

Although I spent all my summers in Hampden from the time I was a year old, I was really a city girl so when I moved to Hampden to live year-round, life became very different for me. It was 1936 and I was a sophomore at Hampden Academy. The football games that fall and every fall were held on what is now a parking lot to the left of the old brick building. There were no bleachers and because there was no gate, everyone who came paid the girls who were selling tickets. There was always a bit of competition between the girls.

Once the cold weather arrived in November (and it seems to me Novembers were always cold) and the puddles stayed frozen, evenings found everyone who lived between the Upper and Lower Corners at the Frog Pond for a glorious, crisp, frosty evening of skating. There was always a bonfire and it didn't matter whether you were a good skater or not. It was just being there that mattered—and of course it was the boys who really mattered. The Frog Pond was directly behind Gerry and Dan Pelletier's house at the Upper Corner. When it was time to walk back to the Lower Corner, we were pretty well warmed up so the walk didn't seem too uncomfortable. If one of the boys asked to walk me home, then the evening could be pronounced almost perfect. It was purely perfect if it was snowing. If nobody asked to walk me home, then Ginny, my best friend, would walk me halfway, which was a point at the cemetery next to the mausoleum. She lived where the Pelletier's lived so this gave her an extra half hour out.

Most of the streets were plowed in those days; for some reason, Summer Street wasn't, or it wasn't scraped down to the dirt, so it was a perfect place for sledding and tobogganing. When conditions were just right, you could go almost to the top of Ferry Street or even to the river. My problem with these wonderful winter evenings was that I lived too close to the corner and that meant that I could see when the porch light was turned on. That was my mother's signal to come home and that meant right then—no lally-gagging or excuses.

I made up for leaving the fun those evenings (They always ended at 9 o'clock.) when I used that old trick—telling Mother I was going to Eleanor's house to do what? I don't remember. But she, of course, told her grandmother that she was coming to my house. Once out and free, just by coincidence, we would run into our boyfriends and spend the next two hours walking all over town—the banks of the river or where Riverside Park used to be or down Ferry Street to the river or along the river where there were cabins. For some reason, this was always a winter activity. Maybe the boyfriends disappeared when spring came. I've often wondered at how closely my mother examined me when I returned or did she choose to ignore my ink cheeks and red nose? I like to believe the latter. Anyway, those nights were magic and I can still hear the squeak of our moccasins on the snow those frosty nights.

One of the less fun things about winter was sleeping in a very cold room. So that meant sleeping under piles of heavy quilts. Even that, however, didn't do much to warm you up because the sheets were so frigid, even if they were flannel. Each evening after supper, I would put a soapstone in the oven of the old black Clarion stove in the kitchen. By bedtime, it was very, very warm. Next I'd wrap it up in

several layers of flannel and fasten them with a large pin. Slipping this into the bottom of the bed between the sheets made one small area of the bed toasty warm by the time I had changed into my pj's. Once in the cold room, I wasted no time hopping into bed. My toes quickly found the flannel-wrapped soapstone, and though I could see my breath, only my nose was cold most nights.

It wasn't until 1938 that the central part of town was serviced by a water and sewer system. Although my grandmother was very frugal, my grandfather was not. He installed a full bathroom in the early 1900's. That was fine except in order to have water for bathing and flushing, somebody had to sweat for it. In the cellar there was an enormous tank with a long, heavy pump attached. When this pump was pushed back and forth, water was pumped into the tank. After a long time of pumping, which got harder and harder as the pressure rose, there was finally enough pressure to send the water upstairs to the bathroom. All of this hard work could go for naught and it did once. After my grandfather's death, my brothers got the pumping job. One morning when Mother was away and I was supposed to be in charge, I turned on the water in the sink. Nothing! After a lot of reminding, pleading and threatening, the boys finally began to pump. They pumped for what seemed forever, but the pressure would not rise to its limit. In the meantime I had gone upstairs. To my horror as I climbed the stairs, I was met by water flooding out of the bathroom. I had forgotten to take the plug out of the sink.

There was running hot water for the bathroom; it was heated off the range in the kitchen and stored in a large copper tank that stood beside the stove and against the wall. Coming in out of the cold on a raw January bone. Strangely enough there was no running water in the kitchen. Water in the wintertime was heated in a large tank on the side of the stove. Cold day, I'd stand with my back to the tank and let that heat warm me to the water was pumped up from the cistern in the cellar. Needless to say, there weren't any tub baths in the summer.

Wintertime at Hampden Academy was like today, a frenzy of boys' and girls' basketball with all the excitement of bus trips if you were a cheerleader or on the girls' team. The State Principals Association had not organized basketball tournaments at that time; I suspect that this may have applied only to smaller high schools. However, the YMCA did organize a tournament, which usually came around February vacation as today. Everybody went to these games, which were played, if memory serves me correctly, in the old Bangor City Hall on Hammond Street. Spectators sat in the balcony. That reminds me that HA teams played in the Town Hall, now the Masonic Hall; there were seats on the stage, otherwise we stood on the sides. To the right of the door was an enormous, cylindrical heater, which was a real hazard to the players.

The grandmother I lived with summers growing up and after my father died, was very, very frugal. Although some people had ice-boxes in the Twenties and Thirties, and some even had electric refrigerators, my grandmother had neither. Perishable foods were kept in the cellar which was cool enough even in the summer. She bought only enough milk or cream needed for that day because they were delivered daily. Butter came from a dairy farm in Winterport. It was a deep rich yellow wrapped in parchment paper, which was usually crusty with salt. That butter generously spread on a slice of fresh bread and eaten with a bowl of mashed strawberries or raspberries covered in rich cream was a dessert that can't be matched to this day. Although we lived close to Mr. Sanford's store (Perry's today) and

shopped there frequently, filling large orders of staples was very convenient because Fred Ems would deliver them in Mr. Sanford's pick up truck. I don't believe Mr. Sanford ever sold meat. Before Mike Stanley bought the store and did sell fresh meat, Mr. Couillard, in his long, white coat, came to the door once a week, I think. He came in a horse-drawn wagon with a white canvas cover over it. After Mr. Couillard retired, Florence Rogerson's brother, Arthur Calkins, sold us meat. Fish was also delivered weekly by horse-drawn wagon. Fresh fruit was not readily available at the store, but when my grandfather or mother went to Bangor every two weeks or so, they would come home laden with cantaloupes or peaches and pears. Mostly we ate the fruits that were in season. The trip to Bangor was necessary because there were no banks in town then. Since my grandfather never had a car, he rode the trolley to Bangor.

Hampden, Maine