters. In fact, by the time you read this, we will be installing labs, workshops, whale skeletons, and a whole world of wonders for you to see when we have the first phase of our formal, public reopening next year.

It isn't hard to think of us as a long line of tireless ants carrying our resources back into the nest. But you may not be aware that the move also involves the installation of art — not historical art, but new, fresh art. Maine is a creative and gently forward-looking place that requires the state to fund the installation of art for newly-renovated or newly-

“By the time you read this, we will be installing labs, workshops, whale skeletons, and a whole world of wonders for you to see.”

constructed state buildings, to the amount of one per cent of the construction costs of the public spaces in those buildings. Called the Per Cent for Art program, it is established in Maine law and run by the Maine Arts Commission. For the

Cultural Building, a panel of five reviewers, including myself, has been formed to determine guidelines. A public call for proposals will then be issued, from which the panel will select an artist. Ultimately, probably in 2027, the finished art will be installed.

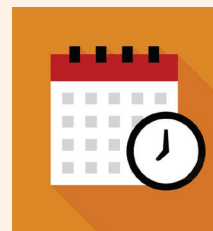
The Cultural Building's public spaces entitle it to receive \$139,000 for this project. That is a healthy amount of money and its use will give the panel much to think about: To what degree should the art reflect the architecture of the building? Should the call for proposals be directed to Maine artists only, to those that can define a connection to Maine, or to those from a wider geographical area? Should the artists be given an open horizon to develop their ideas and placements, or should we suggest the kinds of themes or projects they can consider?

The panel had its first meeting in March. It excites me to participate in a process that will put a kind of crown on all the hard work and sincere hopes the Maine State Museum and its sister state agencies have had for the Cultural Building for such a long time.

The Countdown to Reopening Starts in September

In September, the Maine State Museum and the Friends will officially kick off the countdown

to the first phase of the museum's reopening to the public! In the buildup to the big debut of new interactive and awe-inspiring exhibits, we will offer an array of community preview events, launch a revamped website to enhance visitor experience and provide easy access to information and updates, and show you behind-the-scenes preparations. Sign up for our e-newsletter at mainestatemuseum.org or follow us on Facebook, Youtube, or Instagram (@MaineStateMuseum) to stay in the loop!



The Whales (continued from page 1)

humpback calf of about 6 months old — lived part of every year in the Gulf of Maine.

The exhibition of this whale pair will certainly be a first for the Maine State Museum and in many ways a first in the world. Stay tuned as this exciting exhibit, along with several others, unfolds to a grand debut during the first phase of the museum's reopening, tentatively scheduled for summer 2026.



◀ The Whales and Nails crew spent eight days completing all the detailed work necessary to fully articulate and suspend the two whale skeletons featured in the museum's new gallery.

▲ The skeleton of the female humpback calf, pictured here, weighs about 280 pounds. On display together, the adult and calf skeletons will provide visitors with a sense of humpbacks' size range.

Experimental Archaeology Helps Museum Understand Defence

New research by the museum's curator of archaeological collections about life aboard the Revolutionary War privateer *Defence* is bringing exciting insights to the understanding of the ship. Among other analytical methods, museum curator Andrew Beaupré is using experimental archaeology in his research. This method stems from the premise that knowledge of artifacts cannot be gained simply through traditional archaeological and archival research, but must be combined with mechanical processes to accurately replicate historical items.

In February, Andrew used experimental archaeology to put needle to cloth and sew a hammock in the style of those from the 1700s. He consulted documents of the period, as well as two artifacts from *Defence* that had been initially categorized as fragments of a sailor's hammock - a partial rope clew (see photo) and a piece of wood tentatively identified as a hammock board (a board at either end of hammock, through which rope was strung).

After finishing his hand-stitching tasks, Andrew gained a valuable understanding of the logistics of sleeping aboard a crowded sailing ship. He also confirmed the use of the rope in the hammock construction, called the hammock board's identity into question, and found that a fragment of canvas containing a common worked eyelet may have been part of the hammock assemblage and not part of a sail as earlier researchers had concluded.

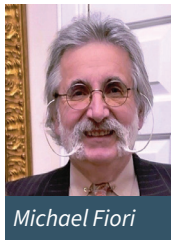


ABOVE: Curator of Archaeological Collections Andrew Beaupré and his son Teddy test a hammock that Andrew made in the style of those from *Defence*.

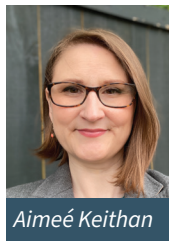
BELOW: The rope clew made by Andrew (on the left) confirmed the identification of a rope clew recovered from *Defence*. HRI 78/3/55

Welcome Aboard!

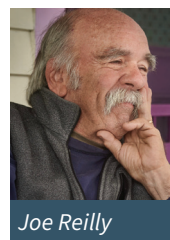
The Friends of the Maine State Museum welcomes four talented individuals onto its Board of Directors as the organization gears up for the museum's reopening in 2026.



Michael Fiori was raised in Brunswick and his extensive schooling includes Bowdoin College, the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy, and the University of Maine at Orono. In addition to his long career in pharmacy, Michael's resume includes being the executive producer of the 1998 documentary *The Forgotten Maine*. He is a past member of the Friends of the Maine State Museum Board of Directors, as well as many other museums and nonprofits in the state. He lives in Winthrop.

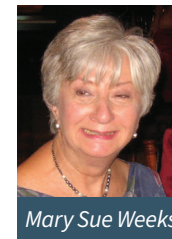


Aimeé Keithan graduated from the University of Maine at Augusta and earned a PhD in historic preservation at the University of York in the U.K. Her career includes such positions as museum manager at Pejepscot History Center, and executive director of Boothbay Region Historical Society. She is currently educational programs manager at Greater Portland Landmarks. Aimeé is a member of the Historic Village Review Board in Brunswick, where she lives.



F. Joseph Reilly holds a degree in elementary education from Boston University and spent over 3 decades teaching in the Brookline, MA public school systems. While there, he designed

and taught a museum-based first grade curriculum working with the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. Until recently, he was co-owner of Goose River Exchange, an antiquarian bookstore. Joe serves as the president for the Bayside Historical Preservation Society in Northport and lives in Portland.



Mary Sue Weeks was raised in Bremen and attended Colby College. She has had an extensive career in fundraising for nonprofits, including Hurricane Island Outward Bound School in Rockland and Tanglewood 4-H Camp and Learning Center in Lincolnville. She has served on the board of trustees for Lincoln Academy and spent 11 years on the Maine State Museum Commission. Mary Sue lives on her family homestead in Bremen in a renovated one-room schoolhouse (which she attended).

Interested in finding out more about being a Friends board member? Please contact Ellen Dyer at ellen.dyer@maine.gov.

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Members Can Get a Sneak Peek of Museum Galleries May 27- June 2

Are you a member? Don't miss your chance to see the work in progress on three new museum exhibit spaces to be unveiled in phase one of the museum's reopening in 2026: *Beyond the Postcard: Stories of the Maine Experience*; *Vector: A Whale's Life in the Gulf of Maine*; and the Lunder Education Center. Though spaces will be under construction, the incredible work underway (including the just completed awe-inspiring installation of two humpback whale skeletons!) will give you a glimpse of the exciting things to come.

Tours will be held:

- May 27 at 10am and 2pm
- May 29 at 10am and 2pm
- June 2 at 9am and 1pm

To register now (or to become a member so you can register), scan the QR code or call 207-287-2304. Space is limited – and you must be a member to register!



The tours are hosted by the Friends of the Maine State Museum. Thank you to our generous sponsor, **Camden National Bank**, for making these sneak peek tours possible.

MEMBER PREVIEW TOURS!

Join us for an **exclusive**
sneak peek of

NEW EXHIBITS
COMING IN

2026



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