

'Dick's Dispatch'

Columns 151 through 175

Richard E. "Dick" Venus, a native son and Ridgefield's first town historian, wrote 366 "Dick's Dispatch" columns for The Ridgefield Press between March 13, 1982, and Nov. 16, 1989. They focus mostly on the people of the first half of the 20th Century and the events and places that were part of their lives.

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#151: THE WEALTH AND ELEGANCE OF HIGH RIDGE AVENUE

Ridgefield's Main Street is known all over this country because of its beauty and its contribution to our nation's history. The majestic and graceful elms that lined the famous street are gone but thoughtful and caring people have made sure that they were replaced by maples and other shade trees.

With few notable exceptions, attempts to change the appearance and the character of Main Street have been stymied by the righteous indignation of those who love Ridgefield and wish to preserve it for future generations. We earnestly trust that there will always be those who will continue to guard this irreplaceable asset with vigor and justified militancy.

Almost as famous, and worthy of preservation, is High Ridge Avenue. Today it extends from West Lane on the south to Gilbert Street on the north. At one time the stretch from West Lane to Peaceable Street was known as just plain High Ridge. The word Avenue was added by those who lived between Peaceable Street and Catoonah Street. There were those who called the area from Catoonah Street to Gilbert Street Maple Avenue. There was even a time when some people living between High Ridge Avenue and Greenfield Street used Maple Avenue rather than Barry Avenue as their mailing address.

It mattered little as street labels were not so important years ago when the mailman all knew everyone in town. Most letters were simply addressed to the individual and just Ridgefield, Conn. We still have some of those letters so addressed, and they were delivered without any problem. Life was a great deal less complicated in those days.

That portion of High Ridge from West Lane to Peaceable Street was at various times labeled Publishers Row, as well as Millionaires Row. The street is a short one, less than a quarter mile long. All of the residents were not publishers but they sure were millionaires.

Ridgefield probably has more millionaires today than it had when High Ridge was known in some quarters as the wealthiest street in the wealthiest county in the wealthiest state in the union. However, for sheer wealth and for genuine elegance, this short but very impressive street was in a class by itself. It still is.

With the passing of Mrs. Gerardus P. Herrick a couple of years ago, the families that made High Ridge famous around the turn of the century are now all gone. That great lady was so

civic-minded that she spent untold hours walking along the street, picking up beer cans and other refuse.

When I was a kid all of the buildings were on the western side of High Ridge with the exception of the house with the silo effect and bubble top where the Miller family lives now. It was a much smaller house at the time, several additions having been made through the years.

Elmer Boutan lived in that little house [28 High Ridge Avenue] when he was superintendent for the estate across the street. Elmer was a fine man who always used to plant peas in his garden on St. Patrick's Day regardless of the weather. If the frost was not out of the ground, he would use a crowbar to make the holes to drop the seeds in. He must have had the right formula as no one had a better pea patch.

Elmer was a great sport and excelled at trap shooting. When he was in his late seventies he still bowled a very good game. Elmer always drove Dodge cars which he always bought from his friend George Tator.

The only other house on the eastern side of High Ridge was the large white house that is now the home of the Calhoun family [50 High Ridge Avenue]. It had belonged to Andrew Benedict and A. Barton Hepburn bought it for protective purposes. Hepburn lived across the street and he was fussy about who lived near him. He must have checked out Louisa W. Gray and found her to be suitable, as the very next year he sold the place to her. Louisa and her two children, Tunney and Geraldine, moved from New York City to Ridgefield and my mother was her modiste.

Much of the property on the eastern side of High Ridge belonged to people who lived on Main Street. For example, there was a fine open field just north of the Calhouns' that belonged to Mrs. Johnston L. dePeyster who lived in the house now owned by the Patrick Crehan family. I was once set to plow the field with a team of horses. Both horses were just colts, the field was very stony and it turned out to be quite an experience. The field was plowed, the stones all picked off and lime and fertilizer were applied. It was seeded to winter wheat, which grew to an enormous height and was then plowed under to enrich the soil.

Again the stones were picked and again more fertilizer and lime. That spring it was seeded to buckwheat and when it blossomed the field was just a sea of white. Beekeepers must have had a bumper crop of buckwheat honey that year as millions of hardworking bees came from miles around to feast on the buckwheat and gather the nectar. The humming of the bees as they worked could easily be heard as far away as Main Street.

The bees must have been terribly disappointed if they thought this would be an annual event. That fall, after more fertilizer and lime, the field was seeded to alfalfa and it yielded the finest crop of this nutritious legume this side of the Mississippi River. The Stanley Lewises now make their home on what must be the richest soil in Ridgefield.

The oldest house on High Ridge is, of course, the Peter Parley House. This venerable old structure was built by the Rev. Samuel G. Goodrich in 1797. This was not the first house on High Ridge. One had been constructed just north of the Peter Parley house. However, it was burned to

the ground by the British forces as they retreated to Saugatuck Shores after the Battle of Ridgefield, April 27, 1777.

As every child in school must know, Samuel G. Goodrich, Jr. was the famous Peter Parley who wrote *Recollections of A Lifetime*, excerpts of which appear each week on this page of *The Press*. The Goodrich family had lived on West Lane close by the Little Red Schoolhouse where Samuel Jr. first attended school in 1799. His first teacher had a delightful name. She was called Aunt Delight Benedict.

Perhaps it was she who instilled in young Samuel the delightful sense of humor that accompanies his wonderful writing. That wonderful humor is recognized in his selection of the word Parley, from the French word "Parler," in his nom de plume. It also shows in his answer when questioned as to what college he had graduated from and he would reply "West Lane" in such a manner as to make it sound like "Wesleyan." He must have been an exceptional person.

#152: THE BEAUTIFUL STONE COMPOUND OF THE WEALTHY HYDE SISTERS

The road that is now known as High Ridge had not been built when the Rev. Samuel Griswold Goodrich, Sr. constructed what we have come to know as the Peter Parley house. Access to the family's new home was made from West Lane, by way of the very short street that later became Parley Lane.

Mr. Goodrich used a portion of his new home as a school and had students from surrounding towns as well as local youngsters. Some came from as far away as New Haven.

Apparently the place was well adapted for the teaching of young children and in later years, Hugh S. Banks used it as a school. Later still, William O. Seymour conducted a school in this famous old house.

It must have been the atmosphere in which the building was steeped that caused Samuel Jr. to write all those school books and stories that young people found to be of interest. One can easily imagine the effect his writings may have had on a young Samuel Clemens. The pen name, Peter Parley, may have influenced Clemens in the adoption of his own pseudonym.

It is to be regretted that the present owner of the Peter Parley House did not continue the old house as a seat of learning. We could all have learned a lot from the highly esteemed and very intelligent Preston R. Bassett. Ridgefield is deeply indebted to the Bassetts for their careful preservation of their historical landmark.

Prior to the Bassett family, the grand old place was owned by a prominent New York banker, Harris Dunscombe Colt. His wife, Elizabeth Browne Colt, was the daughter of Walter R. Browne, a former mayor of New York City.

The Colt family also owned the Bluebird Apartments on West Lane. They bought the place from Ida M. Smith who had been the manager of the famous Port of Missing Men.

After the passing of Mr. Colt, his wife suffered very severe depression and became pretty much of a recluse. She moved to the Hotel Roosevelt in New York City where she maintained an apartment. Mrs. Colt lived alone and no one was allowed to visit with her. Food was brought to her daily along with fresh linen but this was done without the maid ever entering the room.

Harris D. Colt Jr. and his wife, Theresa Strickland Colt, took over the Peter Parley House after the senior Mrs. Colt passed away in 1929. Harris was a noted archeologist and spent much time in traveling about the world. During his travels Harris met and married Theresa, a native of Malta. In his archeological pursuits Harris did considerable exploring of the pyramids in Egypt.

When the senior Colts bought the property, it extended all the way west to Shadow Lane. That was changed in 1920 when two sisters, Elizabeth Alvina Hyde and Mabel Lillia Hyde, left their family home in Wildwood, N.J. The sisters had visited friends in Ridgefield and like so many others, they were struck by the beauty and tranquility of the town. The Colts were persuaded to part with the corner property on which there was a small yellow building. So the small wooden building quickly disappeared and in its place there was built the several attractive stone buildings with the stylish old English cobblestone courtyard.

Each stone had to be cut and faced properly and when completed the buildings were a vision of substantiality. The cobblestones in the courtyard became so polished with use that we were concerned about the possibility of the express horse slipping on them while deliveries were being made.

On the right side of the service entrance is the garage, also of matching stone. The chauffeur William Anderson had a nice apartment above the garage. To the left of the service entrance is the nice stone house that was once the home of the superintendent, William Weinberger.

Billie, a navy veteran of World War I, had a very pleasant disposition, and a sense of humor that was matched by that of wife, Ingeborg. This couple were just full of fun and when they attended a party, their presence was enough to assure its success. The Weinbergers had a daughter, Marion, who attended local schools but then we lost track of her. We were quite pleased to learn that she lives in New Jersey and that her mother lives with her.

Three of the very popular flowering shrubs were featured in the original plantings on the Hyde estate. They always bloomed in rotation and seemed to have some kind of an agreement among themselves that guaranteed they would not vie for attention at the same time.

First there was the brilliant-yellow of the forsythia that tells us the winter is behind us. Then came the wisteria with its long purple or lavender blooms to announce that spring is really here. As the gentle blooms of the wisteria started to fade, the red, pink or white buds of the weigela were ready to burst on the scene. By this time you had better have your vegetable garden all planted.

One of the finest displays of wisteria that we have ever seen is hanging from an arbor on the corner of High Ridge and Shadow Lane. They were planted by Billy Weinberger more than sixty years ago and can easily be seen as you enter the street from West Lane.

Along with the large wooden gates at the main entrance, two large and very old rhododendrons stand guard and they are also products of Billy's original plantings. These priceless shrubs receive the necessary attention of the Mortimer Schwartz family, the present owners, as well as the tender loving care provided by Bill Boland.

I believe that in all those years Billy Weinberger and Bill Boland are the only ones to whom was entrusted the care of this Ridgefield landmark. The two Bills remained as ownership of the estate went from the Hyde sisters to Mrs. Howard Lapsley Thomas, to the Robert Englers and the Schwartz family.

Another feature of this exceptional estate is the old-fashioned formal garden that is protected by the white wooden fence that fronts on both streets. It has just about every perennial that can provide constant bloom during the spring, summer and fall.

The Hyde sisters spared nothing in the construction of this fine estate. It was said that they really could well afford it. There was a story that each sister was worth forty million. At any rate they were never observed standing in the bread lines of the Depression years.

#153: A GRAND, OLD HOUSE THAT'S GONE

Last week we mentioned three spring flowering shrubs — forsythia, wisteria and weigela. There were immediate phone calls, reminding us that we failed to list many other spring flowering shrubs, such as spiraea and the multi-colored azaleas. I hastened to explain that our reference was made to shrubs that flourished on the former Hyde estate on High Ridge and Billy Weinberger's story that the three mentioned were the only ones he could get to agree on blooming each year in proper rotation.

The other shrubs were of a more capricious nature, and according to Billy, chose to bloom on occasion at a time when their brilliant colors could steal the show. They refused to sign a non-aggression pact that would guarantee their blooming at a precise date, in the spring.

At any rate, it was nice to learn that someone reads this column and we were happy to receive the calls. It should be noted that in keeping with its agreement, the weigela, in colors white, red and pink, is at this moment bursting into bloom, as the graceful wisteria fades from the scene until next year.

Just north of the Peter Parley House on High Ridge, there is the very impressive residence of the James Ettinger family. The land on which this building sits once belonged to the John A. King family. It was purchased by the Morris family in the past century. It seems as if the King family owned most of the land on what we now call High Ridge.

A very ornate mansion once stood on this property, about where the present mansion now rests. It was once the home of A. Newbold Morris, a man who was very prominent in the affairs of Ridgefield. He contributed greatly to the welfare of this community.

His daughter, Eva V.C. Morris, married McDougall Hawkes and they also made this their home for many years.

This great mansion was an excellent example of Victorian architecture. It is a shame that we do not have a picture of this house, as it was a classic and it is doubtful that the beautiful woodwork could be duplicated today. [Note: The accompanying rendering was discovered long after Dick wrote this column in 1985.]

McDougall Hawkes was also a very prominent man in Ridgefield and fit nicely into Millionaires Row. He was a civil engineer and was considered by many as the outstanding

authority on bridges. He was a member of the New York State Bridge and Tunnel Commission and at one time was the New York City Dock Commissioner.

Mr. Hawkes' great-great grandfather was John Lawrence, who in colonial days was widely known for his legal ability. John Lawrence had the title of Advocate General of the colonies and officiated at the trial of the master spy, Major John Andre.

As every student knows, or should know, Andre was captured at Tarrytown and incarcerated in nearby South Salem, under the watchful eye of our own Lt. Joshua King. Lt. King was later to become Ridgefield's first postmaster and it was he who successfully penetrated Andre's clever disguise. [Note: This is the same King who established the King family, mentioned above, largely responsible for the development of High Ridge into mansions.]

McDougall Hawkes had a daughter, Eva, who died at a young age and soon after that, the family moved away, but retained ownership of the great house. The place was put out to rent or lease and different families used it as their summer residence. One of the families to use it was the John E. Davis Sr. family. Their son, John E. Jr., was the husband of the present Mrs. [Maude Bouvier] Davis, who still makes her summer home in Ridgefield. Mrs. Davis has a niece who was once our nation's First Lady, when she was Mrs. John F. Kennedy.

The senior Davis family had a chauffeur named John Lietel. John, according to the junior Mrs. Davis, used to double as nursemaid for the family's dog, a very large Airedale, who always rode with him on the front seat of the big limousine. Whenever the dog was ill, or got upset for any reason, John was called and had to stay overnight with him.

The Lietels had a very beautiful daughter, Tish. She was every bit as pretty as Brooke Shields. Our sax player in the old Mayflower Swing Band, fell for Tish, head over heels, and that was easy to understand. Paul and Tish used to accompany us when we went out for an evening. In the early evening there was no problem driving down the long driveway that led to the garage, over which the Lietels lived. However, getting Tish back home in the wee hours of the morning was an entirely different matter.

After dark, nothing was supposed to move on that estate and everyone was in bed early. There was no night watchman armed with a shotgun, but they did have that large Airedale, and his hearing was uncanny. The least noise would set him off and any kind of fuss was enough to cause John to be called to the mansion to take care of him.

It was a bluestone driveway and the stones made a lot of noise that was rather pleasant to hear during the daytime, but had a different effect after dark. It was a time for caution to be used as Tish's father did not relish being called to the mansion in the middle of the night to administer to a very healthy dog.

So Paul used to park his Model A Ford roadster out on the highway and walk Tish down that long driveway to the garage apartment. Sometimes it seemed as though it took forever for them to say goodnight, which I guess was also understandable. However, it was always a great relief to hear Paul's light footsteps as he made his way back to the car.

The senior Davis family leased many different places during the summer months, including our present Community Center and, one time, the mansion at Casagmo when Miss

Mary Olcott was away. When they no longer used the Hawkes place, it was placed on the market by Mrs. Eva Van Cortland Hawkes.

Col. Rousseau, a retired army officer, purchased the estate in the mid-40's. The Rousseau family apparently did not share my admiration for the beauty of the grand, old house and proceeded to tear it down.

It seemed incredible that anyone would consider destroying a building that could never be replaced, but that is exactly what happened. The mansion disappeared quickly and almost as quickly, the present large white mansion arose in its place.

Reed and Audrey Shields made this place their home, when the Rousseau family left Ridgefield and for the past 18 years, it has been home to the Ettinger family. I still miss seeing that ornate old wooden building.

#154: FAVORITE HIGH RIDGE MANSION — YOU COULD SEE THE CITY!

Of all the lovely homes on High Ridge, I guess my favorite would have to be the one that is now owned by the Albert D. Swanson family. It is of graceful design and there is something very livable about this fine house.

Just north of the Ettinger mansion, this excellent example of late 19th century architecture sits on what we believe is the highest point of land in the village area. Because of its elevation, the view to the west is just magnificent.

It is a real treat to witness the sunset from the rear of this fine, old, brown-shingled house. In the years before pollution descended on us, it was possible, with the use of field glasses, to make out the form of the Empire State Building 55 miles away.

William A. Jenner bought the land for his home from John A. King, and proceeded to build this great mansion. He named it "Overlook," a name that seemed quite appropriate.

At the time, like other people on the Ridge, Mr. Jenner expected to use his place as only a summer residence. Therefore, a central heating plant was not included in his plans. He did have a lot of fireplaces, which were used to take the chill out of the air on weekend visits during spring and fall. It was many years later before the house was winterized for year-round use.

Mr. Jenner was an eminent attorney and a senior member of one of New York's oldest law firms, Spring and Wetmore. While staying at his summer home, he commuted to the City as did his neighbors on the Ridge. Each morning, at the appointed hour, a beautiful chestnut driving horse, with George Bennett holding the reins, would appear at the front door of the Jenner mansion. George was Jenner's superintendent and among many other things, it was his duty to see that the boss did not miss the 7:30 train. So each morning George would pull up to Ridgefield's railroad station at 7:20. That would just about guarantee Jenner's arrival at 9 in the City as trains ran on time in those days.

Besides the chestnut, there were three fine bays in the Jenner's horse stable. They were all good drivers, but the chestnut was Mr. Jenner's favorite. This fine horse drew a neat little rubber-tired cart that had one seat that was wide enough to accommodate two passengers. This

wagon was equipped with such fine springs that a ride, even over a rough surface, was like floating on a cloud.

The Jenners' property ran west from High Ridge a considerable distance beyond what we now call Shadow Lane, which was just a cow path at the time. The entire estate must have measured more than eight acres.

There was the superintendent's cottage, the horse barn and two other large barns. In later years, Romeo Petroni developed this back acreage into a nice little community. A very steep driveway connected the main house to the buildings in the rear. Signs of this driveway are still visible although it has not been used in many years.

Mrs. Jenner (Josephine) took an active interest in the young people of Ridgefield. She seemed especially determined that each school boy and girl would have a working knowledge of plant life and botany in general. When we were in the lower elementary grades, Mrs. Jenner would invite an entire class to her home, where we would be shown picture slides on the proper method of planting a vegetable or flower garden. Following the slide presentation we were continued on a tour of her excellent gardens, to view first hand what she wanted us to learn.

The Jenner daughter, Anne, shared her mother's interest in youth. In fact, after Mrs. Jenner passed on, Anne continued to invite the school children and I think they looked forward to the trip and the hot chocolate and cookies.

We have fond memories of that very pleasant house, especially the game room with its valuable billiard table and the large, colorful chandelier (probably a Tiffany) that hovered majestically over the bright green cushions of the table.

Anne married Sterling Foote and they lived at Overlook for many years. My Marie's father, Forester Foote Bishop, was a cousin of Sterling Foote. Sterling was a philologist and a noted collector of books. He was a 1902 graduate of Yale and taught for some time at the great seat of learning.

The Foote children were a very prominent part of Ridgefield's social life in the 20's and early 30's. Hope shared her grandfather's love for driving a fancy horse and presented a nice picture as she drove by with a spirited trotter, drawing that same neat little cart.

She married James Gibbons and for some time lived on Donnelly Drive. Hastings and Sterling Jr., were more interested in gasoline-powered vehicles, especially motorcycles, which they rode at tremendous speeds. When they left town, they left behind an old cycle and a couple of old cars. The machines were stored for many years in a large barn on the western end of the property. I believe the building has since been converted into a dwelling. The cars and the cycle would be very valuable today as they were real antiques.

The elevation of this estate was a cause for the Ridgefield Water Supply Company to purchase the property, some 30 odd years ago. It was the company's intention to erect a standpipe at the highest point of land.

At the time property values were very low and several of the great mansions, including Overlook, were available. They could be bought for what many people in Ridgefield today are paying in yearly rental fees. They could be acquired, as the saying used to go, "for a song."

The song, in this particular instance, may have been “I Guess I’ll Have to Change My Plans.” There was a considerable amount of music on High Ridge and it was not coming from the many songbirds that inhabited the area. The neighbors had organized their own chorus and the upshot was that the sanctity of historic High Ridge had been preserved and the standpipe failed to materialize.

#155: INTERESTING HIGH RIDGE PEOPLE WHO LIVED ON THE ‘EAST SIDE’

Across the street from the Albert Swanson residence at 35 High Ridge, are two houses that are of more recent vintage than their neighbors’. They were both built in the early 1950’s, just as the population explosion in Ridgefield was getting under way.

One of these fine homes was built by Judge John Edward Dowling at 32 High Ridge. He had returned from Chicago to be Ridgefield’s Judge of Probate. Ed, as he is more popularly known by friends, had been with the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the Windy City.

Because of the untimely death of Judge Ralph E. Cramp, it was necessary to hold a special election. Attorney Dowling, a Ridgefield native, was the winner over Attorney Michael E. Bruno in a spirited election campaign.

It is interesting to note that our present Judge of Probate, Romeo G. Petroni, was once a law partner of Attorney Dowling. Albert Arvay now owns and lives in the house at 36 High Ridge.

The other attractive house, at 42 High Ridge, is now home to two of our favorite people. We affectionately call them the Marys — Lindeke and Parry. They have been a decided asset to the town and they are right at home on the famous street. Their fine house was built by Bacchiochi Inc. for the retiring Rev. William Browne Lusk. That fact in itself assured a well-constructed building.

Mr. Lusk had served as rector of Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church from 1915 to 1950. That 35-year span probably made him second only to the later Rev. Richard E. Shortell [of St. Mary’s] in years of service to a parish in Ridgefield.

Mr. Lusk came to Ridgefield just about the time the present Saint Stephen’s Church was being completed. He quickly endeared himself to the parishioners of his new church and in later years was affectionately called Daddy Lusk.

Both the Reverend and Mrs. Lusk were natives of Ireland, having emigrated from County Antrim. Following World War I, Mr. Lusk paid a return visit to his native country. On his arrival back in Ridgefield he used the Town Hall auditorium to give a lecture on his travels and observations. One of those attending the lecture was the Rev. Richard E. Shortell, whose parents had come from Ireland. To say that he disagreed with what he heard is putting it mildly.

The following week the pages of The Ridgefield Press actually quivered as they carried Father Shortell's sharp rebuttal to Mr. Lusk’s opinions and assessments as well as his analysis of the role played by the Emerald Isle in World War I.

The public debate continued for some time on the pages of this newspaper. As these two men of the cloth were both strong-willed as well as very learned, the comments made were not

particularly coated with sugar. One thing was sure, a lot of Presses were sold during those summer months.

The upshot of the whole thing was that the two fine gentlemen became very close friends. As a matter of fact, when Father Shortell was in the twilight years of his pastorate, Mr. Lusk was almost a daily visitor at Saint Mary's rectory.

On many occasions, while making my delivery of newspapers to the rectory I would find the two old friends side by side in rocking chairs on the porch. Except for intermittent bits of conversation, each of the clergymen would sit there reading their breviaries.

All this would not seem so very unusual today. However, at the time the spirit of ecumenism was not as prevalent as it is now and it was something very nice to see.

Unfortunately, but as so often happens, Mr. Lusk did not stay with us long enough to enjoy his retirement in his new home on High Ridge. It seemed as if it was less than two years when he was called to his just reward.

The next house north of the eastern side of the street was noted in a previous column. It was built in the early 1900's by Mrs. Louisa Gray after her impressive credentials had been carefully scrutinized by the neighbors. This fine old house is the present residence of the Michael Calhoun family at 50 High Ridge.

Mrs. Gray's daughter, Geraldine, married Robert Teviot Livingston. When Mrs. Gray passed on, the Livingstons took over the large house.

Robert Livingston was a big man, with a kind of sad face that masked a delightful sense of humor. He was considered to be a very intelligent gentleman and carried several significant titles. Two of them were Professor Emeritus of Industrial Engineering of Columbia University and President of Livingston Institute. He also operated his own consulting firm.

Professor Livingston was associated with Columbia for more than 40 years. During that time he received the very prestigious Freedom Foundation Award in 1951, the Gilbreth Award and Medallion in 1965 and the Management Science Marquis Award just a few months before he passed away in January 1968.

Robert Livingston lived very quietly on High Ridge for many years. He apparently devoted most of his time to his studies of management and he was rarely seen, even by his neighbors.

That all changed rather suddenly and he began to take an active interest in local affairs. Soon he began to attend town meetings and did not hesitate to speak his mind. It was a joy to hear him at these meetings when he would expound on management, which, of course, was his favorite subject.

He also made several contributions to this newspaper on various subjects. His letters of complaint concerning the neighborhood dogs that continually knocked over his garbage cans were classics. His description of how he combatted this most annoying nuisance was little short of hilarious.

Robert Livingston was a direct descendant of the Third Lord of Livingston Manor. This esteemed gentleman was very prominent in the colonial history of New York and was mayor of that city from 1784 to 1789.

So far on this rather short but very famous street we have found a world-famous writer, a descendant of the Advocate General of the original colonies, a noted Columbia professor and two descendants of former mayors of New York City.

#156: BANKER A. BARTON HEPBURN AND HIS STATELY ALTNACRAIG

Continuing our journey along Millionaires' Row, we must cross High Ridge Avenue in order to view the most majestic of all the great mansions on this famous street.

Before the turn of the century Alonzo Barton Hepburn purchased a large tract of land from John A. King [now 55 High Ridge]. It is just north of the Jenner property with which it shares its great elevation and spectacular view of the west. He also acquired more acreage for his back property from Henry B. Anderson.

The back property bordered the old Ridgely Country Club — now Ward Acres. This property extended north to Peaceable Street and along with the High Ridge site amounted to more than 20 acres. Mr. Hepburn later sold a great portion of the back property to his close friend and protege, Albert H. Wiggin. On this property Mr. Wiggin built the large mansion that is now the home of the Raymond Bessette family at 47 Peaceable Street.

Alonzo Barton Hepburn was probably best known as A. Barton, but his friends called him plain Barton. Whatever he was called, he was born in relative poverty on a farm in Ogdensburg, N.Y., in 1847. As a lad he worked on the farm and the laborious farm work must have made him determined to shed a life of poverty. However, he loved farm life and after reaching the pinnacle of success in the financial world, he owned his own farm but that is another story. Mr. Hepburn was a very modest man and never forgot his humble beginning. His rise to prominence reads like a Horatio Alger story about Ragged Dick. His goal must have been to have the most pretentious of the stately mansions on High Ridge. After viewing the great house with its enormous columns on either side of the front entrance, we would have to agree that his efforts in this connection were quite successful.

The best architects and the finest tradesmen were assembled to put the Hepburn mansion together and it took more than two years to build it. When finally completed, this magnificent structure was called Altnacraig, a name that it has carried for almost a century.

I believe that in all those years there have been only three owners of this historic property. After Mr. Hepburn's death from an accident in the early 1920's, Mrs. Hepburn (Emily) kept the place going to some degree until the mid-40's. At that time Lillian Benka bought Altnacraig but kept it only a couple of years. It was then acquired by Mrs. Helen Karlonas who has since that time operated it as the Altnacraig Convalescent Hospital.

Mr. Hepburn spared nothing in the construction of his fine home and even added a nice little swimming pool which may still be there at the rear of the mansion. It must have been the very first swimming pool in town. The acreage in the rear of the mansion was developed into a

very neat little farm, complete with cows, horses, and chickens. Several of the buildings that housed the farm animals are still standing, complete with housing units for those who worked on the estate. Several families lived in these apartments, including the Forsyths, the Scalas, and the Unwins. I believe the late Edward Unwin was the last superintendent for the Hepburns. There was also a fine conservatory, the frame of which may still be standing.

On either side of the driveway between the farm buildings were some of the finest gardens in Ridgefield. The black soil was so rich from the years of fertilizing that you could just throw the seeds out and then listen to the plants grow.

There were absolutely no stones in these gardens. I discovered that when, many years ago, I was sent to plow the gardens with a fine old team of horses. Lady and Jim were mother and son and were known as an honest team. They never dogged it and never quit when the going got tough. It was not a very warm day, but soon the horses were puffing and perspiring to an alarming degree but they continued on and on.

It suddenly dawned on me that the reason Lady and Jim were in such a state was because there were no stones in the garden and the soil was exceptionally heavy. In stony ground numerous stops were necessary while the plow was maneuvered around the obstacles. This would give the horses a respite from their steady pulling of the plow. The little black horses were very grateful when adjustments were made to compensate for their accustomed rest periods.

A. Barton Hepburn was probably best known as a financial genius but he was also a noted philanthropist. He was a very kindly man and was always ready to help those in need. He made many large contributions to various colleges and schools.

The Hepburns had two daughters, Beulah and Cordelia, but there was no son to carry on the family name. That may have been the reason why Barton Hepburn continually searched for young men who he felt were worthy of a college education but did not have the funds to acquire one. When such a boy was brought to his attention, that lucky boy would get the necessary help from this kindly benefactor.

Mr. Hepburn was an exceptional student himself. As a young man he made a study of banking and by the age of 30 was recognized as an outstanding authority in the financial world.

In the late 1800's banks were failing to an alarming degree. Someone was needed to keep this important part of the economy on an even keel. Because of his banking experience, Barton Hepburn was made superintendent of the Banking Department of the State of New York. His calm and level-headed approach to these bank failures helped to rectify the chaotic conditions.

Mr. Hepburn also served several terms as comptroller of currency for New York State. During World War I he was called on to raise money that was needed to carry on the war effort. That he was eminently successful in raising the necessary money was recognized not only in New York but in Washington by President Woodrow Wilson. His prowess in financial circles was brought to the forefront when as a comparatively young man he was made president and chairman of the board of the great Chase National Bank.

#157: A VET-CHASING HEIFER AND AN ACTRESS WHO LANDED IN ALFALFA

Salmon Portland Chase reached great prominence as chief justice of the United States Supreme Court at the end of the Civil War. However, his greatest contribution to this nation was made while he served as the secretary of the treasury during that terrible war between the states.

During that dark period of our country's history, Secretary Chase faced the monumental task of maintaining the national credit and supplying the funds needed by the Union to prosecute the war. While successfully accomplishing these things, Chase was able to develop a national banking system. To this day, the great bank that carries his name is a leader in the world of finance.

It is said that, as a young student of banking, A. Barton Hepburn was fascinated by the exploits of Salmon Chase. Perhaps reading about the great financier kindled the fires of ambition that carried Hepburn to leadership in the world of finance.

It must have been too much to expect that this poor farm boy from the most northern part of New York State would one day become a master banker, as head of the great Chase National.

When Barton Hepburn attained his lofty position as head of the bank, he remained the modest gentleman that his associates knew him to be. Love for the land and for life on the farm must have remained strong in this great man.

While his hankering for farm life was partly satisfied by the establishment of the little "gentleman's farm" at the rear of his mansion on High Ridge, his real ambition was for something that would be considerably larger. Within a few years after completion of his fine estate on the Ridge, Mr. Hepburn could be seen driving his horse and buggy around the back roads of Ridgefield. He was searching for a tract of land that would have the acreage for the kind of farm he had envisioned, while his keen mind rested from wrestling with financial matters.

He finally found what he was looking for about a mile from his home on the Ridge. It is located on Whipstick Road and had been used as a farm, though not as extensively as it would be by Barton Hepburn.

The original farm house, built by Joseph Benedict in 1790, is still standing and is the residence of Mrs. Francis W. Collins. It is in excellent condition as are the houses for the farm workers and the barns that Mr. Hepburn built.

The large barn housed both the horses and the cows and huge hay mows. There was a silo at the end of the barn that held 50 tons of corn silage. Near the barn a large windmill pumped an abundant supply of clean fresh water from a very fine well.

After acquiring the original tract, Mr. Hepburn proceeded to purchase surrounding property until he had more than 150 acres. The farm, which he promptly named Whipstick Farm, extended from Wilton Road East, almost to Nod Road and ran south to what is now the Landegger estate.

Mr. Hepburn took an active role in overseeing the construction of the buildings, the clearing of the fields and building of the fences. He made regular visits to the farm and the workers were duly impressed by his ideas and his knowledge of the operation of a farm.

Henry Greene, grandfather of Sgt. Willian Greene of our local police department, was one of the last farm workers to live on the farm. George Mulvaney (Bob's father), was Hepburn's teamster and drove the last team that Hepburn had.

The horses were both bay in color, but the similarity between the two ended right there. One was long in body but short in height and would eat more oats than three horses. The other stood much taller but was short in length and was known as an easy keeper and ate much less than his long-ribbed partner.

We asked Mr. Mulvaney why they were so mismatched. He laughed and said that rather than being mismatched, they were actually a perfect team. He added that it was more important that they worked well together rather than that they just looked pretty together and then said: "You know, it's the same way with people. They don't have to look pretty to work well together."

George was right about the horses, for they sure worked well as a team.

About five years after Mr. Hepburn passed on, Mrs. Hepburn sold the farm to Francis W. Collins, who had just purchased the Ridgefield Water Supply Company. Emily was more interested in her flower gardens than she was in the farm.

The Collins family made no attempt to run the farm. Francis Collins' definition of a gentleman farmer was "one who made his money in the city and came to the country to spend it." He did not wish to be placed in that category so he rented the farm out to Irving Conklin, who used the eastern section of the farm for pasturing his dry stock, and about 20 heifers.

One day while inspecting this herd, we observed several heifers acting in a peculiar manner. We advised Irving Conklin, who called Dr. Knapp, the grand old veterinarian. As the three of us approached the pasture it was noted that the eyes of the heifers seemed to be glazed and some were staggering.

As soon as Irving opened the gate, one of the heifers charged him and it was necessary for him to climb a tree to escape. The heifer stood at the tree, weaving back and forth. Dr. Knapp asked me to crawl along the fence and attract the heifer's attention by barking like a dog. The heifer charged in the direction of the barking and as she neared the fence, the old doctor threw a lasso over her head and snubbed her down.

This heifer and one other died the next day and it was discovered that they had consumed some locoweed.

Across the lane from the pasture were five nice hay fields that ran along a ridge all the way to the present Landegger estate, then the residence of Townsend B. Martin.

We were assigned to remove the stone walls and make just one big 20-acre field and this was all done with three teams of horses. We recall that all those who worked on this project wore gloves as there was considerable poison ivy. Just one man, George Seelig, refused the gloves. He contracted the worst case of poison ivy that I have ever seen. Every inch of his body was covered and we had to carry him in a sheet. Dr. Woodford took care of him and he survived, but it was very serious for a while.

When the big field was completed, it was seeded to alfalfa and it was a beauty.

T.B. Martin was a famous sportsman and owned a stable of racehorses. He also had a friend who was one of the real great movie stars of the day. This beautiful lady had many talents, one of which was the ability to fly an airplane.

One day she came to call and it was not by limousine. We were inspecting the progress of the newly seeded alfalfa when we noticed a small plane flying low over the field.

After circling the field a few times, it became apparent that the pilot intended to land. We all had visions of the newly seeded field being torn up by the wheels of the plane.

At any rate, the plane made a perfect landing and as we approached it, ready to scold the pilot, a very elegant lady emerged from the cockpit. Needless to say, all feelings toward admonishment quickly faded under Jean's dazzling smile.

#158: THE HAY-TOP KIDS WHO TOPPLED, THE WASPED HORSES WHO FLED

With your kind permission we have detoured from our trip along High Ridge. as it was felt that a few anecdotes relating to A. Barton Hepburn's Whipstick Farm might be of interest.

As pointed out earlier, the buildings on the farm have been well cared for by both the Hepburn and Collins families and are still in excellent condition today. One small house that was home for one of the farm workers has since been removed and the windmill that pumped so well has disappeared.

The Windmill pumped water into a wooden tank that was raised about 40 feet above the ground and had a capacity of about 500 gallons. It had a mechanism that turned the pump off at about 400 gallons while still allowing the fan to turn.

When the water had receded to the 300 gallon level, the pump would re-engage with the fan and raise the water level back to 400 gallons.

During the 30's, the system had begun to age and there were occasions when the pump would fail to shut off. The end result was that after the tank reached capacity, the water would cascade to the ground through an overflow pipe at the top of the tank.

At the time, the owner of the farm was also the owner of the Ridgefield Water Supply Company. Therefore, he had a real sense of value where water was concerned.

This was especially true if the water being wasted was not running through someone's water meter. It was understandable that such examples of waste as an overflowing windmill did little to improve his disposition.

Inside the gate to the pasture was a large barrel under a faucet where the dry stock came to drink. From time to time, the faucet would be found turned on and the barrel overflowing. This would cause Mr. Collins to have considerable distress and various people were blamed for not turning off the faucet. On one occasion, one of our crew, dear old Mr. Overfield, was accused of having left the water running on the previous day.

As he was suffering the brunt of Mr. Collins's wrath, we noticed a nice little Guernsey heifer as she approached the water barrel. Before taking a drink, the heifer rubbed the top of her head on the handle of the faucet. Sure enough, the water started to flow as we called the attention of the two men to the culprit who was responsible for turning on the water.

Perhaps the heifer was just scratching an itch, but it sure looked as though she knew what she was doing. At any rate, the problem was solved by removing the handle of the faucet.

In the mid-30's, Mr. Collins acquired several hundred little pine trees. They were just seedlings and measured no more than a foot in height. Irving Conklin sent Percy Humphrys and me to plant the trees. Fifty years later the trees are enormous and stand in a grove on the south side of Whipstick Road at the bottom of the hill below the farm house.

We recall an incident that occurred while bringing in the hay front that great hay field that was previously described. In order to get to the hay barn it was necessary to climb a steep hill. About half way up the hill there was a curve that was difficult to negotiate. To add to the difficulty, the surface of the road at that point was made very slippery by the protrusion of a large layer of rock. The rock surface had been polished by traffic over the years until it was very smooth.

One of the hay wagons was much larger than the others and was a tough pull even when empty. When fully loaded, even the Budweiser team would have to strain to pull it up that hill.

On this particular day, the wagon was loaded to capacity and though the team was a good one, we anticipated trouble. As expected, when they reached the corner, the iron shoes of the horses were as skates, as they slipped and slid on the smooth surface of the rock.

Another team was brought forward and hooked in front of the first team. About this time, Mr. Collins appeared with his two children and expressed the desire to take pictures of the huge load of hay. To make the pictures more interesting, Anne and Junior were put up on top of the hay. Then to safeguard the children, I was added to the overloaded wagon, though at the time I guess my weight was not considered a factor.

When we were all settled, the driver attempted to start the teams. They tried several times and then quit.

At this point the teamster reached forward with a pitchfork and touched the rump of the pole horses. Things began to happen rapidly as the horses violently objected to this method of starting them. They backed the wagon right down to the bottom of the hill where it struck an obstacle and turned over.

It was a soft landing and no one was injured and the pictures of the whole proceeding must have furnished a graphic illustration of what you should not do to a horse.

It should be noted that it took three separate loads to get the original up to the barn.

There was another exciting day when the men were busily engaged in getting the hay from the field where the Don Allan family now reside at 286 Wilton Road East.

A team of grays, Major and Dick, were being used to rake the hay with a two-wheeled machine called a dump rake. As the hay was raked into windrows, the men rolled it into hay cocks. It was then pitched by hand onto the hay wagon. At the time, much of the farm work was till done by hand.

When the raking was completed, the team was allowed to munch hay from a hay cock while the teamster helped load the wagon. Unfortunately there was a nest of yellow jackets under the hay cock. The ferocious insects did not like being disturbed and started to attack the horses. '

The horses were walking away when the teamster noticed them. He yelled at the team and they then started to trot toward Wilton Road East. The pace increased as they reached the highway with a frantic and very embarrassed teamster in hot pursuit. The driverless team was now racing toward town at a full gallop!

As they flew by Charley Russell's house, the horses became separated from the hay rake. As they went by Curtiss Leighton's, the wiffletrees fell free and as they reached Main Street, they were held together only by the neck yoke.

The terrified horses fled up the sidewalk in front of T.C. Jessup's where one went on one side of a tree and the other went the opposite way. The impact threw both horses to the ground where they thrashed around till the men arrived.

Runaways were quite dangerous and very frightening and this one was probably the last to occur in Ridgefield.

#159: THE PASSING OF THE HEPBURNS AND THEIR ELEGANT ALTNACRAIG

We have been relating some of the anecdotes concerning the operation of Whipstick Farm. The farm is comprised of a great many very desirable acres and we feel that the temptation to develop this fine property must have been stoutly resisted by the owners over the years.

For some years now, the great fields have just been allowed to grow and growth in the wooded areas has been quite dense. However, in recent weeks, breaks have been made in the excellent stone wall along Whipstick Road as you near Nod Road. Inside the walls, the soil is being moved around and indications are that at least some of Whipstick Farm is about to succumb to the bulldozer of a developer.

At the point where this activity is taking place, the woods have an abundance of mountain laurel. For many years these shrubs, with their white and pink blossoms, have put on a spectacular show each spring. Mountain laurel was designated our state flower in 1907 and we were always cautioned not to cut it.

The shrub has a long and interesting history; it even attracted the attention of Captain John Smith and he mentioned it in his General History of Virginia, New England and the Summer Isles, which he wrote in 1624. I guess the bulldozer would have no way of knowing about that.

Our hope is that this new development will be worthy of this beautiful area. Perhaps we will be lucky and the developer will pattern his venture after neighboring Twin Ridge.

So it's back to High Ridge and the grandeur of A. Barton Hepburn's palatial "Altnacraig." We have a great appreciation for the painstaking manner in which the great estates on this famous street were put together. Surely nothing was spared in the construction of the buildings or in the developing of the properties and their great sweeping lawns.

This is especially interesting when one considers most of these places were originally intended to be used as just "summer cottages." That the owners were meticulous is quite evident to anyone who has visited at one of the fine mansions, as they are all classics.

Even the concrete gutters and curbs on the west side of the street were all supplied by the property owners. They have recently been covered over by the town, after installation of a new storm drainage system. Perhaps they will be rediscovered by some future generation that will no doubt marvel at their excellent construction.

Mr. Hepburn even had steps placed in the bank on the highway in front of his home along with a little platform to aid those who would be climbing into a carriage. He also had a nice concrete sidewalk built across the front of his property. There are a few places where the sidewalk has lost the battle with the roots of the large trees that line the street, but it is still in fairly good condition after all those years. [Alas, all of the sidewalk that once lined the west side of High Ridge has all been removed, and pedestrians today walk in the road.]

A. Barton Hepburn once served as chairman of the Advisory Board of the Chase National. In that position he succeeded the legendary John Pierpont Morgan. Morgan was quick to recognize his unusual ability and became one of his great boosters.

Mr. Hepburn reached the pinnacle of success when he became president and board chairman of the great Chase banking enterprise. Though his greatest fame was achieved in that exalted position in the world of finance, he became an international figure when, after World War I, he was made the chairman of the League to Enforce Peace. His hard work and devotion to duty had paid off and made him a winner all the way.

For more than a quarter of a century, A. Barton Hepburn enjoyed his beloved "Altnacraig" before passing on in 1922. He was 75 when tragedy struck him on the streets of New York. As he was crossing Fifth Avenue at 23rd Street, he was knocked to the pavement by a Fifth Avenue bus.

He suffered a concussion of the brain and injuries to the right knee and ankle. At first there seemed to be hope for his recovery, but he took a turn for the worse and died three days later. Just before the fatal accident, Mr. Hepburn had said that his old age was blessed by "love, reverence and troops of friends."

This great man had come from poverty to the highest position in the world of finance, but he never lost the common touch. He remembered his birthplace on the Canadian border in the town of Ogdensburg, N.Y. There are schools in that town that were made possible by the generosity of Mr. Hepburn. There is even a hospital in that town that bears his name.

He would not have been happy to know that the A. Barton Hepburn Hospital was fined \$34,000 a couple of years ago. The fine was imposed by the New York State Department of Health. It seems that the hospital was in error in allowing surgeon John Bongiovanni to perform eight operations.

The operations were to correct disorders connected with the urinary tract, the bladder and the prostate. The report of the investigating group found no fault with the quality of the surgery performed. There was no mention of any dissatisfaction among the patients. Therefore, it is assumed that the operations were successful.

However, it was revealed that the good doctor was blind at the time he performed the operations. He had lost his sight in an auto accident four years prior to his surgical performance. The board also barred the 53-year-old doctor's six-year-old guide dog from the patients' area.

Though Mr. Hepburn would have been unhappy about the judgment against his hospital, he would certainly have been happy to know that his great home on High Ridge is still considered one of the finest of Ridgefield's mansions. No doubt he would also be happy to know that his beautiful home is now being used to care for people who are unwell.

Emily L. Hepburn kept Alnacraig going for 25 years after her husband's tragic accident. She shared Barton's love for their stately edifice and did her best to preserve it.

Mrs. Hepburn was a busy lady, but found time to take an active part in organizations which she thought would benefit Ridgefield. She was instrumental in 1914 in getting the Ridgefield Garden Club Started. She was a charter member of that worthy organization that had much to do with preserving the natural beauty of the town in the list of the Garden Club's original officers. Mrs. Hepburn's name appears as a vice president.

We hope that the elegant mansion will continue to grace High Ridge for many years to come and trust that the many trees on the lawn will not hide its majestic facade. [Sad to say, Alnacraig burned to the ground in a suspicious fire in the winter of 1994.]

#160: THE HOUSE THAT MOVED ACROSS THE STREET

There is an empty lot just north of Alnacraig where another great house once stood. The lot is now a part of Alnacraig's expansive and beautifully landscaped lawn. [A house was built on this lot, 61 High Ridge, in 1998.]

The fine house that rested on this precious piece of real estate was the residence of Charles Alfred Hamilton and his family. Mr. Hamilton had purchased this land from his close friend, A.B. Hepburn, in March of 1899.

Mr. Hamilton was vice president and chairman of the Board of International Silver in New York City and like most of his famous neighbors, he was a daily commuter to that city during the summer months. In the winter the Hamilton family lived in the city at West End Avenue.

Each morning his coachman, Charles Stannard, appeared at the front door in time to transport Mr. Hamilton to the old Ridgefield railroad station (still standing) where he would board the 7:30 train. Considering the great wealth of most of the passengers on that train, the New York, New Haven and Hartford might have labeled one car as the Millionaire Express.

Charles Hamilton's interest in metals extended to brass as well as silver and he became a director of The Bridgeport Brass Company. His son, Burgoyne Hamilton, ignored silver and gave his entire attention to brass.

At an early age Burgoyne joined the staff at Bridgeport Brass and learned the business from the bottom to the top. His efforts helped make the company a standout in the brass industry. He was rewarded by being named Chairman of the Board of that great manufacturing enterprise.

After the passing of his father in 1919, Burgoyne and his wife maintained the High Ridge estate for only a short time and then moved with their daughter Florence and son Charles to Greens Farms. Florence later married Martin Fraser Carey

Charles, who was always called “Sonny” by his friends, married a daughter of Owen Josephus Roberts. Roberts, an eminent jurist, was appointed a special prosecutor in the notorious Teapot Dome oil scandal in 1924 by President Calvin Coolidge and was later appointed an associate justice of the United States Supreme Court by President Herbert Hoover. He was known as a leading exponent of conservatism in jurisprudence.

“Sonny,” probably so-called to distinguish him from his grandfather, is remembered as a friendly person. He was tall and slender and wore great horn-rimmed glasses.

After the family moved, Sonny retained close ties with his Ridgefield friends, especially the Kilcoyne family. He was an avid sportsman and loved to hunt. He never failed to return to Ridgefield each fall to hunt in his favorite wooded areas with Luke Kilcoyne, whose father had been superintendent on the Hamilton’s High Ridge estate. The Kilcoyne family had lived on the estate and their home along with the barns was destroyed by fire.

Burgoyne Hamilton shared the honors of owning one of the first automobiles in Ridgefield with Doctor Russell W. Lowe, Samuel S. Denton and Harvey P. Bissell. Fred Lund, who had been specially trained in the operation of a motor vehicle, became the chauffeur for the Hamilton family.

As befitting a family of their stature, the Hamilton family had some fine horses. Margaret Kilcoyne remembers that the names of the coach horses were Jumbo and Sambo.

As the automobile took over from the horses, the great carriages began to disappear as a means of transportation. This left Charley Stannard in a dilemma as he stoutly refused to change with the times, as did many of the old coachmen. They wanted no part of a gasoline powered vehicle.

Draft horses were still being used for hauling purposes so Charley doffed his fancy coachman’s livery for the somewhat subdued clothing of the teamster. Draft horses lingered on for a few years after the coach horses were retired but as gasoline powered trucks began to appear, their numbers began to dwindle until their use in the 20’s was pretty much relegated to farm work.

With the advent of the farm tractor in the 30’s, even the farms were no longer a haven for the big draft horses. Some of the last teams in Ridgefield were owned by Frank Bloomer, Clifford Seymour, Edwin Smith, Mrs. John H. Lynch, Joe Pinchbeck, George Doubleday, and Irving Conklin, who had four teams at one time.

Two of the Conklin teams were engaged for a couple of years in the very early 30’s in the construction of the Silver Spring Country Club. That was just before the bulldozer began moving the earth as it had not been moved since the Ice Age and the glaciers began sliding.

When Irving Conklin purchased a large John Deere tractor in the mid-30’s, we all began to realize that the use of the draft horse for farming was at an end.

So Hamilton's horses were gone and the outbuildings were gone. Soon the family would be gone to Greens Farms and the mansion would take on a rather forlorn look that most homes seem to acquire when they are empty.

It was a fine building and with its great wrap-around porch, fielded a style that was just a little bit different from others on the Ridge. The lawns were well kept and the numerous flower gardens made it a very attractive place.

It should be noted that the millionaires, when building their great homes on High Ridge, were like the ladies who, when selecting a dress to wear to an important function, used care to avoid using attire that would be similar to that of their friends. No two of the fine mansions were alike.

The Hepburns and the Hamiltons were very good friends and as pointed out earlier, Charles Hamilton had purchased his tract of land from A. Barton Hepburn. The two homes were quite close together for such large structures. That was fine for families that were good friends.

Now, however, the Hamilton mansion was empty and Emily Hepburn was concerned about who would be her next neighbor. Problems of this kind are easily solved, if you can afford it. So Mrs. Hepburn simply repurchased the land next door and its mansion.

The Hepburns owned several acres across the street and since the fine building was too valuable to destroy, Mrs. Hepburn decided to move it to the eastern side of the Ridge. Therefore, she called on Caro Northrop for his assistance. Caro was a genius at moving buildings and assured Emily that he could do the job without disturbing the dining table or any dishes left on it.

Soon Caro and his trusted team, King and Jerry, were sliding the great building to where it now serves as the lovely home of the Jack Sherry family [at 72 High Ridge].

#161: HOW CARO NORTHROP AND TWO HORSES MOVED A MANSION

In preparation for the trip across High Ridge Avenue, an awful lot of work had to be performed. Caro Northrop's method of moving a house was probably no different from that employed by other building movers. Caro's secret was probably the meticulous manner in which he made the building ready for its trip. To be sure, it was no idle boast when he declared that he could move a house without disturbing any articles left on the dining room table.

Perhaps the confidence that seemed to exude from this fine man was generated to some extent by the many years of experience in a business that he obviously enjoyed to the utmost.

After jacking up the Hamilton mansion, he placed under it the great wooden beams on which the wooden rollers would carry the house to its destination. Caro then set up his many units of block and tackle that would lessen the amount of energy needed to pull the large building.

A block, in this instance, is not a city block or a child's building block. Rather, as the name implies, it is a block of wood in the middle of which is a grooved pulley. He used miles of rope that passed through the series of blocks and over the pulleys until an assemblage of blocks and ropes made it relatively easy to draw the great mansion across the street.

When all was in readiness, Caro's trusted team, King and Jerry, were hitched to the lead set of block and tackle. They would pull the rope almost to Main Street and then return for another hitch. That long pull probably moved the house about one foot. As can well be imagined this was a rather slow process. However, it was a safe one.

When the journey was completed, Caro had set the house perfectly on the large foundation that had been previously built to receive it. He was as good as his word and the whole operation was completed without a crack appearing in any of the walls or ceilings.

When someone suggested that it had been a hard pull for the horses, Caro said he did not think so as it was a downhill pull all the way. There was a twinkle in his eye when he said that as no one was more aware than he that the building had to be kept perfectly level during the trip, even though in its new resting place, the building was probably 25 feet lower than it had been on its original foundation.

The great wrap-around porch had been removed from the house prior to moving it. Upon arrival at the new location, additions were made as well as various alterations that made it difficult to recognize as the house that once sat on the western side of High Ridge Avenue.

Mrs. Elvine Richard was the first owner of the former Hamilton house at its new location. She bought it from Emily Hepburn in the mid-20's. Mrs. Richard enlarged her holdings by purchasing land south of her new home from the Hosmer Martin estate. It had been the backland of what is now the Main Street residence of Pat and Diane Crehan and family. This property was described in Dispatch No. 151 so we just say that Stanley and Helen Lewis used great foresight: when they built their nice home at this very desirable location. High Ridge is really the place to be.

Mrs. Richard's new home quickly took shape and in appearance it could hold its own with the other nice estates on High Ridge. Another change was an attractive garage built on the northeastern edge of the property. The place was beautifully landscaped and Mike Paccadolmi did a great job of tending the spacious lawns and gardens.

After some 15 years, Mrs. Richard passed on and Constance Ladd bought the place from the estate of Mrs. Richard. For some reason the Ladds stayed only a very short time and in the early 40's the place was again sold, this time to Adelaide Brownlee. Mrs. Brownlee had come from Danbury where her husband had been a prominent physician.

In the mid 40's, the place again changed hands and this time the owner was Blanche Wheaten. Like the Ladds, Blanche stayed only a short time and Frank Dain, who owned a lumber company in Katonah, became the new owner of the fine home at 72 High Ridge Avenue.

Frank also had an interest in our local lumber company. He and his wife, Margaret, kept the place for about 10 years and then sold it to the Charles Scotts. It seemed a little strange that in all the families of the numerous owners of this nice place, there were very few children and this is a very large house.

The Scotts kept the place for a dozen years and then sold it to Noel and Gloria Regney. The Regneys were both musically talented and they wrote and had published the best-selling

Christmas song “Do You Hear What I Hear?” Noel can still be heard at the tinkling piano as he entertains at the Elms Inn.

Just a dozen years ago the place was sold again, this time to Robert Martin. The Martin children grew up quite rapidly and as they did, that big house began to look a lot bigger. So Bob very sensibly put a very attractive addition on the garage and put the big house on the market block again. This time it was purchased by the Jack Sherrys and they are the present owners of 72 High Ridge.

So, in 60 years, this nice place has had 10 different owners. To their great credit, even those who did not stay so long, all gave the place excellent care and its fine condition today attests to that fact.

There is only one more house on the east side of High Ridge. It rests on the corner of High Ridge and King Lane on a lot that was once a part of the Hawley estate and later the Sanford Freund estate. Norman and Elsie Craig built this very attractive house 25 years ago. It is the very newest of the fine homes on the ridge and as there does not appear to be any more available land probably will be the last home built in that very desirable area for many years to come. As Karen, Bill and Laurie Craig reached maturity, the house seemed to grow with them. So five years ago the Craigs bought a smaller place and sold their nice High Ridge home to the James R. Fraser family. The Fraser children must have grown even faster than the others as after only three years they sold to Alfred E. Steinhaus, the present owner. [This house at 82 High Ridge was replaced in 2008 by a larger brick mansion called High Ridge Hall.]

Did you ever notice how almost every new house in town is so much larger than the average home of 25 years ago and at a time when they tell us that people are not having children any more?

#162: THE DREAM HOUSE OF E.P. DUTTON

Of all the great mansions on historic High Ridge Avenue, the one closest to me is the one that stands just north of Altnacraig. There is a valid reason for my feeling about this great place, as it was under my care for 30 years. It is my firm belief that this beautiful example of Victorian architecture is the most substantial wooden structure that I have ever seen.

Many men, in the course of their lifetime, have had a dream of how one day they would build a house for their family that would contain every conceivable idea that would make it comfortable, practical and livable. Nothing would be spared in making this dream house attractive to all members of the family. Money would be no object in the fantasy of putting together a house that would satisfy the most severe critic.

Many years ago, Edward Payson Dutton had such a dream and he was fortunate enough to see that dream come true.

E. P. Dutton was born in Keene, N.H. in 1831. His father owned and operated a dry goods store in that town. When Edward was only two, his family moved to Boston where the young lad would spend his formative years.

After attending local elementary schools, he was enrolled in The Boston Latin School, from which he graduated. His father had established a much larger dry goods store in Boston and after graduation Edward went to work for his father.

While he was still a young man, Edward's health broke down and he was sent to France to recuperate. It was expected that it would take several years for him to regain his health. However, by some stroke of good fortune, his health improved rapidly and within six months he was declared completely cured.

Edward took advantage of the opportunity of seeing some of Europe and traveled extensively in France and Switzerland. By the time he returned to the United States, he was fit as a fiddle and anxious to resume his career in the dry goods business.

However, his father had a friend who had become quite successful in the publishing business and the friend took an interest in the young man. He advised Edward that he seemed to have a particular aptitude that would prove to be useful in the publishing field.

The friend took Edward on a tour of his establishment and urged him to get involved. He needed little urging as his interest in publishing grew quite rapidly and he made a thorough study of it.

When only 21, Edward and a Mr. Ide formed the Boston publishing firm of Ide and Dutton. The business proved to be successful and six years later Dutton bought out Ide's interest in the firm. That was the start of the E. P. Dutton Company that was destined to become one of the world's great publishing houses.

It was not long before the name E.P. Dutton spread far beyond the limits of Boston. He bought out several small publishing houses and then in 1869, moved his business to New York City. The company's first New York address was at 718 Broadway and after just a few years, it moved uptown to 681 Fifth Avenue and finally to 201 Park Avenue where it is still doing a flourishing business today.

Before leaving Boston, Edward Dutton met and married Julia Sleeper. Julia was a member of an old and prominent Boston family. To the best of my knowledge, the Duttons had no children. I saw Mr. Dutton only once and that was when I was very young and he was very old.

My memory of Mr. Dutton is that a long, white and very full beard partially concealed a kind and friendly face. At the time, he was driving his horse, a beautiful mahogany bay, while seated in a buckboard, with a wide leather belt across his lap. I learned later that the strap was to prevent him from falling from the wagon, for even at his advanced age, he drove at a very fast pace. Come to think of it, he must have pioneered the use of the seat belt!

On this occasion, he was just out for a pleasure ride. However, years before, he had participated along with his friends, George Haven, Barton Hepburn, and Dr. Edwin Van Saun in races on Main Street that were popular around the turn of the century. Like his friends, Edward Dutton was an avid horseman and his horses were considered to be among the very best.

Those must have been exciting times and the races must have been much more fun to watch than the races we witness daily on Main Street today.

My father and my older brothers knew Mr. Dutton quite well, and they told me of how he used to drive his horse and buggy into the wooded areas of town, especially on West Mountain. There in quiet solitude, he would read his breviary and do his meditation. I have his breviary and it is one of my prized possessions. The name E. P. Dutton is emblazoned in gold on the cover of this fine book and you just know who the publisher was.

The breviary has a preface, written by the publisher himself. In it he gives freely of his views on Christianity and the positive effect that it had on the formation of this great country.

If by now you have gained the impression that E. P. Dutton was a deeply religious man, you are assured that your impression is correct. A great part of his life was spent in religious work for the Protestant Episcopal Church. In fact, a great portion of the business of the E. P. Dutton Publishing Company was devoted to the printing of religious and children's books, as well as publications connected with that church.

Edward Payson Dutton was not only a gifted writer and great publisher, he was also an excellent businessman. It naturally followed that he would accumulate a considerable amount of wealth.

It was in the very early 1890's when Dutton felt that he was ready to build his dream house. It would seem that he must have retained some of the enthusiasm of his youth, for by this time he was no longer a young man, when he purchased the property at 63 High Ridge Avenue on which his great mansion would be erected. The land, like most of that on High Ridge, had belonged to the King family.

The newly acquired tract of land would extend from High Ridge west to the land of A.B. Hepburn that bordered the new Ridgefield Country Club and consisted of more than eight acres of exceptionally fine property. There was a right of way from Peaceable Street that furnished an entrance to the back property where he would build two large barns, one for horses and one for cows, as well as living quarters for Dutton's employees.

#163: PUBLISHER DUTTON'S MAGNIFICENT MANSION

When Edward Payson Dutton was ready to build his dream house, he hired a fine architect. The agreement between the two men contained a proviso that allowed Mr. Dutton to take an active part in putting the plans together.

Among Dutton's many talents was the ability to do the work of a draftsman and a certain knowledge of architecture. Perhaps his greatest contribution came from the fact that he had spent years thinking about what the house should look like and it was relatively easy for him to put his ideas on paper.

At this point, the smartest move made by Edward Dutton was in the selection of a general contractor. While visiting various construction sites he was introduced to James F. Kennedy. "Big Jim," as he was known, had earned an excellent reputation in the construction business. He was also well known for his complete honesty and this made a big hit with Mr. Dutton.

Just five years earlier, Jim Kennedy had done the stone work on the Congregational Church and had only recently completed Saint Mary's Church in Norwalk.

After viewing these fine structures, Mr. Dutton was convinced that he had found his man. The great mansion at 63 High Ridge attests to the fact that he did not make a mistake.

The great roof on the mansion is almost the size of a football field and has a series of peaks and valleys. The original shingles on this roof were wooden and they lasted more than half a century as an indication of the kind of materials that were used. The wooden shingles on the sides of the great building are the same ones that were nailed there almost 100 years ago.

The tremendous stone foundation that Jim Kennedy built could have easily supported a much larger structure. A dozen years ago, just for curiosity's sake, the level of the house was sighted from the back door to the front door. There was less than a quarter of an inch difference, despite the enormous weight of the great mansion. Wonder how long the new houses today will stay on such an even keel?

It required a little over two years to complete the mansion, but when finished, it contained every idea that the fertile mind of Edward Dutton could fabricate. Nothing was left to the imagination, it was all quite real.

The kitchen, the maids' dining room and the butler's pantry were encircled with wainscoting up to chair rail height and after all those years, it was still in excellent condition the last time I saw it. I doubt very much that the wainscoting could be replaced today.

The beautiful hardwood floors were laid with very narrow boards and the library and living room had parquet flooring.

There were two large oak tables, one in the kitchen and one in the maids' dining room. They were so heavy, it would take a strong man to lift just one end of them. The drain boards and the china closets in the butler's pantry were also made of solid oak.

The sink in the butler's pantry had two marvelous faucets. They were more than a foot apart and extended over the sink to a height of two feet. There was an enormous loop in each faucet top that brought the dispensing end of the faucet out over the sink, creating a laboratory effect. The inner working parts of the faucet were so well machined that no washer was required, and apparently they were meant to last forever.

Between the faucets was a rather unique gadget that may be worth describing. It was a shiny metal tank, the top of which had a lid with a handle that stood a little higher than the faucets. On the front of the little tank there was a tiny faucet, similar to the ones that could be found on electric coffee percolators.

E.P. Dutton did not overlook any possibilities and though he had an excellent artesian well, he wanted to make sure the water was safe. The little tank was filled periodically with charcoal, through which the drinking water was filtered before emerging from the little faucet.

The ceilings in the mansion were well over 10 feet from the floor level and we often thought of how ideal this house would be for some of the basketball players of today — and they could afford to heat it.

The doors to each room swung on hinges so huge they could have easily supported 400 pounds. The oaken doors were at least three inches thick and it would take a strong man to lift one of these doors as they were more than three feet wide and eight feet in height.

The upper section of the walls in the dining room was covered with black leather, down to chair-rail height. The leather was kept in place by large decorative nails, the heads of which were the size of a half dollar.

The lower part of the walls in this room was done in solid mahogany. There were also strips of solid mahogany, laced in designs across the ceiling.

A huge chandelier hung over the dining room table and where it emerged from the ceiling there was a design in the ceiling itself that was made of plaster. Today, patterns of this kind are made with paper and then glued to the ceiling for effect.

The beautiful fireplace in the dining room has glossy tile on either side across the top and in the apron on the floor in front of it. This was topped off with a mantle which, of course, was made from solid mahogany, and in the center of which is a flawless mirror.

On the opposite end of the dining room are two china closets. As you might expect, they are also mahogany and, as an added attraction, have leaded glass in a fancy design.

On the west side of the dining room, there is what must have been considered one of the early picture windows. It is probably five feet in width and eight feet in length and the plate glass in this window must be close to half an inch thick. We remember how on one occasion this great window was struck by a partridge in full flight. The impact was terrific and no doubt most windows would have shattered, but this one did not even crack.

As previously pointed out, Edward P. Dutton was a deeply religious man and in designing his dream house he included some things that were mindful of that fact. Stained glass windows are placed strategically through the house and four small ones are directly over the great picture window.

Mr. Dutton must have enjoyed the exceptional view from his picture window. The foothills of the Catskills can be seen in the distance and no doubt they reminded him of the mountainous area around his birthplace at Keene, N.H.

#164: A DOG IN THE CEILING, A TOILET IN THE BEDROOM

A great deal of space in mansions that were built in the 1890's and early 1900's was devoted to large entrance halls. E.P. Dutton's great house was no exception and his hallway was as large as most living rooms. Right off the hall and just inside the front door is a little foyer, with a wooden bench, above which there was a large mirror.

The fine woodwork in the hallway is made of white oak and is as hard as iron. The stairway to the second floor and the balusters that line one side of it are also made from oak.

Eddie Holt once told me that his father, who was one of Jim Kennedy's carpenters, had made the balusters with a lathe that had to be turned by hand. He said that the wood was so hard, the cutters on the lathe had to be changed constantly.

Underneath the stairway, there was a cute little powder room. It had a sink that was made of highly polished granite. Like the other sinks in the house, it was made in such a manner that water did not just flow out of it, but rather made its exit in a swirl and went around and around as it disappeared down the drain pipe.

The little powder room also had a rather unique toilet. It must have been one of the last of its kind, with a pull chain and the large copper-lined wooden tank, way up near the ceiling. It operated perfectly and never caused any trouble. Apparently it was made to last forever.

The library is also of white oak, including the strips that lace across the ceiling and the numerous bookcases.

In the center of this room there is a very large desk. Of course, it is made of oak and designed by Mr. Dutton himself. It has drawers on both sides and two people could easily work at this desk at the same time. The story is that the desk was made by hand, right there in the room where it has stood all those years.

The beautiful parquet flooring in the library has, unfortunately, been covered with wall to wall carpeting. I would bet that when the carpeting wears out, it will not be replaced, once that flooring is revealed.

The mantel over the fireplace was also oak and had a fancy hand-carved design on either side. The woodwork in the living room, or parlor, was also made of oak. However, unlike the library, where the woodwork was done with a clear varnish, the woodwork in this room was painted white with a delicate bead of gold leaf threaded through it at just the right places.

The original ceiling in the living room had a very fancy design in each corner. The design was made of plaster and of course was hand-made. The plaster was at least an inch thick and must have been very heavy.

One winter the house was closed without heat and this caused a section of the ceiling to fall. One of the owners decided to replace the entire ceiling with plasterboard. This meant that the fancy design was lost forever and the molding had to be raised as the new ceiling was less than half the thickness of the original.

Each fireplace had a different design and the one in the living room had a pretty little cabinet on either side, with small panes of leaded glass. Speaking of fireplaces, there was one in each room, including the bedrooms. This was all made possible by four enormous stone chimneys, located at just the right places around the house. It must have taken a truckload of wood each day during cold weather to satisfy the appetites of all those fireplaces.

The stairway leading to the second floor was made of oak with the aforementioned balusters on one side and oak paneling on the other. The stairway had a landing with a little alcove, complete with a cushioned series of window seats. The top of the seats were on perfect hinges and could be opened to provide storage space. The main purpose of the seats may have been their use as a resting place on the long climb to the second floor.

The climb was made longer than in most houses because of the ceiling heights and the fact that for some reason, there was a space of more than two feet between the first floor ceiling and the next floor.

The same was true of the space between the ceiling of the second floor and the floor of the attic. There were hundreds of wooden struts between ceilings and the floors above them. I have often thought that there must have been enough lumber used in the construction of these floors to build two ordinary homes.

The roof of the great house was equipped with box gutters. This meant that the gutters were recessed about ten inches back into the roof, rather than hanging from the edge of the eaves as the conventional type gutters did.

Box gutters were lined with metal and worked very well as long as they were kept in good repair. However, if the metal rusted out, the rain water had easy access into the house and could result in a great deal of damage.

Deterioration of the gutters, or the metal lining, also afforded easy entrance to various little wildlife creatures. One time a family of squirrels found a small hole in the metal lining and they proceeded to work diligently to enlarge it. Once inside, it seemed they could travel miles in back of the walls and under the floors. So the squirrels declared “squatters’ rights” and evicting them from their expansive quarters would prove to be difficult.

Several methods were employed to entice the squirrels to move to another location. None was completely successful. However, the one that seemed to work best was when a couple of boards were removed from the attic floor and a little hound dog was inserted between the floor and the ceiling below.

The squirrels had been making a considerable amount of noise as they roamed and played in their cavernous new home. That noise was as nothing compared to the absolute bedlam that existed as the squirrels led the dog on a merry chase at great speeds through the struts and across the ceiling.

It was some time before the squirrels agreed to vacate the premises and it was later still when a very tired dog finally made his way back to where he had entered the chasm. There would be repeat performances, as the squirrels returned on several occasions, until their entrance was discovered.

There were three large bedrooms on the second floor and three smaller ones. Mr. Dutton’s bedroom had an excellent view to the west. It had a series of windows that were just above the picture window in the dining room that was previously described.

An unusual thing about Mr. Dutton's bedroom was that it had a toilet set right in the middle of the floor. It was said that Mr. Dutton never tired of looking out those windows at the rolling countryside.

#165: THE BEAUTY AND THE BANE OF DUTTON’S WATER SYSTEM

There were two areas at E.P. Dutton’s mansion that seemed to have natural, built-in air conditioning units. One was on the south end of the large porch where there was always a gentle breeze. The mercury could climb to 90 degrees or more on Main Street, but on that great porch it never got to be more than 75.

The other thoroughly enjoyable spot was the guest room on the north side of the second floor. There were large windows all around this room except for the south side. When the windows on the east and the west were open, the soothing air that passed between them was so cool and pleasant that it was hard to believe that it could be stifling just a block away.

Not all of the second floor was used for bedrooms and baths. One room was used as a linen closet. The lower part of this room was lined with chests that had large oaken drawers up to

about four feet above the floor. From the top of the drawers to the high ceiling there were white oak closets. The drawers and the doors to the closets worked so well that a small child could have opened and closed them easily.

Of course everything in this grand house fitted perfectly and only the finest hardware was used. Still, I always marveled at how tightly the doors and windows fit and yet how easily they opened and closed after all those years.

There were three small rooms in the attic, one of which was finished off with plastered walls and ceiling. The turret that can be seen on the south west corner of the building is a part of this room.

I do not believe that this room was ever used for living purposes. It was more like a stateroom. The view from the two lower floors was excellent but the view from the attic was spectacular. As well as the view to the west and over the Hudson Valley that was afforded by the other floors, this floor provided a view to the south of Long Island and the Sound. Foliage on the tall trees interferes with this view today.

The other two rooms which were finished in wainscoting were used primarily for storage.

In one of these rooms there was a very large wooden tank, a storage place for water probably holding 500 gallons.

A powerful pump that sat in the garage, directly over a fine artesian well, pumped the water up into the tank. The pump was powered by a gasoline engine. It was a rather ingenious operation.

My brother Jack told me how the tank, which was located near a window, was clearly visible from the garage. On the surface of the water in the tank was a large float that was attached to a board that traveled up and down the side of the tank. The board could be seen from the garage and when it neared the top of the tank it was the signal that the tank was in need of a refill.

One of Dutton's employees would start up the gasoline engine and watch as the board descended from the top of the tank. When it reached a certain point that would indicate that the tank was full and the engine would be shut off.

The water would then filter out through many pipes as it traveled its way to the bathrooms, kitchen and laundry. The question was asked as to what would happen if the employee failed to turn off the engine in time. Jack went on to explain that in case of an overflow, a copper gutter that encircled the tank would carry off the excess water to a pipe that extended outside the building.

It was a very efficient system at the time but eventually it was abandoned in favor of the public water supply that was to be installed on High Ridge. When this occurred the tank was dismantled and stored in the same room where it had been operating. Perhaps the owners of the house were not confident that the water company would be able to continue to supply the water. For 75 years after the switch to the public water supply, the tank was still stored where it could be reactivated if need be.

A further indication of their lack of confidence was the fact that when the public water supply was brought into the house the old pipes were left intact and the water still traveled all the way up to the attic and then came back down to the various faucets, etc.

The decision to use the same old pipes was to cause problems in the future. The great mansion had originally been intended for use as a “summer cottage.” When the Duttons returned to their city home during the winter months, the house was closed up and the pipes were drained of water. In later years the place was used year round and while there was heat on the first two floors, it got pretty cold up in that attic. The pipes that traveled to and from the tank were still there and full of water.

The pipes were laid between the attic floor and the ceiling of the second floor. They were laid in channels made of copper that was intended to carry off the water that might result from a leaky pipe.

The theory was a good one and everything worked well during a mild winter. However, during one exceptionally cold winter, one of the pipes froze and broke. There was no one in the house at the time and the water ran for several hours before the problem was discovered.

It was about 15 below zero and although the water made its way through the channel, when it reached the end of the pipe outside the building, it froze again and backed up and over the channel.

The result was that the beautiful mahogany dining room received most of the descending water and it looked like a complete disaster.

Once the water was shut off and the place was completely dried out, Ernest Sturges and his men went to work. When they were through with their cleaning and painting there was no evidence of what we had considered a major catastrophe.

One thing that had to be changed was the leather that had been on the walls of the dining room since the house was built. When the leather was dried out it had shrunk to half its original size. Therefore, on the walls today, there is conventional wallpaper rather than the black leather which had given the room a medieval touch.

After that painful experience all pipes were removed from the attic floor where they had served no useful purpose.

All three rooms in the attic were in the western portion of that expansive area. The rest of the attic was wide open like an auditorium. I guess that it would accommodate one hundred dancers with plenty of room for the orchestra. The peak of the roof was probably 20 feet above the attic floor.

#166: DUTTON'S MASSIVE TOP AND BOTTOM; AN EXPLOSION NEARBY

The large attic in Edward Payson Dutton's grand old mansion went through some drastic changes a couple of years ago. Much of the great open space that was previously described was converted into several rooms. In the process some excellent woodwork was concealed under plaster board.

The rafters used in the roof of this building were not rough-hewn with an axe. They were cut with a saw but were not finished by a plane. Therefore, they were full-sized and the great

three by 14 rafters measured exactly that. For example, a two by four purchased today is planed down to one-and-one-half inches by three-and-one-half inches and is smooth to handle but not as strong as before it was planed.

The fine builder, James F. Kennedy, was not one to skimp on materials that he used and Mr. Dutton's roof should last forever.

Each weekend during the two years that the mansion was under construction, Dutton would travel to Ridgefield to see first-hand how the job was progressing. As noted earlier he had taken an active role in planning the building and was very knowledgeable concerning the plans and blueprints. As he examined the work being done and compared it with the blueprints, he noticed several instances where the plans called for a two-by-four and Kennedy would use a two-by-six, or a two-by-eight would be used in place of a two-by-six.

One day as the job was nearing completion, so the story goes, Dutton approached Kennedy and said, "Jim, I'm afraid you are losing money on this job." Without any hesitation Kennedy said, "If I am, it's me own business."

The story ends with Dutton's giving Kennedy a bonus of \$5,000 [about \$160,000 today] because he was so pleased with the finished product. It is very doubtful that today's contractors are the recipients of such generosity.

It should be mentioned before leaving the attic area, that a copper gutter was placed around each of the great chimneys, about three feet above the attic floor. Each gutter had a little drain pipe that extended to the outside of the house. The purpose of the gutters was for them to carry off any condensation that might occur. What E.P. Dutton did not think of, Jim Kennedy did. They sure made a great team.

No description of Dutton's mansion would be complete without a trip to the huge basement. It was more than just huge and perhaps enormous would be more descriptive.

There were two coal bins and each was large enough to hold 20 tons of coal. There was a storeroom and a wine cellar as well as a room that was used as a repair shop. There was also a complete bathroom that had a marble sink like the others in the house. One corner of the basement was used as a laundry and despite all these uses there was still a lot of open space.

The first thing that would attract one's attention on entering the basement was the massive stone foundation that Jim Kennedy felt was necessary to support the very heavy structure. The stone work is still intact today and you can be sure there has been no shift in any portion of it.

Other than the windows, each of which is protected by large metal bars similar to those used in a jail, the only break in the walls of the foundation is in its northern end. At this point there is a door which allows passage to the area under the porch on that end of the building.

There was a great furnace, which I believe was a Burnham. It had a steam boiler and its size caused one to quickly understand the need for two coal bins. In 1951 the furnace was converted from coal to oil and it proved to be very efficient. probably because the house was so well built and all of the doors and windows fit so well. One thing was sure: Once the house was warmed up, it stayed warm, even in the coldest weather.

Despite the proven efficiency of the furnace, it was destroyed a couple of years ago in favor of electric heat. We are not sure why the fine boiler was broken up, but it did have a design on its face that may have been objectionable. In the metal just over the door to the furnace was an unmistakable swastika, or fylfot. The design was of Greek origin and that furnace was in the basement years before Hitler and the Nazis adopted it as their symbol. This symbol of the sun had arms that were bent backward, counterclockwise, unlike the one used by the Nazis. At any rate it is now gone.

When the mansion was new, cooking was done with gas and gas was also used to illuminate the large house. The walls of the building seemed to be full of water pipes and gas pipes.

The gas was not furnished by the Ridgefield Illuminating Company as that short-lived firm was not formed until after the turn of the century. Dutton produced his own gas with a machine in his basement that is well worth describing, as it is very doubtful that more than a real few have ever seen one.

A compound was used to produce the gas and it was inserted into the machine by means of a vial located on its side. On the other side of the machine was a water wheel that was about four feet in diameter. After the compound had been inserted, a faucet just above the water wheel was opened and as the wheel turned, the gas was forced into a tank atop the machine. The tank would then rise and pressure the gas into the pipes that would carry it throughout the house.

I still have one of the gas lamps and the globe which enclosed the flame. A battery-operated gadget in the lamp produced a spark that would light the lamp when a switch was turned.

This unique machine still rests in the basement of the mansion and on the wall next to it, in a picture frame, are the directions for operating it. Also just outside where the machine is located there is a small underground storage tank.

Gas that settles in that tank could remain there for many years and as it is very explosive it could be quite dangerous.

I believe that the machine just described is the last one in Ridgefield. There was one in the home of Albert H. Storer on Main Street where the Lance Ballou family now lives and there was one in the Albert H. Wiggin home on Peaceable Street where the Raymond Bessette family now lives.

Some years ago there was a fire in the former Wiggin home. It was then being operated as a hotel by the Meisners. The firemen brought the fire under control and confined it to the basement. Before leaving they decided to shake down a small coal stove that was used to heat hot water. This was done as a precautionary measure but it did not turn out that way.

Unbeknown to the firemen, a storage tank was located just outside the basement where the gas machine had stood many years before. A significant amount of residue had remained in the tank since the people had stopped using the gas machine in the distant past.

As one of the firemen shook down the little coal stove, hot coals from the grates dropped into the ash pit. They were just hot enough to set off the gas that had been seeping in from the

storage tank. It was as if the gas had been waiting all those years for just such a moment, and there was a tremendous explosion.

Some of those who were in the basement at the time were our present fire marshal, Francis Moylan, Dino Giardini, Jack Leary, Earl Sturges, and Bob Mulvaney. The resulting blast did not blow them from the basement. It just seemed that way from the manner in which they flew out the door.

#167: THE GENEROSITY OF E.P. DUTTON, WHO LOVED BOOKS AND HORSES

The great E.P. Dutton estate, on fabulous High Ridge, in its original form consisted of more than eight acres of very fine land. Its three outbuildings were built with the same high-class workmanship that was employed in the construction of Dutton's mansion.

The smallest of the three buildings is located directly behind the main house and is now used as some kind of garage. Its original purpose was to provide a nearby stable for Mr. Dutton's favorite horse and the buckboard on which he traveled Ridgefield's country roads. Dutton was a great lover of horses and always kept six or seven good driving horses.

In his younger days Mr. Dutton favored the sleek speedsters that he used to race on Main Street in contests with his horsey friends. However, in his twilight years his favorite was a beautiful mahogany bay Morgan that provided the steadiness that a man of his advanced years required.

Along with the horse and buckboard, the little building also housed the pump for Dutton's deep artesian well. There is a trap door in the roof of the building directly over the pump. It provided a place to withdraw the casing from the well in case it developed any problems. As I have said before, Dutton and Jim Kennedy thought of everything.

The other two buildings were very large barns, one for Dutton's other horses and one for his cows. Each building also had living quarters for Dutton's employees. These buildings were located at least six or seven hundred feet to the west of the main house and have since been converted into very fine homes.

Once a driveway ran from High Ridge past the mansion and the little barn to the large barns and then out onto Peaceable Street. The remnants of a pipe fence that lined either side of this driveway are still visible in several places.

Now that these buildings have become residences, the entrance is from Peaceable Street and they carry the street numbers 39 and 45. The two lovely homes have very stylish gambrel roofs and they are at least 200 feet back from Peaceable Street.

The entrance from Peaceable Street is probably 30 feet in width. It is lined on either side by a perfect stone wall while overhead enormous trees provide an archway that creates a picture of an old and very tranquil country lane.

It would be easy to envision a pair of prancing coach horses coming down this lane. They would be driven by a liveried coachman and they would be drawing a fine carriage. Mr. and Mrs. Dutton would be seated while enjoying a pleasant summer afternoon ride.

All four of Dutton's buildings were equipped with lightning rods. Huge glass petticoat insulators carried the extra-large ribbon wires to where the protective system was grounded.

The lightning rods did well in protecting the buildings from the elements that produced fire from the sky. However, they were quite vulnerable to the evil intentions of a man on the ground.

In the early and mid 20's a fire bug was operating in the area. There had been several fires of questionable origin, and one had destroyed a barn right next door that belonged to Charles Hamilton. People lived in fear of where the bug would strike next, but that's another story.

A pile of hay on the floor of one of Dutton's barns became ignited but fortunately it was quickly discovered by one of his employees. With the prompt assistance of our Volunteer Fire Department, the fire was extinguished before any great damage was done and the efforts of the firebug were thwarted on this occasion.

Some of the old timers will remember that his name was synonymous with what is felt when one has a toothache. He himself was a fireman and, as so often happens in incidents of this kind, he helped put out the fire.

E.P. Duttons' attention was not limited to his buildings. Both he and his good friend and neighbor, Barton Hepburn, were firm believers in feeding the soil with a natural fertilizer that was produced on their estates. The result was that their land became exceptionally rich and still is to this day.

When the time came to seed the lawn and the terraces, Mr. Dutton imported the very finest grass seed available. Much of that very fine grass still flourishes in that vast lawn and we hope that the newly planted trees will not hide it from the view of an admiring public traveling over the Ridge.

Edward Payson Dutton's elegant place on High Ridge must be considered as reflecting to a great degree the outstanding character of this very fine man. Evidence of his love for Ridgefield can be found in the many efforts that he put forth on behalf of his adopted town.

He was generous with his money, his time and his talents and never hesitated when an opportunity came about to be of service. Since his business was publishing, it seemed natural that his interest would turn to the establishment of a first class library for Ridgefield.

Everyone knows that in 1901 James N. Morris built the original part of our present library in memory of his wife Elizabeth. It is probably not so well-known that Edward R. Dutton was a member of the committee that raised \$9,000 [\$284,000 in 2022] with which to purchase the property for the library. The land was bought from Evelyn Smith and included that now owned by the Village Bank [The Prospector site today].

As well as being a charter member of the Ridgefield Library and Historical Association, he was one of its incorporators. Mr. Dutton was vice-president of the library and when his advanced age prevented him from taking an active part in the operation, he was voted honorary vice-president for life.

This very kindly man gave many books to the library and no doubt many of them still line the shelves of that excellent institution.

E.P. Dutton was a great advocate of education and when the need arose for a new school he was quick to join with others to raise money to purchase a lot on which to build it. That is the former school on East Ridge, now occupied by Boehringer Ingelheim [Chef's Warehouse in 2022].

The records show that at a Town Meeting on Oct. 7, 1912, a couple of resolutions were adopted. One was that the gift of E.P. Dutton and others be accepted with the condition that the town should erect a suitable school building on the property. The school was to contain not less than 10 rooms and the cost would not exceed \$40,000.

I guess we can agree that Edward Payson Dutton was quite a man and when he died at age 92, on Sept. 6, 1923, it was a great loss for Ridgefield.

#168: THE CELEBRITY AUCTION AND THE MAN WHO WON

Fannie V. Dutton had been married to Edward P. Button for more than 60 years when she passed on in February 1920. When three years later Mr. Dutton followed to his just reward at age 92, there were no close family members to take over the great mansion.

To settle the estate, the mansion and the High Ridge property were sold at public auction on June 29, 1924. This was no ordinary auction for the fame of this place had spread for many miles around as did the news that it would be sold at auction.

To handle a sale of this magnitude, the services of the noted auctioneer Arthur C. Sheridan were employed. People came from great distances, some to actually place a bid on the property and some, of course, just to see and be seen. It was a gala event and it was estimated that more than 500 attended.

The actual sale took place in the living room but the crowd was scattered throughout the house and onto the great porch as well as on the lawns. More than 50 bids were received by mail as well as those that were made at the sale. Some of those who placed bids on this very desirable property were considered to be quite prominent and some were even household names at the time.

For example, the famous American statesman and United States Senator from New York, Elihu Root, was one of those who not only placed a bid but came to Ridgefield to present the bid in person. The records show that Root was unusual in that he was Secretary of War under one president and Secretary of State under another. Root resigned his secretaryship in 1909 and was elected to the United States Senate. The Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to him in 1912.

Among the bidders were some very prominent Ridgefielders, such as Harvey P. Bissell. Charles Holt and John Hampton Lynch. H.P. Bissell was the owner and operator of the famous Bissell Drug Store and also owned and lived in the fine building that is now The West Lane Inn. Mr. Bissell had just completed his term as comptroller of the State of Connecticut. He was recognized as a power in the Republican party throughout the state.

Charles Hamilton was also a publisher and his residence on the western corner of High Ridge and Peaceable Street, helped to justify the name Publisher's Row for that famous street.

His place with its red brick mansion, terraced lawns and exotic shrubbery was considered a showplace in its own right.

John Hampton Lynch owned one of the very largest and one of the most beautiful of all the great estates. He built his mansion on West Mountain and it is now the home of the Congregation of Notre Dame.

Because of the fine places that these gentlemen already owned, it is very doubtful that any of them really planned on occupying the Dutton mansion. It is more probable that their interest stemmed from a desire to be in a position to have a say as to which lucky person would move to the hallowed ground at the top of High Ridge.

At any rate, when the bidding stopped and the auction came to a close, Auctioneer Sheridan declared that the successful bidder was the grandson of another publisher. His name was James G. Blaine III and his winning bid was in the amount of \$32,500. Even 61 years ago this would have been considered a steal. This is especially true when one realizes that the property consisted of twice as much land as it now has.

Blaine was the grandson of James Gillespie Blaine, a very well-known American statesman of the late 1800's. The elder Blaine, early in his career, had been editor and part owner of the Kennebec Journal, a newspaper published in Augusta, Maine. He was later elected to the United States Congress from Maine and served for six years as Speaker of the House. Later still President James Garfield appointed him Secretary of State.

It was just 101 years ago that James G. Blaine won the nomination of the Republican Party for President. The Democrat, Grover Stephen Cleveland, won the election in what was one of the most fiercely conducted campaigns in the history of this country.

There were those who blamed Blaine's defeat on a speech, made in his behalf by a clergyman, the Rev. Samuel Dickinson Burchard. In the speech Mr. Burchard blasted the Democratic Party and labeled it the party of Rum, Romanism and Rebellion. It turned out to be one of the all-time boo-boos. Blaine, whose sister was mother superior in a convent, was not considered to be anti-Catholic. However, many political historians believe the fact that he permitted this phrase to be used in his presence convinced many voters that his party was anti-Catholic. It was felt that this cost him many votes.

James G. Blaine III used the former Dutton mansion only on weekends but kept the place for some 25 years. Unlike Dutton, Blaine did not get involved to any extent in local affairs. However, he did enjoy his mansion and did much of the work himself on weekends.

He used to mow the lawn with a set of gang mowers that were similar to those used on a golf course. The idea was fine except that instead of drawing the mowers with a tractor equipped with large soft tires, he used an old Chevrolet with narrow tires.

Blaine drove the old Chevy at great speeds around the lawn and the wheels of the light weight car would spin each time it started up and each time it turned a corner. This, of course, played havoc with the fine grass that E.P. Dutton had planted at great expense. Some of the neighbors used to say that each time the wheels on the Chevy spun, Mr. Dutton did likewise.

So, a greenskeeper Mr. Blaine was not. However, he knew what to do when he realized that he had much more land than he needed and probably much more than he was capable of taking care of. He solved this problem by selling off the back property with two large barns that were previously described. The barns, of course, have since become very fine homes and the original tract of land was reduced to about three and one-half acres.

The High Ridge property was put into the hands of his sister, Jennie Blaine Schmalholz. Jennie never actually used the place and soon it was again placed on the market. In 1950 and 1951 large mansions, such as those on High Ridge, were just not selling readily.

#169: THE BIG MAN ON A SMALL HORSE

By 1951, the 57-year-old mansion at 64 High Ridge had had just two owners, Edward P. Dutton and James G. Blaine. In that year the great place would have its third owner and he would prove to be just as famous as the others.

To properly describe the new owner, it will be necessary to go back to the mid-1930's. Therefore, with your kind permission, we will leave High Ridge for a while and journey a mile or so to the south.

It was a typical Saturday afternoon in October and the leaves were taking on the beautiful colors that we will be enjoying again in just a couple of weeks. I was driving a red Ford pickup truck on the doors of which was printed "Conklin Dairy Telephone 50."

The truck was loaded with stock feed that was to be delivered to Hillscroft Farm. The feed was produced by a cooperative known as The Eastern States Farmers Exchange and Irving B. Conklin was the local distributor.

As I turned into Saint Johns Road from Wilton Road West, a horse and rider were approaching from the west. As we neared each other, it quickly became apparent that this was no ordinary horse, as it had a gait, a quickness and a style that were the hallmark of good breeding.

We would one day find that the rider was no ordinary man either. However, at the time our attention was riveted on that magnificent gray saddle horse.

For the moment we failed to notice that the rider was a veritable giant of a man. He actually stood well over six feet and must have weighed at least 230 pounds. I was to learn that the horse's name was Kathleen Mavourneen and she was an Irish thoroughbred. The mare had once belonged to Tommy Hitchcock, who, as was noted in an earlier column, was America's top polo player back in the 20's.

It should be noted that the gallant mare carried all that weight without a word of protest. As a matter of fact she gave the impression that she thoroughly enjoyed carrying the big man. This man had a way of bringing out the best in anyone and could easily convince a person that hard work could be quite enjoyable.

As the horse and rider drew near, we slowed down in order better to observe the fine mare. It was easy to see that she was all class and we stopped as we came alongside. The rider suddenly asked if we were on our way to Hillscroft Farm. We answered in the affirmative and without another word he started the mare off again. It was only then that we noticed that the rider was really too big for the horse.

At any rate that was how I met Dr. Royal C. Van Etten for the very first time.

He turned out to be the owner of Hillscroft Farm but we felt that his abruptness of this occasion was really uncalled for. We had not intended to admonish him that his great weight was too much for the mare to carry. We would only have liked to tell him how fortunate he was to have such a horse.

It would be several years later before we learned that the good doctor's brusque manner was engendered to a great extent by his rather hectic lifestyle. He was on the staff of five of New York City's largest hospitals. He was chief of staff at Lenox Hill Hospital and he taught at Columbia Medical.

Doctors Inkster, Safford, Wagner, and Von Posnak were some of the Ridgefield physicians who came under the tutelage of Dr. Van Etten. It was said that in any large city hospital, when his name was mentioned, there would surely be someone to step forward and say that they knew the great man.

Many of Dr. Van Etten's patients were among the rich and famous. One who depended on him for her medical needs was the beautiful Mary Pickford who, for the benefit of some of the younger readers, was known as "America's Sweetheart" in the days of the silent films. I once had the pleasure of listening to the doctor converse with Mary when she called him from Hollywood. An autographed picture of Mary stood on the mantel over the fireplace in the doctor's dining room.

Upon being made aware of all these impressive credentials, it became easier for me to understand why the great man did not just fall off his horse in appreciation of my feeble efforts to voice my approval of Mavourneen.

At any rate it would not be our last meeting. Perhaps encounter would be a more descriptive word of how I first met Dr. Royal C. Van Etten. Ten years would elapse before we would meet for a second time. That meeting would take place in our nice little apartment at 148 (now 613) Main Street.

On that occasion, Dr. and Mrs. Van Etten came to see us about the possibility of our taking a position as superintendent of his Hillscroft Farm estate. He turned out to be a most charming individual with a very persuasive personality. It just seemed to follow naturally that when he made an offer that we could not refuse, an excellent relationship was established that would exist until the good doctor passed on more than 37 years later.

My tour of duty at Hillscroft started on May 1 and it was a hectic time as there was much to do at that time of the year. The previous super had retired and his assistant had gone to another job, so it was obvious that this would be no picnic.

Perhaps I should describe Hillscroft as it was really one of Ridgefield's finest estates. It consisted of more than 87 acres, about 10 of which were devoted to apple orchards. The elevation was great and the view to the southeast was superb. Long Island and many miles of its coastline could easily be seen from almost any place on the estate.

At night, the Sound looked so close that one would feel that a stone tossed in its direction would surely make a splash. The lights on the little boats that plied the waters of the Sound at night were clearly visible.

At the turn of the century, Hillscroft was owned by Charles T. Root and his superintendent was John Regan, father of Mary and Elizabeth Regan. The Regans are cousins of Marie (Mrs. Richard E. Venus) and they lived in the same little cottage that would be our home so many years later. I have a brochure that was put out when the place was on sale in 1900. It has pictures that show the highway, the orchards and the superintendent's cottage. They are much the same today except that additions have been made to the cottage.

The mansion is entirely different as this fine structure was not built until the mid 20's. In the early 20's the place had been rented to the Joseph Conron family while their place of West Mountain was being constructed.

#170: THE PEOPLE AND FIRES OF HILLSCROFT

There were two quite disastrous fires at Hillscroft Farm on St. Johns Road. One of unknown origin occurred just before the turn of the century and it destroyed the main house. Charles T. Root then purchased Hillscroft and built a fine mansion to replace the original farm house.

A young writer of humorous prose and verse came along and became very interested in the Roots' daughter. The daughter was receptive to the attention being paid her and she married the young writer. He turned out to be Franklin P. Adams and his friends called him F.P.A.

It probably was of no consequence but it is interesting to note that Adams was educated at the Armour Scientific Academy in Chicago as well as at the University of Michigan. The Armour Academy was founded by the Armour family that owned the famous Chicago meat packing company. This great company would later be headed by Joseph Conron, a future occupant of the Roots' mansion at Hillscroft.

Adams was probably best known for "The Conning Tower," his column, which first appeared in *The New York Tribune*. He wrote several books and the last hit that he had was the *F.P.A. Book of Quotations*, which he wrote in 1952.

Some may remember him as the sharp-witted member of the staff of experts on the popular radio program, "Information Please," in the late 30's and the 40's.

At any rate, to continue our description of Hillscroft, we would point out that the farm started just about where South Olmstead Lane enters St. Johns Road. It then ran south and west on both sides of the road to where Donnelly Drive is now. It extended on the west to Silver Spring Road and on the east, almost to Wilton Road West.

For some unknown reason, the Root family left Ridgefield. I have never been able to understand how anyone could leave this wonderful town, especially if you had a place like lovely Hillscroft.

It would be rather difficult to explain to the many families that now live at Hillscroft and its environs just how splendid the estate was. The many changes that were made in the past 15 years leave few reminders of how it used to look.

The mansion is pretty much the same and the cottage have been added to but the nice orchard in front of the cottage is the same and the little ice house that we later used for a dairy is still there.

The grape arbor that we built 40 years ago with telephone poles has withstood the test of time but the great barns have all disappeared, some to be converted into dwellings.

We have a little brochure that was printed when the place was for sale in 1900. It notes that anyone who would purchase Hillscroft, could move in and bring with them only matches to light the fire. The farm would produce anything else that was needed. This attractive style of Hillscroft was still in vogue a half century later, when the great place was again on the market.

After the departure of the Root family, Hillscroft was rented to various families, including the Morgans and the Conrons. It was while the Conron family occupied the Root mansion that it burned for the second time. During a terrible thunderstorm, it was hit by a bolt of lightning and the resulting fire completely destroyed the great house.

We have previously noted that Joseph Conron, his wife, Kate, their son, Raymond, and their daughter lived at Hillscroft while their home on West Mountain was being constructed. The Conrons' new mansion was where Dr. and Mrs. Henry D. Minot now live at 4 West Mountain Road. It was kind of a Spanish style of white masonry with a red tile roof that was visible for miles around.

Because of its prominence on a bluff of the mountainside, the mansion with its red roof was used as a guide for airplanes in the early days of aviation. We always thought it looked very pretty, up there on its lofty perch and that roof poking through the trees was very reassuring.

Some years after the Conron mansion was built, a very attractive ballroom was added to it in anticipation of a wedding that never materialized.

James Doubleday apparently did not share my feelings for the Conron mansion. When it came into his possession in the late 40's, he immediately tore it down, and replaced it with the house where the Minots now live. Jimmy had a penchant for tearing houses down and replacing them. Jimmy and his lovely wife, Betty, lived there several years before moving on.

At any rate, the fire at Hillscroft that was the result of a direct hit by a bolt of lightning, was to cause great changes in this fine estate. Hillscroft was purchased by Edward W. Simone and he built the present fine mansion that is now the home of the Robert Soloff family at 133 St. Johns Road.

When his new home was completed Simone added the protection of an excellent lightning rod system. Rods were placed on the mansion, the cottage, the many barns and the tall trees that stood near these buildings.

We once witnessed a bolt of lightning hitting a lightning rod in the top of one of the tall pine trees. The resulting ball of fire that followed the wire down the side of the tree and into the ground at the base of the tree would have been a persuasive selling point for a lightning rod salesman.

Edward Simons spent a lot of money in rebuilding the mansion and in refurbishing the cottage, the cow barns, home barns and garages. All of these buildings were equipped with

telephones that were a part of an intercommunication system that must have been quite novel in the 20's.

The main house had one of the most beautiful staircases that we have ever seen. In addition to the intercom system, this house had a buzzer system for summoning the maids.

The very attractive, sunken living room had rather unusual wallpaper. It was actually a mural of tropical scenery and was said to have cost \$60 a strip, from the ceiling to the chair rail. Of course, the view from this great house was just magnificent.

A massive stone wall on the eastern side of the mansion separates it from a very large perennial flower garden and just east of this fine garden was a fine rose garden, made up of four large beds of tea roses.

Just beyond the rose gardens was an excellent asparagus bed that was 25 feet wide and 40 feet long. Asparagus is a heavy feeder and the farm had plenty of fertilizer and the result was that you never saw such asparagus. The stalks were almost as big around as a baseball bat and they were as tender as marshmallows.

There was also an enormous vegetable garden, in which just about every variety of vegetable was grown. These gardens were protected by a privet hedge. You may be sure that it was no ordinary hedge.

#171: THE MAD DASH WITH THE SUPERMAN DOC

The hedges at Hillscroft Farm were at least 300 feet long and most of them stood at least six feet in height. Wherever a gateway was encountered between the gardens, the hedge was allowed to grow to a height of nine feet and then it was trimmed into a graceful arch over the gate.

Trimming these hedges was a real chore. not only because of the length and the height but because most of the hedges were about eight feet in width. It was necessary to stand on planks that were suspended across saw horses in order for the one doing the trimming to be able to reach the center of the hedge.

Electric clippers had not yet come on the market at the time so the trimming was done by hand. It was such a long-drawn-out process that when the trimmer finally reached the end of the hedge, he could go back to the other end and start again.

When Edward W. Simons owned Hillscroft in the early 20's, his superintendent was J. Ebert Anderson, and Gottlob Riede was Bert's assistant. In the mid-20's Bert transferred to Casagmo, Miss Mary Olcott's great showplace on Main Street, and Mr. Riede became the super and stayed on when Dr. Van Etten bought Hillscroft.

Milo Holub was Simons' chauffeur and he and his wife Jenny and their son Eddie, lived upstairs in a very nice apartment over the horse barn. Just a few years ago that large barn and the hay barn were moved out nearer St. Johns Road where they were converted into two quite beautiful dwellings.

Mr. Simons is remembered as a very kindly man. He did not stay in Ridgefield very long but he sure was active and made a big impact while he was here. It seemed that he had hardly

arrived in town when he became associated with several organizations. In no time he became a member of the Board of Directors of the Ridgefield Library and Historical Association. Soon he was elected president of the First National Bank and Trust Company. This bank later became the Fairfield County Trust Company and later still the name changed again to Union Trust Company [now Wells Fargo].

At any rate, when the Simons family moved from Ridgefield in the late 20's, it signaled the entrance of Dr. Royal C. Van Etten, his wife Louise and their son, Royal C. Jr.

Years ago the large mansions on High Ridge were often referred to as summer cottages. By contrast, Mrs. Van Etten and her son used Hillscroft during the summer months but the doctor used it only on weekends.

He never took a vacation but considered a weekend at Hillscroft and an hour or two on a Wednesday afternoon as a real treat. It seemed that he was always on call and his trips to the farm were interrupted more often than not and he would dash back to New York.

Dr. Van Etten was the nearest thing to superman that I have ever seen. He must have been a pioneer in the use of a beeper. One Wednesday in the mid-40's he took the afternoon off and came up from the city to help with the haying. He loved to be a part of the farm life and was thoroughly enjoying the work in the hayfield. We noted that he had a little black object in his shirt pocket from which a wire protruded some six inches out of the top.

We had never seen a beeper before and had no idea of what its purpose was. The doctor had only been in the hayfield for a half hour when we heard an unmistakable beep emanating from the little contraption. He was more than 60 years old at the time, but the way he ran for the house, one would think he was half that age. In less than ten minutes the doctor had changed his clothes and had gone roaring out the driveway on his way to Lenox Hill Hospital.

He told us later how he had just purchased the beeper and that was the very first time it had been used to summon him to the hospital. Of course, he was very proud of his new gadget that would keep him close to his patients.

Traffic conditions permitting, the doctor would allow himself just one hour to make the trip to the city. He was absolutely the fastest driver we have ever come across. We used to say that the bluestone from the driveway would still be falling for several minutes after he left the farm.

To ride with Dr. Van Etten was truly an experience, even when he was out for a leisurely drive. To ride with him when he was in a hurry was a real hair-raising incident.

On one occasion the doctor had to travel by train. He had a timetable but could not find the time he could get a train out of Branchville station. The doctor's low boiling point had long since been passed when he sought my assistance. His fury was directed against those who had drawn up the timetable and had neglected to include Branchville.

I suggested that his chances were much better at the Norwalk station. My suggestion was almost immediately regretted as he found a train leaving at 5 p.m. He asked if I would go with him to drive the car back and when the answer was in the affirmative, he actually leaped into the

driver's seat. It was then 4:45 and since the trains ran pretty much on time, I felt that there was no chance of making that 5 o'clock train.

My family watched as we flew out the driveway and later they told me that they never expected to see me again. It should be noted that Dr. Van Etten was the best-natured man with the worst temper that I have ever met. Now he is driving down St. Johns Road with one hand on the wheel while banging on the dashboard with the other and all the time damning the Vanderbilts and any other family that had any connections with a railroad.

He had to slow a bit to make the corner from Silver Hill onto Wilton Road West and I considered jumping from the vehicle at that point. It was not bravery that kept me in the seat: we were just going too fast.

As we sailed over the Wilton town line, I was reminded of the doctor's tremendous reflexes and tried to reassure myself, but as he started passing every other vehicle, even on the corners, my confidence quickly evaporated.

We passed four cars in a row when Orem's Diner appeared on our right. One of the cars, parked at the diner had a tall antenna, indicating that it was a policeman's vehicle. The banging on the dashboard stopped for a second as the doctor pointed at the antenna and inquired as to whether the cop was a friend of ours. No answer was forthcoming as at that point my furtive glance at the speedometer showed that it was registering just above 85.

You should know that as he wheeled that car into the Norwalk station, his train was just approaching the platform. With a big smile of satisfaction, the good doctor grabbed his bag from the back seat and with a wave of his arm, ran to make his train.

#172: THE CARE AND FEEDING OF 50,000 BEES

There were those who used to say that spring was the busiest time on the farm. Then there were others who felt that the busiest time on the farm was in the fall of the year. Actually, on a well-run farm, a person is kept real busy during all four seasons.

I can remember one spring that was especially busy. It was the first day of May when I started at Hillscroft Farm and there were a number of things that had to be done at once. The vegetable garden had not yet been planted. Plants in the hotbed were straining against the glass to get out in the open where they could finish growing. The flower gardens were in need of attention and fields had to be plowed so that corn could be planted.

These things, coupled with the regular chores, such as the milking of the cows and the feeding and care of the livestock, made it all look like an almost insurmountable task. This was especially true because at the time no help was available.

If that were not enough to contend with, we discovered one more thing that required our immediate attention. That happened to be 11 hives of honey bees. They were essential to the wellbeing of the orchards.

We had a considerable amount of experience in the operation of a farm but most of it was gained in the care of livestock, rather than in the diversified duties that the operation of a gentleman's farm involved.

One thing was sure: I had never been any closer to a bee than was absolutely necessary, and now I would have to care for more than 50,000 of them. There was only one thing to do and that was to study the lifestyle of a bee and establish a crash course in the operation of an apiary. It was with a severe lack of enthusiasm that I approached this new and unforeseen challenge.

Whereas the book told me that my new little flying charges were good-natured, I was very skeptical and our initial meeting was delayed while my studies continued. However, the meeting had to come about shortly as the time for putting the supers on the hive bodies had already passed. Supers were the box-like affairs in which the bees made the honey for human consumption.

I guess it would help to know that cows give milk, not for distribution to the dairy cases of your favorite grocery store. No, the cows really intend all that milk for their calves. Chickens actually lay eggs as a means of perpetuating their breed rather than to be packed, 12 in a box, and sold as a popular breakfast food.

Bees do not really care whether or not their honey ever gets into the little bottles that grace the shelves of the grocery stores. They produce the honey in the hive body as food that will sustain them during the cold winter months. They even work themselves to death doing this.

By putting the supers on top of the hive body, we are providing a place for the bees to continue the manufacture of honey after the hive body has been filled. So we take advantage of them just as we do with the cows and chickens.

Along the way we learned that the wax, which the bees make to hold the honey, is a very valuable commodity to the military. The beeswax is used to coat the bullets used in rifles and also the larger shells for the use in cannons.

So these little creatures are really quite valuable, not only for sweetening with their honey, or for the wax used by manufacturers of munitions, but also for their ability to pollinate various fruit trees and flowers.

After reading everything I could find on bee culture, I still did not feel qualified for the job of putting the supers on the hives. One thing that I did not need to learn from the book was that given a proper cause, a bee had the ability to inflict a rather painful sting.

On the day selected for putting on the supers, we placed the supers on the ground near the hives as part of the preparation for opening the hives. Lest anyone get the false impression that this would be an exhibition of bravery on my part, I would hasten to say that I wore the conventional beekeeper's headgear and both my sleeves and my pant legs were tied tightly. Also, as an added precaution, I carried a smoker, which was in some way supposed to give me the necessary confidence.

Despite the preparation and the protective equipment, my approach to the hives on that first occasion was made as gingerly as possible. The book told how bees, when they are busily engaged in their work, pay very little attention to anything other than just the job they are performing. On this fine sunshiny day, it was reassuring to see that the bees seemed to be quite busy. In fact as I stood next to the hive, watching them scooting in and out of the hive body, I thought that I felt a flicker of courage returning.

The roof cover of the first hive was removed without incident. Then a light frame filled with sawdust that acted as insulation during the winter was retrieved.

Now, a tool similar to a screwdriver was used to pry up and remove a flat cap that kept the bees from climbing through the top of the hive body. When the cap was removed, I was hardly prepared for the sight of several thousand bees, crawling furiously around inside their home.

Fortunately the book was correct and the bees were so busy that they did not seem to notice my presence. However, you may be sure that no time was wasted in placing the supers on top of the hive body. Even so, as the roof of the hive was being put back in place, the little insects were swarming up into the supers. They seemed anxious to start making honey for us.

This act was repeated until the supers had been placed on all 11 hives. Just a week before, no one would have been able to convince me that I would be capable of performing this task, so I was naturally quite proud of myself.

I was especially pleased that while bees had crawled all over me during the performance, not one of the little creatures had stung me.

Hillscroft Farm had two great orchards in which just about every variety of apple was represented. There were Baldwins, Russets, Wolf's River, Red and Yellow Delicious, McIntosh, Northern Spy, Greenings, Fall Pippins, and Sheepnose. It is the only place in Ridgefield that I saw the Sheepnose, which is an old-fashioned apple. It greatly resembles the Red Delicious but is not the least bit juicy. When these trees were in blossom, the place was like a fairyland.

Now it was time to check the beehives again. This time the weather was different as it was a very hot and very humid day. I found out, without any help from the book, that on this kind of day, you stay away from the bees. I was stung no less than seven times before I reached the first hive.

#173: BOUTONNIERES, BEETLES AND BANTAMS AT HILLSCROFT

Our "education" in beekeeping progressed rapidly and we came to have a genuine respect for these little creatures. The sharp sting that accompanied each mistake was guaranteed to keep our attention.

Among other things we learned that bees are quite valuable both as a producer of food and as an enhancement of plant life. The old saying, "busy as a bee," is not an idle expression. Weather permitting, they are just about the busiest of living things and much can be learned from them.

The vegetable garden at Hillscroft Farm covered well over a third of an acre. Just about every vegetable known was grown in the very rich soil of this large garden. Today people find it much easier to buy their vegetables at the store rather than growing them. Forty years ago most every home in town had a vegetable garden and it was considered a necessity.

We had two 100-foot rows of peas at Hillscroft and we had to cut brush for the pea vines to climb on. It was a lot of work but the reward was that great taste of luscious fresh peas and

that is something that everyone should experience. Many people liked to eat them, just as they came from the garden, while others felt that cooking them made them even more flavorful.

On the lower, or eastern side of the garden, there were three rows of strawberry plants, one, two and three years old. The oldest row was replaced each year in order to keep this ratio, as the most productive was always the second year. One year the three rows produced 120 quarts of the most delicious red berries.

Sweet potatoes are generally considered as being grown in a warmer climate but we grew them at Hillscroft. After harvesting the sweet potatoes, they were packed in sand and they kept well all winter long. That farm could produce just about anything a person would need.

Mrs. Van Etten had a penchant for mixing flowers in with the vegetables. There were many flower gardens on the place but it seemed she always wanted more.

On either side of the walkway from the garden gate to the mansion were more than 700 little lobelia plants. Their tiny blossoms of that shade of blue that no artist has ever been able to capture brightened the whole area and flourished throughout the summer months.

Dr. Van Etten was not as enthusiastic about flowers as he was about other aspects of farm life. However, he did have a couple of favorites and you may be assured that they received our full attention.

One was a fine carnation called "Enfant De Nice" and we had two rows of them across the garden. They were tiny and made an ideal boutonniere, with a fragrance that was really delightful. After a gentle rain, the aroma that emanated from these flowers was overpowering.

Speaking of boutonnieres, Jackie Gleason wore one the other night on his TV program and that is the first one I have seen in a long time. There was a time when a gentleman was not really dressed without one. I know that the doctor always looked real handsome with a carnation in his buttonhole. Come to think of it, I guess they do not even make button holes in jackets any more.

One other flower that Dr. Van Etten always felt brightened up the area was red salvia, which was popular along the towns that lined the Hudson River. At the race track in Saratoga, bright red cannas, surrounded by red salvia have been a fixture for many years. So we had two such flower beds at Hillscroft and the doctor called the cheery display his Hudson River beds. We became very fond of these flowers and 40 years later still have two of the beds.

There were two quite lengthy grape arbors at Hillscroft. One had white grapes and the other had the purple Concord grapes. They were fine to eat and they made great wine but they became heavily infested with Japanese beetles. These pests became a genuine cause for concern and many ideas were concocted for containing them.

The spray D.D.T. was coming on the market at the time but its deadliness was a double-edged sword and many were afraid to use it. One of the many ways suggested as a means of combating the beetles came from a friend of Mrs. Van Etten. Beth Komble Widmer lived at the eastern end of Hillscroft Farm on Wilton Road West. She was one of the fine people who believed that the invasion of beetles could be stemmed by finding something that would prove to be a mortal enemy of the perpetrators.

Therefore, when the Widmers noticed their bantam chickens eating the beetles, they felt that they had discovered the perfect antidote. On her next visit to Hillscroft, Beth Widmer brought along a black cochin bantam rooster and two little black hens. They were very cute bantams with glossy black feathers, bright red combs and wattles and a small white dot on either side of their heads.

The rooster was a real fashion plate with a tail that was so long it appeared to be disproportionate to the rest of his tiny body. That rooster was very proud of himself and strutted around like a drum major.

The miniature chickens had voracious appetites that were far in excess of their capacity and after an hour or so they had to take a rest. The way they went after the beetles was something to behold. They were like three little black jumping jacks as they hopped from vine to vine. It looked as though the beetle population was about to diminish for the first time since the invasion.

The bantams made great pets and unlike the rest of the farm population they were allowed to roam at will. They always remained together and if you saw one you could be sure that the other two were close by. If a threat was posed by a dog or a cat, they presented a united front that made any adversary think twice about bothering them.

They were, of course, the conventional-sized chickens at Hillscroft. We used to keep 100 Barred Rocks for egg production and each spring 100 roosters were raised to broiler size and then put in the freezer. Incidentally we used the public freezer which was located on Danbury Road in the building that now houses the Town Spirit Shop. Most everyone has his own freezer nowadays.

#174: A VERITABLE PARADISE ON ST. JOHNS ROAD

We have mentioned that two kinds of grapes flourished at Hillscroft Farm. There were also numerous kinds of edible berries.

Just north of our cottage were two rows of currant bushes. The currants were complemented by two nearby quince trees. I would say that you have never really tasted good jelly until you have sampled the results of combining currents and quinces. The quince is very smooth and tasty while the little red currants supply the necessary tang that sets this jelly apart.

Just beyond the currant bushes were 50 high producing raspberry bushes. Raspberries are generally susceptible to mildew but because of the elevation at Hillscroft and the almost constant circulation of air, this was not a serious problem.

There were also gooseberries, wineberries and elderberries, as well as a grove of blueberries and in the back pasture lots there were blackberries and they were my favorites.

In front of our cottage three fine peach trees provided the best tasting fruit imaginable. Just think of how nice it was to be able to walk out the front door at breakfast time and pick yourself a fresh and luscious peach.

If you are not impressed by all of these wonderful, natural foods that would tickle anyone's palate, how about the fresh eggs, fresh milk (unpasteurized), and cream and butter and cheese? If that is not enough, then also consider your own steer with all those roasts of beef and

steaks, stashed away in the freezer along with 100 broilers and pork loins and hams and Canadian bacon and pork chops and regular bacon, plus all those fresh vegetables, and all those wonderful foods that were produced on this veritable paradise on St. John's Road.

It is doubtful that Ridgefield will ever again see a farm where so many different food stuffs were produced. In a little brochure that was put out in 1900 when Hillscroft was for sale, it was noted that a person purchasing the place would need only a match to light the fire in the stove and all the foods that are needed could be produced right there on the farm. This was equally true when Hillscroft was for sale in the 20's and again when Dr. Van Etten sold it in 1951.

When one considers all the things that Hillscroft provided, as well as the sheer beauty of its setting, one must wonder how anyone could willingly leave such a genuine Utopia. Sometimes people sell their homes on impulse.

In 1951 Dr. Van Etten really had no idea of selling the farm that he loved so much. Then one evening he and Mrs. Van Etten attended a dinner party at the home of the Wheadon Grants on West Lane, where the Ralph Delli-Bovis now [1985] live. During the meal, the Grants made the startling announcement that they had placed their beautiful estate on the market.

There were several other large estates on the market at the time and the Van Ettens were assured that it was the thing to do. The doctor was more than a bit skeptical about making such a move but Mrs. Van Etten thought it would be exciting to find out how much their great place was worth. Dr. Van Etten finally gave in to all the coaxing and Hillscroft was listed with Previews, one of the real large real estate operators.

Dr. Van Etten placed what he felt was the exorbitant price of \$120,000 on the place that he loved so well. He told me that he was confident that no one would ever pay such a price. However, he was wrong. Can anyone imagine what that beautiful place would bring on today's market?

At any rate, it was years before, on that May 1 in the early 40's, when I arrived at Hillscroft. There were all of those things that I have been telling about to care for. There were the gardens to plant, the fields to plow and plant, the hedges to trim, and the livestock, consisting of the cows, the chickens, the horse and the hogs to be attended to. In addition there were the storm windows and porch enclosures on the mansion and the cottage that had to be removed and stored until fall.

Then there were the spacious lawns that needed immediate attention, and I was all alone at the farm. Even my family had not arrived as the cottage was being painted inside and out.

This all looked like a real challenge and the prospect of securing any additional help was rather discouraging. Then we got lucky and about the middle of the month Fred Williams came to our rescue. We kept everything going till Fred arrived, but boy were we glad to see him. Then a couple of weeks later, dear old Clifford Seymour came over to help and we were finally in business.

The following year, during the haying season, the three little Scott boys — Harold, Francis and Donald — became members of our team and they were very good workers and still

are today. A few years later Fred Williams retired and Richard Bennett replaced him. These are very good men that we are talking about and we have seldom seen their equal.

Ernest Sturges had only worked a couple of days at painting our cottage when Dr. Van Etten came for a visit. He wanted to know if I had paid anything to the painters and I replied that they were only just getting started. With that he made out a check and handed it to me, saying that he liked to keep ahead on such things and besides he noted that Ernest had his men to pay every week. Ernie was not surprised to receive the check as he had worked for the doctor before and knew of his habit of paying in advance.

That was Dr. Van Etten's "modus operandi": he always had to be ahead. Arthur Carnall, when he was Ridgefield's tax collector, once told me that the very next day after he mailed out the tax bills, Dr. Van Etten would drive up from New York City to pay his bill. We got to know that he was the same with any bill that he owed. It was as if he was afraid that he might die and leave something unpaid.

Taxes were something else though. Arthur Carnall said that the doctor told him that he considered it a privilege to live in Ridgefield and was quite happy to pay for it. As usual the good doctor had to be the first to pay so he made out the check the minute he received the bill. The local tradesmen and businessmen were happy to have Dr. Van Etten as a customer, for they knew they would never have to wait to be paid. He was a very unusual man.

Dr. Van Etten made it a habit to be first. He was first in his class at Deerfield Academy in 1902. He was Phi Beta Kappa and first in his class at Amherst when he graduated at age 20 in 1906, and he was cum laude when he graduated — again first — from Columbia's College of Physicians and Surgeons.

#175: THE DEMAND FOR HIGH-FAT RAW MILK BOOMS WITH A BULL

The little dairy herd at Hillscroft when we arrived there consisted of four milk cows and two heifers. It was destined to grow and it was decided that, since the cows were purebred Guernseys, as each heifer calf arrived, we would raise it to maturity.

The bull calves were sold for veal with one exception. The dam of this little bull calf was a remarkable cow and had produced over 13,000 lbs. of milk in her first lactation. It was very rich milk and tested more than 5% butterfat. Therefore we were anxious to raise what we hoped would turn out to be a very valuable sire.

This handsome little red bull calf was born on election night in 1948 and was appropriately named Hillscroft's Harry S. Truman. He was so registered with the American Guernsey Cattle Club.

It should be noted that the little calf arrived just about midnight and at the time Tom Dewey was leading Harry Truman in the balloting.

The worth of any bull is measured by the production of the heifers that he sires. This one looked like a sure winner as each of his first heifers out-produced its dam, both in pounds of milk and in butterfat content. This was in the days before the skim milk diet craze and butterfat was a desired item, rather than something to be shunned.

At any rate, as the herd grew, so did the amount of milk that the herd produced. We made butter, cheese and ice cream and still had a surplus of that rich Guernsey milk.

When people found out that this milk was available, they began stopping at the farm to buy it. Soon others were calling and asking for us to make delivery. It just naturally followed that a milk route was established and the list of customers kept right on growing until it was impossible to take care of them all.

Those who have never enjoyed fresh raw milk from the farm and have never seen the golden cream rise to the top of the milk bottle have really missed a great experience.

There were two major objections to the use of raw milk. There was the possibility that a person could contract either tuberculosis or undulant fever. Both of these diseases were of a very serious nature, so it is understandable that there was just cause for concern.

A cow that was infected with TB could pass that germ along to anyone using her milk and a cow that carried the bacteria of the Brucella group could cause anyone using her milk to have undulant fever.

A test was devised which identified cows that carried the TB germ. Those found to have it were branded on their right cheek with the letters TB. They were separated from the rest of the herd and destroyed. A blood test revealed any cow that might be carrying Brucellosis and they too were separated and destroyed. In such instances the government would pay the farmer a nominal price for any cow that he lost.

Of course, the great Louis Pasteur took care of both problems with his method that was aptly named pasteurization.

We asked Dr. Russell W. Lowe one time what he thought about pasteurization. His answer was: "You can throw a handful of mud in a pail of water, then boil the water and it is safe to drink. But who wants to do that?"

In other words he felt that the proper thing to do was to keep the milk clean by proper testing and then pasteurization would not be necessary.

It was great when Ridgefield had raw milk from tested cows and we always enjoyed it. However, it is easy to understand how difficult it is to bring milk into the cities from farms all over the countryside without pasteurizing it. It was the only way that one could be reasonably sure that the milk was safe for human consumption.

The large dairies quickly learned that pasteurization was also a means of preserving the milk. Pasteurized milk will not go sour nearly as quickly as raw milk. In fact, it never really does sour in the true sense of the word. Not only that but it can be pasteurized more than once.

However, since it is necessary for milk to sour before it is thoroughly digested, it seems proper to assume that raw milk is easier to digest.

So the little herd at Hillscroft grew from four to ten cows and if we had had 100 cows, we could not have been able to supply all the people who wanted raw milk right from the farm.

The demand for raw milk increased greatly when Irving Conklin sold his farm and retail milk business. Irv sold practically all the milk in Ridgefield and the milk from Conklin's Dairy

was unpasteurized. There were a number of people who just did not want the pasteurized milk that the big dairies started bringing into town.

We bottled most of the milk and tried to supply those who wanted fresh raw milk. However, we could not meet the demand and always had a long waiting list.

As our little milk business expanded we converted an old ice house into a fine dairy building where we processed the milk. The ice house had become obsolete for the storage of ice with the advent of the electric refrigerator but it was ideal for the purposes we had in mind.

Some of the barns at Hillscroft have been destroyed, as was the large silo that had the word Hillscroft painted across the top in letters that were four feet in height.

Two of the largest barns were moved out into the orchard in recent years and have been made over into fine dwellings along St. Johns Road. However, the little old dairy that had been an ice house is still standing in the same spot where it was constructed so many years ago.

Dr. Van Etten was quite pleased to see the revenue from the farm grow as the dairy herd increased. It helped to offset the many expenses of operating a large estate. He expected the farm revenue to be only an assist, but after a couple of years, the farm started to break even and after a couple of more years it began to show a profit.

We were quite proud of our contribution, but apparently it was not the thing to do. Our government had encouraged people to engage in farming by rigging tax laws in their favor. Suddenly the tax laws were changed and only those farms that lost money would benefit from the operation. This caused a dramatic change in attitude among those who had worked to make their farms productive.