

—GRANTS—

A "GREAT WORK": THE SACO MUSEUM'S MOVING PANORAMA OF PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

by Jessica Skwire Routhier, Saco Museum Director



▲ **Moving Panorama of Pilgrim's Progress**, 1851, distemper on muslin. Saco Museum. Gift of the heirs of Luther Bryant, 1896. Photo: Matthew Hamilton, courtesy of Williamstown Art Conservation Center; photo splicing: Portland Color

The Dyer Library/Saco Museum (DL/SM) is pleased and honored to be the recipient of a 2011 Great Works Grant award in the amount of \$20,000. This grant will support an ongoing project to preserve the "Moving Panorama of Pilgrim's Progress"—a rare and remarkable 8 x 850-foot painting on canvas created in 1851—and to make it accessible to worldwide audiences in new and innovative ways.

Moving panoramas were an international phenomenon in the mid-19th century. Using a system of rotating spools, they were theatrically presented to audiences by scrolling the fabric from one spool to another, accompanied by a lecture and music. This gave the illusion that the painted scenes were progressing before the audience's eyes, creating a shared visual experience that predated modern cinema by more than 50 years. Fewer than 15 moving panoramas exist today, and none of the others are as complete, as large or as impressive as the DL/SM's *Moving Panorama of Pilgrim's Progress*, which was conceived and designed by the premier American artists of the time, including Frederic Edwin Church, Jasper Cropsey and Daniel Hunting-

ton, among others. Its fine art underpinnings and its subject matter—John Bunyan's 1678 religious allegory *The Pilgrim's Progress*—made it one of the most important and popular panoramas of its time.

Recognizing the panorama's significance, Save America's Treasures kicked the panorama project off with a challenge grant that has allowed the entire panorama to be treated (at the Williamstown Art Conservation Center in Massachusetts) so that it is stable and able to be exhibited. Because it is impos-

sible to restore the panorama to the point where it may be presented in motion, as it was originally intended to be seen, the continuing project will also include the creation of a full-scale replica (printed by Portland Color) that can be "performed" using a mechanism based on historical models. Also in production is a web-based interactive video (pro-

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duced by Back Lot Films of Fremont, NH), including narration and a musical sound track, that can be



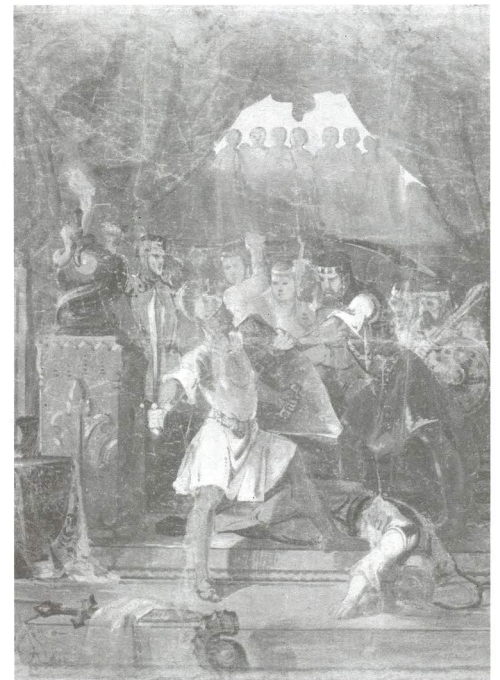
^ [Continued] **Moving Panorama of Pilgrim's Progress**, 1851, distemper on muslin. Saco Museum. Gift of the heirs of Luther Bryant, 1896. Photo: Matthew Hamilton, courtesy of Williamstown Art Conservation Center; photo splicing: Portland Color



^ **Christian Meditating in the Field**, design attributed to Edward Harrison May, from the *Moving Panorama of Pilgrim's Progress*, 1851, distemper on muslin. Saco Museum. Gift of the heirs of Luther Bryant. Photo: Matthew Hamilton, courtesy of Williamstown Art Conservation Center



^ **Christian Passing Through the Valley of the Shadow of Death**, design attributed to Henry Courtney Selous, from the *Moving Panorama of Pilgrim's Progress*, 1851, distemper on muslin. Saco Museum. Gift of the heirs of Luther Bryant. Photo: Matthew Hamilton, courtesy of Williamstown Art Conservation Center



^ **Interpreter Showing Christian the Wonders of His House**, design attributed to Edward Harrison May, from the *Moving Panorama of Pilgrim's Progress*, 1851, distemper on muslin. Saco Museum. Gift of the heirs of Luther Bryant. Photo: Matthew Hamilton, courtesy of Williamstown Art Conservation Center

performed "on demand" by panorama enthusiasts worldwide. The culmination of the panorama project will include a book to be published by Kent State University Press, a major exhibition scheduled for the summer of 2012, a distinguished lecture series and an array of public programs for all ages.

The panorama is a compelling object by any standards, but adding to its allure is the story of how it was lost for nearly 100 years. Donated to the York Institute (the Saco Museum's predecessor) in 1896, it was exhibited the following year, and then, as hard as it is to imagine losing track of 850 feet of fabric, that's exactly what happened. The panorama was rediscovered in the museum's storage vault in 1996, nearly 100 years after it had last been seen, and since then there has been a steady campaign to restore it to its former glory and find a way to present it to modern audiences. Now, thanks in part to the Maine Arts Commission's Great Works Grant award, that moment will soon come.

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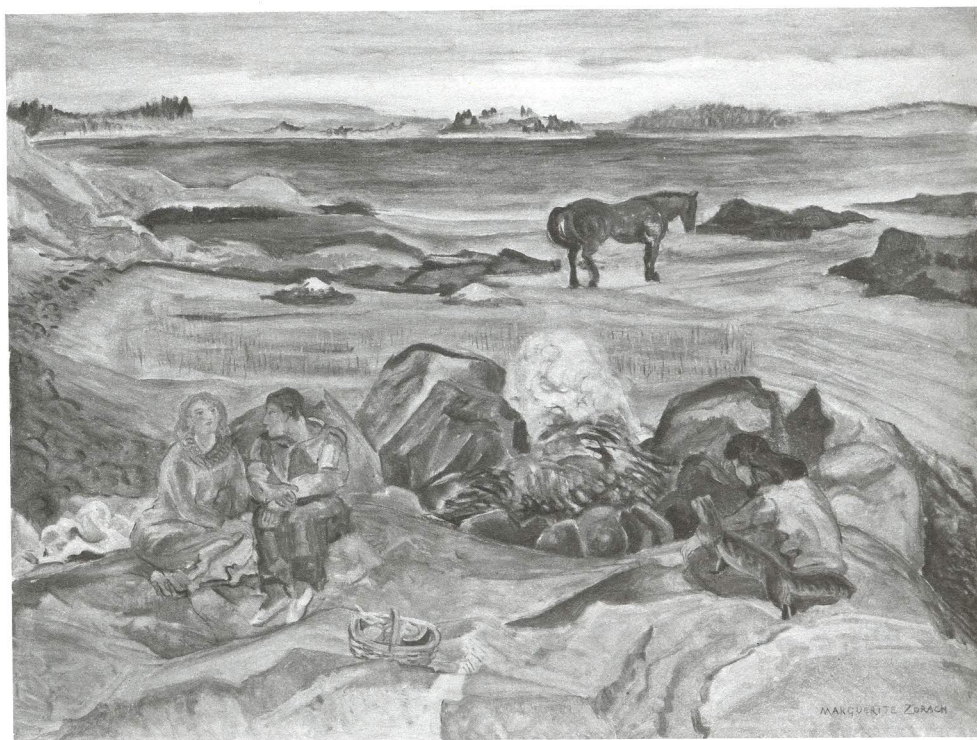
OTHER AWARDS MADE THROUGH THE GREAT WORKS GRANT THIS YEAR WERE:

Farnsworth Library and Art Museum, Rockland: Support for the exhibition "Andrew Wyeth, Christina's World and the Olson House." This exhibition will focus on Andrew Wyeth and his artistic relationship with the Olson House and its occupants, Christina and Alvaro Olson.

Portland Museum of Art: Support for "Maine Moderns: Art in Seguinland," 1900-1940 examining a small group of American modernists who worked in Maine in the 20th century. The project includes an exhibition, catalogue and related programs.

Penobscot Theatre Company, Bangor: Support for the Theatre's world premiere production of *INK* and related public programming.

Portland Ovations: Support for *Shuffle.Play.Listen*. Portland Ovations will present acclaimed cellist Matt Haimovitz and pianist Christopher O'Riley in an innovative concert that spans the music of Bach to Radiohead. ■



▲ Marguerite Zorach, United States, 1887-1968, *Clambake*, circa 1945, oil on canvas, 30" x 40", Portland Museum of Art. Gift of Unum Provident Corporation, 2000.8.2.



▲ William Zorach, United States (born Lithuania), 1887-1966, *Winter, Robinhood Cove*, after 1922, watercolor and charcoal on wove, 21 3/4" x 30", Portland Museum of Art. Gift of Owen W. Wells and Anna H. Wells, 2007.24.30.