

!!! Tolerance – Compassion – Curiosity – Humor !!!

Volume LXVIII

Number 247

❧ **YULETIDE PRAYER** ❧
(Invocation)

*At first snowfall I bow my head
To let the cold hush trace my brow
And feel the Yuletide fire fed
By loved ones who are gathered now
In memory or close at hand
Their warmth unites against the cold
To melt the winter gray and bland
Into the flames of red and gold*

- Kathleen Creamer

❧ **BOUND FOR WINTER** ❧

*But it was the night of the winter solstice,
when the Northern Hemisphere was veered
into the colder reaches of space and the sun
remained hidden . . . longer than any other
night of the year.*

*Daniel had never thought very much
about this annual darkness, the silent cold
hinge by which the door to summer would
slowly open once again . . .*

From Daniel Plainway, Page 325

While I was living through Cordelia Underwood's bright July, and then Mollie Peer's spooky and conflicted October, I hardly suspected how much I was looking forward to writing a tale of winter. The season itself brings its own "confliction," if you will, for the darker months of the year can be both beautiful and perilous, those aspects oft-times swept up in the same winter storm.

No season is more praised in Maine

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than fall, but her stunning colors and crisp atmospheres harken the experienced heart to the waning daylight, the approach of bare trees and besieging weather. Winter's is a spare beauty, when even the music of the woods is stripped down to the peculiar notes of the wind through leafless branches and the simple calls of crow and chickadee.



The woods in warmer months are redolent with life – the flora taking turns in display, the fauna apparent even when it remains invisible. The trees, and other plants of *winter*, sleep for the most part, and those creatures that do roam the snows are like suspicious guests (perhaps even thieves) roaming the house at midnight. The alert wanderer only arrives in time to see mysterious tracks winding round bole and stone before they're erased by the next snowfall or a brisk wind.

The forests above our house in Edgecomb never seem more alive than when this sleep, this creeping is in effect. The summer woods are so rife with eyes and speech that the traveler might imagine (in the ordered chaos) that he will pass without notice. The winter woods seem to have but one watcher and one voice and are otherwise so still and empty that a single step into its precincts arouses interest. The traveler in the winter woods is always seen and seen always.

There are times when I walk the summer woods and am suddenly conscious of “presence” – of that very sort of watchfulness. It may come, unbidden, on a wooded slope or along some stream bank

where I have often walked and where I have never been aware of “notice” before and I have wondered if I have reached not a place in the woods but a place in myself where I am still enough to be conscious of God's attention.

The winter forest is almost always still enough for both of us. That “attention” – that “notice” – is plainer to me and I wonder what revelations might be mine if I could sweep aside the clutter of life as surely as winter sweeps the woods.

Some people – having experienced the northern summer – move here expecting winter to offer Currier and Ives and truth be told there are lithograph-perfect moments even if you do have to squint to get rid of the old car in the yard or the telephone poles ranking the street.

But winter can isolate even as it adorns, and “snowbound” is not even a hyphenate but a single word. I once met a man at Fernald's Country Store in Waldoboro (about which establishment I will say much more at another time) and this man was vocal about his unhappiness with the winter and in particular with “all the snow” we had received up till that day (I think this was in February).



Sumner Richards (my good friend and proprietor of Fernald's) and I looked at one another. Weather patterns have changed since we were kids (we have the photos to prove it, I like to say) and we had recently been bemoaning the *lack* of snow. Storm after snow-filled storm will carry across the northern United States only to veer

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seaward when it hits Boston, almost as if the hook of Cape Cod catches the collar of the storm and flings it off course.

This fellow, as it happened, was a former Bostonian, where there is often more snow than here along the mid-Maine coast. But he lived in a house in the woods, now, not on a city street, and winter had arrived to drive the point home.

"The trick," said I, turning on my stool with coffee cup in hand, "is not to adopt a siege mentality."

"What?" said he a little sharply.

"Winter in Maine is something that needs to be met on its own terms," said I. "It's easy to get into the habit of bolting from the house to the car and from the car to work. Just walking down Main Street, from door to door, becomes something you have to *get through*. Sometimes you have to stop and let the cold brace you up instead of making you retreat."

I was on a bit of a lecture now and didn't take note that the fellow was looking at me as if I had three heads.

"Have you ever gone down to Pemaquid Point when a storm is coming in from the east and the ocean is riled up and the waves are reaching further and further up the rocks? You stand above the rocks and have this sensation that you're *up* and the whole view – ocean and sky - is *down* and you might just fall into it. It's exhilarating *and* frightening. Winter is like that."

"Oh," said the fellow, "yeah," but with the sort of understanding and enthusiasm I probably lent those words the first time a teacher told me that the "square of the hypotenuse is equal to the sums of the squares of the two sides."

There is a certain wisdom that lets us know when someone isn't looking for a solution to their complaint, only for a moment to voice it, and perhaps I should have been wiser and realized this before I spoke up with what amounted to unsolicited advice.

Sumner proved the wiser between us, and he laughed quietly (and not unkindly) when the man bought his cup of coffee and left the store.

The real truth is that we must each

meet something like winter on our *own* terms – some will choose not to meet it at all, and there are those who will be besieged by winter and like it

For winter does exhilarate and frighten. And even in this modern era one enters December with small doubts about food and shelter and warmth. Here in Maine we are generally fortunate to avoid such things as tornadoes and earthquakes. We seldom feel the full effects of hurricanes and a heat wave here is not usually like one in Texas. But we have winter and we call it a "character builder" – perhaps unthinkingly and with more pride than is warranted. It does not mean that we have more character than anyone else, only that winter is an integral *part* of our character, whether we allow it to exhilarate, frighten, or both.

But even those who love winter watch its approach with a certain trepidation. There are times when I am snowshoeing, deep in the woods, and I stop quite actually in my tracks and turn my face to the north and the wind. It is as if I am *up* and all the woods about me are *down* and that I might fall into them. The stillness can be dizzying until the voice of a crow or the spray of snow from a chickadee lifting itself off a laden branch lends sudden small weight to the moment.

Something from beyond the woods has spoken. God is manifest in all things and if he allows us that exhilarating, frightening, momentary understanding of what is immense and pristine, he also sends each angel with the words, "Fear not."

Van Reid

December 14, 2004

Edgecomb, Maine



❧ THE ONLINE ADVENTURES OF THE MOOSEPATH LEAGUE! ❧



For those looking for conversation (or perhaps a good quibble) with fellow **Friends of the Moosepath League**, there are two Facebook Groups bringing together readers of the Moosepath Saga and The American Zig-Zag. You couldn't ask for a nicer or more cheerful bunch! And these groups are often the first place to find out about the latest news regarding the Grand Society and also the upcoming adventures of such characters as Officer Thomas O'Toole of Chicago and Captains Broad and Huffle of Portland (no new news yet from the Rambunctious Hedge, but do prepare to meet Professor

Dennis Fleming who runs afoul of a meteorite in Indiana!).

We invite all and *sundry* to flag down the train and jump aboard at:

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/25763521771/>

and

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/131286216930190/>

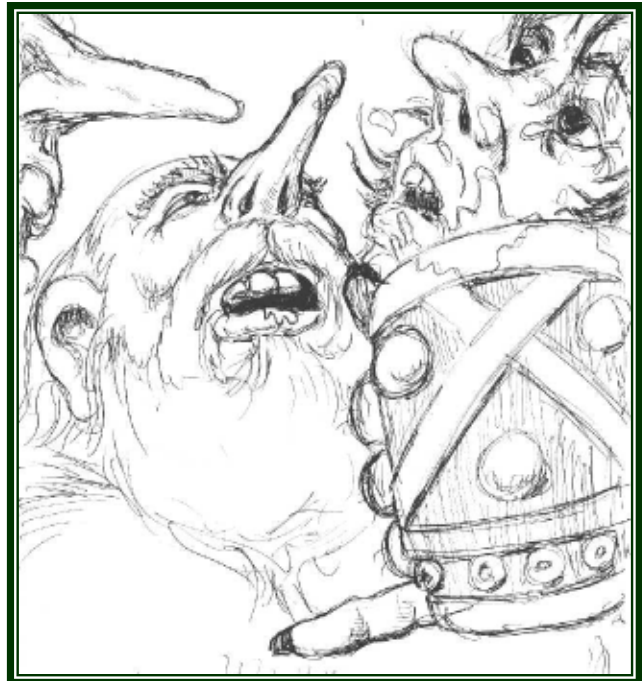
Hope to see you there! Moxie!

❧ MR. TOLLY'S CLOSE ENCOUNTER ❧

Artist Lyle Tucker of Roswell, New Mexico has heard all the jokes, we know (and told quite a few of them himself), but we couldn't resist the reference. (Roswell, New Mexico is famous in UFO lore as the place where aliens are said to have "landed" back in the 1950s.)

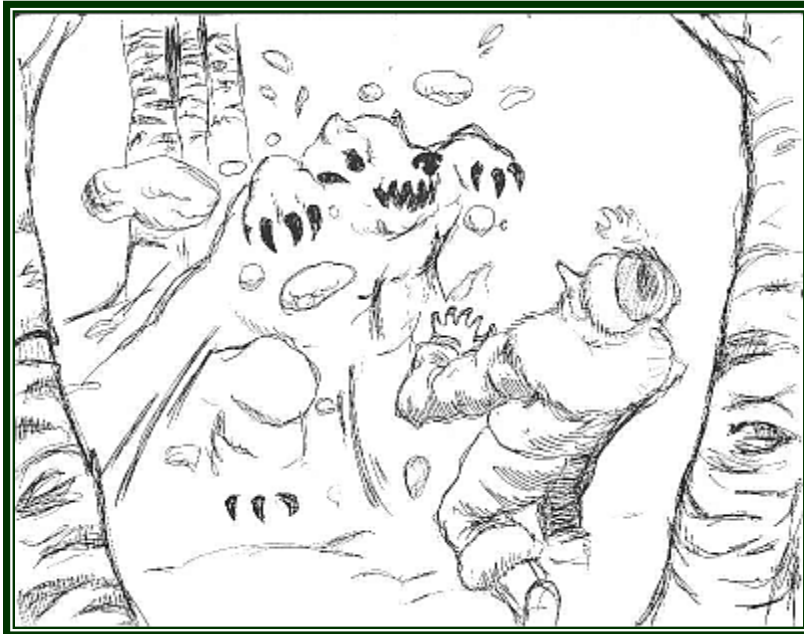
Mr. Tucker and Van Reid met by way of a Yahoo group dedicated to aficionados of old comic books (Mr. Reid insists that should be *old aficionados of comic books*), and have since nurtured friendship in their mutual interests and a possible collaboration that would form the core of a collection of illustrated adaptations of "Mr. Tolly's Tales" as presented in the Moosepath novels.

Here is a preliminary sketch by Mr. Tucker which was inspired by "A Shaggy Bear Story!" depicting three (well, two and a nose) of the troll-like brothers who nearly destroyed Mr. Tolly's farm.



Thirteen of them squeezed into my humble little rooms, their heads bent and their elbows knocking things from the walls. Cairn and Stie and Nutt packed in, and each was more vast and vastly more unattractive than the one before him.

From Cordelia Underwood, page 140



The bear stood to its hind feet in one massive movement – fur bristling, muscles rippling, claws like daggers, teeth like jagged ice. A great mantle of snow covered the creature’s shoulders and the crown of its head, making it more frightening still.

From
Cordelia Underwood, page 145

In these (and other sketches), Mr. Tucker has revealed a style reminiscent of illustrators of classic literature such as Charles Keeping and Frederico Castellon, expertly capturing a mythic sense of the early New England frontier.

More of Mr. Tucker’s comic-related work can be seen at <http://home.earthlink.net/~rivards/tucker.htm>. He is also an accomplished magazine maker himself, having recently published on CD-Rom the first edition of a computer journal – NBA [Not Brand Ack!] - devoted to comic books, music, and other diverse topics. For more information, check out <http://lyletucker.tripod.com/>.

❧ THE INITIAL QUESTION ❧

From the editors: *As new people become aware of the Moosepath League, it is only natural that certain basic questions and concerns reappear now and again. Of course, one of the most common inquiries springs from the famous tear in Jacob Mallard’s checkered pants. But almost as usual is to be asked about the initials and date in the stage-left dressing room of the Lincoln Theater (nee Hall) in Damariscotta, Maine - most specifically: Why is Sundry Moss’s initials not with those of the three Charter Members’ and Mister Walton’s? and Did this indicate some conscious or subconscious sense of class distinction on the part of Mr. Eagleton?*

Mr. Reid has long felt that he did not do the business (or Mr. Eagleton) justice in his treatment of the scene (page 295 of Cordelia Underwood) and at his suggestion we excerpt Basil Penwall’s excellent treatment of the subject, which appeared as an extended footnote in his well-received and important monograph “Disguise, Dual Identity, and the Moosepath League” (1947).

Nowhere has there been more discussion about the four sets of initials (and why there weren’t five) than among members of the Grand Society itself. But a quick glance at how events had fallen out that day (July 10, 1896) is all anyone needs to understand why Christopher Eagleton neglected to include an “S. M.” with the other letters and date.

To begin with, the Charter Members had only met Sundry Moss twice (during the incident of the moose and later at the theater) before pen was put to wall; Mr. Ephram said, later on, they might as well have met him only the once, as they were a “little befuddled” after the recovery of the red flannel underwear. Mister Walton was greatly in their mind, but they had not yet understood Mr. Moss’s coming role in their lives and adventures. (Mister Walton told Melbourne Heater that he hadn’t entirely grasped Mr. Moss’s character, worth, and importance to him and the League till after the Underwood Affair when Sundry told him he had

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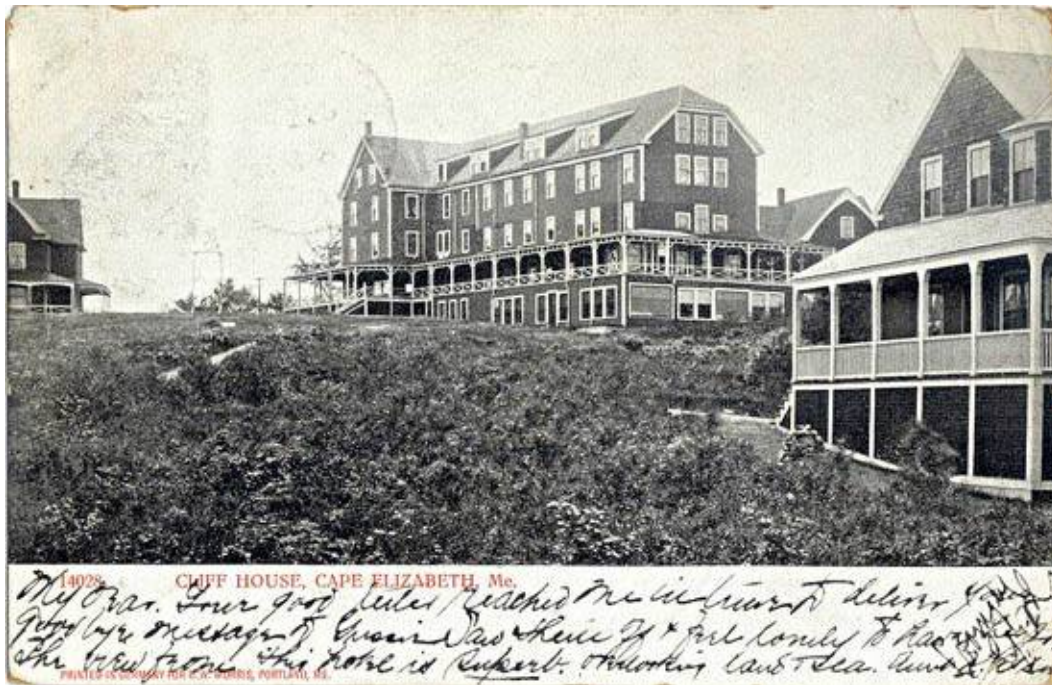
written to Phileda McCannon, explaining their sudden absence from Damariscotta.)

So the Gentlemen of the Club had met Mr. Moss in confusion that afternoon, then sat in the same row as he at the Lincoln Hall that evening – which event did also result in confusion, due to Maude the Bear’s unexpected appearance - before those famous initials were penned upon the wall of the dressing room. This seems explanation enough, but there is one final point.

Messrs. Ephram, Eagleton, Thump did not know Sundry Moss’s name at the time of Eagleton’s work! Mr. Thump and Mr. Ephram often remarked at how their friend Mr. Eagleton was first to understand that “Sundry Moss” was *not* a collection of botanical specimens but the name of the young man traveling with their newly elected Chairman. This realization (and a brief dialogue with Mister Walton to that end) occurred on the next morning as they were leaving the telegraph office where they had discovered the news about Miss Underwood’s kidnapping. Mr. Eagleton certainly could not have initialed a name he did not know.

Moosepathians everywhere may breathe easy on this point, and those looking for evidence of prejudice among the early members of the Grand Society must look for it elsewhere.

[A note from Mr. Reid: *I do wish that I had read Mr. Penwall’s excellent monograph more carefully before writing those scenes taking place in Damariscotta in Cordelia Underwood. All the evidence is there in the book, it simply didn’t occur to me to highlight it or point it out in the narrative. I managed to point out the question (page 295) but not the solution (page 320). My thanks to the editors of the The Moosepathian for providing what I did not.*]



~ THE MOOSEPATH – THEN ~

Cliff House - formerly Cliff Cottage - as visited by Messrs. Ephram, Eagleton, and Thump (and Bird) in October of 1896. [see Mollie Peer, Chapter 29]
(From the Moosepath Archives)

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❧ **THE MOOSE-QUILL** ❧
Letters from readers!

For the Moosepathian,

. . . . In a word, the newsletter is terrific. I especially enjoyed the exchange between Mister Walton and Sundry's father. The newsletter has been beautifully done, and I'm looking forward to the next one already. . . .

Lucille VanDusen
North Hanover Twp., New Jersey

Thank you, Lucille. We received many kind and encouraging words from Friends of the Moosepath everywhere. Thanks to all! We hope that you continue to enjoy our newly awakened journal.



Dear Editors,

Congratulations on the revival of The Moosepathian. It arrived on the heels of my completing Fiddler's Green, thank goodness, lest I go through withdrawal! It was delightful as well as informative. I loved your masthead. Does the picture have any significance? It doesn't look like Portland to me.

Eileen Douglas
Newcastle, Maine

P.S. I wore the wrong shoe on November 10 - not November 12. Hopefully there's no stiff fine nor my membership revoked.

To answer your first question, Eileen, the picture behind the masthead is not Portland, but a "view from Edgecomb." The village across the river (the Sheepscott) is Wiscasset, which town, someone recently

pointed out, has at least a cameo in each of the first four Moosepath books as well as Peter Loon. The picture is from Dominions of Maine by Rufus King Sewell (1859). The provenance of the picture behind this edition's masthead is more mysterious (that is to say, we don't know where it comes from).

I called the Moosepath League's secretary, Pauline Goomer, about your having worn the wrong shoe on the wrong day, and she says not to worry. In her words, "We've never been very big on rules." Something tells me her great-uncle Sundry Moss would approve.

Dear Editors

Maybe it's just my advancing age, but I find that I have to spend quite a bit of time going back through the books to refresh myself about who specific characters are, when certain events occurred, etc. (and it's not because I read too quickly...I don't.) I know that novels don't include indexes, but perhaps a short list that indicates the names of the characters and when they first appear might be helpful in future installments. Just a thought.

Robert Bell
Cincinnati, Ohio

From Van Reid:

Thanks for the suggestion, Bob. Such a table or index might benefit me as much as any reader. It was not very long ago that I was on my way to an event during which I planned to read from Fiddler's Green and had picked out a passage I thought might suit. But a few miles down the road it suddenly occurred to me that that particular scene actually took place in Mrs. Roberto! I will seriously consider including a list of "major players" and where they first appeared, when I return to the next Moosepath adventure.



❧ ERRATA ❧

Perusing the best publications and periodicals, we discover that they all nobly admit to errors in earlier editions by way of a "Corrections" sections or "Errata." In order to emulate these prestigious journals, we hope to include mistakes in each number of *The Moosepathian*. In the present issue, as perhaps in future ones, we include our *Errata* in the letter section as that is how we plan on being informed about these mistakes. And so – the first "correction" in our re-inaugurated journal!



*Dearest Mr. Reid,
First, I am truly
honored to be
mentioned in the
premier issue of that
most illustrious
periodical, "The
Moosepathian." I*

*hardly feel worthy of that honor. My fellow
compatriots and I are always eager for more
tidbits from the Moosepath, and you have
delivered (nor was the refer-ence to a
possible sixth book lost upon me)!*

*To my chagrin, I must point out,
however, that my website address is
incorrect as stated in "The Moosepathian."*

*. . . . my address is actually only
"luciusmonkey.tripod.com". My webmaster
evidently could not afford the "www" prefix,
and, thus, we must proceed without. Or
perhaps the world wide web is in fact too
small to contain the enormity of my
adventures. While I do not actually believe
it, I like to think that the latter is the case.*

*I truly hope that you and yours, and
of course my good friend Mr. Plumbob, had a
wonderful Thanksgiving, and here's to a
merry Christmas and New Year. May all of
your fondest wishes be fulfilled!*

*Sincerely yours,
Lucius M. Monkey*

*We have asked Mr. Reid's secretary – sock
monkey Abner T. Plumbob – to reply for us.*

He writes:

Thank you for
your kind thoughts,
Mr. Monkey. We
were, in our turn,
truly honored to find
the Moosepath
League featured so
prominently on your
website. And we would think that your
adventures may indeed be too enormous for
the WWW. We are still shivering over the
account of your exploits in Transylvania!



A sixth Moosepath adventure has
indeed been started, though Mr. Reid does
not expect to be writing in earnest till after
the New Year and, then, due to other
logistics, not in quite so concentrated a
time period as in the past.

I did in fact have a wonderful
Thanksgiving, thank you, celebrating at the
home of Mr. Reid's parents. His mother is
a wonderful cook and the company was
lively and stimulating.

May I echo your kind sentiments
regarding Christmas, New Years, and
fondest wishes – sending them both to you,
to readers of *The Moosepathian*, and all the
world.

As ever,
Abner T. Plumbob



❧ **DICKENS ON CHRISTMAS** ❧

. . . . Christmas was close at hand, in all his bluff and hearty honesty; it was the season of hospitality, merriment, and open-heartedness; the old year was preparing, like an ancient philosopher, to call his friends around him and amidst the sound of feasting and revelry to pass gently and calmly away Happy, happy Christmas, that can win us back to the delusions of our childish days, that can recall to the old man the pleasures of his youth, the sailor and the traveler, thousands of miles away, back to his own fireside and his quiet home!

From The Pickwick Papers



❧ **UNSENT POST** ❧

(From the Archives of the Moosepath League)

It was in the summer of 1952 that Mr. & Mrs. William Meager of Acton, Massachusetts came to Portland, Maine for the purposes of a holiday as well as the collation and dispensation of certain belongings and papers of Mrs. Meager's uncle, Matthew Ephram. In the fall of the following year the Meagers were guests at the 56th Annual Anniversary Dinner celebrating the first Moosepathian Fishing and Hunting Expedition, in the course of which Mr. Meager gave a very well-thought of speech and bequeathed to the Moosepath League many of the artifacts, letters, and diaries from the Ephram estate that now grace the Club Archives. The letter presented below is from that collection, and while it was never delivered to the *Eastern Argus* or printed before now, we think it illuminating to read what Mr. Ephram wrote that night when he returned from the Shipswood Restaurant and that "magnificent idea!" and pleasant to contemplate what revelations and adventures awaited him and his friends on the very next day.

Eastern Argus
99 Printer's Exchange
Exchange Street

July 3, 1896
To the Editor,

The city of Portland will be pleased to be informed of the incorporation of a new club in its precincts. Mr. Christopher Eagleton of Chestnut Street, Mr. Joseph Thump of India Street, and your humble correspondent Mr. Matthew Ephram of Upper Danforth Street represent the founding membership. The appellation by which this institution will be known is not yet decided upon, and the exact nature, purposes, and object are also in the planning stages. New members are yet welcome. Applicants should be of a robust nature, well-mannered, and touched with a certain degree of imaginative curiosity without being given to absolute flights of fancy. Forthrightness is of principal importance. Messrs. Ephram, Eagleton and Thump hope for a private, yet public-spirited organization, that does not blink at an enjoyable outing. Applications may be forwarded to the address of -

Yours sincerely,
Mr. Matthew Ephram
Upper Danforth Street

❧ **RAMBLES ON THE MOOSEPATH** ❧



Before the story called *The Moosepath League* began to appear in the “Lincoln County Weekly” back in April of 1995, Van Reid had been writing a book column for that paper for the better part of a year and half. It was called “Bookpaths” and we may see some reprints from his column in future issues of *The Moosepathian*. He chose the title because, in his words, we all follow our own book-path and we are all looking for guides.

We at *The Moosepathian* suggest the guides at Rambles.net, a website devoted to being (in their words) “Your best source on the web for folk & traditional music, speculative fiction, folklore, concerts, movies & more,” found at <http://www.rambles.net>.

We think they live up to their goal, presenting a plethora of intelligent reviews for people who like old fashioned storytelling – whether it resides in literature, music, or film. Of course, it doesn’t hurt our feelings that they have such nice things to say about the first three books in the Moosepath Saga!

❧ **LOOKING FORWARD** ❧

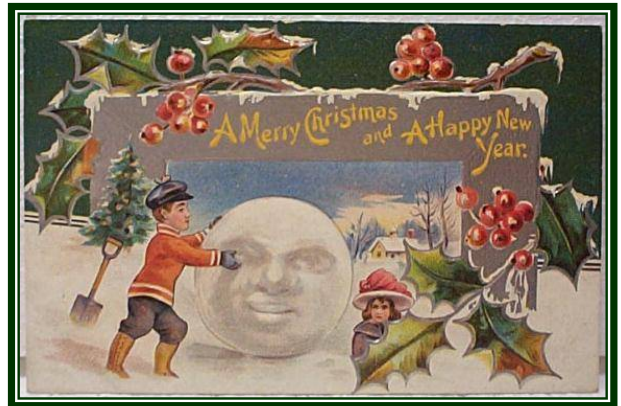
And so the second edition of the newly reestablished *Moosepathian* comes to a close. I want to especially thank Kathleen Creamer for her lovely prayer in verse that opens this issue, Lyle Tucker for sharing his marvelous artwork, and Tim Robertson for shepherding the MSN group with such Waltonian energy and wisdom.

Thanks also to everyone who responded to our new journal with kindness and enthusiasm. I am asking readers to please let us know how we can shape and improve this “magazine” and also for submissions of artwork, photography, essays, and poetry that might reflect and celebrate the ideals and adventures of the Moosepath League.

Please send bouquets and brickbats by e-mail to vanreid@tidewater.net or by post to **Van Reid, P.O. Box 186, Edgecomb, Maine, 04556**.

In future editions we will see more previously unpublished excerpts from the Moosepath Saga, historical analysis from such respected scholars as this issue’s Basil Penwall, and news of the present day goings on of the Grand Society. We are looking forward to poetry by Maine writer (and former dairy farmer) Trudy Chambers Price, a scientific treatise on that elusive Maine creature – the side hill gouger, and more photos from actress and costume designer Ginger Breo. We also look forward to hearing from you and hope that you and yours have a wonderful Holiday Season! Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukah, and of course Moxie!

Van



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“Shaggy Bear Story” art © Copyright: Lyle Tucker 2004

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