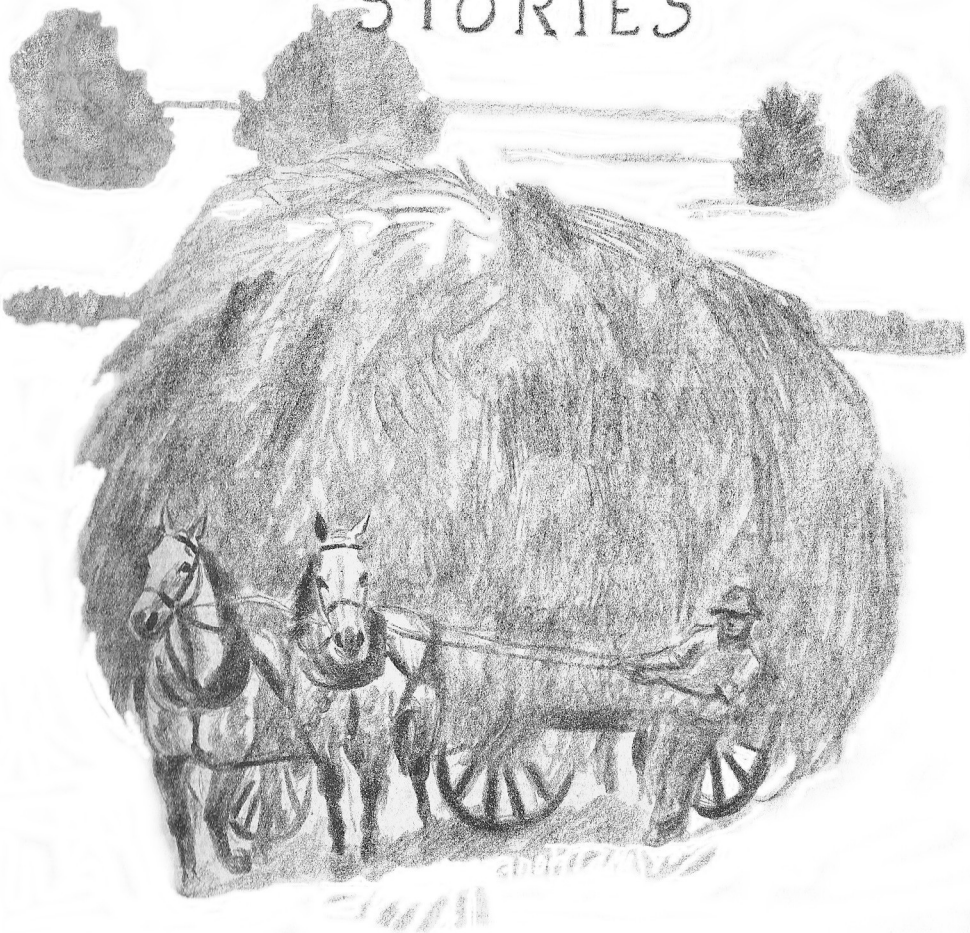
BUCKS COUNTY FARM STORIES



By Phoebe Taylor

From the recollections of
Miriam Broadhurst

BUCKS COUNTY

FARM STORIES

Printed by Doylestown Printing

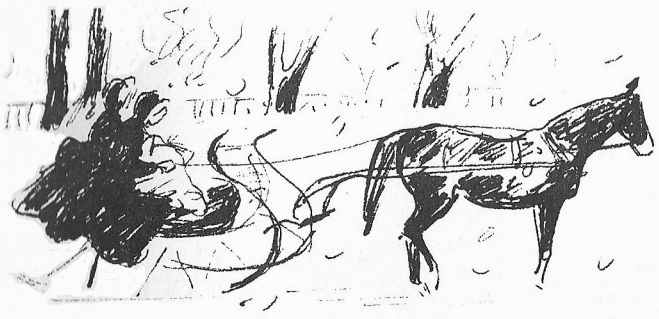
for the Holicong Studio
First Printing 1971
Second Printing 1982

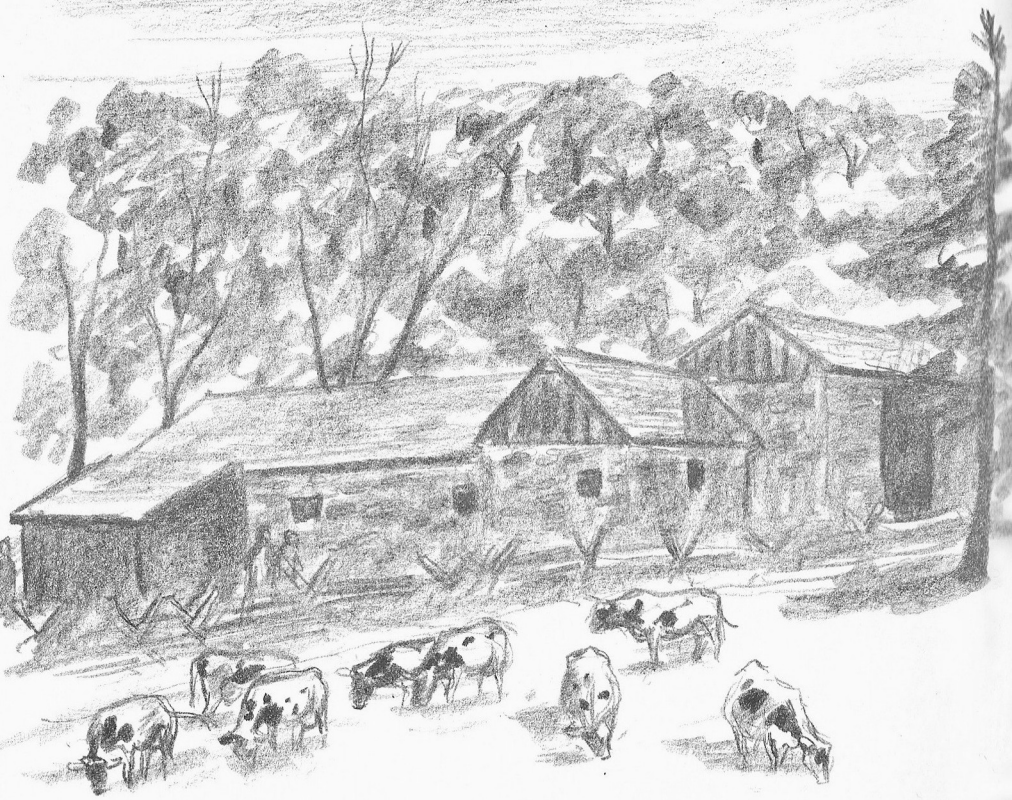
BUCKS COUNTY
FARM STORIES

By Phoebe Taylor

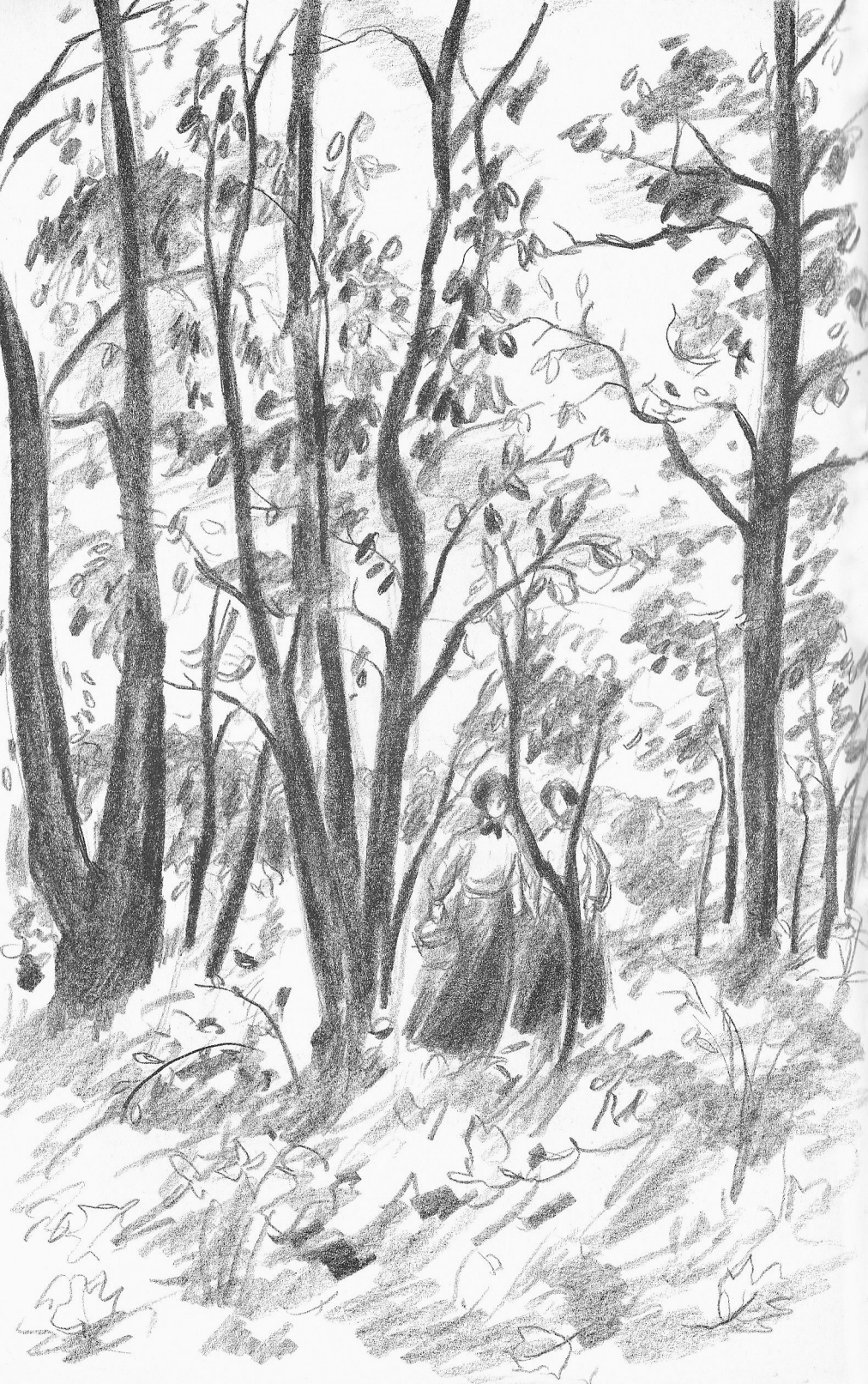
Illustrated by the Author

From the Recollections of
Miriam Broadhurst





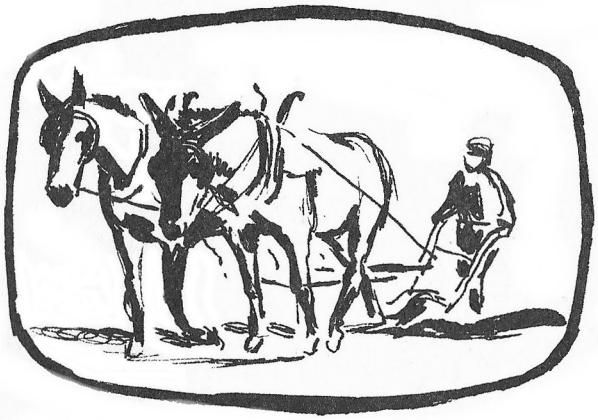
To my husband
Leslie



FOREWORD

During childhood visits to my grandmother's farm I often walked to the next farm to see cousins Mirriam and Nellie. The shady green trees, white picket fence and the cool house with a special fragrance all blend together in my memory.

Now, many years later, Miriam Broadhurst has spent pleasant hours telling me stories of her life on the farm where she was born and lived through the tremendous changes of these last years. With almost total recall she has related incidents of the past and with the same clarity of mind discusses problems of the present and future. I hope that her true tales of "Tommy Boy", "Whitey, the Mule", and "Charlie" and others will be of as much interest to readers of this book as they have been to me.



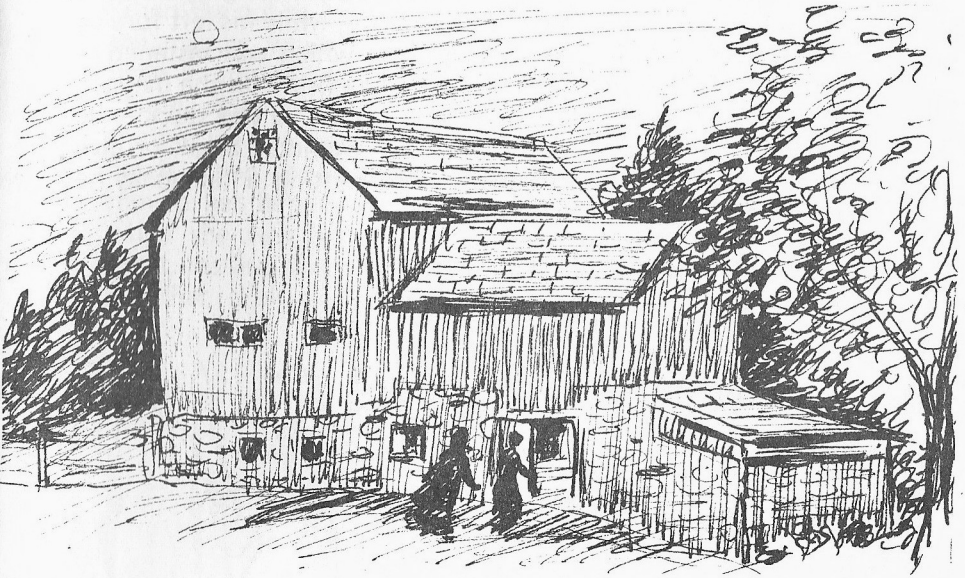
CONTENTS

TOMMY BOY

Long after father died, Nellie and I ran the farm, with the help of Elwood, who walked over in the early morning, worked throughout the day until the horses and cows were fed and bedded down in the evening, and then walked home again, leaving us alone. If anything happened at night there was no one to call. Elwood didn't have a telephone and we couldn't walk across the frozen fields in winter (we did this just once at 2:00 in the morning), skirt the tall corn in summer, or slosh through the mud of spring. So we listened at night to the sounds of the animals and the wind. They blended with our dreams, but anything unusual woke us immediately.

Bump, thump, bump! "What's that?" I sat up in bed and called Nellie. I could hear the bed creak and the scrape of slippers on the floor, then Nellie appeared in my doorway . . . tall, straight, already decisive. Even though her silhouette was all I could see in the gloom, I felt her authority.

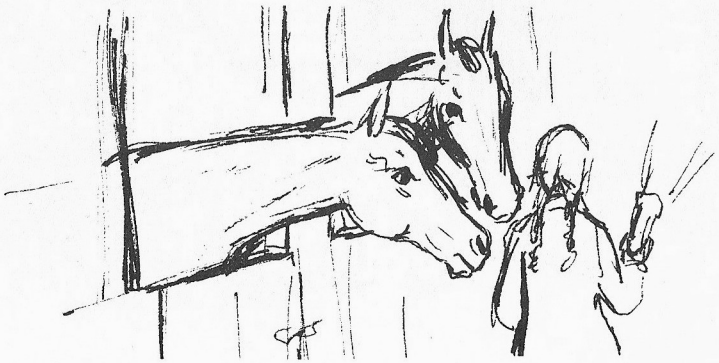
"It's Tommy Boy again," she said, "It sounds just like the last time he caught his leg in the strap."

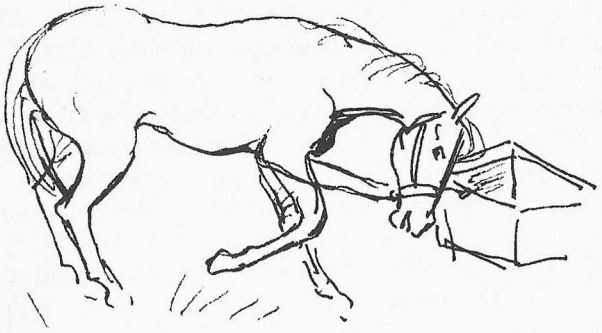


"All right," I said, "I'm coming," and I pulled myself out of bed and slid into the slippers left in front of the chair every night in case of emergency. At the foot of the stairs I had left my raincoat to fasten over my nightgown. Nellie was moving impatiently down the hall and I hurried after her. In the kitchen I picked up the flashlight and without turning on any lights we unlatched the door and walked out into the darkness. It must have been about 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning. A pale light shown from a small crescent moon and the grey barn looked gloomy against the black trees beyond.

"Now thee do exactly as I tell thee," said Nellie (nothing could have persuaded me to do otherwise). I walked along the path with her until we reached the barn. The thumping was louder and I was frightened, but determined to do whatever I was told.

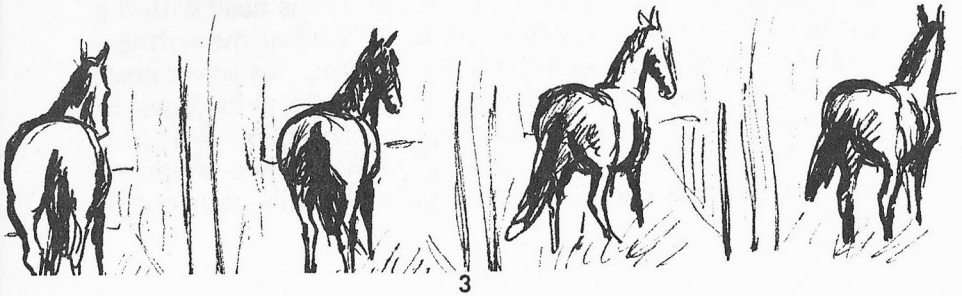
"Go in front of the horses by the manger and shine thy light exactly where I say – now go." I walked up the stone step to the entryway and down the corridor. There were four stalls for the four horses and each was secured by a rope or strap. Demi was first, getting up and blinking at my light, then Nate moving his old head sleepily, then Bess the handsome dark chestnut who kicked viciously, and finally Tommy Boy, bumping about unhappily on three feet, hitting against the far wall, throwing his head up and down, while his left foreleg dangled uncomfortably over the strap which was fastened at one end of his halter and the other to a hook on the manger. He had put his foot over the strap and now he was stuck – he couldn't get it back, and the leather wouldn't break or give way. Only his rear feet were free, beating a tattoo as he swung his haunches back and forth.





"Where is Nellie," I worried. But I stood still as I promised, my light focused on the manger. There was the sound of a latch lifted and I knew she must have gone around the outside of the wall through the barn yard and opened the door to the corridor back of the four stalls. I held my breath as I caught sight of her shadowy figure moving steadily along behind the horses . . . Demi . . . Nate . . . Bess, the demon. My heart seemed to poise between beats, waiting for her to get by those lethal hooves. Not a move out of Bess. I exhaled my breath and watched her come to Tommy Boy. He was so tall, towering above her diminutive figure. She put her hand on his haunch, along his back, and up to his withers.

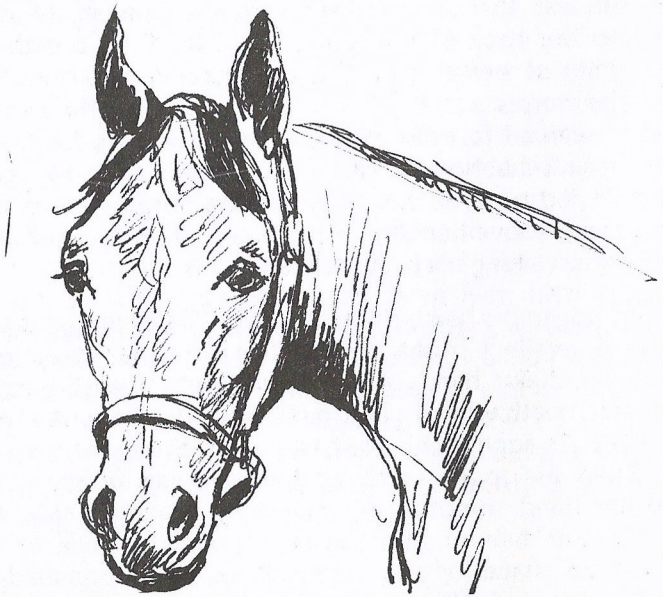
When she got to his head, she whispered, "Turn the light over the manger while I unsnap this." The light was wavering a little in my shaky hands as she deftly unsnapped the catch. "Now underneath while I get it out." I steadied it as she freed the big leg. As soon as his foot was down she re-snapped the catch. Then she spoke softly to him. He was quiet, so she moved her hand smoothly up his neck, along his side, and when she was behind him she calmly walked back of the great, restless shapes again . . . Bess, Nate, Demi. She made it. Another click and I knew she was safely out in the yard.



As I turned to go, there was a great rattling of a chain. I shivered and almost bolted down the corridor. The bull was in the stall on the other side and only the rattling chain, a manger, and low wooden wall separated me from his snuffling, fearful bulk. Using all my will power, I managed to subdue my feeling of panic and not run. At the door I walked out sedately to meet Nellie.

"Turn thy light off," she said, "There's enough moonlight to guide us to the house."

I flicked off the switch and walked in and up stairs to my room, placing my rain coat and slippers within reach again in case of another emergency. Lying there, looking up at the canopy over my bed, the white ruffles grey in the night, I



thought about Tommy Boy, his big handsome head with the white snip down his velvet nose, remembering the softness and warmth as he rubbed it against my arm. The velvet nose, the velvet night. We were young enough in those days to throw off quickly the excitement of a crisis and drift into sleep until we woke early next morning to the sound of roosters crowing and Elwood clanging the milk pails out in the barn.

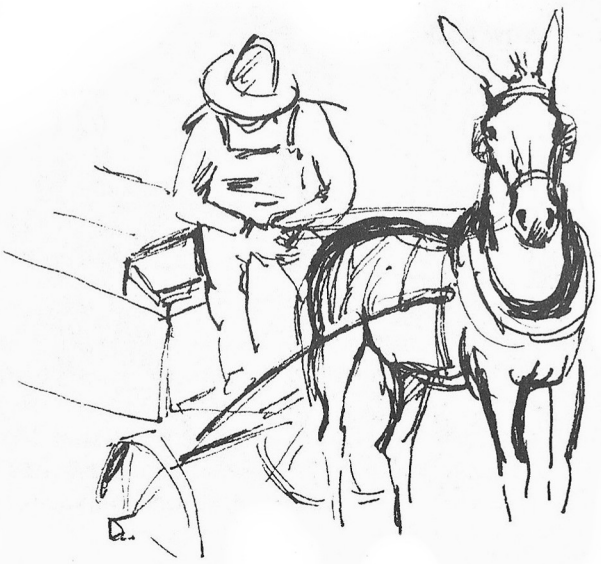
BYCOT ROAD

"The Squire Paxson's coming! Run, get under the bridge!" The three of us were fishing in the creek when we saw the tall figure with the cane come out of the lane beside the white-washed fence and turn down the path along Bycot Road. Bill, Jane and I ran under the dome of the bridge and huddled together until we heard footsteps on the wooden planks. They stopped directly over our heads. "Rat-ta-tat-tat," went the cane. The squire was signalling to us that he knew exactly where we were and what we had been doing – fishing in his creek.

I don't know why we were afraid of him – I can't remember his ever getting after us – just the signal with his cane on the wooden bridge. But we stayed silently waiting until he had walked along the bank to the top of the hill and had disappeared over the other side toward the station, before we came out. Bycot Road (now Holicong Road) was a sea of mud in those days but the path along the bank where people walked, was carefully cindered and the grass scythed so closely that it was as smooth as the lawns around the houses. In early summer there were wild strawberries to gather as we walked, making it very pleasant to go from the school to the railroad. It was pleasant, at least, when we weren't chased by a school boy who threw rocks at us.

The path started beside the school, then bordered the Squire Paxson property and the Anna Atkinson property. On the other side there was the Broadhurst farm extending to Canada Hill Road (now Upper Mountain Road) and then the palatial home of Judge Edward Paxson and his wife Mary Martha Stop Bridges Paxson. It was Judge Paxson who built the little Bycot station from his own stone – it was really his private stop. He lived in town on Walnut Street in the winter, spending the spring and summer in the country. Food was sent him from the Bycot station all during the time they were living in the city.

The road in front of these lovely homes, the Bycot Road, was so bad that the four families decided to combine efforts and build a solid road. To this day the road they built holds up better during floods than any other in the township. Father and mother offered the stone from their three lime kilns which were no longer used, for the section from Squire Paxson's to half way up the hill. The other families supplied stone for the remaining sections and the township provided a man, Steve Scarborough, a mule and a cart.



Nellie and I used to watch Steve as he came along, wide brimmed hat shading his face, driving the cart with the white mule. Up the lane he plodded to the back of the barn, and on to the far edge of the quarry where the three stone arches stood in the woods. All of the stones were very large and he knocked them apart with a huge sledge, while the old mule waited patiently. Then he loaded the cart and came back down the lane. Halfway from the house to the road there is a hand pump where we used to water our horses if they wanted a drink. Nellie and I listened as the cart creaked to a stop so we could hear his sing-song chant. Sometimes we were sitting in the hammock hung between the maple and spruce trees, quite a distance away, but we could hear him very clearly:

> "Gee haw, whoa – want a drink? No? I guess not – get up – go on."

It never varied, I guess that poor old white mule just didn't put his head down in the water fast enough, so he had to 'get up – go on' every time.

I don't know how many loads of rocks, carried on the cart by the mule, it took to make a solid bed for the road from the school to the station, but I know they worked every day during a hot summer. After the large rocks were down, they put on a layer of small ones, and then another layer of smaller still. That was the way it was left for some time and these small rocks were sharp and hurt – right through our shoes and I think it hurt the horse's feet too. After while a very fine stone was put on and that made it much better for horses and people

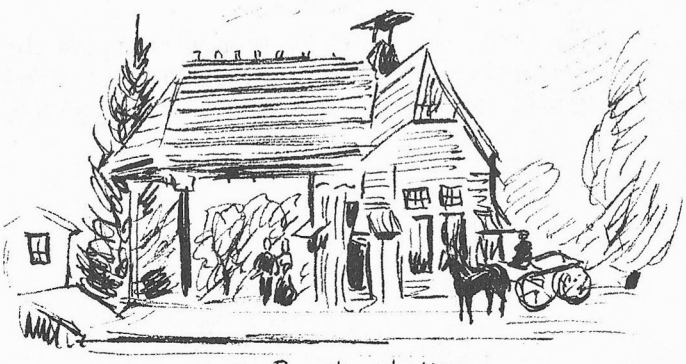
The path on the banks was carefully tended alongside the fine new road. Jesse Sands, the mail man, walked it for years with the bag of mail secured to a stick which he carried over

his shoulder. At the foot of the hill, just before the station, there was a bridge over a gulley built by the supervisors for drainage between two of the Paxson's fields.

The new Bycot Road was the only good section of road, besides the turnpike, in the whole township. Across the mountain the mud was so bad, even after the coming of cars, that I remember sliding all the way across into a field.

It was a source of pride to the Paxson families, Broadhursts, and Atkinsons, and to all the people who worked on the farms and lived in the little houses along it, to have a road smoothly laid on stone, and bound by carefully cut banks and a well-kept walking path.

There was a tiny house below the Judge's, abandoned now with vines growing out of the windows, which at that time was neat and well-kept by Jane Taylor and her husband who helped with the garden. The frame house just in from the corner and close to the barn, was the home of Oliver Rose, a corpulant man who managed all of Judge Paxson's farms. The attractive house on the other side was built of stone from a house on the "Red Top" farm which was torn down. The Shaffers lived there and worked on the farm. The plain white house close to the road on the other side was occupied by the Spencer Roberts.



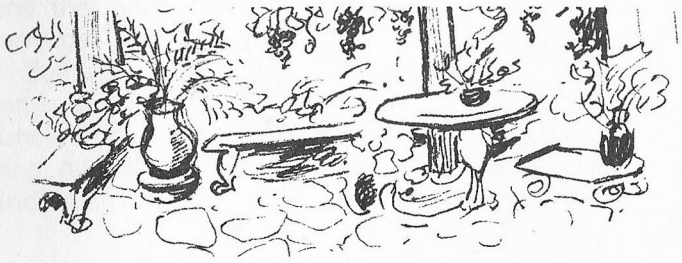
Bycot station

Judge Paxson's house was a creation! It had originally been the modest home of Thomas and Nancy Johnson Paxson, but what the Judge made of it, when he brought his second wife to live there, was a far cry from the fieldstone covered with plaster houses of the neighborhood. He really was a builder! He added a big room the width of the original house, a porte-cochere, and sun room with windows on three sides facing the railroad, the mountain, and meadow. There was a solarium to sit in and over all the Victorian lavishness dazzled the eye.

I was greatly impressed! Nothing I had ever seen in the country homes I visited compared with it. The driveway was edged with urns holding geraniums and palms. A fountain bubbled in the midst of this splendor and beds of cannas added wide splashes of brilliant crimson and gold.

An elaborate arbor had a dome covered with wisteria and grapes of many varieties. There were benches where one could sit in the dappled shade and take in all the fragrance or eat a fat bunch of winey Tokay or Sweet Emperor. Down the driveway on the left was the Judge's law library. Attached to that was the coach stable with carriages and rows of gleaming harness, then the horse stable with the beautiful shining horses. Instead of stone, everything was wooden, very English, and the walls were so high that the barns were not seen from the house.

I learned a lot about tropical plants when I visited the green house which was run by Spencer Roberts. He raised lovely sweet peas, fresias, and carnations, but I was most impressed by the lemon tree, the banana palm, and a monkey plant (Euphorbia) with orange flowers. A windmill at the foot of the mountain pumped water from the spring. It was all walled in and had an iron door. They didn't have deep wells dug in those days, but kept putting in shallow ones when the need arose



Down the hill from the house stood the wash house where a fire was built to heat the water. Laundry was sent to and from the city, and the mending and quilting was carefully done by aunt Rosie Morris. Eggs, butter, churned by Kate McCarty, and special fruits from the greenhouse were sent to Walnut Street also.

Part of the Judge's house was unheated and in the winter the family came only occasionally, but Kate McCarty lived all year round in the heated section. Jim Walker, the coachman, lived in the Long House in Holicong, and went to Philadelphia in the winter. He drove a fine pair of bay horses in a carriage with a hood which could be put over the passengers when it rained. It didn't cover Jim, so he had to ride in the rain with some sort of gum thing over his lap.

The dining room was the most impressive room in Judge Paxson's house. I was too little to be invited to dinners or teas, but Kate McCarty sometimes invited me to come in to the dining room to try to play the organ. There were two steps from the second kitchen to the dining room — one stone and one wood, and even the creak they made as Kate or Ida Rothey (who was the waitress) walked up them, became a symbol in my mind of the elegant house. When the Judge was there he would say, "Sit on my lap, little girl", but he had no lap because of his fat stomach, so I wriggled on the edge of his big knees. He was a kind person, but his wife, Mary Martha Stop Bridges Paxson did not mingle with the other wives. Cousin Anna, who enjoyed talking to the Judge, visited often, but always in a very formal way. She and Jane would get all dressed up at 4:00 and call.

One night I had been asleep for several hours, when my parents were awakened by sparks flying by the house. Aunt Rose saw them too, at the Judge's house, and at first thought they were shooting stars. Suddenly she realized that it was the barn, crackling and burning behind the tall wooden wall which hid it from the house. She raced out into the night and pounded on Oliver Rose's door, but there was no answer. It was Sunday night and he hadn't come home. Desperately she ran to the Roberts and by that time the neighbors started coming. Our family went across the fields and we children watched the awful sight with terror and excitement from a safe distance. There was no fire company and not enough water or any way to use it on such a raging fire. The barn and carriage house burned and five of the beautiful horses perished in the flames.

Sometime after the fire, I remember a terrible snow storm which knocked down the telephone wires and covered the road so deeply that it drifted over the bridge spanning the gulley at the foot of the hill by the station. We couldn't get a horse through, but I had to go to Philadelphia, so I walked the banks. I trudged along until I came to the bridge over the gulley. Something warned me and sent me out into the road. I struggled through the drifts until the perspiration dripped, even on such a cold day. I could hardly make it, but I was so lucky to have gone by the road, because when I reached the other side I found that the bridge had washed away and I would surely have washed away too.

It was a lonely place — no one around, just the little station and there was the train, big and black against the white snow, the engine puffing, steam hissing. The conductor had started on but when he saw me in the snow, he waited.

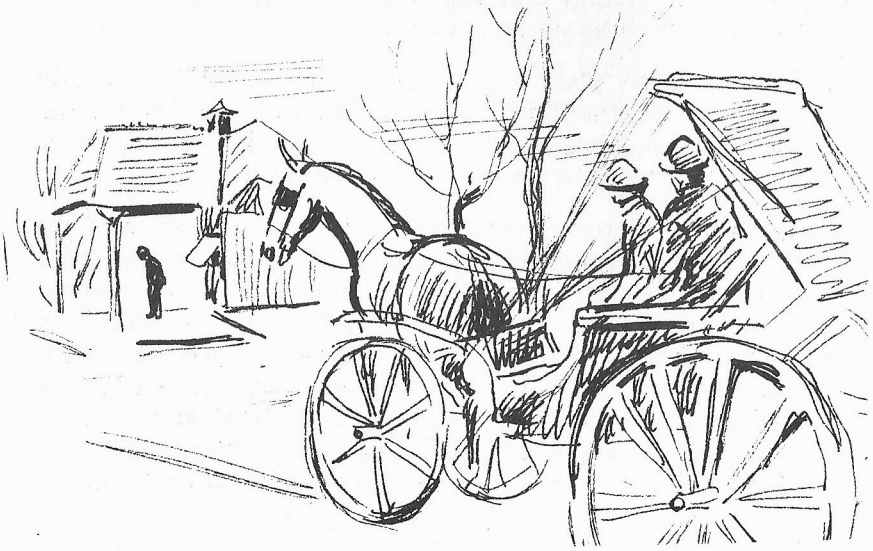
Years later, Judge Paxson, who had become a justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, died, leaving his vast properties, including the "Red Top" farm, "Stop-Over" farm, and the huge farm on Old York Road which he had intended used as a Farm School. There was much contention over his will. It has been said that two nieces who went into the city to hear their uncle's will read, went down on the train in deep mourning, heavily veiled, but came home with no veils at all after finding out that the Judge had left them almost nothing.

CHARLIE

"Hello tramp." a little girl called out to Charlie as he walked along a village street in Ohio.

"I ain't no tramp, I'm a plain hobo." Charlie replied. He objected to being called a tramp and indeed he did not look like one, as he was clean shaven and his brown hair was cut. Charlie was a little man with a thin nose, his body thin too. When he stayed with us I bought him shirts with a 12½ neck-band in the boys' department.

The first time I saw Charlie was on a cold, dark November night back in the twenties. I was going to Philadelphia on the 6:55 train. As we approached the station we could see the dingy light barely lighting up the platform, the rest was lone-some, no one there (I thought), no homes near by – just the mountain black and close. Father couldn't stay with me because he was driving Black Horse who was afraid of trains. As the engine came around the bend, its big disk of light glaring, he said, "I must go now," and let me off. It was only then that I saw this little man on the platform – a wizened looking figure with a suitcase by his feet. I felt uneasy and glad that the train was coming. We got on and he rode to Spring Garden Street and I went on to the Reading Terminal.

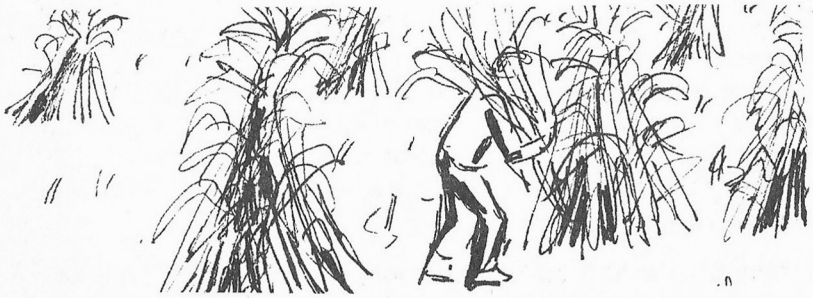


Our first knowledge of him was in late fall when he helped Archie Keyser on the Bycot farm. Snow was already on the ground, the corn in shock and only half done. Charlie and a buddy named Joe finished it, and after that he worked for father, husking the corn. As soon as I saw him I remembered him as the little man on the station platform.

Charlie lived in our cottage, which was a store house then for the farm. It had a stove on the first floor and a cot upstairs. Even though there was no heat upstairs Charlie said the stove heated it well enough if he left the stair door open. He cooked, ate, and slept there and we gave him milk and eggs, kerosene for his light, and firewood to burn in his stove.

Some winters he husked corn from late November to February, building the shocks like wigwams in the winter fields. He knew how to stack up the bundles so that even a high wind or a storm didn't blow them over. They stayed solidly until hauled into the barn to be ground up for bedding. This was one of his skills, his husking too, because he husked clean and farmers liked to haul it after Charlie had done the work.

Charlie's visits varied. Sometimes he came for only two days like the time we had the new man, whom he didn't like.



Sometimes it was six months. While he was here he stayed on the place – I don't remember him leaving at all until he found it was pleasant to walk to Jesse Sands for ice cream. He lived at the farm and worked and cooked his meals until one day you would see him striding down the drive, out to the road, and he was gone. Many times he left without his wages. Sometimes when father was here, he went to market to collect, but after father was gone he just let his wages go until the next time.

It was so important to Charlie to keep people from knowing about him or where he went, that he took great pains to build up an impression which would allay suspicions. In time, though, I began to look for signs – one was when I caught him looking at the calendar in the kitchen. Once I asked some questions. It was a very cold and windy night in November and Charlie had come over for an onion to cook with his meat. "Charlie," I said, "You've come here a great many years, who are you? Where are your people? Where did you grow up?"

He sat down and then he said, "I was an eccentric." That was the word he used to describe himself. "I grew up at Mountain Top. I have a sister up there, 74 years old, and she can dance a jig."

"If anything happens to you would you want me to tell your sister? I have no address."

There was no answer. Charlie wouldn't say and he never gave us an address, but we looked in the atlas and found that there is a Mountain Top near Wilkesbarre.

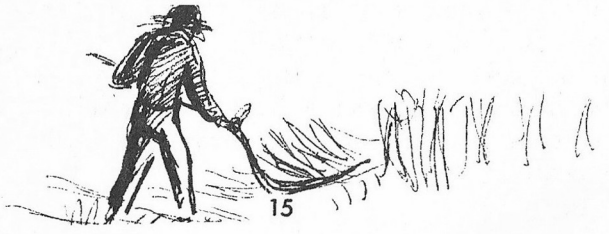
Charlie was always afraid of animals and we had never asked him to care for them, but late March of one year John, who worked for us and tended the heifers, got sick with pneumonia. We asked Charlie just to poke some hay at the heifers until we could find someone to look after the animals. Charlie poked in the hay – once – then came down to the house and said, "Now I'll be going." In his haste to be gone from the heifers he left clothes, some new scissors we had bought him, his razor, and his wages.

When Charlie did collect his money he wouldn't take anything higher than a dollar bill. He said that if he put down a five dollar bill for a sandwich (they were 10¢ then) people would think he had a lot of money and try to rob him.

Sometimes Charlie would return in time to pick strawberries. He knew what was on the farm to do and would return to things he liked. His box of strawberries was the most beautiful I have ever seen, perfectly arranged. We were proud to have it to sell. (This was another of his skills.) Once he came in September and helped to get the "glad" bulbs out of the garden, there were lots of them to do in those days. He picked potatoes for Ben, and Aunt Jane gave him his dinner. Charlie liked this and told us what a good cook she was. When potato picking was over, he came back and raked leaves on our place.

In December of one year I decided to do over the cottage. Charlie lived on in his little room and helped the carpenter. He gathered up the torn things and kept his fire going in the stove so that it was possible to do the work. He and the carpenter ate together and swapped stories. I think he enjoyed it while the process of renovation was going on, but when he came back next time I saw him walking up the lane in the dusk and when he reached the cottage and saw that now it was made to house other people he was not pleased. He stood and looked at it sadly. When he came to the house I told him I had fixed a place for him out in the barn and I would feed him in the kitchen. He wasn't very happy with the way things were. He didn't like the new man either, so for several years he came only a few days at a time – usually in the summer when he scythed the tall weeds. This was done perfectly – another of his skills.

When we fed him he grew more friendly and told us of some of the places he worked. Many of his jobs were corn husking. He husked in Bucks County, Berkes County, near Easton (where he lived in the spring in a brooder house which was warm with no chickens in it), Montgomery and Chester Counties. When he was younger he said he followed the crops from Maine to Florida. "I never was a drinking man," he said, "never touched it except when I picked blueberries down in the pines. All the 'Pinies' drink and I did too."



Somewhere down there he worked for a man who went to Philadelphia every day. Charlie said he played croquet with the little girl. He drove the horse and wagon (the only time he had driven) to take the man to the train and he met him at night too. It was so hot that one evening he went in his shirt sleeves. The man, the "boss", told him to wear his coat, but it was so hot that Charlie wouldn't do it and wore shirt sleeves the next night too, then he walked off and left. Charlie did what he wanted and when he was asked to do something he didn't want to do he just walked away.

Charlie just kept moving on. He seemed to travel by railroad and to sleep in the railroad stations, or walk from place to place. Often he arrived around 7:00 in an evening and said he'd rested in the shade of a tree during the heat of the day. We always gave him supper – then he went to bed with a flashlight and arose at 4:00 in the morning. He continued to eat eggs, milk, and onions. A baker came three times a week and Charlie would purchase a sweet biscuit from him and some bread. When I went to Doylestown he gave me a little money to buy ½ pound of mouse cheese, 1 pound of scrapple, ½ pound of hamburger, and six packs of Green Turtle Chewing Tobacco. If he hadn't given me quite enough I just made it up and didn't tell him.

As Charlie grew older he seemed to get smaller and more wizened. Some woman in Berkes County, feeling sorry for him, tried to get him into a Home. He didn't object and let her make all the arrangements. She probably felt that she was being of service to him, but when it was time for him to go – he disappeared.

Charlie didn't show up for quite awhile after that but when the hurricane Hazel blew through, he came back to view the damage. This time he did go into a home – a new Bucks County home. "It was deluxe," said Charlie, "not a knife in the place, just forks and spoons." But he soon left.

We didn't see him until the next October. Hawthorn came to work for us and one morning he brought Charlie home, blue with cold. He had slept on Buckingham Mountain. We gave him warm cereal and coffee. I knew the barn would be too cold to sleep in so I called the Neshaminy Home and made arrangements for him to go there. The next day Hawthorn set out to drive him. When they reached Route 611, Charlie said, "Let me out here," and out he went, and off he went. I called the home later . . . no Charlie.

A year or two later someone did get him into the Home and he stayed there a year. I went to see him and took him some tobacco. (He no longer liked Green Turtle Tobacco, it was too sweet) he said.

When spring came and it was time to plant the gladiolas, Charlie showed up again. "They wanted me to plant onions," he said in disgust. He had enough. He planted the glad bulbs and, of course, he did it just right (another skill). But Charlie's greatest ability was with the scythe and he had regular places he went to throughout the years to cut the lawns and high weeds. He told us of one place he had always gone to near Flemington where he had cut their grass year after year, but they finally got a power mower and when they saw him coming they pulled down the shades and waited for him to go away. The coming of the power mower displaced Charlie.

Charlie's size and strength diminished as he became older. He no longer carried a suitcase, it was too heavy, not even a bundle – just his two shirts. A man in Rushland had given him suits but Charlie had no feeling for keeping clothes, he had only the one he was wearing. Sometimes on a hot day I saw him put his coat on a fence post and walk away leaving it hanging there. Even a new coat and pants and shirts he wouldn't take with him.

In later years I had a problem buying clothes for Charlie. I could no longer buy them in the boys' department of the clothing stores because the boys styles were different from the men's now and did not suit Charlie. I started going to the Navy store for his things.

It had been some time since Charlie had been around when the flood of 1955 came. At 7:00 in October in walked Charlie. He said he had been working in Alpha, New Jersey, and had come by train. Old age money was keeping him then. He had come to see what the flood had done to the countryside.

He dug potatoes for Ben for half a day and cut out a red rose bush hedge for us. I wondered about the cool nights and got him plenty of covers and then I saw him looking at the calendar and knew that it was time to move on.

"Marian (he called me Marian instead of Miriam) would you mind driving me to Lambertville?"

"Of course I'll take you," I said.

I had saved a tweed coat for him and he seemed happy getting into the car with it to drive to Jersey. At the edge of New Hope he said, "You better not go across the bridge, I'll get out on Main Street." Then as I started to slow down he said, "If you don't mind you could take me to the Lambertville station." so I proceeded across the bridge. That was the last I ever saw of him . . . 1955.

There had been so many appearances and disappearances of Charlie's. One time when we attended the ceremony of the paying of the red rose rent, Charlie came all dressed up at

9:00 and asked if he could just have some chicken noodle soup for supper. Then he told us all about the Amish people whom he had been visiting. He explained to us why there were groups of worshipers meeting at houses. There were Church Amish and home Amish, said Charlie, those who held services in their homes. He also told about the clean Amish and the dirty Amish, and those with the brightly painted houses and dirty beds. He could name all the towns too; he knew the valley like a geography book.

People used to say to me, "Aren't you afraid of Charlie?" I never was. He was watchful too. Sometimes when we were off the place and people drove in thinking there was no one around, Charlie would look through the crack in his door and later report to us about them.

Charlie's great joy in life was that no one knew him or what he was going to do. Whatever he liked to do, he did well; whatever he didn't like to do he left undone. He was afraid of thunder showers. Whenever a storm struck Charlie would knock on the door. He would tell us that barns are often struck and so he sat in the kitchen until it was over. I never saw him sick (he ate moderately – just soup and coffee, a little meat and cheese, and oatmeal for breakfast).

Once when he was cutting glad bulbs he bobbed up from the row and said, "They tried to make a Catholic of me and couldn't do it." He seemed pleased that he had resisted their proselytizing. Charlie wouldn't let anyone change him.

I realized after years of Charlie's visiting, that he usually travelled on holidays – that seemed to be the way of the road. The rides were good on Labor Day, Memorial Day, and so on. Sometimes we wondered how Charlie spent his money. Father asked him what he did with it; we knew he was not a drinking man. He told father he liked to play card games now and then. He didn't spend it on clothes I know, most of them were given to him and those he bought he purchased in Philadelphia from fences, he told me.

Charlie's visits spanned more than thirty years. He was a wanderer, coming in and out of our home, working for us, creating a place for himself in our lives, but never allowing himself to be possessed or influenced. He held tightly to his freedom to do what he wanted to do and walk off, away from anything he didn't like. He wished to be respected, he was no tramp, just a plain hobo.

WHITEY, THE MULE

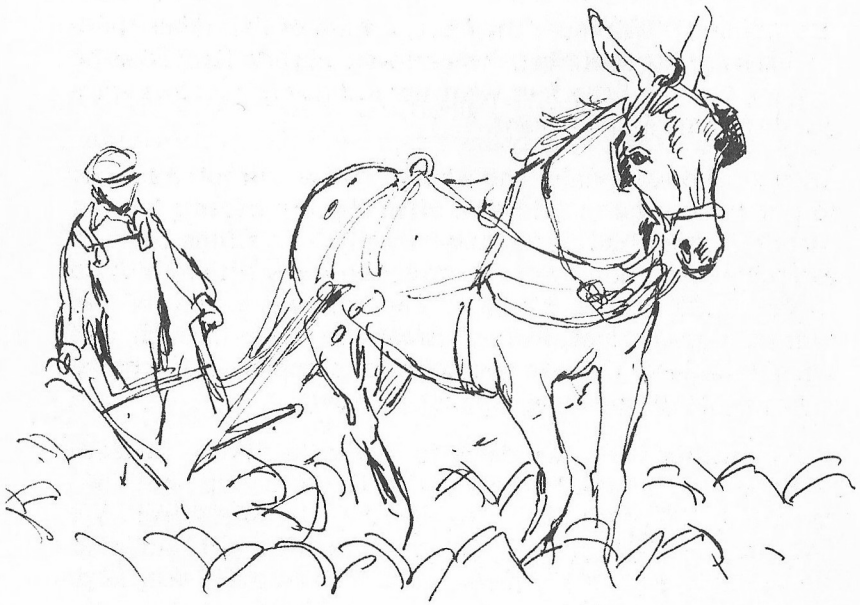
As I think of "Whitey", the mule, I think of the rather child-like steps of his small feet. His ears were big and flapped as he walked, but the little feet went up and down the rows without disturbing a single plant.

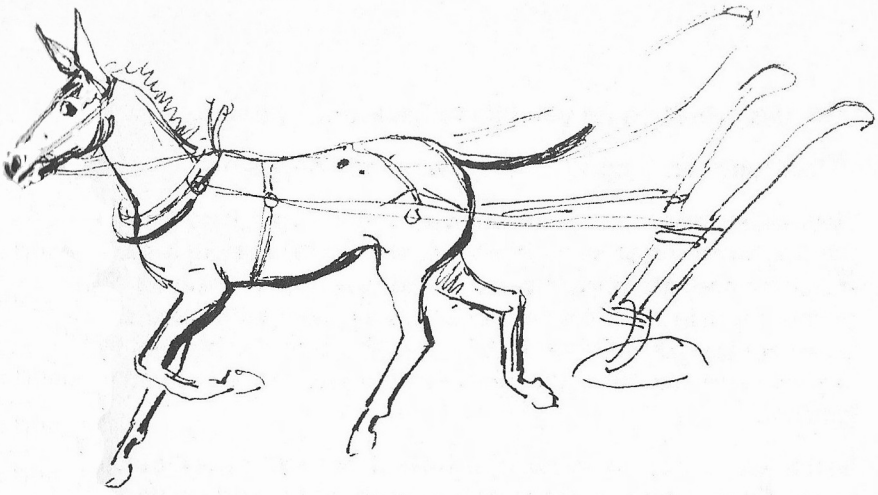
On the farm we usually had a horse that wasn't too fractious to pull the one horse cultivator after the corn became too tall for a two horse cultivator to go through. This time came in early July. The horse wore fly straps and very often a muzzle so he wouldn't bite the corn. The heat was pretty bad in those tall green lanes where no breeze could get through, and I couldn't blame the man and horse for stopping and standing a bit to cool off when he completed a row.

The cultivator they used came to a point with rows of teeth and could be set at different depths. This same type was used for the truck patch too, throughout the whole season. We had only a small garden when I was a little girl, but later Nellie had a great many gladioli and then we had a very large truck patch beside the house.

I can remember various old horses who went their leisurely way along the rows of corn and then the vegetables. When dear old pepper and salt Demi was gone we had to have a slow horse to take his place. So our brother looked around South Jersey until he found "Whitey", a white mule speckled with black. "Whitey" had belonged for many years to a man who had a trucking farm and he told my brother that he did a good job.

Nellie and I were in the kitchen when the horse van came slowly up the lane and stopped at the "turn around". The man got out of the cab, opened the side door and led out this white mule with the black flecks and the rat tail. He was put in the end stall of the horse stable, the one closest to the house. A man named Fred soon began to cultivate the corn with Whitey and thought he was doing a very good job. His long ears flopped back and forth, but his feet were small and did not trample the corn.





One hot summer afternoon we heard a trotting in the lane and something making a noise on the stones. We looked out and there came Whitey at a fast trot with the cultivator behind him and no Fred. Clattering along, ears flapping, Whitey headed for the barn, pulled the cultivator through the door and kept going down the corridor to the watering trough. He stopped there and had a good drink, dipping his dusty nose, sucking up the water, and then raising his head until the water ran down his chin and dripped on the concrete floor. He was still drinking when along walked Fred. Nellie called out to him, "Why, Fred, what happened?"

"I don't know," said Fred, "We went back and forth and one time when we got to the end of a row Whitey set out and I couldn't hold him, I just couldn't."

Fred and everyone else learned that when Whitey wanted to stop, he stopped. He did a good job — his little feet going carefully along the rows until he had enough — then nothing could keep him.

Next year, the second World War was going on and farms were short of help. The men on our farm just didn't have time to cultivate the truck patch and all the glads Nellie grew. A Mr. Mortimer, from Jericho Mountain, organized a small group of men to do part-time jobs on farms — helping with extra things which needed to be done, like gathering crops and carpentry. I telephoned to see if a man could cultivate the flowers and truck patch.

"Oh, yes, when would you like to have him," he said.

"The afternoon is best," I said, "when the dew is off."

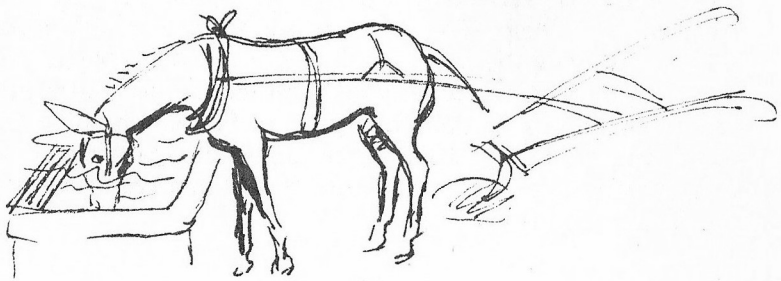
Wednesday afternoon was decided upon. I told him we had Whitey so he must send someone who could handle a mule. A man named McIlmoyle came, wearing a broad-brimmed hat on his reddish hair, his face bright pink even without a sunburn. He seemed perfectly at home adjusting the harness for Whitey, and handling the lines (which were rope instead of leather).

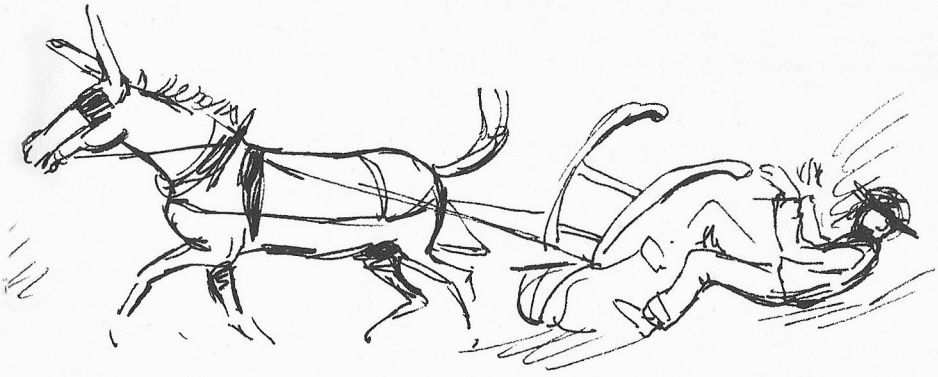
Nellie went out to show him how deep and how close to work. Soon Whitey's little feet were going up and down the rows. After a couple of trips McIlmoyle didn't need to hold the ropes much. He just let Whitey go up and down without steering. When he was finished, the truck patch was beautiful to see, the soft earth well up around the strawberries, the tomatoes fine, needing only a little hoeing, the beans, cabbage and gladiolas just right.

"He's some mule," said McIlmoyle, "I don't even have to steer him."

This kind helper came several weeks. One summer afternoon, Nellie was out in her flower bed when she heard a commotion. Whitey and the cultivator came down the lane full tilt. The cultivator was on its side so it pulled easier, scraping over the stones, bouncing behind Whitey's heels. Into the barn they went, cracking against both sides of the door, bumping down the corridor to the watering trough. Whitey stopped then, plunging his head into the cool water until only his eyes and big ears showed, then dripping a stream on the floor.

McIlmoyle came soon after and looked at Nellie. "What happened?"



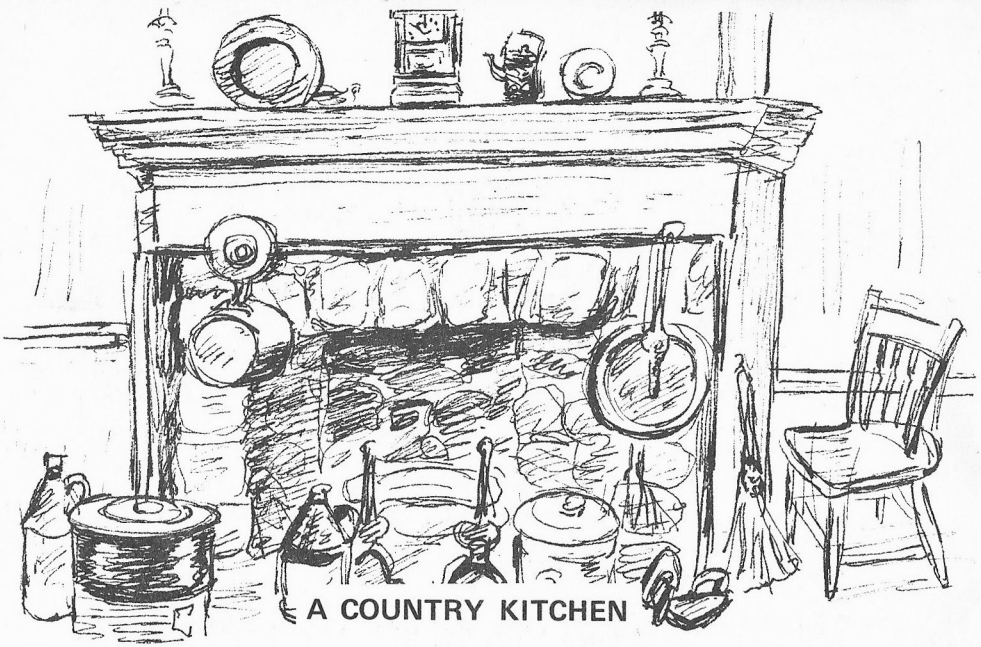


"What did happen?" said Nellie.

"Well, Whitey was going back and forth as usual. Then all of a sudden, at the end of one row, I couldn't hold him. I just couldn't hold him at all."

This seemed to be Whitey's way all the time we owned him. He had other strong ideas too. Sometimes at night he banged and banged. We didn't go out to him; we knew what he was up to. He had opened the lower barn door (by kicking it). He never disturbed the other horses, just went out by himself. And in the morning we would see him grazing in the croft near the barn. He ruined the boards of that stall. They were replaced and then kicked out again. Finally a concrete block building was erected for the bull and a box stall included for Whitey. He made plenty of noise, kicking the concrete, but he couldn't get out and there he lived until the barn burned and we ceased farming. Whitey was sold and went away in a truck.

We all missed him — his pranks and his cultivating ability. A garden tractor doesn't make a garden look nearly as pretty as one carefully done by a cultivator pulled by a mule. I still think of Whitey with his long ears, his queer disposition and little feet, moving with childlike steps up and down the green lanes of corn. I can feel again the heat of early July and see McIlmoyle, red face below the broad hat, loosely holding the rope lines, and behind him the earth turned, pulverized so fine that you wanted to scoop it up and feel its softness against the inside of your hand.



A COUNTRY KITCHEN

"Please let me come in through the kitchen," people say and they really prefer to enter the house this way and feel the warmth of this room; there's something relaxing about it. It has changed somewhat over the years. I remember when the mantle held seven lamps, arranged from the tallest to the smallest nutmeg lamp (which was used as a night light on the landing of the second floor). They all had round fonts with the handle on the side. The iron sink is still here, but the pump which pumped water from the cistern is gone. We used to drink this and the cistern was cleaned twice a year. Later we drank water from the pump by the lane, carrying kettles of fresh water before every meal. Think how much harder we worked in those days. We thought nothing of going out in cold weather or hot with our kettle.

There was a table just inside the door with two agate dish pans, one to wash, one to rinse the dishes. The other table, where food was served, ran lengthwise and extended into the new section, added to make room for the men who came to help with the barn raising. Our old stone barn had gone to pieces and when it was to be rebuilt, Grandmother realized that we must provide space to feed all these men who came to work. (There were so many and they stayed so long.) Later when the new room was used for the threshers, mother thought they sometimes let the machinery stay unfixed so they could have another one of her meals.

The floor in those days was covered with a rag carpet of wide red and green stripes, the in-between part brown. Under the stove was a piece of brown oil cloth and the walls were putty colored. Colors generally ran to brown or dark shades which were good and serviceable. In the early days the milk and butter were kept down cellar on swinging shelves. Later, father put in one of the first refrigerators. The top raised up to put the ice in and shelves were made of slate, making it easier to keep clean. The ice was cut from the ponds until they didn't freeze, then Dr. Willard, whose father had the ice company, used to bring a 75-pound piece which was cut in two so that it would fit. We kept two grey pans and one of agate full of butter and milk.

Work had a special order in the old days. There was so much preparation involved that you couldn't be impulsive and changeable about the necessary chores. Monday was wash day. In the winter two wooden wash tubs were brought into the kitchen and the water was heated on the stove in big iron kettles. The clothes were all hung outside in the wind, freezing into stiff shapes; sometimes dusted with soft snow flakes from a flurry. Ironing followed and this too was important. Much more ironing went on compared with today. Hand towels were ironed, linen towels, beautiful damask towels with a fringe almost 5 inches deep. Sheets were muslin and carefully ironed too.

Our irons, heated on the stove, were one piece, handle and all, not like the kind Cousin Anna had, where a handle clipped on. Our dear colored Mary fixed me a little board, covered with muslin so that I could iron with my own iron. I did everything Mary did, and one time when her back was turned, I took one of the lovely damask towels and burned a hole right through it. Poor Mary was mortified.

The dresses and shirts were starched and sprinkled. Sometimes Mary would take one of my starched dresses and stand it upon the board; then she would say, "Here's little Mirriam." I loved to hear her say that. I didn't like wearing the dresses though. Every time I was dressed up, I first had to take a nap, then my hair was taken out of curlers (put on in the morning), then I was dressed in my stiff dress and not allowed to go to the barn. Naomi, Helen and Alice played in the loft, but I couldn't, because I was too dressed up.

In late afternoons the eggs were brought in and cleaned on the table where the dishes were washed, then put in the cellar to keep cool. Bread was baked three times a week and cake and pie made on Saturdays. Mother liked simple cakes, without icing, so we usually had sponge cake, baked in the coal stove with a wonderful golden crust. I used to carry some out to the men who walked behind the plow in the fields. That's hard, not work, tramping over the furrow all day long and they enjoyed stopping for a piece of cake.

Sometimes the pies were decorated with powdered sugar and one hot day I decided to do it myself. I made beautiful designs, but when my brother Joe, who was the first to eat one, took a bite, he made a terrible face and said, "This tastes awful!" I had used salt instead of sugar.

I tried so hard to imitate Mary. I was with her all day, because mother had no eyesight. One time I sat underneath the table where Mary stacked the dishes to be washed. It had a movable leg and I pulled it. Down came everything with a crash — every dish was broken! Poor Mary, poor father — he went to

the general store that afternoon and bought some ironstone dishes from Eddie Kirk for everyday, otherwise we would have had to eat from mother's best china.

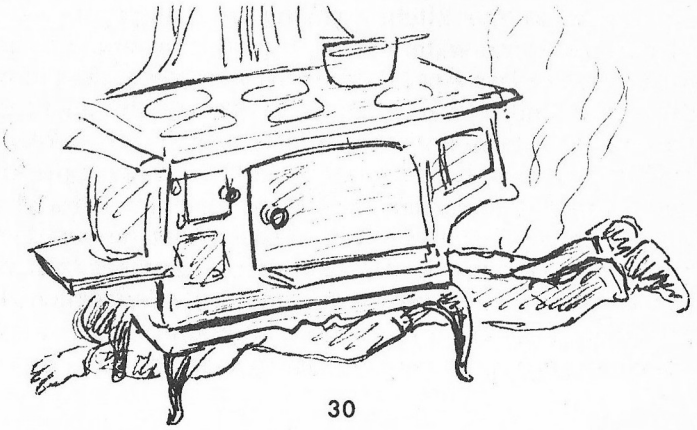
We bought butter in early days. Later a cousin sent us a square glass churn, which held two quarts and had a wooden paddle which turned by hand. The butter came according to the cow who gave the milk. One cow's milk came in no time, from another it took 20 minutes or so. We poured off the buttermilk to use for buttermilk pancakes or biscuits, or to drink (with salt added to it). The butter was put in a strainer and water poured over it. Then we added salt, pressed it into shapes and put it in a brown bowl and into the refrigerator. Sweet cream had to ripen a little, over one afternoon and night and we would make it into butter the next day.

In February father brought home a round of beef, cut into three pieces – one for us, one for Aunt Tacy, and one for Anna Fell. The beef was taken down to a tub in the cellar and rubbed with a mixture of: 5 lbs. salt (rock)
2 lbs. sugar
1 oz. salt peter
This was mixed and mixed and then rubbed into the pieces once a week for three weeks. After that each one was pierced with a skewer and tied with a string so that it could be hung from hooks in the kitchen ceiling. A newspaper was put under to catch the watery drips. It gradually shrank to about half its size. In late April, before the flies came, the old mold was cut off and it was wrapped in newspapers and packed into wooden boxes with coarse salt covering it to keep the bugs out. To cook it we shaved it down (with a proper knife) and browned it in butter, flour was sprinkled on and then milk stirred in. Father liked it so much that he might make his whole meal from it. He liked it on pancakes too. When I was crossing the ocean, I had some dried beef which Nellie had put in a jar for me to eat on shipboard. I ate it and in spite of a rough sea I was the last to succumb to seasickness.

One time our kitchen was the scene of a movie. The man who was living in the cottage was making a film for the Lehigh dairy showing old and modern times and he thought our kitchen, with the old stove and sink and especially the bowls of eggs, would be just right. Someone came in an old-fashioned dress and apron and the eggs were on display in agate pans. Later we were invited by the producer of the movie to see it at the New Hope Solebury School. It was beautiful, showing the rolling countryside, the old barns, kitchens (ours), and the modern Lehigh dairy.

A real life scene in our kitchen took place on a February evening when mother and father had been out to the teacher's institute. As they came into the kitchen they smelled an odor like burning feathers. At first they couldn't find any source of the smell, then father saw something back of the stove smoking! He hurried over and there was old Walter so intoxicated that he lay perfectly still while the hot stove burned right through his heavy shirt to his stomach. Father hauled him out and threw a bucket of water over him. Then he treated his burns and he seemed all right. Old Walter had come to us off the road in August and we didn't know he drank until December.

A farm kitchen really has the scenes. I remember a colored man who worked for us and slept over the kitchen. He studied for his civil service examinations in our kitchen and became a trusted mail carrier in Philadelphia, most respected by the businessmen. Another colored man, a bible student, said grace for all the men who came to help and he could really say grace, everyone was quiet with heads bowed.



In the summer the food was cooked in an outside kitchen on a stove which burned wood – it made more room to feed the men who worked. There was a great iron skillet which was filled with fried potatoes, another was full of stewed tomatoes. But a large iron pot with a pot roast smelled the best. A woman named Mary came one day a week and on her day father liked to bring home a large pot roast. It sat on the back of the stove after it had been browned up front, and she kept turning it, keeping the good dark color, and the potatoes she added and carrots were rich with the dark gravy too. There was cornstarch pudding she made too, and set out in blue bowls to cool.

In 1926 electricity was put in. It gave us lights and a toaster, but we didn't make any real changes. Our kitchen has so many doors, it would be impossible to put in a modern arrangement. There is a big closet for dishes, a closet for food supplies, and a big closet for coats, boots, etc. On the north west wall is a dutch oven, no longer used. In mother's day, in the 1870's bread was baked there, with the same flue as the stove. The old oven is used today to keep all sorts of things – melted soap, spray for plants, and odds and ends for housekeeping. It's always a joy to open the door and look in at the beautiful brick lining. One of the kitchen doors leads to the cellar and we've always been grateful for the easy cellar steps.

Children played games and danced on the kitchen floor, sat on the bottom step and in front of the stairs, eating little bites of cake and apples. An old-fashioned kitchen is an important place in the home. People today like to enter by the kitchen far more than by the front door. They feel at home and pleasant, as they pass on to the cool dining room with mother's spode ware in the glass front cupboard, then into the parlor with Nellie's plants and maroon frize covered chairs. They carry the warmth of the kitchen they entered first, and feel content and welcome during their visit.

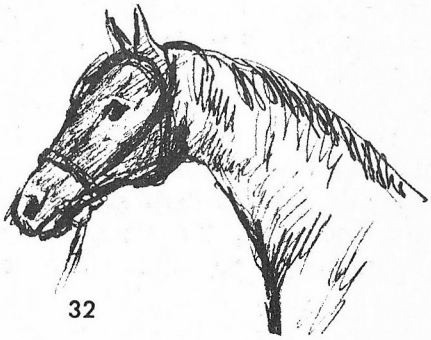
BLACK HORSE

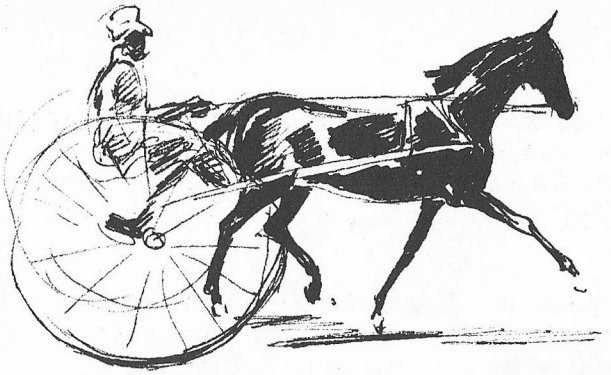
"Why, I was hatched out of a black bird's egg," Bill told us children, but he wasn't really black, more of a chocolate color. He came to us off the road as a young man hunting a job and was associated with the Valley Farm for over 40 years.

Bill or Will (he was called both names) always loved a horse. At one time he had a pretty brown horse named Kate. Everyone knew about Kate and how much he cared for her, how he polished her coat until it shined, and combed out her long tail and mane.

One time Will was put in jail for knocking down a policeman in Doylestown (when he didn't know what he was doing). Father told him he was coming to bail him out, but those were the days of no phones and Will was afraid he wouldn't come. The sheriff had trusted Bill and knew he was a good worker, so he put him outside to split wood. After making a small pile of split logs Will dropped his sledge and wedges and took off through the corn fields.

As soon as the sheriff discovered this he drove all over hunting him and then came here and wanted to take Kate. Father and the storekeeper from Holicong had gone to bail him out, so mother was left to greet the sheriff. She wouldn't let him touch the horse. "I feel things will get straightened out," she said. Father returned and still no Will. It was after dark, about 9:00 when mother heard the kitchen door latch and she went out. Will was at the door wet and frightened. "I thought the boss wasn't coming, so I ran away," he said. In due time all the legal matters were settled and Will was back at the Valley Farm with his horse Kate.





Many years later, Will bought a black horse named "Western Boy", a pacer with a track record of 2:17. He wasn't beautiful, but he could pace. Horse races were held on the Fair Grounds in Doylestown and Western Boy became quite a sensation. Will had people train him and drive him and at first he won several prizes. Then one day a man came to the farm and told Will he would buy Western Boy. "Oh, no, I can't give him up," Will said. The man looked at him and didn't say another word, just turned on his heel and left. After that Western Boy never won again. Even though Will had different people drive for him, the same thing always happened. Near the finish they would hold him in. Father and I went often to the races and we saw him held in right before the finish line. Perhaps they couldn't stand the thought of a black man's horse winning.

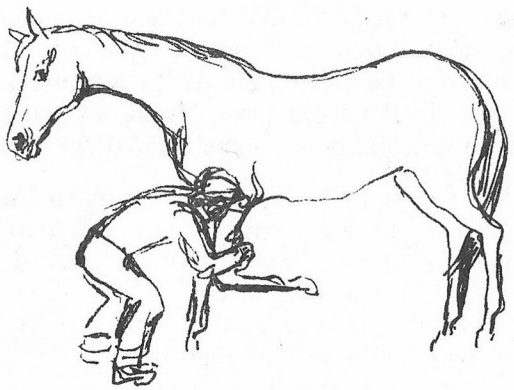
Finally Will took his horse off the track. Nellie and I drove him and he was so slow and poky on the road that no one would believe that he could race. Will used him to rake hay and other light jobs on the farm. He didn't always call him Western Boy, his affectionate name was "Black Hoss."

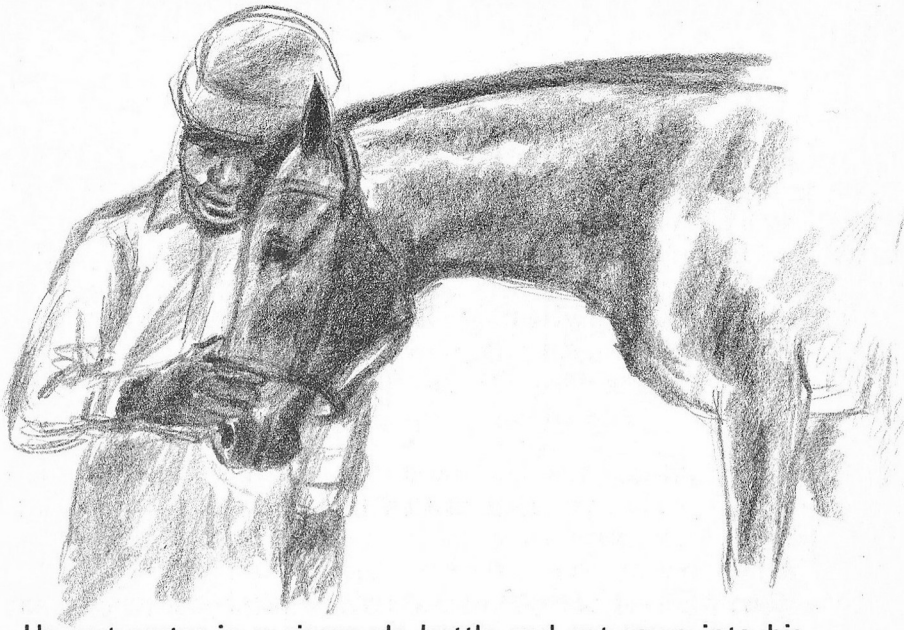
One year Will decided to work at the quarry in Rushland. He continued to live on our farm and commuted by the New Hope train. While he was away, the men used Black Horse, continued to drive him, and, of course, fed him and put him out to pasture. One evening Western Boy was put in a croft back of the barn. This was a small pasture where a cow or horse could be put so that he was close to the buildings in the morning. There were two or three trees and grass. It was a hot summer night, and toward morning a vicious storm came up, lighting the sky with harsh yellow streaks of lightning and making us all shudder with the claps of thunder. I thought some tree on the farm was hit, but no one went out into the deluge to see.

Will had to leave very early by train to get to his job in Rushland. When the men went out to get Western Boy they found him standing under the ash tree trembling and trembling and trembling. They came to us to see what could be done.

Of course we called doctor Massenger. "The horse has most likely been stunned by lightning – not much to do, but put him out of the way," he said.

Will was called from the quarry and came as soon as he could get a train. I think he ran most of the way from the station and up the lane, around the barn into the field where the horse stood rooted to the spot under the ash tree, trembling. Will stroked him and talked to him and then urged him to move. The shivering horse was rigid. The other men tried to help and gave up, but Will stayed and coaxed, picked up a shaking black leg, moved it a tiny bit, then another. Inch by inch he made his way, a very long way into the barn to his stall. But Western Boy wouldn't eat, he wouldn't drink, just trembled and threw up his head.



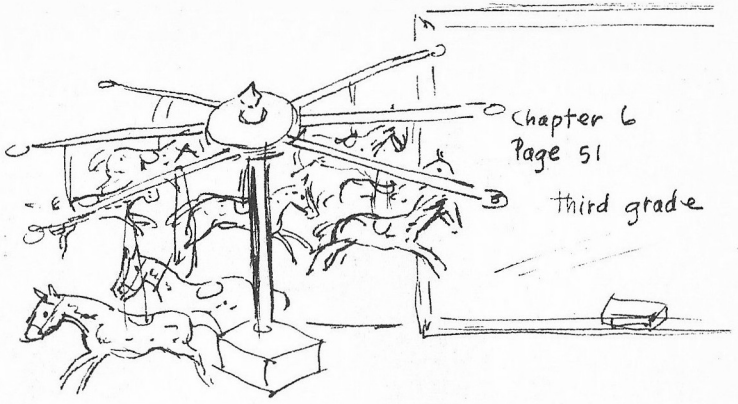


He put water in a ginger ale bottle and got some into his mouth, then moved his hand under the jaw working his throat until a little went down. He held tight to the bridle with the other hand. Black Horse kept shaking. He put feed in his hand and tried to get Black Horse to lick his hand. "Black Hoss ain't going to die, Black Hoss ain't going to die." This went on for days. Little by little Will did get the water in him. One day Black Horse lapped some feed and this was very comforting.

Will tried even harder, patting him, loving him, urging him on. For six weeks he continued. Then he made up his mind to back him out of the stall. It took a long time. He got him to the water trough and tied him to it. Black Horse was scared to pieces. Will soothed him and then took water in his hand and put it into his mouth. He took time off from work to teach him to drink.

Eventually he got him back into the stall and this went on until Black Horse drank from the trough and ate feed from the manger. With the good care and devotion given all winter, by spring Black Horse could help on the farm. He could rake hay.

He lived for two years, doing chores on the farm, raking up to 16 acres. Then he didn't eat and in the end the doctor's advice was taken.



THE SCHOOL ROOM

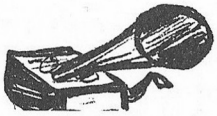
Over a period of 100 years our old fieldstone farm house has been added to and altered and even the names of the rooms changed. Although the shed remained the shed, the kitchen became the kitchen and dining room, the parlors living rooms, mother's room a sewing room, grandfather's room the blue room, the boy's room the north room, grandmother's room Nellie's, Sarah's Mirriam's, and the garret an attic. The men's room over the kitchen, where one of the men slept with an open knife to guard against ghosts which sometimes took off his socks, he said, was named Blue-Beard's room by cousin Anna because of the jumble of things in the closets. The third story room became a school room for pupils who came for special lessons for over 25 years.

This school room is an irregular shaped room, the chimney jutting out, and a window overlooking the fields and floods. There is a little casement window where the ceiling is low on one side, and back of it is a large closet. Equipment for the schoolroom varied and was added to meet the needs of the pupils who came. There were small tables, a bedroom desk and a framed black board which was most important. It could be seen and used on both sides and the students always liked to have their lessons written on it. There were books which were useful from kindergarten to college. When I knew I would have a pupil needing work in a certain subject I went to the experts in that field and acquired the best material which was available.

On the wall were different pictures at different times – a large Swiss poster, a Danish windmill picture, and an old mill in the Cutalossa. A framed picture stood on the floor which said, "Watch and Pray," and from this a little girl learned her letters. On one wall a pupil painted a mural of old Demi horse hitched to a sleigh like the one in which she had been driven home from school. Another girl painted the old Sycamore tree with a bird feeder hanging from it and a downy woodpecker feeding on suet. It looked exactly like the old tree. But one mural had to be painted over when the room was redecorated, the other is still there.

There was a victrola in the room and many beautiful records of Caruso, Alma Gluck, Fritz Kreisler, Elman of the Philadelphia Orchestra and others. There was a little bell that was rung each time a session was to begin, and on the writing desk a bible which was read aloud at the beginning of each pupil's lesson. Passages from the bible were memorized and everyone loved the stories. Another bible, which has been in the house for 100 years, has a record of weather extremes kept over the years by my mother and by me. The pupils were interested in looking at the record of droughts, big snows, hurricanes, hot and cold weather.

The pupils came for their special lessons on Saturday mornings, after school, or during the summer months. Each one (ranging in age from kindergarten to college) had a specific



need to learn some subject. The schoolroom did not always have all that was needed to do adequate teaching – the big dictionary in the back hall of the second floor was searched again and again. Encyclopedias on the first floor were used many times. A piano on the first floor was often played, the rhythm helping them work, and the kitchen was used for baking cookies and making soap and gathering around the table once a week for a box luncheon. The farm was used for May Day, Hallowe'en and school gardens. Sometimes a work bench was pulled out of the big closet and wood carving and various articles of woodwork were made. Chair caning, sewing and creative art was taught as the need arose.

There was a handmade wooden merry-go-round which the children loved to play with. One of the girls made tiny doll clothes to fit one of the figures. The sister of one of the boys used to play with it every time she had to wait for her brother.

Some children had problems with spelling, math, reading, French, Latin, algebra, civics and adjustments to learning. Every pupil seemed to acquire a love of learning through some means. Each one was given an opportunity to express himself independently and then steered to the more complicated mechanics of learning. One boy made a beautiful ship model – requiring weeks of careful work in the recreation period. One chair which was caned still stands, a book case, though wobbly still holds some of the books. Many of the precious interesting books have been sent away. The musical books are all gone, but a few rare specimens are left – a very choice history, some very fine texts of English grammar, some French books and a few comprehensive math books.

There was no real teaching done in this schoolroom. An effort was made to show the pupils their needs so that they could teach themselves and never give up seeking knowledge. I realized when they left school that I can't teach them everything and can only show them the way to educate themselves and never give up. A special effort was made to have them know the things around them and to appreciate the true culture.

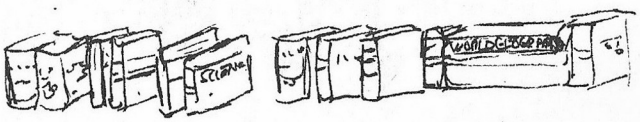
To try to unravel their problems and start them learning I often resorted to unusual methods. There was one boy who couldn't concentrate at all, who seemed unable to think about his math long enough to set the figures down. I found out that he loved pumpkin pie, so I had some for him when he came next time. We sat down in the kitchen and enjoyed it and discussed his math problems. His mind relaxed and he was able to absorb his lesson.

One pupil was reached by letting him explore the attic. Never having seen one before he was captivated and wanted to know about everything he found. In talking about old treasures we unlocked his mind and he was able to start learning his lessons.

Another boy who couldn't comprehend mathematical problems, learned to keep an account book for a real person, an old lady. He even wrote out the checks and I signed them. Without realizing it he learned to add, subtract, divide and multiply.

One wistful little boy, from Center Square, who stayed apart from the others and from me too, was won over during a big flood which covered the meadow with water one summer. I stopped work and went wading in the meadow with him. After that, reading the rest of the morning was a joy.

Near the end of the teaching in the schoolroom some pupils came with the most wonderful volumes used in the public school and yet they were allowed to skim them and leave the text unfinished. We tried to cover more with the subjects than the school requires, see a fuller understanding of the text.



One of my most scholarly students was from Princeton University. He needed help with his mathematics and I was able to make him see the problems so that he could solve them.

Great, great, great grandchildren lived on Valley Farm, walked down the back lane and came to this school for pre-school training. The great, great, great grandson between four and five years of age learned his first lesson of promptness (which he never forgot). His little sister came on time one morning and little brother sauntered through the fields and was late. When recess time came at 10:30 he was told he must make up the time.

Now as a grown man working for the United States Navy, he remembers his first lesson to be on time.

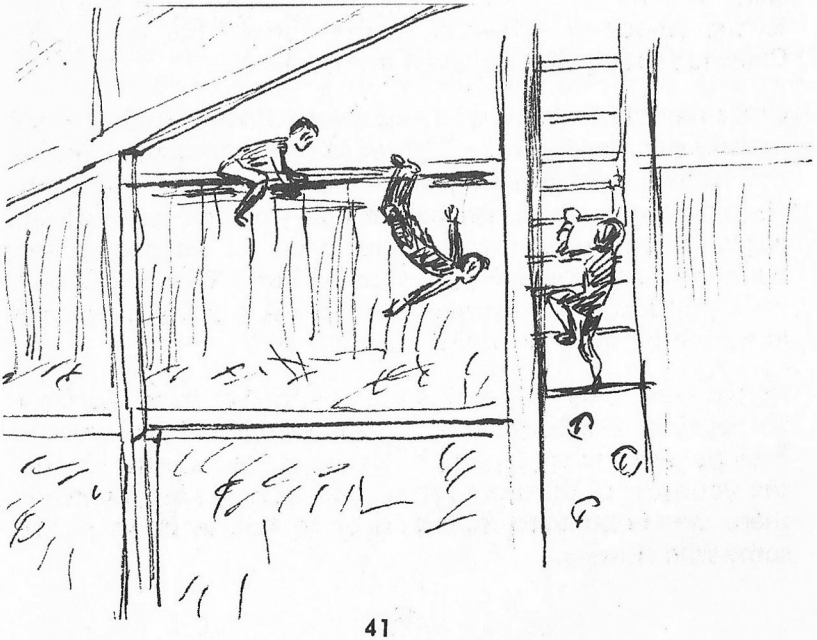
There was always time for fun as well as study. We took side trips to the pottery museum, bird sanctuary, New York, Philadelphia. There was some freedom in the plan of the school work, freedom, and some system, and some finish to the job . . . so this old farmhouse schoolroom did help a number of boys and girls to proceed further in their school life.

RECREATION ON THE FARM

In the early 1900's the children found their recreation close to the farm. The automobile and airplane had not yet come, so a walk to some nearby spot away from home was recreation, and when the little friends came along it was a special treat.

In the winter at Valley Farm the children skated on Lahaska Creek and on the Paxson's pond, and in the woods. In the spring some of the children walked across the swale to five acres of woods and there they found many wild flowers and flowering trees. They brought specimens home to their mother to identify. She always knew what they were and could show the children in which botany book to find them. There was the Spice Bush, American Wild Crab Apple, Witch Hazel, Spring Beauties, Dog Tooth Violet, Yellow Violets, False Solomon's Seal, Wild Geraniums, and on the return home several more kinds of violets including a big blue water violet.

In the summer the children played in the hay and straw in the barn. They floated on a raft in the Lahaska Creek and waded in an old swimming hole.



Sometimes they went back of the barn to an old orchard of very large apple trees. On one side was an old worm fence and on the other sides, post and rail fence. The Valley Farm children loved to climb these big apple trees and throw apples down to the pigs. Pigs don't graze in a field like cows, and this old orchard was their home. After the children tired of this they put big limbs across the post and rail fence and played see-saw. Sometimes two children had to sit on one side to balance a heavy brother on the other end.

With September came fall and off to the Conky Hole they went to gather shell barks under the Hickory trees and then to the woods to gather chestnuts, for at that time many Chestnut trees grew on a piece of woodland.

One time two little girls, my sister and I, went to the woods in early summer and were frightened by what we thought was the bellowing of a bull. We hurried out of the woods and started to run, our straw hats hanging on the backs of our heads, dangling against our shoulders. As we panted and pounded along our older sister called out, "That isn't a bull, it's a bull frog!" And sure enough it was a bullfrog croaking in a pond by the edge of the woods.

As we grew older our walks took us further from the farm. We went to Buckingham Mountain for hikes in all seasons. Friends were invited to go with us sometimes. My sister and I, the youngest of the group, strayed far over the mountain and there was nobody to molest us or to fine us if we picked some wild flowers.

We walked to Bycot Station, visited with the agent for awhile and rested. Then over the trail we went and up a swampy path which had once been the roadway to a house. There were pools of water which we tried to jump and fallen trees to clamber over. Up, up, up, sloped the road with flowers blooming alongside it in the spring. Finally we reached the main road where the horses and wagons were driven, and where there were "thank you ma'ams" made to let the water run off.

After a short distance on the main road the children sometimes struck off onto a path called the Indian Trail. This path came out on a road on top of the mountain. There we proceeded along the wood road for a long time – the younger children, like me, sitting down for a rest. There was no water to drink and our throats were very dry.

Perhaps we went three quarters of a mile along the ridge until we could see Will Atkinson's red barn. Then we started down the mountainside where Laurel bushes and some Scrub Pine grew and in the spring of the year, beautiful Arbutis. We zig-zagged along and into a tangle of briars which tore our stockings and sometimes our dresses. Then after sliding and falling and climbing we came out on the lower wood road. Green Shoots of Day Lilies appeared along the path and four or five daffodils bloomed. We were thrilled to find daffodils and picked one or two and then wound our way around trees and swamps to the New Hope railroad. Sometimes when we came near the railroad we found beautiful moss with arbutis blooming on the edge. We gathered a few sprays and put them in the paper bags we carried.

One time when I was picking some sprigs, I suddenly found my hand close to a big snake coiled up on the dry moss. I jumped back, dropping my flowers and ran to the railroad.

I was too frightened to look carefully at the snake but I think it was a pine snake.

On the way back we walked along the tracks toward Bycot. My sister was nearly always ahead of me, my legs tiring long before hers. I would call. "Wait, wait for me," but she didn't like to wait. We were warm too — early April days sometimes had a high temperature and we still had on our long sleeved and long legged underclothes. Mother liked us to keep it on until late spring to be sure we would not catch cold.

After we reached Bycot Station and headed up Holicong Road for home, we were tired and warm and thirsty. Back in the house we put the daffodils and arbutis in water. Mother told us the daffodils came from the site of an old home in which Eliza Sine lived. Only the stones were left of this house and some of her gardens. I still wonder on stormy days and winter days how Elizabeth Sines ever got out to get food to eat.

We took a little rest and then it was time to do our evening chores. These were followed by a good supper and an early bedtime, making it a perfect day.

I like to think back when perhaps the whole Valley was covered with trees in the days of the Indian. White man pushed his way up the Delaware from Fallsington — clearing 300-acre tracts of good timber at a time. Later the size was reduced to 200, then 100, 50, and finally 20. With zoning it has become one acre and in some places in 1970, ¼ of an acre.

MORE RECREATION ON THE FARM

In the summer months a group of us, all in our teens, and all members of a First Day School class led by Susan Atkinson, met at Susan's home each Wednesday at about 2:30, no matter the heat, to play tennis on the grass courts. After awhile we rested in *three* hammocks. What luxury! We had only one hammock at the Valley Farm.

At 4:00 Susan appeared with a bowl of lemonade with slices of banana floating in it and a plate of cake. The tennis game ceased and all of us sat on the ground for refreshment. It surely did taste good. Occasionally a thunderstorm came before we started home at 5:00. Then we huddled in the house and watched the storm come over the valley until we could go home. Sometimes, when we were in a gay mood, somebody played the piano and we danced until the storm moved on.

In the middle of July this group went on a picnic to Buckingham Mountain. We arrived at Susan's home at 10:30 and each of us carried a picnic lunch which we put in a two-seated open wagon. Mark, the nice old bay horse, was hitched to it and stood patiently waiting in the shade of a maple tree. Susan came out of the kitchen door with more sandwiches, a small milk can of water, lemonade in jars, and a big loaf cake. All the food was put in the wagon and Susan drove the horse. The girls, about twelve of us, took turns riding in the wagon as there was not enough room, but old Mark walked so slowly that it was easy to keep pace with him.

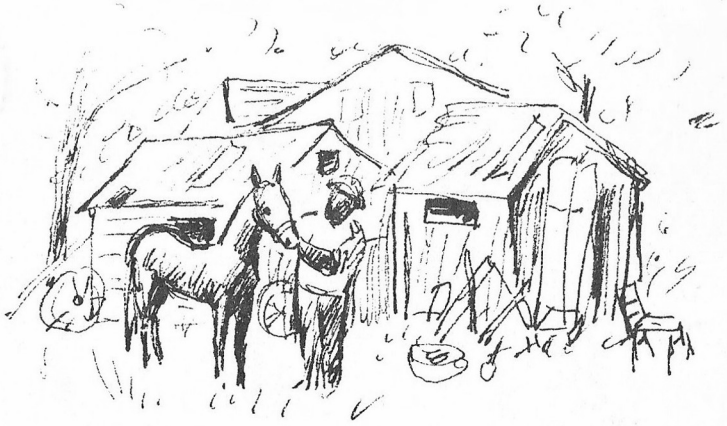
Down the road we went to Bycot Station, up over the mountain to the Mt. Gilead Church where we rested a few minutes and looked over the beautiful view. At the bend in the road there were two forks and we debated whether to take the upper or the lower. They were both old woods roads and no matter which one we took there were often limbs across the road which we had to pull aside so that old Mark could get by.

Those of us who were walking trudged up a gradual incline. We came to a pile of rocks on the right which we called the "Little Wolf Rocks". In a little while we saw the great, grey boulders of the real "Wolf Rocks". Mark was tied to a tree and given a few ears of corn in a box and we unloaded the lunch from the cart. Of course, we were ready to eat and we were very thirsty too. We sat on the big rocks on the top overlooking the valley and ate and ate and ate. Most of our sandwiches were meat and jelly and I think I tasted my first peanut butter sandwich on a picnic. In half an hour we were ready to climb over the big rocks which protruded from the steep side of the hill.

We thought about the hermit, Albert Large, and looked at the opening where we supposed the entrance to his cave was. We had all heard tales of how he lived on the mountain for 30 years, hidden from the world in his cave. We could see the blackened wall of the outer room which he used as a kitchen. We sat on a huge rock we called the "arm chair" and an overhanging ledge we called the "hermit's bed". Some daring girl would climb out on the tilted rock called the "hermit's pulpit" and then we would call out, "Preach a sermon." Some person usually did.

On down the hill we scrambled, eating huckleberries as we went. We found the "buggy" rock, a big rock with a top tilted back just like a buggy. And then on toward the foot we came to a great flat rock called the "hermit's table". Year after year these experiences seemed so real – climbing up, zig-zagging until we reached the top, warm and sometimes with clothes torn, and hurrying to the can of water; not much left by this time.

By now the hardiest of our group were ready for a special trip. Susan and some girls who didn't want to go stayed, while the rest of us ran down to the road over the mountain (we really did run most of the way). At the bend of the road lived Billy Giles and his mother Mary Jane. We stopped and spoke to Mary Jane, who came to greet us, standing behind the screen door, dressed in an apron and calico dress. Then we walked out to the tumble down barn to see Billy Giles and his little horse Peanut. Peanut was a little horse, not a pony. Billy led him around for us and told us about his herb medicine. We asked him how he made it. "That's a secret," he said, but he showed us his bottles stored on a shelf. The place was littered with trash which he collected from the neighbors and he hoped to sell to dealers.



Billy Giles and Peanut

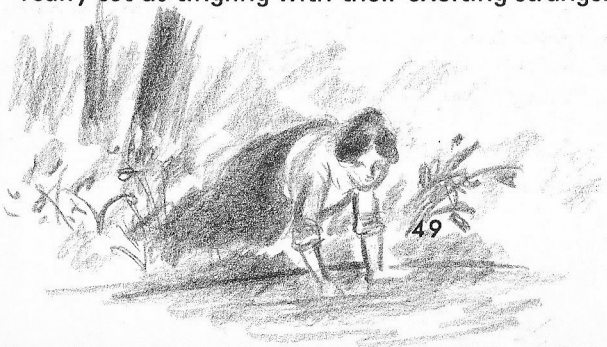
We left Billy and went down another wood road in back of Mount Gilead church. There stood a two-story house and a group of children ran out to meet us. This was the Simons family who lived there many years. The father worked in the neighborhood and the children went to school. When they moved away the house gradually fell apart and there is nothing left now but some stones almost covered with vines and leaves.

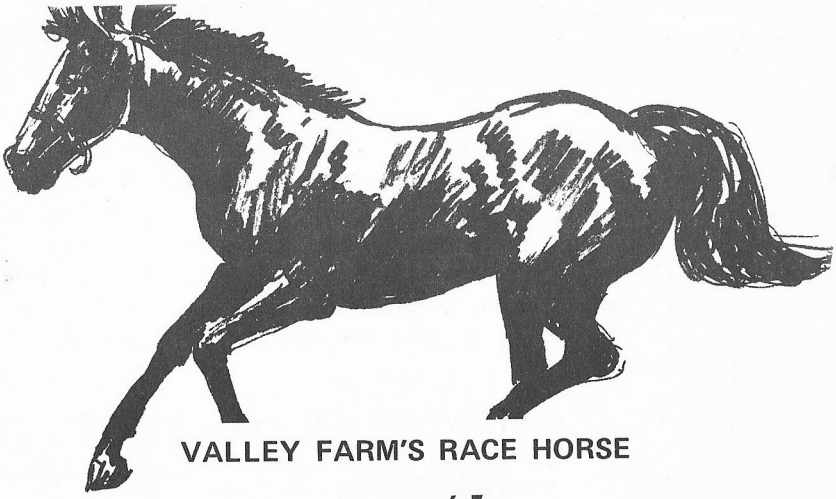
There was a spring nearby which we were always glad to find on warm spring days. We rinsed our hands and then held water in them to drink. By this time some had had enough and others of us wanted more. Sometimes we ran all the way down to the station where there was a spring under a mound with an iron door. Judge Paxson pumped water (by windmill) to his farm.

Finally we went back over the road to the Wolf Rocks to find Susan and those who stayed with her reading a story. How many miles did we go? Perhaps we walked and ran four altogether. We never felt very tired until old Mark and the wagon started home, then we were all ready to ride but only a few could get in at a time. At 5:00 we were back at Susan's home, still thirsty and tired. We gave her happy goodbyes and the group departed. Some were transported by their parents and others walked home.

Fortunately on most of these mid-July trips we had pleasant weather with lovely summer breezes.

My oldest sister often remarked, "These silly girls — to go out on this hot day." But it was never too hot. We looked forward to the challenge of the tennis and the promise of cool lemonade and delicious cake. We were drawn by the lure of the mountain with its rugged slopes and great boulders which we had named to fit our familiar surroundings, but which really set us tingling with their exciting strangeness.





VALLEY FARM'S RACE HORSE

When a race horse came to stay at Valley Farm, my brother Joe thought this was the most exciting thing which ever happened. My uncle brought Josephine, a small sleek thoroughbred, to be cared for and rested because she was quite lame.

Josephine was a vicious kicker, but that didn't stop Joe from giving her a great deal of loving attention. He certainly admired her, and under his care she improved and gradually got over being lame. She walked easily about the pasture and trotted sometimes when she saw something of interest, like another horse.

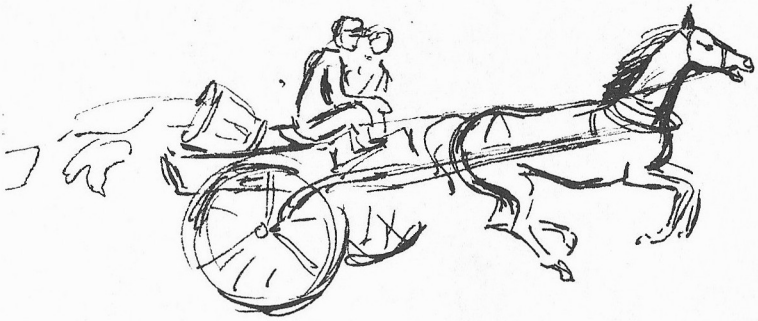
Joe decided one day that he would put a collar on Josephine and drive her with the Jagger wagon. He had to make a trip anyway to take the laundry up to Sally on Buckingham Mountain. When I heard he was going, I asked to go along. I was about 10 years old then and loved to go on errands. These were the only trips we ever took off the farm. No one went on a drive just for pleasure, so I was always on the lookout for chances to ride with my brothers in the wagon or buggy.

"All right," he said, "thee can come." He pushed the seat of the wagon forward and put the basket of laundry in the back. Josephine submitted to the collar and the harness, and the kicking strap which was to keep her from demolishing the foot board.

When she was securely hitched, I climbed on the seat and Joe

snapped the buggy whip. We were off. Josephine trotted briskly down the lane and onto Holicong Road. This was fun, I thought, much better than the plodding of old Ned who pulled us to meeting every First Day. We went along smoothly to the Bycot Station, and then started up the mountain. Just a little way up the road we came to the first "cross way". Josephine leaped sideways in fear, then reared up. raising the whole wagon with her. She twisted around and tried to back us down the hill. I screamed, "I'm getting out!"

"Thee stay here," said Joe. "Thee wanted to come." He got hold of my skirts with one hand, keeping me down, and pulled out the buggy whip with the other and lashed Josephine until she started forward. In a few feet we were at another cross way . . . up she went again, the seat tilting this time so that I was on an angle. I screamed again and Joe yelled in my ear. "Thee wanted to come – now stay!" He whipped Josephine and she moved ahead.



All the way up the mountain there were cross ways about every 12 feet (built by the supervisors to allow the water to drain down the hill without washing out the road). Josephine hated the collar which pulled on her neck and she hated the cross ways which were so frightening, so she twisted and reared and tried her best to back us down the mountainside. There were only a few thin guard rails between us and the precipice and it looked as if a small push would knock them down. As we teetered near the edge I looked down the steep dropoff and was so terrified that I could hardly hear Joe, but I felt the power of his will and the grip of his hand holding me down.

We must have come to ten of these before we reached the top, and every time it was a battle of strong wills . . . of Josephine wanting to send us down the mountain, wagon and all, of Joe determined to conquer the wild horse and drive her where he had planned to go, of my fearful pleas to get out and run home. I remember hanging on to my slanted seat and seeing the clothes all tossed out of the basket on the wagon floor.

At last we reached the top of the mountain and Joe drove Josephine to the front of a little barn and stopped. She was heaving and blowing and sweat, like soap suds, frothed around her collar and kicking strap. Joe jumped down and handed me the reins. "Thee sit here and hold her while I take in the wash," he said.

"Oh, no, I can't." My eyes flooded with tears and the panic that had nearly choked me before at each cross way seized me again. "I'm going home, I'm going home." I was nearly shrieking by now.

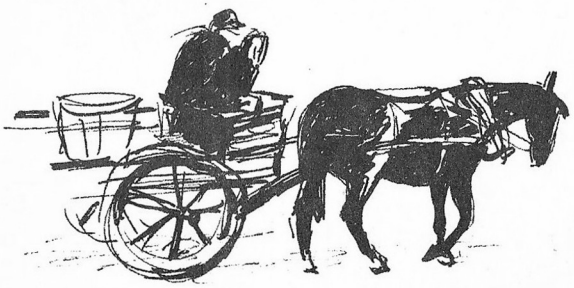
"No, thee's not," said Joe. "Thee wanted to come. Thee is staying right here and holding the reins 'til I get back."

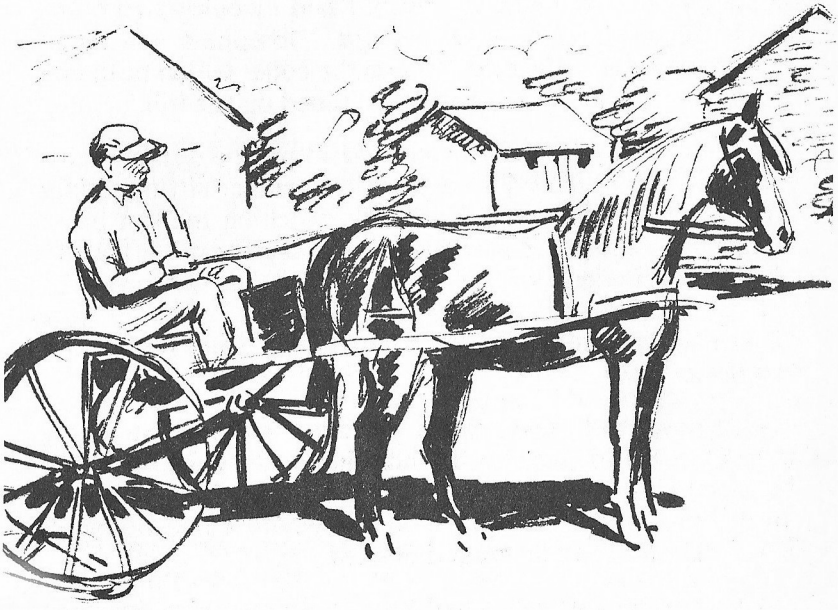
I stayed – I don't know how he made me do it, but he did, and Josephine never moved. She was still heaving and puffing when Joe came back walking up the lane to the house with the basket and coming back again. I said I wouldn't go home in the wagon, but Joe said I would. "Josephine will be all right going down," he said, "it was the collar which bothered her, pulling on her neck when she climbed up the hill."

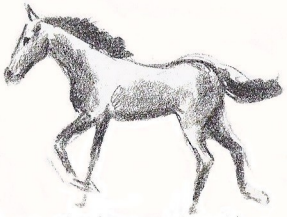
I cried, but I stayed in the wagon and Josephine walked down the mountain as slowly as a cow. I remember sitting rigidly behind the bay rump and black tail, watching the wet black kicking strap sliding up and down the sudsy sweat. I gradually relaxed, the the grip of my fingers on the side rail loosened. The tears dried on my cheeks, leaving only a runny nose which made me sniff until Joe handed me a handkerchief and told me to blow.

Josephine walked slowly down Holicong Road to the Valley Farm gate, up the lane to the hitching post by the barn, and then stood, her head down, still breathing hard, while we got out of the wagon. "I told thee she would come home all right," said Joe, and he looked pleased.

Thinking back over this experience, I wonder what kept me from getting out of the wagon and walking home. Was it fear of going against Joe – or was it fear of going down the mountain by myself? I don't really know.







Holicong Studio
Holicong, Pa. 18928
215-297-5273