

"Aunt Jo Remembers" as told to Alice Hawes

Memories of the Upper Corner: 1912 – 1930

Old Gristmill Store

Josephine Richards Cheney Luro was born in 1912 in an upstairs apartment in the Old Gristmill Store in Hampden, Maine. The store stood on the south side of the road at the corner of Elm Street West and the Main Road. The store had once been a warehouse and a store for General John Crosby who gave the land for the Hampden Congregational Church. Crosby was a trader and merchant of early Hampden and owned ship yards and wharves in town. The store burned in 1915.

Elm Street West Farm

When Josephine was nine months old her family moved to a house her father built farther down Elm Street West. It was straight ahead when you look down Elm St. West, from the Main Road and on the west side of the road where the road turns down to the Souadabscook Stream. Their father built the house and barn on their six acres lot. The family consisted of her parents, Herbert and Bertha Richards, five girls: Mildred, Christine, Helen, Pauling, and Josephine and one son, Kenneth. The family had a large garden and raised all their own vegetables and potatoes. "They lived off the good earth." Their chickens gave them eggs and meat. Their cow gave them milk and cream. They made their own butter. Some of the few items they purchased were a barrel of flour for the winter, molasses in large quantity and possibly Karo syrup. Grain for the animals came from the Grist Mill at the bottom of the Long Hill by the Souadabscook Stream. They got the grain there and pulled it up the hill in a wagon. Another product of the farm was eggs. At Easter the children would find a basket in their bedroom with colored eggs in it. They sold their whipping cream for 25 cents a quart.

Main Road

When Josephine was groping up; the Main Road in Hampden was just a gravel road. It was a good many years before it was tarred. In those days when the Richards children were young, they could name all the families in the houses along the Main Road from the Upper Corner to the Bangor line.

The Upper Corner – Pump and Watering Trough

There was a town pump and a watering trough at the Upper Corner (the intersection of Western Ave and the Maine Road) where the light system to enter Rte. 1A is now. People got their water for the horses at the granite water trough. At the pump they got water for washing clothes, drinking, cooking and bathing.

Josephine's Grandmother and Grandfather Humphrey lived near the corner. They lived where the Pastoral Counseling Center is today. When they and others were too old to get the water themselves, the kids did it for them. The children would carry two pails of water for wash water and

tubs. All the people in the area drew their water from there. Another way of getting water was from a rain barrel beside each house. Water was drained from the roof by way of a gutter and downspout into the barrel. They used this water first and when there was not enough left, they carried water in pails from the pump to their homes.

Lennan Family

At the Upper Corner, where the beauty shop is now, there was a store that was owned by Charles and Hattie Lennan. The store was down stairs and they lived above it. On the left side was a millinery shop and later a wallpaper shop where Mr. Lennan kept books of wallpaper samples from which customers could order their wallpaper. Mr. Lennan's father was named Benjamin and the children called him Grandpa. At first the elder Mr. Lennan lived on Elm St. West. His house was located on the east side of the corner, which was at the bend in the street where the road goes to the Souadabscook Stream. When Benjamin Lennan could no longer care for himself in his own home, he went to live with his son Charles and daughter-in-law Hattie above the store. His room was on the back right side of the building overlooking the Main Road. Prayer meetings were held at the church on Wednesday evenings. "The Lennans were every religious and would not miss out on that." While the Lennans were at the church, Josephine and her sister Pauline would stay with Mr. Lennan. The girls sat in a front room that overlooked Western Ave.

When Josephine was 14 or 15 she worked at the Lennan store. While Charles and Hattie had their lunch upstairs, she tended the store downstairs. Sometimes she might sell crackers or perhaps cheese to a customer while she worked. She was warned to sell a certain customer only one bottle of vanilla, if he came in for it. The person had a habit of drinking too much alcohol and would drink vanilla as a substitute for hard liquor. He would purchase a bottle vanilla, then sit on the steps outside the store and drink it down.

On Saturdays, Josephine's father, Herbert Richards, settled his account with Mr. Lennan. Her father ran a grocery bill at the store and he paid his bill by selling Mr. Lennan butter and eggs for his store. Lennan sent him home with a bag in which he put three or four pieces of penny candy for the children.

School

The Richards children attended school where the Kiwanis Club is now located. It was a "double school" with two floors. The school went up to the ninth grade. The former school that houses the Kiwanis Club today replaced the school that Josephine attended. That school burned. Marion Smith was Josephine's first grade teacher and also her Sunday School teacher. The children walked to and from school, morning and late afternoon, as well as at noontime. Hours were 8:00-3:30 with one hour for lunch, 11:30-12:30. If it were a very rainy day, mother would give them five cents to buy lunch. Instead of coming all the way home for lunch they would eat at their desks at school. The children would stop at Lennan's store on the way to school to buy a sour pickle and cracker for their lunch, and sometimes tried to time their leaving with the trolley schedule. Their uncle, Leslie Humphrey, was a conductor on the trolley. It went by their street at 12:20, so if no passengers were on the trolley their

uncle would give them a free ride up the Main Road to their school. But if someone were on the trolley, they couldn't have a ride, and they had to hurry as fast as they could so as not to be late for school

School was held despite the weather. "We never minded school, rain or snow. We used to get a lot of snow then!" The snow out from the house was shoveled by hand. High drifts went over the roads. The Main Road would be plowed first by a wooden horse-drawn plow. It was a V-shaped plow with stones or boulders on the wings to hold it down. The children would ride on the base of the triangle to weigh it down so the plow could go deeper. It would take about a week before the plow could get to work on the side roads. There were no cars on the roads then, just horses and wagons. Everyone in the neighborhood worked together helping each other with the shoveling. Mr. Ralph Newcomb, Kenneth Newcomb's father, plowed the town roads.

Neighborhood

Mrs. Reynolds was a dressmaker who lived in the house just north of where Jerry Pelletier now lives on the Main Road. It is a few houses before the driveway to the SAD #22 administrative building. Pauline and Josephine were the same size. Mrs. Reynolds made them dresses and bloomers alike. Girls did not wear petticoats then. Their outfits were made from the same pattern and print but in a different color from each other. The fabric was often gingham. Children wore rompers until they were six and dresses and bloomers after that.

The Trasks lived near the Beatty store, which was located beside where Berna Beatty lives now, back beyond where Michael's Town Care (Gott Family Restaurant as of September 2001) stands in Hannibal Hamlin Plaza. Mr. Trask's name was Walter. On their way from school the children would stop to visit with Mrs. Trask who sat out on her doorstep. The Trask's son Clair became an undertaker after Mr. Sparrow, the former Hampden undertaker, retired.

On the other side of the Trask house lived Cal Bickford who ran a livery stable. Josephine's teacher, Emma Newcomb, left her horse and buggy there while she was at school. She lived near where Jerry Stanhope lives now and drove into town with her pung.

Across the street where the Irving Station is now located were the homes of Mrs. Packard and Dr. Nason. Just north of the drive to the Kiwanis Club was the Nickerson home, where Arrene, Joyce and Mary lived. South of the drive to the Kiwanis Club, about three houses up, was the home of Bert and Alice Smith and their daughter Marion.

Where the Weatherbee School is now located was Mr. Bragg's farm. His daughter Frances Bragg was librarian at the church. Across the Main Road was the large home of the Cowans. Their property is where the Fleet Bank and Shopping Center are today.

Beside Mr. Lennan's store at the corner of the Main Road and Western Ave. was E. H. Rowell's Hardware Store. In between the two buildings was a very small town fire department building for a while. Across the street was A.W. Braithwaite's store. He sold dry goods and in addition housed the post office.

At the brick house, which is three houses south of the Hampden Congregational Church, was the Treworgy farm. Josephine used to earn three cents a basket for picking berries there. On the corner of Elm Street East was Leon Littlefield's, where Perry's live now. There were just three houses on Elm Street East: Fred Humphrey's, where Mr. Preble lived later, another house where the Beede family lived and one where Myra Batchelder lived. On Elm Street West there were no houses on the south side until one got to the Richards farm. There were just big elm trees that belonged to the Halls who lived in the Crosby House on the corner of Elm Street West and the Main Road. Some of the people who lived on the North side of Elm Street West were Frank Whitcomb, Dan Ryan, Gramp Ben Lennan and the Toziers. (Mrs. Tozier taught Josephine to knit.)

Children's Activities

For the winter activities the children went sliding down Long Hill. This is sometimes called Grist Mill Hill or Waterworks Hill. They skated at Frog Pond, an area behind the present Waterworks where water stood and iced over in the winter. Later, when they were older, they also skated above the Waterworks dam, where the dam has recently been let out. At Christmas they had a tree at Gramp Humphrey's. Four children would sit on a low-down ironing board. They got up and stood by the tree and spoke their pieces, then sat down again. They received a small gift such as a hankie. Their family was close and they liked to get together for holidays and reunions.

The children made their own games. "They made their own good times". These are some of the games they played:

Hopscotch—They took a piece of glass or flat stone; with a stick they made a hopscotch design in the mud or sandy area in the dooryard, then they played the game by tossing the stone or glass into a square and hopping over that space.

Horse chestnuts—In front of the house where Berna Beatty lives now, there stood a large horse chestnut tree. This is on the southwest side of the road at the intersection of Western Ave. and the Main Road. Berna's house did not have a porch on it then. The children would run from school to get the chestnuts. They'd bore a hole in them and put a string through. The string was about two feet long. They'd whirl the string and chestnuts, sling them into the air, then run to find where they landed.

Paper dolls—Josephine and her sister Pauline, who was 22 months older than she, enjoyed playing with paper dolls. They would cut out dolls and dresses from an old Pictorial Review magazine. They would then name the dolls and play with them in family groups. A favorite place to play was under their high white iron beds, on the wide floorboards.

Dolls—Josephine had one real doll of her own. She and her sister made a room for their dolls by putting doll furniture together in groups. They had a small chair, about 8" high, a doll's high chair and used a box for a bed for their dolls.

After school—There were no activities such as sports today in which children could take part. The children did chores such as cleaned out their room, tidied their chest of drawers, or helped with washing

and stringing the washing out on the clothes lines. Everything had to be ironed, even the sheets. Their mother did the big things.

Hampden Congregational Church—Lawn Parties

The church had lawn parties during the daytime in the summer. For decorations they had Japanese lanterns strung outside. Josephine's mother, Bertha Richards, made cream cakes from the whipping cream they made at their farm. These were layer cakes with thick whipped cream between each layer and on top. She brought her cream cakes to the church lawn parties. The food for all the courses was put on the table for people to help themselves and the cakes were placed on the table next to the beans. One woman liked their mother's cream cakes so much, she would take her piece of cream cake first and eat it, and then she would have her beans.

Ladies Aid

In 1952 Josephine attended a meeting of the Ladies Aid Society with her sister Mildred Ellis who had come from Bangor for the meeting. The ladies met at different homes and worked on various projects such as making quilts. At the church they put on suppers. This meeting was at Mrs. Tropps' who lived on the hill at the end of Elm Street West where the Cheney farm had burned. The Tropps had built a big house there. At this meeting the women were working on a quilt, which they would give to a needy family or to a charitable group when it was finished.

Sunday School

Children sat in little chairs. They marched around and sang, "Hear the pennies dropping". Church met upstairs while Sunday School met downstairs. Sunday School at the Hampden Congregational Church was important to the Richards children during their youth.

Hampden, Maine