

Ansonia Rd + Johnson Rd
Woodbridge

My woodbridge neighbors in earlier days

I purpose to mention certain of my Woodbridge neighbors who were living some seventy-five years ago, most of whom I personally knew. I shall confine myself to those who lived on the Baldwin Road on the west and the Johnson Road on the east and those living on the Ansonia Road connecting the roads last mentioned. The Johnson Road, in recent years so called, from the Sherman or Marks corner to the Orange line is comparatively new. The "ld. Dogburn Road formerly ran about three-eighths of a mile farther east, under the shadow of Job's Rock, close to the New Haven line. William Hotchkiss and my grandfather gave the land for the new section some time before my grandfather's death in 1842. But these men, in giving the road, were caught napping. In those days the state law required owners of land adjoining a highway to fence it, so the town turned back on them and required them to fence this land which they had given. My grandfather thought that was rubbing it in. The walls that he built are still standing. I cannot conceive of any advantage to these men from the new road, and the land given by my grandfather was excellent.

Beginning at the Orange line on the Johnson Road the first house was that of Nathan P. Peck. He had a small farm, so could afford to hire much help, and this kept him rather closely confined. I remember that one day at a gathering about the Woodbridge church, when it came late afternoon he remarked, "I shall have to go home to milk; all my life I have had to get home to milk." But when I think of the fine family of children her raised I feel that it paid to get home to milk.

Mr. Peck was a good neighbor and was often at my home. He dearly loved a joke, but I can think of a few instances in which his jokes resulted in very real loss. I think he did what many other New England boys have done, namely, married the local school teacher. I didn't know Mrs. Peck well, but I think she was a woman with education and

East
Side

refinement, and she helped her young neighbors with their lessons.

*Plains lot
40 acres
Ira bought
his grandfather's
near-by land*
Perrotti
William F. Morgan lived at the next place above. My grandfather's farm extended from about half a mile east of the Derby town line to or near the New Haven line on the east. When he died in 1842 seventy-six acres was set off to my uncle Elias Clark from the east end. There were no buildings on it and he soon exchanged it for a place near his old home, owned by David Camp. Camp built a house and set out two Norway spruce trees, one each side of the house, both of which stood until recently. One is still standing with the top broken.

Perrotti
In 1856 William F. Morgan bought the property. He had begun his business life as a carpenter, and was trained to accuracy and method. He said that when a young man he attended church, and the minister told some one he knew that that young man was interested in religion because he paid such strict attention- But he said he heard not a word, because his mind was busy thinking out some problem connected with his work. He next ran a milk route. A man who lived near his road to town said that for years his team always crossed a certain bridge exactly at a certain hour after midnight. When he took the farm he followed the same methods. He was a progressive farmer for his day. His house was about a mile from my home, with the old farm road running between. He was often at our house and we were at his. He and my father exchanged tools and did business together. He was a great joker and excellent story teller, and we children were always glad to see him coming. He made a success of the farming, and sent his son to college and gave his daughters a good education. He didn't attend church in Woodbridge, but furnished a horse and carriage for his family to attend. *Dot Sutton's father*
Frederick G. Sperry of Woodbridge is one of his grandsons. He died in 1891. Parson Willard of Westville conducted the funeral service, and I can almost recall some things he said. Referring to the fact that he was not a church man,

he said in substance, "we may not judge from this of his true character. We may not analyze the heart, or take to pieces the soul to determine their true nature."

The next neighbor above was John J. Beecher, ^{North of Park East side} a steadygoing, upright man, as I believe. He was the son of "Deacon Beecher", and he and his brother Wells, were both deacons of the Woodbridge church. Mr. Morgan called him Jonnie B.

The next on the corner of the old road was the Sherman homestead, later owned and occupied by Mr. ^{De Frank} & Mrs. Marks. Silas Peck and I tried to establish the fact that Roger Sherman, signed of the Declaration of Independence, owned or lived on this place, but we didn't succeed. We, however satisfied ^{he} ourselves that owned a large adjoining tract, where the Woodbridge Golf course now is. He lived in New Haven. In my boyhood days the Widow Sherman and her son James lived on the Sherman corner. James was not a very strong prop for his mother, and she used to take her troubles to Mr. Morgan. He called her Granny Sherman. He enjoyed her quaint remarks and her interesting personality. One day the old lady felt sick, and thought she was about to die. She went to her bed and sent for Mr. Morgan. He came and sat with her for a while, and when he got up to go he said "now Granny if you die tonight you send me word." The old lady was used to him and took the joke, and they had a good laugh together. Mr. Morgan went his way, and she soon returned to her household duties. He understood her and knew what medicine to give her.

On the next corner, where the Sorensen family now live, lived Cap'n Andrew Clark. I don't remember him. I think he was the father of Leonard Clark, who lived ~~xxxxxxx~~ ^{Rum Road} on the Simmons Falls Turnpike, about half a mile west of the top of Long Hill. ^{Cap'n Andrew's} His land adjoined that of my father's and we had a right of way over his land out past his back door. He was a forceful man and able to cope with his near neighbor, William Hotchkiss, of who we shall speak later. Mr Charles

*Chas P Augur's house
How De German*

Augur told of one of their disagreements, and I got him to tell the same story in a suit in court.

The next place was owned and occupied by "Deacon Beecher, who was succeeded by his son Wells; steady-going men, who were not given to "making a noise on town meeting days".

A little above lived William M. Notchkiss. My uncle married his daughter, so that I heard quite a little about him. They Called him Uncle Bill. He was smart, and he didn't see why so many people should be simple. But like all smart people he sometimes put his foot into it. My father said Uncle Bill was the first victim he could recall of the "Bunce Game." This was a game frequently played in my boyhood. On the south side of Chapel Street, next east of where Malley's store now stands, stood the Old Park House. It was really an old time tavern in the city. People from the suburbs and the surrounding farms met there, not only to tip their elbows, but to do business together. There were sheds where they could leave their horses and oxen while they went about the city. Uncle Bill was there one day and had his oxen with him. He knew oxen and expected to have the best. While there he was approached by a couple of Strangers, who admired the oxen and talked of buying them. This put Uncle Bill into a business frame of mind. They soon disclosed some of the features of a business enterprise, and Uncle Bill became interested. It would be necessary for some one to put up one hundred dollars to carry the project through, after which the money would come back to the one who furnished it. Uncle Bill put up the hundred dollars. Soon after this he discovered that his new friends had disappeared. Then he knew they had him. He had not only swallowed the bait, but the hook and sinker as well. His neighbors knew that he didn't mind so much losing the hundred dollars, as he did to have them know that he had been made a fool of.

Another time Uncle Bill lost out. Daniel Augur who lived on the

EARL AUGUR
lived where
Tennette lives now

(5)

lived on the corner of the Ansonia Road ^{Johnson} was an old time butcher. He bought cattle of the farmers here and there, and bought of Uncle Bill. One evening Uncle Bill called on Mr. Augur, and they figured up their accounts and Mr. Augur paid Uncle Bill a good sum of money. They put in into his vest pocket and pinned up the top of the pocket, so that the money wouldn't joggle out as he walked home. When he got home the top of the pocket was safely pinned, but the bottom was gone. He had worn a vest that had done duty too long to be reliable. Of course Uncle Bill was up betimes in the morning and searched the path through ily but he didn't find the money. He suspected his neighbor who lived between, and who always had an eye open for the main chance, but of course he couldn't accuse him.

On the next place above, Phineas L. Peck, uncle of the late Silas J. Peck, told me he and his ^{father and mother,} wife who was afterwards called "Aunt Adeline", were living in 1835, when his ^{mother's} wife's father, Ephraim Baldwin, died, and they immediately moved to the Baldwin homestead. In my boyhood days the place stood idle. We called it the Wren Place. It was allowed to depreciate for years until Errold Augur bought it and repaired it, making a nice home of it. *Jennette House*

Dr. Gorman On the corner of the Ansonia Road, as I have said, lived Daniel C. Augur. Before the beef from Chicago there was quite a large number of butchers in and near New Haven, who supplied the market. Some of them I remember. Rogers Platt lived in a little house where the Plymouth church on Chapel Street now stands, and if I mistake not he had a slaughter on the corner of Edgewood Avenue next above. Truman Alling, after whom Truman Street was named, had one where the St. Bernard Cemetery now is. William Bronson had one where the St. Lawrence Cemetery now is. He had a farm as many of them did in connection with his butchering business, and I remember the fat oxen lying at ease on the hillside, waiting their turns. There were two of these slaughters on my road two miles below. *father's child*

I asked my father how these men managed their products before the days when ice was used. He said they would butcher towards night, and during the night the meat would cool and would be put upon the market the next day, and that which was not immediately consumed would be put into brine. Corned beef and pork were the staple articles of diet in New England in those days. Even farmers who didn't "put down their own" would buy in quantity. Mr. Charles Agur told me his father had a perennial order which he filled once a year for Uncle Asa Alling, who lived ^{possibly Derby Ave} a mile and a half below, and sent him each year to deliver a barrel of beef. One year when he arrived with the beef Uncle Asa told him he would not need it that year for he had a whole barrel left over from the previous year.

In those days drovers would start through the country with a herd of cattle, stopping for rest and feeding where the occasion offered. All along farmers would buy from these herds cattle to turn into their pastures to fatten for slaughter in the fall or early winter. Sometimes a drover would own a farm where he would pasture and sell out his stock during the summer. The farm previously mentioned, formerly owned by Cap'n Andrew Clark, was later owned by S. Harwood and used for this purpose.

But in my day ice was used and this local butchering continued, although to a lesser extent for some years after the western beef was coming in. I think the last time my father fattened ^{ed} cattle for market was in the year 1881. About the turn of the century my uncle butchered a pair of fat oxen and put the meat on the benches of his merchant son for immediate consumption. But immediately complaints began to come in in abundance "the meat was too tough. One epicure lamented that he had lost his dinner that day. The meat had not ripened enough.

Turning west on the Ansonia Road we pass the end of the Beecher

Road, on which about a stone's throw from the corner, lived Uncle Willis Sperry, who was a cobbler and also sold boots and shoes from his store in Westville in the building afterwards used for the post office. When a small boy it was a happy day for me when on some morning in the early winter my father in making a trip to the city, took me a long to be fitted to a new pair of high-topped boots. If perchance the boots had a patch of fancy leather set in the top in front, we were especially pleased.

We come next to the house of Colonel David Baldwin on Colonel David's Hill, where ^{lived where Todd's is} Mr. Dinniman's new barn now stands. ^{Eliot Todd's} He died in the year 1881. During my day he didn't do much farming; in fact we children never saw him out doors. But in warm weather the front door would stand open, and as the horse climbed the steep pitch in the road in front we could look through the hall and see him sitting at the north window. But for all this quiet living on his part he made money and when he died left an estate of forty thousand dollars. He had money to lend. In those days a man would often pay a bill by giving a note, and the one taking it would often discount it for cash. The colonel bought such notes. This was called shaving notes, and this practice was undoubtedly the forerunner of the present day holding companies. A note shaver was not popular, for it often put him into a position of ascendancy over his neighbors which they didn't like.

The colonel of course lent money on notes, and incident to the loan he would require a bonus, which was not pleasing. A couple of Orange young men who had taken up the butchering business needed to borrow from time to time to buy cattle. Their credit was good and the colonel was quite willing to lend them. One of them who had borrowed sent his brother with the money and to borrow it over again for himself. The colonel was pleased to make the second loan, but said he would have to have a little bonus. "Well" said the young

man said, "there will be no break in the interest." "Well" said the colonel, "have to have a little bonus." The young man paid the bonus but went home displeased, and the brothers never borrowed again of the colonel.

Bodok

The next house west was that of Augustus F. Baldwin, son of the colonel. Both house and barn were on the south side of the road, but he moved his barn to the north and close to the road. Mr. Baldwin was a friendly man and liked to talk with his friends and neighbors. He was about the age of my father, and he would wander down to our place for a friendly chat. Our people thought he moved the barns so that they would be close to the road and he would have to cross to them back and fourth, which would give him an opportunity to intercept the passers and talk with them. In justice, however, I ought to say that one of his younger neighbors gave the reason for moving the barns to be a plan for the future. During the life of the colonel he kept the land in his name. The land in front of his son's house to which the barns were moved was very desirable to the son, and by moving his barns to it he thought he might have a better chance to have it set off in to him in the inheritance that would come at the death of his father.

Selas Beck (above hite)

We come next to the home of Ephraim Baldwin. I think there was an old house there which stood next to the old line between Milford and New Haven. If I mistake not the Ansonia Road, before it was straightened, turned just south of it. I think Ephraim Baldwin bought the property of Colonel ^{Alling} Allen about eighteen hundred, and that he took about ten years to build the house now standing and owned by Mr. Fisher. Mr. Baldwin's wife was Martha Newton, of the celebrated Newton family. Mr. Baldwin died when little past middle life. He was stricken while at Hartford attending the legislature, and the first that his family learned of his death was when a span of horses turned in at the gate with the body. Mr. Baldwin acquired a most excellent

reputation for wisdom, integrity and public generosity so that my father, then a boy of nine, was so impressed with it that he could tell it to me many years afterwards. He set up his son Newton, about 1820 on a farm the dwelling of which now stands on the Race Brook Road a little above the corner of the Ansonia Road and now owned by Mrs. Beede. He set up his daughter Martha on a farm the dwelling of which now stands on the Ansonia Road on the high ground just east of the Wepawaug River. As I have said, Aunt Adeline and her husband, Silas J. Peck, moved to this homestead where Mr. Baldwin lived, at his death. Both husband and wife were strong characters, so far as I know they ^{were} honest and upright, but ^{possessed} ~~possessed~~ the New England capacity for looking out for their personal rights. One time Mr. Peck had sold a pair of oxen to "Arran ^{Hotchkiss} ~~Hotchkiss~~ in Westville for butchering. Mr. Hotchkiss caught sight of my father and asked him to stop on his way home and ask Mr. Peck to drive the oxen down. As he knocked Aunt Adeline came to the door. He began to state his errand when she turned to her husband to ask, "Sile Peck did you agree to drive them oxen?" "Won't drive em a rod" he said. After husband and wife had expressed their indignation a few moments and my father got a chance to state the rest of his errand he said, "Mr Hotchkiss said he would pay for the driving." "Oh, well, that was different."

Uncle Silas at one time had a large dog, which was inclined to protect his master's interests. Mr. Morgan hated dogs but my Uncle Elias liked them. Both, however, in some way offended the old dog, so much so that Uncle Silas said "Morgan and Elias will get bit yet." My father told of turning the corner from Race Brook Road in a very low sleigh, to climb the long hill leading towards the Peck farm. The dog met him there and seemed much displeased about the matter. He barked furiously and gnashed his teeth, jumping from one side of the sleigh to the other, and every moment he expected him to jump into the sleigh. He was afraid to reach for