

CHAPTER XXII

ANECDOTES

THE SAWYER FARM

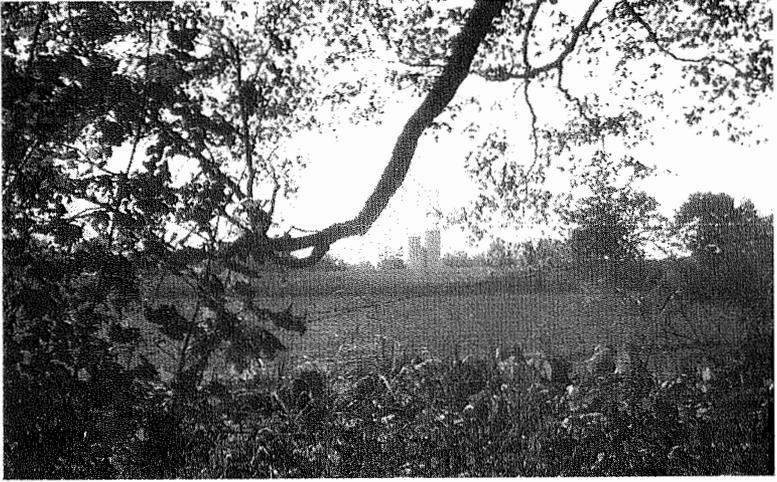
At the Sawyer Farm, 1983 was a good crop year. Corn matured, and the dry matter was high. That fall Peter and Ann Sawyer had their silos full, and every few days the large 24 x 80-foot silo would be topped off with ensilage. At four in the afternoon of October 19, the ensilage was above the staves into the dome. Ensilage is chopped-up corn that is grown on the farm to feed the cows.

Howard Eaves and Linda Moran finished the evening chores around seven and left the barn. At 10 minutes after eight that evening the silo collapsed with a deafening crack that was heard throughout the community. The five-year-old silo fell diagonally across the two-story barn and the hay mow filled with 60 tons of hay, crushing 22 cows and 10 calves.

Help was immediate and generous. Besides the Jaffrey Fire Department, Jaffrey Police Department, the VFW Ambulance service, and the Jaffrey Department of Public Works, ordinary citizens came to do what they could. The first task was to release the trapped cows.

Fortunately the room with most of the milking equipment was spared because the work of running a dairy farm does not stop. Brattleboro Milking Equipment, Public Service of New Hampshire, and local electricians worked through the night restoring the milking lines, electricity, and water so that the remaining cows could be fed and milked at the usual hour of 3:30 in the morning.

It took three days for volunteers to remove the ensilage and to clear away the rubble from the barn and silo. Most of the ensilage was removed to a field and covered with a tarp so that it could be salvaged, although it would have to be checked for nails, pieces of concrete, and other debris. The dead cows were removed by the Jaffrey Public Works Department and taken to the town landfill where they could be buried in the sandy soil, the soil at the farm being too rocky for a mass burial.



Sawyer Farm silos

Volunteers came from all the local churches and especially the Apostolic Lutheran Church in New Ipswich. Many contractors sent trucks, the Cott Company sent soft drinks for the workers, and a farmer offered the use of his 50-stanchion barn although it was later deemed impractical to move the herd. A Greenville farmer sent apple pumice as food for the heifers.

The small garage at the farm was filled with crockpots and casseroles as Judy Sawyer, the wife of Peter Sawyer's cousin, Lee, coordinated the food that was donated for the workers.

The Sawyers were facing a massive bill of \$250,000 to replace the destroyed silo, the damaged barn, and loss of the cows and ensilage. They had insurance on the buildings, but this did not cover a disaster due to a collapse, so they were not insured. The insurance on the cows was about \$600 per cow, and it had been scheduled to increase to \$800 on November 1. It was impossible to sue the builder of the silo because the company had gone into a Chapter 7 bankruptcy, and the firm that made the concrete staves for the silo was in Chapter 11.

Henry and Diana Gallup started a Sawyer Farm Fund to help raise the necessary cash. Elizabeth Yates McGreal, a Peterborough author, suggested that a church accept the donations so the money would be tax deductible. Emily Preston of the United Church of

Jaffrey agreed to accept the monies and deposit them in the fund.

The Monadnock Jaycees donated the proceeds from its annual “haunted house” to the fund. This event was held every Halloween in Cheshire village in Jaffrey. Despite snow flurries and bad weather, a horse show was held on November 5 at Furnace Brook Farm on Appleton Road, New Ipswich. Mary Williams donated her services to judge the events. The monies collected were donated to the Sawyer Farm Fund. A bake sale at the Christmas Fair raised more money for the fund.

The Sawyers were given a calf by the Peterborough Rotary Club to replace one of the Holsteins. Gordon Billipp had arranged the purchase from the Barrett farm in Keene. The herd was replaced through the breeding of their own stock.

Ann Sawyer was an artist and member of the Jaffrey Civic Center Art Group. The Sawyer Farm was used many times for numerous art workshops, and so it was not surprising that the Gallery of Monadnock Artists held a benefit show and sale in Harrisville, New Hampshire. Many of the works that were donated for the sale had been done at the Sawyer Farm.

The veterinarians Tenney, Fritz, and Combs of Peterborough donated 100 cattle magnets, about three inches long, which a hundred of the Sawyers cows were given to swallow. When the cows ate the salvaged ensilage, the metal that was not removed from the feed would adhere to the magnets and not pass through the cattle’s digestive system causing internal damage.

In November 1983 the community held a barn raising, and volunteers rebuilt the destroyed section of the barn. The volunteers started working on Friday, November 11, and by Saturday evening the basic barn was finished. Marc Tieger and Lee Sawyer coordinated the many workers while Judy Sawyer arranged for the feeding of the helpers. Contractors Kenneth Mattson, Albert H. Goddard, and Matthew Traffie brought their construction crews to the site.

Most of the project was handled by professional construction workers, who worked at no cost, along with the help of many ordinary citizens. The frame was installed on Friday with the rafters being raised on Saturday afternoon, and the structure was enclosed by Saturday evening. The remaining work was done in the following weeks.

A new silo was built in June 1984, replacing the destroyed one.

The new silo is poured concrete, and it was strengthened with reinforcement rods. It is three inches thicker than the old one and stands at the same height. Life has returned to normal on the farm.

The farm has been in the family since 1858, and Peter and Ann Sawyer are the fifth generation of Sawyers to farm this land. Yet its future is in doubt as small dairies continue to disappear from the New Hampshire scene. In 1960 there were 16 farms in this area, but today there is one. But the "Thank You" on the silo will remain for many years, acknowledging a great community spirit.

CARIBBEAN

The Super Bowl weekend party started early in 1997. On the cold, snowy evening of Friday, January 24, five men, Stephen Pelkey, Richard Pickford, Jeffrey Ross, Charles Gardos, and Richard Hill, left the Atlas Advanced Pyrotechnics building in Jaffrey and headed south to the Foxwoods Casino in Ledyard, Connecticut. Arriving about 1:30 A.M., each set off for his favorite gaming table. Some chose blackjack, one chose the craps dice, and one chose Caribbean stud poker. At 5:10 A.M., Richard Hill was still at the stud poker table when he turned over his five cards to reveal a royal straight flush that made him the winner of a \$203,000 jackpot.

The men shared the euphoria of winning for the rest of the morning as they drove home. On Super Bowl Sunday everyone gathered at Stephen Pelkey's home on Nutting Road where they shared good food, family, and laughter right through the disappointing Patriot loss.

NEW YEAR'S EVE CELEBRATION

Traditionally on New Year's Eve, people dress in their finest clothes and go to restaurants, inns, or parties for dinner and dancing. However, for one group of rugged individuals New Year's Eve means donning their winter outdoor clothing, warm boots, mittens, and woolen hats and heading for the home of Gerald and Juliette DeGrandpre on Gilmore Pond Road.

For 25 years or more, the DeGrandpres have led their friends into the woods, either on snowshoes, skis, or on foot to an enormous pile of brush and tree limbs that Ged has gathered throughout the year. No matter what the temperature or weather condi-

tions, the merry band gathers around a roaring bonfire that sends sparks soaring 20 feet into the night sky and salutes the arrival of the New Year with hot dogs and champagne.

When the embers die down the guests return to the DeGrandpre home for Juliette's delicious homemade beef stew, coffee, and deserts. Everyone is frozen but ready to face a New Year.

NECROLOGY

Longevity in the last 20 years has increased because of advances in medicine, nutrition, care of the aging, and possibly living in Jaffrey. The current list of nonagenarians contained 124 names (triple the number in Volume III), of which 16 percent were Jaffrey natives and 44 percent lived in Jaffrey for 30 or more years. It should also be noted that most led busy and productive lives well into their 80s.

The tradition from the past town history volumes has been to give honorable mention to those who have lived 90 or more years. But for the sake of space our list will contain only the centenarians who lived in Jaffrey most of their lives.

Name:	Kathleen G. (Power) Cournoyer
Date of Death:	June 20, 1980
Place of Birth:	Ireland
Age:	102
Name:	Laura M. (Charlonne) Langevin
Date of Death:	Dec. 22, 1994
Place of Birth:	Canada
Age:	100
Name:	Waty Austin Taylor
Date of Death:	July 27, 1997
Place of Birth:	Jaffrey
Age:	100
Name:	Lucy Canfield Gentsch
Date of Death:	Feb. 19, 1998
Place of Birth:	Lyme, New Hampshire
Age:	100