When New Hampshire author and illustrator Tomie dePaola lived in Weston, VT in the mid-1950s, he heard plenty of local stories. Little did he know that fifty years later, he would be retelling them in his latest book, *Front Porch Tales & North Country Whoppers*. A lovely assortment of little known folk tales about local New Englanders, the stories are told in local dialects. The passing culture is captured and preserved in the telling.

One true story called *Settin*’ is about two newcomers to the town who were invited to a local farmer’s home to come and “set with” us on a Saturday evening after supper. As the story unfolds we find the two men and another neighbor sitting on the porch in a row, silently, for the entire evening, finally sharing some tasty donuts and cider, with nothing said. “They set and they set and they set” the newcomers tell us. When they see their car the following Monday they tell him that he and his wife Maudie felt that was one of the ‘best sets’ they ever had! It’s a funny story and like the other stories in the book, there is some underlying wisdom as well. We should be so lucky to just sit with friends for a long quiet evening.

This book has several stories of events between flatlanders and the locals. As a young boy in 1947, the author visited Mallets Bay on Lake Champlain near Burlington, VT and caught on that the locals had their own accents to words, and that they didn’t mind speaking to visitors. In *Front Porch Tales* we see a tourist asking “how many seasons do you have up here?” And he learns that not counting mud season, black fly season and memories.

Today Tomie works out of a 200-year-old restored barn in New London, NH. “I write the book first and do the illustrations later,” he said. His art work uses acrylics. Tommie said in an interview that he never runs out of new ideas for his writing and his illustrations. “I read a lot of books and to that end, Tomie earned an MFA. He worked as a designer, artist, and teacher, and at the age of 31, illustrated his first book. Since then he has written and illustrated more than 200 children’s books and received the Newbery Honor Award and Caldecott Award, among many others. His most famous books are the Stega Nuts series, a name which means Grandma. His first adult book, Christmas Remembered, is a group of short stories with pleasing illustrations, covering six decades of his Irish family holidays with all their sights, sounds and memories.

Throughout these stories, Tommie uses the local dialect words like aiyah for yes, fatmah for farmer, kew for cow, porky-pine for porcupine, and many others, all listed in a glossary at the end of the book. He said he did a lot of research on the local dialects and found there were slight differences in how the natives spoke in Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine.

Tommie grew up in Meriden, CT, of Irish and Italian heritage. At age four he decided he wanted to be a writer and an artist. He also wanted to be a tap dancer and singer. That was in 1938, and he vividly remembers the big hurricane that hit New England with its flooding the the widespread damage. His parents always encouraged him on his quests, supplying him with paints. They also sent him to dancing school, not a common interest for a young boy, and this experience later became the book, Oliver Button is a Sissy. In fact many of his childhood experiences were recounted in a series of books entitled 26 Fairmont Avenue (this actual home address.)

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