

It all began on June 1st, 1927, when I purchased the store from Ted Mulcay. (The property is now owned by Julia Anderson) The store and Post Office were in the front room in an area about 12' x 14'. There was a porch on the front of the house which I closed in after the first year to make more room for the store.

Our only refrigeration then was a plain wooden ice box on the back porch. Later, it also held ice cream which was shipped to us in a tub of ice on the train from Tate Brothers in Springfield. One of the cold favorites of the young set was the "black cow", ice cream in a large cup with root beer.

Bobby was about one year old when we bought the store. My cousin, Loren Otis, and his family came to visit us that summer, also.

We carried Tydol gas and sold it by means of a one-gallon crank pump. After four months or so, George Fillio and Worcester Cooper convinced me to go to Standard Oil which later became Socony and is now Mobil. I also had a kerosene pump in a small building across the driveway.

We sold potatoes from barrels at that time and one day young Billy Starbuck sat in a barrel and couldn't get out. He was stuck so firmly that he finally had to be rescued. Billy was Dr. Amber Starbuck's <sup>nephew</sup> niece. The doctor purchased the Big House, and opened it to guests at the same time I started up the store.

Running such a small store gave me time to work outside so I contracted to make cement pillars for the Griffin house which still stands on those pillars. The house, now owned by Jasmine, was then the property of Mr. and Mrs. Griffin who had a button shop in Shelton, Connecticut. We became friends with Frank and Etta Halliman who were often there as Frank was chauffer for the Griffins.

One of the big social events of the first season was the wedding of Dorothy Smith and Henry Cummings in Louis Smith's garden. Another notable event was Rene Roberts move to the Prentiss Place on Chipman Road.

At the start, Grace had charge of the Post Office as Assistant Postmaster. Her mother, Helen M. Cook, was Postmaster in name only until 1935 when Grace received her first appointment from Postmaster General James A. Farley. 1928 brought exertion and confidence into being, proving very helpful in all operations. I acquired the mail route from Middlefield Post Office to the one in Bancroft and held it for four years.

On December 16th Shirley was born at home and on the 28th we were saddened by the death of my mother, passing at age 47. Our 1929 New Years was very sad.

1929 went very well with increasing progress.

1930 brought many changes. At Town Meeting in February, I was elected to the offices of Town Clerk and Town Treasurer bringing a large increase in my bookkeeping work. On March 29th, Marie was born at the Big House and on May 1st we moved into our present home and store.

As our store had grown our competitor across the triangle suffered a decline and his store was sold. Dr. Herbert A. Youtz purchased the place from the new owner. As he wanted our as a retirement home Dr. Youtze arranged an exchange and we became the owners of the larger building which, to this day, houses Olds General Store. Dr. Youtz, father of Julia Anderson, had the former store renovated and restore for his retirement from Oberlin College.

Our stock looked pretty lonesome in the larger space at first. After a few weeks we splurged and put in a Delco Electric System getting rid of the kerosene lamps which provided our only light. An apartment over the new store was rented most of the time. Our own new home was the house next door to the store where we still live.

A sad time in that eventful year was the passing of Grace's sister, Florence Cook, who had taught school in Haverhill. A pleasant happening was the marriage of my cousin, Frances Cottrell, to Herbert Prew.

1931: Our first electric refrigerator came as the electric power company extended its lines to Middlefield. Customers had to contract for five years to provide the service and I became agent for the company, reporting outages and problems and collecting bills.

Quite a large backroom induced me to invest in a second-hand pool table who turned out to be so big the cues had to be cut down to avoid hitting the walls.

In front of the ice cream cabinet were three stools, one of which was cracked in the center, and, as a person sat, he got pinched. Startled after so treated, Helene Slack commented, "Why, George, this stool does funny things!"

1932 brought more Oldses into town - on September 2nd Phyllis was born to Elmer and Annie and on September 6th, Hazel came to our family.

1933: The townspeople called a social worker, Carleton Hall, to town as lay minister and athletic director. A good baseball pitcher, he formed a baseball team, along with the Donahue boys (Tom, Maurice, John and Florry), Ernest and Cliff Boyer, Peter Tefts, Tom Dellecesse, and others. Mr. E. A. Evans was sponsor; Arthur Gardner, umpire; and I was manager for the season. Young Bobby was batboy. And we were the winners over the other towns in the area. Our playing field was prepared with much hard work on the site where the Elementary School now stands.

This was also the year of Middlefield's Sesquicentennial and a historical Pageant was held on the Fair Grounds in celebration.

1934 We lost our pitcher of note, Carlton Hall to Pittsfield's YMCA where he went to work. Our team slipped without his leadership and disbanded after the season ended.

September 22nd, daughter Nancy was born at the Big House.

Rev. David Julius was called as Minister. It was his first pastorate and he remained for two years. His wife, Dorothy, accompanied him and along came son, Peter.

1938 - The year started out sadly for our family with the passing of Grace's father, Ed Cook, at age 64.

1939

1940 Nancy started first grade at Center School at the Old Town Hall along with Raymond Olds, Richard Roberts, Duane and Clayton Pease.

1941 began with blizzard-like weather with many roads blocked to traffic. The year brings the first of many surgical operations for Grace.

There were many bad storms in the next few years. In one, the drifts were so bad traffic could not resume until a snow-blower could be sent from Logan Airport in Boston to break through the icy drifts. During one storm I met the bread man down by what is now Don Savery's, and brought my order back on a togaggon.

1942 The war had started and I was required to register the boys for the draft upon their 18th birthdays. This was in addition to running the store, helping in the Post Office and doing elective jobs such as Town Clerk, Town Treasurer, Notary Public, and for a time, Fire Warden.

The forties say the influx of deerhunters grow as Charles Ferris started the Fox Club on West Hill.

The store resounded with laughter and tall tales as the hunters would come in to get warm around the wood stove.

1943 saw Bob's graduation from Chester High School. He was not quite seventeen so worked a year at Cortland in Chester before going into the army.

1944 Bob left for boot camp in Ft. Benning, Georgia.

1945 He was shipped out to Japan but the war ended and he was e-routed to India for a period of time. There he met and married our prize daughter-in-law.

Billie, guided by the Red Cross, arrived in Springfield where she was picked up and taken to Chester Town Hall where Shirley and Marie were appearing in Shirley's class play.

1946 Bob finally arrived from India via troop ship.

Shirley graduated from Chester High. She worked in the store for a year.

1947 Shirley left for the women's army. Marie graduated from High School and began studies at Berkshire Business College.

1948 Marie Graduated and began work in the law office of Paul Tamburello in Pittsfield.

1950 On March 29, Catherine Grace was born to Bob and Billie.

Hazel graduated from High School and started her nursing training at Cooley Dickenson Hospital in Northampton, Mass.

Much of the store's inventory had to be picked up in Pittsfield so I made trips there every Monday and Thursday. Often, I carried passengers. Some persons needed to go to the bus or train station and I would drop them. Or I might pick them up to bring to Middlefield. Others just wanted to shop or visit someone in the city for the day and they were my round-trippers. During school vacations my children would often come along and frequently take in a movie or visit relatives as I picked up goods at the suppliers'.

During the children's years at Chester High, I often took time off to make trips down the mountain as they participated in extra-curricular activities. Bob played baseball and basketball. Marie and Shirley were in plays and glee club and they worked on the year book and school paper. Marie was a cheerleader and also played basketball on the girls' team. In spring she was catcher on the softball team. Nancy played basketball and wrote for the year book and newspaper. All the children were very active in the Junior Endeavor group of the Congregational Church in town.

1951 A great event was Shirley's marriage to Walter Van Parys on October 13th at Fort Myers, Virginia. Grace went ahead and on Friday October 12th, Marie, Nancy and I left at seven o'clock in the evening and arrived at 7:30 in the morning in time for us ~~Marie~~ to dress for the ceremony in the chapel. Marie was matron of Honor in the morning service.

On the way home we stopped in New York overnight. It was my first time in New York City.

1950 We were saddened by my father's death on December 10, 1951.

1952 Nancy graduated from Chester High, and in the fall began studies at Salem State College.

Marie attended theatre school in Hartford, Conn. after many years in community theatre and a summer as an apprentice at Berkshire Playhouse in Stockbridge. (1951)

Shirely and Van presented us with Denise on Sept. 23 and from then on, girls every few years (five in all) and finally a boy, John, making a half dozen.

1953 The store continued its gradual growth, always keeping my nose to the grindstone. Through those years, I was troubled with back pain which was very disagreeable and limited my activities considerably. Marie was married June 20th to Thomas J. Clark, son of our friends the Rev. David C. Clark and Frances, then of Lexington, Kentucky.

- Hazel graduated from Cooley Dickenson Nursing School and received her R. N. from Massachusetts.
- 1954 on June 7th David Cartwright Clark, II was born to Marie & Tom in Hartford.
- 1955 Hazel married Elwin C. Hall, Jr. of the U.S. Navy.
- 1956 I had surgery on a disc which was found to be fractured. I recovered nicely after being careful for about a year.
- 1957 I rennovated the store, rearranging cabinets and display cases. It then remained much as it was at my retirement.

George Wesley Clark was born in Wakefield just as the Clark family was about to move to their new home in Rowley, Mass.

After a period in the U.S. Marines, Nancy was home to help in the store during my convalescence. All the girls did service in the store and were of great assistance to both Grace and myself, especially Marie and Nancy who seemed to adapt to the many duties readily.

In 1957 also, Charles F. Pease and Thomas Rose of Chester Co-Operative Bank approached me to see if I was interested in taking the place of the later Livingston Smith as director - to finish his term. I was appointed for three year terms for twenty years retiring at age 72 as the law requires.

In 1951 I was given tenure of office as Town Clerk ~~and~~ held the office until retirement without having to be elected each year. The mandatory retirement came in 1975 after forty-five years service.

In 1963 with my store workload extremely heavy, I found the work of Town Treasurer increasing each year so it was prudent to retire from that office.

I continued to serve the bank as a member of the Security Committee for six years.

1972 Grace took enforced retirement from the Post Office and Nancy was appointed to replace her.

In 1975 we were feted on our Golden Wedding anniversary at a Grand party at Hazel's Big House. On Sunday October 12, over 250 friends and neighbors gathered to wish us all the best. Nancy, in charge of the event, made up a scrap book of our early years. Relatives, friends and offspring were all there - including five children, twelve grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. Twenty-eight in all with sons-in-law and Billie.

1976 After a sampling of Florida's winter weather, Nancy resigned from the Post Office. Barbara Winn, her substitute, was appointed Acting Post Master, thus keeping the office open, after the Department had seriously considered closing it. After a long period of working, worrying and letter writing on our part, the Government decided there was sufficient local support to keep the office open.

1977 On April 23, 1977, Barbara Winn received her appointment as Middlefield's Postmaster.

During this period I was busy with the store and helping as much as I could promoting the continuance of the Post Office.

Over the years, I served the local church as janitor, committeeman, moderator and deacon. As I look back, I have many, many fond memories. I am proud of my family and their progress in their callings. Through all this, I value my family and my friends.

On November 12, I was given a surprise retirement party at the Legion Hall in Dalton with other 200 attending. All the family except Shirley were present. Chairman was Barbara Winn. It was a very successful party and really gave the past 50 years in the store a grand finale. Included in the guests were several old timers of our younger days: Charles and Helen Cook, Herb and Frances Pres<sup>ly</sup>, Dot and Ed Lyman, Willard and Hazel Pease, Bert and Hazel Rock, Dick and Janet Waite, Merton and Muriel Cottrell, Neil and Della Nickerson, Bill and Dot Cook - and many, many others. We danced until 2 a.m. and finally left the party arriving home at 3 a.m.

After about two years trying to sell the store, the two Main brothers, Wayne and Archie and I came to an agreement. On October 14, 1977, the deal was closed.