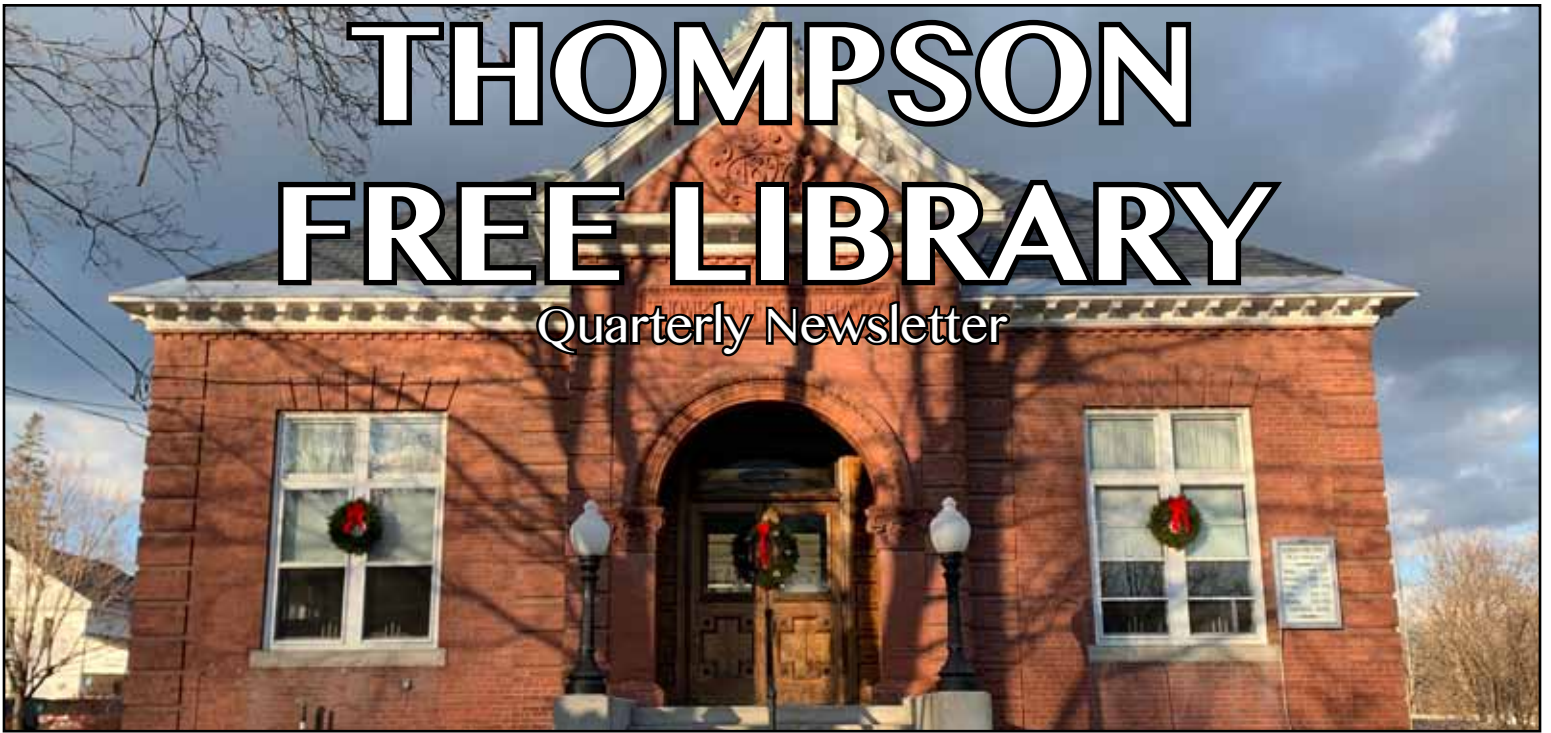


THOMPSON FREE LIBRARY

Quarterly Newsletter



JANUARY 2022

Maine's Mything Links

By Kim Brawn

Imagine being a kid running around the shores of Sebec Lake looking for fantastical creatures with names like butter tree squeaks, side hill gougers, and wedge ledge chompers—or years later having your own Will-o'-the-wisp (floating orbs of light in the woods) sighting from the family dock. These are the memories of botanist, science teacher, and author Christopher Packard who grew up listening to his grandfather's stories about these mythical creatures, sparking his interest which led to his book, *Mythical Creatures of Maine: Fantastic Beasts from Legend and Folklore*.

In November, Chris, joined by a large, eager audience via Zoom, discussed the book that combines cryptozoology, storytelling, and oral history. It's a field guide to the mythical creatures of Maine



The Lunksoos was actually a very real creature! Despite being described as an evil spirit, it was just a Acadian word for wolverine misinterpreted by non-Francophones.

that, as he puts it, “populate the stories of our folklore across time and culture.”

Chris's family has a long history in the local area. His great great grandfather established Packard's Camp in 1894 on Sebec Lake in Willmantic. Today Chris lives in Hampden and loves the outdoors. He's an avid paddler, hunter, and trail runner. These passions help him better understand the people who tell the sto-

ries he shares, people who lived so much of their lives in nature.

Yes, he's a scientist who writes about mythical creatures—the irony is not lost on him—but the book is really about sharing stories with each other, listening, and being open to possibilities. “I had to put away my scientist hat and put on my folklorist's one,” he said.

(continued on page 2)

Maine's Mything Links

(continued from page 1)

Chris relates tales from indigenous people to French Canadians to sailors, lumberjacks, and guides. He focused on two of the legends of The Wabanaki Confederacy (or Five Nations.) The first of which is Pamola, a great winged evil spirit that resides on top of Mt. Katahdin waiting to kill or devour hikers. Pamola was both feared and respected as the god of Thunder and protector of the mountain. (A summit on the Knife Edge was even named Pamola Peak.)

Another is Lunksoos, also known as the "Indian Devil"—the only creature in the forest that native Penobscots were afraid to encounter. There were many theories and misunderstandings regarding this creature but it probably all boiled down to a linguistic-translation issue. It's actually the Wabanaki word for wolverine—a real-life, fierce, snarly animal with a ferocious bite. French Canadians had their own beasts such as Loop-garou (a werewolf) and Lutin (a house elf).

Chris's enthusiastic and informative

talk generated many questions. TFL director Jon Knepp asked him what his favorite creatures were. He demurred, "I can't pick a favorite . . . each has something absolutely fascinating about it . . . although I do have a great soft spot for the wedge ledge chomper from my grandfather's stories."

"I loved the program and the book," said Jon. "Everyone should read it! It's entertaining above all else. Whether true or not, these stories have helped shape the state, so they are very culturally relevant. There's a ton of research and a lot of local history too. Every creature is treated as if it were an actual animal living in the woods or waters of Maine."

After giving us a tantalizing tour of the Maine mythosphere, Chris left us with this imponderable: "If you live your life like they are real. Then are they not real?"

(Chris's book is available at TFL, follow him at @c.s.packard on Instagram, and his talk can be found on our Youtube channel: <https://bit.ly/3FmouMz>).



A Good Fit

By Kim Brawn

Shannen Rhoda, TFL's newest staff member who started in mid-November, traces her connection to the library back to 2002 when she, her husband, and their 7-month-old daughter moved to Dover-Foxcroft. Not knowing anyone, she sought connection at the library where she met lots of people who she's still friends with today.

Over the past two decades, Shannen the patron has spent much time checking out books and going to programs, so she knows her way around. "It's very familiar to me," she says, helping make the transition to working here easier. "Now I'm learning all the ins and outs." Libraries and books are a strong part of her background. For many years, she volunteered at the Sedomocha Elementary School library and coordinated their Scholastic Book Fair.

"Shannen is catching on very quickly," says library director Jon Knepp. "She already knows a lot of our patrons and is getting acquainted with the rest."

"I always felt welcome here and there were always fun things going on for all ages," Shannen remembers fondly. Fast forward to 2021, despite the challenges of COVID protocols and changes, as far as jobs go, "I can't imagine a better fit."

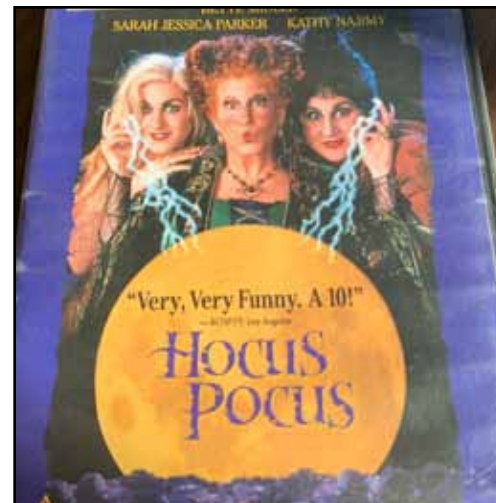


Pamola, guardian spirit of Mt. Katahdin, is depicted in various ways. Here, he is a moose-man-eagle hybrid. Maine's indigenous residents avoided Katahdin above the treeline, so as not to incur Pamola's wrath.

Treating You Right



Halloween fell on a Sunday this year and Tom and Phyllis Lyford, TFL's dynamic duo, along with their son Chris, gladly stepped in to greet the trick or treaters who arrived at the library's original main entrance. "It was a joy for us," said Tom. "We welcomed lots of creatively-costumed trick-or-treaters, youngsters and parents alike." Each child was treated to both candy and a brand-new shiny book of their choice from the multitudes invitingly displayed on the tables. All those choices had one little girl debating for half an hour, "Which one should I choose? I mean, I love this one, but then. . . there's this one here, but that one too." (She'll appreciate *The Paradox of Choice* when she's older.) Then, two little "outlaws" dashed in to grab candy and worried they were being detained as Tom and Phyllis stopped them with, "Please don't leave before picking up your free book!" They snatched the two closest ones and ran out the door. According to Tom, parents expressed gratitude for the spooktacular giveaway—and for the library itself. --*Kim Brawn*



Sanderson Sisters Put a Spell on Youth

By Jon Knepp

Movie night returned to the TFL on October 29th with a showing of *Hocus Pocus* just in time for Halloween! Movie nights were a great success prior to the pandemic. With the addition of the Event Tent, movies were possible once again! In order to kick off the spooky season, we treated the 18 in attendance to cookies, popcorn from the Center Theatre, and hot cocoa. The weather even cooperated! After having to cancel our showing of *Ghostbusters* the week before because of rain, we had a dry, crisp day perfect for sitting under a blanket.

I had not seen *Hocus Pocus* in years and forgot just how fun it was! Especially great for me was being able to see my kids watch it for the first time. Andy (7) and Cooper (10) said they enjoyed "drinking hot cocoa . . . any part with explosions . . . and when they tricked the witches into getting into the incinerator at the school." They both gave it two thumbs up. They're no Siskel and Ebert, but to be fair they are still children. Their review was still more eloquent than Rachel, whose Dec. 12, 2021 Amazon review stated simply "Nuff said. *****"

We hope to be able to show movies again soon, even if we have to get creative to do so. Stay tuned!

“Hurricane Ben” Sets Sights on Metallica

By Jon Knepp



My friend Ben Apatoff is intense! Some of us first met him during Hurricane Sandy in 2012, so we’ve always called him “Hurricane Ben.” But, as time went on, the name still fit. At parties, he can talk to anyone about anything, leaving them convinced it has to be the subject he’s most passionate about. It’s not, though, because I’ve seen this positive, exuberant “Hurricane Ben” energy countless times with myriad subjects. What he is most passionate about is metal. When he talks or writes about metal, he “turns it up to eleven” as Nigel Tufnel of Spinal Tap would say.

Ben’s latest book *Metallica: the \$24.95 Book* bottles up this energy in 320 pages. I’ve never been a metalhead and my interest in Metallica mostly ended when they went after Napster in 2000. Even so, I knew Ben’s book would be amazing, so I invited him to talk about it and the Black album’s 30th anniversary via Zoom on October 7th and he went full

tilt into it because, again, that’s the kind of guy he is.

Ben’s talk took me back and reminded me that, before Napster, Metallica wrote a lot of songs that I loved as a teenager. Most have very intricate and deep lyrics hidden under all the thrash. Lars Ulrich was still a sellout; whining about online piracy getting in the way of buying his fourth yacht. Still, he got the other three boats because the music was good. One of the other attendees, Rod Willey, echoed these statements, saying “[Ben] had an authentic joy in talking . . . it brought back a lot of memories of listening to the Black album, over and over, as a much younger person.”

It was great to have such a passionate author visit the library, and I look forward to his next endeavor. His book is available at TFL, you can follow him at @metallicabook on Instagram and his talk can be found on our Youtube channel: <https://bit.ly/3FmouMz>

Back to School

By Kim Brawn

What seems like an eternity ago, Michelle Fagan, our youth services librarian, made regular visits to SeDoMoCha Elementary School during their scheduled library times. Finally, this fall she returned to doing what she loves, promoting literacy and libraries, in person. Here is Michelle (a.k.a. Ms. Michelle) in her own words:

So, my Sedo visits don’t have a name because it is just a regular library day for the kids. I see Kindergarten through 4th grade in the school library. We talk about the Thompson Free Library and that they can use it for free, the things we have and what we do, like programs and take-home kits. Then kids pick out books and read independently for 10-15 minutes. Next, I’ll read a picture book



and sometimes we talk about important topics like kindness or holidays. The last 15-20 minutes I book talk—new and old books that may interest the kids. They can ask questions or share things with me and the class. It’s still a classroom setting but the kids enjoy the change of pace with a visitor like me. I’m so happy to be back working with kids at school. I love my job and COVID has made it so hard.

Sedo visits have helped me feel a bit more normal.

Since K-4th have limited school library time it’s really important to remind them they can still get books at TFL. The pandemic has caused many children to slide back in reading skills, I’m hoping they use our library to help rebuild them or work on other skills they need to get where they should be.



Listen to Me!

By Kim Brawn

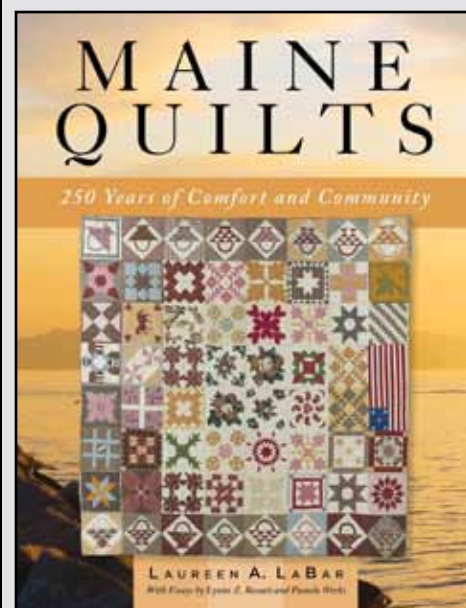
Exploding teeth, Tin Man turmoil, hypnotism and reincarnation, deathbed confessions, and Bruce Springsteen! Yes, TFL emeritus and volunteer Tom Lyford knows how to grab an audience's attention. Back in mid-September under the tent one afternoon, Tom hosted "Podcasts 101" with the goal of convincing those attending that "podcast-listening is so much easier and more rewarding than they would ever believe."

With experience creating his own *Boomer Monologues* podcast, Tom gave an entertaining introduction into the world of podcasts by playing captivating clips from an eclectic array of shows, including his own. His lineup illustrates the fun diversity of topics and the brief snippets sucked us in and left us hanging—and wanting more. Thankfully,

Tom supplied us with a wonderfully informative handout about the podcasts he sampled and where to find them. While there were some audio glitches along the way, library director Jon Knepp assumed the role of tech troubleshooter and Tom handled it with his trademark humor. After all, he's very familiar with Plan Bs himself. Because of background noise while recording, Tom moved his "podcast studio" to his closet, surrounded by his 800+ t-shirt collection!

Tom offered post-presentation help for those embarking on their own podcast-listening journey. He said, "I was delighted to learn the following week that some who came to the 101 had succeeded in tuning into podcasts and were honestly enjoying them."

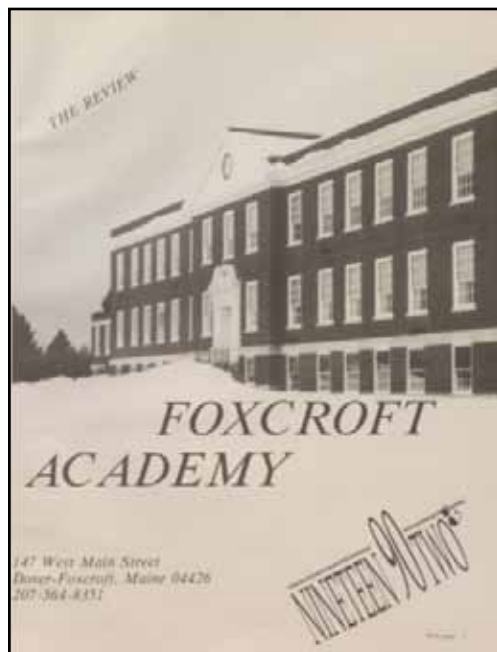
Northern Comfort



Lauren LaBar, a former archaeologist turned Chief Curator of History and Decorative Arts at the Maine State Museum, held court under the TFL tent in September to discuss her book, *Maine Quilts: 250 Years of Comfort and Community*. Historically quilts were very practical items to help people get through the cold Maine winters, but they are also pieces of art.

"The program was great. We learned a lot about the history of quilting in Maine," said library director Jon Knepp. "Quilts aren't often what I think of when what I contemplate 'Art' with a capital 'A' but I came away with a much better understanding of it as an art form. What surprised me the most were the many different types of quilts, ranging from very simple patterns to complex and interesting designs that are meant strictly for museums, not living rooms or bedrooms."

—Kim Brawn



Foxcroft Academy Yearbooks: Now Easier to “Review”

Attention genealogists and those trying to judge their friends’ high school haircuts alike: In working with the Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society and Foxcroft Academy, the FA Reviews have been digitized and are available on the library’s website! Every yearbook from 1940 to the present can be found by looking on our home page (<https://www.thompson.lib.me.us>) under Online Resources -> FA Reviews/Piscataquis Observers. You can even use the search function to find what you need even more quickly. If you have any questions or need help accessing the yearbooks, let us know! —*Jon Knepp*



Upscale Booksale



The library’s 10¢ basement book sales have been a hit for years! Our patrons can’t resist a good bargain and everyone shows up looking to score a deal or find that hidden gem! To keep the fun and deals rolling, we’re bringing the best of the basement upstairs to our book sale cart. Though priced at 50¢ for paperbacks and \$1 for hardcovers and DVDs, most of the books are recent, popular, and in good shape. While there’s no “thrill of the hunt” on the book cart, you’re still getting a good deal and helping to support the library. These sales are made possible by very generous donations from our patrons, which are accepted on a continuous basis, but we ask you to limit donations to 1 or 2 boxes at a time please. —*Jon Knepp*

CATastrophe Avoided



When life gives you lemons, you make lemonade. When your 3D printer gives you hairballs instead of a cat, you reclassify it as priceless modern art. Little jokes like this help us deal with technology glitches, though we have yet to find anything to make our struggles with the copier tolerable. —*Jon Knepp*

Keepin' it Merry and Bright, Y'all!

Once again Ms. Michelle decked the halls in festive style & gathered all the holiday books & DVDs—new & old—to spotlight during the Yuletide season! Jon hung beautiful Finestkind wreaths & volunteer Pat Juska graced us with a lovely winter arrangement!

