Unless noted otherwise, programs are virtual, and free. Registration is required to attend programs, events, and exhibitions. Please check mainehistory.org for program updates, how to register, and latest COVID policies.* Indicates in-person event.

MHS Celebrates 200 Years of Preserving and Sharing Maine’s Story

The faces on this collage reflect the diversity of people from every Maine county, made possible by the collections of Maine Historical Society, and Contributing Partners of Maine Memory Network. A digital history platform managed by MHS, the Maine Memory Network provides free access to thousands of images, exhibits, and documents owned by over 280 contributing organizations throughout the state. Explore this remarkable online museum at mainememory.net.

Row 1 (L-R):
Androscoggin: Senator Edmund S. Muskie, 1972. The Edmund S. Muskie Archives & Special Collections Library / MMN #6270
Aroostook: The McIntyre family, Houlton, ca. 1900. MHS / MMN #1130
Cumberland: Toby Len God, Mother of the Year, in Washington, DC, 1952. MHS / MMN #7361
Franklin: Channington Stanley Emmons, Photographer, KIngfield, 1887. MHS / MMN #6886

Row 2:
Hancock: Col. Charles Hilden, 16th ME Regiment, Cadets. MHS / MMN #4295
Kennebec: Samantha Smith, Manchester, 1983. Maine State Museum / MMN #275185
Knox: Edna S. Vincent Millay, ca. 1940. MHS / MMN #1141
Lincoln: Conrad Heyer, Revolutionary War soldier, Wadsworth, ca. 1852. MHS / MMN #13423

Row 3:
Hancock: Col. Charles Hilden, 16th ME Regiment, Cadets. MHS / MMN #4295
Kennebec: Samantha Smith, Manchester, 1983. Maine State Museum / MMN #275185
Knox: Edna S. Vincent Millay, ca. 1940. MHS / MMN #1141
Lincoln: Conrad Heyer, Revolutionary War soldier, Wadsworth, ca. 1852. MHS / MMN #13423

Row 4:
Somerset: Margaret Chase Smith, legislator and senator from Skowhegan, 1940. MHS / MMN #4295
Washington: Passamaquoddy Tribal Chief Savo Selmore, Pleasant Point, 1901. MHS / MMN #10928
York: Jennie Carroll, Bridgton, 1900. MHS / MMN #10088

MHS EVENT CALENDAR

Unless noted otherwise, programs are virtual, and free. Registration is required to attend programs, events, and exhibitions. Please check mainehistory.org for program updates, how to register, and latest COVID policies.* indicates in-person event.

MARCH

WHENSE these stories? History in Longfellow’s Poetry
Panel discussion for Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s 215th Birthday
February 23, Wednesday 7–8 pm

NORTHERN THREADS: Two Centuries of Dress at Maine Historical Society*
Members Only Preview Events
Space limited. Register now. MHS Gallery and Shettleworth Lecture Hall
March 14, Monday 5–7 pm

MARCH

NORTHERN THREADS: Two Centuries of Dress at Maine Historical Society*
Part I: Clothing circa 1780-1889
Opens to the Public
MHS Gallery
March 16 to July 30

NORTHERN THREADS: Two Centuries of Dress at Maine Historical Society*
Part II: Clothing circa 1890-1980
Opens to the Public
MHS Gallery
August 12 to December 31

MAY

NORTHERN THREADS: Curator Tours*
for MHS Members
May 4, Wednesday, 12–1 pm

Maine Sea Songs with Castlebay
May 17, Tuesday, 7–8 pm

JUNE

NORTHERN THREADS: Curator Tours*
for MHS Members
June 1, Wednesday, 12–1 pm

Looming Tides: 18th-Century Patterned Silks in New England
Talk with Nell Lazaro
June 1, Wednesday, 7–8 pm

AUGUST

NORTHERN THREADS: Two Centuries of Dress at Maine Historical Society*
Part II: Clothing circa 1890-1980
Opens to the Public
MHS Gallery
August 12 to December 31

AMERICAN REPUBLICS: A Continental History of the United States, 1783–1850
With Alan Taylor
April 26, Tuesday 7–8 pm

CIRCA—SPRING 2022

EDITORS: Elaine Tselikis
DESIGNER: Patricia Cousins
CONTRIBUTORS: Steve Brongar, Henry Caiazzo, Tilly Laskey, Laurie MacWhinnie, and Elaine Tselikis
PRINTING: JMcCarthy Printers
Highlights of our story. And what an awesome responsibility and opportunity. Let me share some key

As you might suspect, MHS could be characterized as the modern era of MHS—began to change in powerful ways in the 1960s when a group of Young Turks, led by Earle Shettleworth, Jr. and others, lobbied to open membership to anyone who wanted to join. (Previously, individuals had to be invited and approved.) That launched what I characterize as the modern era of MHS— one we are still very much in. This was also the period in which “social history” was emerging—a groundswell of interest, efforts, and new initiatives in the historical community to expand beyond

Evolving Constantly from the Beginning

Like Maine itself, the story of MHS is one of constant evolution, reflecting the interests and passions of its leaders, and its times. Initially, MHS focused on documenting the founding of Maine and collected materials that now

By Steve Bromage

Early preservationist, bequeathed the Wadsworth-Longfellow House to MHS. The House opened to public tours in 1903 as one of the nation’s first house museums. The adjacent Research Library designed by Longfellow’s nephew—opened in 1907 during James Phiney Baxter’s transformative 30-year tenure as MHS President. Our colonial revival garden, designed by Myron Lamb, was installed in 1927 and has been lovingly cared for by the Longfellow Garden Club ever since.

In 1992, the Board took the bold step of purchasing its museum building next door to the Wadsworth-Longfellow House on Congress Street, a move that invested in the future and demonstrated a new focus on community engagement. It provided gallery space to share our collections, and a lecture hall to bring people together. Soon after, in 2001, MHS completed a meticulous restoration of the Wadsworth-Longfellow House, ensuring that the gem of our campus was in impeccable condition and ready for new generations of visitors.

Focus on Community and Inclusivity

As you might suspect, MHS could be perceived as an old “Yankee” organization for much of its early life. But the world—and MHS—began to change in powerful ways in the 1960s when a group of Young Turks, led by Earle Shettleworth, Jr. and others, lobbied to open membership to anyone who wanted to join. (Previously, individuals had to be invited and approved.) That launched what I characterize as the modern era of MHS— one we are still very much in. This was also the period in which “social history” was emerging—a groundswell of interest, efforts, and new initiatives in the historical community to expand beyond

Two Hundred Years of Maine Historical Society

Happy Birthday to Maine Historical Society!!! 200 years.

“In 1822, Maine was flush with optimism and the excitement of creating something new—on the verge of its most prosperous era, economically and demographically.”

By Steve Bromage Executive Director

Clockwise from lower left: Nathan Goold, 1912, MMN #11703; Anne Longfellow Pierce, MMN #15634: William King, 1845, MMN #23427; Old City Hall, Portland, 1886, MMN #12192; Albion K. Parlin, 1848, MMN #1545; Maine State House as it looked in 1820, Portland, MHS and Maine State Museum / MMN #14660; James Phiney Baxter, 1908, MMN #58341; Walter Goodwin Davis, 1914, MMN #13783; Wadsworth-Longfellow House campus, 1908, MMN #11711. Learn more about these leaders from the MHS Collections on Maine Memory Network (mainememory.net). Enter the MMN number associated with their image in the search bar.
Are you ready to encounter amazing Maine history up close and personal? Did you know Maine citizens pursued fashion trends on par with Boston, London, and New York in the 19th century? Have you ever wondered how the fur trade impacted wildlife and the environment? What did people wear to a ball that honored famed Revolutionary War hero, the Marquis de Lafayette?

The much-anticipated MHS gallery exhibition *Northern Threads: Two Centuries of Dress at Maine Historical Society* brings historic clothing, fashion trends, and their backstories to the modern audience. To accommodate its scale and uniqueness, *Northern Threads* is a two-part installation that illustrates key themes in Maine history from the late-18th to mid-20th centuries — while exploring the impact of fashion on Maine’s society, economy, and environment.

MHS houses one of the largest and most varied collections of historic clothing in the state. Central to our 200th anniversary (1822-2022), *Northern Threads* will illuminate pieces from our permanent collection, with never-before-exhibited items, and highlight unprecedented public online access. Ideally, gallery visitors will attend both installments, immersed in remarkable vignettes (or scenes) based on different themes. Vignettes feature beautifully dressed mannequins and cased items, highlighting specific eras, trends, fibers, topics, and communities or individuals that contextualize the garments into distinct aspects of Maine and American history.

**Part I: Clothing circa 1780-1889**
March 16 to July 30 — Vignettes include the 1830s Gigot Sleeve; Civil War Era Fashions; Mourning Attire and Practices; Fabric’s Adaptive Re-Use; the Bustle Deconstructed; Outerwear; and Silhouettes in Sequence.

**Part II: Clothing circa 1890-1980**
August 11 to December 31 — Vignettes include Maine’s Gilded Age; 1920s-1930s Fashions; Women at Work; Chemistry and Fashion; Bridal and Formalwear; Swimwear; Outerwear; and Silhouettes in Sequence.

A 3-D virtual tour and digital exhibit will increase public access 24/7 for those unable to visit the gallery, or who want to explore more of the MHS historic clothing collection on our popular Maine Memory Network platform. Exciting public and educational programming are in the works. Companion Mini-Exhibits will feature: Parisian fashion drawings from the Mildred Burrage collection circa 1920; Maine Graphic Tees; and Wadsworth-Longfellow family clothing, 1780-1825 on view in the House during summer.

Opening March 16, plan your visit to NORTHERN THREADS:
Go to our website mainehistory.org for details on admission and how to schedule your timed visit to the gallery. MHS members attend free, Non-member adults $10; children (6-17) $5 and under 6, free. Remember, this is a two-part exhibition! Come for the clothes—stay for the history!

IN THE MAIN GALLERY | Landmark Historic Clothing Exhibition Brings Maine History to Life

NORTHERN THREADS
Two Centuries of Dress at Maine Historical Society
MARCH 16 TO DECEMBER 31, 2022

Northern Threads is made possible by contributors, partners, and donors, including: BHA Foundation Fund; Margaret E. Bumham Charitable Trust; Elsie A. Brown Fund, Inc.; The Coby Foundation for Textiles, Ltd.; The Davis Family Foundation; Institute of Museum & Library Services; William Sloane Jelin Foundation; The Morton-Kelly Charitable Trust; Karen and Kirk Pelletier; Deborah S. Reed; The Phineas W. Sprague Memorial Foundation; Doris S. Stockly; and Down East Magazine (Media Sponsor)

Green wool dress with red satin and black braid details, ca. 1900.
MHS / MMN #105656

Officer’s double-breasted frock coat, 1861-1863 Jotham Donnell of Houlton.
MHS / MMN #105656

Hannah P. Adams’ embroidered dress, Belfast, ca. 1880.
MHS / MMN #105512. Garment photos: Gail Dodge
Maine Historical Society in Pictures: exploring our first 200 Years

When Maine separated from Massachusetts in 1820, it also split away from the Massachusetts Historical Society. Legislation signed on February 5, 1822, positioned the newly created Maine Historical Society as the third-oldest state-dedicated historical organization in the United States.

MHS will mark our 200th year with the exhibition, Maine Historical Society in Pictures, opening on March 16, in the Shettleworth Gallery. Curated by Tilly Laskey, the exhibit features MHS’ five fascinating locations over two centuries, alongside paintings, photographs, and stories of leaders who have steered our organization through pivotal times.

Two Hundred Years of MHS
Continued from previous page

the stories of “leaders” and to recognize, study, and recover experiences of working people, Indigenous Nations, ethnic minorities, women, and many others whose perspectives and histories had largely been ignored. In the 1990s, MHS began holding regular history forums to convene researchers pursuing this work, including efforts to document Maine’s Black, Jewish, and Irish histories.

In the 1980s, MHS renewed its commitment to the professional care, management, and principle of providing access to its collections that continues today— including processing backlogs, comprehensive cataloging, and surveys. By 2005, the full library catalog was available online.

Expanding Access for all Maine People
In 2001, MHS launched one of the most innovative online history platforms in the country, the Maine Memory Network. Unveiled the same year as Maine’s Bicentennial, it positioned the newly created Maine Historical Society as the third-oldest state-dedicated historical organization in the United States.

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In recent years, we have focused on building a modern organization that can nimbly respond to ever-changing community needs— and preparing MHS for its third century of service. A main emphasis has been on developing programming and content that explores how history shapes Maine today, and that centers on the needs, interests, and passions of contemporary Mainers. Recent exhibits like 400 Years of New Mainers; Making Paper; Making Maine; Maine Eats; Holding Up the Sky; and Begin Again have all the community with content, information, and a place to explore critical contemporary issues.

The 2021 Maine History Maker Award program honoring the L. L. Bean family explored how Maine’s special sense of place has become a powerful brand. Maine Memory Network has been fundamental to our expansive, inclusive scope of how all Maine people fit into and can participate in Maine’s story.

Focused on the Future: Our Third Century
I am constantly aware of the shoulders that we stand on, and the efforts made every generation to put MHS in the position it is in today. This brief history of MHS demonstrates the remarkable stewardship and commitment shown by the members, trustees, donors, and staff before us. I want to thank each of you who has contributed so much in so many ways to MHS—I am humbled, and all of us here are deeply appreciative.

We are now engaged in a comprehensive business planning process. It focuses on making history relevant and a resource for all who care about Maine, and to contributing MHS’ expertise, knowledge, and resources to the important work of ensuring Maine’s future vitality. We will also map out the transformation of our campuses and digital presence, and the development of a business model as entrepreneurial and forward-looking as our programmatic work.

Thank you so much for being part of MHS. This is a remarkable community of people who love and care deeply about Maine. We look forward to celebrating MHS’ 200th birthday with you throughout the year!
INTERN SPOTLIGHT | Vivian K. Cunningham

Fashion Creative

By Elaine Tselikis
Editor

Vivian Cunningham began her student internship with MHS in Autumn 2022 to work on the exhibition NORTHERN THREADS: Two Centuries of Dress at Maine Historical Society. Originally from Montgomery, Alabama, Viv is a junior majoring in Textile and Fashion Design at Maine College of Art & Design (MECAD). A family background steeped in museum work instilled a love for historic clothing design. Supervised by Abby Zoldowki, MHS Collections Manager, Viv brings impressive skills, imagination, and passion to the Northern Threads team. Creating customized museum garments that underpin fragile garments, her work enlivens historic Maine fashion for all who experience this stunning exhibition.

What brought you to Maine?
VC: I genuinely love Maine College of Art & Design’s community and Portland itself. My parents encouraged me and my sibling to move as far as we were comfortable to find ourselves. I believed that MECAD was so welcoming and had a fantastic Textile and Fashion Department.

Tell us about your mother and early training that inspired your interest in historic fashion.
VC: I have always grown up around history. My mother has worked for the Alabama Historical Commission my entire life and I have followed in her footsteps since I was born. I was a mere two weeks old when she had to go back to work and I went with her, spending formative years quietly in the office of the house museum she was director of. Even my personal interest in historic fashion stems from my mother and our bonding moments of hunting for vintage clothing in estate sales and thrift stores, and watching period dramas together.

It wasn’t until eight years ago that I began delving into the research and making of historic clothing. I have been asked for my opinion in such a vast field, which is new to me – it’s Fosshape

OBJECT LESSON | New Museum Paradigms

By Tilly Laskey
Curator

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, museum curators and anthropologists in the United States went “into the field” to collect objects directly from Indigenous communities, “salvaging” cultural heritage. They justified taking these important items because they believed—obviously incorrectly—that Native peoples would assimilate into American society, and that their knowledge and cultures would disappear. Items were catalogued, locked in storage rooms, and interpreted by specialists.

In 1990, with the passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), federally mandated consultations with Native peoples about museum holdings led to some meaningful collaborations. Many museums started listening and acted on recommendations from Native communities, engaging in shared authority over the care and interpretation of their cultural objects. Today, when approached about donations or items offered for sale, the paradigm has started to shift away from museums insisting, à la Indiana Jones, “that belongs in a museum!” to instead asking Indigenous communities if the pieces should belong with them.

In November 2022, Jennifer Neprun, Director of the Penobscot Nation Museum, alerted both Maine State Museum (MSM) curator Laurie LaBar, and me at Maine Historical Society, that a Canadian auction house was selling a rare Penobscot beaded collar and cuff set. We quickly received support from Chief Francis and the directors of MSM and MHS, and pooled our funds. Unlike the old museum model where we might have competed against one another, the three museums committed to the purchase and agreed the collar and cuffs should belong to the Penobscot Nation. Happily, we secured the bid, and ownership of the collar and cuffs is restored to the Penobscot Nation.

This August, visitors can view the stunning collar and cuffs set in the second installation of MHS’ exhibition, Northern Threads: Two Centuries of Dress at Maine Historical Society.

by Vivian Cunningham with one of the custom dress forms she crafted for Northern Threads. Photo: Hilary Hendrickx

How is this project important to younger people? Would your friends and colleagues attend this exhibition?
VC: This is a very interesting question I have been asking myself a lot... How important exhibitions like these are to young people. My classmates are supportive of me, but unfortunately, I have not met many young people that share a love of learning history or would even be entirely interested in this exhibit, which is very heartbreakingly for me. Overwhelmingly lately, the decline in the interest of learning history and its importance has become really clear to me. Among my friends I am the ‘history nerd’ and have seen people’s eyes glaze over when I talk about certain subjects. I know other people have complained about required history classes: ‘why are they important’ or ‘it’s boring.’

Please share your most challenging experience with the project so far.
VC: I think the most challenging part of this project is not construction of the forms, but rather dressing them. Sometimes a garment can only be handled a few times—to get fully acquainted with the garment’s shape and what the form needs to make it safe for the garment, and once more to make sure the garment fits the form to the fullest before it is boxed up until the exhibit.

We appreciate how your work is benefiting Northern Threads. How is this internship helping your goals?
VC: I have honestly learned a lot about the strengths of textiles, which has been an absolute blast. I have been learning so much from Abby—a true mentor to me, and so helpful and encouraging in the workspace. She asks for my opinion. I am taken seriously and feel proud and confident in myself. I have never been asked for my opinion in such a professional way or to give presentations to donors. I have been immensely grateful for all the experiences that I have been exposed to. I never thought I would do this professionally— but I can now see myself working in collections for the rest of my life.

I have not met many young people that share a love of learning history, which is heartbreakingly for me.”

Collar and cuffs, circa 1890-1910
Unrecorded Penobscot Artist
Glass beads on wool
Collections of the Penobscot Nation Museum
The Old and New Normal

By Laurie MacWhinnie
Head of Reference Services

The University of Maine at Farmington (UMF) began as the Farmington State Normal School in 1846. The UMF archives serve as the official repository for the permanent records of the history, organization, and activities of the university. An eclectic collection of documents, images, photographs, scrapbooks, artifacts, and UMF-related publications, its main purpose is to promote knowledge and understanding of the historical development of the university. There are also limited collections on early education and education in Maine.

In 2021, the UMF Mantor Library partnered with the History Department on a Maine Memory Network grant project to create a digital exhibit to celebrate the college’s 125th anniversary during the 2021-2022 academic year. The goal was to capture the unique and colorful early history of the Farmington State Normal School, focusing on the social life and activities of the 1900s – 1950s. Significant contributions of early female faculty in development of the university, the teaching profession, and the Home Economics “cottage baby” program were also important stories.

Spanning fall 2021 and spring 2022 semesters – students in the History of UMF and History of Maine courses did primary research using images, scrapbooks and other items in the archive collections, and also conducted oral history interviews. Their work contributed text for We Used to Be “Normal”: A History of Farmington State Normal School, launched on Maine Memory in time for the college’s anniversary celebration in 2023. This first foray into digitizing some of the school’s history added a new level of scholarship to the History Department’s long-standing collaborative relationship with the Library. Students could have practical experience in historical research using original sources. The initial assignment was so successful, it has become a permanent part of several UMF History courses. Faculty member Allison Hepler uses the assignment regularly in her History of Maine and Women’s History, and U.S. History courses.

In spring 2020, COVID-19 brought unexpected challenges, including the sudden loss of archives access. The ability for students to conduct primary research was hampered when classes went remote. Most students left campus. The few who remained could not visit the Library or use archives collections during shutdown. The assignment was quickly adapted to allow students to use images or artifacts on Maine Memory Network. Students could still experience working with primary sources, enabling them to successfully complete the assignment, and the digital format offered more choice in research topics.

Once the archives became accessible to Library staff in 2021, work began on identifying new images to add to Maine Memory Network to provide greater student accessibility to UMF’s history. Current digitization efforts are focused on UMF’s past that draw the most student interest, including athletics, fraternity and sorority history, and student life. Even with most UMF students back on campus, Maine Memory Network content provides greater flexibility for students in courses offered online or in hybrid format. Digital collections are accessible whenever and wherever students are studying. Using Maine Memory to make more of UMF’s history publicly accessible also provides new information for anyone interested in learning more about our college and education in Maine. It’s a win-win! The Library has also created over 20 new “Snapshots” mini exhibit pages on its Maine Memory Network website mantorLib.mainememory.net. We plan to add more of these in the future!

Digitizing Collections for Public Access

By Henry Ciaiazzo
Digital & Project Archivist

Curious what a large-scale digitization project looks like at your favorite library or museum? What is involved in a project that delivers online public access to thousands of pages of 17th and 18th century manuscripts?

As reported last spring, MHS began exhaustive work in summer 2020 on Beyond Borders: Mapping Maine and the American Indian. Only offered boundary, 1634-1848. This National Endowment for the Humanities funded project aims to provide full text online access to over 20,000 pages of records, correspondence, depositions, surveys, and maps – from the Pejepscot Proprietors, the Plymouth Company, and Barclay-Collotin. These major collections document exploration, colonization, and settlement; relations with Indigenous peoples and Nations; and the socio-economic, political, and geographic establishment of Maine as a state.

Here is a snapshot of the exacting work we do to help you access our growing collections that reveal Maine’s role in American history – and how this impacts your favorite library or museum?

Our Digitizing Process

- Staff begin work on each collection by assessing manuscript material, condition, technical problems, and what can be scanned in-house at MHS, or needs to be sent to vendors such as Osher Map Library.
- We determine how to describe records in our cataloging process. Each collection has specific needs. We want to ensure we reach as many researchers as possible.
- After creating a workflow, collections are methodically scanned in high resolution (41-43 MB TIF) by our Digital Technician and given a file name which corresponds with its collection, volume, and page number. Metadata is embedded in the file, such as copyright status and collection name, saving headaches in the long run!
- We then create a master excel spreadsheet, containing important administrative and technical metadata for each digital file. Accurate documentation is crucial – when dealing with 20,000+ files, you must be exact.
- When digitizing is completed, the Project Cataloger views each page’s content to create metadata with the keywords and subject headings, making it easier for researchers to find.
- After manuscript pages are scanned, derivative copies are uploaded to our transcription project (hosted on Zooniverse) for volunteers to work on across the globe. Over 1,600 volunteers have transcribed our Beyond Borders collections! View our project, or volunteer at www.zooniverse.org.
- High Resolution JPEGs are created and edited by our Digital Technician and then migrated with a master TIF to our digital archive.
- Beyond Borders Project Update

Pejepscot Proprietors: Fully digitized, transcribed, and cataloged.

MHS: volume pages 3,486, Maps 126.

Other Library: Bounded Volumes 747; Maps 76.

Catalog records created: 5,310.

Pages transcribed: 2,367.

Plymouth Company: Fully digitized, are now cataloging. The company kept so much of its records, from deeds claiming thousands of acres of land to “Glugs of Rum” costs.

MHS: Volumes 1,815; Maps 70; Archival Box/Folder Items 10,408.

Images by Osher Map Library: Bounded Volumes 3,420; Maps 50.

Pages transcribed: 2,316.


Osher photographed over 20 maps — some more than 10 feet long — relating to the Treaty of Ghent and boundary between the US and Canada.

When work on all collections is complete, Beyond Borders will launch a webpage with access to all digitized materials – transcriptions of at least 10,000 manuscript pages, Maine Memory Network exhibits, essays written by historians, and a new finding aid database. (We have also replaced 226 older Maine Memory map records with high resolution images and enhanced metadata.) Watch for the webpage launch announcement!