

**Thomas Cote Wood Carvings Collection**  
MCC-00504

Total Boxes: 3 boxes, 1 map tube, two oversized posters, and two oversized carvings  
Linear Feet: 2.6  
Cubic Feet: 2.78

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## **Thomas Cote Wood Carvings Collection (MCC-00504)**

Shelf List Number: AX-00504; V-8

### **Collection Overview**

#### Creator

Thomas L. Cote & others (Top of Maine Carvers)

#### Dates

Bulk of collection is undated  
1973-2021

#### Provenance

Donated by Thomas L. Cote in 2021-2022

#### Language

English  
French

#### Conservation Notes

Not applicable

### **Conditions Governing Access and Use**

#### Restrictions

Access: No restrictions

Physical: No restrictions

Technical: No restrictions

#### Rights Statement

The Thomas Cote wood carvings collection is the physical property of the Acadian Archives/acadiennes at the University of Maine at Fort Kent.

#### Recommended Citation

Thomas Cote wood carvings collection, Acadian Archives/acadiennes, University of Maine at Fort Kent.

### **Collection Description**

#### Historical and Biographical Information

Thomas (Tom) Cote (b. 1948) is a wood carver of Acadian and French-Canadian descent. He grew up in Caswell, Maine, and, learning the craft from his mother Rena, he started carving at the age of 12. He is descended from Jean-Baptiste Côté (1832-1907), a Quebec City carver who gained prominence for his prolific work and craftsmanship.

Cote served with a U.S. Army Medevac unit during the Vietnam War. He subsequently spent several summers studying wood sculpting in Saint-Jean Port-Joli, a center for Quebec folk arts

that gained wider recognition thanks to the Bourgault family of sculptors. Cote's work bears the influence of traditional French-Canadian culture and includes depictions of woodsmen, *lutins* (gnomes or elves), the *Bonhomme sept-heures* (bogeyman), and canoes and snowshoes. He has also carved eagle-head canes for aging veterans. Cote uses hand tools exclusively: mallets, chisels, and knives.

Cote has taught woodshop in local classrooms for over thirty years, offered private lessons in his workshop, and shared his craft with his grandchildren. Though he has retired from the school system, he continues to give lessons. His carvings can be found on all continents but Antarctica. His body of work extends to carved roadside panels installed in St. John Valley communities to coincide with the Acadian World Congress of 2014. He has earned the designation of Master Carver from the Maine Arts Commission. Cote resides in Limestone, Maine.

### Scope and Content

The wood carvings in this collection have been made by Thomas Cote as well as his students and family members over the years. Artists other than Cote have been credited in the collection inventory below. The carvings range in subject from animals to household items to reliefs of people.

The collection also contains a couple newspaper articles on Thomas Cote's carving career and classes; banners for events/exhibitions he (and others) participated; photos of his artwork; and books he donated on woodworking and crafting with other mediums.

### Arrangement

The collection is split into 6 series: wood carvings; newspaper articles; photographs; memorabilia; books/periodicals; banners/posters; and sculpture donated by Gerald Wantlant. Materials that were/are on display at the time of the creation of this finding aid have their locations noted in bold.

### Separated Materials (If Applicable)

1. Banner "Carvings by Cote: Master Traditional Carver" in map tube
2. Poster for Bangor Folk festival (UMaine)
3. Panel poster of Thomas Cote bio with pictures of carvings and students working

### Subject Headings

Art, Acadian

Animals

Maine artists

Relief (sculpture)

Wood carving

### Related Materials

1. The Acadian Archives has carvings made by Cote that were a gift of Gerald Wentland
2. Carvings by Sculptor Joseph 'Joey' Albert.

## Collection Inventory

### Series 1. Wood Carvings

Box	Item No.	Description
1	1	Whetstones for sharpening in wooden cases (items 1a and 1b)
1	2	File for horseshoes
1	3	Sanding bows (items 3a and 3b) (Thomas Cote)
1	4	Draw knife used by Rena Cote; probably from Arthur Devos (two-handed tool with long blade)
1	5	Round-head wood mallet (Thomas Cote)
1	6	Heavier handmade mallet used by Rena Cote (Thomas Cote)
1	7	Various tools including Rena Cote's: three chisels (a, b, c), two carving skewers (d, e), and two deep gouges, one with a handle made of rolled paper (f, g)
1	8	Yellow shuttle for tatting (Cote's mother used a similar tool)
1	9	Wool winder (dévidoir) (Heather Taylor)
1	10	Letter opener (Thomas Cote)
1	11	Relief with lighthouse (Heather Taylor)
1	12	Relief of Father John, medicine man (Thomas Cote)
1	13	Relief of hanging flower (Rena Cote)
1	14	Relief portrait of la Sagouine (early piece) (Thomas Cote)
3	15	Wooden spoons with burning lines (items 15a and 15b) (Patricia Watson)
3	16	Wooden spoon with Acadian flag (Kirk Cote)
3	17	Donut turner (Thomas Cote)
3	18	Wooden spoons with fleur-de-lys design (items 18a and 18b) (Thomas Cote)
3	19	Bust on wooden base (John Violette)
3	20	Jewelry in a box: pair of earrings and a bracelet that belonged to Rena; wooden charm and barrel pin made by Thomas Cote
3	21	Relief apple carved by a student of Mr. Cote
3	22	Drinking cup with duck carved into side (Thomas Cote)
3	23	Duck carved from golf club (Thomas Cote)
3	24	Lutin or gnome (Thomas Cote)
3	25	Tea strainer (Thomas Cote)
3	26	Wooden stick with exercises (Dolor, Thomas Cote's brother)
3	27	Black-necked stilt on log (Thomas Cote)
4	28	Zebra (Kennedy Bencivenga)
4	29	Hobo (Caron)
4	30	Le gigueux/jig doll (2 pieces)
4	31	Beaver dam relief of Limestone (Tom Marquis)
-	32	Carousel horse (Ellyzabeth Bencivenga)
-	33	Beaver sculpture 19 x 23 x 5" (unknown)

**Series 2. Newspaper Articles**

Box	Folder	Description
2	1	"Northern Maine School a cut above rest." <i>Chip Chats</i> . Pp.72-73.
2	1	Rice, Rachel. "Pavilion brings region's history to life." <i>Bangor Daily News</i> .
2	1	Leigh, Sylvia. "Woodworking is Limestone man's relaxation."
2	1	Potato harvest tickets (Mr. Cote's number was 11)

**Series 3. Photographs**

Box	Folder	Description
2	2	Picture of an unknown artist sitting next to his sculpture of a man and horse plowing land. 2021-08.
2	2	Same artist from previous photo sitting at a table next to sculpture with other art pieces displayed on table. 2021-08.
2	2	Young girl sitting at a table with a drawing in front of her. 2021-08.
2	2	Another unknown artist standing at center of photograph in classroom, holding a partially carved piece of wood and carving tool. 2021-08.
2	2	Relief of a man drilling a tree in the woods.
2	3	Two carved gnomes, one of which is sitting on a rock and the other is resting on a railing.
2	3	Tom Cote. 4x8 scene of a medic helicopter flying over a body of water near a lighthouse. Bangor Armory,
2	3	Close-up of the medic helicopter from the previous image.
2	3	Relief of Father John (medicine man). [This relief is part of the carvings in series 1.]
2	3	Painted relief of a bald eagle on a tree branch.
2	3	Relief of a bird.
2	3	"125th July 1994." Man sitting on a tree log carving it with a mallet and chisel.
2	3	"125th July 1994." Two men sitting on a tree log carving it by hand.
2	3	Two men carving tree log while a third man watches, c.1.
2	3	Two men carving tree log while a third man watches, c.2.
2	3	Finished totem celebrating 125 years. Man in overalls carved into log and displayed in front of a house.
2	3	Postcard. "Family coat of arms. Carved from basswood 2' x 2' plus background and frame.
2	4	"Presque Isle Walmart." Mural of a farm on one wall. To the left of this wall, the painting continues but depicts fall foliage.
2	4	"Presque Isle Walmart." Zoomed out picture of the farm mural which shows the body of water to the right of the farm.
2	4	"Presque Isle Walmart." Mural of a snowmobiler riding through a field next to a road. 1993-01-23.
2	4	Side view of a carving of an eagle taking off from a pile of rocks.
2	4	Front view of the above carving of an eagle taking off from a pile of rocks. c.1

2	4	Front view of the above carving of an eagle taking off from a pile of rocks. c.2
2	4	3 paneled relief of people chopping/cutting wood in front of a snow-covered house.
2	4	"For Caribou businesses." Young girl standing under life-sized carving of a moose.
2	4	Carvings of a moose and bowls on display on a table in a storefront.
2	4	Black and white photograph of a man standing on the back of a truck picking up barrels.
2	4	"Top of Maine Carvers" sticker. Depicts a beaver over text, with the state of Maine in the background.
2	4	Man holding a carving in each hand. One is a miniature statue of a person and the other is a bust of a head.
2	4	Carving of a farmer milking a cow displayed on a table under the 'future farmers of America Limestone Chapter' banner.
2	4	Zoomed out side angle of the carving of a farmer milking a cow displayed on a table under the 'future farmers of America Limestone Chapter' banner.

#### **Series 4. Memorabilia**

Box	Folder	Description
2	5	Fiber College on Penobscot Bay. "Educating Creative Expression Exhibit." Pamphlet. 2009-09-10- 09-13.
2	5	Copy of above pamphlet
2	5	"Temptation: Wood Carvings by Jessica Stackhouse." Postcard invitation to presentation and reception at the University of Maine at Presque Isle. 2008-05-10.
2	5	Mundell, Kathleen. "Artists of the Forest: Traditional artists from northern Maine." 7 copies of the same postcard invitation for an event featuring Tom Cote and other artists. 2019-06-01- 2019-08-11. (Cote's carvings on front of postcards).
2	5	"Tom Cote, master carver: From Roots to Bark; the Acadian way with Wood." 3 copies of the same postcard invitation for an exhibit at the Reed Art Gallery at the University of Maine at Presque Isle. (Cote's carvings on front of postcards).
2	5	"Artists of the Forest." Booklet featuring short stories on different artists and their work.
2	5	Guimont, Michel. "Paryse Martin: La raison du mouvement." Card for exhibit featuring artwork on the front cover. 2015-12-06.

#### **Series 5. Books/Periodicals**

Box	Folder	Description
2	6	Tangerman, E.J. <i>Whittling and Woodcarving</i> . New York, Dover Publications Inc. 1962.

2	7	Diehn, Gwen & Krautwurst, Terry. <i>Kids Style: Nature Crafts; 50 Terrific things to make with Nature's Materials</i> . New York, Sterling Publishing Co., Inc. 1997.
2	8	<i>Wildfowl Carving Magazine</i> . Vol. 15 no.4. Winter 2000.
2	8	<i>Country Home Folk Crafts</i> . Vol.1 no.4. October 1994
2	8	<i>Creative Crafts</i> . Vol.3 no.9. May 1973
2	9	Meyer, Barbara. <i>Bread Dough Floral Miniatures</i> . Vol.1 Craft Publications Inc. 1976.
2	9	<i>Decorative Quilting</i> . Craft Course Publishers, Inc. 1973.

#### **Series 6. Banners/Posters**

Storage	Area	Description
Map tube	K-504	Banner "Carvings by Cote: Master Traditional Carver"
Map storage	Shelf 8	"Thomas Cote & Apprentices." Poster for Bangor Folk festival (UMaine).
Map storage	Shelf 8	Bazinet, Natalie. "County Faces." Blown up article featured in <i>The Star-Herald, Houlton Pioneer Times, &amp; the Aroostook Republican and News</i> .
Map storage	Shelf 8	Handwritten poster about Tom Cote panel with pictures of his carvings/students carving.

#### **Series 7: Carvings donated by Gerald Wentland**

*This sculpture was carved by Tom Cote but donated by Gerald Wentland, hence why it has its own series.*

Box	Item No.	Description
3	N/A	"Coulée de sève/Old way of collecting sap" (Thomas Cote)