

CHAPTER II

CHANGING TIMES

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new."

—ALFRED LORD TENNYSON.

The changes of the past few decades and the realities that are ours today make the tales of wonder of the Arabian Nights seem dull in comparison. We have our airport and our "magic carpets" fly us to distant parts in almost no time at all. Now nearly all our streets and highways are hard-surfaced, over which our horseless carriages in ever greater numbers whisk us to anywhere at the touch of our fingertips. We have our radios that bring us the news of the world almost as fast as it happens. An inventor's dream four decades ago, we now have our television sets that bring into our living rooms great moments when history is being made, or the lighter side of life. All this leads us to wonder how our forebears got anywhere at all. But theirs was an economy based on self-dependence, and life was simpler then. Each one's world was smaller, his needs nearby, and his hopes and aspirations led him to the fulfillment of his dreams. And perhaps we may say that life for him was richer and more true than in this age of discontent and the search for the far-off attainable, and sometimes the unattainable. He had time to live!

These changes affect every aspect of human life in the home, in the town, and in the world at large. At no other period in history have changes been so rapid and involved as since the early 1930's. Today one often hears some of the older residents of the town say that they are glad to have lived early enough to have known the old American way of life as well as the new, for, while much has been gained by the changes, something of intrinsic value has also been lost in the tides of time and in the name of progress. Something less hurried has gone out of living. Admittedly, the good old days were not all good; neither were they all bad.

The early 1930's were at the turning point in Jaffrey's sociological, economic, and political histories. The second and third generations of the new immigrant families had attained their majorities and were assuming places in the town's active citizenry. These new elements in the population, principally those of French-Canadian descent, along with those of other European extraction, were be-

ginning to come to the forefront, while the older stock, basically of Anglo-Saxon origin, was thinning out. The new elements have amalgamated into every facet of community life and enterprise, contributing to Jaffrey's growth and well-being.

This change began in some measure nearly a hundred years earlier when the westward migrations of the sons and grandsons of the pioneers left something of a void in the town. The lure of the cities soon attracted the Irish immigrants who replaced them on the hill farms of Jaffrey for a brief pause during and after the 1845-1847 Irish potato famine. After the Irish came the German immigrants who for some years occupied the farms in the northeast quarter of Jaffrey and many of whom remained in Jaffrey for the rest of their lives. Their sons and daughters intermarried with the other Jaffrey families and have descendants living here today. Then came the Italian and Finnish immigrants, to be followed later by Lithuanian, Swedish, Polish, and other European nationalities. There is no antipathy or discriminatory feeling and all are devoted Jaffrey residents, many holding positions of honor and trust within the gift of the town, while others are professionally engaged. Jaffrey presents a well integrated cross-section of peoples.

But even more far-reaching than the sociological changes are the economic ones. Once essentially an agricultural town, today Jaffrey is becoming suburban in character, with only a few of the original farms in active operation. While most of the original homesites are still occupied, the land is no longer cultivated as it was in the family farm era, when every landowner was monarch of all he surveyed and provided his family's livelihood from the land. Today the supermarkets provide the necessities of livelihood for most of the people. Fresh fruits and vegetables from the home gardens have been replaced by imported produce, and even the so-called "kitchen gardens" have almost disappeared. The villages are stretching outward. As one travels along the black-topped highways that have replaced the dirt roads of yesteryear, one unexpectedly come upon a house, here and there, half hidden in the renewed forest growth where once was a field. The present generations are seeing the last of the open fields. Few people today have the time or the will to keep them cleared. Nature is reclaiming that which once belonged to her.

Most of the tillers of the soil and keepers of cattle and sheep are gone. Like the builders of the town, they were a race of hardy men to whom the fragrance of new mown hay drying in the sun

and the earthy smell of a newly plowed field were sweeter than all the gums and perfumes of Araby. Few here may see their like again, for the pursuit of agriculture in a suburban economy is not possible today. The hillside pastures where cattle were grazing in 1933 have given way to brush, and little pines growing taller year by year began peeking over the stonewalls as the bucolic sound of cowbells was fading away. In 1933 the plowman still guided his horsedrawn plow along the furrows of brown earth to eke a livelihood for himself and his family. But the horses soon after left the fields, never to return, going where old horses go, as the mechanized rumble of tractors began to be heard across the fields. But, with few exceptions, even that is changed now, and much of the idyllic charm of many a Jaffrey landscape has gone with the wind.

The summer and fall of 1967 are indicative of what is actually taking place. Never in the history of Jaffrey have so many hayfields been left uncut or untilled. And Nature is not prone to stand still!

THE AGRICULTURAL DECLINE

In 1933 Jaffrey was still a dual town, agricultural and industrial. The centralized populations of its villages contributed to the industrial drama, while the pastoral hillside scenes proved that all was not yet lost in the whirlwind of change already taking place in the national economy, which left many towns less fortunate than Jaffrey gasping for breath. But even here a new dawn was appearing over the economic horizon.

As the selectmen made their inventory rounds in the spring of 1933, they tallied forty-nine farms in active operation, most of them the so-called family farms which have been declining nationwide in recent years. Thirty-five or forty years ago a man with eight or ten cows could make a comfortable living farming. Today he needs at least forty good cows.

The tax list reveals that in 1933 there were over forty cattle herds on Jaffrey farms, ranging from a few head to the largest herd of twenty-nine cows on the Jason C. Sawyer farm. Second in line was the twenty-five cow herd of Hiram E. Cutter. The total bovine number as of April 1, 1933, was 406 head of over-two-year-olds. This figure does not include the contingent of young stock not of taxable age found on every farm. As of April 1, 1967, the selectmen found only 175 head of cattle over two years of age, the largest number on the Jason C. Sawyer farm operated by his son, Richard P. Sawyer, a Cornell School of Agriculture graduate. His total

herd numbers 140 head, including 77 milking cows. The other remaining herds were on the farms of Edwin E. Cutter, son and successor to Hiram E. Cutter, named above, and David O. Jewell, and on the Lehtinen farm. The second largest herd of over seventy head owned by David L. Van Blarcom was dispersed in August, 1966, leaving only four dairy farms in Jaffrey. More recently, Peter B. Davis, who purchased the Blick or Lawrence farm in 1965, has set up an Ayrshire heifer raising program on his farm.

In the 1933 economy ten or a dozen cows comprised a good-sized herd and kept the fields and hillside pastures cleared. In this category were George R. Brown with 10, Hiram E. Cutter with 25, James H. Fitzgerald with 12, Charles Jurva with 15, Fred W. Moore with 17, Jason C. Sawyer with 29, and Felix Sirois with 13. It was also the era of the family cow, sometimes referred to as the foster mother of the human race, with some forty-five households owning one or two family cows. Today there are only two family cows left in Jaffrey, one on the Carlos T. Pierce farm and the other owned by Renouf Russell on the former Wesselhoef farm. In 1933 all the milk consumed in Jaffrey was produced on Jaffrey farms; today nearly all of it comes from out of town. There remains only the small scale retail dairy business on the Lehtinen farm.

The following is an animal inventory at five-year intervals covering the past thirty-five years:

	1932	1937	1942	1947	1952	1957	1962	1967
Cows	367	337	272	260	229	205	222	162
Neat Stock	43	29	28	23	24	20	13	13
Horses	147	93	87	81	59	54	17	3
Oxen	2	4	6	—	—	—	—	—
Sheep and Goats	28	28	—	—	12	118	49	—
Hogs	46	11	5	—	4	—	—	—
Fowls	1705	2685	2616	6675	12615	19760	22000	17000

In the 1930's and 1940's many who maintained summer estates in Jaffrey also engaged in either major or sideline farming activities, with year-round managers on their farms. Among these the largest enterprise was that of Miss Georgina P. Yeatman, noted architect, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, who had a going farm known as Chislehurst Farm on the shoulder of Mt. Monadnock for over twenty years. In 1953 Miss Yeatman moved her herd of registered Guernsey cattle to Beaufort, N. C., where she continued her dairy enterprise, and the following year sold her extensive Jaffrey holdings to William L. Shearer, III. The Chislehurst Farm is now the



THE SAWYER FARM

property of Henry Wheeler, Jr., and is known as Woodcock Farm. The late Dr. Charles S. Mills, D.D., of Hartford, Conn., and Jaffrey, developed a herd of Guernsey cattle of choice strains on his estate known as Brechinwood Farm and found a ready market for his quality dairy products. This herd was dispersed after his death in 1942. Isaac Sprague of Wellesley Hills, Mass., whose summer home was at the foot of Mt. Monadnock, and is now known as Birchtoft Lodge, maintained a herd of Guernsey cattle. There were others who operated farms on smaller scales.

The humble kine, besides being utilitarian creatures, also rendered valuable service to the town in keeping its landscapes cleared and beautiful. In the changing agricultural picture is the conversion of a few former dairy farms into roadside stand vegetable businesses. These include the Howard Doten farm and the former Jurva farm now operated by Archie L. Coll, Jr., who raises many acres of sweet corn for his growing trade.

Thirty years ago, and even later, a flock of laying hens used to be a feature of every farm and many a village home had a small flock for a continuous supply of fresh eggs and chicken for a Sunday dinner. Today the order is in the many thousands or none at all. The Coll Poultry Farm of Archie L. Coll, Sr., was the Jaffrey pioneer in the large scale poultry business, and with his full capacity in use would be able to carry on a 30,000 bird business. Other poultry farmers today include Daniel C. Shattuck with several thousand hens, his sole interest being market eggs; and Robert H. Schulze, formerly of Providence, R. I., who purchased the Emerson Chamberlain poultry farm on Prospect Hill, and who specializes in the production of hatching eggs. Archie L. Coll, Jr., raises roosters and also has laying hens.

Lumbering operations, once an important factor in keeping the forest growth in balance, have declined during the past few decades. In by-gone days one could occasionally see clusters of lumber camps near woodlots where portable sawmill operations were in progress, and the piles of sawdust nearby indicated the extent of each operation and furnished bedding material for the stock of neighboring farmers. In 1933 there were four sawmills, including the stationary one at the mills in Squantum. Today not a single one remains and the forests are moving in closer and closer. The last portable sawmill operating in Jaffrey was in 1954 on the so-called Dean farm where Joseph Deschenes sold the standing timber along Old Peterborough Road. After that it was a common sight

to see heavy trucks loaded high with logs passing through the main arteries of the village to the stationary sawmill at Squantum, so long as it remained, or to the towns below. Today these trucks are few and far between. All the lumber used by local woodworking mills is delivered ready sawed into boards and planks.

Tree farming is gaining interest among Jaffrey residents who own woodlots. A tree farm is a privately owned woodlot where the owner practices good forest management and conservation, recognition of which is indicated by the occasional "Tree Farm" signs on these properties. The long range objective of scientific practice is to produce a continuing high quality timber crop from the land, with other multiple use aspects if the owner desires these. The program comes under the auspices of the New Hampshire Tree Farm Committee of the Granite State Forest Industries. Nationally the program is sponsored by the American Forest Products Industries, Inc.

The late George H. Duncan was the pioneer tree farm operator in Jaffrey. His farm contained 460 acres. Alfred P. Sawyer, successor to Mr. Duncan's farm, operates 425 acres. Other tree farm operators include Thomas B. Buffum, off Lincoln Corner Road, who has 150 acres; Mrs. Clarence Hillsmith, Thorndike Pond, with 65 acres; and Copeland Draper in the Gilmore Pond area, with 100 acres.

Manufacturing-wise, too, the town has undergone changes. In 1933 tacks and nails, cotton cloth, and wood products were the chief items of manufacture. Since then nylon and other artificial fibers have replaced cotton, and, while tacks and nails remain, plastics, electronics, and matchbooks have been added. (See Manufacturing.)

In the 1930 decade the usual rate of pay was thirty-five cents and fifty cents an hour, depending on the type of work involved. Hay-makers and foremen on jobs were usually paid fifty cents an hour. Twenty dollars a week was considered a good week's pay. But toward the end of the decade wages began their upward spiral, as was evident at the 1937 annual Town Meeting. At this meeting it was "voted to pay a minimum wage of forty cents per hour to all employees of said Town employed by town agents or officials of said Town as highway labor in any capacity or description." At the same meeting a \$1.30 rate per hour was established for "trucks hauling one and a half yards of gravel or sand when employed by the town."

The old order has changed in living costs, too, as every house-

holder knows, yet, according to published figures, during the twelve year period from 1955 to 1967, food prices have increased about seventeen per cent, or much less than nearly everything else and half as much as wages.

These are some of the vicissitudes of one New England town, and Jaffrey is attuned to the changes the years have provided since the early 1930's, but even here the turbulence of the world has been felt. These are some of the things of life as it was lived that have passed from the worldly scene, perhaps never to return except in dreams of the long ago.