Tourism in Lewiston-Auburn?
We are already there!

Many people don’t realize that between Bates College, Museum L-A, the Gendron Franco Center, and the Public Theatre—not to mention our numerous festivals, cultural happenings, and sporting events—we already host tens of thousands of tourists annually that inject millions of dollars into our local economy.

Now a new initiative to capitalize on the beautiful history of the Franco population is underway. After attending the International Francophone/ Francophile Conference in Quebec last summer, a local group felt it was important to develop its own Franco Trail in Lewiston-Auburn.

Members of the Gendron Franco Center and Museum L-A met to review the Franco assets that exist in the area that could be featured in the trail, including the Franco Center, The Basilica, Little Canada, the University of Southern Maine L-A’s Franco Collection, the Maine Genealogical Society, and Museum L-A.

Simultaneously, a Francophone tourism route was being developed by the Museum of Work and Culture in Woonsocket, Rhode Island to include Woonsocket; Manchester, New Hampshire; Biddeford and Lewiston/ Auburn, Maine; and north to Quebec. It was felt that these four cities were connected by a common history: textile industrialization that permitted many Quebecois to immigrate to these areas for work in the mills. Bus tours and tourism information with a map of the Franco Route and a list defining partners in each city is being developed that will include historical places, cultural centers, local hotels, restaurants, annual events and Chambers of Commerce.

We will keep you updated as these exciting opportunities develop, but you may start seeing more bus tours appearing in our cities in the near future!

If you are interested in helping develop the local Franco tourism trail, please contact rachel@museumla.org

See page 6 to learn more about this artwork
A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

A Pivotal Moment in Our History

Museum L-A, the community’s dedicated collector and keeper of the voices and stories, is at a crossroads between its own history and the future.

Since we opened, we’ve received people from 43 states and 12 countries. Those from afar, leave in awe at the beautiful history and community we live in. Local people usually leave having taken pride back in their community. 

Museum L-A is here to help our communities reclaim the pride and greatness we once enjoyed, realize how great and amazing a people and place we were, but more important, that we’re still great and amazing today in every way. We can’t say it enough.

Museum L-A has been through very hard times, but, through sound management, the spirit of frugality of our ancestors and help from our donors, we turned those times around. We are not financially there yet, so we still have to make every penny count. We are reviewing all our operating systems to prepare for the next phase of becoming a strong, vibrant and unique museum of the future.

Financial stability is always a top priority. We have already invested $1.5 Million in the new site and close to $6 Million in operations, 85-90% of which was spent with local businesses.

So why is it urgent for us to consider a new museum NOW? Simply put, we have no other option.

We are in temporary spaces, being squeezed out due to growth in new and expanding businesses around us (hooray!) which has forced us to sacrifice half of our storage area (Ouch!).

We are losing, almost daily, important artifacts because we lack a secure and climate controlled storage area. Key collections – 500 pieces of original art and over 4,000 point paper art done by our millworkers, 210 silkscreens and over 250 original bedspreads – are becoming National Treasures but are in immediate danger of deterioration.

Our current space prohibits new programs of extreme importance such as for children with Autism or people where you can come and hang out, alone or with family and friends, to not only learn but to live, work or just play. Your input along with our wanting to be in a mill and stay downtown brought us to our 1 Beech Street site on the riverfront, near our parks where we demolished 60% of our the existing mill, but saved the original 1850 building.

In late 2016 the vision became the beginning of our reality when a one million dollar anonymous leadership gift was given for the new Museum. This gift was the impetus to start moving our project forward. We hired new professional staff, brought on new board members, reactivated the Building and Capital Campaign Committees, and contracted with exhibit planners. We want our museum to become a force and not just a place.

This is an exciting and challenging time for the Museum, particularly this year as we anticipate the hard work ahead of us. I am inspired by what former citizen, Dr. Bernard Lown, inventor and Nobel Peace Prize Winner said when I first told him about our plans: “This is unheard of what you are trying to do! You are trying to put together a Museum to tell the story of the ordinary person and everyday worker rather then a famous someone or art collection which would be easy and bring in lots of funding. Trying to do this from the bottom up to honor the every day person and worker is going to be very hard. I applaud you and admire what you are doing.” Little did I know…

Workers we interviewed told us – “It was HARD WORK.” Hard work never deterred us. We invite you to join us in our community quest. “WE CAN DO IT!” because “WHY NOT IN L-A?”

Sincerely with our ancestors,
Rachel Desgrosseilliers
Executive Director

2

Executive Director Rachel Desgrosseilliers with millworker art in February, 2018
OUR VISITORS LOVE US
Museum L-A Rated in the Top 4!

We have achieved a status of which we are very proud! Museum visitors from near and far have been rating their experience at Museum L-A on TripAdvisor and Google. We are now # 4 of 21 “Things to Do” in Lewiston, Maine on TripAdvisor.

We’re proud of our exhibits, programs and activities. Have you had a great experience at Museum L-A? Tell us about your experience and leave a review of your own on Google or TripAdvisor. While you’re there, read about all the great things our guests have to say about us.

“You MUST check it out! Really cool to step back in time a bit and see how things were once done in our community and the people who all made it happen. GREAT history lesson for my home-schooled boy and myself! We’ll be visiting again for sure and are excited for upcoming events.”

TRIPADVISOR REVIEW BY MANDYZNZ

“This was a fantastic place and it was amazing to see the incredible history of the Bates Mill. I highly recommend checking out this museum and I am definitely going back!! L/A FINALLY has someplace that celebrates the history and culture of the fantabulous Lew/Aub.”

GOOGLE REVIEW BY ERIN P.

TEAMWORK MAKES THE DREAM WORK
Young Curators Reveal Secrets and Tackle Teamwork

Through the Kids as Curators program, local students worked closely with Museum L-A staff to create, install, and share their own museum exhibits. So far this year, 160 students have produced two exhibits: Auburn Middle School launched “Hidden Treasures” in February, and Lewiston High School’s “Conflict and Compromise” opened in May.

Trips to Museum L-A, as well as visits to the schools by our staff, helped students build their skills in research, writing, artistic design, and teamwork while building an exhibit, after which they became the teachers on opening night.

“Auburn Middle School students have been fortunate to have multiple opportunities to show that they can do real-world work in the community and contribute to building the narrative of life in our Maine community,” says 8th grade teacher Diana Carson. To that, Kate Webber, Director of Education & Outreach, added “Kids as Curators is incredibly important to us since it gives the younger members of this community a platform to share their stories and talents. They’re the future of Museum L-A and this is their museum.”

This exhibit was made possible by funding from the Maine Humanities Council, the Maine Arts Commission, the Lewiston-Auburn Children’s Foundation, Mechanics Savings Bank, and the Maine Thread Company.
Maine Innovation Expo Electrifies Audiences

Visitors of all different ages, interests and backgrounds came together to celebrate invention and ingenuity at our second annual Maine Innovation Expo on May 19.

Visitors topped 700 people, coming from 4 states and 57 towns across Maine from Biddeford to Bar Harbor.

The festival was jam-packed with fun facts, educational activities and fascinating inventions that enthralled guests. Did you know that you can cook s’mores with solar power, and play piano pieces with bananas? Or that drones can be used in commercial agriculture?

Said one expo enthusiast, “The whole family had an absolute blast at the Maine Innovation Expo. We were all impressed with the sheer size of the museum, as well as the hundred plus activities and learning hubs provided. In fact, the children are still talking about it and can’t wait to go next year!”

Many intended to stay for an hour—and found themselves still exploring four hours later.

One robotics volunteer commented: “I’ve spent the whole day going up to people and asking, ‘Do you want to drive a robot?’ Not a single person has said no!”

The Innovation Expo was designed to make innovation fun, accessible and visible at the local and state level for people of all ages. Exhibitors were encouraged not only to make connections to future customers and collaborators, but also to reach out to a younger generation in the midst of deciding what path to take in their education and careers. Businesses and organizations had the opportunity to showcase their fun and exciting work.

That’s what brought Ken Hodgkins to the expo, who currently serves as the Director of the Office of Space and Advanced Technology in the US Department State’s Bureau of Oceans, Environment, and Science. Mr. Hodgkins was a special guest speaker at the event and was able to connect with students from his alma mater, Edward Little High School in Auburn.

He spoke about the latest efforts in international space collaboration, including the Global Positioning System (GPS), orbital debris, and the use of nuclear power sources in space.

“There are incredible opportunities right here in Maine, but you have to be exposed to something to know that it’s an option for you,” said Museum L-A’s Director of Education and Outreach Kate Webber. “At the Expo, kids could get their hands on things they might not have the chance to try otherwise. We had six-year olds learning to lay brick and mortar with Ed Hodson Masonry. Exhibitors went above and beyond to share their skills and spark the interest of attendees both young and old.”

“I’ve spent the whole day going up to people and asking, ‘Do you want to drive a robot?’”

Four thrilling shows by the high-tech comedy group AudioBody and performer Michael Menes were packed. The Maine Drone Society led two outdoor races, and the Bonney Eagle Robotics Team gave hands-on demonstrations of their competitive robots to a captivated crowd.

Museum L-A extends a special thanks to the farmers, scientists, builders, historians, artists, tech buffs, and more that joined us from 56 businesses, schools, and nonprofits!

Thank you to our 2018 sponsors:

- Norway Savings Bank
- Bangor Savings Bank
- ART WORKS
- National Endowment for the Arts
- Auburn Public Library
- CBS 13/FOX 23
- Maine’s Big Z
- Michael Menes Productions
- Praxis Production Studios
- Sun Journal
- SwarmAG Precision Agricultural Drone Services
- The Home Depot
Maine’s Award Winning Young Historians

On Saturday, April 7, nearly 400 students, teachers, and parents gathered at the University of Maine’s Orono Campus for Maine National History Day (NHD). This annual competition for students in grades 6-12 promotes critical thinking skills through project-based learning. Students work individually or in groups to create either a documentary, website, exhibit, performance, or paper around a historical subject of their choice.

“We are students in grades 10-12 who are Black, Muslim, and from immigrant and refugee families,” they commented as they heard, saw and felt the history of past immigrants.

“We love our cultures and we love Lewiston. As our city changes rapidly due to a changing population and economic development, we believe the voices of youth are especially important to guide this change in the right direction.”

The students will incorporate city history as well as their own experiences and creative talent to paint a mural “reflecting that history and the beauty we see in our community,” on the face of the Maine Immigrant and Refugee Services building on Bartlett Street in Lewiston.

A couple weeks after the students’ visit, Museum L-A traveled to Lewiston High School to follow up with them. Stories from three different groups of immigrants—French Canadian, Irish, and Greek—were shared by Rachel Desgroseilliers, Margaret Craven, and Elizabeth Clifford. They talked about what brought the groups here, the challenges they faced, and the traditions they kept and lost over the years. All were impressed to see that the students were working hard to incorporate not only their stories but those of many ethnic groups that have come to L/A in the past.

“Hold on to your culture,” Rachel told the students after explaining how the French language was rarely taught to children after her generation. “Don’t let anyone take it away from you.”

Lewiston Youth Artists Immerse in Local Immigration History

In March, twelve students from Lewiston High School’s 21st Century Leaders Program converged on Museum L-A to research their city’s history of immigration and cultural change over 100 years.

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Top award winners in the state contest qualify for the national contest in Washington, DC, in June. This year 33 entries, 21 teachers and 58 students are eligible to represent Maine in the nation’s capital. In recent years Maine students have consistently won first place in at least one category at the national level. Good luck to these hardworking, talented students!
African Diaspora: A Student Exhibit

A temporary exhibit created by students in Erin Towns’ Maine Cultural Studies class at Edward Little High School was hosted by Museum L-A in May of this year. The project was spearheaded by talented seniors Muse Farah and Sara Kalonda.

“We are both the living, breathing definitions of African Diaspora,” the students write. “We came to America for better lives, education, and opportunities. We want to show the representation of contemporary immigration from the Middle East, Africa, and Asia in our community and state. We want to show the history and why people came to the United States.’’

Class members gathered oral history interviews with community members who have come to Lewiston-Auburn from different parts of the world. Their exhibit, open to the public for two days, featured interview material, photographs, artifacts, fashion, and foods that represent the myriad of cultures represented in our communities.

“It is our hope that the exhibit in the old Bates Mill will bring more understanding and collaboration among the peoples of Auburn and Lewiston Maine,’’ says Ms. Towns. “These student leaders are making it happen.’’ After viewing the exhibit and talking with students and teacher, Rachel Desgrosseilliers, Executive Director of the Museum, announced that the work they had done would be a huge help in the research needed to develop the Immigration Exhibit for the new museum now being planned. Shouts of joy and excitement reverberated through the Atrium space.

Museum L-A was honored to receive sponsorship for this exhibit from United Insurance of Auburn.

Left: Students from the Androscoggin Valley Educational Collaborative, background, listen to Edward Little High School students, standing on the stairs at Museum L-A in Lewiston, during Stories of Immigration. Erin Towns’ Maine Cultural Heritage class at Edward Little High School in Auburn collected stories from their peers who have immigrated to Maine and shared them with gifted and talented social studies students from Leavitt Area High School in Turner, Lewiston High School, Oak Hill High School in Wales and Edward Little High School. “We realized that our recent immigrants are not mentioned in textbooks,’’ co-organizer Sara Kalonda said. “We are taking a look at Maine history through a global lens,’’ Towns said. (Daryn Slover/Sun Journal)
Upper Galleries Enjoy a Face Lift

The permanent exhibitions in the upper galleries are once again getting a face lift as Museum staff incorporate new artifacts that were donated by the American Textile History Museum in Lowell, Massachusetts and present new exhibit concepts. “Visitors will now see more exhibit pieces and stories about the mills and shoe workers,” says Emma Sieh, Collections & Exhibits Coordinator. The redesign process will continue all summer, but the galleries will remain open to visitors throughout the duration of the projects.

Right: Emma Sieh hangs the remaining portraits of workers from the Portraits and Voices exhibit series that began in 2004.

NEW EVENTS FOR KIDS
Tinkering, Mystery and Magic

Museum L-A hosted three programs this winter for children ages 5 and up. “Tinkering Tuesday,” with volunteer Gene Clough, was about invention and discovery. Students were able to send telegraph messages in Morse code and build their own gear structure. “Mystery Thursday,” hosted by educator Kate Webber, enabled students to use their investigative skills for solving mysteries with the help of some basic clues and facts about history. “Magic Friday,” with volunteer Ray Biron, featured a fun and fascinating magic show.

Above: Alexis Walk, left, of Wales and Shelby Dagneau of Lewiston look for clues that will tell them whether their clothes are made of cotton or wool at Museum L-A in Lewiston. Children were given the task of solving various mysteries about historic objects during “Mystery Thursday” at the museum. Museum L-A offered three days of discovery-related activities during February break. “History itself is a pretty big mystery,” Kate Webber, director of education and outreach, told the kids. (Daryn Slover/Sun Journal)
“Object of the Month” New Feature for Collections Department

A new featured attraction is now on view in the museum galleries! “Every month we will be choosing an object from the collection to highlight and put on display as the “Object of the Month”, said Emma Sieh, Collections & Exhibit Coordinator. The idea behind this featured attraction is to evoke curiosity in an item that would have been otherwise hidden in storage, inspire visitors to help preserve our history through the collection by donating or sponsoring an item, and start conversations between the visitors and museum staff about their own personal histories.

Make sure to check our website every month to see what the newest Object of the Month will be, or stop by and get a closer look in person!

APRIL’S OBJECT OF THE MONTH: OLIVINE SIROIS’S ACCORDION

A personal history written by Theresa Pleau about the life of her Mother, Olivine Sirois:

“Olivine (Bonsaint) Sirois, May 1907 – June 1997, immigrated to Lewiston in her late teens. She came to care for a brother’s wife who was ill with TB. She came from a family who loved music. They were very poor but always found time to play and sing and dance. There was no people such as music teachers. You picked up an instrument and you played it. Her forte was the accordion. A brother played the guitar, another the banjo, still another the violin. Her father was living during a time when having an instrument was a miracle so he played the mouth organ, whistled, played the spoons, and accompanied the whole with his feet. We were told he also made puppets that he placed behind a lamp and made their shadows dance on the wall.

It is no mystery that after such an upbringing, Olivine never lost her love of music. She met and married my father, Stanislas Sirois, and brought up their family with music and songs. Playing her accordion, her children, her grandchildren, and her great-grandchildren danced around her when she played. This is why we, her family, are proud to donate her accordion to the museum. Though it is now silenced, it will always resound in our minds and hearts.”

This very loved accordion belonging to Olivine Sirois, along with the accompanying film we shared on our website and Facebook, brought many fond memories and comments from our community. We are a fun loving and musical people!

MAY’S OBJECT OF THE MONTH: ASTRONAUT BEDSPREAD

“All systems are go for countdown” with this astronaut and space themed bedspread made by the Bates Manufacturing Company.

New designs were always being created by the Design Department here in the Bates Mill. As the company began to move away from traditional woven designs, the patterns began to reflect the more whimsical and current fashion trends of the time. This particular bedspread would have been launched and sold in stores during the height of the Space Race, when America was trying to be the first to land on the moon.

With the innovation of the programmable Jacquard loom in textile mills, designs like this one were able to get infinitely more complex. A punch card system allowed for intricate detail to be added to each new design and could indicate what sections of the design would be raised or lowered. Get more information about the Jacquard loom on a museum tour today!
The Work of War Evokes Emotion

*The Work of War: Honoring Our Veterans and the Ones They Left Behind,* an evocative exhibit that was open to the public from November 10th through January 13th, told the story of local veterans throughout history. “Museum L-A wanted to celebrate the bravery, patriotism and service of our veterans to our country.” said Emma Sieh, Collections and Exhibit Coordinator. The honor wall of portraits that had been submitted by friends and family members of veterans was a favorite, though it often caused tears or hugs of comfort. Rachel Desgrosseilliers, Museum Director, said that she was particularly moved at the ‘Missing Man’ table when a veteran, Mr. Robert Dillingham, commented quietly, “It’s just not big enough.”

Within the exhibit was a station where people were encouraged to fill out a thank you card to a veteran. People of all ages graciously filled one out, including children who drew pictures of flags and soldiers. These thoughtful cards were then delivered to two veterans homes at the end of December by Collections & Exhibits Coordinator, Emma Sieh and volunteer Tom Jarvis, a Navy Veteran.

> Would you like to be part of our exciting story? You can be!

Your gift counts. A gift of any size will help us to continue providing outstanding educational programs for people of all ages. Our exhibits are second to none—and your donation helps us create truly unique exhibits that showcase the history of our work and our community.

If you value the important work we are doing, please take a minute to donate online at museumla.org or mail a contribution to: Museum L-A, Box A7 Lewiston, Maine 04240. Thank you.

Stay tuned! We hope you’re enjoying this newsletter. As you have read, there are many exciting developments taking shape at Museum L-A. The remainder of 2018 will be packed with new programs and new opportunities! Watch your mail in July for our annual mailing with more details, updates, and ways to be involved and join us in our excitement!
A NOTE FROM JOHN CLEVELAND, BOARD CHAIR

Museum L-A Welcomes New Board Members

Museum L-A is excited to welcome Michael S. Malloy and Robert D. Westhoven to the Museum’s Board of Directors. Michael is an experienced local attorney with a passion for museums and Robert has extensive experience in banking and finance. A warm welcome to them both!

Michael Malloy is the founding member of The Malloy Firm in Auburn, Maine. He received his J.D. *cum laude* in 2008 from Suffolk University Law School in Massachusetts. He also has a double major from Middlebury College in Vermont focusing on International Politics and Economics, and French.

Robert Westhoven is the Vice President and Commercial Team Leader at Androscoggin Bank in Lewiston, Maine. He has strong leadership skills with a proven record of achievement in team referral and sales production.

GET INVOLVED

**Volunteer Opportunities – Diverse, Fun and Engaging!**

Volunteers support the Museum in activities that range from interacting with visitors, participating in museum committees, creating exhibits, helping with collections, and working on special events to providing support for staff. In all they do, their commitment enables Museum L-A to provide a lively, fun and educational experience for everyone.

For more information on volunteering for Museum L-A, please contact Robert Caron at 207-333-3881 or email rcaron@museumla.org.

There are so many ways to support our work and preserve our history. Museum L-A’s current volunteer needs include:

- Greeters
- Tour Guides
- Data Entry
- Researchers
- Education
- Retail/Gift Shop Experience
- Writers & Composers
- Graphic Design
- Marketing
- Archiving
- Exhibit Committee
- Entrepreneurial Task Force
- Development Committee
- Light Cleaning
- ...and so much more!

For more information about volunteering for Museum L-A, please contact Robert Caron at (207) 333-3881 or email rcaron@museumla.org.
THE LOST ART OF HANDIWORK

June 14 - September 15

A New Gallery Exhibit Celebrating the Cultural and Traditional Skills of Creating Works by the Hands of Maine Artisans

Join us at our free opening reception for handiwork demonstrations!

June 13, 2018  5:30 - 7:00 pm

Hours of Operation
Tuesday-Friday 10:00am-4:00pm
Saturday 10:00am-3:00pm

Phone: 207-333-3881
Website: www.museumla.org
Museum L-A connects generations and cultures, fosters a spirit of discovery and human ingenuity, and helps people experience the rich history of work, the arts and community.

MUSEUM HOURS

Tuesday-Friday
10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Saturday
10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
and by appointment

OUR MISSION

Museum L-A connects generations and cultures, fosters a spirit of discovery and human ingenuity, and helps people experience the rich history of work, the arts and community.

Donate now... No gift is too small!

WANTED: ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDS AND HEARTS

The museum’s collection holds more than 500 beautiful and unique designs hand-drawn by Bates Mill Design Department, as well as over 200 silkscreens and thousands of point paper designs used in the textile mills of old. An Entrepreneurial Task Force has been established in order to generate new revenue streams for the museum and to honor the creativity of the mill workers. These iconic patterns lend themselves beautifully to wallpaper, fashion fabric, fine art prints, gift wrap, furniture upholstery and so much more.

Committee members will join Portland architect and acting chair Paul Lewandowski, and Kristen Dettoni, Co-founder of PatternPod in New Hampshire.

“We are looking for more entrepreneurial minds and hearts to join our Task Force to help develop new products, establish eCommerce on our site, and find new opportunities to showcase the beautiful art of our ancestors, in whatever form that could be,” said Executive Director Rachel Desgroseilliers. “We need your creative and business minds.”

Would you like to help? Contact Rachel at rachel@museumla.org or call (207) 333-3881.

You can help us increase revenue with creative uses for these work art designs!