



Alice Chandler of Wilnot sent this photo from around 1992 of Jo Crisp's Andover kindergarten class on a visit to Chandler Farm. Alice's husband Earle, who died in 2005, is at the left. Can you identify any of the other children? If you can, please contact the *Beacon* by e-mail, phone, or letter!

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Reminiscence

The Great Depression

This continues and concludes Walter's reminiscence about life during The Great Depression.

**By Walter Walker
 For the Beacon**

My sister, a year and a half younger than I, also helped around the farm, more with my mother than my father. My brother, five years younger, was too small at that period in our lives to be much help.

As soon as we were big enough, we had chores to do each day, but we found time and were allowed to spend a lot of time at play. During the hot days of summer, the brook that ran partway around the farm took care of our spare time.

At other times we became inventive. At the end of summer, the barn was full of hay to feed the oxen, and we made tunnels in it that were really scary. We would also get up on a high beam and become Batman as we flew down with an old black coat tied to our shoulders.

On rainy days we would retreat to the attic where ancestors and distant cousins had left all kinds of things they no longer wanted. These included quilts started but never finished, antique valentines, and two or three albums of eight-by-ten photos of huge steam trains that a long-gone cousin used to pilot over the Rocky Mountains. Sad to say, all those things fed a bonfire, as I had the job of clearing out the attic so my father could convert it into bedrooms for his growing children.

In that same area, we hand-rigged up a stage where we put on shows that ranged from funerals to political ads we had heard on the radio. They even included commercial breaks, as we would strum on an old banjo with two strings singing, "Super Suds, Super Suds, lots more suds from Super Suds."

One day we invited my father's uncle, a rock-solid Republican, to see our show, and we ran down Wendell Wilkie something fierce. The poor old man got mad and left our show and threatened to return to Concord, until his wife re-

mind-ed him we were just children playing.

A large Atwater Kent radio given to the family by a well-to-do relative on my mother's side stood on an outside wall and was turned on after our evening meal to catch the latest news from Lowell Thomas. Then we were entertained by my mother's soap opera called *One Man's Family*, and for we kids there was *The Lone Ranger* and *Superman*. Then the whole family laughed at *Fibber Magee and Molly*, *Gildersleeve*, *Jack Benny*, and others.

One early quiz show I remember was called *Name That Tune*, in which a few bars of a song that had been popular years and years ago were played. Each week the cash prize grew, and a few more bars were played, until someone called in the correct answer.

Once we got old enough to understand the game, we started playing cards. My father did not enjoy card-playing and would only play a game or two after much begging from his wife and kids and then go back to his pipe and paper. Thus, many games of two-handed whist and solitaire took us up to bedtime. My mother continued the solitaire games, until failing eyesight brought an end to that simple pleasure.

The farm's two oxen were very gentle beasts, and often my grandfather would let them roam about eating new grass before he put them up for the night. We would get one of them next to a log pile and then climb up onto the big broad back for a free ride, until he or we got tired of it and slid off.

I saw, along with my grandfather, a feat by one of these "dumb beasts" that had to be seen to be believed. It was winter, and they were coming down a short but steep hill with a load of logs, when our old collie dog fell down in the icy rut. It looked like there was going to be a gruesome end to the family pet, when the ox with the great set of curved horns reached down and hooked that dog out of the way.

It was a sad day when the oxen had to be sold. My grandfather had died, and we were having to spend too much time and money feeding them, so a home-made tractor was purchased, and a local cattle dealer who could be counted on to be sure they went for beef and would not be abused by another teamster was contacted, and many a tear was shed as Line and Dine left the farm.

I believe historians are still debating whether the country was coming out of the Depression before World War II began or that without the war it would have continued for years. The war did put an end to it for sure, but at one hell of a price.

I hope this has given the reader an idea of what living in the Great Depression was like for this farm boy. 

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