

I was one of many children born at the Smith/Cole home on Main Road (now “Kinsley House”, home of the Hampden Historical Society.) My mother’s twin sister was a registered nurse, and during the 1920’s and 1930’s, it was the fashion to go to a home where women had their babies and were bedridden for at least two weeks. My mother and her sister were part of the Cole family, so my immediate family was living in the house anyway. We lived there until I was about two years old, then moved to Summer Street, where I lived until 1993.

I remember as a small child playing with friends, the Maddocks kids and Morna Kimball Rawcliffe, at the “Kinsley” in the big shoe in back of the barn. The shoe was complete with windows and stovepipe. It had a black oilcloth covering. It must have been made for a church play, *The Old Woman Who Lived in A Shoe*. I also remember playing in the flower gardens and picking raspberries, then in the fall “helping” to pick the pears from the tree next to the driveway. Many games of croquet were played on the large lawn.

When I was growing up, Summer Street was called the most beautiful street in Hampden. We had lived on Summer Street only a short time when a store at the Lower Corner burned (about 1930). At that time there were several stores and businesses in the area of the present Rawcliffe’s garage. Our home was near the head of the street and sparks were flying, so the men were soaking down the roofs of nearby houses. My mother woke me so I could spend the rest of the night at the “Kinsley”.

In the winter we had loads of fun sliding down Summer Street hill, starting at the Main Road and going as far as our sleds would take us, then we had the long walk back up! Of course if a car or horse and sleigh were going up, we “hitched” a ride.

In the summer many of us picked string beans at the Sweet Farm—sometimes at the garden in back of the Sweet house and across the field in back of the Kinsley, going toward Reed’s Brook and the River. This was a huge garden with a cellar hole where a house had once stood, with a large lilac bush growing beside it.

My father, along with Norman Gould, had a garage at the Lower Corner for several years. For a few years, there was a lending library on the second floor over Sandford’s Grocery Store (now Perry’s)

(Editor’s note: See Photograph 4: “The Old Woman in the Shoe” in the Photographs sections, page 166.)

(Editor’s note: See Photograph 5: “Croquet at the Kinsley House circa 1930” in the Photographs section, page 167.)

(Editor’s note: See Photograph 6: “Hampden’s Lower Corner circa 1930-Sandford’s Grocery Store and Peterson’s Garage” in the Photographs section, page 167.)