

**36 - 44 West Main**  
**Buckley Block/Tift Building**  
*Working Script*

Believe it or not, the building in front of you is a very historic piece of Mystic CT! During this video you'll get a chance to see what kind of history 36-44 West Main Street has seen!

You may be wondering why there is a picture of an owl sitting in the middle of Mystic..! In December 1914, an owl was found dazed on a trolley rail in the middle of the street.<sup>3</sup>

That's right, there used to be trolleys in Mystic!<sup>1, 2, 3</sup> They ran from 1904-1928 every half hour.<sup>7</sup>

The conductor of the trolley brought the owl to Frank Buckley. The owl spent the holidays in Buckley's Meat Market which was part of the Buckley Block.

The Buckley Block is actually a single building with several storefronts which was originally built in 1878 by Samuel Buckley.<sup>1</sup>

In 1891, the building housed a B&S grocery store, a tailor, a butcher, and had lodging with offices on the second floor.<sup>1, 2</sup>

After many years, Samuel Buckley retired in 1910. His son, Frank, inherited the family grocery business. Can you believe that steak was 18 cents per lb., a bag of flour was 79 cents, and 10 lbs. of potatoes was only 17 cents!<sup>3</sup>

The meat market closed in 1915 because Frank had invested in the new automobile industry. He purchased a car, making the Buckyleys one of the first families to have an automobile in Mystic!<sup>3</sup>

In 1931, the local newspaper announced the marriage of Frank Buckley and Anna Tift. Frank renamed Buckley Block as Tift Block in honor of his new wife, and shortly afterward gave the building to Anna.

The Tifts were a successful local family of merchants and mariners.

Anna's oldest brother, Henry Harding, moved to Georgia to develop a lumber industry for his family's shipbuilding business. The sawmill camp grew into a community - eventually named "Tifton", which Henry designed to resemble his hometown, Mystic.

The Tift building hosted many different renters and businesses throughout the years. In the 1930s, the "Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company" - now better known as "A&P" had a storefront in the building.<sup>3</sup>

In the 40's, the Maxwellton Marine Paint Co., owned by Edward and his wife Lil found a home in the Tift building. The store sold more than a marine paint - it also carried house paint, hardware, art supplies and picture frames - selling supplies to a growing artist community, including local folk artist and author, Ellery Thompson (*seen here.*)<sup>2, 3</sup>

In the 1970s, Tuck Jones bought Maxwellton Co from Eddie Maxwell and the framing service is still in operation today - in a small studio behind the Tift Building.<sup>3, 4</sup>

The '70s even saw a return of the meat market to the Tift building, when local grocer Kenneth Calkins opened Calkin's Meat Market - the first grocery available on Main St in nearly a decade, and a half-century after Frank Buckley's original market closed.<sup>3</sup>

The building remained in the Buckley-Tift family until 1978 when Thomas Tift - who had inherited the building from Frank & Anna Buckley's daughter, Helen - sold it to an investment company. At that time, the building began to see more tourist-oriented businesses including a jewelers and clothing boutiques.

In 1998, the building was sold for 1.1 million dollars - a record amount for a commercial building in Mystic at the time. Tourism-friendly businesses continued to expand and included a toy shop & candy store in addition to clothing stores.<sup>3</sup>

From meat market to jewelry store, the Tift Block has seen an evolution of businesses and faces from 1878 to today.

Archive Sources:

- 1 Mystic River Historical Society
- 2 Mystic Seaport Museum
- 3 The (New London) Day newspaper
- 4 Tuck Jones (primary source interview)