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# The Midcoast Inquirer

Newsletter of Midcoast Senior College  
December 2019, Volume 15, No 1



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## Bright & Beautiful: Restoring Maine Maritime Art

*Peter and Teresa Fogg*



A family brought this painting to us at Fogg Art Restoration. It is part of a trio of paintings produced during Maine's China Trade period. All three paintings were created by the same artist in Hong Kong about 1850. The trio consisted of the portrait of the ship and the portrait of the captain and his wife of Bowdoinham, Maine. According to maritime historians, this trio is very unusual.

The two portraits of the people are in good condition but, as you can see, the ship's portrait was in precarious condition. The team at Fogg Art Restoration examined, tested and developed a treatment plan that would stabilize the piece enhance its visual appeal while preserving its historical and monetary value.

The linen painted on was embrittled and was torn and split in many places. The surface of the painting was covered with dirt and aged varnish which had turned very dark. The colors that the artist intended were hidden from view. Not a pretty picture! Some careful chemical testing on the edges of the painting allow the

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## President's Letter

Members and friends: I have the pleasure of reporting that MSC's growth and organization continue to thrive, despite a lack of government consistency in Washington. Interest in our activities remains high, as evidenced by increased participation in our classes and other activities. Our membership survey done nearly a year ago told us that winter classes would be greatly appreciated and not to forget summer opportunities. Our curriculum committee, led by Victor Papacosma and Linton Studdiford, worked diligently to produce five inspiring winter classes in a matter of days, followed by some well received seminars in July. Thanks to them and their committee for rising to the challenge.

Success is not always intentional. We have experienced computer and television screen issues in the classrooms of which many members are aware. Your Board is also aware of these issues and is working diligently to resolve the problems now. We hope to have new projectors with screens in the classrooms by January, enabling larger screen formats to assist vision from the back of the room. We expect that these would be far more reliable, requiring less attention from Donna and others, especially Clare Durst who has worked tirelessly to meet our technology challenges. Special thanks to Donna and Clare.

We continue to attract new members and generous instructors anxious to offer stimulating courses. We are so fortunate to live in such an outstanding area, attracting a continuous stream of new residents from many parts of the country. Many of you are able to share your lifelong experiences in our classes and at summer and winter wisdom lectures. Our weekly Current Events gatherings in the Curtis Library are open to all free of charge on Thursday noon. Do join us and share your wisdom.

Our faculty luncheon in late August was a terrific success. Our instructors meet with several Board members

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The Midcoast Inquirer

is the newsletter of  
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**Midcoast Senior College** is one of seventeen Senior Colleges in the State of Maine. We serve the area from Freeport to Waldoboro and inland up to Augusta. Most of our classes are held at 29 Burbank Avenue, Suite 6, Brunswick, Maine. Class schedules and *The Midcoast Inquirer* are available on our web site for each semester. Students may also register on line at [midcoastseniorcollege.org](http://midcoastseniorcollege.org).

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and offered comments about their upcoming classes. I was especially impressed that many spoke of their gratitude for the opportunity to teach, though they are not compensated for their work. Each offered a succinct outline of their classes; I felt like I wanted to take them all. We are extraordinarily grateful for their commitment and dedication to offer high quality instruction on stimulating topics.

We are working on future interests and other venues for classes. Both challenges and opportunities are significant. Our assets are improving. We are encouraged by the enthusiasm and support of you, our members. Our annual fund continues to reflect your generous participation, so necessary to enable us to keep tuition as low as possible. We are attracting a few donations of stock and seek support from estate benefactors and other planning options. Gifts from Individual Retirement Accounts are tax deductible and most appreciated for those of us who are over age 70 1/2--the limit is \$100,000. Please contact Donna Marshall for more information.

*Doug Bates, President*

**MSC Thanks Its Volunteer Crew**

Midcoast Senior College is grateful to its many volunteers who help in the office, in the classroom, serve on committees, and generously give their time and talents. Without them our senior college would not be the special place that it has become. From coffee room treats to assisting the teacher, each individual contribution is a treasure. If you are interested in helping in any way, please call us at 725-4900. Thank you!

**Mission Statement of the Midcoast Inquirer:**

The Midcoast Inquirer articulates the academic spirit and educational mission of Midcoast Senior College to offer lifelong learning for older adults. To this end, we provide a bulletin board that announces course offerings, lectures and special events, and a literary forum (or virtual classroom) of essays, reviews, interviews and commentaries written by faculty and students.

*--Robert C. Williams, Editor*

**NOTE: Midcoast Senior College membership becomes effective upon payment and is for one fiscal year only, currently July 1 through June 30 of each year.**

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team to identify the type of dirt and varnish that will need to be removed. It also reveals that the painting's color is wonderfully exciting.

The back of the painting has the artist's signature and chop mark in vibrant red. This is very important to the piece because of its obvious history, showing that three paintings are indeed created by the same artist. This would need to be preserved.

With this knowledge, Fogg art Restoration designed and wrote an appropriate treatment plan. The plan is presented to the family, questions were answered, and the plan was approved.

### **Begin the Treatment, despite Torn Lining**

Time to take photographs. Fogg Art Restoration takes pictures before, during and after the treatment to document the journey. These are fun for the client and create yet one more layer of provenance for the piece.

Due to fact that the linen was torn, and the torn edges were very fragile, the painting had to be removed very carefully from the wooden stretchers that are the support for the painting. These stretchers were cleaned and set aside.

The conservator then lined the painting. This means the painting was adhered to a support. The torn pieces were temporarily and meticulously pieced together using conservator's tape on the back. In this case the painting was mounted to heavy weight Mylar using an archival, removable, clear adhesive called Beva. Remember, we wanted to see the signature chop mark on the back when the project is complete. Beva was just the ticket!

The painting is now stable for generations to come, stretched to the wooden stretcher bars that had been set aside. We like to use bars again whenever possible for historical reasons. Time to get the camera.



### **Cleaning and Varnish Removal.**

Let's get that dirt off. The conservator used The Modular Cleaning Program. It is a Low chemical, pH-adjusted cleaning system approved by The American Institute for Conservation. The results were very rewarding.

Our testing had revealed the type of varnish, so we knew the appropriate solvent to remove it without harming the original paint. The varnish removal created the wow factor. Removal of the aged and very yellowed varnish revealed the exciting colors the artist had intended. And they were truly intense and wonderful. More pictures.

### **Make Those Tears Disappear: Filling and In-Painting**

Proper fine art conservation should always be removable. This means not just the lining but everything that is done to the front of the painting. So, the conservator applies a layer of isolating varnish to the painting. Everything done from this point on is not on the painting but, in front of the painting.

The tears were then filled to make the them disappear. No more scars. The fills were then smoothed out and appropriate texture was created as well.

Then, another application of varnish. That created a surface that was ideal for the conservator to see the colors exactly.

The coloring of the losses and tears is called in-painting. A special paint is used called Aldehyde resin conservation color. It was used because it does not change color over time and allow the repairs to show. It is easily removed if needed. The conservator used their years of experience to match the colors and a careful eye to understanding the way the artist had applied the original paint. This took hours of patience and skill to achieve. It is often a very rewarding part of the restoration to the conservator. And, this was one of those projects. The conservator photographed this with pride.

### **Final Finish**

All in-painted and ready for a final finish. The conservator made a low molecular weight varnish. Decisions were made as to the desired amount of gloss appropriate to the period of the painting. Low molecular weight varnishes are as clear and thin as water. They contain ultraviolet inhibitors that will keep them that way for generations. They are very easy to remove if it is ever necessary, thus causing less stress to the painting. This final varnish makes the surface of the painting uniform. The painting looks awesome. Pride swelled in the conservator. You guessed it, now make those digital images

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## We're Number One!

*Bruce MacDougal*

### Almost Done

A protective Plexiglas back was placed on the back which has breather holes to modulate relative humidity and protect the painting from future damage. Fogg Art conserved the period frame. It was cleaned, stabilized and any surface damage was addressed. A cushion was applied to the frame's rabbet to protect the painting's edges, and it was refit. All the images were placed on a photo CD for documentation and enjoyment.



### Show Time

The painting was presented to the overjoyed clients. They made plans for their family to donate the paintings to a museum when they are done enjoying them. We too enjoy what we do and are grateful to be doing work that provides us with such rewards.

*--We will all be remembered not only for what we create but for what we choose to preserve.*

*Peter and Teresa Fogg are co-owners of Fogg Art Restoration in Wiscasset. This essay is adapted from their Winter Wisdom MSC talk in January 2019.*

## Where in the Midcoast?

### Do you recognize this place?



You can find a description of this place on page 7. It is a great place to visit.

That's right; we're the world champs. The Gulf of Maine, all the way from the north shore of Cape Cod to the top of the Bay of Fundy, is the fastest warming body of water in the entire world. On a map the gulf may look like an open bay, but it's actually bounded by a series of banks, large underwater ridges that rise from the bottom of the ocean almost to the surface, between Cape Cod and Nova Scotia. They're pierced by a deep-water channel. These banks make our gulf somewhat similar to a small sea. Only part of the northern Pacific Ocean is warming faster. The Red Sea and the Persian Gulf are hotter, but they are not warming as fast. We're definitely number one, the fastest warming body of water in the world.

How come? Blame Greenland and her neighbors. It's a complicated story and there are three reasons for our warming:

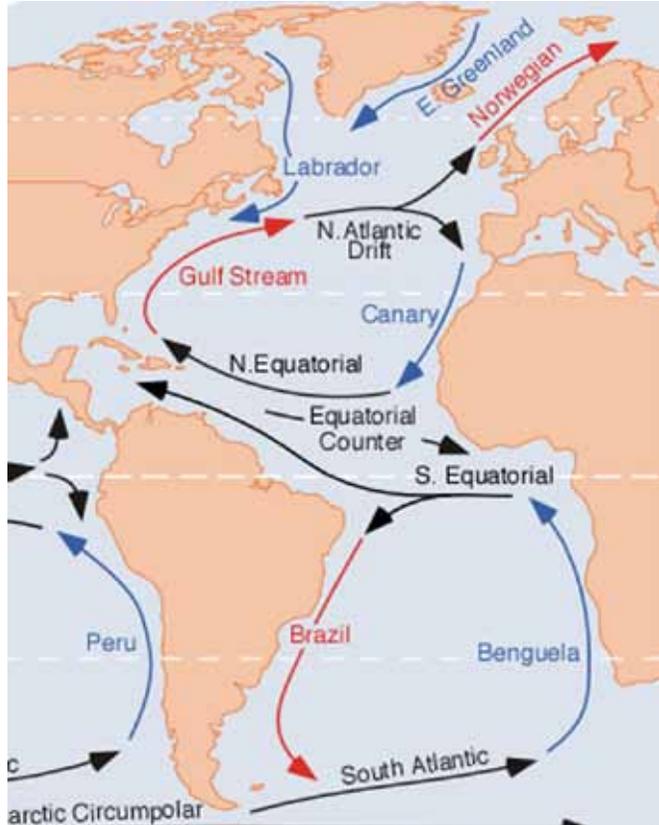
First, all of the oceans are warming. Well over 90% of the excess heat added to our planet is taken up by the oceans. Most is added to the surface waters, the top mile or so, but some of the heat warms water as deep as two miles.

Second, in both the North and South Atlantic these surface waters travel in a circle with the hottest waters nearest the equator traveling from east to west approaching the shores of North and South America and the waters closest to the poles traveling away from the Americas. In the South Atlantic Equatorial current, the northern half nearest the equator is diverted along the edge of northern South America and Central America, then into the Gulf of Mexico and finally around the tip of Florida where it merges with the tropical waters from the North Equatorial current to form the Gulf Stream.

The Gulf Stream is a huge hot salty current. It's bigger than 2,000 Mississippi Rivers combined. Its waters flow north and then head back towards Europe. South of Greenland these waters split into three different currents, the Norwegian going north into the Arctic Ocean, the Canary going south, and a third that sinks Why? Much of the North Atlantic Drift current's hot water comes to the surface and evaporates, forming heavy brine that sinks to the ocean bottom].

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Ocean Circulation Patterns

Here Greenland and her neighbors enter the story. Their ice is melting so fast that there is a huge area of fresh cold meltwater in the circle current's path across the North Atlantic. The meltwater is lighter than the salty Gulf Stream water and forms a cover over it so there's less evaporation and less brine sinking to the ocean's bottom. A big problem. The other two currents have increased in size and are hotter but there's still a roadblock. The hot Gulf Stream waters are backing up and pushing the normal colder Arctic waters around Newfoundland and Nova Scotia out of the way. So instead of the Gulf of Maine getting mostly Arctic waters from the coast of Labrador, we're getting a lot more hot Gulf Stream water. In 2018 there was hot water 400 feet deep off northern Nova Scotia. My daughter said that the swimming in Cape Breton was warmer than the swimming in Harpswell. I've never experienced that.

Third, the story isn't quite this simple. Surface ocean currents are driven by the prevailing wind currents which have the same circular paths. The spinning of these wind circles is to a large extent powered by the difference in temperature [energy] between the polar winds and the winds coming from the south. Incidentally this same temperature difference creates and pow-

ers the jet stream. The warming of the entire Arctic has destabilized both the polar winds and the circle wind currents. These wind changes vary producing years or seasons with more backup, faster rising Gulf of Maine water temperatures and greater sea level rise. And then there are years with less backup. To what extent and how we're just finding out. After all, in human history it's never happened before. To quote Bob Dylan "the times they are a'changin'".

The oceans are huge and the changes at any given place are small. We've measured only a relatively small number of places. Scientists have a lot more to find out. Fortunately, there is more funding for this research recently and also a much better coverage of the research findings in the press. It's an ongoing and exciting story. Stay tuned!

*Bruce MacDougal is a retired hand surgeon who teaches MSC courses on climate change and climate science. He resides in Harpswell.*

## Annual Fund Reminder

Although the calendar is turning from '19 to '20, the annual fund drive at Midcoast Senior College is only at its half-way point. As an independently operated 501(C)3 senior college, MSC does not receive support from a college or university as do many other senior colleges. Our budget relies on community sponsorships, individual donations, and tuition and membership fees. Satisfied students are vital donors.

Please consider making a donation to Midcoast Senior College through a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD). A QCD excludes the amount donated from taxable income and will count toward your required minimum distribution (you must be 70 ½ or older to be eligible). The money must be sent directly to the 501(C)3 by your investment firm. Since many are not itemizing because the standard deduction is more advantageous, this is a way to allow you to lower your tax bill and support the organization. Please contact your broker if you would like more information.

Thank you for your support of Midcoast Senior College!

## News of the Board of Directors

In 2020, Midcoast Senior College will celebrate its twentieth anniversary. A 20/20 committee has been established to mark the occasion. Bob Williams and Nora Bishop will produce a history of MSC, The First Twenty Years, to tell the story of MSC from its founding to the present. The June 2020 annual meeting will likewise be a moment of celebration.

New board members elected since June whose first board term will end in 2022:

- **Bill Haggett** is the retired President and CEO of Bath Iron Works, and a life-long Mainer who remains very active in community affairs. He is a vigorous supporter of many local non-profit organizations.
- **Steve Piker**, a retired Professor of Anthropology from Swarthmore College, has taught several courses at MSC as well as at Senior Colleges in Portland and Lewiston. He is a strong believer in continuing adult education.
- **M. Kelly Matzen**, a retired Auburn attorney who lives in Brunswick, adds legal expertise and administrative counsel to our Board.
- **Susan Michael**, a retired scholar, has been a prominent presence at the MSC Current Events program for many years. She now assists in researching, editing, and amending the documents which underlie and support MSC while promoting our offerings to the greater community.
- **Karen Williams** has retired from a career in bank auditing in Illinois. She is active in community affairs at The Highlands of Topsham and adds her financial experience to our Board and its Finance Committee.



Twenty years ago, in 2000, MSC had its beginnings in the Old Bath Road home of U. Maine's University College Bath/Brunswick (UCBB).

## Deaths:

Mark Smith (1941-2019) was MSC board president and helped engineer the move to independence in 2012. A graduate of Williams College with graduate degrees from Columbia and Harvard Universities, Mark was a widely acclaimed schoolteacher and school superintendent before retiring to Maine in 2003. He received the Wheeler-Thompson Founders Award in 2017 for his significant contributions to MSC. His wife, Judy, has been a frequent contributor to these pages. Our thoughts and prayers are with Judy and Mark's family.

--Ed.

Agnes Beale passed away September 25, 2019 in Melbourne, Florida where she had moved to be close to her cousin. Agnes was born in New York City, raised in New Jersey and spent much of her professional life in an insurance office in Pennsylvania. Yet it was in Maine, and at the Midcoast Senior College, where she made her mark in retirement and where we remember her. She had a full life.

Born August 29, 1939 to an Irish-Italian family, Agnes was a devoted Catholic. It wasn't until she was in her forties, with an interest in the women of the Civil War, that she was able to finish college with a degree in history. That was emblematic of her philosophy. When she retired and joined MSC, she found the mission of life-long learning compelling. As a volunteer, then board member, finally a winner of the Wheeler-Thompson Award, Agnes was recognized as the first Administrative Assistant of MSC.

In the little office, in Bath, then the even smaller office in Brunswick, Agnes was surrounded by filing cabinets, books and volunteers. I sat next to her for four of those years until ill health forced her retirement. We became good friends and along with all of us at MSC, I came to know that:

*There are good ships and wood ships and ships that sail the sea.*

*But the best ships are friendships, may they always be!*

*May your home always be too small for your friends.*

--Irish Proverb

--Nora Bishop

## Winter Wisdom Schedule

All presentations will be held on Wednesdays at the Morrill Room of Curtis Library, in Brunswick, and will begin at 12:15 pm except January 8 location is U.U. Church.

- January 8 *Castlebay and the MSC Singers, 1960s Folk Music in a Time of Political Turmoil*
- January 15 *Richard Neiman, MD, Good from Evil. The Tuskegee Syphilis Study and campaign for Patient Rights*
- January 22 *Robert Shetterly, The Obligations of Artists. One Man's Role*
- January 29 *Mary Morton Cowan, Cyrus Field and the Laying of the Transatlantic Cable*
- February 5 *Snow Day*
- February 12 *Lucille Stott, Saving Thoreau's Birthplace*
- February 19 *Longfellow Days. Gary Lawless, Edna St. Vincent Millay and Ragged Island*
- February 26 *Bruce MacDougal, Climate Change and the Global Order. The Next Thirty Years*
- March 4 *Snow Day*



Maine Street, Brunswick, ca. 1870

## Where in the Midcoast is: The Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens

Opened in 2007, the “People’s Garden” invites visitors of all ages and abilities to create and to explore meaningful connections to plants and nature at their own pace. Its journey began in 1991 when a small group of MidCoast residents dreamed of building a world-class public garden on 148 acres of rocky coastal forest that would one day be both an economic engine and cultural anchor for our region. After 16 years of planning, the Gardens opened officially in the summer of 2007.

Since then, the Gardens has become one of Maine’s top attractions and one of the most distinguished botanical destinations in the country. Its exquisite gardens, dramatic and compelling natural landscape—including nearly a mile of tidal saltwater frontage—make it ever-changing, endlessly captivating and thoroughly unique. The Gardens presents limitless potential to inspire learning about natural history, habitats, botany, horticulture and ecological connections.

As the largest botanical garden in New England, the Gardens comprises 295 acres, 17 of which are gardens featuring native plants of Maine and other plants suited to northern coastal conditions. Over 200,000 guests from throughout the United States and 63 foreign countries visited CMBG in 2018.

### Thanks to our MSC Sponsors for their Support!

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- Bath Savings Institution
- Just Framing
- M.W. Sewall



*...because learning never ends.*

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