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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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Broadside

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MEET MAINE HERE!

All about the Maine State Museum's Phase I
Reopening on October 24, 2026

The first phase of the museum's multi-year reopening is nearing completion and there's a whole lot that's new, including more than 19,000 square feet of new exhibits, displays, and gathering spaces.

When the doors open on October 24, visitors will be greeted with totally renovated main floor exhibits, the return of a beloved landmark exhibit, and even more to look forward to. The main floor and 4th floor will be open, with exhibits on the lower floors returning as soon as exhibit cleaning, new research, upgrades, and installation are complete.

Phase I Main Floor Exhibits include: *Beyond the Postcard: Stories of the Maine Experience*

This introductory exhibit offers visitors new perspectives on our state's history by exploring historical and contemporary Maine people through objects, documents, and photographs.

Vector: A Whale's Life in the Gulf of Maine

Visitors can enter the 4,130-square-foot whale gallery to see the dramatic display of two humpback whale skeletons and become immersed in the lives and biology of humpback whales and whale ecology in the Gulf of Maine.

The Lunder Education Center

The museum's first dedicated learning space for families and school groups provides visitors with interactive exhibits and displays to encourage play and exploration for kids of all ages. Visitors can experience first-hand what it's like to be an underwater archaeologist, a switchboard operator,

and even a wild inhabitant of a pine forest living inside a life-size pine tree.

Phase I 4th Floor Exhibits include:

Maine Quilts: 250 Years of Comfort and Community

Maine Quilts is a comprehensive exploration of our state's contributions to the art of quilting and highlights the extraordinary work of women and community groups to this art form.

At Home in Maine

The beloved landmark exhibit has been updated to feature new and rarely displayed collection items for a multifaceted journey through centuries of Maine's domestic past.

In addition to offering these new and refreshed exhibits, the museum is also expanding hours to open on Sundays, a first in many years. Visitors can also look forward to a revitalized Museum Store with new custom merchandise, new reception and presentation areas, upgraded facilities, and expanded programs this fall.

Stay tuned for more information on our website and in our e-newsletter in the coming months!

The museum will be offering
FREE ADMISSION FOR ALL
October 24–December 31, 2026!



Meet Maine Here

As the Maine State Museum prepares to embark on the first phase of its public reopening after being largely closed for over six years, we see that we will find a changed world, one that has been transformed profoundly in some ways. Before the pandemic, the museum had an annual attendance of about 45,000, of whom some 15,000 were students in school. Since 2020, Maine's total number of enrolled K-12 students has declined considerably, and costs for travel have increased, from bus rentals to the cost of gasoline. And the political world has changed.

How will that affect our future as a museum and as one of Maine's important educational institutions? Will our student attendance decline? How can a modern museum stand astride such polarized points of observation?

“The Maine State Museum is about you and so many others whose lives, cultures, accomplishments and aspirations deserve to be remembered [...]”

On the other hand, we have developed a host of entirely new online learning programs and classes, which have drawn a larger audience each year and now reach about 2,400 students. And we will have the excellent Lunder Education Center, our first purposefully-designed educational

space, equipped with engaging new displays, the latest technology, and engagement opportunities for every level of learning. We think our educational attendance is much more likely to rise than fall.

When the museum is fully open, nearly half of our exhibits will be new, fresh, and cover more emotional and intellectual ground. Personal stories will link to history and to Maine's character and people. Multitudes of visitors who loved our old exhibits, but weren't sure when they would ever change, will now be dazzled by a horizon of new visions and impulses that will be fun, stimulating, bold, and excite curiosity and enjoyment. We think thousands who have never visited us before will want to experience the freshness and inspiration that our new exhibits and programs will convey.

The Maine State Museum is about you and so many others whose lives, cultures, accomplishments, and aspirations deserve to be remembered. Our 'new' museum will reflect our official tag line: **Meet Maine Here**.

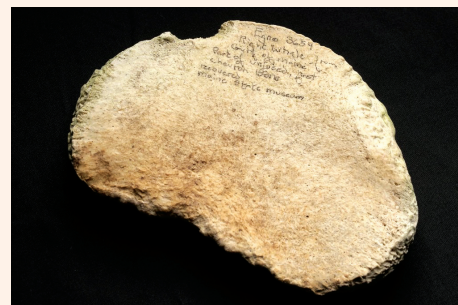


Photo: Greg Rec, Portland Press Herald

Sealed in Time: Maine State Museum's Specimen for the Future

The Maine State Museum will contribute a small bone from its whale EgNo3694 to 'America's Time Capsule,' which will be placed in Philadelphia's National Historical Park in commemoration of the nation's 250th birthday. The time capsule is intended to remain sealed for two centuries. EgNo3694, a North Atlantic right whale, was killed by fishing gear entanglement and was found near Boothbay in 2016. Parts of its skeleton will be featured in the reopened museum, along with skeletons of two complete humpback whales. North Atlantic right whales have experienced a severe population decline. The inclusion of the bone in the time capsule poses the question to the future: Have right whales been saved from extinction?

“My Maine Museum” Project Wraps Up with Student Visits and Digital Exhibit

This May, students and teachers from five Maine schools, all selected to be a part of the Maine State Museum's "My Maine Museum" program, concluded the pilot with much celebration and special visits to the museum.

"My Maine Museum" was designed to bring young voices and perspectives into the museum while delivering a memorable educational experience to Maine students. The schools selected for the program during the 2025/26 school year were Islesboro Central School, Solon Elementary School, Sterns



Students from Lewiston Middle School tour the new main floor exhibits.

Junior/Senior High School, Lewiston Middle School, and Hall-Dale High School. Allison Poulin, a teacher in Skowhegan, served as an advisor and created lesson plans to guide students through the program.

Students were asked to share an image and description of something important to their lives in Maine. Their submissions covered a broad range of topics, from family trips to beloved pets. This digital exhibit will be on display at the Maine State Museum for visitors of all ages to enjoy, and is available now on the museum's website.

Below are some examples of the "My Maine Museum" student submissions. View them all at mainestatemuseum.org/my-maine-museum



Parlor Set With Deep Maine Connections Returns Home

In early 2025, the Maine State Museum received a donation of a remarkable parlor set with an even more remarkable family story.

The set, consisting of a parlor sofa, side chair, and table, came to the museum from Gail Bingham of Louisville, Kentucky. Four generations of her family had cared for the set which had been given to her great-grandmother, Sarah Dixon, as a wedding present by her employer Mrs. Harriet Stanwood Blaine. Harriet's husband, James Blaine, was a prominent national politician, serving as Speaker of the House, a Republican candidate for President, and U.S. Senator from Maine. The Blaine House is now the home of Maine's governors.

Sarah Dixon (1855-1928) was a Black woman born free in Virginia to John Dixon, an enslaved man, and Sallie Dixon, who had been emancipated by 1851. It is not clear why or when Sarah arrived in Augusta, but she had likely been working for the Blaines for some time before they gave her the parlor set on the occasion of her marriage to Henry Edward Taylor (1832-1893), a local African American hostler. The parlor set was actually three pieces of furniture from different eras that the Blaines had owned and used in the Blaine House between the 1850s and the 1870s. The Blaine's gift to Sarah and her husband



represents a long tradition of prosperous families handing down household furnishings to favored servants.

Sarah, Henry, and their family lived on Child Street, a few houses away from the Blaine family. There, the parlor set held a prominent place in their small home. When the Taylor family moved to Illinois around 1912, the parlor set went with them. It passed through the family of their son George (1888-1969) when he settled in Indianapolis. The set then went with his daughter, Rebecca Taylor Bingham (1928-2023) to Louisville, Kentucky, where she and her family made their home.

Through all this time, the Taylor family

kept the story of the parlor set alive. Rebecca Taylor Bingham brought her children to Augusta on vacations into the 1980s. They took tours of the Blaine House and reflected on Sarah Dixon Taylor's work there. When Rebecca Bingham died, her daughter, the donor, knew the parlor set needed to come "home."

And come home it did. The set will soon be exhibited in the museum's *At Home in Maine* exhibit where it will preserve a chapter of African American history in Augusta and show how material culture can weave together the stories of one family through generations of change.

Vector Offers Up Another Rarity

Beyond being the only display in the world that features two humpbacks of this size and age range, *Vector: A Whale's Life in the Gulf of Maine*, includes another unique element - baleen!



In February, Dan DenDanto of Whales and Nails (above) attached a preserved baleen plate to Vector's upper jawbone. Due to its fragility, baleen is rarely included in skeletal exhibitions of this scale. Baleen is composed of keratin, the same protein as human fingernails. With its addition to Vector's skeleton, visitors will be able to gain a more accurate understanding of whale biology and ecology.

Museum Welcomes New Curator

The museum is pleased to welcome **Brittany Jaarsma** as the new curator of historical collections. Brittany grew up in the French Acadian community of Madawaska, Maine, and these roots led to her love of history. She went on to earn her B.A. in Archaeology from the University of Evansville and an M.A. in Museum Studies from the University of New Hampshire. Brittany has worked at several museums throughout the country, most recently at Old Sturbridge Village in Sturbridge, Massachusetts. She is thrilled to return home to Maine and bring her skills to the Maine State Museum as it enters an exciting new era.



Brittany Jaarsma

Show your support!



Scan to give a secure gift online. All donations of \$35 or more earn the benefits of membership.

Save these Dates!

Phase I of the museum's reopening is almost here.
Get ready to celebrate and be part of these
unforgettable events.

September 12, 2026 – SEA You Soon Exhibit Preview

10:00 am to 4:00 pm

Cultural Building Atrium

****FREE FOR ALL VISITORS!****

Join us for a day of fun family festivities (including a life-size inflatable whale!) and get a sneak peek at new exhibits through hands-on activities.

October 24, 2026 – Grand Reopening Celebration

10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Cultural Building Atrium and Maine State Museum

****FREE FOR ALL VISITORS!****

The big day! Enjoy live music, food trucks, all-ages activities, demonstrations, and more.

Members & Donors Reopening Reception – TBD

Maine State Museum

A special evening to celebrate our members, donors, and friends for their support and dedication in making a revitalized Maine State Museum possible for all. Invitations and more details to come.

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