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Portland Journal; An Idea + a Philanthropist = a Market

By SARA RIMER

Owen Wells, financial adviser to the Maine philanthropist Elizabeth B. Noyce, had just returned from a trip to the Pacific Northwest, where he had visited the Pike Place Market in Seattle and the Granville Island Public Market in Vancouver, British Columbia.

"I said to Betty, 'I think we ought to build a public market in Portland,' " Mr. Wells recalled. "She said that was a great idea."

Mrs. Noyce, who had come into her millions through a divorce settlement from her husband, Robert N. Noyce, a co-inventor of the microchip, was not particularly concerned about cost. It was 1993, not long after she had responded to the closing of banks across Maine by blithely creating a new bank in downtown Portland, the Maine Bank and Trust Company. If a public market would help further revitalize downtown, if it would create jobs for this city of 65,000, if it would help the farmers of her beloved state of Maine, then she was all for it.

Mrs. Noyce, who lived in Bremen, died in September 1996 at the age of 65. She had given away \$75 million, primarily to Maine charities, including the Portland Museum of Art, the Maine Maritime Museum, the University of Maine and the Maine Medical Center.

The Portland Public Market, nearly as long as a city block and about half as wide, opened this past October. It is a soaring two-story structure of glass and timber built on land owned by Mrs. Noyce.

"We had a great fall," said Ted Spitzer, the market director.

Mr. Spitzer was giving a tour of the market the day after Christmas, showing off the displays of poultry, beef and bison -- the bison are raised in Waterford -- fruits and vegetables, homemade pies and ice cream, and fish not just from Maine but also from all over the world.

The Portland market, with 23 vendors and more expected, is a tiny fraction of the size of the Pike Place Market, which has 250 businesses. But it does have the expertise of Walter Compare, who left his fish job at Pike Place to move back east with his wife, Holly, a Maine native.

Mr. Compare was behind the counter at Hanson Brothers Seafood, where he had arranged a still life composed of mussels, eels, oysters, tuna and salmon. He does throw an occasional fish, he said, like the showmen at Pike Place, "but we don't like to copy."

At the other end of the market, the Port City Jazz group was serenading shoppers. People were grazing on generous free samples of smoked salmon, goat cheese and homemade jam and crackers. Emma Hayes, 6, and her sisters, Isabel, 4, and Eliza, almost 2, from Cumberland, were enjoying strawberry ice cream cones from Smiling Hill Farm with their mother, Betsy Hayes.

At Borealis Breads, which was closed for the day, a hand-printed sign said the bakers were home with their families. Mr. Spitzer said the owner, Jim Amaral, had contracted with several Aroostook County farmers to grow wheat for his bread.

This is exactly the market that Betty Noyce would have wanted, Mr. Wells said. "She would have admired the entrepreneurial ability of these people," he said.

It cost \$9.4 million to build the market, which operates seven days a week, year-round.

"She wanted it done right," said Mr. Wells, who is the president of Mrs. Noyce's philanthropic foundation, Libra. "She said, 'I don't want the market to become like Quincy Market where they sell T-shirts and knickknacks.' She wanted food."

The market is next to the Maine Bank and Trust, which now has 14 branches around the state, and a few blocks from Barbara Bush Children's Hospital, which Mrs. Noyce helped endow.

None of Mrs. Noyce's projects bear her name.

"She never wanted any kind of memorial," Mr. Wells said. "People wanted to name scholarship funds after her, and buildings, and she always said no."

In the same spirit, she also refused honorary degrees.

"She thought just giving money was not the appropriate measure for an honorary degree," Mr. Wells said.

But on the second floor of the market is Mr. Wells's private tribute, a small sculpture of an old woman pushing a cart laden with vegetables, and feeding corn to a crow. The sculpture, by a Colorado artist named Nancy Roper, was originally titled *Henrietta and the Heckler*. Mr. Wells has renamed it "Betty Sharing the Bounty."