When we think of Freeport we often think about the geography; the waterfront, tree-lined streets, and the beautiful architecture of its homes and its civic institutions. But we often overlook the unique personalities that for better or worse, have defined this community. Freeport, from before its incorporation until now, has been the home of many interesting characters.

About 1907, Edith Gertrude Selene came to Freeport. Born in England, Miss Selene was a noted archeologist, Egyptologist, and artist. Soon after she purchased a home in Freeport, she married Dr. Thomas Horace Evans who was a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Evans was a medical doctor, professor of anatomy, an author, poet, and musician, who just happened to speak six languages.

Though Freeport had humble beginnings, over the years it attracted successful citizens from Manhattan and Brooklyn. But what makes the Evans’s arrival in Freeport so interesting is their choice of neighborhood. Instead of purchasing a home in a tony section of the village like Ocean Avenue, the Evenses decided to live on South Main Street. This area of Freeport is the oldest section of the village and had been home to fisherman and baymen for generations. Dr. and Mrs. Evans decided to call a modest one and a half story baymen’s cottage, across the street from the Freeport River, home. It is said that Mrs. Evans had suffered from health issues and wanted to be near the fresh salt air. Having lived in New York City, Dr. and Mrs. Evans did not expect to become close to the residents of the adjoining properties. Their plan was to live in Freeport in the winter and summer in Europe.

Soon after moving to Freeport, the Evenses did not endear themselves to their neighbors. For 20 years, residents were able to cut through their property to get to an adjoining street. Mrs. Evan quickly put an end to that.

Later, Dr. Evans got into a fistfight with a neighbor across the street. During the altercation Mrs. Evans joined the fray and was charged with assault. Dr. Evans suffered a concussion. Two days later, he was attacked again as he walked home in the evening.

When Dr. Evans reported local health officials to the State for their lacks procedures for dealing with contagious diseases like diphtheria, things really got out of control. We often think that contentious Board meetings are something new. They aren’t. During the teens, Dr. and Mrs. Evans raised such a fuss at board meeting that they got thrown out. Later, their motorboat mysteriously sank and a vicious rumor that Dr. Evans liked to experiment on cats was started. Dr. and Mrs. Evans angered so many residents that someone tried to burn their house down.
Things got really heated when Dr. and Mrs. Evans began to remodel their cottage. The remodeling included lots of windows that overlooked adjoining properties. Mrs. Evans claimed that she needed natural light for painting. Her neighbors thought she was a busybody trying to spy on them. Their neighbor to the north was dentist and Village Trustee Dr. Myrick. He did not appreciate Mrs. Evans’s ability to look down onto his property, so he erected a 16-foot fence between his house and the Evans’s. Once again, there was trouble on South Main Street. Dr. Evans and Dr. Myrick had some heated exchanges during village board meetings and in the local media concerning the fence and other issues.

Eventually, Dr. and Mrs. Evans and their neighbors learned to peacefully coexist. Over the years, Dr. Evans still sent his suggestions to the Board about local improvements and wrote numerous letters to the editor. In 1948, Mrs. Evans died in her beloved home on South Main Street. Her husband died there in 1961. Though they did not have children, their memory has been secured in local newspaper accounts, village board minutes, and from artifact preserved at the Freeport Historical Society. Their home still houses Mrs. Evans’s art, Dr. Evans’s music and photographs from their travels abroad. The architecture of 350 South Main Street represents the idiosyncratic style of this unique and colorful couple who made Freeport their home.