

Cross-Reference

The E. R. Willets oral history can be found in:

IV 3A 18 - Oral History Collection

Box 4

Tape 21.

Item Description:

1 30 minute audio cassette tape of Col. William Howard's recollections of E. R. Willets's trip to China in 1921. Willets traveled as a member of John D. Rockefeller, Jr.'s party.

E. R. Willets

Biography - 000-043
To China in 1921 - Standard Oil, New Jersey

Willets - stories from China

Oil for the Lamps
"Hobart"

Traveled by oxcart, pony cart
Main interesting experiences

Abby Rockefeller trip - 1921
Willets and other dinner companions to Abby

Jr. opposed to smoking and drinking
Abby enjoyed a good time
One evening party - 129
Hotel - Jr. absent
If he returned, party (Abby) to be warned

Sitting at table, drinking, smoking
waiter sent to get more drinks

Jr. approaching - party put drinks under the table, flapping
to dispel smoke

Nice table on Jr.'s arrival

Then in comes waiter with drinks
Other waiters took drink off tray
Arrived with mystifying, bewildered look

Jr. did not admit to what he found
He retired and party began again

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Willets plus four drove first car through interior of China.
There were no stations. They had to carry oil, gasoline, and parts.
On the way they went into a ditch and lost a shearpin from the car.
The pin was found in the road seven miles back.

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*This was prepared
for the High House
Committee in Sea Girt, N.J.*

EDMUND ROBERT WILLETS
VIRGINIA LIPPOLD WILLETS

In 1820, Edmund Willets travelled by pony cart from Trenton, New Jersey to the rugged wilderness of what is now Sea Girt. He was duly impressed with the area and the family later built a summer home in Sea Girt. Several generations later, the three Willets sons formed the Willets Manufacturing Co. of Trenton in 1879 where they make Willets Belleek china as well as raw pottery to be decorated by home craftsmen. The family continued to maintain a summer home in Sea Girt. The three brothers continued to operate the pottery until 1909 when the business was sold to a former employee, John Lennox who has continued in the pottery business. The family went in several directions. Daniel Willets became a real estate developer in Long Island. Willets Point is named for the family.

Edmund Robert Willets and his sister, Margaret Willets remained in Sea Girt. Margaret married John Mason, a stock broker and they had four children who grew up in Sea Girt.

In 1919, Doctor William E. Lippold, a Brooklyn surgeon came to the shore because of his youngest daughter's ill health. Both of Dr. Lippold's daughters fell in love with Sea Girt; however, World War II disrupted even the New Jersey shore. Dr. Lippold was called to active duty and served in Plattsburgh, New York later being transferred to Panama where he commanded the Station Hospital in Colon. Dr. Lippold's oldest daughter, now married to Kenneth P. Howard, a member of a prominent Pittsburgh family, was living on Long Island while her husband served in the South Pacific.

In 1943, Virginia Lippold married Edmund R. Willets, who had returned from his employment in China where he was a marketing representative for Rockefeller's Standard Oil. Because of the war, Bob Willets worked for Sidorsky Helicopter Company in Connecticut. With the Mason family gone, and Bob and Virginia living in Connecticut, the Willets Sea Girt home was sold to the Catholic Church where it was used as a retreat for the Sisters of Marymount. In 1945, with the conclusion of World War II, Dr. Lippold returned to Sea Girt, converting his summer home into a year round residence. His oldest daughter, Norma and her husband also settled in Sea Girt. Dr. Lippold served on the the Sea Girt Board of Health until his death in 1956.

In 1953, his daughter, Norma was elected to Sea Girt's Council, the second woman in Sea Girt's history to hold elected office. Her husband, Kenneth Howard, now a Lt. Cor. in the Coast Guard along with Lt. Thomas Black and others established the Coast Guard Reserve Unit in Point Pleasant. Norma Howard served

in various council parts to include Garbage Commissioner, Finance Commissioner and Public Works Commissioner. When the Lighthouse became available, Norma Howard was one of the driving forces in obtaining it for the town. Among its many uses, the Lighthouse was the city recreation center where community youth gathered to play games and build handi-crafts. In the evening, it provided a teenage canteen for dancing.

In the early 70's, the Willets returned to the shore on a year round basis, living in Spring Lake until their deaths.