

Marian Clark Trow Wilkins – Memories of New Boston

*Notes: The 1920 census lists **Marian Clark Trow** of New Boston, NH as an unmarried 24-year-old bank stenographer. She lived in the household of her parents, Albert F. Trow, a 45-year-old Baggage Master for the railroad, and Dell C. Trow, his 50-year-old wife, along with Dell's mother, Susan F. Clark (age 83). The Trow family does not appear in New Boston in the 1930 census.*

Marian's memories of New Boston were typed by Marian in 1986 "with just two little fingers", probably in response to an inquiry by Rena Davis of the Historical Society. I've retyped her memories, also using two fingers and added notes in italics. – Dan Rothman 2015

November 11, 1986

First I would like to introduce myself.

Marian Clark Trow Wilkins, age 91, and am told I have two blessings to be thankful for, a practically sound mind, I guess, and memory of my life in New Boston, until they took the train off the road and we had to move to Manchester, N.H. [*The New Boston railroad ceased operating around 1930.*]

You hear about such unexpected delights of a life time, the fact that you were in the Store when my Nephew and his wife stopped in and you found out who they were and you visited. That is the big red letter day in my life I guess. I do wish we might continue that pleasure and share all the news of years in New Boston. I am sure you have learned so much more than I know, but perhaps I could surprise you with my more personal knowledge of many things. I can recall my mother telling all about the big fire [*of 1887*] that swept thru the Town and was stopped just one house from where ours was. [*The Trow family lived on River Road a few houses east of what is now Dodge's Store.*]

I had better stop here and explain that I am in the Scituate Ocean Manor Nursing Home because I am almost blind and have one bad knee and leg that hampers my walking a whole lot. So my letter will be full of errors in typing even though I went to Bryant and Stratton Business College and learned to type with just two little fingers to govern the keyboard as far as I should be concerned. Keys stick occasionally, and as different girls come in to take care of my room I am interrupted and lose my train of thought.

Whether at the time the Old Church on the Hill was struck by lightning and burned I was old enough to remember or from hearing about it from my Mother. It is so vivid an experience it seems I must have actually seen it, young as I was at that time. [*In 1900, the author was 4 or 5 years old.*]

My Dad worked on the train that ran out of New Boston and when that was discontinued we had to pick up and move to Manchester, sell our house and I began losing much of my own contact with the Town.

The first Minister I can recall at the Protestant Church was a Mr. Wildey, then Lebosquet and finally Mr. Swanson who married Mary Warren. I cannot recall the name of any at the Baptist Church until a Mr. Lovett and his wife came there. *[Reverend Louis William Swanson served as pastor of the Presbyterian Church in New Boston from around 1910 to 1945. The Baptist Church stood on the town green, across River Road from the author's house. Today there is a gazebo on that spot.]*

I can go up and down the streets in the Town recalling who lived in the houses, some with two changes or more of occupants. Our house was the third one from the Atwood's Store *[now Dodge's Store]* down to the bridge that went across the river to the station. Originally it was occupied by my Grandfather, Dr. Clark, and my Grandmother Susan Knowlton from Northwood, N.H. He had a relative or two in Westminster so I guess he came from there.

My Dad was born in Mont Vernon and lived some of his boyhood there. Then his Dad and Mother came to New Boston and took over running of The Tavern until they were both stricken with pneumonia and died within a few days of each other before my Dad was of legal age. *[Elbridge Trow and his wife died in 1892, when their son was about 17.]* Horace Chandler drove the Stage Coach from New Boston to Goffstown or maybe Manchester; I am vague on that point. He and his wife lived on River Road in a house about opposite the bridge.

I understand you are sending a map of buildings in the Town in early days and it will be a great delight to have some one point out and read to me what you have learned.

I knew all the additions to the Farm that Mr. Whipple made to create a business that was so successful for the Town when he had the cement barn built and the special train came from Boston to dedicate it. I originally had one of the books every one received, but in moving from Newton Highlands, MA to Bedford NH then into Manchester, down to Orleans on the Cape and here, I had to do away with so many things each time and have hated myself no end for letting that book go to where it was more or less appreciated at the time of one move, as I would have loved to have had it while living in Orleans and now here. I am a real "Talking machine"; when opportunity comes along I can boast about things as we used to do them. *[Joseph Reed Whipple published a book "About the Farm" for his Boston hotels' visitors, describing his Valley View Farm in New Boston. Was this the book Marian remembered, or was there another book printed for some special occasion?]*

I ended up with a very pretty plate from one of the Hotels when the Mizpah Circle at the Church received one of the barrels for their Fair, and an after dinner spoon from the feeding place outdoors at the Piggery. *[Whipple had farm produce (milk, eggs, pork, etc.) shipped from his New Boston farm to his Boston hotels (Parker House, Young's, and Touraine). Barrels of slops from the hotel restaurants were sent back to New Boston to feed the pigs, and these sometimes contained silverware and dishes. We don't know why a barrel would be sent to the New Mizpah Circle of the Community Church of New Boston which was (and is) a women's social group.]*

I remember all the hiding places that had to be found for hiding the cannon, Molly Stark, and the feelings in Concord that it should be up there or at least at the little park and house [*General John Stark House*] in Manchester. One was under the dam at Reed McLane's Grist Mill.

How they rolled all the roads in winter [*large wooden rollers packed the snow down for sleighs*] and what great sliding it was on one of the double runners some boy in High School would make and how popular it made him with the girls. What fun the husking bees always were at Jim McLane's barn on the hill getting the corn husked and finding one of the red ears that entitled a fellow the right to kiss any girl he chose.

All the games and socials held in the Whipple Hall up over Atwood's Store. The floor was not safe for dancing but the miles we did with the variety of marches we had, and the pin up games, etc. with now and then the men getting up the usual luncheon. Our class was the first one from the school to make a trip to Washington.

Walter Johonnet lived on River Road and with a pair of horses went all around to the Farms in Town and edge of Frankestown collecting milk to bring back to the Creamery, a very interesting and thriving business right out in back of our house.

The Post Office each year came under a moving proposition depending on whether the President was Republican or Democrat and had to be moved from Atwood's to Dodge's Stores. [*Postmasters were political appointees prior to World War II. Clarence Dodge, who was a Democrat, had a general store on the west side of the river, opposite the Tavern. Solomon Atwood, who was a Republican, ran the general store that Clarence bought in 1920 and is still called Dodge's Store today.*]

What an interesting place it was to sit on a friend's veranda and watch the Sundays when the Averills owned and ran The Tavern. There were certain business people from Manchester who came to spend the week end and watch the boys in Town get out their little fire engine and see how far they could pump a stream of water. James W. Hill who had the store in Manchester was one and a man in the casket business named Felton another. [*New Boston's fire engine until the 1920s was a horse-drawn hand-pumped machine called "Constitution #2." A railroad man built a working scale model called "Pinball" for young boys to practice with.*]

What fun it was when the boys had that engine and a man named Brown was Station Agent and had a daughter Myrtle, He used to teach us how to dance around the may pole when the little Engine boys had their Ball.

Did you ever hear the story about how many fellows one night before the Fourth picked up the grandstand out in front of Dr. Weaver's house and toted it over the bridge to leave it on the Baptist Church lawn? [*Dr. Charles Weaver lived in the house on the corner of Central Square and the Mont Vernon Road from 1882-1912. Dr. Sam Fraser lived here later. This would have been a good location for a temporary reviewing stand for the Fourth of July Parade.*] Or of the miraculous escape from being run over by one of the rollers George Dennison, the butcher, had? I could fill a book of things, I guess. It's a great pastime for me in my old age.

One day when there was nothing interesting to listen to on my radio I started finding out how well I could recall the different people living in all the houses in the Village, and even went on along the different roads leading out of the Town itself. It ended way down River Road with a Thomas Cochran just beyond the pond on the right. [*The ice pond east of Molly Stark Lane?*] Up High Street it ended with Mr. Igo and his family who at that time was the Superintendent, I guess you called him, of all the Farm buildings. Where you kept to the left at the intersection by the Atwoods, it ended up with one house up a rise belonging to some one named Dodge. Keeping to the left at that intersection [*on the Francestown Road*] you came to several, a Dr. Todd, Perley Todd, and somewhere up in that area a place occupied by Deacon Dane and his family, who made the most delicious cider apple sauce and sold it in wooden buckets, just great, along with something made out of doughnut dough.

Going up Shedd's Hill [now Clark Hill Road] there was a Warren family, and Elsie was a great seamstress. [*Elsie Warren was the librarian at the Whipple Free Library for many years.*] Up the road past Charles Reade's place I got as far as a family named Leach who had a daughter Mildred. On the road to Amherst I ended by George Marden's saw mill [*on Route 13 opposite New Boston Pizza*].

In going up Meeting House Hill and past the Cemetery there were the Carters, Jim McLane's Farm, and the Mansfield family. There was a section of Town called South Hill and a family named Prince. Somewhere around Joe English, a family named Herrick, as a girl from there was one of us who went to Washington.

I am quite vague about the Upper Village except for Charles Marden who was very active in the affairs of the Village. Tucked away on a little rise opposite where a Mrs. Holt lived and made the most delicious cookies and other things to sell, was the man who you went to in order to get your clock and watch repaired and cleaned.

Have seen Charlie [*possibly Rena's husband Charlie Davis*] and gotten your address so I will not burden you any longer with thinking backwards for some years and again ask your kindness in putting up with so many errors trying to get them all on paper before I lost my train of thought.

Sincerely,
Marian Trow Wilkins

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