

Media Release

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Contact: Amy Catania, Executive Director
HISTORIC SARANAC LAKE
891-4606
amy@historicsaranaclake.org

Saranac Laboratory Museum to Host New Exhibit of Antique Medical Curiosities on Loan from Ripley's Believe It or Not!®

May 12, 2015, Saranac Lake, NY — Historic Saranac Lake announced June 5 and 6 as the dates for the grand opening of new exhibits at the Saranac Laboratory Museum. A highlight of the opening is a new temporary exhibition titled, "Medical Marvels: Science or Quackery?" The exhibit features antique medical devices on loan from Ripley Entertainment Inc. This exhibit will be on display through Fall 2016.

How did a small local historical society forge a connection with the world-known Ripley's Corporation, with over 90 facilities in ten different countries? According to Historic Saranac Lake Executive Director Amy Catania, it all started a few years ago during Winter Carnival.

Saranac Lake's Winter Carnival tradition brings old timers back every year and helps foster new friendships. Peter

MacIntyre is one of those annual pilgrims to Saranac Lake. For years he has come back to visit with friends at the Blue Moon and the Waterhole and to march in the parade with the Brothers of the Bush. Peter has a deep love for Saranac Lake history, and so he made new friends with the staff at Historic Saranac Lake. (Peter's grandfather, Homer Sampson, came to Saranac Lake for the TB cure and became a respected local radiologist and avid curler.)

"Peter stopped by during carnival a couple of years ago," explained Catania. Bunny Isham had just brought in a few interesting old medical devices that she had found in a closet in her cure cottage, and I knew Peter would like to see them. He took a look and said, 'I spent my career with Ripley's, maybe I can help put you in touch with someone there who might be willing to loan you some more things like this.'

Edward Meyer, Vice President of Exhibits & Archives and Ripley Entertainment Inc., facilitated the loan of numerous unique artifacts, from an electric skull cap to an "Ultraviolet Ray" device. "Edward was very patient with us in putting together this loan," said Catania. "This is a special opportunity for Historic Saranac Lake and we are grateful for his help. It isn't every day that a big name like Ripley's comes to our small museum like ours."

To make the most of the opportunity, Historic Saranac Lake got to work raising funds and making connections with experts in the field of medical history. Grants from the New York Council on the Humanities and the Gladys Kriebel Delmas Foundation supported the planning and design of the exhibit in consultation with the Dittrick Medical History Museum in Cleveland, Ohio. "We wanted to make the exhibit meaningful,

engaging for visitors, and fun,” said Catania. “Thanks to the help from the experts at the Dittrick, I think we have done just that.”

The new exhibits are supported by a generous anonymous donation and a significant grant from the Will Rogers Motion Picture Pioneers Foundation. Improvements include new gift shop cabinetry by Tom Seymour, a new film on Will Rogers to be unveiled later this summer, a complete overhaul of the exhibit panels in the main laboratory space, and a self-guided tour with audio component narrated by actors from Pendragon Theatre.

Historic Saranac Lake is contracting with Jim Griebisch to produce the historical film on Will Rogers Hospital and the audio tour. The film will feature interviews with former patients and employees of the hospital. Caroline Welsh, Director Emerita of the Adirondack Museum, and Art and Museum Consultant, is assisting with the film and exhibits. Exhibit design is by Karen Davidson of Davidson Design, Inc.

“This is a major project,” said Catania. “With our neighbor, the Hotel Saranac, being restored and reopened next year, we knew that we need to be ready for more visitors. And we are doing everything we can to offer a top notch, unique heritage tourism experience.” Catania credits board members, volunteers, and especially fellow staff members, Todd Bailey and Chessie Monks for their hard work bringing it all together.

The Saranac Laboratory Museum will be closed for exhibit installation May 5th through June 4th, although the museum will be open for scheduled school tours as well as the May History Matters Speakers Series. Anyone hoping to visit during this time, may contact call Historic Saranac Lake at

518-891-4606 to schedule a tour. A preview fundraiser reception for Members of Historic Saranac Lake will be held June 4.

About Ripley Entertainment Inc:

Ripley Entertainment Inc. is one of the largest and fastest growing chains of amusement attraction companies in the world. Built on the foundation of a small daily newspaper cartoon drawn by Robert Ripley, which debuted in 1918, the company today operates 95 attractions under a dozen brands worldwide. Robert Ripley expanded the world famous Believe It or Not! brand into radio, television, movies, books, licensing, and Odditoriums—a genuine empire of the weird, the bizarre and unbelievable.

Over 60 years after his death, the legacy of the great American entrepreneur Robert Ripley lives on. For over 95 years, Ripley Entertainment has been a world leader in providing family entertainment. The daily Believe It or Not! cartoon that catapulted Ripley to fame in the 1920's still runs in hundreds of newspapers in over forty countries and dozens of languages. The 32 Ripley's Believe It or Not! museums that house his collection of oddities span the globe and have entertained over 100 million guests since 1933.

Information provided by RipleyEntertainment.com

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Photo caption: Homer Sampson was director of the X-ray laboratory at Trudeau Sanatorium. Though he had no formal medical training, he was awarded an honorary Ph.D. in Science from St. Lawrence University in 1934. The



Courtesy of Peter S. MacIntyre

Adirondack Room in the Saranac Lake Free Library displays a sculpted bust of Sampson, and his doctoral hood. Sampson's grandson, Peter MacIntyre has facilitated the loan of artifacts from Ripley's Entertainment Inc. to Historic Saranac Lake for the upcoming "Medical Marvel's" exhibit.

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