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# Rainy-Day



"Into each life some rain must fall," as Portlander Henry Wadsworth Longfellow observed. So when the clouds come out, take the party indoors.



From top: The imposing L.C. Bates Museum; keepin' it unreal with the guys at the Cryptozoology Museum.

## FROM STAFF & WIRE REPORTS

**T**ired of the usual suspects? If you're touring Maine and dare to look for something a little different, we recommend these museums—a feast of the unexpected.

### STRANGE MAINE

"This is more than a used-record store, even though that's what it is," says Strange Maine owner Brendan Evans. "It's a cross between a museum and an art installation. We're not trying to preserve or teach anything. It's just an aesthetic experience."

A museum of the retail persuasion, this 10-year-old Congress Street shop sells what they call "antiquated media," which translates to extinct VHS, VCR, cassettes, tapes, vinyl LPs, and game systems like Atari and Nintendo, along with a good selection of used DVDs and books. Old toys serve as decor. Leave your preconceptions at the door. Strange Maine was named for an out-of-print 1986 anthology of short horror fiction of the same name; there are a couple of copies on display in the store. The website calls the store "a performance venue interested in promoting the unusual, the beautiful, marginalized, amazing, ignored, experimental, overlooked, etc., etc..."

"We hold shows—*avant garde* musical acts, sound-collage artists, noise artists, sound poets," says illustrator Michael Connor, who works at Strange Maine when he's not producing issues of his comic book series *Coelacanthus*. Copies are for sale at the desk. 578 Congress St, Portland; daily 11am-7pm; 771-9997, [kraag.org/strange](http://kraag.org/strange)

### THE AFRICAN CENTER FOR THE SACRED ARTS AT THE MUSEUM OF AFRICAN CULTURE

Oscar Mokeme has run this Portland museum of Sub-Saharan African art and culture—paintings, masks, bronze, and ivory pieces—for 16 years.

"I've tried to connect the collection to the African diaspora here in Maine, in a contemporary fashion." For this reason, there are pieces from Somalia, Sudan, Rwanda, Burundi, and Congo, among others. There is a room full of spectacular carved and decorated figures, most from Oba, Nigeria. Mokeme calls them masks although most are entire figures. A python skin at least 15 feet long, pressed flat and varnished to a high gloss, descends from the ceiling to the floor. "The python connects heaven and earth. It's a symbol of motherhood, birth, regeneration, and protection of



## DISCOVERY

the village." And you were thinking serpent in the garden of Eden. On the floor is a stitched, checkerboard floor mat of goat and cow hide. Framed illustrations by Maine artists Ashley Bryan, Rohan Henry, and Daniel Minter are on exhibit. There are two large murals by Cornelius Aringu, "the African Picasso." Art is a "sacred and healing medium," says Mokeme. **13 Brown St., Portland; Tues.-Fri. 10:30am-4pm; Sat 12-4pm; Admission: \$5; 871-7188, [museumafricanaculture.org](http://museumafricanaculture.org)**

### CASTLETUCKER

When this 1807 Wiscasset house overlooking the Sheepscot River became the home of Mollie and Richard Tucker and their five children in 1858, it was on its way to becoming Castle Tucker. Initially prosperous, the Tuckers refurbished extensively to their Victorian tastes. Castle Tucker documents the life of a successful family that later struggled economically. Because of the family's financial decline, the house remains largely unchanged from its 19th-century Victorian style. **2 Lee St., Wiscasset; June 1-Oct. 15: Wed.-Sun. 11-5pm; [historicnewengland.org](http://historicnewengland.org)**

### INTERNATIONAL CRYPTOZOOLOGY MUSEUM

Loren Coleman's artifact-packed, 10-year-old Portland museum may be the world's epicenter of cryptozoology, which he defines as the study of hidden or unknown animals, as yet unverified by science, such as Yeti, Bigfoot, and sea serpents.

"Remember, although many tried, no white Westerner had ever seen, documented, or captured a Chinese giant panda bear until Ruth Harkness brought one back to New York in 1936. Before that, there were only accounts of sightings," says Coleman. "Ruth tried something different—unlike the men, when she got to China she asked directions." He points to a glass case containing a photo and a stylish Barbie-sized Ruth Harkness statuette with a panda cub at her feet.

The museum contains many such wacky dioramas of the real and not-yet-real, plus assorted taxidermied animals and taxidermy-esque crypto-creatures, including a towering furry fellow in the center of the store. Coleman's been collecting for 50 years, and his TV appearances on shows like *Monster Quest* and *CBS Sunday Morning* have resulted in donated items coming in from all over. There are plaster casts of Bigfoot prints, a casting of a 3-million-year-old Gigantopithecus skull, and a hideous mounted monstrosity in a

glass case that turns out to be nothing more than a hairless raccoon. Coleman has written 10 books on his subject, including a collaboration with Mark Bessire of art and text titled *Cryptozoology, Out of Time Place Scale*. Yes, that Mark Bessire, director of the Portland Museum of Art. "He's a closet cryptozoologist."

The museum is a trip. Why would you want to miss it?

**11 Avon St., Portland; Sun. 11-3:30pm; Mon. 12-4pm; Wed.-Sat. 11am-4pm; Adults \$7, Kids \$5; [cryptozoologymuseum.com](http://cryptozoologymuseum.com)**

### DEER ISLE-STONINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Located in the 1830 home of the daughter of a soldier in the American Revolution, the Historical Society exhibits artifacts, Native American arrowheads, fossils, ship models, fishing gear, and historical books and photographs. It is an extensive archive of the history—native, colonized, nautical, commercial, and genealogical—of one Maine island.

**416 Sunset Rd, Deer Isle; Mid-Jun. to mid-Sept: Wed., Fri., Sat. 1-4pm; 348-6400, [historicalsociety.org](http://historicalsociety.org)**

### FAWCETT'S ART AND ANTIQUE TOYS

John Fawcett opened up shop on Rt. 1 in Waldoboro in 1996. He collects "original art relating to toys" and "very rare comic strip art" from artists like Charles Schulz—what he calls "the kind of thing people's parents and grandparents would remember." In other words, retro stuff rather than kid stuff. Here you'll find many little Betty Boop dolls, Gene Autry's shirt, a full-sized Yoda, and an army of little bygone cereal box figurines. Of his collection, Fawcett says, "They're all my favorites or they wouldn't be in here."

**Route 1, Waldoboro; Memorial Day to Columbus Day; Mon., Thurs., Fri., 10am-4pm; Sat. & Sun., 12-4pm; [home.gwi.net/~fawcetoy/moremuseum.htm](http://home.gwi.net/~fawcetoy/moremuseum.htm)**

### MONTPELIER: THE GENERAL HENRY KNOX MUSEUM

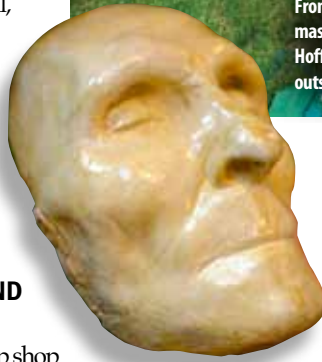
Henry Knox was born into poverty in 1750 in Boston; with hustle and wit he became a bookseller who caught the eye of General George Washington in 1776. Knox served as his Secre-

tary of War; upon retirement in 1795, he and his wife Lucy retreated to Maine and built the 19-room mansion Montpelier. Knox's golden years were spent dabbling in gentleman-merchant enterprises until he died in 1806, allegedly from choking on a chicken bone. The family fortunes had begun to dissipate; land was sold, the family scattered, possessions were dispersed, and the mansion was razed in 1871.

That would have been that if not for the Henry Knox chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution in the 1920s. They enlisted the resources of Henry Thatcher Fowler, Knox's great-great-grandson, and publishing magnate Cyrus Curtis. In 1929, construction of



From left: Neal Dow lived into his 90s, and his death mask is displayed in a glass case in the library; Nancy 3. Hoffman takes a break from organizing her collection outside the Umbrella Cover Museum on Peaks Island.



a Montpelier replica began near the original site. Fowler donated Knox family antiques. Visit August 10 and catch Knoxfest, a history celebration with a film about Knox jazzed up with a live steel band and a chicken barbecue and ice cream social.

**Route 1, Thomaston; May 25-Oct. 14: Thurs. & Fri. 10am-4pm; Adults \$10, Kids \$4, Under 5 Free; [knoxmuseum.org](http://knoxmuseum.org)**

### NEAL DOW MEMORIAL HOUSE

The former mayor of Portland and 1880 presidential candidate Neal Dow (1804-1897) was the "father of prohibition" who helped craft it into law in 1851. Interestingly, though, Dow himself authorized the shipment and stockpiling of a large supply of "medicinal" alcohol for use by "doctors." Discovery of this fact triggered Portland's rum riot of 1855. Prohibition was repealed in 1856. So was Dow a hypocrite, or a closet tippler? "I think personally he never touched a drop," says Dow museum docent David Perkins.

Dow served in the Civil War; his 1829 federal-style Congress St. mansion was a link on the Underground Railroad. After the war, Dow and his wife Maria lived there with their five children. Dow's son Fred inherited the

mansion and his father's temperance mission. Fred willed the house, as the Neal Dow Memorial, to the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and upon his death in 1971, the WCTU took over the building.

Now on the National Register of Historic Places, the frivolity-free Dow home provides insight into the life and times of a very sober-Victorian-era scholar. Oil and photographic portraits of Dow abound; the man was positively shaggy with muttonchop whiskers. A ceramic death mask sits in a glass case in his library among his extensive book collection.

714 Congress St., Portland; July & Aug: Mon-Thurs., 10am-4pm; Admission: \$5; 773-7773, trolley-museum.org

Having fun after a tour of a vintage Boston T trolley car at Kennebunk's Seashore Trolley Museum.



**L.C. BATES MUSEUM**

In 1860, when George Hinckley was six, he was given three rocks. "He claimed that these were the start of Maine's natural history museum," says curator Deborah Staber. Hinckley founded the Good Will-Hinckley Orphanage for boys in 1889 in a town now called Hinckley, halfway between Fairfield and Skowhegan. In 1911, he opened the Bates museum on the same campus to house his collection of rocks, minerals, fossils, Native American artifacts, and many donated items.

The orphanage is no more; today, Good Will-Hinckley is a charter school offering an education aimed at a future in farming, forestry, and clean energy, taught hands-on at the riverfront campus of woodland and organic gardens. The museum is autonomous.

"It's a sort of museum of a museum, be-

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Loren Coleman, Director/Founder  
As appearing on CBS Sunday Morning and  
Mysteries at the Museum.

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Map of Cryptozoology by Alexis Rockman, used with permission.

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Monday: Noon - 4, Wednesday-Saturday: 11 - 4,  
Sunday: 11 - 3:30 (Last tours 30 minutes before closing)  
Adults \$7, 12 and under \$5



## DISCOVERY

cause it's so old," says Staber. "We have 32 dioramas of Maine landscapes and animals, including many birds and a caribou. There's a mounted blue marlin donated by Ernest Hemingway. We have Maine artists exhibited every summer, and this summer's theme is 'The Gift of the Glacier.' We have a glacier-scratched rock right outside the museum." Staber says visitors often tour the museum, have a picnic outside, and then walk the campus trails. She acknowledges that the museum is not heated in winter. "We're the coolest museum in central Maine."

16 Prescott Dr., Hindckley; Apr.-mid.-Nov: Wed.-Sat. 10am-4:30pm;  
Sun. 1-4:30pm; Adults \$3, Kids up to 17 \$1; 238-4000, gwh.org

### WILHELM REICH MUSEUM

The 160-acre Rangeley farm called Orgonon was the home, observatory and research laboratory of Dr. Wilhelm Reich (1897-1957), who came here in 1942. Born in Austria and a lapsed colleague of Sigmund Freud, Reich came to America in the 1930s to teach at New York's New School. His research focused on harnessing the energy he believed was inherent and available in animals and objects. His "orgone accumulator" boxes supposedly stored energy to treat "neurosis" and terminal disease. Experiments were on mice; later, he built a human-sized accumulator.

An article published in 1947 in *The New Republic* by writer Mildred Brady alleged, with distortion and innuendo, that Reich's orgone energy was being used for "orgastic" sexual purposes. This led to the FDA banning Reich's equipment and a lawsuit resulting in a judgment ordering Reich to destroy his equipment. He refused, his appeals failed, and he was sentenced to two years in federal prison. Reich wrote a will before his incarceration to establish the trust that maintains his Rangeley farm as the museum it is today. He died of heart failure in prison. The controversy that dogged him in life ironically contributed to his enduring legacy as an early icon of the sexual revolution.

The museum showcases Reich's research and scholarship, holds conferences, maintains the property and bookstore, and "administers the Reich archive." Two cottages are available for rental on the grounds.

19 Orgonon Circle, Dodge Pond Rd., Rangeley; Jul. & Aug:  
Wed.-Sun., 1-5pm; Sept: Sat. only, 1-5pm; Adults \$6;  
864-3443, wilhelmreichtrust.org

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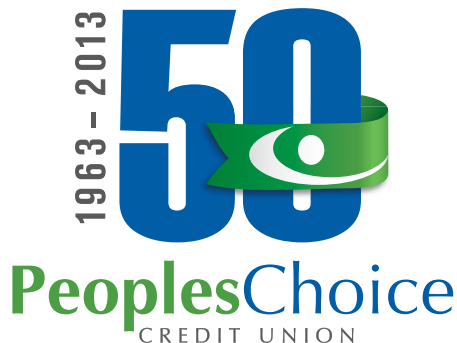
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### THE UMBRELLA COVER MUSEUM

The Umbrella Cover Museum on Peaks Island is the brainchild of Nancy 3. Hoffman who began collecting 20 years ago because she was fascinated by the stories that accompanied each cover. Whether a donor claims a cover is from the Sahara desert or was the only umbrella cover design allowed in Cold War-era Czechoslovakia, each has a story. Last summer, Hoffman achieved the Guinness World Record for the most umbrella covers, at 730. So what's next? "I'd like to take the exhibit to England and then to other parts of the world. The British deserve to see the umbrella cover museum."

62-B Island Ave., Peaks Island; Jun. 25-Labor Day: Tues.-Sat.  
10am-1pm & 2-5pm; Sun. 10-12; Donations accepted;  
939-0302, [umbrellacovermuseum.org](http://umbrellacovermuseum.org)

### THOMPSON ICE HOUSE MUSEUM

Calling itself a "working museum dedicated to traditional ice-harvesting methods," this modest, focused museum is named for Herbert Thompson (1905-1991) of South Bristol. It claims to be the only ice house on the National Register of Historic Places still in use.

In the pre-electrified 19th century, Maine's harvested ice was big business; ice was shipped to the West Indies and even to China. As electricity diminished demand, harvested ice dwindled to just crushed ice for local fishermen. These days, the annual President's Day weekend ice harvest in February is the Thompson Ice House's tribute to a tradition begun in 1826.

Rte. 129, South Bristol; Jul. & Aug: Wed., Fri., Sat., 1-4pm;  
Donations accepted; 644-8808, [thompsonicehouse.com](http://thompsonicehouse.com)

### SEASHORE TROLLEY MUSEUM

Before you reach the beach in the Kennebunks, check out the Seashore Trolley Museum. With more than 250 vehicles including subway cars and buses, the museum has trolleys from New Zealand, Australia, Japan, Germany, Hungary, and England. One was used in the 1981 cop thriller *Nighthawks*, starring a young Sylvester Stallone, and another in Spike Lee's 1992 biopic *Malcolm X*. "This past March, an Emerson College student filmed for her senior project here. That a college senior would find our site relevant in 2013 is impressive," says executive director Sally Bates.

195 Log Cabin Rd., Kennebunkport; Memorial Day-Columbus  
Day: 7 days, 10am-5pm; Adults \$10, Kids \$7.50, under 5 free;  
967-2800, [trolleymuseum.org](http://trolleymuseum.org)

For more, visit <http://www.portlandmonthly.com/port-mag/2013/07/quirky-extras>

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