

MAINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY PUBLIC PROGRAM SERIES



The Richard D'Abate Lectures: Conversations About History, Art, and Literature

In May 2012, Richard D'Abate will retire after 16 years as Executive Director of Maine Historical Society. This program series celebrates the spirit of his intellect and recognizes his many contributions to Maine's cultural life. Programs honor Richard's far-ranging interests, the connections between literature, art, and history in particular; the intellectual friendships and collaborations that have characterized his career; and Richard's deep appreciation for and commitment to the diversity of Maine people, experiences, and history.

PROGRAMS AND DATES

MARCH

TUESDAY, MARCH 6, 12PM

Longfellow's Shadow: A reading of poems by Wesley McNair and Betsy Sholl

Join us for readings by two Maine poet laureates. Richard D'Abate, a poet himself, has embraced MHS's Longfellow legacy as an opportunity to incorporate literature, the arts, and culture as vital elements of a Maine history that is broadly told and understood. The poets' readings will reflect themes in Longfellow's poetry, his stance as a poet, and his attitude toward social issues of his time.

THURSDAY, MARCH 15, 7PM

Hold On: The Privilege of Keeping Old Things Safe

With Nicholson Baker, Author

In 2001, writer Nicholson Baker published *Double Fold*, a book about libraries, paper science, and lost history. In it he documented his efforts to save a large collection of beautiful and exceptionally rare newspaper volumes, which were being scrapped in favor of microfilmed replacements. Baker's forceful case served as a seeming coda to the era of print, a beachhead for those who believed in the lastingness of paper, and presaged issues and arguments that organizations like MHS face in the digital age. Why, we are asked, do we need to keep all this ephemeral stuff now that it can be digitized? Baker will revisit the intellectual underpinnings of his newspaper crusade, share tales of research recently done in the MHS library, and remind us of the essentialness of real, physical things.

APRIL

TUESDAY, APRIL 3, 12PM

Perspectives on Maine History: Maine at Work, 1860-1900

With Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr., Maine State Historian, and William Bunting, Historian and Author

Join us for a glimpse into one of the most important and revealing photographic collections in the state: the collections of the Maine Historic Preservation Commission. Shettleworth and Bunting will pay particular attention to and share selections from a large collection of stereo views that includes wonderful images of Mainers at work. Shettleworth will also help recognize the contributions that Richard D'Abate has made to the state by sharing perspectives on how Maine history has evolved over the past decades.

Continued

THURSDAY, APRIL 5, 7PM

The Nature of Lost Things

With Rosamond Purcell, Photographer

Rosamond Purcell wrote *Owls Head: On the Nature of Lost Things* (2003) in order to understand how and why thirteen acres mounded high with scrap intermingled with antique machinery and historical ephemera had taken over the landscape. The answers came from William Buckminster, owner of this culturally over-charged place who, one day, in passing, mentioned that the only person he would like to have acquire the two-centuries-old brass foundry that he had found in a pile of hay would be the Director of Maine Historical Society, Richard D'Abate, who, according to a recent magazine article, "seems like a decent sort of fella." On Bucky's behalf, Purcell took up the song. Join us to hear about the connections between Buckminster, Purcell, and MHS.

THURSDAY, APRIL 19, 7PM

The Civil War of 1812

With Alan Taylor, Professor of History, University of California, Davis

This year marks the bicentennial of the War of 1812, a formative moment in both Maine and U.S. history and the subject of Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Alan Taylor's new book. Taylor will tell the riveting story of a war that redefined North America. In the early 19th century, Britons and Americans renewed their struggle over the legacy of the American Revolution. In this second confrontation, soldiers, immigrants, settlers, and Indians fought to determine the fate of a continent. Would revolutionary republicanism sweep the British from Canada? Or would the British contain, divide, and ruin the shaky republic? Taylor will tell us about an often brutal (sometimes comic) war and help illuminate the tangled origins of the United States and Canada. Alan Taylor, a Portland native, is one of the foremost historians of early America.

MAY

THURSDAY, MAY 10, 7PM

Saving Second Nature: The Environmental Movement in New England

With Richard W. Judd, Professor of History, University of Maine, Orono

This talk will focus on the pastoral landscapes of New England — the valley farms, familiar woods and past-enshrouded fishing out ports that became iconic symbols of New England beauty. It will explore how farm, village, and woods were idealized and romanticized in the tourist literature and regionalist writing of the late 19th century, and how these idealized images shaped New England environmental politics. New England environmentalists avoided the common premise that nature and culture were separate and antagonistic worlds, and instead embraced as their rallying points a blended landscape rich in cultural symbol and ecological harmonies, what Thoreau called "a partially cultivated country," and what environmental historians today call "second nature." This environmental goal generated a vast array of policy innovations, from farmland preservation to protecting the northern "working wilderness." Judd is one of the foremost Maine historians and editor of the journal *Maine History*.

Continued

THURSDAY, MAY 24, 7PM

The Mysterious Penobscot Belle: Early Photography & A Forgotten Wabanaki Encampment in Portland in the mid-1800s

With Harald E.L. Prins and Bunny McBride, Kansas State University

About a dozen years ago, Prins and McBride, noted anthropologists who have done extensive work with Maine native communities, obtained a mid-19th century engraving of Mary Louise, a beautiful young Penobscot Indian woman, originally published as a "Fashion Plate" in a popular women's magazine. For purposes of mass reproduction, this fine image had been copied from a Daguerreotype, probably made by the young photographer Marcus Ormsbee who operated a studio at Middle Street in Portland. Although it is unlikely that the original artifact still exists, Prins and McBride claim that she was the first American Indian woman photographed in the Western hemisphere. Their presentation will explore her individual identity, comment on some fascinating details relevant to this particular portrait, and, last but not least, describe the long-forgotten coastal encampment just outside Portland frequented by Penobscots and other Wabanakis, including itinerant basketmakers, doctors, and showmen.

These programs are made possible through the generous support of our donors and of the Maine Humanities Council.



MORE INFORMATION



For details about these and other MHS programs, please visit us online at www.MaineHistory.org/programs

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