

*The Maine Historical Society Invites You To:*

**AGREEABLE SITUATIONS AT 21: ART, OBJECTS AND CULTURE IN MAINE**

**A Symposium**



**Saturday, May 10, 9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.**

Maine Historical Society  
489 Congress Street  
Portland, ME 207-774-1822  
[www.mainehistory.org/agreeable](http://www.mainehistory.org/agreeable)

Please join us for a day-long symposium that celebrates the anniversary of *Agreeable Situations: Society, Commerce, and Art in Southern Maine, 1780-1830*. The program will explore the significance of this landmark book, and consider key issues in the study of material culture today. AGREEABLE SITUATIONS AT 21 is organized by the Maine Historical Society in conjunction with the original collaborating institutions: The Brick Store Museum, Saco Museum, and Old York Historical Society.

For more information and program details, please visit: [www.mainehistory.org/agreeable](http://www.mainehistory.org/agreeable)

**Speakers include:**

- *Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, Harvard University*
- *Kevin D. Murphy, CUNY Graduate Center*
- *Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr., Maine Historic Preservation Commission*
- *Emerson Baker, Salem State College*
- *Thomas Hardiman, Portsmouth Athenaeum*
- *Laura Fecych Sprague, Independent Curator*
- *John Mayer, Maine Historical Society*
- *Abby Burch, Winterthur Program in American Material Culture, University of Delaware*

**Registration:** \$65; \$55 MHS Members. **Early-Bird Rate\*:** \$55; \$45 MHS Members. \*Registration must be received by 5pm, Friday, April 18 for early-bird rate.

**REGISTRATION FORM**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Total Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Visa/MC#: \_\_\_\_\_  
Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Check (payable to Maine Historical Society)  
Credit Card

*Please complete this form and return to:*  
Maine Historical Society, 489 Congress Street, Portland, ME 04101-3498

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Saturday, May 10, 9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

**8:30-9:00 Registration**

**9:00-9:45 “How Objects Make History”**

*Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, History Department, Harvard University*

A Pulitzer Prize-winning historian of Maine subjects, Professor Ulrich will discuss the importance of object-centered research, which she discovered during research for her essay “From the Fair to the Brave’: Spheres of Womanhood in Federal Maine” for *Agreeable Situations*. Object-based research, especially textiles, is a major focus of her writing.

**9:45-10:30 “Parris’s Portland Portfolios: An Analysis of Federal Period Architectural Drawings”**

*Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr., Director, Maine Historic Preservation Commission and State Historian*

Mr. Shettleworth will explore two extraordinary portfolios of Alexander Parris, New England’s great Federal architect, to reveal new information on his work during a dynamic and prosperous time in Portland’s history.

**10:30-10:45 Break**

**10:45-11:10 “John Brewster, Jr.: New Discoveries of Maine Portraits”**

*Thomas Hardiman, keeper, Portsmouth Athenaeum*

The great itinerant artist, Brewster portrayed many Saco, Maine, individuals. While curator at the Saco Museum, Mr. Hardiman made many new discoveries, including unidentified portraits, Brewster’s painting technique, and his relationships to his patrons. Much of this research has not been published.

**11:10-11:30 “Boston & Maine: Massachusetts Connections to Great Maine Collections”**

*Laura Fecych Sprague, consulting curator of decorative arts, Bowdoin College Museum of Art, and independent curator*

Beginning with the 17<sup>th</sup> century trading posts of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, Bostonians have long been present in Maine. This brief review reveals how these families have shaped some of Maine finest collections of art and material culture.

**11:30-11:50 “By His Account Rendered’: The Business of Cabinetmaking in York County, Maine, 1815-1840”**

*Abby Burch, Lois F. McNeil Fellow in the Winterthur Program in American Material Culture at the University of Delaware*

Ms. Burch will draw on her Master’s thesis research for which she studied and compared the account books of two cabinetmakers, Joseph Murphy of South Berwick and Nathaniel Knowlton of Eliot. Two contemporary case studies reveal the different tactics craftsmen employed in responding to individual desires, economic circumstances, and consumer demand.

**11:50-12:15 “Collecting Objects, Creating Access: Twenty Years at Maine Historical Society Society”**

***John Mayer, Curator of the Museum, Maine Historical Society***

In the years since the publication of *Agreeable Situations*, the Maine Historical Society has actively sought important objects to build an already extraordinary collection of paintings, sculpture, and decorative arts. John Mayer will highlight these objects, how they relate to MHS library and manuscript holdings, and how the Maine Memory Network, MHS’s online museum has expanded public access for this rich collection.

**12:15-1:00 LUNCH**

**1:00-1:45 “On the Eastern Frontier: Maine Material Culture in the 1690s”**

***Emerson Baker, Professor of History, Salem State College***

Professor Baker has spent the past two decades excavating a series of Maine archaeological sites that were destroyed in 1689 and 1690 at the outbreak of King William’s War. Work at these sites provides a unique opportunity to examine the range of society and economy in coastal northern New England in the late seventeenth century, a time of significant political, economic, religious and social stress.

**1:45-2:30 “Parson, Painter, Tinker, Print-maker: Jonathan Fisher of Blue Hill: A New Appreciation”**

***Kevin D. Murphy, Professor of Art History, CUNY Graduate Center***

Professor Murphy’s thorough analysis of Fisher’s fascinating diaries (written in cipher) has yielded exciting new insights into the life, house, paintings, printmaking, and varied works of this remarkable Congregational minister. Fisher’s innovative house survives in Blue Hill with many of its original paintings, drawings, and decorative arts at the Farnsworth Museum in Rockland. Not since Mary Ellen Chase’s 1948 biography has Fisher received such careful study. Murphy’s forthcoming book *Jonathan Fisher (1768-1847) of Blue Hill, Maine: Commerce, Culture and Community on the Eastern Frontier* will be published by University of Massachusetts Press.

**2:30-2:45 Break**

**2:45-3:30 Future Needs and Opportunities**

***Moderated by: Kevin Murphy***

**Panel discussion:** Symposium presenters will discuss key issues and opportunities facing the field. What still needs to be addressed? Why does Maine need to be included in national studies? What great material is waiting to be discovered? How have methods changes? What new scholarly insights might there be?