

Reminiscence

# The Hersey Farm, Part 2

This is the second part of the reminiscence begun in last month's Beacon on page 22. Like the first part, it is excerpted from *In Their Time* by Helen Duchesne, a book about the Hersey Family Farm. Copies are available for loan at the Andover Libraries.

What makes the Hersey farm unique is its many outbuildings. The main barn is 50 feet by 36 feet, a fairly typical old barn. A wagon and other machinery remain in the barn. Above the first floor are two levels of haylofts that at one time stored tons of hay.

The cattle, hitched in place to their stanchions, once filled the length of the left side of the barn. In its most productive days the barn held around 35 head of cattle. Only eight to ten were milking cows. Milk was for baking and for making butter, the primary source of income. This money was so important that the children were not allowed to drink milk. The skim milk that remained in the pans after the cream was skimmed was fed to the pigs and calves. My grandmother liked whipped cream on gingerbread and sometimes saved

some cream to whip. When she and the children were eating it, they listened for my grandfather's footsteps in the shed. If they heard him, Grammie hid the cream.

After my mother left home, my grandfather held several corn husking bees in the main barn. He invited nearby relatives and neighbors to the "party." At a husking bee, large piles of corn to be husked are placed in front of the guests gathered in a circle on the floor. If a red ear is husked, that person can get up and kiss someone. My Aunt Elsie said she always worried someone she didn't like might kiss her.

I recently learned a distant cousin met her husband at one of these gatherings. Her mother, sister, and she walked down through the woods and across the fields carrying lanterns. On the way home they frightened each other with the shadows cast by their lanterns.

I remember the husking bees being held and thought my sister Eleanor and I should be allowed to go when we were about 13 or 14, but Mama said we were too young. She may have worried we'd

Cilleyville, a little one, but we were so busy. We had a good business. We sold everything, even dry goods: socks and stuff like that. Cookies, bulk, all in a row, penny candy, ice cream, beer, and of course milk and bread."

After her first child was born, Dottie decided the stairs to their upstairs apartment were just too steep, so they bought the house next door, where she lived until her recent move.

"I became postmistress when my husband died [in 1976]. I went over there [to the store] early in the morning. Of course it doesn't have any heat; it has a gas stove. I had to be up and dressed and eat and be over there at six. It was six to twelve, and then I had 'til three off, and then I had to be back from three to five." She ran the Potter Place post office until it closed on July 30, 1988. Visitors can still find the original names on many of the mail boxes.

Dottie's love for animals is legendary. Many remember seeing her, even in the worst weather, walking her beloved Emmy – twice a day, she said. Her love for animals started early. She recalls as a child in Grafton: "Every time I found a stray cat or someone was going to get rid of one, I'd bring it home. We had maybe 12 or 13 cats, and I had them all named from the funny papers: Mutt and Jeff and Jeeks ...."

Over many years, Dottie was the faithful tender of the window-box geraniums at the railroad station and warm company to those serving as station masters for the Andover Historical Society. It was always a treat to have her pop over for a chat, a quick hello, then watch her head off briskly with the dog for a walk. How we will miss her!

## Dottie from page 18

was in my uniform, and somebody afterwards told me he was totally blind."

After the service, Dottie returned to New Hampshire and resettled. "My husband was my brother's best friend, but he was seven years older than I. And we used to go to dances and everything.. Anyhow, I'd been in the service and I didn't see him, and when I came home, he was in the store, helping out in the store, and I needed a ride to go to Wilmot. I asked him if he could call somebody to see if they'd come and pick me up. He said, 'I'll drive you,' and I said OK. And so he asked me to go out, and it went on from there."

"My husband [Gordon] was made postmaster here in Potter Place, and at that time you had to live in the town that you were going to be postmaster or you'd have to find somebody that did, so we had this little house in Elkins that I hated to leave, but we had to come down here and we lived upstairs in an apartment over the store [Emons General Store]."

She remembers the store: "At that time [before the children] my husband and I, he had two aunts who owned the store, and he had just been helping out in the store, but when he was made postmaster, I helped him out in the store."

Dottie's husband's aunts were Inez Emons and Emily Phelps, who were sisters. Emily came to help with the store after Inez's husband died. When Inez died, Emily ran the store for awhile and then gave it to Gordon.

"There was a lot of work to order and stock shelves and keep track. It was pretty exhausting. The only store was this one. Well, there was one in

meet our future husbands there, too, while we truly were still too young.

My grandmother served sandwiches and cider to the huskers after the job was completed. It was a fun-work job that the young folks looked forward to.

After husking, the corn was dried in the shed. Later, it was taken to a grist mill for grinding into cornmeal for the cattle. A small amount was saved for baking johnnycakes and cornmeal muffins. Uncle James says my grandfather hitched up his oxen and wagon and took the corn to Tilton for grinding. It was an all-day trip.

Attached to the main barn is what the family refers to as the "new" barn. At one time it stood in the field, along with a house, west of the main barn on the

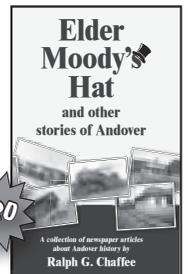
opposite side of the road. The house and barn had been part of a stagecoach line on Route 11 from Boston to Hanover, New Hampshire, in the early part of the 1800s. Coaches stopped at the barn to get fresh horses and drivers, while passengers sought food and drink. When the Northern Railroad made its appearance in 1846, the stagecoach line was no longer needed. Years later, after the house was struck by lightning and burned, my grandparents bought the property and moved the barn.

Buildings were not moved as they are today on big trucks, but rather were taken apart board by board. The major boards were marked and numbered and brought to the new location by horses  
See Hersey on page 20

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