BIG PAUL BUNYAN, Maine "folk hero," is an ad salesman's product. His nemesis stands in the heart of the great North Woods.
IN A WORLD OF BIG HEADLINES AND LOUD NOISES, SALT MAGAZINE PROVIDES A QUIET CORNER FOR REFLECTION. WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHS TELL OF TRADITIONS AND CHANGES IN THE LIVES OF MAINE'S REALLY IMPORTANT PEOPLE.

SALT IS PRODUCED BY COLLEGE STUDENTS AND PROFESSIONALS PARTICIPATING IN SALT'S EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS. THEIR TAPE RECORDED INTERVIEWS AND PHOTOGRAPHIC NEGATIVES ARE PRESERVED IN THE SALT ARCHIVES OF MAINE FOLKLIFE.

Above: Palermo. Photograph by Dave Read.
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Cover Photograph: Tonee Harbert
WOODEN BOATS

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MAGAZINE

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A NOTE ON PRODUCTION
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Guide to Maine Eating
The Really Important Places

ALFRED
Leedy's. Route 202 in the center of town. Everyone takes their mother here on Mother's Day. It's mobbed. The two seaters at the counter are different. Avoid the pies. Hours: Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, 7 A.M.-8:30 P.M.; Friday and Saturday, 7 A.M.-9:30 P.M.; Sunday, 11 A.M.-8:30 P.M.; closed Tuesday.

ANDOVER
Andover Variety Store. "Can't understand why they call it that because it's a place to eat," says Monty Washburn, who tests his fishing stories at the counter every year. "Maybe it's that you can get a variety to eat." Addie Fenner opens at 6, closes 13 hours later at 7 and does it all herself at age 70. Coffee and hot chocolate go for 25 cents. Ham, eggs, toast and coffee cost $1.50. There's one lunch special every day.

BIDDEFORD
Colonial Hut. 66 Alfred Road. Not what it once was or as popular. But the French Canadian Club Richeleau meets here weekly and the trademark of Greek food is still turned out. What the connection is to the restaurant's name is beyond us. Try their homemade spinach pie. Hours: 8 A.M.-10 P.M. every day except Saturday when open until 11 P.M.

DANSKIN
Dansk in 109 Elm Street. Brash Biddeford Democratic Party politics are argued here. Heaps of cheap food spills over the edges of your plate. Open for lunch. Hours: Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, 11 A.M.-6 P.M.; Thursday and Friday, 11 A.M.-7 P.M.; closed Saturday and Sunday.

BINGHAM
Thompson's Restaurant. In the center of town on Route 201. The kind of town on Route 201 where people still talk about the deer that broke through the front plate glass window 20 years ago and ran into the men's room sending the occupants out with their trousers down. Hours: 5:30 A.M.-8:30 P.M. every day of the week.

BRUNSWICK
Miss Brunswick Diner. 101 Pleasant Street. Fourteen (10 + 4) stools front a long and short counter. Also several booths. Daily specials listed on board. Mexican food offered. A Budweiser beer costs $1.25. Placemat is a puzzle of finding presidents/vice-presidents' names from a maze of letters the shape of a U.S. map. People in three booths were heavily into it. Hours: 4:30 A.M.-9 P.M. Sunday through Thursday; 24 hours Friday and Saturday. Early Bird Special: 4:30-8:30 A.M., 2 eggs, toast and homestyle. $1.25. Dinner listings available from 11 A.M. to 9 P.M.

CAPE NEDDICK

EASTPORT
Waco Diner. (Pronounced Waa-co, not like that foreign place of Waco, Texas.) Bank Square, Water Street in the downtown. Originated as a lunch cart. Name comes from combining founders' names Watt and Cowell. The one place in town where a Budweiser beer is served during the day throughout the year. Locals eat the food. Outsiders often don't the second time. So much for outsiders. Hours: 6 A.M.-9 P.M. Monday through Saturday; 7 A.M.-11 A.M. Sunday (breakfast only).

FORT KENT
Doris's Cafe. Route 11 on the way to Eagle Lake. Across from the Dodge Dealer. If you need to grab a room for the night or have your laundry cleaned. You can brush up on your Acadian French while feasting on Doris' large succulent omelettes and thick homemade French Toast. Only three bucks. Comes with a smile.

HERMOSA/BANGOR
Dyars Truckstop. Just off Exit 44 of Interstate 95 in Hermon about three miles south of Bangor. See Satissue number 28 for article about this place. Dyars' own their own fleet of trucks and truckers have their own tables. Breakfast is the deal here. One of Salt's trustees from Bangor says he has a sticky bun here before driving to a board meeting.

KENNEBUNK
Glen-Mor. Route 1, just north of center of town. Good pies. Heavy on the fried food variety. A salad brings you half a head of iceberg lettuce. Your taste test is over before you know it someone will be calling you "deah"—either Russ the owner or Linda the waitress or Louise the cook. Speedy comes in at noon.

Kennebunkport
Allison's. In center of town. Dock Square. Bastaized descendant of the old wonderful Chat and Chew. Polished gold rails instead. Don't expect miracles with the food. Tourist types enter heavily through the summer, but locals still dominate the bar. Emery reads the newspaper. Serves breakfast 6 A.M.-11 A.M.; lunch 12 noon-4 P.M.; dinner 6 P.M.-10 P.M. every day of the week except Sunday when open at 7 A.M. Bar is open until 1 A.M.

LUBEC
Tip's Lunch. On the land side of Water Street next to the Lubec Narrows. Straight food. Put your feet on a chair and you'll be told to remove them. Just as you should be. Counter stools and tables. Hours: 8:30 A.M.-6:30 P.M. every day except Sunday when it's closed.

MACIAS
Helen's Restaurant. Unfortunately, now the New Helen's just north of the center of town on Route 1. Nothing like the great old Helen's. But the thick pies with thick topping of whipped cream are still the greatest. Counter area has closest feel to the old Helen's.

MILBRIDGE
The Red Rooster. Route 1 in the center of town. Straight food and a large salad bar. Has a wishing well out front where coins are tossed in. Eat blueberry pancakes in wild blueberry bares' country.

PORTLAND

DePhilippo's Ye Olde Pancake Shoppe. Forget what the name conjures up. 617 Congress Street. Breakfast and lunch. Hours: Monday to Friday, 5 A.M.-1:45 P.M.; Saturday, 6 A.M.-1:30 P.M.; Sunday: 6 A.M.-12:45 P.M. "Lunches 10 A.M. till closing But Never on Sunday" says the menu. Counter stools and lots of tables. Jimmy DePhilippo's in charge at the cash register hard by the entrance/exit.

"George, you want a table?"
"No."
"You wanta table young lady?"
She takes it. Two minutes go by.

"George, there should be something breaking shortly for you.

Port Hole. 20 Custom House Wharf. Near the end of the old Casco Bay Ferries pier off Commercial Street. First name place for people who work on the waterfront. Sit down at the 25-foot counter and before you know it someone will be calling you "deah"—either Russ the owner or Linda the waitress or Louise the cook. Speedy comes in at noon.

"Sit down, deah. Louise has made you your favorite dinner. It's nam today.

"Just sit yourself right down, Speedy."

Village Cafe. 112 Newbury Street. Inexpensive Italian food. You get what you pay for. Serves as a reminder of Portland's Italian community before it was dispersed by housing renewal projects, and a link for the remaining community.

Miczio's Italian grocery is around the corner on India Street. Hours: 11 A.M.-11:30 P.M. Monday to Thursday; 11 A.M.-12:30 P.M. Friday and Saturday; closed Sunday.

PORTSMOUTH/NEW HAMPSHIRE
Rosa's. We realize this is just over the state line, but it's one of the two places outside of Maine that's worth eating at. 80 State Street in the downtown. Straight Italian food. Not the same since recent expansion and renovations. Catch the Memorial Bridge All Stars musical group—a mixture of ages and instruments from piano, trombone, drums, to clarinet. Heavy on old tunes. Play every Wednesday evening.
FROM FOLK TO POP
AND BACK AGAIN

A Salt Symposium on the Interaction of Folk and Popular Culture.

9:00 A.M.—Welcoming Remarks and Introduction

George Lewis, Professor of Sociology, College of the Pacific. "Folk Culture and Popular Culture: Some Preliminary Distinctions."

9:30 A.M.—Session I: Material Culture

George Carey, Professor of English and Folklore, University of Massachusetts. "What Happens When Publicity Hits The Folk? Examples From the Chesapeake."
Harald Prins, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Colby College. "Popular Image and Self Articulation in Traditional Crafts: The Case of Maine Indians."

11:15 A.M.—Session II: Literature

Ian Mckay, Associate Professor of History, Queen’s University, Ontario. "Twilight at Peggy’s Cove: Post-modernism and Tourism in Nova Scotia."

1:00 P.M.—Lunch

2:00 P.M.—Session III: Music

Edward D. Ives, Professor of Folklore, University of Maine. "Joe Scott, the Woodsman-Songmaker: His Use of Popular Songs."
Neil Rosenberg, Professor of Folklore, Memorial University, Newfoundland. "Country Music: Is It Folk Or Popular?"

3:45 P.M.—Wrap Up Session

What Have We Found? Where Do We Look From Here?

4:45 P.M.—Conference Ends

Date: Tuesday, June 20th, 1989
Location: Room 113 Masterton Hall, University of Southern Maine, Portland Campus, Portland, Maine.

Hosted by the New England Studies Program, University of Southern Maine. The Conference is part of a project funded in part by the Maine Humanities Council through funds received from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

For additional information and registration, please contact the Salt Center for Field Studies, P.O. Box 1400, Kennebunkport, Maine; tel. (207) 967-3311.
SACO
The Plaza. Main Street. Don’t be fooled by the fancy new front. The Plaza is a great old girl in a new hat. The steam that clouds the windows on a winter day comes from the same 30-year-old coffee and water urns that began belching out strong black coffee in 1936. Wooden booths and teak wall paneling are also that vintage. Mashed potatoes, meatloaf and realiable from a can in the strong black coffee in 1936. Wooden booths and Dynamite Don. Part of the gentrification two dollar range.

Rapid Ray’s. Center of Main Street. Gussied up from former elongated van of duo Rapid Ray and Dynamite Don. Part of the gentrification look for Saco which no one thought possible two-three years ago. Biggest bargain: steamed hot dogs. This is pure hot dog heaven with servers you'd think if you met them on the street sold hot dogs for a living. Have hamburgers as well.

SANFORD
Redman’s Corner Diner. Corner of Washington Street and Pioneer Avenue in the center of town. Eighteen stools line a long straight counter. There’s a gumball machine behind. A couple of two chair tables plus one for four round out the seating options. Hours: Monday to Friday, 5 A.M.-2 P.M.; Saturday, 6 A.M.-1 P.M.; Sunday, 7 A.M.-12 noon. Breakfast served 8 A.M.-11 A.M. Monday to Friday and all day Saturday and Sunday. Homemade toast rivals Wonder Bread for airiness. Homemade pie: 90 cents. Daily special that day was steak and eggs for $3.50. Highest price on menu is under “Dinners” at $4.50. An 18 Wheeler goes for $3.50.

SEBAGO LAKE

[New Listing]. Galli’s Variety/Cafe. Intersection of Routes 35 and 114. $1.69 breakfasts 6 A.M.-11 A.M. Walk past the variety store goods section of Routes 35 and 114. Sl.69 breakfasts 6 A.M.-11 A.M. Lunch and dinner from 11 A.M.-9 P.M. Twenty five cent coffee all day long. Real food for real men. Local fishing stories exchanged daily; both fact and fiction.

It’s 7:00 one recent morning and a portly, bearded man walks in wearing an orange cap, baggy blue trousers and a black and red checked jacket. He smiles broadly as he rounds the corner to find his friend Walter mixing with some locals over coffee.

“Hey, how are ya Walt,” he says.

“Not too bad, Ben. I’d be better if this rain would let up. What’ve you been up to anyway?”

“Put it in the microwave and put some gravy on it,” the one continued.

“Two eggs over medium,” says Ben, lighting a cigarette while helping himself to a cup of coffee.

“Yea, I was up around Bangor last week and thought I’d scout for this pond I’d heard so much about,” began Ben. “I finally found it and damn if it wasn’t still iced over! Jesus, you know I don’t think the sun’s been in there for years. All that bushwacking and I didn’t even wet a line.”

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"Past few years I've worked here at the landfill, I've never seen a Salt magazine in there. "Even when I worked in the recycling center—never seen a Salt magazine come through there."

Nathan Gallant
Sanitation Worker
Town of Falmouth
Landfill and Recycling Center

Salt is a keeper. Nobody, but nobody throws it away. Sometimes it gets stolen—er, borrowed—and sometimes those center sections full of tremendous photographs end up on somebody's wall. But chucked in the trash can. NEVER!

Anybody who reads Salt can tell you why. Salt collects stories and photographs about Maine people that you'll never find in any of those magazines that go to the recycling center. Stories that last. Stories about real people like you. People who tell it like it is, the good and the bad, the funny and the sad, the stuff that makes them see red, the things that are important to them.

So that's why Salt goes from hand to hand and never goes to the dump. On the average, every copy is read by four to five people. One copy was read by a whole shipload of Merchant Marines!

Now if you don't mind waiting your turn, you'll find out what others already know. Salt is habit forming. And it's the kind of magazine you keep around forever. Some people have every issue since we started publishing in 1974.

If you DO mind waiting your turn to read Salt, there's an easy solution. Subscribe and get your own copy. Twelve dollars gets you four issues. It's as easy as filling out the order form enclosed in this magazine, or call Tim at 207-967-3311.

Subscribe to Salt and help solve Maine's growing trash disposal problem. Because nobody EVER throws Salt in the dump.
CONTRIBUTORS

During all of its 16 year history, Salt has had a strong interest in documenting folk traditions of Maine. The run of back issues of Salt Magazine attests to this. Last summer, we expanded our approach to include popular culture as well. In all cases, the results proved unexpected. Things we might have assumed to be grounded in folk culture actually turned out to be some combination of folk and popular. One distinction between folk and popular holds that folk culture changes little over time, but greatly over region whereas popular culture changes greatly over time, but little over region. The articles and photographs in this issue provide several examples of the blurring and mixing of these distinctions.

TONEE HARBERT photographed the story about the Paul Bunyan and Woodsman’s Memorial statues, as well as the story about the musical group, Schooner fare. For three and a half months last fall, he served as Salt’s second photographic fellow. Much of the work he shot then will appear in future issues of Salt. Originally from Oregon, he holds a degree in photojournalism from Ohio University. He now lives and works in Portland, Maine.

BRETT JENKS researched and wrote the story contrasting the statue of Paul Bunyan and the Woodsman’s Memorial monument. He came to Salt for the 1988 Summer Semester Program. He grew up in New Jersey and is completing his final year at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst as an English major.

JULIE MAURER researched, wrote, and illustrated the article on bingo. Originally from Hanover, New Hampshire, she graduated from Middlebury College with a degree in art in 1988. She took part in Salt’s 1988 Summer Semester Program. Since the fall of 1988, she has been teaching at Carrabassett Valley Academy in Maine.

AMY SCHNERR researched and wrote the story on Schooner fare. She came to Salt for the 1988 Summer Semester from the College of Notre Dame of Maryland in Baltimore where she is now a senior. She grew up in Philadelphia and is majoring in Communication Arts.

GEORGE LEWIS, who wrote the introduction to this issue, is a professor of sociology at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California. He was born in Houlton, grew up in Bar Harbor, graduated from Bowdoin College, and then headed west for graduate degrees at Oregon. He served as Visiting Professor at Salt during the 1988 Summer Semester Program when the stories in this issue were researched and written. He will return to lead the 1989 Summer Program that will serve as an extension of the same topic on folk culture and popular culture.

DAVE READ’s vision of his small town birthplace formed the photographic essay, “Inner Maine.” He grew up in Bingham. He teaches photography at the University of Nebraska where he is a professor in the Art Department. In the fall of 1988, he began a year’s leave of absence to return and photograph in Maine. The photographs displayed in the essay were taken since his return. An exhibit of his recent Maine work was held during March and April of this year at the Westminster Gallery in Lewiston. His photographs will become part of a book that he describes as “about the Maine that exists in my memories.” He taught a photography course at Salt during the 1988 Fall Semester Program. He teaches again during the 1989 Summer Program.

LYNN KIPPAK, JR. took the photographs of the story on junkyards. A photographer as well as film producer, he serves on the Maine Film Commission. A graduate of the New York University School of the Arts, he was recently involved with a television program on AIDS for the World Health Organization. For the last 15 years, he has lived in Cape Porpoise.

AMY RAWE researched and wrote the article on junkyards. She participated in Salt’s 1988 Summer Semester Program. Originally from Pittsburgh, she is finishing her final year at Wake Forest University in North Carolina as an English major.
In that year, General Thomas W. Hyde established the Bath Iron Works. The son of ship owners and masters, he dreamt of building the steam-powered steel ships of the future.

Maine's lack of mineral resources was no deterrent to General Hyde. Maine had a more important resource: shipwrights of matchless skill and determination.

Today, at BIW, our people are still our greatest resource. And we're proud that so many members of our "family" are carrying on the tradition of their own shipbuilding families. We have mothers and daughters, fathers and sons, workers whose parents and grandparents were here, at BIW, before them. Through the years, they've made "Bath-built" a synonym for shipbuilding excellence. Thanks, Maine, for a great shipbuilding tradition.

The history of Bath Iron Works and Maine shipbuilding can be seen in the exhibits of the Maine Maritime Museum in Bath.
The Seabees and the Locals

ONE FOGGY morning, six olive green trucks with 47 Seabees rumbled into Kennebunkport from the north. It was an astonishing sight. Not just the trucks and the uniformed men, but the invasion from the NORTH. All invasions come from the south. They cross the Piscataqua River and head for the beaches.

Not only did this motorcade head down Route 9 from the wrong direction, but it landed in a veritable wasteland, not the beaches.

The young sunburned Seabees jumped from their trucks onto a forlorn scraggly stretch without a single tree or growing blade of grass. It was made that way from all the debris dumped on it when the town blasted underground to make a sewer line two years ago.

All the locals got quite a kick watching those Seabees go to work out there. You couldn’t help but see everything they did, of course, with nothing to shield them from the eyes of curious passersby. It was better than being a sidewalk superintendent in the city.

First of all the Seabees marked off a square in the back of the wasteland and put a chainlink fence around it. It looked like a large dog run. Then the boys put their trucks inside the fence. That made sense and the locals nodded approvingly.

The next day some bulldozers showed up. The boys plowed and leveled and then they hauled in a couple of house trailers, unloaded two portable latrines and put up a SIGN.

The sign said NMCB Seven, Detail Kennebunkport, CAN DO, Safety is Our Responsibility. The locals grinned. How about that! A base of their own, right in Kennebunkport, good weather home of the President of the United States.

The best was yet to come. Yep, a little sentry box, lifted right off the Seabee truck and steadied on its feet by the entry. Nobody got inside the box for the time being, but the boys gathered round and smoked a few cigarettes and you could see that sentry box made them feel pretty good.

The next sunny afternoon the boys drove those six trucks up the road to the Cape Porpoise Volunteer Fire Department and hosed them down along with the town’s prized 1950 vintage firetruck.

By then everybody knew they had a presidential heliport in their midst. They also knew that the pilots were NOT going to be put up at any fancy Shawmut Inn with the press corps. They were going to sleep in those trailers and use those portable latrines. Being taxpayers, naturally the locals were pretty pleased about that.

Of course no way could you get anybody official to tell you what was going on. Lt. Robbie Russell, unit commander of the Kennebunkport Seabees, said talk to the Secret Service.


Meanwhile the Kennebunkport Seabees dug up two huge stones the size of a man while they were running their bulldozers. They erected the stones in ceremonial fashion, spelled Seabees in little rocks at the foot of the stones and put some tall stalks of swamp grass around them.

It was too much for one local, who drove right up to NMCB Seven to ask the boys what they were doing with those big stones. “We been keeping an eye on you,” he told them.

“I bet you have,” grinned a Seabee from Mississippi. “You probably know more about why we’re here than we do.”
WE ARE WHAT WE BUY
How Popular and Folk Images Make Us What We Think We Are

By George Lewis

GROWING UP IN MAINE, in Houlton up in the County, and later on Mount Desert Island, I scarcely heard of L.L. Bean. Oh, I knew there was some sort of store with that name, but whenever the family traveled down Freeport way, I was far more intrigued with the old wooden billboards, with their faded scenes of sand dunes and camels, that advertised the fabled Desert of Maine.

It wasn't until I went to college, at Bowdoin, that I found out Bean's was famous. All the guys from out-of-state, with their new "Bert and I" records, weren't satisfied until they could write home to New Jersey or Connecticut, or Long Island, or maybe even Ohio to say they had been to Beans. (Preferably at some appropriate hour, like three in the morning when there was nothing to do at Bowdoin except gaze at snowdrifts, study or go to bed.)

So one night I went. Checked out a few tents and boots and watched the out-of-state guys buy their Maine outfits. "Ayuh-h-h" they said, drawing it out real slow, then cutting it off quick, like Marshall did on the record, as they tried on their Maine Guide Chamois Shirts and Bean Rubber Soled Hunting Shoes. "Can't get theah from heah."

Even then, L.L. Bean was marketing an image of Maine and Maine people in its choice of store inventory and, especially, in its mail order catalog. In Maine, where things are rugged, you gotta be tough and independent, stoic, hard-working, self-reliant. There is no time in Maine for the frills, temptations and empty pleasures of life as it is cooked up in the urban cultural stews of Boston, Connecticut and New York, said L.L. Bean.

Here life is "quality time." Simple, honest and to-the-point. Here, in the winter, we go outdoors and piss holes in the snow.

Well, L.L. Bean didn't actually take the independent Maine image that far... it took an old Yankee friend of my family, Draper Liscomb, to do that. But old L.L. might have been tempted, if there was a product the company could sell that would help a person piss quality holes in the snow.

L.L. Bean continues, today, to aid folks all over the country in attaining the simple Maine lifestyle. The company is pushing 800 million dollars in annual sales, puts out 22 different catalogs, and fills over eight million mail orders a year. There is a trout pond in the middle of the men's clothing section, and a special parking area for tour buses. Beans and the image of Maine they helped to create and now so lucratively sustain, are a part of our national popular culture—the American collective identity. Mention Maine to anyone across the country and you'll get a conditioned response. "Isn't that where they eat lobsters and wear red plaid shirts and talk funny? Isn't that where L.L. Bean is?"

Bean is not the only one to ride to economic success by marketing popular cultural images of the state. Bob Wakefield, founder and owner of the Great Maine Lobster Company of Portland, sends gourmet packed lobster kits (lobsters, cooking pot, bibs, claw crackers) to Bloomingdales and Neiman-Marcus. His line ranges from the "Classic," with the pot and bibs and all, down to the simple, hole-in-the-snow "Yankee" basic—just lobsters, seaweed and icepack.

Images, like these of Maine, are to a great extent created from bits and pieces of reality, then gradually shaped to the needs of the creator. As the British historian, Eric Hobsbawm, has noted in his studies of what he calls the "invention of tradition," a goodly number of what we think of now as "authentic" images of countries such as Scotland and Wales were constructed largely because of the pressures of "romantic tourists and English publishers... the only thing was to ransack the past and transform it with imagination, to create a new Welshness that would instruct, entertain, amuse and educate the people."

This simple, honest and to-the-point Maineness
can be seen instructing, entertaining, amusing and educating the people on national television every week on *Murder, She Wrote*. Jessica is always acting out these values, as she triumphs over the duplicity of big city life, solving murder after murder by means of tough, clear eyes logic—inspired and nurtured, it seems by the stoic simplicity of her independent lifestyle in "Cabot Cove," Maine. (The series is actually filmed in Mendocino, California, but, what the hey, L.L. Bean doesn’t print his catalogs in Maine either, does he?)

And, speaking of images of Maine, Mendocino is also where Stephen King’s *Cujo* was filmed. King’s dark side view of Maine, its rugged, threatening and supernaturally evil environment, and its people—the rustic bumpkin turned rabid—is now another facet of the Maine image. No matter how you choose to evaluate his work aesthetically, King’s horror fiction, much of it located in Maine, is the best selling popular literature of all time.

To what extent do these constructed popular cultural images of Maine reflect reality? Do people in Maine talk and joke like Bert and I? Do their clothes have L.L. Bean labels and their kitchens gourmet lobster cooking pots? Are they simple, honest, quality people? Do they piss holes in the snow?

And are these images, as commercially constructed as they are, any less real than those that bubble up from the folk traditions and culture of the state? To what extent is the image of the Maine woodsman as portrayed in song and story of the lumber camps and immortalized by statues such as the Woodsman’s Memorial, located deep in the Maine woods, any more real than the giant Bunyan statue, immortalized for many in Stephen King’s opus work, *IT*, that stands grinning and clad in bright painted Bean boots and shirt beside Main Street in Bangor?

To what extent are the values expressed in Schooner fare’s regionally popular songs “Portland Tawn” and “Salt Water Farm” more true to how Mainers really feel and think than the values expressed by Jessica of *Murder, She Wrote*? Do people from Maine recognize themselves (or, at least, their neighbors) in the characters of Sarah Orne Jewett, Carolyn Chute or Stephen King?

Popular and folk images of Maine have some things in common. They reflect how we ourselves, or others, would like to see us. Part reality, part wish fulfillment, part the scramble to be on top of what sells economically, or perhaps just culturally, these images actually do, to some extent redefine the reality from which the raw material for their construction is drawn. In a very real sense then, from the L.L. Bean of Freeport to those of Egypt, Maine, we become in image and desire, creatures of the very culture we create and consume.

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HE LOOKS LIKE something the carnival left behind, too big to fit on the truck. Paul Bunyan. Maybe you’ve seen him. All the tourists have.

They pull over right there on Main Street in Bangor, their family wagons and campers slowing traffic. They file out in sunvisors and white sneakers. The parents stand at the curb readying cameras while their children invade the swingless playground. They climb up on the six foot pedestal to kick and feel his fiberglass boots. They lie there on his laces feeling the warmth of plastic in the sun.

“What I wanna know is where’s that blue ox of his?”
“We were at the Grand Canyon before, you know.”
“Did he really make the Grand Canyon?”
“William, can you read the sign?”
It all started at Dick Bronson's house as the planning committee joked about Bangor's polluted water.

Above: Connie and Dick Bronson

It takes a skillful tourist to miss Paul Bunyan, standing up there with his proud and foolish smile, high above Burger King and the Holiday Inn. Even if you skip the downtown area, from the Interstate he'll catch your eye.

"Mommy, I don't wanna take my picture."

Perhaps at one time there were stairs and a kiddy slide within the figure. Maybe the builder misplaced the see-saw and forgot to bring the merry-go-round.

Something was forgotten. History, tradition, aesthetics? Maine's Paul Bunyan is a gigantic plastic souvenir. Too big to take home.

"Come on, Susy. Smile! Sarah, leave her alone!"

The original idea back in 1958 was to have Paul straddling Main Street. That way cars could drive between his legs. Older citizens of Bangor remember the story. It would have happened except for the expense. In that year, all that the twenty-some-odd thousand dollars could buy was a thirty foot figure in multicolored lumberjack garb. The city unveiled it in January of 1959 to the laughter and cheers of 200 people.

Governor Clinton A. Clauson spoke that day. The statue's dedication was the first event in Bangor's 125th Anniversary celebration. Looming up there behind the Governor, Paul Bunyan was cloaked for the unveiling with a parachute barely covering his head.

It was the largest cover people could find.

"You do things big in Bangor," Governor Clausen said from the platform. "This huge statue of Paul Bunyan is a fitting symbol of the Bangor of yesterday, the Bangor of today, and the Bangor of tomorrow. There is nothing small about your accomplishments in the past and present, or in your plans for the future. The rough edges have been worn off the brawling Bangor of yesteryear . . . . Diversified industry has sprung up and the Bangor Tigers now work in mills and shops and offices."

And then the laughter. A tall crane was positioned to unveil the smiling, bearded face. The parachute slid upward and got stuck on a collar button. "It began to be a tug o' war," Edward Ives remembers. "The huge crane trying to pull the thing off. Finally they got it loose and everybody cheered." He tells this sarcastically.

Edward Ives was and is one of the arch skeptics in the crowd. A folklorist at the University of Maine, he thought it was unauthentic and tasteless. The boots, jacket and double bitted ax are all historically incorrect. Among other things, he called it a travesty.

"There was a parade that went with it and we watched that. Then after the parade, we were walkin' down the road and I ran into Old Atwood Gibbs. Well Atwood was an old river driver of the old school. He was comin' down the road toward the thing as we were walkin' away and I said, 'Hi, Atwood.'"
OMEWHERE UP on Chesuncook Lake, in Great Northern Paper land, there is another monument dedicated to the river drivers. It is also dedicated to the man who assembled it, but such explanations have to be earned. First one has to find the thing.

‘Oh, hi.’

“I said, ‘They just unveiled that big statue down there.’

‘Oh, he says, ‘they gonna take it down now?’”

Twenty-five thousand people watched the parade. Newberry’s coffee shop gave out free coffee “to anyone sporting a beard.” Dick Shaw, an editor for the Bangor Daily News, was only a child at the time, but he remembers the corps of bearded men. "I probably was in second grade and there was a contest, the Paul Bunyan contest and it was a PR gimmick somebody dreamed up. It looked so strange to see clean cut, straight, middle-aged men with horned rim glasses and full bushy beards. They wanted to get them as bushy as possible to look like Paul." Shaw is a quiet man. He wears glasses. Whenever he mentions the statue he calls him by his first name, Paul.

"Paul is like a member of the family. If you’ve lived here all your life you can say what you want about him, but you might get offended if someone from away came and made fun of it.”

Funny that it all started one night at Dick Bronson’s house, as the anniversary planning committee joked about Bangor’s polluted water. Maybe we could do a statue called the River Driver’s Revenge, they laughed, 125 years of bad water. Dick’s wife, Connie, was in one of her children’s bedrooms reading a good-night-time story.

“I was not even officially on the committee that created this thing,” she admits. “They just held the meetings in my house.” Her hair is short and gray and she is wearing chocolate brown polyester. “Everybody was trying to think of something,” she recalls. “You know how the minds go crazy and this was a very creative bunch of people and finally I said, ‘Well how about Paul Bunyan,’ because I had just been reading this again to one of my kids.” She holds an old copy of Louis Untermeyer’s Wonderful Adventures of Paul Bunyan.

Dick Bronson loved the idea. He collects circus momentos. They are piled up in his basement. His wife says, “His father took him to the circus when he was five and he’s just never recovered.” When Dick Bronson talks, his lips move in straight lines like a ventriloquist’s doll, though maybe there’s no connection.

“It was also the year Disney did his version of Paul Bunyan,” Mrs. Bronson says, “the cartoon version.”

It’s not easy. Three miles down the Golden Road there’s a gray wooden sign with an arrow and black stickers that spell out “Woodsman’s Memorial.” The persevering few who come this far may feel they are being politely misguided. Having ventured up 95, past Millinocket, under Baxter State Park, and past the last general store where the cashier assures them no such monument exists, they head out onto privately owned logging roads, hoping for some clue. The only sign is a difficult find. It is car lengths past the correct turnoff and on the other side of the road. Unobservant tourists may not find the necessary road to Chesuncook Dam until the second or third pass. And the Golden Road is only a circuitous two hundred miles or so.

Those who pass this little test drive down a dusty pot-holed road past a few mailboxes and private property signs into view of the water. There is a grass parking lot with empty boat trailers, evidence of weekend sportsmen out on the lake. There are a few old houses, painted white with green shutters, standing empty.

And there is a totem pole, well it looks like a totem pole, in the front yard of the last of these houses. The Woodsman’s Memorial. Lumber camp utensils and tools welded onto a cast-iron shaft, in totem pole fashion.

HENRY VAN DEBOGERT was fishing out on Chesuncook Lake the day he decided to build it. Henry loves trolling out there, for the fish and the scenery, not to mention daydreaming.

“A lot of times it was slow going.

“As you know, trolling isn’t a fast sport,” he says, sitting in his living room in Bangor, miles away from Chesuncook. Looking from his backyard he can see Bass Park, but not the Bunyan statue.

“I would sometimes find myself dreaming about the beauty and I thought it would be nice if they had a big cross up along there somewhere, but I’m not particularly religious.” Henry is past middle-age now, but he wears glasses so thick they magnify his eyeballs, giving him the look of youth. Like the sincerest kid on the block.

“I dreamed about having some kind of monument. “Perhaps it should have been called the Riverman’s Memorial, but we thought, well I can’t recall why. Just that river drivers and woodsmen are one and the same usually.”

When Henry first came to Maine years ago, he knew little about logging or the men who drove wood down rivers. But he spent years as an insurance adjustor travelling the tote roads out to old lumber camps and warehouses. He’s seen a few tons of backwoods fossils, the scattered remains of outdated machinery and tools discarded in the woods. Chains and tongs or picaroons
lay rusting, old trainlines and even engines sat like skeleton remains.

He learned of the places all through this region where woodsmen reframed local geography. Rivers were widened and lakes given currents; roads and bridges were erected and in winter sprinkled with water to keep them icy for the sleds. Henry now works for the Bangor Historical Society.

The people and places he visited along the way taught Henry much about the river drives. Boots tied up on trees once marked the site of a river driver’s grave. Many men drowned and were buried right alongside the river. “They were heroes in my mind,” he says, “these men that were the basis of building the lumber industry. They who lost their lives in the river.”

He heard stories about the camps, the cooks and their infamous food, the frozen nights spent in soggy, unwashed wool, and of course the post-drive celebration in Bangor. Month-long drinking fests spent in the streets and bars and houses where one could buy women. Recently paid loggers were famous for drunken brawls and eyes which scanned the roof-tops for blue chimneys, the subtle invitation of the whorehouse.

The Bangor Tigers are legendary. These were the local drivers, the Penobscot loggers. Spendthrift men with gifted footing, famous for excesses during the late summer which left them broke until the following spring.

Trolling down Chesuncook that day, something in Henry’s past connected with the local history and he decided, “It was time someone commemorated the woodsman.”

As a child, Henry’s mother made sure he saw the local sites. In his words she dragged the poor boy around. They spent many an April 19th in Lexington and Concord, as he describes it, “viewing statues of Revolutionary heroes until I was bored to the point of exhaustion.” She also took him to Plymouth Rock and to the Museum of Fine Arts to see the Indian statue “Appeal to the Great Spirit.” But as a teen, it was Henry who made sure Henry was in Gloucester when the Sailor’s Memorial was dedicated to “Those That Go Down to the Sea in Ships.”

Loggers and North Woods landowners are always bringing rusty tools out of the woods, Henry says, throwing them in their basements. He knew where he’d find the right stuff for his statue. He started asking around. As he tells it, he soon became a nuisance. “The manager of the woodlands department of the North-
ern (John Maines) was a personal friend and he finally said, ‘I wish you’d stop bugging me about this thing that you wanna put on Chesuncook. Why don’t you go ahead and do it.’ And he sent me to Nelson LeVasseur, who was building roads at that time.”

Nelson LeVasseur had been the Great Northern Paper Company’s everyman for decades. He led river drives, teams of horses, and bridge and dam building crews. It was Nelson and his men who cemented the iron shaft upright in the ground, once all the tools had been collected and welded onto it.

Edward Perry was there when Henry first dedicated the Woodsmen’s Memorial. Perry was the mechanic who actually welded on all the tools. Standing in the tall grass of the boom house yard, Henry VanDeBogert offered a few words. It was 1971, a retirement picnic given by the Great Northern Paper Company. The boom house cooks were still there. At that time they still spent their springs feeding the men on the drives. In addition to other things, at the picnic they served bean-hole beans.

“Ladies and Gentlemen, let us take this moment to dedicate this Memorial to the many woodsmen whose mighty efforts have aided in building a great paper and timber industry in our state of Maine.

“Mr. Perry, who constructed the memorial, and I are most grateful to the Great Northern Paper Company and the many men connected with our Maine woods who contributed tools, time and effort to this project.

“With the end of driving wood on the West Branch, it seems fitting and proper to dedicate this shaft.

“May it long stand to remind us of the great heritage of the men working in our forests.

“We are proud and happy you came out on this occasion.”

At that time, there was a posted list of all the tools extending out from the back of the monument. The weather soon tore it off. A few years later, after Edward Perry’s death, Henry arranged for a plaque dedicating the monument to him, the space left by the fallen list. This may seem strange, dedicating the Woodsmen’s Memorial to Perry who was not a logger. Perry did work for Cole’s Express, a company which forged many of the iron tools of the trade. But unlike most of the men at the Great Northern picnic that day in ’71, he was not a logger.

Behind nearly every instrument on the Woodsmen’s Memorial is a history lesson or tale about who or how

**Somewhere up on Chesuncook Lake, there is another monument dedicated to the river drivers. Lumber camp utensils and tools welded onto a cast-iron shaft, in totem pole fashion.**

Facing Page: The Woodsmen’s Memorial

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it was found. Scanning up a photo of the monument, sitting in Bangor miles from it, Henry tells a few stories.

"Searle Thompson thought if there was some way we could attach them to a steel shaft or a cast-iron shaft and have the tools way above the ground it would last indefinitely. And we did have a fourteen foot high piece of cast-iron which had served as one side of a window encased in the corner of the old Bijou theater. We salvaged this when they tore the building down. Urban renewal.

"The Bijou theater was one of the places of entertainment in the early 1900s in that it had its own orchestra. Vaudeville at that time was a big draw and many woodsmen in their time off no doubt attended matinees and so forth at the Bijou."

They also ate a lot of beans. Often on the drives they ate them four times a day. Thus the bean pot resting on top of the shaft. "One of my friends said, 'The bean pot you have on the top of this won't last through the hunting season 'cause somebody'll take a pot shot at it.' But it's been there since June of '70. A hunting friend of mine picked that up out in the woods back of Phillip's Lake, where a camp had burned it. The bottom was out of it, so we put in a false bottom and filled it with a mixture of asbestos and cement to keep the weather out of it."

Henry points to a log marker. "Each owner of wood that was coming down the Penobscot River in drives had a mark on his logs, so when they got to a sorting gap they would have a crew there that would grab the logs as they came floating down, similar to the marking of cattle in the West. Some people made a good living grabbing unmarked logs from the drive, because you couldn't prove ownership of 'em."

Many of the objects weren't the size of those used on the drive, but were chosen for ease. Like the peavey and picaroon. Both are from lumber mills; smaller than those used on the river and space-savin on the monument.

Other tools were chosen to represent important, but external groups. Men who didn't work on the rivers but were essential to the drives. A set of small tongs because "the blacksmith was indispensable, cuz heavy iron was used all the way through." A horseshoe for the teamsters and their animals. The bean pot for the cooks. And the outboard motor prop for the boom jumpers: boats with caged-in propellers able to ride up onto and over the herded logs on lakes. "Propellers are easy to find. They're layin' around anywhere," Henry says. "I mean outboard motor propellers."

One symbol representing the men's infamous activities in Bangor takes longer to explain. As if hearing an old joke again, Henry grins when recounting this history. "The men ripped and roared and were lusty around Devil's Half Acre downtown, 'cause of course
every time the drive ended this town was flooded with men with pockets full o' folding money. And the fellas, some of 'em not too brainy, would lose it in the next few days in these bars.”

Bud Cushing, one of Henry’s friends from ‘Suncook Dam, occasionally tells this joke: A woods boss asks one of his men, “Hiram,” he says, “what d’ya do with your money? You make good money, you don’t spend any, what do you do with it?”

“Well,” the logger responds, “I go to Bangor twice a year and all. I spend some on the women and some on the rum,” he says. “And the rest I squander.”

Henry even found a symbol for all this. The granite slab lying in front of the shaft. Some say it’s the front step to an old Bangor whorehouse. “Now the houses where men could find the women usually had blue chimneys,” Henry explains, “so the granite step was alleged to be to one of those houses of ill-repute, which were sort o’ necessary to those guys that were in the woods all winter when they came out in spring.”

Locals like Bud Cushing and woodsmen like Nelson LeVasseur believe the step came from Aunt Fan’s, the most famous of the blue chimneyed houses. Aunt Fan was a renowned Bangor figure before the turn of the century. But Henry isn’t sure. “I can’t say it was Aunt Fan’s but that was the idea. Actually, it’s just one of the steps that urban renewal removed on Exchange Street.”

“L.E. Towle put the finish and base paint on the shaft so it would stand the weather.”

“Max Gass supplied us with a large snatch hook.”

“John H. Higgins gave us the bean pot.”

“John Sinclair found a draw shave in the wall of a house at Seven Islands.”

“Nelson LeVasseur is the one we can thank for plannin’ the puttin’ up of the monument after we supplied the parts.”

STORIES BEGIN to compound. Everywhere there are parallels, everywhere they contrast and overlap. It is as if the Woodsman’s Memorial faces the woods. It looks out over those it honors as well as those who put it together.

Paul Bunyan peers invitingly toward the highways and hotels, inviting business to Bangor. Paul Bunyan combed his hair with a pine tree. Riverdrivers didn’t shower for two months at a time.

Like the popular stories that surround them, both the Bunyan statue and the Woodsman’s Memorial reflect back to Bangor’s logging days, back to a frontier mentality where the Exchange Street bars and brothels were as dangerous to a river driver’s health as the log jams up on the river.

Tales and exaggeration were as common as the deer flies and as tall as Bunyan’s ox. Both point to the logger, who, like the fisherman, cherishes the tale as much as the catch. There are the extravagant stories of Paul Bunyan, the embellished life of Jigger Jones and the nostalgic remembrance of living loggers. Ten year old children swear Paul Bunyan carved the Grand Canyon and Jigger Jones walked the Maine winters in bare feet. Seventy-five year old men will curse those winters long ago when it was thirty-five below at noontime.

“Even if a man could swim, he would have little chance. No one would see him go, except by great luck. No one would hear him call, if he had time to call before being knocked senseless. It would be a cold and lonely way to die.”

Louise Dickinson Rich,
_We Took To The Woods, 1942_

“Paul Bunyan could roll a log so fast that it made foam on the water solid enough for him to walk ashore on.”

_Legend_

“Jigger . . . was a small man, standing not more than five feet six, and he weighed around a hundred and forty pounds. He was strong . . . He was actually as quick as a cat.”

Stewart H. Holbrook,
_Holy Old Mackinaw_

There are some who say Maine loggers never told Paul Bunyan stories. And some say Old Paul still lives in the North Woods. With the contrast comes contradiction. For it is impossible to hear one side without echoes of the other.

NELSON LEVASSEUR looks like a cross between Humphrey Bogart and an old James Dean. His eyes are stone-blue. There are more lines on his face than the Great Northern map he handles in front of him. Both represent a history. His fascinatingly wrinkled eyes show years of sun glare on the river drives.

By map, he charts his experience. He points out rivers he has dammed, bridges his crews have built, an island where he stored horses, and in recent years the roads he has cut out and paved. He is maybe five-seven in height, maybe 160 pounds.

His finger glides up the map, up Chesuncook Lake. “I see us one time at ‘Suncook Village way up to the head of the lake. Up here,” he points. Back in 1947. “Them days we were drivin’ primarily the West Branch of the river you know. This river here. We spent twenty-one days there. This river was fulla wood and...”
we had a head wind and we couldn’t move that wood. And yet there was no machinery, there was nothin’ at all you do about it.”

He is sitting in his favorite room. The basement of his home in Ellsworth. A four-panelled poster of a river rapid covers one wall. Nelson thinks it is a river in Colorado, but notes many trees that might be found in Maine. Small photos from his own rivers are framed up on the other three walls. There is an ornamental peavey given to LeVasseur by the Great Northern when he retired. Along with a picaroon and pulp hook, it hangs above his photo albums.

“A lot of things were screwed up in the woods cuz we worked with the old feller up there.” He looks to the ceiling. “You could go to college and get all the degrees you wanted, but that old feller up there controlled the winds.”

Pointing up above Chesuncook Village, eighteen miles above the dam and the Woodsman’s Memorial, he returns to ’47. “There was quite a few old people that retired and lived here in the village so we cut firewood for them. We cut firewood for the hotel and the boom house and we picked strawberries. And the boss had a garden and we weeded that every day. There was nothing we could do about it until the wind shifted.”

“...In spite of the fictional convention that rivermen and loggers top off a hard, twelve or more hour day by sitting around a camp-fire singing French-Canadian chansons and talking about Paul Bunyan. Our river-hogs come in from work, eat their suppers, and go to bed. Nobody ever heard of Paul Bunyan.”

Louise Dickinson Rich, We Took To The Woods, 1942

...As a woods boss, Nelson had to go into Bangor every spring to recruit his own men. “A lotta guys come outa skid row. Christ they’d been on the drunk for two or three months. Drinkin’ wine, can’t eat. But you sobered ‘em up and get some food in’ em, God damn good men. Good workers. The best. “I was thinkin’ about it one time. Them guys never had a car payment, they never had a mortgage on the house, they never had children, worry about college, you know. They never paid no insurance. They had no worries. The quicker they went broke, the quicker they went back to work. They always knew they could get three meals a day and a place to sleep. That’s just my own thinkin’ but Jesus they all lived to be a damned good old age anyway.”

Johnny Irish was a skid row logger. He started logging as a youngster after coming to Maine from Ireland at the end of World War I. Nelson points him out in a photo on his wall. He is standing next to the river in baggy pants and a life preserver-belt. “Heckins, that’s it, Johnny Heekins.” Nelson later remembered his real name. “We called him Irish.”

After Johnny turned sixty-five, Nelson had to get special permission for him to work one year past Great Northern’s mandatory retirement. He wanted him to have enough money to return to Ireland before he died. He gave him safe jobs like watching the sluiceway, or as Nelson says, “Just checking things out. He’d report back to tell me about all the deer he’d seen.”

After the drive, Nelson had some men escort Irish to the airport to help with his departure. On the way he asked the driver to pull over at a clothing store. “He wanted to look nice returning.” He snuck out the back door of the shop, and they never saw him again. “He went off on a drunk. Died on skid row, the bugger.” Nelson looks to the photo. “Good man he was.”

The skid row loggers had fun with the youngsters, especially the college boys. “They’d laugh at the young fells. “Fourth o’ July some o’ them boys might take a day off. They’d go into Millinocket or Greenville and they’d come back with a six-pack a beer you know. Have a little glow on. The older men, they’d laugh at ‘em. You know, “Jesus Christ, you was in downtown Portland and you got a thousand dollars in your pockets, why in the hell didn’t you DRINK some booze?”

“...In the realm of alcohol Jigger stood alone. His drinking abilities passed all belief.....He actually drank everything from clear grain alcohol to canned heat, and from horse liniment to painkiller; that is, everything except champagne and cocktails, both of which he held to be injurious to the stomach and kidneys.”

Stewart H. Holbrook, Holy Old Mackinaw

...“Them young boys were good men, too. You know once you broke ‘em in. But you couldn’t put the young fellas all together because they’d come up with some weird ideas, strikin’ on you or they wanted ice cream on the table, you know. So we’d have to put two or three college men with two or three Bangor men, we called ‘em. Woke ‘em up a little bit see. Ship ‘em to different camps. Unless there were two buddies come from Connecticut or New York or something. If they were friends we tried to keep them together, cuz they were buddies. They were a long way from home.”

Nelson LeVasseur is the real thing. Years past retirement, he still works in the woods. Last winter for firewood he cut one hundred fifty cords. He says it was just to avoid sitting in front of the television.
Paul Bunyan is just a story, read from books written forty years ago by folks we never knew. Yet still, the fiction has its place.

A crew of Paul Bunyan’s men once built a sawmill that ran backwards, creating logs from sawdust. Another year the mosquitoes were so large two of them killed and picked clean one of his oxen. And then there was the time he had to climb up a rainshower in order to turn it off.

Jigger Jones had his moments as well. In his early years he once sluiced a team of horses. Sliding off the side of an ice road the logs they were hauling tumbled over them. All four horses were killed. Jigger broke a leg.

J. NORMAND MARTIN built the model that was used in creating the thirty-foot statue of Paul Bunyan. It took him a week. It was done as he puts it, “with very, very little research believe it or not.”

Thirty years later, he blames himself for historical discrepancies. The boots and jacket Paul wouldn’t have worn. He also accepts criticism for the aesthetics. “I think if I were to do it over again I would certainly devote more time to it and get a better feeling for the community, as to what it is they would like to have. It was done so quickly.”

Many accuse him also of looking like the statue. His only reply is, “coincidental, purely coincidental.” Though Bunyan has the only beard, both have prominent noses and bushy eyebrows shaped like upside-down “V”s. Both have crow feet wrinkles at the outer edges of their eyes. And given Bunyan’s ox, they both share taste in color. Martin drives a blue BMW and lives in a blue house. Connie Bronson tributes the coincidence to heritage. “Fortunately he’s a French-Canadian,” she says, “and so supposedly was Paul.”

It wouldn’t be the first time a member of his family was honored with a statue. Martin’s brother Onias was the only soldier killed in Bonnetable, France by the Germans during World War I and in his name the locals built a memorial.

Like the 1959 statue, the legend of Paul Bunyan had that same commercial taste back in 1910. Richard Dorson tells the story in his book, American Folklore. Though the first written record of Bunyan was an article by James McGillivray in the Detroit News-Tribune in 1910, he wasn’t a national figure until caricatured by W.B. Laughead, an ex-lumberjack. Laughead used the Midwestern myth in an advertising campaign for the Red River Lumber Company. Between 1914 and 1922 he gave out free pamphlets publicizing Paul’s fictitious doings. One was called “The Marvelous Exploits of Paul Bunyan.” The last issue, “Paul and his Big Blue Ox,” was printed in 1944.
To Richard Dorson, Paul Bunyan is “the pseudo folk hero of the twentieth-century mass culture, a conveniently vague symbol pressed into service by writers, journalists, and promoters to exemplify the ‘American Spirit’ . . . . Paul Bunyan represented only the most obvious facts of American life—the worship of bigness and power, and the ballyhoo of salesmanship and promotion.”

Big was the idea, the gimmick. An oversized eye grab. Something to bring in different license plates. “The masses of people, the general public, by and large, get a kick out of gimmicks,” says Norm Martin, wearing a blue suit very close to the color of his car. “I can remember when the statue was put up. Originally there was some criticism in town. The art community didn’t consider it a work of art.” But he adds, “You know, it was never intended to be a work of art. The original concept was to have some kind of extravaganza, something big, something people would notice.”

The Woodsman’s Memorial isn’t something tourists notice and pull over to photograph. It isn’t colorful and it can’t be seen from the highway. The grass around it is uncut and there is now a wild bush growing in its shadow which may soon hide it from the road.

Tourist or no tourist, both the Woodsman’s Memorial and Paul Bunyan celebrate the life of the river driver. But stories told by Nelson LeVasseur and other men who recount the old “pod auger” days, the rough times in the camps, make a smiling 30-foot statue seem foolish, a far cry from the way life really was for a woodsman.

“We called pod auger days when things are tough,” says Nelson. “Like in the Depression you know. When you couldn’t get a job. And you’d go into a lumber camp and Jesus Christ the horses was half fed and the cook didn’t have no food. You know belly robbers they called ’em in the army. They didn’t wanna feed ya.

“I like these days here. Them days you had to carry water, and Christ, you had outhouses and kerosene lamps. Fulla lice. Jesus yes. What in the hell you gonna do? You got a hundred men in the camp, no runnin’ water, five feet a snow outside, how you gonna take a bath? Take a sponge bath when there are a hundred men in the camp?

“Now they got shower rooms. Two men to a room, sheets on a bed. TV room, pool hall, VCR, microwave, shower room, toilet, hot and cold running water. It wasn’t that the paper company didn’t furnish a good place to live, it’s just we was so far in the woods. There was no roads. Everything came by water.”

“That’s what we called the pod auger days. No electricity! No running water! Walkin’ in the wood twenty miles to go to work, Christ, and stayin’ there two and three months, that’s pod auger days. After you’d get there Christ they’d work ya Jesus Christ from dark to dark, no overtime, straight time them days. Had a poor place to sleep. Tar papered sheds, canvas in the winter time. Christ you go to bed and you hear trees scrapin’ the side of the canvas or tar paper. You know it’s so goddamn cold. No clean blankets, no sheets on the beds in them days. Straw ticks, all the mattresses made outa straw. Straw ticks. That’s pod auger days.

“Peelin’ time you never washed because Jesus Christ if you ever washed, the flies would chew you alive. We used to peel, all depends on the moon, May 15th to August 15th, then the sap would start stickin’ and you couldn’t peel anymore. We used to knock down a tree and then top it off, then take the bark off. That’s what we called peelin’. Then you’d get that pitch all over you, you know the sap. Flies, God o’ mighty, flies were terrible then. But we never washed. You washed your hands a little to get to the table but generally you left that pitch on there, ‘cause you’d get your skin so tough they wouldn’t bite through it. But them were the good ole days. Them are pod auger days.”

Many accuse J. Normand Martin who built the model used in creating the thirty-foot Paul Bunyan statue of looking like it. His only reply is, “coincidental, purely coincidental.”
At Great Northern Paper, quality control starts from the ground up, beginning with the soil that nourishes the trees. Careful land management yields a better, more profitable product and conserves our forest resources at the same time. It makes our woodlands more interesting for visitors and more livable for wildlife. It makes us stand a little taller, too.
INNER MAINE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVE READ
Dave Read grew up in Bingham on the Kennebec River. He is a professor in the Art Department of the University of Nebraska. In 1988-89 he returned to Maine to photograph the Maine he remembers from his childhood.
THE APPLAUSE subsides at Bath’s Chocolate Church, and Steve Romanoff adjusts his guitar strap. “Well, we got a request to do something from the ‘50s tonight.” The audience stirs. “So here’s something from the 1650s . . . . You’ve gotta be SPECIFIC folks!”

After more teasing, Steve continues. “I wrote this song. It’s one of the first songs we ever learned together. Yep, this is the song that turned it all around, that made us decide to leave our heavy metal acappella group and move into the glamor of folk music.”

Even after their laughter calms and “Silver Streams” begins, the audience remains smiling. Those seeing the band for the first time have been taken by surprise. This was supposed to be an ordinary folk band. Instead, this is a performance. And the audience is smiling, laughing, thinking.

That’s Schooner fare. Their jokes, anecdotes, songs, and stories incite and amuse their audience, and as a result, motivate them to become a part of the show. That, according to Schooner fare, is what folk music is all about.

Steve Romanoff’s patient story-telling voice fills Bath’s old church. “Ninety percent of all the Clipper ships built in the world were built on the east coast in North America.” On either side of him Tom’s electric bass and Chuck’s 4-string banjo strike and strum chords that rumble and peak like the beginnings of the tide. Just before they swell and break, Steve continues, “About 80 percent of them were built in the town of Bath, Maine.”

Now the musicians and guitars start telling the story of sailing ships and sailing men, and the rhythm and volume intensify.

The men harmonize the brisk lyrics and play so intensely that the ceiling fans can do little to keep them from sweating. And although the show has just begun, the song ends as though it were the grand finale.

Written by Amy Schnerr
Photography by Tonee Harbert
“Now let’s do a couple of quick introductions just to bring you up to date to show who’s who,” Steve begins. “I think we ought to start with the first row here.”

When his voice is audible again over the audience’s laughter, he gestures toward the back row. “And I wanna know who sits way back there.”

The trio all squint out to the back of Bath’s Chocolate Church intently as if expecting a response. The response they get is laughter.

Steve extends his right arm toward the banjo player. “Please welcome down here from Freeport, Maine, that little Tijuana for Yuppies, a wonderful place, give a warm welcome if you will to Mr. Chuck Romanoff.” His brother takes a slight bow and gives a playfully disgruntled look to center stage.

Tom, stage right, interrupts the feigned sibling quarrel. “And in the center, please give a warm welcome to Chuck’s twin brother here, Steve Romanoff.”

Although they are twins, Chuck and Steve hardly look like brothers. Chuck’s brown beard and short wavy hair contrast with Steve’s straight silvering hair and light brown mustache. Steve’s introduction does not go by without teasing.

“Where did you get that hair color from anyway, Steve, a bottle?”

Steve struggles to hide his own laughter and nods. “Yeah, in more ways than one!” His broad smile lifts his apple-round cheeks to just below his eyes. “Thank you very much and now here sporting the band’s least traditional instrument, from South Paris, Maine, our half-brother, Mr. Tom Rowe.” Steve extends his left arm toward Tom, who holds a bass guitar that looks as if it has been amputated at the neck. Its base is no wider than Tom’s hand.

Tom rises to his own defense. “This is my L.L. Bean Swiss army mountain dulcimer. I put it together myself.” He tilts the guitar flat and inspects it. “Had a lot of extra parts in the end, though. But hey, it doubles as a canoe paddle, baseball bat, and fits easily into any backpack.”

At the end of that night’s performance, Steve reminds the audience, “We’ll be sticking around after the show, like we always try to, if you want to talk to us or just say ‘hi’, so feel free to introduce yourself.”

Schooner fare’s accessibility emphasizes their ‘folk’ element, but their commitment to entertaining makes them unique as folk performers. They strike a balance between their informal relationship with their audience and their commitment to being an entertainment group. Unlike popular musicians today, Schooner fare does not place themselves above their audience. Instead, their audience is an essential element of their performance.

“There’s a bunch of kids here tonight, and we’re delighted,” Chuck bellows, “that ya brought your folks. And just because school’s out doesn’t mean that you’re off the hook. We were all teachers and counselors,” he explains, “and we feel that it’s our responsibility to have some kind of curriculum throughout the summer. So we believe that one cannot have enough review of the vowels.”

The audience laughs but Chuck continues in a voice so serious he could have been hosting Masterpiece Theatre. “This is a very serious, sullen piece of work. Let’s ask that everyone concentrate. It’s a short round song, so I’m gonna sing this one. We’ll sing the verse of which there is only one, repeated twice. We’ll try not to make this real difficult on ya. If ya don’t know it, sing it!”

I LIKE TO EAT, I LIKE TO EAT, I LIKE TO EAT MY APPLES AND BANANAS

“That don’t be silly about this. This is a very academic piece. We’re not going too fast for ya, are we? Some of ya are still waiting for an easier song. Try it again now, except this time may I have the first vowel please.”

The audience hesitates, then randomly shouts ‘Ayyyye!’

“Very good. Everybody!”

AYE LAKE TAY ATE, AYE LAKE TAY ATE, AYE LAKE TAY ATE MAY AYPLES AYE BAY-NAY-NAZ

“Some people are not taking this song seriously at all! I think that’s because they can see where this is leading.”

Where it leads is to a room full of people laughing before they can even finish their nonsense verses. But the band persists in leading them through the vowels with the utmost seriousness. They pretend to be surprised at the audience’s reaction. “There is chuckling and snickering going on here!” And at the
WE DO CONSIDER ourselves singers of folk music," Steve explains, "but we are in show business. We are not folk purists who sleep with dulcimers and so forth."

And unlike strict traditional folk music artists, Chuck explains, Schooner fare does it "with a certain amount of pizzazz, a little flash and a little show business, because we want people to be entertained, and sometimes they learn something."

Chuck is shorter than both Tom and Steve, and his broad chest holds the group's deepest voice.

"Some of the songs that we've written have been so appealing to such a wide range of people that they're easily learned, easily sung, easily remembered, which falls into our definition of a folk song, but it automatically crosses into pop music if people are constantly asking for it," Chuck says.

"If we were real traditional folkies, we wouldn't care if anybody was even listening. We'd just be out there doing it. We want the show to be well received. We've made the commitment. So we do a show instead of a repertoire of songs."

"People come to hear what the songs have to say, whether they're just fun or of a serious nature. The lyrics are more important than any other aspect of the song."

"And that's why it's folk music." Tom's voice is sure and even. The tallest of the three, he is always on Steve's left on stage, performing the somewhat traditional songs with the band's most contemporary instrument, the electric bass. During some songs he adds the light airy pitches of his penny whistle.

There is no clear line where the band stops being traditional and adopts elements of the popular music industry, yet this combination of old and new ways is what makes Schooner fare unique.

Steve alternates between a 6-string and a 12-string guitar. "We try not to be too traditional and we try not to be too show biz. We're still a trio that identifies with folk music, but we know nothing will make an idea germinate in the audience's mind better than an entertaining presentation."

Among the criticisms the band endures is the question of whether or not they let their music be unduly influenced by popular music standards.

"We have been typed by some people in the folk establishment as being too show biz. At the same time, a folk festival referred to us as the traditionalists. So who are ya gonna listen to? We just keep plugging away.

"We're the only group that we know of that have been the same configuration for almost 14 years. We have not had one personnel change, not one interruption in our work. We've never quit, we've never broken up. We've always been together. We've just gotten more and more involved in it over the years. And we've never let the nay-sayers or the categorizers or the critics, and so forth, have very much bearing on our song choice, our mode of presentation. And it hasn't hurt us one bit to ignore them."

Tom leans forward on the desk where he's seated in the back stage office before the show. "We grew up in the '50s and '60s, so not only did we follow and love folk music but we followed and loved the Beatles, and rock-n-roll. And so naturally some of those influences are gonna creep into what we do, so you're not going to hear what ya heard in the '50s and '60s, from us. You're going to hear a wide range of other sounds and some people might call that pop influenced."

Chuck stands next to the desk. His hair is damp from his shower. "Synthesized instruments, we use them from time to time, because sometimes they're just plain fun. But we don't rely upon synthesizers or similar types of instruments."

"Those things are all fads," Steve insists. "We enjoy listening to them the same way you enjoy watching a rainbow, or watching a thunder storm. It's temporary. It ain't gonna stick around. We're not interested in trends or whatever the current rage in popular music is. But the stuff that's gonna stay is not as sexy, as a
result it's not as commercially viable, so we don't have the big agents pounding on our door, or the big producers pounding on our door."

Steve sits back in his chair and hooks his thumb behind one of his suspenders. "We have all the work we can handle because we've been intrepid and tenacious over the years and cultivated our following from the grass-roots basis and never compromised on our product. People know when they come to hear us they're gonna get 100 percent."

"ONE OF THE THINGS that helps to distinguish us from other folk singers is that we are from Maine, we are of Maine. We are all born and raised in Portland and Auburn respectively, we still live here, our parents still live here, our kids all live and go to school here, our mortgages are here, we come home and mow the lawn."

"That's really a huge influence on our material," Tom emphasizes. "What we do in Chicago is what we do in Caribou, Maine." Steve raises his brow. "We change the show every night, but they get the same kind of show, 'cause we want the people in Milwaukee to be as familiar with us as the people in Rangeley, so they say, 'These guys are from Maine.' We particularly want the Mainers to know that."

Tom gazes up at the room's high open windows where slight breezes glide in with the noise of Bath's evening traffic. "I think it's important to this act for people to know how we came to choose this material for one thing, and for us to have this identification with where we're from. And it helps them [the audience] understand a lot about us if they understand the PEOPLE that we're from. I think when people think of Maine they come up with a certain image. A lot of times it's an image of 'quality, handmade goods,' or interesting, self-sufficient people. We identify strongly with that because we're all of those things."

"And at first we thought it was sort of a detriment because we weren't mainstream music business, ya know: 'How are we ever gonna make it, if we come from Maine?' And then we started saying, 'Well the music is from Maine basically,' the initial thrust was music of the Maine coast and New England. So I think it's important for our audience to understand where we're coming from for them to relate to what we're trying to say."

"We know that Mainers are unique," Steve pauses. "And people love to come to Maine. People from Maine don't feel they have to go anywhere. It's a big beautiful state full of wonderful people and we love being able to travel around and make friends in our own state without feeling we have to always be on the road out of state."
"This is our home, this is where we always come back to. This was our past, it is definitely our present, and we want it to be our future. It’s where we really enjoy working. The work is not as hard, because we’re always in Maine. We were 300 miles away last night [in Caribou], and we were as far away as we would have been if we were in Manhattan. But we finished the show and we were still in Maine.

“When we’re in Caribou or in Kittery, we can still talk to people about things that’re close to our hearts and close to their hearts. We can find those common denominators that are unique to Mainers. The musical heritage, the maritime heritage, the agricultural heritage.”

WEST OF AUGUSTA, in Wayne, at Ladd’s Community Recreation Center, children, parents, teenagers and some older adults gather for a church supper. Afterwards, four young boys all wearing the green Ladd Recreation T-shirts sit in packs joking with each other. Two young girls walk to the water fountain. The blonde one whispers to her friend just before they pass the boys. Husbands and grandparents watch the toddlers while wives and mothers put away the extra cold-cuts. The women’s voices weave in and out of the bustle in the room and only pieces of conversation survive the noise.

“Where’s the aluminum foil?”

“Why don’t you take some of this home? There’s enough here to feed an army. We won’t eat all this. Please.”

“You potato salad didn’t last long!” In minutes the kitchen area is clean and dark.

Everyone waits for Schooner fare to perform. This is the final fundraiser for the community’s new playground.

In an office in the recreation center, Schooner fare has a bite to eat, discusses which songs they’ll sing, and in what order. Then a man knocks on the door and lets himself in. He is tall and smiling.

“Howdy. How’s dinner? I’m Doug Stevenson. I enjoyed your sharing with us at the Portland Symphony back in March or April?” Doug extends his hand and continues, “I’m also the fund-raising chairman. Somebody asked me to give you a message,” Doug says handing Steve a folded envelope. “It’s a little girl, 12-years old.”

Steve takes the message and reads it. “Oh, a birthday!”

“She’s in the audience. Standing on the stage she’s sort of off to your left.”

Doug and the 12-year old girl are good examples of Schooner fare’s diverse audience.

Tom leans back and thinks aloud. “Who is the
audience of Schooner fare? That’s probably the hardest question that you can ask because Schooner fare’s audience is so diverse. Targeting your audience is one of the troubles that the record industry has with folk music in general and certainly us. We’re not easily typed.”

“We’ve got everything from yuppies to fishermen, sailors to stock brokers, attorneys to farmers. So when you ask who our audience is, I would guess that our audience would be Mr. and Mrs. America, and their kids and their parents.”

“Our audience is more family than anything else. That’s probably the best way I can describe it. Whole families come out to see us.”

“But we’re not a family show in that we’re a spiritual group,” Steve adds. “We’re first an entertainment group whose material is idea-oriented and we try to present those ideas in a very entertaining format. The consequence of that is we have first established an audience of people in their 20s. Because that’s the kind of material we were singing. It was similar material, but the kind of venue lent itself to the singles bar. We don’t do bars anymore. We do legitimate concerts in a variety of settings. But the people we first tried to reach are in their mid-30s to mid-40s and they’ve got kids who are teen-agers now. Many of them have brought their children up on our songs.

“We like to attract an intelligent audience who read, who talk, who are involved in politics. We have the folk element in our audience, but we also have the people who are interested in more than just folk music: literature, politics, ecology, family.”

“Not necessarily activists,” Chuck hesitates. “I tend to think a traditional audience is more activist. Ours cares about these issues, they’re concerned about them, they think about them and we like to address them from time to time.”

“And [the benefits] were a great way for us to escape from the bars and get the concert audience developed around the state of Maine,” Tom admits, “and was a great way for the organizations to raise money. And we got exposed to another audience that we couldn’t find in bars, because Mr. and Mrs. America generally don’t go out to a bar on a Wednesday night.

“And it’s real interesting, because the material itself has a universal appeal, even the songs of the sea, even the songs that are songs of Maine and the coast. The metaphors that are presented are very universal. So it works in Duluth just like it works in Portland.”

Recalling how the trio met, Tom remembers, “There was a group in Portland who was kind of a folk-rock ensemble that needed somebody with very particular talents. Luckily that was me. The next thing I knew I was playing in this group. Well, so were Steve and Chuck.” But the group was “having personnel problems, and a few times Steve, Chuck, and I sort of gravitated towards one another and would sit down and play folk songs, old folk songs. We discovered we had a unique vocal blend and an interesting sound and that we all wanted to do that particular kind of music.”

“It was a lot of luck involved,” Chuck admits, “that the vocals and instrumentation was compatible. That doesn’t happen automatically.”

“So when the group split up, ultimately, I got a call from Steve. He said, ‘Hey, do you wanna play folk music?’ and I got a call from the other guy who said, ‘Hey do you wanna play rock and roll?’ And I decided to go where my heart was. I decided to play folk music. So Steve and Chuck and I got together, started rehearsing and four months later we played our first gig as Schooner fare.”

“The reason we’ve stayed together this long is because when we started we had a similar vision of what the group should be, what we wanted it to be, the kind of material we wanted to do, and the way we wanted to do it. When you get in any group where the personalities match and everybody’s pointed, musically, in the same direction, you’ll have something that’ll last. That’s why we’ve been together 14 years.”

“In terms of the personalities in the group, we’re the same as when we started. We’re three different people who get along.”

“We know what good show business is, we know what good performing is, we know what good folk music is. And we’ve been lucky to combine those elements over the years.”

Chuck clears his throat. “We write and choose our material for the long haul. Just as our careers have progressed over the long haul, inch by inch. If it would have been easy to hit the road years ago, available to play town to town across the country, who knows what that might have done to move us forward, but nobody was interested. Still aren’t. We’d rather go slowly. Almost every step has been pretty solid. We might go sideways once in a while, but we don’t go backwards!”
On another evening, on Peaks Island, Schooner fare performs in a large paneled room filled with cafeteria tables. Young and old adults sit with coolers of soda and beer and snack on chips and pretzels. Their children grab handfuls and roam out to the wrap-around porch where Schooner fare’s music carries clearly. One young mother walks her toddler around the porch. They pass older couples watching the sun set on the water that sparkles from Portland’s skyline. Inside, the crowd sings the words to Steve’s “Portland Town.”

I see the light across the bay!
I see the light not far away!
And I hear music all around,
I’m comin’ home to Portland Town!

The song finishes with rowdy applause, and as if in an effort to rationalize how the next song fits into the folk arena, Steve gives the band’s definition of folk music.

“Folk songs, those are the songs that people remember. Those songs are made by people, not by the fat cats in the back offices of the big record companies. They can’t make folk songs. Only PEOPLE can make folk songs—songs that people choose to remember and sing because they can’t help themselves.”

Then the band goes into their own spicy version of “Hit the Road Jack.” Families and vacationing baby-boomers desert tables to find floor space. They swing and twist, they clap and sing along, maybe because they can’t help themselves, but probably because they’re having fun.

In between sets, in a not-so-private room off stage, the band tries to relax amid questions, requests, introductions and reunions with audience members.

In the line to buy Schooner fare cassettes, T-shirts, and even Schooner fare magnets (to hold their schedule on the refrigerator), a tan woman shouts “Where are the wives? We wanna meet the wives.” A regular at the Schooner fare shows, she was at their first Peaks Island performance six years ago, and claims, “They performed six years ago to help a local fisherman out of a legal debt. They’ve come back every year since, and so have I!”

Tom turns and holds the wall up with one palm. “I think that the rules that we adhere to are: if you’ve got something to say then it’s worth writing into a song. In terms of “Salt Water Farm,” the way that song evolved was that my grandfather had always wanted to be a farmer, own a farm, and farm. He had a small farm but because he couldn’t make enough money farming to feed his family, he also had a factory job all his life.

“And I thought, that’s always been sort of a dream of mine, to have a small farm and be able to farm it. And I started thinking about it and I sat down and wrote “Salt Water Farm”, using him as the central character. So that’s how that song evolved, from his dream and my dream sort of stapled together.”

Back on stage that song starts with gentle strums, hints of melody, while Steve introduces it. “This is a song Tom wrote about his granddaddy who had a dream. Not just having a place, but time to return to it. I think it’s something we all do. Sing this with us.”

Now the performance room is dark and full of the sweet, soft song. One mother puts her tired daughter on her lap. The calm melody seems to soothe the child, who rests her head back under her mother’s chin. Three couples sway together at their long table, singing the words. The porch surrounding the room is full of older couples waltzing gracefully, cheek to cheek.

Typical of their accessibility, Schooner fare returns to Portland that night on the midnight ferry full of wound-up concert-goers. Schooner fare, however, is winding down. They shuffle their heavy equipment on board and nearly collapse in the closest seats to the lower level entrance. Outside the ferry, the water is as black as the sky and the evening’s music, still ringing in people’s ears, is no louder than the choppy waves.

“WE CAN FIND THOSE COMMON DENOMINATORS THAT ARE UNIQUE TO MAINERS. THE MUSICAL HERITAGE, THE MARITIME HERITAGE, THE AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE.”

KEEPING FOLK songs alive and appealing to today’s audience is a difficult task. Sometimes songs need to be changed to suit modern tastes. Schooner fare is careful, however, not to lose much of the song’s original quality. Rearranging and ‘updating’ old material is something the band does regularly and masterfully.

Tom wraps both hands around his coffee cup. “I don’t think that they [the audience] came out to be bored to death by 300-year-old songs. That doesn’t mean that we can’t do 300-year-old songs, but you’ve got to present them in a way that your audience can relate to, and maybe even get into, be part of.”

“If we find a song that’s 300 years old and I really like it—”
THE TRANSFORMATION OF A FOLK SONG

This is the chorus of the folk song, “Mary L. MacKay,” as sung by Schooner fare. Tom Rowe of Schooner fare wrote out the musical score and words the group uses. The original score was based on the singing of the song by Edmund Henneberry of Devil’s Island, Nova Scotia. The original version, as Tom explains, “Really sounds like Gilligan’s Island when you play it. So we’ve retained most of the melody, but we’ve changed the time signature. It’s 6/8 [in the original]. We do it in straight 4/4.”

Instead of the minor key of the original version to be sung “Freely and rowdily” Schooner fare’s version is set to a major key to be sung “brightly.” “Different key to make it more suitable to our voices,” says Tom Rowe. “If the key doesn’t feel right we simply change it, until we have one that’s comfortable. We decide who’s best fit to sing the song, how high the high part should be, how low the low part should be, and we find the key that makes that work.”

The first phrase of the chorus is actually the first line in the original fourth verse. From then on, as Tom Rowe explains, “We wrote the rest of the chorus. The rest of it doesn’t exist in this [original] song. But you can’t tell because when you listen to the song as a whole you say, ‘Yeah, that works.’”

Schooner fare found this original folk song printed in the book, Folk Songs of North America, by Alan Lomax and published in 1960. The song was reproduced from a collection of folk songs collected by the noted Canadian folklorist, Helen Creighton, in her book, Songs and Ballads from Nova Scotia, published in 1933. The original words were composed by Frederick W. Wallace and published in Canadian Fishermen in 1914. There were nine original verses. In their rendition, Schooner fare deletes the seventh verse. They use the ninth original verse as their introduction.
"—we probably wrote it," Steve jokes.

"Well, ya know, we really like what it has to say but it isn’t a particularly entertaining song, it’s a hard song to sell, we’ll rewrite it."

"Rebuild it in some cases."

"We’ve made them Schooner fare songs," Tom explains, "and that means going through some significant changes. Older folk music by its nature wasn’t nearly as harmonic as we make it. The older songs are not going to last, given today’s musical ear and the way people perceive songs today. But that doesn’t mean that this material should die and go away. It’s part of our tradition, it’s part of our heritage."

"And one way that we can hold onto it is to update it, make it relate to our audience today, help them see a piece of history, perhaps, while they see how this song might even apply to life in the 20th century."

"We do a lot with time signatures and change things around in terms of the dynamic of the time."

"I always think of the Mary L. McKay, which is a great song, and it was about Portland and it was about Nova Scotia and it told a great story but it sounded a lot like Gilligan’s Island’s theme—abysmal!"

Steve laces his fingers behind his head and crosses his ankles. "There’s an interesting parallel: the rebuilding of a vessel, such as the Mary L. McKay. Mary L. McKay is not the original name of the schooner, and that schooner has since been rebuilt and renamed and reused, and it continues to function to this day in a maritime museum in Massachusetts. Same with the song. Gets rebuilt, gets renamed, and it continues to function as a functioning vessel."

Tom widens his large brown eyes and raises his brow. "Alabama would be a real good example. Originally it was a sea chanty with no accompaniment, and it went something like—

da, da, da, daa, daa, daa, daa, daa, daa,
Roll Alabama roll!
da, da, da, daa, daa, daa, daa, daa, daa, daa, daa, daa,
Oh! Roll Alabama roll!

—and that’s the whole song. The original Alabama had no verse-chorus; it was strictly chanty delivery. Chanty delivery means a leader and then a chorus sings that. Roll Alabama roll! Then the leader sings again and they sing. Oh! Roll Alabama roll!"

"We’ve taken that and we’ve put a static, solid rhythm to it, a good solid base under it so it’s in straight 4/4. There are no pauses, no stops, and then we’ve added a chorus to it in which we use—

Oh, Susanna, now don’t ya cry for me,
For I come from Alabama with a banjo on my knee!

"We just use Oh Susanna! as the chorus part, it being an Alabama-based song as well. It works well as a refrain and it’s one that everybody knows, because people like something they can grab and sing along with and you can make the audience part of the song that way."

"We find that people really sing the Alabama and really request the Alabama. From something that was a pretty dray work song, it has turned into a very exciting sing along. Updating it really worked. We didn’t lose anything, because the story’s all there and even the original melody. It doesn’t have that dirge-like quality that the original song has. The story that we’re telling is a more exciting story than the song used to be because rhythmically it’s livelier."

Because so many folk songs are not recorded in the Library of Congress, it’s difficult to determine their origin. As a result, folk songs get borrowed and changed, and Schooner fare’s own material is no exception. "What’s happening to our songs," Steve explains, "is only a continuation of the folk process, the folk tradition which we have always participated in unabashedly."

[Our] "John Cook has been recorded twice by artists who claim it’s traditional. It’s a great compliment."

"Or you get those old cowboy songs, and they turn out to be old military songs or old love songs from the [British] soldiers."

Tom tugs at his beard. "There are some folk traditionalists who will tell you that to change a folk song is to take a perfectly good traditional song, and ruin the tradition."

"But they’ll be the same ones who will defend to the death the 14 different versions, authentic, of each song," Chuck adds.

Tom nods and laughs. "And you say, ‘Well, wait a minute, somebody changed the original version, all right.’"

"The songs that we write and select are ones we deliberately expect or hope will be learned by the people who are listening to it, and will ultimately be remembered, and ideally repeated by the people who have heard them and learned them."

"And you say, ‘Well, wait a minute, nobody changed the original version, all right.’"

"Some people might call it bastardization of the music." Tom looks at the other two. "We all think of it as updating those songs and holding them in the repertoire, when really they probably would die out and you’d only find them in books and nobody would sing them anymore and nobody would ever know them. We’re trying to bring those songs back and give them back to people because they’re their songs. They are folk songs."
They'd come by bus from all over the land to sit in this heat. The whole weekend. Knowing they had a chance at the $25,000 jackpot, it didn't seem to bother them. They brought their good luck charms—two dollar bills, knicknacks. And they brought BINGO FEVER!

Written and Illustrated by Julie Maurer
THE BINGO HALL on Indian Island was like a steaming manhole in the middle of New York City traffic. It was hellish. Moist clammy bodies stuck to metal folding chairs. Row after endless row of players sat baking in the cavernous aluminum building for ten solid hours at a time. There were 640 people all told. It was 105 degrees this July day.

Big Red, so-called for the fiery fringe of hair that encircled his balding head, stood at the front of the hall. He called the numbers all weekend. "B-15, N-35, 0-72," the combinations streamed from his mouth. He lorded over his slaves like the devil himself. "Tomorrow it's gonna be two degrees cooler," he tempted them. They'd come by bus from all over the land to sit in this heat. The whole weekend. Cigarette smoke hung in cumulus clouds blown by futile fans about their heads. Knowing they had a chance at the $25,000 jackpot, it didn't seem to bother them.

"Bingo" is called in the far corner of the hall. I barely saw the winner through the pungent haze. Neon scoreboards flashed the winning formation through the smoke. This time the combination called for the "postage stamp" formation to be constructed on the card. The cards were all headlined generically, BINGO. And under each letter of the word followed vertically a series of five numbers, or in the case of the letter "N," two numbers, one free-space, and two more numbers. In all, there were twenty-six different bingo games, all calling for a different display on a newsprint-number-grid.

The excitement soon subsided. Chairs screeched back into place on sweating cement floors. The crowd settled again to the tune of shuffling paper bingo cards and to the gentle swoosh of fluorescent daubers, turned upside down by hungry owners.

People readied for the next set. Daubers—ink vessels with squeegee tops that marked bingo cards, covering numbers in splotches of moist color—were evidence of games won or lost. They came in all colors of the rainbow, available at the front of the hall for fifty cents to a dollar and a half, depending on the daubers' luminosity. These extravagant markers glowed in the smoggy clutter of the game room, dotting used cards by the dozen—cards that had been ripped from pads of twenty and crumpled by many an exasperated player.

"WELCOME aboard the bingo bus." Joe let the doors of the VIP Tours and Charters bus flap open. His near toothless grin spread from one dimple to the next. It got wider as he watched me amble up the steps with all my recording equipment. "We'll be taking off from Kennebunk in five minutes, landing in Portland in a little over a half hour," he mocked, turning his craft into a modern day

BINGO FEVER!
chitty chitty bang bang.

I was glad to get out of the heat. Seven thirty in the morning and it was already eighty degrees. The bus was air-conditioned and empty, save for a gaggle of ten people clustered toward the front. All women and all from Dover, New Hampshire, they had started their journey early. I couldn't help but overhear.

"And you've been up all night?" I confronted the woman with the salt and pepper hair to my left. Her name was Glennis and she gathered herself to the edge of her cupped bus seat.

"Yes, I've been up all night because my daughter delivered her baby this morning at five thirty. My first grandchild." But she didn't gush the way most grandmothers do.

"That's exciting, yet you're here on the bus anyway?"

"Yup. And I told her she had better hurry up, cuz I had to make the bus in Portsmouth." She perked up.

"I guess I know your priorities—bingo?" She cracked a smile, nothing to hide,

"Yup." Nothing comes before bingo, not even a brand-new bouncing-baby-boy.

Husbands take a back seat, too. Barbara Jones was the first to admit it. "Al said to me this morning, 'Five-thirty in the morning you get up to go play bingo?' I said, 'HEY, when you got the fever, you got the fever, RIGHT?'" Nodding, the other women from Dover grew interested.

"We play bingo every chance we can con our husbands into allowin' us. The woman's voice was low and scratchy. She took a drag off a short wrinkled butt that looked like it'd been snubbed out once before. They called her Irene, Irene, the "VILLAGE QUEEN." She was not the only one who smoked.

"My husband's at home washin' the kitchen flooah, before it gets too hot."

"Well, my husband's passed away, but you'll see, they left theirs at home," Glennis spoke for her friends.

"Mine's home doin' the grocery shoppin', right where he should be," Angie, another of the Dover gaggle confessed. She didn't mind playing hooky from the home-front. The Village Queen sitting adjacent to Angie, fretted. The others had an honest laugh.

"Oh-no, I can't give you my last name—whoever printed that—" started Irene.

"She's afraid someone from the church would see it!"

"Only one that I don't want to know is my husband! He guesses, but he ain't," she stuttered—"he's got close a few times, but when I got a poker face I don't give it away. Oh, how my husband would shoot me."

The Village Queen forgot the thrill of the adventure momentarily. But Joe's voice sounded over the intercom reminding her, "If you're interested, Jerry will be calling bingo now."

A hush, save for the constant gritty diesel noise of the bus.

Jerry gripped the railing at the threshold of the bus. Joe watched him between downward glances at the road—295, north. Jerry was sporting a royal blue and yellow styrofoam, netted baseball cap. A few graying hairs sprang through the mesh. His eyes bulged, unfixed, jumping front to back, scanning the antsy crowd of bingo lovers. A hand-
ful more had gotten on the bus in Portland.

I thought of a parrot. Jerry reminded me of a tropical bird, perched on the black leather railing of the bus, bobbing his head up and down, counting the crowd, and every so often he teased our young hostess, Wendy. It was a suitting image on such a humid, jungle-like day.

Jerry sent Wendy cascading down the center aisle. A vision of pink. Feathered blonde hair contrasted with the purplish hue the pinks and blues of her summery outfit radiated. She was young—fresh out of high school, but so in charge. The whole bus was at her command as with the purplish hue the pinks and such a humid, jungle-like day.

She had to hurry. Time for bingo juice. Syrupy, almost gelatinous cherry red and rich orange drinks were circulated by this same little woman. Wendy encouraged, “You’d better take a drink now, it’s another hour and a half to Bangor and lunch at Dysart’s.” Conversations picked up during this mini-intermission. No one spoke during bingo.

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Angie spoke about other bingo excursions she’d been on. “The one in Connecticut’s been running for two years. We just went to the second anniversary down to the one in Ledyard, Connecticut last weekend. Another one of those Indian run bingos.”

Irene, the Village Queen was there too. “Two hundred n’ fifty just fer your package to git in the door. And we didn’t win a penny but I’d go again it was so exciting.”

“Oh, it was the best game you’ve ever been to. Thirty thousand dollah cover-all, twelve thousand dollahs for the letter “L,” thirty thousand dollar BMW, five thousand dollah door prize—it was unreal.

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“Newington—they’re the only ones who run a good bingo. Yeah. Because they don’t have to go by state law, like the Penobscot up here. State law only lets you give away so much money. In New Hampshire they don’t have to follow that law so they give away what they want, it’s the only way you can have a fair game. You know what yer payin’ out—,” she’s interrupted by a barking Village Queen.

“You wanna write sumthin’, write sumthin’ bout Sununu. Makin’ the people pick up the tax on their winner take all. Write that in. Puttin’ the tax on the poor people, yeah, really. You have to pay tax—what, five percent?”

“Why don’t they take it off of them?”

“No, the problem is, they don’t get the tax out of the people who are makin’ the money, like they do from the Indians, they get it out of us suckers. It has to come from the winner take all. Five percent to the state, FIVE percent to the state. Why don’t they take it off of them?”

Then Angie takes sides with Irene, “We have to pay five percent of their fifteen hundred too, but who cares?”

“Well let ‘em pay twenty, they’ll still make it!” Exasperation.

They spoke a foreign language about an unfamiliar game in faraway places.

Fastened to the metal, mustard colored siding in sharp white letters were the words, PENOBSCOT NATION COMMUNITY CENTER. The new elementary school to the right, simple parking lots on two sides, and the Penobscot River running behind. I
surveyed the grounds. Stillness. Not a breeze.

As my bingo troop filed off the bus and into the hall, dust from the dirt lot stirred and clung to the creases of sweaty legs, cramped too long on a bus. Like flowers, travel weary bodies unfolded and perked in the sun if only to wilt again when inside the musty hall.

Slumping into chairs too small for their adult bodies, the ladies from Dover worried about seating themselves near a fan. There were too few, and no air conditioning. Packed in, ten to a table, Wendy seated us together. Fifteen rows, each row a narrow five tables long, comprised one side of the bingo hall. There were two sides, an old and a new. We sat in the new half, under flickering fluorescent lights that struggled to illuminate.

At half past noon, the center was nearly full. The Penobscots coagulated at the forward end of the old section, just filling two rows. The hall remaining was a confusion of local day trippers and bus groups. As people waited for this adventure into bingo land to begin, they bought cold Pepsis and hot coffees at the concession stands that lined the interior. “Coffee cools ya off,” one lady in a floral print moo-moo said to another who was swizzling a tall Diet Pepsi, “It makes ya sweat.”

Others exchanged peanuts, lemon hard candies, and home made brownies. But most just smoked while stationing their cards, daubers and other bingo paraphernalia.

Jerry, the caller from the bus held a small fan in the palm of his hand. It whirled like a dragon fly. I watched him sneak it out of his bag and set it propelling onto the table before him. A soggy brown ring of paper towels from the men’s room circled his neck like a choker. Trend setter. He’d found a way to beat the heat. We were all festering.

People snuck more things out of their carry-on bags. Besides thermos bottles and favorite snacks, ornamental knick-knacks were displayed in the small spaces left between bingo cards. A crinkled, worn dishrag of a two dollar bill was placed gently in ceremonial fashion before the woman across from where I hunched. It had been her mother’s good luck charm.

Elaine Brown spoke in a hush, “My mother loved beano.” Beano and bingo are local variations of the same game. “The last year she lived, we took her to beano almost every night, she could be right flat in bed, and we’d go down and say, ‘Let’s go to beano, Mom,’ and she’d say, ‘I don’t think I can do it.’ She’d get up and go to beano. Two days before she died, we carried her into the beano hall, she loved it.

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Others had good luck charms. Simone Lauze from Lewiston and Barbara DuBois from Lisbon, Maine, slung their charms into a jumble among the ashtrays, cards, daubers and plastic cups, then straightened them one by one. A clown bearing balloons from a daughter’s first birthday cake, a triplet of wooden, hand-carved elves from Hawaii, a horse-shoe, and all kinds of elephants, including a pair of blue spangled elephant earrings that seemed to bow their trunks with a turn of the head. Simone told me an elephant was only lucky if it was given to you. A gift. She also whispered, “Beano is a sickness, once you start you don’t know when to stop. It’s true.”

“Yeah,” interrupts Elaine, “there’s a shit Brown, right ovah theyah.” She gawks at her husband, who’s looking innocently at his card.

“My muther loved beano.” Beano is a cross between a bull and a horse. “Is that double good luck now?”


I confuse the train of thought, giggling, “Your lucky number is the color of shit?”

“I thought you said lucky cullah.” I repeat his words, “Lucky color is the color of shit. But there aren’t any shit brown daubers.”

“Yeah,” interrupts Elaine, “there’s a shit Brown, right ovah theyah.” She gawks at her husband, who’s looking innocently at his card.

“What’s the next game?” Harold shifts gears, if only momentarily.

“Double bingo.”

“Well SHIT on me lawd!” Harold looks to the high ceiling of the bingo hall.

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“Yeah, bingo is a social thing. An escape from the kids. I have five.” Barbara confessed from behind a
bright yellow frock. All the while she’s arranging these trinkets.

“It’s a replacement thing. Instead of going out and spending big money on alcohol. It’s better to spend it on bingo. It’s also a great way to get out and meet people.”

Simone is draped in startling fuschia. She and Barbara had in fact made their acquaintance at Indian Island. Now they sat together, like old friends, sharing their lucky charms while numbers and letters streamed through the air, lit up on electronic boards, or broadcast over T.V. sets that glared through the mist of the stagnant hall. I left them doddling over their cards and cooing to their charms.

“Quickie! Anybody need a quickie?” An older Penobscot man, his charcoal hair graying at the side-burns shouted down the aisle. His song continued, “Put your arms around me, I’ll be your slave, just a little quickie will go all the way.” I heard him loud and clear, and wondered what in bingo-lingo the man meant by “quickie.”

Elaine Brown whispered to her neighbor, but looked straight at me. “She doesn’t know what a ‘quickie’ is!” Elaine accused, kidding me. “Well, I hope she don’t!” laughed her neighbor-lady.

I knew then they weren’t referring to bingo. “I know what a ‘quickie’ is, you guys. I’m old enough.” They roared.

Really, a quickie in bingo terminology was a fast round played on a yellow and black newsprint four by four inch card. The object was to be the first to cover the card completely. The numbers were called once every two seconds or so. It was the only time all weekend the hall was quiet. Hush. “Quickies” required undivided attention.

BEEs IN A hive. The hall was full of bingo bees droning over paper cards, caught in a network of combs, segregated by bus, playing to the steady hum of letters and numbers that regulated the pulse of activity.

I buzzed right out of the building. And behind the building ran the Penobscot River, the only relief in sight.

While others sought cold drinks, ham sandwiches or puffed cigarettes during the twenty minute break, I...
plodded down the steep bank to the water. But stepping in, I found the water lukewarm. A dead fish smacked the bank, compressed against the mud pack by an unnatural wave made by a passing motor-boat.

It reeked. Knee-deep I turned to see a smiling Penobscot woman drag herself down the path I had freshly traced in the underbrush. I watched as she forged ahead, keeping her white rubber sandals clad to her feet. "You got any shoes on dear?" she asked.

"No," I grinned sheepishly. "It's nice to get outta that hall."

"You better watch out, ya know, there's leeches in here."

I felt the slimey mud and crispy leaves beneath my bare toes. I waded out, looking to my feet. Yup. Leeches, stuck all over them like toilet bowl plungers. Slivered almonds. Punchy from the long day, I didn't know whether I was laughing or crying, but tears rolled down my flushed cheeks. I felt like a stewed tomato.

The first day of high stakes bingo lasted a good ten red-hot hours. The fire engine outside the hall was the same color. Harold told me it was parked out there, ready to hose people down as they slipped out for a break during the brief intermission. He said they also sprayed the roof, hoping to cool the building.

"Sun's gonna go down and it'll get coolah. Roof'll cool off," Harold assured. "Shoulda taken a showah, Harold." Elaine suggested to her too-hot to handle-husband.

"I got right under it." I think he did, too. He said the roof was so hot the water draining off was near scalding temperature. There was no relief, then.

HEY, newspaper-lady!" Joe the bus driver hailed me through the heavy smog that perforated every inch of the hall. The stench of bodies sewn together at the hip like Siamese twins was beginning to overwhelm. At nine o'clock Saturday night the hall was still packed with people. Nobody left when there was still a chance to win the $25,000 super bonanza jackpot.

Joe's balding head glistened with sweat as he promised me there was no way he'd be back to play on Sunday. One day of bingo in 105 degree weather was more than enough for our tired driver.

Elaine and Harold Brown bought one-day-only tickets, too. They'd come from Augusta Saturday morning, and planned to head right on down the pike Saturday night. Another game of bingo ended. Harold and Elaine kept at it.

"How did you know that game was over before it was over?" I checked in with Elaine.

"Cuz everyone goes, 'Ahhhhhhhhhh!"' She exaggerated.

"You can hear it," Harold said,
even before the number’s called. If they got it—just like if I hit the twenty-five thousand dollar jack-pot, you’ll know it cause I’ll be layin’ on the floor.” Elaine hid a smile with the back of her hand while he continued, “And you’ll smell sumthin’ shitty.” Harold was in rare form. The two continued to prod each other.

“Can you imagine six kids between the two of us?” Elaine’s mouth was open, her eyes rolled skyward. “You have six kids?”

“And him,” she flung her arm across the table to Harold, “Crazy like that!”

“Do they play bingo, too?”

“No, they don’t like bingo.”

“How come?” Harold sat waiting this cue, “Cuz they don’t like eating that government surplus cheese and stuff on account of the money we spend on beano.”

“Oh Harold,” Elaine fussed. “I never really say how many children we have. For income tax purposes,” Harold teased.

“We have six plus one foster, makes seven, HAROLD BROWN.”

I watched them wrap themselves up in a game. Elaine must have been playing three sets of cards at once. And there were six games per card. In all, Elaine watched 18 games. Harold had his fair share too.

“You’re down to two, Harold, go fer it.”

“Go for it.”

“Try my damndest, Harold.”

“Down ta three.”

“Oh go fer it!”

“Tryin’ to if you’d hold up and wait fer me!”

SUNDAY I met a Penobsct man named George Leach. He sat in the old section of the hall, where all the Indians seemed to group. “All roads lead to Indian Island, and bingo is everything.” George is 68 years old.

“I saw two ladies from New York walking down one of the roads here this morning, looking for the Pe-nosct Indian Reservation. I told them, ‘You’re on it.’ And I asked them if they’d come to play beano. ‘No, what’s that—bingo?’ they questioned me. It’s the same thing ya see. Then they asked me if I was an Indian. Now how do you answer that? Any native Mainiac is an Indian. So—really.”

Mr. Leach was very fit. His skin taut, muscles revealed by a ripped white undershirt, decorated by a lone green dauber mark, he spoke to me through yellow, tinted glasses. The brown bandana around his neck caught the sweat from his neck before it became too noticeable. He sat at the entrance end of what I termed ‘Indian aisle.’ George had come to the hall with his wife that Sunday, as he had always done. He’d been playing bingo on Indian Island for 15-20 years.

He called himself an extrovert, and came to bingo to see and meet people. The hall was a place to reconnoiter. “I don’t party or drink anymore, bingo is my entertainment now.” George told me that he was a reformed alcoholic and that bingo along with his fitness program has been helpful and rewarding. “Joy and love and peace all begin with people.” And he motioned to the crowd of bingo fanatics who were settling down for another ten hour day of bingo.

“There are more people in the winter,” George said. “Culture. A typical Mainiac has spring, summer, fall to enjoy the outdoors—that’s where he is, camps, whatever. Therefore, this cuts down on bingo and other forms of entertainment, which he would be doing in the winter—not summer.” So the bingo hall bustles in the winter.

I asked him about the buses and the weather in the winter. “It’s not a problem, buses in the winter. You need the buses. They ensure a crowd. A crowd assures the Indians dollars. If you have buses, you have dollars.”

The transitive theory of bingo, by George Leach.

“And there’s one more thing I need to tell ya. All the non-smokers, like myself that play beano are hoping for legislation to fund a non-smoking beano hall, or section of the hall. It’s gonna take a while, things need to cool off from the last battle. The hall has only just re-opened. So, first things first, I guess.”

George, who had been so attentive to this point, turned to his stack of cards and began to play the opening set. So I looked for other Penobsct to talk to. Only two long rows played in this hall full of bus trippers.

Janice wore a yellow shirt. It was sleeveless, gathered in a tight knot about her waist and low cut in the front. Janice let her smooth sepia skin begin where the slight fabric ended. Raven black hair fell to featherers around an honest face that was
lightened by a sure smile. Rivulets of perspiration ran down the side of her serene face while swells of sweat gathered in the furrow of my own brow.

"I feel like I'm in another world," I glowered at the young Penobscot woman. She laughed, shrugging it off, wiping her hand across her forehead calmly, as though she'd heard this line before. Her eyes darkened, hardened, piercing black onyx stones.

"You come from another world," her words passed through me. I couldn't focus. Numbers continued to be called. "B-15-0-68," hollered the bald man staged at the front of the hall. They didn't echo. Instead the numbers hung in the humid smoke ladden air, as they would later suspend themselves square and blocky before my tired irritated eyes when I attempted sleep.

Janice Lewey had never been out of Maine. She stood out in a crowd of sixty year-olds, but was flanked by two other Penobscot women, closer to her own twenty-to-thirty-odd years. All were avid bingo players.

"Yah, I play every month. I never miss a month. It used to be they played every two weeks, but the new law says we can only play once a month now. That's what the state wants. But we can play on Sundays. That's new. Now that they settled, now we can play on Sundays. We play in the winter, too. We're hooked," Janice nudged Jeanne's elbow.

Jeannie, friend and bingo-mate, rolled her eyes and boasted, "I won sixteen hundred dollars last month." Later that Saturday in July she would win another ten grand.

I thought about the money. The community church bingo games were slight by comparison. Earlier in the week I'd walked out of St. Monica's Church in Kennebunk with a can of vegetable soup, content to have won my lunch. I'd gone in empty-handed and emerged full. Church bingo was comradery, community spirit, group participation. A lot of give and take. Lay home-baked brownies on the winner's table, win a bingo, and take away a neighbor's pie. But something different was happening here on Indian Island. People paid money to win more money. And not for charity. The Penobschts rely on bingo income to fund community projects.

I remembered how an elder member of the Penobscot community explained the games of old. "Like the time the senior citizens were given five bingo tickets. They took mine away and I called them Indian givers." Madas Sapiel laughed. She wore her hair drawn back in a small nub of a pony tail. It was black streaked with silver. Turquois stripes hemmed her billowy magenta dress. She was stunning.

"Where does the money go, from here?" I asked.

"Where does it?" She snapped back, almost rudely. "Do you know?" "Nooo! But they oughta spend some—get air conditionin' in this place." She spoke in a low garble, chin stuck to the loose flesh of her weathered neck. "It's a good question. You oughta ask them. You have to ask those questions of management. Where does the money go?"

Sherry Oakes, the woman at my side, shifted in her seat. Her pants clung to the shiny metal moistened by the muggy air. We were all sweltering. The conversation too, became heated. Both women were local day trippers to Indian Island. Carrie was from Rockland, and Sherry was from Carmel.

"The money goes to support their schools," Sherry affirmed, peeved with the distrust Carrie had just conveyed. "It goes toward the kids' schools and to the elderly, and things like that."

Carrie looked first to Sherry and then to me. She was looking for a reaction. Her grin widened and I could almost hear her cackle before it was out. "We're low men on the totem pole." Carrie got wise, and
Sherry ignored her. The only thing the two women had in common was the spread of bingo cards strewn before them.

It's how that new school's built out there.” The conversation folded.

Sergeant Bruce Rafnell handed me a five by seven inch pamphlet. The “black book” of bingo playing. “The state must be represented at every high stakes bingo game.” This weekend’s rep stood before me, arms folded at his chest, legs shoulder width apart. We were outside the domed hall. Clean cut, he certainly appeared lawful.

He ground his left heel into the sandy dirt of the parking lot. Behind us ran the tepid muddy waters of the Penobscot River. I was asking him about the taxes Irene and Angie haggled over on the way to the hall. It was then he handed me the brochure, entitled, “State of Maine. LAWS, RULES, And REGULATIONS relating to BEANO or BINGO.” So I read.

Section 314-A: Part 4: Term of license; fees. A license issued under this section is valid for a period of six months. The annual license fee for a high stakes beano license is five percent of gross revenues. The fee is payable in monthly installments based on five percent of the gross revenues of the previous month. All license fees shall be paid to the treasurer of State or to be credited to the General Fund.

Cut and dry. The settlement reached between State and Tribal governments after the initial bingo dispute in 1980 had come down to this. Sergeant Rafnell spelled it out automatically, as though he knew the case verbatim. “In 1980 the Attorney General shut ‘em down and the case that went to the Supreme Court was called Arthur Stilphen versus the Penobscot Nation. It was decided that though the Indians had a right to ‘internal tribal matters,’ bingo did not qualify under these terms. Hence, the state now has jurisdiction and the right to levy a five percent tax on the gross revenues collected from bingo. The left over money goes to the Indians, for tribal services. Every five years the law is subject to reevaluation, based on reports submitted by the state and the Indians.” Presently the two have a very satisfactory working relationship.

The bus headed south on 95 to Topsham, Portland, Kennebunk, and Portsmouth, New Hampshire, loaded in orderly fashion. There had been no bottle necking at the doors of the bingo hall when the last game ended.

People simply filed out calmly. No rush. Crowd control. People were dogged. High stakes bingo turned endurance sport. It was a mass exodus, people flushed themselves out of the hall and into the refreshing night.

I found my lady friends from Dover. They dragged themselves onto the bus. Joe was there, thoughtfully cranking the air conditioning. I had never been so glad to get on a bus.

Martha, our hostess for the night, together with an exhausted Wendy, stood tall and bellowed, “Does anyone want to play bingo on the way home?”

A joke? No one laughed. I nearly cried. I think it was Angie who finally piped up.

“We’re all bingoed out.”
“Code man says it's the new thing they passed...last election. It reads: You can't do this, you can't do that. Enough rules to choke a horse. It's the new way, Mon Oncle says. Everything has to look nice. Can't look dumpy, he says. Dumpy ain't allowed...unless it was something dumpy before the new rules. If it's dumpy and new, they give Mon Oncle stiff fines. All the towns are going this new way nowadays.

"Buncha Bullshit," says Buzzy.

Carolyn Chute, Letourneau's Used Auto Parts

THE JUNKYARDS OF MANICURED MAINE

THE JUDGE is gritting his teeth so hard that his jaw muscles are flexed and pushing through his skin like a wad of gum. Grit, release. Grit, release. Grit, release. He rolls his eyes, adjusts his glasses, and looks over the top of them at Michael Palmer who is sitting in the hot seat.

Defending himself against the town of Kennebunk, Palmer is making his final statement. The tone of confidence and mastery he had used earlier in the trial is gone. Now his voice is puny, anxious, like a little boy pleading with his paddle-in-hand father.

He flashes a nervous grin. "My property is as clean as it has ever been since I moved in," he sputters. "I have done all I can to comply...but now the town is getting nit-picky...there is nothing left that is considered junk." He looks at the judge. Grit, release. Grit, release. The judge returns a stern, icy stare that Palmer reads as "Prove it."

He looks up again, glances at his wife and then settles his gaze on Don Tison, the town's Code Enforcement Officer. Tison is attentive, even sympathetic. But he knows the rules. The 1983 Injunction against Palmer reads that he must clean up his yard.

His junky yard. Which is wildly speckled with all sorts of riches: broken down cars, a baby stroller, old tires, a cat on top of a red canoe on top of an old truck, a washer and a weary looking laundry basket, a crippled tricycle, a vacuum cleaner, plastic thingamajigs, a motorcycle skeleton, a scattering of wood boards and metal pipes, and dogs. Big dogs. The tipsy mailbox cowardly guards the boundary to the chaos.

And somewhere in the middle of it all is Michael Palmer. He is a thin, small-boned man. The kind that might have been called a "pipsqueak" in the second grade. But two characteristics mark his spirit. The corded veins in his forearms and his eyes. The veins beat with vitality; the eyes bulge with obstinance.

"I bought this property, I paid good money for it and I figure I should have the right to do what I want with it."

"I don't think anybody should have the right to come in and tell somebody how to live. That's my biggest argument, is they're coming in and telling me..."
how I have to live.” He swats a mosquito that was trying to squelch some of that blood out of his arm. He brushes off the squashed remains.

Back in the courtroom, the town’s lawyer, Mr. Furbish, objects that Palmer has strayed from the point. “It’s not relevant.” Palmer had begun to talk about the sour politics involved with his property. He believes the relative of a Selectman has been scheming to snatch his land. “What about that??” he demanded.

“Sustained...Ask questions that are RELEVANT to the INJUNCTION...which is to remove the clutter.” Swatted and brushed off.

Palmer recomposes himself after the judge leaves the courtroom to review the case and make his decision. He gets up and moves to the table next to Tison and Furbish. He scowls at Furbish and then peers at Tison, whose blond eyebrows are becoming more distinct as his blush spreads like a brush fire.

“Kennebunk is nothin’ but a political tourist town.” Tison looks at his shoes. They are brown.

“If you go around the town of Kennebunk, you’d be in court every day...there are worse properties than mine...It’s about time for somebody to stand up and fight.” Palmer picks up speed and Tison’s eyebrows become very blond. He looks at Palmer now, whose eyes are flashing and fingers are pointing. Tison watches him like he might be seeing the car on a roller-coaster that has just rolled to the top of the Big Hill. It plunges, whips around, and finally screeches to a stop.

“Don’t get me wrong...I like ya’, Mr. Tison. You’re a good man.”

“I like you too, Mike. I think we can work this thing out.”

“It’s too late to work out...I’m pissed off now.”

Tison nods in resignation. “The time frame was the problem, Michael.”

It was five years ago that the town first asked Palmer to clean up. No response. The injunction was then issued to prod Palmer into action. Tison testified that the public safety concerns still exist. The debris, outside and inside the home, he contends, is a fire hazard. Batteries and radiators leak poisonous pollution into the soil and a nearby brook; the sharp objects and clutter are dangerous snares to the kids who live on the property. Tison sent a notice to vacate in February of 1988 after Palmer failed to clear his property of these materials.

“It just falls back into the same situation. Him citing that he...should be able to live the way he wants to live and one man’s junk is another man’s treasure...which is the truth in that sense, but to take a treasure and throw it all over the yard so it becomes a hazard or a nuisance...is when the town gets involved. That’s the situation we have here.”
“Mr. Tison, are the Palmers still in violation of the injunction?” Mr. Furbish questions.

“I would have to say yes, with the qualifying statement that 75 to 80 percent has been cleaned up...the majority of the junk is gone.”

“What remains?”

“Barrels, wood, tires, a junk van...Mr. Palmer’s junk may be useful to him, but the organization of his property is poor.”

Palmer has wound down and is speaking softly with his curly-haired wife.

Tison and Furbish are feeding papers into big, devouring briefcases. The judge swishes back into the courtroom and the men snap to attention like schoolboys in the principal’s office. He takes his seat and looks at Palmer like a sleepy bullfrog—eyes just slit open.

He acknowledges Palmer’s “efforts to comply,” however, Michael Palmer has not “fully complied” with the 1983 Injunction against him. As long as he still has junk wood, tires, car parts, etc., Palmer’s efforts are “wholly without merit.”

The ruling: The matter is to be continued for 60 days. Palmer’s property must be fully cleaned up or else Kennebunk can take further action, either in court or with a fine.

Palmer pushes his moppy hair off his forehead and scratches his left sideburn. Tison glances over at him, trying to gauge his temper. It seems to be in control. Tison figures it is safe. He cautiously walks past Palmer. But Palmer snags him with “Have you seen half the houses around town?”

“Yes, Michael.” The town has approached other families on this matter and their situations have been resolved. Palmer feels he is being discriminated against, that he is being singled out as an exception. He is an exception. At least in Kennebunk.

Back in his comfortable environment, tinkering with his motorcycle, he talks about the southern, coastal “political tourist town” he is coming to detest for its legislation of his lifestyle.

“The biggest problem is coastal towns. More than the people inland. Because of the high tourist rate. Well if the tourists come in and don’t like it, don’t look. You know, that’s my opinion. They’re not up here to tell us how we’re gonna’ live...and they’re not here year ‘round. It always happens in the summer so that tells me what’s going on.

“It’s always in the summer time that we have our problems with the town—the town’s afraid they’re gonna’ lose money because of what my property looks like. Well number one, I’m not on the main drag. I’m not on the turnpike and I’m not on Route 1 and I’m not on Route 9. The tourists don’t come around this house.”

He stops to survey his house and wipe some grease on his jeans.

“This is a town that survives with tourism for three months, and then for the nine months, it’s the town people, and the town people support this town. The tourism, all they do is support the businesses.

“They don’t support this town...and that’s where it should belong. It should belong back to the people and the people should have a strong voice. You know, what I stand up for, I stand up for. I get a lot of hassles about it, you know. You live in that yellow house, I live in this yellow house, you live your life, I’ll live mine.”

The inflexible motorcycle part refuses to mold to its designated place on the bike. Palmer chucks it on the ground and stands up to stretch.

“It’s not just here. It’s everywheres, you know? They’re doing it all over the place, and...for a long time I thought, “Well jeez, I’m just an individual. I’m an individual that thinks a lot different than other people do, I guess.”

Severin sighs. “There’s always been a lot of complaints, you know...People not liking the looks of Mon Oncle’s business. Put up a fence here. Put up a fence there. Can’t have too many unregistered vehicles showing from the road.”

Carolyn Chute,
Letourneau’s Used Auto Parts

HOWARD THOMAS’ brows are furrowed hard and frown lines are carved deep. He has lived in Buxton for ten years. This is the first time he’s been bothered about the looks of his place.
"That's just the way I look at it. They leave me alone, I'll leave them alone. They want me to pay my tax, I'll pay my tax. That's all they need. And I think you'll find an awful lot of people around that feel the same way."

On July 1, 1988, the Selectmen of Buxton, a rural town miles inland from the coast and tourists, sent the following letter to over thirty of their citizens.

Dear Resident:

Selectmen have requested that our constables report to us any properties which appear to be violating the State Auto Graveyard/Junkyard statute. Your property has been reported to us as possibly violating this state law.

It is our intention to work diligently to improve the over-all beauty of our Town, and our strongest concerns are so-called "auto graveyards and junkyards." Please review the statute enclosed to see if your property may be in violation of this state law.

We will expect to hear from you regarding this matter by August 1, 1988. Hopefully it will not be necessary for the Town to take any further enforcement action. Thank you for taking the time to help our cause.

THE STATUTE included with the letter defines the terms "automobile graveyard" and "junkyard." A yard or a field with three or more "unserviceable, discarded, worn-out or junked" vehicles is an automobile graveyard. If they are being stored "temporarily" or are to be repaired by the business on the property, they are legal. A "junkyard" is defined as a yard or field used for storing discarded or junked plumbing, heating supplies, household appliances, furniture, lumber, scrap iron, steel, garbage dumps, waste dumps, and sanitary fills.

Howard Thomas, brow still furrowed, sits back in his easy chair. The letter has already been tossed aside, slipping down to rest in one of the muddled piles of the living room mess that almost seems to be self-reproducing. Howard Thomas himself is nearly indistinguishable amidst the confusion of clutter. His living room is like a chaotic sort of algebra problem. The first impression is frustration, hopelessness. But once the problem is entered into and dissected slowly, some sort of order and sensibility emerges.

So it is with the Thomas home and yard. Chaos animated with 25 fat cats and two BIG black dogs. Thomas has extended wire pens onto the house for his creatures. A good deal of Howard and Kay Thomas' income goes into bulk cat food and vet bills. They run what seems to be a half-way house for injured or abandoned cats. Only there's no "half-way" about it. The cats never leave.

An ugly runt of a cat named "Scuzzy-butt" struts up the driveway as if he owns the place and all its disorder. The driveway spreads and stretches back beyond the house. Junked cars and trucks peek from behind. There is even an old white limousine—a bit rusted, but still dignified. A wooden shack leans uncertainly towards the house. Christmas lights still line the roof, waiting patiently for their season.

And yet, to Howard and Kay Thomas, everything is logically in its place. Howard moves out of his chair, pulls up his droopy jeans, and disappears into another room of tangled jumble. He emerges cradling an orange puff ball with topaz eyes. He repositions himself in his chair, making room for the cat, Sampson. His dog, Buck, lies in front of the television and looks at the screen every once in a while as if he understands the reasons for Dan Rather's serious expression.

Somehow Howard Thomas manages not to startle either the cat or the dog even though his voices raises to a thundering level. And he clamps a fat cigar in his teeth, forcing his lips into a sneer.

"Well, personally, I don't like it. And my junk, what I have got, I try to keep down back where it don't bother nobody. It's out of sight. I don't think either one of my neighbors is a hollerin' ... I've got seven cars registered...and what I've got, I'm either gonna fix up, or I use. I've got a car trailer, I've got one (car) sitting on it down there....I got no place to take it. And I been a-hauling cars for everybody and their neighborhood around here for nothing. So if I'm doing anything, I'm helping clean up more than I'm doing anything else."

The scowl on his face disappears instantly. He begins to chuckle. The four newest additions, Eenie, Meenie, Miney, and Moe, parade along the back of his chair. Each steps on Howard's in-the-way head. He
waits silently to let them pass safely before continuing. He talks of his 1946 truck with the boom. It’s not registered but he uses it at home.

“You know,” says Kay Thomas from the couch, “that’s what pulled all the stumps on this lot...that’s the only way we cleared the lot, was with that wrecker...hook onto the top of the tree and pull it over and the stump comes out.”

“But to me, anything that you can use, that will run, it’s not junk. That’s the way I look at it,” Howard adds.

“I got two vans that’s sitting down back. Both of them are stacked full of lumber. I am NOT getting rid of them. Because I use them for storage. They’re not up where anybody can see them. They’re not hurting a soul.

“Leave me alone! They leave me alone, I’ll leave them alone. That’s the way I look at it.” He stops to let the redness in his face fade. The corner of his mouth twists up into a smirk.

“If they want to give me a hard time, I’ll take the seven that’s registered and I’ll park them right on the street. And THEN they’ll have something to look at!” His stomach shakes as he chuckles, causing the cat in his lap to spring over to Kay’s lap.

“Yep. I’ve got some cars that’s 600 foot down in the trees. Are they botherin’ somebody? If anybody is walking down there in the first place, he’s trespassing. He shouldn’t be down there. And they ain’t botherin’ a soul.

“People have been accumulating cars for YEARS. I got a friend that told me the other day...he’s got over 100 in the field.”

Kay nods. “You know, I can see they’re trying to enforce the law...if there’s some way to enforce it. But when you can’t get rid of them anywhere, what are you supposed to do with them?”

This is a problem. The Environmental Protection Agency shut down the shredding mills that the junkyards relied on to buy their cars for reusable steel. After the junkyards stripped and drained the cars, the shredding mills would buy them. But since junkyards can no longer sell to the shutdown shredding mills, they must charge higher prices to tow and process a junk car. The cost is anywhere from $50 to $90. That is, the car owner pays the junkyard to take the car off his hands. And the fee is high for all sorts of junk, not just cars.

“It costs you five dollars to go down to Saco Steel to get rid of a refrigerator. A lot of people ain’t got that five dollars to throw away,” Howard adds. Fartface, a comical looking cat, seems to nod in sarcastic sympathy.

“There’s a lot of folks around that ain’t got money to fix their car, and if he’s got a piece that fits it....”

“It’d surprise you how much stuff I give away.

“I do it, hauling cars off, it damned sure ain’t for the money in it. It’s so I don’t sit in this chair and get stiff. It’s something to do. It breaks the monotony. As long as I can make enough to pay for my gas, I don’t care. That’s the way I look at it.”

“But on weekends, I couldn’t haul, during the tourist season...that’s just like your lobstersmen here, they can’t take no lobster on Sunday, on account of the tourists. Well you know what I think about that.”

He wags a stubby finger. The cat licks it.

Howard watches the television for a minute. Despite the newscaster’s hurried talk about warfare in the Persian Gulf, he keeps his train of thought on the tourists.

“Got enough around here. I come in Sunday night...I come up the turnpike from 495, and the other side of Kittery, where that bridge is down there that cost you 75 cents, was bumper to bumper, from there until I got off the turnpike, going south. Thank God I was coming north.”

Kay looks at him with squinting eyes. “Well I get the feeling they’re trying to make Maine into...not a party state, but a fancy state. It’s like the rents around here. Folks can’t rent something, ‘cause they don’t make that kind of money. But the big shots that are coming in from out of state, and the white collars, you know, they can do anything they want to do. And that ain’t right. There ought to be a place for everybody. That’s like we run Thomas’ cat house. I’m up to 25 now, mostly because nobody wants them.”

“Now you tell me,” Howard interrupts, “what is the difference here, and if you go say, 100 miles north of here. Every yard is full of cars. ‘Cause they got no place to take them. That’s no difference.

“The only thing you can do is if you don’t like it, you move. To somewhere nobody’s that picky. And you wait until the big shots move in there and then you move again. But you’re not gonna win.

“I think you’ll find more feel that away than any other way. The only ones that’s got any complaints is your town council. And they ain’t got nothing to do but sit on their big fat butt...and that’s the way I look at it.”

“Leave me alone! They leave me alone, I’ll leave them alone. If they want to give me a hard time, I’ll take the seven cars that’s registered and I’ll park them right on the street. And THEN they’ll have something to look at!”

Facing Page: Howard Thomas
There are more trailers and camps in Miracle City than there were a month ago. Things have gotten out of hand in Miracle City the Selectmen all say.

“Trailers between trailers.”

“And those shacks, too!”

“And there are places where you can see that mess from the road. It’s a disgrace to our town. People will think Egypt is the slums!!”

Carolyn Chute,
Letourneau’s Used Auto Parts

We’re not looking to squeeze these people,” says Selectman Greg Brew. “And we wouldn’t like to go so far as take people to court,” affirms Patricia Chase, also a Selectman of Buxton. But “several citizens were complaining” about the eyesores of Buxton.

The “several citizens” turned out to be illusive. No one wanted to talk publicly.

When pressed for names of those who had complained, the Selectmen became quiet. Hushed like kids in a kindergarten room when the teacher asks who colored on the wall.

“Carlton Berry is the straw that broke the camel’s back,” Patricia Chase hesitantly confided. But you ask Mr. Berry and he says he’s baffled. He says he asked the Selectmen about the commercial junkyards, but had no strong objection to personal junkyards.

Back to Patricia Chase. Eventually she suggested Arlene Hill. Mrs. Hill agreed to an interview. She was one of very few. Could she suggest any other citizens who oppose the junkyards? Silence. “You know, I don’t think any of us are very well versed on what you are asking,” she said. Well versed or not, these are the voices that led Town Hall into action. “Let me think who cares enough about Buxton to stick their necks out.” Try Edith Wright. And William Thomas.

Mrs. Wright cheerfully agreed to talk but later cancelled the interview. She had discussed it with her husband. She said she realized she didn’t know enough about the legalities of the issue.

William Thomas also declined a personal interview, but agreed to talk briefly over the phone. He answered questions simply, saying only that some Buxton home owners lack pride. There was a strong undertow of reluctance to say more. “Try Carroll Walker.”

He too initially declined the interview. He spoke a bit over the phone and suggested Harvey Donald.

“Sure I’ll talk.” Finally.

Upon arriving, Harvey Donald said that he really didn’t have a strong opinion on either side, so he had called Carroll Walker and insisted he come to the interview. Together they said what others seemed so hesitant to say.

Walker believes junk cars and yard clutter are hurting the image of Buxton. “Oh, yeah. Definitely. It is an eyesore. It is an eyesore for people coming in from out of town and for people in town...just as there is an ordinance for noise pollution, so should there be one for eye pollution.”

Donald speculates that “90 percent of the people on the street would say they are against these junkyards...and certainly anybody who’s living next to one and is directly, adversely affected will be against them...That’s why we have a local government. As a watchdog.”

And what the watchdog needs to be aware of, Donald and Walker believe, are the junkyards that have spread through their town like rust. Junky yards are an element of the old Maine—broken down, rusted out, rural Maine. But Maine has been changing. A new Maine is slowly emerging. A Maine with shiny chrome, purring engines, and out-of-state license plates. Maine is growing. And the growth is gradually rubbing out the rust spots. Junkyards and growth don’t mix.

Donald, a real estate agent, has lived in Buxton for over 20 years and has seen amazing growth—especially in recent years.

“Many new people have come into subdivisions, especially from Portland...major corporations have been moving to Portland.” Along with their three-piece suits and day-at-a-glance calendars, they bring employees. “These employees of the new corporations are spilling out of Portland into towns such as Buxton.”

Or else the corporations “snatch up much of Maine’s labor force...we have a labor shortage up here due in part to the infusion of growth...Maine is going through like what Dallas and Houston did ten to fifteen years ago, only their infusion was due to the oil boom. The whole Northeast is in a boom now.”

Caroll Walker’s eyebrows wrinkle with concern.
“The change seemed to start all at once.” He has lived in Buxton for 40 years. He looks at Donald. “In 1965 it was probably hard work to sell a house.” Donald slightly smiles, reflecting on quieter days, and nods twice. Walker goes on. “And not many new buildings were going up...but now it has mushroomed just like an atomic bomb.”

The explosion has side effects. More people require more services. More services demand more funds. Funds from the people. Most of whom don’t have the money to spare. Donald agrees. “A rapid infusion throws things out of balance.”

Like Buxton, many Maine towns today are caught in clashes of culture. Lifestyles are being challenged. And Town Hall is in the middle, caught between adapting to the changes taking place in Maine and representing those who resent the changes. Buxton’s plan of action has not progressed as far as Kennebunk’s. Perhaps it is just a matter of time before the whole hand of Maine is well manicured.

Harvey Donald sees growth as inevitable. “You can’t do anything about it. You can just manage it. You can’t stop people from coming...people like our lifestyle in Maine.”

Walker stops him with a whimper. “But it won’t be Maine much longer. It will be Boston.”

Patricia Chase taps her nails on the table and tilts her head. She says, with a twinge of pride, “There are people that are living in the town of Buxton that commute to Boston.” Maine is becoming a distant suburb of Boston as well as Portland.

“We have a tremendous amount of people moving in. The growth in the last ten years has almost doubled.” Chase has lived in Buxton all of her 56 years. Her girlish, natural smile makes it easy to imagine her in earlier days, going to high school dances and football games, and flirting with the boys.

Her husband is watching television. Edward Kennedy is speaking at the Democratic National Convention. Mr. Chase looks away only when he overhears his wife speaking about the must-see places in Maine. He joins in. His pale blue eyes glint as he describes Maine’s serene beauty. Stonington Harbor and Deer Isle. Tenant’s Harbor. “Not so touristy.”

“What’s so unique about Maine,” Patricia Chase nearly whispers, “is that it’s not too sophisticated.” Unspoiled. She remembers a time, 35 to 40 years ago, when there weren’t even any zoning ordinances in Buxton. She shrugs her narrow shoulders and leans forward. “But with growing numbers of people, a town NEEDS rules and regulations.” A place gets too crowded and you’ve got to draw lines and restrict freedoms to create some sort of order.

And like all small towns in Maine, “Buxton is experiencing growing pains.” Chase is aware that “people with junk cars are gonna have a hard time getting rid of them...some are in poverty and can’t afford to have them moved...of course they shouldn’t have let them pile up that way.”

She shakes her head slowly. “We are damned if we DO and DAMNED if we don’t...some want to see Buxton cleaned up. Others, such as the junk collectors, treasure their junk or have no place to take it...Town Hall will either have to get tough or let it go a little while longer.”

“Eitherway, SOMEONE will be unhappy.”

Arlene Hill is. Very unhappy, that is, about the condition of her town.

“Good leadership and good planning” are in order to “have good control of the junkyards.” She believes it’s characteristic of a Mainer to collect junk only so far as the town government is oblivious.

Looking out the kitchen window of her large white house, Hill reflects on the change in Buxton, where she has lived since 1946.

“I feel that Buxton was a beautiful, rural community...over the years you can see it change.” She smooths her navy-blue pants. “I am as concerned with mobile homes as with junkyards.”

They are both eyesores. Hill wishes that Buxton had created mobile home parks. “There are some very impressive houses in Buxton. The mobile homes nestled in between them detract greatly from Buxton’s beauty.”

She pauses and sighs. And “junkyards shouldn’t devalue property that is expensive or historical...people should have consideration for that.”

“It should be the Selectmen’s leadership to appoint a study committee or a planning board to study junkyard restrictions and possible plans of
action...Buxton will have great growth in the next ten to twenty years. So we better be on top of good planning.” She turns her head away and looks out the window.

DOWN THE STREET, her neighbors, Lesley and Frances Moulton, live on the corner of the intersection in Buxton Center. Right across from Town Hall. Disorder spills out of the side porch to mesh with the clutter in their yard. But for the Moultons, it’s home.

And it’s not junk. A few broken down tractors dominate the scene. Filling in the gaps are farm tools, two or three wood piles, a rusted out ancient truck, a daisy whirl-y-gig, an assortment of tires, an orange van, a weary swing set, and two pink flamingos stabbed into the ground just right so that they appear to be drinking out of a birdbath.

Mr. and Mrs. Moulton sit at the kitchen table eating blueberry pancakes. They have lived in Buxton since 1956. Thirty-three years. Large, bright balloons brag of a recent 49th wedding anniversary celebration. Frances has a grey bob haircut. She wears a yellow plastic clip on the side. She looks at her husband like a schoolgirl with a crush.

His army green work suit has been splattered with the black blood of countless tractor or car innards. His red socks blare out from navy blue tennis shoes. He too received a letter from Town Hall, and he’s given the matter a lot of thought.

“People move out into the country from the city because they like the rural atmosphere, and they enjoy the country.... So they say, ‘Well you can’t sell any of your land unless you sell five acres to put another house on because it will be like a city. And we don’t want it that way.’” He pauses to swish the last bite of a pancake across the syrupy plate. He pops it in his mouth and then leans back in his chair.

“But I’m not gonna junk it because it’s too good. It’s being built.’ Well they weren’t gonna bother with that...see, but they wanted to understand what I was doing. They said one thing about it, ‘What was I gonna do with them pallets down there in the pile?’ And I said, ‘Well that’s kindling wood for next winter. It’s gotta be sawed up and put in under cover.”

Frances Moulton’s voice crackles. “If we threw it away, we’d be cold.”

“We don’t burn oil here. We burn wood.”

“That’s our good wood stove there. Heats up the whole house here.”

Lesley Moulton lets out a low grunt. “If they get TOO rough, I’m gonna lug my trailer with all my cluttered junk and iron and stuff and when the door’s opened on the town garage, I’m gonna back it in there and DUMP it.”

With that, the stubby man pushes himself away from the table and drops his head in a firm, final nod. He moves through the porch screen door and stoops to pick up a greasy wrench.

With the delicacy and diligence of a gardener trimming the most fragile rose, Mr. Moulton applies the wrench to a disabled tractor. With twists, grimaces, and snips he cultivates his garden bed of metallic blooms.

“People move out into the country from the city because they like the rural atmosphere. But if you got some junk in your yard, which you’re gonna use later, it makes a messy looking thing, which is country. They don’t like that.”

Facing Page: Lesley Moulton
THE SALT PILE
BACK ISSUES, BOOKS & BINDINGS

The Salt Tide book (hardbound, 433 pages) sells for $14.95 plus $1.00 for shipping. The cost of back issues is $3.00 each plus $0.50 shipping, with the exception of Nos. 21 & 22 (Eastport for Pride) that costs $6.95 plus $1.00 for shipping. Library rates for back issues are available. Binders (each holds 8 issues) are available for $9.25 including shipping cost.

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No. 30.—Rural Poverty in Maine: Piecing Together a Year; Following a Social Worker; Single Parent With Child.
2. Edited with an introduction by Pamela Wood

SALT TWO

THE MAGAZINE ABOUT THE REALLY IMPORTANT PEOPLE OF MAINE

THE BIG, OLD Summer Hotels are a dwindling breed. They cater to a lost elegance. But some people go without jacket and tie!

NUMBER 27

THE MAGAZINE ABOUT THE REALLY IMPORTANT PEOPLE OF MAINE

SIX MILLION people come to Maine on vacation each year. Do they make life better or worse for Mainers? How are they changing the state?

NUMBER 28

ON CUSTOM House Wharf, life stays much the same. That's the way Fonnie likes it. Grime, fish and sweat. Not a place for Yuppies.

NUMBER 29

THIS is Walter. The bear is Cuddles. Walter's struggling to overcome child abuse. He's also trying to find a home. The two may be the same.

NUMBER 30

THE MAGAZINE ABOUT THE REALLY IMPORTANT PEOPLE OF MAINE

ALLS MAY NOT BE the village square, but people meet in the neon light of the concrete beast to forge the same old links of belonging.

NUMBER 31

THE MAGAZINE ABOUT THE REALLY IMPORTANT PEOPLE OF MAINE

ONE IN EVERY FIVE rural Mainers is poor. Like Monica, struggling to get by. Christmas rubs in the difference between having plenty and little.

NUMBER 32

THE MAGAZINE ABOUT THE REALLY IMPORTANT PEOPLE OF MAINE

NUMBER 33

THE MAGAZINE ABOUT THE REALLY IMPORTANT PEOPLE OF MAINE

NUMBER 34
"We are not folk purists who sleep with dulcimers. We are in show business."