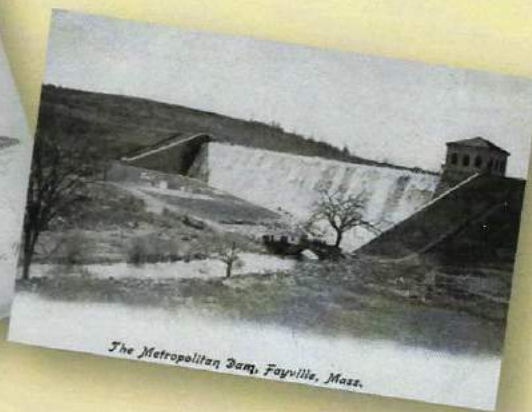


# *Southborough Memories*



*By Donna L. McDaniel  
Published by the Southborough Historical Society  
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## On the Cover

### ***Emerson Onthank house***

This house across from White's Corner on Turnpike Road was, in the early 1800s, home of a Baptist congregation meeting on an upper floor. The Onthinks were among the first settlers of the town, dating to pre-Revolutionary times. The house is no longer there.

### ***The 1953 Tornado***

The damage and death left behind by the June tornado, especially in the Fayville section, occupied headlines and newspaper stories for weeks afterward.

### ***The "Latisquama Road boys"***

In the middle of the century (c1945), young people "hung out" with neighborhood friends like those pictured. Front row: Richard Maley, David Pond, Ray McGovern, Ron Bagley, and Bob Dumont (who provided the photo): Second Row: "Babe" Bagley, Tom McAuliffe, Dickie McAuliffe, Ronnie Baldini, Tommy Brown, and Richard Allen.

### ***Portrait of Helen Sears***

This impressionistic portrait of Helen Sears Bradley, a member of a prominent family, was painted by the very well-known John Singer Sargent.

### ***Script***

As schools do to this day, Peters High School students wrote and illustrated publications giving news of each class, reports on recent graduates, and stories and poetry. *Script* was published throughout the year. *Peter's Piper*, a yearbook, focused on graduation ceremonies, student productions, and featured many ads from town businesses. Student Evelyn Johnson did artwork for *Script* and the original cover depiction of Peter, the piper.

### ***The Fayville Dam***

The photo represents possibly the single most important event in Southborough history—the damming of Stony Brook in 1898 for the Boston water supply. Without the water power that had come from the Brook, the small factories around the brook in Fayville could not operate. Thus a large portion of the town that could have become a "factory town" had to turn to other business pursuits. The large reservoir project also attracted Italian workers, the first generation of many of the town's leading families to this day.

## ***Thank you***

For support and patience: The Southborough Historical Society  
For so many people willing to share their memories and treasured photographs  
And many more who answered questions and responded to our messages  
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*Southborough*

*Memories*

*1920-1950*

*Conversations with long-time residents*

*By Donna L. McDaaniel*

*October 2011*

## *The Contents*

*To those who were interviewed*

*Introduction*

*To the Readers*

*Growing Up in Southborough*

*Memories of School*

*Getting Around - Trains and Trolleys...*

*After High School - Getting a Job*

*Social Life*

*A Town of Farms*

*The Wars*

*The World of Women's Work*

*The "Worcester" Tornado*

*Community Volunteers*

*2011—A Different Southborough?*

*About the Author*



## ***To those who have generously shared your time and memories with all of us***

First, sooner or later you will look at your words in this book and decide you didn't say them or that if you said them it wasn't what you meant! You'll wonder why I didn't choose some of your other words. You'll be regretting you ever opened your mouth!

Most of us are not at all used to having our words appear on a piece of paper for all to see. When I began as a newspaper reporter, I dreaded picking up the paper to see what I had written, knowing I would find many other ways I could have said something better or clearer or maybe not at all. Then, when later I became a selectman, I had yet another version of that experience—many times I'd read what I was *said* to have *said* in the paper and wondered if the writer had even been in the same room with me! It's not an easy thing, this seeing our words right there in front of us and all our friends and relatives!

Here's a second lesson. Think of what you read in a newspaper yesterday and then relay that to someone else. It's likely already faded and everyone has already forgotten what you were so embarrassed about yesterday. It's humbling for writers to remind ourselves that the paper for which we so carefully crafted words late into the night was likely being used to wrap fish or garbage. So much for that! There's nothing as old as yesterday's paper. Take heart. For better or for worse, what you've said may well be forgotten. My hope is that it will touch other people and help all of us appreciate the people who have made our community a place we are happy to call home. I apologize if I have misinterpreted your words. If I made an outright error, do let me know so I can correct it.

### **A note about women's maiden and married names**

The more I began to quote women using their married names, even when they were remembering what they did as fifth graders, the more it seemed a little odd that I was using the name of a much older person to quote what someone recalled from age 10 or as a teenager—well before she had taken another name by marriage.

So I did something unusual: Example: If I were quoting someone with my name talking about what it was like when she was in the fifth grade, I would not refer to her as "Donna Bowen McDaniel" (maiden and married names). Instead I am using only a maiden name "Donna Bowen" when I refer to the days before marriage. Then, about the time of usual adulthood, I add her married name in brackets—Donna Bowen [McDaniel]. Of course, I don't have marriage dates but that's not the point. I fear I may be inconsistent in applying my new rule but I hope it is clear. We will get used to it. (Or maybe never do it again!)

Donna L. McDaniel  
October 2011

## *To the Readers*

For the last few years, I have been immersed in the memories of a few dozen people who have lived in Southborough for most or all of their lives. Being “immersed” means that first I interviewed them, recorded their conversations, and heard their words again as I transcribed them. I’ve also spent months pulling some of those words together into this book. There are more words left out than there are here, though I hope the ones here are particularly useful in conveying “the way it used to be.”

The history we learned in school was mostly written by men about men, focusing on wars and politics. Writing about women’s lives opens a window on relationships that shape our lives and culture, interactions with families, with teachers, and with friends. It turns out that I interviewed more women than men primarily because, as the data show, women outlive men. And some men didn’t accept my invitation to talk!

When I began this project, I planned to do something called “oral history,” a method of asking specific and standard questions to record and transcribe for posterity, possibly published. But soon I found myself straying from the stricter view of an oral history—I didn’t want to stick to a script; I wanted to be free to follow the thread of someone’s memories, often in a way that I knew would be more interesting given my own experience of the person and of our town (for my “only” forty years here come December).

So, as I end, I prefer to describe what I’ve been doing as recording memories and experiences as a conversation; and more themes came up as the result of our being together. The book is not a transcription of interviews—they are the raw material for creating a memory picture of different parts of our community lives—school and social activities, growing up in our small town in the last decades, and finding work in the businesses and farms of the town, growing to create a family and social life, and much more.

One thing I’m sure I’ll need to say over and over again: not so very long ago people who lived in this town saw it as four distinct villages (distinct if not geographically, at least emotionally). Fayville people continue this distinction more than others; but I’m giving this notice that sometimes I have to use “Southborough” as an umbrella name for all of us, no matter what village.

This is an opportunity to remind all of you—save letters and records and photographs and scrap books from your family AND be sure to write enough so that someone in the future can identify the setting and the people. Photos of lovely but unidentified people are not helpful for your descendants. The Historical Society collects materials—letters or a box of photographs or other artifacts of a past time—and welcomes your contributions.

So many times when I interviewed or mentioned the project to someone in town the first thing I heard was “you MUST interview [name of someone they knew].” I often have been grateful for the suggestion—but the list kept getting longer, not shorter! I know there are more of you out there. I expect to have occasions for us to talk in the future.

## *Being a "Kid" in Southborough, Fayville, Cordaville, and Southville*

*We didn't have the stuff you have today. We could leave the house  
on a bike and not say where we were going.*

*--David Falconi*

"Growing up in Southborough was wonderful experience," according to David Falconi, who with brothers Rick, Jim, and Peter grew up on Newton Street. They could be found "playing some sport in somebody's backyard or building forts," he said. "We'd have pickup baseball games—someone throws up the bat and winner gets to choose up sides... In the summer, we had back then even a playground program run out of the basement of Peters School, and we also had field that doesn't exist anymore (the one at the corner of Rte. 85 and 30 owned by St. Mark's). "In the winter Eddie Newton would build a giant slide with a big curve that ended up in our front yard. He'd be out there all day long, icing it down. Every once in a while somebody would go off the curve," said David.

"When we were kids and heard the Deerfoot Farm whistle blow at 4:45 at night, we came home," said Lena Carloni, who lived farther up Newton Street. "Often we were playing on Deerfoot (or Clear) Hill where St. Mark's had a ski lift. "You could see into Marlboro and the lights and the reservoir. It was a beautiful spot. Also St. Mark's had a clock that we could hear. It chimed every half hour, maybe every 15. I don't know what happened to it, but we could hear it."

Jim Colleary grew up nearby on Winchester Street. He recalls that most of the kids in the center of town grew up playing and/or working on Mauro's Farm [along Boston Road at the bottom of the hill where Winchester Street was]. "There'd be Steve Douglass and I



and the Mauro kids," said Jim. "I learned how to drive there at 12—a truck or a tractor. We milked the cows in the morning and/or evening. It was a neat place to hang out." David Falconi remembers the farm too, playing in the barns, and "going over in the spring with a truck to get a load of cow manure for the garden."

## Southborough Memories

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“Joseph Mauro (‘Old Joe Mauro’ to some) was so good with the young kids,” said Jim Colleary. “He seemed to understand us.” Joseph is the grandfather of now-retired Fire Chief John Mauro, and father to Willy, proprietor of Mauro’s Market on Main Street, now under the care of his own son, Steve.



“We hung out at the farm and played baseball on Mauro’s field at the corner of Upland Road and Winchester. One thing about Winchester Street as a kid—the end that goes to East Main Street—used to be closed off by the Highway Department when it snowed so we could slide—it was a sliding area for the town—a nice safe hill for little kids. Wally Hamlin, whose house was at bottom of the hill, would park at the bottom of the street to make it clear for sliding,” said Jim.

“It was a wonderful time,” said Bob Dumont, who also remembers pickup baseball on the lot across from Richard Maley’s on Winchester Street. He’s still in touch with one of the kids—“a buddy back in fifth and sixth grade.”

“We also went skating on the pond on St. Mark’s west campus,” David Falconi said. There was a skate house there and the town used to have a winter skating party once a year, yes, with a bonfire. That ended in the ‘60s.

In Fayville there was skating on the pond at the northeast corner of Central Street and Boston Road (Rte. 30) which doubled as the swimming spot for summer. The Town Meeting appropriated money to maintain the pond winter and summer, according to life-long Fayville resident [and Southborough Town Clerk] Paul Berry. There was a little building in the back to change and there was “even a life guard”—Berry remembers



## Southborough Memories

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Johnny Bavari as the guard. At some point Frank Mattioli, later the town's first full-time police chief, was the safety guard there, according to George Boothby, a neighbor of Berry.

"The pool was not big or deep. There was a little sand around the edge and a little house—until somebody set it afire.... One time we went down and stole the boards and built a hut in the woods. Police Chief Jim Telfa made us take it down and put the fence back," said Boothby.

Another time, when he was maybe 14 or so, Boothby remembers "a whole bunch of guys—Lou Tembari, William Minnucci, Gino Castignetti" went to a hut they had "under a tree by Castignetti's" (after the Central Street railroad crossing on the right). "Around 4 p.m., it was kind of windy; we were in the hut smoking corn silk wrapped in newspaper (we tasted the newspaper more)," said Boothby. "Little did we know the 1938 hurricane was coming! All of a sudden the roof blew off. 'What's going on? We better go home'. We had to hang onto the railroad tracks [to walk in the wind]."

[Sometimes] the older kids would "let us go sledding with them when they rode their double-runner sleds," said Eleonora Fantony. "We would ride from Miss Neary's school [on Oak Hill] right down to Boston Road, down at the end of the street, downhill right across onto Central Street, and ride right down to the very end. It would be such a good slide. The trolley cars were running then, but we knew what time they would come, so one young man would stand at Turnpike Road and make sure there was nothing coming either way, so that it was safe. We hardly ever saw an automobile in those days. It was dark. It would be nighttime when we went."

David Falconi remembers that Bob Sealy, the highway superintendent, used to take the kids for sleigh rides in the field. And someone (a Bagley, perhaps?) had red ponies to rent for a ride.

But mostly, David says, he "hung out with his 'posse'—the Newton, Lyman and School Streets gang. We'd walk home for lunch every day—the Burwells, Kaisers, Buzzells (lots of them), Ted Petrasiak and his brother and sister; and John Boland—his mother was my den mother for Cub Scouts." Mary Ellen Boland lived across East Main Street from the house later lived in by Eleonora Fantony Burke; Mrs. Boland's grandson Matt, who is John's son, now lives in the house that was built by his grandfather.

## Southborough Memories

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Bob Dumont's family moved to 15 Latisquama Road from Marlboro when he was eight and a half. "When we first moved to town that neighborhood was a neighborhood!" he remembers, as he recalls who lived in the houses around him. "Eddie Blood's family lived in the brown house next to my mother's and the O'Leary's lived in the brick house almost across the street; then there was a vacant lot and then the Daughans and next to them was the Gasparonis and all those kids grew up there. Down the street some of the Miseners lived, including Bert Misener (later Ginga) and her sister Josephine. In 1944-45 we played football on our side lawn with Bert and Josephine and the McAuliffe brothers and I think Tommy Brown in the house down back, a little ways off Latisquama—that was a little group we had—the Latisquama Road group."

There was a ton of Mauros, Maleys, and Maguires, said David Falconi. Every house seemed to have kids. It was right after WWII and the baby boom. It wasn't that so many houses were being built—they wouldn't pour foundations in the winter then."

## Southborough Memories

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And there were Mattiolis, too. Janet Mattioli remembers playing “cowboys and Indians” on Conders Hill rising from East Main Street now with Overlook Drive. “It’s really Clear Hill and before that either Mingo or Mungo,” Janet noted.

Janet’s father, Frank, was one of the men in town who owned an auto. [Others, according to her recollection, were Jim Telfa, John Boland, Tommy Boland, and her Uncle Charlie.] “My mother being a nurse,” said Janet, “got called a lot” especially after Dr. Bacon—the sole doctor in town—died. So her mother was busy ministering to people’s needs any time of day or night. Dr. Bacon, Janet remembered, “had a parrot and met patients in one big room—complete with “a parrot squawking the whole time anyone was there.”



Janet’s memories also include the time when the Mauros were putting in septic systems for their houses along Boston Road and sent one of her relatives to Marlboro with a leather satchel in which to carry back sticks of dynamite needed for the project.

Before the houses on Moulton and Leonard were built off Richards Road in the early ‘50s, Rick Falconi remembers walking and playing in the woods there. His grandparents lived in the house on Cordaville Road recognized by its columns—it had been the home of Cordaville Mill owner Milton Sanford. His brother David remembers visiting the house at a more recent time and being “blown away” by how small it was—“it seemed like such a big place” when his grandfather lived there and his grandfather’s office “seemed so huge.”

Rick “loved growing up in Southborough. It was a lazy laid back town. The reservoirs added to the ambience. We were fishing/swimming and skating.” David remembers Friday nights the gym at St. Mark’s would be open to Southborough kids. They used to have movies there and we could go. There was a lot more interaction between both those schools—using their fields and the ice rink open in the old days anytime school was not in session.” David also went to a summer day camp at Fay School for many years. Two other Falconi brothers still in town— Jim and Peter—hung around in the same group. But “then you get a driver’s license and everything changes,” said David.

In those days the buffalo herd owned by Arthur St. Maurice was probably the most widely recognized attraction in Southborough; tourists out for a ride on Sunday would be looking for the farm on Framingham Road. David Falconi recalls Sunday afternoons sitting with kids on the stone wall where the Marlboro Savings Bank is now (the intersection of Newton Street, Boston Road, and East Main Street) and giving directions to the buffalo. St. Maurice, who served as selectman for a time, was known around town as a “character.” In his store across from his house and farm, he sold “odd ball stuff” that

## Southborough Memories

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couldn't be found any place else, like caviar, venison, pheasant, and more items considered quite exotic.

David also remembers sitting in the spot in front of the bank in the late '60s "watching a guy breaking into the drug store across the way with the alarm going off." David was the one who went to court to testify against the thief, who apparently failed to notice he had an audience.

While David noted that he's "always said we behaved ourselves because everybody knew who we were—if we did something wrong, my parents knew about it before I got home." One of those times was the story of the Table Talk Pie truck driver delivering to Wentworth's in Fayville who left the truck open. Waiting for their leader to come for a meeting, a group of Boy Scouts got into the truck and took some pies. "Well, it was stupid of him [her son, Tommy], but they had a Boy Scout Committee meeting at my house and I heard the men talking, and I went in and I said, 'You'll have to excuse me, but something has got to be said to these children, so that they know that this is not what you do.'"

"So one of the older policemen came down to the Fayville Hall and talked to the boys," according to Laverne. "Tommy never forgot it. I can hear my husband saying to him, 'Didn't you have your supper?'"

And Tommy said, "Yes."

Were you hungry? "No."

Well, why did you do it? "They tasted good."

"I think it might have been Willie Colleary's father that came down," said Laverne, "I'm not sure. But he was very nice to the boys. He came to their meeting and he said, 'Now one of you boys left your hat there. It's out in my car. And if you will come out after I leave, you may have your hat.' Tommy never forgot it."

But, said Laverne, "It was a different story at Vera Amorelli's little store there on Central Street. When some [other] kids got in there, she picked them up by the scruff of the neck

and shook 'em. What she called them, I wouldn't repeat. She said, 'You never do that again; I beat-a you up.'"



With the creation of the reservoir system, the central village of Southborough was no longer accessible to Fayville without crossing one of several causeways (Boston Road, White Bagley Road, Middle Road, Parkerville Road, or Cordaville Road). Thus

## Southborough Memories

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the presence of the reservoirs created by the Metropolitan District Commission (the MDC, now known as the Metropolitan Water Resources Authority (the MWRA), was particularly noticeable in Fayville.

Residents took special note of opportunities offered with such a body of water, undisturbed by the fact that it was illegal to fish in the reservoir. Eleonora Fantony's brother Joseph would follow the railroad tracks heading toward Southborough and try to sit or lie down on little banks close to the water. The MDC hired a man called "the 'fishing cop'—one of his jobs was to patrol the area and he was always catching my brother Joe, said Eleonora. He'd bring Joe home, and while the fishing cop stood there, my father would give Joseph a real 'call down' about how he's not supposed to do that. And then afterwards, my father would soften up, because my father liked to fish" and he wondered why they didn't let anyone fish there. "One time," said Eleonora, "my aunt and I went fishing with Joe. All the time I was there, I was scared to death we'd be caught."

George Boothby used to go fishing every Friday "I had to," he said, and it was "good fish." Arthur Monahan was fishing warden. Boothby remembers "clocks all around the reservoir where he [the warden] had to punch in to make sure he walked the route." When George got caught, Monahan would threaten to send him to the Lyman School. "That was a big thing when I was kid," said Boothby—"Just say 'Lyman School' and you'd be shaking in your shoes." [Lyman School for Boys in Westboro was what was called a "reform school" at that time.]

Especially with the reservoirs separating Fayville from Southborough, there was a lot of social activity in Fayville, usually centered on the Fayville Village Hall. There were Christmas parties for the children of the Fayville School. Edward Borst lived in the Turnpike Road house just before the reservoir with his wife —"Aunt Millie". Known to most as "Uncle Ed," he made sure there was a Christmas tree; the Fayville Athletic Association made sure there were gifts for all the children. And Miss Neary often made sure the children could recite some appropriate pieces.

All the school programs were at the hall as well as a lot of suppers and dances for the community. Also important to many in Fayville was the library in the Village Hall, right to the left of the entrance, and under the care of Librarian Florence Nichols.

The joys of Christmas parties and a Village Hall library admittedly seem old-fashioned compared to the excitement of—racing cars! When the Falconi boys were high school age, you would find them at the Westboro Speedway with their father, who owned a number of race cars. Races were Friday nights but there was always something to do other times—they were there "as much time as in Southborough," said David. The Speedway [where the Stop and Shop is now at Otis St and Route 9] was "a big part of all of our lives," the brothers agreed. The idea was to get an old car and fix it up with stuff

## Southborough Memories

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from the junk yard. Rick got involved in building and owning race cars—and a bit of driving when he was in high school and college. By the time the raceway closed in 1985 Rick had become the general manager.

There'd be a crowd of Southborough spectators, the brothers said. "Everybody from Southborough would sit over on the back stretch. That was the local entertainment—there wasn't that much to do. No doubt the fact that Pat Richardson, a local teacher, was one of first female drivers must have inspired some of the Southborough fans.

It all started when John Falconi bought a car and got acquainted with promoters at the Speedway. Unfortunately, when he sold his share in the Speedway, the proceeds were deposited in a Marlboro bank that failed (the top officials went off to prison while depositors like their father lost their money—a lot, in his sons' assessment).

Perhaps more in Southborough style was the Southborough Speedway in the coal yard at the railroad tracks off Main Street. There kids raced "just regular bicycles" on Saturday mornings in the mid-60s. About 35 kids from around town would have "pick-up" races but soon it was more organized and there were trophies and awards to be won and even a banquet.

### Photos

Page 1: Looking up Oak Hill Road in Fayville

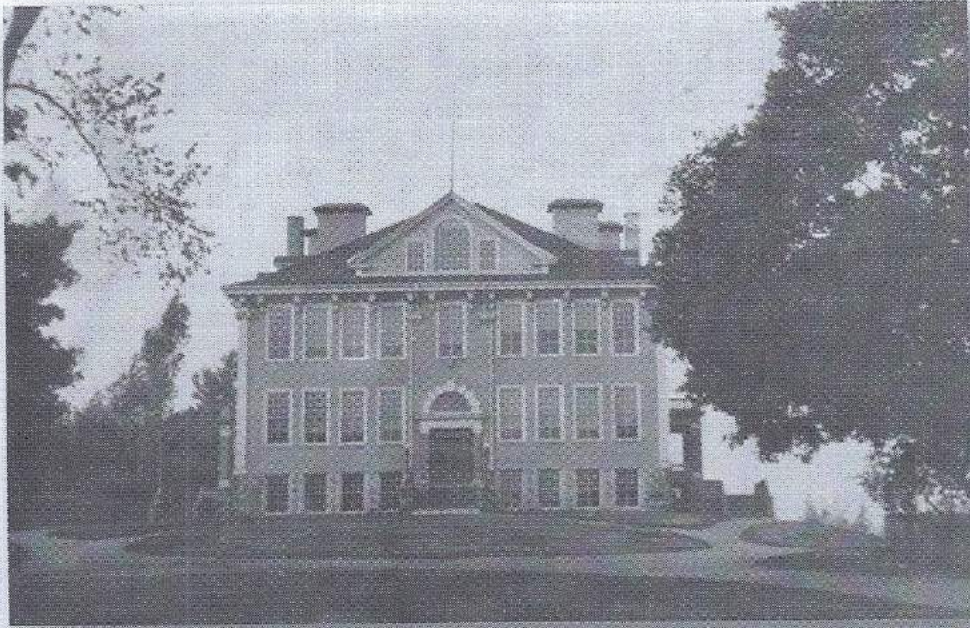
Page 2: Sledding was one of Southborough youths' favorite activities

Page 4: The "Latisquama Road group," courtesy of member Bob Dumont:

Front row: Richard Maley, David Pond, Ray McGovern, Ron Bagley, Bob Dumont  
Second Row: "Babe" Bagley, Tom McAuliffe, Dickie McAuliffe, Ronnie Baldini,  
Tommy Brown, and Richard Allen.

Page 5: Frank Mattioli, the future police chief

Page 6: John Boland, ready to deliver papers on his special bike.



### *Memories of School and Special Teachers*

*You did not fool around in Miss Finn's class. Believe me,  
—John Boland*

The names are very familiar, these teachers from early in a century past. They were the ones who taught more than one generation of who grew up here. Three of our schools today bear their names—Neary, Finn, and Woodward. While it was mostly (but not solely) children from Fayville who went to Miss Neary's School up on Oak Hill Road, all children in Southborough could count on having Miss Mary Finn and most likely Miss Florence Finn before they finished "grammar school," as well as Albert "Pop" Woodward as their school principal. Some who went to school in the center of Southborough had Woodward's wife, "Na," for the first or second grade.

Historically there were four primary schools pretty much in the four corners of town. The Fayville School at one time had been just a little beyond Winter Street, near the reservoir. The best-remembered one was part way up Oak Hill Road where Miss Margaret Neary held forth in a one-room three-grade school house. Many Fayville residents went there as their parents had or and perhaps were followed by their own children. [For more—and fascinating—details on Miss Neary's one-room school house, see *When the School Bell Rings: Remembering Fayville School* by Charlotte Milani who grew up in Fayville.]

## Southborough Memories

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Since the Fayville children lived mostly on the north side of Turnpike Road, they crossed that street cared for by part-time police officers Henry Moore and then Jim Giffin (later to be police chief). “We used to love to wait for her [Miss Neary] when she came down on the trolley car” [she lived on Middle Road not far from Main Street], said Eleonora Fantony. “We’d wait to take her hand and walk up the street with her. She’d have all these little children hanging on to her.”

On rare occasions, Eleanor Onthank’s father—who had gone to the same school—gave her a ride but most often she walked from her home on Boston Road near the Framingham line. “But everyone walked to Fayville, really,” she said.



Natalie Fantony recalls about six kids in each of the three grades and George Boothby remembers that the first two rows of seats were the first grade, the next two rows for second grade and the last two rows for third grade. Eleonora Fantony remembers that “Miss Neary used to take one grade at a time. She gave the first grade something to do while she was teaching the second grade. She seemed to have complete control. I don’t recall her having to get after anybody while she was working with the other classes. Somehow or other, it always seemed to me that she had order there.”



## Southborough Memories

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George Boothby's memory includes Miss Neary as a "wonderful teacher" but also a disciplinarian: "You knew when she hit you with a ruler that she meant business. I got hit a lot! Probably for talking. We'd swap places at the chalkboard. We'd run down the hill...we thought she couldn't see us after the first house, but she came out to the end of driveway to watch us." George remembers bringing a sandwich for lunch. Others, perhaps at other times, remember going home at noon to eat.

Paul Berry is one who remembers walking home for lunch. His whole family had had Miss Neary as a teacher and there was never anyone there but her while he was there.

Angie Pessini found the walk "quite a walk uphill" to get to the school from Central Street. "I was only five when I first went." She liked school and found Miss Neary to be very nice and a good teacher but, she said, "don't do anything bad, she'd get awful cross." Angie, now 100, remembers that Kenneth O'Leary always had a pencil in his mouth so Miss Neary made him go down to the basement and chew the pencil."

When Alice Bertonassi [Phillipo] was going to school, Miss Neary had many students who spoke only Italian. "Around here, we all were Italian. We all spoke Italian, and the only families that really spoke English were the Mazzerellis and the Fantonys."

"Originally, I never knew how to speak English," said Alice. "I stayed back because I didn't know how to speak English. There was no kindergarten. You went into first grade and they held you back [if you couldn't speak English].... I used to take home the reading book and once you learned—I'd say to my brother and sisters, 'Come on, look what I learned today.' I'd be so excited. And I'd tell them about it. And they used to pick it up. So, when they went to school, it wasn't as hard as it was for me."

Many of those with Italian names believe that Miss Neary changed names, maybe when she had trouble pronouncing or spelling them. But the town's only doctor at the time, Dr. Bacon, may have been the primary name-changer. At any rate, Malchiordi became Mitchell, for example. Joanna Moro [Montvitt]'s birth name was changed to Jo-Ann. But later, appropriate corrections were made for the church and town records (handled years later by former Fayville student Eleonora Fantony, the first woman Town Clerk).

According to Eleonora Fantony, Miss Neary's school was "the center of our life for a long time, for a little while before you went there because you heard of other students who went there, and for three years of your life for the first three grades. She made us all feel happy. She was wonderful to the parents. She would come down from school after school and call on one of the homes. I never heard anyone say anything bad about her, even after she stopped teaching. Everybody still loved Miss Neary. And she had been there for years. She taught my mother."

Miss Neary always seemed to remember the holidays. There'd be a little party in the basement with bobbing for apples and eating doughnuts on strings for Halloween. Memorial Day was observed, and there was always a Christmas party at the Fayville Town Hall. The young men of the Fayville Athletic Association—who had likely all gone to Miss

## Southborough Memories

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Neary's school themselves—helped organize it. They helped her decorate and brought ice cream; there were Christmas carols and sometimes “a little play.”

“Nice times,” the students remembered.

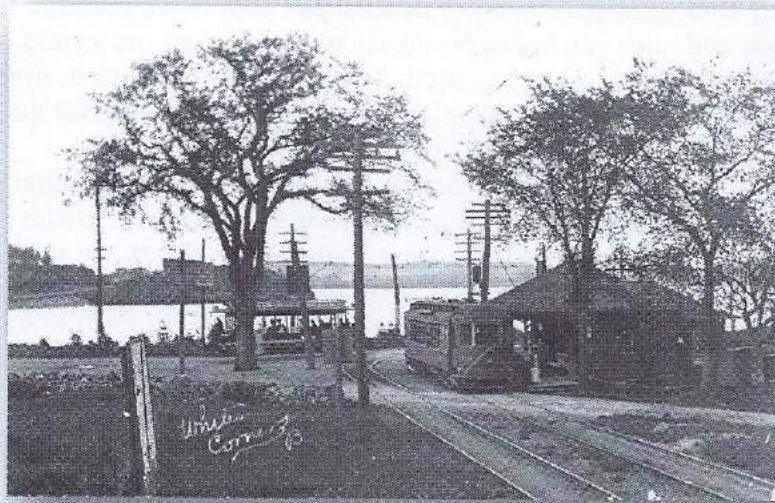
When the Fayville children finished the third grade and went off to school in Southborough, they rode a bus driven by Bill Wentworth (owner of the general store and tavern at the northwest corner of Central Street and Turnpike Road or by Frank Fitzgerald [whose family owned the store that still bears that name in Cordaville].

Before there were school buses, Eleonora Fantony remembers riding the street car to Southborough for the fourth grade. “We had to change at White's Corner because our car was going to Worcester. Then we got on one that went to the right at White's Corner around the reservoirs there and came out at Newton Street. The trolley stopped at the drugstore. There we got off to walk up to school. The car continued on up Newton Street, onto Marlborough Road, and after Marlboro went to Clinton. And then took the trolley home again. After I was in the fourth grade, we got school buses.”

Some of the students had work to do even before they went to school. Willy Mauro remembers having to collect eggs early in the morning. “I wasn't too much into the farming thing,” he said. “I was youngest so maybe a bit spoiled.” While his father had had Miss Neary in Fayville, Willy walked to Peters Annex, and then high school.

If those buildings were too crowded, then some who'd ordinarily be attending there would be bussed to South Union School on Highland Street [now the Arts Center and town office space]. John Boland found a “full house” when he started the fourth grade so he was bussed to South Union. John Wilson was another who was

bussed. Some say that the students were asked who'd like to go to the other school and were chosen if they raised their hands; others believe there was probably a lottery of some sort to decide—and that parents were informed.



## Southborough Memories

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Fourth grader John Boland, who thought he “lost” when his name “was picked out of a



hat,” was so sure going to a different part of town was “a disaster because everybody I knew was in the other school. But, looking back, he saw it as “a wonderful thing. I got to meet a whole bunch of kids I wouldn’t have otherwise met.” He found the same when he went to high school. Going off to Algonquin, he saw it as “such a disaster” but then “once you got there, it was the best move that they ever made. It was great. I had a whole group of new friends.” He also wanted to play sports but reports he said he “was a terrible athlete. I tried them all. I played basketball and Little League and was never very good at any of them.” He did play a snare drum in the band.

Back in Southborough, Miss Finn was teaching the sixth grade and her sister Florence the fifth. Florence became a Fitzgerald when she married the man who drove a school bus.

It’s very clear that those who had Miss Finn like to talk about her the most. Most would agree that she was “a good teacher, very smart.” Bob Dumont remembers her as the teacher “who taught me an awful lot about things and one of the things I learned a lot about was music.” John Boland called her “a wonderful lady and amazing woman.” He also recalls “How stern she was. You did not fool around in Miss Finn’s class. Believe me.”

Rita Bertonassi would agree: “Miss Finn scared me,” she said, “but she was a good teacher.” In Rita’s view, Florence Finn was “more relaxed” than Mary, but did warn her students: “Wait till next year, you’ll get my sister.”

Evelyn Johnson [McKie] recalls Mary Finn as “really something special.” She remembers students doing the same Christmas play each year and having to memorize certain pieces. “I still remember ‘Once upon a midnight dreary...,’” she says, reciting more of Poe’s *The Raven* who came “tap, tap, tapping.”

## Southborough Memories

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Even newcomers to Southborough today may recognize Miss Finn for her insistence on memorization because of the lasting tradition of reciting the Gettysburg Address during Memorial Day observances, although today's recitation is apparently more of a reading. But memorizing was "what you had to do," said John Boland. "Everybody did it."

Two other teachers from a large Southborough family were the Bagley sisters. Marie taught fourth grade, and Genevieve taught Latin and English in the high school. Marie Bagley was known for going out west to "some dude ranch every summer," Janet Mattioli recalled.

Rita Bertonassi felt "very fortunate to go to such a small school. I graduated in a class of 15. Sometimes classes were up to 20 and at least one was only five students."

Natalie Fantony remembers occasions like VE Day and President Roosevelt's death when students were called into the gym, sang a song, maybe the National Anthem, and were sent home for the day.

Peters Principal "Pop" Woodward was Evelyn Johnson's home room teacher. She remembers hearing his motto often: "Hard work is not easy." While a few thought of Woodward as "gruff," Eleonora Fantony had kind words for him. Woodward also taught algebra and geometry and coached basketball and maybe baseball. Eleonora saw him as "a very warm kind of a person who was very friendly. He was a real working principal who seemed to know how to handle the kids that got out of hand." She remembers him too as a resident of Fayville's Oak Hill Road and both the Woodwards as "very good Southborough citizens [who] attended town meeting and did everything that people in town do."

Eleanor Onthank "loved" school—"I had some wonderful teachers, thinking back. I remember one in particular—Edith Perry. I sent her a Christmas card for years and years, and then I've kind of lost touch." Eleanor also remembered that some of the teachers were not from Southborough and, typical of the times, boarded with families here.

Bert Misener Ginga thought there were "a lot of good people and teachers" at Peters, but when asked if she liked school, she said: "Not really. I liked being the social person. I didn't want to be smart. It was alright but I wasn't crazy about it and didn't pay attention as much as I should. I quit just before graduation. I thought I was wasting my time and the teacher's time. I didn't want to be there."

John Boland was clear he "hated school—hated academics." But he liked "the social life. It was nice." [Did he like any subjects?] "I was a little oriented on math and sciences and did better at that... but not a scholar. I showed up and once in a while I brought my brain," he said. "It was a battle for me the whole time. I made it through and it was an effort. I wanted to be other places." [And he did enjoy the courses later as a student at Wentworth Institute in Boston.]

Did Paul Berry like school? "Yeh," he said. "School was alright."

## Southborough Memories

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Alice Bertonassi Phillipa "loved school," but her mother was sick and eventually Alice had to leave school to care for her mother and seven



siblings. Others did help, but she said, "I got to be so independent that I used to say to them, 'I'm taking care of my sisters.' I remember doing so many little things, cooking, like I still do. I was, in a way, the mother to the kids, with what I did for them."

A few young women left town every day to go to Catholic school in Marlboro, though some were the only one during their years at St. Anne's Academy. Janet Mattioli went there beginning in the fourth grade. School her back and forth. If her father was late, once in a while he'd ask a chauffeur who drove

someone from Lynbrook to drive her. Then, with the war and gas rationing, Janet said she "learned to ride a bus." Then Janet would walk at 6 a.m. to get the bus from downtown.

"St. Anne's was very very strict" and she liked it very much, said Janet. She was the only one from Southborough at the time, though Sina Gasparoni Torcoletti from Latisquama Road sent her daughter there later. "Maybe a handful" went over the years. Janet graduated in 1948. Sheila Maguire Wilson was one of the "handful" and did find herself separated and wished she had stayed in Southborough; "but it was my mother's dream," she said, and she was, after all, "glad I had that education." Students were primarily boarders, so the few "day hops" had "our own little area to be during the two-hour lunches when the boarders had to fulfill their responsibilities to their school."

"We got out at 4 p.m.," Sheila said, "so I couldn't be in Girl Scouts and, school had no sports. Some of us organized a dance since there was no school prom." She found she "didn't know anybody" except in her immediate Middle Road neighborhood, who were primarily the eight McCulley kids across the street. She did join a dancing class in high school but spent time with a few friends and her cousins. "We could only go so far on our bikes."

When those who were to become Peters High School graduates look back, what most speak of is their friends, many life-long—AND their senior trip to New York City. "It was as though we were going to Paris," said Eleanor Onthank. "We were so excited. Oh, it was just wonderful! We went on a bus and we stayed at a hotel." She doesn't remember the name of it but she does recall that "it was over near Times Square somewhere!"

## Southborough Memories

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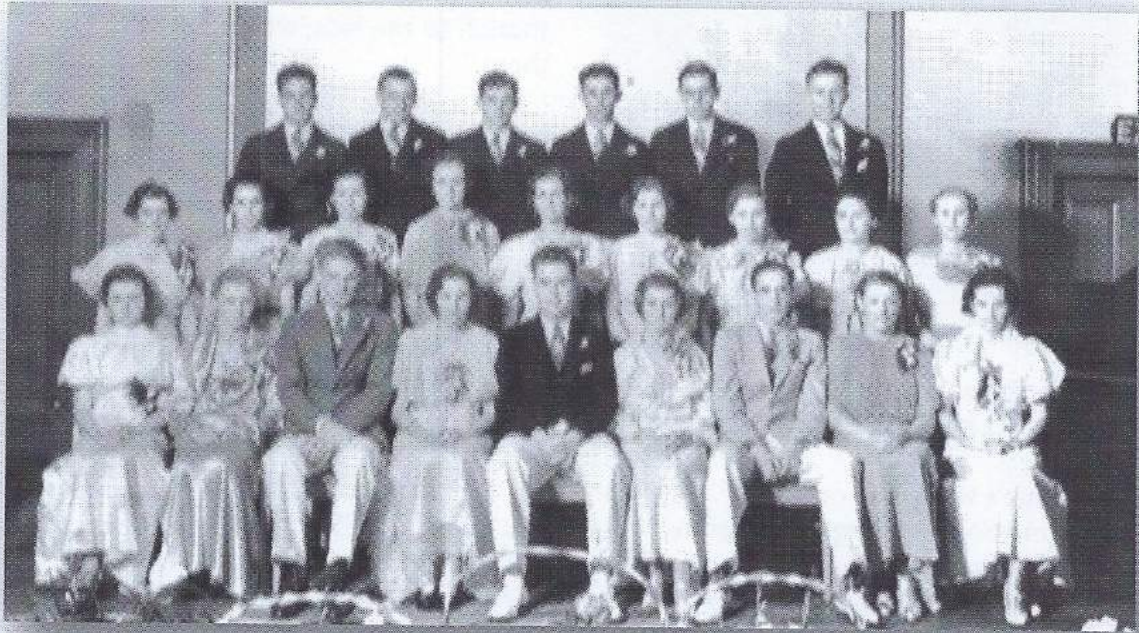
### Photos

Page 9: The "new" Peters High School 1900

Page 10: Miss Neary [at top] and her students, grades 1-3, 1904

Page 12: White's Corner, a changing point for trolleys

Page 13: A classroom of the 1930s



Page 15: Alice Bertonassi who had to leave to care for her siblings

Page 16: Peters High School graduating class (1930s)

## *Getting around: Trains and trolleys and buses and cars—and feet*

*We'd walk home down on the causeway [to Fayville]. It was perfectly safe. There weren't very many cars then. It wouldn't be as safe today.*  
—Angeline Pessini

For some years, the young people in town were quite accustomed to getting where they needed to go on foot. After all, in the early 1900s only the more well-to-do had cars and only the more successful farmers could afford trucks. "We would walk to church most of the time, that's just what we did," said Angie Pessini of Fayville. "We did have Sunday School, but it was on a weekday, after school. We'd walk down from school and then walk home. We'd get through at 4 or 4:30 p.m.; and we'd walk home down on the causeway. It was perfectly safe. There weren't very many cars then. It wouldn't be as safe today."

Starting in 1901 the trolley was the way to travel east and west and connect Southborough to Marlboro—for those who could afford the fare. It wasn't until 1932 that the Boston and Worcester Bus Line replaced the trolley as a way to travel along Route 9. Later, of course, cars came upon the scene—mentioned more by young people who had jobs and could own their own cars—or had friends who did. The more fortunate, like Jo-Ann Moro, had parents who provided one. "My father bought me a car," she said, "a Ford roadster" before she was married and she "would chauffeur people around. Wherever people wanted to go I'd take them. To Marlboro, to Lake Chauncey in Westboro—there were dances there every Saturday night."

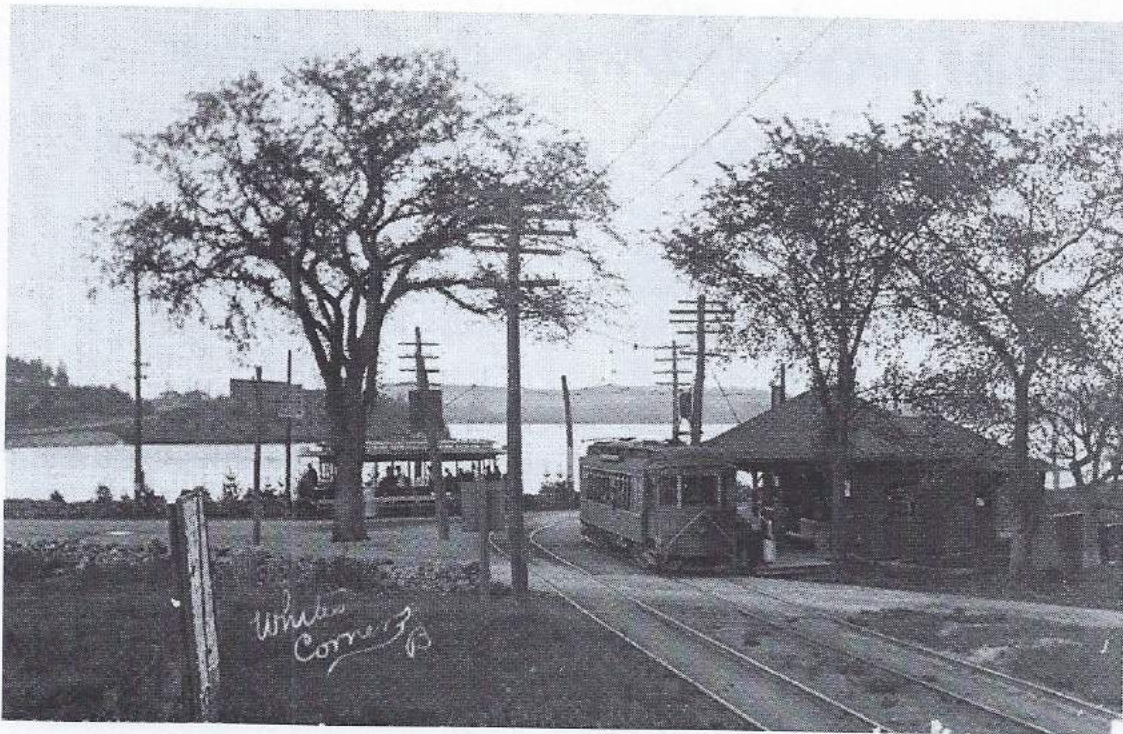
At first, Lena Carloni said there were hardly any cars and no two cars in a family, so when it was time to go to school, you had to find someone in the neighborhood to take you. She remembers that Hazel Foote took her to school and when she retired took her to her first Senior Citizens Meeting.

When he turned 16, Eldred McKie told of the time when "three or four of us guys and one in Fayville who had a license" bought a car. We paid \$10 each for it and kept it at one of the guy's houses in Southville. We'd drive over to Rodney McNeil's house in Fayville 'cause he had a license and would drive."

Another time, Eldred remembers well is when we bought a car—it had a rumble seat!—for \$50. When I drove it home, my mother said to take it back. "It was the greatest embarrassment of my life." [And he did take it back.]

## Southborough Memories

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“When the street cars came in Fayville,” Eleonora Fantony recalled, “in the summertime they had open cars. In other words, they had no windows and no sides. I used to like to ride down towards Framingham Center...We’d ride to the reservoir park. It seemed like the wind always came up there. And there would be men sitting there with their hats on, and the hats would blow into the water. As a kid, I thought that was one of the funniest things. Silly thing to remember, isn’t it? It was fun riding in those open cars.”

“And, you know,” said Eleonora, “we’d walk a lot in the summertime, when we got to be old enough—I think we were 14. I never had a bike but some kids did, but we didn’t ride them an awful lot. We walked.”

“Another walk was to the top of Oak Hill,” said Eleonora, “where you meet the Ashland line, at the crossroads. We used to call it ‘Oregon.’ Down the road were several houses, a lot of them summer homes of people from around Boston—the city. And there were a lot of good-looking young boys there. So a group of us—five or six of us girls—would decide to walk. We’d walk up Oak Hill and down Oregon Road just to see, and we’d stop and talk to these guys. We thought because they came from the city down around Boston that they had to be special!”

In Fayville the train tracks divided, albeit not equally, the village. The Fayville station was close by the Village Hall and, like the Hall, was a focal point of community life. There were stations in Southville and Southborough as well.



## Southborough Memories

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"Trains were a big part of it [community life]," George Boothby remembered. "We always had to wait for the train—the jitneys" said Boothby whose uncle tended the gates on Central Street. The double tracks through town brought the cars from Dennison in Framingham to Dennison in Marlboro.

Mail came in to the stations. "Old man Wadsworth was the postman [in Fayville]," said George.. He used to go down and pick up the mail. There was a side track by the station [for unloading]. Hay used to come in for Hillcrest Farm (back of Brewer's) and dynamite for the tunnel being built for the reservoir system. Boothby remembers watching dynamite being unloaded when he was a kid.



George recalls taking the train to go to his aunt's in Marlborough. They had a cow barn there which was where the trolley car used to stop. And, he remembers the train used to come up on Main Street in Marlborough. That's where the stop was.

By the time Eleonora Burke graduated from law school, she had a car she drove to her office in Boston. Others in her family would drive to the Framingham station to get a train to Boston (rather than have to change trains). Two dentists living on Oak Hill Road, Dr. Proctor and Dr. Lindstrom, went down to go on the train to Boston every morning. They either had a direct route or they had to change in Framingham, but they used the train.

## Southborough Memories

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Angie Pessini remembers taking the train or the bus a lot to the movies in Marlboro. She remembers Mrs. Deere nearby used to put the gate down—“she was there all day anyway.” Angie also remembers she “used to ride with all the boys. That started when I was 14. Then they told me it was about time I got my own car. I think we were 16. I never learned how to ride a bike. They all had cars.”

When Shoppers World in Framingham opened (1951)—the first in mall in America, those people with cars would go to the

movies there. The mall, of course, attracted shoppers, although some were quite satisfied with their own home town. “People say to me, ‘How could you live in Southborough?’” said David Falconi, “but then you could get anything you wanted downtown—magazines, records, stationery, hardware, paint, glass, screens. Where Willy Mauro now has beer there was hardware. The drugstore had toys, magazines—in our world we had everything we needed right here—including a barber shop.”

### Photos

Page 18: White’s Corner was a major transfer point for trolley riders heading north to Marlboro and on or to west to Westboro.

Page 19: Fayville’s railroad station where, among other things, dynamite for the reservoir construction project was unloaded in the middle of a busy part of the village.

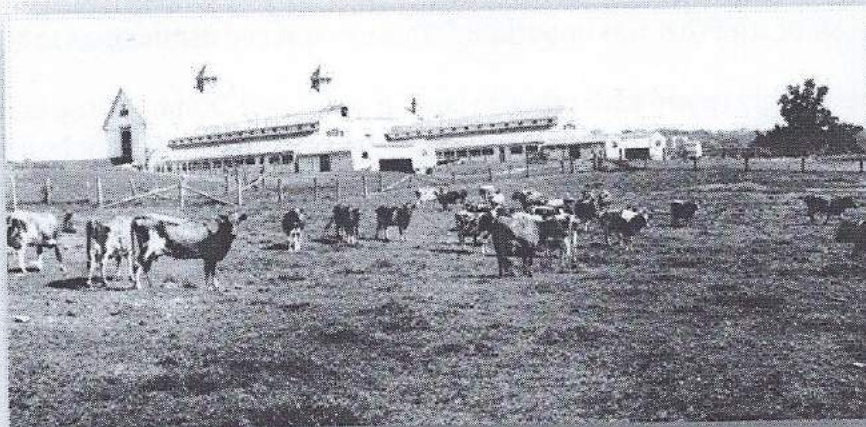
Page: 20: Angie Pessini has contributed many of her childhood memories here.  
[Photo with permission of the *Villager*/Gateway Media.]

## *Southborough's Youth Seek Work and Further Education*

*We just had fun on the train [to work in Boston]. In those days  
they'd even hold the train if they saw you coming down the street.  
—Ethel Armstrong*

*In the early 1900s, graduating from high school was not an expectation for many young people; in fact, many of Southborough's youth left school early to help their family in some way. By the 1930s and 1940s a high school diploma was an advantage in the world of work, and going on to another four years of education was no longer unheard of for the offspring of working class families who wanted their children to "get ahead." In many ways it brought a whole new world to students and their families.*

As the first decade of the 1900s passed, opportunities dwindled for Italian and Irish immigrants who had come to work on the MDC reservoir or in the mills and factories in Fayville. Yet Southborough was fortunate to have other employment needs in its private schools and several large farms, most especially Deerfoot Farm which had had a dairy herd since 1854 and began producing pork products (its sausage became famous) in 1870. From that time well into the 1940s and 50s, the business adapted to new production processes while acquiring more cattle and more land; and more workers were needed, for



whom they built houses and a dormitory. [For many more details on the history of Deerfoot, see Paul Doucette's pamphlet, *Deerfoot: "The Aristocrat of Farms."*]

## Southborough Memories

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The private schools and estates of the Burnetts, the founding family of St. Mark's School, Fay School, St. Mark's Church, and Deerfoot Farm, as well as of other wealthy farmers, required groundskeepers and workers to help with harvest, the daily task of milking cows, and all the work of a farm. Their homes and families needed women as housekeepers and cooks and nannies for their children. And finally, the presence of both Deerfoot Farm businesses—milk, other dairy products, and sausage—provided jobs and often a chance of advancement.

Like many others in town, Joseph Mauro and then his son, John, worked for St. Mark's School for many years. William Colleary, Sr. was night watchman there for thirty or forty years. Alice Bertonassi's father worked for St. Mark's School; and in the summer, he literally built the golf course. He had three or four men with him, and he knew about land. "He'd come home with things to read," his daughter reported, "but he didn't know how, so I'd read and then explain it him and he had a very keen memory and remember everything. At work the next day he'd explain to his three Italian workmen what I'd told him."

There were also jobs with town departments, caring for highways, the water supply, or the cemetery. In a still-traditional working world, women found clerical and secretarial positions in those departments and the schools, where they worked in and managed the kitchens as schools added cafeterias. Often they spent the rest of their working lives there.

Many of the still newer arrivals in this country were skilled in ways of great value to townspeople. Bob Dumont talked about hiring Gino Tebaldi's father to trim shrubs and Ray Cibelli's father to build him a stone fireplace. Townspeople learned that the newcomers had a lot of valuable knowledge and skills to offer that they themselves didn't possess—and they worked hard. "They earned a lot of respect" for their work—"whether or not they could speak clear English was sort of secondary," said Bob. "We got to learn from them a lot of stuff that was important." This eased social distinctions in some way.

We didn't necessarily regard each other as poor or rich," said Dumont. "It was remarkable that Frank Ramelli, Sr. would start a store downtown where there used to be a bicycle shop or that Frank Holland had a news shop across the street and then built next door (now a cleaner). Another benefit for those opening businesses downtown was that St. Mark's students would come down and get hamburgers and play the pinball machine in the corner." Then in 1945 or 46 the Mauros opened their market and the building for the "spa" was built.

The Southborough Arms, the inn and restaurant, host to private school parents and the site of celebrations of all kinds, large and small, also was a place to work. It was at Main and School Street where now a building houses a bank, day care center, and offices. "The Arms," as it was known, burned down in 1969.

What Lena Carloni first remembered of Deerfoot Farms was that it was the only industrial building in town. The south side of the building was for milk, the north side for

## Southborough Memories

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meat packing, and the middle was the office. "I can remember as a kid that I couldn't hear the train come in but I did hear the pigs squealing and we'd go watch them unload. They were always slaughtered on Mondays. All the kids in town made extra money in the summer working at the Deerfoot Farms plant packing hotdogs." It was a major presence in Southborough until 1969.

### ***Leaving Early to Meet Family Needs***

Angeline Pessini finished only a year of high school for a reason common to many other young people—she "had to help support my family." She got a job at Deerfoot's Newton Street sausage factory where the pigs were slaughtered and the meat processed. Angie remembers having to be there "very early" and getting paid "only 25 cents an hour" for making the box that sausages were put in to be sold. ("Men didn't get much either," she said.). She stayed only one winter and then went to work, again making boxes, this time for jewelry, at the Dennison Manufacturing factory on Maple Street in Marlboro (where Design Pak was until recently.) "I started from the bottom and worked up to the top—finally to supervisor." When they sold to DesignPak, "I worked for them four or five years and then, when I was 67 years old, stopped working."

George Boothby, born in 1924, also had little choice about his school years—he left after the seventh grade to go to work. "I had to give my whole pay at home," he said, until he got a raise to \$7.50 a day. "They let me keep the 50 cents," he said, enough for at least one trip to the movies, maybe even two—ten cents admission, five cents for the bus, and five cents for popcorn.

Alice Bertonassi was in the eighth grade when she had to leave school because her mother was injured in an accident. "She was pouring hot water into the washing machine, and the water pan slipped and she fell into the hot water and burned both of her legs," Alice recalled. The nurse from the school—"her name was Daniels, I think—she was wonderful," said Alice, came to the home and saw the condition of her mother. Alice was told that she needed "to be home with my mother and to take care of my family." (She was one of eight). Alice's mother was laid up for a year unable to walk or do anything, "That's why I was not able to finish school, but I kept after my brothers and sisters. They all graduated. If they didn't, it was their own fault. That was another thing in my life. I took over being 'mother' of the family. I was in eighth grade—fourteen and going to be fifteen."

"I never saw a schoolroom again," said Alice, "but I learned by myself. I used to read and things like that. I met somebody and we were talking one day, and she said to me, 'Where were you educated? I've just got to ask you.'" I said, "You know, I loved school, but with what happened with the family, being the oldest, it's a good thing I was a girl, and not a boy. I had to give up my education to come take care of our family. That's all I did." And, she said, "You know, I'm still working. I think it's fun."

Jo-Ann Moro finished three of the four years at Peters High School. She left when her summer job typing at Dennison Manufacturing in downtown Framingham brought her an offer for full-time work taking shipping orders. She met her husband at work and

## Southborough Memories

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married at St. Anne's in Southborough in 1936. She worked another two years before she had her first baby.

Janet Mattioli's mother and father had grown up together in Southborough. Angeline Bagley was too young to go into nursing when she graduated so she found work at Mass Eye and Ear until she was 20 and could study nursing. After completing her studies she worked at Mass. General Hospital in Boston until she joined a medical team going from Boston to France.

Francis Mattioli didn't finish high school but "went to Detroit to make his millions" as his daughter, Janet, said. [Did he? No.] His first job was with an auto crankshaft company. When Henry Ford came along with automatic gears and battery, he went to work for Ford and studied so he could have a certificate (the forerunner of a GED), and had an office job. He also played the saxophone and became a member of the Henry Ford band. When Ford introduced a new dealership or new car, the band would travel by train in a big (caravan). He got as far as the Panama Canal and Cuba and had a grand tour of the U.S. It was a big thing for his family to get postcards from these far-away places.

After graduating from St. Anne's Academy, Janet went to art school on a scholarship. She studied interior decorating and furniture to learn all about styles, wall paper, paint, draperies, antiques, and so on. She worked at the brand-new Filene's in Chestnut Hill to get selling experience. Connie Higgiston, the former school principal's wife, worked there too.

Janet took a summer off to go to Red Cross aquatic school and worked at Camp Virginia (another Southboroughite, Ruth Anketell, was head of the camp's waterfront). One summer she taught at the Fay School pool until the pool closed because of the polio scare.

Janet spent ten years at Paine Furniture in downtown Boston, leaving when the pay by commission was not enough to live on. She worked at GE-Timex in Ashland for eighteen years doing "all kinds of things" until they sold out. Since then she's found herself a number of part-time jobs before and after spending many years caring for her mother.

### ***Working at Deerfoot***

Lena Carloni, one of the 29 members of the Class of 1939, was one of the many Southborough people who would work at Deerfoot Farms over the years. "In 1939 with rumors of war the fellow that worked in the lab went in the service and they asked me if I wanted to work there. I told them I took the commercial course and didn't know much about it but they trained me. I took courses in New York at the headquarters and at Amherst and received a license in bacteriology and worked there for 45 years."

"I started in town but the plant was too small to do for milk production so for some reason they built a building in Newton so I worked there for about 20 years (driving there). It closed in 1960. When that closed, I transferred to the ice cream section and I worked in Cambridge for a few years and then transferred to Lawrence for a few years and

## Southborough Memories

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finally in 1964 started working in Framingham where Breyer's is now. I was there until I retired in 1984. So after 1940 I was working out of town."



"I started in town but the plant was too small to do for milk production so for some reason they built a building in Newton so I worked there for about 20 years (driving there). It closed in 1960. When that closed, I transferred to the ice cream section and I worked in Cambridge for a few years and then transferred to Lawrence for a few years and finally in 1964 started working in Framingham where Breyer's is now. I was there until I retired in 1984. So after 1940 I was working out of town."

When they packed meat for the soldiers they had a vet who was in the service stationed there to check all the meat. "We packaged a chunk of pork with a bay leaf and a hunk of fat into a can. In the war, I worked from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the milk section and then went back for three to four hours to work in the meat section. The vet would sneak into Boston to the commissary, PX, and sometimes brought me out a pair of nylons. One time we went night-clubbing but he lost his hat with all the braids and insignias on it... so I drove him over to Hudson to get his cap. Times were hard but we had fun." [She said it wasn't a dating relationship when the interviewer wondered.]

"Lots of women worked there while the men were gone. They packed hot dogs, sausages, hors d'oeuvres. I couldn't figure out why they packed meat for Russia. When we could see someone running through the building...we'd say he's rushing for Russia."

An article by Donald Poole '52 in *Peter's Piper*, the Peters High yearbook, described the lunchtime scene in downtown Southborough:

On the stroke of noon, the Deerfoot whistle sets off a pandemonium.... The main streets swell with the noon hour business and [the stores] practically burst at the seams as Deerfoot workers and school children make the most of the lunch time

## Southborough Memories

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period. Then, just as if somebody had flicked a switch, at one o'clock everything returns to its quiet pace.

[When the day was over,] exhausted inhabitants, adults and children alike, return home to their dinners....and remain to spend a quiet evening at home.

Seldom after five do you see a single solitary person on the streets.

Andy Baldelli forgets what year—probably 1928—when he went to work at Deerfoot making link sausage—“I boned the meat, then stuffed the sausages.”



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“During the war I went to work in the milk section. Later, when Sealtest came in, I worked there for five years. I did all different things with the milk production and became the pasteurizer.” When the meat section started up again during war, he wanted to go back. (He was deferred from military service because of working in agriculture.) When the manager noticed how skilled he was at boning the shoulders, Andy explained he had worked there before. He got the job back.

Later he became a sausage maker with about 10 men working under him. By then the company had been bought by Hy-Grade. “What years!” he exclaimed. When he was in the milk section for Sealtest he won an award for being a good worker “with a big party and all.” In all, he was at Deerfoot 45 years. When they closed, the inspector got him a job as a foreman for Worcester Boneless Beef and subsequently worked for several companies there.

After all his years in the sausage business, Andy has a message for the rest of us: “When they say it’s junk in hotdogs, it’s not true!”



## Southborough Memories

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### ***Jobs to Enjoy***

Martha Templeman's job at Fenwal in Ashland involved "a great big machine. I used to make things for the bombs—we called them 'studs'—during the war. A great big wheel was going around. I had to put this little thing on to grind the thread. It wasn't an assembly line so I could work at my own pace."

She liked it, though it was "boring sometimes. But I'm kind of an extrovert so I talked to everybody. I was in a machine shop with all the men."

After graduation Rita Bertonassi worked in the corporate office for Arrow Automatic in Framingham and, in fact, retired from there in 1995. She had several different jobs in that company and would have worked longer, she said, but they were going out of business so she retired. It was a very good job," she said, and a "good commute."

For more than fifteen years, Ethel Armstrong took the train and the street car to her job doing biological photography for Children's Hospital. In those days children had photos for their records, as well as photos of operations, autopsies, and polio. She remembers shooting a person "with terribly burned legs" through the glass in an operating room. Her commute took at least an hour each way, but "it was fun because I knew lots of girls from Westboro and we just had fun on the train. In those days they'd even hold the train if they saw you coming down the street."

### ***More to Learn***

Angeline Bagley was too young to go into nursing when she graduated from Peters so she found work at Mass Eye and Ear until she was 20 and study nursing. She worked at Mass. General Hospital in Boston until she enlisted to go to France with the Army Nurse Corps.

John Boland's need to earn money for college brought him some, well, "unusual" jobs. One summer he worked for Bill Binder, known as "a real character" who became head of the town water department. Binder also had his own septic system and disposal business and hired John during one summer. John put in tanks and cleaned out old cesspools. "I was driving the honey wagon around!" John said. "It was interesting... interesting and an experience!"

"I had to work to pay for tuition," he said. "No money and I wouldn't be able to go back." So the next year John worked as a laborer for Bonazoli and Sons, a construction company. "I was the young kid," said John. "They'd say 'hey you, let's go.'" One time they told him to go to Stow where they were working at a big factory along the Assabet River somewhere. John's job was to help clean a boiler. "I figure it means a boiler in the basement," said John. "But here was this giant boiler! How the heck you do this?"

"I'll show you," said one of the workers who opens the door and says "you go in there!"

"Oh, man!" said John. "This was long before OSHA. There were lights inside and that was it. No fan. No fresh air. No life protection. Nothing! I had to clean all the tubes with wire

## Southborough Memories

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brushes. For a week I came out pitch black. But that was the end of that. They never made me do that again.”

“I needed the job—I could have said ‘You’re out of your mind.’ But there was no money in going home, so I had to stay.”

John enrolled in Wentworth Institute after graduating from Algonquin in 1963. He studied civil engineering, intense in math and science, which he found “far more interesting than high school.” He thinks Wentworth was “an excellent school with no fooling around.” He commuted to Boston and in the last year had an apartment with four other Southborough students. “We had a good time. It was a good experience.”

Jim Colleary is another Wentworth graduate. He studied electronics and found it a “good school and valuable” for him. He commuted with four or five others who teamed up to ride into Boston—Steve Douglas of Boston Road (Franklin Institute), John Ball of Pleasant Street, Richard Ghiringhelli of Central Street, and Billy Hamel who went to Boston Art.

Among the Peters High graduates who went on to college were, a bit surprising for the time, a number of women. Eleonora Fantony was perhaps the first woman from the village of Fayville who went on past high school—to law school, in fact. [A college degree wasn’t required for law school at that time.] Now the New England School of Law, in the 1930s Portia Law School in Boston, was the only all-women’s law school in the world.

“I originally wanted to be a teacher,” Eleonora said, so she registered at Jackson College (in Tufts College, Medford). “But I came out of high school in the depression and my father said that he didn’t think he could afford to send me, but I really think he had another reason. He didn’t really want me to be a teacher. Finally he asked me why I would want to go to school for four years, come out and get married and be unable to work (teachers could not be married in those days). He suggested I consider law or medicine, which he felt were good fields for women. I chose law, and I’m not unhappy about it. I don’t know how my life would have been had I not done that, but I didn’t feel too badly about doing what I did.”

She graduated in 1934 and passed the bar exam that year. “She applied to a few firms and had an offer from Choate Hall & Stewart, the very prestigious law firm, but learned her job would be to answer the phone. “And I have to say that when I came home and told my father, my father said, ‘To hell with that. You didn’t go to school for four years to answer the telephone.’” She had another chance with a law firm in Framingham but at her father’s suggestion, and with a bit of help financially, “I went on my own” in an office downtown.

Before law school her father had introduced her to Mrs. Bowers of Framingham, a student at Portia. They ended up taking turns driving to law school together. Eleonora’s father gave her a Ford, and Mrs. Bowers had a Buick convertible. “We’d wear our old clothes in our car to keep warm in the winter and then change coats in the garage and walk across the Boston Common to Portia, which was on Beacon Hill.”

## Southborough Memories

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Eleonora's cousin Natalie Fantony went to the Boston University College of Practical Arts and Letters and received her Bachelor's degree in commercial art in 1949.

Eleanor Onthank graduated from Simmons College in 1943 with a Bachelor of Science in Foods and Nutrition. She took a summer job in the dining car department of the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad and stayed with that—"it was a lot of fun." She married Charles Hamel two years later.

The Aspesis, who lived on the south side of Turnpike Road, all went to college, Peter to Northeastern University and then to business school. He worked in Worcester for a finance company until he was asked by the Perham family, the owners of "Ted's of Fayville" to become a partner. He has been an owner since then, now with his son Michael.

Charles Aspesi attended Burdett College and was a banker at Framingham Trust Company and later became postmaster in Southborough.

Marguerite Aspesi went to Burdett and worked for a bank. Like her sister Gloria, she lived in the same Turnpike Road house they had grown up in (where Gloria still lives.) Marguerite was active in and president of the Catholic Women's Club. She died very suddenly in 1960 while she was being held overnight in the hospital for observation of an undiagnosed problem. "She had been in pretty good health," according to Gloria, who said "the cause was never revealed."

Gloria went to Framingham State College, majoring in elementary education, and earned her Master's in Education there as well. She taught in several public elementary or middle schools in Framingham. She also took advantage of National Science Foundation grants (offered following the 1957 launching of Sputnik) to attend summer programs at DePauw University in Indiana, Northern Illinois State in DeKalb, and the University of Connecticut. Eventually she became first a resource teacher for new math and science curricula and then, after an internship, a school principal at Juniper Hill in Framingham where she stayed for 21 years.

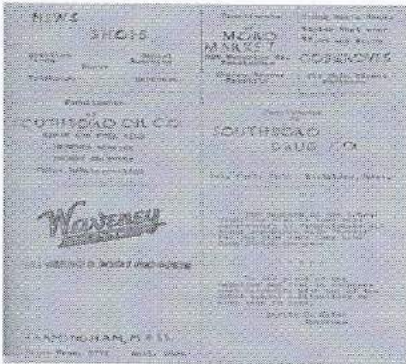
Sue Allen, who admitted to loving school, especially history, science, and "of course, PE, especially field hockey and softball" [which she went on to teach], attended the Boston-Bouvé School at Tufts University [now at Northeastern Univ., though it no longer offers PE courses]. After college Sue taught at Perkins School for the Blind and then earned her Master's at Michigan State. For a time, she taught three days a week in Southborough and two at the high school but then went to Algonquin full-time. She coached "the usual," she said, and retired after 23 years.

When Rick Falconi graduated from Algonquin in 1963, he worked a year at the family's oil company—Falconi Brothers—and decided to go to college. The next year he rode the "T" from Riverside to Newman Prep in Boston and in 1965 entered Franklin Pierce College in New Hampshire where he majored in economics. After graduating in 1969, he went back to Falconi Brothers as general manager. In 1977 he left to help form Solar Solutions, a

## Southborough Memories

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company doing “high end” passive or active solar systems. But business was “petering out with the building crunch in the late ‘80s,” so he went back to Falconi.



David Falconi went to work at the company right after high school when the business was making the final move from coal to oil. He was there until 1998, when his father turned the business over to the three sons (John, David, and James). David later sold his share to his brothers and went to work for the town.

What had at first been Adams Coal Company and then Southborough Oil became the Falconi Brothers. Before coal, kerosene had been used for lamps and stoves, hence the Southborough Oil Company. They're not certain of where to begin counting the age of the company, since Rick, who had been trained as a registered pharmacist, had been selling kerosene at the drug store; but the brothers do believe it is one of the two oldest businesses in town [Ted's Garage being the other].

Rick decided he no longer wanted to be a druggist after a pharmacist friend in Westboro had made an error mixing a prescription and a woman died. That incident was haunting him so, when his father bought Adams Coal, Rick left the drugstore and began with the new company by driving delivery trucks.

### Photos

- Page 21: Deerfoot Farm herd and barns
- Page 25: Deerfoot plant on Newton Street
- Page 26: Ad for Deerfoot's famous sausages
- Page 30: *Script* page of ads from local businesses

## *Dances, Suppers, Movies, Swimming, Skating, and Occasional Mischief*

*Wherever people wanted to go I'd take them—Marlboro, Lake  
Chauncey in Westboro—dances every Saturday night.*

*Jo-Ann Moro [Montvitt] whose father  
bought her a Ford Roadster*

When they were growing up—around 10, 11, and 12, Eleonora Fantony and her friend Josephine Carey, both Catholic, had two best girl friends who were Baptist—Doris Horn, and Muriel Robie. “We kind of hung around together, and very often, it seems to me that it was every other week or even oftener, the [Fayville] Baptist Church would have a supper right in the Baptist Church there. They had a nice basement downstairs and they put on some wonderful suppers. Sometimes they also had entertainment, and sometimes a church service, and we’d go to that. It was something for us to do, and we could walk to it, and it was safe to walk over and come home. I palled around with them all the time.”

The dances at the Fayville Village Hall were for the adults “more so than for us, the teenagers, or for those in their twenties,” Alice Bertonassi remembers. “Usually, that’s what it was. She remembers her mother as a dancer. “Considering how sick she always was—she really was,” said Alice, “if she knew that she could go out and have a good time, she’d go. I always said, ‘Oh go, Ma, go.’ She deserved to have a good time. My mother loved to dance. My father was like a broomstick. My mother would always say to him, ‘I can dance better with a broom.’ And the ones that played the music—they were [usually] all Italians; they all knew waltzes and polkas. Those were the two dances.”

**SOCIAL DANCE**

**Fayville  
Village Hall**

**Ra-Ha-Ra Orchestra**

ADMISSION: Ladies 35c, Gentlemen 55c  
INCLUDING WAR TAX

But Eleonora remembers that “every once in a while one of the grown-up boys would ask if we wanted to dance, and they’d take us out on the floor, and, oh, we thought that was wonderful! [Most of the time] we’d go and listen and sit there.”

While Fayville young people were heard to say they “didn’t have very much to do” and there “wasn’t anything exciting,” but on the other hand, another observed that she didn’t hear a lot of “fussing about not having anything to do.” Most of those interviewed easily recalled all the Saturday night dances and church suppers and movies right there at the Village Hall and Baptist Church but also their excursions to the movies.

## Southborough Memories

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"We used to go to the movies, either to Framingham or to Marlboro," said Angie Pessini. "A wagon used to have hot dogs, and we could go into 'the 5 and 10' and buy penny candy." On Wednesday night, young people also took the train a lot. "It was 10 cents to go to Framingham to the Saturday afternoon movies. It was special," said Eleonora Fantony. "When I got a little older," she said, "we could ride the bus and go to Marlborough. There was a theater right where the Cooperative Bank is now [Main at Florence Street]. That's where I saw Al Jolson in 'Sunny Boy,' the first talking picture—such a sad picture."

The bus to Marlboro was five cents (some remember it as a dime); the movies were a dime and it was "maybe a nickel for a box of Milk Duds," remembered Natalie Fantony, who especially liked roller-skating at Lyonhurst [on the south side of Lake Williams near where the court house is now. It was built in 1922 and burned down years later].

Lena Carloni liked Lyonhurst, too. It had roller skating, old-time dancing, "and the bands—big-time like Harry James and all...we went when we could afford it, but you couldn't dance to Big Bands because it was so packed."

More homegrown movies were shown by one of the pastors at the Baptist Church who lived on the corner of Winter Street and Central Street, right across from the Village Hall. "He was a very nice man," remembered Eleonora. "He traveled and showed movies of his travels and talked. He'd do that as part of an entertainment at the Baptist Church. We went to everything they had." (Note: Others remembered having trouble staying awake at the pastor's movies!)

George Boothby recalls going to the Baptist Church every Saturday night for a bean and ham supper for 25 cents. "What a feed they had! It was run by Avis Rossi and [first name forgotten] Deere and the Rev. A.E. Wheeler, the minister who lived in Fayville. Alice Bertonassi remembers those suppers and dances, as well, though chicken pot pie is what first comes to her memory.

"We always had something going on," Jo-Ann Moro said. Later, as Fayville young people started attending school in Southborough, there were basketball games upstairs in the Town House, home-grown musicals, and, in keeping with the times, an annual "minstrel show."

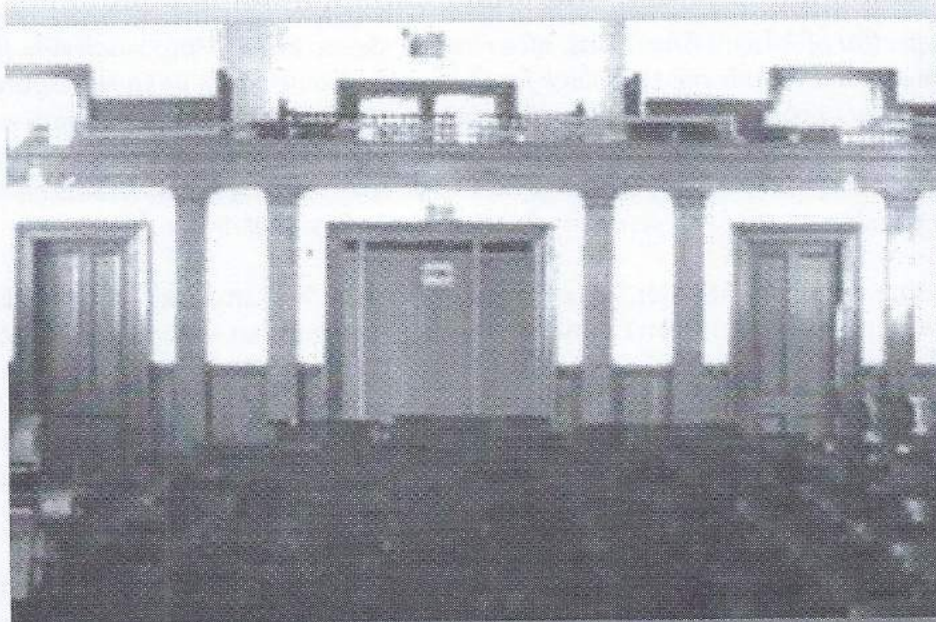
Eleanor Onthank remembers the "so-called gym" at Peters High School "because it was such a terrible place for them to play. They had all kinds of beams and things that came down from the ceiling, and of course, the basketball would hit those and bounce off somewhere. It really wasn't the ideal place, but they managed." Sheila Maguire recalls watching her brothers play from the balcony where "we could reach out to the net."

"The Catholic Church never really had very much for us," said Eleonora Fantony. "When we used to have masses on Holy Days, the Masses were like at 5:30 in the morning. We'd walk through Fayville up to church to go to Mass because people started work in those days at 6 a.m. We would walk to church most of the time, that's what we did. We did have Sunday School; but it was on a weekday, after school. We'd walk down from school

## Southborough Memories

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and then walk home. We'd get through at 4 or 4:30 p.m. and we'd walk home; we'd walk down on the causeway. It was perfectly safe. There were very many cars then. It wouldn't be as safe today to do it."



### **Dancing School**

What Ethel Nelson [Armstrong] remembers from growing up is dancing school. "We had classes, and then we had to do a recital once a year at the end. It was a big deal. My brother used to like to dance with me because he didn't know any girls, but another boy wanted to dance with me... and they'd race across the floor. Girls had to be asked. Hamilton Armstrong (later to be Ethel's husband) was president of the Senior Class, and she was vice president. "The night we graduated was the first time I went out with him," she said. "We dated six or seven years off and on before we got married [when she was 24]. Everyone gave us coupons for gas so we could go on a honeymoon to Wells, Maine. He was called up during the war; but in the end, he didn't go in because he didn't pass the physical."

### **A local favorite: the orchestra**

Both Eleonora Fantony and her high school boyfriend [and later husband], Phillip Burke, played in an orchestra when they were in high school. Eleonora played the piano. (She took lessons from a nun at one of the Marlboro Catholic schools.) Philip played the drums; and another high school classmate, Elwood Banfill, played a saxophone. One of our class, Forrest Buzzell, was "a wonderful trumpet player," she said.

They were hired as entertainment for suppers at the Baptist Church and the Federated Church in Fayville. "We got \$5.00. There were five of us; and once in a while, George Labarre, the druggist, who played a violin, loved to come and play with us. I thought we

## Southborough Memories

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were terrible, but the church people used to love to see us. We were all young kids, and we thought we were very important at that point.”

### The Minstrel Shows

*[Minstrel shows were a very popular form of entertainment for decades. Although originally very disrespectful of African Americans, often former slaves, evolved into vaudeville-like shows. The cast did include men in “black face” who sang some songs unknown before to the world of white people. By the middle of the 20th century most of the performances included, for some reason, Irish songs, as well. In many areas there were musicians who made at least some of their living by going from town to town, as it seems in Southborough, producing the shows with local people and perhaps a professional or two.]*

“At some time when we got older,” Eleonora said, “we also had an annual Minstrel Show. I think it was in the winter. I don’t remember who organized that—it wasn’t church-sponsored or anything like that.” She was one of the many people in their teens who were in the cast every year, including “a lot of young men. They played the Negro men. They were black-faced and wore white gloves. They had a chorus, as I remember.” Barney Maguire was one of the local performers—he was known for his lilting Irish voice and for being a witty story-teller, his daughter recalls.

“A man from Hopkinton with an Irish name played the piano and directed it,” as Eleonora Fantony remembered. “He also brought a singer with him, whose name was Joe Moore. He was kind of a handsome young guy with a lovely baritone voice; he did a lot of the solos. This man [from Hopkinton] used to go around and put on Minstrel shows. He was a wonderful director and knew how to put on these shows....he taught us how to sing the songs and directed.... It was good music and fun to sing.” The cast performed for maybe two nights to packed halls in town.

### Family Games and Picnics

With all the movies and dances and church suppers, memories also portray a more family-oriented slower pace of life: “Everything was very quiet,” said Eleonora Fantony. After all, there was no television. Alice Bertonassi [Phillipo] remembers her family gathered at the table for games:

There were eight of us—four on one side and four on the other. We used to play chalk. My mother would give us a penny. Somebody of the four would have it. They’d close their hand. We’d all put them under the table and we’d pass it on. Then, we’d all put our hands on the table. And each one had a turn saying, ‘Away, away.’ And then the one who got it would take it.

“We used to go by points. My mother would sit there and watch, and my father would sit at the other end.” With one boy and seven girls, they had many laughs and a lot of fun,” she said. “They would never give the penny to their brother because his big grin would give it away. The score would go back and forth.”

“We used to play cards, ‘Go, fish!’” said Alice, and checkers and other board games.



## Southborough Memories

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In the summer there were family cookouts. "We'd go down to Lake Cochituate, the state park in Natick, every Sunday or every other," said Alice. "The whole family—my father would send my son, Carl, and some of the older boys to save six or seven tables." They all took turns bringing different dishes and then taste each others'.

"We had the little fires and used to cook hamburgers and Italian sausages. We had close to 80 people. My mother's family really, really did this."

"There were always relatives around," Rita Bertonassi remembers. Now "it's strange because the close friends I have now have no families or an only child. But every one of my sisters is a great-grandmother." The family used to get together at the Community House the week before Easter and then moved to St. Anne's Hall when the numbers grew—about 150 or 200 people the last time, Rita remembers. "Of course the food! Everybody brings something to eat. The kids have a good time."

### Scouting

Laverne Ferris was involved with Girl Scouting and her husband in Boy Scouts. "We taught photography in our kitchen, so the girls could get a badge." The girls weren't just from Fayville, where the Ferris' lived, but "from all over town. If anybody was sick, no matter where they lived, there was always someone that would think of sending in a pot of soup or some cookies or something."

Laverne didn't grow up in Southborough, but she found Fayville "a wonderful place to live." After living in several places in town, they bought a house on Winter Street [in Fayville] and lived there sixty-six years. "The nicest thing about Fayville," she said, "was that people who knew my grandfather [who had lived there] transferred their affection from him to me. It was easy to get along and be accepted, even in an area where people had been living there for their whole lives. Things were much simpler then, much easier, then," she said.

### The Cattle Show and Circus come to town

The Cattle Show was one of Southborough's special annual events. Eleonora Fantony recalls that for many years the shows were in the back of the town hall in Southborough. Cows were there to compete [for their owners] for prizes for the best one. And there were competitions to see whose team of horses could pull the most weight. Big rocks were placed on a platform for the horses to pull. The Johnsons from their farm on the west end were ones who had a team.

In the late afternoon there was a horse show on St. Mark's field behind the Town Hall. Charles Choate [one of the town's most prominent families] used to ride, and sometimes his two sons as well, Eleonora remembers.

There were prizes, too, for jellies and baked goods. "As kids we would go with a little bit of money and buy candies and things for sale," said Eleonora.

## Southborough Memories

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Laverne Ferris remembers another event the children looked for every year—the day after Labor Day, the circus train came through Fayville [after passing through Southborough]. “The children would watch and when they saw a man down the tracks waiting with a sign and heard the train coming, they’d all run over to wave to everyone on the circus train—it was a big deal every year! Trains were more frequent in those days, but the circus train was only once a year,” said Laverne.

### Cars!

At some point, cars became essential, as Lena Carloni recalls. “A girlfriend’s brother with a ten-year-old car went into the service, and my friend said we should buy it. I asked who was going to drive it. So I had one lesson. A friend took me down Rte. 20 and told me what the things were, and I would go up to Brigham Street in Marlboro and practice before I got a license. A friend of my mother’s taught me some. It was a Ford. And we went everywhere.”

Angie Pessini said she “used to ride with all the boys when she was about 14. I never learned how to ride a bike. They all had cars.” Then they said it was about time she got her own. “I think we were 16.”

Jo-Ann Moro had a Ford roadster that her father bought her before she was married. She’d “chauffeur” people around. “Wherever people wanted to go I’d take them—Marlboro, Lake Chauncey in Westboro, dances there every Saturday night.

“When I got to be 16,” Eldred McKie remembers, “three or four of us guys and one from Fayville who had a license...bought a car. Paid \$10 each for it. We kept it at a friend’s house in Southville and would drive over to Rodney McNeil’s in Fayville ‘cause he had a license and would drive.”

Then, after he was old enough to get a license, he had a job picking strawberries next to Warner Oland’s house and also worked at Lane’s gas station... Charlie Lane’s at the junction of Cordaville with Woodland. So I got some money and went to Millay’s—the only car dealership in downtown.”

A couple of guys who “didn’t have our faculties” paid \$50 for a car with a rumble seat. When I drove home. My mother said, “Take it back.” It was “the greatest embarrassment of my life.” [He did take it back]

### Celebrations

With large families quite common, there were frequent gatherings for weddings or an anniversary or a special birthday. The celebrations were marked by plentiful food, many conversations, and often music and dancing.

*Christmas:* In town at Christmas, Laverne Ferris remembered, “we always had a little entertainment and



## Southborough Memories

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would get a little box of hard candy at the Community House with Santa Claus.” It’s a tradition that continues.

*Memorial Day:* Probably the single best known fact about all Southborough grammar school students is that Miss Finn required them to memorize the Gettysburg Address and be able to recite it. Each year one student was chosen to recite it at the town’s Memorial Day observance at the Civil War monument in the Town Common.

*Fourth of July:* “We always started on July 3<sup>rd</sup> by going to some farm,” Paul Berry remembers, “the Brewers or the Onthanks—and collecting burnable objects to build a bonfire where DeLarda’s house was [next to the Village Hall]. We had ties from railroad, old barrels—every year, every year, they went. Anything burnable.”



“Come midnight July 3<sup>rd</sup>... people came from all over. We had firefighters there. No fireworks, though we could buy them ourselves—but not the big rockets.”

What a lot of people remember—and look for to this day—is the American flag that would somehow appear on the small island in the reservoir visible from most of Fayville. As Laverne Ferris said, “I remember how they used to love to irritate Mr. [Earl] Smiddy [who worked for the MDC] by going out in a boat and putting a flag on the island. He was furious.”

George Boothby’s memory of the flag is more direct. “I put that [the flag] out a good many years,” he said. “We used to float out. We’d cut a tree down to put flag on and go out on inner tubes. Go out around 11 p.m.”

“Then they [the MDC] used to take it down, son of a gun. Later we borrowed a boat. They caught us and took the boat. No motor...so we rowed out; we put a plug in the hole so water wouldn’t come in (where motor would be). Every year we used to go. Uncle Jackie Phillip, Bobby Wiles, Henry Ginga. We stopped for a while when Earl Smiddy [another Fayville resident] was with the MDC. He was a bugger. He didn’t want to see flag out there or he wouldn’t be doing his job.”

### Women’s Clubs

The Women’s Club was an important part of life for a lot of women. “I’ve met some very delightful people through the State Federation [of women’s clubs]. Interesting people—people who were very active,” Laverne Ferris said.

## Southborough Memories

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Typically younger women joined the Junior Women's Club. They had programs like providing milk for school children, according to Laverne Ferris. The regular Women's Club "did a great deal and education was prominent," she said. Like others, she had joined the Junior Women's Club before the Women's Club; she served as president of that club a number of years and belonged to the State Federation for more than sixty-five years. "While I was very active in it, my thrust was the Veterans Home for homeless women veterans in Worcester," she said. "We worked a lot for them. I thought it was a disgrace that women veterans didn't have homes. We raised money and had yard sales to provide them with equipment and clothing and food." The Hillside School for Boys in Marlboro was another club project. The women collected Campbell Soup labels which they could use to buy equipment.

Another project was making May baskets for patients at Westborough State Hospital (for mentally disturbed people). Laverne also had a play reading group there. She recalls that one day, the director said to her, "I suppose you missed Dorothy today."

Laverne said she did. "She's an excellent reader."

"Well," said the director. "We found out she has one bad habit."

"Oh?" said Laverne.

"Dorothy likes to strangle people," the Director reported. Laverne remembers her husband telling her she shouldn't go back. "But I did," she said.

One year, patients were invited to Fayville and a bus load came to Mrs. Deere's house on Winter Street where Laverne lived and they had a party.

## Southborough Memories

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Laverne's first grandson, just a few weeks old, was upstairs asleep on one of the beds. One of the men asked if he could see the baby; and Laverne's daughter, Becky, took him upstairs. The man "got down and knelt and blessed himself, and then blessed the baby and said a prayer." Laverne told Becky that she felt that the baby had been "specially blessed by that man."

Laverne said that she thought that years ago, the Women's Club "was about the only entertainment some women had. They didn't have public transportation the way they do today. They didn't have automobiles. But when we [the Women's Club] were a hundred years old, it was time to stop. Today, people aren't doing things like that. They go home with their computers, their home entertainment equipment. It's a very different world; it's a very rapid world," Laverne concluded.

Lena Carloni was a charter member of the Catholic Women's Club. At the beginning there were a lot of women and a lot of activities, she said. "It wasn't so much doing that was important." Eva Ramelli was another of the women who started it. Lena remembers her as having "fancy hair-do's so that one of first shows [the club had] was hats—beautiful hats." There were bake sales for charity; and if a family in town was in need, members would get the kids' sizes and get clothes for Christmas. "One woman whose husband went to school with me died suddenly," Lena said. "I went to her and said, "Don't be proud, you're hurting the kids...So we could help her."

Janet Mattioli was a charter member of the Catholic Women's Club in 1952, as was her mother, Angeline. The club had a 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, but now there isn't that much activity, according to Janet. The women get together to do one big charity event a year, such as furnish things for Abby House in Worcester. But it has "petered down," she said; "with so many women working it's hard to find people willing and/or able to put in the hours of work that it takes to keep an organization going."

Lena Carloni joined the Senior Citizens Club and was in charge of programs—"the hardest part," she said. "Hammie [Hamilton] Armstrong started the club because there was nothing for the seniors."

### Wedding Bells

As we might expect, there were often marriages between two people who had grown up and gone to school together in town. There are also many fascinating stories about how people managed to find each other or be helped to find each other by their own families, often two brothers from one family married two sisters from another. One woman who saw a picture of a man and went to meet him at the boat in New York; they were married right there on the dock. Others came here and settled themselves and went back to Italy to bring over girl friends or wives waiting for them. Another long-time Fayville resident just happened to go to a square dance in Acton and meet a man from Waltham. One well-known man met his wife at a dentist appointment. Stories to be saved for another day, perhaps.

## Southborough Memories

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### Photos

- Page 31: Poster advertising one of the many dances in Fayville.
- Page 33: Upper Town Hall, site of basketballs games and Town Meetings.
- Page 36: Joe Mauro and Josephine Bertonazzi dancing the tarantella at Bertonazzi wedding about 1959.
- Page 37: The American flag flies again on a small island in the reservoir, within view of Turnpike Road, thanks to some determined men from Fayville not willing to take "no" for an answer.
- Page 38: Members of the Women's Club (perhaps the Junior Club) pose for a photograph after an important occasion.

## *The Farms of Southborough, Large and Small*

*I loved the farm and would not trade all the work I had to do for anything.*

*—Sue Allen*

*A farm is great place to grow up but not to stay.*

*—Evelyn Johnson McKie*

Southborough was all about all farms, large and small, in its first two centuries. The best known was Deerfoot Farm which sold butter to British royalty and sent a milk cow to the North Pole with Admiral Byrd. It also had a milk production and sausage factory in the middle of town.

At the west end of town a Johnson family, growing since their ancestors were among the founders of Southborough, continued to farm, albeit with acreage shrinking over time. At its busiest, the Johnson farm brought hops from Boston every day to feed the cows. The Johnsons have been an integral part of the town's life from the start. A Johnson was the first town moderator. The Johnsons transported children to school over the years. Another was a registrar of voters for years, while yet another was a long-time town assessor. While the last cows have left and the barn torn down, Johnsons count that they have been here for thirteen, even fourteen, generations.

Coming east was Deerfoot, at one point including land on the other side of Turnpike Road and owned by the Burnetts who traced their arrival in Southborough to 1820 when the name Burnett was more associated with vanilla extract than with dairy products. The Deerfoot Farm Company was officially established in the late 1840s when Joseph Burnett acquired 500 acres soon populated by cows and buildings needed to house the herd and people needed to care for them. As the founders of St. Mark's Church and St. Mark's School, as well as the Fay School, the Burnett had enormous influence on the way Southborough would grow. In the next century in their dairy and meat packing business operations would be a major source of employment for town residents.

Moving on from Deerfoot there was the Offutt property on Clifford Road and Wolfpen Farm on Sears Road. On the south side farm owners included Norcross, Killam, Watkins, Ray Davis (Davco orchard) and Aselbekian. Closer to Framingham were the properties of Ellsworth, Brewer, and Onthank—the descendants of one of the original settlers of the town. A family history details the many contributions to the community the Onthinks have made over the years, serving as selectmen and active in civic organizations. The large Clemmons farm in the east had been cut off from town by the reservoir and long since subdivided.

## Southborough Memories

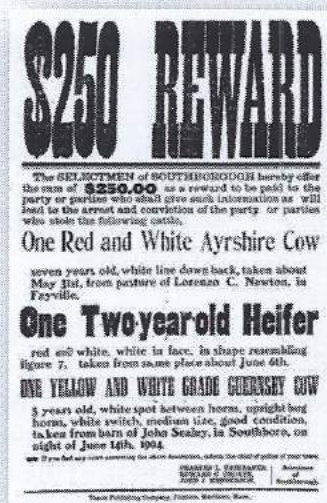
Except for winter, a typical day in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century would find many Southborough residents engaged in farm work—some in an extensive home garden; others on the larger family farms where many of the town's youth were seasonal farmhands—picking apples or gathering vegetables for market.



Many of the farms also had dairy cows and sold some milk to Deerfoot to be processed and sent along. But there were still home deliveries. “When my kids were young we had milk from Bradley’s Wolfpen Farm,” said Dr. Timothy Stone who lived right across from the Town Common. “Bill Park would come down, look in the refrigerator, see what we needed, bring what we needed, and go on his way.” He explained that the milk “came in glass bottles with various devices to skim the cream off before it was homogenized. Some bottles had a constricted neck

with a little siphon gadget that you could buy and press in to get the cream right off the top without any milk. It worked.”

Dr. Stone was particularly familiar with dairy farms because when he first came to town after World War II and served on the Board of Health, a big issue was the sale of raw milk and the regulations on how much a farmer would be allowed to sell without a state license.



The Offutt farm between Clifford Road and Turnpike Road hadn't been in that family for generations, as the others were, but it was home to and farmed by the Offutts and Allens up until the end of the 1990s. The fifty-seven acres were essentially a dairy farm with forty milking cows. The Allen children, Sue, Joanie, Cy, Larry, and Dan grew up on the farm and worked hard, especially during the war when it was difficult to find the needed hired people, but none stayed on the farm after their parents' death (2003 and 2004). Raymond Allen was kept busy as a government inspector for TB, brucellosis, cholera, in slaughter houses and dairy farms, including Deerfoot.

Sue Allen remembered haying, driving the truck, stacking hay in the barn. “We’d ride on the bailer. The knotter [tying the bales] wouldn’t always work so we had to sit and watch for knots and, when it wasn’t there, we’d kick-tie a knot.” [Was it dangerous? I suppose. I don’t know.]



## Southborough Memories

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"In high school we'd be working on the farm in summer—feeding cattle, taking care of little ones. I loved the farm and would not trade all the work I had to do for anything. [Did you milk? Sometimes—machines.] Milk went in cans to Deerfoot, eventually to go in bulk tanks to Hood in Charlestown.

"We had horses and went riding all over town and even to Westboro (through a cattle passage under Washington Street) to be with friends who also had horses," said Sue. While often young people who had farm chores were expected to miss out on after-school activities, she said her parents "always encouraged us to take part in school activities, play sports."

In the 1970s the largest portion of the property was sold for a huge warehouse owned by Western Electric; the final piece—about five acres—was sold for three house lots later.

Southborough's farms not only produced abundant milk and produce, they also had very welcome opportunities to work. Andy Baldelli didn't graduate from high school but went to work at Valley Farms toward Framingham line where the Industrial Park is now (New York Ave). That was a big farm owned by Walter Brewer. "I worked there starting at 14; by 16 I had a car," said Andy.



"I cultivated with a horse. I plowed and hoed, picked apples, and peaches." At the top of the hill close to Route 9 Brewer had peach orchards. Out towards Bose and down below was the Peterson Farm and behind that, where high tension wires are, was his apple orchard—75 to 100 trees."

"Behind Walter Brewer's house (which burned down), I did a lot of plowing with tractor. Then we had a horse to

cultivate—up the row, back and forth. Then we got a gray mare and she'd walk on the rows! If you raised your voice she'd go like crazy!"

Perhaps the smallest herd of all was kept by a Mr. Miller in Fayville. Gloria Aspesi, who lived on the north side of Turnpike Road there, remembers Miller's herd to number maybe six. "Every day he would take his cows past my house down to the field to the east (about where the Chinese church is today). "In the evening he would bring them back to the barn, carrying a shovel with him to pick up the cow flops!" Gloria remembers that he also "let the neighborhood children know when a calf had been born so they could come see the youngest in the herd."

## Southborough Memories

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Andy Baldelli's family also raised chickens in coops in their back yard and across the street and behind other house on Cordaville Road. "We sold eggs," he said. "Wholesaled them too. Way up in woods 15 houses—the laying house and the brooder house" where they started the chicks.

Elwood Banfill lived with his grandparents, the Cuttings, on a small farm between Middle and Parkerville Roads adjacent to the old trolley right-of-way. It was a "truck farm" selling produce from fruit trees, berries, etc. Conveniently, Elwood's father was a conductor on the trolley line; the car would stop at Middle Road so his mother could give him lunch.

Another small farm was John Finn's at end of Flagg Road where teacher Florence Finn [later Fitzgerald] lived. The Killams had a farm on Richards Road which was later divided by the Mass. Pike; on the other side of Richards was the Watkins farm and up off Oregon Road was the Harris turkey farm.

The acreage on each side of East Main Street was originally all farmed by John Boland's grandfather. Eventually, as with other family farms, it was divided between sons. John's father, a carpenter whose houses could be found all over town, built the house on East Main Street before he married. John's sister Mary built a house on part of the land, and his cousin Bill's father built on another piece. It was "a Boland community," just as the Mauros and the Bertonazzis were making clusters of family homes elsewhere in town. (John's son, Matt, now married, lives in the house that his grandfather built.

### ***From home vegetable gardeners to "market gardening" for the city***

Some who raised chickens and grew vegetables went out into their town and others nearby to sell what they harvested. A few of the home gardeners would have a small stand in front of their house or deliver to homes throughout town. Jo-Ann Moro [Montvitt] was known by many as "the egg lady" one of her customers, Gloria Aspesi, recalls.

### **Nine hours at 90 cents an hour for 6.5 days a week**

During the growing season, beginning around age ten or eleven young boys would work on a farm, Paul Berry said. In fall they'd pick apples at St. Maurice's [on Framingham Road]. They worked at Walter Brewer's in Southborough at town line with Framingham, past the new Genzyme Building all the way back to a hillside covered with trees, the farm, and big barns. Walter lived across the street in a big house. The young men also worked for Ted Thompson on Pleasant Street on the other side of the Framingham line. Paul Berry remembers Thompson coming to town "with a flatbed truck to pick us kids up." Those "kids" picked vegetables which would be taken to Boston at night. Berry also remembers the pay—90 cents for a nine-hour day. It went to \$1.00 as a worker got older. Those nine-hour days were 6.5 days a week, including Sunday morning, though they got paid for the whole day Sunday. George Boothby remembers getting up at 5 a.m. to pick blueberries for Mrs. Smith for 25 cents a quart, and some residents remember going to "Blueberry Hill" behind the Onthank house to harvest berries for themselves.

Eleanor Onthank Hamel remembers that the young men working on her father's farm were "mostly from Fayville. I can think of almost every family in Fayville, and they all had

## Southborough Memories

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someone that worked here.” She also said she remembers “clearly that the boys used to play horseshoes at noon—lunchtime—out in back of the barn. I can hear the horseshoes clinking now.”

People from Fayville also worked at other farms in town, including Deerfoot in the center of town—the largest enterprise, and in the West End (toward Westboro), the Beals and Johnsons. The Brewers also had a barn for Eastern States grain which they sold and delivered.

Angie Pessini still sees the big garden going “up the hill” behind the Pessini house on Central Street. “We had no money,” she said, “so we had to do it for ourselves. Everything was too expensive. We had everything—chickens and a cow.” The previous owner used to shoe horses so there was a barn with a fireplace in it.

### **Growing “everything” equals “lots of chores”**

Jo-Ann Moro’s memories of growing up on her family’s farm leave no doubt about what hard work it was. After she married and was preparing for her first baby, she left her job at Dennison and worked on the farm.

It was quite a big place—with a chicken house, an egg cellar, a smoke house, and barns for cows, horses and hay. They grew “everything,” she said—all the vegetables. “I always had lots of chores,” she said—feeding the chickens, cows, and pigs, milking the cows and goats. Like many other farmers in town who had cows, they sold their milk to Deerfoot Farms.

By the late 1940s when Jo-Ann’s son Ron was growing up, they stopped using the smokehouse because it made too much smoke—so they stopped raising pigs. The egg cellar also had a bench with the multitudes of implements and tools needed to keep the farm equipment working, especially wagons. Ron remembers that the hay wagons were still horse-drawn when he was growing up but they had a truck doing the actual haying.

Of course the farm also had an outhouse. Ron thought it was the last outhouse around—he remembers an article about it in the newspaper. He also remembers how “very handy” it was to have a bathroom inside.

Ron, likely like other children growing up on a farm, found it was difficult to do anything after school because of the farm’s work schedule. To stay for an activity or go to a special event, his mother would have to drive us “and there was no way she could do that, so we did nothing. It was just the way it was.” He took the bus home and worked on the farm. “I never got the knack of milking cows, but I could feed them,” he said. And he could shovel manure—“My God was that stuff heavy.”

In the 1980s, when Jo-Ann was no longer able to keep up with the work on the farm, half the farm was sold. The office building was constructed then. The rest—between them and the restaurant—was sold in 2001.

## Southborough Memories

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The “Shrubs and Trees” seasonal business had rented space from the Montvitts for a number of years, first in the area closer to White’s Corner and then, when the farm was sold, they moved to the side toward Woodland Road.

### **Serving chauffeurs with “little lists”**

Eleanor Onthank Hamel grew up on her family’s farm, “Mapledale,” but she was not expected (or, she says, “allowed”) to do much of the daily work. “My father wouldn’t let me do much of anything. I loved to be in the barn and everything, and I think I tried to milk a cow once, but she switched her tail at me too much, and I never tried it again.”

The Onthinks had a small herd of cows (perhaps eight) and “we very often had a pig in the pig pen; and chickens, and all kinds of barn cats, always.”

She did collect eggs when she “got over being afraid of the hens. They’d cluck and fly at me” and she did learn “how to harness the workhorse we had and all the complications of harnessing up a horse, but they really didn’t get me involved in anything, really. I suppose if I had been a boy it would have been different. But looking back, it was nice. It was really very nice.”

Essentially her father was a “market gardener—that’s how they defined that type of farming. And he belonged to the market gardener’s association. All of these fields were planted with lettuce and cabbage, and broccoli and spinach, and corn and tomatoes, and squash and pumpkins, and raspberries, and just about anything and everything. He did, I think, maybe in the ‘30s, build a roadside stand out here, on the center lawn. It was nice. It was kind of rustic. So, he would sell vegetables there. And my mother raised flowers for cut flowers that she sold on the stand.”

Her father also “took a lot of things over to Marlborough to a man named Lester Davis, who went and took them into Boston.” “Our milk, of course went to Deerfoot [Farms], while we had the cows. They came and picked it up.”

Asked if the family was able to earn a “decent living” from the farm, Eleanor said “Yes, I would say so. A lot of the West End people in Southborough came down [to buy produce] and he would also deliver. They’d call up and order things and he would deliver them, and the ladies would come out from Boston with their chauffeurs, with their hats and white gloves. The chauffeur would get out with a little list and my dad would put the things in a basket and off they’d go.”

“But, of course, the shortage of gas in World War II really impacted that greatly. People just didn’t have the gas to drive out.” And her father “lost his help when the boys went in the service. So, really, after that, it just kind of dwindled down.”

### **Photos**

Page 42: Grazing land for farms in the west end of town

Page 42: Help! A heifer is missing!

Page 43: Horses still have to work in the winter plowing town streets.

## *The Wars: Southborough Men and Women Serve*

*Such joy and relief and happiness that it was all over!  
—Natalie Fantony*

Hundreds of people from Southborough served in both the world wars [many more than we can name here.] Some did not survive. The first to die in service was Leo Bagley, uncle



to several Mattiolis, who succumbed to the serious influenza in World War I. Another Bagley, Leo's sister Angeline, became a nurse working in an Army hospital "somewhere in France." Not only was her service remarkable, but she clearly made a great impression on those for whom she cared. One of her patients wrote to her for years after they both had returned home, just one example of the correspondence she kept up. She also spoke kindly of the German prisoners under her care, calling them "nice ordinary men."

After Angeline returned home, she married Francis J. Mattioli. Both their sons, Francis, Jr. and Richard, served in World War II.

Natalie  
Fantony's

father was in the First World War before his mother and father were "going together." Joe Fantony was in the First Division, Seventh Engineers, building bridges as troops advanced. "Most of the time we didn't know where anyone was," Natalie said. "It's so different than now."

Eleonora Burke recalls that her uncle (later to be Natalie's father) went to war but that her own father wasn't called to go because he had a child. He was also postmaster. "I remember hearing that they didn't take postmasters, that it was a job that had to go on," Eleonora said. In 1918, as a member of the National Guard, her father was called out because of the police strike in Boston. "I remember as a little girl thinking



## Southborough Memories

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that he looked so nice in that uniform. There's something about a uniform, that even as child you are impressed," said Eleonora. Her mother took care of the Post office while her father was gone.

Eleonora remembered when World War I was over. Always waiting for news, finally one day it was announced that the war was over and everybody celebrated. "My father went around with a truck blowing its horn, but then they found out that it was a false alarm. About a week later, it was really so; everybody was extremely happy."

Her two uncles, Joe and George (a doctor) came home safely, and life seemed to go back to normal as the servicemen returned.

For those born in the 1920s and 30s, the country had been at war for most of their lives growing up. "I remember December 7<sup>th</sup>, the bombing of Pearl Harbor," said Natalie Fantony. "It was a Sunday night. I was ironing a blouse to go to school. President Roosevelt was speaking—I remember the sound of his voice saying we are at war." Five of her cousins served. Various aunts had two sons serving, and her Uncle Henry had one.



Two of the Southborough casualties were Paul Berry's brother, Joe, killed in Europe in 1944 and buried in Southborough. Joe was married and lived in Marlboro. Harold Fay, said to be the first Southborough man to be killed in action, lived on Pleasant Street in Fayville; he died in 1944 at the invasion of Italy. The playground opposite the Village Hall is dedicated to Fay; his name had been changed from Fazio.

Paul Berry was sent to the Pacific—"it was different," he said. "Everybody was different. I think of all these fellows older than me—not many are left." Paul was with the

## Southborough Memories

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engineers— “building things,” he said. He remembers the moment the war ended. “I was at Camp Attebury in Indiana for some training and then went back overseas.”

Phil Mauch recalls being on a ship that was “torpedoed off the coast of Antwerp, Belgium, but we did make it ashore to dry dock.”

William Colleary, Jr., later police chief, was a combat engineer, driving heavy equipment in Vietnam building an airbase. He had been drafted and left the Army after Vietnam; he became a policeman, first as a reserve and then full-time.

George A. Hubley was a medic with the 261st Medical Battalion. His battalion was assigned to go with Darby's Rangers into North Africa, Sicily and Italy. After landing on Utah Beach on June 6, 1944, George was one of the first to drive the first American ambulances into France. A longtime Southborough resident, George served as the town's Veterans Grave Officer until his death in 1996.

Eldred McKie, who carefully noted he was “from Cordaville,” went to college for two years after graduation and then enlisted in the Navy. During his four years in the service, he “went three-quarters around the world,” including Japan, where he arrived just five days after the war had ended. He saw “all the places you read about,” he said. He married Evelyn Johnson after being told he'd be stationed in Boston but was promptly transferred to New York so she went to live there for a time. Eldred took several trips across the Atlantic. The couple came home to Southborough when he was based in Davisville, R.I.

### Life on the Home Front

The women had many duties at home—including some in direct support of the war effort. Laverne Ferris talked of “spotting” airplanes on top of the South Union School when her husband was on the Manhattan Project in San Francisco. “I took his turn on the top of the school. My grandmother came visiting once, and I took her. She had been up there quite a while and she said to me, ‘Sister, how am I going to get back down?’ (My family used to call me ‘Sister’.) I said, ‘Oh, don't worry, Nanny, we're going to put a rope around your middle, and toss you over the edge.’”

And there was rationing of gasoline and many other goods to deal with. “We took turns driving,” Laverne said. “One would take one week, and another would take another week. I can remember one of the men (they were out at San Francisco) was getting married, and my husband called me up, and he said, ‘Can you spare any of your ration books? We want to have a party.’ So, I mailed him some coupons.”

Laverne would “always make sure that I had coupons for Mrs. Woodward to get the sugar to make Pop's doughnuts. My children called Mrs. Woodward ‘Na.’ They adored her. One time when we went to roll bandages, Na put her fur coat on a bench. [Laverne's son] Tommy was just a little boy, and he crawled into her fur coat and slept while I rolled bandages.”

## Southborough Memories

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"And then, of course, during the war, we had a surgical dressing room at the Town Hall," Laverne recalls. "Mrs. Robert Burnett did not understand why the people from Fayville didn't go up. So, I took the bull by the horns and I called her up. I said, 'Is there any reason why we couldn't have our own surgical dressing room at the Fayville Hall? A lot of these Italian women would be glad to come for an hour, but they have no transportation; some of them don't speak very good English, and they don't want anyone making fun of them. They could come and give us an hour.' And they did. They were wonderful."

Laverne said one of the mothers told her "They ask my son, 'why you papa no speaka de English?'" And, she said, "My boy," he say, 'Of course my papa no speaka de English. My papa no gotta no teeth'." They were wonderful. They came faithfully. And that was people helping people," said Laverne.

Like the others, Natalie Fantony remembers life with rationing books. But many seemed to find ways to have a little extra. Unlike others, Natalie's father owned a garage which meant he had "B" gas coupons. "A" was the best but "B" was good, too. "We didn't go gallivanting very much, but gas wasn't a real problem. Butter was rationed—we had to use oleomargarine. It was white because the butter people wouldn't let them make it yellow (like butter). So there was a little plastic bag with a yellow capsule to knead into the white margarine. We saved tinfoil from Hershey bars and from cigarette packages. We made balls of it and added it to the collections of old pans and metals that would be made into items for the war."

Lena Carloni remembers a similar favor from a friend in charge of the garage at Deerfoot which had the rationing coupons. One time he gave us a "T"—for transport—and that was a lot of gas!

### Time to Celebrate

On D-Day [the invasion of Europe on June 6, 1944], the young people were ringing the bell on Fayville Hall. Laverne Ferris' husband Tom was putting a new roof on the hall. "One of the neighbors was so furious at the constant ringing, that he went up and pulled the rope and it broke. Tom was pounding away, and all of a sudden, he looks up and there the neighbor was lying on the ground pointing to his broken leg."

On "VJ Day" (1945 Victory in Japan) Natalie Fantony remembers driving to Framingham where the streets were "teeming with people celebrating. Such joy and relief and happiness that it [the war] was all over!"

[Note: *Fences of Stone*, the town history, has extensive information on those who served in the wars. The Historical Society has a collection of veterans' memories.]

### Photos

Page 47: Nurse Angeline Bagley [Mattioli]

A Southborough MP in World War II

Page 48: Tents set up on the Village Hall grounds during the influenza epidemic



## *The World of Women's Work: In Their Own Words*

*We washed and ironed everything by hand with crank machines. And we'd be up to midnight ironing clothes. Women kept house, made our own bread, and chopped wood....and had to pitch hay. So they had their own farmhands right in the family. The older ones went to work.*

*— Yolanda Bertonazzi Connors*

### **Lena Carloni**

During high school I worked at Young's grocery store in the little office. My job was to take orders to be delivered. The people with butlers would call in the morning and we'd deliver in afternoon. Mr. Young had a ladder to climb up. Salesmen would come in to sell products. It was the only store in town.[After high school Lena went on to work for Deerfoot Farms and associated companies for 45 years.]

### **Yolanda Bertonazzi Connors**

We had lots of land for farming—a whole field of corn, another potatoes; my mother canned all time; harvesting—we practically lived out of garden. We had cows, pigs, so would slaughter a pig in the winter. We had our own milk house. Eggs from the chickens. We were raised on unpasteurized milk—and the family lived till their 90s. Rabbits, dogs, we had it...

We washed and ironed everything by hand with crank machines. We'd be up to midnight ironing clothes. Women kept house, made our own bread, and chopped wood. I worked like a darned boy. We were assigned things to do, though girls had to pitch hay. So they had their own farmhands right in the family. The older ones went to work—my older sister in a shoe shop.

### **Alice Bertonassi Phillipa**

I never went to work until my youngest daughter, Albina, was six. I went to work as a waitress, first saying, "Oh, well, I'll try it." I fell in love with it. I worked at the Framingham Country Club for nineteen years. I used to work lunch, dinner, and the golfing parties. I'd get the 10 a.m. bus and be there for lunch. Somebody would take me home about 2:30, and then another friend used to pick me up, and I'd go back for supper, Wednesdays and Fridays and sometimes, if they had big tournaments, on weekends, I'd work them all.

After I left the country club, I still had my family at home. I worked at a restaurant in Stow—the Lower Village House—for a German couple for nine years. I never drove. They used to come get me.

## Southborough Memories

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After I got through there, I started at the lunch program at the senior center at the Fayville Hall. [My daughter] June was a hairdresser, and worked for Dick Curran at the spa in the morning early to serve breakfast.

I'm still doing the senior lunch on Monday and Thursday. It's so different [than when it was at Fayville Village Hall. They couldn't get a company to bring in the food and it's much more expensive. All we do is give them a tray that's all prepared.

At the Fayville Hall, I used to cook the vegetables. I didn't like the way they came in, so I'd cook the vegetables myself. And the way the food came in, I would fix it up a little. That's why everybody used to like it. And I did that up until I retired.

You know what—I love meeting people. I delivered meals to people in Fayville, Ashland, Holliston, and Hopkinton. When there was a birthday party, I'd make a birthday cake. Or in the fall, I'd make apple pie and on the holidays, we always had a nice party and people would ask, "Can I take this [home]?" "I'd say 'Yes.' I'd even give them a tray, so they could have a supper.

I was so busy at home; I never had a chance to join clubs. In my spare time, I'd take in ironing. I ironed clothes for people. I did ironing for someone in Fayville named Mrs. Young up on Oak Hill. I did Mary Fantasy's for a long time. I did the Burnetts'. I used to go to their house and do a little housework and the washing and ironing.

I did everything. I'd get up at 6 o'clock and get my children all fed up. By 8 o'clock, I was free. I had a system. We had only one bathroom so I was in there, and I took care of everybody. I saw that they took a bath, cleaned them up, and combed them. While they were brushing their teeth, I was combing their hair. I also had their clothes ready for them, all lined up. Before I got my washing machine, I used to scrub everything by hand. I used to have all scars on my knuckles from scrubbing.

I bought a big enough bureau so my five girls could all have a drawer with their stockings and underwear all lined up. If I went into the drawer and saw them all messed up, they had to clean it up. They had just so many clothes. Sometimes, they had to wear the same dress twice. "But, Ma" one would say, 'I'd say, 'that's what it is.'"

I had a lady who used to help me out a lot. I used to do things for her, and she'd give me extra money, and I'd go shopping. *Eleonora Fantasy Burke*

### ***You had your own law office, and then what?***

Well, I had a general practice. My father knew a lot of people in Framingham, and a lot of Italian people in Framingham knew him so some of them came to me. Some couldn't speak English very well and some had problems, particularly those who had money. A lot of Italian people had money [back] in Italy. In that era—1935 and 1936, they couldn't take money out of the country—they needed a power of attorney to give somebody in Italy authority to remove that money. A lot of them came to me for power of attorney—they were called *carta procura*, I could talk enough Italian to get

## Southborough Memories

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what they wanted. But I wasn't proficient enough to write proper Italian, so my father would put it into proper Italian for me—he spoke perfect Italian and could write it. Then it would have to go to the Italian Consulate in Boston to be approved and then go to Italy. I started off that way, doing things like that.

### *How did you become the Town Counsel [the first woman]?*

The Board of Selectmen was apparently not satisfied [with the counsel they had from Marlboro] and wanted a change. [The selectmen were George Labarre, the druggist, Alton Spurr, garage owner, and Dr. Charles Proctor, a dentist who lived on Oak Hill in Fayville]. Two of them apparently thought it was great for me—they all knew me from the time I was young, and thought it was great I had passed the bar. I said I'd be interested. I was flattered.

But Dr. Proctor did not vote for me; I'm not sure why. I'd never had any trouble with him, and I used to play with his children. A little side story: At that time, Waldo B. Fay [at the Fay School] was rather close to Dr. Proctor, I think, and I think he wanted to keep his finger in the pie of Southborough politics. Fay asked me to come see him. He wanted to look me over, I think, though he didn't say that. I went to see him. Somehow or other, I had the courage to do all these things. He asked my background and various things. We had a nice conversation. I'm not sure whether he ended up being in favor or not. I was Town Counsel for nine years.

I got a small retainer—very small. And then if I had extra, well—I didn't make much money. This was in the late 1903s when money wasn't that good. But I enjoyed it and I made a lot of friends and I made some that didn't like me.

I enjoyed it. Also at the time the MDC decided to discontinue the original agreement the town had giving us an unlimited amount of water from the reservoirs. So we had to go to court, and I went into the legislature and personally talked to every single one of the legislators. I went in; I hung around the corridors and told everyone what Southborough wanted to do.

I worked with a lawyer from Choate Hall & Stewart. We did t some of our rights back—we didn't get everything we wanted, but we got water back. [Later Eleonora was also the first woman Town Clerk.]

### *Laverne Stewart Powers Ferris*

My husband was gone a good deal of the time. I was alone a lot. One day in Boston he ran into the head of the employment department at Stone and Webster Engineering and the man said, "We've been looking for you for five years, Tom."

Tom asked me what he should do. I said, "Well, I can live in a tent if you and the children are there. But down the road, you're not going to say to me, 'If you'd kept your mouth shut, I wouldn't have done it.' The decision has to be yours." He did go back to Stone and Webster.

## Southborough Memories

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I didn't go back to work until I went to a Girl Scout Committee meeting and some of St. Mark's masters' wives were rather uppity; one of them said to me, "Oh, my dear, you really should go and substitute there [in the public schools]—what they have is terrible." That did it. I went home; changed my clothes; and went up to see [school superintendent] Roger Poole, and said, "I'm here to apply for substitute." He told High School Principal Jim Higginson to put me on the list.

I subbed in the high school and taught second grade for a whole year at little Peters Annex, because the teacher was ill. I didn't have my teaching certificate so in [daughter] Becky's senior year in college, I went back to Framingham State.

I applied to sub in Sudbury and the very next morning got a call to sub and then I was offered a full-time job. I filled in for a principal for a while and also was what they called "transition teachers" working with children above and below grade level and doing a lot of testing.

I taught 14 years, three after my husband retired so our house would be paid for.

I suppose you know the vulgar expression—this is for thumbing, this is for pointing, and this is for you. This is one of the things you pick up from boys in school. Somebody said to me when I retired, "Oh, Laverne, you're going to miss it when you see the first bus in the fall." That fall, I went to the kitchen window and I saw the first school bus go by, and I said, "This is for you." I was delighted to be home with my husband.

### ***Sheila Maguire Wilson***

My mother used to work in the [Fayville] post office when it was in Wright's Store where Turnpike Liquors is now. She died in 1961 (In November of my senior year when I was 17). When I graduated I had my father and four brothers at home so, being the girl, I was the one who took care of the home front... I stayed home for five years. Then my brothers started marrying and finally there was only one left at home. Then I worked part-time at town hall for Mrs. Burke [Town Clerk] until 1962. She was always encouraging, asking me "What are you going to do? What are you going to do?"

I taught in Northborough—grade 2 and then stayed home for 18 years while we had kids. I got my master's in reading while I was teaching so then I did special ed reading. I retired in 2004 after teaching different grades, the last three years in middle school. [Like it? Very much.] I thought would be a big culture shock but I learned to enjoy it.

# Tornado Memories

**"Worst tornado ever" creates havoc, destroys home, leaves three dead.**

On June 9, 1953, the path of destruction by the strongest tornado ever in New England [at that time] came to an end in Fayville, after traveling through Worcester and neighboring towns, leaving devastation behind. Fifty years later a resident of Worcester remembered: "We thought the world was coming to an end." (From "June 9, 1953: Tornado Devastates Worcester, Mass. Historical Society, see [http://www.massmoments.org/print\\_moment.cfm?mid=170](http://www.massmoments.org/print_moment.cfm?mid=170)).

**TORNADO KILLS THREE IN FAYVILLE**

**FUNERAL FOR TWO VICTIMS OF TORNADO**  
 Requiem Mass For Mrs. Nuberini And Baby Frankie Marone

**Peaceful Town Is Stunned By Blow From Big Twister**  
 Post Office Scene Of Tragedy That Snuffs Lives Of Three And Wrecks Buildings; Over 20 Seriously Hurt  
 DAMAGE NOT YET ESTIMATED  
 Lack Of Proper Communications Makes Complete Reports Impossible; Cut 100-Foot Swath Through Center

**TORNADO DEAD**  
 Mr. Robert Belmont, 23, town road...

**PHS Graduation Is Postponed**  
 Southborough's PHS graduation...

While the storm covered less territory in Southborough, it still damaged everything in its 100-foot wide path, moving slightly from the southwest and then crossing Route 9 and moving through Fayville. Gloria Aspesi watched from across the street as the Fayville post office collapsed, killing the postmaster's wife. Alice Phillipo saw the front of her just-renovated house on Pleasant Street blow into an arch. Alice was among those who "lost everything" from her home (and was thankful for her insurance). "Impossible" was how it seemed to the Hamels whose barn on Boston Road had burned down just the day before. Eleonora Fantony Burke and her husband returned home after work to

learn that the house where their children were staying with her parents was right next to the imploded post office—and, then, after anxious moments, found they were unhurt.

At home on Cherry Street, Paul Berry heard the terrible noise and ran out to help. Jimmy Noberini, who lived in the house on the corner of Central and Turnpike, was already at the post office building trying to pull the top two floors off because he knew people were in there. Paul and neighbor George Boothby joined Noberini, and more and more people

## Southborough Memories

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came to dig through the rubble; but a small crane was needed to lift off the roof. Three people were dead—next door neighbor Irmgard Noberini and her infant son, and postmaster James Trioli's wife. Newspaper clippings announced the funerals for the three victims. Postmaster James Trioli was under all the rubble, too, and needed hospital care. He lived, though he died seven years later, likely of injuries received that day.

Looking around people could see a “banged up” Noberini house and that Ted's Garage (at corner of Oak Hill and Turnpike) was missing its roof, although the cement block building itself was still standing. The funnel then went down Pleasant Street and stopped after damaging the Phillip's house. On its course to Fayville, the tornado flattened



several other houses, including that of the Gordon Johnsons on Middle Road and the house of the Davis family at Davco Farm on Breakneck Hill Road, slightly south and west of Fayville. According to Boothby, Davis had tied himself to a tree to get pictures. [A number of people remember hearing this, but Davis has died and the story is still unconfirmed.]

“We were all inside,” said Alice Phillip. “I was in that corner there with my children—like a mother hen. I could hear what was coming; and I had to protect my kids, so I went in that corner. We came in from outside in the hallway. We were in the east corner of the kitchen, that's where we were. When we came out, my children were screaming. Things were falling down all around us, the windows were blowing in. The only room that was livable was there [on the north side of the house].”

## Southborough Memories

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"My cousin was living upstairs. The front of the house was blown out. I think they estimated it to be about two or three feet. Her bedroom was on the outside. Her bed was just on the edge of the room, where the house had separated. That was a nightmare!"

"We ran out with the children. We went around and saw the yard was full of debris from where the tornado had dropped everything and then went over. People couldn't get over it. We had a piano, and rocking chairs, and I'll never forget it—that walking around the next morning."

"We couldn't even sleep here that night." Her children went with various relatives for a week, some even a month. "We had to clean up enough so we could move back in. It's a good thing it was summer," said Alice.

One of the most remarkable stories about this disaster this is from Alice: About a week later her cousin working for the state was cleaning debris down by Newton-Wellesley Hospital and found some of Alice's pictures—"all my pictures and everything were gone," she said, but the cousin picked them up and brought them to her. "Look what I found!" he said—they were pictures of my kids. Amazing, really! He couldn't believe it. He said, "What is this?"

Money and raincoats from Ted's Garage and wedding invitations that had just been brought to the post office were retrieved in Framingham,

Alice's husband was on his way home from work in Framingham and heard the news. When he got to near the post office, she said, "he tried to come up the street and he couldn't so he kept screaming, 'gotta go home. My house, my house!'"

The Burkes, who lived right next to the post office, were on their way home. The children had spent the day with Eleonora's mother and father in Fayville. Eleonora also encountered a policeman who didn't want her to go up Route 9. "I said, 'Well, what's going on?' And he said, 'I don't know—they've had some trouble up near Fayville.' And he didn't tell me what it was." She knew the back roads and made her way to the Onthanks on Boston Road. "When I got there, Bill Onthank was out in the road. I said, 'What's the matter?' He said, 'I don't know, there's been a terrible something up in the Fayville section.' I thought: *Oh, my God, my children are there!*" Her husband had just come home so they got in the car but also ran into police who didn't want to let them through, and Philip said, "Well, my kids are down there" and they did get to Eleonora's mother's where "three-quarters of the post office was in my mother and father's yard. It took part of the corner of my mother's house, and everybody was safe from there... But for the grace of God, it could have been our house."

Eleonora learned that someone called the operator and said, "There's been a tornado, and you have to send help," but the operator said, "You gotta be kidding!"—"No, I am not."

As fate would have it, June 9 was to be graduation for the Peters High class of 1953. The tornado came through about 5:00; graduation was postponed until six days later. One of

## Southborough Memories

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the graduates, Gloria Aspesi, was in her house on Turnpike Road across from the post office when her family saw the roof across the street get picked up and blown onto Central Street. Her father went out to help.

George Boothby found Werner Noberini blown into the middle of the field. "All we heard were sirens for two days." Boothby remembered.

For Eleanor Onthank Hamel, June 8 and 9 "were just terrible--the day before the tornado, our barn [on Boston Road] had burned down, and we lost the barn and all the outbuildings up to the wall that goes into the dining room. All of that was gone...we had no animals, thank heavens! My dad had given them up earlier."

"That was a huge New England barn. That's where we had kept the cows" with a little milk room and pump house....."we were in a state of shock. The fire was caused by careless smoking."

"We had wonderful neighbors," said Eleanor, but "unfortunately, the Fire Department discovered the nearest hydrant didn't work." When her father realized that, he said they needed to get things out of the house. Eleanor remembers "people came from everywhere—all the neighbors—and this house was emptied in half an hour. Everything [was out] on the front lawn, but [at least] it was out [of] there." Reverend [Eugene] Gall at St. Mark's Church provided temporary storage space in their parish house so everything was moved a few miles to the center of town.

Eleanor remembers that "the minute the fire alarm rang, there would be a stream of cars following the engines to see where the fire was. It was basically a volunteer department back then. Poor John Bowen, Sr. That poor man, I thought he was going to have a heart attack that night. He was so upset over the fact that the hydrant didn't work."

"The firemen finally hooked up to a hydrant on Willow Street and brought a pumper filled with water. Luckily the wind was blowing the right way. If it had been blown in this direction," said Eleanor, "the house would have gone, too."

"So the next day, we were sitting on crates in the living room, because we didn't have any furniture. And we had one of these eerie thunderstorms. Everything got so black. The wind blew, it blew the trees, and they bent over and blew in a circle. Then we had hail. Then we had silence. And then, I heard this noise, and Fran [Eleanor's husband] said, 'This is a twister!' And I said, 'This is New England.' And he said, 'It's a twister!' You could hear it; it sounds like a train. That's what it sounds like."

"But God was good to us, and it went up over the hill in back of us. It blew down a chimney on Valley Road, but it did its worst work in Fayville, right up the street. We thought the world was coming to an end. You're just kind of overwhelmed."

For weeks newspapers were full of reports on the tornado, the damage, and recovery efforts. National Guard troops arrived. Possibly Governor Herter was planning a visit and maybe even President Eisenhower (though never confirmed).



## Southborough Memories

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But the attention became unwelcome. "People who came to see the results—they walked all over my father's property," said Eleonora. "They were strangers; they just walked in. I went out one day. The National Guard was patrolling because of the post office being there. I went out and said 'Listen. Will you keep these people off my mother and father's property; they are bothering us.' Finally, that's what they would do when people came to look. They would walk right up the steps in my mother's porch and walk across and go down back, walk through the garden—what was left of it. But at any rate, it was a very bad experience, and you know, it took my children a while, when they heard wind. They were young enough to be nervous. That was a bad experience."

## Police Pass Necessary To Enter Streets In Fayville Tornado Zone

Southboro—Unless you have been issued a white police pass, these issued only under the strictest rules of qualification, you will not be permitted to enter any streets leading to or within the disaster area of Fayville, Cordaville and Southville.

These passes are decidedly limited and for a most logical and sensible reason. The town authorities have ordered a near martial law condition in these sectors. They wish to keep out idle curiosity seekers, particularly autoists who impede the progress of clearance in the devastated area.

### Two Types of Passes

The local police, national guardsmen and state police have been ordered to permit nobody to pass into the devastated area unless he or she holds one of these white passes that are signed by Chief of Police Fred Sanction.

These passes are issued only to residents within the stricken area, to tradesmen who must enter to deliver necessities of life, to certain authorized Red Cross or relief workers and to the press. These passes are being issued from headquarters at the fire station in Southboro Center.

### Southboro Resident Passes

Every resident of Southboro who operates an automobile is, upon application, being issued a yellow "Southboro Resident" pass. This is to be displayed on the windshield of their cars and permits free passage of the resident any place within the town except the devastated and "off limits" area.

Southboro residents who do not hold the white police pass, in addition to the yellow pass,

will be barred from the restricted area.

Chief Sanction stated that autoists passing through on Route 9 or on Route 85 will find their way clear and unrestricted. However, they will not be permitted to turn off to the southward into the restricted area.

### Photos

Page 55: Newspapers were filled for weeks with news of disaster

Page 56: What was left of Johnson's Middle Road house

Page 59: National Guard called to protect post office

Page 60: Protecting properties from thoughtless sightseers

## *A Disappearing Breed: Volunteer Firefighters*

*Some families in the [fire] department go back three or four generations.*

*— James Colleary*

A good number of men whose families have been in Southborough for generations feel like John Boland and Jim Colleary do—essentially as if they “grew up” in the Fire Department and miss the days when people from all walks of life could get together as volunteers.

Before there was even a department, Paul Berry recalls, “if a fire came, they didn’t care if you were a firefighter or not.” Volunteers did have a little training. In summer periodically firemen would come down and set up a hose on a hydrant along Fayville’s Central Street “and see how long it took them to knock down a sign. That was their training.”

John Boland’s Uncle Thomas was the first water superintendent and took over the Fayville Fire and Water District which had been created in response to several serious fires in the village. John’s father was chief. “Somewhere around 1920” he had joined the department and “went up through the ranks to become chief—for 23 years, I think,” said his son. “My uncle was water superintendent, my father was deputy chief. And my sister, Mary Boland Guilford, was the town treasurer/collector. I was just following the crowd.” For years we had Bolands, Mauros, Ramellis, DeLardas, Rabenis, Sanchionis, and Brocks; and they’re still active.”

John was 14 when he started spending time at the station. “There were a bunch of us who hung out there—we weren’t old enough to go to a fire, but my father started a separate training with us.”

Essentially everybody had to be a volunteer and “it was the way to get with the guys. So sad that [it’s not that way anymore]; we all knew each other whether lawyer or whatever... it didn’t matter. Once you show up down at the station—it was really great socially.” John misses such camaraderie. “You don’t find that in other places.”

“It wasn’t uncommon for call firefighters to hang out at the station,” said Jim who served as a call firefighter and whose father was a call lieutenant. Both were special police officers, the elder Colleary serving when the chief was Frank Mattioli and the full-time sargeant was Henry Petrasiak. Later Jim’s brother, known throughout town as “Willy,” was the police chief.

Jim remembers when he was young he’d go to the fire station with his father. “They had a TV in the back room. I had a strong desire to be on the Fire Department.” In those days

## Southborough Memories

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“there was a strong connection,” said Jim, “but today we’re not getting that. In those days no one was paid a lot of money and it didn’t cost town a lot. It changed with full-time employees.”



It takes John Boland a while to explain just what it was like at home before there was an official Fire Department phone in the station so calls went to the chief's home. “You heard the radios and alarms and the fire telephone in our house.” Phone calls in the middle of the night went to the Boland house. John's mother, Mary Ellen, would get busy calling a list of numbers, sometimes with the help of a Marlboro operator. “Wherever the fire was my father would get going and my mother would get on the phone—and spread the word,” John said.

“Then all the time I was part-time Chief, I was a volunteer, not a paid job. We didn't have full-time firefighters until the huge fire at St. Mark's School in the early '60s. It was a massive fire in the whole wing of the school. “One of the youngsters there decided to

## Southborough Memories

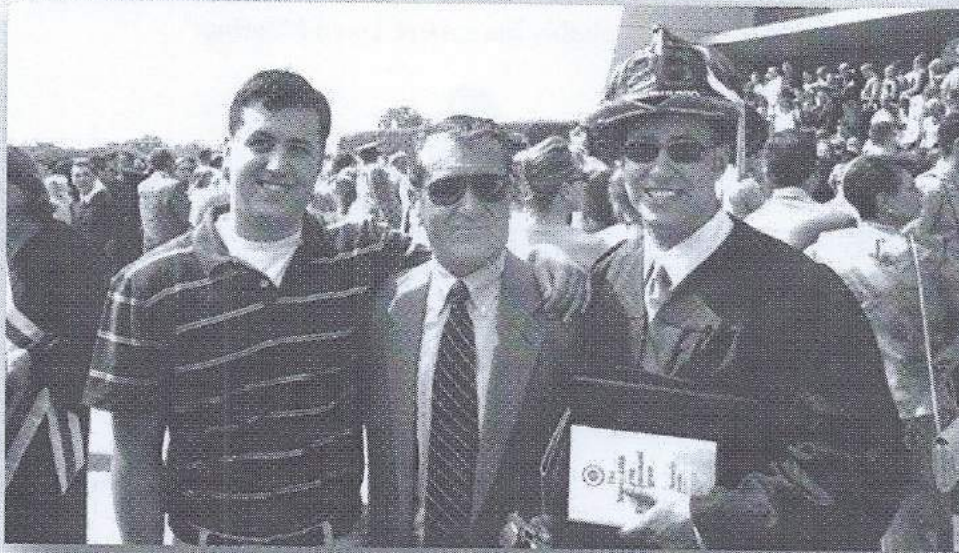
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destroy the place. Town Meeting was soon; Chief Eddie Brock had asked for one or two full-timers. It was a 'slam dunk'—probably his easiest Town Meeting!"



"The men of today are trained well but, on other hand, they're not living here and they don't have the connections. We grew up here—now for many it's just a place to go to work and there's a question of whether someone wants a full-time job but also want to move on," said Jim, noting "the police also have had some of that same moving on."

With Southborough's rising real estate prices one newer issue for both departments has been whether to require the chief to live in town or nearby—if nearby, how "near is near"? A 15-mile range has been suggested at a time when candidates for fire chief to replace retiring John Mauro were being sought. On the one hand, it seems important to have a chief to direct the firefighters; on the other, the firefighters are trained to do their work and have other officers trained to be able to direct them. The days of a phone answered by the chief or his wife in their home are clearly long gone!



### Photos

- Page 62: William Colleary, one of many in his family who have served as call firefighters and well as special police officers or, in the case of son William, as chief.
- Page 63: Firefighters attending to a fire at St. Mark's School.
- Page 64: Deputy Fire Chief John Boland and his sons celebrating Matthew's graduation from the Fire Academy in Stow.

## *Looking Back*

### *How different are the Southboroughs of yesterday and today?*

At the end of their interview, the participants were asked if they had any observations about the Southborough of their younger days and today. Not everyone offered comments; here's a sampling of those who did. It also offers a chance to hear former DPW Superintendent John Boland's observations about how it was to combine several departments into one under his leadership in the early 1980s.

*They had to do it themselves...no playgrounds or fields or  
someone who told you where or how to play, you did it yourself.  
And everybody took care of others.*  
— Paul Berry

#### **Lena Carloni**

I grew up in this town and I love it and it's the best place in the world. This is a great village and I had great time growing up here. I was shocked one morning when I woke up and found a double line down the middle of Newton Street. [That meant] it was no longer a village. The village feeling had gone. Every time I see that double line I'm not happy.

Street cars used to go by on Newton Street [going from White's Corner to Marlboro.] They were gone around 1929 and next was a little electric train. It was very fancy. [The train tracks were in the back of her house.] We'd get on it out here. [Two tracks then but] now it's a single track, like a trolley.

#### **Angie Pessini**

Years ago we had no electricity. We used to have this man—I forget his name—who would come light the street lights every night. Gas lamps. Every night. There were a lot of houses where the reservoir is. Some houses moved here. Some are on Cherry Street. Houses across the street.

Why tear down Woodward and build a new one? That's what makes you mad...and taxes go up.

#### **Ethel Nelson Armstrong**

When we moved to Flagg Road, the bare land where our house stood is now wooded and other houses are hardly visible. Strawberry Hill Road was not there or the road across the street (Flagg Road). The 4.86 acres we bought now has people eager to buy some of it for house lots.

## Southborough Memories

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### **Dr. Timothy Stone**

There were fewer than 2,000 people in town when I came. [Now nearly 10,000] It's amazing. At that time the Board of Health [of which he was a long-time elected member] met at the Borst house on Turnpike Road. Mrs. Borst always made a nice Danish pastry! We met for a while at Ruth Goodnow's house on Fisher Road. The filing case was in the grand piano.

How the board has changed. How the town hall has changed. We had a little fragment of the first floor [for office space]. Oh gosh, I remember Town Meetings on the second floor. People came with their knitting. [Town Counsel] Al Howes would be summonsed to rule on some legal question.

I remember going up there to an auction and I saw basketball there. Phil Burke was the referee. There was a "peanut gallery" on the third floor for the non-voting people at Town Meeting. How that has changed.

After the war I came back to the U.S. in 1946 and spent a year at Framingham Union Hospital, getting back into the swing of things medically after service in army when all you saw was healthy men and healthy men's injuries and deaths. I was getting my feet wet after the war.

I wanted to live in a small town and be a G.P. and scouted around areas in eastern Massachusetts and chose Southborough because it is proximate to Framingham, it didn't have a resident doctor per se, and I liked the idea of the schools here. I like a community where schools [*private schools*] lend something to a town. Groton, Concord, Andover...have private schools and colleges. The aura is better so Southborough was attractive to me that way.

I want to say right off the bat I disqualify myself from contributing to history of Southborough; I learned early on if you're not born here, you were an outlander [*but you've been here for 60 years!*].

It was quite different then but I disqualify myself for talking about how Southborough was!

### **Paul Berry** [*grew up on Cherry Street in Fayville where he still lives*]

Everybody—whatever they had, they had to do themselves...no playgrounds or fields or someone who told you where or how to play, you did it yourself. And everybody took care of others. Older took care of the younger. Things were a lot different. Kids are pampered today. In the summertime 10-11 year olds would work on a farm.



## Southborough Memories

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### *Sue Allen*

I'm not discouraged about Southborough. You care because you would always care but you know in your heart that nothing is going to stay the same, just not going to—have to let it go and move on. I see how kids have to grow up on acre lots and don't have any work to do and maybe they contribute something to family, doing dishes, empty garbage, don't know.

For us there was never a dull moment, and we had plenty to do—that we had to do—no TV until sixth grade. Just out playing on our own. I had to go down to Woodward School in the afternoon to get the garbage for the pigs. They'd save it for us...every afternoon. It was a different way of life and you can't talk to these [new] people about it because they don't understand it.

Still, I'm glad I live here. Peaceful enough town. A lot of changes rankle me sometimes but nothing we can do about it...

A friend lives in Marlboro with her sons—they were talking about hamburger and appalled to be told it came from cows. The way of life is entirely different. Would kids know what a silo was? Maybe for missiles but?? Silage—we had to take forks and go up [to the open top where silage is blown in] to keep it spread out.

### *Yolanda Bertonazzi Connors*

Southborough is changing. I used to know everybody in town, and now people live up the street and I don't even know them.

Today...I think they'll step over you to get where they want to go.

Why tear down Woodward School and build a new one? That's what makes you mad...and taxes go up.

I'm glad I live here. Peaceful enough town. Lot of changes, rankle me sometimes but nothing we can do about it.

What I miss is the Firefighters Field Day...that was the nicest thing...everything free...we'd all donate. That was wonderful and knew everybody there. You just stayed there and enjoyed yourself. Now we have Heritage Day with people selling things. Honestly, it's changed completely. One of things I miss the most. Would love to be bringing my grandchildren there.

The Republicans and Democrats used to have dinners. We'd have porkettas....singing and dancing...way way back when I was just a kid. I used to think it looked like somebody dropped a piece of meat in gravel.

## Southborough Memories

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I miss White's Corner—there's no place in town to go. We go to Carbone's [in Hopkinton].

### **Jim Colleary**

Did anybody bring up the Firefighters' Field Day? I ran it one year. Maureen's father [his father-in-law George Boothby] used to make the greased pole. It started after the war. In the late 50s and early 60s we had an official fire association to run it; it was never run by the town. It had to be cancelled the summer after the '53 tornado. We used to go door-to-door to raise money—all of it went into hamburgers, hot dogs, ferris wheel, pony rides. We had a decorated doll carriage contest.

### **John Boland** *(the first Superintendent of Department of Public Works now retired)*

The differences come because of the number of people, because of people not knowing even some of their neighbors or much about the community but they assume they know how the town government functions without doing any homework. There are people who have no clue what government is all about. Business is a business, and government is government—they're apples and oranges. You can't apply the same rules.

I also see differences with children and young people who seem to have everything and time that is scheduled. We miss community events—like Firefighters Field Day and gathering points to get together informally like the restaurants that are now gone (among them, White's Corner, Eddie Curran's, the Andrea.)

### ***Please reflect on the reorganization in the early 1980s which combined the water, cemetery, highway, and tree departments into the DPW.***

My greatest satisfaction overall was the reorganization—it did a lot of good. We managed to stay with the workforce intact; everybody stayed with it, maybe mumbled a bit but they came along. They'd check hydrants even if they thought it wasn't their job.

I'd say, "Sorry, but everybody plows snow." That didn't go over but they all showed up every single time. They didn't like it but that's the way it was. It all worked out.

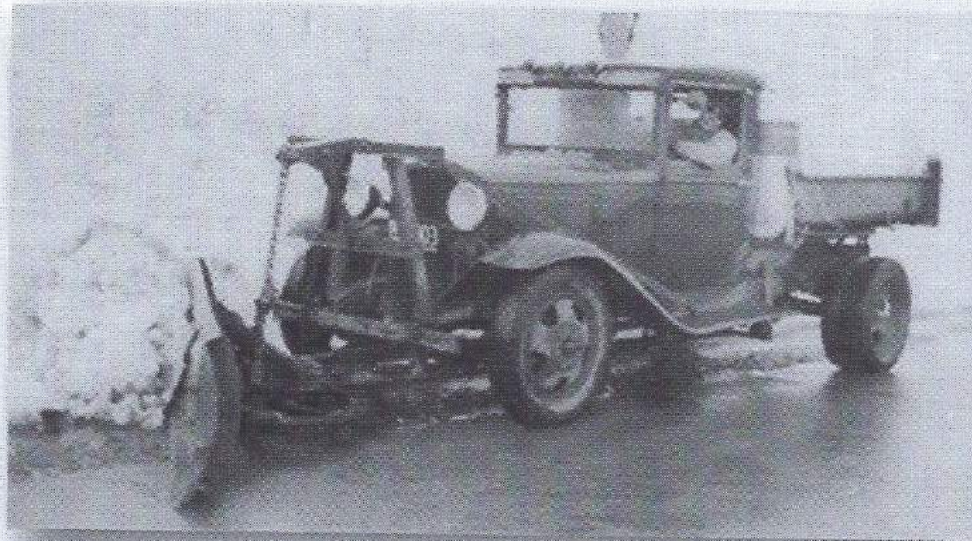
In the end, the good far outweighs the bad. When I went there in 1972, there was no money. Prior to that even less money. Nobody wanted to spend a dime on the highway department, and the water department said they had no money. The highway garage on Cordaville Road was only three to four years old and it was, like, half-finished. No yard. A gravel mess. Looked like an outstructure on a farm. It was full to the rafters on the first day. That was tough. But that's what they could get at the time. At least we had a roof over our heads that didn't leak. The equipment was atrocious. I had to send people out in vehicles that should have been off the road. [The changes there have been substantial.]

## Southborough Memories

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### *What was hardest thing about being in charge of DPW?*

The toughest is the people who wouldn't be satisfied no matter what. That's the hardest. Not enough of whatever...really irritated me were people who would take a negative view—for whatever reason without knowing anything about the issue, not just public works but also what happens to everybody in town. How do you deal with that? Try to educate everybody but somebody like that who doesn't want to hear it? They say the same things over and over. Can say it about the town in general. I think of the worst snow when Callie Mauro in his 70s was still plowing snow all night



long—he'd show up every day, still chugging along (but some people were never satisfied).

### *Rita Bertonassi*

The kids today! There's so much out there now—everything is thrown at them. Our parents worked hard. If those women [of the past] were born in today's world, they would be just like women today. They worked hard. They knew how to save when they had nothing. There was a sense of community too.

We had lots of families and relatives around. It's strange because some close friends I have now have no families or an only child. Every one of my sisters is a great-grandmother. We do get together the week before Easter. Invitations come every year. Used to be at Community House but now too many people so then we went to St. Anne's Hall. [How many people?]. Last time almost 200. And that's not everybody. Maybe 150 but...It's a good time. Of course, the food—everybody brings. Kids have a good time.

## Southborough Memories

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### **Lee Cummings**

*One relative newcomer was eager to say how happy he was to have found Southborough for home. He praised the police and fire departments and went on:*

When people complain about all these taxes, are you getting your money's worth? Absolutely. I can't understand why the word *taxes* has become so horrible for people. I just thank the Lord that I can pay them. In spite of waste and all, we still get a lot for our money. (People who think about it know that.) It all evens out. It didn't used to be that bad. And now the rather well-to-do get a good tax break. You'd think that giving it back wouldn't be so terrible!

### **Photo**

Page 69 We're only kidding. The equipment in John Boland's DPW was in somewhat better shape than this plow.

Donna L. McDaniel has "only" lived in Southborough for 40 years. During those years she has been a reporter for the then-*Middlesex News*, covering all town activities for six years; the first woman selectman for one term (she did not run again); and, for the last 25 years, been attuned to events in town to keep up with her biweekly column in the *Northborough-Southborough Villager*.



She is co-author of *Fit for Freedom, Not for Friendship: Quakers, African Americans, and the Myth of Racial Justice*, published in 2009 (after seven years of research and writing). A graduate of Tufts University with a M.Ed. from Boston

University, she also taught and was a guidance counselor in U.S. Dept. of Defense schools overseas for six years. She likes best doing research and writing history.

Her two sons, David and Evan, grew up in Southborough (perhaps best-remembered as stars by other soccer parents?). Her seven grandchildren range in age from 21 to 2.

Photo: Giving a talk about this book at the Senior Center. Photo courtesy of Susan Fitzgerald of the "My Southborough" blog.