



Norway Museum & Historical Society

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We're Back!

We are very pleased to tell you that after being closed for 14 months, the Norway Museum and Historical Society will reopen June 1. We will resume our normal summer hours of 1 to 4 pm on Tuesdays and 9 am to noon on Saturdays. We have some restrictions in place: Masks must be worn while in the building, and we have set a limit of five visitors at any one time. We will reevaluate the visitor limit throughout the summer.

We are also happy to announce we have some programs and events scheduled:

June 15 – Bruce Watts will discuss Norway artist and character George Lorenzo “Shavey” Noyes.

July 13 - Jim Phillips will talk about music aficionado Joe Quinn and his radio programs that aired on Public Radio.

August 17 - Melanie Tornberg of the Western Maine Art Group will present “Norway Then and Now,” as seen through the eyes of past and present Norway artists. This program will coincide with an exhibit at the Matolsy Art Center.



These three programs are free and will be presented online via Zoom. They will start at 7:00 pm. A few days before each one, a link to join the program will be available. You will be able to find the link on our website, or you can send us an email and we will send the link to you.

The dates haven't been finalized, but around the end of July, we will join our re-enactor friends from the First Universalist Church of Norway and repeat last October's very successful Rustfield Cemetery Tour. If you missed it last fall because you felt it was too chilly (it was) or you had already left for warmer climes, here's your chance to learn a bit about some of Norway's earliest settlers who are buried at Rustfield. We are planning two tours each on two consecutive days and ticket cost remains \$10. When all the details are finalized, we'll make an official announcement.

Once again, we will not have the Norway History Trolley Tour, but we're optimistic about 2022. Instead, we are in the planning stages of a walking tour of Main Street around the end of September. Like the trolley tour, this will be a shared fundraising event with the First Universalist Church. The tour will focus on some of the historic buildings on Main Street and the people associated with the buildings. Like the cemetery tour, reenactors will tell their stories.

We look forward to seeing everyone again!

My Favorite Things

By Susan Denison



For this newsletter, my column probably should be retitled “My Favorite Mysteries,” because that’s what this is. The above photograph was given to us in 2019 by Susan Grimes of Bridgton. The back of the photo is noted “Dumb Bell Ringers, Junior Exhibition 1908, Norway, ME,” and that’s all we know about it.

The date seems about right, based on the hairstyles and the way the subjects are dressed, but there are many unanswered questions. What is a dumb bell ringer? The ladies in the front row seem to each be holding a pair of exercise dumb bells. Where does the ringer come in? Were the dumb bells really musical and used like a modern-day bell choir? What does the “10” on their blouses mean? If this was a junior exhibition, was there also a senior exhibition?

The ladies look to me like they could be high school age, but looking through 1908-1910 Norway High School yearbooks doesn’t provide any clues that this might be a school group. Manually searching old newspapers can be difficult without a reasonably narrow date range. However, the old *Oxford Democrats* are searchable online. My searching did not locate any articles that tie dumb bell ringers to Norway, but I did learn that junior exhibitions seemed to be a thing in Maine the early 1900s. Apparently, they were held at about the same time as senior graduation, both for high schools and colleges. The exhibitions seem to have featured speeches by the juniors, but who knows, maybe there were musical dumb bells, too. It’s still a mystery and I’d appreciate any insight.

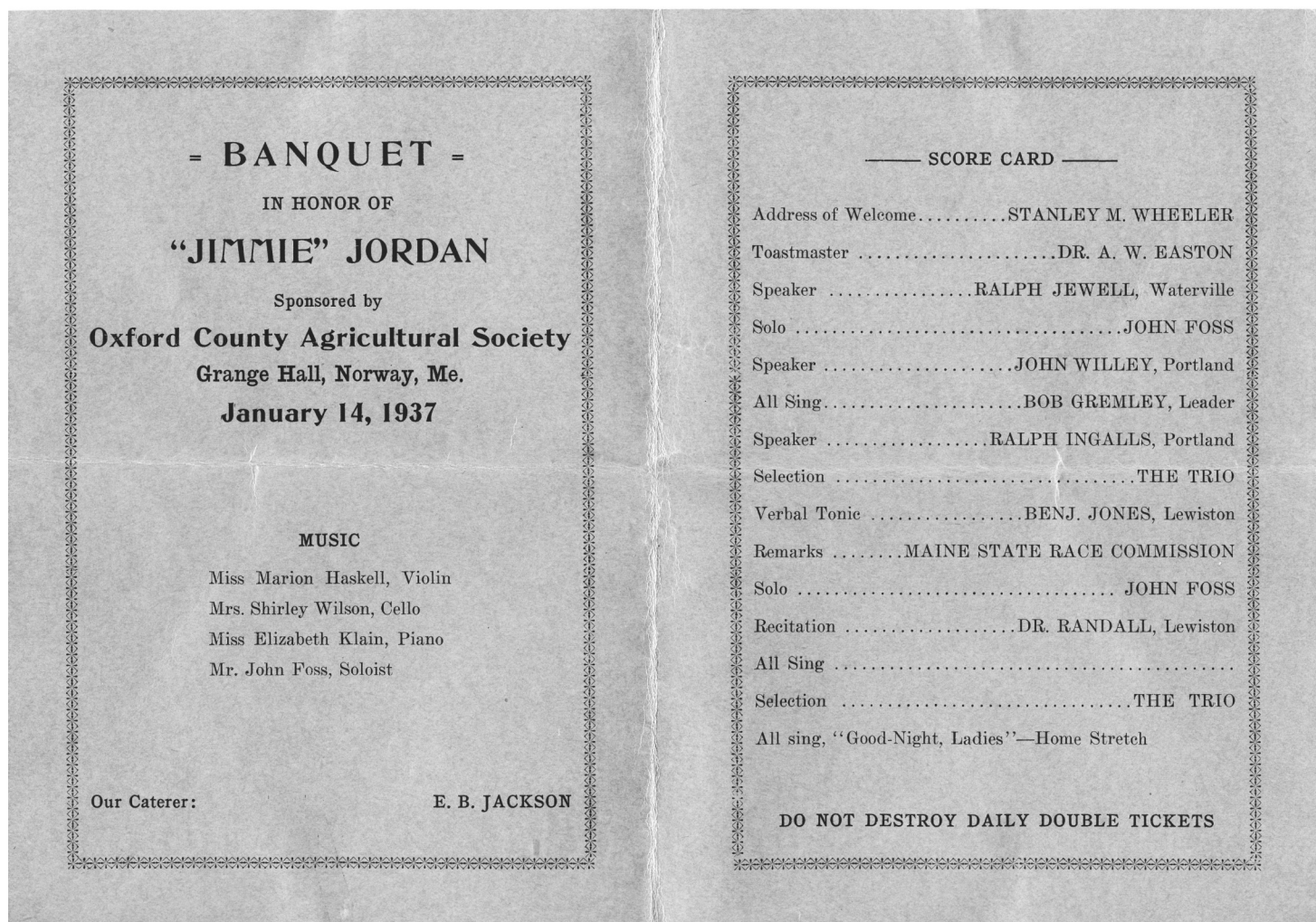
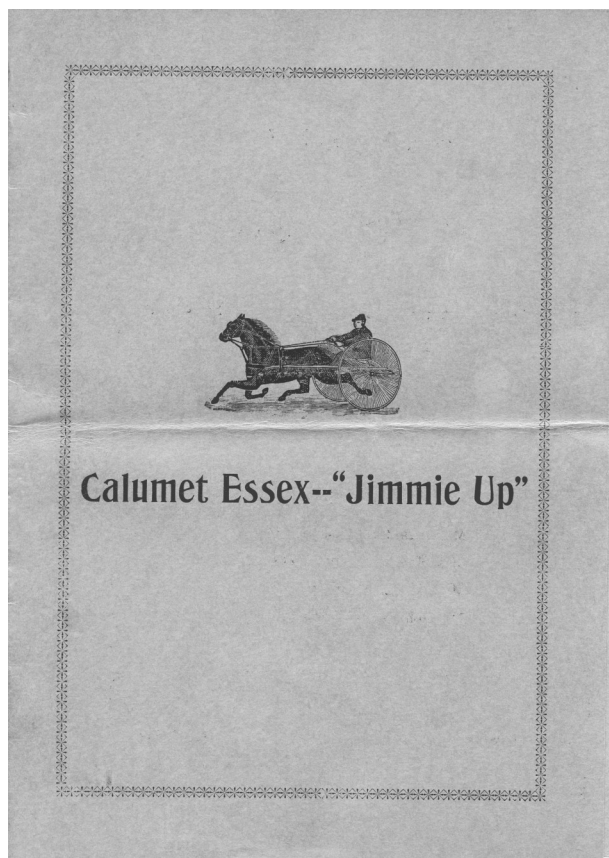
From the Collection

These photos show the front cover and the full program of a testimonial banquet at the Norway Grange, held for James "Jimmie" Jordan, described as the leading light harness horse racer of his day.

More than 200 horse owners, drivers, Agricultural Fair officials and friends gathered to honor Jordan, who won 69 races in the 1936 season. Calumet Essex, referred to on the cover of the program, was a successful harness racing horse driven to many victories by Jordan.

The banquet evidently was a notable event, as the *Advertiser* devoted three full columns reporting every detail, including all of the attendees. Unfortunately, we don't have any other information on Jimmie Jordan.

(The back cover of the program is at the end of this newsletter.)



News from Bygone Days

Researched by Ed Staples

For his Historical Society project, Ed Staples reads the Society's extensive collection of old local newspapers in search of articles of historical significance, human interest, and those that are just plain fun. Ed transcribes the articles he finds and his transcriptions are now part of the Society's collection. The article below, transcribed by Ed, is from the Oxford County Advertiser, September 22, 1882.



The husking yard at Norway's Corn Shop, date unknown. Photo given by Carol Rice.

Corn Canning

The corn canning business is comparatively a new enterprise in this town. Last year was the first season in the canning history of our place. The buildings which are situated less than a quarter of a mile from the village, on the Frost Corner Road were built last year. There are four of them having ample yard room and are well supplied with water from the Lake.

The first season's experience in this industry was not satisfactory to the farmers. Many of them lost what they were to receive for their corn, by the failure of the J. W. Jones Packing Co. and all bills are honored with cash down on presentation to the clerk and cashier, Mr. Henry T. Merrill. The farmer can get his money as fast as his corn is weighed up.

This factory is one of the fifteen, which are being operated by the Winslow Packing Co. This firm, in Oxford County operates factories in Hiram, Canton, Buckfield and this town. There are others run by different parties, one each in Paris, Bethel, Rumford, Fryeburg, Denmark, as well as at Bridgton and Harrison, which are out of the county, but are supplied in part with corn raised in Oxford Co. One can see that sweet corn raising is a big thing with our farmers. It is the great crop and brings them in many a dollar. To what extent the sale of this crop will impoverish their land is an open question.

The Norway factory or canning establishment during the season presents a very busy appearance. Our reporter recently visited it and in conversation with Mr. Benjamin Tucker, Superintendent at the factory, gained some facts which may be of interest to our readers.

The corn is hauled to the "yard" by the farmers and some thirty persons are kept husking. They have five cents a basket for husking. The "yard" is under the charge of Mr. C. W. Ryerson. The husks and cobs are reserved and hauled home and fed out by the farmers who sell the corn.

Mr. George E. Gibson is inspector of the fields and sees that the corn is cut at the proper time and that the "yard" is kept supplied. He visits each piece and sees to it that the corn is just right before it is cut.

The corn after being husked is carried into the cutting room and there passes through the machines that strip it from the cob. There it is sifted and ready to be pressed into the cans. Each can is carefully weighed and is then sent to the sealing room. This department is under the charge of Mr. W. S. Hazen of Bridgton.

In the sealing room Mr. Thadeus Cross has charge & sees that the work is properly done. The same gentleman has charge of making the cans. It requires a dozen or more hands several months to make the cans used in a single season.

The cans then go to the bath room and are boiled and pricked and re-boiled. Each can after it is once boiled is pricked and the steam let off and then resealed and again boiled. Mr. J. S. Carver of Camden, here has charge.

The cans after coming from the bath are cooled by use of cold water, and then they are ready for the packing room, where they are labeled, and packed, two dozen in a box and then they are ready for the market.

Mr. C. B. Cummings has taken the contract to furnish 10,000 boxes.

The canning season for corn is about six weeks and the average number employed is 125 hands and the average of pay is \$1.50 a piece per day. Pumpkins and apples will be canned this year, the same as last, if any of the former can be had. The pumpkin crop is very light and it is doubtful if any can be got. Considerable business is expected to be done in apples.

There were some raising 180 acres of corn planted in this section to supply this factory. The farmer gets 3 1/4 cents per can of 26 ounces. The average yield nets about \$50 per acre. Some yields overrun this considerably. An acre's planting has produced corn enough to fill from 2500 to 3000 cans. This is considerably above the average, however. Three varieties of corn are planted early, medium and late, and the amount planted is proportioned with a view of making the coming season hold out as long as possible.

The following are among our heaviest planters of sweet corn: Mr. Benj. Tucker planted 10 acres; F. A. Danforth 5; E. A. Cox 4; G. W. Russell 4; N. W. Millett 3 1/2 and R. S. Freeman 6. There are 123 others who planted from 1/2 to 3 acres.

The Winslow Packing Co. offers a prize of \$15 for the best acre of corn and \$10 for the best three acres raised by any one man. Mr. F. A. Danforth, Calvin Richardson and Benj. Tucker have entered for the premium.

The number of acres of beans planted is less than ten. Not over half the usual crop will be harvested here.

The medium and late corn seems to be more than an average yield while the earlier varieties were lighter than last year. Some 250,000 cans will be filled here.

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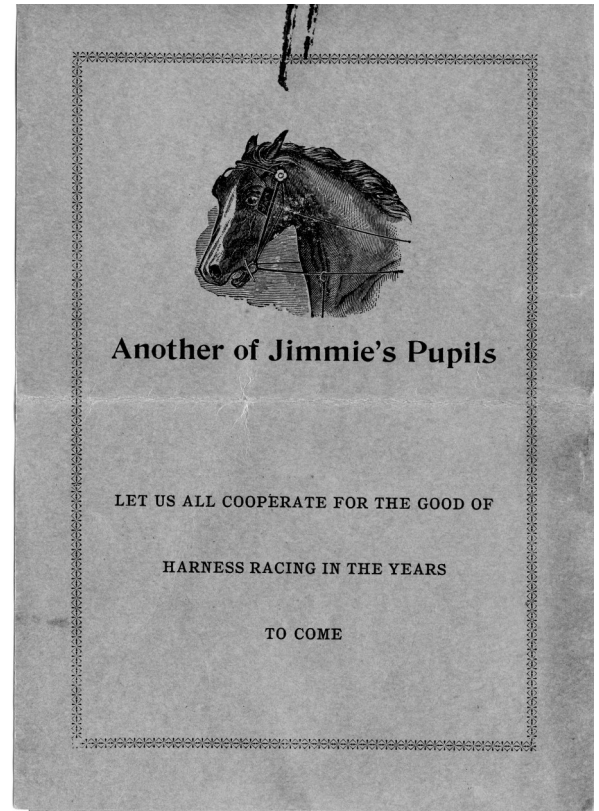
Our Mission:

The mission of the Society is to bring people together to share, celebrate and learn about Norway's heritage, by collecting, caring for and exhibiting Norway's historical treasures; by facilitating the collection of and research into family and local history; and by providing programs that make our history meaningful that engage people of all ages.

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