

Reminiscence: The Wards Of Flaghole Road

By George Boley
For the *Beacon*

In the early 1940s, I became a ward (no pun intended) of the Ward family. They lived in a little cape near the intersection of Flag Hole Road and the road to what was referred to as Shaw Hill (a.k.a. the Daniel Webster Birthplace Road). That same Daniel Webster Birthplace was where this writer would be a guide as a teenager living in Salisbury.

The Ward homestead included a big barn across the road. I can remember



watching the milking in the light of an old lantern. Every time it flickered it would move the shadows on the walls. Sure was a spooky place in the eyes of a five year old boy. That old wood sentry is now long gone, finally succumbing to the weight of winter snows.

There were four siblings living in the old family farm – Mary, Charles, Jim, and Margaret. There was another sister, Alice, who by that time had left home to live in Salisbury after marrying Fred Perreault, who made his living trading horses. Fred was the brother of Mary and Joe Perreault (siblings) who lived just across the train tracks on the “old” road to Highland Lake Beach. Margaret Ward owned a nice waterfront lot behind the Perreault homestead, which I remember her selling for \$400.

All of the Ward family, except Alice and Jim, were unmarried. Jim’s wife had died while giving birth to their son Edward Ward. The old cape only had four rooms, five if you counted the summer kitchen, so Jim slept up in the unfinished attic, a common occurrence in those days.

Edward had married and left by the time I arrived. He had attended school in East Andover Village, the same school mentioned in the January 2007 issue of the *Beacon*. I also attended that school as a first grader before being reunited with my father Alfred Boley, who was the brother of George Beauly of Salisbury (the difference in spelling is another whole story). Alfred was also raised by the Wards during his teenage years, after being rescued from the Catholic orphanage in Franklin.

Margaret Ward was a teacher and taught at the elementary school overlooking Highland Lake. Later, she went on to teach in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, coming home each summer by train to the family farm where she was instrumental in dispensing my daily dose of reading. I remember her old Chevrolet was kept in the shed under a blanket, awaiting her return. The only other car in the family belonged to Jim.

It was a Hudson Terraplane with doors that opened backwards. They were called suicide doors.

Mary and Charles lived off the land, selling eggs, milk, and butter. That, and big gardens and long days, provided everything they needed.

The proceeds from their efforts were kept in the renowned sugar bowl in the kitchen cabinet next to the milk separator. It was my job to turn the handle on the separator faster and faster until out came the cream in one bowl, the milk in another. I thought it was magic!

Every so often the Rawleigh man would stop by. Auntie May (as I fondly called her) and I would run out to the dooryard to see what he had in his truck. Mary would look for thread, as she made all of her dresses out of chicken feed bags, which came in all different patterns. For me it was the opportunity to get a sweet treat, but only one. That sugar bowl had its limitations.

Charles was the first to die. His funeral was at the farm. I recall his casket set up at the end of the living room and the neighbors coming to pay their respects. Most likely home funerals were more affordable. (Remember that sugar bowl!)

I can remember going with Charles by horse and wagon to Highland Lake where they were cutting ice. We brought the ice home and put it in the ice house... a layer of ice blocks covered with sawdust, a process repeated until we reached the rafters. One had to put plenty of ice in, because if you ran out, the only way to keep things cold was to run them down the well in a bucket.

Of course we had no running water other than a hand pump in the kitchen sink. You have not lived until you have taken a bath in front of a woodstove, in a round tub, during a howling snowstorm. The outhouse was at the end of the shed, placed strategically over a small brook. Everything ran down into the meadow; no one thought a thing about it in those days. Folks had better things to do with their time than cast an incriminating eye toward a neighbor.

While my old pictures show power poles by the house, we didn’t partake of that luxury. We listened to the news on WLNH from Laconia, one of the oldest radio stations in the country, by an old battery radio.

One summer, Margaret came home and announced she was going to put electricity in the old farm house. Well, Mary would have none of that! She didn’t want that stuff running around in her house. She was getting along just fine without it, plus it was one more thing for that sugar bowl to support.

In the end, Margaret prevailed and that was the end of cleaning kerosene lamp chimneys with old newspaper.

Soon after the electricity came a new frigidaire and I got the shipping crate to make a playhouse out of. An oil cloth finished the project and kept out the rain.

Back then money didn’t equate to happiness. A big treat for me was to get to go down in the cellar, choose a canning jar of homemade succotash, and eat the whole thing. A slice of homemade bread sprinkled with brown sugar and topped with fresh cream was a close second on my list of favorite goodies.

But there were certain other things that weren’t a treat, like cod liver oil. I got it for everything from a cough to a nail in the foot. Didn’t matter which, I got two large tablespoons.

After Charles died, it was Jim’s turn to go. Unfortunately, I don’t know the timing of Margaret’s departure, but it all took place in the late ’40s or early ’50s. Like Charles, Margaret remained single to that fateful day.



George Boley, his playhouse, the Hudson Terraplane, and the old barn.

It wasn’t long afterwards that Mary sold the family farm and went to live out her days with her sister, Alice Perreault, at the Beauly farm on South Road in Salisbury. Mary passed away about 1961.

Like Margaret, Alice was also a school teacher and taught in Andover, Salisbury, Webster, Boscawen, and later at the Catholic school in Franklin. Alice died in 1973. The Wards are now all gone, including Edward, who lived with his wife, Alice, in Cumberland, Rhode Island.

The last I knew, the old Ward homestead was still owned by the family that bought it from Mary. They used it as a summer place. On the outside it had changed little from the days when it harbored a simpler life and watched those within its walls pass beyond.

Today, George lives in Inverness, Florida. This article was inspired by the *History Mystery* photo of the East Andover School that has appeared in the last several issues of the *Beacon*.

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