

Dan LaPierre: He captures life Travels with Dave and Elaine Violette Journal Item from Van Buren ME - 6/25/2008

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Description: We visit with Dan LaPierre, who has been taking aerial photos of the St John River Valley and its farms for many years. He has now turned to painting of historic topics and places.



Dan LaPierre with one of his paintings depicting a real farm in the Valley

Today I met a fascinating man, who just bubbles with enthusiasm about his interests. Dan retired as a Customs Agent down in Bangor ME, but has bought and goes a couple of times a year to the farm his father built outside Van Buren ME. Dan was raised the area and remembers the families who lived on those farms well; his memory of details about people and times rivals that of my Dad, and that is phenomenal!. Dan is Dad's second cousin, related through Dad's mother's side - the Soucies.

For many years Dan took to the skies and captured photos from the air of the lands, farms, and people of the upper St John Valley and the Crown of Maine. He passionately documents history and because his subjects so often are the farms and lands they are related to, he documents the people as well. He understands what the farms meant to those who started and ran them, and this shows in his selection of photo topics and scenes as well as the detail he captures.



Dan shows us a painting he did from research about the original grist mill built by Francois Violette in 1791

More recently Dan has turned to oil painting as a way to recall people and tell their stories. I would guess that he is doing a dozen or so paintings a year, all painstakingly researched to be sure the details are correct. If a cat appears in one of his paintings, for example, you can be sure that that cat existed in real life and was in the relationship shown in his painting.

He showed us a painting he recently completed that depicts the grist mill built by Francois Violette in 1791. As you will remember from other stories I have written about northern Maine, Francois Violette settled in the upper St John Valley in 1784, receiving land grants along with many others on both side of the St John River. He built his home in what is now Van Buren and built a grist mill along a brook called Violette Brook, which supplied the water power to run his mill. Francois was my great-great-great-great-grandfather. Dan researched old records as well as any descriptions he could find and looked around the grounds where the mill probably stood to learn more about the lay of the land and how the mill might have been set on it. His painting captures details not only about how the grist mill and dam might have looked and operated, but what was actually around it.



This is the painting of the Francois Violette grist mill on Violette Brook in Van Buren

Dan's paintings of people not only show their appearance, but also show the details of how they dressed and the colors they wore. Through his paintings you get the sense of being able to really learn about their personal traits.

Just after we visited with Dan, he was going to show eight of his paintings at the Acadian Festival on the upcoming weekend in Madawaska ME.

Dan and his wife spend most of their time at their home in Levant (near Bangor),



Dan tells us about who the people in this painting were and why he painted them as he did

but spend two two-month periods each year at the farm on Madore Road. They have been restoring the old farm and making it more livable in current times, and these periods give Dan a chance to stay in touch with the lands and people who give him so much material for his research and paintings.

You would enjoy meeting Dan LaPierre, and would be glad for the time you spent with him!

[Dan LaPierre photos](#)

I travels with Dave and Elaine Violette

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