



Waterford Echoes

VOLUME XLII Number 1 (Issue 56)

Spring/Summer 2013

Waterford Historical Society



The Decker Farm, later Moreys' & Colbaths'. Photo courtesy Bill & Mary Colbath

Up Blackguard Neighborhood *Recollections of Helene Decker*

Helene Decker wrote her recollections of life on the farm as part of a Decker family history. The period of time is about 1925-1935 and was organized to cover roughly the sequence of the seasons. It was a dynamic and very active community in South Waterford when she was young. Bill Colbath, who owns the farm today with his wife Mary, arranged an edition of Helene's memories, excerpts of which are included below. More will be shared at our July meeting.

It is probably difficult for [21st Century] descendants to envision what daily life was like for their ancestors in the 18th and 19th centuries; probably the greatest changes have come in the mid-20th century. Since my memories go back a little earlier than that... I think some of my memories of what life was like when I was a child in the 1920s-30s would not be much different from the way things were done in the home of my grandparents or even earlier ancestors.

Let me start with our home. It was a fairly typical New England Cape with an attached ell. Beyond that was what was called the "summer" kitchen that had a dry sink--in other words, a wooden sink with no water coming in or going out. We used the room as a wash room and separator room... beyond that was the woodshed on the right and on the left was a room where wood ashes and other things were stored. Adjacent to that was the ice house. Beyond the woodshed was the area where the buggy and sleigh were stored. At the end of the ell section was the privy. Turning right just beyond the carriage area brought you into the barn.

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President's Corner

WATERFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2013 PROGRAM CALENDAR

JUNE 13 - 7 p.m. ANNUAL MEETING

Program: **"BARNS of MAINE"**

By DON PERKINS (book signing)

Place: THE OLD TOWN HOUSE

Potluck refreshments

JULY 4 **FOURTH of JULY PARADE**

RICE MUSEUM and OLD TOWN HOUSE

Open to the public 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

JULY 11 - 6 p.m. **POTLUCK SUPPER**

Program 7 p.m.:

BLACKGUARD NEIGHBORHOOD

Place: WILKINS COMMUNITY HOUSE

JULY 28 - 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Music Sunday

OPEN HOUSE

RICE MUSEUM

THE OLD TOWN HOUSE

AUGUST 8 - 7 p.m.

Program: **"CABIN, TWO BROTHERS..."**

By LOU URENECK (book signing)

Place: WILKINS COMMUNITY HOUSE

Potluck refreshments

SEPT. 12 - 7 p.m.

Program: **HISTORY of SKIING**

Place: NORTH WATERFORD MUSEUM

Potluck refreshments

OCT. 10 - 7 p.m.

Program: **1938 HURRICANE**

Place: WILKINS COMMUNITY HOUSE

Potluck refreshments

NOV. 14 - 6 p.m. **POTLUCK SUPPER**

Program 7p.m.: **CRANBERRY FARMING**

Place: NORTH WATERFORD CHURCH

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The Waterford Historical Society newsletter is published to benefit its membership. The Society, founded in 1965, is a non-profit Corporation created for the purpose of preserving and making available to persons interested, any and all historical and other material that shall be deemed valuable and worthy of preservation, in an effort to perpetuate for this and future generations, events, customs and traditions of local history, past, present and future, and to make possible the diffusion of such knowledge.

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MEMBERSHIP DUES

Classification: Individual/Couple

Life member: \$100/\$150

Annual: \$10/\$15

Seniors (65 & over) — \$5/\$8

Send checks to:

Waterford Historical Society

PO Box 201

Waterford ME 04088

Membership renewals are due June 1. Membership dues help to fund our newsletter and its mailing cost.

We have the following publications for sale: "History of Waterford 1775-1875" and "History of Waterford 1875-1976" for \$10 each. "This is Waterford 1803-2003" for \$10 inventory reduction. Add \$8 to ship one book or \$12 to ship two or three books. Paid-up dues members qualify for a 50% discount.

Largest White Ash in Maine

from the second history of Waterford



In 1968 Helene Decker of Oxford, formerly of South Waterford, sent the dimensions of a white ash tree on the Irving C. Morey farm in South Waterford to the Maine Forest Service in Augusta. The Forest Service had announced a contest to find the largest of each tree variety. Helene and her family had picnicked under it many years before; she had walked under it many times in the years since, and it seemed like an immense tree to her.

After state foresters had checked the dimensions she received a letter dated Oct. 30, 1969 stating that it was the largest white ash (*Fraxinus americana*) in the state of Maine, and in 1976 it still has that honor. The dimensions in 1969 were: circumference 17' 81/4", height 70' and crown spread 77'. The National record is 22' 3" circumference, 80' in height, with a crown spread of 82'. This tree is located in Pennsylvania.

Mr. and Mrs. J. Osro Decker (Georgia Shaw) bought the old Green place in the Blackguard section of Waterford in 1912. It burned in a few years, and they bought the house nearer the Blackguard road (the Green house was back from the road more) and lived and farmed there until 1944. Daughters, Helene and Dorothy (now Dorothy Everett) have fond memories of picnicking under the large white ash tree.

Irving C. Morey and wife, Elsie, bought the farm from Mr. Decker in 1944 and sold it to Dr. Richard L. White in 1972.



Nobody wrote to identify this photo from the Fall/Winter 2010 issue. It is the Pike Farm with Bear Mountain in the background.



The Bells of Blackguard

by Nancy Chute Marcotte

In Tewksbury, Massachusetts in the 18th Century, John Bell married Hannah Peacock. They moved to Albany in the Territory of Maine with seven children. I don't know exactly when they moved but their son William (born in Tewksbury in 1796) was married in 1820 to Tabatha/Tabitha Holt, who had been born in Albany (also in 1796.)

These are relatives on one side of my family tree, but I don't know anything further back than this. I hope to learn more at our July meeting. The Bells intermarried a lot with the Hamlins in South Waterford. The Holts, I have learned recently, are on both sides of my children's ancestry, in a very interesting way in Norway-- but that's another story!

Deed research shows us that in 1851 William F. Bell "of Boston" and Timothy Bell bought a lot on Blackguard from Daniel Billings for \$1400. This lot had in 1799 been recorded as transferring from settler Isaac Smith to Nathaniel Geary/Gerry for \$800.

William Freeland Bell (1826-1909, married Caroline Eaton) and Timothy Carter Bell (1829-1894, married Samantha Hamlin) were brothers, sons of the aforementioned William from Albany and grandsons of John. They had an elder brother Eben (Ebenezer F. 1820-1900, married Jane Willard.) He is the Bell from whom the current Bells, Merills, Hamlins, Hayneses (and I) are descended.

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Nuances

(Continued from page 3)

Will & Timothy also had two sisters: Mary Ann, who died about age seventeen, and Louisa, who married Josiah Willard. Not surprisingly, their neighboring farms on the 1850 Chaplin map were Willards'.

So by 1851 the Bells were on Blackguard. Blackguard, with the English pronunciation. Why that name? It means "scoundrel" or "scurrilous, profane person." Does that describe someone who lived there? Maybe it's related to a "Mutiny" which happened nearby? I don't really know. The Androscoggin Trail runs by the brook but the road was originally Geary or Gerry Road.



Alice and Irving Bell on Burnell Hill, looking across the Elden Willard place to Stearns Hill. The Willard place burned about 1908. (WHS collection.)

The 1875 Waterford history contains a cryptic note about the Centennial: Capt. Thomas Swan "related some amusing anecdotes, and... told how his neighborhood came to be dubbed with the euphonious sobriquet of Blackguard" (page 334.) Nowhere is that tale written down, however!

In 1871 William transferred to T. C. Bell "the homestead farm," "for support of self and wife." It was left to T. C.'s young widow Semantha Hamlin Bell (sister of W. K. Hamlin) in 1894. Semantha transferred it to Caroline Bell "of Boston" (widow of William F.) and she left it when she died in 1905 to "her sole heir," son Irving Bell.



Photo of West Waterford in back of the Frank Stearns place.

Eben F. and Jane Bell had seven children: Oscar (b. 1849), Mary (1850-1868), Lewis (b. 1852), Clara Jane

(1854-1938, my great-grandmother who married W. K. Hamlin), Eben M. (1856-1870), William F. (b. 1858, married Cora J. Hamlin, another sister of W. K.) and Frank L. Bell, father of Archie Bell.

Archie and his wife Ethel inherited the homestead from Alice Bell (widow of Irving). They had seven children as well: Harry, Donald, Frank, Margaret (m. Edgar Merrill and had 14 children), Earl, Irene (m. Chadbourne) and Esther (m. Fred Whitney.) And that brings us to the present generation on Blackguard and in Waterford.

Genealogy is fun!

Blackguard neighborhood

(Continued from page 1)

If you went across the barn floor to the right side you would enter the tie-up where the cattle were kept. Under this part of the barn was the manure pile, domain of a couple of pigs. The first quarter of the tie-up was modified to hold a small flock of hens. Next to that were stalls for two horses. If you travelled the length of the tie-up you would come to a door that led to the sheep barn.

Now... the main house. This contained, beyond the kitchen in the ell, a storage room or summer dining room, a dining-living room, the parlor and a back bedroom we used as a cold-storage room where a side of beef or pork was often kept in the winter.

Upstairs there were three bedrooms. The larger bedroom had a door opening into the open chamber above the kitchen where mother hung the washing in the winter. This area continued with an opening into the barn.

I soon figured out how I could travel from my bedroom in the west end of the house to the sheep barn in the east end without coming down to the first floor. This could be accomplished only when the mows were full of hay or ladders were in place so I could get up on the high beams. This was play for me but for my father on a cold or stormy morning it was very helpful to be able to go from the house to the barn without going outdoors. Of course he used the first floor route!

Across the road was a blacksmith shop, with a forge and bellows to fan the fire coals. My father didn't use the forge but the building was used for storing all sorts of tools, small farm implements and odds and ends...

Our first mode of travel that I remember was by horse and buggy. I might go with my mother or father or both to the "City" (South Waterford) to get the mail and go to the general store once or twice a week. In the winter we travelled by sleigh. Ours was kind of a pung. A buffalo robe over our laps and a soapstone at our feet helped to keep us warm on cold days. I remember my mother tipping over in a drifted area by the Bell turn ledges once. The horse stopped so no damage was done.

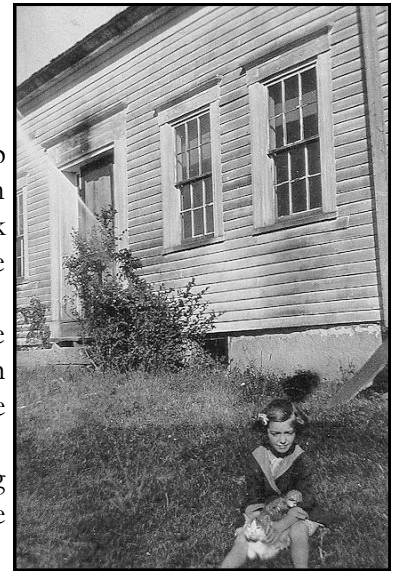
The roads were rolled, not ploughed...in spring as the frost came out of the ground, the roads might be impassable for a week or two. Sometimes a trip to town could be made in the morning while the road was still frozen, and by travelling outside the roadway where possible. The school spring vacation was scheduled to hopefully coincide with "mud season"... In the early 1930s my father bought a second-hand Model T Ford truck...

We had another convenience... On the wall was a telephone, a box-like contraption with a crank on one side and a bell-like receiver hung on the other side. Extending out from the center front was the mouthpiece. It was at least an eight-party line. To call a neighbor you simply rang their number. Our number was eleven--one long and one short ring. The Bells' number was 24--two long and four short. To go outside our party line we called Central--one long ring--and told her the number we wanted to call. Central would oblige us if we wanted to know the time or where a fire was. It was wise not to discuss private matters on the phone. Bored housewives could "listen in" on their neighbor's conversations...

I went to school in the two-room school in South Waterford. I had to walk about half a mile to meet the school team. At first this was a covered wagon with a rounded black top. It had benches along the sides. In spring and fall it was on wheels, which made it fairly high from the ground. You had to climb a step or two in order to get into it. In the winter the body was put on runners. It was a cold ride on some winter days; also a cold walk home. In the winter I had to walk about three-quarters of a mile, facing the north wind. Despite mittens, chilled fingers were frequent.

I remember once my mother allowed me to go to school with the Bell children on their double-runner sled. This was a sled with two sets of runners and was probably six feet long. It could hold four or five children. The road was mostly down hill and our momentum would carry us some distance on the level, so it was a fairly quick way to travel the two and a half miles. Feet were dragged for brakes and all leaned on the curves. It was probably not the safest way to travel to school, but it was thrilling.

(Continued on page 7)



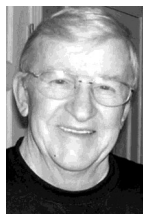
Helene Decker as a girl

In Memoriam

Wesley A. Weymouth, 65, of Waterford, died Feb. 3, 2013 at the Hospice House of Androscoggin Home Care and Hospice in Auburn. He was born in Indiana, Oct. 2, 1947, son of Albert and Delma Gayle (Confer) Weymouth. He is survived by his wife, Wanda; son, Gene Weymouth of Woodstock; daughters, Tammy Bennett and Terry "Tess" Weymouth of Waterford; two sons, Terry Caldwell of Brunswick and Christopher Caldwell of Gelana, KS; 17 grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren; and a brother, Greg Weymouth of Norway.



Franklyn G. Sampson, 75, of Waterford died at home Feb. 5, 2013. He was born in Harrison, Jan. 10, 1937. Sam grew up in South Paris, then Brunswick where he graduated from high school in 1954. He joined the U.S. Navy where he spent 20 years. He married Helen (Wheeler) Sampson in Ft. Lauderdale, FL on Nov. 30, 1957. After the Navy, they spent 19 years in Las Vegas, NV, where Sam spent 17 years as a slot floor manager at Caesar's Palace. In 1993, Sam and Helen moved back to Maine, settling on Temple Hill in Waterford. Throughout his Naval career, Sam and his family lived in California, Alaska, Maine, Iceland, Maryland and Hawaii. He and Helen served as deacons at the United Parish Church of Harrison and North Bridgton and played in the Harrison Bocci League. Sam worked at The Market Basket in Harrison for 12 years and was a member of the American Legion. He is survived by his wife; daughter, Barbara (Sampson) Peterson; two sons, Franklyn and Roy Sampson; sister, a sister Barbara Matolay; and two grandchildren. Sam was predeceased by his brother, Kenneth.



Beatrice V. Fitts, 102, died February 7, 2013 at the Calvin Coolidge Center, Northampton, MA. She was born on Nov. 17, 1910 in Quincy, MA to Arthur R. and Bertha F. (Rice) Fitts. She graduated from Quincy High in 1929; from Bridgewater State College in 1933; Boston University in 1950 with an MS in education and furthered her education at Westfield State College. Her teaching career started in Holliston, MA in 1933 then at the Pollard School, Quincy, MA and at North Quincy High where she became head of the music department. In 1953, she came to Northampton, MA as head of the music department for grades one-12, retiring in 1980. She was the recipient of the MA's Lowell Mason Award and was listed in Leaders of American Secondary Education in 1972. She was an associate member of the Bethany Congregational Church, Quincy, MA; the Waterford Congregational Church and more recently a member of First Churches in Northampton and director of music at First Baptist. For several years, she took part in the Church Musician's Conference at the American Baptist Assembly in Green Lake, WI. Miss Fitts was a charter member of Alpha-Epsilon chapter, Delta Kappa Gamma of Northampton; a member of the Tuesday Afternoon Club at First Churches; the Edmund Rice Assoc.; and the Waterford Historical Society. She was proud to be a descendant of the seventh settler of Waterford and returned to Waterford every year for 100 years. These trips were made possible in later years by her dear friends, Fred and Nancy Engdahl. Special times in Waterford included participation in church/community activities, evenings with friends gathered on the village common, Fourth of July festivities and maintaining an open door for all at Ar-Be-Do-Bea Lodge. Miss Fitts is survived by first cousins, Richard F. Rice, Waterford and Rachel Rice Deans, South Portland and extended family as well as many dear friends in Quincy, Waterford and Northampton. She is predeceased by her sister Dorothy Fitts Hayden and best friend and housemate of 51 years, Dorothy Swain. She is buried in Elm Vale Cemetery.



Eugenia Swanton Horton, 96, died May 3, 2013 at Ledgeview Living Center in West Paris. The youngest of two children, Eugenia was born in Dexter on July 30, 1916 to George Eugene Swanton and Alice May Larrabee. Genie graduated from N.H. Fay High School in 1934 and from Farmington Normal School in 1938. During the Depression years, she taught in elementary schools in Garland, Woolwich, Bath and Otisfield. On July 4, 1945, she married Clarence Eugene "Bob" Horton in Otisfield. They moved to New Haven, Conn., where Bob wrapped up his career as a research engineer for Winchester Arms. In 1946, they moved to Otisfield. Their daughter Jean was born in 1947, and in July of 1948, they moved to East Waterford to establish Horton Ballistics. Genie was a stay-at-home mother for the next 15 years, during which time she was active in the North Waterford Congregational Church, choir, 4-H, the Rebekahs and civic events, such as canvassing for funds to build Stephens Memorial Hospital. In 1961, Genie decided to return to teaching. Over the next eight years, she taught and attended night and summer classes, to complete her fourth year of college, a requirement of Maine, graduating from Gorham State College in 1969. She spent several happy years teaching sixth, seventh and eighth grades in Hebron. Later on, she moved to the Guy E. Rowe School in Norway, where she taught until she retired in 1981. She was able to stay in her home until she was 90. She is survived by her daughter, Jean Eichhorn, of Nottingham, N.H.; a grandson, granddaughter and two great-granddaughters. Genie was predeceased by her brother, George Coakley Swanton.



Pearl M. Chaplin, 96, died May 6, 2013 at Norway Rehabilitation and Living Center where she had been a resident for the past eight years. She was born June 12, 1916, in Greenwood City, the daughter of Ralph and Alice Herrick. Widowed at age 37, when her husband, Freeman died as the result of an accident, she worked hard to provide for her two children. She worked as a housekeeper year round and in the fall she would also pick and pack apples. Other jobs included driving a school bus for students attending the Waterford Memorial School and mowing two Waterford



cemeteries (with a push mower). Before retiring at age 65, she was employed as a housekeeper at Norway Nursing Home. Pearl is survived by her son, Philip Chaplin of Waterford; a daughter, Marguerite Alberi of Norway; five grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren; and a great-great-grandson. She was predeceased by her grandson, Jeff Chaplin. She is buried in Elm Vale Cemetery.

MAINE MEMORY NETWORK

The Waterford Historical Society has been participating in a project for which it received a grant from the Maine Historical Society. For the past year David Sanderson and Bonnie Parsons have been working on scanning and identifying over 100 pictures from the WHS collection which will now be available on the Maine Memory Network.

Our Fred Johnson collection from about 1900 until the 1920s has made up the bulk of these submissions. All the school pictures in our possession have also been entered into the MMN. Some of them are still pending acceptance into the online collection but, once they are, the pictures are available for purchase through the network. A portion of the proceeds goes to our society. For an organization with an all-volunteer staff, this is a wonderful way for people to have access to our prize pictures.

LIBRARY HISTORICAL ARTIFACTS

The Waterford Library has been adding to its historical artifacts. On the stairway wall is a gallery of photographs of some of the children who grew up in the library apartment, starting with a wonderful photograph of Virginia Tyler Cutler in a rowboat, donated by Ginny Raymond and family. The library trustees will add to this collection if they can.

Also new to the library is a landscape painting done by the building's architect, John Calvin Stevens. This was donated by Whizzer and Meg Wheeler, along with a letter from Stevens to Mabel Gage, friend of Stevens, relative of the Wheelers and former missionary to China. Stevens, once president of the Portland Art Society, gave away his paintings to his friends and the library is delighted to have this generous gift.

Blackguard neighborhood

(Continued from page 5)

Recreation was not a high priority as it is in some families today. Father had to be home morning and evening to tend the animals. Most Sundays were for resting. We did not attend church. Later when father was not working so hard and lived nearer the church, I found him to be a devoted church-goer. My parents were members of the Grange and we usually attended the meetings held every other Saturday. I would play with the other children in the ante-room during the meeting. They held various offices during their years of membership and eventually received their 50-year pins.

Some Sunday afternoons, if we were not too tired, we might go for a walk; possibly over to the "Old Place" to check on the sheep or up to Duck Pond to watch the beaver family living near the outlet. We would sometimes go to visit my Aunt Josie, who lived on the north side of Beech Hill. Once my mother and I took my sled and walked and slid the approximately two miles to visit her.

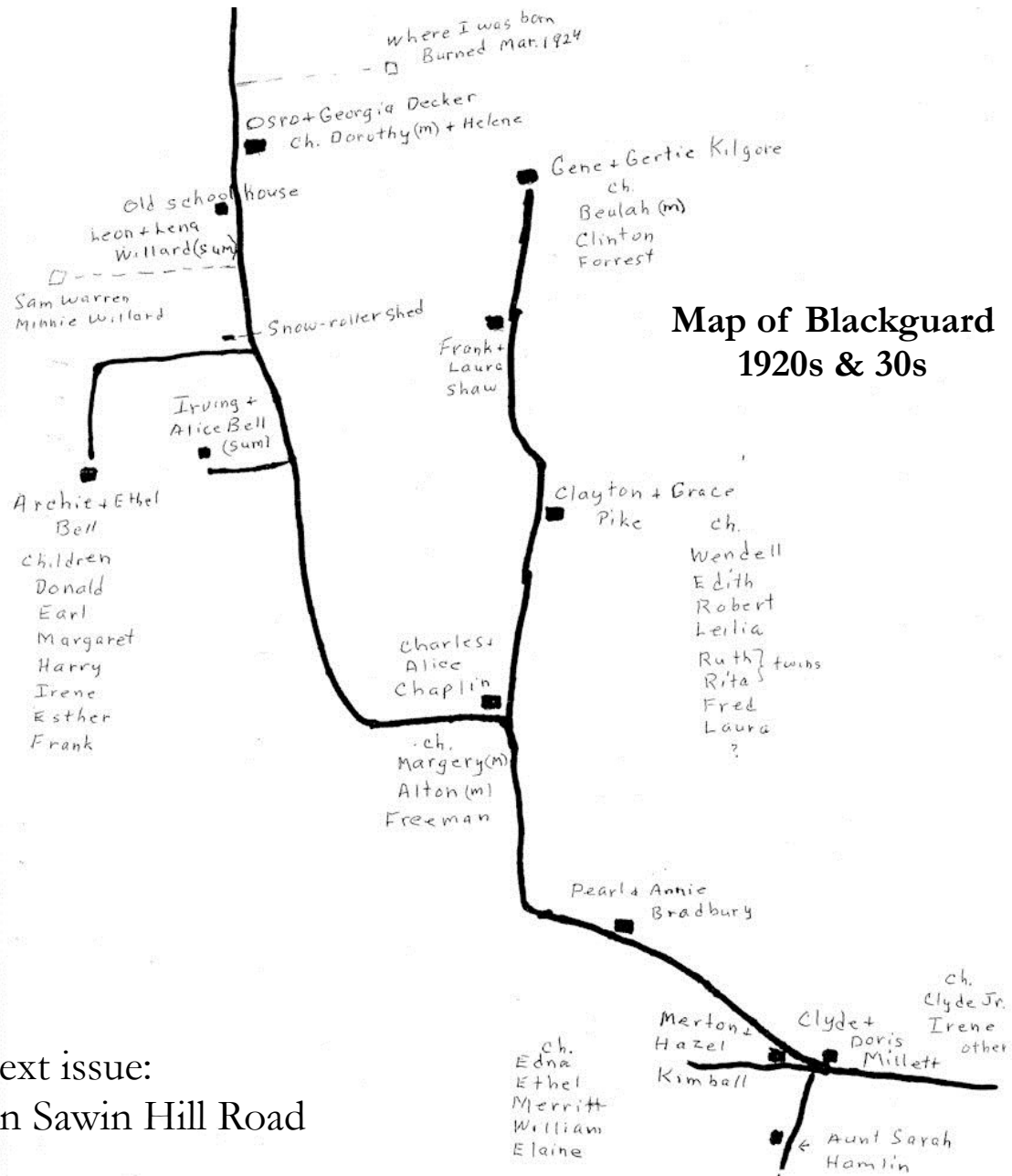
Mother and I would often walk down through the pasture to visit her friend Mrs. Kilgore, who lived on the "Lower Road." They had a radio and we would sometimes listen to Amos 'n Andy with them. We also frequently visited another friend, Mrs. Chaplin. Sometimes these three would visit at one of the homes for a quilting bee, complete with a boiled dinner for the guests.

There were a few summers when we would attend Chautauqua in Waterford, where it was held on the village green. Inside a large tent well-known lecturers and entertainers of various types would perform for a week... in the fall we would probably attend the "World's Fair" in North Waterford. I think we sometimes went to the Oxford County Fair in Norway, but that was probably after we had the Model T...

For me these memories prove the truth of the poet's words: "How dear to the heart are the scenes of my childhood, when fond recollection presents them to view."

Bill Colbath's introduction tells us that the earliest property record in the Oxford County files is when Joseph Kimball sold the property to Joseph Burnell in 1813. William Green acquired the property in 1888 from Thomas Swan. William passed it off to Sara O. Green (later Hamlin) in 1890. At that point it was called "the former Thomas Swan farm." Sara sold the farm to Chester Bragg ("of Upton") in 1914; Chester sold it to Osro Decker, Helene's father, in 1924. The Deckers sold to Irving Morey in 1942; Morey sold to SACO Properties in 1972; then it went to Richard White in 1973; to Frances Scola in 1977 and to William & Mary Colbath in 2004.

FROM OUR FILES



Next issue:
On Sawin Hill Road

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