



1946 A Whole New Year

We started 1946 with another addition to our farm, this time an electric fence to keep all the animals where they belonged. When the cow ran away, the summer before, it tripped and made a mess of itself. Also, I suppose that electricity was cheap and maybe this was something new for civilians after the War.

In any case, we couldn't wire the whole thing and it really was all too late. I don't remember how the pigs escaped. But, last Fall, they were big and ready for the slaughter. Maybe they knew that, War or no War, their end was near. So, everybody, including Frances, by then 6 years old, tried to catch those dumb pigs. Dumb? Wrong adjective. They were a whole lot smarter than we and, eventually, Dad had to get some grown men to help. It was a long exhausting day and while now it may seem funny and good fodder for a movie, we children weren't too happy about the chase. We had other things to do.

Bobbie was finishing at his school, Hazel was supposed to skip a grade and after some discussion, my parents decided that one was enough, and Ted was in Pond Hill School where I started. Now that I am older and wiser in the ways of the world, I don't think skipping a grade is a very good idea. The brain may be able to absorb the academics but the rest of our nature never seems to catch up.

It would be far better to set aside the brighter student with more difficult work in other areas and let the class get on with its learning. Certainly, that is, in effect, what Mrs. Michalek did with 6 grades to teach and it worked very well. There are always the arts, literature, history and geography which can never be fully covered in a class but can easily advantage a faster student without using up his next year's studies in advance.

We were unaware of Dad's plans until he happened to mention in early June that as soon as school ended, we were all moving to Hartford. What a jolt! While I was most definitely tired of country life and nothing to do " just like any teenager" I didn't want to leave my school and my friends.

In any case, spring flew by as it often does, we all passed into the next grade and we did not plant the garden. I don't know how Dad managed to rid himself of all the properties but I do know that the house we bought for \$2000 in 1939 was sold for \$8000. We were rich!

We said goodbye to our neighbors and the animals and off we went to the Big City. I was going to keep in touch with everybody but that didn't last the summer.

Hartford was amazing but we didn't like where we lived. It was a three story house and we lived on the second floor. Frances once again slept in Mother's room, Hazel and I had the private bedroom next to the one bath and the boys slept in a closet in bunk beds. What a comedown. Dad had a three-car garage out back and in it he had his very own tool shop. Mother as usual never said a word about any of this. She enrolled us in various schools and made our clothes and cooked.

My father bought a 1941 big black Chrysler and we were on our way to success. We lived on a city street next door to the Polish Home. It was rowdy and noisy on Saturday nights and of course, I couldn't go there. Our neighbors downstairs were Maniacs and upstairs were Polacks. Good grief.

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Birthplace of Nathan Hale

We were really dumb. These were the adult terms and I right away learned the difference. My parents did too, but one thing we learned while living with many different ethnic groups is this: all lived together with their own church and own school, we fell into the cracks as usual and never did fit, and all called each other's groups by slang names. This was considered normal and only degrading when someone was angry about someone. Then the whole ethnic group fell into the group name.

We lived in a mixed neighborhood but the Polish church and school was just across the main street. And up at the corner was the Irish church and further on the French church and so on.

My mother was delighted for us. We could walk to the Episcopalian church in Colt's Park. While we had all been baptized, none of us had been confirmed. That summer, when I was 16, the Bishop confirmed me. The Bishop became a lifelong friend of my parents, especially my mother, who having an easier life- no garden and no animals and no new children - could devote herself to the church.

My father still worked day and night but now he was in the backyard, no more commuting, and he was doing what he wanted to do.

It was a whole new life, a whole new beginning and one that lasted four years. Then I married, my brothers were Marines, my sisters were working and Dad and Mother moved again, back to the country.

Respectfully submitted, Jean Thibault Castagno

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