## **A hands-on history program is a success among schools at the Cole Land Transportation Museum**

### **By: Marisa Higgins**

### **June 14, 2016**

Bangor, Maine—With the school year ending, the Cole Museum is excited about the success of its newest addition to their school-visit options. The “Junior Curator Program” is a hands-on opportunity for visiting elementary schools, and its popularity is helping the museum fulfill its long-standing educational missions and demonstrate the fun side of learning history.

In addition to a guided-tour, students participating in the curator program are divided into small groups to look-over and handle several laid-out artifacts. Then, combining their observations with a few provided clues, the students work together in their groups to determine the artifacts’ uses. According to Valerie Sprague of Hancock Grammar School, her school’s visit was informative and enjoyable for both teachers and students: “It was a wonderful opportunity for students of all ages! It is a must see. Many students enjoyed the tour and learning about the artifacts, and some even want to go back to learn even more.”

While many joke that history only involves reciting names and date, the processes for discovering and determining history are interactive, and they involve strong observation, communication, and deduction abilities. Visiting middle and high school students have long been participating in these processes through the museum's popular “Veteran Interview” program. Now, the Junior Curator program is the museum’s opportunity to expose *elementary* students to these same processes, and show them how history is a fun subject to study.

“I’m really proud of this program and how it has developed,” say the museum’s director of operations, Jim Neville. “It’s absolutely amazing that a group of 50 rambunctious elementary kids can go almost an hour unsupervised, and in the end they can figure out what the artifacts are with no help from outside sources—just reading the story, using the clues, and working as a team.”

The Cole Museum has always functioned with an educational mission to inspire Maine’s youths by displaying accomplishments from the state’s past. When asked about the new program, Bob O’Leary, the museum's education coordinator, said, “I firmly believe that this is the one of the most exciting programs that we have at the museum. The level of enthusiasm and cooperation of these children as they work through each tables’ story to determine what the artifact might be and how it was used is compelling to watch and experience! It really augments what our founder had in mind when he wrote our mission statement many years ago.”

The museum hosted approximately 3700 students this spring, with 26 of the 72 school groups completing the curator program. Schools interested in scheduling a visit for the upcoming fall, or learning more about the museum’s programs, should call the museum at 207-990-3600 ext 13.

### **About**

The Cole Land Transportation Museum preserves and displays a selection of Maine’s land transportation equipment in hopes to inspire today’s generation through their predecessors’ triumphs. The museum also supports a number of programs aimed at lifting the aspirations of Maine's youth—especially the underprivileged—so they may be a credit to themselves, their families, and their communities.

The museum is opened May 1 thru November 11, seven days a week 9 am–5 pm, and children under 19 are always free admission. More information can be found by visiting [www.colemuseum.org](http://www.colemuseum.org) or calling (207) 990-3600 ext. 13.

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# **Contact**

To learn more about the Cole Land Transportation Museum Kindle Fire Initiative, please contact

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