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# Early Boyhood Days in Ithaca

By

LAWRENCE H. JACOBS



1971

DEWITT

HISTORICAL SOCIETY of TOMPKINS COUNTY, *Inc.*

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## A NOTE

Although the DeWitt Historical Society's growing list of historical publications nears the hundred mark, *Early Boyhood Days in Ithaca* is the first of its genre. It recounts the glorious age of boyhood at the turn of the century when the Golden Age of Homespun had reached its zenith and was to pass into history before the boy attained his majority. Men of today who were boys of the era will be grateful for the author's account of those growing-up years.

Who of them have forgotten the Happy Hour Theater, sleigh riding on Buffalo Street hill, penny ice-cream cones, the iceman, dray horse and "ponies," night fishing in the Inlet, picnicking with the family along Cayuga's west shore, and the regattas upon its surface? Nor are these all the reminders of a happy past that will be recalled by those who peruse these pages.

Of course, not all history results from the impingement of great events upon the lives of men. By happenstance the author's boyhood home in Ithaca has been since 1939 that of Howard C. Loveless, the pressman who printed *Early Boyhood Days in Ithaca*; and 43 years ago, when the author purchased the *Groton Journal and Courier*, this writer was the seller. Thus, rills of events converge in the stream of local history.—  
WHjr.

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## *A Boy Grows Up*

The City of Ithaca was seventy-one years younger when the following was written. At that time Albert and Ada (Clapp) Jacobs and their seven children resided at 120 Esty Street. There were five daughters and two sons. Lawrence, the elder son, was born in November of 1899. He attended Ithaca public and night schools, and took other courses of study to gain an education.

At an early age he was among other boys who sold newspapers in Ithaca's business section after school. That led up to two newspaper delivery routes later. One route was down Utica Street into the Fall Creek section of the city. The other route, in the western part of the city, took him the length of Hector Street to the home of Royal Gilke, where the street turned westward into the country. The Gilkes were very friendly, and he came to appreciate deeply their warm and gracious greetings. From there he walked to Cliff Street and back to the Hector Street intersection.

An uncle, William Clapp, had a chicken farm at his home at the top of Aurora Street Hill. From there one had a beautiful view of the valley to Cayuga Lake and the western hills.

At sixteen, Lawrence was a member of the choir of the First Baptist Church, having studied voice culture under Miss Laura Bryant in school. He was one of the boys who pumped the bellows that furnished air for the church pipe organ "behind the scene."

A printer's apprenticeship in the composing room of *The Ithaca Journal* appealed to him. The next few years were spent learning the intricacies of the highly skilled trade. YMCA activities took up some of his spare time, when Bruce Wilson was secretary. Bicycle riding was very popular, and Jacobs and a boyhood chum pedaled on many a weekend to Butter-



milk Falls and Enfield Glen to explore and enjoy their beauty.

Albert Jacobs had a violin, which he learned to play in a lesser but contented degree. He gave the instrument to his elder son, admonishing him to mind it well, as it "had come down through the family." Lawrence took a deep interest in the instrument from the beginning. He still has it, "tunes it up now and then," and keeps it in good repair.

Under David Mattern, instructor of violin and well-known Ithacan, young Jacobs progressed, choosing classical music in his studies. As a member of Mattern's Orchestra, composed mostly of his students, Jacobs gained further instruction of many composers' works. His favorite overture was *Merry Wives of Windsor*.

By the time the young musician had become a violin soloist he was ready to teach as well, and at one time had eight students under his supervision. This led to his gathering a twenty-five member concert orchestra, all of about his own age except for their pianist, who was a grandmother. Her devotion and encouragement helped the musical group over many a problem. Milton Jacobs, Lawrence's younger brother, studied the trumpet and was a member of his brother's orchestra. Their concerts in the First Baptist Church were well attended.

A portable radio broadcasting station was set up at one time for an evening or two on the stage of the Strand theater on the north side of State Street, just east of Aurora Street. Jacobs' violin solo over that station was his first experience with the ether waves.

In 1918 Jacobs enlisted for two years in Company F, Fourth Battalion Infantry, New York State Guard, stationed at Ithaca. The Company trained in the Old Armory adjacent to the Cornell Campus. Subsequently it was ordered into the Catskills for guard duty along part of the huge pipeline that carries water to New York City. Ossining was the Company' headquarters.

Jacobs' detail was located in a somewhat wild and remote area in the mountains named Millwood, where they were in charge of seven outposts. During their tour of duty there he became Corporal, and later Acting Sergeant.

When his enlistment expired in 1920, the State Guard was to

be disbanded as such and Federalized. World War I was over, and it appeared there would be no further need to make a career in the Army. Jacobs declined re-enlistment, having decided to continue in the newspaper and printing field. His honorable discharge was endorsed "With Best Wishes" from Captain Nagle. Upon it he was registered as Acting Sergeant.

His apprenticeship accomplished, Jacobs received a journeyman's card. He left Ithaca to work for several years in the composing room of the *Syracuse Herald*, and later on the *Syracuse Journal-American*.

Returning to Ithaca about 1925 as assistant foreman in the composing room of *The Ithaca Journal*, Jacobs later assumed the foremanship of the night shift in printing the *Cornell Daily Sun*, using Ithaca Journal equipment.

While a member of the First Baptist Church of Ithaca, Jacobs was active in religious work. He was president of the Christian Endeavor Society of that church and at one time was director of publicity of the New York State Christian Endeavor Society, attending many of its annual state meetings.

In 1927 he was chairman of the Ithaca Community Chest Committee that solicited financial contributions from Ithaca's churches.

Married in 1926 to Miss Garnet E. McMasters, a teacher in the Groton schools, they frequently visited her parents, Alvin and Alice (Hinds) McMasters in Groton, a village in northeastern Tompkins County. It followed that Jacobs became acquainted with the editor and publisher of the village weekly newspaper, *The Journal and Courier*. Ultimately, he purchased that paper and its job printing business, and he and Mrs. Jacobs moved to Groton. Early in April, at the age of twenty-eight, Jacobs became that weekly's editor and publisher.

A daughter, Janice, was born to them in June 1929.

The next twenty years were years of labor and devotion to a community he came to love and serve. As a member of the New York Press Association and the National Editorial Association, the weekly was awarded fifteen certificates of merit. These certificates were later given to the DeWitt Historical Society.

There were many and varied experiences during that score

of years. They included a severe sleet storm that disrupted all electric power for some time. The paper was published that week by using a borrowed gasoline engine. Using different sized pulleys, the small engine was able to turn the newspaper press and folder, albeit speed was greatly reduced; rains caused Owasco Inlet to overflow its banks. Nearly a foot of water flowed over the printshop floor. An ingenious staff made it possible to publish that week's edition; and a farmer wanted to buy some "printer's ink" to cover his horse's gray eyebrows, but it was suggested hair dye at the local pharmacy might be better. The paper did not skip an issue during those twenty years.

During his tenure as publisher of the Groton weekly, Jacobs was appointed a member of the Board of Light Commissioners of the Village of Groton, serving four years as one of the three commissioners appointed by the village Board of Trustees to manage the electric utility. In 1958 he was appointed to write the history of the Groton Electric Department. Several months' research, in cooperation with the Board members and others, culminated in a typewritten story of that public utility from its construction in 1896 to and including 1958. In the beginning it manufactured its own direct current electricity.

Excerpts from the history: "... on September 12, 1917, the entire plant was leased to the Groton Electric & Gas Corporation for a period extending to February 28, 1933. Operation by the lessees began October 1, 1917, and terminated June 5, 1933, when generation by steam was discontinued and alternating current at high voltage was made possible through a transmission line entering the village from the south and using energy purchased from the New York State Electric & Gas Corporation. . . . Taxpayers of the village, at an election held on March 21, 1933, voted . . . in favor of a bond issue of \$45,000 to purchase the interest of the operating utility in the Groton plant and to resume operations on a local basis. . . . The Village Board contracted with the New York Gas and Electric Corporation for the purchase of energy over a period of five years. Thus began development of the present system."

Copies of the history were filed in the office of the Village Clerk, and one for the archives of DeWitt Historical Society.

Jacobs was appointed to a second term of office, but resigned early in 1959 when he moved from the village.

The great depression befell the country in 1929, followed by World War II. While the latter was in progress Jacobs joined others in the community in manning airplane spotters' posts, participated in blackout drills and conducting War Bond drives and other local activities. Those who participated received recognition from the United States War Department.

In July 1948 Jacobs sold the Groton paper to Howard and Ruth True. A year later he was employed by them for several years, and continued with Arthur and Pearl Adams who purchased the business from the Trues. In January 1959, Mr. and Mrs. Jacobs moved to Rochester, New York.

## *The Editor's Chair*

Groton's weekly newspaper, *The Journal and Courier*, had a long line of successive editors and publishers. The newspaper was established about 1865, some seventy-eight years after the village was settled. Through the years its publishers were active in community life. Their fortitude and loyalty to the community, together with established subscribers over a period of several generations of families, as well as a creditable clientele of advertisers, contributed greatly toward a successful enterprise in the Home Town Newspaper.

It was with this substantial background that Lawrence H. Jacobs, an Ithaca printer, purchased the weekly and its job-printing business. He became editor and publisher in April 1928, at the age of twenty-eight, and continued in that capacity for twenty years.

Those twenty years were unusually eventful. In 1929 the great depression befell the country. A whole new mode of living had to be established to continue with the times. Groton's weekly was no less affected. So difficult were circumstances that some of the local farmers paid newspaper subscriptions in butter and eggs from their own farms.

Then came World War II. The United States was drawn into it when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor in December 1941. That brought about an entirely different economic structure as the nation assumed a strict wartime schedule, with civilian consumer rationing rigorously maintained in every respect.

Eligible Grotonians, men and women, were inducted or enlisted in the Armed Forces. Day by day their absence in the community became more noticeable. Eventually, several hundred local men and women became a part of the forces of a nation at war.

The Groton editor, although registered with the Selective Service Board, was not called up and continued publishing the weekly. Many were the letters he received from local servicemen all over the world, all with the urgent message to keep their Home Town Paper coming—"It was like a letter from home."

About 1931 the newspaper plant was moved from rented quarters in the Atwood Block on the east side of Main Street just south of Cortland Street, to property purchased at 205 Main Street, a former restaurant, opposite the L. C. Smith-Corona typewriter factory.

One day in 1945 the editor was at his desk when his attention was attracted to the continuous blowing of an automobile horn as a car came at a good clip down Main Street. In front of the newspaper office the driver of the car slowed, leaned from a window, waved his arms excitedly and shouted something about "War!" The driver was a serviceman who had been a prisoner in an enemy concentration camp and was home for rehabilitation.

The editor turned on his office radio. At once came word that Japan had surrendered and the war was ended!

Pandemonium broke loose in the village of Groton at the news. Businessmen closed shop and employees poured from the doors of the typewriter factory (which was on production work for the War Department), shouting and waving their arms. Main Street became a mass of people carrying tin pans and beating them with sticks—anything that would make a noise. Auto horns sounded incessantly. A small parade was formed. People stood in groups, some openly weeping, some smiling—all releasing pent-up emotions. Bells rang and whistles blew.

Then began the long months of readjustment, of men and women returning, and religious and memorial services for those who would not return.

During the strenuous war days a ten-year-old Groton boy wrote a letter to the Secretary of War in Washington. He asked if there wasn't something he could do that would help win the war sooner and let his father come home. The boy's father was serving in the U.S. Navy. The Secretary answered the boy's letter, warmly commending him for his loyalty and

patriotism. He told the lad to keep on helping and praying at home; he hoped the war would soon be over and they would send his father home just as soon as they could.

Many things happen in twenty years. There was a homicide in the village and one in the township; there were two suicides. These saddened the community greatly. The editor was reluctant to publish ill-happenings of others and carried a conservative policy into the news columns of his paper. A member of one family wrote to him, expressing appreciation for the discretion he had used in one instance.

One night the editor was at his desk. The telephone rang. Lifting the receiver, the distressed voice of his wife told him a woman living on the edge of the village had just called her. The woman's baby had developed pneumonia and had to be rushed to the hospital. She appealed to the editor and his wife for help.

Locking his office door the editor picked up his wife in their car and hurried to the home of the anxious woman. She was waiting; holding her baby, she got in the back seat, the editor's wife beside her.

It was a ten-mile drive to the Cortland hospital. The baby was immediately taken in hand upon arrival. They learned the next day the baby did not survive.

But newspaper life did not always have the disheartening side. From about 1930 to 1944, fifteen certificates of merit were awarded the newspaper for fine accomplishment in general excellence in appearance, its news and feature stories, and for its active participation in community activities. The certificates were awarded by state and national organizations, explained elsewhere in this booklet.

From 1928 until mid-year 1948 the newspaper participated in assisting with many improvements in the community. During those years occurred the electric power change-over from direct to alternating current; Main Street was widened in part and boulevard lights installed in the business section. Steady improvement in service and equipment was made in the village electric department; a start was made to fund and build a community swimming pool in the playground-park in Sykes Street; plans were laid to construct a new central school. Electrifica-

tion of many Groton community farms took place as part of a nationwide program. The first high-school annual was set in type and printed by *The Journal and Courier* job printing department, the editor assisting in laying out the format.

The Groton editor also helped found the Groton Rotary Club, which was chartered April 7, 1938, with Charles D. Corwin its first president. The editor was a charter member of Groton Rotary for several years and was active as a member of its program committee.

These were but a few of the outstanding accomplishments in the community of Groton during those years.

Thousands of weekly newspapers made up the backbone of rural America. Most of them were printed by the "hot metal" process. But another type of printing called "offset" was rearing its head and the "cold type" method was beginning successfully to make itself felt by 1948.

For a number of years Old Home Days were gala occasions in Groton. Many "oldtimers" returned for these community reunions. There were parades, band concerts, street block dances, carnivals, and general Old Home Day get-togethers on the high school athletic field where family programs were held and many well-known, famous speakers were heard. All village organizations participated. The annual event drew large crowds. Young people joined their elders in the fun, heading and helping on many committees, and in other ways.

During the newspaper's early years all type that went into making up its columns was set by hand. Among the numerous behind-the-scene schedule was that of distributing type after an issue was printed, so that it would not accumulate to the point where there was an insufficient amount in the type cases to use for the next publication. Therefore, the type that was set by hand had to be distributed back into type cases. It required considerable time and did not permit the liberty of convenient use of large type for news story headings, and in the advertisements.

The small-size type used in reading matter, etc., predominated. After an issue was printed considerable time was required for distributing "dead" type. A person trained in such work acquired the skill of being able to hold several lines of



type in one hand and distributing with the other, letter by letter. A sponge soaked in water and patted lightly over the type face helped hold the type together in the hand. Type, being lead, did not rust, and the moistened letter quickly dried.

During the latter years, when a printer was laboriously setting and distributing type by hand, work was slowly progressing on the invention of what ultimately was called the Linotype machine—a machine that could cast a solid line or bar of type from a pot of molten type metal.

Gutenberg, the inventor of moveable type, began his work in the fourteenth century. It took him nearly a lifetime to accomplish his goal. His fruitful effort, after years of both failure and success, culminated in his printing of the famous Gutenberg Bible.

Centuries later Ottmar Mergenthaler, among others, labored for years to invent a machine that would cast a line of type from molten type metal. Eventually a complicated machine was marketed, called appropriately the Linotype.

As scientific engineering broadened, the Linotype was improved, until the Mergenthaler Linotype Company built a number of different models equipped to meet the many and varying needs of printing establishments throughout the world.

The time inevitably arrived when the publisher of Groton's progressive weekly installed its first Linotype. One or more employees were trained to operate the complicated machine.

In 1925 the first Linotype was replaced by a second, a model that permitted use of a wider range of type faces for news stories, headings and advertisements. This machine is now installed in the printing plant of Wycliff Translators at Waxhaw, Georgia, the gift of a later owner.

With the advent of the Linotype in Groton it became necessary, among other things, to purchase a special kind of type metal to be used in the Linotype. The machine had in its mechanism a pot in which the metal was automatically heated by either natural gas or electricity to a temperature variance of 535 to 550 degrees Fahrenheit. This was necessary so that the pump inside the metal pot could force the molten metal into a mold to produce a solid line of type. Each line cast was .918 of an inch high, termed "type high," to uniformly print from. The

width of a line of type could be varied to a length of five inches.

Linotype metal had a special formula, necessary for the proper function of the machine. This meant that a sample of the metal was periodically sent to a type foundry for analysis. Should the formula vary to a marked degree “toning” metal had to be mixed with it to keep it up to standard operating requirements.

After an edition was printed, “dead” matter was dumped into a large-capacity smelter, located in the rear of the printing plant. There, it was melted down each week and ladled by hand into ingot molds which formed nine six-pound bars or pigs of metal. These were used to feed into the Linotype pot as needed to maintain an operating level in the pot.

The smelter was an enclosed cast-iron caldron with a built-in firebox. The smelter stood on four iron legs. A galvanized metal bonnet covered the smelter, with a chimney extending from it to carry away the fumes. The small door in the bonnet permitted access to the molten metal.

For many years cannel coal was used in the smelter firebox. The coal was easily lighted and it produced a steady hot fire that surrounded the caldron. When the molten metal was about 500 to 600 degrees Fahrenheit, it was ready to pour.

Before pouring, a small amount of lead flux was stirred into the metal. This brought to the surface considerable dross which was skimmed off into a metal drum. When the drum became full it was shipped to a type foundry, where it was further processed.

After the dross was skimmed the molten metal was ready to be ladled into ingots, in the nine molds, each mold or “pig” weighing about six pounds. The metal hardened quickly when poured but required longer to cool.

The story of the line of type is but an infinitesimal part of the history of printing. Many persons have been honored for noble deeds in many places. The printed word, however, is an eternal monument to the man who invented printing from moveable type—the art preservative of all arts, even to the lowly weekly newspaper whose scribes over hundreds of years have struggled to weave their skill into the tapestry in the life

of all mankind—which includes the archives of the DeWitt Historical Society of Tompkins County.

On July 1, 1948, Howard and Ruth True of New York City purchased the Groton weekly, and the responsibilities of publishing Groton's long-established Home Town Newspaper was assumed by them.

## *Old-Time Religion*

About 1912 there was a Negro church on the east side of North Albany Street, between Esty and Cascadilla, Ithaca. Its pastor was a kindly gentleman. He seemed especially nice to children, showing a genuine pleasure in them. The neighborhood was made up of both Negro and white residents. There was never a question of friendship among them—they knew each other as good neighbors and lived together as such. Both black and white children attended the elementary school a block away, on the southwest corner of Albany and Mill, now Court Street.

During the summertime the church doors were open, especially when evening services were held. The voices of the Negro congregation could be clearly heard outside the church as they sang their hymns. It was pleasant to listen to them, for they sang with a sincerity a listener could feel.

A neighborhood white City Boy often was attracted by their singing, and knew many of the hymns they sang. Frequently, during summer evenings, he would step to the open doorway and peer in. He was always tempted to enter as he saw the congregation standing while they sang, but he never quite got enough courage to do so. At the farther end of the church aisle he could see the gentle-mannered pastor, singing with his congregation. He never heard one of the pastor's sermons but he always had the feeling they were worth listening to.

When the lad was older and singing in his own church choir, he often thought of the old-time religion sung by the good folks of the Negro church on Albany Street.

## *And Then Came the War*

The village and town of Groton in the northeastern part of Tompkins County felt the brunt of World War II, as did other communities in the country. Like other small villages and towns, its efforts were comparable to the proverbial "drop in the bucket." But enough "drops" helped fill the bucket, and Groton community held its head high in loyal service to its country in time of war.

Among the numerous regulations set up by the War Department was a system of blackout tests for home defense. Blackout sirens were located strategically about the village. The instant they were activated was a signal for stopping all activities, and civilians were to do everything possible to extinguish lights and take cover for safety.

The blackout tests proved most efficient at night. No warning of a coming test was given. A trained group of men and women was ready at all hours to make sure that lights in the village were extinguished, and any other regulations adhered to. Automobiles driven by blackout officials moved without lights, were equipped with special lights, or not driven at all.

Groton's first blackout test for home defense came on Wednesday, January 21, 1942. Sirens sounded at 9:30 p.m. and the test continued until 9:45. According to a partially-filled diary of a Grotonian, the first test proved entirely successful. After the test was over blackout officials gathered at the office of the group captain to report any discrepancies or make suggestions for improvement to conform to wartime regulations.

An interesting note in the diary tells of the editor of the village's weekly newspaper receiving notice from a subscriber cancelling her subscription after receiving a statement that it was due. The recipient of the bill stated that the two dollars had to go to the Red Cross. She being a subscriber of long

standing, the editor immediately extended her subscription for another year, mailed her a letter of commendation and explanation dated January 24, 1942.

A few days later he received an answer from her in which the subscriber enclosed two dollars in Defense Savings Stamps, stating that if the editor would accept the stamps she would accept the year's renewal of her subscription. Being an out-of-town subscriber, the editor advised her by letter that her subscription had been credited.

Groton's weekly had a showcase in front of the building, near the sidewalk on Main Street. The fourth Selective Service list of World War II, calling up local men 20-44 years of age, was placed inside the case for the public to inspect. The list was put up on Sunday, April 5, 1942, and remained until another list was issued. Many, many Grotonians inspected each list. Groton was in Selective Service District No. 496. The day was Easter Sunday, according to the diary, and the weather was warm and lovely, except for a thunderstorm that occurred at daybreak.

Another test blackout for home defense occurred from 9:35 until 10:35 p.m. on Friday, May 1, 1942. Again, the test was successful.

World War II gasoline rationing began in Groton on Friday, May 15, 1942. The "A" card represented the minimum amount; B 1, B 2, B3, and X. The latter card allowed unlimited supply of gasoline to the holder. A "B 3" rationing card permitted use of fifty-seven gallons of gasoline for fifteen days.

Selective Service questionnaires were rather lengthy documents of several pages. Groton's headquarters were at the Ithaca Court House, District 496. Grotonians registered for World War II draft at the office of the Town Clerk in Railroad Street. There were local serial numbers, as well as numbers registered in Washington, D.C.

The diary further noted that on Monday, June 15, 1942, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt called upon the nation to start salvaging old rubber, from that date until June 30. Used rubber, he was quoted as stating, was needed to offset the rubber shortage developing in the nation, because of the war. The

reason? Japan had cut off ninety-two per cent of rubber supply to the United States.

One Groton merchant reported on Wednesday, June 17, 1942, he had accumulated 1,100 pounds of old rubber from the public. One cent a pound was paid for it, and the government reimbursed the merchant.

Permanent gasoline rationing went into effect in the Eastern Seaboard on Wednesday, July 22, 1942. An "A" unit was in the amount of four gallons. The rationing included non-highway use of gasoline.

Notation was made on Wednesday, August 12, 1942, that a considerable number of women were on the night shift at Smith-Corona Typewriter factory, which was at that time under contract to manufacture war equipment for the armed forces of the United States.

The absence of men in Groton was very noticeable by August, 1942, they having enlisted or been drafted into the armed services of World War II.

The diary, sparsely filled as noted above, is the property of Lawrence H. Jacobs, who was born in Ithaca and lived in the city for more than twenty years, but at one time lived in Groton. He now resides in Pittsford, New York.

## *Tribulations of a Flood*

The year was 1935, on a summer weekend. The editor of Groton's (Tompkins County) weekly newspaper and his wife were returning home late one Sunday afternoon from Owasco Lake eighteen miles north of the village. Rain had started Saturday morning and did not stop. By Sunday morning things out of doors looked sodden. It continued to rain. By late Sunday afternoon not only was there a lot of muddy water in Owasco Lake, but as the editor and his wife took the macadam road toward home, water seemed to be coming from every nook and cranny along the road—and the rain did not let up.

The highway ran close to winding Owasco Inlet in some places as it flowed toward the lake. Water was dangerously close to the top of the stream's banks, and the current was far stronger than usual.

In Groton village three bridges crossed Owasco Inlet. The largest and highest (in depth of creek bed) was on West Cortland Street. A wide, well-constructed span, its concrete abutments formed a "V," open at the center. The bridge on Spring Street, close to the Smith-Corona typewriter factory, was on lower land. Although well built, it was not as heavy a structure as that on West Cortland Street.

The bridge that spanned the creek on West South Street was at the lowest level. There the Inlet narrowed. Clearance under the bridge was much shallower.

Reaching the village, the editor and his wife crossed the Spring Street span on their way home. Near the bridge the Inlet flowed close to several buildings, guarded by concrete walls. There, the storm waters were pushing hard against the bridge abutments and the protecting walls. Tributaries that fed Owasco Inlet from Peruville, several miles west of the vill-

age, were swelling the main stream, but water was still within its banks. Wary villagers were keeping vigil, gauging the situation for a potential flood in the low section of the village. The editor and his wife reached home without mishap.

During the night Groton's chief of police kept close watch on the stream as he made his rounds. Should the water overflow banks of the Inlet he would rouse residents and volunteer firemen.

At 4 a.m. Monday morning the editor was awakened by the sound of the fire siren atop the Village Hall. Inquiring by telephone, one of several marooned switchboard operators informed him a section of the village was flooding and help was needed. The printing plant was located in that section.

Dressing hurriedly and putting on hip boots, the editor got into his car and headed for his place of business. He was stopped cold on West South Street, usually a quick route. In the gray dawn of morning he saw a vast sea of rushing water, upon which floated wooden debris. The bridge could not be seen, nor could most of the street in front of him. The rain had stopped, but the flood had just begun.

Losing no time watching the fascinating scene, the editor turned his car around and headed southward. By a roundabout route he finally arrived at the West Cortland Street bridge. Being on higher ground, the bridge was usable. But the rush of water was wearing heavily against one concrete abutment. Workmen already were trying to set large sheets of steel against the concrete wall in an effort to save it.

Waved across the bridge by the workmen, the editor headed down Main Street. One block down that street he was stopped again by floodwaters. Turning around once more, he went back up Main, turned east on Cortland Street, and right on Church Street. At the end of Church Street he turned right again into Elm Street hill. He came to a halt half a block down the hill, and parked his car. Below him, in Main Street, he could see his printing plant. Across from it was the Smith-Corona portable typewriter factory that covered nearly a block. Water filled its entire basement. A grocery store and gasoline service station to the south were inundated. Across the road and farther down, at the corner of Main and Railroad Streets, several telephone



switchboard operators, the floor of their building just above water level, stuck to their jobs and courageously handled phone calls. Two garages next to it and residences in that area were flooded.

The editor parked his car, pulled up his boots, and started wading indirectly toward the front door of his office. He noticed employees of Smith-Corona working frantically to salvage all material possible.

There was a small hole in the driveway of the newspaper building, about a foot in diameter. The editor intended to avoid it, but stepped squarely into it. Water went over the top of one boot.

Reaching his office door, he apprehensively unlocked it. He pushed it open slowly and stepped inside. The only sound was that which his boots made as they moved in the water, then about a foot deep. Momentarily perplexed, he waded to the small office safe. Twirling its combination, he pulled open the door. With a sigh of relief he found its contents dry and safe.

He removed most of its contents, closed the door and waded back to his car. Depositing his armload inside it, he locked the vehicle and returned to his office.

Quickly checking his electric motors, he found those on the newspaper press and Linotype machine above water and safe. But the motors in the job press room were drowned. They had to be "baked" before they could be used again.

Much of the printing papers in the stockroom were on shelves well above the water, but about half a ton of newsprint bundles were partially soaked. These he lifted out of the water to a safer place. There was enough dry newsprint left for that week's edition.

By that time some of his employees had managed to arrive and took over the work of searching the building for further water damage.

Out on Main Street a man was wading waist deep in water, on a tour of inspection. Residences throughout the area needed assistance.

Without breakfast, fatigued by his early morning experience, the editor grimly pulled his office chair through the now slowly receding water to his typewriter. Slipping a sheet of

paper into the machine, he started typing the first page of the story of the flood. His employees were doing their best at the clean-up job.

It took most of Monday to obtain details of what had happened in the flooded area. He learned that during the high water a small rowboat had tied up at a post at one corner of the porch of the Tavern, a small hotel opposite the telephone building upon whose registers were signatures of many passing salesmen, famous movie stars, and other important guests.

Lehigh Valley Railroad tracks paralleled Owasco Inlet through the village. A small depot, built many years before, stood beside the tracks at the end of Railroad Street. An unimposing-looking structure, its floors were worn with years of use. It steadfastly withstood the rough waters of the flood, adding another chapter to its long history and to that of the Village of Groton.

As soon as receding waters permitted, Groton Fire Department's big pumper went to work. It took hours to pump out the factory basement, then those of residents in the area. Fortunately no fire calls nor injuries were reported during the emergency.

A newspaper staff whose fortitude emulated that of bygone years when other editors and other staffs met their emergencies, met the emergency. They refused to resign themselves to the problems and discomforts confronting them. By virtue of ingenuity, perseverance and determination of the editor and his staff, the weekly was published on time, keeping faith with the many years of an unbroken record of weekly publication.

## *Biddy Rides the Bumper*

A small variety store in Main Street in Groton was operated by a man and wife in 1943. In the rear of the lot upon which the store was located was a large barn. In its heyday the structure had been a fine livery where farmers and their families parked their rigs while they shopped. A large sliding door could be opened to accommodate the rigs, closed to protect them from weather. An ample hayloft provided fodder for horses if they remained for several hours.

Those years passed and by 1943 the huge structure was more like a hollow shell. In the modern age several automobiles parked in the convenient rear of the building and just inside the big door section. One of these cars belonged to the owner of the property. A small flock of hens also was kept there. They had the freedom of the front parking area of the barn for roosting and laying eggs. All of them were mature fowls of mixed breed.

One afternoon the owner had occasion to go on an errand that would require use of his car. As he entered the darkened interior of the barn several hens moved from his path, clucking contentedly as they changed locations. The man spoke quietly to them.

Inside his car, he started the engine and backed slowly out of the barn, turned the car around in the driveway and unhurriedly drove down Main Street.

Passing village residents he knew well, he was puzzled by lack of their usual greetings. They looked toward him with a half smile but puzzled expression. His thoughts partly on his errand, he paid no particular notice.

Several blocks down Main Street he drove into a driveway and stopped his car. As he got out and walked casually toward the front door of the residence he idly glanced at the front of

his car. He stopped short, a puzzled look on his face that turned into a broad smile.

Sitting quite contentedly on the front bumper was "Biddy" from his flock of hens. She apparently had been enjoying a siesta when the car started. The slowly moving vehicle had not disturbed her enough to cause her to get off. She had ridden all the way down Main Street on the front bumper. He readily understood his friends' odd looks.

Good treatment and plenty of food and water had made the hens unafraid when the man or his wife walked among them. The small inconvenience of the moving car had not disturbed Biddy on the bumper.

With a chuckle the man lifted the hen and put her in his car, went about his errand and returned home. Upon arrival the good-natured fowl simply hopped out of the car and joined the rest of the flock, none the worse for her unusual experience, probably unaware of the attention she had received when she rode down Main Street on the front bumper of an automobile.

### *Dyeing a Horse's Eyebrows*

The printer was busy in the pressroom of Groton's weekly newspaper plant one day in the 1940s. A farmer came into the office. He told the printer he would like to buy some printer's ink. He wanted to blacken the gray eyebrows of his horse.

The printer, surprised by the unique request, explained there were a variety of printing inks of different pigments and chemicals. There was soft-bodied ink, a medium-bodied ink, a stiff-bodied ink, etc., etc., not one of which would be satisfactory for the purpose for which the farmer wanted it.

Also, the inks were of such substance that certain types could be used in printing only on certain kinds of paper. Printing inks were for printing, to be used only on printing presses.

Therefore, should any one of the several inks be applied to a horse's eyebrows, it would most surely be one awful mess.

It was suggested that the farmer take his problem to the local pharmacist, who undoubtedly would be able to offer a more reasonable solution in the form of a hair dye.

## *A Balky Horseless Carriage*

A little, old automobile went up Main Street in Groton village, northeast of Ithaca, one summer day about 1942. Its passengers were the driver and his wife. Near the business section it pulled up at a curbside service station gasoline pump and stopped. The driver glanced at the gearshift lever while disembarking, and asked the attendant to fill the tank. The driver and attendant were good friends. Facetious remarks passed between them as the attendant proceeded with his customary chore, inserting the gasoline pump hose nozzle into the tank fill-pipe of the car. The driver's wife quietly remained seated.

The tank filled, gasoline paid for, the attendant returned the pump hose to its place and waited for his friend to start his car.

Under the radiator, between the front bumper and the radiator hung a crank. To start the engine, it had to be engaged with the vehicle's driveshaft, to turn the engine. Ordinarily, a half-circle turn upward pull on the crank was sufficient to start the engine, with the gearshift in neutral position, which would let the engine run without the car moving.

The car's driver was short and stocky, well-tanned and muscular from work on his small farm just outside the village. He was a humorous fellow, always ready to swap a good story.

Stepping briskly to the front of the car's bumper, the driver put his left hand on the radiator cap, at the same time engaging the crank with his right, preparatory to starting the engine. With skill born of practice, he gave the crank a husky pull. As he did so he was unprepared when the car started moving forward. He had left the lever in low gear!

Instinctively, the man hopped upon the bumper, grabbing the radiator cap with both hands as he did so. Rolling his eyes upward toward the front seat, a look of consternation on his face,

he screamed, "Stop it! Stop it!" His wife, never having even remotely learned the mechanical technique of driving, was unable to move, frozen in her seat, a horrified expression on her face.

Diagonally across the street, at curbside, in front of a residence, was a high, square solid stone block with an iron ring securely fastened in its center. Once upon a time it was a grinding stone for flour. After it had served its purpose it had been placed in its present position for snapping the lead strap of a horse's bridle to it while the owner of the horse and wagon went on an errand—a hitching stone, no less—and had not the remotest connection with reference to an automobile. It was toward that stone that the car slowly but steadily moved.

The pleas of the driver seemed to fall on deaf ears. What few spectators were nearby appeared paralyzed by the sudden and entirely unexpected turn of events.

His posterior extended forward, facing backward, both feet on the bumper, legs bent at the knees, hands gripping the radiator cap, there continued to float out upon the quiescent atmosphere the urgent appeal, "Stop it! Stop it!"

Slowly the vehicle closed the distance between it and the hitching stone, unhampered. Even the service station attendant was rooted where he stood.

The end of the unheralded episode had to come sometime. And it did, suddenly. When the car came square against the stone block, the latter did not so much as budge. Immediately the car stopped, its engine stalled. Not so the driver, however. The sudden termination of the car's movement broke his hold on the radiator cap. He sailed onward and sat down with some force on the stone block, his eyes tightly closed, arms extended forward and upward, the while pleading, "Stop it! Stop it!"

But that was not destined to be the end of his ungainly ride. Completing a backward somersault, he again landed on his already bruised posterior, eyes still closed, arms extended, crying, "Stop it! Stop it!" Suddenly, he found himself unceremoniously sitting on the soft, green grass—terra firma, no less!

From time immemorial, it has been the custom to use one's posterior to sit on, to take the load off one's feet for a greater

or lesser length of time, thereby relaxing the several parts of the human body. One usually avoided, if possible, sitting down forcefully as to cause a sometimes bruising shock, especially when bringing the posterior into sudden contact with solid stone, like a hitching block.

Although the just-as-firm landing on terra firma, padded to a degree with a fairly thick blanket of rich, green grass, may have tempered the whole procedure to a softer conclusion, nevertheless, the unethical circumstances that combined to bring about such a conclusion, were not the most to be desired.

There was, however, the small satisfaction that the balky assembly of mechanical contrivances had come to rest against an object entirely contrary to its original perspective, thereby terminating what at first had uncertain indications in the realm of safety for those concerned.

It took upwards of a minute or so for the driver to gather his wits and take due notice of what had occurred. Then he jumped to his feet with astounding agility and dove for the gearshift lever, which he deftly placed in proper position, making sure there was no question about its being in neutral.

Once more he engaged the crank, giving it so forceful a turn that it should have caused the engine to revolve for a surprising length of time without fuel. That time all went well. The engine purred contentedly. He mounted to the driver's seat and gingerly sat upon it. With great care he shifted gears and backed the car a few feet to clear the curb. Then, once more manipulating the shift lever, he skillfully but with great determination, moved into forward gear.

With a sigh of which they were unaware, spectators watched the vehicle with its two passengers move up Main Street, turn the corner and disappear.

After a few moments of confused consultations on the mysteries of the horseless carriage by a small group of townspeople, the peace and quiet of the village descended once more upon the environs of Main Street.

## *The Fun of a Hobby*

A year after Howard and Ruth True purchased The Groton Journal and Courier, Lawrence Jacobs, from whom the Trues bought the business in July 1948, became an employe of the new owners. With more leisure time at his disposal, the former editor looked around for a hobby. An advertisement in a New York City tabloid interested him. That ad brought him a five-dollar trial kit on internal carving of plexiglas (one type of plastic.)

With his electric drill and special drill bit, the Grotonian undertook to learn how to carve out cavities inside a solid piece of plastic that, when finished, resembled flowers, leaves, birds, butterflies and other attractive objects. He became so interested that his skill developed quickly. Soon he was purchasing plexiglas in larger quantity, along with internal carving dyes of several colors and other supplies needed for extending his new hobby.

Jacobs was soon making attractive small lamps that could illuminate his carvings at night, and many other more advanced articles. He learned also how to heat and form the plastic pieces, adding to their attractiveness as well as to his hobby.

It was not long before other hobbyists learned of his work and gradually he became acquainted with others who had a variety of hobbies.

Eventually, Editor True suggested to Jacobs that a public hobby show might be held. The idea was received with enthusiasm among other local hobbyists. Committees were formed and went to work. Their efforts met with cooperation on every side. Soon entries for the show were coming in and being listed.

The gynasium of the Groton High School building was obtained for the show. Entries came from local hobbyists and



from outside the community as well. The school gym was filled with hobby exhibits. A number of hobbyists demonstrated their skills.

The Groton weekly newspaper gave enthusiastic support to the show in its news columns. There was a great deal of public interest in the affair by the time it was ready.

When the one-day hobby show opened the latter part of April 1951, it proved to be a very busy occasion for all concerned. All day long the public attended the show, hobbyists hardly finding time to lunch at noon. Large groups moved from one demonstration to another after viewing the exhibits.

The event proved to be very successful. The hope was expressed that the show might thereafter be an annual affair, but circumstances developed that prevented it. But that one hobby show went down in Groton village history as a very successful affair.

Jacobs continued his plastic carving hobby. In later years he was invited to exhibit at the Pacific National Exhibition at Vancouver, B.C. His plastic exhibits were awarded second, third, and honorable mention ribbons and awards.

## *Mother Was a General*

Mother was a general, the guiding hand of her flock of seven children in the early 1900s. Their modest home in Esty Street, Ithaca, was a beehive of activity. Most of Father's time was spent as the breadwinner to feed the large family.

The children were assigned to many household tasks, when they were old enough, which they assumed with more or less enthusiasm. One of the chores was beating rugs and carpets when springtime arrived. An appliance made for the purpose was aptly called the rug beater, a strip of heavy-gauge wire with a loop on one end, and a wooden handle.

A carpet was thrown over a stout clothesline and beaten. This called for considerable energy. The amount of dust that rose from the carpet depended largely upon the energy exercised by the young wielder of the beater.

Raising a family of five daughters and two sons was looked upon by Mother as a responsibility of major importance. Their health, of course, was a prime requisite, and certain precautions were always adhered to. Not the least of these was the making of a small quantity of dandelion and elderberry wine, in season, strictly for medicinal purposes. Mother never divulged to her offspring how she made the wine, and they gave it little thought. Homemade remedies were much the order of the day.

As "General" of the household, Mother taught her children how to make bread and tasty pastries. Doughnuts or "fried cakes" were included. The six-lid coal-burning kitchen stove was kept busy. Father saw to it that a goodly supply of pea coal and wood was on hand.

Although city water was piped for use in the house, the hand pump in the shed just off the kitchen was not neglected. Its clear, cool water was a favorite drink on hot summer days.

The "washing machine" was a three-unit appliance. Rubber rollers in a wood frame were attached to a big galvanized iron wash tub, which was filled with hot water. The legs of a corrugated scrubbing board rested on the bottom and side of the tub. Using a liberal quantity of cake soap, clothes were scrubbed by the "elbow grease" method. The task was hard, but clothes were kept neat and clean. Shirts, etc., that had to be ironed were pressed with a six- or eight-pound cast iron, shaped with a handle curling on top from the front to back.

Mother also had a loom, on which she wove rag rugs. Warping the loom took a little time, but with that accomplished, a long strip of cloth cut to a narrow width was wound on a shuttle, and Mother went to work. The spools of warp, set in a row at the rear of the loom, lasted quite some time, and could be obtained in colors. The results were many very attractive small rugs. Not only did they grace the floors of her home, but Mother sold them as well.

When the younger son became ill, the doctor diagnosed it as scarlet fever. Then began several weeks' quarantine, during which each of the children except one became ill with the disease. Mother marshaled her reserve strength, energy and knowledge, between doctor's visits, without complaint. The eldest daughter was not exposed to the disease and was boarded by a friendly neighbor. Mother did not contract the fever, working without fear of it while attending her children. Father, also from the outside, saw to it that the family was well provided for. No lasting serious effects resulted from the disease and the family was ultimately reunited after the house was fumigated.

When the eldest son was old enough he began part-time work after school. He frequently brought home a pint of ice cream, one of Mother's favorite delicacies, which he and Mother intimately enjoyed "after the other kids had gone upstairs to bed."

Schooling and "be sure you're home by 9 o'clock" (p.m.) were strictly adhered to. Mother was the first to propose a picnic or other outing—which the family thoroughly enjoyed together.

Games were played in the fenced-in yard. These included "duck on the rock," "tag, you're it," "hide and seek," "touch

ball,” and others. Mother, her agility limited by the passing years, made a good audience.

A Concord grapevine on the premises bore delicious blue bunches that made fine dessert after dinner, or between meals. Bushes loaded with currants had to be picked when ripe. Cherry trees, one sweet and one sour, provided plenty of fruit. Peach and blue plum trees filled out the “orchard” for home canning.

As the children matured, one by one they married and went their several ways to make their own homes. It was a grand occasion when they returned for a visit with Mom and Dad.

But Mother remained the “General,” ready always to greet them in warm embrace when they arrived, never expressing the longing she had for them to stay longer when they kissed her and left for their homes. The old homestead seemed so much larger after they had gone. But Mother busied herself with her chores, with her knitting in the sometimes long quiet of the evenings, and fond memories of the past, with the knowledge that her children were now men and women, with families of their own, well, and good, and happy.

*What can be said  
Of a Mother's love  
As the years slip quickly by?  
How can one tell her  
You love her dearly  
For all she's done, and why?  
She knows, from the love  
You give in return,  
And that fills her heart with joy.*

A CITY BOY (L. H. Jacobs)

## *Environment of Home*

Saturday night was bath night at one modest Ithaca home in the late 1800s and early 1900s. A large oval-shaped brass boiler that covered two lids on top of the kitchen stove was filled with water and heated.

By a system of rotation, Mother helped her five daughters bathe first, tempering the water with cold, in a large tub on the kitchen floor. They were followed by her two young sons. Each child bundled into warm nighties after the bath and headed for bed.

Mother sometimes made her own soap. When a supply was exhausted, she made more.

In the early days coal-oil or kerosene lamps were used for illumination throughout the homes. The kitchen lamp had a bull's-eye reflector that could be adjusted to focus anywhere in the room. Electricity was installed on the first floor about 1911.

Having no central heating system, coal-burning heaters were set up in each room downstairs. Stovepipes extending through to upstairs rooms into brick chimneys, furnished what heat they could, which in winter months seemed insufficient. To offset this the children had heavy, warm blankets on their beds.

Mother had a zither which she played in her relaxed moments. Father and the children loved to listen to her play old-time songs and hymns. There were many of the latter, learned from regular attendance at church and Sunday school. Although Mother could not carry a tune vocally, the rest of the family were members of the First Baptist Church choir, as they matured. All of the family became musicians, studying piano, violin and trumpet.

The front room off the living room of the home was set aside as a special room, used only on special occasions, a custom not

unusual in many homes at that time. A baby-grand piano in the front room was a treasure, used only when the girls practiced lessons or the family sang together, or "had company." The tinsel-covered Christmas tree was set up in the front room. But there was no fireplace on which to hang stockings on Christmas Eve. Nevertheless, Santa, in some mysterious way, never missed leaving presents for all the family.

In front of the home were two large horsechestnut trees. Every spring they were covered with blossoms that later matured into large, shiny brown nuts, which the children gathered. They had fun carving faces on them and stuck in tooth-picks to resemble arms and legs.

Mother's favorite tree was a Rose o' Sharon on the front lawn. Every summer its multi-colored blossoms added beauty to the landscape. Household plants bloomed in profusion under Mother's "green thumb."

Tea leaves and coffee grounds made an excellent mulch for plants and small bushes. If pesky insects threatened, a quantity of soapsuds sprayed on them usually took care of the problem.

The iceman went by the house about twice a week, delivering orders. His wagon had chips of ice covered with sawdust in it. Children followed the wagon, hoping to get a piece of ice. When they did, they washed off the sawdust and popped the ice into their mouths.

Father had a small flock of hens that supplied the family with eggs. One was a tame bantam. One day the little lady seized an opportunity to get into the living room and flew upon a small bureau. There she made a nest in some towels and laid her eggs. From then on it was a daily habit, of which she seemed very proud.

One problem tried Father's patience for a time. His hens were kept inside a wire coop, with boards set into the ground around the enclosure. One night commotion among the hens woke the household. Hurrying outdoors with a lantern, Father discovered a weasel had burrowed under a board, attacked and killed a hen. After several weeks, the problem was solved—when the animal was found one morning in a trap Father had set.

Dad owned a horse. As the children grew old enough he would lift them upon her back. Holding them securely, while they gripped her mane, the youngsters rode bareback as the horse walked slowly around in front of the barn.

Bicycle time arrived as the years went by. Each daughter in turn had a "hand-me-down" bike. The sons often pedaled their way south of Ithaca out Five Mile Drive to Buttermilk Falls and Enfield Glen; down the west shore of Cayuga Lake road to Glenwood and Frontenac Point; or north and northeast of the city to Renwick Park and Rogues Harbor, near South Lansing. There were many intriguing stories about the latter, but they never confirmed them.

The elder son, still a small boy, noticed that his father seemed to enjoy smoking his corncob pipe after his day's work was done. One day the curious lad took advantage of an opportunity. While no one was around he took his dad's pipe from the shelf where it was kept. Looking at the charred hole in the cob, he decided he should add a little more tobacco. Picking up the small bag of Billy Boy fine cut, he put a small amount into the hole and tamped it down with his finger. Taking a couple of "farmer's" matches from the shelf he quietly disappeared behind the barn. Squatting on his heels, his back resting against the barn, he lit the pipe, choking a little but puffing lustily. Small clouds of smoke floated from his mouth. Now he could understand the enjoyment his father got from smoking!

After puffing a few minutes he noticed a disagreeable feeling in his stomach. He laid the pipe down. Suddenly he felt so ill he wondered if he were going to die. The illness continued for some minutes, during which his skin turned white and he felt "sicker than a horse," as he later told himself.

Some twenty minutes later he felt a little better and decided he was going to live after all. When he returned the pipe to its place, he made a solemn resolution not to touch his father's pipe again. Although the boy's father undoubtedly noticed that his pipe and tobacco had been disturbed, the matter was never mentioned.

The elder son's second experience with tobacco came while he was a printer's apprentice on a newspaper. Most of the printers he worked with smoked. One chewed tobacco. The

latter was also a gifted orator. When he was vociferously expounding a subject he was forced to stop and expectorate a quantity of tobacco juice, then continued his dissertation.

He bought chewing tobacco in small paper pouches, which were discarded when empty. One day the curious apprentice picked up a crumpled tobacco bag from a waste barrel. Opening it, he found several strands of chewing tobacco in the bottom. Innocently, he put them into his mouth, where they absorbed saliva. It was his intention to spit out any of the juice. Nevertheless, he swallowed some. Giving it no particular thought, he went on with his work in the rear of the printshop—until suddenly he was aware of feeling ill.

At that moment the foreman at the other end of the room called to him. The young man's first step made him realize he was almost too dizzy to walk, without support. But, if the boss called, he had to go. He was forced to hold on to cabinets and machinery as he carefully navigated his way the length of the room. The vertigo soon passed.

That experience convinced him chewing tobacco was not for him. He would leave it up to his friend. The latter never learned what happened to the few sheds of chewing tobacco left in an empty pouch he had discarded.

In time, the elder son bought his first automobile, and later his second. The latter was a 12-volt Dodge sedan, a very reliable vehicle. When his younger brother was old enough he wanted to learn to drive also. Coming home one day, the younger lad turned into their driveway. A large horsechestnut tree grew close to the driveway, near the curb. As the youth steered toward his objective, he brought the car too short in the turn, crowding the tree. The latter failed to move. The result was a crumpled running board. This minor accident was marked up to inexperience. The lesson was an impressive one to the young driver. It also proved to be a little expensive for the older brother for repairs.



## *A Picnic and Wild Strawberries*

A picnic was a looked-forward-to occasion by one of Ithaca's families on warm, languid summer days in the 1914-16s. A City Boy tells how Mom, Dad and their seven children never tired of those frequent outings together.

Sandwiches, homemade cake, cookies, and plenty of lemonade elevated the spirits to a high level of anticipation. Small pans were included in which to put wild strawberries the children would pick to bring home.

When Dobbin was hitched to the surrey, the food was carefully packed, the family seated, and they were on their way.

They could choose from a number of places near Ithaca. Their favorite was one of the sloping fields along the lower road on the west shore of Cayuga Lake, near Glenwood Hotel. The latter, several miles from home, offered the shore to stroll along, as well as the fields.

After passing the thick woods, the west side of the road opened upon wide, gently sloping fields with few trees. Usually, a spot near Glenwood was chosen.

Timothy hay, white daisies, purple clover blossoms, devil's paint brush, buttercups—Nature's finest bouquet—waved invitingly in the breeze and sunshine. A tablecloth was spread upon the grass in the shade of a tree, and the picnic dinner was laid upon it. If the breeze turned up corners of the cloth, small rocks were found to weight them down.

Dobbin was tethered nearby, in the shade, where she could nibble grass and swish her tail to drive away the ever-present flies.

Sometimes the children tossed a ball to each other, or explored some attractive spot nearby. Plenty of food and healthy appetites created a temptation to eat too much, but it seemed worth it in the joy of the occasion.

The beautiful panorama of Cayuga Lake lay to the east of them, neatly cultivated fields could be seen, where crops were growing, divided by hedgerows of bushes or stone fences, and a crooked road wound up the hill to the eastern horizon. Crows on the wing sent their call through the summer atmosphere.

Dinner over, everyone sat around for a time, until two or more of the children, nudged into activity by the appeal of the fields, picked up a pan and started out, with the scent of the flowers filling the air.

Walking a short distance through the sea of blossoms, they stopped, to sink down among them to watch the bees as they went busily from flower to flower. Then, carefully pushing aside the wild strawberry leaves that grew close to the ground, they gathered the ripe, wild berries and put them into their pans—those they did not eat. Close to the ground the children often were lost to view, until a head popped up, as if it too was part of the waving bouquet of Nature. The girls wore flowered hats that did not disparage the beauty of the scene.

Although the wild berries were smaller than those sold on the market, the difference was made up in quantity. Notice was taken that a goodly supply could be taken home. There, the berries were hulled and stored in the icebox. The supply, however, was soon exhausted when spread over a dish of home-made ice cream or on strawberry shortcake.

Sometimes part of the time was spent walking along the shoreline of the lake, near Glenwood Hotel. It was fun looking for odd-shaped stones or watching folks with their boats at the hotel dock; and there were always small minnows darting about in the warm water.

When the sun began to edge toward the top of the western hills the family headed for home, tired, happy, and contented, looking forward to the next picnic, and what they might enjoy along Cayuga's shores, where grew the flowers of Nature's bouquet—and wild strawberries!

## *A Violin, a Little Girl, and the Sandman*

“Daddy, will you play your violin after supper?”

The request came from a nine-year-old girl as she and her father and mother were enjoying their evening meal. They lived in a modest home on a quiet street in the village of Groton about the year 1938.

Father was an accomplished violinist, thirty-eight years old. His violin was a cherished instrument, given him by his own father when the former was a boy. In his younger years “Daddy” had been a member of a concert orchestra and soloist in Ithaca. The violin was his hobby.

The girl’s request was not unusual. She and her mother spent many an evening listening to “Daddy” play as he relaxed after a day’s work. Her wish was readily granted “as soon as supper dishes are washed.”

Later, the three gathered in the living room. Father took the violin from its case. Mother made herself comfortable in her favorite chair and picked up her book. Daughter went to the piano where she lightly tapped the “A” key for daddy to tune his instrument. That accomplished, she climbed into a big rocking chair, laid her left arm on its arm, her head in the palm of her hand. He asked her to name the strings on his violin. As she had done often before, he smiled as she confidently said, “E, A, D, and G.”

Tightening the bow, father touched it lightly over the strings. His thoughts roaming: what number should he start with tonight?

He played for the next twenty minutes, composing his own interludes between numbers. As he drew the bow over the strings, the violinist felt the quality of the instrument, and understanding the work of the craftsman who made it. Music from it, controlled by his own interpretation of the composers

who understood the science or art of expressing unspoken words and emotions in music that brought harmony and peace to the mind. The firm, sustaining notes of a religious solo, the exciting, thrilling, confident and rhythmic cadence of a march, the sustaining, full-swelled overture that carried a message of summer breezes, as it swelled, then subsided, as if in thought, and the soft, tender notes of a mother humming to her baby, assuring her all was well, then becoming more lively, like the summer sun kissing the gently-waving wildflowers in the fields and the crooning notes of Mother Nature, clasping a weary child to her bosom. The mellow notes of the violin floated about the room.

It was very quiet when he stopped playing. Father lowered the violin from his shoulder and tucked it under his left arm, letting the bow swing from a finger on his left hand. Mother looked up from her book. Over in a corner of the room, her head resting on her hand, a little girl was sound asleep.

Laying the violin in its case and hooking the bow in place inside the top, father and mother went quietly to the sleeping child. Tenderly he lifted her in his arms. Mother went ahead of him as they mounted the stairs. She had the covers of their daughter's bed turned down when he reached it. Mother had a way of slipping on the girl's nightie after undressing her. The child hardly stirred. Quietly they went back downstairs.

Such an evening was a pleasant way to close a busy day. When father had returned to the living room he paused, looked at the empty rocker, then at his violin, not revealing his thoughts. Another night mother would accompany him on the piano—something set apart for only the little family of three.

A violin, a little girl, and the sandman.

## *City Parks Caretaker*

For many years, until his retirement, Albert A. Jacobs who, with his family, lived at 120 Esty Street, was caretaker of Ithaca's city parks. All of the parks cannot be recalled at this writing. Among them, however, were DeWitt Park on the northeast corner of Cayuga and Buffalo Streets; Thompson Park on Cayuga Street at the junction with Willow Avenue on the east side of Cascadilla Creek; and the VanHorn, a small park bounded by Cayuga Inlet on the east, West State Street on the South, Seneca Street on the north, and a street paralleling the Inlet. The larger Washington Park, on the east side of the Inlet, was bordered on the west by Washington Street, on the south by Buffalo, on the east by Park Place, and on the north by Court Street.

DeWitt Park was the largest, most attractive, and had the most pedestrian traffic. It was located near the city's business section, a block from the post office, two blocks from the then City Hall, and across the street from Ithaca High School, in later years DeWitt Junior High but abandoned this year. At its northern edge, from Cayuga Street, stood the Presbyterian Church and the Old Courthouse. Those buildings were separated by a concrete walk that gave access to Mill, now Court, Street. Off the northeastern corner of the park was the First Baptist Church. From the church property southward to Buffalo Street was the Conservatory of Music.

Around the park's perimeter were concrete walks. In its center was a large concrete circle, with walks branching diagonally from it to the perimeter. Trees and ornamental shrubs added to the beauty of the park.

In wintertime, when overnight snows covered the sidewalks, DeWitt Park was the caretaker's first thought. Snow shovel over his shoulder, Jacobs was on the job early, "to make a path

for folks to walk.” Widening the walks of snow followed later.

During the summer months Jacobs preferred mowing grass with the manual-type mower, rather than the mechanized type, and trimmed the shrubbery, taking great pride in the park’s neatness. This principle was followed on the smaller parks as well. He serviced the mowers himself, sharpening them to his satisfaction. Many a day he could be seen pushing his lawnmower, upside down in “freewheeling” position, on his way to one of more of the city’s parks. Hot days, when the sun shone mercilessly, with no breeze to temper its rays, bothered him not.

Often he loaded his mower, sickle, rake, trimming shears, sharpening stone and other paraphernalia onto a wheelbarrow, prepared for a long day’s work. The wheelbarrow and tools were inconspicuously hidden among bushes while he worked. If a heavy rainstorm made sidewalks dirty, he was on hand soon afterward to sweep them off.

Thompson Park was triangular in shape, with a few trees and shrubs, but lots of grass. The two sidewalks in the park received the same careful attention as did DeWitt, but the latter was his first concern. There was no walk on the northern end of Thompson.

VanHorn Park, the smallest, required the least attention. Nevertheless, he gave it meticulous care.

Jacobs never smoked while at work, his many friends noted as they hailed him in passing. But when the day’s work was done, and he “had a few minutes” for himself, he filled his corn-cob pipe with Billy Boy tobacco, and enjoyed it. The date of his retirement is not noted.

After Mrs. Jacobs’ death in 1933, he sold his home and lived with some of his children in Syracuse and Groton. He passed away in April 1954, at the age of 84, at the Groton home of his son Lawrence Jacobs.

## *Ithaca's Fire Horses*

The 7 o'clock fire drill at headquarters in Ithaca City Hall attracted many spectators on warm summer evenings in the early 1900s. Fire and police headquarters were located on the ground floor on Seneca Street, with horse stalls, etc., in the rear. Steps directly on the corner of Tioga and Seneca Streets led up to various City Hall offices and volunteer firemen's quarters on the second floor.

High over the corner of the building was an open tower in which hung the big firebell.

Ithaca purchased the first fire horses to draw its apparatus in 1904. The department was not motorized until 1915. Sixteen beautiful, powerful and well-fed horses were purchased and trained in those eleven years. Black Dan was the first, then followed Will and Lee, and so on. The latter were bought from Frank Post of Spencer and were sold to him when the department was motorized.

It was essential that the horses were large and heavy in order to perform the job they were trained for. An example was one team that weighed 2,800 pounds. Small wonder then that when a young boy, who loved horses, saw them at fire drill or in action when answering a fire alarm, his appraisal of the animals knew no bounds. Their strength, beauty and spirit were something the lad never tired of seeing. Often he secretly longed for an opportunity to run his hands over the rippling leg muscles, or stroke their deep, smooth, well-groomed necks and manes, a desire he never achieved.

On summer evenings in good weather the double doors of the fire-apparatus stalls were wide open. Inside, where stood the gleaming fire trucks in separate stalls, it was well lighted.

At the stroke of the deep bass tone of the bell in the tower things came alive around the apparatus. Doors behind the

trucks opened and the horses trotted through into position beside the long tongues of each truck. A driver appeared as quickly as did the horses. Harness was lowered upon their backs, buckled on, bridles slipped into place, and traces fastened to the whiffletrees. The apparatus was ready to roll!

The horses knew exactly what was expected of them and could tell the difference between a drill and an alarm. The former over, they were unharnessed, turned around and returned placidly to their stalls. The fascinated spectators dispersed.

But a fire alarm was another matter. At the stroke of the bell volunteer firemen and drivers in second-floor quarters stepped quickly to a large hole in the floor back of the horse stalls, in the center of which was a perpendicular pole. Down this pole they slid and hurried to their trucks.

When a driver mounted his seat, grasped the reins in both hands, braced his feet and called to his team, the truck was underway. Firemen present stepped quickly upon running boards, grasped hand rails, and were ready for whatever job lay before them. Hats, boots and coats were put on at first opportunity.

Leaving headquarters, the horses were turned in the direction they were called. When straightened away, they were at the gallop. The driver, arms extended, reins held firmly, began rocking his body forward and backward, bringing his team in simultaneous motion. It was a thrilling sight to see horses and driver moving as one, speeding down a street. The incessant ringing of a bell on the truck warned of their coming.

There were three pieces of apparatus about 1911: a hose truck and accessories; a steam pumper that resembled an oversized pop bottle with a short neck, all shimmering chrome, and several pressure gauges; and the long, awesome heavy hook and ladder truck. Each piece of apparatus had its own "personality." When the pumper was working a column of black smoke poured from its short stack. It had a high-pitched whistle which was blown frequently when steam was up.

The hook and ladder truck was so long it was necessary to steer the rear wheels as well as the front. When turning a corner the galloping horses hardly slackened their pace. The helmsman, securely seated behind the big, flat wheel on top



of the ladders, maneuvered the rear end into the intersection, then abruptly brought it back into line again as the truck straightened into another street.

Among the disastrous fires one City Boy saw was one that destroyed the Treman & King hardware store on the southeast corner of State and Cayuga Streets. Firemen worked long, hard hours fighting the blaze that gutted the building, but they prevented the fire from spreading to attached places of business. The basement of the hardware store finally took on the appearance of a very dirty swimming pool with debris floating upon it. In spite of hose crews' efforts, something in the basement at water level on the State Street side continued to burn. Finally, in the late hours of the night, one of the hose crews maneuvered its nozzle in a way that "slapped" the flames and extinguished them. A cheer rose from the weary firefighters.

Another fire the City Boy recalls was the one that consumed the elementary school, corner of Mill and Albany Streets; and another that gutted the Ithaca High School on Cayuga Street between Buffalo and Seneca Streets. In later years the youth presented to the DeWitt Historical Society an enlarged photograph of the burning high school.

The lad's deep love and respect for Ithaca's fire horses remained in his memory for many years, "those loyal horses that never flinched under most trying conditions of stress and strain, and served the Ithaca Fire Department so faithfully," as he interpreted it.

## *Coasting on Buffalo Street Hill*

Ithaca for many years was noted as the city nestled in the hills in the beautiful Finger Lakes Region. East, west and south slopes varied in steepness.

Buffalo Street, on the east side, was one of the steeper hills. There were no parking problems in the era of the 1911-12s. Local activities could be attended without the handicap of wondering where to park.

Winter months especially made Buffalo Street one of the more hazardous hills, from Aurora to Eddy Street. It did, however, have one advantage. Someone conceived the idea that the long hill could frequently be closed to traffic and young people be allowed to coast on their sleds, under police protection.

When a propitious time was decided upon a notice was printed in the newspaper. On a certain night coasting would be permitted on Buffalo Street hill. Police supervised intersections where it was deemed necessary, up until a certain hour. The youngest coasters were given afternoon hours, and older enthusiasts the evening time. No extra illumination was set up beyond the regular street lamps.

This event proved to be very popular. Adults and children who did not coast lined the curbs to watch the fun. And what fun! Spectators were careful to stay on the curbs at Aurora Street intersection, but there was a tendency for them to close in at Tioga Street corner in order to obtain a better view of the coasters coming down the hill. A right of way was maintained, however.

After a few runs the hill became slippery on a cold night. Some coasters started only a block or two up the hill. Those more courageous went up farther. Others pulled their sleds to the top where Buffalo Street ended at Eddy Street. The lat-

ter enjoyed the longer and more thrilling ride, even though it meant a longer walk back to start over again.

Buffalo Street hill had one outstanding feature. At its foot, where the center of the street entered the east side of Aurora Street there was a short, topographic change popularly called "The Bump." The latter was a slight depression in the road, then a sudden rise of medium magnitude. The combination caused fast-travelling coasters to leave the ground. How far they sped through the air and the distance before they landed depended upon their speed.

Some coasted "belly" style, lying prone on their sleds. The flexible flyers carried two or more boys, who sat upright, the front boy being the helmsman.

The more experienced and courageous coasters started at the top of the hill. By the time they reached The Bump they had gained great momentum. Gasps and cheers rose from the spectators as each sled went streaking over it. Surprisingly, there were few "spills," and rarely was anyone injured. It simply was great fun! Each sled came down a safe distance from another.

Probably the greatest excitement was caused when the big bobsled and its crew appeared. Carrying several passengers, the bobs were sturdily built, with narrow, wooden running boards on each side, and a rope for each rider to grasp. When it appeared upon the scene excitement mounted to an even higher pitch.

Starting from Eddy Street, the heavy bobsled and riders increased their speed as they descended the hill. By the time they reached The Bump they seemed almost a blur as they passed under street lamps overhead. The crowd lining curbsides was ready. As the bobs rose into the air the townspeople let go in an ear-splitting yell. The riders kept their seats, the bobs settled to their icy path again and sped on their way.

Some spectators maintained the bobs coasted into the western part of the city. Others, more conservative, thought they may have coasted as far as Albany Street. Two rides a night were about all the bobs made.

One young coaster's sled was homemade. Two heavy boards cut to curve for the front end, were fastened securely to a

crossboard for the top, with braces underneath to stabilize it. Galvanized or some other metal was used for runner shoes. To steer the boy had to dig one toe or the other into the ice to change course.

One afternoon he had started a couple of blocks up the hill, which was his usual coasting limit. Lying prone on his sled, he was well under way when a horse and wagon appeared unexpectedly directly ahead, from a side street. Although the sled was not noted for its speed, it went fast enough for the boy. At sight of the rig he instinctively dug the toes of his shoes into the ice, at the same time spreading his bare hands before him. He was able to pull into the righthand curb and stop before he reached the vehicle.

The driver of the rig asked if he was all right. Getting to his feet, the boy took inventory and "found himself all in one piece"—except that he had a pair of pretty sore hands for a few days afterward.

## *When Dobbin Headed for Home*

Dobbin was a grand old mare. Sorrel in color, she stood about fifteen hands high, with flowing mane and tail. Trained as a pacer, she was a beautiful sight pulling a sulky in her younger days. But the years had slowed her down and she was sold for less strenuous work. She still retained, however, the pacer's mode of stepping, in which the legs on the same side lift together, resulting in a rhythmic, side-to-side rocking motion of her body.

An Ithaca man owned Dobbin for several years. He operated kerosene delivery routes, supplying farmers with fuel for lamps and lanterns. His rig, drawn by Dobbin, was a familiar sight. Dobbin was gentle, loved by every member of the family.

His eldest son often accompanied his father on days when school was out. In fall and winter, when cold winds blew, they sought the protecting side of a haystack, or drove inside a friendly farmer's barn, to eat a light lunch. A warm blanket covered Dobbin. Then, on the way again to complete the day's route. Dobbin knew well many of Ithaca's suburban roads.

When the last stop had been made, and it was time to head for home in the waning hours of the afternoon, Dobbin was ready. Pricking up her ears and lifting her head, she waited for her owner to grasp the reins firmly and say: "Let's go home." Taking the bit in her teeth, she settled into her easy, steady pacer's gait.

Father and son, side by side on the wagon seat, watched the motion of the mare's body, like the timing of a perfect, well-modulated symphony. As she covered the miles of the country road, homeward bound, she seemed to emanate an atmosphere of contentment, minimizing the cares and discomforts of the day.

Hitched to a cutter in wintertime, its runners sliding smoothly over the snow, when the oil rig was "off duty," father and members of the his family, huddled in warm blankets, Dobbin took it in stride. A string of sleighbells strapped around her body made merry music as she moved.

There were places where the snowdrifts made the road impassable. Then Dobbin was guided by a twist of the reins into a field paralleling the drift following a path others had made before them, then back into the road again.

In the summertime the sides of those same roads were lined with wild flowers waving their dainty heads in the warm breezes.

When the day's work was done, Dobbin was unhitched and her harness carefully hung on pegs on the barn wall, later to be inspected and oiled to keep it soft. Dobbin was currycombed and brushed from head to fetlocks until her hair took on a luster that glistened in the light.

Hay and oats were waiting for her in her warm, clean stall. The sound of her jaws crunching as she ate was not unpleasant.

Dobbin, the pacer, was a grand old mare.

## *Father and Son Go Fishing*

Night fishing for bullheads in Fall Creek Cove was fun for an Ithaca Boy and his father in 1912-13. During an evening meal, when Mother, Father and their five daughters and two sons were together, Dad would suggest to his eldest son that bullheads might be biting that night in the Cove. The boy always agreed.

Usually, father and son started out together, but once in a while dad would tell the boy to take his galvanized pail, paraphernalia and lantern and start on ahead; he would be along very soon. It was quite a jaunt from Esty Street, where they lived, to the Cove, but they were used to walking.

In his pail the Boy carried braided, green fishline, extra hooks, lead sinkers, a light blanket, a supply of worms, and sometimes food and homemade candy. His lantern had plenty of kerosene, the wick had been properly trimmed, and matches were in his pocket. The boy was about twelve years old; he knew where to go and that his father would follow.

The lad headed north, cutting across streets that made the trip shorter, until he crossed the Lehigh Valley railroad tracks and reached Johnson's Boat Livery at the foot of Willow Avenue where Cascadilla Creek deepened and turned westward toward Cayuga Inlet.

The sun was near the western hills as he passed the boat livery and headed north on the dirt road that led to the pier jutting into Cayuga Lake. About a quarter of a mile below the boat livery he left the road and took a narrow footpath that wound its crooked way through tall marsh reeds that were level with his head. As he walked into the marsh, the path turned, and he stopped to look about him. In the gathering dusk he could see nothing but reeds. Here and there birds flew noiselessly, seeking their nests for the night.

With the sun behind the hills, dusk of early evening brought a dampness over the marsh. On these occasions the lad became uneasy and wished his father would hurry along. But he knew the marsh was safe and his dad had always come, so he went resolutely on his way.

About halfway through the marsh, as shadows became denser, he heard a voice: "Hello, Sonny!" The boy's spirits brightened—Dad was there. The lad answered and waited for his father to catch up.

Emerging from the marsh, they found themselves on the western bank of Fall Creek Cove, at the edge of the woods, across from Renwick Park. They turned south along the stream, following the well-worn path into the woods. Night sounds were starting as they came to a bend in the stream from the east. There the bank was not as high and the current lazy as it gently swirled in the bend, a good place for bullheads. Darkness was falling. They lost no time preparing their lines. Father never used a fishpole.

Cutting two thin, willowy branches about a yard long from a nearby bush, they trimmed them with jackknives, pointing one end and slotting the other, and bending them to test their spring. They stuck the sticks into the bank close to the water's edge and tied one end of the fishline to each.

There was enough light to see to bait their hooks with worms, test the weight of the lead sinkers tied to the end of the lines, and coil them neatly on the ground at their feet. The boy watched his father balance a length of line with its bait in his hand. Twirling the line clockwise, his father let go of it, and the weighted line sailed toward midstream. Both watched the braided line pay out, unencumbered.

Suddenly the bait and sinker stopped, hung in midair, then a mild splash could be heard as it dropped into the water and sank. Dad grasped the line fastened to the set-stick. When he felt the weight come to rest on the bottom of the stream he slowly took up slack, then pushed the line into the slot in the top of the stick.

Having acquired the same skill from practice, the lad prepared to cast his line. When it too settled to the bed of the stream he slotted it in his set-stick. Four baited hooks were



placed where it was hoped hungry bullheads would take notice. There was no conversation during the baiting and casting. The slow current brought the lines taut as the lead sinkers held. Any quick movement of the sticks would indicate a fish was at the bait.

Lanterns were lit as darkness closed in, and placed beside each stick. In their glow the lines could be easily seen. Dark colored bandana handkerchiefs or cloth was tucked into the lantern frames on the shore side, deflecting their light out over the water.

Bullheads, being slow to take the bait, father and son turned their pails upside down to sit on. Dad filled his corn cob pipe, and the wait began.

Summer nights in Fall Creek Cove were peaceful and serene. No breeze stirred the canopy of leaves overhead. Birds had found their nests and were at rest. Only the night sounds of the forest could be heard as early evening deepened into the long night. Somewhere nearby a frog began his throaty solo, now and then a small fish broke the water's surface, and myriads of insects played around the lantern's light. This was the peace of Nature at night.

Father's eyes were ever alert, watching the lines. Sometimes he would quietly tell his son a water snake was a moving spot that looked to him like a small piece of wood moving in the current. Apprehensive, father assured his son the snake would not harm him. Dad picked up a small twig and tossed it toward the moving head. The slight disturbance in the water was sufficient to cause the snake promptly to change course and disappear.

Sometimes the lad would stretch out full length on his blanket and gaze upwards through the treetops to the dark sky above, where stars twinkled. He wondered about many things, and fell asleep to awaken with a start as he heard father moving toward his setline and in a low voice say he had a bite!

And there were times when they would talk in low tones. When dad's line jerked he grasped it in his hand. With a quick movement he hauled in the line, hand over hand, saying "I've got something!" There was a splashing in the water as he pulled in a good-sized bullhead, the first of a nice catch be-

tween them to take home for a family meal. By midnight dad said it was time to go home; they pulled in their lines and soon were on the homeward trek.

Now and then on other nights they would spot someone else's lantern bobbing toward them. Another night angler came along. There would be a short, quiet conversation, and the stranger passed on.

## *The Arc Street Lamp*

Among the arc street lamps used in the City of Ithaca around 1910 was one at the intersection of Albany and Esty Streets. The luminous electric current reaching from one carbon point to another produced a white, sometimes sputtering light that shone through a large white translucent globe. It was a vast improvement over its forerunner, the coal-oil lamp.

Regular care was required to maintain its efficiency. A "care-rent reaching from one carbon point to another produced a white light that shone through a large translucent, white globe. It was a vast improvement over its forerunner, the coal-oil lamp.

Regular care was required to maintain its efficiency. A "care-taker," making his scheduled rounds, lowered the lamp to about waist level by means of a chain which he unhooked from a power pole at street curbside. Repairs made, the lamp was hauled up again, the chain fastened, and the lamp was ready for another night.

It may well have been called a friendly light. During the early evening hours in summertime children in the neighborhood laughed and played their games in its glow, or watched the moths and insects flit about the glowing globe in tireless confusion.

After the children had been called home by watchful parents, only the fluttering moths stayed on while the street arc lamp kept its silent vigil, penetrating the deep shadows of the night.

## *Cutting Ice for the Icebox*

Around 1912, the icebox was an essential household utility in Ithaca. The icebox was sturdily built, heavy, and served for refrigeration of foodstuffs. Its function, however, depended upon keeping a cake of ice in the top compartment.

Ithaca Ice & Coal Company harvested and sold ice to local homes the year around. The company had its office and storage facilities in the extreme southwestern part of the city. Lehigh and Lackawanna railroad tracks crossed Six Mile Creek, with sidings conveniently located south of West State Street. There was a pond near the company's buildings.

During the winter months, when ice froze to a foot or more in thickness, employees cut it into specified squares with cross-cut saws, and loaded it on bobsleds drawn by teams of horses to the storage building. There it was packed in liberal quantities of sawdust to preserve it for future delivery. One cake of ice was heavy enough for one man to handle at a time. Heavy ice tongs were used by the men.

The company distributed ice picks made of iron, upon which were the words "Compliments of Ithaca Ice & Coal Co., Distilled Water and Ice." The handle of the pick was about four inches long and the size of a broom handle. Below the handle extended the pick, about an eighth of inch in diameter, with a sharp point on its end. Workmen used it to chip off surplus ice or snow.

Ice was delivered to homes on order, or customers could cash and carry at the storage building. Delivering it, the iceman grasped a cake with tongs and with a husky swing lifted it to the top of the icebox and dropped it in. If it did not fit the compartment, the ice pick was used to chip off protruding edges.

Homemade ice cream was a common delicacy in Ithaca homes in those days. Mother made the mix and poured it into

a heavy gallon-sized can that fitted the center of a wooden bucket, with room for chipped ice and rock salt between the can and the bucket. A bar with a gear locked across the top meshed with a gear on top of the can. A handle on one end of the crossbar enabled one to turn the center can. A dasher inside the container kept the mix in motion.

Children of a family took turns "cranking." As the mix froze the handle turned harder. Each expressed his or her opinion as to when the ice cream was ready, but Mother made the final decision. Then the crossbar and the top of the can were carefully lifted off.

"Ohs" and "Ahs" of approval were heard. But before anything was done, the dasher had to be withdrawn. Ice cream adhering to it was spooned off and put back into the container. Then someone licked off what little was left on the dasher.

Generous dishes of ice cream were served, and the top of the container replaced. Burlap and ice were laid over the top of the bucket to help keep it cold for the next serving.

"The next serving" was never a long time, especially when strawberries were spread over the ice cream, or a shortcake, was served, topped with ice cream.

Cutting natural ice in winter, when breath of the men and horses froze into small vapor clouds, disappeared, to be replaced by more, was the beginning of the journey of a cake of ice, most of which melted in the icebox and became water in a pan on the floor under it.

## *Dad's "Ponies"*

The spring of 1910 was giving way to early summer. A ten-year-old boy sat alone on the front seat of an open-boxed wagon. The team of horses hitched to it stood quietly, headed south. The rig was on Titus Avenue, a short half block from West State Street in the City of Ithaca. The Lehigh Valley railroad tracks were close by.

There was nothing unusual about it. Standing rigs with horses hitched to them and a child sitting alone on the seat was a familiar sight. One might have noticed that the team was smaller in stature than the average horse, therefore, not quite as tall, but they stood quietly. Nor were they tethered to the usual ten-pound weight and strap that could be snapped to a bridle to keep horses from wandering while their owners were on an errand.

The boy's father had left the wagon, with his eldest son in it, with the assurance that he would be right back. It had occurred before. The boy was unafraid. He had a growing love for horses. The reins were tied to the whip socket near the floor of the wagon.

The lad's father liked to call the team his "ponies," using the reference loosely in the sense that they were smaller than the average horse. They were well matched and worked well as a team.

Suddenly there was a loud, startling report, like that of a rifle being fired. The boy was unable to tell its source. It frightened the horses as well as the boy. The animals lunged, and started running. The boy lost his balance, fell backward and over the side of the wagon. He landed heavily on his side on the pavement and felt the left rear wheel pass over the soles of his shoes. Someone shouted "runaway!"

It was over almost as soon as it started. A quick-witted

passerby had caught the bridle of one of the horses and calmed them down, holding them firmly.

The boy looked up from where he lay to see his father bending over him, a worried look on his face. He anxiously asked his son if he was hurt, putting an arm around the lad as he did so.

Sitting up on the road, the youngster looked about him. A short distance away stood the team of "ponies" and the wagon. He turned his head in the negative, said he was just scared as he was helped to his feet. Luckily, the wagon wheel had passed over the soles of his shoes when his feet were parallel with the pavement, and he was not injured.

Father and son walked back to the wagon. The parent talked with the man who had stopped the team and still had a firm hold on the bridle. The horses had quieted down and stood swishing their tails. Dad thanked the man, who went on his way.

Standing between the horses, at the tip of the wagon tongue, father stroked the horses' heads. Then lifted his son, who put a foot on the tongue and leaned against his father. Together they gently passed their hands over the heads and necks of of the team, and the boy ran his fingers through their manes.

Then father and son took their places on the wagon seat. Dad picked up the reins, spoke quietly to the horses, and they moved away.

Long after his father sold the team they remained in the boy's memory—his Dad's pair of "ponies," small in stature but big in heart.

## *The Swayback*

Horses were very much in evidence in the early 1900s. An Ithaca boy's father owned several at different times, never adapting himself to the approaching age of the automobile.

No two horses the lad's father owned were alike, although all were gentle and never gave his children cause to be afraid of them. Nor were any of them the same in appearance.

One horse in particular made a lasting impression upon the boy. It was popularly termed a "swayback." It was well applied

and in no way enhanced the beauty of the animal. From the horse's shoulders to its rear quarters its back had so definitely a curve as to be readily noticeable. Its back just seemed to hang there. So pronounced was the sway that it attracted instant attention from passersby when drawing a wagon on city streets. Its deformity, however, (if that is the proper term), had no effect on the horse's manners—in fact to the boy the animal seemed to want to please the lad. Nor was it a "hurry-up" horse, either.

The lad was too young to know the circumstances involved with the purchase of the swayback by his father. And he could never recall a time when the latter spoke unkindly to the animal. It was always given the same careful attention any other horse his father owned. But the swayback was marked for life.

Dusty white in color, the boy's father frequently put his son astride the ungainly-looking creature. The boy, whose developing love for horses was growing deep, was not frightened of the animal.

Anger and resentment welled within his small breast when the boy heard a remark like "What a homely-looking old nag!" On such occasions its owner never failed to defend the animal, paying it a compliment like "You couldn't ask for a nicer, all-round horse."

Faithful to the requirements of its owner, the swayback loved to lower its head when the boy spoke to it and the lad would stroke the broad neck and run his fingers through its mane—to him it was, and always would be, "The Swayback," a kind and gentle horse that served his father well.

## *Beebe Lake and Winter Fun*

During the winter months about 1913 Cornell University students and Ithacans enjoyed skating and tobogganning on Beebe Lake. A small, picturesque placid body of water, it lay east of Thurston Avenue bridge that spanned Fall Creek gorge. A winding road on the south side of the lake ran through woods thick with evergreen trees from Thurston Avenue, near the lake shore, to Forest Home, a hamlet on the northeastern fringe of Ithaca.

A City Boy was among those who enjoyed the winter fun on the lake. There were wooden benches along the edge of the skating area upon which one could sit while putting on skates.

Many used a type of skate that clamped to the soles and heels of a shoe by use of a key. Usually, a strap also was used from the heel up over the instep.

That kind of skate was fine if soles and heels of shoes were in good shape. But if they were worn, the clamps did not always stay fastened securely and worked loose. That caused many a skater considerable annoyance and frequently a fall on the ice.

There were good, fair and poor skaters, but all seemed to have a good time. An accomplished skater made good use of the opportunity to enjoy his skill, as well as demonstrate his prowess. Two skaters often teamed up, clasped hands with arms crossed in front of each other, and skated in pairs, their rhythmic sway being nice to watch.

“The Whip” was usually executed sooner or later. A long line of skaters grasped hands and started skating forward. When they had gained considerable momentum one end of the line stopped, while the rest of the line graduated its speed. Those on the far end had no choice but to hang on as long as they could to complete the whip, or were forced to let go. In



which event they were on their own, either to coast along by momentum or fall and slide some distance on the ice.

Skating on Beebe Lake was fun.

But so was the toboggan slide, of a different sort. The big slide was a network of metal, built between the road and the lake, along the lake shore. A flat space on the high end permitted loading the toboggans. From the top the slide slanted to the lake shore, steep enough to push a loaded toboggan across the lake to the farther shore.

The runway of the slide was packed with cakes of ice on both sides, as well as the runway, leaving just room enough to keep the toboggan in line.

The city lad's first choice usually was skating. Once in a while, however, he wanted the thrill of the slide. His skates were the clamp-on type and now and then came loose. He rode the toboggan with friends.

His first ride although successful, taught him some "musts" in safety. Each passenger had to sit on the toboggan so that no part of his body exceeded the width of it, to be free of the packed ice on the sides. The boy was not advised of that precaution, but wound his arms outside his legs when he sat in position.

When the toboggan was well on its way, his elbows began bumping against the ice cakes. Too late to correct the error, they bumped all the way down.

After the ride was over and he and his companions got off the toboggan, he found that, although no serious harm was done, he had two badly bruised elbows. Henceforth, he saw to it that he was properly seated before the toboggan started its run down the slide.

## *Regattas on Cayuga's Waters*

The annual Cornell University regattas on Cayuga Lake were gala occasions, as recalled by an Ithaca boy around 1915. Cornell students and city residents turned out en masse gathering on the east shore of the lake, just below Renwick Park, to watch the colorful spectacle. Cayuga's waves lapped a rocky shoreline close to the railroad tracks for several miles. East of the tracks the land sloped sharply upward, the hillside affording ideal bleachers where spectators could sit and watch part of the races and the finish line.

When the winter chill was gone and spring winds foretold warmer weather, Cornell crews and coaches began training on Cayuga Inlet. The racing shells and equipment were housed in a building on the Inlet. Several crews prepared to meet competing oarsmen from other universities.

When the lake's surface was calm, the crews ventured out upon it, keeping mostly toward the east shore. The coxswain in the stern of a racing shell with a short megaphone fastened over his mouth, could be heard timing his oarsmen and instructing them. Their long oars skimmed close to the surface as they bent forward, then disappeared as they dipped them for the pull.

Regatta Day brought a flurry of excitement. The Lehigh Valley Railroad made up a long line of open cars with built-in bleachers running the length of each car. This brought the cars and bleachers parallel with the race course and the shoreline. Tickets for seats sold fast.

When the cars were loaded, in the western part of the city, the train backed slowly down the tracks to the regatta starting point. The crack of a gun signaled the start of a race and the train of spectators moved slowly forward, giving those on board full view of a race from beginning to the end.

The slope of the east bank afforded a huge crowd an excellent view of the finish line. When the train's whistle sounded on the evening air, spectators on the hillside knew a race was underway.

If the wind was too strong at announced starting time of the regatta, the first race was delayed sometimes until nearly sundown, making the scene even more picturesque. Then the shimmering rays of the sun's golden path across the water from the western hills was broken only by boats moving to and fro, or drifting slowly before anchored. Many boats of all kinds lined the race course, policed by officials' launches.

The freshman race opened the regatta, continuing through one following another until the final varsity contest. Rarely did winning crews lead from the start. Shells see-sawed back and forth, usually leaving the winner in doubt until the final few feet. When a shell and its straining oarsmen crossed the finish line a length, or barely ahead of its nearest competitor, excitement ran high. Cheers and the sound of horns blowing filled the air, more loudly when the home crews won, while oarsmen slumped in their seats from exhaustion, the speed of their shell suddenly slackened as if it, too, was content to stop.

The regatta over, the train moved away and spectators on the hillside closed in over the tracks to walk singly or in pairs back home or to waiting vehicles.

Cornell crews in the early 1900s were widely known for their victories and were formidable adversaries for competitors.

## *The "Gas House"*

The "Gas House" was what the neighborhood boys and girls called it in the 1909-12s. And the "gas tank" stood close by. They covered about a third of the east side of Plain Street, between Mill and Esty Streets. Between the "gas house" and residences toward Albany Street was an open field which was used by children as a "short cut" between Esty and Mill Streets.

A low, brick building from Esty Street to the larger building on Mill Street contained tons of soft coal. Its open windows permitted frequent delivery to maintain a sufficient supply of fuel for the row of furnaces in the connecting building on Mill.

During the summer months a door on Plain Street, opening upon the furnace room and coal bins, stood open. Boys would gather just inside, where they could watch the men stoke the ever-hungry furnaces. It was hot in the big room and the men's arms and faces were covered with coal dust and were heavy with perspiration from scooping up the coal with short-handled shovels. They were adept at their work and never missed their mark as they fed coal through the open furnace door, then quickly closed it again to shut out sight of the roaring flames within.

Between stokings, the men would talk with the boys, sometimes about their own work, sometimes about how the boys were progressing with their studies in school.

The "gas tank" was on Esty Street, close to the coal building. The boys were always curious as they watched the "inside" tank rise and fall so slowly they could not see it move. Someone told them there was pressure within that caused the action.

A large stationary tank, half as high as the other, had a "catwalk" around the top, and a hand rail. Frequently one could see a man up there on a tour of inspection.

Such was the experience of a boy who liked to watch the “gas house” but who did not know its purpose, except that he was told “they make gas there.”

## *Penny Ice Cream Cones*

“Here comes the Ice Cream Man!”

That excited shout was not unusual on early summer evenings in the neighborhood of Albany, Esty, Cascadilla and Mill Streets around 1912. Children playing on the sidewalks and in the streets sighted the rig and hurried home to coax a penny, or sometimes two, from their parents.

A penny for an ice-cream cone! A common commodity in those days. The diameter of the top of the cone was only about the size of a quarter, but when a generous scoop of ice cream was adroitly set into the cavity it became a delicious refreshment.

The rig was drawn by a horse that never was in a hurry—patience personified! The wagon was built with closed compartments along each side, with an aisle in the center, from which the Ice Cream Man dispensed his wares. Inside the compartments was a quantity of bulk ice cream in metal containers packed in chipped ice. Cones were carefully packaged by themselves. There was a framework on top of the compartments, part of which was glass, with openings on each side.

From this small emporium the owner filled his numerous orders for penny ice-cream cones. An urgent group seemed always about him.

Where the Ice Cream Man came from and whither he went, the children seemed not to care. Nor did they know his name. They were satisfied to obtain their penny ice-cream cone, and enjoy it to the full. Those with two pennies were doubly elated.

## *The Five-Cent Movie*

The Happy Hour Theater was one of Ithaca’s popular theaters in the 1912s. Although it was still the age of the silent movies, it was enjoyed by old and young alike. Located on the

second floor over what was then a public library on the corner of Tioga and Seneca Streets, it was typical of many another theater of its day. Entrance was from Tioga Street. Admission was five cents.

For a nickel, one could stay through the second show, if he wished. Generally, however, if a person arrived after the evening show had begun, he stayed through until he had seen the entire program. There was a short intermission between shows.

There were the serious silents, and the comedy silents, a combination to make up an evening's entertainment.

A pianist was engaged, who accompanied the picture with more or less enthusiasm. If the scene was serious, the music took a serious note; allegro, fortissimo, crescendo, or smooth and soothing, depending upon the scene on the screen.

Now and then the music stopped while the audience read the words. In the silence the click of the projector in the booth could be heard as it slowly pulled the film from one reel to another.

The Happy Hour Theater—a haven of happiness in the days of yore—an evening's entertainment for five cents!

## *Recollections*

**RENWICK PARK**—privately owned until 1921, on the shore of Cayuga Lake north of Ithaca. Families enjoyed picnics there in summer, band concerts, swimming, and general recreation. A wooden pier extended some distance from shore. Another pier at right angles from it, housed a number of private pleasure boats. A picturesque park, it was fringed on the south by thick woods, on the west by Cayuga Inlet.

**LAKE TOURS**—a steamboat, "The Frontenac," plied Cayuga Lake waters from Buffalo Street landing in Cayuga Inlet in the city to Glenwood Hotel, Frontenac Point and points between. It had a good tourist trade. The tour furnished excellent views of the lake and its shores in the early 1900s.

**TOMPKINS COUNTY FAIR**—covering a number of acres southwest of Ithaca, across Meadow Street bridge at Six Mile Creek. The separate vehicle and pedestrian entrances kept ticket sellers busy. There were fine exhibits of farm machinery, flowers, and numerous others; sulky horse racing on the race track, vaudeville shows in front of the grandstand, and the Midway at night.

**BUTTERMILK AND ENFIELD FALLS**—south of Ithaca, reached by the Five Mile Drive. Enfield Falls is several miles beyond Buttermilk. Ideal for picnics. Trails lead up and down the gorges, among the trees, bushes and wildflowers.

**FALL CREEK COVE**—west of Cayuga Street and the Lehigh Valley Railroad tracks, Fall Creek deepened into a wide stream that wound its way slowly through the thick woods, finally to empty into Cayuga Lake. In the deeper waters of the cove were sunfish, perch, carp, bullheads and eels, that tempted anglers night and day. Narrow, well-worn footpaths wound their way among tall trees that furnished refuge for many species of birds whose songs could be heard all summer long.

Rabbits made their homes among the undergrowth. Picturesque and serene, Fall Crook Cove extended along the extreme southern and western sides of Renwick Park.

AMONG BUSINESS PLACES recalled in the early 1900s were Treman & King, hardware; R. C. Osborn & Co., variety store; Atwater's, grocery; Todd & Blackmer, drygoods; Buttrick & Frawley, men's clothing; Heggie's, jewelry store, all on State Street; Miller Paper Co., Corner Book Store on Tioga Street; Gas & Electric Corp., Lent's Music Store on South Cayuga Street; D. B. Stewart & Co., South Tioga Street; Conservatory of Music, Buffalo Street; Ithaca Hotel, Clinton House; Ithaca Gun Co., "Gun Hill Road"; Wharton Movie Studios at Renwick Park.

THEATERS—Strand, Temple, Star, Happy Hour, Lyceum. The latter showed "Birth of a Nation," and stock companies.

FIRE STATIONS—City Hall, College Avenue, West State Street, North Tioga Street (after 1915).

SLEET STORMS in winter sometimes covered the snow with ice and children in residential areas skated on it.

ITHACA FALLS—at western end of Fall Creek gorge. Noted for their beauty year around. Water tumbled down in white foam in early spring, reduced to a trickle in dry weather, and water froze in winter as it cascaded over the long descent of rocks. Not accessible for picnics.

HORSE CHESTNUT TREES—large, sturdy trees loaded with blossoms in spring, matured into brown nuts with hard shells about half the size of a golf ball. Trees scattered about the city. Children gathered nuts and carved faces on them.

CIRCUS—arrived in town by railroad. Men, women and children were on hand at dawn to watch it unload and prepare for performances. Elephants used in moving wagons and setting up big tents after they disembarked.

PERCY FIELD—northern end of Ithaca just across Fall Creek bridge near Ithaca Falls. Popular for school athletics, baseball and football games.

TROLLEY CAR BARN—located at foot of State Street Hill, next to Six Mile Creek.

ELECTRIC LIGHT BULBS—long-shaped and clear. The filament



was easily visible. They cast a yellow-white light of small wattage.

**OIL LAMPS AND LANTERNS**—used coal oil or kerosene by many households in early 1900s. The lamp base was glass and held the kerosene and wick. The latter, saturated with fluid, extended upward through the burner. Its glass chimney was clear unless flame was turned too high, then it charred. Lamps had to be cleaned and replenished daily. Lantern had metal bottom for oil, wick same as the lamp. The lantern chimney tilted outward in its frame when raised to light the wick.

**FRITZ KRIESLER**—renowned violinist, gave concert in Bailey Hall on the northern end of Cornell University campus; about 1919. Students and Ithacans attended. Seats sold out. A City Boy was in the audience. In the middle of a solo the lights suddely went out, throwing the large auditorium into total darkness. Kriesler and his accompanist kept on playing as if nothing unusual had happened. Just before the solo ended, the lights came on again. Kriesler received tremendous applause. The tall, solemn-featured virtuoso calmly acknowledged it with bow after bow. He finished without further incident.

**BICYCLES AND A BROKEN COLLARBONE**—two Ithaca boys, chums of long standing, about fifteen years old, pedaled their way to Enfield Glen one day about 1915. Arriving at the lower falls, they dismounted and pushed their bikes to the top of the hill in the Glen. After exploring the woods a while they were ready to go home. They had just mounted their bicycles when one of them got out of control. The runaway bike gained too much speed for its rider to stop or get off. The small vehicle jumped a ditch and came to rest solidly against a fallen sapling. The rider went headlong over the handlebars, landing with a thud on the debris-covered ground. When the boys straightened matters out, the unruly bicycle seemed undamaged, but its rider suffered a broken collarbone. The healthy lads met the situation courageously. The uninjured boy put a bike on each side of him and wheeled them along afoot, leaving the injured lad unencumbered. They hiked back to Ithaca without riding, and went at once to a doctor. The latter found the bone only cracked. He strapped the boy's left arm to his chest, where it remained until the bone healed. The chums took the accident

in stride, but the runaway bike was not ridden again for several weeks.

**A SMALL FLOOD**—Monday night, March 22, 1942, a creek flowing from the east into Groton village in the rear of lots at the edge of the business district of Main Street became clogged during a heavy thunderstorm. Water washed out driveways as it poured into the street. A muddy stream flowed northward down Main Street from curb to curb, threatening the Smith-Corona portable typewriter plant and other business places and homes. Police aroused residents in the immediate area, who worked from 1 a.m. to 3 a.m. in an effort to avoid more extensive damage. It took hours to clean up the sticky, brown mud, most of which was put back into the washed-out driveways.

**LIGHTNING KILLS TWO PIGS**—a terrific thunderstorm broke over the village of Groton about 10:30 on the morning of August 9, 1942. Lightning struck a 22,000-volt electric power line in a field at the rear of an upper Spring Street residence. The high-voltage line burned a hole in the ground, causing huge flares of many-colored lights, the reflection of which could be seen for a mile or more. The bolt hit and travelled along an electric fence, killing two pigs en route to another upper Spring Street residence, where it spent its fury without further harm.

**TROLLEY CARS**—five cents was the fare for riding Ithaca's trolley cars in the early 1900s. There were trolley tracks on West State Street, North Tioga Street to Renwick Park, East State Street, Eddy Street, Stewart Avenue, Thurston Avenue. There were enclosed and open models of cars. One of the busiest lines was East State and Eddy Streets, especially at certain hours of the day when Cornell University students rode up the hill after their shopping trips into the city. Sometimes the trolleys were filled to capacity. A City Boy, riding a trolley on an errand after school for Todd and Blackmer, drygoods merchants, wondered how the conductor managed to collect all of the fares at such times. Somehow, he always accomplished it. Relatively small cars, the lad was glad of an opportunity to watch the motorman manipulate the power and brake controls in the front vestibule of a car, or tap the toe of his shoe hard on a loose rod in the floor which rang a bell to warn of the trolley's approach.