

Part One (A)  
What Started It All

# New England Memories

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Volume 28.7

The World Of New England Remembrances

\$2.75

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## An Attic Article, A Curiosity

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*The quaint Queen Anne, built in 1863, was my first experience as a homeowner. We moved in toward the end of May of 1980. Like any hopeful young couple we had grandiose dreams and plans for our new home and, typically, wallets filled with as many cobwebs as the attic had accumulated over the previous one hundred and seventeen years.*

*The place to start, so my dad advised, was to use our meager resources on becoming energy conscious, batten down the hatches, so to speak, in anticipation of harsh New England winters and the high cost of heating fuel; in this case, natural gas.*

*In this effort I begrudgingly found myself, on a sweltering August Saturday, inside the dingy and dusty attic. The solitary window was really square but made to look circular from the outside and, to make matters worse, there was no way to open this dirty portal, so the attic was void of proper cross ventilation and light.*

*The project consisted of raking and fluffing, by hand, settled Rockwool type insulation, then adding more where needed, with a modern equivalent of the settled and thinned gray insulating material to fill voids between ceiling rafters. After a few hours of this steamy work, I found myself thirsty, overheated, exhausted and itchy. I did not wish to climb back into this hole a second time, so I was determined to complete my mission and get out of there.*

*Midway through, with my feet dangling over the edge of the solitary opening, I rested and hoped to find cooler and more breathable air passing up through the small hatch opening. I was smudged with dirt and insulating gunk from head to toe; I was also sinus blocked and incredibly uncomfortable, as well. Not one to sit idle for too long, while I sat resting I unconsciously continued to fluff Rockwool in the area closest to me.*

*In an effort not to disturb hidden old knob and tube electric wiring, I worked slowly and carefully dipping my gloved hand deep into the Rockwool like a garden hoe or trowel and pulled apart clumps of the gray insulating stuff. I moved material around, continually fluffing, and then smoothing it over. I broke up the clumped matter as I went along the edge of the joists closest to me. I worked my way around the opening I sat on, adjusting my seat as I progressed so that I eventually encircled the opening on all four sides.*

*When I found myself back where I had begun, I noticed I had taken all the Rockwool from one area and “fluffed” it into another, so that now the framed area closest to me was void of insulating material all together. All that remained visible now were the newspapers lining the joists. I still do not know what service these newspapers provided. Nevertheless, the front page of *The Boston Traveler* from 1946, presumably the year the Rockwool was originally placed there, stared up at me. WOMAN VANISHES, it read.*