

Thomas Cote Wood Carvings Collection
MCC-00504

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

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

Thomas Cote Wood Carvings Collection (MCC-00504)

Shelf List Number: AX-00504

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) Côté (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.

Côté 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. Côté's work bears the influence of traditional French-Canadian culture and includes depictions of woodsmen, *lutins* (gnomes or elves), the *Bonhomme sept-heures* (bogyman), and canoes and snowshoes. He has also carved eagle-head canes for aging veterans. Cote uses hand tools exclusively-mallets, chisels, and knives- exclusively.

Côté 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. Côté 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 Tom 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)

Banner "Carvings by Cote: Master Traditional Carver" in map tube

Poster for Bangor Folk festival (UMaine) [**In window by square table**]

Items currently on display- See series 1: Wood Carvings and series 6: Separated Materials (All materials noted in bold).

Panel poster of Tom Cote bio with pictures of carvings and students working.

Subject Headings

Acadian

Animals

Maine artists

Reliefs

Wood carving

Related Materials

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

Collection Inventory

Box	Folder	Description
Series 1. Wood Carvings		
1	N/A	Whetstones for sharpening [2] (in wooden case)
1	N/A	File for horseshoes
1	N/A	Sanding bows [2] (Thomas Cote)
1	N/A	Drinking cup with beaked animal carved into side (Thomas Cote)
1	N/A	Duck from Golf Club (Thomas Cote)
1	N/A	Relief Apple (Unnamed student)
1	N/A	Shuttle for tatting (yellow). [Cote's mother used a similar tool.]
1	N/A	Letter opener (Thomas Cote)
1	N/A	Jewelry pieces in a small box with a teddy bear on the sides. (The bracelet/earrings are Rena's, the barrel pin and wooden charm are Tom's.)
1	N/A	Potato Tickets (#11 was Thomas Cote's)
1	N/A	Relief of Father John (medicine man) (Thomas Cote)
1	N/A	Dolor's (Tom's brother) Teaching stick with exercises
1	N/A	Relief of hanging flower (Rena Cote)
1	N/A	Thomas Cote's mother's tools- one chisel, a carving skew, two deep gouges)
1	N/A	Small object for rolling wool (Heather Taylor) on lathe
1	N/A	Relief with lighthouse (Heather Taylor)
1	N/A	Draw knife used by Rena probably from Arthur Devos. (2 handled tool with long blade)
-	N/A	Beaver Dam Relief of Limestone (Tom Marquis)
-	N/A	Bust (John Violette)
-	N/A	Black-Neck stilt(?) (bird on log) (Thomas Cote)
-	N/A	Carousel Horse (Elizabeth- Tom's granddaughter)
-	N/A	Donut Turner (Thomas Cote)
-	N/A	Acadian spoon (Kirk Cote)
-	N/A	Fleur-de-lys patterned salad set (likely made by Thomas Cote)
-	N/A	Spoons with wood burning lines (Patricia Watson)
-	N/A	Round-Head Wood Mallet (Thomas Cote) [In display case by window]
-	N/A	Heavier handmade mallet used by Rena Cote (Thomas Cote) [In display case by window]
-	N/A	Round-Head Wood Mallet (Thomas Cote) [In display case by window]

- N/A Heavier handmade mallet used by Rena Cote (Thomas Cote) [**In display case by window**]
- N/A Zebra (Kennedy Benzivenoa) [**In display case by window**]
- N/A Lutin [gnome] (Thomas Cote) [**In display case by window**]
- N/A Tea Strainer (Thomas Cote) [**In display case by window**]
- N/A Relief portrait - Sanguine (early piece) (Thomas Cote) [**In display case by window**]
- N/A Beaver sculpture 19x23x5” (unknown) [**In display case by window**]

Series 2. Newspaper Articles

- 2 1 “Northern Maine School a cut above rest.” Chip Chats. Pp.72-73.
- 2 1 Rice, Rachel. “Pavilion brings region’s history to life.” *Bangor Daily News*.
- 2 1 Leigh, Sylvia. “Woodworking is Limestone man’s relaxation.”

Series 3. Photographs

- 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.

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| 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

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| 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

- 2 6 Tangerman, E.J. *Whittling and Woodcarving*. New York, Dover Publications Inc. 1962.
- 2 7 Diehn, Gwen & Krautwurst, Terry. *Kids Style: Nature Crafts; 50 Terrific things to make with Nature's Materials*. New York, Sterling Publishing Co., Inc. 1997.
- 2 8 *Wildfowl Carving Magazine*. Vol. 15 no.4. Winter 2000.
- 2 8 *Country Home Folk Crafts*. Vol.1 no.4. October 1994
- 2 8 *Creative Crafts*. Vol.3 no.9. May 1973
- 2 9 Meyer, Barbara. *Bread Dough Floral Miniatures*. Vol.1 Craft Publications Inc. 1976.
- 2 9 *Decorative Quilting*. Craft Course Publishers, Inc. 1973.

Series 6. Banners/Posters

- Map tube K-504 Banner "Carvings by Cote: Master Traditional Carver"
- Map storage Shelf 14 "Thomas Cote & Apprentices." Poster for Bangor Folk festival (UMaine). [**In window by square table**]
- Map storage Shelf 14 Bazinet, Natalie. "County Faces." Blown up article featured in *The Star-Herald, Houlton Pioneer Times, & the Aroostook Republican and News*.
- Map storage Handwritten poster about Tom Cote panel with pictures of his carvings/students carving.

Series 7: Carvings donated by Gerald Wantland

*This sculpture was donated by Gerlad Wantland but carved by Tom Cote which is why it has been added to this collection but kept separate from the others.

- N/A "Coutee de save/ old way of collecting sap (Thomas Cote) [**In display case by window**]