

## Maine & New England Jeffrey Butland Family Owned Business of the Year



# Getchell Brothers Inc.

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Getchell Brothers Inc. in Brewer has been making ice for four generations, so being named the Small Business Administration's Jeffrey Butland Family Owned Business of the Year for 2016 is a perfect honor.

"I was excited to win the Butland Family Business Award because I am very proud that the business has been able to survive four generations, adapting to so many changes and challenges," Getchell Brothers President Doug Farnham said. "We face the same challenges as most [small Maine businesses]: high energy costs, low population, weather. [But] the best part of having a family business in Maine was the opportunity it created to return to Maine to raise our family."

Getchell Brothers, which was nominated by Ronald Roope Jr. of Bangor Savings Bank, has serviced the ice products industry for more than 123 years.

In the spring of 1888, two young brothers ventured into the rugged and competitive ice business. Fourteen year old, J. Calvin and 15-year-old Fred started Getchell Brothers Ice Company, founded on the concept of superior service to the residents of Brewer.

Originally, ice was harvested along the Penobscot River near South Brewer. Later, the harvesting operation moved to the Kenduskeag Stream just below the Bullseye Bridge and an office was established on Oak Street in Bangor. In 1890, Getchell Brothers was one of about 20 ice companies in the Bangor area; by 1920 only Getchell Brothers remained. During the harvest season, up to 1000 tons of ice could be packed away in a day.

In addition to family, they credit much of their success to the company's dedicated employees.

"Along with four generations of family members, we have had dozens of employees who have worked 20, 30 years, or more for



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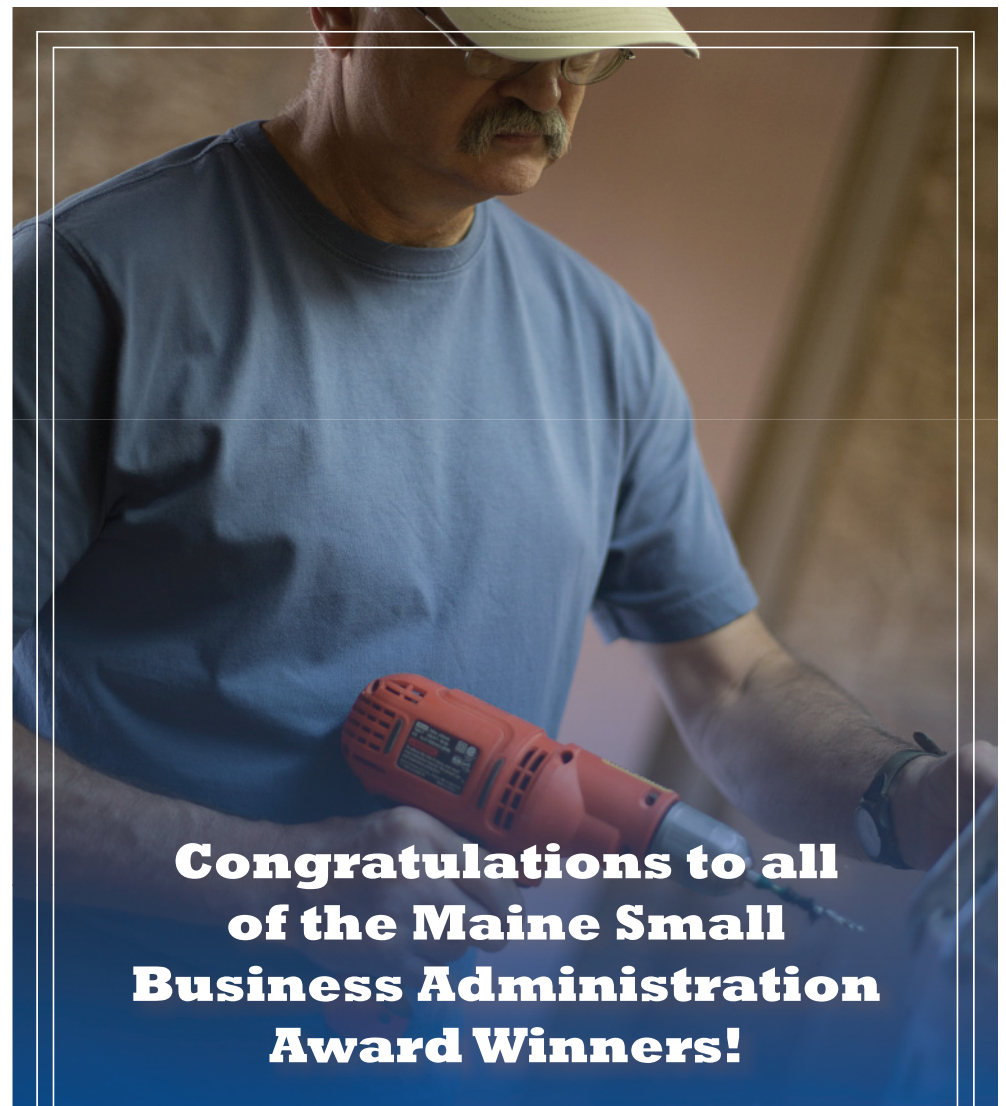
Fred Getchell, one of the original Getchell brothers.

the company," Farnham said. "Family business really can become an 'extended-family' business. Those long-term, loyal employees add to the legacy you feel you are building with a multi-generational business."

Farnham notes that he came into the business long after it was established in his family, but does have some advice for those looking to pass their company down through the generations.

"One thing for sure would be make good long term business decisions you have to be a good business in order to be a good family business. Second, you need to expose the business to the next generation so they understand the business and know it is an option," he said. "Finally, passing on a business to the next generation can be complicated and you should have a plan."

Throughout the years, the company has tried several other businesses to complement the ice business. Lumber, firewood, honey wagons, brick making, coal, home heating oil, cold storage, and window coverage are the documented sideline businesses. These businesses provided the precedence for today's Ice Cream Division. In 1983 the Sealtest distributorship started the ice cream business. Since then, the addition of Giffords, Ben & Jerry's, and in 2005 became the exclusive distributor of Blue Bunny Ice Cream products in the state of Maine and New Hampshire have made Getchell Brothers a leading distributor of ice cream in Northern New England.



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