

An Account of the 'Farm' in New Boston, New Hampshire
acquired by Howard and Mildred Morrison in 1935

As recalled by Robert (Bobbie or Doc, depending) in the spring of 2005.
Graphics by daughter Melissa Morrison.



The farm was no farm at all in 1935. It had been once, with fruit trees, hay fields, cows, 100 +/- acres of timber. But the last occupant, Frank Greer, was the local druggist, not a farmer, and the place showed it. He died in Spring 1934 and son Frank Jr., a merchant seaman, came ashore to settle the estate.

Not a good time to sell; the country was in a deep depression, the farmhouse was shabby inside and out. But affluent city folks were beginning to infiltrate the countryside to snap up depressed property at bargain prices. That was Greer's best hope. After all, the house, framed by tall trees, had that classic cape style charm.

The one good move Greer made was to expose the 8 ft wide brick fireplace and oven, hidden by plaster fronted by an ugly wood stove. He did that only because an architect, Frank Owen, convinced him it would raise the house's appeal to flat landers.

In the fall of 1935, his luck turned. Rebecca and Alton Jackson, old Winchester friends of the Morrises, heard about the place, phoned with an urgent "you gotta see it message." Their motivation; the Jackson's had bought an old farm in New Boston a few years back and wanted compatible company for the cocktail/cribbage hour. So on a cold gray December weekend, Dad and Mother drove up and looked. Shabby be damned. They saw the potential.

After all, they grew up in New Hampshire. Dad learned hunting and fishing from his father, they had friends there. He saw land stocked with deer and partridge, land that embraced a brook and bordered a river stocked with trout.



The fireplace, before improvements. Previous owner reluctantly knocked down wall that had hidden it.



Fireplace all fixed up with appropriate adornments. Spinning wheel probably bought from Rebecca Jackson, antiquer friend. Musket was stolen early on, reappeared two weeks later, no explanation.

Mother saw an outlet for her artistic talents, creating a home to her liking – their Winchester home was a dark ark, elbowed by a neighbor’s house and tall trees. She also saw a healthy environment for her growing boys. More on that later.

Mother quickly checked out a few other farms for sale in New Boston. No contest. Greer’s won and folks phoned the realtor.

Hold it. Seems a lady from Wellesley had already met Greer’s price, but asked for a few days to get up the cash, as in green walking around bills. Enter Dad with the cash, and bingo, a done deal. My guess; Greer was so desperate to shake off the old homestead he went for the instant payoff and the lady from Wellesley, who came first, could go hang.

Closing date: Dec. 21, 1935; price, \$1,550. I was 12 years old, my brother Howie 16, the house 163.

Motoring to New Boston from Winchester, we hummed along Rt. 3 to Chelmsford, alongside a sweeping curve in the Merrimack River and adjacent railroad tracks in Tyngsboro; what fun to look up from the back seat of the family car and see a smoke-belching locomotive racing alongside, or better, charging right at us. Daily rail service to Montreal in those days, when trains ran all over the country, on time.

Then straight through Nashua’s wide main street, left onto Rt. 111 and past the White Mountain Mfg. Co, where hand-cranked ice cream makers were made. Now we’re headed west into dairy and chicken farm land.



Mother, Mildred, decorator, cook, gardner, hostess, keeper of the flame.

Alongside the road in Merrimack, a modest enterprise, gas station out front, restaurant behind, with a sign running along the ridge, “Eat Here and Get Gas.” We chortled, but never stopped.

Into Milford, past two saw mills, a furniture factory and the deserted McLane Mfg. Co. that used to make the patron mail boxes found in post offices all over the country. Maybe you’ve seen one, an ornate box with a glass window and combination lock. I’ll bet some are still operating in small towns around the country.

In Milford we picked up Rt. 13, headed north up a long hill to Mont Vernon. A few small hotels still stood, formerly popular with folks who found the country air beneficial; Stearns School for Boys – maybe two dozen pupils and a strong English program; no football but they did field a tennis team.

New Boston next. Curving downhill to a bridge over the South Branch of the Piscataqua River, Sutherland’s saw mill on the left, Paul Allen’s cantaloupes on the right, a few more houses, then the village.

Running time, two hours, all on two-lane roads. Traffic lights? A few in Nashua maybe. Wait a minute; two-lane roads? Part of Rt. 3 might have been three lanes, a depression era innovation. In those days, New Hampshire farmer drivers were known to drive slowly, down the middle of all roads. Drove Massachusetts drivers nuts.



House as seen from road. Two rock maples front and center, granddaddy rock maple, left. It was reinforced with wires connecting upper branches and survived the 1938 hurricane.

Solution? Add a middle lane. Then faster drivers going in either direction could use that middle lane to pass slower folks. Spawned godawful head-on crashes in a time before safety glass.

To get to Greer's you made a nasty uphill left turn from New Boston center, drove past a few houses, past the town dump, Henry Friedrichs, Paul Allen's cow pasture, Corthel's brick house. About a mile on a crowned dirt road, with room to pass an oncoming car, but watch out you don't slide into the ditch.

Approaching Greer's, trees dominated; north and west, a granddaddy rock maple and three middle aged rock maples. On the south, matronly elm shading most of the original house; two handmaiden elms alongside. View of Crotched Mt. to the west, Hooper Hill to the east. A cart lane running through woods to the Piscataquog river and a mile upstream.

One hundred fifty or one hundred twenty five acres, depending on who was reading the deed and trying to match it to the map. The boundaries west, north and east were plainly marked by two roads, the river and stone walls. But one south west stretch was so higgeldy-piggely the first surveyor threw up his hands and suggested we work out the line with the abutter. Never had to.

The house was basically sound. A few broken windows and loose clapboards, peeling paint in front, no paint in back. One barn in good shape; it hadn't housed horse or cow for years.

One shed; for carriage perhaps? We never knew. It collapsed in on itself one quiet summer day when we weren't looking.

The three fields, north, east and south were surrendering to iron weed, juniper, grey birch, choke cherry, briars, golden rod, poison ivy, sumac, and pasture pine. Wild strawberries, too, and one of life's big/little pleasures was to hunker down in a patch of the little sweeties and pick them off, one by one and eat 'em, al fresco.



East, or back side. Backhouse is missing a board! Hey, it's part of the cross-ventilation feature. Area to left is locus of the shed room.



"Needs some work", but at least there's ample firewood on the porch. Photo taken shortly after purchase.

Now for the house tour, starting with the original square cape style building. Room taken over by our parents had space for double bed, bureau and little else. Tiny fireplace in which Frank Greer Jr., used to smoke cigarettes lying on his back with his snoot in the fireplace, smoke wafting undetected up the chimney. Instead of tobacco, he could have been puffing hand-rolled sweet fern butts, choice of many rural lads.

Guest room with formal fireplace. Living room with huge fireplace and brick oven, no mantle, just a gaping hole where it had been plastered over. Heavily shaded by elms, so an additional window was installed in the south side. The carpenter who knocked out a hole for the window, found insulation in between the siding and the plastered walls, insulation in the form of a solid course of bricks.

Finally, one small room we made into a bathroom. Upstairs, two bedrooms, one walk in closet. That's it for the original house.

Next three rooms added later included dining room with two doors to the outside, five inside doorways. Barely space enough for Dad's hand-made pine trestle table, two antique pews alongside, chairs at the ends.

Kitchen with iron sink and cast iron pump, wood-fired cook stove and squat brick edifice that held cast iron kettle; for soup, wash water? No way to drain it. We never did figure it out.

Cellar under the original house with dirt floor, remains of a wooden pipe that ran underneath the road and a neighbor's field to a spring. The weight of all that main chimney and fireplaces rested on a graceful brick arch.



One of three fireplaces off the main chimney, this in the guest room.



The dining room table Dad made using two pine boards from the barn for top. Note the genuine pews.

Also off the kitchen, a small bedroom and a room we used for icebox, beer, fruit/veggie storage. Then a hallway to a woodshed, backhouse and workshop. Cellar under the last bedroom had brick enclosure holding two large kettles with tiny fire boxes underneath. Again, why the kettles? Hog mash?

Finally, headed south from the kettles, another workshop and garage.

The contents, bought for \$50, included thunder jugs, bureaus, chairs and tables. We dragged the beds outdoors and torched.

But there were many useful tools and utensils, a printing press and cabinet full of paper stock and under the barn, a working hay rick.

No phone, no electric, no indoor plumbing.

Back now to downtown New Boston...

Just where Rt. 13 curved right and over the river, stood Dr. Fraser's house; he'd practiced medicine for many years, and still didn't get it. Couldn't even stop blood flowing from a cut in Cousin Ned Pearson's ear lobe, the cut courtesy of my first auto accident.

Across from Fraser's, an inn down to its last bed bug, beyond that towards Francestown, Saltmarsh's cider mill, hard and soft, and his own concoction, a pleasant but mild tasting apple syrup.



Kitchen stove, with pump in right rear.
Brickwork to the left held big iron kettle.

Just before crossing the river, Ernie Hagland's Drug store, formerly Greer's. One bitterly cold winter night during WWII two amateur thugs stomped into Hagland's and demanded money. Ernie balked. Thug whacked him over the head with his revolver. Hagland went down, hollering as he went, "come on boys, there's only two of them."

Dumb thugs, thinking Ernie had friends out back, spooked and headed out, one through the door, one through the window. Someone called the sheriff. No answer. Called the deputy sheriff.

"Did you hear about the robbery at Hagland's?"

"I heard it on the radio, but I ain't been officially notified."

The few able bodied men left in town figured out the robbers' route and took chase. Found their abandoned car and set out after them after notifying State Police. Dumb thugs walked right into the cops' arms.

Across the river, a cluster of wooden buildings associated with the town's past agricultural glory days, anchored by Dodge's General Store, hub of New Boston's universe.

Ben Dodge ran the store and was the postmaster. The Post Office occupied a small front corner, the rest housed rural essentials, beer and food staples. Our perennial favorite was the wheel of Vermont cheddar that sat on a counter in front of the beer cabinet. Age improved it, so the strategy was not to buy a chunk off a new wheel, but to wait until it was down about a quarter or so. The establishment's privy cantilevered over the river.

Ben was a Democrat, short and squat, pink cheeked, glad hander, no enemies. Reed Patterson, assistant postmaster, did most of the postal duties, leaving Ben free to smooze the customers. Reed, a college grad and batchelor lived with his widowed mother. He was the first active environmentalist I heard about.

Seems the town dump was a scant 1/2 mile from town and spilled into a small ravine and brook. Garbage, dead cats, forsaken autos spilled down towards the brook. Reed cataloged the rare species endangered by the dump. Stood up at town meeting to urge the dump be moved. Citizens listened because Reed was old family, but dumped his thoughtful recommendation; some 30 years later, the dump was moved miles away.

Homer

Ben died in the 1940's and his son Homer took over the store.

While Ben was short and affable, Homer was tall, gaunt, wasted few words. His grim chops alone would cast gloom into a cage of young monkeys.

My brother stopped in once in the 1960's when the timber market was hot and started talking with Homer about our land; Homer liked to drop sage rural advice on his city customers, in this case "don't sell that land, Howard, it'll just get more valuable"

A man obviously looking for timber, stood alongside shifting from foot to foot, ears flapping, trying to get Homer's attention. He finally ran out of patience and butt right in, "Homer, do you know this man?" he asked, swiveling his head from Homer to Howard.

Homer gave him a slow cool study; "I do, but you don't,"

Across from Dodge's and headed upstream, the Wason Library, Cecil Marshall's Market; decent vegetables and meat and if he knew you, whiskey from under the counter, poker out back on Saturday nights.

Past Cecil's to the Merrimack Farmers' Exchange, hanging in there to supply aggie tools and chicken feed to the few working farms left. Next, a dam, pond and Henry Friedrich's ice house; what a pleasure to walk in your bare feet on a July scorcher, the damp, pine scented sawdust soothing your feet.

After WWII, noted financier Roger Babson (Babson College, Babson Investments) took over the ice house, and a lot more. Roger was a visionary. Figured atomic war inevitable. Boston prime target, but property 50 miles away safe. Figured Boston corporations should have emergency facilities 50 miles away, for records, perhaps some housing. Roger bought up houses and raw land all over town, figured to develop and sell to corporations Make a kazillion.

There's more. Roger thought about gravity. Bad. Planes fall out of sky, people fall down stairs, drop antique tea cups. Man who insulates against gravity will be hero, get really rich. Roger created annual prize for best paper on gravity, set up Gravity Center with library in nice old house near New Boston Center, installed local white-haired to keep records, open mail. Roger died shortly afterwards. His executors sold off all his New Boston acquisitions.

Catty-corner from Dodge's, the church, school and the firehouse, and across from them, town hall, playground and ball field, complete with grandstand. The ballfield's outfield sloped up and away from the infield, giving local outfielders an advantage over visiting outfielders.

Turning the corner from Dodge's, now running downstream, the abandoned RR station, Henry Friedrich's blacksmith shop and Daniel's garage.

Across the river, Pinball Hill, where, in better days, motorcycle races were held up and down the bubble shaped hill.

The town had been a prosperous cornucopia linked to a Boston hotel chain, including the Parker House. Garbage came up by train. Farm produce rode the train back. The swill was carted around to various farms, where pigs ate the garbage and left the accidentally discarded silverware for the farmers. Our place had at least one identifiable piece – a Parker House gravy boat.

But the hotel chain collapsed, effectively punching New Boston's agrarian meal ticket. The trains stopped running. New Boston went to sleep.

Now, back to the farm and notes on life there. Most of the rehabbing was done from early 1936 to WWII. Mother, Howie and I spent our summers there, Dad up on weekends, often with Uncle Arch (Unk) or friends.

Running Water

You want running water? Just run the handle up and down on the pump to the right of the sink. That's if it's primed. If not, prime it by pouring water, which you just happened to have on hand, into the top of the pump while vigorously running the handle up and down. Made a sound like a man retching.



Ideally a two man task, one pumper, one pourer. Raise the handle too high and it opened the valve that let the water back down into the well so you'd have to start all over again.

The pump was by the kitchen sink, nice clear water through a lead pipe from a well in the front yard.

Lead pipe? Yikes! It was quickly replaced by a new pipe – cement lined. Now we could get nice clear water with a distinct cementy taste.

Also in the kitchen, the old black stove with kerosene inserts and a new stand up enamel-on-steel two-burner kero job from Montgomery (Monkey) Ward with removable tin oven.

For years, Mother dished up good meals with that equipment; one of her specialties, blueberry muffins, or as Dad called them, “fly muffins.”

One of the first major improvements in 1936 was running another pipe to a second well by the barn, 30 ft. away. This pipe fed a 500 gal. tank installed in the shed attic, and from there by gravity to the kitchen and our new sink/toilet in the bathroom.



Since electricity did not arrive until 1941, another hand pump was installed to feed the new tank. It sucked water some 30' laterally and another 12' vertically, so it was performe a serious device.

Its handle stood 4' high operated by standing straight up alongside and assaulting it with a push-pull motion; something like five back and forth strokes to lift one gallon up to the tank.

Now guess who most often won the job of running the pump? Young Bobby. As a result, I quickly became a rabid conservationist.

“You know, the more water that gets used in the bathroom, the more water has to be pumped from the well.” I explained. “Now, think about this! If the well runs dry, we're going to be in real trouble, so let's all conserve water, O.K.?” The men in the family agreed, and cooperated.

Guests were exempt, and I became a quick if flawed judge of character; any guests, even family friends I held in high esteem, who I thought were guilty of excessive laving or flushing, I cursed mightily and wished them ill.

And how did the men in the family cooperate? Well, a patch of poison ivy ran alongside the shed foundation, on the east side facing away from the road. Someone suggested that peeing on the ivy might kill it. Good idea. Took two - three years of applications to do the job, but perserverence with a capital P paid off and the ivy eventually wilted. Must have been the salt content.

Another technique involved the two or more pee process. Let's say it was bedtime, with three people waiting to use the bathroom. First one would declare "*three pee!*" which meant that the first two didn't flush, but the third one did, for sure.

In a related item, before the bathroom, when we had only the privy... well, on a winter night, after a few beers... you know, the privy was a long cold walk... so you can understand... Unk and I slept upstairs, see, and instead of using the privy with the risk of freezing our feet, we'd quietly raise the window and, you imagine.

Trouble was, figuring in the distance between the inside and outside walls, the length of the apparatus employed and prevailing winds from the west, not all the spent beer made it safely to the ground.

Mother couldn't figure out at first, why the faint yellow streak on the side of the house. But when she did, a stern cease and desist order resulted.

The privy, we called it the "back house," squat on large granite blocks with access from the shed. Cross ventilation, plastered walls and ceiling, four holes of ascending diameter. Wasps – the insect species – gathered there to duel with spiders and spook skittery occupants. Jeez, do you suppose toddlers ever fell through the big holes in backhouses?

My artistic contribution; mounting pasteboard match books on the inside of the door. Dad, a pack-a-day smoker, would collect them from watering holes and upscale hotels, everywhere business took him. I fastened them with gimp tacks as he delivered them, eventually covering the entire door. Some people used *New Yorker* covers to decorate their rural abodes but my match book collection was unique.

Soon after electricity arrived in 1941 we went soft; an artisan well, running hot water in both kitchen and bathroom. A bathtub and shower! The backhouse was doomed, and eventually torn down. Mother planted flowers in the foundation and boy, did they flourish!

That first winter we tried a chemical toilet. A real stinker; a big bucket half full of a microbe killer and deodorant. It may have killed microbes but it was no deodorant. And I was the one to empty it at the end of a weekend. Where did I empty it? Remember now, this was in the 1930's; the nearest neighbor was a good 100 yards north. No health department to field complaints. OK?

So I'd half drag, half lug the beast downstairs, across the east field and dump it. By spring, rains and wind had dispersed the contents. That field ended in a stonewall a good 100 ft. away where we maintained an informal garbage dump.

Crows and other creatures sorted through our swill. And you'd be surprised what a good job they did. By the way, the olden expression for taking out the garbage was "rushing the growler."

One day I decided to shoot a crow. Loaded our trusty single shot bolt action .22 caliber rifle. Raised a window real sneaky like, took aim and... damn... the sentinel crow crowed the alarm and they all flapped off before I could snap off a shot.

You've probably heard that crows are smart. You bet. The next day I aimed a broom handle out the same window. The sentinel crow just stood there, giving me the beady eye, picking his beak. I swear.

Heat

You want heat? You know where the wood pile is!

When we bought the place in December, there were three working fireplaces, one old black cast iron kitchen stove. So here's how we'd get warm on a winter weekend that first year.

Arrive Friday night, temperature inside around 40. I'd hustle up wood for the big fireplace. Dad would light the kitchen stove, which now held two kerosene burners. Here's how that task went. Turn on valve and peer into burners with flashlight to see if kerosene's flowing.

At precisely the right time, light burners with a kero-soaked taper. Too much kero and the flame flared and smoked something fierce. Too little and it didn't light. Wind in NE? Good chance it'd blow out the budding flames.

Keep at it until burners glowed pink. Might take half hour. Between the stove and the fireplace, indoor temp rose. How much? Not much. Climb into flannel pajamas between flannel sheets, maybe add a warmed up chunk of soapstone



Dining room showing backside of kitchen chimney. Left door a closet, right led to kitchen. This is the wall we hacked the paint off. Doors in brickwork were bricked in. Stove didn't make the cut.



at feet. Soapstone felt good until you fell asleep, not so good when your feet hit it in the AM.

The first improvement in the heat department was a furnace in the basement, wafting into a big register in the hall. This arrangement poured nice warm dry heat into the hallway; some of it found its way into the adjacent guest bedroom and bathroom but most of it rushed to the upstairs bedrooms. Wood fired at first, later upgraded to coal.

The fireplace warmed the living room fine. The other bedroom and dining room never did get comfortable. The kero burners kept the kitchen pump from freezing, but little better. And that's the way it was winter weekends for the first few non-electricity winters.

Want Light? Get a Match

Up until 1941, kerosene was right behind water as an essential. It cooked our meals and lit our evenings.

Kerosene was stored in the cellar in a 55 gal. drum. To fuel the stove, lug a glass gallon tank down stairs and fill 'er up. To fuel the lamps, use a one pint tin can with slender spout.

We had two kinds of kerosene lamps, the all purpose portable, bright enough to show you the way to the backhouse, get dressed by and do large muscle group chores, and the Aladdin reading lamp.

The portable model was simple enough; a glass reservoir, handle and chimney, a cotton wick (maybe asbestos) controlled by a brass knob. Remove the chimney, crank up the wick a bit and light with a kitchen match.

To light the match, scratch it on the sole of a shoe, if leather, or on the seat of your britches if made of rough fabric. I've also seen old timers light their pipes by flicking a thumb nail across the match head. When a speck of burning match snuck under the nail, goddamn!

You put the lamp out by cranking the wick down away and blowing hard down the chimney. Howie showed me how early on, only he embellished the process by pretending to blow and spit same time. Next night he said I could do it. I blew hard and spit good and busted the chimney. Hey, that's what big brothers are for, right?

The Aladdin was bright enough to read a Sears catalog by, but it was a tricky device, requiring constant surveillance and adjustment. It made light by feeding a kero inspired flame up into a cone-shaped loosely woven asbestos mantle, about two inches high. The mantle was sensitive; flame not high enough, not much light. Flame too high, carbon formed on the mantle, it turned black. Left that way a minute or so, the carbon ignited, sending flame and soot scooting up the chimney, smudging the ceiling.

Work Play

Work in the morning, play in the afternoon. That was the unofficial farm routine. Some involved teamwork, some didn't.

Mother pitched right into decorating. She picked the interior paint colors, wallpapers and curtain styles. She painted most of the interior. She studied up on crafts appropriate to the farm's 18th century beginnings to create stencils she then applied as borders to the original four rooms.

Her toughest project was splatter-painting the downstairs floors. She did it all by herself.

Here's how. First, pick color scheme; solid green for background, with red and yellow splatters. Don expendable old clothes, gloves and shoes. Paint floors solid green. Experiment to find the right technique for splattering - drops must be right size and right density - not easy.

Start with yellow. Squat on low milking stool. Dip brush with medium stiff bristles into paint pot and get just right amount of paint. With other hand, grab a stick and hold it at just the right height over the floor. Whack brush against stick so that paint droplets fly off in a random pattern. Squat, whack and move across the whole room. Let dry.

Repeat process with red paint. Varnish. And she did all this with a back injured years ago.

For teamwork, Dad, Howie, Uncle Arch and I dug the trenches for various plumbing ventures: for the pipe from lower well to house; for a line to the septic tank and the line from the tank to two settling wells.

The soil was close cousin to cement; rocks of all sizes resolutely bonded by a sand/clay mix, Pick axes and crow bars were as essential as shovels.

Burning the slash left over from the 1938 hurricane was a winter family affair. We'd construct a pile beginning with newspaper,

small dead pine twigs, larger dead stuff until the pile was a few feet high, then set 'er off, The pile had to have enough dry material to generate a fierce hot blaze, then we could add most anything, live green pine tops, even boughs constipated with snow.

Amazing how fast pine will burn once it gets its dander up; we had to keep hustling up fresh fuel or the fire would fast burn itself out. On windy days, smoke and firey cinders would blow all over us.

It was a team effort that replaced the clapboards on the east side. Dad was the lead carpenter. His biggest job was rebuilding the old shed into a rustic family room, or as we always called it, the shed room.

First he knocked out space along the back side, added four sets of windows to capture sun, light and view of fields, trees and Hooper Hill on the other side of town. I don't remember if big "picture" windows were fashionable then, but if so, they never would have made the cut with conservative Dad.

He went with good old three over four windows, with small roughly 6"x9" panes. A pain to paint and they broke up the view into little segments. Never bothered us.

For cross ventilation, he replaced the old square barn door style doors with an arched doorway, screened in summer, boarded in winter.

To make a curved framing piece for the arch, he cut down a maple sapling, shaped it by hand, bent and nailed it in place, figuring the green wood would season and hold its shape. It did. Kept the old wide pine board walls and ceiling. Added a sofa, wicker chairs, map of the county (circa 1860's) which included a black dot for each house and barn. In good weather, the shed room became the place for drinking, cribbage, partying, singing – barbershop style – the kind participants love but which inspires non-participants to wish they were somewhere else.



Dad, in the cellar hole left when the shed above it collapsed. Used as a picnic spot, had wood-fired WWI army cook stove.



Rehabbing the east side; from left, Dad, "Unk", Bobby and Ham, Jr.

For one job, I think it was a roof, Dad hired a carpenter named Felix from Boston; spent a week with us, got his room, board and \$65.

The dining room, besides being small and plagued with seven doors, cried for restoration. The wide board wainscoting and the brick backside to the kitchen chimney were layered with paint. With some trepidation, Dad took a blowtorch to the wooden wainscoting. Risky, could have burned down the house.

We tackled the brick with a brute of a tool; a head about the size of a mason's hammer mounted on a wood handle. Head was a collection of old plane blades welded together to form a level face of sharp edges about four inches square.

Heavy bugger. Stand close to the brick and hit it straight on, hard, and the paint chipped away. Slow process, but better than chemicals.

I had two specialties; reglazing the old windows and pulling juniper from the once healthy fields. The latter was good for developing young muscles. I'd wham the sharp end of a pickax under the main stem and pry and yank until the cussed weed came loose. Kept score. Got 25 cents each.

One of Howie's exclusive tasks was oiling the dirt road that was only 20 feet or so away. In dry spells, every vehicle that clattered by sent dust into the house.

Howie would drive to Daniels Garage and have a 50 gal. drum of spent crankcase oil loaded onto the back of the beach wagon. He'd dress in any threads ready for scrap, drain oil into an old watering can with the spout holes enlarged, then walk backwards down the road, swinging the can from side to side. The oil calmed the dust for a year or two.

And let's not forget Howie's first venture in salesmanship, fostered by Dad. Dad invented a simple door knocker fashioned from two horseshoes; figured it was a natural for the upscale rural trade.



Horseshoe door knocker on original front door. Knocker designed by Dad with the idea Howie would sell them door-to-door in the summer.

Had his friend and machine shop owner, Ernie Stockwell, work up a few dozen. Sent Howie out on the road in the New Boston area, knocking on doors of prosperous looking houses.

On the upside, it gave Howie license to tear around the countryside in the beach wagon, tough assignment for a 17 year old boy. On the downside, sales were meager, but those were hard times to sell anything.

For play, golf in Frankestown at the Mt. Crotched Country Club; nine holes and try to stay out of the rough. Movies in Manchester and Milford, tennis in downtown New Boston, weekend family friends, cribbage at the cocktail hour, bridge in the evening, and two swimming holes.

The first was about two miles west and upstream in the South Branch of the Piscataquog. A made-by-nature pool; inlet over modest rapids to pool, oh, maybe 150 feet long by 30 ft. wide, shallowing out on a sand bar outlet; real deep in the middle, with a rock on the bank just right for diving from. Trees all around.

Like a lot of New Hampshire swimming holes those days, it was just sitting there, unmarked, unsupervised, unspoiled. Owner unknown. There was a house nearby, with convenient turn around for cars in the front yard. But if you turned when the grizzled old owner was home, he'd open the door and give you an earful.

He was looked upon as an unkempt hermit and we ignored him. But it was his home. Who were we to trespass? We were his superiors, right? But did anyone ever try talking with him? I doubt it. And anyway, he might have waved a shotgun if approached.

On a hot weekend you might find one or two different groups splashing around at the same time; most days it was ours alone.



Mother and her cousin Freida Goodell. Why they're sprawled below the dam instead of swimming in the pool, background, I don't know.

One summer, a newcomer held swimming lessons there for kids. An unconfirmed story had it that an old grump native stopped his wagon on an upstream bridge and dumped a load of manure off his wagon and into the stream, calculating it to reach the pool in time for class.

Post WWII, someone erected a house smack dab on the bank where we had dove from, then threw up an industrial strength chain link fence around the whole works. The bastid.

The other hole was in the same river, quarter mile down our cart lane. Nature was not as skillful making this one, just a stretch of water wider and deeper than average. So, using wet equity, we built a pool. We simply built up a dam with river rocks. Yanked them up from the bottom around the dam site and grunted them into place. Built a raft on which we floated rocks down the main channel. Got it to the point where you could execute a racing dive, swim upstream 50 feet or more without scraping knees or elbows.

The land on our side of the river was heavily wooded. On the other side, more woods, as far as you could see, up and down the river. With rare intrusions by fishermen, it was our private sanctuary.

Building the dam was work, but we never thought of it that way; just a good way to spend the afternoon. When my brother and I went there alone, we'd take down two cans of beer, keep 'em cool in the pool. Work, swim, drink a beer, have a smoke, then pee, downstream. Why not? The next nearest swimming hole was at Sutherland's dam and sawmill at least a mile away.

Most times, we worked and swam nekkid, or to use the vernacular of the day, "bollicky." The dam, being an informal collection of mostly roundish rocks, would sort of fall apart under the stress of winter ice chunks and spring freshet.

So we'd rebuild it next summer.

Under the rubric of play, I suppose I should include window breaking and phone line baseball.

The barn faced the front of the house with a horizontal row of windows above the doors. Howie and I went through a period when, out of boredom, we simply stood in the front yard and heaved stones at the windows; broke most of them Why Dad didn't hammer us for that I don't know.



Phone line baseball also included stone-throwing. The copper phone lines along the road were strung on glass insulators mounted on wooden yard arms on wooden poles; about six or eight lines in those days.

To score in this game, you'd heave stones at the wires; hitting one wire was a single, two wires a double, bust an insulator, home run! A phone company man would periodically appear and replace the insulators. Routine. You could get away with foolishness like that and not be prosecuted.

Fishing was Dad's prime interest. He felt he owned that part of the pool where the brook entered the river.

One summer he tried time and again to catch the big one, a resident rainbow trout hanging around the pool. Tried different lures - he was a dry fly man - without luck.

Then one day as he walked down the lane to battle the trout he met a stranger coming up the lane, eyes popping, bragging about the catch he held up, obviously, Dad's fish. Nothing illegal, but for years dad referred to the guy as that "watery-eyed son-of-a-bitch from Manchester."



Our pool. South Branch of the Piscataquog.

Our phone shared a party line with two others; Henry Friedrich the fire warden, #2, and Corthel, #3. We were #4. To ring someone on our line, just crank his number. To raise the operator, crank once.

If you rang Henry and he wasn't there, the operator would pick up and say "Henry's not in, he's over to Bill's, want me to ring him there?" If you picked up to listen in on someone else's gab, line voltage dropped, a dead giveaway. In a thunder storm, stay away from the contraption.

Also under play I must relate the great hut excavation project undertaken by Johnny next door, my cousin Ned and I. It was a common boy urge; build a hideout away from adults. We selected a knoll in the second field east from the house. Nice spot, surrounded by a scattering of cedars. Design called for a dug-in structure facing away from civilization. The soil was hardpan and we labored mightily with youthful zest; the results were pathetic.

Days later, under positive parental interest in the project, I agreed to show them our progress. There the family stood, silently gazing at the scanty scratchings in the ground.

Mother finally spoke, grasping for the positive spin. “You could call it Cedar Knoll.”

“Or *see da hole*” said Dad. Subdued he-hawing. Da hole was doomed.

Rose Bowl Parade, Move Over

New Boston came to life every Fourth of July, starting off with a parade. Mother sniffed obligation; it was our first summer in the town and she beamed “let’s show them we’re part of the community.”

So we mounted a mess of saplings around the sides of the beach wagon to suggest a woody scene, built a campfire of stones and crinkled red paper. Idea was I’d sit by the fire holding a frying pan, having a ball, frying up a mess of trout in the pan, grinning at the crowd.

The idea struck me as corny and not fitting role for a teenager. So I crouched motionless and stonefaced, head down, the whole parade.

My brother was luckier, he got to drive and scan the crowd for good lookers. There were other floats; Boy Scouts, 4-H, and the most spectacular, the flat bed truck entered by the American Legion. It starred three WWI veterans holding a flag, a rifle and each other – to keep themselves from toppling over. Seems they had greeted the great day with a salute from a bottle.

There was also a well turned out lady on a well-groomed horse. It saluted the viewing stand with a loud fart. And finally, of course, the town’s fire engine.

Next up, the town’s baseball team, varied talent, but hey, it’s live and it’s the national pastime. And all day, the midway.

Big hit there was the mouse game, beside the ever popular beano. Game had a big glass top box with numbered holes in the bottom. Players bet on which hole the



Our entry into the 4th of July Parade. In case you wonder, the “theme” was camping in the woods, with me cooking up a mess of trout.

mouse would pop into after the attendant dropped the mouse into the box. Went fine for awhile, but the man got careless transferring the mouse to the playing box and the mouse bit him on the finger. “Son of a bitch” said the man, flicking the mouse away. The mouse ran where any normal mouse would, right into the beano game, inspiring the women participants to scream and scramble onto the table. After calm had returned, they turned their attentions to jawing out the man running the game.

We skipped the bean supper, dancing and fireworks.

One of Henry’s Best

Our general on-site all-purpose vehicle was a Ford Model A, circa 1929. Known as a “woody,” but we called it the beach wagon. Bought second hand for \$100. Had 99,999 miles on it run up by lackeys on a Cape Cod estate.

Called a woody because sides and roof supports were real wood, varnished. Roof built like a canoe, black treated canvas over slats. Hood painted baby poop tan. Fenders black. Visor over windshield missing. Arrived in good working order; 4 cylinders, electric starter, windshield wiper, spare tire, snap-in removable window coverings which we soon lost, and running boards.



The small, nickel plated instrument panel sported a speedometer which my brother once got to register something wicked like 55 mph, possibly down hill, a gas gauge good for estimates, ignition toggle switch and headlight switch.

Gas tank under hood above engine, practically in your lap, for gravity feed to carb; no pesky gas pump to complicate matters. To really check gas level, stand on running board, unscrew cap and peer in.

On the floor, shift knob on the end of long shaft, making it awkward for folks, especially girls, sitting in the middle of the bench seat; accelerator, clutch and brake pedals, starter button and hand brake.

On the steering column, hand throttle and spark lever; on the right side and under the dash and hard to reach, a choke knob to feed an extra shot of gas into the carb when starting.

Also, a side view mirror, the horn button in middle of plain Jane steering wheel. Horn made an ah-oo-gah sound, like a rutting ngulate. Race the engine while horning and the sound climbed the scale.

There was supposed to be a gauge atop the radiator, but instead, just a simple cap. If the vehicle got too hot, it just steamed and hissed. Ample warning.

To start, yank door open and hop in; keyless entry long before the electronic kind. Move hand throttle down to send rush of gas to the carb, advance the spark handle up to give the electrical system an extra rush, flip ignition switch and stomp on starter button while agitating choke, or as we used to say, “goosing it.”

A foolproof procedure. After engine caught, ease up on the goosing, return hand throttle and spark to original positions. It was fun to hear Mother shout “goose it goose it” when we stalled in traffic, which wasn’t often in those days; there wasn’t much traffic, and the Model A was a dependable beast.

Back seats removable, but heavy. My brother and I tried to kill the vehicle, driving through rock and brush-strewn meadows, but never succeeded.

Howie came up with the theory that speeding over unpaved roads made it easier on the tires because that way you just flew over the tops of pointy rocks and gravel. Dad disagreed after counting the number of tire repairs rung up that summer.

Each fall, we’d jack it up, drain the radiator and pull the battery. One fall we forgot. Next spring oil was detected in the radiator, water in the crankcase. So what? Small matter of a cracked head. Replaced same and cranked her up. Ran pretty good for another year or so before we sold it to a woody aficionado who thought he had died and gone to heaven. This was one of Henry’s best.

Earlier, I mentioned Mother imagining summers at the farm would provide a healthy environment for her growing boys. Really? Fresh air and exercise, sure. Good for my brother Howie, a mixed bag for me. He had his driver’s license, drove around in the wagon, found friends, sought girls and mischief.

Outside of Johnny Corthell who was next door part of a few summers, there was no one for me to pal around with. Too many days in lonesome mode. Should have at least fixed me up with a flock of hens to feed, water and cluck over.

However, one summer an elaborate scheme brought Howie’s fraternity bro Larry “Beaver” Tournock to the scene. Idea was Larry, as straight an arrow as ever took the boy scout pledge of honor, would be company for Howie, tutor me in algebra and serve as general peerless role model. He was both, and a strong, healthy lad - his favorite lunch - a whole head of lettuce, plain, no dressing, utensils optional.

After I got my driver's license, Mother worked the phone in desperate efforts to match me with girls. As stubborn then as now, I resented such intrusion and her efforts seldom bore fruit, or tomatoes.

I do remember two. Seems the Trumbulls, big spread off Route 13, tennis court, horses, had a relative coming for the weekend, could I squire her around? Stunning blond from main line Philly. My age but socially light years ahead. We did tennis; I could have beat her, of course, but thought it polite to let her win. Then we split for dinner and I returned in Dad's Packard to do a movie in Manchester.

Her first words in the car, *cigarettes*? I was only a few weeks into smoking, didn't pack any, but said sure, stopped at Dodge's and bought a pack. Vague memory of trying to open, distribute and light one while driving. God was my co-pilot that night.

I think she enjoyed toying with my naïveté and her chatter filled any communication gaps. There was no good night peck on the cheek. The other date, daughter of a socially prominent Boston family with summer place over in Lyndeborough. Drove her to a movie in Milford. I doubt we exchanged 49 words the whole evening.

Vic Surette

Vic lived up hill from us in a once substantial house – solid two-story, with center chimney; barn with cupola, cows, hens, pig. He was one of that vanishing breed, the New Hampshire farmer, hanging in there with a doleful future. He had already sold off the handsome wide-board wainscotting that paneled his living room. The day he showed Howie around his barn yard, he bragged on the quality of the water in the well, invited Howie to take a drink. He did. Then Vic casually added that of course, once in a great while, one of the cows would back up to the well and flop one in.

It's likely our arrival helped Vic survive the next 15 years or more because Dad had him do numerous jobs. No written estimates, no invoices, no receipts, no deductions, just a handshake and cash.



Mother thought that eating outdoors was what you do in the country. Howie disagreed, hence the umbrella. This is the north side, well shaded in summer. That's the granddaddy rock maple in the background.

One job was spawned by the devastating 1938 hurricane. Vic was driving past our place as that howler was winding up, and noticed the barn's side door had blown out. Good neighbor. He flagged down a passing car and got the driver to help him bolster the door shut with a log. Good deed, right?

Wrong, but no point in fingering Vic - he had no way of knowing the ferocity of the unforecasted hurricane. Securing the door was like tying down the escape valve on a steam engine. Wind coming from the southeast and up under the barn's open skirt went to work stressing the whole structure. Shingles took flight, framing creaked and parted, windows went and finally the other door flew off across the road. The barn was salvageable and Vic and Henry Friedrich made the repairs.

Another job he took on was simple enough in concept but not so simple in execution. Our backhouse needed cleaning out, no doubt. Dad approached Vic; would he take on the task?

Vic paused; he was a proud farmer, not a swamper. Then he thought of the cash. The weekend after Vic did the job, we returned and Vic appeared. "Mr. Morrison, don't ever ask me to do that again!"

"Oh, what happened. Vic?"

"Well, let me tell you. I hitched the hoss up to the wagon, went down to your place, took a little swig from the bottle I keep for emergencies, lined the wagon all over with newspapers, shoveled the shit into the wagon and drove down to the south field like you wanted, shoveled the shit out, and just then a little twister sprung up and blowed those goddam papers all over me and the hoss."

Some other jobs; rebuilding the front yard well, building two septic outflow wells and building an artistic wall at the end of the shed. An architect friend of Dad's had designed one (\$40) but it was too formal. Vic and my parents designed a more natural one and Vic built it.

The front lawn sloped up from the parking area to the house, with no formal path. One day after a light snow, Vic walked up to the front door, his foot tracks tracing a perfect winding path. We staked his course and later he made a walkway over it, with flat field stones. Still there.



Vic Surette and Albert

He called the plum tree out back a “prune” tree, all small birds were “shed peewees,” and trees were propagated when birds ate berries then pooped out the seeds as they flew around. He called poison ivy “mercury,” and could rip it up with his bare hands. He died in the 1950’s and Dad and Mother drove up for the funeral.

Henry Friedrich

Back now to “*Don’t you like the way the trees hold hands around the house?*” and Henry Friedrich. I had said earlier that Henry swore like a blacksmith. This needs clarification. Cuss words were simply part of his vocabulary, like hot, cold, heavy. Mostly goddam and son of a bitch. He didn’t use cuss words in anger, more as modifiers and fillers.

Henry and his wife had a son and three daughters. The middle girl Roberta was my age and comely, but more on her later. Henry, the only native Dad would offer a drink to, was a resourceful solid citizen.

Owned the icehouse. Did blacksmithing. As the number of horse customers dwindled, he went into custom truck bodies. The basic design involved some strap iron and oak planks. When our barn was sprung by the 1938 hurricane, he forged and helped install the hardware – like giant iron staples – used to pull the structure together again.

After the hurricane, he, in his capacity as fire warden, ordered our lane cleared of fallen trees, justifying the work because the lane was an important link between our Old Francestown road and the Old Lyndeborough Road to the south. Flimsy justification, but let’s not quibble.

He did this without a word to us and got the job done with money and manpower from one of President Roosevelt’s controversial but popular programs, the old Works Progress Administration (WPA). It was no small job; there were scores of big pines spraddled across and blocking the lane. I wish I could have seen Dad’s face when Henry told him that the hated Roosevelt had done him a big favor.

You see, Dad and his friends were conservatives. They harbored as much animosity for FDR as we did for George W. Bush. For them, FDR meant tax and spend, tax and spend, or you might say, tax me and spend the money on layabouts.



Vic Surett’s horse, probably the summer he suffered a gross indignity during the backhouse cleaning episode.

About Roberta . We were attracted by age and proximity but any hormonal heat was stopped cold by mutually shared shyness of massive proportions. A typical tryst that summer revolved around rushing the growler, that is, delivering garbage to Henry's pig.

On the scheduled morning, I'd pick up the swill pail and my brother would drive me to Friedrich's house on the way to pick up the mail. I'd lug the pail up hill to the pig pen and Roberta would magically materialize.

We'd stand there casting sideways glances at each other, at most, exchanging good mornings. I'd dump the swill into the pig's trough and we watched while the pig slurped snotted and oinked his way through breakfast.

About then my brother would race the engine and honk the horn, signaling it was time to move on.

For a few years, Henry kept a cow or two and we bought the raw milk, unpasteurized, unhomogenized, with a solid plug of cream on top. Mother considered it the real stuff. And she didn't fret about health risks; Henry could do no wrong and his cows were inspected for TB every year.

Lena, Cora, Jack, Jean and Johnny

There was one other house between Henry's and ours. A compact old brick house, occupied in the summer by Lena Corthel, thin-lipped widow, her wannabe socialite daughter Cora, her hen pecked husband Jack and their plain as a muslin curtain daughter Jean. Johnny was a grandson and the only kid around I had to play with. Cora, Jack and Jean rode horses and had done so for years, galumphing down our lane that led to the river.

One Sunday our first year there we found ourselves with some surplus thunder jugs and time to burn. So what we did was to hang a jug from an apple tree out back, start it swinging then take pot shots at it with our .22 – an impromptu shooting alley.

Suddenly from the lane, frantic shouts. Seems our misses were zinging over their heads, and were they pissed!

The hen-pecked husband did manage to carve out some quiet time for himself on Sunday mornings. He'd scoop up the newspaper and retreat to the barn where he'd have a leisurely read and a good poop, squatting in an abandoned cow stall.

In the early summers, two large, retired and worn out school teachers used to board out summers with Lena. Their morning ritual was to waddle down the road past our house, sniffing the tiger lilies.

Mother, always into doing the right thing, invited them to lunch. They were loaded, side by side, into one of the two antique pews that served as seating alongside the dining room table. They lowered their bulk in unison and crack! the pew gave way. No injuries, but they did squawk something fierce. They ate quickly and departed.

Corthel's place also was the scene of a botched lesson, for me, in sex education. One morning, Mother with a sense of urgency in her voice, said I should rush over and witness something important, something involving caponizing chickens. That's all she said. I knew chickens, dumb birds, but caponizing?



Anyway, I trotted over to a confusing scene. Man would lift a chicken, squawking, flapping and scattering feathers, onto a table, make a pass or two with a knife, then hand the bird, squawking and flapping even harder, back to an assistant.

The process, I learned years later, involved removing the gonads from male fowls to make them fatter. It's a good thing they didn't flaunt their nuts outside, like me, or the experience might have added to my confusion on the subject.

The Paul Allen of cantaloupe fame owned a pasture and woods between Corthel's and Friedrich's. He milked a few cows in a shed by the road. But come evening milking time the cows would like as not wander up into thick woods as if called to an important meeting.

One summer, Johnny and I made ourselves useful by shooing the cows down to the milking shed. Wasn't hard to find them, the boss bossy was belled.

Frank Wilson

Frank Wilson was a neighbor, rural delivery postman and part time worker for the Road Agent (country lingo for the Town's DPW, most powerful post in town because he dispensed money and jobs).

Frank, short and wiry, had just the right build for unplugging culverts. And each spring he would begin fishing a day before the official opening to be sure he would jerk a keeper or two out of the brook that gurgled through our land.

Johnny Upton

Johnny Upton lived a mile or more further to the west in a once substantial farm house. He gave up farming and took up drinking. He used to wagon into town about once a month, buy a bottle, then head back. His horse knew the way and there was scant auto traffic to contend with.

By the time Johnny bumbled by our house on full automatic he was swaying and muttering. This bothered Mother. One day as he rattled along with a full tank, Mother ventured out to the road and spoke to him, some uplifting, “you really shouldn’t drink like that” message no doubt.

“Go to hell you old hag.” Mother retreated and never tried again.

Drawing Medium

Up hill from us and close to Vic, in a modest cabin, there was George Goodwin and another old rural relic called the “Drawing Medium,” known for his ability to take divine instructions from above and translate them, in favorable, (like maybe \$5) circumstances, into drawings. Dad was privileged to be invited to one of the gent’s sessions.

There the old boy sat staring towards the heavens, pencil poised. Silence as tension mounted in the cabin. Finally, his hand started moving herky-jerky over the paper, inscribing what seemed to be a landscape. Inspiration finished, he asked Dad if he could identify the scene. It was a challenge, but Dad had no choice, “Vic’s pasture?”

A withering glance. “Nope, Scobie Pond.”

Farming

Mother gardened; healthy flowers in a modest plot in the front, easy to water. Encouraged, she picked a spot out North in soil more suitable for road ballast.

It was a dry year, so water had to be lugged in pails some 50 feet and it was my brother’s job. He protested, resisted and cursed every watering and the garden flunked. Probably a combination of drought and his maledictions.



Mother’s WWII “Victory Garden.” Venue where I knocked off four hedgehogs while on furlough from the army.

During WWII, Mother established a Victory Garden out back, east side, with corn, squash, beans. We arrived one Friday night when I was on furlough, and found four hedgehogs dining on the corn.

Ever try shooting four porcupines with a single shot, bolt action .22, in the dark? I bagged the first, but had to resort to clubbing with the butt to get the others. The only other varmint I shot was a veggie rapist ground hog; gave the liver to Henry Friedrich.

She also raised sage in a plot out back, where the soil was better. Raised several good crops. Dried it on racks Dad set up in the barn. Sold it to a Boston spice house. Gave the proceeds to her alma mater, Mt. Holyoke.

One summer we raised three ducks, Harpo, Groucho and Chico. Let them forage in the front yard days, housed them in a hut nights.

One morning a stray dog rushed in and broke Chico's leg before we chased the dog off. A simple splint fixed the leg, but he was immobilized.

The morning after, his brothers fanned out to go bugging in the grass. Chico, naturally, couldn't. He quacked plaintively. Brothers returned, held a conference, figured out his plight and took turns bringing him back choice specimens until he could move out again and feed himself. Honest.



The ducklings had come from Henry Friedrich, with the deal we would fatten them up, return them in the fall for, ah, slaughtering and eating. We returned them all right, but eat them? Naw.

Gardens ducks and finally, trees, our only other "crop," but a good one. There were six harvests; unfortunately, the records are incomplete, but here's a try.

The hurricane of 1938. Some of the downed trees ended up in Sutherland's mill, came back as wide planks that Dad installed on the renovated shed room floor. No estimate of value.

Sometime during WWII Dad had Vic Surette, George Goodwin and the "drawing medium" cut hardwood somewhere uphill towards the southern boundary. How many cords, I don't know. No estimate.

I like to think Dad went into this venture to give these men some work and cash.

In colonial days, one of the predominant trees in the east was the American chestnut, a versatile hardwood you could make into almost anything, houses to tool handles. In the 1920's, a blight killed every living chestnut. Our chestnuts were just lying there, outer bark rotted away, but inner wood, 8-10 inches in diameter, still solid. Howie hauled the best of them out of the woods in the beach wagon.

Some we trimmed and made a fence to keep in granddaughter Nancy, or dog, I forgot which.

Mid-1950's, a Timber Stand Improvement (TSI) thinning operation carried out by a mill in Fitchburg, Massachusetts. No record, so let's make a conservative guess estimate at \$1, 000 gross.

1962, another TSI by Lorden Lumber Co. of Milford, trees marked by the New England Forestry Foundation. 150,000 board feet, @ \$17.00 per M, or \$2,500.

Winter 1977. Major TSI, trees marked and marketed by Robert Todd of New Boston, sold to a mill in Pittsfield, N.H. Net revenue to Howie and me around \$22,000.

So there's at least \$25,000 in revenue over 42 years, or some \$23,500 over the acquisition cost. The beauty of it all was that you could walk through those woods at nearly any time during those 42 years and see almost none of the ugliness that clear cutting leaves .

A TSI is a nice way to harvest timber, if you can afford it. It's like gardening; you pick the produce as it ripens and pull the weeds. It leaves some good trees for seed stock and for cutting tomorrow.

Dad always went the TSI route, leaving a buffer, maybe 100 ft., from brook and river. Further, he practiced TSI himself, often strolling in cold weather into the woods to trim the lower dead limbs from young pines to help them grow into knot-free timber.

The 1938 hurricane totaled a handsome knoll covered with mature red pine. County Forester recommended Dad replant with red pine. He never did.

Years later, while I was shopping at a chop it yourself Xmas tree enterprise at a mill outside of Milford, I ran into the mill's grizzled owner - plaid shirt, shit-kicker boots, stubble of beard, pipe in mouth - and asked him about red pine. He choked, spat and cursed.

"I wouldn't have that shit in my mill! Where'd you get the idea of red pine? Jeuzz Christ. Saw that up neat and square, stack it up just right and a month later, it's all twisty and not worth snot, couldn't sell it to a blind man."

Well, if you don't plant good stock you never know what's going to peek up through the duff. After the 1938 hurricane, that grove of devastated red pine came up to brambles, grey birch and other unworthy species. It was something like 20 years before white pine seedlings appeared.

One other note about our forestry practices. The first, or maybe the second spring there, Dad had the local fire laddies burn the scruffy north field in April while there were traces of snow bordering the stone walls. Made for nifty grass that one season, but we never did it again.

And finally, blueberries.

High bush blue berries stood here and there along the cart path; enough to grace Mother's muffins through mid summer. Unk tried several years in a row to transplant bushes to Winchester but they never took.

Inflation or Appreciation

When dad was asked, early on, by friends, "Howard, why did you buy this place," he'd answer, "it's my hedge against inflation."

Dad was a consevative, not an economist, so his inflation fear was really based on his deep dislike of President Roosevelt and his New Deal spending policies.

The farm's value did leap during the Morrison reign, so let's look at the numbers. Remember, Dad bought it for \$1,500 plus \$50 for the contents, in 1935.

Timber sales over the years the land was in Morrison hands brought in \$25,500. Mother sold the house and 15 acres for \$17,150, Howie and I sold the remaining land for \$109,000.

So in 50 years, that \$1,500 investment brought in \$150,100. I suppose you could name herds of common stocks that outperformed the farm over the same period. So what!



Howard A. Morrison, explaining why he, and wife Mildred, bought the farm.

Selling the farm to Dave and Janet Nixon was a natural. It put the original spread back together. It protected the land from development or exploitation because the Nixons felt the way we had about land. And they have proven to be excellent stewards.

Negotiations were civilized. I got an appraisal, raised it some, set a price. Nixon countered, we split the difference. He wrote that our Morrison generation was welcome to visit the land, picnic, swim, cut firewood.

I've returned, usually spring and fall, to stroll down the lane, inspect trees I remember pruning, see what new growth might be coming along, swim. I missed 2004, but, I'm going to get back in 2005. Swim? We'll see.



That's me, "Bobby" our first summer

"Gramp" Jack Fiske, left, and Grandfather Henry K. Morrison, Dad's father. Old Concord N.H. friends, sitting on pew that survives to this day. It went, I think, from New Boston to Howie's home to Jenny's to mine.



On the pew and front porch; "Gramp" Jack Fisk and his wife Aunt Mary, Grandmother Emma and her husband and grandfather Henry K. Morrison.



From the left: John Pearson, Howard A. Morrison, Wallace Leavit, big fish and "Unk".

