

# 'Deceptively simple'

Antrim photographer using salted-paper prints to fundraise for Grange

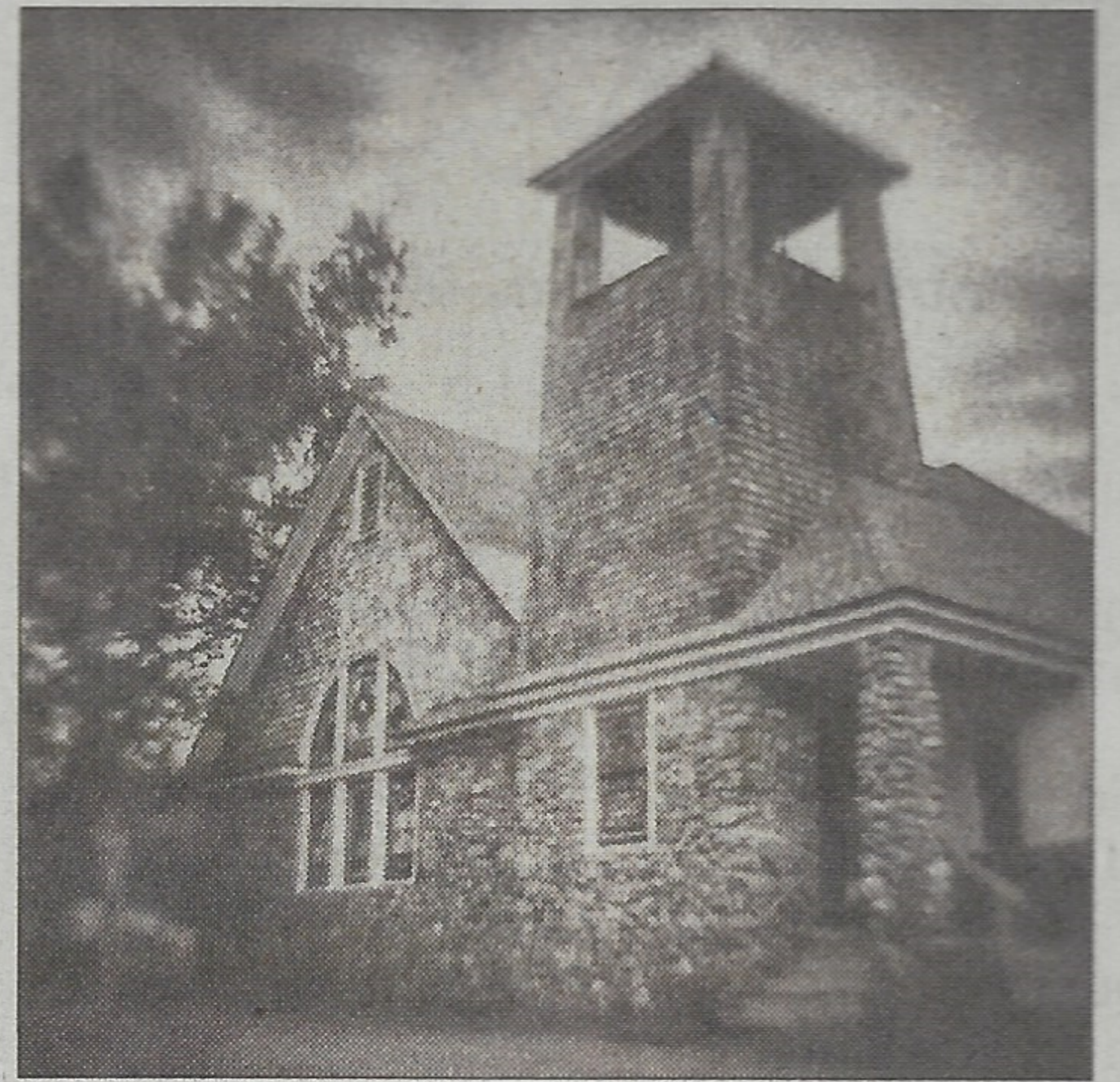
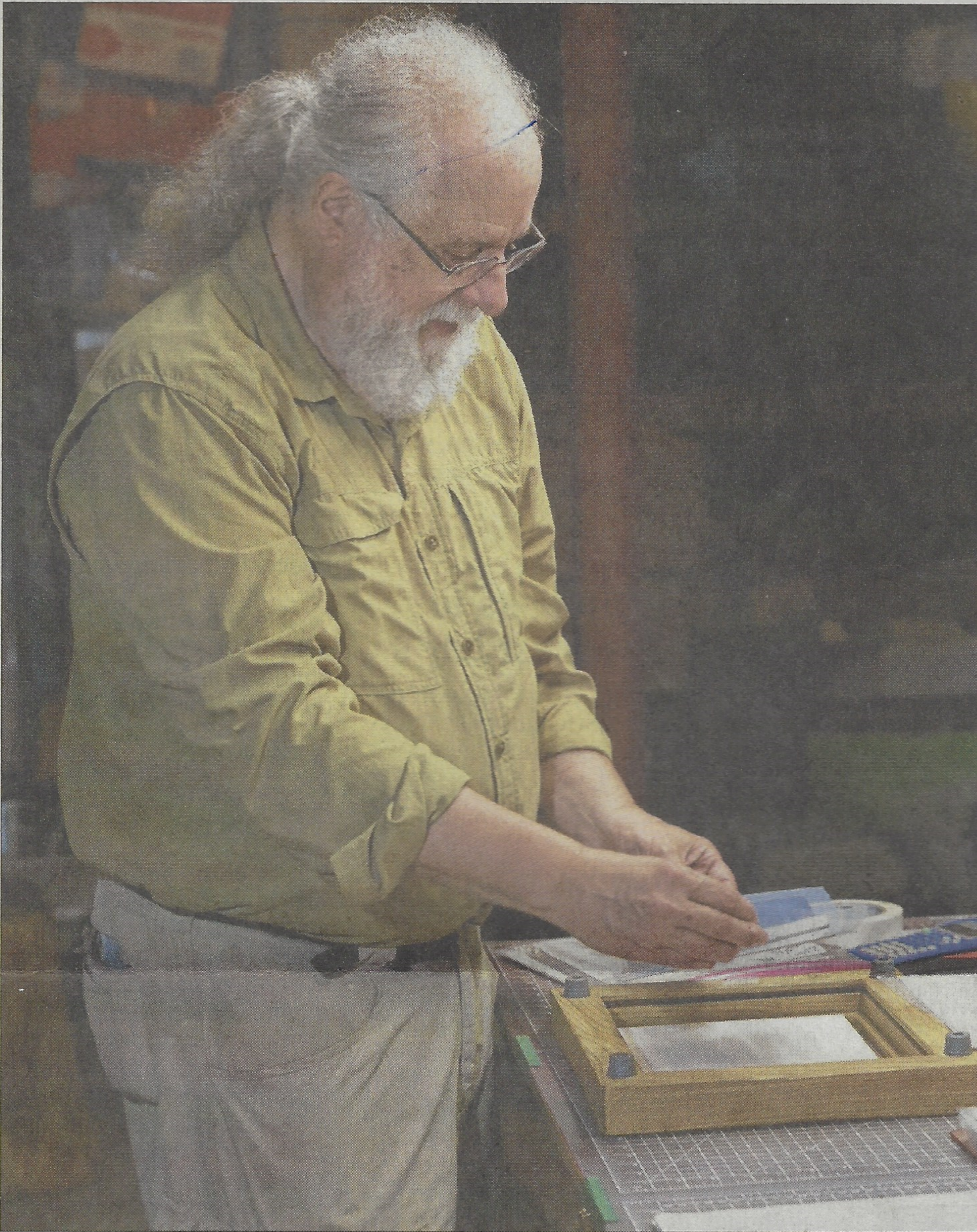


PHOTO BY VICTOR ROSANSKY

Frank Gorga, an Antrim photographer, will create salted-paper prints of three recognizable Antrim Center scenes to raise funds for the Antrim Grange. Top: The Stone Church in Antrim. Above: The Antrim Grange Hall. (Photos by Frank Gorga)

By **TIM GOODWIN**  
Monadnock Ledger-Transcript

Frank Gorga calls the process for making salted-paper prints “deceptively simple.”

The Antrim photographer has used the printmaking style for many years, but its history dates back to the mid-1830s, when English scientist and inventor Henry Fox Talbot created what is now widely considered to be an antique process. Back then, it was the dominant paper-based photographic process for producing prints from negatives but its allure only lasted a couple decades.

“It’s the father of modern, pre-digital photography,” Gorga said.

As a retired chemistry professor who spent the last half of his career at Bridgewater State University, Gorga was drawn to the lost art’s simplicity. Gorga said salted-paper printmaking saw a revitalization in the 1960s and 1970s, right around the time he picked up photography, but his interest in old-fashioned prints really came about when one of his students – an art and chemistry double major – embarked on a small research project around the cyanotype, which produces a cyan-blue print.

He did some of his own cyanotype

prints, but quickly realized “it’s not suitable to a lot of images,” Gorga said.

So he went in search of another style and landed on salted-paper.

“I was looking for another process, a more universal process,” Gorga said.

It starts with the “right kind of paper;” in this case, Hahnemuhle Platinum Rag soaked in saltwater, Gorga said, which he makes using kosher salt with no iodine, for a minute or two. After it is hung to dry, the paper is painted with a heavy dose of a silver nitrate solution and once again allowed to dry. The com-

SEE GORGA PAGE 10



# Salted-paper prints to help Antrim Grange

GORGA FROM PAGE 9

combination of the chloride from the salt and the silver creates a light-sensitive material ready for printing.

With salted-paper prints, Gorga said, the negative must be the same size as the paper. The negative is placed on the paper and then topped with glass. He uses an artificial purple light rich in ultraviolet because "as you know in New England, the sun is not always reliable," Gorga said.

It takes about 15 minutes to create the print but as time unfolds, "the image is right there on the paper as it exposes," he said. He then runs the print through a number of solutions to remove any unreacted silver to prevent any further reaction to light.

"It sounds complicated, but it's really quite simple," Gorga said.

He said during a printing session, he typically has one or two under the light at a time.

"But it's really a one at a time, completely hand-made kind of thing," Gorga said.

The process is done in his basement – which he calls his dim room – as he "can do it anywhere where there's not a lot of windows or fluorescent lights," he said, given its insensitivity to light.

While Gorga produces his salted-paper prints as a hobby, he recently signed on to use his expertise to help the Antrim Grange raise funds for the restoration of the Grange Hall on Clinton Road in Antrim.

Gorga identified three photographs of recognizable Antrim locations – the Grange Hall, Stone Church and the old walnut tree in the Antrim Center cemetery – that he will print with proceeds from the sales going to the Grange.

Gorga was familiar with the Grange's mission to restore one of Antrim's oldest buildings, originally built in 1785 and moved to its current location in 1832. A couple weeks ago he went to a Grange meeting and offered up the idea to



A walnut tree in the Antrim Center Cemetery.

PHOTO BY FRANK GORGA

make the prints to sell as a fundraiser.

"They've got that very old building they're fundraising for," Gorga said.

The prints, which are viewable at the James Tuttle Library, are offered in two sizes – an approximately 6.5 inch square of the Grange or Church or 6 inch by 7.5 inch (Tree) on 8x10 paper or 4.5-inch square or 4x5 on 5x7 paper. Large prints cost \$75 each, while small prints are \$30. Three or more

prints in any combination (ordered at the same time) are discounted for \$65 and \$25.

Orders for prints will be taken through July 24 and delivered in early September. For further information or to purchase a print, visit [http://gorga.org/blog/?page\\_id=5219](http://gorga.org/blog/?page_id=5219). For questions, contact Renee Mercier-Gerritsen, Master of the Grange at [renee\\_mercier@yahoo.com](mailto:renee_mercier@yahoo.com) or 547-5144, or Gorga at [frank@frg-photo.com](mailto:frank@frg-photo.com).

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