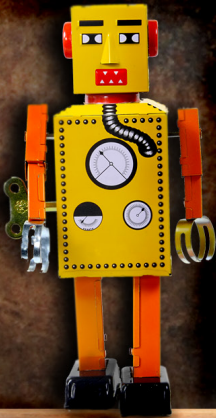


# New Hampshire **CURIOSITIES**

Quirky  
characters,  
roadside oddities  
& other offbeat  
stuff



  
**ERIC  
JONES**

**Curiosities Series**

*New Hampshire*  
**CURIOSITIES**

Quirky characters,  
roadside oddities &  
other offbeat stuff

SECOND EDITION

Eric Jones



Guilford, Connecticut

*For Megan and Shannon*



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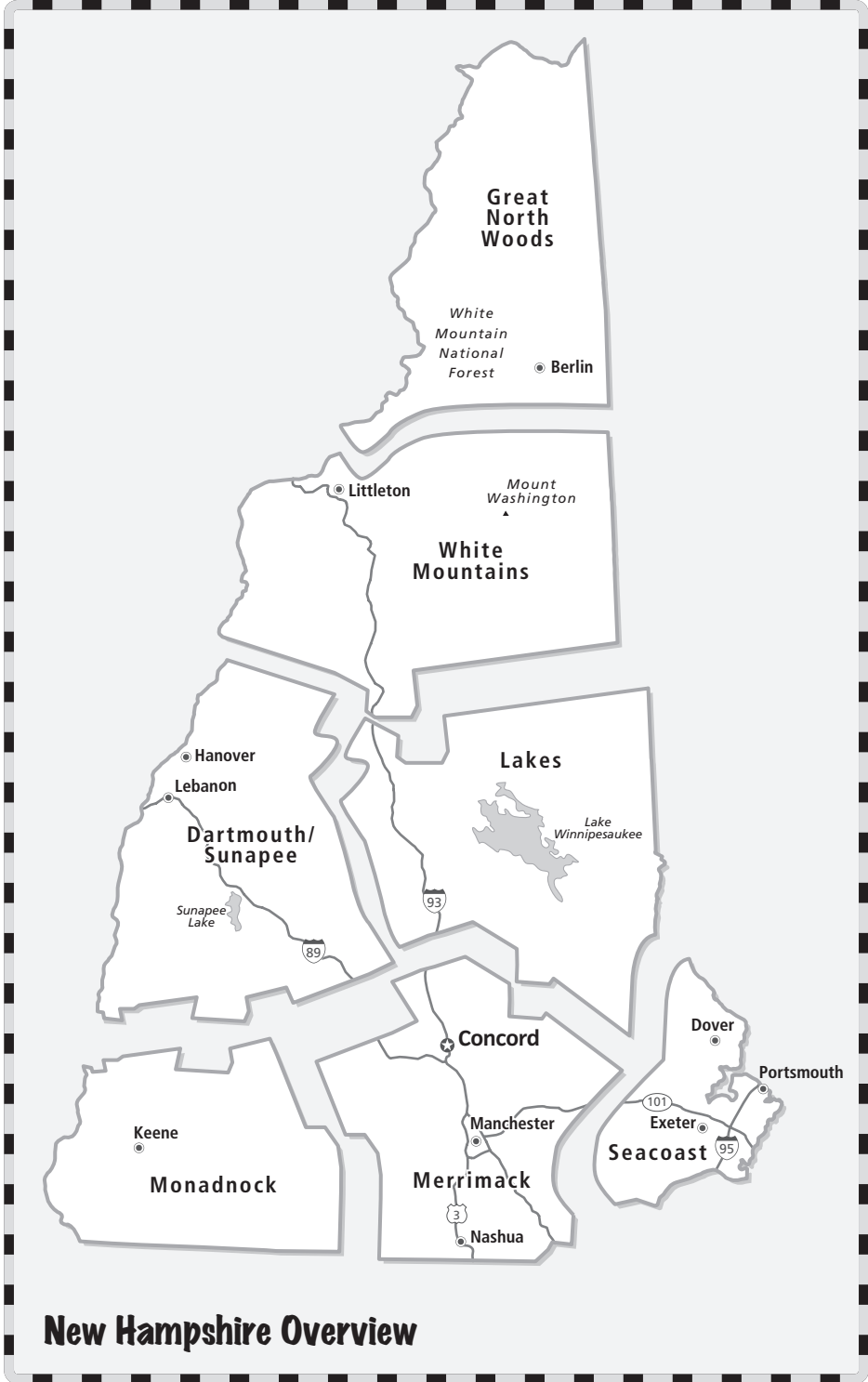
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# New Hampshire Overview

# acknowledgments

For me, the best part of being a travel writer is that to do your job you need lots of help from strangers and, better yet, few of them expect to be paid. While writing this book, I found help in town halls, libraries, and newspaper offices; at historical societies and radio stations; and in homes and workshops from Pittsburg all the way down to Portsmouth. I extend my gratitude to all.

Journalists from all over New Hampshire were tremendously helpful. In the far north, I'm especially grateful to John Harrigan, outdoor columnist for Manchester's *Union Leader* and former owner and editor of Colebrook's *News and Sentinel*, who sight unseen invited me up north for a guided pickup truck tour of the area and dinner at his camp. I also found a mother lode of New Hampshire history, legend, and lore on J. Dennis Robinson's wonderfully rich and varied website, [www.seacoastNH.com](http://www.seacoastNH.com), for which I've been immensely grateful. At New Hampshire Public Radio, the news director, Mark Bevis, and The Front Porch host, John Walters, offered numerous media contacts and entry ideas.

Many, many others, from local historians to town clerks to state representatives, have generously shared their time, research, and stories. I would like to thank Matthew Thomas, Marcia Shackford, Cindy Caveney, Robbie Grady, Robin Broden, Marilyn Bedell, Victoria Barlow, Linda Peters, Kathy Valliere, Denys Draper, Karla MacLeod, Edith Tucker, Diane Waldron, Joyce Charbonneau, John Hunt, Judie Reeve, Michael O'Brien, Ken Gidge, Desiree Mahurin, Cynthia Sweeney, Sally Kelly, Becky Newton, Charlene Courtemanche, Marti Mayne, Hans Schulz, Owen Houghton, Krystin St. George, Robert Stephenson, Dwight Haynes, Yvonne Nanasi, and Fred Plett for their help in uncovering a whole new crop of curiosities.

And finally, I'd like to thank Meredith Rufino for her help in putting together this second edition of *New Hampshire Curiosities*.





# introduction

Any ordinary sporting event with a bizarre twist, like a football game played in 2 feet of mud or a snowmobile race over pond water or a regatta of 600-pound pumpkin boats.

Any collection of unusual items, like antique outboard motors or nutshells carved into baskets or murder-scene dollhouses.

Anything mysterious, like a smooth green stone with strange etchings found at the bottom of a posthole or a pointing-hand carved onto a rock with roman numerals etched beneath it way out in the middle of the woods.

Any monument or headstone or memorial erected in remembrance of something bizarre, like a lost limb or a battle against gravity or a fatal accident involving a load of gravel or the angel-whispered solution to a seemingly intractable problem involving floating land masses.

Anything very much out of place, like a 60-foot-tall medium-range rocket on a quaint New Hampshire town green or a horse buried in the middle of the town cemetery or a forgotten burial ground with untold numbers of dead lying just inches beneath a downtown city street.

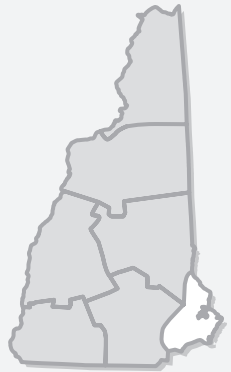
And almost anything having to do with Mount Washington, New England's highest peak and home of a cog railway, an auto road, a continuously manned weather observatory, and what some area experts describe as "The World's Worst Weather."

Who would really want to argue with New Hampshire about that? Not the tourism board in Florida, that's for sure, though Gainesville in summer can be about as comfortable as being wrapped in a buffalo hide while sitting in a sauna. Flinty New Hampshire citizens take a special kind of pride in the fact that, on average, Mount Washington has hurricane-force winds every third day and that observers on the summit once recorded the second-highest wind speed in the world. For all their taciturn reserve, deep down New Hampshire folks know things are most interesting and exciting at the extremes.

That famous crank Henry David Thoreau once said, "In wildness is the preservation of the world." If that's true, then I'd like to add this: In weirdness is the preservation of the American spirit. I'm here to tell you, New Hampshire has American spirit in spades. Enjoy.



**Seacoast**



## Seacoast Region

**Whatever else we** might say about New Hampshire, it certainly doesn't have a very long coastline. Okay, to be honest, it's actually got a very short coastline, the shortest of any state in the union if you exclude places like Kentucky and Iowa, which don't have any coastline at all. (Sorry all you landlocked citizens, giant water parks do not count as coastline.) Depending on how you choose to measure it, New Hampshire's coastline is somewhere between 13 and 40 miles long. Maine's coastline seems unimaginably long by comparison, especially if you take into consideration all the bays, inlets, and islands—a whopping 3,475 miles.

But what it lacks in length New Hampshire's seacoast more than makes up for in charm. Portsmouth is the crown jewel of this region, a picture-postcard-worthy New England port city that *Money* magazine named to its list of "Top 10 Best Places to Live in the USA" a whopping five times between 1998 and 2008. And for good reason: It's got just the right blend of small town charm and big city sophistication, not to mention spectacular views of its deep-water harbor.

Since the Seacoast is home to some of the oldest towns and cities in the state, it's probably no surprise that many of the region's curiosities have a historical bent. Durham's Leif Eriksson Day Parade celebrates the explorer's discovery of America nearly five hundred years before Columbus with a brisk early-morning 25-foot-long march from the Laundromat to the coffee shop (short distances are becoming a theme here).

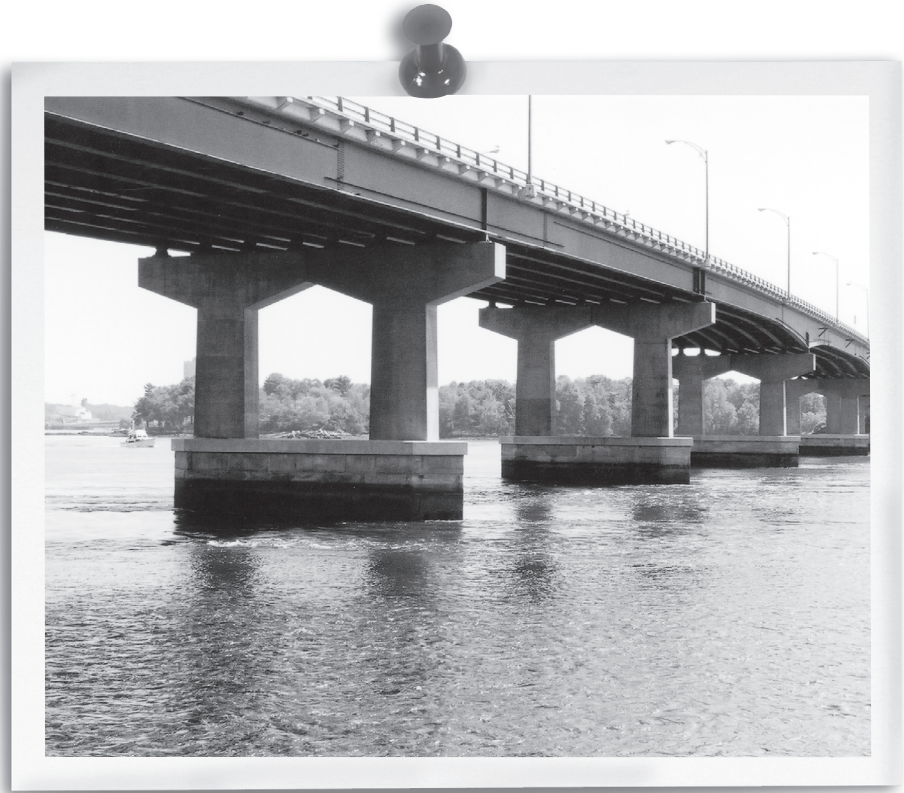




## Local Currents Compete for World Title (Maybe)

Dover

Just off Dover Point, under the highway bridges that span the bottleneck where the waters of beautiful Great Bay merge with the Piscataqua River, you can find some of the swiftest and strongest tidal currents in the entire world. At least that's what Seacoast tourist brochures claim. *Some of the strongest tidal currents in the world . . .* But if there's one thing I've learned researching this book, hometown boosterism can sometimes get the better of facts.



These currents may not be the fastest in the world, but we think they're all right.



## Seacoast Region

Or you might come for the real curiosities. For starters, check out the 6-foot-long stuffed iguana, found dead by the side of the road right here in Dover (don't even ask), or the two-headed snake suspended in formaldehyde, or some other cloudy preservative, in an old-fashioned glass canning jar. He's hard to spot among his pickled compatriots, from bullfrogs to toads to rattlers, each in its own Ball jar of decades-old . . . juices, but if you bend down close enough to read the handwritten index cards, you'll spot him. Perhaps the museum's most famous animal oddity is the four-footed chicken—just a baby chick, really, with both front-wheel and what looks to be less functional rear-wheel drive.

But, if you're like me, you'll come for the oddest oddities: the glass display case of botanical curiosities that includes specimens like an ingrown branch (think ingrown toenail in the form of a tree branch); wood growing around a stone; a "natural cloth" that resembles a loosely woven stocking tied at one end, donated by an anonymous collector who harvested it from "some species of palm tree" (the collector didn't sweat the details, so why should we?); a 32-inch-thick wedge of bark from a redwood; and, my personal favorite, a "piece of wood badly eaten by ants," the gift (if you'll permit me to call it that) of one Mr. E. M. Bailey of Andover, Massachusetts.

The Woodman Institute's great strength is that it accepted such donations, and many more like them, because its directors lacked funds for acquisitions and so never had the luxury of saying no. And the eclectic collecting continues to this day. "We rarely say no to a donor," the current director, told me, "not only because we don't have money, but because we never know what else a donor might have tucked away in the attic." Isn't that kind of a scary thought?

The Woodman Institute, located at 182 Central Avenue in Dover, is open Wednesday through Sunday, except holidays. The museum is closed December 1 through March 31 and on Memorial Day. Admission is charged. For more information go to [www.woodmaninstitute.org](http://www.woodmaninstitute.org) or call (603) 742-1038.



sharing his life with her but would prefer not to share his life with her dog.

Rather strongly prefer, actually. So much so that when Cordelia refused to get rid of her furry friend, Mr. Law broke off their engagement, ending the relationship. A harness shop owner, Henry Law went on to own large parcels of land in Dover and donated property for a number of the town's parks, including the eponymous Henry Law Park, where there's now an amphitheater for outdoor concerts as well as a skate park.

Cordelia died in September of 1891 at the age of thirty-three—possibly from heartbreak?—but she left a lasting, and pretty darn big, rebuke for Mr. Law on her grave site in Dover's Pine Hill Cemetery: a large granite monument atop which sits a stone sculpture of a woman crying. Cordelia is not only said to have ordered the construction of the sculpture, but also to have left instructions for its placement on her grave: The weeping woman's back would be turned toward the Law family plot in retribution for Henry's injustice to her, yes, but most of all, I imagine, as perpetual punishment for his rejection of her poor little dog. Dover's Pine Hill Cemetery is located at the corner of Central Avenue and East Watson Street.

### **A Parade for Those of Us with ADD**

Durham

The first thing Mrs. Nobel Peterson gave me was a warning: "Now, if you come this year and just plan to watch from the curb, well, I can guarantee you'll be back next year marching in the parade, and then the year after that you'll be the one cheering the loudest." The parade she's talking about is Durham's Leif Eriksson Day Parade, and her warning to me was based on twenty-four years of experience. "We have people come back every year from all over the country, from Texas to California to Michigan, just to march in our little parade," she told me.

Take special note of Mrs. Peterson's phrase "our *little* parade." The parade isn't very big—there are no floats or marching bands or giant inflated Disney characters—just a large group of people marching down the street. And it just may be the shortest parade route in the world. "We gather in front of the Laundromat around 6:00 a.m., admire each other's Scandinavian flags, practice our cheers, then study the parade route to be sure no one gets lost," she explained to me. "Then at exactly 6:30 a.m. we march 25 feet to Young's Coffee Shop, where we all have breakfast." And that's it. Throw in thirty seconds of singing each Scandinavian national anthem followed by "The Star-Spangled Banner" (in its entirety, of course), a brief Parade of Beautiful Sweaters, and a scripted question-and-answer session about the parade itself—including the questions "Why is the parade so early?" and "What proof is there that Leif Eriksson discovered North America in a.d. 1000?" in response to which the whole crowd shouts out the answers—and you've got the entire program of Durham's Leif Eriksson Day Parade. (Take note: Young's serves free coffee and free Viking cake, but each marcher buys his or her own breakfast.)

The event takes place each year on the Sunday closest to October 9, the date President Lyndon Johnson declared Leif Eriksson Day way back in 1964. In a bit of explorer coincidence, Leif Eriksson Day coincides with Columbus Day weekend, but, according to Mrs. Peterson, divided loyalties aren't a problem. "The only requirement for participating in the parade," she says, "is that you be an admirer of Leif Eriksson's that morning. In the afternoon, you're free to march in some other explorer's parade." And, of course, with Leif's modest 25-foot parade route, you'll have energy to spare.

### **"Give Me a Burger, Hold the Suds"**

Durham

You've probably heard it said that good help is hard to find. Not so for Franz Guest, owner, cook, and grocery buyer at Franz's Food on Main Street in Durham. Durham is home to the University of New



**Give me a veggie burger and hold the starch.**

Hampshire, with its population of 10,500 potential cooks and counter helpers between the cash-starved ages of eighteen and twenty-three, and Franz's Food just happens to be a gourmet sandwich and burger joint located inside a Laundromat. "Most of my hires have happened right here," Franz said as he perched atop one of the top-loading commercial washing machines lined up no more than six paces from the register. "Skye was sitting right where I am, on this washer," he said, gesturing toward a young woman behind the counter with a two-hundred-watt smile, "and I said to her, 'Hey, you want a job?' And she's been here three years—right, Skye?"



## Seacoast Region

Bertrand, who just an hour earlier had interviewed a Seacoaster who claimed she had been chased in her car by a large low-flying object with flashing red lights for a distance of about 12 miles.

Muscarello joined Officer Bertrand in his cruiser and led him back to the field on the Dining family farm where the young man had first seen the object. After a brief investigation yielded nothing, Officer Bertrand heard Muscarello scream and turned to find what he would later describe as “a huge, shapeless object with five sequentially pulsating-from-left-to-right bright red lights” slowly rise above a stand of pines. The object seemed to tilt back and forth and float toward them with



5-0 and UFOs once met in this field.



unidentifiable, as well as its important place in the annals of ufology, with the Exeter UFO Festival. The one-day event is a perfect half-and-half blend of academic UFO symposium “for both believers and skeptics” (as the festival planners say) and kid-friendly outdoor alien-themed festival, with events like a UFO construction contest and alien pet costume contest. (Don’t worry, if you don’t have an alien pet one will be provided for you, after you sign a liability waiver, of course.)

If you’re on the skeptical side of the believer-skeptic divide, the full slate of lectures and panel presentations throughout the day will at least challenge your assumptions: Past panelists have included serious, scientific investigators of UFO phenomena, including nuclear physicists and retired avionics industry professionals. And if you’re a believer, you’ll find some weighty scholarly evidence to bring home to dinner-table debates, including some stuff about nuclear fusion and Einstein’s theory of relativity that might just change the debunkers’ minds. Or at least make them scratch their heads.

Lectures and presentations at the Exeter UFO Festival are held in the Exeter Town Hall, while most of the kid-friendly events take place in Founders Park. For more information go to [www.exeterufofestival.com](http://www.exeterufofestival.com).

### **The Worst Band You Didn’t Know You’d Love**

Fremont

The Shaggs were three teen sisters from Fremont whose father withdrew them from the local high school, scraped together money for musical instruments and lessons twice a week in Manchester, and designed for his daughters a rigorous daily schedule of morning practice, afternoon mail-order home schooling, more practice, and then dinner. Oh, and to finish out the evening, the girls performed a round of calisthenics and, you guessed it, rehearsed one last time.

One would think all that practice and self-sacrifice might turn Helen, Betty, and Dot Wiggin into rock virtuosos, but the fruit of all those jam sessions and leg lifts was far more interesting than mere virtuosity. Described as “primitive,” “raw,” “unpolished,” and

“aboriginal” by their more generous reviewers, the Shaggs inspire in their listeners extremes of either appreciation or disgust. To wit: Frank Zappa reportedly said the Shaggs were better than the Beatles. And Lester Bangs, a music critic for the *Village Voice*, claimed that their harmonies sounded like “three singing nuns who’ve been sniffing lighter fluid.” Their music must be heard to be believed.

The Shaggs started small and, much to their father Austin Wiggin’s chagrin, they stayed small. For five years, beginning in 1968 and ending in 1973, the Wiggin sisters played in public almost exclusively at Saturday evening performances in the Fremont Town Hall, where as many as a hundred of their peers gathered to chat, dance, and, on occasion, heckle the sisters on stage. Dot led the group through sets that included a song celebrating parents (“Parents are the ones who are aalwaays there!” she croons) and a number about Dot’s lost cat named Foot Foot.

Austin spent most of his savings on the recording of a Shaggs album in the spring of 1969, *Philosophy of the World*. Neither the girls nor the studio producer felt the group was ready to record, but Austin reportedly said he wanted to “get them while they’re hot.” The record didn’t make any splash at all. A few years later, Austin brought the girls down to Boston for another recording session, but by 1973 Fremont had put a stop to the Shaggs’ town hall performances and the sisters, by then in their twenties, were beginning to bristle under their father’s strict managerial style. In 1975, when Austin died suddenly of a heart attack at the age of forty-seven, the band died, too.

End of story, right? Wrong. In the 1970s collectors got hold of copies of *Philosophy of the World*, and over the next three decades the album was rereleased a couple of times. With each rerelease the Shaggs got a little more attention and acquired a whole new crew of puzzled, bemused, but often adoring fans—slowly but surely the Shaggs were becoming an outsider music sensation. After best-selling author Susan Orlean wrote an article titled “Meet the Shaggs” in the *New Yorker* in 1999, Tom Cruise’s production company optioned the

film rights. As of this writing in 2011, a musical called *The Shaggs: Philosophy of the World* is opening off-Broadway after a successful run in Chicago. Really. The Wiggin sisters, who all still live within a dozen miles of Fremont, seem as surprised by their new fame as their fans, but they're just as sweet and good-natured as ever. Austin would be shocked to learn how long he really had to get the Shaggs while they're hot.

### Grass Drag Championships

Fremont

Just in case you've ever wondered (and I know some of you have), snowmobiles don't really need snow to go mobile. A grassy field, some dirt, even a small pond will do in a pinch. In fact, once you've attended the New Hampshire Snowmobile Association's Grass Drags and Water Crossing Championships, held each Columbus Day weekend on Phil Peterson's Brookvale Farm in Fremont, you might even begin to wonder if there's any surface out there a true snowmobile fanatic wouldn't at least try to ride. (A gravel road? A rocky beach?) Still, just because you can do something doesn't necessarily mean you should do it—you little ones at home take note.

First held in 1985, the three-day snowmobile event has grown by leaps and bounds each year and is now billed as the nation's largest grass drags and water crossing championships. Need a little more explanation of the sport? A grass drag race is held on a 500-foot-long straight-line grass and dirt track. Each heat consists of four snowmobile racers lined up side-by-side on the track. When they're given the green light, the racers tear off down the track, dirt and grass flying from the sleds until they reach speeds as high as 115 mph on their way to the finish line. Each race is over in about five seconds.

The water cross component of the event is just about what you'd expect: a snowmobile race around a small island in a pond located in the middle of a farmer's field. Racers get a running start on an acceleration track and then try to see who can do the best job of making

his or her snowmobile act like a boat. Obviously, sinking is an undesirable side effect, since snowmobiles aren't boats, but most riders make it around on sheer speed and guts.

Lauren, a grass drag fan from Concord, tried to describe the appeal of the sport for me: "There's so much about it that just feels off—the warm fall weather, the grass track, the water and the mud. It's like doing something your mother told you not to do with a bunch of your friends and getting away with it." Oh, now I get it—Snowmobile Free or Die.

The New Hampshire Snowmobile Association's Grass Drags and Water Crossing Championships are held each year in the middle of October at Phil Peterson's Brookvale Farm on Martin Road in Fremont. For directions and information go to [www.nhgrassdrags.com](http://www.nhgrassdrags.com) or call (603) 237-8449.

## **George Washington's Naughty "Girl"**

Greenland

Wouldn't it be great if one of George Washington's slaves had escaped, fled to the north, and settled here in New Hampshire? And wouldn't it be even better if, instead of taking his loss of free help in stride, old George wrote numerous whiney letters to a polite, ever-diplomatic, but less-than-cooperative New Hampshire official in a failed attempt to get his former slave, now free woman, put on a ship and brought back to Virginia?

Well, it's a great story, and even all the more enjoyable because it's true. Ona Maria Judge, a house slave of George Washington's, escaped from Philadelphia by ship to Portsmouth in the summer of 1796, toward the end of the second term of Washington's presidency. In a letter sent to Joseph Whipple, Collector of the Port of Portsmouth, Washington said that "the girl" was a particular favorite of Mrs. Washington's and "handy and useful to her, being a perfect Mistress of her needle." Washington went on to say that "the ingratitude of the girl, who was brought up and treated more like a child than a Servant . . .

ought not to escape with impunity if it can be avoided." He suggested she be seized and "put on board a vessel bound immediately to this place [Philadelphia]."

Washington and Whipple's correspondence stretches over a period of months, with Whipple remaining ever polite, ever diplomatic, but somehow ever unable to carry out the president's requests. In his first letter to Washington, he is happy to report that Ona "declared her willingness to return & to serve with fidelity during the lives of the President & his Lady if she could be freed on their decease, should she outlive them." Washington writes back to explain to Whipple that it would simply be unfair to reward "Oney's" ingratitude with special favors and "thereby discontent . . . the minds of all her fellow-servants who are far more deserving than herself of favor." The president again asks Whipple to seize Ona and put her on a ship, preferably one bound for Virginia, but to be careful not to incite a mob or a riot. When Whipple writes back to the president, he again reports only "failure," claiming it was impossible for him to tell whether seizing Ona would incite a riot since "so far as I have had opportunity to perceive . . . different sentiments are entertained [among the public] on this subject [of slavery]."

The Washingtons persisted in their attempts to retrieve Ona but to no avail. She married John Staines in 1797, and the couple had two daughters, Eliza and Nancy. The family settled in Portsmouth, but Ona Maria Staines lived out the last decades of her long free life on Dearborn Road in Greenland, either an ungrateful escaped servant girl, if you want to take George's view, or the epitome of a New Hampshire woman, one who chose freedom even at the risk of death.

To read the full text of the letters excerpted above, visit the Weeks Public Library in Greenland at 36 Post Road (two doors down from the Greenland Central School) and pick up the manuscript "A Quiet Abiding Place," by Paul Hughes. For hours of operation and information call (603) 436-8548.



them in with great care and precision all around the car. By the time White was finished, the entire trolley, with the exception of the windows and doors, was completely encased in stonework and hidden from view, a trolley car entombed behind thick gray walls of granite. And his wife was impressed by the results. "You wouldn't think an old trolley car would make such a cute little place," Mrs. White noted in her diary, though originally she must have had her doubts.

The White family no longer owns the home. In fact, when I visited a contractor was renovating the house for its current owners, who live in California and rent the place out. (That's right—the trolley house is for rent!) The contractor was kind enough to give me a quick tour inside. The ceiling's a little low in the kitchen, and the windows in front are shaped the same as a trolley's, wider than they are tall, and there's a slight bow to the walls at the front of the house, where Ernest built around the nose and tail curves of the trolley, but beyond that, it's just your average comfortable cottage. A cute little place, just like Mrs. White said. And it all could be yours, to rent anyway, if you're in the market for a once-mobile home.

### **A Fake with a Long Shelf Life**

Hampton

Some lucky fakes can get so famous, it doesn't matter that they're phony. As a case in point, I submit Hampton's Viking rock, best known as Thorvald's Rock. Legend has it that Thorvald's Rock, which now sits on the grounds of the Tuck Museum in a shallow well with iron bars across the mouth to protect the stone from souvenir seekers, once marked the Boar's Head burial site of the Viking explorer Thorvald Eriksson, brother of the more famous Leif Eriksson and son of Erik the Red. Those scratches visible on the rock, legend also has it, are ancient runes.

The legend probably started on July 4, 1902, when Hampton district court judge Charles A. Lamprey published a piece in the local newspaper making the case that a strangely gouged stone on his family's



**Could a Viking rock get a restraining order on a man from Massachusetts?**

coastal property marked the grave of the Viking explorer Thorvald. According to Viking sagas recorded in medieval Icelandic manuscripts, Thorvald was retracing his brother's discovery of Vinland (what is now known as North America) in a.d. 1004 when he found a stunning rock outcropping that reminded him of the fjords back home. Shortly thereafter he came ashore, skirmished with local Indians, was mortally wounded by an arrow to the armpit, and with his last gasping breaths requested burial ashore. Those rocks in the legend, Lamprey argued, had to be Boar's Head, the rocky promontory just north of Hampton Beach, even though, truth be told, there are more than a few rocky outcroppings along the 3,000 or so miles of coastline between here

and Canada. And the strangely gouged stone on Lamprey's property, it stood to reason, marked Thorvald's final resting place.

Somehow the highly unverifiable and extremely unlikely, almost certainly totally untrue legend got spread by way of tourist brochures, real-estate developers, and newspaper accounts alike, and the rock became famous. It had a particularly eventful twentieth century: Some-time in the 1950s, it was moved to make way for new construction in the area. Then in 1973 local amateur archeologists reportedly searched for Thorvald's remains at the site where the stone once lay and came up empty-handed. According to one report, an enterprising but unethical man from Massachusetts even tried to take the whole rock home with him in his truck. Finally, in 1989 Thorvald's Rock was moved to the Tuck Museum where it rests to this day, safe—albeit behind bars—from amateur archaeologists, souvenir hunters, Viking fanatics, and a certain guy from Massachusetts with a pickup truck and a plan.

The Tuck Museum is located at 40 Park Avenue in Hampton; Thorvald's Rock is on the museum grounds close to Park Avenue. For museum hours and other information call (603) 929-0781.

### **Pardoned Three Hundred Years Too Late**

Hampton

Goody Cole's crimes, if she was in fact guilty of them, weren't necessarily of the cruelest, most blood-curdling variety. A young girl alleged that Goody had spoken to her through a cat. A couple of neighbors accused her of putting a curse on a cow. Oh, and two women claimed that they heard moaning in the wind whenever they spoke Goody's name. Such was the "evidence" that put Goody Cole, New Hampshire's only convicted witch, behind bars for the last few decades of her life.

It was 1656, decades before the Salem witch trials, when Eunice "Goody" Cole of Hampton was tried and convicted of witchcraft and sentenced to life imprisonment in Boston. In her eighties she was released and lived a pauper in Hampton her remaining years,



**Goody got imprisoned for witchcraft, and all she got was this rock.**

depending on care and support from the very citizens who had imprisoned her. Legend has it that when she died, townspeople drove a stake through her heart before burying her on unconsecrated ground in an unmarked grave. Talk about getting shafted.

In 1938, the year of Hampton's tricentennial celebrations, a local group called the Society in Hampton for the Apprehension of Those Falsely Accusing Eunice "Goody" Cole of Having Had Familiarity With the Devil (whew, that's a mouthful) formed for the sole purpose of

rehabilitating Goody's good name. The town issued a proclamation exonerating her of all witchcraft charges but, surprisingly, not specifically apologizing for the years of false imprisonment or the whole stake-through-the-heart thing. Members of the group with the long name then burned copies of Cole's seventeenth-century court records and placed them in a tin along with samples of soil from her supposed home and burial sites. According to reports, citizens planned to erect a stone monument to Goody Cole and bury the ashes of her court records beneath it. For some reason the plan never materialized, and the ashes still remain, unburied, sitting at the Tuck Museum. (Maybe that's why Goody's ghost is said to roam the town green on moonless nights.) You can also find an odd-looking unmarked erosion stone that's said to honor Goody on the Tuck Museum property, right near Thorvald's Rock.

The Tuck Museum is located at 40 Park Avenue in Hampton. For hours of operation and other information call (603) 929-0781.

### **Pro Sand Castle Builders Compete to Justify Dubious Career Choice**

Hampton Beach

Greg Grady's serious about sand. So serious, in fact, that he's one of only about 250 master sand sculptors worldwide who can make a living "in sand," attending sand-sculpting competitions and creating commissioned sand sculptures for individuals, municipalities, and businesses. "A bunch of us sat around trying to figure out how many of us there were, and we came up with about 250," Grady said. "Now, of course, that's not set in stone, but it's a pretty good estimate." Don't you think it's kind of funny for a sand sculptor to say, "That's not set in stone?"

Grady is the co-organizer of the Hampton Beach Master Sand-Sculpting Competition, held each year at the end of June. Fifteen master sand sculptors have twenty-one hours over a period of three days to create original works of art out of their individual allotments of

ten tons of sand and all the water they want. "One of the biggest misconceptions people have," Grady told me, "is that we do something tricky to the sand [to create sculptures]. There are no tricks: just sand and water, that's it." (Only after the sculptures are finished can artists spray them with a 10 percent glue and water solution to help prevent damage.)

By the looks of things from past competitions, sculptors shy away from castles. Standout creations have included Adam and Eve on opposite sides of a towering apple tree, a woman in a bathtub, and two mill workers wrestling with a piece of cloth jammed up in the huge gears of a factory loom. Judges choose first- through fifth-place winners based on artistic merit, technical difficulty, and overall design, and, with over \$15,000 in prize money, the stakes are high. There's also a people's choice award, so you can vote for your own favorite.

While sand sculpting may sound like a great career, don't quit your day job just yet. There are risks beyond sunstroke and premature wrinkling. Greg Grady recalled a competition in which one of the sculptures fell only an hour before judging, no laughing matter for the sculptor, Fred Mallet of South Padre Island, Texas. "Ten tons of sand is no joke," Grady told me. "Someone could get really hurt." Luckily, Fred escaped unharmed, but others aren't so lucky. As a case in point, Grady recalled a competition down in Fort Myers when an inebriated spring breaker tried knocking down a competitor's sand sculpture to get a laugh out of his friends: "He kind of ran and tackled the thing, and then he just lay there, crying. An ambulance came and took him away—I think he dislocated his shoulder." Guys like that are why we need crowd control barricades. The Hampton Beach Master Sand-Sculpting Competition is held at the end of each June right on Hampton Beach. For information go to [www.hamptonbeach.org](http://www.hamptonbeach.org) or, if you'd like to volunteer at the event, call (603) 926-8718.

### Round Up Those Breakdowns, We're Having a Wrecker Rodeo!

Hampton Beach

If you don't get a proper warning that the New Hampshire Towing Association is coming to town, you might mistake their wrecker parade—wherein hundreds of tow trucks large, medium, and small, yellow lights flashing, drive down the Hampton Beach strip—for a tow truck convoy headed off to clear some massive freeway pile-up. Of course, that's not the case. But watching tow truck after tow truck (and tow truck driver after tow truck driver) parade by, one can't help but stop and wonder: Who's going to come to the rescue if some poor soul does break down and needs a tow?

Each year in the middle of May, hundreds of tow trucks from all over New England parade through Hampton and down Ocean Boulevard, lights flashing and horns honking. While it's fun to get a close look at all those wreckers, especially without the anxiety of actually needing one, the parade is just a preamble, really, to the tow truck rodeo at Hampton Beach State Park. Drivers in the rodeo compete in four different classes—light duty, medium duty, flatbed, and heavy duty—for prizes and all-important bragging rights.

Events include the Timed Tire Change, the Barrel Race Round-Up, the Rolled-Over RV Removal, and the Customer Chitchat and Chow Down (a dual event consisting of an idle-chitchat-in-the-cab competition followed by a chili-dog-eating contest). Actually, I made those events up, but the competitions at the Wrecker Rodeo are just as fun. Okay, almost as fun. There's a timed obstacle course and a timed hitch and ride event, as well as a beauty pageant for the most attractive wreckers. Just for the sake of clarity, that's a beauty pageant for the trucks, not their drivers. Of course, a driver beauty pageant (would there be a swimsuit round?) really would be something to see. Something to see and then forget very, very quickly.

For information about the New Hampshire Towing Association's Tow and Trade Show, visit [www.nhtowingassociation.com](http://www.nhtowingassociation.com). The location of the trade show and rodeo may change year to year, so be sure to confirm beforehand.