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### CLARENCE BIRDSEYE DAY LECTURE FINDING AID & TRANSCRIPT

- Speakers:** Maggie Rosa, Steven Scotti, Carol Sharoff, Al Swekla, Bruce Tarr
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#### Video Description

This video records a program held at the Cape Ann Museum to commemorate the nationally recognized inventor Clarence Birdseye (1886-1956), who was a lifelong Gloucester resident and entrepreneur, and to highlight the tremendous impact his innovations in frozen food preparation and electric lightbulbs had on the

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region's fishing industry. Listen and watch as historian Maggie Rosa recounts a detailed timeline of his life and work, as well as the unveiling of a portrait of Birdseye commissioned from noted local artist Luisa F.V. Cleaves, which now hangs in Gloucester City Hall. Part of the ceremonies include the reading of a city ordinance that proclaims October 7, 2006, as Clarence Birdseye Day. The convivial event is well attended by many family members and local friends, including an impromptu speech from Senator Bruce Tarr.

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### Subject list

Clarence Birdseye	Birdseye Seafood, Inc.
Luisa F.V. Cleaves	General Seafoods Corp.
Marjorie Merriweather Post	Postum Co.
Edward Fish	Birdseye Electric Co.
Maggie Rosa	W.R. Grace
Double belt freezer	Reflecting electric lamp

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### Transcription

[For the first 3 to 4 minutes, the video shows people engaged in conversation, welcoming the special guests, and viewing the exhibit displays about Clarence Birdseye].

03:52

**Maggie Rosa:**

Good morning, everybody. Can you hear me?

OK.

I'd like to thank everybody for coming. It's terrific to see so many people, and also to see such a large number of the Birdseye family. And I don't know whether the Birdseye family wants to stand up en masse and wave to the crowd? Or you could just raise your hands. You've got ...we've got two grandsons. We have two daughters-in-law...I suppose I should have introduced the daughters-in-law before the grandsons, and then great-grandchildren. And I think it's terrific that they traveled from New Jersey, Michigan and New Mexico, or Arizona to come to Gloucester today. Audience clapping.

04:44

Thank you.

I think it's a very appropriate occasion for us to celebrate Clarence. One doesn't normally celebrate somebody's death, but I think that we have this opportunity 50 years after his passing to remember him. And I must say, as I've worked on this project — and I, by the way, am Maggie Rosa — as I've worked on this project, it has been terrific and it continues to be terrific. Everybody seems to have great memories of Clarence, and things have come out of the woodwork, as we shall see, in terms of what people have in memorabilia.

I'd also like to thank the people that have helped me on this project, and that includes at the start, Birds Eye Foods. They put me in touch with the Birdseye family, and the Birdseye family came forth with lots of information. There is also lots of information on Birds Eye Food's website. The family has been terrific providing me with things, and then I found in Gloucester, we have great resources of knowledge about Clarence, and Dottie Brown was very important. There are photographs that Dottie took when she and Sarah Robbins went to Peru, and they'll also be on this presentation. So, I thank you, Dottie.

6:22

And I thank Louisa Cleaves for enthusiastically embracing the idea of painting Clarence's portrait, which will be unveiled in a few minutes. We have Suzanne Silveira, who is always a source of information to me and good counsel. A plaque appeared yesterday from Peter Maggio. The plaque was on the Birds Eye plant and was unveiled in 1978, which is probably the last time Clarence had any official recognition in Gloucester. And last but not least, a debt of gratitude to the Cape Ann Historical Museum for allowing us to have this celebration in this lovely facility, and for their support and, again, counsel during the events leading up to today.

It is and has been declared by the Mayor to be Clarence Birdseye day in Gloucester, Saturday, October the 7<sup>th</sup>, 2006. Unfortunately, the Mayor is out of town this weekend, as are several other Council members, but I'm delighted that Councilor Al Swekla came, and that he will now read and present to the family the proclamation. So, Councilor Swekla, thank you very much.

08:11

**Councilor Al Swekla:**

Thank you, Maggie.

It's an honor and a privilege to pinch hit for the Mayor, who had an assignment down south many, many weeks ago, and he couldn't attend today. So again, I knew about Clarence, I heard about Clarence, from my father-in-law. My first father-in-law used to speak highly about Clarence because he knew Clarence personally. And so, it really is an honor and a privilege for me to really pinch hit today and declare this proclamation from the City of Gloucester. that was to be presented by Mayor John Bell, and the proclamation reads as following:

8:58

Whereas Gloucester, Massachusetts and America's oldest port, and a city with long and proud maritime heritage; and, whereas, Saturday, October 7, 2006 is the 50th anniversary of the

death of Clarence Birdseye, citizen of Gloucester; and, whereas Clarence Birdseye is internationally recognized as the father of the frozen food industry; and, whereas Clarence Birdseye was an inventor with over 300 patents including, but not limited to innovative food preservation methods, electric lamps, paper manufacturing, and harpoons; and, whereas Clarence Birdseye developed his food preservation methods in Gloucester; and, whereas the citizens of Gloucester, a city having an illustrious history relating to the preservation of foods, especially fish, have great respect for Clarence Birdseye and his numerous inventions; Now, therefore, I, John Bell, deem it my duty and honor as the Mayor of the City of Gloucester, Massachusetts, to recognize Clarence Birdseye for his many achievements, and do proclaim October 7, 2006 to be Clarence Birdseye Day.

10:27

**Maggie Rosa:**

So, who would like to come and accept the proclamation?

Okay, family members.... we could have the little one....

Proclamation is given to a family member.

And now it's the time for the unveiling of Clarence's portrait; and again, I think we can lift the screen so that the members of the family can jump up on stage. Again, you can decide; no favorites here, you know, who unveils it and how it gets unveiled. So, okay family...

And, Louisa has to help. Let me introduce Louisa.

This is Louisa Cleaves, a portrait artist in Gloucester, and she has become a dear friend through this project. And, again, as I said, she embraced enthusiastically this project. So, thank you, Louisa.

11:59

**Louisa Cleaves:**

Before the unveiling takes place, I just want to say it's an honor for me to have, or has been an honor for me to paint Clarence Birdseye, and by now be with his family, too. And I would like to thank Maggie Rosa, and Suzanne Silveira for pulling all the strings, the historical strings together to bring this event to fruition. And Maggie Rosa, for her passion, vision and determination to make this event happen. Thank you.

The artist and family members then go to the stage for the unveiling.

14:09

**Maggie Rosa:**

We have a little bit of business before I start making the presentation.... and that is, that after this event to the Cape Ann is over, there is.... we're going to go down for lunch at the Gloucester House, and I'd like a show of hands so that we can let Lenny Linquata know how many people he should be expecting. There is a private room set aside for us, but if I could have a show of hands and then we can let - I think Suzanne can let Lenny know — So, a show of hands.... Okay.

14:59

Okay, so let's say 25.... round number there!

Okay, now Joe you get to work (operating the slide projector).

So, I'm going to give a presentation of Clarence's life, and whether or not.... You can interrupt it with stories if you'd like; otherwise we can wait until afterwards for stories to be told. And then following the presentation, there are two movies, that I was I was able to generate from movies that were originally made by Clarence back in the 1930s, and which Henry sent me. And the ones I chose for this occasion are one of whaling — and I think somebody thinks it's Ipswich Bay, but it's anyway close to Gloucester — and the other one is of building his house on Eastern Point. The whaling one is about five minutes long, and the house building is 10 minutes. And they are without music. So, I guess you can.... because I certainly don't have those skills to do that, and I couldn't figure out what music you'd put for these movies anyway. A-whaling we would go or something. So, I guess people can chit chat as they watch them. Because this is a celebration. This is not a funereal event.

16:54

So, Clarence was born in 1886 in Brooklyn, New York, but he spent summers out on Long Island, and it is my impression that he would have been influenced by Teddy Roosevelt in those days. And as a small kid, I think he probably was imitating Teddy Roosevelt's trips and expeditions, because it is reported that he gave a... an animal, a dead animal, to his mother, to her on his fifth birthday, but it is known that by age 10, he was selling muskrats. Next slide to me, please. He was selling muskrats to the Bronx Zoo through contacts that he had, so he's already showing two of his inherent skills — that is, natural biologist and entrepreneur. With the proceeds from these sales, he buys a shotgun. Now, I don't know anybody who would allow their son to buy a shotgun at age 10. But anyway, he gets a shotgun. And he proceeds to learn the art of taxidermy or the skills of taxidermy. Another skill that he's going to use for the rest of his life.

18:18

Did you press that? Oh, get back, get back. Okay.

Joe and I have — Joe is my husband and he, we haven't discussed how we use this slide projector, okay. Anyway, another skill that Clarence learned at an early age was an interest in cooking. And when he went to — when the family moved to Montclair, New Jersey, he undertook some cooking classes at a tender age and became interested in food preparation,

and maybe a part of his reason for having all these diverse interests is that he was one of a family of nine children. Maybe... I think one child died at an early age, but there is a large family and he's somewhere in the middle. So, he was probably able to go off and do whatever he sort of wanted to do. His father was an attorney, and his mother may have provided the inventor genes because her father was somebody by the name of Henry Underwood. And he was an inventor and manufacturer.

We know, or I know very little of Clarence until he entered Elmhurst College in 1910, and I know that he used his hunting skills to provide money to pay for his living expenses, and this time, he's now selling black rats to Columbia University, presumably for research purposes, and frogs to the Bronx Zoo, so that they had feed for the lizards.

20:00

And this time, he is now selling black rats to Columbia University, presumably for research purposes, and frogs to the Bronx Zoo so that they had feed for the lizards. The questions that come up when I'm thinking about this is how on earth did you get these animals from Amherst in Massachusetts down to New York, but maybe somebody can clue me in on that. Unfortunately, the proceeds from these sales weren't sufficient. And he had so -- and family money situation became tight, so he left Amherst College in 1912.

20:40

He then joined the US Department, Department's biological surveys program, and he went out West. He went and spent time in New Mexico, Arizona, and Montana, and he was using his hunting skills at this time. And what he was assigned to do for at least a portion of this time was to work with the Rocky Mountain labs to investigate the causative agent for what the people in Montana were describing as black measles. This was a highly fatal disease. The fatality rate was 80%. And it appeared in the spring, so Clarence's mission was to hunt and trap little critters that might have been carrying wood ticks. And if one goes to the appropriate website, you can find that he is still listed as having discovered and categorized little critters, such as the Mexican rat and the brush mouse or something like that. And it's also reported that he collected 4700 ticks. And it is through his efforts and presumably the efforts of other people that the famed University of Chicago bacteriologist, Ricketts, discovered that the causative agent for black measles, which is now known as Rocky Mountain spotted fever, is the bacterium *Rickettsia rickettsii*.

22:34

After two years Clarence moved to Labrador, and he set off (next slide please, Joe) he set off on a six-week expedition with a noted missionary physician Sir Wilfred Grenfell, who's well known for lifting up -- that's not quite the right word, but anyway -- elevating the health status of the Eskimos in Labrador. Clarence, ever observant, notices that there is a large amount of money to be made in the fur trading business. And so, he left this six-week expedition and became a fur trader. (Next slide please, Joe) And he assumed the role. Now this is a picture of the Inuit, the

Eskimos, as they were dressed at about the turn of the century. And the next slide is that of Clarence in his fur trading days. So, he assumed the living conditions appropriately.

23:57

I don't know where in Labrador he was, and maybe some of the family do, but it was probably very isolated. It was no doubt very isolated. However, this didn't prevent him from taking his wife, that he married in 1915 to Labrador. His wife is the daughter -- her name is Eleanor Gannett and she is the daughter of one of the founders of the National Geographic Society. So, I think she has an amazing story in and of herself. But one of the examples of what an amazing woman she must have been is that in 1916 she has a five-week old child, Kellogg's father, and they went to back to Labrador. The winter seas were about to freeze over, and they go and live in a three-room cabin 250 miles away from the nearest physician. Not only that, but Clarence was away a lot of the time, obviously, because he was busy trapping the furs. So, she had to manage house and child.

25:12

Anyway, Clarence, ever observant, noticed how the Eskimos were preserving their food supplies and one of the stories is that fish froze so rapidly that when you thawed them, they had the good possibility of being alive. He noticed and probably took very careful records of this, because he is noted for being a very good note taker. He also observed that the quality of the food depended on the rapidity with which the fish or the game were frozen. And that is because the ice crystals when they freeze rapidly are very small and so they don't break open the structures of the cells.

26:14

He extended the freezing of the fish and meat to also freezing of vegetables, specifically cabbage, so that the family did have a supply of vegetables throughout the winter months. And I have a quote of what their diet might have been like, if Clarence was the cook. His quote, "I" and he doesn't say "we" but he says, "I ate about everything – beavertail, polar bear, and I'll tell you another thing. The front half of a skunk is excellent."

27:05

In 1917 the family returns to the US and he has several jobs. But in 1920 he is employed by the US Fisheries Association. And the US Fisheries Association I understand was close to the Fulton Street fish markets or at least Clarence was down at the Fulton Street Fish Market quite frequently. And he became very disgusted about the condition of the fish as it was being sold to people, because the fish (next slide) would be sitting on ice and the ice would melt and the bacteria would start growing in the ice water, so people were not getting a healthy diet. And I think this concern about people and their health is evidenced at other times in his life. He played an important role in the USDA's governmental regulations on the quality of food.

28:12

But anyway, he's observing the ice. He's thinking about the Eskimos. And he decides that it's time to start a commercial process for freezing of fish and other food. And so, he messes around at home, uses the bathtub, uses the kitchen, probably drives his wife crazy. They've got three more -- they've got three children at this time. I don't think Eleanor was born until '25. But anyway, in '24, excuse me, in '23 he founded the company Birdseye Seafoods, Inc. And this is going to come as a bit of a shock to people in Gloucester, but he actually quotes himself as having discovered the process of freezing foods in Yorktown, New York. So, Yorktown, New York actually can claim, with some validity, that they are the site where the frozen food industry started. However, that's not going to satisfy us.

29:29

So, we'll go on with the story. Well, he filed a patent application. (Yeah, maybe it's the next slide? Nope.) Anyway, he filed a patent application entitled Method of Preserving Piscatorial Products, in which he describes the basic process. And the basic process is -- think of the package of peas, okay? -- the little box of peas. Peas are compressed; the fish is compressed into these little boxes. And then the boxes are rapidly frozen in a solution of calcium chloride brine. So, the little boxes and the compression is to prevent air pockets in the food, because air is going to act as a heat insulator and slow down the rapidity with which the food freezes. So that's really one of his major inventions, but it doesn't take off commercially. However, he does get a patent for it.

30:40

Another quote from Clarence is "Production of perishable foods dressed at the point of production and quick frozen in consumer packages was initiated, as far as I am aware, in the kitchen of my own home late in 1923, when I actually experimentally packaged rabbit meat and fish fillets in candy boxes and froze the packets with dry ice." The company didn't succeed. The company had to declare bankruptcy. However, Clarence was not going to be deterred by that. And he looks around for financial backing, and he finds it in a group of five people, and I will mention all the names because it turns out that one of the families was pointed out to me living descendants live in Manchester. They are Wetmore Hodges, Basset Jones, IL Rice, William Gamage, and JJ Barry. And so, then the whole operation moves -- the operation and the family move to Gloucester in 1925, where Clarence is still developing his processes.

32:00

Now, we have a very interesting person enter the story and that is Marjorie Merriweather Post. Marjorie Merriweather Post is a story and maybe she should be my next project, but there have been books written about her. But anyway, Marjorie Merriweather Post was the daughter, the only child of Charles W Post, the founder of the Post Company, the makers of coffee substitutes and Post cereals, hugely successful endeavor. She was very wealthy. But her father, importantly, had trained her to be a business person. She had attended boards of directors meeting as a child.

32:45



She sailed into Gloucester, and you could see the kind of lifestyle that she was used to. This is not the yacht that she sailed into Gloucester, though. This is one of her later yachts. This is the *Sea Cloud*, and I acknowledge Joe Garland for this photograph that was in his book, *Eastern Point*. This is the *Sea Cloud*, as I understand it, off Ten Pound Island in Gloucester. Anyway, this boat was built in 1931 and has a huge freezer section in it. It is still sailing the seas. You can, if you want, go take a cruise on the *Sea Cloud*.

33:30

Anyway, Marjorie Merriweather Post -- and I might make up the story here 'cause it's a little bit fun. She wants goose for dinner. And when Marjorie Merriweather Post wants something, she gets it. So, somebody goes off the boat, goes down to Gloucester, comes back with goose, cooks and serves goose. Goose is delicious! Marjorie, ever inquisitive, says, "Whence cometh set goose?" The chef, presumably, has to say, "Well, it was frozen", at which you can imagine that Marjorie Merriweather Post went [pantomime of astonishment]. But when she could regain her composure, she said, "I must go visit this man down in Gloucester that has frozen this goose so tenderly." And she goes off and meets Clarence. She comes back and is absolutely convinced that this is going to be the future of food. But her husband at the time -- it was her second husband. She ultimately had four. -- but her second husband was EF Hutton, of EF Hutton, of Sachs, Goldman Sachs trading company. And he wasn't convinced, which just goes to show something about women and something about men.

35:00

And neither were the board of directors of the Postum company. And she tried hard to persuade them, but she wasn't able to. She could have, they could have gotten it for, the rights to his patents, and his technology for \$2 million. It took them three years to convince these gentlemen. And the price by that time had gone up to \$23 million. And why it had gone up so dramatically is that Clarence had fundamentally solved the problem of freezing food so that it could be done commercially. And it is the next patent that he, for which the National Inventors Hall of Fame (next slide please Joe) recognized Clarence's efforts in 2005. And Kelly, I know, Kelly and Gypsy and Ellen were present because there's a very nice photograph of you all in one of the websites. This is the taken from the brochure for the day when he was inducted. There's only been 230 some people invented into this U.S. Hall of Fame.

So, and the pattern that he got it for, is on the next couple of slides, which this is called the -- I turned it around so you could actually see the equipment -- it's a double belt freezer. It's a production line thing. It's basically the two belts, and metal plates that are squeezing these little boxes, think of the frozen peas boxes, down and there's some coolant that is used to keep these plates very cold. So, the, so the process is not only squeezing out all the air, but also rapidly cooling. And this is the industrial machine. And the next slide is taken again from this patent and you could see the little boxes and the way, on the top six or seven I guess and figure 11 has got what the fish are all squeezed together.

And so, so Marjorie Merriweather Post has achieved her goal, albeit at a high price. And in fact, that price was investigated by the, a Senate subcommittee on finances in 1932. Because Goldman Sachs, and I think it's out there, or I might have decided it wasn't quite appropriate to show it, Goldman Sachs took a hit of \$12 million. And I don't think it was Marjorie Merriweather Post and E.F. Hutton, who took the hit; it was other people. But anyway, that's neither here nor there. The invention and the process are now on commercial track. And by March 6<sup>th</sup> 1930, the first frozen foods go on sale. And this is an advertisement in the Springfield, Massachusetts paper for that day. I have typed up that story if you want to read it, but what's important is the array of foods included all sorts of frozen meats, fish, vegetables and fruits, and among the things that is being touted is the convenience to the housewife, and fancy, having June peas in March. So, this is, this is exactly true, right, we have lovely June peas in March, high quality. So, the freezer displays on the next slide and, and I have to point out that 'frozen foods' was a dirty name so they had to call it 'frosted foods' because people just didn't like the connotation frozen foods, and it's "In Sanitary Packages'" and "Try a Birdseye". The next one is of a freezer case showing this amongst everything else in the store. Lots of little packages.

39:39

Okay, however the industry didn't take off, and the industry didn't take off for a variety of reasons. First of all, it was the Depression period and the retailers didn't have the money to buy, to spend on display cabinets. So, Birdseye worked out the deal where they would lease cabinet, refrigerated cabinets to the merchants. There was no refrigerated transportation to get the food across country so it was still limited to the points of production. But that was solved by a collaboration with a gentleman by the name of C.V. Hill in maybe New Jersey, I don't know. And then there really wasn't the supply of, or the quality control, for the large quantities of vegetables. And it's, it's crucial and that is why Birdseye has, has had a one up, an advantage over other efforts to sell frozen foods, is that the quality control of the vegetables is incredibly high. I have personal experience in that in that I had a cousin who worked for Birdseye in England as a fieldsman, and he wrote me and told me the stories of how the farmers would try and get around Birdseye but they didn't succeed. They certainly wouldn't get around my cousin.

Anyway, but so frozen foods started to take off in the Second World War. And, and by the Second World War, they had figured out the supply and quality control of vegetables, and there's a company called Seacoast Farms in New Jersey, which is called the 'Ford' of agriculture because they developed large agricultural processes. In the next few slides, I found everything on the Web, and this is in, these were photographs taken in I think 1941 '42 of the laborers that were trucked in by day to work on the fields, and the center truck is where, there's containing the baskets of food that they picked. The next slide shows the production line of the beans being emptied. And by the young kid in the foreground and in the background, there's a lady putting the beans into the little boxes. Next slide please. Continuing to put the boxes, fill the boxes. Next slide please. They come out of the freezer carried by the gentleman in the back and they're put into the shipping cartons down in the foreground. Next slide, please. They're

inspected in a cold room. The original photo, you might not be able to see it, is ice, it's the cold room and the ice on the pipes and the guy's inspecting the cartons, and then they get shipped off. Next slide, please. In a truck. And that truck looks awfully familiar to Gloucester, doesn't it? There's lots of trucks in Gloucester like that.

And this is, I think, where we need to stop and pause and say what, how large the impact of frozen foods has been on the economics of Gloucester because if it hadn't been, I'm sure if it hadn't been for Birdseye, working together with Gorton's, the whole frozen foods industry would not be in Gloucester. So, we have an enormous debt to pay to this, to Birdseye and to Gorton's. The other reason that frozen foods took off in the Second World War is that women were working and they wanted rapid methods for cooking when they got home, and then there was a large amount of food that was needed for the American troops.

Meantime, Clarence, so that brings us up to sort of 19, into the 1940s with the frozen foods industry. The frozen foods industry started to take off. There was in fact, almost a gold rush of companies jumping into the frozen foods business, and the market plummeted because the quality plummeted. And so there had to be these regulations on the quality control. And Birdseye, as I mentioned earlier, was instrumental in those rules and regulations.

So, from the time that Birdseye, ooh I forgot something. Birdseye, when it was sold to the Postum Company, resulted in the change of name of the Postum Company to General Foods. So, Marjorie had a way with that, that is clearly an important event. So, Clarence was not only developing and refining the methods for frozen food preservation, but he's also looking in to food preservation by dehydration, not inventing the process of dehydrated foods were known but wanting to bring it to commercial fruition. And I think that's where he got involved with Electric, Birdseye Electric, because he developed a lot of lamps, and, including reflector lamps. The next one is artsy lamps, the silvering on there is, is ornamental. He has, I have a list of the patents that he has for all of his U.S. patents at least and they're color coded by class, whether it was frozen foods or lamps and he has almost as many patents for electric lamps as he does for frozen foods.

And I think the next slide is that's his company Birdseye Electric, which was founded, which was founded down on The Fort. And just yesterday I was given a little note from some lady who's still alive, lives in Lanesville, she's going to be 98 next month. And she informed me that her husband had worked for Birdseye Electric, she sent the pay stubs, there on this little foam board the pay stubs that this gentleman was, was getting back in 1937. And also, a Christmas card that they received from the Birdseye's, so I thought that was really nice.

Anyway, the next slide is of ornamental lamps. So, remember the 30s is the art deco period. And this is an RCA promotional neon lamp. There's a whole group of people out in this world that are interested in lamps. Kelly got one on eBay, I know not too long ago. I think he forgot to bring it. Anyway, I would, I'd have beat you if I'd known that. So that so those are the lamps and, the lamps were used in the dehydration process. And that was being worked on, I think in

the 1940s during the Second World War, when Clarence realized that getting food to the troops would be better if it could be dehydrated and be of high quality.

The next slide, I have to thank Mrs. Schuster in the audience, Mrs. Schuster. This is one lady who worked with Clarence, as also did Dorothy Norton in the 1940s. Mrs. Schuster was, she wasn't Mrs. Schuster then, she wasn't before she was married. This is a carrot dehydrating machine. Clarence is in the white lab coat and there is a gentleman whose name escapes me at the moment is on the photograph working. So that and if you go to the next slide, please Joe. This is a cross section of a carrot dehydrating machine. And it's taken off the front page of a patent that he got. And you'll see the little loopy things and those are the lamps and during the dehydration process, it was necessary, he discovered, it was necessary to keep heating the food up so that the rapidity with which the water could be removed would be uniform. And so, things go in at the top, scoot around, come out at the bottom and then have to get put into little packages. So that was the dehydration process for which he also has several patents.

49:50

So, before I turn to the next project and his last project for which he got patents, I want to just turn to his personal life.

50:01

So, Clarence came into a million dollars and the, in 1929, and he decides obviously to spend it on the good life. And he bought, buys a boat—a whaling boat, has whaling experiences, is developing a harpoon gun. So, he has this boat. He builds a house—the first house he buys... next slide...The first house he buys is on St. Louis Avenue, Number 17. And I do have a point somewhere, but it is this one, 17 St. Louis Avenue on Eastern Point. And you can see St. Peter's Church on the extreme left.

50:55

And the house that he built for the family is a big white house.

51:01

And these photographs, aerial shots, and I think they must have been taken by son Henry. Yeah. And who unfortunately, was killed in an airplane crash, I believe, in the seventies. The next shot is again another aerial photograph showing the house as it, a closer view of the house and a portion of the gardens, for which Clarence and Eleanor were heavily involved. The next slide is a slide of the house in the winter as it looked so. And now, the house still stands on Eastern point. The trees have grown up so you don't get the full majesty of the house.

52:10

So, the next slide is a slide of Eleanor and Clarence and I don't know when this was taken. But it's to remind me that they worked together with their love of gardening, and together wrote this book called *Growing Woodland Plants*, which is available on the net. I don't know that... the Museum was going to try to get copies but I don't think they were successful. But what I want

to do is read a little bit from the introduction written by Clarence in 1951. Because I think he's very telling to his character.

“As a youngster, the not-so-senior author,” both Eleanor and Clarence are authors, “spent 25 years as a field naturalist, hunter, trapper, and fur trader in the deserts, mountains, woods and tundras of North America, from Mexico to Labrador. During those years I came to know scientifically and intimately most of this continent’s, mammals, birds, reptiles and trees. But I had absolutely no interest in small plants. During that quarter of a century, I tramped and rode, and noticing over hundreds of miles of wildflowers and ferns. Then we moved to Gloucester, Massachusetts, and Eleanor joined a garden club,” the Gloucester Garden Club, by the way. “Soon, she began identifying wildflowers and ferns of which I knew nothing. That was bad for family discipline, for I was supposed to be the naturalist of the clan. About that time, too, a gale wrecked my 40-foot offshore fishing boat,” possibly the hurricane of ‘38, but who knows, “and abruptly ended my hobby of placing migration markers in 60 foot, 50 ton finback whales. Simultaneously a developing case of angina pectoris, imperiously suggested a less strenuous form of outdoor recreation. So suddenly and completely I ceased to be a horny-handed harpooner and became a babysitter for the gentle maidenhair and dainty lady slipper. Why, whale hunting, though exciting, must necessarily be taken by a business man in small doses and limited areas. But wildflowers and ferns can be found in every field and along every country road and can be propagated almost anywhere in spare time. More important, while seasickness had kept Eleanor from joining me and whaling, we have been able to pursue our wildflower hobby together for a score of years.”

Isn't that lovely? You don't need to read the rest of the book to get the essence. Anyway.

55:17

So, the next slide is the book. And the next slide is where they go off together to Paramonga, Peru, which is... it's a terrible photograph. But Lima is just below the “P” in Peru, and Paramonga is a few miles north of Lima. And Clarence was hired as a consultant for the company W.R. Grace, which was developing the manufacturer of paper from sugar cane waste, which is otherwise known as bagasse. And he again was successful, and again there are patents to his name on this process. And the next few slides came when Dotty Brown visited—Dotty, wave your hand—Dotty Brown and Sarah Robbins were, a late well-known woman of Gloucester, visited the Birdseyes. And these slides, this slide is for the fortress at Paramonga. The next slide is taken from the fortress showing the W.R. Grace plant in the background. The next slide, these take a while to sort of... they're larger... this is a slide of the bar—bales of bagasse with two guys on top to show the relative height. Next slide please Joe. This is Clarence and Eleanor outside their house.

57:06

Then, next one please. This one is of Clarence; you can see his arm on the extreme left with pet fox Susie. Now Clarence is actually, must have had a sort of a C-turn in his life because now he's having, keeping foxes as pets. And instead of hunting them, one of the great movies that isn't

being shown today is of them, of Clarence going off to Essex and coming back with a bunch of foxes that he's trapped. Anyway, this time he's got them as pets, but also in their collection of pets included a penguin and a gannet. So, they were, they were busy. This is a picture, it's a lovely picture of Sarah Robbins on the left, and Clarence and Eleanor...now on the next slide.

58:05

They return to the states in '55 probably. And I put this photograph in because I, it's just as I imagine Clarence: busy working on his next idea, sitting surrounded by his memorabilia. Whether this was taken in 1955, I haven't a clue. But anyway, it's sort of representative. And the next slide is the slide I want to leave you with because this is Clarence, in his element, is in his house in Gloucester, on Eastern Point Boulevard. It's called "Lobster Feast," he's cooked the lobster and is bringing it out for his family and friends. And that is the last of the slides but I want to leave you with a quote. And that is, and I think we would disagree with parts of this quote:

"I do not consider myself to be a remarkable person. I did not make exceptionally high grades when I went to school. I never finished college. I am not the world's best salesman. But I am intensely curious about the things that I see around me. And this curiosity, combined with a willingness to assume risks, has been responsible for such success and satisfaction as I have achieved in life."

Thank you very much. And that's my presentation on Clarence. Now, I would like people I know have some stories, to at least tell one story. Don't I, Dotty?

59:43

No? Does Dotty want to tell her story?

**Dotty Brown in audience** 59:45

Just privately.

**Maggie Rosa** 59:47

Okay, Dotty's story is going to be told privately. Come back for the rest. Now we have sitting in— I must say that doing this project has been a huge amount of fun. And as I said, things have come out of the woodwork. We've got the plaque that Peter Maggio presented yesterday that was on the Birdseye plant down in the Fort. And another big surprise was the discovery of the missing portrait of Clarence, and that I'm going to turn the microphone over to Steven Scotti, because he called me up this past week with this story. And we will...

**Audience member** 1:00:32

You're asking for stories?

**Maggie Rosa** 1:00:34

Yes, can we just have, I love it, I just... I want it, I want it. Steven, can you talk—tell about the story of the missing portrait?

1:00:45

And I'm going to go outside.

**Steven Scotti** 1:00:57

Yes, there was a missing portrait and it's not missing; it's been with me. And it was done by Ed Fish in 1978. And I'm so glad that you'll have a chance to look at it. It's in the lobby. It has a cover over it and the cover will be removed. I just want to say, because we've had quite a presentation here about Mr. Birdseye and science, but I want to put the focus back on the art. Beside painting being a purely optical art. Some paintings seem to have a life of their own. They seem to possess the kind of spirit. They seem ensouled. The display, and they display a magical capacity to retain our gaze. We look at them, and they seem to look back at us. I know that art, like music, is mysterious. Because it seems to be alive. We too are mysterious creatures. It takes one to know one. When an artist can produce that mystery in his or her painting, or sculpture, or music, they seem to imbue it with a life of its own. The mystery only deepens when a work of art seems lost, as it was in the case with Ed Fish's portrait of Clarence. Of course, this painting wasn't lost, it was with me.

1:02:38

The mystery has been solved.

1:02:41

It is here today for all to see who have come to celebrate this anniversary of one of Gloucester's finest, as we say here in Gloucester—Gloucester finest. And on this day of this celebration, I would like to also celebrate the life of Ed Fish, who has painted many paintings of Cape Ann folk through the years, the great and the unknown, Mr. Ed Fish.

**Maggie Rosa** 1:03:32

Mr. Fish's portrait is, of Clarence, is now on display outside. So, stories.

1:03:47

So, did Pat, did you say that Mrs.... [audience chatter and laughter].

1:04:00

So, does anybody have any? Yeah? Oh, I'm sorry. I forgot to mention. I'm sorry. That Clarence, among his honors, was listed, is listed, as one of the 100 prominent Rotarians. And that list is a very impressive list, so 100 Rotarians, it's got, yeah, everyone, but Clarence is in it. And the Rotary Club has recognized Clarence and continues to recognize Clarence, and today we have Carol Shroff who's representing Gloucester Rotary Club, and she has some words to say. So sorry, and I apologize for it.

**Carol Sharoff** 1:04:55

I'm Carol Sharoff; I'm the secretary of Rotary and I just want to say to start, this will just take one minute too, because you've all been patient. I moved to Gloucester in 1973, the same year

that my brother was hired by Birdseye at General Foods in White Plains. So, it was one of those nice coincidences as I drove along Eastern Point Boulevard trying to find the Birdseye house and making connections in my family—so that was my personal connection. But as the Secretary of Rotary, first of all, we're so proud that Clarence Birdseye was a member of the Gloucester Rotary Club. Rick Doucette is here also from our club. Our archives could probably use a little help from some of the members of the Historical Association, but what I was able to find was that in 1936, Clarence Birdseye was listed on the docket as our membership roster from 1934-1935. But then in 1936, he was crossed out and in someone's handwriting it said "Birdseye Electric," so there was some transition at that point. He was a member of the Vocational Service Committee, the International Service Committee. And one of the things about Rotary, too, is that we have—our club in Gloucester was formed in 1923. It is obviously an International Club, everyone probably knows about it at this time. And its purpose is to promote—well, I should read the object of Rotary is to encourage and foster the ideal, the ideal of service as a basis of worthy enterprise, and in particular, to foster high ethical standards, development of acquaintance and the application of service in each Rotarian's personal, business, and community life, and also international understanding, goodwill, and peace throughout the world. Who could have done that better than Clarence Birdseye? And so, we're quite proud that a member of the Gloucester Rotary Club was named one of the 100 most influential Rotarians in the world. It's quite an honor. Today the Gloucester Rotary Club gives out scholarships to Gloucester—actually to Gloucester residents, not just Gloucester High School graduates—in the name of Birdseye, and so that's our way of remembering him. And also in 1978, Steve Dexter and a couple of other Rotarians decided that Birds—Clarence Birdseye needed to be recognized locally. And so, the Rotary Club gave this plaque to the building that Peter Maggio now owns, and installed it there. And so, we're glad that it's here again, and hopefully, Maggie, the Association will be able to keep it. The club met at the old Savoy Hotel, which is no longer active or doesn't exist; it's where the police station is. I did find the Rotary songbook from 1935. And maybe someday soon we'll all learn the songs that the men of Rotary at that time—because women weren't part of the club until the late 80s—did sing at the club. And I just wanted to say, just in closing, that one of—I found, because I have some of the Rotary archives—a name tag, Clarence Rotary, Clarence Rotary... Clarence Birdseye Electrical Industry, including lamp manufacturing. So, voilà.

1:08:26

Because there are so many Rotary Clubs around the world, one of the things that Rotarians do, it's a little silly, but it's actually kind of a neat idea, is we give out these flags that indicate that you have attended a club, and that they're traded throughout the world. And I just thought that this should be a part of the Birdseye memorabilia that he was a member of our club.

1:08:53

Thank you.

**Maggie Rosa** 1:09:02



I have just noticed that State Senator Bruce Tarr has joined us, and I am sure that Bruce has something to say, even if he wasn't expecting to say anything about Clarence Birdseye and frozen foods in Gloucester. So, thank you for coming, Bruce. Do you need the microphone? No.

1:09:32

The family don't know you.

1:09:37

So, Senator Bruce Tarr, this is the family in the first three rows.

**Senator Bruce Tarr** 1:09:41

Good Morning.

**Maggie Rosa** 1:09:43

Grandsons, daughters-in-law, and grandchildren.

**Senator Bruce Tarr** 1:09:46

Terrific.

1:09:48

Thank you very much, Maggie, and good morning, and it's great to be with all of you. And I congratulate everyone who's responsible for putting the program together here this morning. One of the great things about the city of Gloucester is that it has a culture that is so diverse and so eclectic, that sometimes we forget about that level of diversity. And we forget about the very special people who were in our midst and who come to Gloucester or who start in Gloucester with a tremendous amount of creativity and have given us, over the years, the mark of distinction of innovation. Very often times, we think about that, with regard to the fishing industry. We think about the fact that schooners were developed because nearshore fishing vessels weren't large enough or safe enough or capable enough to go to those parts of the world where the fish were. And sometimes we think about the fact that we've developed gear to find species that weren't harvested previously or weren't harvested in the same way, particularly, all with the same efficiency. And sometimes we think about the more modern developments that come from our city, and we think about places like Varian where high technology is made real here in the city of Gloucester. But one of the great hallmarks of all of that innovation, without question, is the fact that we have been home to the work of Clarence Birdseye and home to a place where someone who took an idea and thought that it would be a workable idea, challenged his critics, and made it real over the years. And of all the many things and of all the many people that have made Gloucester a great place, certainly one of the most notable and one of the most distinctive is Clarence Birdseye. Because in this special place, he advanced a special idea. I'm particularly grateful to him, because frozen food constitutes the bulk of my nutrition. And so, absent the great work of Birdseye and whoever it is that invented the microwave oven, and I'm sure someone here knows that... it was probably someone named Litton. But absent the work of, absent the work of Clarence Birdseye, I would weigh much less

than I do today, although that may be a good thing. But the fact remains that in a city that has been and is populated by so many distinguished people, by what they do with their mind and what they do with their hands, the dean, in many ways, of that delegation is Clarence Birdseye. And so, it's a great thing that you do here today, Maggie, and everyone responsible for this, for putting this program together. And helping us to remember just how important Clarence Birdseye was and Clarence Birdseye is. And with three rows of family here, I would be remiss in saying that one of the great contributions he has obviously made, is leaving a great legacy and a great family and a great group of people that we can turn to and talk to, and understand that his legacy wasn't just one that was in a patent. It wasn't just one that was in technology. It was one that was made real through a great family that carries on his spirit. So, I'm deeply honored to be here today, Maggie, and happy to share these moments with you. I know that somewhere, we have a citation for all of you and I am going to try to locate that momentarily. And I was a little bit expecting a little bit of breathing room but that's okay. I'm going to try to find that and give it to you and I'll be back momentarily. But to the family. Let me just say thank you for honoring us with your presence. Thank you for carrying the banner of a great legacy. And thank you for sharing with one of—with us—one of Gloucester's most distinguished and greatest citizens. And this term is usually reserved for fishermen but I think we're safe to say it today... one of the great Gloucestermen of the history of this community, thank you all very much.

**Maggie Rosa 1:13:45**

Are there any stories or shall we just go, now, go to the movies? And I know people can be time challenged. I said, we won't blame you if you decide to leave. So, this will end the [Adelphia?] presentation I think, and we can start the first one of the house, oh excuse me, the whaling.

**Unknown speaker 1:14:17**

The film in this video was edited by Henry Birdseye, the grandson of Clarence Birdseye. Here you see Clarence Birdseye's boat, the *Sea Loafer*. They're getting ready for a day of fishing. They'll be sailing out of Gloucester and fishing in the waters off of Cape Ann.

1:14:50

There's the Annisquam Lighthouse.

1:15:00

And some whales.

1:15:34

Now there's Clarence on the left in the white shirt.

1:15:39

Looking for fish, or shark.

1:15:50

Now, here's Clarence shooting his harpoon he invented. This harpoon can be viewed at the Essex Peabody Museum. It's on display there.

1:16:05

Besides being the father of frozen food, he invented many, many inventions. And he was always looking for new ways to perfect his inventions.

1:16:53

There they are catching some shark.

1:16:59

This one shot in black and white. But if it was in color, I imagine you'd be seeing a lot of red in this video. Now, here's Clarence harpooning a shark the traditional way.

1:17:33

People think that Clarence might have helped save Gloucester in the 1930s from economic ruin, because of the industry that he brought in here into Gloucester.

1:18:24

And here they are having lunch there's, there's Clarence in the white hat.

1:18:48

And this is the bounty of their fishing trip.

1:18:54

And the last shot here, you'll see Clarence his son with the shark.

**Audience** 1:19:45

[Noisy crowd chatter]

**Steven Scotti** 1:22:02

What prompted you to paint this? What prompted you to paint this?

**Ed Fish** 1:22:08

I was encouraged by Mayor Alpert for the two years that I had a studio in City Hall.

1:22:23

He said "Hang them up somewhere."

1:22:27

I said, "Where?" "It's up to you."

1:22:30

So, I started hanging murals. Paintings by Ed Winter and other artists.

1:22:43

And then when that year was over, I started the project of painting famous people of Gloucester, amongst which Clarence Birdseye was one.

1:22:59

There are four left of the dozen or two I did. And they're hanging on the third floor of City Hall now. And I wrote them down just to be sure I wouldn't forget them.

1:23:23

And they all tell a story, with things behind it.

1:23:30

For example, A. Piatt Andrew, was registered as a congressman. I cut him right in half, half congressman and half soldier.

1:23:47

A lot of people don't like it, at the time.

1:23:50

And so, I suppose that's one of the reasons why they just disappeared. Why they were in the cleaning closet of City Hall.