

MY FOND REMEBRENCES OF NORTH TEWKSBURY

By Marietta Meloy assisted by Dave Marcus

I grew up on Andover Street in North Tewksbury. My parents, Fred and Mabel Meloy moved into the house in 1917. Pauline, Esther, Freddie, and I were born in Lowell. My sister Catherine was born in the house on Jan 27, 1920. A nurse helped my mother deliver Kay into this world. When we moved into the house on Andover Street, the road was dirt. People would actually help shovel the road after a snowstorm. The automobiles traveling the road were Model A's and Model T's. They had to be started by hand cranking them. We had 5 horse chestnut trees on the property. We had fun when the chestnuts fell on the ground. They would have lots of thorns. We would crack open the outer, thorny shells and have many piles of our favorite colored chestnuts to play with. On a rare occasion when we were mischievous we would throw the chestnuts at cars. Today I understand how dangerous that was to do. The Eastern Mass. Street Railway Co. ran a trolley from Lowell. It stopped at the Hood Road. People would ride the trolley after a snowstorm as the trolley would "brush" the tracks off with an attachment to the front of the trolley.

Tewksbury was real country in those days - in the year 1917. There was no running water, no central heating, and only later, electricity in our house. There was a well near the roads where we got our water with a hand pump. Then we had a hand pump in the kitchen. We would have ice on the cast iron, sink drain where the water would run out to the backyard. My sister Pauline would go outside with hot water to thaw the ice so the sink could drain properly. Later when we got electricity, a pump would send water to our cellar where we had a tank. Often neighbors would come over for water when their well went dry. When Mama would wash clothes she would use a big copper boiler to boil the clothes on a big black, cast iron stove. Mama would then use a big wooden washing machine with a wringer operated by hand. The clothes would be hand fed through the wringer and a big tub on a chair would catch the water.

Many deliverymen came by to sell their goods. The Conants Market would deliver meat by truck or automobile. Duncan Cameron lived just up the street and delivered milk. In the winter, the cream would freeze and the cap would be lifted up. Mama would sometimes let us eat that frozen cream. If we ran out of milk, one of us would go to Cameron's milkroom. He would allow us to get what we needed. Then Mama would call Mr. Cameron to tell her what we took so she would bill us. Irving Bailey's father would use his horse and wagon to deliver mail.

An iceman came and so did a man delivering fish. Others would stop by the house selling their wares or goods.

We had a big barn and Papa stored a lot of building materials in the barn. My father was a general contractor in Lowell. He built many beautiful homes and the United States Post Office located on Merrimack Street. We had five horses in our big barn. They were old fire horses that Papa bought at auction. Some of the names were Nellie, Rex, and Moxie (a Shetland pony). I think it was Rex who fell half way into the scuttle (a trap door in the barn where the manure was shoveled) and had to be shot. I remember once we coaxed Mama to get on Moxie and take a ride down the path in back of the barn. She had long hair done up in a pug and wore a red sweater. We kids hid along the path to make the slow poke horse move faster. It resulted in Mama falling off and her hair flying in the wind. Mr. O'Rourke, Mrs. Pickard, and Mama would hitch a horse up to the surrey "with the fringe on top" and take us for rides around the back roads. When the hay was stored away in the barn, we would jump from loft to loft. Papa put up a swing at the barn's front door and it was a thrill to swing out as far as possible. There was a pigpen down the path from the barn. After the pigs were gone we made it a clubhouse. Four or five fields bordered our clubhouse where people would cut the hay. We would spend warm summer days eating the wild blueberries and blackberries that grew along the hay fields edges. They were delicious. There were cherry trees on the property and I think it was called "Cherry Hill Farm" at one time. All the neighbors and I learned to skate on the pond in the back in the winter. We knew everyone up and down the road.

One time Mama put on skates and skated on a small patch of iced outside our kitchen. She always had hot chocolate and cake for us after our skating parties. Growing up was a wonderful time for all the children around here. We skated, went skiing, snow shoeing, tobogganing, horseback riding, sleigh rides, Halloween parties, played football and baseball, roamed in the woods and played cards. Mama and Papa also let us dance in the big room when our friends were here. We had a Victrola and had a lot of records for music. Many Sunday afternoons I remember when Papa would listen to all the wonderful old time performers on his records. There was John McCormick and Gally Curchie (sp?). My niece, Pink would play one record for hours, her favorite, "Clementine".

The first house in Tewksbury next to the Lowell town line was the home of the Goddard family. Next to that house was the Blacksmith shop. Often my brother and sister would walk down there and watch the horses getting new shoes. When we had poison ivy, we would put the afflicted arm in the water trough where they put the hot horseshoes to cool. It was a soothing remedy to stop the awful itch of poison ivy. Later Mr. Goddard on the International Farm Equipment Co on the site of the blacksmith shop, sold machinery to all the farms around the area. The

property eventually became Brooks Pharmacy. The field across the street became a Mobil Gas Station. The development of Andover Street eventually spelled trouble for the rural atmosphere of the area. Despite the efforts of some residents, the area has become a suburban/urban neighborhood.

The most famous of all the places that we loved was Martin's farm. Bob Martin ran the farm. His sister Barbara was married to Paul Conway and their son Bobby was a friend of Kay's (my sister). All of us used to ski, snowshoe, and go sledding on the hills over at the farm. Some of us worked on the farm. Our family bought vegetable from Bob Martin.

In the winter all of us looked for a lot of snow so we could have a sleigh ride. Mr. Martin had a couple of sleighs and he would hitch up the horse and take us for a ride. We would go up Fiske Street, to Bailey Road, to Haggett's Pond Road, onto Lowell Road in Andover where we could stop at a small roadside stand for a hot dog. When the storms were bad and plows could not get all the snow removed, Bob Martin would go to Lowell with the sleigh. He would go for groceries and other provisions. He would take us with him. Coming home up the hill would be difficult for the horse. Bob would ask us to walk for a while to make it easier for the horse. It sure was a wonderful, happy life here in North Tewksbury. Mr. Martin would use a wooden plow with barrels of stones to weight it down. He would then plow the neighbor's driveways.

Christmas was the greatest happening for us. On the Sunday before Christmas, Papa and all our friends would go over to Sullivan's or Martin's woods to chop down a big pine tree to put in the back parlor. It was difficult trying to get a pine tree the right height. Mama would have hot chocolate and cake and cookies for us. I was close to twelve years old and still believed in Santa Claus. Mama and Papa made it a magic time for us, wrapping presents, trimming the tree and enjoying company.

Across the street, Jack Sullivan and his wife Maude lived. At Sullivan's, we had a wonderful time in the barn where hay was stored. We made tunnels and played endlessly in the hayloft. They had parties for the neighborhood children. We ducked for apples and chased a "greased pig". Sometimes Mr. Sullivan would let us use the bungalow when we had parties with our friends. We played Pin the Tail on the Donkey and they would show us movies in the shed. When we were in high school, we had parties in their den with our friends from Lowell especially playing Post Office and Spin the Bottle! On the maids night off we would all do the dishes to help the girls get their chores done. We even were daring enough to toss the dishes from one person to another.

Our neighbors, the Johnson's, and their children, Juanita, a nurse, Barbara, a telegraph operator, and Donald, a Forest Ranger were good friends of ours. Every spring I remember Donald and some of us kids would go for a walk on Jack Sullivan's property where there was a path

and we would pick violets. Once we came across a pheasant's nest of three or four eggs right on the ground. We would also do some target practice with our 22 rifles where there was a ledge near the bungalow.

Up the street was the Hilton homestead. The Henry H. Hilton family lived in Chicago where Mr. Hilton was the President of the Ginn and Company Publishing of Boston and Chicago. They would summer in Tewksbury and when he retired, Mr. and Mrs. Hilton moved back to the farm. Mr. Omer Blanchard ran the farm for them and took care of a big vegetable garden on the site of the present Dewing School. The Baptist Church was across the street. The most enjoyable events there were the Harvest Suppers, the Church picnic and the clambakes. I remember the stalls in back of the Church for the horse and wagon and later automobiles.

Our friends, the Battles, lived on North Street and had a large fruit farm where Raytheon and 495 are located. They grew delicious peaches and pears. Every year Mama would call for the very best peaches and pear, which she would preserve. It was fun helping her do this. Their neighbors, Wallace and Mildred Farwell, made marvelous ice cream. It was so good they sold it at a store near the old Kitteridge house. Many goodies were sold at that store. Mr. Farwell operated the store.

Another family on North Street was the Carsons. Edwin and Martha Carson owned many acres of land in North Tewksbury. He had a large herd of cattle. I remember his cows crossing Andover Street to graze on land where Deering Drive is today. Someone would be there to stop traffic when the cows crossed the road. The land went all the way up to Bailey Road. There were two houses on Fiske Street in those days. Mr. Carson had a large business selling hay.

Our family knew many families on North Street. We knew Butler Ames, nephew of General Ames, who lived in the castle on Ames Hill. Ames Pond was located on Andover Street and was built by Butler Ames's relatives. It had a dam you could skate to and also you could get to it from Kendall Road. Ames Pond was one of the greatest places we spent growing up. Skating on weekends would be crowded with people from all over the surrounding towns and especially from Lowell. We would meet all our friends and skate for hours. We would watch men cut ice and store it in a building adjacent to the pond.

Hood's Farm was located on River Road. This was a famous farm that had prize cattle. They were bred there and were sold all over the United States for thousands of dollars. Papa took us one time to the big barn. The barn had a big wooden ramp. I saw people driving big bulls up the ramp. I was scared! There was a path in the back of that property along the Merrimack River. The path starts at Trull Brook Golf Course and continues along the river to Lawrence. It is called the Avis Trail and was founded more than 100 years ago by residents of Andover.