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HOW GLOUCESTER KEPT ITS HEAD ABOVE THE WATER DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION LECTURE FINDING AID & TRANSCRIPT

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Video Description

This recorded lecture at the Cape Ann Museum was part of a day-long event titled "Lookin' for the Sunny Side of the Street: America's 1930s" that was presented on November 6, 2010, in collaboration with the museum, the City of Gloucester, and the Cape Ann Community Cinema to celebrate the area's resilience in the face of

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adversity. Longtime museum volunteer and historian Mary Rhineland McCarl begins by relating stark statistics that emphasize the dire economic conditions of the city during the Great Depression. However, through many government-funded projects and the hard work of its citizens, Gloucester managed to take care of those in need and adapt its available resources as events unfolded. McCarl ends on an upbeat note by playing part of the first full-length animated film made for movie theaters, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, which opened in Gloucester in 1938 and was a tremendously popular cultural event for the era.

Subject list

Franklin D. Roosevelt	Great Depression
A. Piatt Andrew	Works Progress Administration (WPA)
Captain Ben Pine	Public Works of Art Project (PWAP)
Frederick Lincoln Stoddard	National Committee for Birthday Balls
Charles Allan Winter	<i>Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs</i>
Mary Rhineland McCarl	

Transcript

Courtney Richardson 0:07

My name is Courtney Richardson. I'm the director of Education and Public programs here at the Cape Ann Museum. I want to welcome you today to our very special lecture. Before we start, I just want to tell you a little bit more about "Looking for the Sunny Side of the Street". That's a daylong celebration here in Gloucester, created by the American History and Music Project, and in collaboration with the Cape Ann Museum, the Cape Ann Community Cinema and the City of Gloucester. And, there's been some events already today and there's some others I just wanted to mention. In addition to our talk this afternoon, there are films being shown at the Cape Ann Community Cinema from one to four. So you might be able to catch one of those after the talk today. And, there is also a lecture at 6:30 with Susan Erony in that is at City Hall and it's about the FSA photography during the Great Depression. And then at 7:30, there's a musical performance with Jim and Maggie Dalton. And that is titled, the title of the day, "Looking for the Sunny Side of the Street, America's 1930s". Today, I'm very pleased to be welcoming one of our very own special members of our little Cape Ann Museum community to talk. Mary Rhineland McCarl has been a volunteer with us since 1988. She actually has been summering in Gloucester since her birth, and moved here, finally, in 2001. But she's been a very dedicated

How Gloucester Kept Its Head Above the Water During the Great Depression – VL27 – page 3
member of our community for years. So we're very happy to have her. Her talk today is titled, "How Gloucester Kept its Head Above the Water During the Great Depression". So please join me in welcoming Mary McCarl.

Mary McCarl 2:10

Ok, thank you very much.

Mary 2:15

We have to go back away here on August 5, (Can people hear me?) on Aug 5, 1932, The Gloucester Society of Artists put on its annual costume ball. In this, the second full year of the Great Depression, the theme of Prosperity had to be taken in a totally ironic sense. No paintings were selling, the number of students in the summer schools was way down, the jobs as illustrators was a drying up as magazine sales shrank. There was no help on the horizon, the federal government under head, Herbert Hoover was preaching that prosperity was just around the corner. Many of the artists were old time, pre World War One socialists, and they knew better. As they jumped out of the giant cornucopia and scattered quote "gold coins" around the room, they felt justified in their skepticism. Abigail Verhoef portrayed Prosperity with a giant question mark as her headdress and a sign that said, "How soon?". She was followed by the pupils of a local dancing school. They portrayed "1928, The sky's the limit", "1929, What happened?", "1930, now it's a panic", "1931, woe is me" and "1932, woe is us". What happened, of course, was that things got terribly worse during 1933. The number of Gloucester citizens on relief doubled between '31 and '33, as did the cost of caring for them. Payments went from \$20,000 a year and '31 to \$40,000 in '33. This was a terrible burden on the local taxpayer. There was, of course, no Social Security. The welfare system went back to colonial days, Gloucester had a poor farm for its helpless, elderly and indigent citizens. Tiny amount of money for those on the dole relief, the system had no proviso to care for healthy, able-bodied men. In November 1932, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected the 32nd President of the United States, but he was not sworn in until March 4 1933, four months later. In his famous first inaugural address, he said, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself". And he called on the American people to work with each other and the government to try to remedy the situation. He went on, and I think we have to think about this in 2010, "The money changers have fled from their highest seats in the temple of our civilization. We may now restore that temple to its ancient truths. The measure of the restoration lies in the extent to which we apply social values more noble than mere monetary profit".

Mary 5:28

Part of the problem was that, as a deliberate act, Republican administration of the 1920's never kept statistics on the unemployed at a national level. The first numbers we have for Gloucester are, as of January 1, 1934. 3000 men and almost 1000 women were unemployed. Most of those were over six months. Another thousand were working only part time. In 1932, there were over 1000 families in need of assistance. The city provided \$3 a week towards rent, but only if it was at least three months overdue. The population of Gloucester in the 1930 census was 24,000. This was a time when you can barely get by on \$15 a week, about \$750 a year. This converts to

\$12,000 in 2010. A grim little statistic gleaned from the annual school report of the era is the numbers of children unable to attend school because they lacked shoes and clothing. There were 65 of them in 1929, 123 in 1930, the largest number 263 in 1933. The numbers hover around 200 through 1940. by 1944 there were only 20. On the whole the service clubs, the Elks, the Moose, and the Rotary quietly provided the necessary clothing and shoes. We will see this in one of the City Hall murals. In 1938, the Board of Public Welfare estimated there were 1200 fishermen working for the port of Gloucester. We cannot know how many men were not hired to go fishing, perhaps 600. Because they worked on shares, they were not eligible for unemployment benefits under the rules the time. In 1930, there were 187 vessels in the fleet, 1931 170, in 1935 there were 134. 53 vessels have disappeared in three years. They are presumably elderly dory fishing schooners, rendered obsolete by the diesel-powered trawlers. This number of vessels, about 130, persisted throughout the depression years, because any taken out of service were quietly replaced with more inexpensive vessels. A dory fishing schooner with an auxiliary engine cost about \$50,000. A small diesel powered seiner about \$20,000. The Dory fleet had been heavily dependent on perhaps 1000 crewman from the Canadian Maritimes, who would come down to Gloucester by train. In 1931, the border was closed to them. That spelt the end of the banks fisheries out of Gloucester. There was a second fleet of fishing boats, the modest mackerel seiners, owned and crewed by men originally from Sicily. Personally, they fared better than the hand lining dory fishermen because they could follow the fish South if necessary. Because, in that case they did not land the fish in Gloucester, this was of no benefit to the shore side fish packers. Gloucester had already lost most of the fresh fish trade to Boston, which had built an enormous fish pier in 1914. Despite the grumblings, the mass demand as Gloucester's fish packing companies, which are most of the larger vessels did turn to outer trolling. These vessels, diesel powered engines, were larger than the Sicilian fleet. Landings of fish in Gloucester plummeted. But then revived as frozen fish which could be stored for months if not years became important. In 1930, Gloucester landings were 47 million pounds, 1931 25,

Mary 9:54

not much, practically half. The numbers of fish landed kept falling. The lowest year again was 1933 with only 22 million pounds. After that terrible year the numbers began to rise. So that the 80 million pounds that were landed in 1939 seem comfortably high. But this included 21 million pounds of salt cod imported from Canada for Gordon's, Gordon's Original Ready to Fry Cod Fish Cakes. Remember them? Of the approximately 60 million landed by local vessels. 45 million were red fish, the frozen, quote ocean perch, fish sticks of my youth. The remaining 54 million were probably fresh.

We need to turn to FDR, the president from 1933 through 1945. Why is he Important to Gloucester during these depression years? He had a personal tie to the place, which Joe Garland in his "Eastern Point" book shows. And then, there are some hilarious photographs. I have one up on the board over there. FDR entered Harvard in the fall of 1900 and took Economics 1 from none other than A. Piatt Andrew, Harvard's newest and youngest member of the economics department. In 1902, Andrew built his house, Red Roof, on Eastern Point, and in the spring of 1903, he invited some of his favorite students to visit him in his new abode. On

May 2, 1903, someone took a photo of four men in a human totem pole, A Piatt Andrew at the bottom, FDR next to the top. In his senior year, having decided to major in economics, FDR took another course with Andrew, "Survey in Currency Legislation, Experience and Theory in Recent Times". Wonder if he applied that. In 1933, 30 years later, as we have seen, Gloucester's fisheries were suffering terribly. A Piatt Andrew had first been elected to the US House of Representatives in 1921, as a Republican. He was so great a success that it was understood he would eventually have been one of the US Senators from Massachusetts. But, he died unexpectedly in 1936. But this is 1933. In that desperate spring of 1933, Piatt Andrew worked behind the scenes with Captain Ben Pine, veteran of the great series of schooner races between the Gertrude L Thebaud and the Canadian Bluenose. They decided that the more publicity for Gloucester's plight, the better. They were hoping that tariffs on imports of cheap Canadian fish would be set up to help the Gloucester fishermen. Andrew put together cogent arguments to help Washington politicians vote in favor, had 200 of them mimeographed, then he dashed back to Washington to await the arrival of the Thebaud. Ben Pine persuaded the city fathers to put up \$1500 to clean the vessel up below decks, though he insisted she keep her battered and scruffy appearance to show she was a working fishing boat. Then he recruited some old time high liners as captain and crew, and off they went to Washington. Andrew joined them 60 miles down the Potomac, having flown there. As they came into the harbor in Washington, the crew spotted the presidential yacht, Sequoia, gave it 21 toots on their horn. The President waved and when they landed at the Navy Yard, the presidential auto came by and stopped. Mrs. Roosevelt toured the Thebaud from stem to stern and the point was made. The next day Mrs. Roosevelt returned the favor by having them all to tea at the White House. It was a supreme teaching moment, but it did not accomplish what they hoped for, a favorable vote on the tariff.

Mary 14:31

In late June, this is 1933 still, having accomplished more in his first hundred days than any president before or since, President Roosevelt decided he needed a brief vacation. He chartered the schooner Amberjack II and headed for his family compound at Portobello Island, just across the Canadian, excuse me Campobello Island, just across the Canadian border. On the night of June 20, the Amberjack anchored just inside the breakwater. Ben Pine was out in the Thebaud but he didn't dare approach too closely in the dark. In the morning, Piatt Andrew had himself rowed out to the Amberjack where he was greeted cordially. The President produced a snapshot of the human totem pole, and everyone laughed heartily. Soon Ben Pine arrived in the Thebaud. Crammed with politicians, including the artist Emile Gruppe, who just happened to have a large oil painting of the Thebaud, which he presented to the president. Darn it all the presidential library in Hyde Park can't find it. I think one of the boys took it home and didn't tell. At noon, the Amberjack went off through the cut and up the Annisquam River, to the annoyance of the skippers in the accompanying warships that had to go out and around. That was only time FDR visited while president, but his son James would come back whenever his father was running for re-election. I have not been able to discover if Mrs. Mrs. Roosevelt ever visited. What were the results? Nothing to speak of for the fisheries as such. But in 1938 Gloucester was able to dedicate its brand new fish pier. Cost about \$1.2 million, \$540 an outright gift from the federal government, \$660 alone from the state. The city contributed

\$100,000 including Five Pound Island. It had the capacity to freeze 3.5 million pounds of fish a day and had an ice making plant that could produce 50 tons of ice a day. Gloucester had been talking about it since the 1920s and actually had persuaded the state legislature to vote favorably on it in 1931. The school, the city had been talking for an even longer time about replacing the high school on Dale Avenue, which had been built in the 1880s. 1925 they enlarged it and modernized it to some extent, but it was known to be insufficient. For example, there was no gymnasium. The auditorium and city hall across the street was used for basketball and wrestling. In September of 1940, the students moved into the new high school off Centennial Avenue. It was state of the art with an auditorium and a gymnasium large enough for the ROTC cadets, and that also provided space for vocational training programs. This cost \$1.3 million. Half, \$650,000, from the federal government, half bonded by the city. These two projects could never have been done without federal aid. There was a third project that was immeasurably aided by federal funds. Since at least 1923, the city have been complaining about the cut bridge, the only access. These were the days when opening shot at least 6000 times a year. They desperately wanted a new fixed span high bridge over the Annisquam. It would have involved a new road from Gloucester to connect with 1A in Beverly. This was of course before they had thought of 128 as a circumferential around the whole city. Already in the 1930s the rust Island crossing being chosen for the new bridge. When we reached the part of the of this talk that deals with the murals, we will see how one of the Gloucester artists envision the other bridge.

Mary 19:02

in 1937, the WPA, the Works Progress Administration, gave the city \$1,000. Now worth about \$15,000 to hire a young MIT professor, Frederick Jay Adams, to do a feasibility study of traffic in Gloucester. He came up with a plan for a circumferential road within the city, Gloucester Avenue is the only part that was built, that would have brought a road down to the new Fish Pier, almost exactly with a route 128 extension was built in the 1960s. The roadbed of the old Rockport road would have been used as part of the circumferential highway, getting a second access road to Rockport. The new highway would have crossed the Annisquam on a new bridge that would have come in from Essex Avenue, close to where the water treatment plant is now and done away with the cut bridge. On the panel on the right there you can see the plan for the new bridge and then you can see the whole, the whole plan for this circumferential within Gloucester. The federal agency that was responsible for planning and building was the Works Progress Administration, the WPA. Almost 95% of the Works Progress Administration funds went for infrastructure plans and buildings, such as the projects that I have described. Gloucester benefitted immensely from smaller projects as well, the key to its public amenities. A team of unemployed engineering draftsman toiled at the bottom of City Hall, came up with 45 maps of all the utilities in the city. Burnham's field, the remnant of the old upland Marsh, was finally drained and excellent playing fields installed. In fact, every neighborhood of the city was given its own public park and recreational facility. The incongruous Victorian tower was taken off the Sawyer Free Library Saunders house. A new slate roof was installed on City Hall. As you exit this building, and walk along Warren Street, you see the handsome stonewall in front of City Hall, a discreet bronze plaque that proclaims that it was built by the WPA.

Now it's time to talk about the programs that provided the, quoting the President, "social values more noble than mere monetary profit", that he mentioned in his first inaugural address. We left the Gloucester Society of Artists to 1932. How did the artists fare? The members of the Gloucester Society of Artists, as opposed to the Northshore Arts Association, were adept at working with federal art programs. By 1930, by December 1933, at the urging of an old Groton School and Harvard artist friend, George Biddle, the artist and administrator Edward Bruce, Harry Hopkins, the director of the Federal Emergency Relief administration, and with the strong support of Mrs. Roosevelt, the President set up the Public Works of Art Program, the PWAP. It was always torn between the fact that Bruce and many other new dealers wanted to support artists impoverished by the depression, but at the same time wanted the best possible art on the walls of public buildings. We are fortunate that one of the young administrators in 1933, Charles Henry Sawyer, was approached in 1977 to give his reminiscences of the programs. Sawyer was made Director of the Addison gallery of American Art at Phillips Andover Academy in 1930. In 1933, Francis Henry Taylor, director of the Worcester Museum, was made the New England Regional Director of the program. The director of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston offered spaces headquarters, and the services of his assistant director John Davis Hatch. They were all stunned when over 1200 artists registered in New England on the first day. The program was set up for only 150 artists in all of New England.

Mary 23:57

Sawyer was in charge of Essex and part of Middlesex counties in Massachusetts. The artists understood they were to be hired to decorate public buildings, if not federal, then state, then municipal. The first project that came to hand was the state hospital in Tewksbury for the elderly, the indigent and the feeble minded, as was it was founded in the 1850's. Gloucester artist Bertha Metzler Peyton and some Rockport artists were hired. W. Lester Stevens from Rockport was in charge. Sawyer remembered that the, quote, "somewhat heavy and stolid harbor scenes" that were provided, were not what the administrators were looking for, but they were accepted. Some of them survive today. The program was only set up in December 1933. On January 12 1934, John D. Hatch, the associate Director in Charge of Region One, New England, arrived in Gloucester. He found the artists and administrators under the direction of Frederick L Stoddard had already divided up the mural work for public buildings. Stoddard, almost 30 years before, had done a great many murals in the schools of New York City when it absorbed Brooklyn and the other boroughs. The city administration, administrators had already chosen Charles Allen Winter for the big mural, the City Hall auditorium. Mr. Hatch approved, just as well. Then they moved on to the Sawyer Free Library, Stoddard was given that assignment. The third stop was the high school on Dale Avenue. Frederick J. Mulhaup and Oscar Anderson were chosen for that. The city agreed to pay for materials, not over \$100, and the artists were ordered to get to work on sketches. Everyone assumed the depression will be over in six months, so they had limited time. Winter had almost succeeded in finishing by the deadline. The big mural in the auditorium, 20 by 15 feet, was finished by August 1 1934. The final report on the activities of the Public Works of Art Project lists: Oscar Anderson, Howard A Curtis Stoddard's assistant, Bertha Metzler Payton, Frederick Lincoln Stoddard and Charles Allen

Winter. I don't have time to discuss any of them besides a set done by Charles Allen Winter in 1937 and '38 for City Hall on the ground floor. We have no information Charles Allen Winter had ever done a mural, let alone one as big as the auditoriums but he had what was needed to work in a hurry. Huge numbers of sketches of people, a good camera and the enlarging projector. He took his images from wherever he could get them. Some of them were his own 'Michelangeloesque' inventions he'd been using for 30 years in bank note designs, magazine covers and illustrations. Some of them were copied from Italian old masters, a Raphael Madonna sits demurely at her spinning wheel. I can show you precisely. Some were done from photographs of living people. 8 recent mayors stood in for the first town council. He first redid the photographs as sketches in charcoal, projected the drawings onto the canvas at the scale he wanted the finished mural to be, outlined them in charcoal and filled in with oil paint. For description of the method, see John Sloane's book, *The Gist of Art*. The Cape Ann Museum has photographs that Winter took for the mural over the door to the mayor's office.

Mary 28:10

All, except Stoddard, which was too bad, worked in Marouflage, the technique popularized by the French academic artists under whom Winter had studied. It meant the paintings were done on primed canvas and oil paint, then adhered to the wall with white lead. Thanks to the artists' use of this technique, the paintings were removable and this has ensured their preservation. We do not have an accounting from 1934, the PWAP year, on how much the murals cost the city. For the seven WPA years 1936 to 1942 came to \$544.30, roughly \$8200. They, I believe, they bought the canvas from the local sail makers so it didn't cost much. The artists were paid in the neighborhood of \$40 a week. In 1938, Winter made \$1.45 an hour. In 2005 currency he made about \$30,000 a year from his very arduous mural work, considering that he was almost 70. Of the murals, and then close to 40 panels by the four artists, I've chosen only four small ones by Winter. They're all on the ground floor of City Hall. Two large ones, City Council in Session, and an Allegory of City Government. And four small vertical panels of the Civic Virtues. In the small panel, and those unfortunately rather bad photographs because I didn't have any lighting, around the corner on the left hand side of City Council in Session, a nurse helps a boy or doctor and scientists confer. Above them are scientists with microscopes and then buildings of the Addison Gilbert Hospital. The other panel of this mural depicts Planning, two boys playing with a model of what would be the new high school. Well behind and above them, two architects, in Renaissance costume, confer. Above them is Winter's idea of the high bridge over the Annisquam with towers that looked like lighthouses. On the right hand side of City Council in Session, is first Charity, depicting a small boy receiving a new pair of shoes. As I told you that grim little statistic about no shoes, no clothing, and receiving a new pair of shoes from a goddess, and discarding ones with holes in the sole. The Goddess with their left hand pushes a basket full of food, including a bag labeled flour in the direction of a woman with a child. Behind them is the optimistic depiction of a factory going full blast. On the other side, Protection, a boy and girl are hiding under the shield of an Athena-like figure. Thus in these relatively small panels, Winter summarizes the ideals of the government projects, as they worked themselves out in Gloucester. Winter commented in a handwritten document, that was probably intended as a news release, "This work is done under the Public Works of Art Project, (Actually, it was the

How Gloucester Kept Its Head Above the Water During the Great Depression – VL27 – page 9
federal art project by this time.) encouraging the much-needed decoration of public buildings, which in America has been much neglected, as all visitors to European cities know well. It is to be hoped that when the WPA work is terminated, cities will recognize practical values of this work in bringing the citizens nearer to their civic problems by giving them pictorial representation of them. Mural painting is not an extravagance as many people believe, but a practical use in arousing public interest in the city's history and general welfare”.

Mary 32:48

This didactic approach was typical of Winter, the old socialist who had drawn covers and illustrations for the Masses magazine before 1914, heavy-handed allegory was old fashioned in 1937. But it was still very popular. He had been painting the same sort of scene since 1900. His wife, Alice Beach Winter said he was a symbolist at heart. And he certainly showed it with these murals, which combined photographic realism, flattened space and allegory. It's notable he was popular enough to keep on being hired by the WPA throughout the 1930s. He finally aged out in 1940 and died in 1942 age 70. The city was very proud of its murals, and on August 1, 1934, the Gloucester Daily Times announced that all the completed ones to be on show as part of the Cape Ann Art Festival. One of Mulhaup's works, entitled simply Mural, but almost certainly a sketch, was put on display at the Corcoran gallery in Washington in April and May 1934. None of the Gloucester artists were chosen to be in the 1937 traveling show Federal Art in New England. But in November of that year, there was a show in Gloucester. Winter had completed his City Council in Session. It was on display, as well, as his large mural with portraits of the class of 1935, in the high school auditorium, and some other murals completed by the three other artists in the Sawyer Free Library and various schools. In 1937, for the first time, easel paintings, sponsored by the WPA were listed in the newspaper. Two were by Howard Lautenberg, seven by F. L. Stoddard, eight by Polly Nordell, one by Oscar Anderson, one by Bertha Metzler Peyton. There were none by Winter. In August 1938, a traveling exhibition of art created under WPA auspices in Massachusetts, spent two weeks in City Hall. Dorothy Grafly, who wrote for Philadelphia papers, always a perceptive critic, commented, "she was delighted that it was given space in the municipal building, open to all rather than an art gallery". The show included painting, sculpture, but also examples from the index of American design. Dioramas and practical objects such as carved bookends. Grafly applauded in particular, the sculpture demonstrated a breakdown of the antagonist between the artists and the artisans, and she felt that that was what artists were gaining out of this necessity to cooperate during this period of the Great Depression. In 1939, another traveling show of Massachusetts's artists came through Gloucester. Four paintings were chosen as gifts to the city. A portfolio of Nancy Thornburg's drawings of 36 old buildings were presented to the Sawyer Free Library. But that was the end of it for Massachusetts. The state folded the WPA art program, even before it was technically necessary. To some extent it went on till it was absorbed by the war in 1942, in some other states, but not here. People were allowed to finish up what they were working on. As for art produced elsewhere in New England, in 1937 Charles Sawyer helped put together an exhibit, Federal Art in New England, that opened at the Addison Gallery in Andover, toured seven other New England museums, but significantly and unfortunately, none of them in Gloucester. None of the Gloucester Artists were chosen to have their work illustrated.

Mary 37:31

I think they're all considered old.
They were. Those four.

Mary 37:38

In all, the federal art projects, supporting roughly 550 artists in the New England region who produced 108,000 easel paintings, over 2500 murals and over 17,000 pieces of sculpture. Count that in six years. Five years, six years. The most admired oil painting, by the professionals, was Jack Levine's the Feast of Pure Reason. I don't know if it comes to mind, politician and a policeman and somebody else feasting on basically the population's money. Thousands of watercolors for the index of American design and hundreds of thousands of silkscreen posters, as well as things like dioramas for museums. I don't have enough time to talk about all the WPA programs in Gloucester that were not aimed at professionals. Suffice it to say, the playgrounds of Gloucester, built or renovated by WPA workers were crammed with children. I'll take 1936 is the high point of participation. It was estimated that during the year, there were 100,000 visits to those facilities by both adults and children, some as participants, some as audience members. These numbers are like hits on modern computers. They were not 100,000 individuals but 100,000 visits. 25 men and nine women were employed with a monthly payroll of \$2,400. The playgrounds with their swing sets and see seesaws for little ones, baseball diamonds and basketball courts for the older children, were places where both courtesy and safety were taught. At the headquarters building at 158 Main Street, woodworking, metal craft and crafts for girls were offered. At the Armory on Prospect Street there were indoor sports during the winter such as basketball. At the Legion building young men were taught navigation to prepare them for the merchant marine. 82 men completed the course in 1936. Music at the Armory in the evenings included swing orchestra. Dramatics were taught to both adults and children. These numbers are just extraordinary. More than 200 children, 2000 children and adults turned out for a costume gala party in 1936. See no television-increased participation. 36 may have been the busiest year, but they're all crammed with public programs.

Mary 40:52

I will end my survey of Gloucester during the Great Depression with a description of President Roosevelt's birthday balls. Everyone knows, of course that he had polio, infantile paralysis, and was passionate about alleviating the sufferings of others who were afflicted. His birthday was January 30. In every year that he was president, cities and towns all over the country held birthday balls. 70% of the money raised after expenses, stayed in the community to help those with polio. 30% went to the sanitarium at Warm Springs, Georgia that he supported and where he died. Every year the President addressed the attendees over the radio. This was always looked forward to. There were great successes from the beginning. Over 1100 people crammed the armory for the first one in 1934. The \$350 netted in 1935 may not seem like a lot, but remember, people were existing on \$750 a year in those times. Every year the music and dancing became more enthusiastic and complicated. In 1936, a locally famous radio baritone sang, a couple who demonstrated tap dancing on roller skates and an 11-year-old tap dancer

How Gloucester Kept Its Head Above the Water During the Great Depression – VL27 – page 11
from Danvers did her stuff. There were 16 players in the dance band and 41 in the high school band. In 1937 the, quote, most fascinating young lady in attendance, received a loving cup personally described by the President. 1938 was the Big Apple party, Natalie Cahoon, does anybody know what happened to her? Who she insisted she was going to go on to be a professional dancer. She won. Trucking on Down and Susie Q were some of the other dances. This was '38. '39 the feature dances were a decorous Lambeth Walk, and the wild Jitterbug. All together Gloucester demonstrated it could have fun for a good cause. Well, this has been an all too brief survey of Gloucester during the Great Depression. I'm looking for photographs that we could add to the collection. And if anybody can demonstrate the Susie Q or the Jitterbug I'd love to know,
We'll make a movie,

Mary 43:38

I said I would end, we're going to have to punch the buttons, with the most popular cultural event of this era in Gloucester, it was not the movie of Captain's Courageous, but rather the opening of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. March 25 1938, seven shows a day at the Strand Theatre on Main Street. Now, I hope everybody will help me sing, Heigh ho, heigh ho

(Shows movie clip of Snow White and chatter about movie)

Mary 47:27

Anyway, I'd be happy to answer any questions.

Mary 47:31

I read every issue of the Gloucester Daily Times between 1933 in 1939.

Mary 47:40

The editor couldn't stand FDR. As time went on, he got more and more apoplectic. That Man talks on the radio too much, that Man smiles too much, that Man can't keep his wife under control. Mrs. Hoover never left the White House but Mrs. Roosevelt was all over the place. Then he ended up ended up with a, I think, slightly bizarre comment that "because of Social Security, the lower classes would no longer believe in original sin". He blamed that on Roosevelt!

Mary Speaker 48:29

I also read all the annual reports, the Mayors were elected every year in those days. So they'd give summaries. We know exactly how much was paid by the WPA by the WPA. We know what the welfare, roughly what the welfare costs were. Social Security was voted in '35, but didn't really take hold until some years later, but at least it was on the horizon. There are some reports, so we were very lucky that the director of the deCordova Museum in, in Lincoln, in 1977, got hold of Charles Sawyer, who had been, as I said, so in charge of the region in 1937 and '33 really, and he was still hale and hearty. He lived to be 99. And he wrote reports and gave interviews at the drop of a hat. So, we have a, we have the memoirs, the memory of all

How Gloucester Kept Its Head Above the Water During the Great Depression – VL27 – page 12
that. And then the government was great at putting out mimeograph reports on everything.
And I think I've read most of them.

In the library, in boxes still, not really sorted, are the results of all my labors but certainly the newspaper information is all there and you're more than welcome to look through it. It's not totally sorted but it's in pretty good shape.

Mary 50:22
Yes, sure Bill.

Unknown Speaker (Bill) 50:24

Mary, you mentioned that in 1930 Gloucester's population was 24,000. Do you have a sense of how it ended in the 1930s and some sense of the summer population and the degree to which the economy was dependent on tourism, and the role of summer residents in that time.

Mary 50:44

In that time, they were very concerned about the summer residents. The summer residents paid one third of the tax money. As the depression went on fewer and fewer of them would stay for any length of time at the hotels. The hotels didn't suddenly fold, World War Two did them and they were huge hotels, great rambling wooden things.

Unknown Speaker 51:21

The Rockaway on Rocky Neck, the Thornwald, the Moreland they were very large and used to also to cultural things. I must say they were they were important and all that. But World War Two with gasoline rationing really did them in completely. I, it's very hard to tell these numbers because they didn't vote here. They weren't here for the census. I get the impression that there were maybe 3000 more people in the summers something like that.

Mary 52:00

But it may have been more. It may have been more. They were a driving force as far as the artists were concerned. How much they impacted on the rest of the city is hard to tell obviously things like the grocery stores and the carpenters and the people who worked for them. They do, the same perceptive head of welfare in 1938, who commented on the numbers of fishermen, commented that there were perhaps 1500 people who worked only in the summers for the summer people and they couldn't get jobs the rest of the year that added to the doles.

Mary , I remember as a child though, Lexington Avenue Magnolia.

(Mary (Yeah, oh yeah).

Unknown Speaker (Adele) 53:03

The Oceanside hotel, and I used to hunt and peck in all those nice stores that used to come from New York. Yeah. So there must have been quite a lot of summer people here that time in the general maybe not just in Gloucester but Magnolia and the general vicinity

Mary

It is certainly, Adele and it's hard to say if they chose not to go to France for the summer but they stayed in Gloucester if they felt poorer. But you wouldn't know it nobody else would know. I think people rented out the houses still. It wasn't the end of the world, the Great Depression, of their world, the Great Depression. But I think World War Two was the word really finished it, oh yeah that close down. They close down and Lexington Avenue, of course, is not anymore. Yes, yes, Susan

Unknown Speaker (Susan) 54:11

I have two questions, Mary. One is, in all your research, have you ever come across anything on Protection of Fishing mural at City Hall, the last mural by Winter ?

Mary 54:23

the last winter? No, I, having read seven years of the paper. I stopped in 1939 the Germans came over the border and that did it for me. I decided I could cease. So no, I didn't. But we know, we have some of these pay stubs. We know he was getting \$1.45 an hour and he kept on going in 1940 but the impetus behind it? I really don't know. He did the four small panels, the Civic virtues in '38.

Unknown Speaker 55:15

Second question where are you going with your research now?

Mary 55:20

I'd like to do a book, I really would. But I would like to get illustrations and the newspaper, the GDT, did not have what do you call them,

Mary 55:37

Well photographers who took lots of interesting photos of just people on the street. They, that came in in the '50s after the war, so it was all text.

Unknown aside)

(related Eudora Welty coming to Gloucester)

Mary

You certainly did in 1943 or so, Life magazine sent Gordon Parks here. And he went out on one of the Italian trawlers took some wonderful photos. Here and then at sea and then back. And they are up online on The Smithsonian, what's it called, called American experience I think, I forget the title. You can see those there. But really I love to get the Jitterbug contests, the.. Oh, there is one funny, one funny photograph from 1938. Angus Waters, in the Bluenose had

How Gloucester Kept Its Head Above the Water During the Great Depression – VL27 – page 14
beaten the Gertrude Thebaud in the in the schooner races. Although both sides were very disgruntled by the whole thing. They didn't want to pay Waters his money and the trophy disappeared and it

Unknown Speaker 56:59

turned up About a week later on the doorstep of the home for Little Wanderers, the orphanage in Boston with a bottle of castor oil and a bottle of cod liver oil. And a rude little verse about Dear old Gurtie, he was going to win the next time. But this was late October of '38. And they did have a photograph of the kid who won the costume, Best Costume in the Halloween the WPA Halloween. He's dressed up in oilskins with a sign around his neck. It says instead of Angus Waters, it says angry waters.

Mary 57:46

So there are bits Yes, well,

Unknown Speaker 57:49

National Geographic. did an article in Gloucester I think at '39, and as I remember Good Harbor Beach. Oh yeah, in some of the photos Yeah,

Mary 57:59

yeah. Yes sure

Unknown Speaker 58:01

I was looking for myself down there, but

Mary 58:05

Bob told me that \$15 a week was pretty standard.

Unknown Speaker 58:11

Yeah, my father worked '38 I think for the Building Center, and he made \$15 a week supporting seven kids.

Unknown Speaker 58:22 a loaf

Remember, bread was two cents. We do have to remember the relative values. Yeah. Yes.

Unknown Speaker 58:32

What was the unemployment rate in Gloucester generally during the time period, and how did it compare with employment or unemployment amongst fishermen and, you know, related harbor businesses if you have any immediate and rough numbers on them,

Mary 58:46

The men and women who worked on shore were counted. The fishing on the whole was still done on shares, so they were not. The fisherman's union really came in after the war. So I can't

How Gloucester Kept Its Head Above the Water During the Great Depression – VL27 – page 15
tell and I don't know what the how it would compare with some of the other, say, Portland, Maine. I just don't know. It wouldn't help to look at Boston because Boston was so much bigger. What did we say '33 was probably the worst year, worst year for landings, probably the worst year. They, they the statistics are fragmentary, I can't find a full span of the stuff. So, it has to be impressionistic. I'd say that because of the frozen fish, the red fish that they were bringing in by the end of the '30s. The fishing had certainly improved, and as far as Gloucester is concerned, the best years of all, were the '50's for landings but it was almost all for freezing by that time.

Unknown Speaker 1:00:07

I mean would it would impressionistically seem that unemployment around the city of Gloucester, let's say other than fishing and hardware related roughly the same more or less

Mary 1:00:19

I'd say probably roughly the same A little story from 1933 Cape Ann Manufacturing Company, which became Mighty Mac. They had to let 200 women go because there was no work stitching, making clothing. They got a contract for the CCC, the Civilian Conservation Corps for 50,000 jackets, and they hired the 200 women back. Bob can Talk about that.

Unknown Speaker 1:01:01

My mother worked for Might Mac in 1938. And she worked at 1956. And went through a lot of changes from the Fort where the Yeah, I think where Chamber of Commerce is now, and then moving up to Emerson Avenue,

Mary 1:01:16

yo, yo. But these government contracts, were just a lifesaver.

Mary 1:01:25

But I'm sorry, I don't have comparative statistics. I had trouble enough digging this stuff up. Okay. I gotta stop, The tapes run out

Unknown Speaker 1:01:39

Just about but you had mentioned in an earlier draft, that the government just buried his head in the sand about what was going on because they didn't want to keep statistics

Mary 1:01:54

A very interesting series of books by a man named Berliner, I believe, on precisely that on the difficulty of getting the information, having to put it together really from whole cloth beginning in '33, which is why that that Mimeo, sort of band on Vimeo, the unemployed in Gloucester in '34 was so valuable January 1,'34. And that was just the beginning. Yes, ma'am.

Unknown speaker

How Gloucester Kept Its Head Above the Water During the Great Depression – VL27 – page 16
Was it just an unfortunate coincidence that the fisheries declined during the depression? Or were their economic factors that...

Mary

well, it was complicated, it was the end, the really bitter bitter end of the sailing, the schooners. The first ship, fishing boat out of Gloucester, that an auxiliary engine was put in a 1900, the first one that was built to have an auxiliary engine, but these were still wooden schooners, was 1902. They were gasoline and they tended to blow up. So it wasn't really, it took a number of years before the designers caught up with the fact that diesel engines in metal ships worked. The British and the Dutch, but the British in particular, had pretty well worked this all out in the North Sea fisheries. But it hadn't made it to these North Atlantic fisheries. And there were with constant balance between the fact that the Grand Banks were Canadian waters. George's was American waters, the whole question of the borders. As I said, in '31 they cut off all the men who would have come down from the Maritimes by train, or used to maybe, 1000 were just unable to do it, and that would have thrown everything say in Lunenburg and Halifax out of whack. So that there was a complicated internal balance. When Ben Pine and the Thebaud got to Washington, the Canadian ambassador, no, the Canadian, he was a was a finance guy just happened to be there. And he was in on the talks. Well, then Ben Pine was urging,

Mary 1:04:39

'Course using Piatt Andrews arguments, urging tariffs against the Canadian fish, but there was an unfortunate uneasy balance. '33 was the worst year, for everything. But that was because the Republicans had done nothing to acknowledge the whole change in the technology in regard to fishing.

Unknown Speaker 1:05:09

Yes. Well, I in the mid 30s there was another industry that another fishing industry that came up and they came out of Michigan, Michigan, and they moved to Gloucester, the gillnetters, and that, that was effective. As kids we reeled nets what 25 cents a box. That's how we made money as kids. And it was still some of the Arnolds around and the Ellwells and some of the other original families, but they all came out of Michigan, Michigan, to Gloucester, to fish out of Gloucester.

Mary 1:05:42

It's fairly complicated, The number of fisheries that were within this quite small port. Different times of year for different fish, different methods of catching different fish.

Mary 1:05:56

The Sicilians, from what I could read, seem to be the most adept because they're the vessels were small, and they were nimble. And as long as they could sell the fish they catch it. But of course they didn't necessarily land them in Gloucester. The process serves. In the 1890s Gordon Pew had something like 65 vessels. Gordon Pew bought up all these all their rivals. It was 1889,

How Gloucester Kept Its Head Above the Water During the Great Depression – VL27 – page 17
I think was '90. But then they realized they had all these obsolete schooners in it wouldn't
schooners have no use. So they would try to sell them up to Canada.

Mary 1:06:49

The American vessels were the Gloucester vessels, the ones that were usually made in Essex actually, were on the whole superior to the Canadian ones because they used oak and the Canadians used pine, I read this somewhere which I thought was interesting. So if a Gloucester Vessel wrecked, on PEI for example, they, the locals, would rush out and harvest the timbers to reup into their ships. In this went one of the in the '90's actually. Gordon Pew owned at one point, the Walrus, the Seal of the Lords, huge steam powered Outer trollers, enormous things. Cost him \$250,000 each. They fished for four years. They mothballed them because they were no longer of any use and quietly sold them up to Canada to use not as fishing boats but as inter-island suppliers. Yes, again Bob

Unknown Speaker (Bob)1:07:57

Gorton's had the OK service that used to bring down salt cod from Canada and we used to go down the waterfront and watch them come in and unload salt cod and then they'd put them on the flakes and let them dry out on the flake racks around the city too

Mary 1:08:11

I just remember the end of the of the flake yards

Unknown Speaker 1:08:16

You knew Gloucester by Sea was Gloucester by the smell

Mary 1:08:20

Coming into Gloucester you'd see the sign, Gordon's original ready to fry fish cakes. Yeah. But see that was all imported from Canada. They weren't doing it firsthand anymore you know. The book by John Morris is wonderful, is really absolutely first rate, I highly recommend it. It's the, it's not the romantic side of the fisheries, but it's what the numbers really were. And what the distribution really was. That's where I got my figures from. What I'm doing now is writing a history of this. Really the history of the commercial fisheries in last year between 1840 and 1940 for the Park Service, the National Parks and so some of this is going into there. But anyhow, yes now this may be off the subject but, What are the most important years of the fishing industry? When did we do our greatest fishing here in Gloucester? You've done so much research, when do you believe this was the most important seaport in the US at 1890. 1890 was the highest in the 1880s and 1890. It's noticeable I think that that Captain's Courageous, the book, was published in 1897. And he was looking back about 20 years to the 1870's which he felt had not been contaminated by the go getting millionaire ethos and so the Disko Troop had an old fashioned Skipper who had all the old moral virtues of the uncontaminated Yankee.

Mary 1:10:22

But the 1890s there were, oh, almost 550 schooners in the fleet. I'd say about half of them were probably the only ship owned and the others were, belonged to the to the processors.

Mary 1:10:44

But the landings now that's something else again. Landings were in the 1950s Red Fish frozen for fish sticks. Looked down up.. But the great years were probably the 1890's. I highly recommend to all of you if you're interested in the 19th century, in 1880, about the fisheries, the US fisheries, founded a special center in Gloucester and they published seven books that came out of it on reports, including volume four, which is really just on the Gloucester fisherman. They sent out 30 skippers with practically orders to keep diaries of everything they did. In dammit, we can't find them. I've got people at the Smithsonian looking, but they are illustrated, they're absolutely fascinating. And I know perfectly well that Rudyard Kipling pulled a lot of Captain's Courageous out of them and didn't acknowledge it. They're called the Fish, Fisheries and Fishermen of the United States

Unknown comment

The Library of Congress, they don't know.

Mary

They haven't. But what I'm looking for, Adele, are the diaries of these guys. And they also kept saltwater tanks on board to put in any odd critters that they've brought up in the fishing nets. But that the book that includes Gloucester has dialects, superstitions, clothing, full description of the charities of Gloucester to the care for the fisherman. Very nice engravings of houses that you could build, that they did build on the profits of being fisherman.

Unknown Speaker

Do they speak at all and they have those of the Portuguese, the Sicilians, Nova Scotians, Newfoundlanders, that were all part of that, you know. That would be interesting just in and of itself.

Mary

The, there's the some set that was done in the 1880s does not include the Sicilians yet, but it does have the Novies, the Newfies, and the Portuguese. I don't believe the Sicilian got here till about 1900

Unknown Speaker 1:13:43

What about the mayor of Boston, his opinion of the Fishermen?

Mary 1:13:49

James Michael Curley. Governor, governor, he was Governor in 1936. Yes, this is a story about Curley. I think it was the only time he was governor. And of course FDR was running for the second time in '36. He did not come to Gloucester but he sent his son James, then Governor Curley came down. And Governor Curley, as governor, was in charge of institutions like the

How Gloucester Kept Its Head Above the Water During the Great Depression – VL27 – page 19
Tewksbury state hospital for whatever it is, the indigent, the feeble minded. And he said, Well, you know, I have given orders that they need to serve fish twice a week at all the state hospitals. It's done remarkable things for the intelligence of the inmates. I'm strongly considering having served three times. So that's the James Michael Curley story. But anyway, thank you.