THANKSGIVING DAY WITH FATHER, 1958

(eight numbered pages)

and other

related scenes around

old SIX HUNDRED

and

South Hill

by R.T.

One

FATHER, outside back kitchen door
under shadows from grape arbor:

"What's this? What did

you say?



Two

FATHER:

"Oh, so you want some action,
do you?"

DEC • 58



Three

FATHER:

"All right .... I'll give you action!

DEC • 58



Four

FATHER, pausing after action:
"What did you say? Time to move
around the south side of the
house? All right."



Five

FATHER, having moved to south side of house, thinking:

"I wonder if anybody has thought to gather the eggs?



Six

FATHER, still thinking:

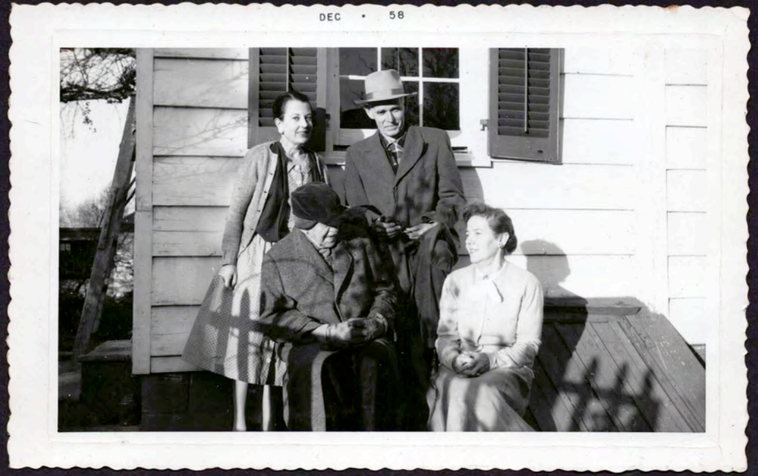
Or fed the chickens?



Seven

FATHER, speaking in answer to question:

"Who said I wasn't smiling?"



Eight

FATHER:

"All right! Let's all smile."



REGARDING the foregoing series of pictures:

I believe these were the last made of Father while the weather permitted outside activity; from this point he transfered that activity, such as it was, to the cellar; then of course that activity ceased. Also to be recalled were the last times he managed to get upstairs to bed, before it became necessary to bed him down in the north room; and I know we can all remember those struggles to get him upstairs when the time came, step by step up that interminable climb; how tortuous it all was, even when big Jim Dove was on hand to help; how two would push behind, and how two would help pull, and how someone would have been dispatched ahead to fly around and get the bed ready, and other things; and what fun it all was, except perhaps for the patient himself, Father.

Again refering to the pictures: for the long time record the names of those gathered in No.6 are as follows, left to right: R.T. Bird; Father (Henry Bird); Allison Albee -- with Hazel Bird behind Father. In the last two pictures Alice Bird trades places with Allison.

Opposite page: familiar landmark in Father's past, the early Milton Point schoolhouse on Milton Road.





REPLAY of familiar young faces of long ago, from left to right: Doris B.; Junius B. B.; Alice E. B.; Roland T. B.





The orignal pictures were taksn by William T. Davis on Oct. 12th, 1912, in front yard, between house and barn. These are copies made with No. 116 camera with greatly extended lens, held in place with tube of cardboard!



THIS is "little Buttercup" taken on a warm day in the summer of 1965 when clothing was a burden -- best completely discarded; thereby proving the point that the most feminine thing a girl can possibly wear, is nothing at all.

I put her here to represent the many other grandchildren and great grandchildren whose pictures would fill several pages if all were available.




JUN • 67


JUN • 67

FATHER would never have forgotten this little area.

Sat. July 1st, 1967

"The afternoon trip down to the old Ryensis site on the Eddie Eagan estate brought these results: 3 pix of Alice & Junius in waist high Tripcicum (spelling?), and 11 larvae: 6 in site under that old oak -- now dead and 5 in area to the east where none have been seen for maybe 30 years!"

From notebook record



1967 VIEW of old Milton Point chapel, after it was taken over by the "Friends." The shingles covering the original siding were put on by my Uncle Will (Bird) when I was still a boy

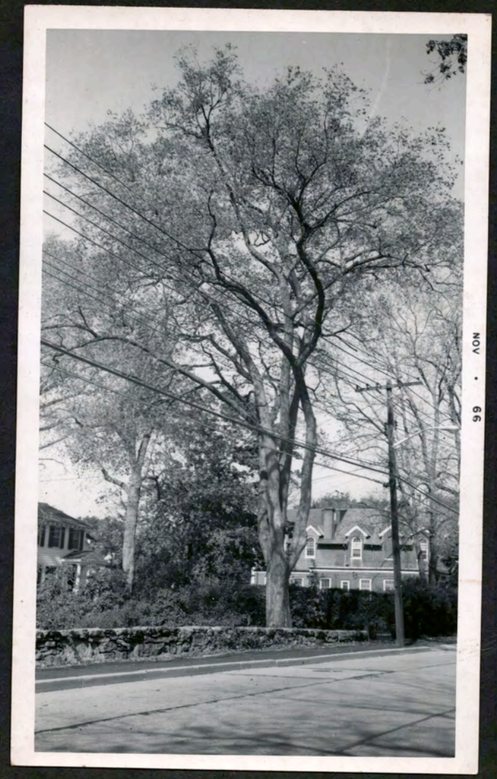


Rear [redacted] of property sold to the "Friends" except this end, with cove. This was the old Park lot bought by Father early in my time. A yellow frame house standing near the road housing the Roach family (colored) was torn down prior to sale. Other pix of this property taken for the record are in my collection.

JUN • 65 •



THE BIG ELM in northeast corner of front yard at 600, as taken in October 1966. Shortly after this, tree was cut down, a victim to the Dutch elm disease



ALICE, with landmark erratic on old Throne estate near Boston Post Road. Father used to tell me the dislodged fragment was only crack free from the main mass when he was a boy; this crack had increased considerable by my time; every winter with its ice contributing by expansion a small mite more to the total. I would say it has gained ten inches since I used to deliver Father by horse and buggy to the Harrison station, and pick him up on his return from New York. I am forever reminded of these occasions when I see the boulder, and I remember the slow long pull it was for Jim the horse, going; and how the decent wasn't much of an improvement because of the steepness of the road there, and the horse had to be reined up accordingly.

NOV • 66 •



• FEB • 67



JUN • 67





JUN • 67



MAR • 67

SITE of "kitchen midden" at Rye Town Park, next to Rye Beach shoreline, as marked by stratum of clam and oyster shells. Picture taken just before site was covered ~~with~~ to fill in space to retaining wall on left. I got a crude scraper here, this day, and might have gotten more had I been physically up to digging with the proper tools. Alas, it was not so, and this is the last item from this spot that has so often proven fruitful in the past. Date: Sept. 5, 1966; Park employee on the bank.



GRANDFATHER SLATER'S hilltop farm outside of Middletown, just off the Donaldson Town Road. I can recall that this house with the windmill behind it was easily seen from the Erie railroad trains when we were coming up from New York, and how I knew from which side of the train to watch from long practice, and when. I can remember how equally well the Erie traffic could be easily seen from the house, and how that was the only feature that appealed to me the first ~~time~~ there, especially after I had been spanked by Mother for some richly deserved reason. I can also recall how Father would come up to visit when he reached the stage that he had to -- for reasons he never made known to me; and how he used to walk out from town from the station, following the railroad tracks; and how on one occasion he scuffed a brand new pair of shoes doing it, and the temporary fuss that was made over it -- only temporary however, in the face of the happy circumstances of his being actually there.

That is Junius seat on the porch rail; I think he was busy reloading his tape recorder. Date of this pleasant wonderful day, summer of 1969



MOTHER was born in this farm house at Currys Corners, above Grahamsville, on road to Liberty. This was on the farm that Stephan may have come back to after the Civil War; at any rate he owned it before he sold out and moved down in the Rondout Valley below Eureka and took over the well known Fuller grist mill, house and property there. I think this property may have come to him through his third wife, Molly LaMoree, for the mill was once her family. (the mill is gone now, the site at the bottom of Rondout Reservior a mile or two above the dam.) Stephan flourished here for awhile, but he was afflicted with asthma, the flour dust bothered him; eventually he sold and bought the hilltop farm outside of Middletown, and the little adjoing farm below. Along about 1906 he sold the hilltop farm, moved to the lower house for a few years. Then he sold that and moved in to No 12 Broad St., where he lived out his days. He also owned another house in town (I remember it, but not the address.) Father never had much use for Stephan, but the old man was reasonably "well fixed", together with his government pension as a Union soldier, and his various properties.





THE ABOVE taken by William T. Davis on Oct. 12th, 1912 -- this a copy. In the 1967 photo opposite it seems I stood by chance on exactly the same spot as Mr. Davis. Interesting to note is old tie post in Davis photo. The little boy, is, I think, Junius.

• FEB • 67





MAR • 67



JUN • 65 • ©

MAR • 66



By the dock,
Alice with bread

MAR • 66



FEB • 67



JUN • 67



THE END of one era, and the begining of another for the area in view as taken from our old salt meadow facing the last unimpeded view of the harbor, partly visible on the right. The smoke comes from the demolished home of Everett Ferris after it was pushed to the edge of the pond by bulldozer.
Date: August 1965

AUG · 65



JUN · 67



THIS MONSTROUS and meloncholy midden of concrete slabs came for a large part in front of 600, when the sidewalk was ripped up to install a larger gas main, so that the new apartments going up on the meadow .....

HOW FATHER would have snorted at this polluted view down the harbor, begining with this arrangement on the salt meadow, and the rest of it. The big dredge below the dam used this target to sight in its various boundaries around the area that was being excuvated for the marina, soon to come. In case you haven't noticed, it is raining, adding dismalness to the scene.



JUN · 67

JUN • 67





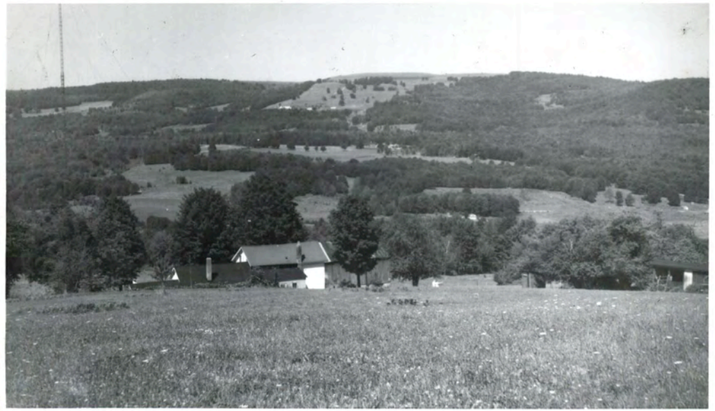
JUN • 67

JUN • 67

MAR • 67

BEFORE moving up on South Hill, Uncle Tommy lived in this house in Grahamsville, now owned by the Hasbrook family. When the street was paved and widened, it took with it the front porch, otherwise it is the same as I remember it. Hank was born here. I can remember the order of the rooms inside, and how those little attic windows lighted up the little attic, and what it contained; and how among the old pieces of furniture and pots and pans, there was the half of a coconut shell -- the first I had ever seen. I can also call back the deep pool in Chestnut Creek, back of the house where I once watched Mother hook and land a trout. As a guess, I would say Tommy moved to the hill farm when Hank was still very young; but as he also remembered that coconut shell (I asked him last summer) he must have been at least two years old.







MAR . 67

THE SOUTH HILL FARM

I spent part of every summer at the South Hill farm until I was 16, and became a permanent fixture there for more than 2 years after. I can call back the misty dawns of summer, the cows waiting at the pasture gate, the pungent odor of the old cow barn; how the cows looked in there with only their rumps visible from the open door, their tails switching flies; and I know how it feels to squeeze in between two hot panting cows for the first time, learning to milk, for I have been there and can speak with experience. I can recall the cats mewing as we came outside with full buckets -- waiting to be "paid" for their labors in keeping the barn free of mice and rats;and I can remember the busy hum of the cream seperator, as the next part of the morning chores; the transfer of our activities to the pig pen afterward, with the skim milk, a throw-away product then, but costing 30 cent a quart in any market these days; and how at last we got the call to breakfast, and how hungry we were, and how we could hardly wait to begin while waiting for Uncle Tommy to bend his head and mumble the blessing.

I can call back the majestic view of Thunder Hill on sunny summer afternoons, the vastness of the intervening valley, the clarity of the air, the fairyland quality of the farms away over there on that other mountainside; how white a field of buckwheat in full flower stands out against a patchwork quilt of those of corn and oats and timothy; and



I can call back how the dark carpets of woodlands crowd in on these fields, and the cow pastures, rough with stone and boulders, the mountain laurel in bloom, and how pretty it was and useless, speckling those pastures with pink. I can see the mighty ridge of the hill pushing aside the sky above, and remember how that ridge looked with a thunder storm brewing on the far side, and how the clouds and curtains of rain came marching over the ridge, getting closer and closer; and I can see the flicker of the lightning, and hear the thunder crash as we in the hayfield flew to the task of getting the last haycock safely on the wagon.



... and I can remember the feel of that stout seat against my bottom, and see the hay rolling up in front of those curved tines, and recall how I had to deliver



those rolls carefully in a line across the field in order best to fascilitate the loading of the wagon; and I can recall the fun it all was, and how proud I was of this ...



• FEB • 67



On the opposite page

RETURN to Grandfather Slater's hilltop farm in summer of 1969. From left to right: Hazel, seated; Junius; the present owner of farm; and Peggy. I have the woman's name and address somewhere.



• JUN • 67



• FEB • 67



JUN • 67

R. T.

MAY • 65 •

T H E E N D