



News Release

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Life story of prominent County resident gets second printing three decades later; family donates new book to NMCC and other central Aroostook libraries

Aroostook County - A book that chronicles the life and times of a prominent central Aroostook County man and provides a glimpse into the region's past is again in print, 33 years after its original publishing.

"Call Me Phin," is an autobiographical account of Castle Hill native Phineas F. Ellis, a devoted public servant whose career spanned six decades and included service in the Maine State Legislature, as Castle Hill's first town manager and as the first administrator of Presque Isle's A.R. Gould Memorial Hospital. The book includes historical recollections of people, places and events in The County from the turn of the 20th century through the 1970's.

Originally printed in 1977, a year after the author's death, the 1,000 copies sold quickly. With numerous requests for additional books over 30 years, family members decided it was time to introduce a new audience to the publication.

"I never dreamed there would be another printing," said Elaine Ellis Hotham, who worked side-by-side with her father to edit the original publication in the final years of his life and got the book printed. "My son Tim (Hotham) and his wife Tracy, who live in North Carolina, took on the task of reformatting the text and getting the autobiography published a second time. All of the text had to be keyed in. There are a few more pictures and the style is different. There is also a forward that was added by Tim that talks about his grandfather's legacy. I wish he had lived to see his book – the original book – finished. Now 33 years later, it is once again available."

The first copies of the newly released "Call Me Phin" are being donated by the family to libraries throughout central Aroostook. The first book was presented to the Edmunds Library at Northern Maine Community College, where Ellis' grandson, Dan Hotham, taught for more than three decades.

“Above and beyond the personal experiences of my grandfather, this book really captures what life was like in central Aroostook at the time,” said Dan Hotham, who retired from NMCC last December after 35 years. “We wanted to share it with a new generation. By donating the book to area libraries, our intention is to make it available to all people who want to learn about the past and be inspired by the story of a life well lived.”

“Call Me Phin” takes readers through the life of Phineas Ellis. He begins the journey with his childhood years and schooling and continues on to cover everything from teaching school to working on the family farm to becoming a Maine State legislator.

Ellis writes about his political career in Castle Hill and Mapleton, the bold stance he took to establish a new mail line in Ashland, serving in the Army medical corps, working as a chore boy for a doctor in Ashland to earn his way through high school, and his session in summer school at the Aroostook State Normal School in Presque Isle, which is now the University of Maine at Presque Isle.

He also talks at length about his instrumental role in building the new hospital in Presque Isle. After being elected president of the board of trustees, he managed to secure Hill-Burton funds to build a new hospital at a new location. This success, along with locally raised funds and grants, catapulted the new Arthur R. Gould Memorial Hospital into reality.

On the personal side, Ellis recalls, in vivid detail, his decision to marry and start a family, build a farm for his new family, and the financial and other hardships he experienced during his time representing the people of central Aroostook in both local government and in the state legislature.

Aside from his own experiences, “Call Me Phin” recounts stories of working in area lumber camps, including the account of how his father, Jasper O. Ellis saved the life of noted County businessman and the grandfather to U.S. Senator Susan Collins’, Samuel Wilson Collins. A section is also devoted to the story of the lynching of Jim Cullen – the only lynching in New England – which occurred in Presque Isle. Phineas Ellis conducted significant research on the incident and was the first to lecture on the topic.

The newly printed “Call Me Phin” is available for order online at www.callmephin.com.

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EDITOR’S NOTE: *Media interested in meeting with or interviewing Elaine Ellis Hotham should call the NMCC College Relations Office at 768-2808 to arrange an interview.*



Retired Northern Maine Community College Instructor Dan Hotham and his mother Elaine Ellis Hotham present the first copy of “Call Me Phin,” an autobiography written by their grandfather and father respectively to Jason Parent, director of development and college relations at NMCC. The book will become part of the Edmunds Library collection at the Presque Isle College. Other copies of the publication will be donated to school and public libraries in central Aroostook.