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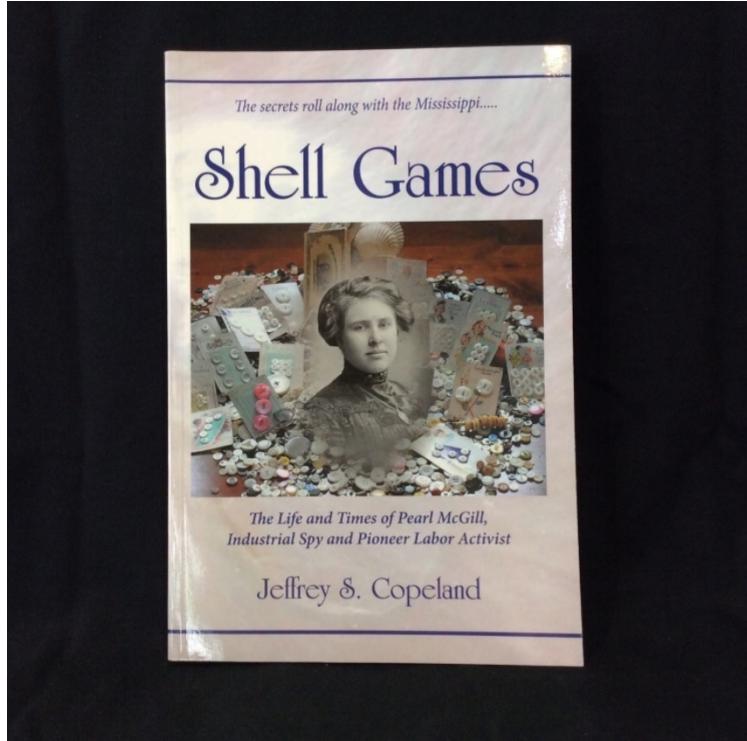
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MAY 29, 2025

A LOOK INTO THE LIFE OF MUSCATINE LABOR ACTIVIST

Musser Book Club to explore "Shell Games" at June 2 meeting in historic Setting

MUSCATINE, Iowa — The Musser Book Club will spotlight Shell Games: The Life and Times of Pearl McGill, Industrial Spy and Pioneer Labor Activist by Jeffrey S. Copeland at its next meeting on Monday, June 2. The event will take place in the National Pearl Button Museum, located at 117 West 2nd Street, Muscatine — the very heart of the story's setting.

Set in Muscatine during the height of the pearl button industry, Shell Games blends historical fact with fiction to tell the compelling story of Ora Pearl McGill, a courageous young woman from Grandview who became a key figure in the early labor movement. Against a backdrop of workplace conflict, industrial espionage, and even murder, the book brings to life a transformative era in Muscatine's past.





Doors open at 6:30 p.m., allowing attendees time to explore museum displays, including exhibits on Pearl McGill and the process of pearl button manufacturing. The book discussion will follow, focusing on the 2012 title's portrayal of McGill's journey from factory worker to reluctant spy to labor activist.

Copeland, a professor of English at the University of Northern Iowa and author of over 35 historical fiction titles, draws from extensive research to illuminate the injustices and labor struggles of the early 20th century. Though fictionalized through character dialogue and imagined inner thoughts, *Shell Games* powerfully captures the reality of harsh working conditions and the stark divide between laborers and factory owners.

Mark Your Calendar:

Jeffrey S. Copeland will visit Muscatine on Thursday, June 26, to present on *Shell Games* at the National Pearl Button Museum. The presentation begins at 2 p.m. and will offer further insight into the history behind the story.

Get Your Copy:

Copies of *Shell Games* are available for checkout at the Musser Public Library Service Desk. The book will also be available for purchase at the museum.

Want to Learn More About Pearl McGill?

- Read an article by Mary Wildermuth: [Celebrate Muscatine: Pearl McGill](#)
- Explore McGill family history via the [University of Iowa ArchivesSpace](#)



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- Dive into Janet Weaver's essay in Labor: Studies in Working-Class History: [Pearl McGill Essay – LAWCHA](#)

Join us in exploring the rich and sometimes turbulent history of Muscatine through the eyes of one of its most remarkable residents.

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