

Reginald Barney's story of his life growing up in Canaan, in his own words:

(Reggie initially gave his oral presentation to students at the Cardigan School. They were thrilled to hear about life in 'the old days'.)

"I was born in 1927 and lived on a small dairy farm on a side hill under Mr. Cardigan overlooking the town of Canaan. We had 20 milking cows, 15 head of young stock, 3 horses, a pair of oxen, a pair of steers, 2 pigs, 50 hens and a large bull with a ring in its nose.

My first eight years of schooling were held in a one-room schoolhouse with attached wood shed and outhouse. There was no running water at the sink; we had to go up to a small spring above the school and bring water back in a pail. The teacher taught all eight grades by herself although those in the 6, 7, and 8th grades would help her with the lower grades. The teacher opened the class day by heading a portion from the Holy Bible, then the Lord's Prayer and of course, Flag Salute.

As a youngster I remember riding down to the Canaan Railroad Depot in an old truck to pick up a load of grain for the cows, horses, and chickens. The grain would come in 100 lb sacks and we would have to get a load every two weeks. There would usually be several other farmers lined up at the boxcar door waiting their turn so I had plenty of time to explore the station area and freight yard, and take on the sight and sounds of train activity. I was intrigued by the huge steam engines and thrilled when the engineer would holler down a greeting to me. There would usually be some sort of train activity going on, such as a steam engine taking on water by the huge water tank, of which the cement foundation can still be seen at Depot Park. Or a pusher engine coming backwards from Orange Summit and turning around on the Wye before returning to West Lebanon, or a way freight unloading supplies at the freight house, or a passenger train stopping to discharge and take on passengers, or an express train roaring thru town.

Back on the farm, by the time I was 14 my days consisted of work and school with little time to play. A typical day would start at 4:30 a.m., cleaning the stable gutters and putting down fresh bedding, milking the 20 milk cows, straining the milk, bottling the milk and cooling the milk. Breakfast was at 6:30; 7:00 a.m. we would load up the milk truck with crates of quart glass bottles, pint glass bottles, and ½-pint glass bottles of cream. At 7:15 we would leave for the milk route pedaling milk door to door in Orange along Rte 4, Canaan Village, Canaan Street, and Canaan Center. By 8:00 a.m. we would have most of Canaan Village done, then I would go to Canaan High School from 8 a.m. 'til 3 p.m. By the time I was 15, Orange's one room school was closed and the students were sent to the Canaan grammar schools next to CHS. My folks paid the bus driver to take me home. As soon as I got home I changed my clothes and went to the barn for the evening chores. IN the evening, 40 quarts of milk was taken down cellar in the main farmhouse, to be run through a separator. One spout of skim milk would come out, which was fed to the pigs and hogs. The other spout of crème came out. The crème was sold in ½ pink glass bottles and what was not sold was saved for churning. Usually once a week this

cream was put in a churn and paddled around until it made chunks of butter. The chunks of butter were made into round balls, salted down, and stored on large shelves in the pantry.

The 1930's were tough years economically; many were out of work and many families were very, very poor. I remember one family in particular had 4 children who boarded our school bus for the one room school in Orange. Even though it was below zero, freezing cold, they would be poorly clothed; the soles of their shoes would be coming part and held on by rubbers. All they had in their lunch bags was a hard black biscuit. My heart went out to them and the teacher and I and a few others would share from our lunch boxes with them.

Living on a farm had many advantages. We were practically self-sufficient. We had all the milk, cream, butter, and eggs that we needed. We had beef cows and steers that could be slaughtered for beef, and pigs for pork. We had huge gardens in the summer and the women folk were kept busy canning greens, corn, peas, and beans. We had high bush blueberries, a bed of strawberries, currants, apples, cider and plenty of wild raspberries and blackberries. We usually harvested 75 bushels of potatoes each year. Potatoes were the main diet of the day, morning, noon, and night. Either fried, boiled or baked and sometimes scalloped.

The main staples we had to go to the store for were flour, sugar, and spices. Oranges, peaches, grapefruit and pineapples came in crates or bushel baskets and usually came by railroad express.

On the farm, the year was divided by the four seasons, spring, summer, fall, and winter.

Spring started around the middle of March. We had 500 maple trees that we tapped, hung buckets and covers on. Maple sugaring season it was called. Sugar roads had to be broken out by either horse teams or oxen. If the snow was especially deep we would use oxen with a slip yoke. The sap was gathered by large buckets and emptied and drained into a large three-barrel container mounted on a drag or sled. The sap in the 3 barrel vat was unloaded at the sugar house into a large 6 barrel holding tank where it ran into an evaporator and boiled until it changed to syrup."

The Summer Season was known for haying, called the 'hayin season'. As a boy, we started out with horses and a mowing machine: John Deere was the name of the machine. I remember sitting, was learning to mow when I was probably 10 years old; I had to sit on the lap of a man that worked for my dad; he taught me how to use my foot to raise the cutter bar and to hold the reins of the horses at the same time, and we did the raking with a one-horse rake, and after it was raked, we would pile it up into piles – heaps of piles, and then we had a hay wagon with horses or oxen - that would come down the field, with piles on each side, and a man on one side, and a man on the other side would pitchfork the piles of hay into the hay wagon and bring it to the barn to be stored.

It was a storage barn with a huge hay loft that came down from the beams and went into the piles of hay on the hay rack, and it would lift the hay up, and then on a track, would jump down

to the loft on either side, and would jump or pull a rope that would lead and followed the hay loft.

After the horse and buggy days were over with, we got our first tractor, I think 1946, and we did our mowing with the tractor and then we raked it with the tractor, and then we had a hay loader, we raked the hay into windrows and rows, and we hitched the hay loader behind the truck and it would bring the hay up a ramp and dump onto the body of the hay ramp, and after that we bought a hay baler, and baled the hay into square bales; we never did have those large round ones that they have today; we all had the small square bales.

So that was a summer job...

In the Fall, it was harvesting the crops; cutting the corn; we planted 3-5 acres of corn; every stalk had to be cut by hand – with a sickle, and it was a back aching job, and it took us the month of September usually to cut those acres by hand and to bring it to the silo, and have it chopped and set up into the silo.

Wintertime was woodcutting time, and after delivering the milk downtown to the customers, we would go to the woods and work until noon, and after the noon meal, we would go back to the woods and work until 3:00 because we had to start chores and feed the cows a little after 3:00. We used to have to cut about 30 cords of wood by hand using a cross-cut saw, it was the days before the chain saw and it took all winter time to do that, and we used a lot of wood of course to make maple syrup and, all the heat for the farm house and the other house was all wood stoves.

Reggie's father developed Rheumatic Fever when he was around 45-50, "and that's why I had to take over to do most of the work. I didn't have time to go to college, and I couldn't even play sports in High School; I was tied right down. I had to sell the farm in 1969; we couldn't make a living anymore on a small farm....luckily in High School, I took the Commercial Course - bookkeeping and typing, and that part came easy for me and I bought out the insurance business."

Ann Wadsworth: "So that's why you are the Treasurer of every organization in Town"

[Both laughing]