



Give Us Your Best Shot

Moon over frozen China Lake



Roland Fournier, of China, captured this photo of the full moon over a frozen China Lake at the Head of the Lake on January 9.

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Septic
compliance
is board's focus**

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Two companies
seek to set up
in town**

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Unlocking the mysteries in attics and barns

Text and photos by Lyn Rowden

What hidden treasures does your attic, barn or curio cabinet hold? What is that thing you found while digging for a garden? Who are those people in those old photos? Do you know?

So many people here in Maine have generations of family living in the area, with a long unbroken line of heritage stemming from a particular farm or homestead – and they know their people. Most of us take it for granted that Granny knows so-and-so or Grampy knows such-and-such, and we leave it at that. But historical society folks are walking, talking history books, digging into the past and keeping the records, scrapbooks, memories and stories alive for the future.

The members of the Vassalboro Historical Society have put a lot of work and research into solving mysteries held in their own attics and barns. In addition to all the efforts they apply in maintaining a museum and extensive archives, and in writing their research bulletin, each year members come forth with objects from their own collections for an impressive Show and Tell. So when I heard this event was open to the public, off we went to learn something of the people of Vassalboro – and beyond.

I am not going to show and tell about everything we saw because, as you probably know, I edit "Pages in Time," and I would like to feature some of these items there. However, I would like to introduce a few of the VHS members and the interesting artifacts and pictures they displayed, and encourage you to dig into your own past and to support your local historical society.

Helen LaFleur and her daughter have been using modern technology to help them locate old postcards from East Vassalboro. On E-Bay they found a postcard of Butterfield's Store which became the Cates Store and stood directly across the street from the Revere House. She said it had a second story where the grange met and there was a spring floor which made for wonderful dances.



A souvenir photo album was given to each graduating eighth grader in the Class of 1945. Shown here are left to right, Harlan White, Mary E. James and Betty Taylor, who became the librarian and very active supporter of Vassalboro historical preservation.

She also displayed a card, posted with a one cent stamp, showing the old schoolhouse (in use before the one recently set up behind Taylor's blacksmith shop on Rte. 32). When they moved from the old school all the students formed a human chain to pass things to the new school. A souvenir for the eighth grade class of 1945 was a small picture book with each sixth through eighth grade student's photo with name handwritten in it.

Kent London, historian and 20-year veteran of VHS, showed an interesting series

of photos taken on China Lake in 1952 when divers replaced an intake pipe from Kennebec Water District's pumping station.

Ann Cates Higgins displayed a vibrantly colored double-sided, handmade braided rug she found at an antique show. It has a few rough spots identified as mouse nibbled, however, it remains a stun



Fred Pullen, owner of Freddy's Garage, in Vassalboro, proudly displays his antique porcelain Texaco sign.

ning piece made by Vassalboro native, Ruth Priest, with Vassalboro's American Woolen Company wool. A large area rug created by Ruth, along with a handmade cupboard from her home, are on display in the museum. Coincidentally, Ruth had an Uncle Fred who, by marriage, was Ann's great-uncle, Fred Priest. Ann told me her highly energetic sister loved to braid rugs, too, and created an entire set of stair treads for her home. It made me think: with all the hard work people had to do then just to put dinner on the table, and here, they had time to do exquisite masterpieces like this! Hmmm.

David Bolduc, of Waterville, was an adventurous child who liked to explore a small island on the Kennebec near his home on Grove Street. He never lost his interest in the long-gone Waterville Iron

Loring Bernhardt has a traceable genealogy stored which he has painstakingly unraveled and pieced together in gigantic albums after rescuing photographs, postcards and letters from an old burned-out house. Sifting through junk "and animals," he added, (the attic stored grain) he found letters and postcards dating back to 1897, which he sorted by the holidays. One, sent to Percy Taylor in Portland in 1907, is a colored drawing of the Mill Agent House in Vassalboro.

Trying to identify all the people in pictures is difficult without reference points so Loring has a bit of good advice to all who take and keep pictures: write on the backs the subject, when, and where they were taken. Who knows who someday will be trying to identify that Army cousin in 1968, or the roommate you traveled with in '89, or that baby sleeping under the Christmas tree in 2010?

Eric Albee and Esther Bernhardt also shared items of family history. Their contributions will appear soon, in "Pages in Time."

Please, share your valuable treasure of history with the community by sending photos and articles for "Pages in Time." Upcoming generations want to hear your story. I urge everyone to get out and attend a local historical society meeting and take



Postcard of the Mill Agent House, sent in 1907, found by Loring Bernhardt in his old family home.

in a program. Bring the family and see the VHS museum and all the wonderful history houses and archives in our area. VHS welcomes everyone to their meetings every other month on the third Thursday: the next meeting is March 15, at 7:30 p.m.

We enjoyed Show and Tell so much, next year we want to bring some antiques of our own!



Kent London's series of photos show divers replacing an intake pipe for Kennebec Water District in 1952.