

Reminiscence

Grace Chaffee: School Days In Andover And Old Time Postmen

Grace Chaffee, born in 1900, was interviewed by Barbara Upton for the Andover Historical Society at her home on Beech Hill on April 25, 1985. The interview was transcribed by Jeanne Barrett and excerpted for the Beacon by Suzy Norris. Part One ran back in the August 2007 issue, which you can read online at AndoverBeacon.com/online.asp.

Grace Chaffee: Ervin James was my father. He was a printer in Manchester, and that was where I was born.

About 1903, his health was not good and they told me he would have to be outdoors so he came back to his old home [in East Andover] where his father had lived. I went to the East Andover school, and sometimes it was a long walk and sometimes I would have a ride. When Dad was a mail carrier, I could ride some mornings. Sometimes I couldn't.

The school was in the present school [now the East Andover Village Preschool] near the Grange Hall and the church. There were two rooms—the first four grades were taught by Nellie Morey at the time I went and the other ones were taught by different teachers through the years. That was grades five to eight.

The superintendent of the schools would come down on the train. He'd visit the schools at E. Andover; then he'd walk up Chase Hill to Flaghole to visit the Flaghole school, then walk over the hill by (probably you'd remember it as) Gertie Putney's place but it came out down by the Boston Hill schoolhouse and then he would visit that school and then he would walk back to Andover. It's a little different from the way the inspection is done nowadays.

... These old schools had just a school house and no well. Any drinking water had to be brought from some neighbor's home or someone who lived near the school. They carried it in pails, and we had one cup for every-

body. Probably it wasn't so sanitary, but they got along all right.

It was always fun to go somewhere to get water. Sometimes you got it slopped over before you got there and then had to go again.

When I went to East Andover school, the cellar of the barn that went with the large boarding house where Wyman Ordway lives now was all open, and when there was a big storm there'd be a lot of snow in that cellar, and we used to like to go out and jump down in the snow into the cellar so that we'd have to have a little longer recess before we could get out when we'd get caught in the snow ...

Another time, we had 15 minute recess in the forenoon and in the afternoon, and we got our coats on as quick as we could, and we ran as fast as we could. We'd go up Chase Hill to the top of the hill, and usually John Severance and Charles Putney would have a double runner [sled], and everybody would pile on that who didn't have a sled, and off we went – sometimes in the ditch, but not very often.

If you ran like everything, after we'd gone down what was now the main road, over the bridge, we'd go nearly as far as where Bryant's house is, and if you ran again, you'd go up the top of Village hill as far as where the Finney's lived, and then we could slide down that hill, and then we'd have to run again to get back to school, all in 15 minutes. We really had exercise. It was a lot of fun.

The man who kept the store there was elderly. He had a car and he always sanded the road in front of the store over to his barn with ashes, and how we kids hated those ashes. We'd cover them up every chance we could 'cause we couldn't slide good over those. I'm sure he fell down several times.

There was one teacher we did not like, and she used to have a strap about a foot long and she'd strap the boys

over the shoulder. One day somebody caught it, and they passed it along, and she tried to get it, but they kept passing it around all the room until it was recess time.

Another time the boys brought a box of candy and gave it to Nick Eastman to take to her, and he was the one who was not overburdened with brains. He liked candy, and he ate it before he got up there.

... As I said, my father's health was not good so we came back to E. Andover. He started setting out apple trees and clearing out the farm because it had not been lived in except for a short time summers. Then he didn't have any special work; he was just told by Mr. Bryant, who was a rural carrier, that he [Mr. Bryant] was not going to continue, and he asked my dad if he was interested. Dad was and took the exams and passed, so for the next 22 years he was a mail carrier.

There were two routes. The first one was ... the forenoon route, and then dad went home and changed horses. This was horse and buggy or horse and sleigh, no cars then.

Then he'd have his dinner and start on the afternoon route. Dad always

changed horses at noon because the roads were not as nice as today.

In the wintertime, there were two ladies that were concerned about his health. Mrs. Bailey always had a hot free stone and she'd take the cold one – it was warm when he left home, but cold when he got to her house on the forenoon route – and in the afternoon Mrs. Emery would have one ready for him. She used to live where the Goodys live now.

One day when they were using cars, my dad came along and a man who lived alone and elderly, he pulled out his watch and said, "Well, you're right on time, Ervin. I can set my watch by you."

The [postman] who came after Dad was Harry Eton. He had quite a sense of humor, and we always enjoyed talking with him. If it was a very windy day Harry almost always would say, "Well, good day to win the beans, today." On other days if it was nice, he'd say, "Well, nice overhead, but not many going that way." He always had a joke or a comment that we always enjoyed. It's a little different now with the cars and the speed with which they get around.

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