

Norridgewock Historical Society

Newsletter * Summer 2021

President's Report Becky Ketchum

Due to the ups and downs of Covid the Museum was closed this season. However, we did open up for the Mill Stream School's annual visit. The three third grade classes (about 45 kids) came on the last day before their summer vacation, so energy levels were extra high! We all had a wonderful time. The children were given a brief overview of the Museum and then went inside the Museum for a tour/scavenger hunt. Janice Malek and Nathan Richards led the groups. Promoting the theme of "Explore! Dream! Discover!" at the end of the visit each child received a Norridgewock Historical Society penlight.



The visit began in the garden. Hamlin Eaton would have approved of this field trip! (Janice in green; Nathan on the bench.)

Last week we had our first regular meeting since 2019. It was nice to see everyone again. Although we have not been able to hold monthly meetings and programs, the Executive Committee has been meeting regularly and has also been working through the DIY points on our grounds & building maintenance "to do" list. Many thanks to Donna, Tom and Eastman who have tackled a number of very labor-intensive projects. Not to be missed: Take a look at our newly repaired and freshly painted porches!

Several years ago we had to take down the old shed in the side yard. This spring we were gifted with a brand new shed, 12 x 16. DMO Landscaping prepared the pad. The day the shed was to be delivered the Executive Committee went over to help. Welcome to 2021: one man playing with a little remote control single-handedly got the shed off of the truck and onto the pad. Other than touching a few buttons on the remote, no one lifted a finger! Technology, isn't it grand! RFK



Depot Street in the Early Days

After the Somerset Railroad came to town (1872) a path was worn following the curve of the tracks from Main Street to Bridge Street. This eventually became what we know today as "Depot Street". Accessibility to the train made the road a magnet for farmers and a variety of manufacturers.

* Granite and marble companies established places of business along the tracks.

* C W Whiting, who was a dealer in "potatoes, fertilizer and livestock" built a small office (sometimes referred to as "the potato shack") and a storage shed next to the depot. Other dealers also put up storage sheds by the tracks.

* Norridgewock's first corn factory was built (1882) across the street from the depot. This factory later became a supplier for Burnham and Morrill/ "B&M" which was headquartered in Portland and was one of the leading canneries in the state. Although the parent company Burnham and Morrill changed hands and moved a number of times, the "B&M" brand name still exists today.

* Down the road from the corn factory, heading toward Bridge Street, the Sparkling Spring Creamery (later called the "Solon Creamery") opened. The creamery turned out 3,000 lbs. of butter per week!

* There was some overlap in involvement with the creamery and the corn factory. George S. Jewett and George Lunt were key players for both companies. In the corn factory's early years George Lunt made all of the cans by hand and soldered on the lids when they were filled! (This latter tidbit about George Lunt comes from a short piece written by Alta E. Tripp for Down East in October, 1966, *Norridgewock's Corn Factories*.)



Early Scenes on Depot Street

At the depot when the train included passenger service. Ed and Josephine Whiting are pictured on the platform; Al Stanley and Glenys Stanley (Butler, Everett) are in the horse drawn carriage.

The "potato shack office" next to the depot.



Depot Street in the Early Days (continued)



Charles Worthley's Marble and Granite company on Depot Street.



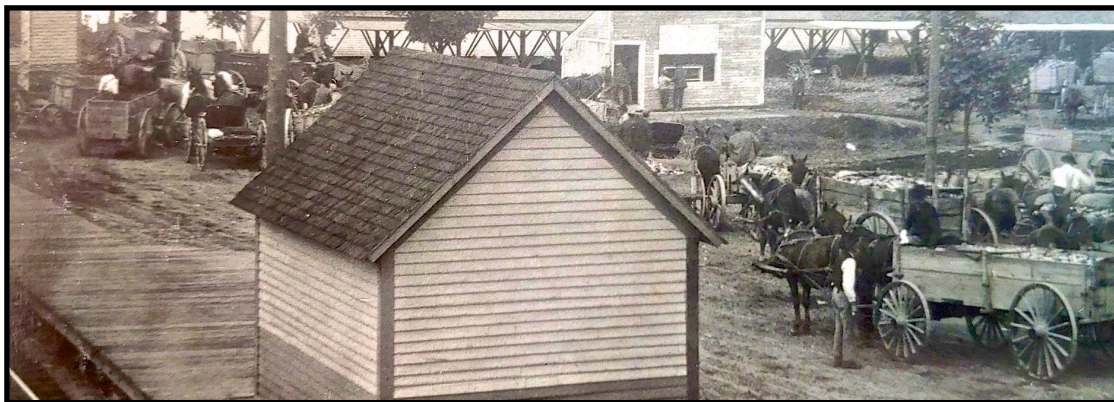
One of the granite yards by the tracks. To get to the yard, the horses had to go down a steep hill (the road behind the current Post Office). Pieces of stone were embedded in the road to prevent the horses from slipping.



The Creamery: left to right George Clark, Bill Grey and George Lunt.



The B&M Factory (on the property where New Balance is today).



Farmers bringing their corn to the factory. In what is a good example of the seasonality issues related to growing corn in Maine, I found this note on the back of the picture: At the corn factory September 18, 1911. After the frost on the 14th-15th, mercury at 26 degrees, fifty cart loads of corn came in and are waiting to be weighed and dumped. The yard piled full; no vacant spaces.

Farm & Factory People



Picking corn for the factory on August 31, 1930 at Harlow's field on Martin Stream Road. Left to right: Blake Tracy, Eugene Merry, Linwood Frederick, George Harlow, Fred Chapman and Harry Marcoux.



Before automation, all the corn was husked by hand. Workers (often Canadians from the Waterville area) came up for the corn season. Initially they camped in tents; later the company put up barracks for them on the banks behind the factory. Women generally did the work and often brought their kids along with them as day care centers did not exist during that era. Eventually, as child labor laws developed, this practice became an issue.



The Jewett Family

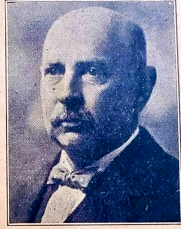
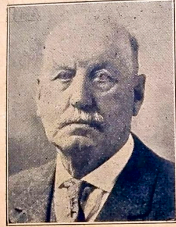


L to R: George H. Jewett and wife Ethel (Bascome), son Sidney; George S. Jewett and wife Addie (Bentley); Fred Jewett and his sister Florence. After photo was taken Fred married Lucy Muscette Hale and Florence married Walter Taylor.

Phone 51-23

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George S. Jewett is credited with the successful growth of the B&M factory in Norridgewock. Besides being a good manager, he was also an innovator and inventor. One of his inventions was the self-heating can, a major innovation for the industry at the time. (Patent obtained in 1903.)

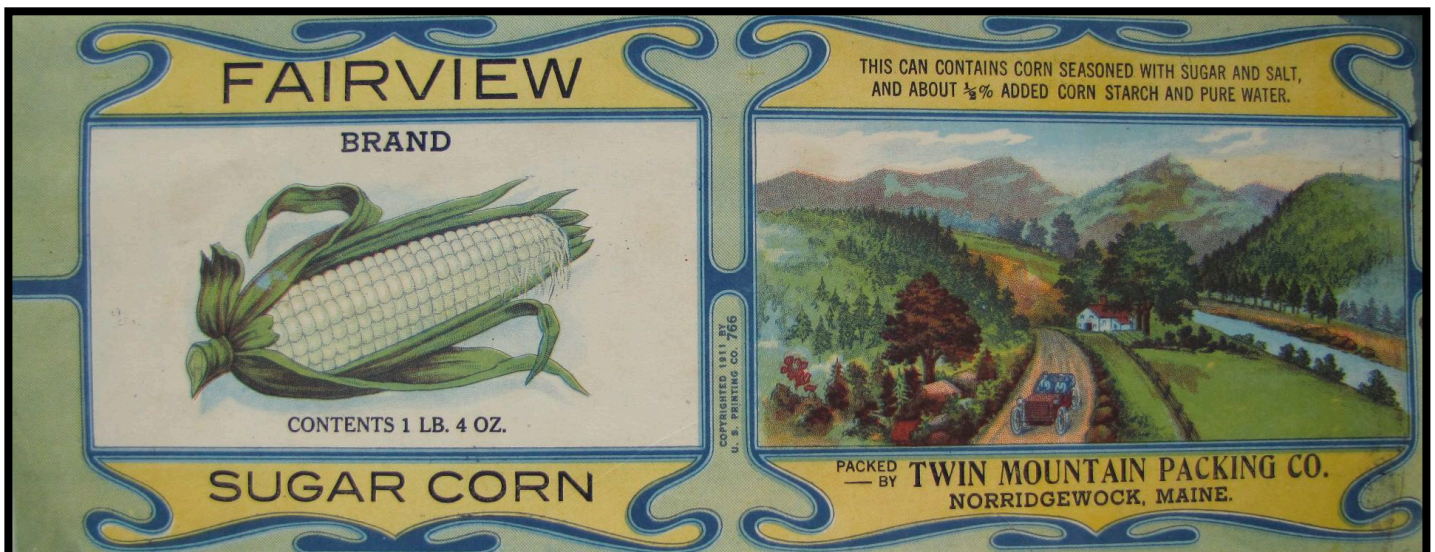
After twenty years with B&M in 1910 he opened his own factory with his son Fred. The new factory was located on Perkins Street (in the vicinity of the Public Works garages today) and was called the G.S. and F.E. Jewett Company. At its peak the company produced 1,200,000 cans of corn a year. Over time the operation expanded to include canneries in Fairfield and New Portland.

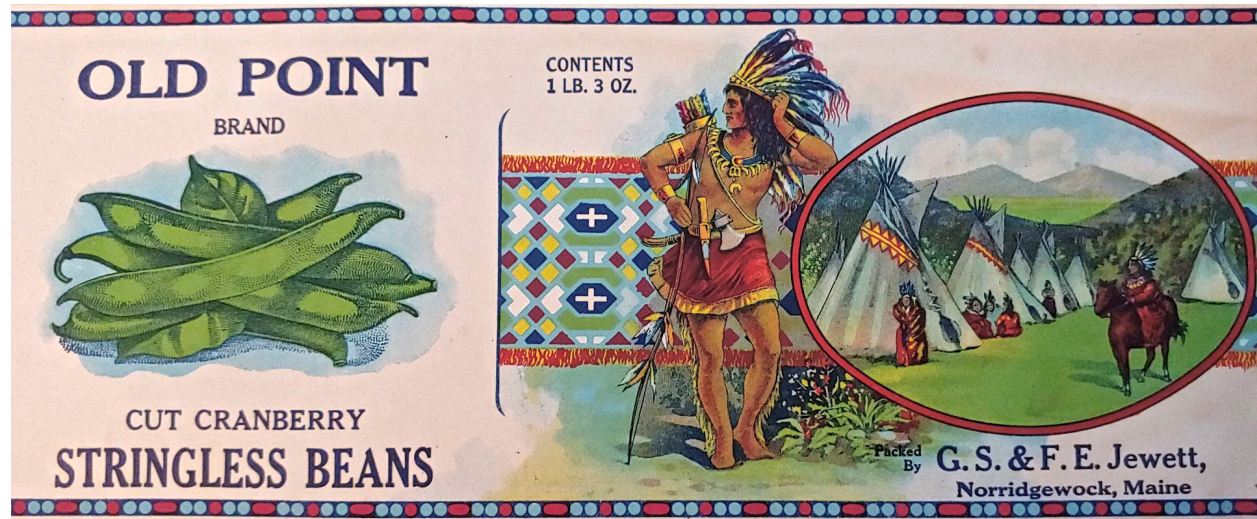
After his father died, Fred Jewett ran the company. When Fred died his brother George H. Jewett, who was living in Atlanta inherited the business. While he remained in Atlanta, his son Sidney moved up to Norridgewock and acted as business manager until the company's closing in the 1950's. (Note: Sidney's son George C. Jewett was a member of NHS for many years and visited Norridgewock pretty faithfully when summering on the Coast. We are sorry to report that we recently received notice of George's death. He died at in his home in Georgia last month following a brief illness.)



The Jewett Factory on Perkins Street

Jewett Can Labels Were Works of Art !





Notes from Editor's Desk:

**REMINDER: GIANT NHS YARD SALE !
 SEPTEMBER 18th at the Museum
 11 Mercer Road - Rain or Shine- Opens at 8:30**

This is our major fund raiser of the year and our first since 2019! If you have items to donate for the sale, please let me know, so we can arrange a drop-off time.

I hope you enjoyed the newsletter. If you have any questions and/or ideas for future topics please let me know. Becky (rketchum1@aol.com)



Norridgewock Historical Society
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Norridgewock, Maine 04957

If you haven't already, please join the Norridgewock Historical Society !!!
Help us to continue to preserve, educate and share the stories from Norridgewock's vibrant past.

Dues/Contribution Form

Make check payable to NHS. Send to NHS at P O Box 903, Norridgewock, ME 04957

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