



Business History

The Tweed Shop

One of the locations of the shop was:

Emily Farnsworth Store and Post Office

Address: 410 Main Street

City: Southwest Harbor

State: Maine

Owned by: Ritchie - Edith Elizabeth Ritchie (1905-1994)

The Tweed Shop in Southwest Harbor, Maine, a summer enterprise, was typical of Tweed Shops all over the country at the time. This photograph was taken in 1951, but the Tweed Shop fad started in the 1930s and continued well into the 1960s. There are still a few Tweed Shops scattered around the country in 2012.

There was a "British Tweed Shop" or a "Scottish Tweed Shop" or a "Town and Country Tweed Shop" or a "Country Tweed Shop" doing business in Northeast Harbor from at least July of 1942 until 1965. Bar Harbor hosted "Olive's Tweed Shop" or the "Bar Harbor Tweed Shop" at various times from at least 1945 to 1968.

During the time when the Tweed Shops were popular they often opened summer branches in up-scale resort communities, in charming little shops or barns decked out as a New Yorker's idea of a country shop. They usually featured at least one floor loom and often sold trendy upscale antiques and unique gifts along with yardage, handbags, ties, socks, kilts and jackets and bespoke clothing. The Southwest Harbor Tweed Shop seems to have been a good example. Just inside the door at the right of the photograph one can just see a wooden trunk painted by Peter Hunt (1896-1967), or in the style of Peter Hunt, the folk painter at Provincetown, Massachusetts, a good example of one of the trends sweeping the country at the time. A trunk like the one shown in the photograph, in good condition, would, in 2012, be a valuable antique.

The history of the Southwest Harbor Tweed Shop can be pieced together from newspaper accounts from the Bar Harbor Times and a little research.

"At 522 Madison Avenue, there is a new and distinguished little boite called, with simple clarity, the Tweed Shop. Wonderful imported tweeds are strewn around the little room in bolts, and hanging in the closet are a few charming two-piece suits, some of the strictly tailored in the classic tailleur sense, and other very Chanel, with patch pockets and trick pleats and other dressmaking details. You pick your material and they make your suit for you in a way that, I hear, approaches the inimitable. Two ingratiating features of the place are that you can buy the tweeds by the yard if you like, and that there are some suits you can take home with you if they happen to fit. Among other things tossed around are some lightweight cashmere sweaters, cut very waisty in divine colors, and

some triangular bib scarves in marvelous color combinations to fill in the "V" of your suit." - The New Yorker, February 4, 1933, p. 44.

"Ritchie Imports, Ltd. - Seal Harbor
Tweeds and Sportswear
735 Madison Avenue, New York
Takes Pleasure in Announcing the Opening
Of a Summer Branch Shop at
Gottfried's Seal Harbor
Skirts and Suits Made To Measure
Scotch and Shetland by the Yard with Sweaters and
Cardigans To Match and Blend
Ties, Socks and Sweaters For Men
Scarfs - Tartan Novelties - Celtic Silver
Tel. Seal Harbor 100" - Bar Harbor Times, July 18, 1940.

"Ritchie Imports, Ltd. - Southwest Harbor - Main Street
735 Madison Ave., N.Y.
Summer Branch
Main Street, Southwest Harbor
(formerly at Seal Harbor)
Scotch and English Tweeds
by the yard
Skirts and Suits Tailored to Order
Our New York Tailor is Here For Your Convenience
Shipments of Shetland and Cashmere Sweaters, Men's Socks, Ties and Pullovers direct from
Scotland also Botany Blazers from England are on display." - Bar Harbor Times - July 17, 1941.

"Rosemary Lawler has completed her work at the Carroll Drug Store and will open her gift shop in a few weeks. Miss Edith Ritchie of New York will be at the gift shop this summer with her tweeds and sweaters." - "Bar Harbor Times," Thursday, June 10, 1948.

Lawler - Rosemary (Lawler) Therriault (1921-1999)

"Miss Edith Ritchie and Miss Vera Somerville of Ritchie Imports Inc., New York were the week end guests of Miss Marion Clark. While here they made arrangements for the reopening of their tweed shop." - Bar Harbor Times - May 12, 1949

Clark - Marion F. Clark (1893-1973)

"Miss Edith Ritchie of New York will open her sale of tweeds and sweaters in the old store building owned by Mrs. Allen Lawler. Rosemary Lawler will have a gift shop in part of the store. They will open for business about July 1." - The Ellsworth American, Wednesday, April 7, 1947.

"Miss Edith Ritchie of Tweeds, Inc. of New York is to arrive this week and will have rooms in the home of Mrs. J. D. Phillips." - The Ellsworth American, Wednesday, July 2, 1947.

Robinson - Ina Caroline (Robinson) Lawler (1865-1959) - Mrs. Allen Jacob Lawler
Driscoll - Clara A. (Driscoll) Phillips (1872-1964) - Mrs. Joseph Dana Phillips

"Miss Somerville, who is a partner of Miss Edith Ritchie of the Tweed Shop is coming with her to open the store. Miss Ritchie is making a tour of Europe in company with her uncles and will return here in August." - Bar Harbor Times - June 30, 1949.

Records show that Edith constantly went back and forth to Ireland and elsewhere in Europe for the rest of her life.

"Miss Vera Somerville, partner of Miss Edith Ritchie of the Tweed and Yarn Shop, received news that her sister had died. Miss Somerville had only just arrived in Southwest Harbor. She went to Oldtown and took a plane for New York." - Bar Harbor Times, July 14, 1949.

"Ritchie Imports, Ltd.
Announce That Their Summer Shop
Is Now Open For The Season At The
"Sou-wester"
on the Manset - Seawall Road
Suits, Coats, Skirts from Tartans and Tweed in Stock
Also Tailored to Measure
Also In Stock
Imported Sweaters, Gloves, Scarves, Ties and Socks For Men and Women
Ritchie Imports Ltd. - Edith E. Ritchie
735 Madison Avenue, New York" - Bar Harbor Times - July 21, 1949.

The shop on Madison Avenue was in the heart of what is still the silk stocking retail district, between 64th and 65th Street.

"Miss Vera Somerville, also of New York will arrive the last of this week to take charge of Miss Ritchie's Tweed Shop. Miss Ritchie is expected to come for next week end and the holiday, but will not come to stay until August." - Bar Harbor Times - June 29, 1950.

"Miss Edith Ritchie, who has, been coming to Southwest Harbor in the summer for several years, will not be here next summer to open her Tweed Shop of Ritchie Imports on Main Street. Miss Vera Somerville of New York city, who ran the Southwest Harbor shop was also very well known in town and both will be greatly missed by a wide circle of friends." - Bar Harbor Times - March 14, 1957.