

Maine bicentennial a catalyst for Boothbay Railway Village's view of its future

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Many are making plans to celebrate Maine's bicentennial next year. It is a time to celebrate our state's history with the rejuvenation of a local organization we all know and love — the Boothbay Railway Village. At the Boothbay Railway Village, we are the place 'where history moves you,' literally.

The Boothbay Railway Village was the first "railroad museum" in Maine that evolved into a Village with historical buildings that were relocated onto the Village's grounds — with trains running seven days a week from May to October from its conception as well as selectively during special events in November and December ... unlike any other museum in Maine. Starting in 1964 from a love and passion from one individual whose interests developed an eclectic collection, the Village evolved into a non-profit museum in 1981. The Village over the years has been a designation on the peninsula that has drawn over three million visitors and hosted an array of events on its thirty-acre campus in its 56-year history. Our unique village setting with a working narrow-gauge train showcases all aspects of life in Maine from 1850 to 1950 — connecting us to our past and to our present. At the Village, we aspire to transform the way we view and relate to Maine's rural past through interactive visitation, educational opportunism, and a variety of dynamic programs to enrich our daily lives. This is a key aim of the Village's Mission and Vision.

In the coming months, the Village will be making a major shift in its focus. The major shift promises little disruption to our 50-year-plus commitment to existing initiatives that include our ubiquitous steam trains and supporting other train museums. We will be making plans toward the expansion of educational opportunity and dynamic programming as well as a Capital Campaign and improving our guests' experience. We will be working on fundraising through a variety of efforts and avenues while we also continue the development and launching of our own Capital Campaign program in 2020. Since 1981, with the formation of a board and the hiring of an executive director, the leadership team has always upheld its commitment to maintaining the Village and its role in the community. As many of you know, in recent months the Village has hired two key players in keeping with that commitment — Steve Markowitz and Kate Steed. We are excited where their expertise will lead us with their collective management and know-how along with our staff and volunteers' insights, experience and commitment. We will be bringing the Village into its next chapter and fifty years — we are excited about the possibilities and opportunities that lay ahead.

All of this growth will add exponentially to the Village and to our existing initiatives — including the iconic narrow gauge steam trains from years past. The very bones of the Village itself holds the facilities in which past people have, and future people will, gather to learn, share, and better understand how Maine became Maine. All can experience first-hand how our communities evolved, cultures merged, customs survived and fell away, and how our industries grew.

Our new leadership, volunteer experts, staff and the Village's Board are taking the critical steps to identify and secure funds to expand educational programs, foster the creation of new Village buildings which will include a new Visitors' Center in the future, improve the Village's overall infrastructure, funding to continue our treasured "Artisans' & Craftsmen's" program, solidify our plans to develop an

endowment which will support and insure the BRV's future and development of workshops for all to attend.

We head into 2020 with high aspirations — investing in the Village itself and its programs. Unlike any other Maine museums with trains, the Boothbay Railway Village is much, much more. We have curated a wide range of historical buildings and artifacts to offer a broader immersion into Maine history — with the Village's collection including an auto museum that displays over 50 cars and a model railroad exhibit that rivals' others across the country. When the Village's founder George McEvoy used the Freeport Station periodically as a young commuter and learned it was to be demolished, he leapt at the opportunity to preserve it and brought it here to Boothbay where it now lives on in its original duties. Over the years, it's been joined by the Thorndike Station, the Spruce Point Chapel, many iconic Central Maine buildings, the old Boothbay Town Hall and a residence we refer to as the Harrington House -- just to name a few. Preservation has been the heart and soul of the Village's growth and development program all along.

There are multiple preserved railways in Maine, but only one with a Village and collection that tells the Maine story. The next year will be an exciting time for the state of Maine and the Boothbay Railway Village. We hope you'll join and support us as we usher in this new era of growth, programs and discovery — “where history moves you.”