

# Buck

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lief, the image depicts the form of a woman's leg and foot — but not just any woman. There are many incarnations of the story associated with this mark, but the general storyline of each has withstood the test of time.

"The most common one is that a woman was being burned at the stake, and my ancestor, Col. Jonathan, supposedly condemned her to death," Ed Buck said.

One of the first records of this story appeared in The New England Magazine in 1902 and reads as follows:

"All was ready and the hangman about to perform his grewsome [sic] duty, when the woman turned to Colonel Buck and raising one hand to heaven, as if to direct her last words on earth, pronounced this astounding prophecy: 'Jonathan Buck, listen to these words, the last my tongue shall utter. It is the spirit of the only true and living God which bids me speak them to you. You will soon die. Over your grave they will erect a stone, that all may know where the bones of the mighty Jonathan Buck are crumbling to dust. But listen! Listen all ye people — tell it to your children and your children's children — upon that stone will appear the imprint of my foot, and for all time long, long after your accursed race has perished from the earth, the people will come far and near and the unborn generations will say, There lies the man who murdered a woman. Remember well, Jonathan Buck, remember well!'"

"Please take into account that this was written by a bored newspaper reporter, waiting for new news in the Sarah Ware Murder case, in 1899," a telling of the legend by Bucksport local Emeric Spooner reads. "J.O. Whittemore had moved to town for that reason and soon after a year began to look elsewhere for newsworthy stories. When he ran this it was picked up by the Associated Press and spread across the country, thus a myth was born that would last generations."

There are various incarnations of the story, and the words supposedly spoken by the witch vary depending on who you ask. Another version of the story that

can be found on a plaque beside the monument says, "as the sentence was being carried out, the woman curses the colonel and concludes with 'so long shall my curse be upon thee and my sign upon the tombstone.' As the flames consume her body, her leg falls away and rolls out of the fire. Her deformed son, rejected by the community, grabs the leg, further insults the colonel and flees into the wilderness."

According to "In Search of Maine Urban Legends" by Spooner, the legend is just that — a legend.

The Salem Witch Trials ended before Jonathan Buck was born, and there is no record of any taking place in Maine, according to a list compiled by Marc Carlson of the University of Tulsa, Oklahoma. According to Ed Buck, Jonathan Buck had no authority to sentence anyone to death.

"Which came first, the monument or the witch's curse?" Valerie Van Winkle asks in her history of the many incarnations of the legend surrounding Buck.

"The facts surrounding the life of Col. Buck are that he was an honorable, industrious man who founded this community and was a leader in its early development, building the first saw mill, the first grist mill, and the first boat. Notably, the witch's curse was unheard of before the flaw in the marker appeared," the plaque next to Buck's monument reads.

An account from historian Rev. A.G. Hempstead echoes this sentiment.

"[T]he Bangor Historical Magazine by William D. Williamson, author of a History of the State of Maine, published in 1832 [said]: 'He was a man of strong mind, retentive memory, and steadfast purpose. In his person he was well proportioned, not large; his complexion was dark; his countenance sedate and expressive of sense, and his manner commanding. He was distinguished for his piety, and much respected for the excellent qualities that give character to the righteous man.'"

The supposed witch's leg has been attributed to a simple flaw in the granite, and yet people come into town and stop to examine the monument, which is the original that was placed in 1852, according to the plaque that informs visitors of the legend.

History speaks of a man



ASHLEY L. CONTI | BDN

Legend has it that Col. Jonathan Buck was cursed before he died after he burned a witch. As the woman was burning, her leg rolled out of the bonfire and she yelled a curse at Buck and his family before she died. Now an image of a woman's foot and leg appear on his memorial.

who contributed much to a town that's slowing down. And yet the myth prevails, even as tangible history — like that which surrounds Ed Buck in the Bucksport Historical Society Museum — starts to crumble. The local mill has closed, and as Buck glances around the small museum, he sees what others don't.

"We're just trying to keep this little museum going," Buck said. "It's all volunteer work. Unfortunately we're running out of people who want to volunteer. Older people are dying, and younger people don't replace them. Younger people aren't as interested in the history of Bucksport. ... It's kind of sad."

The legend of Jonathan Buck has prevailed, but people such as Ed Buck are around to tell the legend and support the history of a town and a man, attempting to keep both alive.

"If you want to believe it's a leg, it's a leg. If you don't want to believe it's a leg, you'll say it's an imperfection in the granite," Ed Buck said with a laugh. "It's a fun story, and if people enjoy it I don't have a problem with it."

As for Buck's own view of the story, the incarnation as he understands it has the witch saying the following: "The curse will affect all of your family and your descendants forever and ever."

"I guess I'm cursed," Buck said with a chuckle. "I often tell people I've had a

lot of bad things happen to me, but I blame it on my own mistakes and maybe some

other people that interact with me — but I never blame it on the curse. I don't be-

lieve in curses. I believe in stupidity. And maybe a little bad luck."

# Theater of WAR

Photo by Paxton Winters

Theater of War is an innovative public health project that presents readings of ancient Greek plays as a catalyst for town hall discussions about the challenges faced by service members, veterans, and their caregivers and families today. Using Sophocles' plays to forge a common vocabulary for openly discussing the impact of war on individuals, families, communities, these events are aimed at generating compassion and understanding between diverse audiences. Each performance is followed by community panelist remarks and a facilitated town hall discussion.

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A new version by Bryan Doerries

Photo by Paxton Winters

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→ **TIME:** 7:00 - 9:00pm

→ **LOCATION:** Bangor Opera House  
131 Main Street

ADMISSION IS FREE. SEATING IS LIMITED

To reserve your free tickets please email: [theaterofwar@penobscottheatre.org](mailto:theaterofwar@penobscottheatre.org) or call the box office at 207.942.3333

TRANSLATED, DIRECTED & FACILITATED BY **BRYAN DOERRIES** PRODUCED BY **PHYLLIS KAUFMAN**

To become a part of Theater of War, host a performance in your community, support our efforts, continue the discussion online, or for additional information, please contact Bryan Doerries, Artistic Director, or Phyllis Kaufman, Producing Director at [info@outsidethewirellc.com](mailto:info@outsidethewirellc.com)

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# Dead

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began in December of last year, when Adam Perkins decided to use the extra space in his family's professional framing business.

"We've been a custom picture frame shop for 13 years now," Perkins said. "Two years ago, we expanded our services and started doing fine art printing. With our building expansion we had a little extra space left over, so we thought 'what can we use this space for?' We just figured that everything we do is art related, so let's open up a mini gallery."

Adam's father, Ed Perkins, opened the business in 2002 and has been working for custom framing shops for 35 years. School Street Picture Framing Inc. is one of only a few businesses of its kind left in the area, and Adam Perkins has taken it a step further by offering patrons and those interested in the arts a gallery displaying work by local artists.

"One thing the gallery is trying to do is bridge the gap between fine art and illustration," Adam Perkins said. "Unfortunately in art culture we've labeled what fine art is and what illustration is. So we want to merge that together and say, 'You know what? Illustration is fine art.'"

Though the Perkins have no cultural ties to the Mexican holiday, their art will act as an appreciation of the imagery associated with the celebration and the purpose behind it.

"It's a celebration of the people's life as opposed to mourning their death," Jessie Perkins explained.

The exhibit will feature two back-to-back openings, one from 5:30 to 8 p.m. Friday, Oct. 30, and another from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 31. The exhibit will remain on display at 33

School St. in Brewer until Dec. 5.

For more information about The Gallery @ School Street and their upcoming

exhibit, visit their website at [schoolstreetpictureframing.com](http://schoolstreetpictureframing.com) or their Facebook page at [facebook.com/schoolstreetpictureframing](http://facebook.com/schoolstreetpictureframing).

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