

[Botsford]

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Conn. 1938-9 [Botsford?]

“If it was a good day,” says Mr. Botsford, looking out his kitchen window at the driving rain, “I’d take you up to Northfield in the car and point out a lot of interestin’ places that I know about.

“I used to go up to Northfield quite a bit, and I knew a lot of people up there. Went up to Sam Hume’s one Fourth of July morning’, me and another feller. Sam had a barn with an ell part, stook on the highest hill around here. I had my telescope and we’s lookin’ all around.

“You could see Dayton row, up in Plymouth, just as plain. A feller come out of his house that worked in the shop with me and started feedin’ his chickens. Next day I told him about it, told him how many chickens he had. I don’t know what we’s doin’ up there so early in the mornin’. Out all night I s’pose.

“Northfield’s got a lot of interestin’ history. Kel Humaston told me that his father—and he come from the oldest family up there—his father said that there’d never been any trout in Northfield brook. Only it ain’t Northfield brook, by the way, it’s Humaston brook. Named after the Humaston family, but nobody remembers it these days. There used to be trout in every other brook around here. Down’t the Moosehorn, and up to Lead Mine, and I’ve even seen them in a little brook that used to run down the hill by the rolling mill, and in that one that goes through the center of town, underneath the road—Twitch Grass brook, they call it— but nary a 2 trout in Northfield. How do you explain that? You know what I’d like to have done? I’d like to have a chemical analysis made of the water. The Knife Shop? Why

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there wasn't any trout in the brook as far back as people can remember. Knife shop didn't have nothin' to do with it.

Kel Humaston knew what he was talkin' about; he come from the oldest family around. He never god married until he was quite far on in years, Kel didn't. Then he married a childhood sweetheart. She'd been married, and her husband had died. She wasn't very young when Kel married her either, but she was a plump, good lookin' woman, carried her age well. She got killed comin' down Hickory Hill in a buggy. Horse ran away and throwed her out.

“Old More Humaston had that place up beyond where Nelson lives now. I think he was Kel's uncle. Had the biggest grapevine in the state of Connecticut, people used to come from all over to see it.

“Ever notice the Soldier's Monument in Northfield? It's got the same names on it as the one in Plymouth. Some was claimed by Plymouth and some was claimed by Litchfield, so they put the same names of 'em both. Up past the monument on that road to Litchfield way up on the hill there used to be a church I think it burned down.

“Abe Turner used to keep his hobby horses in there. He had the first merry-go-round I ever see—first one around here. He used to take it all over to the fairs and carnivals, 3 and store it in the old church in the winter.

“It was built like a clothes reel—or like an umbrelly. Had a big center pole and rods hangin' down off'n it with the horses on 'em. It run by a gear and it had to be cranked, and Turner had an hour glass with sand that would run just five minutes, to time the rides. You rode five minutes for ten cents.

“He had two men crankin' it, Abe did. I remember one time at Harwinton Fair he had a couple big buck niggers with red flannel shirts crankin' it. I see him go by here many a time

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with his outfit. Horses was each packed in a box—kind of three cornered boxes on account of the heads, and the poles and the guy ropes and all.

“The Turners were prominent Northfield people.

“Abe used to sell popcorn cakes at the fairs, too. And oyster stews. Boy, his oyster stews were good. He'd take two of three big Boston crackers and break 'em up in the stew. Them crackers were two inches thick. Twenty five cents for a stew— he had a tent he used to serve 'em in—and they certainly were find.

“The Turners were related to the Filleys. You remember old man Filley, his daughter married Newton the plumber? One of them Filleys got killed in the army, and another went to New Haven, and got to be the best photographer down there. Myron Filley, his name was.

“Then there was old Ben Smith, up in Northfield, Uncle Ev's brother. I'll tell you a story about Ben. He had a ram, a vicious, bad tempered beast, and that ram butted his wife so bad 4 she died. Old Ben was goin' to kill him, but he thought up a good way to do it.

“‘I'll fix that son of a bee,’” he said: “I'll learn him to butt people.’ So he fixed up a crowbar out in the field, and put a cap onto it, and waved it around so's to attract that ram's attention. And it ran straight at that cap; and split its head wide open on the crowbar.

“Some of them rams are bad. I can remember when they used to keep 'em in the old sheep barn. Some of the Scotchman here in town used to shear 'em. Ever see 'em shear sheep? The Scotchmen were good at it. Get 'em down and hold 'em just the right away, and have that wool off before they knew it.

“Old Daddy Andrews up in Northfield used to have a great flock of them, too. He had a son named Bubby, a dudish kind of a feller. Used to work down to Miller and Peck's in Waterbury, and all the women used to like to have him wait on them. He was so nice

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and polite and kind of gentlemanly. Well, sir, old Daddy Andrews died, and Bubby went back up the farm and he got to be a regular farmer. Forgot all about his nice clothes and everything, and went around in an old pair of overalls and needin' a haircut and shave half the time.

“You see Mrs. Andrews last week you say? Well, that must have been Bubby's wife. I didn't know he was dead.”