



Port Norris

The Past for the Future

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Port Norris Historical Society is dedicated to preserving the history of our unique village, located in Commercial Township in Cumberland County, NJ.

PNHS Next meeting: March 10 7:00 pm • 1723 Main Street

[Visit our website for more details.](#)



PNHS 2019 Legend

Recognized on November 2, 2019

Luther R. Jeffries, Sr.

Here is Luther's story as told by his daughter, Linda Reeves.

My father, Luther R. Jeffries, was born September 13, 1908 in a house on the corner of Church and Chestnut Streets here in Port Norris. I don't know too much about his childhood but I do know he had a very loving, kind mother, Anna Dillahey Jeffries and a very strict, hard-working, honest father. My dad inherited his mother's disposition. He was a gentle person.

As a child he suffered, from pleurisy-pneumonia, nearly dying before this led to removal of a rib to drain his lung. I suspect it might have caused trauma to his heart causing a great disappointment when he became an adult. Growing up his time was spent playing the great American sport, baseball. It was his great love. Not having a wealthy family, my dad would make his own baseballs out of string. He played baseball throughout his time in school and as a team member of the Oyster League. He was a left-handed pitcher and quite accomplished at the sport. He was also a romantic who loved to read and memorize poetry and throughout my brother's and my growing up period my dad would recite poetry to us. Always at Christmas he would read Dickens Christmas Carol to us. Much to our boredom.

During his senior year at P.N.H.S. he was approached by a scout from Bucknell University in Pennsylvania. He was awarded a fully-paid, four-year baseball scholarship to Bucknell. During his sophomore year he injured his heart while playing his beloved sport. He came home to Port Norris no longer able to play. At that time the United States was suffering due to the Great Depression. Fortunately there was an abundance of oysters and my dad went to work on my grandfather's oyster boat, the R & A Jeffries. He worked in the middle of the deck and was chief cook and bottle washer.



In the meantime he was courting Marion Lloyd. They were married in 1931, my brother was born in 1933 and soon after my dad became employed by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company in Millville. Although he did not possess an aggressive personality, he won awards for superior salesmanship. One year he sold a half-a-million dollars worth of insurance and that was a great deal during recovery from the Depression. He would quietly pay premiums for those who did not have a dollar or two for insurance. While others in our neighborhood had ice-boxes, we had a refrigerator and a nice Chevy sedan. We even took vacations to Fortescue but due to the pressure to sell more and more and more insurance my father fell under his own depression. He and my mother, who was his emotional support, bought not the store but the business of Mr. Massey who had a small sweet shop on the corner of Main and Market Streets. This was 1944 and the country was in the midst of the Second World

War. While the young men in town were engaged in freeing our world from the evils of dictatorships my father, due to his heart condition, was classified 4F, therefore, not able to serve his country. But he and my mother were serving many soldiers, sailors, air force men and also during lunch, the teenagers attending Port Norris High School. They worked from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. taking care of business. They would take turns going home during the day to rest. I remember hearing my mother cry from exhaustion. And then the war was over WHAT A CELEBRATION THERE WAS. My father made effigies of Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo. The town gathered at the ball diamond located across the street from the Shiloh Baptist Church on Memorial Ave. They had a huge bonfire and cremated those scoundrels.

During the following years my dad and mother purchased building and business from Lou Mathis located across the street from their sweet shop and proceeded eventually to build an addition which became a restaurant and for a few years they served home-cooked meals, my father cooking and my mother baking. They also served the local Rotary Club during their meetings held in the store. They employed young teens in the kitchen during lunch hour and older teens in the evening. For ten years they were a permanent fixture on Main St. They installed a real old-fashioned soda fountain and a huge carbonator in the kitchen that mysteriously and loudly carbonated the fountain sodas. It had a belt that could cause permanent disability if you happened to fall on it. The Wurlitzer jukebox seemed to be in constant use with “flashing lights” and GOOD music.

During that time alcoholic beverages could not be purchased legally but a person might be fortunate enough to locate a speakeasy in the surrounding area. During the winter months my parents provided my mother’s homemade soup but never my father’s attempts at baking. During the summer months my father would put a Coca Cola cooler on the sidewalk in front of the store filled with ice and bottles of soda. As the years went by the restaurant began to hurt their health so they sold it to Grace Barrett who eventually sold it to Jane Adams and eventually it led to the business called Jellybeans..

My father still loved baseball and during those years he erected a small, square building at the same diamond where he played during his teen years. And during every game you could find him there, selling hotdogs, sodas and snacks. He was adding to the family income while enjoying his real love, baseball. Those were the Port Norris years. They next purchased a considerably large portion of land near Green Creek, N.J My mother worked for Abbott’s Dairies in Wildwood and my father managed a clam house owned by his brother Norman which was located on the Bay near Pierce’s Point. He and my mother’s brother, John Lloyd, partnered in building a mobile home park on the a-fore-mentioned property. It had a clubhouse and an Olympic-sized swimming pool. It was a successful venture. Then my father signed a contract with a Delaware oyster man to provide and



plant wire bags of clam shells in the Bay to catch oyster spat. Unfortunately, that was the year MSX hit the Bay. Unfortunately for the Delaware Oysterman the oysters died but fortunately for my dad the contract was legal. So, they sold the mobile home park and purchased a house in Green Creek, adding a large addition to house my mother’s antiques.

Then, back to Port Norris where my father became partners with my brother and nuclear physicist Charley Thompson opening an isotope processing plant just off North Ave. They became famous when it was discovered the property was radioactive. By this time the property was owned by a company from Texas. Their final move was to Port Elizabeth.

Then, onto the next venture, working as manager of my brother’s clam house in South Port Norris. Father was in his mid-sixties and his health began to fail. He suffered a disabling heart attack and although he survived his working years were over. Around 70 years of age it was discovered he was suffering from Non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma and when he was 71 his heart could no longer function and he suffered a heart attack which took his life.

My father was a born-again Christian and he is resting until we meet again. But, all those years and hard work allowed my mother to have her beloved antique shop known as the IRON KETTLE ANTIQUE SHOP and my father to enjoy his love, BASEBALL. AND BASKETBALL. ... AND FOOTBALL. During those years at Christmas my mother would be baking her ‘lassie cakes and my father would be out purchasing gifts for little children who would not have had Christmas gifts if it were not for his and my mother’s hard work and unselfish ways.

Although they did not come from wealthy families, they enjoyed the wealth that was ingrained in them from growing up in Port Norris. One thing for sure, it’s not what the legends have done for Port Norris it’s what Port Norris has done for the Legends.

An afterthought: I am convinced family is the first and greatest institution. I have been blessed to have been allowed to personally be touched by six generations (ancestors and descendents) of the Lake family. [Read more on the Lake Family.](#)

SEED SWAP REVIEW

For those folks who love the challenge of growing things from seed, the Port Norris Historical Society was the place to be on Saturday, February 8.

The Society held its first ever Seed Swap which attracted a nice crowd of seasoned gardeners, first time seed growers and a few curiosity seekers.

Several tables were filled to capacity with donated seeds of flowers, herbs and vegetables of all kinds, including a few exotic species from as far away as Egypt.

Guests were invited to bring their collection of seeds saved from their own garden to share and swap.

Our thanks to the Rutgers Master Gardeners of Cumberland County who brought seeds, answered questions and provided guests with lots of helpful educational information.

We hope to make this an annual event.

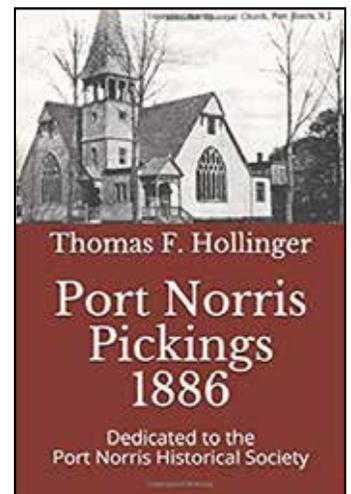
– Virginia Campbell



NEW BOOK Port Norris Pickings 1886

The Port Norris Historical Society is very grateful to Tom Hollinger for his gift of *Port Norris Pickings 1886*. He has dedicated this latest edition to us.

What a labor of love to compile these books. “This book contains information provided from newspapers of the day published in Bridgeton, New Jersey. Some people of the town, called “local correspondents” would write down the “happenings” of the week and send it to the papers to be published. The correspondents would go by nicknames or just an initial located at the end of the day’s story. Hopefully, this will give us a glimpse of what life was like in our small village many years ago. This book is the fourth in a planned series of books dedicated to our unique little oyster village, which would explode in growth and prosperity and capture the attention of an entire State.”



You can purchase the book from us directly, or you can get it on Amazon. \$12.95

You can also enjoy the past Pickings we normally share in the newsletter on our website. [Check it out!](#)

Scrapbook

A few goodies from our collections.

PORT NORRIS.

Rev. Charles Mitchell, of Bridgeport, is conducting the revival service at the M. P. church, in place of the pastor, Rev. N. Hewitt, who is unable as yet to take his usual place.

A cineograph and graphophone entertainment was to be given in the K. of P. hall Saturday night, but as no audience appeared, it was indefinitely postponed.

Revival services have closed at the M. E. church. At the Baptist church the meetings will continue this week.

On account of the inclemency of the weather on Saturday, the flag-raising exercises were postponed until to-day and it promises to be a more patriotic occasion than our town has witnessed for many days. The full account will appear in the News.

Miss Florence Russell, of Leesburg, is the guest of relatives in this place.

Baptism took place in the Baptist church Sunday evening. Six candidates were baptized.

Mrs. Elenora Fowler was very sick yesterday.

Miss May Green is spending some time at Philadelphia.

Miss Margaret Smith, of Haddonfield, is the guest of Miss Hattie Robbins.

An all-day meeting will be held in the M. P. Church on Thursday.

An unusually large amount of oyster boats are advertised for sale at present.

Colonial Theatre



Port Norris Pickings

January 13, 1886

High Winds

Oyster Boats Dragged On the Marshes. at Long Reach

The high winds of Friday and Saturday did considerable damage to the vessel property alone. On Friday night the rain and hail came down in torrents. Boats that were anchored in the Maurice River were driven ashore and left high and dry upon the marsh. The storm, as described by one who weathered it all, was nearly as bad as the September gale a year or so back. Crews were on watch all night and only those vessels that had two anchors were at all safe while others were shooting and tossing about, and were at the mercy of the waves being run into with other vessels. Several boats are badly broken up by being run into with other vessels. Three or four are so far on the marshes that it will take some time to get them off. On Saturday night an owner of a boat came down from Philadelphia and drove to Back Creek to look after his oyster boat which had blown up on the marsh near Sea Breeze. What other damage has been done we are not appraised of. Nothing of any importance in this city, except the snow beating under roofs and damaging ceilings and goods, and limbs from trees blown off.

From the book *Port Norris Pickings 1886*. He has dedicated this latest edition to us. See page 3 to purchase.

New Membership Levels

We have made some changes to our Membership beginning in 2020, with the addition of one NEW level. Donations of \$50 or more that were previously listed as BENEFACTOR will now be designated as PATRON. BENEFACTOR levels have changed to \$30 Individual and \$35 Family. General Individual and Family remain the same. (See the yellow box at right). All members receive merchandise discounts. Please check our website for listings of additional benefits. We are grateful for your ongoing support which helps us meet the needs (heat, electric, etc.) of maintaining our building. We wish you a happy, healthy and peaceful New Year.



NORRIS ASKS

What was the name of the Theater on Main Steet?

Colonial Theatre. See photos on page 4. Built by Jacob Rosenfeld, a former projectionist, in 1948. The theatre was run by Jacob and his wife Mildred until 1958, when it closed. It was demolished circa. 1980's.



Please Note: Meeting dates and times are posted on the website each month along with the approved minutes from the last meeting. Everyone is always welcome. [Click here to view.](#)

Membership and Renew for 2020

We would love to add your name to our growing list of members. Please give some thought to joining the PNHS.

Membership fees are for
 Individual - \$10, Family - \$15,
 Benefactor - \$30 Family \$35.00
 Patron - \$50 and
 Student - \$1 (no voting privileges)
 and entitles you to discounts
 on our merchandise.

Click here to renew or join,
historicportnorris.org/membership.htm

Or mail your check to: Port Norris
 Historical Society, PO Box 187
 Port Norris, NJ 08349.

Thank you for your support. Membership is key to applying for grants as well as your dollars help us continue with all of our endeavours.

Membership fees are tax deductible.

**See us on Facebook
 and our website
historicportnorris.org**

If you are getting this email from a friend and would like to be added to our list, please [click here](#) and we will add you. If we received your email at one of our events, and if you do not wish to receive this newsletter, click here web@historicportnorris.org, we will remove you from the list. We do not sell or share your email with anyone!

Officers

Rachel Cobb, President
 Richard Smith, Vice-President
 Alvina Baum, Secretary
 Mary Linda Locotte, Assistant Secretary
 Faye Hickman, Treasurer

Trustees

Eileen Bernhardt
 Virginia Campbell
 Gloria Guidera
 John Hickman
 Elizabeth Hoffman
 Joyce Massey
 Sam Ricci
 Rev. E. Barnes, Lifetime Honorary Trustee

For a complete list of committees see our website. [View Here](#)