

THE GUILFORD REGISTER

ADVENTURES & STORIES FROM THE MAINE HIGHLANDS

MARCH 2026 VOL. 2, NO. 3 FREE



FUN TIMES WITH ARCHAEOLOGY & GEOLOGY
THE HARRIGAN LEARNING CENTER & MUSEUM

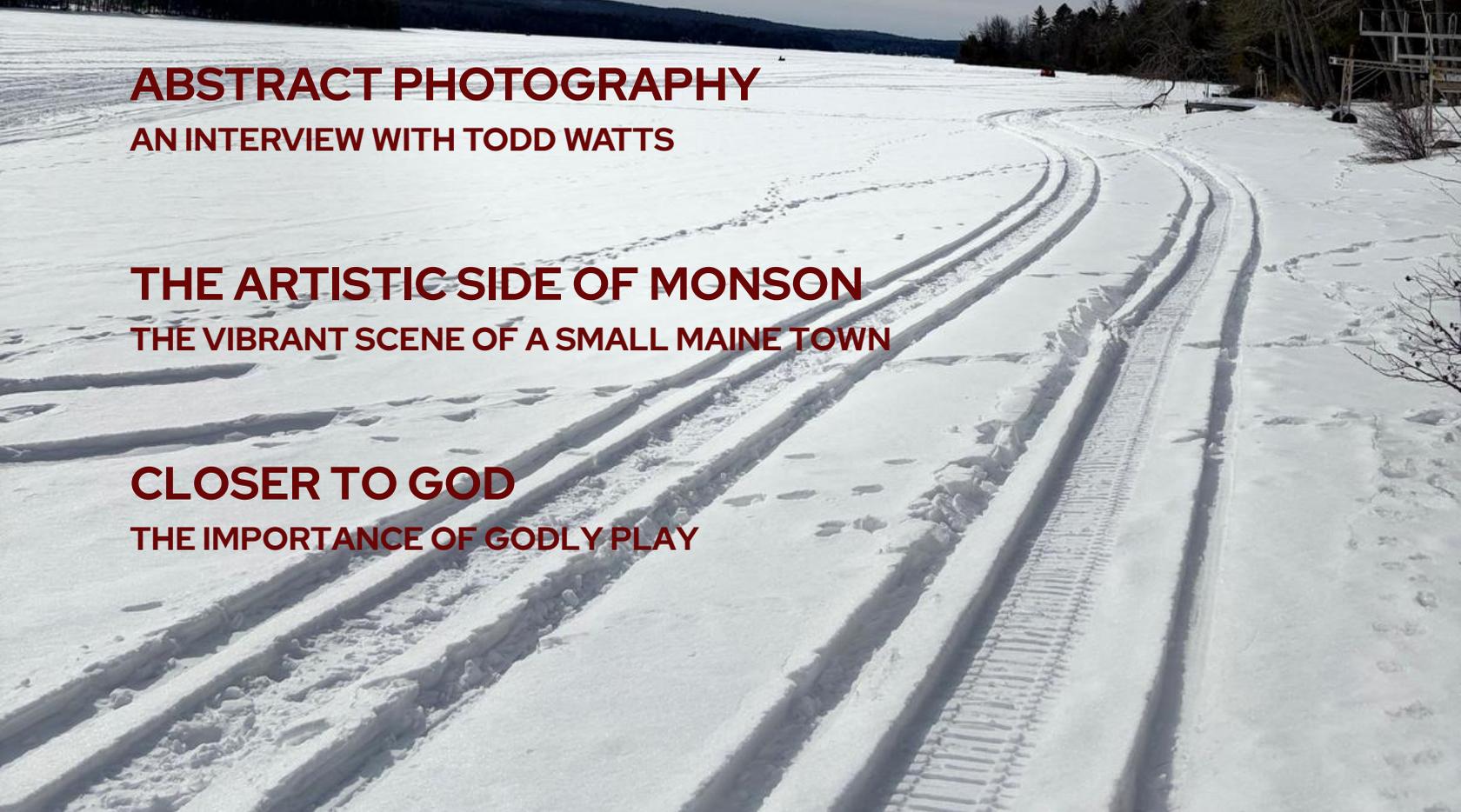
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I Don't Care

By John McNamara

I am not talking about the popular song “I Love It” by Icona Pop, but in a way I am.

I don't care. And I don't mean that in the way that it probably sounds. Those three words out of context might make me sound like a total jerk, but that is far from the truth. When I was younger, much like almost everyone else I grew up with or who grew up before or after me, I cared a lot about the wrong things. I cared about the clothes my parents bought me—never the right ones. I cared about the pimple that always arrived at the worst possible moment in my life. I cared about what people thought about me, said about me, and then bullied me about. I didn't know then, as most kids don't know today, that all that crap doesn't matter. The problem was not me. It was everyone else around me.

Social media perpetuates this problem today—thrives on it and pits kids and adults against each other every day with words and images and what is “right” and “wrong” according to this influencer or that one. The same thing that I experienced as a kid continues today. The difference now is that it spreads faster and farther, and hurts deeper than ever before. It even kills.

At some point in my life—it might have been that rainy day in July when Jack let out his first scream when the doctor smacked his bottom, welcoming him into our world. It might have happened sooner, but I think Jack's birth is a good starting point. At that point in my life, I stopped caring what other people thought about me. I stopped worrying if people were talking behind my back about me. I stopped living my life for others. I took control of my life, and, for better or worse, the last couple of decades have been the most rewarding—the most fulfilling. And it all comes down to not caring about things that aren't worth caring about.

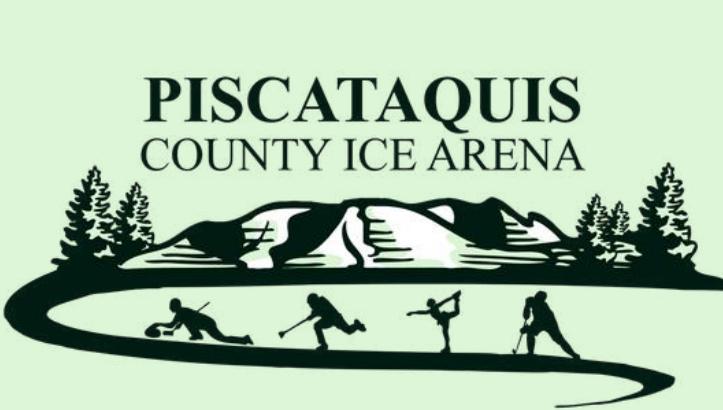
Don't get me wrong. I care if I upset someone. I care if I make a mistake or hurt someone's feelings. But what I don't care about is what others think or say about me. I know this is something that comes with age, most of the time. There are many people—probably millions—who never reach this moment in their lives, and they spend their entire lives trying to impress someone—the world.

I learned that everyone has an opinion and will say something nice and/or something bad about someone—that is part of being human. It is how we react to those words and actions that define who we are, and I personally don't care. I dress the way I dress because I feel comfortable in those clothes. I drive what I drive, eat what I eat, say what I say, and do whatever I do because that is me. People can like it or not, I don't care.

You see, true friends do care. True friends—genuine people do care about you, about those close to them, and so they accept their friends as they are. They don't try to change, shame, or bully them. The same applies to any couple. If you are in a relationship and one person wants the other to change so the two ‘match’ better, then the relationship is doomed. Like me—love me for who I am, including all of my kinks, ticks, and flaws, or move on. I don't care.

I've spent the last 17 years teaching our son the same lesson, and given the access teenagers have to social media and the fact that he was uprooted from the big city to move to rural Maine, he has done exceptionally well at following the ‘I Don't Care’ credo. And this is an important lesson for us all. It is important for us to grow, and to be proud of who we are—what we have become. We need to own our narrative and be confident in the decisions we make—the clothes we wear, the friends we make, the life we live. If we are not, then we are living someone else's version of our life, and that is not right.

So when you hear me say ‘I don't care,’ you can be sure it means that I don't care about some rumor or some chatter about me or what I am doing. I am living my best life, meeting wonderful new friends, fulfilling my destiny to help others, and being the best version of me that I can be. If anyone has a problem with that... well, I don't care.



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Monson Arts: Breathing New Life into Maine's North Woods

By John McNamara

Nestled in the remote town of Monson, Maine, at the edge of the vast North Woods and serving as the last stop before the legendary 100-Mile Wilderness on the Appalachian Trail, Monson Arts has emerged as a transformative cultural initiative aimed at spurring economic development through the arts. Launched in 2018 as an initiative of Maine's Libra Foundation, this residency and arts center represents an ambitious vision to revitalize a community long defined by its natural resources and manufacturing heritage.

The town of Monson carries a rich history dating back to its founding in 1822. For generations, the community's economy depended on natural resources, with slate quarries supporting a thriving industry from the late 19th through the early 20th centuries, and Moosehead Manufacturing producing wood furniture from 1945 until its closure in 2007. This loss of manufacturing dealt a significant blow to the region, prompting the need for innovative approaches to economic renewal. The Libra Foundation saw an opportunity in Monson's artistic heritage and natural beauty and invested in developing an arts program to spark both economic and creative growth.

Monson has long attracted artists drawn to its dramatic landscape and sense of place. The town was home to renowned photographer Berenice Abbott and painter Carl Sprinchorn, while Henry David Thoreau wrote about the area in *The Maine Woods*. This artistic lineage, combined with the area's stunning natural setting, provides the perfect foundation for Monson Arts' mission to provide time and space for creative work.

At the heart of Monson Arts is its residency program, which welcomes emerging and established artists and writers from around the world. During each session, cohorts of five artists and five writers are invited to either a two-week or a four-week program throughout the year, receiving private studios, private bedrooms in shared housing, all meals, and a \$500 stipend for four-week programs or \$250 for two-week programs. The program is remarkably inclusive, open to anyone at any stage of their career working in diverse media, including drawing, painting, sculpture, photography, film, video, installation, fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and audio production.

The physical infrastructure supporting this vision is impressive. Residents' studios are located in newly renovated Main Street buildings, specifically designed for visual artists and writers. Visual arts studios are spacious, well-lit, and equipped with large work tables and sinks, while writing studios offer comfortable furnishings, including work tables, bookshelves, and reading chairs. Artists also have access to woodshop and metalshop facilities for fabrication. Residents live in newly renovated historic homes throughout town, within walking distance of studios and downtown amenities, with fully furnished three-bedroom structures featuring shared kitchens, bathrooms, common areas, laundry facilities, and high-speed fiber optic internet.

A particularly noteworthy offering is the Abbott Watts Residency for Photography, which provides access to the photography studio and darkroom of Todd Watts in nearby Blanchard, adjacent to the former home of Berenice Abbott

herself. This unique opportunity connects contemporary photographers directly to the legacy of one of the 20th century's most influential documentary photographers.

Beyond residencies, Monson Arts has established itself as a vital community resource through its gallery exhibitions and educational partnerships. The Monson Arts Gallery has hosted diverse programming, from exhibitions featuring work by artists from the Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, and Micmac Nations to shows of Berenice Abbott's vintage photographs from the 1930s and 1940s. The organization also runs high school visual arts and writing programs, bringing students from six area high schools to Monson Arts twice monthly for intensive creative work.

The organization's impact has been guided by thoughtful leadership. Stuart Kestenbaum, former director of the Haystack Mountain School of Crafts and Maine's poet laureate, served as artistic director from the program's inception in 2017 until 2020 bringing his extensive experience in arts education and community engagement to shape the organization's vision and programs.

Applications for Monson Arts residencies are accepted three times annually, with deadlines on January 15, May 15, and September 15. The program has grown substantially since its inception, aiming to host 100 residents annually, making it an increasingly significant destination for artists and writers seeking focused creative time.

Monson Arts represents more than just an artists' residency—it's a bold experiment in rural revitalization through culture. By investing in the arts, the Libra Foundation has helped transform Monson into a destination that honors its manufacturing past while building a sustainable future rooted in creativity, community, and the inspiring landscape of Maine's North Woods.





THE GALLERY

ARTIST STORIES, ARTWORK & INTERVIEWS

Each month we will highlight a Maine artist or art gallery. If you are a Maine artist or art gallery, or know of one who would like to be showcased here, reach out to us at john@theguilfordregister.com

Todd Watts' Artistic Expression

By John McNamara

Nestled in the woods of Northern Maine, Blanchard Township is a beautiful, wooded landscape. In that town, along the Piscataquis River, sits a home that once belonged to Berenice Abbott, an American photographer best known for her portraits of cultural figures of the interwar period, as well as New York City photographs of architecture and urban design of the 1950s, among other works. Next door, you will find Todd Watts and the Abbott Watts Residency studios.

When I arrived on a cold, winter morning, the ground was still covered in snow. The roads were a mixture of ice and sand. It was a winter wonderland in every direction, and it was cold. Todd and I began my tour in his editing studio, a building he and his wife, sculptor, Jemma Gascoine built some years earlier as her ceramic sculpture gallery, in Blanchard, before moving it to Monson and establishing the Gascoine Gallery and the Monson Pottery.. It was warm inside, and one wall of all windows looked out over the frozen Piscataquis River. A sight that I suspect is quite stunning in the spring when all the snow melts, and the river rages south. It is a perfect room to create.

The other walls are covered with shelves of art books or some of Todd's work, all large, framed works of art. I feel compelled to call them works of art, not photography, because of the unique process Todd uses to create each one. Throughout my career in the art world, I have spoken with many photographers—even shown many of their works in my galleries. Those photographers were much more traditional—landscapes, nature, people. You could look at the image and see the beauty in the detail, the lighting. The photographer waited for the exact moment to capture the shot. Some of them would adjust color and contrast on the computer before printing and mounting an image for a gallery. Todd is not that kind of photographer.

Todd grew up in New York. He went to the High School of Music and Art and later to the School of Visual Arts. He studied painting, sculpture, and drawing—all types of art. He loved art—still does—but was not sure what he would do for a career. He was too focused on studying all of the elements of art and enjoying the process. As part of his graduation, he needed 35mm slides of all his work—his paintings, sculptures, etc.—but before he could hire one of the photography students to capture his portfolio, they had all left for the summer. Unsure of how he would photograph his artwork, Todd went walking through campus when another student, a rich kid, stopped him and told a story about how his father would not give him any more money. The kid had a beautiful Nikon camera and was willing to sell it to Todd for \$100. One desperate for cash and the other desperate to graduate, a deal was made. Todd bought his first camera and graduated. After graduation, Todd packed his car and drove to Haight Ashbury in San Francisco. He then spent four months in California with that Nikon, taking photos—almost 3,000 in total. He had fallen in love with the camera—with photography. That serendipitous moment with the rich kid gave us the Todd Watts we all know today.

His first foray into real photography work was architectural photography—photographing buildings. He and his upstairs neighbor in Tribeca, over a bottle of bourbon, decided to start an architectural photography company. For a couple of years, the two of them photographed buildings all over the US before a girl got involved—love got in the way, and the two decided to shutter the company. That is when Todd stepped into teaching photography at the School of Visual Arts.

Today, Todd creates large-scale works of art; not photographs. A photograph is his canvas—his first layer. Each of his works is a multi-layered abstract image that includes hundreds or thousands of components. One of his more intriguing works, called Blackbird, includes more than 2,000 images of birds. This is just one example of how much time and energy Todd puts into each work. He does not take photos and then alter or enhance them. Instead, Todd comes up with a concept for an artwork and, using one photograph as the 'canvas' for his work, he lets it

(WATTS, continued on page 9)



Above: Canary, 2025

I Wasn't Really Serious

By Walter Boomsma

I do seriously admire the work of Maine Author Tim Cotton. (I am serious about that.) Tim is a retired Bangor Police lieutenant, author, and social media personality famous for his witty, heartwarming posts about law enforcement and life in Maine. He recently shared some insightful thoughts about what people post on Facebook. Since he mentioned not getting any raisins in a bowl of Raisin Bran, he tickled my sense of humor. So, with my tongue in my cheek, I added the following comment.

Do you suppose the day will come when obituaries include, "The deceased lived an active life scrolling and posting on Facebook?"

I wasn't really serious. Once more comments were added, I realized I may have been. It doesn't take long to discover some people seem to live on Facebook. If it means that much to them, why not include it in one's final legacy? Apparently, I struck a chord because several people thanked me for the idea. Unfortunately, I can't tell if their tongue was in their cheek when they replied.

Social media is redefining the word "friend," so I am using it here advisedly. I seem to have several "friends" who spend every waking moment searching for politically related posts to share. Others are anxious to share their medical issues and seek medical advice. Some post cute photos of puppies and kittens. I rarely respond directly. Are they friends with me or friends with Facebook? Perhaps instead of waiting until "death do them part" from their phone, Facebook could offer some participation awards. "He who spends the most time on Facebook wins."

Oh, wait, they do. I've received several "top fan" badges. I'm never sure why, but I think it relates to the number of comments I've made on a particular page. It's some sort of participation trophy. I wasn't striving for it. I haven't figured out Facebook's algorithms, but I know that's how they decide what I get to see. I find some irony in the fact that the most recent one I was granted involved an organization I frequently criticize. So, in addition to redefining "friend," Facebook is now redefining "fan."

I suspect the quality of our participation in Facebook—all social media, really—is a non-issue for them. All that really matters is we just keep scrolling and clicking "like." I can't prove this, but I think that if you hesitate while scrolling, Facebook considers that interest. I recently received a notice on Facebook about a ballroom dancing class in another state that I'm interested in. I'm not sure what I did to deserve that notice.

Some of my "friends" are helping my participation by tagging me in posts and "highlighting" posts that I'm not interested in, but they think it increases their chance of winning something. They also assume they'll get another star in their heavenly crown if they share missing children announcements that are actually nothing more than clickbait.

I could go on.

Facebook is probably one of the least understood communication vehicles we have available to us. It, and social media in general, serve some valuable purposes—one reason these platforms have been so readily adopted. Personally, I don't plan to promote it in my obituary. And I hope my involvement in social media isn't my legacy.

An interesting exercise, maybe an AI program could do this—Facebook is doing it, but they probably won't share the results, would be to write a description of you and your interests based solely on your social media activity. If you're willing to think about that, you may find it creates perspective. I'm undecided whether a person's perspective is apparent on Facebook or lost there. And that begs the question of whether or not it's an accurate portrayal.

Years ago, a popular icebreaker for new groups was to ask what two words people wanted on their gravestone. Beyond the basic data, some gravestones include an epitaph. Obituaries tend to report a person's involvement. You may not want to write or plan either, but thinking about them can reveal perspective—or better yet, help create it. "Here lies Joe. He departed this world, leaving behind over 1,000 Facebook Friends."



Seth Godin recently noted that smartphones want our attention—as much of it as they can get. *"It does that by bringing the outside world to wherever you are, piercing the intimacy of here and the magic of now by persistently creating anxiety or fear or satisfaction, again and again and again."*

How's your relationship with your smartphone and social media? Who are you, and how are you spending your time and energy? Relationship quality should be an issue. You do have choices.

*Walter Boomsma is an educator, writer, and the author of **Small People—Big Brains**. With a background in teaching and public speaking, he blends practical wisdom with a deep appreciation for lifelong learning. His work often explores themes of personal growth, communication, and community engagement, encouraging readers to think differently and discover meaning in everyday experiences. Through his writing and outreach, Walter strives to spark conversations that lead to understanding, empathy, and positive change.*



Closer to God

One thing that I have really missed since moving to Maine is my life in children's ministries. I miss telling Godly Play stories, and in full honesty, I need these stories to be an active part of my life. The other day, when I was working at my day job at Davis Brothers Furniture (apologies for the plug), we started a conversation about Lent and our practices. There was a mention of giving up potato chips or not saying mean things. We had some giggles, but then I remembered Lent is a time to be serious and sincere. One of the things I learned through Godly Play and some very wise clergy (too many to name) is that Lent is a time to pray, to turn to a practice that brings us close to God. It can be giving up something that may take you away from God, but it can also be something that makes God a greater focus in your life. And when done sincerely, it's something that will bring great joy to your life, not guilt or shame. I also realized I have fallen out of my practices of prayer and meditation and haven't been feeling close to God at all. And I have kind of been grumpy.

So I did what I find most natural and familiar: I turned to Godly Play and began a new Lenten practice. I joined a circle of one and shared the stories with myself. I begin with the Circle of the Church Year. Easter is such a Holy Mystery that we need 40 days to prepare for it. We need time to pray, meditate, and remember. This brought memories of telling the story of Jesus in the wilderness to the children at Ash Wednesday services. Jesus spent 40 days in the desert fasting, praying, and facing temptations. Jesus found strength in the words of our Lord and resisted. The story of the synagogue and upper rooms tells of Jesus preparing his disciples for what was about to happen. And finally, I thought about the story of Holy Week, Jesus in Jerusalem. The last time he went into the Holy City. Jesus arrived on Sunday, and he was greeted with cheers, and people waved palms and laid coats at the feet of his donkey. He would preach from the steps of the Synagogue, people would listen, and some would become afraid. On Wednesday, he grew angry and flipped tables when people were selling and making financial transactions in the synagogue. The men in charge grew nervous and afraid of this man. They approached one of his followers, Judas, paying him to betray Jesus. On Thursday, Jesus and his followers went to the upper room and shared the Last Supper. Jesus washed the feet of his men, and told them he would always be with them, and he would be present in the bread and wine. Jesus was captured later that night and was put on Trial. Pontius Pilate asked the people if he should spare Jesus or Barabbas. The crowd cried out for Jesus to die. He was crucified and died on Friday. On Saturday, Jerusalem was quiet and somber. The women had not betrayed Jesus; they returned to his grave on Sunday, and there was the most amazing Holy Mystery: the stone in front of his tomb had moved, and it was empty! A man appeared to the women that they did not recognize, but they knew who he was... Easter Sunday is a day of pure joy and celebration. And we get to say the "A" word that we can't say during Lent.

I may not have a classroom or a circle to share the stories of Godly Play, but I do have the stories in my heart. When I think of them, I feel like I am back in community with the people who love the sacred stories, the people who love the Church, just like me, and mostly, I feel a whole lot closer to God.



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THE LIBRARY SHELF

SHORT STORIES & CHAPTERS WRITTEN BY MAINE AUTHORS

Each month we will highlight a short story or serial written by a Maine author. If you are a Maine writer, or know of one who would like to be showcased here, reach out to us at john@theguilfordregister.com

Cold Girlfriend

A murder-mystery-adolescent, humor (in two parts)
By Dana Green

Chapter 5: Nine-year-old Boy Wants to Drive a Pickup Truck

Got your Ticonderoga yellow pencils sharpened? Ready to write in your blue composition notebooks? The murder mystery detective clues are about to begin. First off, Timmy had been thinkin' about "Little Henry" our fill-in mini hockey jockey. When we are short one player for our ice hockey matches, we let the little nine-year old (going on ten) Henry lace up his sister's white figure skates and play winger for us. His older brothers are Linwood and Jerry. Jerry was Kandy's last known boyfriend of record. That would be clue #1. Write it down.

Timmy's epiphany (moment of understanding) meant we would get Henry over to my place and get him to "spill the beans" on what he knew. Timmy said, "Henry is the key to solving this crime." I figured Timmy had been watching way too much Perry Mason. However, as his wingman, I was more than willing to play along.

Henry came over on the next Saturday for pizza and foosball. He was three inches too short to play pocket pool. Mom made us pepperoni individual pizzas. Henry loved it. "Little Henry" had just accepted his teacher's recommendation (St. Anthony's Catholic Elementary) to be Timmy's understudy — altar boy. He followed us around like a puppy dog on a short leash. Understudy—Catholic alter boys—are the worst. That is not a clue. But it is valuable information, nevertheless.

Henry lives with his stepbrothers, Linwood 24, and Jerry 19. Jerry is a junior in high school and soon to be "the second dropout" stepbrother in their household of Sunoco grease monkeys. Henry's mom ran off to Florida with a "Fuller Brush" salesman when Henry turned five. My mom said, "Henry's mom loved expensive hairbrushes more than her family." Topping that line, my dad quipped, "Henry's dad joined the French Foreign Legion and has not been heard of since."

Wow, am I lucky or what? My Catholic parents "hate me just enough to stay married." My dad loves my sisters. It is me and my brother he despises. "Ha! Ha! Cross my heart and hope to die." Just kidding, Chummy. Damn, do not be so darn serious. Do not write that down. It is not a clue. It is a family secret. Now play close attention. A bunch of clues are coming your way.

Chapter 6: The "King's English"

While the three of us were eating pizza in my bedroom, Timmy began his "Wizardly" quiz on our prey. It was masterful.

"Hey, Henry, tell Dana and me what you saw your brothers doing at night down on the frog pond during Christmas break?" asked Timmy with a crooked eyebrow.

"What are you talking about?" said Henry looking down purposely at his last piece of pizza.

"I heard you telling Fr. Rancourt that your brothers did something really bad," said Timmy.

"You heard that? I said that in the confessional. That is private," said Henry with a blushing cheek.

"Henry, your puffy cheeks are beet red. You blush when you are fibbing. Tell us the truth," I said.

"No. It is a family secret. I will get into big trouble with Linwood and Jerry if they find out."

"Not with us," I said.

"Jeepers Creepers. You guys won't tell on me, will you?" asked Henry very suspiciously.

Timmy did the sign of the cross and pledged us both to Encyclopedia Brown's badge of honor.

Pausing for a moment. Henry then said, "I was sleeping when my older brother woke me up and had me put my snowsuit on over my pajamas with my boots. He said we need to go out for an hour..."

Henry stopped mid sentence and stared at Timmy. I waited.

Then Timmy said gently, "Henry my understudy buddy, go on. The truth will set you free."

I thought, 'Timmy's mom would be so proud of his use of the King's English.'

Henry continued, "Linwood said if I went with him and Jerry in his pickup, he would let me drive partway home."

Henry took a deep breath and looked skyward.

"And?" I asked.

"We drove a short distance in the dark and then he pulled off to the edge of the road and parked next to a snowbank. Linwood told me to lay down on the bench seat and keep my head down. No peeking out the windows. Jerry covered me with a wool blanket," said Henry.

"Did you see anything? What did your stepbrothers do?" asked Timmy in a prodding voice.

"I peeked out the frosty covered rear window. I saw Linwood and Jerry take our old "moose rug" out of the back of the pickup truck. Jerry had a flashlight in his mouth. They carried the rug down behind a snowbank. I realized that Linwood had parked us beside the hockey rink frog pond. A half an hour later I was half asleep and freezing cold when they returned with the rug and tossed it into the back of the truck."

I asked, "Henry what happened after that?"

"The three of us rode home and I went back to bed. My fingers and toes were turning purple."

"Hey, Henry, did you get to drive the pickup truck home?" I asked.

"Nope."

"Figures," said Timmy smiling.

I knew that wry smile. It was Timmy "The Wizard" or should I say, Encyclopedia Brown's Master Detective smirk of ... 'I got the clue I was lookin' for.'

(GIRLFRIEND, continued on page 11)

A Hidden Gem in Rural Maine: The Harrigan Learning Center and Museum

By John McNamara

Nestled in the small town of Milo, Maine, the Harrigan Learning Center and Museum stands as an unexpected treasure trove of natural history, archaeology, and geological wonders. This museum of geology and archaeology opened to the public in 2016, transforming a quiet corner of Piscataquis County into an educational destination that has captivated visitors from across the state and beyond.

The museum represents the remarkable vision and generosity of Tom and Nancy Harrigan, who designed and funded the facility as part of a \$4 million complex intended to improve the Piscataquis region's economy. What began as Tom Harrigan's personal collection, gathered during decades of worldwide travel, has evolved into a comprehensive learning center that challenges conventional museum experiences. The Three Rivers Milo-Brownville Kiwanis Foundation owns the museum that serves as an educational center for children and a tourist destination.

Located at 15 Harris Pond Road in Milo's business park, adjacent to an impressive 67,000-panel solar array, the museum defies expectations for a rural Maine attraction. Its collection spans millions of years of Earth's history and represents cultures from around the globe. Visitors encounter everything from dinosaur tracks and eggshell fragments to ancient Incan tools crafted from meteorites, from Columbian mammoth teeth to intricate walnut shell carvings featuring twelve detailed human figures.

What truly distinguishes the Harrigan Learning Center from traditional museums is its hands-on philosophy. Unlike most museums, which are sober, quiet places that discourage interaction with the exhibits, this facility is a breath of fresh air, encouraging guests to take photos, engage with the exhibits, and even handle some pieces. Director Tom Harrigan and Assistant Director Lydia Richard create a welcoming atmosphere where learning happens through storytelling as much as through observation. As Harrigan himself notes, "this museum is built on stories," and he possesses a narrative for nearly every artifact on display.

The museum's diverse collection reflects Harrigan's extensive travels and passionate curiosity. Display cases showcase fossil fish, dinosaur tracks, Native American artifacts from the Milo area, and archaeological specimens from distant civilizations, including Mayan, Aztec, Toltec, and Incan cultures. The natural history section features cave formations, gems and jewelry, iron pyrite, amethyst, citrine, and jade. Mammoth teeth, large and small geodes, fossil wood, and even a glass sponge round out the paleontological offerings.

One of the museum's most celebrated attractions is its fluorescent mineral room, where ultraviolet light reveals hidden colors invisible in normal daylight. Visitors consistently describe this darkened chamber as "mind-boggling" and a highlight of their visit. The glowing rocks create an almost otherworldly experience that appeals equally to children and adults.

Adding to the museum's appeal is its newest resident: a full-sized robotic deinonychus dinosaur that greets visitors. This "terrible claw" dinosaur, named for the distinctive sickle-shaped claw on its second toe, lived during the early Cretaceous Period

approximately 115 to 108 million years ago. The animatronic creature brings prehistoric times to life in a way that particularly enchants younger visitors, who can also obtain "dinosaur hunting licenses" as they explore the exhibits.

The museum has garnered significant recognition since its opening. In 2018, the Harrigans received the Myrick Award from the Executive Committee of Piscataquis County Economic Development for their contributions to the area. U.S. Senator Susan Collins has praised the facility, and it has hosted visits from U.S. Representative Jared Golden and U.S. Senator Angus King. Regional media outlets have featured the museum repeatedly, spreading word of this rural gem.

For those planning a visit, the museum operates seasonally with specific hours: Wednesdays and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Sundays from 1 to 4 p.m. The facility welcomes school field trips and group visits by appointment. Admission prices are modest, and recent information indicates that children under 16 enjoy free admission. The museum also maintains a reference library with an extensive collection of books for those wishing to deepen their research into the subjects on display.

Beyond the museum building itself, the Harrigan complex includes the Milo-Brownville & Points North Visitors Center, featuring exhibits from local historical societies, wildlife and aerial photography, mineral displays, and books by local authors. The Three Rivers Kiwanis building houses a six-table pool room that has become a community gathering spot, with leagues forming throughout the year.

The Harrigan Learning Center and Museum represents more than just a collection of artifacts; it embodies the power of individual vision to transform a community. Tom and Nancy Harrigan's decision to build this facility on 2.1 acres donated by the town of Milo, then gift the entire complex to the Three Rivers Kiwanis Foundation, demonstrates extraordinary civic commitment. Their contribution has provided rural Maine with an educational resource that rivals those of urban institutions while maintaining the personal touch and accessibility that make learning truly engaging.

Whether you're a geology enthusiast, a history buff, or simply looking for an enriching family outing, the Harrigan Learning Center and Museum offers an experience that proves treasures can be found in the most unexpected places.



speak to him. He adds layers of photographs to create a truly breathtaking abstract image. His work is in museums around the country, and you can see some in his wife's gallery in Monson, the Gascoine Gallery. These are works that need to be seen in person. It is only then that you can get up close and see the multitude of details. Of course, a private tour of his studio, as I got, will give you the story behind the works—the journey from start to finish—and those stories that Todd shared helped me see his work from a whole new perspective.

Today, Todd has the quaint studio where we began our interview, but across the road, he has a much larger facility used for printing, storing, and preparing works for shipment. Both buildings are surrounded by nature, and Todd built them so nature could be enjoyed from inside. Windows wrap the buildings, letting swarms of natural light fill the spaces.

In the mid 1970s, Todd worked with Berenice Abbott on a project in New York—photographing traffic. They spent weeks together as Berenice was driven around the city, sitting in the back of a convertible Porsche, taking photos of traffic. That project did not produce the images Berenice hoped for, so they scrapped that project, and Berenice invited Todd to Maine to work with her on printing a portfolio of her work. Todd spent two months living in Berenice's home, making her prints. That led to Todd buying the empty house next door to Berenice, and from time to time over the next 16 years, the two of them worked on a plethora of projects together. Todd remained in New York to complete most of the work, but over time, he needed to enlarge his studio and not finding suitable space he decided to renovate the house in Maine and move into it in 2000. He has been producing incredible works in Maine ever since.

His big studio across the road became part of the Monson Arts Residency program in 2021 with the formation of the Abbott Watts Residency for Photography. That program accepts photographers from around the world each year, and you can learn all about it here (www.monsonarts.org/residencies/abbott-watts-residency).

The lucky resident photographer lives in an ultra-cool residence in Monson and come to Blanchard to work with state-of-the-art equipment to help bring their vision to life. Still, probably the most important part of their residency is the time they spend with Todd, learning the trade, listening to his stories, and hearing about the journey of photography over the decades.

Of all the art and photography throughout the larger studio, it is hard not to notice the dozens of masks, large and small. Funny ones and scary ones, too. Some are simple in design and material, while others are quite elaborate. This collection began with Todd buying a mask he liked in SoHo. Before he knew it, friends were buying him masks for holidays, birthdays, etc., which has resulted in quite the collection that includes a Canadian child's hockey goalie mask, a 1930s catcher's mask, a US Navy cold-weather mask, and other various masks from around the world.

Todd's first book, the Blanchard Weather Report, which is a must-buy, began as an email. Todd would send a photo of the day's weather to a few friends. Those emails got forwarded around, and soon more than 250 people wanted to sign up to receive them, so the logical next step was to take all those photos and produce a pictorial weather report. The photographs are not documentary. Instead the reader is taken on an

emotional journey through the four seasons of Maine, and all the weather-wonderful nature locals take for granted up here. For someone new to Maine, the Blanchard Weather Report has been an enjoyable “read.” I have enjoyed how Todd has captured the beauty of this corner of the world throughout the year.

Like many artists, the concept of “retiring” is not in Todd's vocabulary. He is deep into his second book, which will be a little different than Blanchard Weather Report. In this second book, the reader will experience what Todd experienced when he made the photos. This book pairs words and images, with the words focused on the experience of when the photograph was made rather than an explanation of the photograph, which I think is a fascinating approach to talking about photography, and for art lovers who crave hearing the “how” and the “why” an artist creates something, this book will be for them. It will be like being in a gallery with the artist right next to you.

He does what he loves, and he loves what he does. He cannot imagine not being creative, so for the foreseeable future, Todd will continue to produce a few works each year and keep his studio doors open to photographers who want an experience of a lifetime. And for anyone who follows Todd's work but has not had a behind-the-scenes tour, as I recently received, you should reach out to him. It is an absolute joy listening to Todd share his life story. See more of Todd's work at www.toddwatts.com.



Above: *Now and Then*, 2023; Below: *Blackbird*, 2025



The Story of Milo, Maine: A Small Town with a Big Heart

By John McNamara

Nestled along the banks of the Sebec River in Piscataquis County, Milo, Maine, is one of those places that feels like stepping into a quieter, gentler time. With a population hovering around 2,300 residents, this small town has a rich history woven through with the threads of industry, community, and the kind of resilience that defines so much of rural New England.

The story of Milo really begins in the early 19th century, when the first European settlers arrived in what was then wilderness. The town was incorporated in 1823, and like many Maine communities, it took its name from a place far removed from these pine-covered hills—in this case, the ancient Greek city of Milo, known for its Olympic champion wrestler Milo of Croton. It's a rather grand name for a humble frontier settlement, but perhaps those early residents had big dreams for their little corner of Maine.

What really put Milo on the map, though, was the river. The Sebec River wasn't just a beautiful feature of the landscape—it was power, opportunity, and lifeblood all rolled into one. By the mid-1800s, the river's strong current was driving sawmills and gristmills, and the town was buzzing with activity. Lumber was king in those days, and Milo's forests seemed endless. The sound of saws and the smell of fresh-cut pine filled the air as logs floated down the river to be processed and shipped out to growing cities throughout New England.

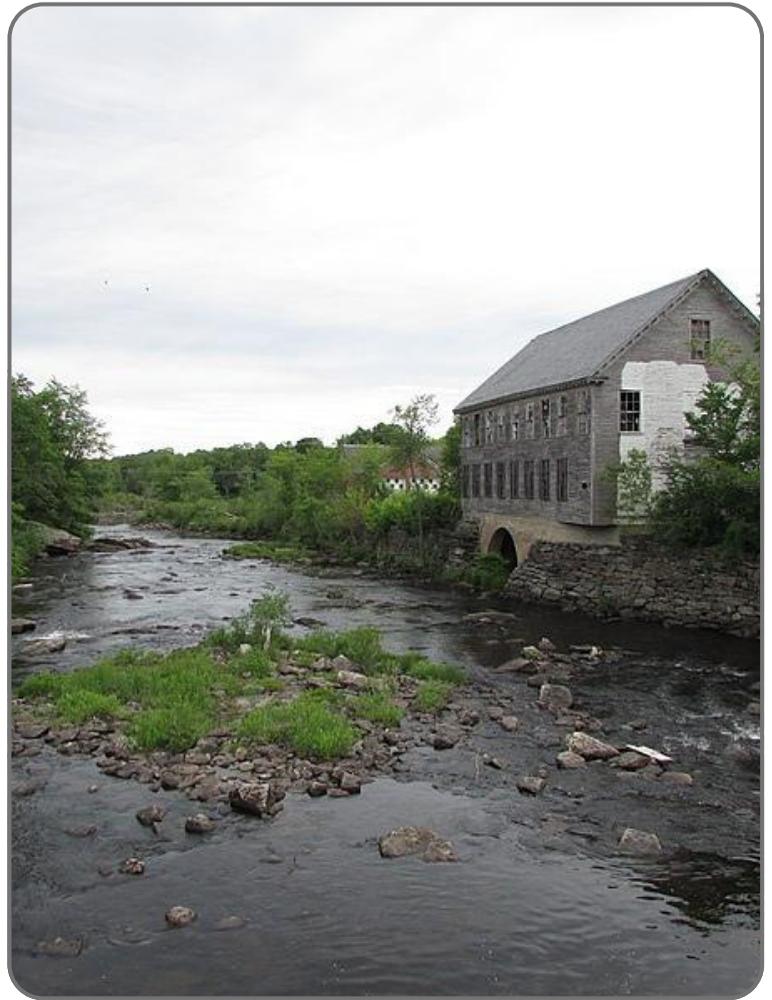
As the 19th century progressed, Milo evolved from a rough logging town into a proper community. Churches were built, schools opened, and the town center began to take shape, with shops and businesses serving the growing population. The arrival of the railroad in the 1880s was a game-changer, connecting Milo more directly to the wider world and making it easier to transport goods and welcome visitors.

One of Milo's most distinctive landmarks emerged in the early 20th century: the Three Rivers Community. This wasn't just a neighborhood—it was where three rivers (the Sebec, Pleasant, and Piscataquis) came together, creating a natural meeting point that had always drawn people to the area. The community that grew up around this confluence became a vibrant part of town life.

The textile industry also found a home in Milo during this period. Mills that once processed logs began processing wool and cotton as well, and for many decades, these mills provided steady employment for townspeople. There's something special about mill towns—a particular kind of community spirit that comes from generations of families working side by side, sharing the rhythms of shift work and seasonal changes.

Like so many small New England towns, Milo faced its share of challenges as the 20th century wore on. The textile industry's decline hit hard, and the town had to reinvent itself in many ways. But here's where Milo's story becomes particularly touching: instead of fading away, the community doubled down on what made it special. People stayed, families remained rooted, and the town found new ways to sustain itself.

Today, Milo has embraced its role as a gateway to Maine's wilderness. The town sits just south of Baxter State Park and Mount Katahdin, Maine's highest peak, making it a natural stopping point for hikers, hunters, and outdoor enthusiasts. The



forests that once fed the sawmills now draw people seeking a different kind of renewal—the peace and beauty of nature.

The town has also worked hard to preserve its history and character. Historic buildings downtown have been lovingly maintained, and there's a real sense of pride in Milo's heritage. The annual Piscataquis River Festival celebrates the region's natural and cultural history, bringing people together for food, music, and community.

What strikes you most when you learn about Milo is the continuity of community. Some families have been there for generations, their roots running as deep as the pines. There's a connection to place here that's become increasingly rare—people who know the land, know their neighbors, and feel a real responsibility to both.

Sure, Milo has faced the same struggles as many rural American towns—economic ups and downs, young people leaving for opportunities elsewhere, and the challenge of maintaining services with a small tax base. But walk down Main Street, and you'll still find businesses run by people who genuinely care, a library that serves as a community hub, and schools where teachers know every student by name.

Milo, Maine, reminds us that history isn't just about grand events and famous people. It's also about ordinary folks building something lasting in the places they love. It's about rivers that keep flowing, forests that keep growing, and communities that keep holding together, even when times are tough. In that sense, this little town tucked away in central Maine has a story worth telling—a story that's still being written, one quiet day at a time.

(GIRLFRIEND, continued from page 7)

Chapter 7: Spilled Beans

I had asked Henry what the old rug looked like. He told me it was the color of “yucky coffee.” I asked the shade and he said, “Like someone who adds lots of milk to their coffee.” He also said the rug had a large Maine moose with antlers situated “dead in the center.” Nothing else. A classic Maine moose rug. Popular in the Greenville area. The out-of-staters love ‘em. The going price is \$125 in July at the Greenville Trading Post. They cost \$40 when the folks “from away” disappear in December.

Henry did not know where “the rug” had ended up. His exact words were, “That damn rug could be anywhere.” Timmy and I snuck into Henry’s garage the next day after school. Flashlights in hand we found the rug stuffed under a “Maine blue industrial size tarp” along with a rusty bicycle and two pair of wooden snowshoes. On top of the tarp, Linwood and Jerry had piled some boxes of Christmas decorations. Nice and tidy. Clue #4 for those of you keeping score.

Henry said, “The rug had been under our kitchen table for eight years.” He told Timmy in the “strictest of confidence” he had spilled baked beans and salsa on the rug last summer and Linwood had taken it to the garage. He said his mom had bought it in Greenville for his first birthday party.

When Timmy asked him why his mom had bought a “moose rug” for his first birthday, Henry said, “Mom said that my grandma had taken a shine to it.”

We Mainers refer to this as too much illegitimate spurious information. That play on words is born out of wedlock. Ouch! Caught you in a lobster trap, old Chummy.

Timmy and I dragged the rug out from under the tarp. It did smell a bit like baked beans. I told Timmy “The Wizard” the red spot covering the moose’s nose was not the result of spilled salsa sauce or ketchup. It had no odor. Looked like blood to my naked eye. “The Wizard” nodded in agreement. That would be a king size clue.

The bumbling cold case police detectives with the help of the chief medical examiner’s office would arrive at the right conclusion.

Chapter 8: Lovers Quarrel

Jerry and Linwood got themselves handcuffed and transported by the Maine State Police for interrogations a couple of days later. Their prison cell photos, fingerprinting, strip searches, and interviews took place with the “cold case detectives” in Waterville. Yikes! Strip searches. Not for me.

Jerry rolled over like a Maine logger’s piece of pulp wood. It ended up that the medical examiner knew all along that Kandy’s death was due to hypothermia and drowning. She had a big contusion on her head. However, it was not her cause of death. Jerry had pushed Kandy down the porch steps at his house during a “lovers quarrel.” She hit her head and started bleeding, and he thought she was “a goner.” He told his brother “She’s dead ... she’s not breathing” and that he needed help getting rid of her body. Linwood rolled Kandy’s body into the moose rug and loaded her into the back of his pickup.

Jerry turned on his older brother and told the detectives, “Linwood said we could dump her in the snow-covered ice on

the river. She would float down the river when the ice went out. Clean and simple.” That was a simple-minded grease monkey plan. Big clue for those of you still following along.

Jerry sobbed when he said, “But the snow was too deep, so Linwood changed his plans. When we got to the end of the frog pond, he broke through the shoreline ice and push her body under the rink. When Kandy was fully submerged in the frigid water she came to. She struggled and tried to get out.”

Kandy’s lungs were full of water. The coroner and the medical examiner both agreed that Kandy died by drowning. Under the ice ten feet from shore. No more clues. Case solved.

Chapter 9: Tears in Heaven

Kandy with her Maybelline mascara-stained tears on her rosy cheeks arrived at Heaven’s Gate. I trust St. Peter sent her to see Mary Magdalene to redo her make up and get her a new dress, shoes, and a fancy handbag. God knows, she deserved it.

Linwood and Jerry got fifteen years for manslaughter. They should have gotten twenty-five to life in my book.

“Little Henry” lives with us now. He thinks his stepbrothers have left to find his dad in France. Dad said it would be best if we could keep it a secret for as long as we could. Hmm, Chummy, what do you think?

The End





LOCAL EVENTS

THINGS TO DO IN THE MAINE HIGHLANDS

Each month we will highlight a Maine artist or art gallery. If you are a Maine artist or art gallery, or know of one who would like to be showcased here, reach out to us at john@theguilfordregister.com

MAINE MAPLE SUNDAY

March 21-22, 2026

Maine maple producers will be hosting the 43rd annual Maine Maple Sunday weekend. Spring is a great time to get out and enjoy the great State of Maine and everything that it has to offer, including Maine Maple Syrup. Most sugarhouses offer maple syrup samples and demonstrations on how pure Maine maple syrup is made.

Learn more at www.mainemapleproducers.com

MOOSEHEAD MARATHON

April 26, 2026

Run through the heart of Maine's wilderness and discover what you're truly made of. Moosehead Marathon and Half awaits you on April 26, 2026. Join us for a race through one of Maine's most picturesque regions—the heart of Greenville, along the stunning shores of Moosehead Lake.

Learn more at www.mooseheadmarathon.com

BLACK FLY FESTIVAL

June 6, 2026

The Black Fly Festival is an annual event held on the FIRST Saturday in June every year in Milo, Maine with crafters, vendors, businesses and food vendors. Learn more at:

www.facebook.com/BlackFlyFestivalMiloMaine

MAINE WHOOPIE PIE FESTIVAL

June 13, 2026

Experience all that Piscataquis has to offer. The Maine Whoopie Pie Festival is the largest annual event in Piscataquis County. Piscataquis Valley Fairgrounds, June 13, 2026 from 10am to 4pm - Rain or Shine! Learn more at:

www.mainewhoopiepiefestival.com

PISCATAQUIS FARMERS MARKET

Saturdays in June - August, 2026

Whether you live in Piscataquis County or are traveling through, you will want to stop at the Piscataquis Farmers Market in Guilford. With upwards of 40 farmers and artisan vendors offering fresh fruit and veggies, meats, cheeses and so much more. Enjoy this outdoor market along the Piscataquis River. Learn more at:

www.piscataquisforward.org/farmers-market

RIVERFEST

July 25, 2026

Join us for a day filled with live music, craft vendors, fun activities for the kids, an expanded beer garden, a community run, fireworks, and so much more. It all kicks off with the annual town parade. Come for the fun, stay for the friendships. Learn more and sign up at:

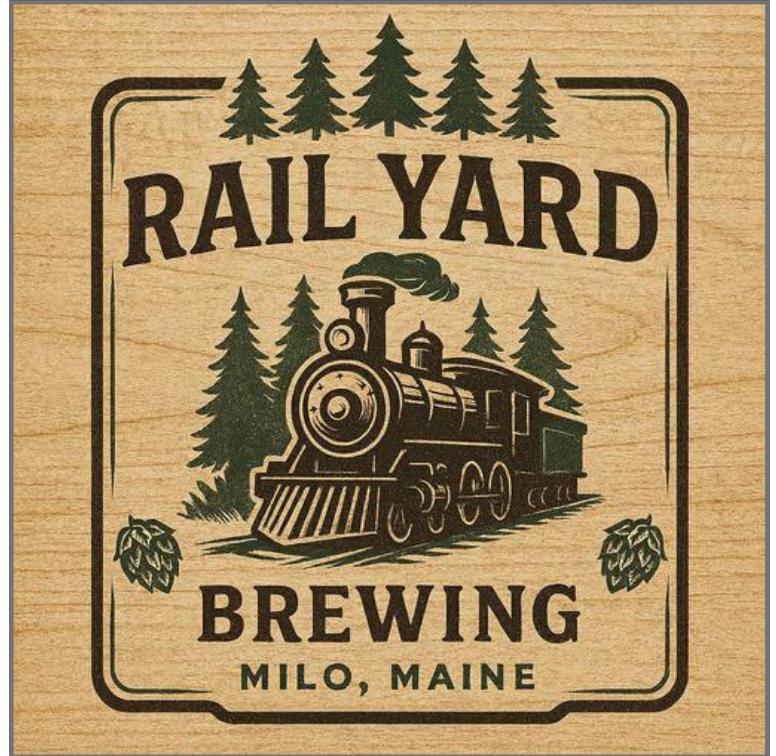
www.piscataquisforward.org/riverfest

RED HOT DOG FESTIVAL

August 8, 2026

The Maine Red Hot Dog Festival is a DDA fundraiser designed to attract a large number of people to the town where they will see all that Dexter has to offer, and to simply have fun! Learn more and sign up at:

www.redhotdog.org



www.piscataquisforward.org/farmers-market