

The Bethel Journals – Bethel Maine History



JOHN HOWELL CROSBY

(1867-1936)

By Donald G Bennett

The sun had already made the day pleasantly warm. After a long cold winter the snow had vanished, bringing the newly reborn, waxy green leaves out on the trees and shrubs. This was the first spring that I had lived in Bethel; things seemed to start growing awfully slow.

About 10 o'clock on that May 30th morning, Mother and I drove over to the little Riverside Cemetery with some potted geraniums, in the cemetery, surrounded by towering pines, were a few people setting out plants around their family monuments, trying to beautify that pretty little spot next to the river.

I took the carton of plants from the back seat of the car and followed my mother thru the yard to a small lot just a short way in from the riverbank. We stopped in front of a medium sized stone of beautifully polished granite that had inscribed on its face one word - Crosby.

My grandfather had been dead for almost ten years. I had never known the man - he died when I was not yet two-but his spirit and influence in our family made things seem as though he had never been far away.

Added later: John Howell Crosby was descended from Simon Crosby who had married Ann Brigham in 1634. They emigrated from England to Cambridge (Mass.) in 1635 with their eight weeks old son Thomas. Simon was a freeman. He was selectman in 1636, 1638 and in died in September 1639 when only 31 years old. Some sources infer that he had a considerable estate. His wife Ann remarried and lived to age 69.

He had lived the last four years of his life at his beautiful old homestead in Sunday River, backed up against the mountains and walled in with the elms and pines, listening to the merry gurgle of Barker Brook running thru its rocky bed a few yards from the house and to the orchestras of birds in the morning and evening. Here he was able to relax, getting out with all of his old friends who lived in the valley.

Turning back now thru his sixty-nine years to the time of his birth, we find the carpetbaggers infiltrating the broken Confederate States, while in the Capital, President Andrew Johnson was slowly being stripped of his executive powers by a stern, "radical", Republican Congress.

The aftermath of the War Between the States - confusion and inflation - didn't penetrate very deeply into the sleepy little towns of New England. These towns hadn't grown much except in population; life was carried on in about the same manner that it had been before the Revolution. They mourned the loss of their loved ones in the Great War, but only a few politicians were concerned with the national crisis.

In the village centers were the usual shops, bakeries, livery stables and post offices, while outside the sleepy beauty of the village greens were sprinkled many small farms, some being market gardens.

It was on one of these little farms in Belmont, Massachusetts, that my grandfather was born - the son of John Spencer Crosby, a descendant of Dr. Samuel Crosby, a Revolutionary War surgeon - on December 50, 1867. The baby was named John Howell. When Howell was a year old, his father bought another farm in Arlington, the neighboring town, sold the one in Belmont and moved his family - Sarah, his wife, Helen, their daughter, and Howell, the younger son - to their new home.

John's new farm, Crosby Farm, grew under his strenuous efforts, coming, in the next fifty years, to be regarded as the best market garden in Arlington, his being the first to raise hot-house vegetables.

From the time that Howell could walk, he would tag his father all over the farm day after day, helping wherever he was able and learning more about the management of the farm each day. Because he grew up on a farm, Howell's interests, during his early life, turned chiefly to nature - collecting birds and birds' eggs.

He used to listen for hours to the stories that his mother would tell him of her childhood. She used to tell him about an old woman that had lived in Arlington Center, when she was a little girl. Sarah often went to see this old friend of hers when she had any spare time and listen to her stories of the Revolution. The old lady had lived in Arlington all of her life, her stories being just about the common occurrences that took place in the town during the years. She would tell Sarah about being awakened one morning by the steady*"clump, clump, clump" made by the British soldiers marching by their house on the cobblestone pavement as they made their way

thru the early morning fog toward Concord. The family didn't dare to move or show themselves, but they crept to the window, peering over the sill to watch the Red Coats marching by.

These stories thrilled Howell immensely. As soon as he was able to read, he pored over his father's books on the Revolution and the period following. It was probably from this early reading that he gained his interest in politics.

Two years after the family moved to their home, his mother had another son, Nelson, and a year before he started school, another, Roland.

A new school was built in Arlington in 1872, on the block at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and the road that went by the farm, Mystic Street or the Woburn Road.

In 1873 my grandfather entered the first grade in the Russell School, where two generations of his family were to go after him.

For the next few years Howell divided his time quite evenly between going to school and working on the farm. However, as he progressed in school, he discovered something that opened a whole new field of entertainment for him - reading. From the time that he learned to appreciate books until his death, he never lived without a good selection of books near him.

My grandfather went thru the usual nine years of schooling in the Russell School and then onto the high school. Where the high school stood, there now stands one of the three junior highs in Arlington.

All the time that Howell was going to school, his father's farm was expanding, coming to be recognized as one of the better market gardens in the area. However, the family was still badly pressed for money with the children to care for and the expense of improving the farm.

Howell's greatest desire was to attend college, but as he started his senior year in high school, he realized to his sorrow that he would not be able to go. Therefore, when the time arrived in the spring to start the early planting, he left school to devote his time fully to the farm. But Howell's education did not end there. During the rest of his life he kept himself well informed on all of the various situations developing in the world thru his love for reading. In later years he was thought of as one of the town's better educated men.

After Howell left school, he also developed a keener interest in politics. Many times he would go into Boston to hear a good speaker on some world or local problem. He loved to listen to a good orator. By going to these rallies so frequently, he gained many new acquaintances.

In the summer of 1890, Howell went to Europe with one of his friends, a Philip Eberhardt, whose folks lived in Germany. The two traveled in Europe for four months - biking thru Germany, Switzerland, France and England, returning to the States in the fall.

When he returned, he rejoined the young peoples' club at the Baptist Church in Arlington. Howell was elected president of the club, a young woman, Daisy Conant, a descendant of Roger Conant, one of New England's earliest planters, being chosen secretary.

Howell became very attracted to his secretary. Many times Daisy went with him to the rallies in Boston to hear the speakers. He courted Daisy thru the next summer and fall; then on December 9, three weeks before his twenty-fourth birthday, they were married in the Arlington First Baptist Church by Rev. Charles H. Watson.

Just before their marriage Howell had had a new house built at the upper end of the farm on a small lot next to an old place owned by David Butterick, and referred locally as "the well known Wyman estate". He had kept his eye on the old place for quite some time, but the owner didn't show any signs of wishing to sell.

After the newly-weds returned from the honeymoon to New York, they settled down to start life in their home.

The next few years were spent in fixing up the inside of the house, putting in many long hours on the farm - Howell had to spend their first Christmas morning working on water pipes that had burst in the greenhouse - and going to their friends' weddings. On Sundays after Howell got thru with his duties in Sunday School and Church, some of the gang would leave for a picnic dinner out in the country. The crowd usually went in a couple of huge wagons and a cluster of buggies, with great hampers of food. Sometimes the neighbors got together on the shore of Mystic Lake for an evening clambake.

That September, their first child, Helen Edith, was born. Two months later Howell was appointed to a membership on the Republican Town Committee.

The winter passed rather uneventfully, but poor old Mr. Butterick's resolve not to sell finally weakened in the spring. In June, Howell bought the house from him and started in working on it. That fall, after the house had been made ready, the family moved into their new, old home. A few years later his Conant in-laws came to live in their recently vacated but new house.

Things really began to get into full swing that autumn when in November their second child, Phyllis was born. The children got into the usual mischief- they very nearly killed each other in their escapades. After they bought Jinks, a high-stepping, black trotter, they would go evenings for a refreshing drive to cool off after a rugged day.

At that time, Howell's brother, Nelson, discovered that he had T.B. Although his condition was rather serious, he almost killed himself worrying about what to do. Late in the summer he and Howell left for Texas. Nelson was going to stay on the ranch of a former Arlington friend until he got better. However, a few years later he bought a ranch of his own a short, "Texas" distance away.

A year later the youngest brother, Roland, was engaged, Nelson came home from Texas, got married and then went back again. Howell was elected to the school committee, which provided him with many spirited discussions with the other members. Two years later after getting into frequent hassles, he resigned in disgust. Howell had a very quick temper, which sometimes got the best of him.

My grandmother's uncle, Jack Hardy, was a member of a horseback riding club that took trips thru New England in the summer. One time they stopped in a little town called Bethel after coming down thru the Grafton Notch and asked for a good place to put up for the night. They were directed to a Miss Locke's boarding house in Sunday River valley. When they returned to Arlington later that summer, all they could talk about was the beautiful old place in Bethel where they had spent the night.

The next summer more of the family went to Bethel including Howell.

In the fall of 1899, Howell was elected to the General Court as a representative from Middlesex County. During the four years that he served as representative, he was either a member of a finance committee or on the Ways and Means Committee. After four years in the General Court, he ran for nomination for Councilor and was defeated.

That fall they went on a second honeymoon thru Niagara Falls, Chicago, Kansas, Texas and Colorado Springs, returning home just before Thanksgiving.

During the intervals between his political jobs, he spent most of his time on the farm or ferrying parts of his family back and forth from Texas, going for a short vacation to New York when things had got straightened out. Their family was now complete: four girls - Helen, Phyllis, Ruth and Evelyn. Howell was the superintendent of the Sunday school in the Baptist Church, working with his friend, (Rev.) Dr. Watson.

Now that Howell had more time to himself, he began expanding his library. Howell did all of his business thru Lauriat's, an old bookstore in Boston. When the shop had a new selection of books come in, they would send those that they thought he would like. He would look them over, make his own selection and send the rest back. This was his first real start in an avocation, and he went all out in it. As it was, later on he would practically go crazy over such things as rugs, oil paintings, or phonograph records. For a while he bought books by the almost by wholesale lots, some of which he never had the time to read; when he became interested in something else, his book craze began to slide. But the quality of his selection improved.

In 1907 he was elected to the Board of Selectmen in Arlington, where he served for three years. In the meantime he had been nominated and elected to the Massachusetts Senate. Also in the Senate he was on the Ways and Means Committee while being chairman of the Metropolitan Affairs Committee.

In an August 5, 1910 Boston Transcript article, the paper said, "Mr. Crosby's greatest single contribution to progressive legislation was his work on the Boston City Charter... The passage of the act was an achievement of the highest order." He was reelected for a second senate term.

After he was defeated in an attempt for a third term as Senator, he started another of his high pressure hobbies, rug collecting. If rugs would have stayed on the ceiling, they would have been there!!

Howell bought his first car, a Pierce Arrow, in the fall of 1908. He had quite a nervous temperament. Therefore, after he got the car, he drove a little, but he soon gave it up entirely. Instead, there was a friend of his in town, a Mr. Graham, who drove for him until his youngest daughter received her driver's license and became the family teamster.

Also at this time he made some additions to the house. He extended the dining room, put a music room on the east side, had a larger bookcase built in the parlor, and added some piazzas to the front, back and side of the house.

That winter he set out on another hobby - collecting phonograph records. However, this time his wife was the one who got him into it. Howell had been in the habit of giving her fifty dollars at Christmas to buy her own present. Then after he gave her the money, he always asked what she was going to get with it. On this occasion she told him that she was going to buy a victrola. Howell scoffed at the idea and told her that she was foolish to buy one, because there wasn't one

made that was worth listening to, the reproduction being so poor. But my grandmother had a counterattack ready: one of her friends in the neighborhood had just bought a new model which couldn't be compared to the older makes. The next evening they went to the neighbor's to hear the victrola. Howell was so taken by the music that Grandma had to practically drag him home.

After the demonstration, Howell could hardly wait to get to Boston and buy one. Going at this in the way he did all of his inspirations, he told Grandma that she could put her fifty dollars into the pot if she wished but that he was going to buy a really good model. Two days later he had a very large, cabinet model victrola delivered to the house.



Crosby Farm about 1938



The farm crew – photo taken in middle 1930's – standing at the entrance to barn lower level where picked vegetables were washed.



Daisy Conant Crosby and J. Howell Crosby circa 1905



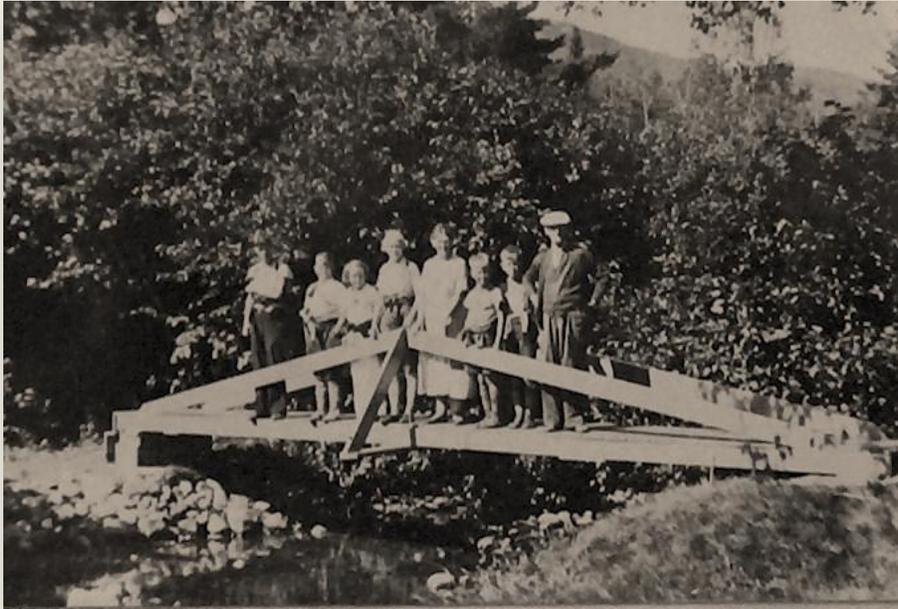
The Crosby home at 282 Mystic Street, Arlington



Daisy and Howell Crosby at home in Arlington circa 1930



The Red House in Sunday River, Newry, Maine circa 1930



With their grand children on the bridge over Barker Brook in Sunday River



Howell and Daisy with their four daughters, left to right, Phyllis Williamson, Helen Howard, Evelyn Bennett and Ruth Crosby circa 1933



A winter visit from the Sunday River snow roller in 1923: Howell and Daisy often took a vacation to the Red House in February.

From then on, he collected records in much the same manner that he collected books: When the store in Boston had a new supply of records come in they would send a selection that they thought he would like the best. He played the selections to review them; kept those he wanted and sent the rest back. His albums contained all kinds of opera pieces, regular classical music, and the latest in popular music, his favorite popular singer being John McCormack and Enrico Caruso his favorite tenor for the opera records.

My mother used to say that she grew up to Caruso. Her father was slightly deaf and ran the volume on the victrola wide open so that Caruso's powerful voice almost shook the house down.

That summer Daisy, my grandmother, with a group of women friends went to Europe on a tour that was conducted by one of Howell's cousins. When she returned in August, Howell met her in New York, coming home by boat the next day.

He started his fourth collecting series that winter - oil paintings. In time the rest of the house that wasn't covered with the bookcases and rugs was hidden behind the paintings, Enneking, with his nature scenes and sunsets, being his favorite artist.

In the fall his eldest daughter, Helen, married Julian Howard and went to live in Akron, Ohio.

For about ten years now his father had been retired from the farm, leaving Howell in complete charge. John had originally planned to give the farm over as a joint ownership to the three sons. However, Howell was the only one to take an active interest in the place. As the other sons finished school, Nelson went to Texas, and Roland got a job chauffeuring for a wealthy lady in Boston. Because of this situation, Howell took over the management of the farm.

In running the market garden there were three divisions - the marketing in Boston, the management of the greenhouses, and the management of the rest of the farm outside. When Nelson finally did come back from Texas, he took over the job of selling in Boston. Roland came back for a few years also, but he died a short time later.

All the help on the farm were either Irish or Italian. They were all good natured people who loved my grandfather because he was willing to do almost anything for them. He used to get a kick out of working with them and listening to the Italians jabber back and forth to each other in their native language. It really doesn't take long before one can understand them; they do most of their talking with their hands.

In the winter the whole gang shifted into the greenhouses, where the temperature was always above seventy degrees or more; or they went to work in the closed in celery pits.

During the cold months the main object was to keep fires in the boilers going to heat the greenhouses. Scattered over the farm were three sets of the houses; each set had its own heating plant. In all there were ten houses. The night watchman had the job of firing the boilers thru the cold winter nights, if he failed only one night, the farm might as well have closed up. Ed Gately was the night watchman and a good worker, but he also liked to drink. Although my grandfather never knew it, there were many nights that Mrs. Gately fired the boilers while Ed was out cold in order that he keep his job and to keep the lettuce from freezing. (Mrs. Gately was also a frequent baby sitter for me plus she made wonderful donuts. The Gately's lived on Kimball Road near the center set of greenhouses.)

Every summer my grandmother and their girls went to Miss Locke's in Bethel to spend their vacation. The tribe would go mountain climbing, swimming and picnicking with the rest of the boarders, being occasionally surprised by their father who'd take a train up to Bethel once in a while when the farm was all right.

Then in the fall of 1916 he bought the Lowe place in Sunday River, a nice rambling set of buildings backed up to Barker Mountain. The house was a little run down; after the Crosby's

bought it, Howell spent almost a year fixing it up and painting the buildings red with white trim.

That December of 1916, was my grandparent's twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. Although there was supposed to be only an informal reception, over three hundred friends and relatives came. Those present included many of the Senators and Representatives that had served with Howell in the legislature along with the help from the farm. Everyone there had the time of his life, Howell being sure that all the farm help were introduced to his friends and close associates.

Next spring he was elected to serve on the Constitutional Convention in Boston, which met continuously until the middle of the following winter.

During the winter the country committed itself up to its neck in World War I. The situation handed Howell another job, Food Administrator for Middlesex County. Throughout the remainder of the war, he was busy either in Boston or at home with work on some committee. Although Howell worked tirelessly for the good of the country, he was a staunch Republican. He, along with many other party men thought that Woodrow Wilson was an idiot who had tricked the voters into electing him.

After the work on the new house in Sunday River had been completed, all the family went there for the summer. At the crack of dawn a great pile of suitcases, a clothes hamper of food and odds-and-ends and a victrola were packed into the big Pierce Arrow. After all this was stowed away, the family climbed in on top of the luggage - the left-over's being stacked in the front seat with the driver.

In November, 1919, Howell's father died at the age of ninety in the town where he had so successfully raised a family and established a business.

The next few years were spent in buying furniture for the house in Bethel. Phyllis, the next in line, was married. She and her husband, Earl Williamson, returned to Bethel to live a year after they were married.

Crosby's Farm underwent changes in its management when Nelson started working his son in as his successor, and Howell got my father interested in taking over for him on the farm. My father, Harold, was courting Evelyn, Howell's youngest daughter, at the time.

In taking over the management of the farm, the two young men had to uphold the standing of being the leading market garden in New England. Howell and his father before him had developed new strains of lettuce and celery which had immediately cornered the market. Their Pascal celery was the elite of the celery classes at that time. In addition to this, they pioneered in the perfecting of a destroyer for celery blight; in experimenting with various fertilizers, they were the first to use boron in their fertilizer mixtures.

When competition from Californian producers started, a small retail store was built on the farm as an outlet for the surplus. Slowly the Crosby's market changed: the bulk of their farm produce instead of being shipped to Boston every day was being sold at the store.

Howell had more time to himself now that the younger men were running the farm. He began to do some work on the house in Arlington. To start in, he began "Painting Campaign I" in which he painted every room in the old house, doing the outside shortly after.

Besides his collecting books, rugs, paintings, and phonograph records, he used to make some

wine in the berry season. At the time that he had bought the house from Mr. Butterick, there had been one old grape vine. After he went to live there, he put in a few more. One was a huge affair reaching from the garage fifty yards up across a sunny hill to a stone wall. Many years later when the vines were bearing well, the family was always swamped, with grapes, grape jelly and anything that could be made from grapes; the neighbors got the overflow, Howell making sure that his friends had all that they wanted.

Howell's best wines were his rhubarb and elderberry – which he took very real pride in making. When he had finished a new batch of rhubarb wine, he would hold a sample up to the light and scrutinize it carefully for any flaws. Although he took great pleasure in making the wine, he seldom drank any. In his wine closet in the cellar, there was, besides several of his own sweeter wines, a supply of the more bitter Italian wines that he purchased directly from the importers in Boston.

Sometimes when the family was seated for Sunday dinner, Gramp would bounce up from the table and rush down to the wine closet, pick out a bottle and take it back to the dining room. Then he'd hold the specimen up to the window while he invited the rest of the family to gather around, marveling at its rich golden color, to Howell's delight, of course.

Once he put a batch of raisin champagne into the bottles to "work". The bottles were packed in a box of sand to keep them cool. Every once in a while he used to go down and inspect the case. One time he had just reached the cellar stairs when one of the bottles exploded, scattering glass all over the cellar.

The last of the daughters, not married, Ruth, received her Doctor's Degree from Radcliffe in 1929. A few months later she accepted a position at the University of Maine. Now all the children had left home, except for my parents who lived at the other end of the farm in the original Crosby farmhouse.

Nelson was elected to the legislature the next year, while my father took over his father-in-law's place on the farm, the old folks going to Bethel. They stayed just long enough in Arlington to thoroughly clean and for Howell to paint the house again before they left for the country and the Red House.

From the summer of 1931 they spent most of their time at the Red House. Often in the summer, all of the family would gather at the old place beneath the towering elms at the Red House to have a happy reunion. In the fall it was back to Arlington for one last time.

In February 1932, they returned to Bethel. Now after a strenuous but successful life Howell had completed his life's career cycle. The remainder of the winter he spent in making bird shelters and feeders, taking food out to his wild friends every day in the cold winter weather. When the weather prevented him from going out much, he would sit and read by the hour; or he would listen to his records. All that he had to do was to sit back and watch nature work. A few years before, he and a neighbor, Jim Reynolds, had set out some pines on a lot next to the house. He used to be able to see Old Speck Mountain from the dining room window. He made his weather predictions in the summer from the observations he took in the morning of the top of the mountain.

For four years they lived at Sunday River away from the noise of the world of civilization, and

being pleasantly surprised when some of their family dropped in on them.

Then one evening, August 2, 1936, not unexpectedly, Howell Crosby died after being ill most of the summer.

It is very hard to judge a man, to see the true qualities in him, while he is still alive. When a man dies, all the things that ever happened to him are brought out by his friends and associates. I have never heard a person comment about my grandfather except in a very respectful tone of voice. Although he had a quick temper at times, he never forgot his friends. As the seasons changed he was continually making the rounds of his neighbors with a basket of fruit or vegetables. He had the reputation of his business associates of being a shrewd man although didn't finish high school. His collection of books was considered by many one of the finest in Arlington.

Howell could come home from a meeting in Boston, change his clothes and work the rest of the day with the men on the farm; and the men loved him as others respected him.

I think that there were two ingredients that made my grandfather seem more than an ordinary man - integrity and ambition.

EPILOG

After Howell's death, Daisy kept her summer schedule of Red House living but spent most of her winters in Arlington at the old home. From Arlington she visited with Ruth and Helen. Ruth was a professor at the University of Maine, in Orono and Helen lived in Kitchener, Ontario. When summer came, Ruth took over for their return to the Red House. In 1945, the house in Arlington was sold. The Bennetts moved to Bethel where Harold and Ellie took over the farm and dairy business started by his father, Edward Bennett.

Crosby's Farm went through a number of changes from 1936 to 1957. Harold continued working as sort of a partner until 1938. He left the farm to start his own farm equipment business in Arlington. Nelson Crosby became the surviving partner but his son, John Samuel Crosby, ran the farm and operated the farm store. In 1938 nearly one-half of the farm land was sold. The original farm house, barn, piggery and Gately house were torn down. From 1939 until 1942 the recently sold parcel was put under development and a number of houses were built—the first group faced Mystic Street and others were started along a new set of roads laid in the back property. War suspended house building.

In June 1938, Ruth and her mother set sail for England and Scotland to tour literary points of interest. However, due to the threat of war looming larger and larger, they booked a return trip for sailing from Southampton on October 2d aboard the "Pennland" a German owned Red Line liner. (I remember waiting for their train from New York to arrive at South Station in Boston—exciting for me because we waited on the platform to watch the train come in pulled by double headed steam locomotives.)

John Crosby's family, his wife Pauline and two daughters Ann and Carol had been living in the old homestead. They moved to a temporary house in Arlington while their new house was being built on Mystic Street on retained farm property. This house still stands at 246 Mystic as well as Howell's and Daisy's new house at 250 Mystic and the new old house at 282 Mystic Street. Nelson and Cora Crosby's home on Davis Avenue near the former farm store still stands. The former store building is a residence.

In 1957 John Crosby sold the farm and moved to Moody, Maine where he resumed vegetable farming and running a farm store. He continued this business on U.S. Route 1 for another 25 years. John died in 1998. Ann married and lives in Burlington, Mass; her sister Carol is married and lives in Colorado.

In 1962 Ruth Crosby retired from the University of Maine. Her mother had come to live with her at her apartment on College Avenue in Orono. They spent each summer at the Red House until 1965 when Daisy could no longer make the trips. Daisy died in January 1969 at the age of 96. Ruth continued the same summer-winter schedule. Earl Williamson died in 1966 and his wife, Phyllis, lived with Ruth at Orono winters and stayed in her own home near the Red House in the summer.

In 1969 Ruth inherited the Red House when her mother passed away. Before that Ruth had devoted herself to writing about their family experiences at the Locke Farm in Bethel. In 1966 her book, "I Was a Summer Boarder", was published by Christopher Publishing Co. of Boston. Her book became a favorite among readers in the Bethel area and those familiar with Sunday River. In 1974 she had a second book published entitled, "From an Old Leather Trunk". This book told about an ancestor, Samuel Rugg, and his journals and inventions in the first part and the middle section is about her grandparents, Benjamin and Clara Conant and their trip to England with the Old Folks' singing group. Benjamin Conant became an established printer in Boston. After 1893 they lived next door to their daughter in the "honeymoon" house.

In 1977 my mother, Evelyn, who was living in Bethel became ill, was briefly hospitalized, mostly recovered and moved to Falls Church, Virginia, to stay with Kathy and me. She passed away there June 27, 1977; had she been able to hold on for another 10 days she would have made it back to her home in Bethel because I was to retire from the Army three days after she died.

Ruth and Phyllis continued to spend summers at the Red House until 1980. Ruth was hospitalized in December 1980 and died on April 1, 1981. Her sisters, Phyllis and Helen also passed away that same year. Phyllis was living with her daughter Helen George in New Jersey and Helen was living at the Howard's home in Kennebunkport.

When Ruth passed away, I inherited the Red House property and its contents. A special item among the contents was the "Old Leather Trunk". At first Kathy and I rented the Red House to Cindy and Mark Hiebert while at the same time I set up my picture frame work in the work shop that connected the house and barn.

In 1986 we decided to rent our house in Mayville and move to the Red House in order to be able to continue working on its rehabilitation and general up-keep. The old house and barn had deteriorated considerably over the years. Since the time my grandparents bought the house in 1916 as well as in the times of the Barkers, Athertons and Lowes before them all the rooms were heated by individual wood stoves. During my grandparent's time, John Nowlin had taken care of their wood supply and keeping a wood supply handy for fueling stoves. By selling the pine tree plantation we got enough money to take care of some of the most pressing maintenance problems but in the end we decided to sell the property. However, the customary peace and quiet of the valley had fled as the Sunday River Ski Area had boomed. Respect for privacy was not a quality generally observed by winter sports visitors. We closed on the sale in January 1994. The Crosby era in the Sunday River valley which had started at the Locke Farm in 1897 had ended after 97 years and three generations.

Donald G. Bennett

Our last look at the Red House - 1993



The Bethel Journals

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