

The Dash

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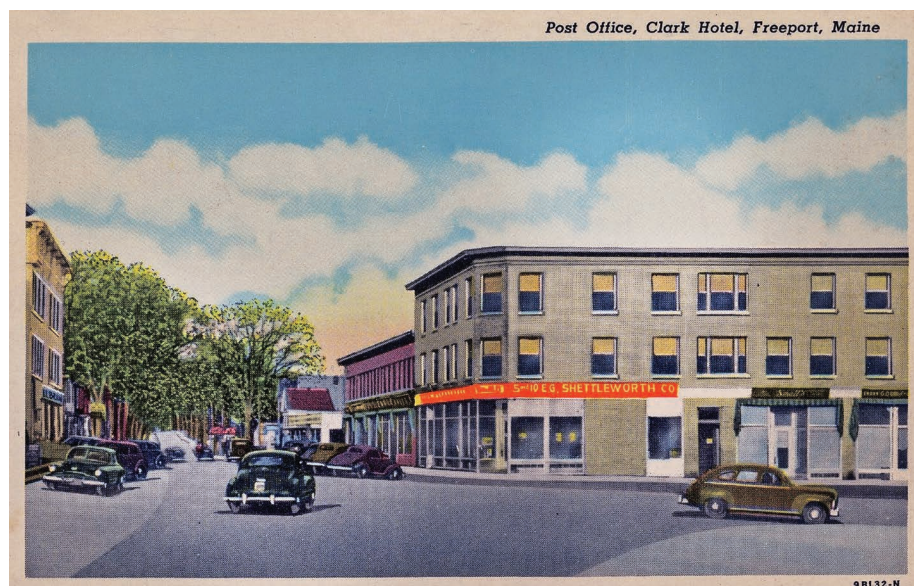
“A TOWN WITH A FUTURE”

State Historian Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr. Remembers His Father's Freeport Business

The following is an abridged version of remarks made by Maine State Historian Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr. at a program presented to Freeport Historical Society on September 22, 2023. The full program will be posted to our website.

I HAVE BEEN ASKED BY the Freeport Historical Society to share my memories of Freeport in the 1950s and 60s. Having recently turned seventy-five, I have recollections of the town that extend back sixty-five to seventy years ago when I accompanied my father to his store at Main and Bow Streets.

I will begin with my father, Earle G. Shettleworth, Sr., who was a merchant in Freeport from 1946 to 1968. Born in Middletown, Connecticut in 1899, he was the youngest of six children of George and Emma Jane Bartlett Shettleworth. In 1909 at the age of ten, he began working summers picking potatoes ten hours a day for ten cents an hour or a dollar a day. By 1921 at the age of twenty-two, my father found his life's work in retailing by joining the F.W. Woolworth Company. After training in New York City, he



managed Woolworth stores in Putnam, Bridgeport, and Hartford, Connecticut; Newport, Rhode Island; Plattsburg, New York; Manchester, New Hampshire; and Portland, Maine. He ran the Portland store on Congress Street, now Reny's, from 1933 to 1946.

The Portland store prospered during World War II due to the area's wartime shipbuilding economy, and the company decided to reward my father with a larger out-of-state store. In those days,

managers received both a set salary and a percentage of annual sales. However, my parents were settled in Portland with their three-year-old daughter Sara in a beautiful home they had built in the Baxter Boulevard neighborhood in 1940-41. Thus, my father left Woolworth's in 1946 to manage the frozen food division of Hannaford Brothers.

Working for Hannaford provided the family with an income while my father

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FROM THE COLLECTION OF EARLE G. SHETLEWORTH, JR.

FALL 2023

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for its members.

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OFFICE & EXHIBIT HOURS

Tuesday – Friday:
10:00 am to 4:00 pm

Check our events calendar for exciting
upcoming events and programs.

Research and visits involving
the collection require an
appointment in advance.
Please call 207-865-3170 or email
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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Members,

FREEPORT IS INDEED A town with a future. Freeport Historical Society is focused as much on the future of our town as we are on the past. Everything we do to preserve our past is with an eye to those who will come looking for it tomorrow.

Our cover story looks at Freeport in the mid-twentieth century through the eyes of Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr. Experienced as an enthusiastic young boy and interpreted through the lens of our beloved state historian, Earle shares both a professional and personal history of a small-town small business, and life in a promisingly prosperous post-war Freeport.

Freeport within living memory is the focus of many of our collection efforts, through oral histories and story sharing, we are working to ensure what some of us remember today is recorded for tomorrow. We continue to collect documented records as well. Collections Connections (page 10) shares one of the latest treasures brought to us, revealing surprising details of daily life at the cinema in Freeport.

We're also casting back to a time long before written records of any kind. The Land We Live On (page 3) our fall programs on Native American history

begin to look deeply at the thousands of years of history in this place long before European settlement. We are asking deep questions not only about what this history is, but how we have told or failed to tell it, and how our understanding of today's social and environmental concerns is enriched by a wider lens of history.

Back Then & Now (page 8) shares how the history and imagery of Pettengill Farm inspired a new book of art reflecting on the past and present. This work reminds us how history and memory are both fluid, informed by the past and shaped by our present day. In turn, our understanding of our current moment is informed by how we view and interpret the past, as well as our thoughts for the future.

FHS will continue to ask how we can best preserve and share stories of our past to give context to our present day, knowing that understanding the past is crucial for making decisions for our future. Thank you for your continued support in this effort.

What we learn again and again in our work echoes the words of Earl G. Shettleworth, Sr., "We have a splendid community spirit." It is the spirit of this community that gives us all faith in Freeport's future.

— ERIC C. SMITH, Executive Director

November 29, 6:00 pm at the Smith Center for Education, Wolfe's Neck Center

Native American use of natural resources on the changing coastline of Casco Bay: 5000 BP to the Present

with Nathan D. Hamilton, Associate Professor of Archaeology, University of Southern Maine and Thomas Bennet, Director, Prince Memorial Library, Cumberland, Maine

A rich precontact record of Native American activities has been established for the islands and shore of Casco Bay. Seventeen archaeological excavations provide a view into the use of marine and terrestrial animals and plants. This presentation will focus on displays with archaeological and environmental data and methods of analysis. Presented by Freeport Historical Society and Wolfe's Neck Center. Online registration coming soon!

You can learn more about these events on our new page www.landweliveon.org

The Land We Live On



Dwayne Tomah presentation on October 25 at the Wolfe's Neck Center.

The Land We Live On is a community partnership with:

Freeport Climate Action Now
Freeport Community Library
Freeport Conservation Trust
Freeport Sustainability Advisory Board
Meetinghouse Arts
Town of Freeport
Tri-Town Equity and Inclusion Coalition
Wolfe's Neck Center

WHO WAS LIVING ON THE shores of Casco Bay a thousand years ago? Five or ten thousand years ago? What were their lives like? How have the lands and waters changed? What is the history and legacy of European settlement here? Where are the native people of this land? How is this knowledge and culture passed on today? These are some of the questions we are asking through a community series called The Land We Live On.

Throughout 2023, FHS has gathered community organization leaders to ask what do we know about this land and its first people, why is our knowledge limited, and how can we learn more? We're asking these questions from many perspectives: historical authenticity, ecological concern, social understanding, and current events. Our emphasis is on the questions because we recognize how little we do know about Native American life in this land we call home. This is a part of our history we have not told, or told well, for a long time.

Our community partners have worked together to probe these questions and seek out ways to engage them together through arts and archaeology, language and literature, storytelling and film.

Our first event brought Dwayne Tomah, Passamaquoddy language keeper and storyteller, to Wolfe's Neck Center to share Wabanaki stories that express the tribe's cultural understanding of their relationship with the land and its resources. Dwayne also shared some of the earliest recordings of the human voice – Passamaquoddy speakers recorded on Edison wax cylinders in 1890. These records are an invaluable link to culture shared through oral tradition for thousands of years, only to be disrupted by policies that removed native children from their homes and language.

We'll return to Wolfe's Neck Center in November to welcome Dr. Nathan Hamilton and Thomas Bennett to explore their archaeological understandings of Casco Bay life over the last 5,000 years. They will share artifacts from digs throughout Casco Bay representing changing fishing and hunting patterns as well as sea level and climate changes.

Freeport Community Library is also hosting a November film series on Native American Culture in Maine.

This is just the beginning of our learning about a vast part of our history here in Freeport. We'll be sharing more in the coming months as we continue to question and learn. We hope you'll join us on this journey to a deeper understanding of this land and the people who have lived here for millennia. FHS

Earle G. Shettlesworth

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

made plans to open his own store. Surveying the Greater Portland area, he focused on Freeport, a thriving town of 2,800 with six shoe factories and the L.L.Bean sporting goods factory and show room. A prime business location had become available due to the June 5, 1946, fire that swept through Clark's Hotel at Maine and Bow Streets. Built in 1910 on the site of the Harraseeket Hotel, the three-story brick Clark Block housed Kimball's Drug Store and two clothing stores, Gould-Curtis and Small's, on the first floor. Once hotel rooms, the second and third floors were devoted to apartments and transient rooms.

On October 1, 1946, my father purchased the Clark Hotel Block from Grace Lugin of Portland for \$32,000, using his own funds and a \$12,000 loan from his brother-in-law Neil Knudsen of Falmouth. Despite post-war building material shortages, he was able to renovate the entire building in time for the December opening of his store in Kimball's former space to take advantage of the Christmas season. Both clothing stores resumed business in the building, and the restored apartments and rooms were under the management of my father's sister Margery and her husband Walter Taylor. An experienced carpenter, Walter was responsible for the maintenance of the building.

Shortly before the opening, L.L. Bean crossed Main Street to welcome Earle Shettlesworth to the Freeport business community. During their conversation, Mr. Bean raised the question of placing a sign on the roof of my father's building in the form of a large arrow pointing to the L.L.Bean factory and showroom. This sign would guide Route 1 travelers to Bean's as they entered the Main Street business district. My father immediately agreed. When Mr. Bean inquired about rent for the sign, my father assured him there would be no charge, citing the benefit of such advertising for both their stores. The next day Mr. Bean returned with two Hudson Bay blankets, one for my father and the other for my mother in



FROM THE COLLECTION OF EARLE G. SHETTLESWORTH, JR.

Earle G. Shettlesworth, Sr. with son Earle Jr.

appreciation for the sign. Later my father learned that the building's previous owner had refused Mr. Bean's request for a sign and that he was especially grateful for the new owner's permission to install one. Earle Shettlesworth and L.L. Bean remained friends until the latter's death in 1967.

At the opening of the E.G. Shettlesworth Co. store on December 10, 1946, my father declared, "This is a town with a future, and what's more, we have a splendid community spirit. I have faith in Freeport." That day the customers who crowded the aisles found a 5 and 10 cent store on the Woolworth model with a lunch counter and a wide variety of reasonable priced goods. A daylight basement below the main entrance featured quality second-hand furniture from F.O. Bailey in Portland.

Three days later, December 13, 1946, the *Six Towns Times* published a full report of the opening:

Tuesday morning the E.G. Shettlesworth Co. opened its doors for the first time, and a long line of Freeport buyers were already waiting outside for the event. The Shettlesworth Co. store is in

what used to be the Kimball Pharmacy. In approximately the same location that Kimball had his soda fountain, Mr. Shettlesworth has put one in where it will be possible to get light lunches. The store is brightly lit with florescent lighting. In fact, standing outside on the street after dark, the store lights up the square as it has never been lit before.

The *Six Towns Times* also carried several display advertisements relating to the opening. My father's ad announced:

The Grand Opening of a new variety store with a modern snack bar, homemade ice cream and a Cushman bakery department. You will see many hard-to-get items on display such as enamelware, oil cloth, toilet soap, soap powder, crochet cotton, nylon hose, ladies' aprons, Turkish towels, tableware, plenty of your favorite candies, toys galore, and a complete line of Christmas wrappings.

Another advertisement extended a warm welcome to the E.G. Shettlesworth Co. from the following local businesses: Baker's Store, Poulin & Goodwin, Small's, Freeport Hardware, Ye Green T Kettle, Nordica Theater, L.L.Bean, Inc., E.E. Taylor Shoe Co., Jackson Sales, Inc., Fish's Stores, Freeport Grain Company, Gould-Curtis Co., and *Six Towns Times*.

Beginning about the age of seven in 1955, I sometimes accompanied my father to his Freeport store on Saturdays. The half hour journey began on Baxter Boulevard in Portland and followed Route 1 across the Martin's Point bridge into Falmouth and on through Cumberland and Yarmouth into Freeport. The stretch between Yarmouth and Freeport was marked by automobile tourism with its overnight cabins, motels, restaurants, gift

shops, and signs for the Desert of Maine. Memorable among these roadside attractions were the Tugboat Restaurant, now the site of the Muddy Rudder, and Clara and John's Tea Room on the hillside beyond.

As we entered Freeport, Route 1 became a tree-lined Main Street of old homes, culminating in Freeport Square or Post Office Square. The business district was defined by the Patterson Block, the Clark Hotel Block, the Davis Block, the Oxnard Block, and the Warren Block. The Warren Block housed the post office on the first floor and a staircase leading to the L.L.Bean showroom on the second floor. The rest of the building was devoted to Bean's factory.

As my introduction to retailing began, my father had one rule: the customer is always right and must be treated with courtesy and respect. Such treatment was a key to building customer loyalty and repeat business. My duties were simple. I learned to restock counters and shelves with everything from needles and thread to glassware and dishes. I also assisted the clerks at the cash register to bag or wrap customers' purchases. The head clerk was Mrs. Keef, who was succeeded by Frances Burns, a high school friend of my mother's, who moved from Portland to work in the store.

Merchandise was shipped to Freeport by rail. My father and I would drive to the freight depot at the railroad station in his Ford station wagon to pick up arriving cartons and crates. These would be stored in the basement of the store or in the adjacent stable, a relic of the Harraseeket Hotel.

Promptly at noon, my father and I would cross Main Street to a one-story wooden building next to Bean's that housed Win Stowell's restaurant. One large room contained a row of tables and chairs along the left wall, a center aisle, and a lunch counter at the right with an open kitchen behind it. While Freeport



FROM FHS COLLECTION 100

had other restaurants such as Frank's and The Falcon, my father preferred the camaraderie of Stowell's. Here you could get the great American lunch of a hamburger, fries, and a Coke and rub elbows with attorney Paul Powers, insurance agents Ed Davis and Bill Prindall, and barber Babe Walsh.

Sometimes my father planned afternoon visits for me to see Eddie Skillin's collection of old Freeport photographs or to examine Ray Lydston's Abraham Lincoln collection. Ray was a retired printer from Lewiston who lived with his wife and sister-in-law in the second-floor apartment of a house on Upper Main Street. He owned an extensive library of Lincoln books and memorabilia and once corresponded with the great Lincoln historian Carl Sandburg. He also ran a small business of copying old photographs, which were printed by local photographer Mel Collins.

As I grew older and more independent, my Saturdays in Freeport became less frequent. However, my ties with Freeport continued. On a warm summer morning in the 1960s, my father and I joined Ed Davis to explore the northern reaches of Casco Bay. The three of us set off from South Freeport in Ed's lobster boat. Toward afternoon we sighted the majestic granite tower of Halfway Rock rising from the mist off Harpswell, a

dramatic vision that remains fixed in my memory to this day. From Ed we learned that this unexpected landmark marked the halfway point between Portland Harbor and Seguin Island at the mouth of the Kennebec River.

In 1965 L.M.C. and Eleanor Smith learned through my father of my historical interests. That summer they invited me for dinner at the Stone House to show me their impressive collection of ship paintings and their fine library of Maine books. They thoughtfully encouraged me to pursue my passion for the past as I applied to colleges in the coming months.

Some years later the Smiths arranged for me to interview Freeport artist Helen Randall, whose home would later become the Freeport Historical Society's Harrington House on Main Street. The year was 1972; I was in graduate school; and Miss Randall was eighty-seven years old. Both the Smiths and Dr. Charles E. Burden of the Maine Maritime Museum were anxious to preserve Helen's memories of her sea captain father Rufus Randall and his family. Dr. Burden impressed upon me that I would be talking with the daughter of a nineteenth century Maine sea captain. The result was a twenty-two-page interview now in the

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A PICTURE-PERFECT DAY AT PETTENGILL FARM

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN OCTOBER brought hundreds of visitors to our beloved historic farm for the 47th Annual Pettengill Farm Day to celebrate fall and nineteenth-century rural life in Freeport. With a plethora of hands-on activities, demonstrations of historic crafts, guided visits to the Pettengill Farmhouse, wagon rides of the property, lively music, fresh food and treats, visitors to the farm had ample opportunity to get a feel for the generations of farming history this property holds.

Of course, Pettengill Farm Day can't happen without the hard work of our Trustees, staff, volunteers, and sponsors. In addition to our own FHS volunteers, Freeport High School, Bath Savings Institution, and the Boy Scouts pitched in to help keep everything running smoothly. Sponsors Wolfe's Neck Farm, Bow Street Market, Brickyard Hollow, and Coffee By Design made sure we had the resources we needed to make the day a success. We're so grateful to the community that shows up for this event, and we can't wait to host it again for the 48th time next year!

.....
Photos by Stuart Bratesman
and Polly Brann



Volunteer Kim serves up fresh donuts made by Connie Coffin.



Jim Cram helps visitors board a wagon for a tour of the farm.



Steve Brann and David Coffin help visitors make milking stools with pieces cut by David.



Volunteers Judy Foye and Mary Tagney help visitors make Balsam sachets.



**THANK YOU TO OUR
2023 PETTENGILL
FARM DAY SPONSORS:**
Wolfe's Neck Farm
Bow Street Market
Brickyard Hollow
Coffee By Design

Earle G. Shettleworth

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

files of the museum in Bath.

To return to my father's business, he sold the Clark Hotel Block to Paul Powers in February 1956 for \$36,700 and leased his space in the building until January 1969. Nearing seventy years old, he announced on January 1, 1969, that he had sold his business to Edgar J. Leighton and his wife Dorothy. Edgar had managed



FROM THE COLLECTION OF EARLE G. SHETTLEWORTH, JR.

Earle G. Shettleworth Sr.

Fish's store in Freeport and wanted to have his own business. Citing Edgar's "excellent reputation for trustworthiness and honesty", my father expressed confidence that the E.G. Shettleworth Co. was in good hands for the future.

The Freeport of 2023 is now a lifetime away from the Freeport of the 1950s. As I close this evening, I leave you with two more memories of that earlier time:

A bustling post-war downtown still linked to the past by the weekly visit of a horse and wagon driven by the garbage collector and his wife, who ran a pig farm on the outskirts of Freeport.

The bright lights of the stores that stayed open until 9 o'clock each Friday night to attract the shoe shop workers, who received their paychecks that day.

I thank the Freeport Historical Society for the opportunity to reflect upon the town's role in the formative years of my life. I cherish the fact that my father enrolled me as a charter member of the Freeport Historical Society in 1969. How far it has come in its fifty-four years of preserving and sharing the community's past! FHS

Back Then & Now:

Two artists imagine the life of the Pettengill Farmhouse

EARLY IN 2023 artists Rebecca Goodale and Carrie Scanga contacted FHS regarding a potential project inspired by Pettengill Farm. After a visit to the farmhouse and a look at items related to the home and its last occupant, Millie Pettengill, they worked for several months creating a collaborative artist book inspired by the reminders of daily life left behind by generations of occupants. Following the release of their book, the artists agreed to an interview about their process and the stories that emerged from their experiences with Pettengill Farm and its history.

When did the Pettengill Farmhouse first catch your attention? What was your first impression?

CS: I first encountered the house on Pettengill Farm Day in 2022. The scraps of wallpaper, architectural details, and vestiges of Millie's collections gave me a vivid sense of temporality and storied place. I immediately wanted to tell Rebecca about it, because she is a Freeport neighbor to the Farm and storytelling and place have inspired all of our collaborations.

RG: Pettengill Farm is in my neighborhood, an easy walk from my house to the farm. I have lived in Freeport for the past 16 years and over the years have enjoyed walking the trails there. When Carrie asked me to consider a collaboration about the house, I was excited by the possibilities.

What elements of the house and its surroundings most captured your imagination?

RG: The apple trees, the cedar tree, the pear tree all holding steady to the land,

marking those humans before me who came to this place and planted these trees. It is a beautiful landscape swooping down to the water and out to sea.

CS: The sgraffiti carved into the upstairs plaster walls, like a message in a bottle sent from another time.

Can you tell us about the printing techniques you used in creating this book?

CS: The book's pages were printed from drypoint engravings using the intaglio technique and linoleum carvings using relief printing techniques. Intaglio printing requires incising a drawing into the matrix with a sharp needle, a process that mimicked how we imagined the farmhouse's sgraffiti. Using relief printing to make the pattern was a way of referencing Millie's wallpapers and drawing on Rebecca's expertise in textile design.

RG: We also included chine collé techniques (layering printed papers on top of the intaglio plates) and some hand coloring.



Were your choices of technique influenced by what you observed in the house? Are there any similarities between the techniques you employed and elements of the building?

RG: Definitely. The printmaking methods were inspired directly by the sgraffiti upstairs and the wallpaper remnants downstairs. And essentially the experience of turning the pages leads the viewer through the downstairs' rooms and then upstairs into the world of the imagination.

One striking element of the book is the way the black and white illustrations interact with the bright colorful art and paper. Why did you decide to employ this contrast, and how did you decide where to use color?

CS: The patterns that are downstairs are replications, to a degree, to actual wallpaper and floor patterns that Millie

lived with. The patterns that are upstairs are based on research from the Freeport Historical Society collections. Audrey showed Rebecca pictures of Millie's pets, gardens, and livestock, for example, and the upstairs patterns are inventions based on these historical sources.

We employed the emotional qualities of color and line as a way of expressing how alive the *feeling* of Pettengill Farmhouse is. In a way, this is the "story" part of history: the invented set of metaphors or perceived chronology that is animated through the telling. Our telling isn't meant to be factual but rather an emotional narrative made in the visual languages of line and color.

You've clearly employed your imaginations to great effect in this book—many pages combine and expand upon small traces of life from the house to create almost dreamlike scenes. What were some of the stories you imagined in these scenes?

CS: The sun comes up over the course of the house tour through the book. Time is told as a spiral, idiosyncratic and achronological. We dip into a time when the Atlantic coastal waters off this land may have had walruses, we consider boats from varied eras, and we layer the creative acts of many makers across time, including the sgraffiti carver, Millie, and Rebecca and me today.

How has your understanding and perception of the house and its story changed through your work?

CS: Millie's life was rich and vibrant, full of texture, color, sound, and mystery.

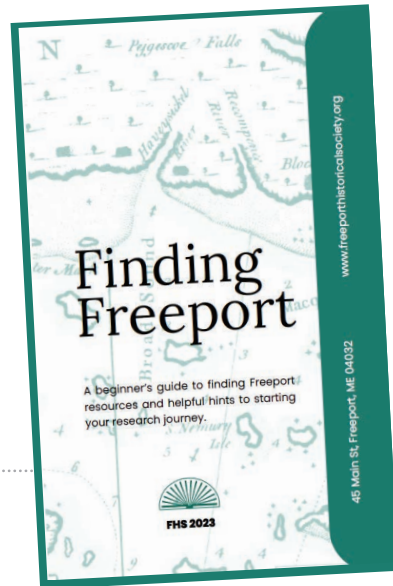
RG: I like to imagine that the drawings of boats, sea creatures, and birds were made by a young school-age girl. I think she read a lot and then, lacking a sketchbook, she escaped into the walls upstairs. *The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner* and illustrated newspaper articles about boats being built in Freeport might have influenced her marks. Sometimes she is working from thin air, making the boats that will carry her away into the future. **FHS**



Photos by Dennis and Diane Griggs of Tannery Hill Studios in Topsham

COLLECTION CONNECTIONS

We continue to receive and consider some wonderful items into the Freeport Historical Society's collections.



Finding Freeport

Have a question about a Freeport relative or property but don't know where to start? Stop by FHS to grab a copy of our newly updated *Finding Freeport* pamphlet. This resource is full of helpful hints and new avenues for you to start your research journey.

Pick one up at our research program, Curious Minds:
Discover on November 9th from 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
or the next time you're in town.

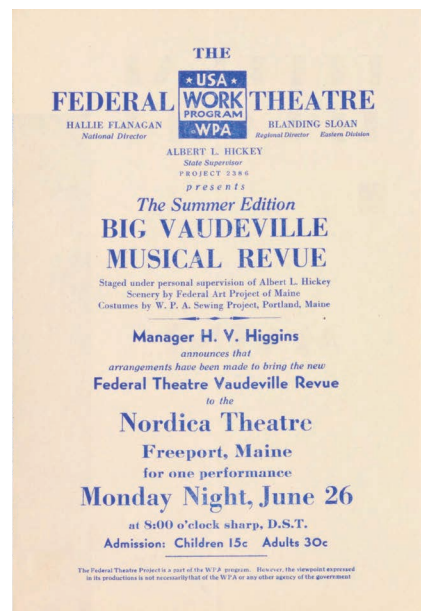
What's in Your Attic?

WHEN SANDY AND BEVERLY WILLIAMS bought the Harland and Lottie Higgins house in 1982, they knew that upstairs in the attic there were a handful of items leftover from the Higgins estate. A recent cleanout inspired them to see if the Freeport Historical Society wanted some of that material. We always appreciate being contacted if there's something Freeport related that may otherwise be given or thrown away. And, in this case, how lucky were we that the Williams decided to do just that.

Enclosed in a modest cardboard box they brought over were the business records of the Nordica Theater under the tenure of Harland V. Higgins and Charlotte "Lottie" Brackley Higgins. The Higgins' bought the Nordica Theater in 1934 and ran it until the late 1940s when Lester and Kathleen Hughes took over the operation.

This donation is particularly exciting for two reasons. First, the Higgins' tenure as The Nordica's operators is still within Freeporter's living memory and represents a time period (roughly 1930-1980) that the FHS is actively looking to collect. Second, the box contains hundreds of "Daily reports detailing not only ticket sales and attendance, but also what films were shown and remarks about what was going on around town that was driving (or hindering) attendance. These unique business records offer us a glimpse into the popular culture Freeporters were consuming in the aftermath of the Great Depression and through WWII.

The Nordica Theater's Daily Report for December 30, 1939.



The Federal Theatre Project (running 1935 to 1939), was a significant government effort initiated by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to provide employment for unemployed theater professionals during the Great Depression. COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Though its primary goal was the reemployment of theater workers, the project also aimed to establish a lasting and vital theater presence within communities beyond its funding period.

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Interested in seeing your business here?
Contact us for details about Annual and Event sponsorships.

Join Us Today!

Member support provides a foundation for our organization to continue to carry out our work of enriching lives by keeping Freeport's past present. Join today and get exclusive member benefits.



BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP

All Members

- Printed edition of our newsletter *The Dash*
- Discounted admission on programs and events
- Vouchers for downtown walking tours
- 10% Discount at Freeport Oyster Bar and other community partners
- Benefits start at \$20 for seniors and \$35 for individual memberships.

Family Members at \$50 or Contributing Members at \$100

All the above, plus:

- Free Admission to Pettengill Farm Day for the whole family

Supporting Membership at \$250

All the above, plus:

- Voucher for 1 dozen oysters at Freeport Oyster Bar

Sustaining Membership at \$500

All the above, plus:

- Private guided tour of Pettengill Farmhouse
- Flight Club membership at Freeport Oyster Bar – includes 1/2 off your first 1/2 dozen oysters each visit.

Leadership Membership at \$1,000

All the above, plus:

- Private guided boat tour of the Harraseeket Historic District