

Westhampton Memorial Library

STONE WALLS

Fall 1977



You know, there are hundreds of magazines similar to STONE WALLS being published all over the United States, as far away as Alaska and Hawaii, in cultures as foreign to us as the Navaho Indians. And what is most striking about this collection of community efforts is not their diversity, but rather the common threads that run through all of them.

Each magazine concerns itself with the lives of people which, without doubt, have been remarkable, but not, for the most part, exceptional. There's a difference.

These lives are not exceptional because they share similar joys, they share similar frustrations, they share similar fears and failures. What they share with our lives is what we can continue to hold on to. We can think of one-room schoolhouses, we can reminisce about sleigh-rides, and remember making butter at home, but remember is all we can do.

Perhaps, then, something more positive that nostalgia can come out of all these community efforts. Perhaps we can be reminded that every single community has its share of good sympathetic people who 'keep at it', but don't make a lot of noise. And if we just listen and recognize that people are not so different everywhere else, well, then, maybe we'll stop elbowing one another and quietly, unoffensively obliterate the barriers that prevent us from saying, "Welcome".

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ellie Lazarus". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'E'.

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At Home in the Woods

(An interview with Carl Libardi)

by *Ellie Lazarus*



"I've worked in the woods all of my life," states Carl Libardi as we bump along in his well-worn Chevy panel truck. "I didn't have the background for anything else, I guess."

Carl Libardi, known by most as Carlo, has run the A. & L. store in Chester Village for thirty years. But that store, a full time job for most of us, is only a part of Carl Libardi's everyday life. A major part of his life is the nurseries where he nurtures a range from native maple and birch, which he collects himself, to exotic Japanese yews.

"My Chester nurseries plot was just sand and gravel twelve years ago, but I made soil out of it." And that says pretty much about Carl Libardi himself, a man who never went to high school, a man who stands watchfully still in the woods to witness what others learn out of textbooks. "I never had a horticulture course," explains Carl. "I was working when I was thirteen and I've been working ever since. The years I wasn't in school I learned more, I guess."

To Carl Libardi the woods are filled with animate objects. As we walk along, he picks up a birch seed. "See this. The creator has given it wings and in no time at all its progeny will be spread over a valley or downstream, if they're meant to float, like the Hemlock or Sycamore. The Sycamore's seed comes concentrated in a ball and that will float. Once it disintegrates, that seed will lodge itself on the banks of a river. Acorns have to come in intimate con-



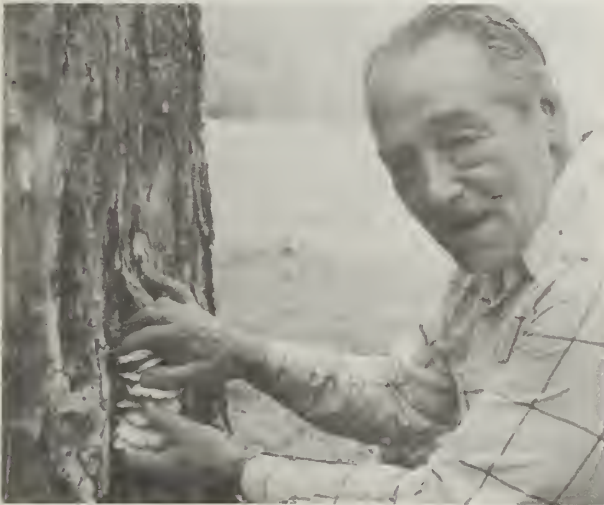
An accidental acorn next to a birch has brought to life an oak tree sapling.



An acorn sends its roots into the soil to begin a new oak tree.

tact with the soil in order to burst. The deer feed on them. There were so many acorns this year that the deer remained in the highlands, even after the green vegetation started in the valleys below the snow line, because there was plenty of mast up high. Each seed of a birch has a different vitality. I planted this whole row," he says, pointing, "at the same time. Some are now 1½ inches in caliper, others, 3 inches. There is more uniformity in birches if you plant just roots instead of conceiving them by seed."

Not too far along, we passed a dead maple tree, a nursery for bushels of mushrooms, as Carl explains. "Those are edible



Edible oyster-shell mushrooms on a dead maple tree.

oyster mushrooms. To eat them, you skin them and soak them overnight in heavily salted water to get the beetles out. You can dry them or use them right away. After you pick them, you can rub their bottoms onto rotten parts of trees and more will grow there — contagion with spores. The micilliums or little threads carry the sperms of the mushroom and can be transferred to other fertile areas, like dead trees."

Slews of other plants serve useful purposes. That's common knowledge. What is not common knowledge is which serve what purpose. "The willow belongs to the

family known as Salix," Carl Libardi explains, "from which an extract has always been taken for a pain-killer. You'll find that same element in your aspirin, artificially produced and its name is salicilate. It is present in the leaves of the willow. People used to steep it and drink its juices. People have also steeped the bark of the willow and used it as a lotion for poison ivy. The camptonia, also known as the Sweet Fern is used for poison ivy, too. It will soothe it, but I'm not sure whether it will cure it."

"Marsh marigolds," Carl goes on, "are a good green to eat if you catch them early enough. They're better than dandelions."



"Jack-in-the-Pulpit has juice in its bulb, that'll burn ya' like horseradish."

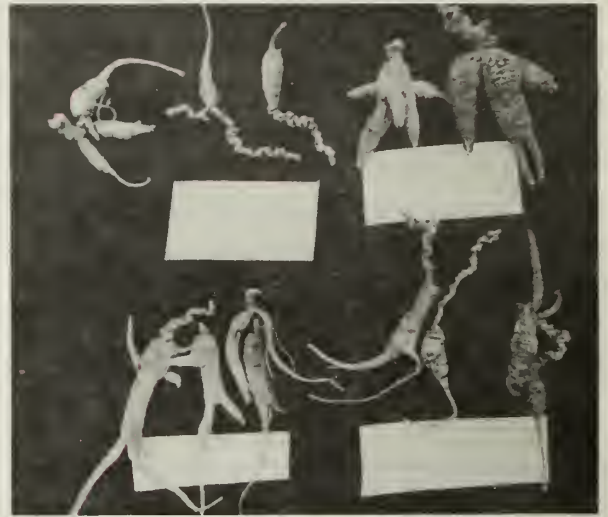
Even plants that people stay away from have their uses, Carl explains to me. "Jack-in-the-Pulpit has a juice in the bulb that will irritate the skin. It'll burn ya' like horseradish. If you touch the juice to your skin, you will get a rash; if you touch it to your tongue, it will burn your tongue for hours. The Indians would dry the root, pulverize it, and mix it with bear fat or skunk grease. Then they would use it for rheumatic pains or arthritis, but primarily to create abnormal heat in the lungs to bring an increased flow of blood to the chest to cure pneumonia."

There are other plants which we humans know to be helpful, but not so for other animals. "The Witch Hazel tree", according to Carl, "has enough sugar in the sap to form a yellow blossom in February(!). The blossoms are small and inconspicuous. I have seen squirrels," Carl says smiling, "who had imbibed too freely and become drunk. They chase each other, try to climb a tree and can't. The catkins on a Quaking Aspen," he continues, "similar to those on a birch, have something in them that causes them to ferment when the partridge eats them. They ferment in his crop and they cause the partridge to do acrobatics, go through the windshield of a car, or fly through windows of houses."

Carl Libardi has collected wild plants all his life. He would carry two or three thousand New York Lace Ferns off Gobble Mountain at one time on his back in order to earn forty cents for each thousand. He'd collect Vermont Fancy Ferns for New York florists and Dagger Ferns for Bostonians and Philadelphians. "During the war, I'd get telegrams from Boston or Philadelphia asking for \$10,000 worth of 'Daggers'."

Ferns he collected as routine. What Carl Libardi collects as a real specialty is Ginseng, that mysterious plant whose root is considered by many to be an elixir. "Ginseng" means "man-shaped root", for the root sometimes resembles a human body. The scientific name for ginseng means 'panacea'. 'Shang' as Carl Libardi calls it, is worth \$1500.00 a pound now. It is found on slopes facing southeast, smaller ones on slopes facing north, and average ones on slopes facing east. When you see a ginseng plant for the first time," he explains, "you marvel about everything in the woods that it resembles. It isn't hard to identify, though, once you know it. It actually has lines all its own. There is no woody part to a ginseng plant, like the sarsaparilla or walnut which it resembles. The leaves actually look oriental.

The Chinese have long believed in its powers. One Chinese emperor sent two pounds of Ginseng as a precious gift to



Ginseng roots, collected and labeled by Carl Libardi.

Peter the Great. Soviet scientists have now discovered that proofreaders, telephone operators, and coding clerks all work significantly faster and more accurately on ginseng. One of the world's leading experts on plant drugs, E.J. Shellard, has accumulated evidence of ginseng's anti-stress, anti-fatigue, and anti-infection



"Trout-lilies, also called adder-tongues or Dog-tooth violets, have spotted leaves and a little yellow lily." (May)

properties, and he attributes those properties to certain glycosides in ginseng which are not found in any other plants. Carl Libardi is rather an agnostic collector of ginseng. "I think it's kind of like giving someone a capsule with no medicine in it, just powder. If he thinks it will work, well, maybe it will."



The work of the yellow-bellied sapsucker.

What Carl Libardi knows, he has experienced. A zoologist he is not, but he knows how animals behave the way most people know weather patterns. "Deer have specific ways of communicating with one another," he says as he looks across the meadow. "Under those apple trees I saw a herd of five deer one day, and I walked right up to the wall. The big buck that was with two does and two fawns had his back turned towards me and his tail was raised. Finally, he looked directly at the fawns and they looked at him. And then he turned his head and looked down in that corner. You could see his muscles tense — I was right on top of him, I was motionless — then he gave a squeak and a snort. The two big does and the buck started running right across that field. The two little fellas went right down where the buck had indicated."

"Of course the buck and the doe both have scent glands in their forelegs and

they leave a signal. I have watched a doe come up to me when I was walking in the woods and I stood still. If the direction of the wind is from her to me, she can't smell me. But when the wind shifts, the doe starts, looks around, and bounds away. The buck who is trailing her, half an hour later comes by smelling the doe tracks. When he gets to that spot, he becomes very wary, squats down, looks around for an adversary, and slinks away. You don't mean to tell me they don't give a signal!"

"Even animals of different species altogether communicate with each other," Carl Libardi continues. "I've seen a woodchuck just sitting in the nursery here with its head down. Then I hear a red-wing blackbird change its tone to a more piercing note. The red-wing blackbird has seen me, and is warning the woodchuck. The woodchuck never even raises his head, he just takes off."

To know animal patterns as Carl Libardi knows them, takes time, patience, and watchful senses. "The woodcock, when mating, makes a bleat and a burp and thereby attracts the female," Carl begins to relate after he has told me of the long periods he spends just standing still wait-



"Dutchman's Britches, related to the Bleeding Heart, grow on slopes facing east because they like the moisture and the shade."

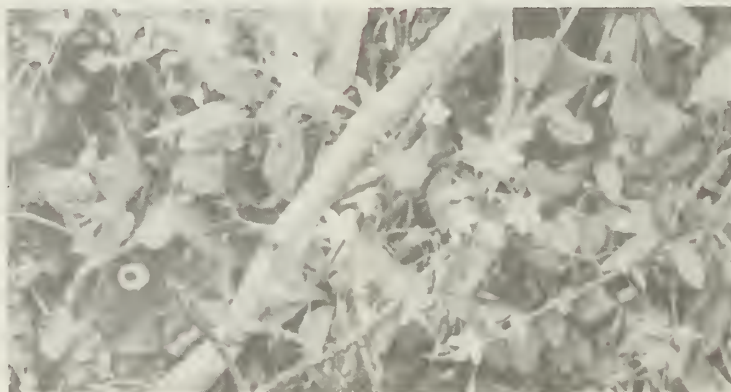
ing. "He'll keep it up fifteen or twenty times, just those two simple notes. Then he will take flight, gain altitude, and fly around in a circle, the circle becoming tighter as he elevates until he's just about out of sight. At that point, he'll begin to chirp and then begin his free-fall. He won't pull himself out of that free-fall until he's at the horizon. He plummets straight down, only 20 or 30 feet from his point of origin."

Carl Libardi's tales don't limit themselves to animals and plants. "I'll never forget the old Bob Smart place," he begins as we drive to his Middlefield nursery. "There's a cellar hole there now on the right as you go up to Middlefield from Chester. The house has been vacant for years. Newspapers dated from 1840 were on the walls. There was an old organ in there which I repaired. Mice had been in that organ for generations, so I cleaned it all out. There was a staircase behind the organ and a mirror in front of it. Anyway, one day, I started to make a little noise on that organ, and the next thing I knew, I wasn't alone any more. I looked into the mirror and there was a man with close-cropped white hair and a stubbly white beard. He was holding a pair of shoes in his hands and he was staring at me. I don't know which of us was more frightened. It turned out that he had hitched a ride from

Springfield as far as Chester and had walked to that house (now a cellar hole) and slept there overnight, intending to spend the summer during hay season at Sam Willard's farm in Middlefield. What a way to meet someone!"

If Carl Libardi now spends most of his available time in contact with the plants and animals around him, his boyhood days brought him in contact with all sorts of people. "I was fourteen when I would carry water up the railroad to the railroad workers, all jailbirds, you know. Remember the bandy-dancers?" he asks with a twinkle in his eye. "Well I carried water for those boys at forty cents an hour. I used to have to carry it all the way up, two pails full of water, that was work! What used to break my heart, though, was when these great big hulking guys would yell, 'Come on here with that water!' They'd take one big dipper full, then another big dipper full, and the third one couldn't finish, they'd throw away."

Spending an afternoon in the woods and on back roads with Carl Libardi is sort of like, well, travelling down a river with a river-boat captain. Everything comes alive. Nothing, not the faintest sound nor the subtlest smell lacks meaning. It's like acquiring a new set of tools (after all the senses are our tools). And it's a generous man who can give that to someone.



"May-bells, or Spring beauty, are gregarious. They live in colonies." Photos by Ellie Lazarus

Getting Acquainted With Ferns



by Virginia Ladd Otis

We New Englanders are blessed with great natural riches. Lowell Thomas, who had traveled everywhere, upon being asked to name the most beautiful part of the world he had seen, called our hill country, specifically the Berkshires, the loveliest. To truly appreciate the virile greens of New England, with their complement of blue lakes and streams, go spend a summer in the Arizona-Utah desert. Scenes of verdant valleys and groves will haunt your mind like a mirage. You are always thirsty, dusty, hot, and dry. Surrounded by rainbow colors of red, yellow, and purple in all shades, you find yourself desperately homesick for green! A good part of New England's lush charm is due to the ferns.

What is fresher than a bank of ferns beside a woody path? At either side they wave gracefully over the trail, a symphony of greens in intricate design of fronds seen through fronds, seen through more fronds, stippled with shadow and sunlight. The hardwood grove is floored with the hay-scented ones, all serrated and tapered to a fine point, green-gold in sunlight, rich green in shadow, delicate and feathery, yielding to every breath of wind and swaying fluidly as if dancing on their springy stems.

One of our favorite books is a hand-me-down fern guide by Frances Theodora Parsons, 1899. One doesn't have to read far into this copy of "How to Know the

Ferns" to realize that Ms. Parsons wrote it first hand and from the heart. It is completely illustrated with drawings which need only a wash of green to bring them to life; and, best of all, the text is enhanced by accounts of the author's expeditions in the field and by ferny quotes from such masters as Shakespeare, Scott, and Thoreau, the latter being her favorite quotee.

Judging by an outdoor photograph of the author on the flyleaf, she was a fine looking young woman, clad rather quaintly . . . from our point of view . . . in a straw hat, high-necked white blouse with mutton sleeves, and an ankle length skirt! With some difficulty we picture her dressed in this manner clambering (as she says) about forested brooks, down dark ravines, and up mountain ledges!

Frances Parsons urged parents to introduce children to outdoor hobbies, and went on to enumerate the values of nature interests to children and adults alike. Besides the obvious bodily health from outdoor exercise, there is the health of mind that comes from relaxation from daily cares plus the stimulant of an absorbing interest. The outdoor enthusiast in any field seldom needs sleeping pills; for one feels "the golden doze of mind which follows much exercise in the open air." The author states, one assumes with some authority, that "there is no such preventative for insomnia, no such cure for nervousness or

morbid introspection as an outdoor pursuit.”

Evidently all her vacations were charted in vicinities where she could carry on her personal discoveries of ferns to add to her “life lists”, until she had included about all one could hope to find in the eastern United States. She reminded her readers that on an ordinary walk through fields or woods, the would-be fern expert could become acquainted with ten to fifteen varieties. Fern study, as any other nature hobby, whether of birds, rocks, or what-have-you, carries the advantage of costing very little to pursue. As naturalist John Burroughs reminds us, “The most precious things in life are nearest at hand, without money and without price. Each of us has the whole wealth of the universe at our very door.”

On our winter rambles we often observe a number of evergreen fern acquaintances, including the handsome, hardy Christmas fern, and the polypody, or rock fern. The latter is usually found on large rocks or ledges in deeply shaded woods, the fronds being leathery, rather small, with round russet fruit dots (or sori) on the underside when in spore. Thoreau called this fern “the cheerful community of the Polypody” and labeled it “strangely interesting, even outlandish,” saying, “It is a fabulous, mythological form such as prevailed when the earth and air and water were inhabited by those extinct fossilized creatures that we find.”

About the end of April, the osmundas, or ostrich ferns, begin to unroll their fiddle heads, this large fern being the much touted edible variety. These magnificent giants grow in swampy places or along sunny-banked streams, and have dark spore-bearing fronds in midsummer. In the woods or at the wood’s edge stand the stately interrupted and cinnamon ferns. Both species grow circle-wise and were once known as “basket ferns”, the strong

stems being used by the Indians in their weaving crafts. The cinnamon, however, has central spore bearing fronds of reddish brown, while the interrupted bears masses of darker spores midway along its green fronds. The bracken is another variety which grows several feet high, a strong fern, but coarse and weedy in appearance. Also called the brake, it has a worldwide distribution and is often referred to in literature. In “The Lady of the Lake”, Scott’s hero exclaims: “The heath this night will be my bed... The bracken curtain for my head.”

A gay little fern of roadside and damp field is the sensitive fern, having a rippled aspect in its light green leaves. Its single fruiting fronds are noticeably dark and they mature in June, as do the cinnamon and interrupted spores and others. A lover of both sun and shade, the hay-scented fern, delicate as green lace, covers whole hillsides, growing along the edges of fields and under hardwoods in shifting sunlight and shadow. One perceives the sylvan beauty of these ferns all along the country roads of hillcountry, in Vermont especially. In our thoughts we connect them with birch and maple groves, with laurel and lady’s slipper, and with the thrush’s song.

A favorite fern growing more rarely in dusky hardwoods is the beech fern, delicate and downy, growing low to the ground in a triangular shape ending in a fine point. Other familiar wood’s species are the marginal shield and spinulose wood ferns, both evergreens; the small New York fern; and the silvery spleenwort, a vigorous fern of medium size bearing half-moon shaped fruit dots on the backs of the upper fronds. Silvery at first, the fruit dots later turn brown. Quite rare is the small grape fern, its fronds coarsely serrated, holding its spore stalk above. The rattlesnake fern grows in similar manner, branching into three fronds from a single stem; but it

is larger and more finely serrated. In late summer the light brown spore stalk rises above the plant like a banner. Truly beautiful is the maidenhair fern with its green tresses arranged in a circulet atop the wiry stem. The maidenhair spleenwort must be the shyest of ferns; and but once did we find a specimen poised delicately in the crevice of a damp cliff wall above a mountain-side cavern.

We find the ferns quite bewildering in

their variety, and sometimes the only way to tell the species apart is by inspecting the fruit dots, or sporangia, on the back of the fronds. By pressing the individual ferns and mounting them in a scrapbook, one can make one's own fern guide. We doubt if we could approach the expertise of Frances Theodora Parsons, but we can still prove her theories on the relationship of physical and mental health to out-door pursuits!

...

Middlefield Boys' Club

(A "history" based only upon memories dating back to the year 1908)

by Richard Waite

RAZZLE - DAZZLE - ZIP - BOOM - BAH
MIDDLEFIELD'S BOYS' CLUB - RAH - RAH - RAH

This was the "Cheer" of a group of approximately twenty young farm boys ranging in ages from twelve to eighteen who lived in this hill town more than sixty years ago. It was delivered not only in our home town on many occasions but in such metropolitan communities as Pittsfield, Springfield, Boston, and New York City. While this cheer probably was not delivered with the finesse of a college cheering section at a football game — for enthusiasm, vigor, and just plain noise generated by the group involved, it could not be surpassed. Its author is unknown.

As far as we can recall - after a lapse of more than six decades - the existence of a club like ours, in a small rural farming community of only a few hundred souls, was unique. With our homes spread out over an area of more than twenty square miles, with many of us attending "district" schools, our opportunities for getting to meet other boys were more or less confined to those who lived in our immediate districts. And needless to say,

"Shank's Mare" was our principal means of travel.

That such a club did come into being was due to the interest and efforts of a Miss Alice B. Church, descendant of some of the town's early settlers and operators of woolen mills in the town. It was she who not only "sparked" the idea but opened her home for our meetings and guided us in our selection of officers. How often we met we cannot recall; what we do remember is that stormy weather rarely kept us at home on meeting nights. She gave us an elementary education in the ramifications of parliamentary procedures and stimulated our interest in local, state, and national affairs. Regularly, we listened to the reports of our secretaries and treasurers, and conducted in good order whatever business seemed necessary. We especially recall one of our treasurers reporting meeting after meeting that the Club had a treasury balance of \$2.99 - not too bad, considering the value of the dollar at the time. Club members were encour-

aged to participate in discussions of current issues, out of which came two memorable debates. One debate was to decide which of two of our most famous presidents — Washington or Lincoln — was the greater individual. We also debated whether it was Admiral Peary or Mr. Cook who *really* reached the North Pole. We do not remember who the winners were; really, all were winners since no small amount of time was spent poring over history and consulting daily newspapers to support positions in favor of one or the other of the principles being “debated”.

We were also encouraged to develop any latent theatrical skills by putting on “shows” at the local Town Hall, which were well patronized by local citizens. Especially during the summer months, with the influx of summer visitors, we played to many full houses, often with the “SRO” sign out. Probably the loyalty of parents and friends accounted for these turn-outs rather than the quality of our performances. As far as we know, none of our members aspired to the professional stage.

Some time after Miss Church had the Club organized and functioning, it seemed to its members, in a relatively orderly manner, she asked for help from the minister of the local church, Rev. William A. Estabrook. It may have been that we were getting out of hand and needed to have the kind of discipline a man - especially a clergyman - might provide. Whatever the reason, Mr. Estabrook met regularly with the Club and took an active part in its activities until the Club ceased to exist. Fortunately, he was highly respected as an individual as well as a clergyman and contributed much to the Club’s activities.

One activity which neither Miss Church nor Mr. Estabrook supervised or participated in, and in which only a few of the club members were involved was that of

retiring to the church’s horse sheds (long since torn down) following meetings for the trading of rabbits by those who owned this species of livestock.

Sometime after the Club had been organized and seemed to be functioning in good shape, its activities began to draw the attention of boys who either were outside the age limitations or chose not to belong. Among this group our club was known as “The Bright Boys’ Brigade”.

Probably the high points of activity experienced by our club members were the trips that were taken to such metropolitan centers as Pittsfield, Boston, and Nantasket Beach, and two trips to New York City. In that era, and for some of us, travel time to Pittsfield by horse and buggy and public transportation would approximate two hours, in contrast to today’s easy half-hour automobile drive.

Our first trip, to Pittsfield, provided many “firsts” for most of us: visiting a museum, eating in a restaurant, and going to a moving picture theater. Not very exciting by today’s standards!

As indicated earlier, this trip was only an introduction to much more extensive travel. How this and later trips were made possible financially apparently did not concern us, and were never revealed to us as far as we can remember. But among those who had summer homes in our town at the time was a Mr. David C. Coe of Longmeadow who was one of Springfield’s leading tailors, and who was one of our tour guides on later trips. Assisting him on these trips was a Springfield dentist, a Dr. Hurlburt. We now assume that these two men, Miss Church, and probably others, including local citizens and parents, were our benefactors. To the best of our knowledge, their names have never been revealed.

Our horizons were further widened by a trip to Boston and Nantasket Beach, probably by an “excursion” train that ran

between Springfield and Boston during the summer months. Getting to Springfield was arranged by someone who apparently had influence with the Boston and Albany Railroad, for one of the express trains running from Chicago to Boston was "flagged" at the Middlefield station early in the morning to take us aboard. Probably this was the first and only time in the railroad's history that an express train made a pick-up in our town.

Upon our arrival at Boston's South Station, we were immediately introduced to the rush and noise of metropolitan life; hardly had we emerged from South Station onto Atlantic Avenue than an elevated train came roaring overhead at what seemed to be only slightly less than supersonic speed. Awed by the sight and sound, one of our members collided with some force with a baby carriage, much to the disgust of the lady who had a definite concern for the occupant of the carriage. A boat trip down the harbor; a first sight of salt water for most, if not all of us; a swim in the ocean; doing the many attractions made it all a day to remember. (Incidentally, today's swim suits are quite a lot more revealing than those we saw on the beach at Nantasket.) It was a tired bunch of kids who arrived in Springfield to spend the night with our hosts in Springfield and Longmeadow. A sight-seeing trip in the Springfield area and back home in the afternoon.

Prior to another trip - to New York City - the Club staged a "show" presumably to raise money. The finale was a song to the tune of "The Old Oaken Bucket". The first few lines are recalled as:

"We're off on our trip to New York,
Coney Island,
Your kindness in helping we ne'er shall
forget
We have Coe for a pilot, the doctor to
help him
And we'll take in the sights of New York."

By train we went to Albany to spend the night in a YMCA where we experienced another "first" - swimming in an indoor, tile-lined pool. This was in sharp contrast to our local swimming holes. Early the following morning we boarded a Hudson River Dayline boat - the "Hendric Hudson" - for a down-river voyage to New York City. While we probably reflected very little at the time upon the scenic aspects of the trip (we do have rather imposing hills in Middlefield) or the historic areas by which we cruised, the memory of it all stays with us. It is our memory that there were huge ice houses along the banks of the upper Hudson River and we now wonder about the amount of pollution consumed in the homes and public eating establishments of that era when 'natural' ice was the only coolant.

Our headquarters in the city was the Mills Hotel, where spring locks on the bedroom doors frequently created situations where occupants found themselves on the outside of a securely locked door with the key on the inside, thus creating some near-panic situations. Whoever locked doors back home? Sight-seeing in the New York area included an evening at Coney Island, a "rubber-neck" bus tour of the Bowery, Central Park, a visit to



Sightseeing bus in New York City. (Note solid tires) Photograph taken circa 1914 Middlefield Boy's Club. Dick Waite second from left.

Grant's Tomb (then out in what was rela-

tively open country) and an elevator ride to the observation deck of the "Singer Building", then, we believe, the second tallest building in the city. This elevator ride so terrified one of our members that it was only with great difficulty that he was persuaded to ride down. We rode the "tube" under the Hudson River to the New Jersey shore where we went aboard the North German Lloyd liner — the "Kaiser Wilhelm II". Here we came face-to-face with the luxuries afforded those who traveled first-class between the United States and Europe. We also saw the "steerage" accommodations under which so many immigrants to the United States traveled. During World War I, this was one of the ships by which U.S. service-men were transported between the United States and Europe, though not traveling first class.

On one occasion, as we were walking along a sidewalk in New York, a couple of men were overheard commenting on the nature of our group. To the question: "I wonder what that bunch is", the response was, "Probably some bunch from an insane asylum or a bunch of orphans from



*Some members of Boys' Club at Coney Island.
Dick Waite second from left, second row.*

some home."

On by train to Springfield, a night with hosts there, and back home to Middlefield and return to the business of milking cows, feeding the pigs and chickens, weeding the crops, and harvesting the hay. But we had "seen the world" and liked what we saw.

There was yet another trip to New York - this time by night boat from Hartford, Connecticut, the details of which seem to have been lost in time.

Fully half of the original members are known to have died. The whereabouts of others, if they are living, is not known. Those who are living and who have contributed to the preparation of this "history" include Ralph Bell, Amasa Graves, and Richard Waite (all of Middlefield) and Russell Ferris of Westfield.

On November 19th, 1976, Ralph and Elia Bell celebrated their sixty-fifth wedding anniversary here in Middlefield. When they were married, the suit Ralph wore was made by the David C. Coe tailors, fulfilling a promise made by Mr. Coe that he would give a suit of clothes to the first member of the Middlefield Boys' Club to be married.

There certainly were many other experiences in the relatively short history of the Middlefield Boys' Club which should be recorded but, unfortunately, they have been forgotten. Before it is too late, we want to record as best we can these experiences that meant so much to those of us who were members of our Club. We offer a belated "Thank You" to the memory of all parents and friends who supported our activities; to David C. Coe and his associates, to Rev. William Estabrook for his steadying influence. And especially we pay tribute to the memory of Miss Alice B. Church, who made it all possible.

Members of the Middlefield Boys' Club

Ralph Bell	Middlefield	Paul Nickerson	?
Luke Benis	Deceased	Harold Pease	Deceased
Cecil Brown	Deceased	Ralph Pease	Deceased
Alfred Churchill	Deceased	Roland Pease	Deceased
Alfred Cone	?	Merrick Stockwell	Deceased
Carleton Cone	?	Richard Sweeney	Deceased
Russell Ferris	Westfield	William Sweeney	Pittsfield
Amasa Graves	Middlefield	Richard Waite	Middlefield
Joseph Kelley	Florence	Henry Curley	?
Elias Lyman	Deceased	(A summer resident)	

...

Granville's Loyalist Minister: Rev. Jedidiah Smith

by Helena Duris and Barbara Brainerd

It is well known that the town of Granville, Massachusetts, distinguished itself during the Revolutionary War by sending a large number of patriots to fight for the cause of independence. Not so well known is the fact that this same town harbored within its rustic borders a gentleman who was a Loyalist - a sympathizer with King George III of England. In a series of strange and sometimes bizarre events, this man was dismissed from his position as pastor of the First Congregational Church, packed up most of his worldly goods, rounded up some fifteen members of his family and emigrated to the remote territory of Louisiana.

Jedidiah Smith was born in Suffield, Connecticut, and graduated from Yale in 1750. On December 1, 1756, he was ordained as minister of the church in Granville. He was given a settlement of one hundred dollars and a salary of fifty dollars which was later raised to seventy dollars. He married, and purchased from John Spelman ninety acres of land on which he built a house and settled down to the chore

of raising a large family.

The first years of Jedidiah's ministry in Granville were peaceful and profitable ones. He was an excellent preacher and fostered for a while a revival of religion, adding to the church thirty new members in the year 1757 alone. Gradually, however, he fell under the influence of Rev. Solomon Stoddard of Northampton, Massachusetts, who advocated, among other things, that "all adult Members of the Church who are not scandalous" be



"The Parsonage" built in 1751 by Rev. Jedidiah Smith.

allowed to take communion. This aroused the anger of many who felt that "Stoddardianism", as it was called, was far too liberal for the Congregational Church. They felt that only persons who were "regenerate," that is, avowed to be in the spirit of Christ, should be allowed the privilege of communion. Council after council was called in to advise and heal the difficulties with the Granville church, but without effect. On April 16, 1776, the town voted "that Mr. Smith should be dismissed," and he was dismissed accordingly on that same day.

History does not record the attitude of the townsfolk concerning Rev. Smith's Loyalist leanings. Certainly such a patriotic community must have expressed some disapproval, but there are other reasons which must have contributed to his desire to depart from the area. For one thing, he had seven sons who would have been liable for enlistment as soldiers in the Continental Army if the family were to remain in Granville. Also his good friend, General Phineas Lyman of Suffield, Connecticut (a well-known Tory, by the way) offered to Rev. Smith a large tract of land in Louisiana. The ties with General Lyman were further cemented by the fact that his son had promised marriage to one of Rev. Smith's daughters.

The group of emigrants was increased by the addition of four more persons. Rev. Smith's brother, Elnathon, who was married to Hannah Bates of the illustrious Bates family of Granville, had been away in service with General Lyman for two years. He now wrote a letter requesting that his wife and three children be allowed to accompany Jedidiah's family to Louisiana where Elnathon would meet them and all would start a new and prosperous life together. Thus, counting Jedidiah's wife and ten children, there were sixteen Smiths who set out from Granville for Middletown, Connecticut. From there they

intended to sail down the Connecticut River to the Atlantic Ocean and to follow the coast around to the mouth of the Mississippi River.

Only one of Rev. Smith's sons did not go along on the journey. This was Jedidiah Smith, Jr., who was already married and living in Blandford. Sumner Gilbert Wood, in his *Ulster Scots and Blandford Scouts*, refers to Jedidiah, Jr., as "a most important functionary in the history of the town," and, evidently not wishing to sully his name with the taint of Toryism, states that he "probably differed from the political sentiments of his father."

From the very beginning the voyage of the Smith family was marked with trouble and tragedy. At Middletown their departure was delayed for some time since the vessel they were to board, co-owned by the notorious General Lyman, was suspected of harboring British officers who were escaped prisoners. After the arrest and then the release of Lyman, the family finally was able to sail from Middletown about the middle of May. They endured a "boisterous passage" to the mouth of the Mississippi and up the river as far as New Orleans. Here they met with more delay. At the time of their arrival the Spanish authorities had placed in effect a quarantine due to the presence of small pox, and it was not until the middle of August that the family was able to procure a small craft to take them up the river to Natchez. Their vessel had gone no more than two miles when a sudden squall arose, nearly capsizing them. They were successful in making an emergency landing at the estate of an English gentleman, with whom they decided to leave a great part of their belongings (furniture, farming utensils, bedding, wearing apparel, and library), since their small craft was over-laden.

At that period the country was settled only for a short distance above New Orleans and then at scattered intervals.

Finding accommodations for the large family was often difficult. The weather was extremely warm with showers two or three times a day, exposing the group to alternating hot sun and cold rain. After fifteen days of this discomfort, they arrived at Fort Adams, about four miles below Natchez. It was here that they received the tragic news that Mr. Elnathon Smith had died. To add to the family's distress, very shortly thereafter Rev. Smith was seized by a violent fever. Aggravated by the inclement weather and the uncomfortably crowded conditions aboard the small boat, his condition worsened rapidly. Jedidiah became delirious and, in a fit of frenzy, leaped into the river. Although he was saved from a watery grave, the drenching heightened his fever, and seven days later, without ever having regained his "rational senses", he died. The date of his death was September 2, 1776. He was buried at Natchez on a high cliff, two hundred feet above the river, in the then common burial ground. His grave, along with others, has since fallen into the Mississippi River so that the remains of this once-prominent Granville citizen have completely disappeared.

The band of travelers, now deprived of

both heads of the family, suffered greatly from privations of every kind — from sickness and from the raids of savage Indians. Furthermore, the property which they had left with the English gentleman near New Orleans was confiscated by the Spanish authorities since England was now at war with Spain. No aid was ever forthcoming from the formerly friendly General Lyman nor from his son, the Smith girl's intended husband.

The saga of the Jedidiah Smith family ends here, but, although unrecorded, the luck of the unhappy group apparently took a turn for the better. The Delaware Art Museum in Wilmington, Delaware, contains a portrait of Calvin Smith who was the youngest son of Jedidiah and was born in Granville. He is portrayed as a prosperous, middle-aged gentleman, quite clearly a success both economically and socially. Over the years descendants of the Smith clan return to visit the "home town" of Granville. The most recent visitor was Mr. E.D. Ogden of Natchez. It is evident that in spite of hardships and tragedies, the progeny of Jedidiah Smith, Loyalist, of Granville, have become respected and prosperous citizens of the states of Louisiana and Mississippi.

The main source for this article is a hand-written record labeled, "*An Interesting Account of Jedidiah Smith.*" The author is unknown. The document was found in the office of the Town Clerk of Granville.

Material was also taken from the following:

Walker, Williston. *A History of the Congregational Churches in the United States.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903.

Wilmington Society of Fine Arts. *American Painting and Sculpture.* Anneville, Penn.: Lebanon Valley Offset, Inc., 1975.

Wood, Sumner Gilbert. *Ulster Scots and Blandford Scouts.* West Medway, Mass.: 1928.



Me and Jim

contributed by Bertha Bronson

This poem and story was taken from a 1966 copy of the magazine "Good Old Days", and was penned by an unknown author for an old time phonograph record, in the 1860's right after the Civil War.

*We were both brought up in a country town
Was me and Jim,
And the whole world seemed to frown
On me and him.*

*At school we never was given a chance to learn,
Or be Jim's friend,
And we both wore patches on our pants,
Did me and Jim.*

*But we both grew hearty, hale, and strong,
Did me and Jim.
We knew every note in a thrush's song,
Did me and Jim.*

*We knew where the bluebirds built their nests,
When Spring tipped over the mountain crest,
Why the robins all wore solid vests,
Did me and Jim.*

*Then we fell in love,
As most folks do,
Did me and Jim.*

*We was out with the same gal though,
We two,
That's me and him.*

*And she treated us both alike did she,
At a quilten party or huskin' bee,
We were even up in the race you see,
Was me and him.*

*I popped it first, and she answered me no,
Jim followed suit, and she wouldn't have him,
and told him so,
Forbidden fruit we called her then,
And I'm afraid we cussed a little, and then: —*

*We prayed she would live and die a plain old maid,
Did me and Jim.*

*Then the war broke out, and Company B
caught me and Jim.
We were both on a trip for the Union, see,*

*was me and him,
And we heard the screech of shot and shell,
The snarl of the guns and the rebel yell,
And we followed the flag through the battles of hell,
Did me and Jim.*

*'Twas the day we fought at Seven Oaks,
Death came to Jim, and excuse me please,
but I sorta choke,
Talking of him.
For his rugged brown hand I held in mine,
Till his soul passed out in the picket line,
Where an angel waited to count and sign,
The death of Jim.*

*Then I fought on till the war was done,
without poor Jim,
Was given a sword instead of a gun,
And I thought of him.*

*I wore an eagle when mustered out,
On my shoulder strap;
And I faced about for my whole life's route
But not with Jim.*

*I was quite a man in the country place
I left with Jim.
She gave me a smile with a blessing face,
And asked about him.
And I told of how as a soldier brave,
He fought and died, as she sat alongside.*

*And so I kissed her because she cried,
Kissed her for Jim;
Then I married her one bright day in June,
For me and Jim.*

*And often under the stars and moon
We talked of him.*

*And after awhile when the baby came, a boy,
And him wantin' a name,
We just called him,
Jim.*



Nooney Obituary

contributed by Frank S. Nooney

The story of the life, activities, and accomplishments of James Nooney, one of Chester's most unusual sons, is now all but forgotten. Only a few distant nephews and nieces are familiar with it, he having left no posterity. Some of the older members of the family have, over the years, acquired bits and pieces of information about Uncle James, but the most complete available account of his life is contained in a eulogistic obituary which apparently was published in a now unknown area newspaper at the time of his death in 1865. Let that account tell the story:



Obituary Upon The DEATH OF PROFESSOR JAMES NOONEY - 1895

CHESTER'S REMARKABLE SON

*Astronomer, Scientist, Linguist, who lately
died at the Old Homestead on Chester Hill.*

James Nooney, probably the most noted man born and reared in Chester, recently died, well advanced in his 85th year, at the home of his boyhood where for over ten years he had led a singularly recluse life. Notwithstanding that his active work had brought him into contact and sympathy with eminent men in various walks of life, Mr. Nooney absolutely sequestered himself from the world in his last years, and could not be persuaded to appear at the church centennial celebration at Chester Center last October. Chester is one of the most modest places in New England, and yet she has a pride in Professor James Nooney, when she remembers that the United States government chose him as astronomer and mathematician in running the boundary line between Mexico and this country in 1849, and again in locating the

northwestern boundary between Great Britain and the United States in 1850-60. This was Nooney's great service, but he was through his whole life a most useful and excellent man.

James Nooney was born on Chester Hill, near where Charles Ingalls now lives, in a house since demolished which the old residents called "the house on the hill". It had been a hotel. His birth occurred August 12, 1810, and he died very near the same place, on Good Friday, and was buried in the old graveyard on Easter Sunday. It is an interesting coincidence that an astronomer should die and his remains be laid to rest on anniversaries determined by astronomical calculations. Nooney's family was originally Irish, like many of the settlers of Murrayfield, as the territory which comprised nearly all of the

present towns of Chester and Huntington was called. He was a hard working farmer's boy, and had to labor and save in every way to enable himself to get an education, for he had no help from home. He was twenty-eight years old when he was graduated at Yale College, and he had so distinguished himself that he was appointed before graduation to be professor of mathematics in the United States Navy and was ordered to join the sloop *Erie* on June 29, 1838, and did so, without waiting to receive his diploma. Professor Nooney remained in the navy for two years, cruising in the Gulf of Mexico in the Gulf Squadron, and stopping at various ports. He returned from this service in 1840, and was appointed tutor at Yale, and remained until 1843. From 1844 to 1847 he was professor of mathematics and natural philosophy in the Western Reserve College, then located at Hudson, Ohio.

Professor Nooney spent some years travelling over our whole country. He has traversed every state except Rhode Island. Why he should have left out "*little Rhody*" does not appear, but he did. He had been over every territory, and a considerable part of this journey was made before 1848, when he was appointed astronomer and mathematician on the southern boundary survey. This work occupied him somewhat more than a year. While engaged in running this boundary between Mexico and the United States, Professor Nooney possessed himself of a piece of the coral of which was built the fort of San Juan de Oliva, at Vera Cruz, taken in our Mexican War. Afterward, Mr. Nooney went to California and in April, 1850, he was engaged in laying out a new city in association with the surveyor-general of the state. He was later elected county surveyor, and also ran private surveys at a high price, obtaining for one job \$15,000. In June 1852, he went to Australia, sailing from San Francisco as commander and half-

owner of the ship *Orpheus* of 1000 tons burden, carrying 150 passengers. He took lading for traffic in Samoa, where he stopped twelve days, and he also touched on the Hawaiian and Fijian Islands. Returning in March, 1853, he visited many of the South Sea Islands; at Honolulu he sold his ship and returned to San Francisco as a passenger. He sailed to the Bahama Islands in March, 1858.

Professor Nooney was again called into the service of the government in April, 1859, being appointed astronomer on the joint commission of the United States and Great Britain to settle the northern boundary line, on the 49th parallel between the Pacific and the Great Lakes. The Reverend E.C. Haynes of Chester writes:

He joined the commission at the point where the 49th parallel intersects the waters of the Pacific. His work was to establish astronomical stations, and under his direction monuments were set to mark and fix the points along the line. In August of 1859 he passed a glacier of one or two miles in extent, and 100 or 200 feet thick; solid blue ice like the great glaciers in the Alps, and about 6000 feet above the ocean level. In September 1860, he was on the summit that divides the waters flowing into the Atlantic from those flowing to the Pacific. He could in five minutes drink from the brooks running in the different directions. There the Missouri is a small brook, which he could step across. So also the Saskatchewan which empties into Hudsons Bay. The great Columbia rises near that place, and flows to the Pacific southwesterly. The great Colorado rises a little south of that point, and empties into the Gulf of California.* The mountain peaks arose nearly a mile above him, and two miles above the level of the ocean, and were clad in snow all summer. It snowed on those peaks, while rain was falling for three days in the little valley where he then was. There was erected an observatory and

an astronomical instrument was set up, and by the most careful observations and calculations the exact position of the 49th parallel of latitude was there determined. A stone pyramid was erected to show the dividing line in all time to come. It was probably from this point that through an instrument along the swath cut to run the line that he could see the Pacific Ocean.* He finished his work of actual surveying on October 25, 1860. But he found it necessary to make copies of all field notes and computations. To this end he began and continued a dreary march of 35 days, often enveloped in snow, and nearly all the time drenched with rain, swimming great rivers now and again; he arrived in good health December 1, 1860, at Colville Depot, Washington territory. There he spent a comfortable winter preparing his notes and calculations for transit to Washington, D.C.

Professor Nooney left Colville March 4, 1861, and the journey consumed more than a month; he rode 400 miles on horseback, arriving at San Francisco April 10. He found awaiting him orders to go at once to Washington and make the report of his survey, which, of course, he did. He then returned to California, where he did much public service. He was for some time superintendent of the public institute, and he was engineer of the Humboldt Tunneling Company in 1863, and carried on the calling of surveyor in California for some fourteen years. Returning to the East, Professor Nooney made his home for sev-

eral years in New Haven, and lived in Springfield on Allen Street for a year. He then went to Florida, where he remained a few years, and suffered from a serious attack of yellow fever, which hurt his health. Then he went to Kansas as a place where he would find a remedial climate, but there fever and ague drove him away. After a brief stay in Michigan, he returned



to the old homestead on Chester Hill, on the Cook Brook Road, and there passed his last ten years from October, 1884, until this spring, when he died at a venerable age. He was a man little known by his neighbors, and yet one without any pretense. Seclusion became in a sense a habit with him and he was not present at the notable anniversary of the Center Church last October. But "like all true students", writes Reverend Mr. Haynes, "he was ever reaching upwards. He continued his studies up to the time of his last illness. He was a fine linguist and studied the Bible in various languages and was a member of the College Church in New Haven."

*Note: It will be apparent to some that there are inaccuracies in the Reverend Hayne's letter, particularly with respect to the topography of the area where the 49th parallel of latitude crosses the Rocky Mountains. For instance, the Pacific Ocean is not visible from any point in the Montana Rockies because of distance and intervening mountain ranges. The "summit" of the Continental Divide mentioned probably refers to Triple Divide Mountain in what is now Glacier National Park. Waters from that area do flow northeast to Hudson Bay, southeast to the Gulf of Mexico, and west to the Pacific Ocean. They do not flow to the Colorado River and the Gulf of California. Tributaries of the Missouri, Columbia, and Saskatchewan Rivers do rise there but not the main rivers. These inaccuracies were undoubtedly due to a lack of knowledge about what was then a vast, wild, and remote region.

The Pine

by William Rose

*There's something calm and majestic
Something wild and still sublime
Lovely, sweet, and all fantastic
Rare especially is the Pine.*

*Oaks are stalwart, maples useful,
Willows weep their tears sublime
All have beauty, grace, or strength, but
None more glorious than the Pine.*

*Most trees change from green to crimson
As the summer turns to fall,
While the Pine through every season
Is most changeless of them all.*

*Always green, the Pine in winter
While her comrade trees do sleep
Protects, it seems, her sleeping sisters
By the vigil watch she keeps.*

*Elm trees shade the dogs and horses,
Just as hemlocks serve the steer.
Does the Pine tree offer shelter?
Yes! for partridge and for deer.*

*Ash is hewn for sleds and sleigh pins,
Walnut beds will last for time;
But the houses that we live in
Are the best when built from pine.*

*Only groans we hear from hickories,
Alders ne'er give aught but creaks;
Oh, for more trees like the Pine tree
With its constant whisperings sweet!*

*Should the Maker of all nature
And the Keeper of all time,
Bid me which tree is my favorite
I'd say - "Maker, 'tis the Pine".*

with permission

Varied Green

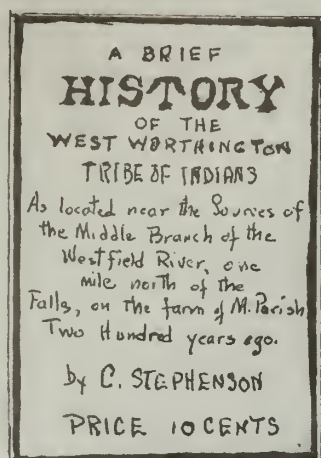
by Madeline Hunter

*I wish for unfettered freedom
For a varied-green meadow
With a motionless willow
That weeps in joy, not sorrow
Whose gnarled roots have penetrated the soil
And give account of the years.*

*I seek the comfort of wisdom
I seek an ancient farmer, a discovering child
I seek the greened meadow that rocks
That rocks a regeneration rhythm
That rocks the message of our time
That rocks in peace
That will be juxtaposed
With the cradle of civilization.*

Drawing by Michael Rubin.

West Worthington Indians



This tiny booklet, 2½ inches by 3¼ inches is spotted and yellowed with age. It once belonged to Mrs. H.G. Porter and is now in the possession of her grandson, Mr. Edward Porter of Worthington. It was printed in 1881 by J.M. Stearns, Dalton, Massachusetts.

Chauncey Stephenson, the author, was a quaint old character who traveled about peddling salve from a basket that he carried on his arm. The entire contents of the booklet is quoted herewith:

Chapter 1 Location, Rock Formation, &c.

This very remarkable spot, the very plain and certain site of a small Tribe of the aboriginal inhabitants of America, is located in the west part of the town of Worthington, Hampshire Co., Mass. about twenty miles west of Northampton, and fifteen miles east of Pittsfield, and directly on the original Boston & Albany Turnpike, so famous for staging before the days of Railroads.

Only half a mile to the northeast of the once famous Snake Hill (so named from the tortuous windings of the road as it ascends the rocky bluff into Peru) there are several large and deep springs of clear, cold water, with the brook issuing from them which constitutes the source of said stream of Rivulet, which after flowing a little over a mile south, descends in a succession of most beautiful cascades, to the depth of more than one hundred feet. The volume of water is not very large except in time of long or hard rains, Spring and Fall when it is considerable, producing a vast amount of splashing and foaming among the rocks: it is the most wild and romantic Sylvan scenery imaginable, and is yearly visited by hundreds from all parts of the Union. This rivulet turns several busy mills, for various wood manufactories, in its course

above the Falls.

The ledge, or rock formation here, is a sort of coarse Schistose or slate, and the course of the stream, north and south, seems to be near the axle of the nearly perpendicular strata, as it was thrown up in the great geological upheaval of a very remote period of time.

The springs and stream above mentioned have been famous for the yield of the "speckled beauties". A middle aged man; Mr. A. Granger, has told the writer that he had formerly taken therefrom trout that weighed two and two and a half pounds each, and in early times people have taken them still larger, through the ice on the pond, with their hands.

This remarkable favorable location was doubtless found by the Indians at some very remote period; either by ascending the stream from Westfield and Huntington, or, which I think more probable, by the eastern route through Swift River, (where the relics mentioned in the following chapter have been found), East and West Cummington, and Jordanville, to the famous trout springs already described and to the pitfalls near them; to be described in the next chapter.

Chapter II Pitfalls, for catching animals, &c.
The face of the country around the seat of

these wild sons of the forest, like all of New England lying between the back of the main rivers, is broken into high hills and ridges of abrupt and rocky ledges.

The ancient pitfalls of this small tribe, or family of Indians; which I shall take as a central ground in this description, is situated in a kind of natural basin of about one mile in diameter, of dry gravelly soil, very clear of stone, and about twenty rods east of the stream. There are two of them in number, arranged in northerly and southerly directions and about three rods apart, the north one being somewhat the largest, they are oval in shape; in the polar direction, from two to three rods in diameter; old residents say they have formerly known them when they were fifteen feet in depth, although in the process of culture around them they have been filled up with stone and earth to within about six feet of the surrounding surface.

In searching the primitive Forest for some further indication of its former occupants; on about the same level as the pits, I discovered the head and foot sources of what was doubtless the GRAVE of the Chief.

These stones showed very plainly the agency of human hands, not only in the settling of them, two feet in the ground, (they rise about two feet and a half above the surface), but also the shape of the stones, being very heavy, with a broad base in the ground. The top or exposed part, seemed to be rounded somewhat like a post, which was evidently done by percussion with other stones, and not with iron or steel instruments.

Numerous relics of this people have been found in the vicinity: such as flint

arrow-heads, stone hatchets, etc.

Their burial ground, it would seem, was some twenty or thirty rods north, on still higher, sandy ground, where one or more partially decayed skulls have been found.

Their corn field, of which the Indians always had one, was on level ground, about eight rods north-east of the pits, of nearly an acre in extent. This was found well cleared up when first settled by the Whites.

Their wigwams were doubtless built in a shallow excavation similar to the pits, at the east end of the corn field, for the convenience of watching the same.

The number of these Indians probably never exceeded one hundred, and perhaps not more than half that number.

The scarcity of game, caused by the gradual encroachment of the Whites, doubtless led to their withdrawal, or union with some other tribe.

This was the only settlement of Indians, except the Stockbridges, in Western Mass. so far as my knowledge extends.

With one suggestion as to the probable method of digging these very large pits, I now close my sketch. As we all know, they had no metallic utensils or implements of any kind, and no means of making boards or planks. I think they might have taken a large flat stone of the best quality for the purpose to be found in the vicinity, and by fashioning in their way, made a very good hill digger or scraper, and then by attaching strong thongs of bark or rawhide, and with a team of a dozen stout Indians, and with one of the largest and strongest to hold it, excavated the dirt, a bushel at a load, with considerable celerity.



Hayden Pond

by Doris W. Hayden

I am so grateful to Howard Mason and *Stone Walls* for making information about an up and down sawmill available to me. I had seen the original at Mr. Mason's some time ago and spotted the section which was reprinted in "*our magazine*" and wanted to get a copy of that part of it.

My interest stems from the fact that John Brockett, my husband's ancestor, bought eighty acres of land in Blandford in 1793 out of Farm Lot #43, known as Birch Meadow Lot from the brook running through it. Instead of making the brook a boundary on the west, he owned across it which seemed at first unusual. However, on thinking things through, it was evident he intended to dam the brook with the cooperation of a neighbor, perhaps James Campbell, who owned land to the south in Farm Lot #44.

A pond, later known as Hayden Pond, was made and a canal constructed from the lower end to a mill erected on the neighbor's property. For many years real estate tax records show that John Brockett owned one-half interest in the mill. Later on, his descendants were owners.

The mill is long gone although I know its site. I am sure it was operating for many years. On reading diaries of my father-in-law last winter, I came across entries referring to the mill in 1864, with the board feet sawed on different days. He sometimes operated the mill all night long. I believe it was still in use for many more years, but have no sure proof.

Hayden Pond is no more. The City of Springfield bought all the land along the west side of Cobble Mountain Road a few years ago. They installed a pumping station in Huntington and a huge pipeline to Blandford to carry water, when needed,

from Littleville Reservoir into the swamp above Hayden Pond. This would then flow into Cobble Mountain Reservoir. Because authorities in Springfield declared it to be a "dirty pond", it was drained and only the brook remains. When the dam was removed, a big chestnut log was found in which the "gate" had been placed.

The pond was a wonderful place, though. In early spring the peepers nearly burst themselves with their shrill, constant calling. One night my son said, "Mommy, can't you stop that noise?" The best I could do was close the window.

At one time suckers ran up the little feeder brook to spawn. We had a wise old mother cat who always went down and sat by a narrow place ready to scoop out a fish when it went by. She was pretty adept, too.

Redwing blackbirds, squeaking like rusty hinges, with black ducks and colorful mallards doing "tip-ups", were always there in the spring. Once I saw a pair of small black and white bufflehead ducks. Occasionally there would be a blue heron standing stiffly to catch an unwary frog. Bitterns, too, were there at times, looking for all the world like dried out bits of wood sticking out above the pond weeds. Their calls sounded like the working of an old time pump.

Several times otter were seen playing in the water but they never stayed long. In later years, beaver came and built their complex houses. My husband was not too happy about that because they raised the water level and flooded some of our best hay land. When disturbed, a flat tail slammed against the surface of the water, sounding like breaking a board in half crosswise.

Dragonflies darted above the pond and water striders made dimples on the surface. A look down through the water revealed other life such as pollywogs in various stages of development, newts, and small schools of fish. We did not swim there because of the possibility of encountering leeches — ugly things! There were also water snakes seen at times. Swallows would do a sort of ballet dance above the pond in summer, swooping down to catch the insects just above the water. Kingfishers, too, made sudden dives to capture a fish. From my living room window, I often looked across the pond to see a row of glistening shells of big turtles sunning themselves on an old log.

In winter, the pond was a safe mecca for skaters. No public maintenance there! The skaters cleared off the snow themselves when necessary. I have seen perhaps fifty skaters, young and old, at one time — amateurs with their new Christmas

skates wobbling around, tumbling down, but picking themselves up and trying again, also experts moving along so easily and gracefully. If the ice was right on moonlit nights, the air was filled with shouts and calls — with a bonfire or two to take the chill out of fingers and toes.

One might paraphrase "*This is the house that Jack built*" and say:-

"This is the mill that John built.

This is the pond, that ran the mill than John built.

These are the fish, that lived in the pond, that ran the mill that John built.

These are the kingfishers, that caught the fish, that lived in the pond, that ran the mill that John built."

And on and on, ad infinitum.

What about the ecology of the area? Who can say that draining the pond was good or bad? I am not an expert on such matters but I do know I miss a lot of enjoyment.

Story of a British Deserter Daniel Prince

by Virginia Ladd Otis

A favorite place for hikers to visit in Williamsburg, close to the Goshen Line, is Burgoyne's Cave. The wild place of cliff and tumbled rock received its name because of a visit by the British general and some of his men on their way to Boston after their decisive defeat at the battle of Saratoga in 1777.

One can reach the cave from the end of Old Clary Road, where a grassy wagon road proceeds to the woods. Another approach is made by a straight climb from Route 9 beginning past the steep cliffs on the left, if one is heading north from Williamsburg to Goshen. Just beyond a settlement of small houses, where a stream

flows under the road, a woods road leads past the cave site, a distance of perhaps half a mile.

The cave is screened from the road by hemlock trees, but ribbon markers show its location. There is no *cave* here at all, and a better name would be Burgoyne's Cliff or Cleft! There is a narrow canyon between the parent cliff and a great slab which fell off some little time ago and stands four to six feet away, completely open to the sky. If the men slept here, they slept up and down hill, as the floor is not level! A little brook flows nearby, and the spot is very cool, having a northern exposure with the sun seldom penetrating the shade of hem-

locks. Burgoyne's men camped there in October, and perhaps they saw the same kinds of birds we did on one occasion — pine grosbeaks flying through green shadows, bright as butterflies, and a flock of golden-crowned kinglets, lispings their joy to be alive.

From the Williamsburg History we gain this amusing incident concerning the British soldiers who camped here: "On his way back to Boston, General Burgoyne and a few straggling soldiers took shelter in a cave on the Clary farm. In the morning this unwelcome company entered the kitchen of the farmhouse, then owned by Samuel Barber, and snatched the milk jars from the shelves. In their eagerness, they spilled all of it, making it necessary to go on to Haydenville for breakfast under the old oak at Fairfield's Tavern."

Evidently one British soldier liked what he saw at this place, for, as the history relates, he "dropped out from the irregular line of march at Springfield and returned to Williamsburg. There an old road leading to Goshen, he built a log cabin. Later this man, Daniel Prince, married a Miss Packard of the neighborhood and reared a family. Among them were twin sons, James and Daniel, born in 1785."

The site is close to the cave, and to find it, we continue on the old road and look for a break in the stone wall to the north, where an old sapping road passes through. This leads through a brushy area to an opening, where a hollow in the ground is marked by a triangular stone three and a half feet high and two to three feet wide.

The marker of granite faced with schist was erected by William Miller, a great-great grandson of Daniel Prince, probably in the 1930's. The marker is inscribed with a drawing of the British flag and the words:



Nearby there is a rounded ledge on which is inscribed, also by Miller, BIRTH PLACE... PRINCE TWINS.

In the vicinity one may find a site where granite posts were quarried and cut, samples still lying on the forest floor. Walnut Hill towering above us beckons the ambitious climber, for it is covered with handsome trees, relics of chestnut trees, and cliffs which have sheltered many generations of porcupines. When the leaves are off the trees, one can look across to the high rise dorms at the University.

Burgoyne's Cave is a fascinating spot which sets one's mind thinking over the events of Revolutionary times, when this British soldier decided to become a citizen of a new country.

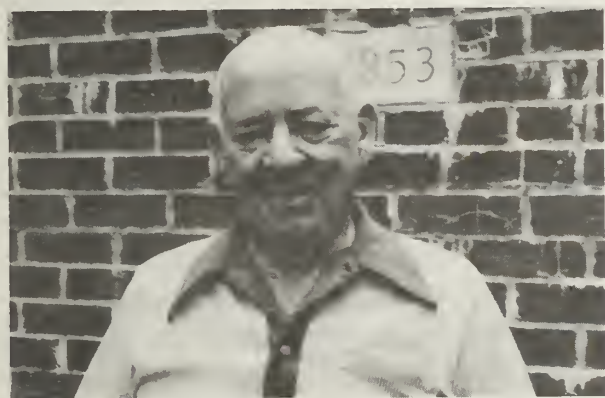
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Henry Snyder

by Lois Ashe Brown

The following includes excerpts from an hour long visit and taping with Henry H. Snyder at his home, "Brickhaven" at Worthington Four Corners. His wife of sixty years, the former Eva Decelles of Adams, died in early March and he lives in semi-retirement in the home they had built in 1951 after they sold the business and home they had built up in Christian Hollow.



Henry H. Snyder at "Brickhaven" Worthington, June 1977.

Photograph by Lois Brown

"In all the world, is there a place where you would rather live than in Worthington?" was my first question. "Right here in Worthington...best place on earth... acres of diamonds in my own back yard," replied Henry firmly and without hesitation.

Born in 1895 on the Snyder farm over on Trouble Street close by the Worthington-Cummington town line, Henry attended the old Coon District School with his brother and four sisters. He speaks fondly of the annual reunions with his Coon District classmates and tells of one time when he and Eva entertained them at dinner and then took them on a bus ride around town

to visit familiar landmarks of their youth.

His father, whose name he bears, was crushed to death by a falling tree when Henry was only nine. After that, as man of the house, he grew up fast, working at a variety of jobs. "My first job paid my board and room, 50¢ a week and a red handkerchief...not much," he said, "But it was one less mouth to feed at home." He speaks lovingly of his mother and her hard work and kindness to everyone.

By the time he was eleven, he was working for his board and room and five dollars a month for Dr. Streeter in Cummington doing chores and driving a team of horses to Williamsburg hauling apples. Henry says he worked so hard that Mrs. Streeter was worried and urged her husband to put on a helper. Arthur Barlow was hired to help but Henry says they fooled around as boys will, and he chuckles as he confesses that he did more work alone than they ever did together.

At home by the time he was thirteen, he was cutting enough hay to feed eight cows and a horse all winter, besides cutting wood to keep the family warm. At the same time, he was working out for the neighbors. With his late brother-in-law, Lou Sweet, he worked for three years on Miss Eleanor Ferguson's place tending the farm and the orchard.

It was a 1915 stripped-down Ford truck chassis that changed the course of Henry's life. "A couple of fellows from Adams had used it to pull a plow on Cummington Hill where they were raising potatoes to get a farm deferment during World War I. When they finished and left town, they gave the truck to me for kindnesses my mother had done for them," recounts Henry. "By then, I was courting Eva and

needed a horse, so I sold it to a fellow over in West Worthington named Jones. He paid me \$25 and I bought a horse with it. Well, in the spring Jones couldn't start the truck and he told it around town that I had stuck him. The word got to me and I went over and told him that if he thought I had cheated him I'd buy it back. So I did. I took a kettle of hot water to it, pulled up on the crank and it started, jes' like that."

With that truck, minus any modern accessories, Henry tells how he worked nights and weekends hauling grain, coal, cattle, and collecting scrap iron that he sold in Albany. Meanwhile, he was working as an apprentice carpenter for Charlie Kilbourn. Soon that was taking too much time from the sideline he was enjoying and he began to be absent from his carpentering job. "Finally, Mr. Kilbourn said to me, 'I like your work and I want you to stay, but either you work full time for me or not at all.' I went home that night and talked it over with Eva and she urged me to do what I thought best. So I gave a week's notice and went to trucking in earnest."

"Shortly after, I was offered the job of driving the mail stage, travelling to Pittsfield every morning and to Northampton each afternoon. I carried the mail to Hinsdale and Williamsburg, delivered the mail along Star Routes and did personal errands in Pittsfield and Northampton."

"Only once did I ever borrow money, and that was the time I went to Frank Sears over in Cummington. He gave me the money I needed with no note or anything. He said, 'If your word's no good, then you're no good.'"

"I started selling GMC trucks fifty-two years ago and for a long time I was my own best customer. Even now, I average about three trucks a week and my customers come to me. I give 'em a good deal, save them a few dollars, and make enough to pay my taxes. Often I sell a truck with a

very small down payment but I have never been cheated or lost a cent. Once I sold 48 school busses to Carl Wallin of Hinsdale all at once. That was some order!"

For a number of years Henry hauled cars from Buffalo to dealers all over this half of Massachusetts. He got his first account by going to Mr. Shapiro in North Adams and offering to buy a car carrier from him. By contracting directly with the car dealer he cut out the middleman and had all the business he could handle. Then the War came along and there were no more cars to haul.

"There I was stuck with seven car carriers. But you know my friend, Eddie Carroll who owns Riverside Park? Well, with gasoline rationing and people unable to get to his amusement park in Agawam, he had to figure some way to save his business. So he bought all my car carriers and by putting sides on them and putting in seats for seventy people, he converted them into half-assed sight-seeing busses. He charged for the ride, admission to the park, for a hot dog or two, and for rides and made a good thing on those busses. After the war, he sold them for junk."

"Did you ever play golf, Henry?" was one of my questions that set him off on another good story. "Yes, just once. It was a time out at the Hinsdale Club when I was trying to sell something or other and was having a party. I stepped up the tee and hit a ball. . . it may be going yet, never saw it again! I had a fine set of clubs Marie Stone had given me but I never got around to using them and she finally said she knew someone who would use them if I wasn't going to, so I gave them back to her. 'Course I kidded her about being an Indian giver."

We talked about the new water line being laid through town. Henry recalled when the first one was put in back in 1910 and he tells of teamsters with pairs of horses and scoops digging the ditch for the pipe; and he remembers again in the

years of World War II when it was replaced. "This is the third time," says Henry, "and now we'll be lucky if we can get some money from Mr. Carter for a sewer line."

Over the years, Henry H. Snyder, Inc. had a part in hauling every kind of commodity in these parts. "For more than twenty-five years, I sent three milk trucks to Springfield without ever missing a day, besides having other trucks picking up milk from the hilltown farms. I must have driven over two million miles myself and I've never had to show my license," he proudly reports.

It was during World War II that Henry contracted to haul beans from the York Farm in Cummington to New York City. "One of my drivers took a load of beans to the city, pocketed the money, and abandoned the truck in the woods near Westfield...never saw him again but I was lucky to get the truck back. Then another of my drivers, Rob Bartlett, salt of the earth, hauled groceries for me from Springfield to stores all over western Massachusetts and one day when he lost a case of corn, he insisted on paying for it. Nothing doing, I said. If a man hauls over

a thousand loads as you've done and never loses more than a case of corn, I call that pretty good."

"Do you like Worthington better now than fifty years ago?" was my next question. Without hesitation, Henry said it was better then.

"Back when I was a selectman and assessor, I knew everyone and called them by their first name. I got around to all the homes in the spring and was welcome. Now there are so many strangers. Every house in this neighborhood has changed hands in recent years and folks come and go. So many good people lived in this town...don't ask me to name them for I would surely leave out some that have done a lot of good here."

"What would I do different if I had my life to live over? Well, I think I would do exactly the same things again. I've really enjoyed my life; I've earned enough to pay my bills and made a good living. We have a wonderful daughter...my wife worked as hard as I did, - harder even, and I could never have made it without her. Eva and I went to Florida three times, but we were always glad to get home. Yes, it's been a good life here in Worthington."

• • •



Surprise

by David Lynes

It all started July 21, 1977, when I asked my mother to wake me up at nine o'clock but she said,

"Oh, no you don't. You're getting up early to weed the corn patch."

"Humph!" I said. Then I went to bed.

Sure as you're a foot tall she woke me up nice and early to weed the corn. Then we went up to the Medical Center to see if there was a doctor to look at my ear. There wasn't, so we went to my grandfather's to ride the horses. After we had saddled and bridled them we went for a ride.

First we went through a field of baby Christmas trees, then through one with larger trees where there was a robin's nest in a tree in the corner of the patch which my mother and I had been watching to see if the eggs were hatched. We looked and sure enough they had. By that time the deer flies had found us and the horses, so we trotted down a cleared stretch to try to get away from the bugs.

Then we decided to go down to the blueberry patch. When we were almost there we saw *one Mama bear and three babies!!* The babies went up a tree and the mother

took off, much to our surprise, but we didn't stay. We left in a hurry because horses are very scared of bears. We went back later on foot to see if we could find



any tracks. We did and the track was as big as my hand.

I'm sure glad my grandfather doesn't allow hunting!

•••



Unforgettable Person

by Grace L. Wignot

She is a very old person now and her closest friends are no longer living. Her younger friends are busy or too far away to visit her often. Memories of her are so deeply engraved in my heart and mind that, were I to try to forget her, it would be impossible.

Sometimes in the whirl of a busy life in a busy town, I feel that I must shut out all the confusion and be alone with my thoughts. I must make sure that I am not allowing some the most worthwhile things in life to pass me by. It is then especially that thoughts of Aunt Mary come to me. They are vivid pictures of the time when I was a very young girl enjoying experiences which are a delight to recall. My parents were not living, and perhaps I appreciated more than the average child, the attention of adults. Surely no invitation could ever have seemed more important than an invitation to spend a week-end with Aunt Mary.

When I arrived, preparations were being made for our luncheon together on the porch of the cozy little cottage in a woody spot adjacent to Sanderson Academy. It was a secluded spot of natural beauty. The pine trees, maiden-hair fern, little flowers appearing among the fallen pine needles, and little animals and birds made it a place to enjoy. I loved to explore paths, seldom trod, that were hardly visible. After a quick trip into the woods I would happily return to the steps leading to the spacious porch and into the big living room with a fireplace. From there I would go through bedrooms and into the kitchen where our lunch was nearly ready to be served. Every dish was prepared with care and little added touches to make it attractive. I was given the task of setting the table. With a bit of supervision I placed each piece of silver in

its proper place. There were candles on the table a centerpiece of wild flowers and ferns.

It would be improper to rush through such a meal in such surroundings. We ate, chatted, and watched the chipmunks and listened to the birds in the fringe of the nearby woods. "Doing dishes" in the lamp-lighted kitchen later didn't seem to be a chore. A sharing of work as well as pleasure with such a person seemed to me a very pleasant experience.

What impressed me most and remains vivid in my memories were our evenings together. We would draw the shades, light the lamp, and settle down to a cozy evening by the fireplace. Aunt Mary would arrange a chair with a table near by for me. On it would be a copy of the *Readers' Digest*. Then she would get her sewing basket and settle down in her favorite chair. When she started sewing, she would suggest that I read aloud to her. I am sure the one who gained most from the reading was me, for I then discovered the joy of reading but I was made to feel that I was giving her a great deal of pleasure.

Sunday was a very special day to Aunt Mary. As much of the preparation of meals and of the household tasks that could be done was accomplished on Saturday. Sunday was set aside as a special day for rest and enjoyment. We would have a delicious breakfast in the morning before going to church. The afternoon was always devoted to correspondence. That letter contact with warmth and love expressed in her letters gave joy, I am sure, to each person who received one.

How pleasant it is to work about one's daily tasks and recall memories of such joy and inspiration given to me by a special friend in the little town of Ashfield.

Settlement of Chester

by William S. Mills

Excerpted from *Chester Folks: the Founders of the Town, their Ancestors and Descendants.*

Mr. Mills loved the country, particularly the farm he had acquired and named Overdale. He would tramp for hours over his acres, and in doing so became interested in the people whose land bordered his and in their ancestors, a fact which can well be understood since he had written at least one book on "Genealogy" which the Chester library carries. He would spend days searching records and his face would glow as he told of discovering dates and names which had eluded others. One would see Mr. Mills in Chester at holiday times and in the summer months, for he was a schoolman from Brooklyn, New York. He and Mrs. Mills often visited one of the Stevens homes (William or Willis F.) when he would sit by the hour on the piazza overlooking pure nature. Coming here first in 1902, he spent much of his available time around Chester for twelve to fifteen years. It was during this time that he compiled the book on Chester Folks found in our library.

Clara Stevens Rose

The first settlements in the town were between the East and Middle Branches of the Westfield River. Among those between the West and the Middle Branches of the Westfield River was Lot No. 44, the particular tract to which this history relates.*

After the land had been surveyed, the Proprietors proceeded to make terms of settlement, and to assign settlers by the plan of drawing lots. They drew their own lots and at the drawing on October 1, 1763, John Murray drew Lot 44, among others, owning in all nineteen lots in the town. The Surveyor, Edward Taylor of Westfield, reported that Lot 44 was 160 rods long (east to west) and 100 rods wide, and contained 102 acres and 80 rods.

After the settlement, the prospect of war with the mother country increased, and during the progress of that war, it became known that three of the five proprietors of Murrayfield were Tories. On October 16, 1778, the General Court of Massachusetts passed an act forbidding the return of those persons "who had gone over to the enemy", and among the per-

sons named in that act were John Chandler, Abijah Willard, and John Murray. The town of Murrayfield held a meeting in November of 1778 and voted to petition the General Court "to have the Tory lands in this town sold at private sale".

This was done, and as a result of a law passed by the Great and General Court of Massachusetts April 30, 1779, and amended in that year and in 1781, declaring confiscate all property of Tories, three men, namely, John Kirkland, David Smead, and Benjamin Bonney, were appointed a committee to sell at auction the John Murray confiscated Lot No. 44.

The sale was held at Norwich, Massachusetts March 7, 1781, and it was sold to the highest bidder, the Rev. Aaron Bascom, the first settled minister of Murrayfield, for 25 pounds. The State gave him the deed August 31, 1781.

Jessie Wright and Hugh Quigley each bought half of this lot from Rev. Bascom in 1784 and in 1786 respectively.

There is on record the laying out of a road leading from the north line of Lot 44,

six rods east of Hugh Quigley's house, north about 50 rods to the road that passed the house of Quigley's brother-in-law, John Hamilton. It was "two rods west of Hamilton's barn". This was in 1788. . . . This date of the beginning of the road makes it highly probable that the stone

walls still standing in part, were built or begun the next year, 1789, the first year of the Presidency of our Republic. I think of the walls being as old as our United States of America.

*It was on this lot No. 44, that Mr. Mills "Overdale Farm" was situated.

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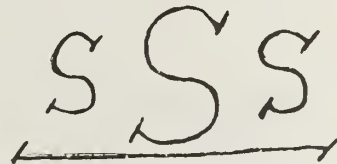
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BARBARA BRAINERD lives in Blandford and teaches at Westfield High School.

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“In a properly built stone wall each rock sits squarely on the ones below it, and so long as gravity keeps pulling on every stone in it, that wall is going to stay put.”

— JOHN VIVIAN

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