

## **Growing Up 'out East' - Stories** **Art Pease, 2023**

I had suggested a category of 'growing up 'out East' for the East Orford history project and Buddy asked me to see what I could write. I've made some categories from my memories below and will see what I can come up with. Perhaps I can persuade Ernie to add some.

### **Traverse**

We had a great traverse on the farm, which we used on the East Cemetery and Piermont Heights roads if we got to them before they had been sanded. I don't know where it came from but it was hanging in Gerald/Richard's sugarhouse the last I knew.

This traverse was 10'-12' long, enough to seat 6 or 8 people, with iron-shod sleds at front and rear. An auto steering wheel had been installed upright into the front sled, so that the traverse could be steered easily. We could get going pretty fast down either of the roads and usually made it to the bottom. If not, the snowbanks were high enough!

At least once, we got Roy Daisey to hitch onto the traverse with his car and pull us back up the hill. Going back home, south up East Cemetery Road, I bet we went faster uphill than down!

### **Rabbit hunting with Earnie**

My good friend and neighbor, Earnie Daisey, was a hunter and fisherman, something I wasn't. However, one winter he persuaded me to go rabbit hunting with him and his dog Molly. I don't know just where we went but somewhere in the immediate area. For two hours or more, we tramped through snow, sometimes up to our crotch, and never saw a rabbit. I don't think the dog did either. When we finally got home, I asked Earnie if that was a typical rabbit hunt and he allowed as it did happen with some frequency. I told him never to even ask me to go again!

### **At The Camps**

Chili at Pemi - we picked up food waste from Camp Pemi for many years and fed it to our pigs. When I was quite young, the cook at camp found out that I liked chili, something we never had at home. After that, he/she would save a little for me and I was sure to go head for the truck if I knew they were going after the swill.

#### *Kitchen at Moosilauke*

I worked in the kitchen at Moosilauke for one summer, where Oscar, a black man, was the cook. Oscar worked in Bellvue Hospital in New York City during the year but came to Moosilauke for many summers. I was a dishwasher/cleaner but every time we had French fries, I always volunteered to fry them. Then, I would get a big bowl of vanilla ice cream and have French fries and ice cream for supper!

#### *Mike at Moosilauke*

For one or more years, Oscar's son, Mike, came to camp and also worked in the kitchen. We sometimes played pickup basketball with other workers on the camp court. At that time, the phrase "That's real white of you" was a common one around school, used in a mocking way when someone did something mildly annoying. I don't think I really thought about its meaning until I said it to Mike one time during a game. I don't think anyone reacted, including Mike but as I was walking home that evening, I realized what I had done. To my eternal discredit, I never apologized to Mike! When I was teaching, I often used that incident to illustrate the kind of 'casual, unthinking racism' which was prevalent in New Hampshire and the United States when I was growing up – and sadly still to prevalent!

### *Haying*

Up through at least the mid-1950s, we hayed the Camp Moosilauke fields before camp started or early in the Camp season. When campers were there, we learned to be careful as we came up to a pile of loose hay and were ready to pitch it onto the truck. I don't think we ever hit anyone but sometimes kids would have hidden in the pile, not realizing that they could get stuck with pitchfork!

### *Broken Leg*

On July 31<sup>st</sup>, 1963, I was part of a group of Orford kids who were playing Camp Moosilauke counselors in soccer at the Camp. In the second half, Gary Miller and I swung at the same ball at the same time and hit right legs. He got a good bruise, and I got a broken leg – not compound but both bones were broken off square. They put me onto a mattress and headed to Hanover. For some reason, we stopped in Lyme at Dr. Putnam's office for an x-ray - I could have told them the leg was broken! I was in Mary Hitchcock for about six weeks and returned to school for my senior year with a toes to crotch cast and on crutches. I was officially off crutches the day before graduation, although I had been hopping around school with one crutch for most of the year. I have often thought that this probably kept me from raising hell that might have gotten me into trouble at home, so the break may have been fortuitous.

### *Baseball Gloves*

As we were picking up the baggage at the end of camp, to take to the railroad station in Fairlee, the trunks and duffels were in individual cabins. I kept an eye out for baseball gloves which had been left by campers – the source of good gloves for years.

### **Church on Atwell Hill**

The Baptist Church on Atwell Hill is right across the road from my Howard grandparent's house, where Ma grew up. Her family went there and my brother told me that Ma and the kids sometimes went to church there also. Usually, Dad would bring them over and go visit with Grampa Howard during church.

From age 6 or 7 to 16 or 17, I went to church there, usually going with Mae and Oscar Ladd. I usually went to Sunday service only but perhaps sometimes to Wednesday prayer meetings. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, a young minister, Rev. Ralph White, came to the church. He lived in Warren and also ministered at Glenclyff, I think. I do remember that he was greatly liked by the young people.

### **Basketball in the Barn**

There was no real basketball tradition in our family, although Gerald, Francis and Irene all played for OHS. The first time I saw any basketball played was in 1957, when I was staying with my cousins, the Donnelly's, after our house burned in early September. I went with Lloyd to Bedell's Barn to watch some boys play pickup basketball – I don't remember participating. I did play at OHS but my skills didn't run to shooting – I could set picks and box out but that was about all I was good at. I was taught how to shoot by my cousin Lloyd, a very good player at OHS, '62. He taught me out in the barn and I understood the concept of keeping the forearm straight, the elbow tucked in and snapping the wrist – I just couldn't do it with any consistency. *[From Lloyd, 12/2/22: "All I would add is a memory of playing with bulky coats and slippery cloth gloves when fingers were threatened with frostbite. Also, we used to play elimination games, either HORSE or SHIT, where you got assigned a letter each time you could not duplicate a shot previously made by your opponent."]*

By the late 1950's, I had persuaded Dad or Gerald [likely Gerald] to make me a backboard and hang it up in the barn floor. This type of setup would be familiar to many folks – I even saw one eerily similar in the Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield, MA. The space was between the cribs/manger in front of the cows on the left and the hay mows on the right, about 8'-9' wide. Good for long-range shooting from the point but not good for practicing shots from the corner. The crib side could be a little rough, with unfinished

boards, but the other side did have some padding – early in the fall/winter, before the hay had been fed out. By mid-winter, the railing along part of the mow was no longer padded with hay and part of the area had a drop-off from the barn floor of 2'-3' into the bottom of the mow.

As I said, there was really no basketball tradition in our family but my nieces and nephews changed that. Harry, Gene, Carol and Janet Pease were all very good players at OHS, with Gene in particular continuing as an accomplished town-team player for many years. They all came up to the barn to shoot and sometimes we played one-on-one or two-on-two. The only problem that Carol and Janet had while playing high school basketball was that they were a little rough for the girls' game at the time. I'm convinced that while they learned some good skills out in the barn, they also learned somewhat rough play, competing with me and/or their brothers. With the cribs on one side and the mow on the other, one learned to give and absorb hip checks and other indelicate maneuvers to survive – not moves approved by most high school referees!

Be sure to have Harry write about his 'hit the can' game

### **Sugaring as a young person**

#### *Spouts in Beech, Pine*

I was far enough down on the totem pole that I didn't usually get to put in the spiles when we were tapping but one day I did. Gerald was tapping, moving right along and I wanted to make sure I kept up. I never paid much attention to tree types anyway and when he tapped a beech, I drove a spile right in it. A little farther along, he also drilled a hole in a pine. I knew the difference on that one but drive in a spile. When Gerald stopped up ahead and started laughing, I told him that if it had a hole in it, it was getting a spile!

#### *Covers: Flat, Curved, Aluminum*

Until I got big enough to carry a reasonable pile of buckets, my job was to carry and attach covers. Of the three main types, the flat ones were the biggest pain. They had a metal rod which went through both sides of the cover, with a space in the middle where the rod was inserted through a loop in the spile, thereby holding the cover on. These worked fine when they were new but after a few seasons' use, if the rod got even a little bent, it was difficult to get everything lined up and attached. Also very easy to bruise one's fingers while trying to get that damn rod through. I expended more than a few choice Anglo-Saxon words while using these covers.

Eventually we got other covers and most were curved, with a groove on each side to catch the side of the sap bucket. They were reasonably easy to carry, not being too heavy, and could be attached pretty easily, by just placing the cover over the bucket and pushing down in the middle, which flattened out the cover enough for the groove on each side to catch the lip of the bucket.

My favorite type of covers were the aluminum ones. These were very light – one could easily carry 50 or 60 at a time and were easy to attach. They were made like the ones above, so were easily attached.

#### *Lots of Snow: Bulldozer, Snowshoes, Dumping Sap Into Tank*

In 1963, there was an unusually large amount of snow in the woods, perhaps as much as five feet when we started to tap in late March. Gerald tried to go over the woods roads with the horses but the snow was so deep that they couldn't even break the roads. Dad hired Charlie Cutting to come over with his bulldozer and break out the road.

We had to use snowshoes to get around, making it much harder to get tapped out. I think we had one or two pair but Dad also bought three more pair of snowshoes. [*Dad's diary: Bought a pair of snowshoes of Robert Hall up to Bradford, \$7.50; Went up to Barre and bought 2 pair snowshoes, one good pair, \$10.00, one pair womens' about right for Harry, \$5.00.*]

Now for the problems. Having the roads plowed by a bulldozer sounds like a good thing but not when gathering the sap. Remember, we were on snowshoes and the snowbanks were plowed up

3'-4' high, making it hard to get up and down over them with snowshoes on and even harder with a full gathering pail. Then, if one got down over the bank into the road successfully, one had to get close enough to the gathering tank to dump the sap in. Gerald could probably reach from the ground but I usually needed to get at least one foot up onto the sled. There was very little space between the tank itself and the edge of the sled, meaning one had to perch precariously with an edge of a snowshoe and balance there long enough to dump the sap into the tank. Sure as hell, if the hosses were ever going to start up unbidden, that was when they would do it, sometimes leading to a sap bath or at least a little shower! Lastly, one had to make it back up over the bank to get to the next trees. Harry had this to say about that season, "*I also remember when it was time pick up the buckets after sugaring season when most of the snow was gone us kids could barely reach the bottoms of the buckets! I always loved sugaring, but it wasn't much fun that year!*" ]

### *Chewing tobacco*

One year, when I was probably 10 or a dozen, Ralph Mack was helping us tap. He chewed tobacco and asked if I wanted a chew. Damn fool that I was, I said yes. After a few minutes, I didn't think it tasted that good and I also swallowed some juice – not a good idea! Not sure if that was Ralph's plan but I never had any interest in chewing tobacco again!

## **Logging**

### *Splitting wood in woods*

For most of his life, Dad did some form of logging in the woods around the ponds or on the east slopes of Mt. Cube. By the 1950s, this mostly took the form of working with/for Don Tatham. Don arranged the logging jobs and hired Dad and Gerald to help, trimming the trees, twitching out the logs to the landing and trucking them to one of several mills.

I often helped on Saturday and during February vacation. My job was usually to split the 4-foot logs lengthwise, into two or four pieces, depending on size. For years, we got our wood for the farm and for Gerald's family from the 'tops' of timber trees or other trees cut just for wood

### *Twitching with Dolly and Baldy*

In the 50s, I used Dolly and then Baldy twitching single logs from the stump to the landing, where they would be piled to await loading onto the truck. Dolly was a big Belgian and very docile. She generally worked very well but one afternoon she decided she was ready to go home. As we came close to the landing, the woods road went around a curve before reaching the landing. From the landing, one could go on over the frozen pond, to the Pond Road. I always walked behind her, as she needed no reins to get travel the familiar path. But this time, she kept right on going beyond the landing and I had to run a little while to get her to stop. After that, as we came to the curve, I just cut off and got the landing ahead of her. I usually didn't even need to say 'Whoa' – when she saw me, she would stop at the right place.

Baldy was a pulling horse given to Dad by Sam Chickering in the late 50s or early 60s, with the stipulation that he be buried over in the pasture, not sold for dog food. I think Dad was a little concerned about me using him but he never acted up. He was a great horse, who was very good in the woods as a single horse twitching logs. He would stand quietly while being hooked but when you said, 'Git up, Baldy' something was happening – I've seen him down on his front knees, still digging, if a log got caught on a root. He busted lots of tugs and chains but always stopped when asked, as if he was saying, 'OK, just as you say.' Dad said that he and Dolly made a good pair: Baldy was willing to do all the work and Dolly was willing to let him!

From Dad's 1963 Diary:

11/4/63 Gerald he dug a hole for old horse..

11\5\63 Ken came up after dinner and shot old Baldy and Gerald covered him up with dozer then took it over to Bill Randall. [*Gerald said that he got down in the hole to hold Baldy for Ken to shoot him and that Baldy looked him right in the eye – one of the hardest things he ever had to do!*]

### **The Berkshire Boar**

In early 1958, Mel Thomson had a Berkshire boar that he didn't want and gave it to Dad. I don't know what Dad wanted with him but he took him. The boar had curved tusks and a big set of testicles! We put him in the hog house and put two two-by-six across the inside of the door so he couldn't get out while we had the door open to put in hay or feed him. These were about 3 feet higher than the door sill or the inside of the building. The building was about 13' by 14', so not a lot of extra room.

One day, Earnie and Roy Daisey, Floyd Jones and I were hanging around the barnyard and someone had the bright idea to take a short piece of leather harness, get in with the boar and slap him across the ass. I don't remember if Floyd eagerly volunteered or was cajoled into it but he took the strap, climbed in through the door and cautiously approached the pig. Pretty soon, the boar turned away from the door, not interested in us. Floyd gave him a slap across the butt.

The old hog swung around and maybe headed for Floyd. I don't think he took more than a couple of steps but Floyd decided not to wait and see. Floyd headed for the door and cleared those two-by-six by at least a foot. He was Olympic hurdler material that day!

After a year or two, Dad decided he wasn't going to butcher the boar – likely too tough or rank for much good meat and so sold him. I don't remember who the boar was sold to but I do remember them coming in a cattle truck to pick him up. The truck was backed up to the hog house door, the tailgate put down with probably some planks on each side and the two-by-fours across the door removed. Gerald went in the hog house and tried to drive the boar up the tailgate and up into the truck. I don't think the boar was particularly belligerent, but he decided he liked the house better than the truck and was not cooperating at all! Finally, we got a block-and-tackle, hooked it in the front of the inside of the truck body and brought one end of the rope into the house Gerald got a piece of chain and hooked it around the boar's lower jaw. Eventually the old boar was hooked, dragged up into the truck and hauled away – likely to become some sort of fertilizer.

I know this seems cruel, especially to anyone who has no idea of what really occurs on a small subsistence farm. We weren't needlessly violent or cruel to any animals but they were animals – the ASPCA was not consulted.

From Dad's and Ma's Diaries:

- 1\28\58 'Went up to Mel's and got a boar he gave me.' [*This was the big Berkshire boar Mel gave to Dad: I think he was useless for anything but lard by them. Gerald says that people kept asking Dad what he was going to do with him - Dad had no idea - but the more folks asked, the longer he kept him. I'd say that sounds like Dad. ;-)*]
- 4\19\59 Sold Polly and old boar to Sam \$300
- 4\20\59 . . Wolf's truck came and got the boar had to pull him in with pulley block 1 1\2 hrs to Load.
- 4\20\59 [Ma]. . The truck came about 12 after the old hog. He wouldn't go into the truck and got kind of ugly so finally they got a chain around his jaw and pulled him in with pulley blocks took 1 1\2 hrs.

From Dave Thomson, 12/1/22: "To the best of my recollection, I was in charge of the Berkshire pigs and at the time Dad thought the old boar was getting too old and too heavy for breeding the 7 to 8 sows we kept then and we had a younger replacement! I'm sure Big boar wasn't happy about the decision. I used to sleep in the barn during farrowing time to try to keep

the piglets from getting crushed by their moms! We had a safety corner in each pen with a heat lamp and if you could keep them safe for two days they were in pretty good shape. This happened every fall and spring so some years we had a ton of pigs around.

I remember selling them for \$7 each, some falls we couldn't sell them all so we would end out keeping them through the winter! I would make trips to Blakes Creamery in Pike almost every Sunday and purchase skim milk for 15 cents a milk jug. Many times getting your folks some also sometimes we would switch on this job, so I guess you folks must have had pigs most of the time. We used to have plenty of rats in the barn so, I don't think I would sleep down there today!

I remember Dad always use to get registered animals, Reg. Brown Swiss, Reg. Black Angus, Reg. Berkshire pigs. I'm not sure why."

## **Types of work/chores I did on the farm**

### *Keeping Woodboxes Full*

From the time Francis went into the Air Force in January, 1953, filling the kitchen and living room woodboxes became one of my jobs. I didn't very often split wood – Dad almost always did that. The kitchen woodbox opened into the shed on one side of the wall and into the kitchen on the other. I would fill up a wheelbarrow with split wood, park it by the woodbox and put the pieces into the woodbox. It was just about as wide as a piece of wood was long – 15"-18" – so wood could be piled neatly into the box, with some laid sideways. This box needed to be filled every two or three days, depending on how cold it was.

The other woodbox was in the living room, beyond the kitchen to the east. This was around 2'x4'x4', made to hold chunks of wood to use in the chunk stove which heated the living room and bedrooms beyond. I would pile a few chunks in my arms and bring them in from the woodpile in the shed, where Dad had made a separate pile of chunks which would not split well.

Sometimes friends came up to play [John Nutter, Roy and Earnie Daisey, Floyd Jones], if the woodboxes were at least partially empty, I'd tell them I had to fill them before I could play. I expect they figured out my ploy pretty soon but with several of us, it didn't take long!

### *Cutting up lard*

In the 50s and 60s, Dad butchered two beef and six pigs a year, to feed us and Gerald's growing family. When pigs were butchered, my job was to cut up the pig fat that would be rendered into lard. I'm not sure how much this fat weighed but it took me several hours to get it all cut into cubes. Ma would then 'try it out' [cook it] on the stove and squeeze the reduced material through an old apple press to get the lard out, which would then cool and be used for cooking [frying donuts!] Also, what was left after the squeezing was 'scraps', basically thick pork rinds on steroids. George H.W. Bush would have loved them!

### *Feeding calves*

My basic job at the barn was feeding the calves over the winter. This entailed getting them to suck on a teat-pail and them teaching them to drink from a pail. This generally went pretty well but sometimes a calf didn't cooperate and I got milk spill on me and the floor.

### *Manure*

The other main job I had at the barn was to clean out the gutters, from the main stable, the calf stable and horse stalls in the horse barn and the little stable. I would shovel the manure from the gutter into a wheelbarrow and wheel it to the east end to the barn, where there was a wooden walkway to the manure pile. At first, I would dump the load right off the end of the walk but as the pile built up, a plank was laid on the pile so as to wheel the load to the further end. It usually took 3 or

4 wheelbarrow loads each morning and then 2 or 3 at night. The calves and horses took another load once a day and then two or three once a day from the little stable.

#### Shitty experiences

Usually there was no problem from the cows, calves or horses while I was shoveling the manure and spreading sawdust. Once, however, as I was bent down shoveling behind him, the bull kicked me right onto the wheelbarrow handles. I wasn't really hurt but he and I had a little 'talk', with the shovel handle for extra emphasis!

Once, Gerald was helping me clean out the little stable [room for 21-15 yearlings, just across the barnyard at the end of the tool shed. He was shoveling and I was wheeling the loads to the manure pile. Foolishly, I made some comment such as if he would load the wheelbarrow correctly, I would only have to make one trip, rather than the usual two or three. Accepting the challenge, he sure did put on a load. I wasn't sure at first if I could even get it going but I did, got across the barnyard and started up the little rise into the barn, heading to the manure pile. Just over the barn door, there was a little roof and snow would melt off and form a little ridge of ice 2'-3' from the door. I was of course pushing hard to get the big load up into the barn and slipped on that ice. Yup, I fell forward, face-first right into the shit! I don't think I asked Gerald to put on a big load again.

#### *Driving cattle to and from Gould's*

For several summers, we pastured the cows up at what we called Gould's, although Mel Thomson had bought the place in the early 50s [lately owned by Peter.] After the morning milking, I drove the 15-20 cows up the road from the farm to the Gould pasture, on the mountain side, just below the barns [gone now] and into the pasture. Then in the late afternoon, I went up to get them and drive them back to the barn to be milked. The cows generally went along pretty well, rarely straying out of the road.

However, they certainly did 'fertilize' the blacktop and I'm sure a few tourists got a little too "up close and personal" with farm life, particularly if the cows were a little "loose." I don't remember any auto accidents, although I expect that a few cars slowed suddenly at times. I do wonder that there were no accidents in the middle of the summer each year, as 25-A was a main route for Canadian motorcyclists on their way to the Laconia races. Again, no accidents that I remember, but I think a one or two riders had to lay down their bike to avoid a collision – and expect they had even more experience with real farm life. I also probably learned a few French-Canadian terms to go with the Anglo-Saxon ones I already had!

#### *Haying*

One of my memories of haying involves what we had to drink on a hot hay day. Ma made both oatmeal water and vinegar water. Oatmeal water consisted of a gallon of water, a cup of dry oatmeal and a cup of sugar. Vinegar water was a gallon of water, a cup of vinegar and a cup of sugar. Both would be put into the milk cooler in the milkhouse, ready to drink when we came in with a load of hay. The oatmeal water was somewhat sweeter and the vinegar water would 'cut one's thirst' better but both were great beverages for a hot hayday. Of course, Dad and sometimes Gerald preferred hard cider from down cellar but about the time I was allowed to drink that, Dad stopped having it made – a connection?

There was of course the good cold spring water to drink year-round. The spring was in the 'long field next to the spring', near the south end of the fields, with pasture on the east and tillage on the west. The water came up out of blue clay, at the base of a big tree. A couple of boards were put over the spring and one could reach down with a glass and get a drink of water. A glass was left on a stick next to the spring.

This was the main water supply for the house and barn from around the time that Great-Grampa Luther Sherburn bought the farm in the 1860s until around 2000. Water never stopped running from that spring, although Dad said that sometimes it got so low that one couldn't dip up a glass of water without some mud in it. When we went to a bulk milk tank in the mid-60s, we had to get the water tested. Twice it came back with what they said were traces of road salt and sewage! The spring was 50'-75' higher than any road and the only possible sewage was what little accumulated in the outhouse at Aunt Bertha's camp, way to the west of the spring. Finally, on the third test, the powers that be decided the water was OK for use!

Until the late 50s-early 60s, Dad did all the mowing with the horse-drawn mower. When we got the Farmall H and then 'Fergie', we did some mowing with the tractors. In any event, there were lots of stone walls around the fields and the edges of the fields were always mown by hand, with a scythe. This kept the bushes down and made the edges look as if one gave a damn! We also mowed out beside the state road by hand, keeping the bushes down and getting a little hay in the process.

When we were still getting in loose hay, there were always 'scatterin's' left, no matter how careful one was when pitching the hay onto the hayrack or trailer. We used a hand rake to clean that up. Before we got a side-delivery rake, we also used a dump rake [the kind one now often sees in folks yards as 'lawn ornaments'], either with a horse drawing it or later pulled behind 'Lucy', the doodle-bug made from a truck Dad bought from Lucy Worthington. I sometimes rode on that rake, dumping the accumulated windrow of hay in a line so it could be piled up and pitched on.

## Deaths In The Family

The first death I was aware of was my Uncle Jay Donnelly, husband of Dad's sister Della. They were staying with us in September 1953, when Uncle Jay died of a heart attack and I think I remember seeing them bring his body out through the living room and kitchen to the hearse.

My only sister, Irene, was eleven years older than I, so I didn't really know her that well, but we did ride on the bus together when I was in first grade and she was a Senior. She got me in trouble on the bus that year. I sat up back with her and other older students, several from Warren and Wentworth. Apparently one *day* they were teasing me and Irene told me to tell them off – so I did, using some of the choice Anglo-Saxon words I had heard. Chet Pierce, the bus driver, heard me and made me sit up front for a few days!

Irene and Larry Huntington were married in November 1955 and they were living on Upper Street when she died in May, 1956. Her death was always a little mysterious to me but I remember being told that she had a bad cold, went and lay down on the bed after supper and when Larry went to check on her an hour later, she was gone! From her death certificate, the cause was 'acute laryngeal edema', which I think means here throat swelled up such that she couldn't breathe. Irene had been a popular young woman and was Mel Thomson's secretary at Equity when she died. I don't remember Dad and Ma speaking about her death very much but I did find this in Ma's 1959 diary, on April 30: "Set out a white, 2 red, 2 pink begonias in a box for Irene [*to put on her grave*]. Three years ago this noon I talked with her the last time." This last sentence gives me the willies every time I read it!

My grandmother Mabel Sherburn Pease was born on the farm in 1868 and lived there most of her life, with a few years on the Pease farm in Wentworth and then with Great-Grampa Pease in Franconia when she and Grampa were first married. From 1899 to her death in 1956, she never lived other than at the farm. She died at 88, after having been in declining health for several years,



including suffering a broken hip. I can remember her saying when Irene died, 'Why couldn't it have been me?' Two months later, she died at home on the farm.

### **Fire 1957 [include articles]**

In early September 1957, the house at the farm burned to the ground. Dad was at a Selectman's meeting, Ma and I were babysitting at Gerald's and Aunt Della was home alone. She smelled smoke and looked into the garage, at the west end of the kitchen. It was full of smoke, so she called neighbors and went to get her purse. When she got back to the kitchen, the fire had broken through the baseboard. It has started in the chimney between the house and garage. Aunt Della got out safely and neighbors and firefighters were soon on the scene but there was no saving the building. They did get most everything out of the 4 bedrooms and living room. Much of the firefighter's effort was in making sure the shed in the back yard and the barn itself didn't burn. I helped get the cattle and horses out of the barn and stood on the hill behind the house, just watching.

Within two days, plans were being made to rebuild and we moved into the new house, built almost on the original footprint, on Easter Sunday 1958. Ma and Dad lived in Ruth Brown's house just down the hill and after a few weeks with the Donnelly's in Orford, I also lived there. I won't write more here as there are several articles on the website or on the thumb drives about the fire and aftermath

### **Growing Up In An Extended Family**

My great-grandfather Luther Sherburn bought the present Sherburn-Pease farm in the mid-1860s and it has been in the family ever since. Harry Pease is the fifth generation to own the farm. My grandfather Francis Pease died in 1925 and Dad took over the operation of the farm. Grammy gave it to him in 1938. Dad was one of seven children, the only boy after six older sisters. Since this was the 'home farm' and Grammy lived there until her death in 1956, I was often surrounded by an extended family while growing up. This was 'the way things were' to me and it was not until I was older that I realized how much I gained from such close and extensive family connections.

Grammy Mabel was born on the farm in 1868 and lived there all but a few years of her life, coming b back to stay in 1899. When I was growing up, she was a constant presence in my life. I remember 'playing school' in her room as very young boy and also listening with her to Recorded Books For The Blind, which she got on a loan basis. I can see us now, she in bed and me in a chair by the table with the record player. Listening to what was likely some gothic novel. I have no idea what the stories were but the occasions are one of my first memories.

The other very clear memory of Grammy was that when we had biscuits, she would 'fix' mine – cut the hot biscuit in half, slather it with margarine and pour maple syrup on it. She broke her hip when I was about 8 and didn't usually come out to the table for meals. I would take the 'fixin's' in to her, where she fixed my biscuit and syrup. After she died, it was a while before I ate that again.

Aunt Bertha Crosby was Dad's oldest sister and a hellion! She and Uncle Bill had been given a piece of land on the south end of the farm in 1938, where they built a small cabin for summer use, so they were often around the house from spring through fall. For my birthday, Aunt Bertha would make a 'lamb cake', in the shape of a resting lamb and covered with coconut – yum! She also gave me the most interesting birthday present: a box filled with scrunched-up newspaper and mixed in with the newspaper were nickels individually wrapped in aluminum foil. I was always very careful to search every corner of the box and every piece of paper to get every last nickel.

Two other little stories when I was older: once, she was sitting at one end of the kitchen table at breakfast and Gerald was at the other end. There was a plate of donut holes near him and she asked him to pass her one. He said, 'Open up,' she opened her mouth he tossed one right in, a six-seven foot shot! It is a wonder she didn't choke on it. Another time, Janet and Gardner Hayes were at the house

for coffee on a summer evening. Aunt Bertha swatted a fly, which landed right in Gardner's coffee. I think it was quiet for a few seconds, then Gardner laughed and Aunt Bertha had another story!

Aunt Della Donnelly lived in Massachusetts at times but she and Uncle Jay also stayed at the farm for weeks at a time some summers when I was small. Aunt Gladys died the year I was born but Aunt Dorice and Aunt Vernie lived in near-by towns and we often visited them.

About three out of four Sunday's, some relatives would be at the farm when I was small. Gerald worked on the farm and lived with his family in the former Davistown schoolhouse just down the hill and Howard and family lived in Laconia. One or both of those families were usually at the farm for 'lunch' on Sunday evenings and their children were much like younger brothers and sisters to me. Other relatives, my cousins and some of Dad's cousins from Maine or elsewhere in New England were Sunday visitors. There weren't as many of Ma's relatives in the area but two or three families were not infrequent visitors.

### **Dormer/Bedroom over the kitchen**

- I don't know when the dormer was put on the front of the house [Gerald says that he thinks Charlie Gilbert built it] but I remember that there was a bedroom upstairs over the kitchen, where we boys used to sleep. At some point a room was partitioned off in the other [east] end of the upstairs. I knew this as Irene's room but I'm not sure if it was made for her or had been done earlier. I don't think there was any heat source in that room. Gerald also remembers that at times, on a particularly cold night, when it would have been a very cold trip downstairs and out through the woodshed to the outhouse, the boys might pull up the window in the dormer and urinate out the window onto the porch roof.

- There was a 'ceiling' in the shed, with a large hole over the car. I remember being lowered down through this hole once as a little kid. Ma had said I couldn't go out into the shed [don't know why] but the boys lowered me down from the space over the shed. There was a door or just a window from the bedroom up over the kitchen to this space over the shed.

- There was a register in the ceiling in the kitchen at the north end of the kitchen stove, where heat went up through to the bedroom above. In the winter, we used freestones or soapstone, heated on the stove and wrapped in newspaper, and put in the foot of the bed to warm it up before we went to bed. It seems as if we also took the ashes with a few coals out of the living room stove, put in a metal pail, and put in this bedroom to take the chill off.