

GEORGE KELLEY'S MEMORIES
We corresponded via email for some time (Paula Gilman)

12/28/2010

Stories about your grandfather - I can think of a couple, neither of which is particularly complimentary. I think he liked animals and in that area he was good at shoeing horses. One of the stories is about a horse he bought.

The horse was of the Morgan type, not a work horse. He probably was thinking of hitching it to a wagon or a hay rake but the horse didn't cotton to having a harness on. I guess the word got around because one of the cowboys from the Diamond Slash L Ranch (Presently Bosiak) came down with a western saddle and bridle and asked if he could try the horse. Sure enough, the saddle felt good and it turned out that the horse knew show tricks and all. I forget what your grandfather did with the horse afterwards.

The other story was on a hot summer day. My uncle, aunt and her parents were on their way in through your fields to the camp they had. (How much is left of the old camp not far into the Lindbergh land from yours?) Hawky was working on his hay and looked hot. Uncle Gordon had filled a jug from Dad's cider barrel so they stopped and asked Hawky if he'd like a swig. He would. He had a swig, another swig and..... They didn't arrive at the camp with nearly as much cider as they planned to.

8-28-2013

When I was growing up, the active men were my dad and Roland Osborne. Morse Brown was busy running the orchard and Fred Twombly was busy running his carpentry business in Concord. Outside money helped, too. Earlier a Mr. Sweet had provided the money to get the orchard going and had built the cottage on the hill. (The late Ferenc Nagy's.) Wendell Mick, a Boston stockbroker if I recall right, bought the cottage and his family summered there. Their impact was positive.

You need to draw the geographical limits of Lower Gilmanton. Nowadays the edges are pretty vague. In the horse-and-buggy days, the community didn't go past the top of Frisky Hill, the top of Pancake Hill or down the Edgerly Hills.

12/7/2014

The Christmas service at the church is mainly for the kids. I hope the Christmas story in the Bible still gets read; Mary Morse used to do it well. My great, great grandfather built the house as a stage stop. He had the post office there, too. How long it was there, I don't know, but probably not after 1840 when my great grandfather rearranged the buildings.

As you will remember from the Historical Society program on sheep farming, it was big in the early 1800s. My great grandfather must have done very well at it. It was the fashion back then to get your buildings connected so you could go from building to building under cover. Also, the women were getting to cook on stoves not the keeping room fireplace and brick oven. Hence the need for a kitchen. He moved buildings and built connecting pieces.

7/29/2015

While over at the farm Thursday looking for a picture involving Sylvester Gale, I came across this one of a family gathering on Thanksgiving Day, 1908. It might have been the last time they gathered; Mabel was married and gone, Mary would also, soon. Charles was a freshman at Durham. George, looking healthy in the picture, would be dead from tuberculosis in 1914.



NEED TO GET NAMES FROM OTHER PHOTO

LOWER GILMANTON HISTORICAL NOTES

Below, in no particular order, are recollections gathered from my (George Kelley) experiences living in Lower Gilmanton.

Early Life

I was blessed with good parents. Like most people, I'm sure I appreciated what they did more when I was older than at the time of growing up.

My father, Charles George Kelley, was one of seven children. His education included Gilmanton Academy and New Hampshire College (Now University of NH) at Durham majoring in agriculture and graduating in 1913. From snatches of information gathered over the years, I think Dad was interested in an engineering career but his father, George, contracted tuberculosis, dying in 1914, and Dad was elected to take over the farm.

My mother, Hattie Belle Page, also was from an old Gilmanton family, was educated at Gilmanton Academy and Plymouth Normal School (Now Plymouth State University). She had taught school locally before college but after that, she taught in Berlin before she and Dad married in 1919.

In my early years, life was basic. No electricity. Running water by gravity. Wood-burning stoves for heat and cooking. Kerosene lamps. No flush toilets - a cold walk to the three-holer. Saturday-night baths in the wash tub. Mother had one relatively modern appliance - a Maytag washer driven by a kick-start gasoline engine. She needed that to process the washing for six children, perhaps a hired man, perhaps a mother-in-law and perhaps a boarding school teacher.

One of the reasons farm families are large is to provide farm workers. No exception here. As soon as we boys were big enough we were working. One learns fast how to rake and pitch hay; how to hoe corn and later to pick it; how to cut seed potatoes, hoe them and finally gather the crop. Dad was forever buying a second-hand implement, a corn binder, for example. It would need repairs to make it work - which we did. "Haywire" repairs often were just that.

One learns to handle equipment, too. I was driving on the road at 12 years old and had been harrowing with the Fordson tractor before that. Early motive power was by a team of horses. Not until Dad bought his first Ford tractor in 1943 did the horses start to rest and finally leave.

Electricity came to the farm in 1938. We got electric lights. Mother got a refrigerator and new Maytag washer, both of which were now in the kitchen. Dad got an electric milk cooler and later a milking machine. That also ended the ice business. Before electricity, the milk cooling and house food refrigeration were done with ice. One of the winter jobs was to go to nearby Rollins Pond, cut ice, haul it back to our ice house and pack it in sawdust. Local summer folk knew we had ice and there was a good business in that.

School

Kelley's Corner School is about a quarter mile from the farm and so named because the intersection of Loudon Road, now known as Route 129, and the Province Road was known as Kelley's Corner. It was one of the original six school houses established by the Town in 1778. Each of the school houses back then were one-room schools located so that no child had to walk more than two miles. Each was heated by a wood-burning stove, light was what came in the windows. Originally, the building had two windows on each side but while I was going there, a bank of six windows was installed in one end so "our light would come over the left shoulder". Teachers were usually young, boarded in the community and often attracted a local husband. While the school could have grades 1 through 8 at one time that was seldom the case but still it must have been a challenge for the teacher. All supplies were furnished, even song books and a hand-cranked Victrola. I still marvel at how well we learned, not only when it was your turn but when another grade was reciting.

It wasn't all work; there were noon-hour and recesses, too. Except on bad days, I walked home for lunch, but most of the kids brought a lunch box. Recess meant games in the front yard. With the mill pond nearby, we could skate in season. Nearby slopes were great for sliding.

The children in school were our neighbors. Acquaintances gained then were lasting.

Dad served on the Town School Board for years. Through this he got to take care of maintenance work that paid some money. When I was old enough, I got to be the school janitor which involved building a fire in the stove on cold mornings, sweeping the floor and filling the water jug from a neighbor's well.

High school was handled differently from today. Each family arranged for attendance and the Town paid the tuition. Most of the Lower Gilmanton kids went to Pittsfield Academy; those towards the Iron Works went to Alton and those in the Corner to Laconia. Until I could legally drive I rode with Maurice and Ralph Merrill. Later, I drove the family car and carried others of our family and neighbors. The car I remember best was a 1930 seven-passenger Buick which was well-used when Dad bought it and we drove it into the ground. Gilmanton roads were all dirt at that time - much more of a challenge than now. In mud season often we parked the car at the Barnstead Town line where the paving ended and walked the rest.

Winter

Winter was a time for work and play. The two farm jobs for winter were, as mentioned above, putting in the year's ice and cutting stove wood for the coming year. I learned how to handle an axe at a relatively young age and to "man" one end of a two-man saw without getting Dad too unhappy with me. Cutting wood was an all-day trip into the woods. We took lunch with us and often built a camp fire at noon to warm up food.

We did play. When the ice on the ponds was good we skated. Often times it was a

neighborhood party with a fire built on the ice to sidle up to and warm up. We children liked to have the whole pond as ours and didn't appreciate the ice fishermen who often left a mess behind. The gear they used back then didn't have a spool for the reserve line so that line was draped over the ice near the hole - and vulnerable to a sharp skate.

Sliding was a joy! In those years, the roads were plowed after each storm but not sanded. Of necessity, cars and trucks wore chains on the drive wheels and the result was two icy wheel tracks that were excellent for sliding. Each family had sleds and double-runners. Sleds varied from the older low wooden sleds to the newer Flexible Flyer type. A double-runner, if you haven't seen one, is a board 10 or 12 feet long with a fixed low wooden sled under the rear end and another steerable low sled under the front end. Several people could cram themselves on one, the front person doing the steering with a rope. It would go like the wind down a hill, then each rider put a hand on the rope and pulled the sled back up the hill.

Plowing the roads was different back then. The road agent had his own truck and plow. The standard "big" truck back then was a 1 ½ ton Ford with the old standard 85 horsepower engine. They weren't really equal to the job and the repair bills were plenty. The Town purchased a Caterpillar tractor and plow which Earl Clifford ran for years. (This is the same tractor and plow which Tom Smithers had for years and now is in the hands of Mickey Daigle.) This larger plow helped but in those years the roads were sunk between stone walls and a heavy snow storm would fill the roadway to the tops of the walls. Teams of men with shovels were assembled to shovel out the worst so that the plows of the time could function. Later, the Town bought a Walter Snow-Fighter - a larger four-wheel drive truck with a plow designed for it. If my recollection is correct, its mechanical complexity brought many repairs.

Buildings Gone and Almost Forgotten

With the multiple new houses in the community now, one loses track of the fact that the 30s were a point of low population for the Community and Town. There were many buildings earlier, some of which I remember.

Barns and outbuildings have had a large casualty rate. Many have been moved and renovated - a sort of recycling. Many others have been lost through disuse and decay. One barn remains at my home farm; not long ago there were three. The presently unoccupied house across Route 129 from our farmhouse used to have a store and barn attached. The barn at the old Osborne farm (Now Rob Baldwin's.) is gone.

The house and barn at the former Edgerly place (Now Boyce) are gone. After Marion Welch passed away in the late 80s, Henry Page bought the place with plans to renovate the intrinsically nice old house. The barn was across the road, right at the edge of the road, and was ready to fall down. Henry helped it do that. He was going ahead with the house until he discovered one morning that someone had been in, set it on fire, and left. Luckily the fire fizzled. Henry took the house apart and reassembled it for a family in Texas.

Another old house, now gone, that I remember is the “Cater house” which sat in the Bosiak field on the north side of the old road that goes down to Kelley’s Corner School.

There used to be a tavern across the Province Road from the Stage Road intersection. I remember the building as a wreck. I understand that the remains of it were taken down and were the basis for a nice exhibit at a museum - perhaps Henry Ford’s.

At the Baptist Church, there used to be two horse sheds; now there is one.

Old Roads

Modern expediency has caused several roads of the past to be practically forgotten. A look at an older map will reveal them. One mentioned earlier runs from the Bosiak farm on Upper City Road down over the hill, across the mill-pond dam and up to Kelley’s Corner School. It’s essentially impassable now; in my school days it was a Town-maintained road.

Pancake Hill Road now ends at the Freese homestead but the roadway can be followed on over the hill to Griffin Road near Loon Pond.

One notices now how Route 107 passes the old Parsons house, now Tonnesen, and hugs the side of the hill as it goes down. Before the road was rebuilt, it went close by the Parsons family cemetery on top of the hill. The steepness of that hill caused a lower road to be built, the northern end of which is still visible at Walter Mitchell’s driveway and the southern end down near the Barnstead line.

There is an old “range road” that runs from the Hawes’ driveway on Stage Road to Geddes Road.

There is a shortcut that runs from the Baptist Church by the remains of the brick school house and to Stage Road.

What is now Bunker Lane used to be the main road. Likewise, the lane running from Route 129 by Sue and Ron Leclerc’s house and by the Donald Kelley house used to be the main road.

Families

There has been a lot of family continuity in Lower Gilmanton. This was brought to mind by two old Kelley School pictures - one taken on the last school day in the spring of 1904 and the other in the 1927-1928 school year. I was in the last one as a first grader. Both sides of my family were in the ‘04 picture: my mother, Hattie Page and her father, C. Frank, member of the School Board, were there as well as my dad’s mother, Adelia Kelley, and four of his siblings, Arthur, Emma, Mary and Ruth. Roland and Inez Osborne were in the ‘04 picture; their sister, Amy, married Shurldin Hawkins and their two older children, Irene and Charles appear in the

'28 picture. Amy's granddaughter, Paula Gilman, presently lives in Lower Gilmanton. The teacher in the '04 picture, Mary Morgan, married Frank Edgerly who came to live at her family home. Two of their children, Albert and Charles, appear in the '28 picture.

Other long-time Lower Gilmanton families are the Potters and Bunkers. The Robert Potter, Jr and his family continue to live at the farm which has been in the family more than 200 years. Of the Bunkers, the Shattuck family continues to live on Bunker Lane and Lura McClary is nearby.

ELM CORNER FARM
Lower Gilmanton
Established in 1802 by the Kelley Family

The Kelleys have been famed farming folks at Kelley's Corner in Lower Gilmanton ever since Dr. Benjamin Kelley settled in 1802.

Among one of the first families in Gilmanton was Dr. Benjamin Kelley who came to Lower Gilmanton in 1801 and lived his entire life here. In 1801 Dr. Benjamin Kelley purchased a 1 ¼ acre lot at the intersection of what was then Province Road (now 107) and the road to Loudon (now 129). Dr. Kelley built a homestead and operated it as an inn and stage coach stop. (George F. Kelley)

He became a fellow of the N.H. Medical Society in 1811. After practicing in Gilmanton for about 15 years, he retired and became an active and useful member of the Lower Gilmanton First Baptist Church, which he was principally instrumental in forming in 1818. Dr. Benjamin Kelley was one of the writers of the Constitution for the First Baptist Church of Lower Gilmanton in 1821.

The Kelley house was an Inn in 1810 and a Post Office. The Post Office was established in 1821, was first kept by Dr. Kelley.

Charles Granderson Kelley, son of Dr. Benjamin, established a 600 acre farm from the small start. He used the first underdrain in the state in a wet meadow. He was highly exact in plowing depths and was considered the "most practical farmer in town". He was also one of the best farmers in the area during the time he operated the farm, and had an early touch of soil conservation. Charles' son, George Franklin Kelley, continued to care for the Elm Corner Farm before passing it on to his son, Charles George Kelley, who was one of his seven children. Charles G. was educated at the Gilmanton Academy and New Hampshire College (now the University of New Hampshire) in Durham majoring in agriculture and graduating in 1913. Charles was also interested in an engineering career but his father, George, contracted tuberculosis, dying in 1914, so Charles was elected to take over the farm keeping it an active dairy farm until the early 1960s.

During Charles' time running the farm, he met Hattie Belle Page. Hattie was also from an old

Gilmanton family, educated at Gilmanton Academy and Plymouth Normal School (now Plymouth State University). Before marrying Charles in 1919, she taught in Berlin, NH. They soon started a family and had six children. Farm life was basic - running water by gravity, wood-burning stoves for heat and cooking, kerosene lamps, no flush toilets just a cold walk to the three-holer and Saturday-night baths in the wash tub. There was one relatively modern appliance for Hattie - a Maytag washer driven by a kick-start gasoline engine. She needed that to process the washing for six children, a hired man, a mother-in-law and a boarding school teacher for the Kelley Corner School House.

As soon as Charles' and Hattie's 3 boys, George, Donald and John were big enough, they were working. They learned how to rake and pitch hay; how to hoe corn and later to pick it; how to cut seed potatoes, hoe them and finally gather the crop. Charles was forever buying a second-hand implement, like a corn binder, for example. It would always need repairs to make it work - which were done. "Haywire" repairs often were just that.

Fortunately many new upgrades happened with electricity coming to the farm in 1938 – electric lights, a refrigerator, Maytag washer, electric milk cooler and milking machine. Electricity ended the ice business. Before electricity, the milk cooling and house food refrigeration was done with ice. One of the winter jobs was to go to nearby Rollins Pond, cut ice, haul it back to the ice house and pack it in sawdust. Local summer folk knew the Kelleys had ice and there was a good business in that.

Early motive power was by a team of horses. Not until the first Fordson tractor was purchased in 1943 did the horses start to rest and finally leave. The 3 Kelley boys learned to handle the new equipment, too. Driving on the road at an early age 12 and harrowing with the Fordson tractor before that.

At the 83rd annual convention for the NH State Grange, the Kelleys were honored by the nation's oldest and largest farm fraternity, for the grand part they have played in tilling of the soil, the furnishing of the food, and the writing of the agricultural history of the state. The Kelleys, along with two other farm families, were selected for its Century Farm Awards, with the requirements that the farm must have been in continuing ownership of the same family for at least 100 years, and must still be farmed, actively and successfully. Changes that have been made, need to have been timely, in keeping with the changes in agricultural development of the state. When this award was given to Charles and Hattie Kelley, Elm Corner Farm had been in existence for 154 years. (The New Hampshire Sunday News, Manchester, NH, November 11, 1956.)

The Kelleys have been stewards of their land in Lower Gilmanton for many years. Carefully tending and lovely developing it with each generation adding to and improving the land and continuing to do so to this day.