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If we at the MHC were to devise a map of our history, “Seely Hall” would be shown in three-inch letters. It’s not much to look at—an unassuming church basement in Portland: linoleum floors, rickety institutional tables, and an old piano in the corner. It’s a no-nonsense sort of room that’s seen a lot of the humanities.

I can’t picture Seely Hall without imagining Steve Cerf over near the institutional coffee urns. A Professor of German at Bowdoin College, Steve has led our Portland Community Seminar there, and our Augusta Community Seminar at the Maine State Arboretum, for nearly two decades. Over the years, he’s developed a loyal following in both cities, having guided participants on a literary journey that has ranged from Jane Austen to Malcolm X, V.S. Naipaul, and beyond. Each month during the winter and spring, the groups have gathered for supper, followed by a book discussion, where Steve practices his facilitation artistry: scraping down to the very fibers of a story, subtly pushing and pulling a conversation en route.

We learned recently that Steve, who lives much of the year in New York, has decided to retire from his regular work with the Council. This was very sad news, and for the seminars, our longest-running public programs, his departure marks the end of an era. But Seely Hall will not go dark: I was thrilled to learn that one of his Bowdoin colleagues, English literature professor Peter Coviello, has agreed to lead the 2008 Portland and Augusta Seminars, helping to keep this signature program alive and well.

These programs were the MHC’s earliest venture into public programming, and they were first offered at a time when the Council’s primary purpose was to make grants on behalf of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Today, the majority of our programs still look like this, even though the range of audiences is much more diverse, drawing people of different backgrounds together with humanities scholars to experience the power and pleasure of ideas. Thanks Steve, for helping us turn a book group in a church basement into a model that transformed our organization.

Erik Jorgensen
Executive Director
David L. Royte was the founder of *The Labor Record of Maine*, the AFL-CIO Building Trades Council newspaper. Upon his retirement in 1988, he remained the publisher, general manager, and owner of that publication. But his reading ranged far beyond his own paper. His daughter, Merle Nelson, recalls her father “always with a book in his hand, always appreciating the written word.” David also showed great dedication to the Maine Humanities Council, serving as a board member for six years in the 1980s.

A person of compassion and a strong sense of humor, David’s non-academic perspective was new to the Council’s board. One of his major duties was the evaluation of grant proposals from communities around the state. His understanding of Maine’s diverse industries and organizations guided his thoughtful, evenhanded treatment of these proposals.

Among the greatest contributions David made to the Council was forming the first Development Committee and encouraging a change in the organization’s philosophy of funding. Since its founding in 1976 as an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Council had received over 98% of its funding from this source. Diversification—from national grants to individual donors—now defines the Council’s budgets, and it receives less than half of its resources from its previously exclusive funder.

David’s enthusiastic contributions helped make the Maine Humanities Council one of the most distinguished in the country. David died in 1990 and did not see the full fruits of his work.

In 2006, his children established the David Royte Fund to honor their father’s belief in philanthropy and the greater good. It enables the Council to offer *Letters About Literature*, a program that gives Maine students of all economic and educational backgrounds the opportunity to express themselves through writing about the books they love best.
Have you ever missed a humanities event because you were away on business, or because it was snowing to beat the band, or because you live in Fort Kent and the event was in Portland? Perhaps you considered attending the Council’s October symposium on *All the King’s Men,* but it conflicted with the county fair you attend every fall.

There’s no substitute for shaking hands with the audience member sitting next to you at an event, or getting an author to sign a book. Realistically, though, attending these events in person is not always convenient—or even feasible. That’s why the Council has launched a podcast that makes it possible for humanities enthusiasts of all ages to experience the power and pleasure of ideas on demand.

If the mere mention of a podcast fills you with trepidation, you’re not alone. Many people assume that podcasts are off-limits to anyone who hasn’t purchased an iPod (the Apple device that has cornered the market on portable media players). The origins and legal status of the term “podcast” are clouded by debate, but you definitely do not need an iPod, or any other portable media player, to listen to a podcast. In fact, the vast majority of podcast fans report listening via their computers.

So here’s how to turn any computer with an Internet connection into a radio that broadcasts humanities content, available whenever you want it:

1. Go to www.mainehumanities.org and click on the *Humanities on Demand* link.

2. Read through the list of recordings with descriptions. You can choose from a series of interviews of Maine writers; authors reading at our partner, the Portland Public Library; and selections from the archive of Council events. New content is being added all the time, but some of the speakers already represented are Richard Russo, Cathie Pelletier, and Huey P. Long (the inspiration behind *All the King’s Men*).

3. Once you’ve found a recording that interests you, either click on the play button to listen to it right away, or download it to play later.

4. After listening, you may wish to respond by posting a comment or question to the *Humanities on Demand* blog. You’ll find a link to the blog underneath the description of each recording.

If, on the other hand, you are comfortable with the technology, but simply don’t care to spend any more time online than is absolutely necessary, consider these added enticements:

• composer Elliott Schwartz created and performed the short sound intros and “outros” that bracket the podcast recordings,

• recordings are forthcoming from institutions such as the Maine Historical Society and Portland Stage Company, and

• if you subscribe to the podcast using iTunes or a similar “podcatcher,” the new recordings will come to you automatically as the podcast is updated.

Happy listening!

The podcast project is supported by a Digital Humanities Start-Up Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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**CALL FOR NOMINATIONS**

The Maine Humanities Council seeks to expand its list of potential nominees to fill future openings on its Board of Directors. The Council seeks a wide geographic representation and range of civic and/or academic experience. To notify the Council of your interest, please send a letter and a *curriculum vita* to:

Governance Committee Chair
Maine Humanities Council
674 Brighton Avenue
Portland, ME 04012-1012
PEACEABLE STORIES
BY BRITA ZITIN

OR close to ten minutes, two-year-old Oscar* has been intently washing a baby doll in a plastic tub. Now it is Rachel’s turn, but Oscar is not ready to give up his washcloth. He splashes the lukewarm water and shouts, his face—not much larger than the doll’s—knotted with frustration. Before he can lash out at Rachel, their teacher at the YMCA child care center, Elizabeth Richards, takes Oscar by the hand and leads him away. His lip is still quivering as he surrenders the tub, but he follows Elizabeth to the book corner and settles on her lap. Before long, he is absorbed in Eric Carle’s The Very Quiet Cricket, and other children have drifted over to sit next to him and listen in.

What gives reading the power to shift the mood in a classroom so swiftly? What do picture books—many of them filled with conflict, or even violence—have to teach us about peace? How can adults help children experience peace when they aren’t feeling particularly peaceful themselves? These are some of the questions that the educators who care for Maine’s youngest children tackle in the newest Born to Read initiative, Peaceable Stories.

Since launching its Many Eyes, Many Voices training in 2002, Born to Read has been asking early childhood educators to indicate their interest in other potential training topics. “Dealing with challenging behavior” consistently ranks near the top of these lists. The demand for conflict resolution training has kept pace with growing uncertainty about global politics. While children have always engaged in war play to help them process their feelings of power and anger, research shows that increasingly, war-play plots and characters are copied from media imagery rather than coming from the imagination. Children worry about the violence they see on television surfacing in their own lives—which it all too often does.

Early childhood consultant Audrey Maynard worked with Born to Read staff and a statewide advisory committee to respond in a thoughtful manner to the demand from caregivers. Maynard was conscious of the potential controversy surrounding a training with “peace” in its title, and she recalls working hard “to ensure that every participant would be able to engage in the workshops no matter what their political views were.” Thus the program interprets the concept of peace broadly, considering various connotations and contexts. “I am happy,” Maynard says now, “when participants leave feeling that *

*Children’s names have been changed to protect their privacy.
their own views have been respected and that they have new ambitions for their work with children.”

Creating a peaceful environment for young children is not as easy as it sounds. Preschool teachers ban toy guns in the classroom only to confront index fingers wielded as weapons. They try to prevent children from saying “bad words” only to be informed that “Mommy uses that word every night.” In our rapidly changing world, even the most experienced educators need the opportunity to discuss these challenges and become aware of resources and strategies to help them develop new approaches to conflict.

That’s where Born to Read comes in. Its Peaceable Stories initiative is based on the conviction that picture books—and the very important conversations and activities generated through book sharing—have the power to:

• help children become creative problem-solvers,
• foster the development of vocabulary for expressing emotions,
• present examples of the experience of peace, which differs from person to person,
• provide opportunities for reflecting on the meaning of peace, and
• nurture dispositions toward peaceful play and relationships.

Through the lens of a story, children can learn new options for peaceful co-existence and conflict resolution. Talking about characters and their relationships fosters empathy and provides children with a rich repertoire of problem-solving strategies. And the peaceful act of sharing a book can calm the hectic atmosphere of a preschool classroom, offering adults like Elizabeth Richards a rare chance to truly connect with children like Oscar.

Elizabeth was drawn to Peaceable Stories because she had already taken Many Eyes, Many Voices, and knew that Born to Read trainings “identify specific books and then help with ideas on how to use them.” Sure enough, within a few weeks of taking Peaceable Stories, she had successfully used her new copy of It’s Mine by Leo Lionni (1972). In this story, three frogs quarrel over the rocks and water in their pond, until a wise toad shows them that it’s both safer and more pleasant to cooperate. As Elizabeth points out, “It seems forced to sit down with toddlers and ‘talk about sharing,’ but it’s easy to read a story and interject a few pertinent points that relate to them directly.” That’s what she did—then, using the Activity & Resource Guide that came with the books, she went one step further to bring the book to life.

The impact of Peaceable Stories is incremental, but it is real.
for the children. She made a pond from construction paper, pasted each child’s picture on a cut-out frog, and asked them to work together to place their frogs in the pond, making space for everyone.

Eight Peaceable Stories trainings have been held in 2007, from Skowhegan to Presque Isle to Lubec. Do all the participants now care for docile children in quiet classrooms? Of course not—and if they did, Born to Read would be the first to admit that the initiative had gone drastically wrong. The program does not claim to provide a one-size-fits-all solution to conflict in early childhood education. Indeed, researcher Janet Gonzalez-Mena has written (Multicultural Issues in Child Care, 2000), “It is only after we realize that conflict is where the growth occurs that we know what we ought to aim for. It is only after we realize that conflict is good and that it won’t go away that we will be able to effectively respond to diversity in early childhood training and, therefore, in early childhood classrooms.”

The impact of the initiative is incremental, but it is real. One participant wrote in an evaluation, “Sharing new books with the children is sometimes hard, both for me and for them. But I believe now I can hold their interest with involvement in activities.”

Another reflected, “It’s nice to get other perspectives. Sometimes my first impression of a book isn’t great, but hearing how others use it or think about it can change that impression.”

And a third commented, “I have a better understanding of how to make an abstract concept much more age-appropriate by bringing it into everyday life.”

Everyday life for Oscar remains tumultuous. He has not learned to share, and he can’t express his emotions using words. But today he felt calm while listening to a story about a little cricket who finds his chirp. And the next time he is frustrated, perhaps he’ll remember that brave cricket and that peaceful moment, and he’ll ask an adult to read to him.

Illustrations by Lisa Jahn-Clough from the Peaceable Stories Activity & Resource Guide.

Sara Bollard (page 3) and Elizabeth Richards (above) read to children in their classrooms at Portland YMCA Child Care.

PHOTOS: DIANE HUDSON

What do I know about peace?
How does it feel?
What words describe it?
Do I show my friends and family how much I value them?
When and how?
How do I work to mend problems with others when they arise?
How do I help children learn to practice cooperation, concern for others, empathy, communication, and conflict resolution in their daily relationships?

What does ‘community’ mean to me? What communities do I belong to, by choice or by chance?
Do I identify stereotypes when I hear others use them? What about when I use them myself?

Do I value the concept of citizenship? Do I vote, contact my representatives, and take advantage of the opportunities that citizenship provides?

What is stewardship?
Do I act as a steward of our environment?

What is global citizenship? Do I see myself as a global citizen?
BEING in a classroom again, or, for some, for the first time, was a strange experience for many of the students. Scovia, from Sudan, said she felt like a little girl, though her passion for learning is anything but childish. Nyajany, from Somalia, had never been to school in her native country, which did not allow schooling of its women until they were married. Samuel had lived in a rural part of Sudan where there simply was no school. He focused on the text with an intensity seen most frequently in college seminars.

On this warm May morning, a roomful of people who spoke at least six non-English languages were at Portland Adult Education to talk about a children’s book for the purpose of mastering English, as part of New Books, New Readers, the Maine Humanities Council’s reading and discussion program for adults with limited literacy or English skills. Any adult who has learned a new language has an inkling of the struggle with pronunciation and complex sentence structure experienced by these students. And yet what these students learned and gave to the class went far beyond vocabulary.

The text was Eve Bunting’s The Wall, a book with themes of war and memory, and the group was composed entirely of people from Sudan, Somalia, Cambodia, Iran, Croatia, and Afghanistan. Not one person flinched from talking about war, and there was complete agreement that war is destructive to societies and that memorials serve not only to honor the dead but as a warning against future violence. The presence of a scholar/facilitator in New Books, New Readers makes the humanities quotient high, but the goal is not to wrench memories of heartbreak from people who have experienced some of the most violent world events.
in recent history. It is simply to promote a love of reading through meaningful conversation.

“Is that a good idea? To have a memorial for soldiers who died?” asked Carolyn Sloan, the scholar/facilitator, during the session about The Wall.

A chorus of “Yes,” in many accents and vocal registers replied.

“It is for the grandchildren,” one student said. “When somebody dies, the mother remembers, but the grandchildren won’t.”

“A memorial can remind people that war is bad,” another student offered. “Fighting is no good.”

A third student thought that a memorial is good to remind people new to the United States of our country’s history and the sadness of war.

“Is it important to know the history of other countries?” Sloan asked.

“Yes.”

“Is it important for me to know what happened in Sudan?”

“Yes,” two people said at once.

This is an example of one of the best kinds of discussions ESOL students have with New Books, New Readers. The program aims to help students find how the stories they read link with their own lives, because that kind of relationship with literature helps students find a continued interest in books. Readers who experience a book on a personal level are likely to continue reading. But what about readers who can’t connect with the text because their English is simply too limited? Can humanities programs go forward with people who simply can’t read?

In 2001, with prompting from Portland Adult Education teacher Alison Perkins, New Books, New Readers began offering programs for ESOL students who were below literacy Level 1. These students often had no education in their own countries, were not literate in their native languages, and perhaps did not know how to hold a pencil or a book. This audience was a difficult one for Portland Adult Education to serve since their lack of literacy skills, ironically, often made it difficult for these students to reach the building for literacy classes: they could not read the bus schedule, maps, or street signs.

Along with their classroom work on practical language skills, these New Books, New Readers groups study one book every three months. Teachers begin by looking at the cover and eliciting comments about the illustrations. The teacher may rewrite the text in even simpler language and place it at the top of each page or make up vocabulary exercises or simple sentence structure practice related to the story. Often the teacher will read the book aloud several times for the students to hear the words.

“One of the beauties of this program is that there are wonderful, wonderful books,” said Joy Ahrens, a teacher at Portland Adult Education who worked with Alison Perkins in 2001. Ahrens is known for her above-and-beyond use of the books. For example, in early classes, she rewrites the text to simplify it so that students can have the feeling of accomplishment of finishing the book. In later classes, students may read the full text. She uses the full text for vocabulary development, grammar, and verb tenses. In this way, books are used as a jumping-off point for a variety of exercises.

At this level of New Books, New Readers, the scholar/facilitator does not enter the picture until the teacher has had several weeks to introduce the student to the text. Llorayne Carroll is a professor of English at University
of Southern Maine who brings a strong humanities background to her role as scholar/facilitator. But she is careful with this audience. “I don’t consider it teaching,” she clarified. “I consider it a discussion. And I am extraordinarily mindful that I am dealing with adults.”

Carroll respects her students’ lives, memories, and experiences. She knows that they bring much to the classroom that may lie hidden beneath the linguistic barrier. Carroll works to help students talk about abstract concepts (friendship and community, for example)—and this is the biggest challenge. Of course, she uses pictures, but she also seeks one word that will create a sense of coherence around each book. “Other—what is the other?”

Carolyn Sloan works with both upper- and lower-level groups. “We read stories to our children before they can read. Why?” She emphasizes that a story is important in ESOL at any level, but especially at Level A and Level B where pronunciation is tricky, and reading and writing difficult or nonexistent.

Sloan is a big believer in the use of stories, acted out, looked at through pictures, or read through words to improve literacy. “No matter how practical it is to teach a person how to say their telephone number, true literacy requires story as a base. Using story is as important as those practical things that allow one to have access to society. It may be history, or fiction, but the humanities starts with story. You can’t leave that piece out if you’re doing literacy. And one of the nicest things is that you can have access to story through pictures, which you can’t do with standard practical things like ‘What is your name?’ ‘What is your phone number?’ The picture book is a bridge to literacy in another language.”

This point was clear in the May discussion of The Wall. Students talked about how the Vietnam Memorial told more than just one story by its very presence. Things besides books can tell stories, the students agreed. Scovia announced that she likes the idea of telling a story through sharing something from the old country, and said that if she goes back to Sudan she will show where she lived to her children. For a minute or two, Scovia spoke rhapsodically about the trees, the grand rock formations, the lemons, and the mangos. Everyone was quiet, remembering their own homelands and the many stories they had brought with them.
ONE of the first things you noticed when you walked into the former armory—the central gathering place at the Maine Humanities Council’s November 9–10 conference for health care professionals—was a large mobile of 1,001 hand-folded, multi-colored peace cranes. On each table, instead of Prozac pens and Diflucan mints, there were Gerber daisies and origami sculptures. Small white lights lit the rafters and shone off the hardwood floors, creating a warm and inviting ambiance. That sense of welcome and comfort permeated the two-day conference.

The conference was part of the Council’s Literature & Medicine: Humanities at the Heart of Health Care® program. It was designed to survey the wide range of innovative programs, including Literature & Medicine, that support health care professionals through the use of literature and writing. The conference’s particular focus was on the literature and medicine movement’s ability to renew and energize health care professionals’ connection to their work. Literature and medicine initiatives have been shown to improve participants’ communication skills and increase their capacity for empathy; they also offer participants the opportunity to reflect upon and process the frustrations, discomfort, pain and grief that are an inevitable part of their work. Burnout is a very significant issue in all areas of health care, and the conference helped to spread the message that there are relatively simple and inexpensive ways to care for the caregiver, thus ensuring their ability to give better care to their patients.

The conference was held in Manchester, New Hampshire, to make airplane travel easier and less expensive for the approximately 200 registrants, who came from 28 states, including Hawai’i, California and Washington, as well as, of course, Maine and New England. The Council sought to bring together leaders of health care programs from across the country to broaden and deepen the conversation about the benefits of bringing health care and the humanities together, to give health care professionals the tools they need to start programs in their own institutions, and, not incidentally, to lay the foundation for a community of caregivers—a range of clinicians such as physicians, nurses, PAs, chaplains, social workers, and dulas, and academics from medicine, public health and the humanities—who are interested in literature and medicine in practice.

“…such parallel charts both heighten the attention of the caregiver, and create an affiliation between the patient and the caregiver.”
There were three keynote speakers, all well known and highly respected in the literature and medicine field. Their work examines how health care professionals cope with and reflect on the nature of their work, and addresses the challenges of communicating clearly, skillfully and compassionately with patients and colleagues from a variety of backgrounds. Directly or indirectly, it forms the basis for much of the activity and interest in the growing field of literature and medicine.

Rita Charon, MD, PhD, the founder of the emerging field of Narrative Medicine, guides both aspiring and practicing health care professionals in writing narratives about their experiences from both their own points of view and the imagined perspectives of their patients. She talked about how such parallel charts both heighten the attention of the caregiver, and create an affiliation between the patient and the caregiver. Rafael Campo, MD, MFA, a practicing physician and teacher at Harvard Medical School who is also an award-winning poet, read from his work, extending the emphasis on the importance of stories. Anne Fadiman, author of the iconic book, *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*, a pivotal text in the literature and medicine field for its careful examination of the clash of cultures between a Hmong family and the western medical system it turns to for a daughter’s epilepsy, spoke of the lessons the story suggests for cross-cultural work.

These themes were further emphasized through workshops on topics that ranged from spiritual grounding in the workplace, the art of facilitation, the potential uses of creative writing by professionals silenced by privacy issues, and questions of balance and boundaries.

Most participants were unabashed in their praise for the conference (see opposite page). They left re-affirmed in the work they are doing and equipped with new resources and contacts to help them continue it. The Council expects that the conference will lead to more Literature & Medicine programs in new sites and new states (in addition to the 19 where it has already been held) as well as an expansion of other humanities-based programs in medical settings.

In the near future we will have podcasts of some of the conference presentations on our website, www.mainehumanities.org, which you can also visit for more information about Literature & Medicine.
"Thanks for a life-altering experience."

"The conference allowed me to learn from both presenters and attendees how to improve my delivery of patient-centered care, how to take my own responses to difficult situations into account in my care-giving, and new ways to improve my skills in the realms of communication and professionalism."

"We have attended many medical conferences over the years, but don't recall any that brought together such a diverse audience of dedicated and enthusiastic participants. The program was extremely well organized and the three keynote speakers were superb, but our overriding memory is of the quality of discourse and degree of interaction among the attendees. The workshop discussions were animated, and the spirit of these discussions spilled over to meal-time gatherings (it's a rare conference where people are reluctant to leave the dinner table!)

We appreciated having the opportunity to speak informally with the keynoters... In a very short time we learned a great deal, and made extraordinary connections to people who share a keen interest in medical humanities. We hope that the Council will be able to carry on this forum in the future."

"This was a wonderful discussion of issues we deal with in our professions, and how to work through our own burn out, fatigue, fear and continue to provide care to others."

"The use of parallel records/having the patient hold that binder was an 'aha moment' for me. Thank you Rita Charon. Campo's poetry—perfect in every way as a tool for patient and caregiver expression."

"How important it is for people to have a place to talk about their experience of their work! How much safer literature makes it to have these conversations!"

The Council thanks the conference sponsors: the Maine Medical Association, The Kenneth B. Schwartz Center, The Bingham Program, Johnson & Johnson, and our Literature & Medicine partners: the Connecticut Humanities Council, the Hawaii Council for the Humanities, the Illinois Humanities Council, the Maryland Humanities Council, the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities, the New Hampshire Humanities Council, and the New Jersey Council for the Humanities. Literature & Medicine: Humanities at the Heart of Health Care® has received major funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities.
America Awakening

$500: The Game Loft is a youth center in Belfast that provides a refuge from electronic games and entertainment. In January 2007, the center began a partnership with Belfast’s Senior College for a role-playing program called “America Awakening.” This interactive history lesson gives each participant a character from a different region and culture in the U.S. Participants use background reading and research to follow their characters from 1870 through 1945. A similar role-playing game called “Pax Britannica” began in March. For more information, call (207) 338-6447 or visit www.thegameloft.org.

Lovell

Making Oral History and Folklore Accessible on the Web

$950: In the past two decades, folklorists Peter Lenz and Jo Radner have conducted several oral history projects in the Oxford Hills area. With the resources of Lake Region TV, the Western Maine Cultural Alliance has converted selections from these projects to digital audio files. These files are now available for easy download from their website, www.westernmaineculture.org on the page entitled “Enjoy a Taste of Western Maine Folklore.” This new format will make the material accessible to a broader audience and help to preserve it for future generations.

Lubec

McCurdy’s Smokehouse Through the Eyes of Frank Van Riper

$500: Lubec Landmarks continues its restoration of McCurdy’s Smokehouse Packing Sheds, with new exhibits this summer providing glimpses of life and work in the last operating herring smokehouse in the United States. The new exhibits, which opened on June 30, are located in the Skinning and Packing Sheds. The smokehouse process and the dramatic extent of the marketing network that supported the industry are revealed through artifacts, ethnographic materials, and photographs taken by Frank Van Riper during the smokehouse’s last year of operation. A third new exhibit on the development of the industry from 1880 to 1990, revealing its significance for Washington County communities, opened on August 4. Van Riper presented a talk on his photographs during the summer, and consulting curator Edward Hawes gave another informative talk. For details on the exhibit, please call (207) 733-1095.

Norridgewock

Norridgewock Corn Festival

$500: The Norridgewock Historical Society hosted a Corn Festival in August. 2007. The festival featured a jewelry demonstration, corn crafts, a homemade electric car, and a poster presentation by local farmers. Speakers included Dr. Paul Frederic, author of Canning Gold, addressing the history of the crop; and Cooperative Extension agent Kathryn Hopkins speaking about modern corn production. To contact the historical society, please call (207) 634-5032.

Old Town

Musical Exchange

$499: On June 26, 2007, youth drumming groups from all Maine Native American communities gathered at the Penobscot Boys & Girls Club on Indian Island for a musical exchange with Iranian drummer Shamou. Through their drumming traditions, the Middle Eastern and Native American cultures shared songs, stories, and lessons. This event was a collaboration between the River Coalition, the Warrior Project, and the Native American Boys & Girls Clubs. To learn more, please contact Sherri Mitchell at (207) 827-8744.

SELECTED GRANTS:

FISCAL YEAR 2007
The Portland Co.: An Introduction

$500: The first formal exhibit of the Trust for the Preservation of Maine Industrial History and Technology (familiarly known as the Maine Narrow Gauge Railroad Co. & Museum) opened June 15, 2007. This quasi-permanent exhibit tells the story of the Portland Company, founded in 1846 by John Poor. The company built boilers and engines for over 300 vessels, including steamships, tugboats, ferries, and fireboats. It also built locomotives and created the first railroad connector line between Portland and Canada (later known as The Grand Trunk). For information on viewing the exhibit at 58 Fore Street in Portland, please call (207) 828-0814 or visit www.mngrr.org.

Portland Freedom Trail

$500: The Portland Freedom Trail links significant sites connected to the Underground Railroad and the anti-slavery movement with permanent granite pedestals in a walking route through the peninsula. Portland’s trail will eventually be joined with national routes, with an emphasis on linking the trail from New Hampshire to Canada. The trail project also aims to engage the community in the ongoing research and advance public discourse on social and economic justice. The first pedestal and brass marker (with artwork by Daniel Minter) was installed in a ceremony at the Eastern Cemetery on November 9, 2006. A gala event took place February 17, 2007; tour information, a brochure, and related educational materials will be available in June. For more information, call (207) 591-9980 or visit www.portlandfreedomtrail.org.

Welcome to the Classics: Wild About Wilde

$1,000: Audiences at free outdoor performances of Oscar Wilde’s The Importance of Being Earnest, presented by The Stage at Fort Preble in South Portland, enjoyed pre-show presentation called “Welcome to the Classics: Wild about Wilde.” The presentations introduced audiences to Oscar Wilde, Victorian theatre, and the workings of verbal comedy through a monologue written and performed by Equity actor Harlan Baker. Baker researched the period, drawing on the expertise of director Janet Ross. The Importance of Being Earnest ran July 13-28, 2007. “Wild about Wilde” was presented prior to every show except for the first. For details, please call The Stage at (207) 828-0128 or visit www.thestagemaine.org.

Maine Gardens: Nature and Design

$1,000: “Maine Gardens: Nature and Design” was a four-day symposium, July 12-15, 2007, on the history and beauty of Maine’s varied landscapes. Participants discovered writers and artists who have imagined these landscapes and heard from those who continue to do so. They became acquainted with the work of both the eminent landscape architects and the ordinary people who have shaped and softened the wild terrain of Maine. The symposium was held at various locations in Rockland; to learn more, please call (207) 230-0142.

South Solon Meeting House Living History Project

$5,000: More than 50 years ago, the walls of the South Solon Meeting House were covered with fresco mural paintings by members of the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. On July 21, 2007, four of the thirteen mural artists—John Wallace, Ashley Bryan, Sigmund Abeles and Sidney Hurwitz—returned to the meeting house to take part in a panel discussion. Following the panel, Ashley Bryan gave a presentation on his art, teaching, and children’s book illustration. “Fresco is a wonderful material to work with,” Bryan told the Bangor Daily News. “I learned a lot but I have never carried it further. It allowed us to give them art in a structure that was used by the community. It was such an honor to be part of a community that would be using this building.” The day’s events were digitally recorded and added to the Skowhegan School’s lecture archive, which is available to researchers at world-renowned art institutions including the Tate, the Getty, and the Art Institute of Chicago.

Ashley Bryan gives a presentation on his art, teaching, and children’s book illustration at the South Solon Meeting House, with his fresco mural painting in the background. PHOTO: RICHARD GARRETT
Reconsidering

Martin Luther King, Jr: His Role and His Legacy

Saturday, January 19, 2008, 9am – 3pm
Hannaford Hall, USM, Portland Campus

Forty years after Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination, this public conference will examine his lasting significance.

How should we remember Martin Luther King, Jr.? What is his true legacy? Presentations and workshops will include a review of current scholarship on King, an examination of his radicalism, how the civil rights movement was represented in photographs, approaches for the classroom, and how Hollywood depicts the civil rights movement. There will also be an opportunity to learn about Maine's role in the movement and to meet Mainers who took part in it.

Conference presenters include Ray Arsenault, University of South Florida; Linda Doeherty and Patrick Hael, Bowdoin College; and Michael West, Holy Cross College.

Registration: $35 (students: $20) includes light breakfast and lunch, provided by Hannaford Supermarkets, and parking. By January 9, visit www.mainehumanities.org for more information and registration, or call 773-5051x210 with questions. CEUs are available for teachers.

Supported by the We the People initiative of the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Teaching American History program of the US Department of Education.

This conference is one of several events taking place in Portland over the 2008 Martin Luther King, Jr. observance week. Please go to www.mainehumanities.org or www.portlandmlk.net for more information on this conference and other events. Organizers of observance events include NAACP Portland Branch, Maine Historical Society, University of Southern Maine, and Maine Humanities Council.