

## CHAPTER XXII

### ANECDOTES AND OTHER THINGS RETOLD

In today's affluent living, little things that made lifelong unforgettable memories in the lives of many of our older citizens no longer are a part of childhood experience. People are too busy to devote time to similar acts of kindness and neighborliness. Besides, in today's society, many would look askance at such little acts of kindness as worthless trivialities. Be that as it may, but those who have lived early enough to have had these experiences treasure them as hallowed pages in their lives' totality. They added a fuller meaning to childhood life that matured into responsible citizenship. Riots and demonstrations of today were unheard of things that would have horrified the most wildly imaginative persons of the day.

#### "UNCLE BEN"

Benjamin and Mabel Wilson did not have children of their own, so, in a way, they became attached to the children of their neighbors on the Turnpike Road. The Wilsons lived and farmed on the former Col. Benjamin Prescott farm, and the Alfred Sawyers lived "next door". To the Sawyer grandchildren, Roscoe and Jason, and the latter's children, Benjamin Wilson became "Uncle Ben". When Roscoe was still a small boy, "Uncle Ben" was in the milk business and made daily trips to the village with his load of milk. Invariably, he would buy a newspaper and a five cent bag of peanuts to eat on his way home. Sometimes on his return trip, as he passed the Sawyer home, he would call to young Roscoe, "Hello, Roscoe, want some peanuts?" and give the boy three or four peanuts. Delighted with his treasure, Roscoe ran into the house and hid the peanuts in his mother's sewing machine drawer and helped himself to them, one at a time, through the days.

#### MARY DEAN

Life was different in the 1910 era when a greater measure of kindness and neighborliness pervaded society. Even safety on treks along country roads was taken for granted then. The Lehtinen children had a mile and a half to trek to and from the district school, No. 9, and later three miles to and from the village school, morning and afternoon. Sometimes on the homeward walk they met Mary Dean, wife of William Kendrick Dean, who lived on

the former Elijah Smith farm, now known as the Dean farm. Driving home with her horse "Kitty" from a trip to Peterborough, at times she stopped her horse to hand them a bag of goodies. To the children it was a happy occasion and enshrined Mary Dean in unforgettable memory.

Her beneficence was not limited to neighborhood children but even to children in the village. Often, when she was in the village, she passed out candy and goodies to children in front of the Davis, Taylor store and Post Office, later the Fred L. Cournoyer store.

#### TAKING THINGS AS THEY COME

Philip and Ora Gilbert lived in the house now owned by Charles H. Griswold. He was a surveyor of lumber for Bean & Symonds, Inc. She ran the White Brothers' boarding house on the site of the present Dillon Block, accommodating 35 boarders and some 75 dinner guests from the mill close by. It was getting near dinner time and she went to the garden in back for some cucumbers. She had waited for two weeks for Marie Louise to arrive, and now while she was still in the potato patch Marie Louise did arrive, weighing all of ten pounds, and just in time for dinner! She called to her husband, Philip, who with Mrs. Alexcina Belletete who lived across the street, got her into the house.

Dr. Franklin Humiston, who was called for medical services, admiringly remarked: "A gift from God. She was born with a smile on her face."

Marie Louise (Gilbert) Hines, who was born on August 29, 1907, now lives in Athol, Massachusetts, and enjoys telling of having been born in a potato patch.

#### FROM SMALL BEGINNINGS

To get started in a business in the Gay Nineties was a hard-work proposition, as Elie Belletete found out. Ten hours of his week days were spent working in White Brothers' mill. On Saturdays he worked until four o'clock in the afternoon. He had set for himself a goal of raising \$500.00 to start himself in a grocery store business of his own. For his work in the mill he received \$4.50 a week. A suit of clothes in those days cost \$4.00, and when one had to be bought there was not much of a remainder. To supplement his mill earnings, he carried on a barbering business at his home on Peterborough Street in the evenings, charging ten cents for a hair cut and five cents for a shave. He managed to save the \$500.00 in

order to start his retail grocery store business on North Street in 1899, which he carried on to the end of his 83 years in 1954.

The present Belletete's Supermarket is an outgrowth of the grocery business started in 1899 by Elie Belletete, father of Homer and Reynold Belletete, present owners of the business.

### A HOLE IN THE GROUND

A hole or excavation on the wooded hill, formerly the French farm now a part of Silver Ranch, across from the D. D. Bean & Sons Company match shop, is still (1970) plainly marked even though its walls have begun to cave in during the past hundred years. Its origin was related by the late Alfred Sawyer, whose lifetime spanned almost a century, to his grandchildren and great grandchildren. According to the story as told by Mr. Sawyer, a group of Italian workmen, who were employed in the construction of the Monadnock Railroad (now Boston & Maine) a hundred years ago, lived in the excavation, which had some kind of covering over it, apparently timber and sod. The original measurements of the excavation appear to have been about twelve feet square and six feet high.

Later use of the excavation is said to have taken place during World War I, when it was supposedly used for the storage of provisions during the spy and Dean murder episodes.

### LUCIA AND LUCY

To Lucy Carpenter we are indebted for the following story. As a child of eight years on a library visit she told librarian Lucia B. Cutter that she did not want to get old.

Lucia Cutter sat her down on a chair and explained: "It's this way: When you are eight years old, you do not do the things you did when you were two. When you are thirteen years old you do not do the things you did when you were eight. And when you are sixty or seventy you do not run and play like you did when you were eight. It is this way with life. You grow and the things you do change."

It was a lesson and philosophy which Lucy never forgot and has helped her to accept the challenge of the years as she has grown into womanhood.

## DR. FRANKLIN G HUMISTON

(See Volume I, pp. 639-642; Volume II, p. 420.)

Following the funeral of Dr. Franklin G Humiston, Jaffrey's beloved physician, in early January, 1913, the sympathy of the townspeople was extended to the bereaved family in many ways, for Dr. Humiston was a dedicated physician.

One incident involves the arrival of a Jaffrey woman, whose identity is not remembered, who came to the Humiston home on a condolence call on the doctor's widow, Carrie R. (Tarbell) Humiston. Unable to say what she had in mind to say, she started weeping profusely. Instead of being consoled, Mrs. Humiston tried to console her visitor.

"He was only your husband, but he was MY DOCTOR and I have had sixteen children," weepingly replied her condoling visitor.

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The writer, then a young girl, remembers well the sorrow that pervaded her father's home when news of the good doctor's death was received. It just simply did not fit into her childhood philosophy that a man whose mission on earth was the healing and curing of the injured and the sick, should himself fall victim to disease and death. No doubt, this feeling was duplicated in hundreds of Jaffrey homes at the time. Even the passage of time and circumstance have not effaced the good doctor's memory and his many acts of extraordinary compassion among the sick.

One such incident is recalled from the household of the late Perkins B. Mead whose life hung in the balance when Dr. Humiston arrived. The doctor rendered his medical service, and seeing that Mead's life seemed ebbing fast, pulled up a chair by the bedside, took the sick man's hand in his own and held it for some length of time. This act of the doctor gave the ailing Perkins B. Mead the necessary strength to pull through and he lived to a ripe age of eighty years, dying in 1933.

"LIGHTNING NEVER STRIKES TWICE"—?

The first of the following episodes was corroborated by the late Adelia Bacon and Marion (Baldwin) Leighton, daughter and granddaughter of Oliver Bacon and Luke Carter respectively.

Oliver Bacon lived on the present Lehtinen farm and Luke Carter was his neighbor on the place now owned by Sterling

Chamberlain in Hadley. On the 4th of August, 1872, thunderheads moved rapidly from behind Monadnock and the sky blackened ominously as Luke Carter came up the road with a load of hay.

"Luke, you'll never make it home before the storm breaks. Better drive your horse and hayload into my barn to wait out the storm."

Carter realized the truth of his neighbor's advice and did so. The storm broke out in all its fury. Lightning struck the barn which Bacon had just finished in time for the summer's hay crop. It killed Carter's horse and undermined part of the underpinning of the barn and passed down the iron rods used in the suspension type of construction of the barn. Although the bolt passed through a hay mow, it did not set fire to it.

"If I had gone straight home my load of hay would have gotten wet but I would still have my horse," remarked Luke Carter rather ruefully after the storm.

On the 4th of July, 1942, just seventy years later lacking one month to the day, the barn was again struck by lightning during a violent storm that lasted all evening and well into the night. When it abated, the writer's brother went into the downstairs cowbarn to see that all was well but returned "all shook up" as the writer's prize cow had been killed by lightning, which also wrecked the entire water system in the barn. This time the bolt of lightning had split rafters on the north side of the barn roof, torn holes in the south side roof, and entered the cowbarn along the iron suspension rods. Splinters of wood were found several hundred feet away from the barn, but no fire was started.

Strangely, two other places were struck by lightning that night, including a pine tree near the residence of Sven Johanson and a pine tree on the Roy Johnson farm, now owned by John A. Johnson. The latter was almost shredded into kindling before the bolt entered the ground at its base. Significantly, all three places were in a straight line, "as the crow flies."

### A DIFFICULT JOURNEY

Following his purchase of the Charles S. Chamberlain farm near Gilmore Pond, the late Harry Mack also bought the so-called Levi P. Towne or David Chadwick farm in the extreme south part of Jaffrey bordering on the Rindge town line. The Cape Cod type house was old and abandoned but it still had good lumber and material in it. He sold the old house and corn barn to Dr. William

F. Wesselhoeft who lived in the northerly part of Jaffrey near Thorndike Lake.

Elmer Eaves and Ernest Harling were engaged to take down the old house and carefully they dismantled it, marking each piece for re-assembly at the Wesselhoeft farm. Harold Royce trucked the material including the chimney bricks to the Wesselhoeft place with his Ford truck and there it was put together again to become the cottage occupied many summers by the Leverett Saltonstalls of Boston.

The old corn barn, however, framed with heavy timbers firmly tied in place, was moved intact over the road by Fred Putnam. Straddled on old discarded telephone poles, with wheels underneath, Putnam and his two-team hitch made the downhill journey to the Will Cutter house, now replaced by the James Balentine house, without mishap, but there, as if reluctant to proceed further, the straining and pulling of the four horses could not move it. The Harry Mack team was brought and with six horses pulling, it slowly moved along Gilmore Pond Road and finally reached the foot of South Hill where once more the horsepower gave out. The Wesselhoeft team was dispatched and the eight horses succeeded in moving it up the hill, through Jaffrey Center Village and along Thorndike Lake Road until it came to rest at the kitchen end of the main house. There it was remodeled to become the kitchen of the Wesselhoeft house.

It took four or five days to make the five mile trip and while on the road each section of the road was closed to traffic, which in 1919 was not the problem it would have been today.

### STRANGER THAN FICTION

Stories of the attachment of animals for man are unlimited and Jaffrey has at least two such stories of dogs that became despondent following the deaths of their master and mistress.

The first of the present accounts is that of the late Hugh Forsen's dog Sultan, who developed a strong devotion for Hugh's father, Edward Forsen, who lived on the former Abel Parker farm, more recently known as the Bell place. When the elder Forsen was stricken with his last illness, Sultan became a very uneasy dog and insisted on being allowed to stay in his master's room. When the elder Forsen died, Sultan, it seemed, was the chief mourner, and when the casket was brought out of the house following the funeral service

and placed in the hearse, Sultan disappeared, never to return. No trace of him was ever found.

Another story, this one only a few weeks ago, involves the Wilfred Varville's dog, Lassie. During the funeral of Alice (Christian) Varville in St. Patrick's church, Lassie was left at home. For a day or two after the funeral she was nowhere around. Someone suggested going to the cemetery to see if she might be there, and, sure enough, there lying between the flowers they found her on her mistress's grave.

How do they know?

### THE RABIES SCARE OF 1896

An exciting episode in the history of Jaffrey came to light from a letter written on August 29, 1896, by Mary Wellman, who later became the wife of Leslie H. Whitney. The letter, now in possession of Esther (Hyrk) Spofford, whose husband, Carl C. Spofford, was a nephew of Mary (Wellman) Whitney, states that on awakening that morning the first sound she heard was a gunshot, and that intermittently through the day gunshots punctuated the day's routine. The tally: Fifty-five cats suspected of rabies which those people wished to have destroyed. The number of dogs that were shot is not known as Mary Wellman was more interested in keeping her own cat out of harm's way.

Interrogation among the older residents of Jaffrey has revealed that the outbreak was caused by someone importing into Jaffrey a dog with rabies that went on a rampage. Annie (Lawrence) Bunce, now nearly 92, a source of the information, does not recall who brought the dog or where it came from.

Cora (Knight) Wright recalled that a young girl named Hattie Mower was bitten by a rabid cat, but no one remembered what became of her. Ruth Humiston recalled that her father, Dr. Franklin G. Humiston, accompanied the victim to a New York City Hospital for the treatments necessary to be begun within a time limit. There was no night train out of Jaffrey and consequently they had to catch the night train out of Troy, New Hampshire. A horse-and-buggy trip to Troy meant speedy preparations. Ruth Humiston remembers the episode very well as she was a school friend of Alice Mower, next younger sister of Hattie. Both girls were daughters of Gilman J. Mower, a farmer who lived on the place on present North Street for many years occupied and owned by Alfred J. Burgoyne. Through her interest and that of Regina

Bassett it was learned that Hattie later married Ralph Bass of Antrim, New Hampshire, and has a son, Donald M. Bass, living in Keene, New Hampshire. The writer contacted Mr. Bass and learned that his mother was in the Odd Fellows' Home in Concord, New Hampshire. Two days later he brought his mother to call on the writer and in the course of the interview she corroborated the above facts and added new ones.

Mrs. Bass, now 86 years of age, recalled the excitement of the rabies outbreak and that her own cat which had been bitten by the imported dog, jumped from the bushes and bit her leg as she was fetching two small pails of water from a spring. She added that a Mrs. Kendall was bitten by the same cat when she stroked it. Dr. Humiston was called to care for the victims and accompanied them to the New York hospital, where, Mrs. Bass recalls, she underwent treatments for two weeks. She also recalls that a calf went "mad" from a bite by a rabid dog.

According to Mary Wellman's letter, Walter Sawtelle's dog "began frothing at the mouth" and had to be shot, and she added that "Jim" Farr's big St. Bernard had been bitten by "the first dog." (James Farr, who married Martha Emory in 1891, lived for many years on the place now owned by Leonard C. Merrill on Stratton Road, and had a daughter Leila and a son Herman, both now deceased.)

The letter stated that the town was to bear the \$600.00 expense of the case.

#### DEATH STALKED IN A BLUEBERRY PASTURE

The circumstances surrounding the death on August 12, 1886, of Charles Stevens, a grandson of Lt. James Stevens of Revolutionary War fame, were not recalled when the family record was compiled for Volume II. He and his brother William P. Stevens, who married Mary E. Stratton, lived on the James Stevens farm for many years owned by Ralph E. Boynton. Even the official town vital statistics give the cause of his death as "unknown."

From a letter written by the late Annie K. (Wellman) Sweatt on August 15, 1886, now in possession of Esther (Hyrk) Spofford, whose husband, Carl C. Spofford, was Mrs. Sweatt's nephew, the facts regarding his death are revealed. Charles Stevens took his basket and went blueberrying in the blueberry pasture "Wednesday afternoon" and promised to be back by five o'clock. When he did not return, Flora, whose identity has not been learned, became

alarmed and went calling for him. Receiving no response, she notified the neighbors and all joined in a search that lasted until eleven o'clock at night. The search was resumed the next morning and toward noon they found him lying unconscious beside a blueberry bush with his basket of berries under his side. He never regained consciousness, and died at the age of seventy years. He never married.

### A FLOWER FOR BOSTON

Five year old Mary Cook, daughter of Milan and Mary Angie Cook of Jaffrey, was standing in her dooryard with a pink dahlia in her hand as Mary Wellman passed the house with her collection of flowers, which aroused the little girl's curiosity. Mary Wellman explained that she was collecting flowers to be sent to Boston where sick little children in hospitals could enjoy them. Little Mary Cook replied, "Say, will you send my flower to them, too?" as she handed her dahlia to Mary Wellman.

The flower collection was part of the mission work of the local Christian Endeavor group and that day, August 3, 1896, three boxes of flowers were sent to Tremont Temple Flower Mission at a transportation cost of seventy-five cents, for distribution to hospitals, jails, and the poor people.

Three years later, on her ninth birthday the day after Christmas, death came to little Mary Cook and there were flowers for her, but her kind deed with the pink dahlia is still remembered through the letters of Mary Wellman.

### THAT CONTRAPTION

When automobiles first came out a member of the prominent White family of manufacturing fame of Winchendon, Massachusetts, was driving through Jaffrey with Governor Long of Massachusetts one day. In the face of a threatening thunderstorm they saw an open barn door at a farm and drove in to wait out the storm. The farmer came out and told them to get out of the barn. The driver of the automobile told the farmer, "I am Mr. White of Winchendon and this is Governor Long of Massachusetts."

The irate farmer replied, "Black or White, Long or Short, get that contraption out of my barn!"

Automobiles of that early day had no tops. The identity of the farmer and the location of the barn have long since been forgotten.

## A FREAK BOLT OF LIGHTNING

Harry Wellman of Boston tells an interesting episode in the life of his uncle, Frank P. Wellman, who for twenty-five years served as Town Clerk of Jaffrey. One day during a thunderstorm, disregarding his wife's advice, Frank Wellman was sitting by an open window and eating. A bolt of lightning came in, bent his silver spoon and knocked it on the floor. Wellman himself was unharmed.