



*Ellen Twisleton Vaughan sketching at campsite in the  
North Woods of Maine, 1879*

# bits & pieces

stories of nature, history & community

SPRING 2026

THE NEWSLETTER OF VAUGHAN WOODS & HISTORIC HOMESTEAD

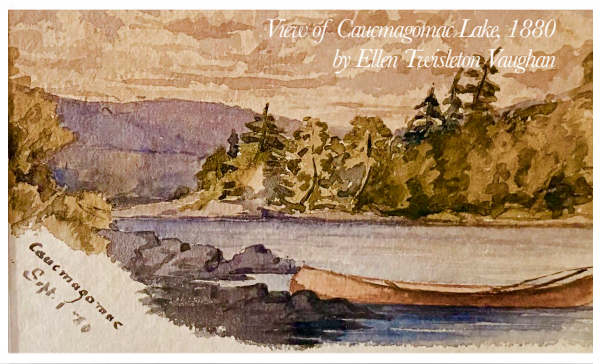


“PAINTING IS JUST  
ANOTHER WAY OF  
KEEPING A DIARY.”  
—PABLO PICASSO

## Far from the Parlor: Conserving Ellen Twisleton Vaughan’s Paintings of the Maine Woods

She carried her paints where she was not expected to go—deep into the Maine woods, far beyond the confines of the parlor.

Art conservation efforts continue here at the Homestead, where a selection of watercolor paintings by Ellen Twisleton Vaughan (1853–1934) have recently been carefully re-matted and backed by Roy Stottler of Renaissance Gallery. These quiet but essential interventions ensure that Ellen’s work—created not in



drawing rooms but along riverbanks and forest paths—endures. Part of a decades-long commitment to preserving the Homestead’s collection, this work prioritizes objects that deepen visitors’ understanding of the lives lived here. Portraits and paintings by the Vaughan family themselves, especially Ellen’s, offer a vivid sense of a woman whose artistic life unfolded outdoors. Her watercolors capture sweeping landscapes and fleeting human activity in the wilderness, . . . *cont’d*

*Far From The Parlor cont'd . . .*

reflecting both her eye for beauty and her willingness to venture beyond convention.

Born Ellen Parkman of Boston, she was raised within an elite social world but chose a different path early on. In 1873, at just twenty years old, she joined a canoe camping expedition to the North Maine Woods—an uncommon undertaking for a woman of her time. There she met William Warren Vaughan, whom she married nine years later, but just as importantly, she discovered the landscapes that would shape her artistic life. She returned to the North Woods again and again, traveling, sketching, and painting, building a body of work rooted in movement, observation, and independence.

After her marriage, Ellen became a devoted steward of the Homestead, helping to shape it as both a family home and a place that reflected her love of the outdoors. She and her



husband improved the house and gardens and helped develop the surrounding trails and bridges that still invite exploration today.

Trained by artists in her youth and during her travels in Europe, Ellen approached art as a deeply personal practice, filling sketchbooks with impressions gathered far from home. As her watercolors are conserved for future generations, they continue to draw us outward—into the woods she knew so well, and into the spirit of curiosity that led her there in the first place.

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## Good Luck Eggs

Every so often, one of our hens lays an egg with not one but two yolks—a small marvel that has long been considered a sign of good fortune. Known in many places as “good luck eggs,” these double-yolked surprises have inspired folklore across cultures. In parts of Britain and New England, they were said to foretell prosperity or unexpected good news; in other traditions, they symbolized abundance, fertility, or even the promise of a coming celebration.

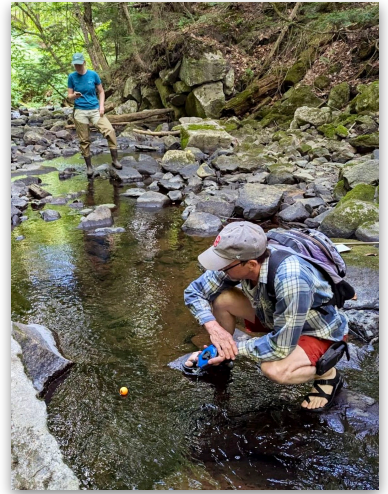
While science tells us that double yolks occur when a hen releases two yolks at once—most often in younger birds still finding their rhythm—the sense of wonder they inspire remains unchanged. Here at the Homestead, these “good luck eggs” offer a charming

connection between past and present, reminding us that history isn’t only found in grand events, but also in the small, unexpected moments of everyday life. So if you happen to crack open an egg and find a double yolk inside, consider it a bit of good luck—and a shared experience with generations who found meaning and delight in the same simple surprise.



## Word On The Woods *& Waters* by Rosemary Presnar

The Vaughan Brook Watershed Based Management Plan Development Project is nearing completion thanks to community support. Assessments and in-stream surveys are complete throughout the watershed. Volunteers contributed over 350 hours in 2025, including help from the Kennebec Land Trust and Vaughan Woods & Historic Homestead staff members. The Hallowell Conservation Commission would like to thank all project partners and volunteers for their commitment to protecting our local natural water resource. Analysis of thousands of data points and observations are in progress by Maine DEP and our environmental consulting team, Ecological Instincts. The project's Steering Committee has scheduled a **Community Meeting on Tuesday, June 23, from 6pm to 8pm** at Hallowell City Hall Auditorium to share findings and recommendations and to gather community input. The key outcome of the project will be a 10-year management plan to address non-point pollution sources and to improve water quality in the Vaughan Brook watershed for future generations. The public can send questions and comments to [HallowellConservation@gmail.com](mailto:HallowellConservation@gmail.com).



*Dan Mitchell (VWHH) and Abby Quinn (Ecological Instincts) measuring stream flow rate in August 2025.  
Pic by D. Fahy*

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## Sneak Peak - Favorite Nooks & Hidden Places

*Staff Pick by Jill Whitchurch-Dixon*

The Back Parlor—also known as Benjamin Vaughan’s study—evokes an almost tangible sense of wonder for me. When I arrived at VWHH in 2025, I was tasked with researching Benjamin Vaughan’s role as an unofficial emissary during the negotiations for the Treaty of Paris. His story quickly unfolded into something extraordinary: a midnight escape by rowboat, imprisonment at Paris’s infamous Prison de Carmes, and finally, a daring bid for freedom under the pseudonym “John Martin.” Though the room is not the original library Vaughan curated more than two centuries ago, I still imagine him there—leaning against the fireplace debating fruit tree varieties or seated at his desk drafting recommendations to political figures. I picture him glancing out the window at his wife, Sarah, gathering herbs in the garden on her way to visit a neighbor. It’s no surprise that the Back Parlor is my favorite room. Shelves flank the fireplace, with cabinets tucked below—ones I barely noticed until a warm spring day when I found Kate sitting on the floor, cabinet door open. Inside were remarkable treasures: two magic lanterns with boxes of glass slides, games, leftover Dutch Delft tiles brought back by William Warren Vaughan, and a delicate layered paper lithophane, possibly crafted by Sally Vaughan. So much curiosity, tucked into one small corner of the house.



*Jill displays a copy of the Treaty of Paris in the back parlor*



*Photo by Andy Molloy*

# SPRING & SUMMER 2026 AT VAUGHAN

## **ANNUAL GARDEN PARTY**

SATURDAY, JUNE 14

5:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. | \$40/person

Music by Katie Dagget

Catered by Tacos Del Seoul

Cash Bar by Table Bar

Buy your tickets online or call (207) 622-9831

*Limited number of tickets - reserve today!*

<https://vaughanhomestead.org/public-programs/>

## **HOUSE & GARDEN TOURS**

SELECT DATES IN

JULY & AUGUST

10:00 a.m. | \$10/person

*Space Limited - Sign up online.*



*Photo by Andy Molloy — a devoted friend to  
VWHH, dearly missed*

