

**MARY LOIS HART
(MARY HART PLETSCH)**

by

Mary H. and Erich C. Pletsch

Dedicated to her sons:

Carl E. Pletsch

Peter G. Pletsch

PART 1

**Written at different times
in the form of several memorandums
by
Mary Lois Hart Pletsch
and set in sequence by Erich C. Pletsch**

Born in Roxbury, Massachusetts, on the 22nd of January 1908, I was the third daughter of my parents, George Albert Hart and Bessie Matthews Wilson Hart of Essex, Massachusetts. I was the fourth and last child of their family. They had had a first child, Robert Manning Hart, who died at the age of three months. My two sisters, Grace and Dorothy, were so much older than I - eight and ten years older - that I was brought up in some respects as an only child. We lived in Essex, Massachusetts, and strangely enough I was the only child born in a hospital.

My mother always told me that I was the only child of hers who was born in a hospital - the other children all having been delivered by a midwife at home. However, it was thought that it would be better if I were born in a hospital, especially since the last midwife had used, according to my mother, a rusty old spoon as an instrument at the last delivery. This is how I came to be born in Roxbury instead of Essex. Mother was fond of telling me that as he was being rolled down the corridor to the delivery room, the nurse in charge commented that the baby's life would be "a bed of roses." The whole corridor was full of these flowers as it was the custom at that time to remove them from the patients' rooms at night so that the fragrance would not be overpowering.

And truly, compared to the lives of most people that I know, my life has been a bed of roses - with everything anyone could ask for in this life. I won't say I have always found everything easy, but that was usually because I made my own pathway hard. I have a wonderful husband, two wonderful sons and one true and honest religion. What more could anyone ask? Also, I have a wonderful heritage from my ancestors who were

responsible, righteous people and dedicated to the cause of freedom. This heritage I can pass on to my children and my children's children. I am grateful for that.

My sister, Dorothy, told me a funny story about me: Her birthday is on the 15th of January and our mother and father had promised her that I would be her birthday present. Well, I did not get here in time for her day. I was one whole week late. She must have thought that was forever, as she was only eight years old herself. Worst of all she expected me to be a black baby. Every time dad came home from the hospital he told about a little black child (by another mother) and how cute and dear it was. So she had thought I would be black - and when she saw little white me, she was simply furious. One week late and white at that.

She was ashamed of me, too, because I did not have much hair. I remember mother telling about wheeling me about in the carriage when she met a friend who looked at me. There sister Dorothy apologized: "We bought the hair that goes with this child, but it did not come yet."

I was brought up in the small town of Essex, almost as an only child, for my two sisters were eight and ten years older than I, and were away at high school, in Gloucester, Massachusetts or at college for most of the time that I can remember. I was too young to participate in many of their activities, and my main ambition was to be grown up so that I could go on long walks with them into the woods and fields, and to wear fancy dresses and to go to dances and parties as they were doing.

I was a lonely child. I remember sitting on the floor in our "best room" tracing the pattern of the rug with my finger and waiting for my sisters to come home from school. They had to travel a long distance on the trolley cars to attend high school in Gloucester since the local

institution did not offer subjects, which would be required for college entrance. They would be gone from home nearly all day. I was not allowed to have many young people come to my house to play with me. My sisters had had friends, the children of the old established Essex townspeople. However, the children of my age were of a different generation, you might say, and certainly of a different ancestry. Children my age came from what was known as “Kanuck” families. They were French Canadians from Nova Scotia who had come to Essex, I suppose, to work as laborers in the shipyards as builders of boats for which Essex was famous. My mother did not consider these children as fit companions for me. I remember so well feeling lonely and ill-used when I saw these young people having a good time playing ball, et cetera, in the streets, and I was not allowed to join them as they were “rowdies”. I suppose it may have been just as well that I did not get into some of the habits these children had - but it was a lonely time just the same.

I was not even allowed to have any schoolmates come to play, as they were French Canadian families whose fathers worked in the shipyards and were not “of our class.” Oh dear - it seemed to me that they had a lovely time. When we drove “uptown” in the Democrat, I saw groups of them playing in the street, laughing and shouting.

A little girl did come home to play with me once. Her name was Alice Coffill. I don’t remember that I liked her especially. Probably she just tagged along home with me. We played in my sandbox. I had a new set of molds - one was an apple, one a pear, one a lemon, orange, etc. The colors of these fruit forms were gorgeous. One could fill them with wet sand and turn out dozens of sand cakes on the sideboards of the sand box. As we

played I could feel the stern and disapproving eye of my mother watching from the dining room window.

As I remember it, Mother soon sent her home, admonishing me against further such adventures. Sure enough, one of the molds was missing. Mother insisted that the visitor had stolen it - and also, horrors, that her hair was full of L I C E !

Upon hearing this ghastly tale at the dinner table that night, my sister Dorothy coined the funny phrase "Alice Coffill - 'aint she awfill," from awful. She applied it, it seemed to me, as a summation of other disasters thereafter.

I did have a summer friend, the daughter of one of the national congressmen. I was allowed to play with her. She spent the winters in Washington, DC, of course, and was probably in the same boat I was friend wise - her own mother had died. The father had remarried and promptly twins arrived. This kept that mother too busy to be a companion to a bereft little girl. Even though the second wife was a truly lovely person - in looks and disposition - as far as I could see. But how she had married that grotesque, red-faced, pot-bellied, cigar-smoking creature is a great mystery to me. He gave me my first view of a politician and it as a horrendous one. He was a caricature of the influence peddling, liquor swilling ---- ugh! How could he have been elected?

Grandchildren of neighbors who came in the summer for a few days to visit their grandparents at the end of the street were welcome for the short time they were around.

As for my grandparents, I remember going to be with them on a Sunday and having to sit on the living room floor - not allowed to speak.

Children were to be seen, not heard! This was a novel experience for me. But I was glad my parents had never thought of it.

When I was a little girl, we lived in this small town of Essex, Massachusetts, as you know. It was a peaceful place, a little town on the Essex River, not far from the famous old port of Gloucester. Everybody knew everybody else in Essex and everybody else's business. I remember when we got our telephone. (I think I remember it.) If someone called you and you didn't answer, the telephone operator usually knew where you had gone and when you would return, and she would relate this information to the person who had phoned you.

We lived in the last house at the end of a dead end street. Besides the house, there were two storage buildings that my father used in his provision business and a small barn which housed a horse and a carriage, called a Democrat. Later it was used as a garage, although garden tools and odds and ends could be found there also. All these structures were connected to the house by a porch-like covered walkway.

The street was called Spring Street because, at the corner, there was a clear spring of water where townspeople came with jugs and pails to get drinking water. There was no "town water" yet and pump water was usually hard, had a rusty taste, and wasn't safe to drink anyway. It was cool by the spring - cool and wet - and willow-shaded. The door to it was slanted, like a bulkhead door, and screened so that leaves and debris would not sully the water. When you opened the door, you would always hear "splash, splash" as one frog after another jumped off the brick ledge into the water.

Then there was the trip home with the cool pail bumping your leg, and occasional splashes of water drenching your hot skin. We made

lemonade with it and strawberry-aide (with crushed wild berries, sweeter than sugar, with the tang of hot sun in them). In the winter we went for water only on special occasions when there was City Company who might expect it on the table. Thanksgiving and Christmas we went to the spring for water. Otherwise we drank cocoa or tea or coffee, all made with boiled water from the well, pump water. I guess I never liked plain water, and I still don't. Maybe it was because of those frogs!

To get to town was a long way by the road. But we had a short cut. We called it "going across the fields."

In front of our house was a large field that had a small hill in it. It was an apple orchard and hay field combined and it opened directly into our lane. Once when I was on my way to the store with 50 cents for groceries in my pocket, I jumped over a haycock that happened to be near the path. The 50 cents leaped out of my pocket, and I found out what "looking for a needle in a hay stack" might be like. I never found that 50 cents. Maybe the funny man who came and went "across the fields" found it. He never looked neither left nor right - nor even up. He always walked a little bent with his gaze cast upon the ground. Perhaps he found it, but I cannot imagine that he would pick it up. He lives on in my memory, a stooped figure, coming and going impersonally, remote, concentrating upon the ground beneath his feet, yet oblivious of it. I never heard him utter one word to anyone. His name was Bouchie, one of the Bouchie "tribe," a large family who came, as my mother said, from Nova Scotia. I knew, somehow, that she did not approve of these "Kanucks."

Oh well. But we were going "across the fields" to get "uptown," were we not? After you went through the first field and around the other side of the little "hill," you came to a wall. Here the well-worn path crossed

the wall via large, flat stones, one or two on each side, at a break in the wall. Here poison ivy was rampant, and one made oneself thin and sparse in order to avoid contact with its leaves. One had been warned sufficiently and so one was wary. On the other side of the wall it was dark and close with bushes, but the path kept on down a little incline to a more open and flat place where there were thickets of tiger lilies and here I held my breath for fear of seeing a slippery snake. It was a little marshy, for the creek ran on the side to the right, under the high road which the path soon joined at the bottom of "Cap'n Sam's Hill."

I don't know who Cap'n Sam was; maybe he was a Burnham (a well-regarded Essex family with several branches). But his hill was a source of joy and delight all during the wintry weather, when I put on my bloomers inherited from my sisters who had worn them for gym classes at Gloucester High School. (Those lovely dark blue, woolen serge balloons that did not wet through and kept you snug and warm.) And sled-rope in hand, I went across the fields to slide after school. I had inherited a wonderful Flexible Flyer from my sisters, and it was the fastest thing on the hill so I was popular there. Billie Bouchie was my friend and champion then. He started belly-bumps and I rode on my knees behind. The wind of our screaming descent blinded my eyes with wintry "tears."

On the other side of the road, at the base of Cap'n Sam's Hill, was the shipyard where wooden ships were built. It belonged to Arthur Dana Storey at that time. This was a wonderful and fascinated place. Long planks were piled high and where one protruded beyond his fellows, it became a springboard where we could bounce up and down endlessly.

From our house we could always hear the pounding and hammering as a boat was under construction. These were fishing boats that would,

when completed, be launched into the Essex River and then go down to Gloucester to have the masts steeped and the rigging put on. A launching was always attended by many townspeople.

These occasional, sometimes seasonal, diversions did not compensate for being much alone at home. But eventually I had to go to school. Not Kindergarten, mind you, but first grade to learn the “Three R’s”, and learn to read I did. This cut down on my lonesome times at least some, only to feel even more deserted, however, the rest of the day until my sisters came home. I recall that my sister, Dorothy, helped a lot. Although she was almost a constant tease, she was good company when she wanted to be, which was most of the time. Sister Grace also helped to brighten my afternoons and evenings.

I came across a picture post card showing the little old “Grand Army of the Republic” - GAR - building in Essex. This building now is called the Stephen H. Meuse American Legion Post 231. The sight of it brought back a particularly funny memory of my childhood. It was not funny then, but it is now.

Perhaps I should tell, first, about our schoolhouse. It was set on a knob of ground above Winthrop Street. I remember most unattractive, square, two-storied building painted a hideous green. All vegetation had been worn from the surrounding territory on the knob by perhaps years of scampering feet. I just heard on TV. that they are going to attempt to teach the 3 R’s in school as in the days gone by, but also teach young people decision making. I wonder how I would have rated here.

Inside there were two rooms on the first floor. In one room, grades one to four were taught, and in the other, grades five to eight. And, you guessed it; the high school occupied the second story. The teachers must

really have had a job of it. I don't remember any of them very well, except a Miss Gately who taught French and Latin I and II in high school. She had buckteeth and did most of the translating herself. Vaguely I remember a Mr. Dutemple, a young man overcome with the gravity of his position. He was rather Prussian when it came to dealing with the senior boys. I expect they were a handful. He did not dare to relax for a moment with them. Oh yes, I remember a very attractive, black-haired, enthusiastic young lady who taught mathematics, but whose name I forgot.

One of the few things I vividly remember was the ordeal of the grammar school spelling bee. I could never spell for sour apples and when it came to choosing up sides, I was the leftover that belonged to the team unlucky enough to get last choice. It was most embarrassing, but I do not remember that anyone ever teased me about it.

Every week there was a new motto carefully and beautifully written by the teacher in the Palmer method at the top of the blackboard on the left wall, and every morning after the pledge to the flag, we turned right and recited that motto in unison. I remember one: "Honesty is the best policy." There were others, many others.

Well, on one particular day when I was attending grammar school, I was firmly instructed by my mother that I was to come home from school immediately the minute we were dismissed. No Lally gagging along the way, just hurry right home. I don't remember why this was so imperative, but I knew that she meant it. Unfortunately, I committed some minor crime in school that afternoon, whispering to my neighbor probably, and the teacher caught me in the act as the teacher turned from writing on the blackboard.

At any rate, I was told to "stay after."

Horrors! In my short life I had never envisioned such a dilemma: two commands in direct opposition to each other and both firmly commanded by ladies in authority who were not to be disobeyed without dire consequences. I suppose I was pretty well indoctrinated with the idea that one obeyed above all one's mother. So, in the confusion after the last bell rang, I slipped out and ran for home. As I ran, however, I bethought me of the morrow and hesitated. Perhaps I should have stayed.

Behind the Grand Army of the Republic house was the old burying ground, so in an agony of indecision, I ran into it to try to collect my wits under the old trees that sheltered the ancient inhabitants. In the center of the cemetery is a large flat stone set on two rocks like a bench. It is the tombstone of the Reverend John Wise, the true and first instigator of the American Revolution.

In my despair I sat down on the Reverend Wise's stone. I think I cried. Below me in a little valley I could see my own home on the left and at night right, on the knob, was the schoolhouse. I envisioned the two ladies who waited for me, one here and one there.

Perhaps it was the Reverend Wise who inspired me. Jumping up I ran at top speed back to the schoolhouse. The teacher was still busy and had not yet missed me. Quickly I told her (and fearfully, too) of my mother's orders and asked if I could stay tomorrow instead. Blessed teacher, she understood and nodded "yes." So I flew home and made it before the time bomb had begun to tick.

I think that this was my very first independent decision and I am glad I had the Reverend Wise as my friend.

Now that I could read I loved it and did so all my life. I could lose myself for a whole day in a book - or rather several - for I read from

morning to night and was thus happy and content until I saw others having a more active life. Only later on when I was older did I have a friend who lived at a great distance from me in the opposite end of town. But we were not firm friends, for we were rivals for the affections of a certain young man. He, by the way, was “respectable” since his father was a railroad conductor and not a French Canadian. It made a difference! At least it did to my mother. There were certain things I did and did not do - was not allowed to. When I asked “why,” the answer came back that I was the daughter of my father and mother and that our family did not do these things. That was hard to understand until I had my own children. Then I knew that certain standards must be kept, or all that has been striven for in past generations may be lost.

One thing I was allowed to do was to go sliding down Cap’n Sam’s Hill in winter - and everyone was there. Under these conditions I could be one of the crowd. I had a marvelous sled, inherited from my sisters who were by now away at college. It was a “Flexible Flyer,” and it really was a flyer. Everyone wanted to ride on it with me, and in the winter I had a brief joy of companionship on the hill. However, on Sundays, although we did not go to church, I was never allowed to go out sliding. One was not noisy on Sunday, I was told.

The years passed with such a sameness that I cannot remember any one from another in those early years. There are a few things that stand out as memorable, however.

The daily newspaper flat upon the kitchen table anxiously scanned to see where “THE FRONT” was now. My mother saying that the Germans were not responsible for the war. My black stockings turning a hideous shade of green as soon as they were washed because the Germans had the

secret of making the black die permanent and we did not. The shortage of sugar, also due to the war, which caused my mother to weight it out in quarter pounds every time my father received a small allotment (he being in the provision business) so that each customer might have a little. My father taking a little extra bag of sugar to someone among his customers who was ill and who, he thought, could be cheered a little with some extra luxury. Seeing my sisters' boyfriends who appeared now and again in uniform, and everyone knitting and making things for the men in the service - all signs of the war.

Another thing which I remember clearly is picking a couple of four leaf clovers for my grandmother who lived in Ipswich, Massachusetts. These were hard to find, but I was lucky this day. It was her birthday, I think, and this was my own special present to her. I put them in a box to give to her.

I remember her death the next January (1917) of the dreaded Asian flu which swept this country. In the cities people died in the space of two days. My Aunt Josephine who was a registered nurse, had contracted it from one of her patients in the hospital. She brought it home to her mother and sister. My father was the one of his family left, his father having died young. I remember my father sitting at the dining room table looking over the watches and jewelry that had belonged to his dear ones, the tears running down his cheeks. It was the only time I ever saw him cry.

I was too young to feel a great sense of loss. I remember, however, that I had felt important telling my school mates that I would not be in school the next day as my grandmother had hired and so I did not have to go to school. I did not go to the funeral, however, but was allowed to pack a small suitcase for myself and go to a neighbor's house. These were

elderly people and I knew them really better than I did my grandmother. So I am afraid I was more impressed with my importance in going to visit with a suitcase and being absent from school than I was with the loss of my grandmother. I was nine years old at the time.

In this same year two of my father's uncles died. They were twins, Frederick and Franklin Hart. Because of that my father and a cousin of his inherited the old Hart Farm in Lynnfield Center, Massachusetts. This cousin was a George Pierpont Estes Hart of Danville, Virginia. He and my father were the only survivors of that generation of Harts, even though the family had been numerous. The women had not married or died quite young and only two sons had had families. Since George Pierpont Estes Hart lived so far away, he was willing to sell out. My father bought his share of the inheritance except for a few keepsakes, which his cousin wanted, and so he became the sole owner of the old farmhouse, the original home, land and everything that belonged to the farm.

My sister Dorothy and I, then only eight or nine years of age, went to visit our Uncle Franklin Hart at the old Hart Farm in Lynnfield Centre. I do not believe I had attended the funeral of Frank's wife, Julia Cowdry Hart, but I do remember our trip was a gesture of good will. I remember Uncle Frank as he sat in that chair, a sort of bucket seat slightly inclined backwards, where later on I was to sit for many an hour, reading my head off. Uncle Frank had blue, blue eyes and curly, wavy hair. The lady in the background I remember as Emeline, but of course she was the housekeeper. not long after this Uncle Frank died.

I will never forget our mad dash across Beverly (Massachusetts) to catch the streetcar to Essex. It was pitch dark behind the Beverly railroad station and we were in mortal fear of missing the last trolley. I remember

falling in to the icy slush of one big pothole behind the station. There was no time to brush me off or mop me up. We ran as fast as my little legs would go. We made it! On the trolley car we could relax. I knew that my sister felt that she had surmounted difficulties of all sorts and would be praised for the effort.

But when mama saw me when we got home, what a shriek! I can remember how she stripped off my once white stockings, my long-legged underwear and berating my sister all the time. My one concern was that my cherished ermine muff was a wreck and ruin.

Now I understand my grandfather's, Henry Jackson Hart, problems. From letters and tales it appears that he and Charles Nelson Hart, they were the oldest brothers, were close and so were the twins, Fred and Frank. But between the two pairs there was not much rapport. There was some family quarrel about a loan, secured by the Hart farm, which almost lost them the farm. Julia seemed to have been especially upset about this affair. She seemed to have resented the older brothers. At least her letters to Frank appear to indicate that.

To tell a little more about that loan: My grandfather, Henry Jackson Hart, was the oldest child after Frederick who died at age 13. There were all together eight children, but only the four brothers and a daughter survived. The daughter went their ways and had no interest in the farm, but the four brothers did have. Henry Jackson decided to go into the coal business and left the farm. His father, Joseph Hart, then took a mortgage on the farm to give Henry Jackson the money to start this business.

Unfortunately, along came the depression of 1890 and he did not do well and lost his business. As a result, the family nearly lost the farm to the mortgagor. As a further result, Henry Jackson, his wife and her

children were no longer wanted at the farm. AS still another result, in his will, Joseph, the father, expressly excluded Henry Jackson from any inheritance. Not that he did not love his son, but because he had already been give more than his share.

After his business failed, Henry Jackson was engaged as manager of the Damon Farm in Ipswich. His son, George Albert, my father, became acquainted with the Damon Bolles family. This eventually worked into a real connection. Mr. Bolles soon went into the investment business, stocks and bonds. He was very helpful to both my father and my mother after father's death and indirectly to my sisters and me after my mother also died.

To get on with my story: These were war times and would-be or already-drafted young soldiers could be seen everywhere and Essex was no exception. Dapper! That described them, those healthy specimen of young manhood who visited my two sisters when they were on leave from a nearby army camp.

I was just a little girl and if they had fallen over me they would hardly have known it. Some were in uniform, some not, some almost ready to be shipped out. About each one there was an air of expectancy and importance. They had a flash in the eye, a strut to the walk: plain young town boys that were unexpectedly about to become heroes. My sisters admired them.

These boys had not seen pictures of young men like themselves shot and dying in the muddy trenches of France, and bombs bursting in air meant fireworks to them.

Those who returned were glorified for a while but almost none of them wanted to talk about their experiences. They knew they were lucky to

be alive and whole, if they were that, and would anyway have to get on with the business of living which somehow they had miraculously escaped to do, so far. My own age group escaped the horror of war pretty much. How fortunate we were.

Now back to the farm: Lynnfield Centre, being somewhere between twenty-five and thirty miles distant from Essex where my father had his business, made it necessary to buy an automobile so that he could look after the property and visit it regularly. In 1917 or 18 an automobile was still an uncommon thing. My ego got another boost every time we drove regally about town in this new and wonderful vehicle. It was a Chandler touring car and I thought it was the most elegant thing on wheels. My father bought it at a garage in Ipswich. There was no such business in Essex. The dealer gave my father a lesson on how to start the car et cetera and perhaps had him drive it around town. Then he was on his own. He was a slow and careful man and he did very well - especially since there was almost no traffic to contend with and the most dangerous thing was a horse, which might be frightened out of its mind at the sight and by the noise of such a strange thing approaching it.

It was as we drove along in this car that I saw my first airplane as it taxied down an open field and took off. It was one of the very first ones and the flier was plainly visible in his goggles and puttees.

The car was used mostly on Thursdays and Sundays only. It was then used to go to **“the Farm”** and those were red-letter days in my life. I loved the old house that had been built in 1642 and lived in by generation after generation of my ancestors. I felt at home there. I loved the wonderful farmland and woods that went with the house. Our coal black pony, “Jago” was driven up there every summer and put out to pasture. He

was a Welsh pony, wild as could be, bought at the Vail Farm in St. Johnsbury, Vermont. He came by freight in a crate and I remember how he reared and snorted with fright when he arrived. He was born out in the pastures and had never seen a bucket or a stall. He was afraid of the watering pail and it took a good deal of coaxing to get him to drink.

When he and I were older, I used to try to ride him in our orchard at the farm. He did not care too much for that. He would rather roam in the orchard, eating apples from under the trees - or, on occasion, walking on his hind legs to pick his meal of apples from the lower branches. Or he would run like a wild horse from the orchard through the gate and into the woods - all through the woods and out into the pasture on the opposite side. One could hear, as he took the other horses with him, the pounding of their feet as they raced and chased each other through the night. He had the company of two horses that we boarded every summer for years. My uncle Frank had been a great fancier of horses and a friend of the then famous Mr. Angle and through the contacts he had made in the years before his death, these horses came to us. One was a young racehorse that had had some injury and the other an old fellow that was always in the rear, and so earned the name of "Lightening."

I did have a little Boston Terrier named Buster, whose favorite sport was to bark and nip at the heels of these big fellows when they were stealing apples from the trees. Once he got too close and was caught by a swift back kick and went flying into space. He picked himself up and did not bother them for a while. But soon he was back at his police duty, but keeping out of reach.

Since it was wartime and wheat was scarce, we planted a field of it, and it did well and gave us a good harvest. Our tools were primitive, even

by the standards of those days. I remember our hired man plowing with a single plow the field which was in a big T-shape, the extra long top of the "T" running along the stone wall which divided the home site from the big pasture. Just before planting the seeds he made a brush harrow by cutting young birch trees and laying them down between two sturdy pieces of wood and nailing them together. I was allowed to ride the horse which pulled this primitive piece of equipment and I felt very proud but a little insecure up there. I can still remember how anxiously we watched as the wheat ripened into gold, how it was cut with hand sickles, how my father flailed it with an old fashioned wooden flail, a long wooden handle with a shorter piece of wood attached with a leather thong. The grain in the head was put on a large piece of canvas on the barn floor and then the flailing began. It was all a long, slow process. One had to keep at it. The next step could be done at one's leisure, however. One waited for a windy day. Then the flailings were put, a small quantity at a time, in a box sieve and shaken in the wind. The air current then blew away the chaff and there were the clean, hard kernels. These grains were cracked in our coffee grinder, and then portions for morning meals were cooked long and slowly. This made a cereal dish that, with cream and sugar, I have never eaten better or as good.

It sounds as though I did a lot of work at this time. However, I was the youngest - eight and ten years younger than my two sisters - so I really did mostly the heavy looking on. Sister Dot, Dorothy, was proud of being a "Farmerette" - women were doing farm work since most of the young men were away at war or in the training camps. She wore a sort of khaki overall - the beginning, I suppose, of women wearing pants. I can see her now on top of a load of hay. Our hired man pitched up a snake occasionally by

mistake, with the hay, but I do not think it bothered her too much. If it did she was too proud to admit it. She really did a good job of distributing the hay evenly on the load. I can remember how one watched the sky for signs of a thunderstorm in the clouds when hay was curing in the fields. And what a rush if a large dark and threatening cloud appeared when the hay was ready for the barn, for it got wet it might mold. It could not be put into the barn loft until it was absolutely dry, or one could expect spontaneous combustion - a fire and no barn. So the hay in the field and the clouds in the sky were all important in the haying season.

I remember once we were in the lower meadow and the trip to the barn was uphill, all the way! I hope there were two horses, but I remember only one. My sister Dorothy drove the horse, the hired man bellowed at him - or them - at crucial moments to frighten them into a spurt of speed over some hard spots. Finally they were through the last gate and up on the highway. The sky was black and lightening flashed close about!

If the old barn had not burned down several years before they would have been right at the door. However the newly built barn was down the street a ways and built on a little knoll so that somehow there was a sharp incline to the front door. The first big rain drops arrived! Shouting, screaming and straining horses and the hired man with one last desperate heave on the rear wheel and - hurrah - we were in! Just in the nick of time, for there came the rain, sheets of it thundering down. But the hay was safe and dry and we could stand in the barn door and laugh and see that our puny strength had been able to outwit the wild forces of nature.

By the time I was old enough for such work the war was over and young ladies were not called upon for such labors. Thinking of the present movement to equate women with men, I am amused. Equal pay for equal

work, equal results, yes, but what fool female really wants to take on a man's job as well as her own? Did the era of the Amazons continue for a long time? The only thing a woman really has on her side is her femininity. Has the mechanical age fooled women into thinking that they are equal to man in brawn and muscle? It would be interesting to find out percentages in inventions and patents for mechanical and scientific pursuit. How do men and women stack up and why?

As I said, I usually did the "heavy looking on" because I was considered to be too young and too frail to do any real work. I would probably have been better off if my parents had given me some work to do - but I had always been sick at the drop of a hat, so I was thought not to be long for this life and was pampered accordingly. My father sometimes let me "lead" the horse when he was plowing or rather cultivating. Once the great beast stepped right on my small foot. It did not really hurt, for the ground was soft powder fine and so my foot just sank into it. However, I was a little concerned as to just how to get my foot out from under his. I suppose he eventually stepped off of me but I can still see that enormous foot and how my little one disappeared under it.

Once we planted some peanuts - and they grew "even" in Massachusetts. It was almost a miracle to pull the plants in the fall and find honest to goodness peanuts hanging from the roots. I could hardly believe it. Collecting slugs and potato bugs from the potato vines was a nasty job but one I was sometimes asked to do. Also blueberrying! I did not care for it because it was so hot and plagued by mosquitoes. This was especially so while getting to the hill where the bushes were to be found. The briars were taller than I and snakes were prevalent. However Buster, my little Boston Terrier, loved to go blueberrying and just to see someone

take down the blueberry baskets would send him into a delirium of barking and rushing around. He always jumped and barked and made a terrible nuisance of himself trying to hurry us on the way until we set off up the path to the woods. Then in sheer exuberance and joy he would grab a stick in his mouth, the larger the better, and run along beside and in front of us, back and forth. Once he ran between my feet and the stick tripped me up and down I went. That was a big laugh for everybody. When we got to the blueberry region, friend Buster spent his time eating berries off the low bushes, snuffing out snakes or chasing woodchucks into their holes. He killed many of them and always dragged them home, depositing them at the back door with a great show of pride. When they were buried, he promptly dug them up again and again and re-deposited them for more praise. It got to be a smelly nuisance, but we loved him anyway. He was a dear and funny dog and the best companion I knew then. He was policeman to all the cats as well as to the horses. Just let a sly cat creep up on the table to steal some favorite morsel, and Buster was there, making a great fuss so that everyone was alerted. The cat was ejected from polite society with a great rush and great deal of barking by my little dog. Three motherless chicks were once his special care. Their hapless mother had hatched them in a stolen nest and then had been devoured by a fox from the signs of things. Buster adopted them and when they were old enough to be out and around he shepherded them around on their excursions into the great out-of-doors. Their names were Pete, Jerry, and Mike, and for some reason best known only to them, they invariably walked in single file and in that order, just like ducks.

Just before or just after Thanksgiving Day, mother hurried up through the field behind the old farmhouse in Lynnfield. She had several

fairly large burlap bags in her hand and looked very purposeful and determined. Through the big gate she went and into our woods beyond. A little bit inside of the gate and in full sight of it there grew ground pine in profusion. This is sort of ground evergreen, the roots of which grow along just under the surface of the ground and at fairly regular but close intervals send up small bunches of luxurious dark green "bouquets."

Finding a thick patch, Mother would begin to rip and tear it from the ground and stuff it quickly into the burlap bags. I do not remember that I was ever asked to help or that I offered to. This was mother's project, although I went along most of the time.

Back to the house we went and having collected my little Boston Terrier, Buster, got into the Chandler or whichever car was then in use, with father driving, we returned to Essex, which was home. All this, as I remember it, was the prelude to mother's Christmas production for her family. For several evenings at home there was the crisp smell of the evergreens as mother broke off the clumps or bunches of green from the long root-runners.

She had separated wire coat hangers and formed the wire into circles. With twine she bound the evergreen clumps to the wire and after a good bit of work there was a lovely fresh wreath of glossy green. She made one for every downstairs window in the house and one for the front door. As I remember it, that made nine wreaths in all.

In between was the shopping in Boston as she went on the early morning train to search for treasures. She bore her brown leather valise triumphantly and with a roguish smile home at night when it was bulging with paper bags of varied shapes and sizes. Somehow, with that sparkle in

her eye and that air of triumphant joy we knew she had found the most wonderful, the most exciting things in the whole world for us for Christmas.

In my mind's eye I always see that brown Valise sitting on the first chair in the dining room as you came from the kitchen. How did she possibly shop all day in Boston and arrive home with that sparkle in her eyes and that sense of excitement! She loved to shop, but even more she loved to give gifts.

Then came the tree. Dad brought it in - and there it stood in the corner - bushy and spicy and beautiful, waiting for the gorgeous ornaments and the tinsel so bright and luxurious and full of sparkle.

Somewhere along the time the house was cleaned and all the silver polished. I think I was allowed to help with that. The excitement mounted! And then at last there were all shapes and sizes of packages under the tree. One could shake and poke them but nobody could see inside or otherwise spy.

The pantry was full of freshly baked pies: apple, squash and mince and more. Then dad brought the turkey, a lovely beast, and the kitchen became the scene of action. But then we were off to bed, chased I would say, all but mama. She closed the doors on the Christmas room and no one must look, no one must peek.

You hung up your stocking and went to bed and all kinds of visions danced in your head, none more wonderful as what you could imagine. Then came Christmas Day and a feat of love and happiness. Our enthusiasm in opening our presents and our "Oh's" and "Ah's" was all Mother wanted and relished. She was the happiest of us all.

Sometime in those early years I contracted an illness which the doctors did not seem to be able to diagnose and which nearly took my life.

I was very ill for months and finally went into a coma. But the crisis passed and I did not die. Eventually I was able to get out of bed and sit in a chair for a short while each day and at long last I could go back to school and resume a normal life. But I was not strong physically and they began to notice changes in my bone structure. Now the doctors tell me I had a case of polio which did not cripple me, fortunately, but at the time caused some damage to my bone make-up. Among other things I developed a "lovely" spine curvature which put me in a hospital for one entire summer just before I went to college.

My mother tried everything to make me well. Once a week we went to Boston to a school of physical culture where I was given special exercises in an individual class in a huge gymnasium. Sad to say it did no good. I did not seem to have the energy to do the exercises during the week at home and I am sure that it would not have done any good if I had. Then after long consultation with the doctors I was sent away to a summer camp in New Hampshire. The money that was spent of this venture! I dread to think of it. There was the new trunk - the camp uniforms which cost a fortune - the poncho, the camera, tennis racket, the new pink woolen suit with the white blouse with the ruffled lace front, et cetera and et cetera. On top of that the fee for the camp was not the least of the matter.

At last I was in the big North Station in Boston with all my equipment - the key to my trunk in my new pocket book - my identification, they called it the allegro, tag pinned to my lapel and the camp director rounding up everybody to put them on the train for New Hampshire.

For the first time I had children of my own age to be with! It was part fun and part agony, for I was very shy and I really did not know how to get along with them very well. Besides that I had never been away from home

for any length of time before - and here I was sleeping in a tent (on a wooden platform) in the middle of these New Hampshire woods with a lot of strange people who expected me to do a lot of strange and for me unusual things. I was not well coordinated and I never did learn to swim - although I insisted on jumping off the diving board and nearly drowned myself one day when the swimming instructor who in the past had caught me when I came up had a broken arm and no one else realized that I could not swim. Also I never did learn how to steer a canoe no matter how hard I tried. Yet at swim-time I kept going further and further out in the lake until the instructor, with his arm in a sling, red-faced and frightened since he knew I could not swim, somehow managed to shout me back to shore. I expect I gave him gray hairs even though he was a young man, my favorite counselor - and the one I least wished to annoy. I cannot imagine how I managed to get into so much trouble with him when he was incapacitated.

But when all is said and done I DID climb Mount Chicora, blanket roll and all, and stayed over night, sleeping on pine boughs and eating breakfast of oatmeal and raisins with no cream. We got back off the mountain the next day. It was a wonderful experience! I did play volleyball also. All this was good for me but of course it did not take away the effects of the polio.

I remember memorial day parades - learning to play the violin - lawn parties - the Chautauqua troops from Chautauqua in Upper New York State that came to small towns once a year, if they were sponsored, - finally going to dancing school - and some very stiff and perspiring boys with whom one had to dance. For this latter event I had a pair of high, very soft leather shoes, which were very fashionable and very elegant. (Also very pointed of toe and which gave me a corn that I still have on my right little

toe.) But who cared for a corn when one could be so elegant! Oh vanity. I also had a blue dress with an all-over embroidered pattern for this occasion. I wore this "costume" to school once, thinking that this was dancing school day after school, only to have to wear it in shame and misery, as I had mistaken the day, and everyone else was in their usual school clothes.

I remember with great vividness a few moments when still a child my father and I attended one of the yearly Chautauqua performances. We must have arrived a little late for this performance at the Essex town hall. We stood at first at the back of the darkened hall. As I stood there, I was spellbound when I looked at the stage. A slim and handsome young man in dark suit with tails was lifting a violin under his chin and then all at once the tender notes of "Humoresque" began to flow out to us from his wonderful instrument. We stood rooted in our place until the last note had ebbed away. That moment of rapture is perhaps the most clear and brilliant of any in my whole life.

I can still feel the presence of my father beside me, the utter darkness of the hall and the effulgence of light upon that one dark figure from whom the rapture of heaven flowed into my heart, my brain, to every fiber and cell of my body to awaken that which heretofore had been sleeping: the appreciation for and love of beauty.

And lately, all these many years later, as I lay in bed one evening expecting nothing, being weary of the world, I heard from the lowly television a final note played by a master upon a perfect instrument, but in my mind I still can hear and see and sense my first experience in Essex. It will be forever new.

At last there was high school with Latin, which I simply could not fathom. At this point I was a year ahead of myself because the powers that be had decreed that in the fifth grade I should take the fifth and sixth grades at the same time because I was such a smart little girl. This turned the "smart little one" into a very confused girl, especially in arithmetic and English grammar. Every night there was a crying session at home when I could not make the problems come out right and my mother tried to help me - and neither of us could do them "the way the teacher does". Too bad someone had not the sense to put me back in the fifth grade where I belonged. So in high school I suffered with Latin and French. After two years I was sent to Bradford Academy, a very expensive and very old preparatory school in Haverhill, Massachusetts, 1922-1924.

I remember how frightened I was when it became time for me to begin my first year at Bradford Academy. I even got the asthma.

This must have been an expensive venture for my parents. My two sisters had been able to attend high school in the city of Gloucester, Mass. The local high school in Essex was not equipped, curriculum-wise to prepare anyone for college.

My sisters, Grace and Dorothy, had had transportation to Gloucester on the trolley cars. By the time I came along the trolley had gone out of business and the tracks had been torn up. Therefore I had to attend a boarding school. One of the best, oldest and most famous was located about 35 or 40 miles away in Bradford, Mass., across the river from the city of Haverhill on the Merrimac River.

I had never spent a night away from home before except once with my two sisters when we visited our grandmother, Lois Augusta Hart.

The catalog of this school did not inspire confidence in my shy soul. It pictured an imposing and elegant building with white pillars and ivy covered walls. It also pictured a large dining room with many, many round tables with formal white tablecloths. It did not look homey; neither did the two formal parlors. If I had been athletically inclined, I am sure I would have been excited over the large indoor swimming pool, the large hockey field and tennis courts.

Unfortunately I had already discovered that I was a real dud at sports and knew that other people considered sports and ones efficiency in them very important.

Students were to wear a uniform - navy blue sailor blouse and navy blue pleated skirts. One must change into more formal attire for dinner. It did not sound homey or even comfortable. Besides, I had never been allowed to play with other children and now I was to be sent off all alone to live with hundreds of strange ones. But what was one to do? The uniforms were purchased and also about a dozen fancy dresses - too fancy, I was to discover to my embarrassment - tennis racket, gym shoes, bloomers and so on, down the prescribed list.

Mother and I drove up to the beautiful, ivy covered building a long the curving driveway and passed the fountain and rose garden in a hired limousine. I do not know what make the car was, but it was impressive. The chauffeur was its owner, a local garage man, who had this equipment for hire and who, fortunately, dressed the part.

Well - I was deposited - and away mother and limo went.

Here is a picture of the room I lived in the first year. Three of us occupied it and took turns using the living room as our bedroom also. We were an odd lot. One, a very prissy young lady by the name of Marian

Trimble was from Maine, the other lonely sweet but shy girl from Proctor, Vermont. We three became friends as well as roommates, but Marian did not approve of us. I was fascinated by a pair of twins from Memphis, Tenn. who lived on our corridor and a Jewish girl who came from the South. It is so long ago that I am not quite sure how I got to be such firm friends with another strange assortment. One of these girls was very pretty - very lively, daring, and had a boy friend who was much older than she was. In a single room next to her lived another girl who was mountainous in figure. She would have made three of me, actually, but she made friends with her fate - never seemed concerned in any way about her size, had a good sense of humor and was lots of fun. She did not get mixed up in the shenanigans that Isabelle (the girl from Proctor?) and I pulled off, however. We all three probably accepted the fact that it just was not practical for a two-ton Tille to appear and disappear fast around corners - go out of sight, et cetera, without being noticed.

Well, I must admit that here, at Bradford, I was first again like a lost kitten. Everyone was rich, sophisticated and wearing grown-up clothes where I had expensive but little girl's (more or less) dresses. But I did manage to make friends and soon had a really good time. It was a lovely school and I suppose I learned a good deal, although, again, the nightmare of Latin was always with me. That was a horrible experience. I had no idea what it was all about as my teacher in high school had, in despair with all of us, finally done all the translating herself. In the end I learned Latin the hard way - by myself. I had good grammar and managed to get a Caesar interlinear from one of my sisters. Every night I sat up until three o'clock in the morning with an Indian Blanket over my window so that the night watchman would not see my light and learned Latin by a strange reverse

process. From the interlinear translation I deduced the grammatical structure, memorized the translation and the grammatical forms as best I could and so learned Latin by myself. As a result, I contracted another nasty bug. (More of this later.)

During the summer vacations of 1923 my sisters and I lived alone on the **Hart farm in Lynnfield Centre**. I am not sure why this came about. Did Papa decide Mama should not leave him alone to fend for himself all summer or did Mama feel guilty and decide she should stay with him? Children should not look too far into what may have been a critical stage in the lives of their parents.

None of my sisters were married. I was 15 years of age and as already pointed out, my sisters, Grace and Dorothy, were ten and eight years, respectively, older than I.

Grace had her future husband, William J. Marlowe, as a suitor and he visited every weekend (can that be?) arriving grandly but always late in a grandiose sports car with the top down and bearing armloads of fruit and vegetables and candy. Somehow the air seemed to sparkle the moment when he arrived - notwithstanding the dubious although tolerant smiles of my parents.

This was the summer when President Warren Harding died. On my daily trip downtown to Roundy's store for Sarsaparilla, Root Beet, etc. which I brought back on the handlebars of my bike in a baseball bag, I saw the American flag at the Blood Estate flying at half mast. I asked about it at the store and heard that the President was dead. For all of us, not being politically interested, this was only a matter of excitement that the President had died while in office. It was only years later that I learned of the scandals and so on.

Maybe my sisters could not afford store bought drinks every day, but it seems to me that I performed this arduous task with great frequency and pleasure. In the first place it was something different to do, and in the second place, riding down the long hill was exciting and third, the country store had many attractions in the form of penny candy, which, even at 15, I found stimulating - plain licorice sticks that tasted mild but made your tongue black and fancy licorice sticks with bumps of sugar in pink or white at intervals. They had Boston Beans that were measured out in a little bean pot and all sorts of things needed in small community.

For this errand - after the hot and dusty push back up the hill - I was greeted at first sight by the cheers and enthusiastic shouts of my two sisters who had waited with their "tongues hanging out" ever since I had first disappeared down the street. They had planned to share the goodies with me. The heroine of that dusty trip was rewarded!

House cleaning on Friday was done by my sisters. A visit of a special stranger besides parents was expected and we must shine. Out came every rug in the house. Over the clothesline they were thoroughly beaten with the rug beater. Then they were left on the grass in the sun while the old board floors were mopped or swept, or whatever my sisters did. Cleaning I did not have to do.

Never will I forget the day when my strong-armed and quick sister, Dorothy, brought back an armful of nice clean rugs, dropped them on the floor and. . . . Wow! I thought the house was on fire! What screams from my sister Grace, who was simply terrified of SNAKES! A medium sized garden snake had ill advisedly crawled in among the rugs, nice and warm. He went to sleep until there he was on the kitchen floor. Sister Dorothy nearly died laughing and hardly had strength left to get the coal shuttle to

pick up Mr. Snake and put him out the back door. She was a real tease and delighted in frightening her more timid older sister.

Since there were lots of garden snakes on the farm, this was not the only snake episode. Once while haying during World War One, sister Grace was perched precariously, it seemed to me, on the top of a load of hay. She had a pitchfork and it was her job to evenly distribute all the hay sister Dorothy pitched up to her. When suddenly with shrieks and more shrieks sister Grace took a quick sliding trip right off that load of hay. Sister Dorothy had pitched up a big fork of hay with a large snake in the middle of it. I cannot remember how this problem was dealt with, but I expect the hired man took over after Grace's departure.

I do not know what I learned at Bradford. I am sure I was the despair of all my teachers, especially the French and Latin teachers; also my violin teacher, who went into terrible rages at each lesson. I was supposed to practice in one of the small rooms off the gymnasium every day. But I was so completely overwhelmed by everything and so totally despairing of ever pleasing her that I spent my practice hours having good cries where no one could see me.

Poor lady! Imagine her traveling all the way from Boston and back once a week to listen to a skinny, awkward, ignoramus saw away on a violin with no timing and never progressing an inch. No wonder she whacked me.

For some reason I came down with some dread disease just before spring vacation in my second and last year. It was some type of a flu thing - but it took me over a month to battle it out.

Just how I got the school time in and my hospital stay too for one month, I do not know. But a bouquet goes to my sister, Grace, who all that

summer was attending a Fanny Farmer cooking school and faithfully came to see me bringing the fruits of her labors. Chiefly among them I remember beautiful petite fours with chocolate frosting and perfect violets on top, and how I ate too many and was ill one night. Also I remember a young architect whom I had met along the way. He was young still, but much older than I. He often shortened the long days in the hospital with his letters, visits and boxes of candy. He was a real friend. It made me feel important and pleased later on to be taken out to tea or dinner and be driven to the station in a taxi now and then by him.

By then I was so far behind in all my studies that there was just no way to make up the work and pass. So I did not graduate as I should have in 1924, but they had me go through all the stupid commencement exercises at the end of the school year anyway.

So - I went home a rather sophisticated young lady. I knew all the social graces and could have met and entertained the Queen of England if I had been asked and was ready for anything except college.

By now I was wearing more sophisticated clothes. I remember some of them so well and thought I was really a grown-up young lady. When I went home for the summer at the end of that second year of prep school, I thought I knew everything about everything. I expect my parents were quite beside themselves. I was not ready for college and insisted that I was not going to school anywhere. I had become interested in the opposite sex and did not think about much else, I suppose.

But with dire threats from my mother and a shove or two from my sisters I finally got myself dressed in my best and met my mother in Boston in the North Station since she was living in Essex that summer while Dot, Grace and I were at the farm. We went to see a school out in the Back Bay

section of Boston, the Chamberlain School for Girls. Another girl's school! This one, however, was completely different than any place I had ever seen. It was located in one of the famous Back Bay row houses, which had only two or three rooms on a floor.

Next thing I knew mother had enrolled me in this Chamberlain School on Commonwealth Avenue as a day pupil. This necessitated daily trips to the city and back on the good old steam cars. My daily routine was up at 6 a.m., a bite to eat on the fly and run almost all the way to the railroad station - three quarters of a mile at least. The train left Essex at 7:00 and arrived in the North Station in Boston one and a half hours later. Then I had to run as fast as possible up the platform and to the subway station to catch a train to Kenmore. In this conveyance one was swayed, jolted and pushed around sometimes sitting but mostly standing for a rough time. Off at Kenmore station, dash up the subway steps onto the street and eventually to Commonwealth Avenue and soon there I was at number X of the brick row houses, the school.

That was a year I remember as pure fun. I loved every minute of it except the getting out of bed to run to the train at such an early hour. I never was a happy early riser. I had been cooped up for my entire fifteen years in a little town with no companions and incarcerated for two more to such an extent that one was allowed to enter only one store unless supervised. But here at last, day after exciting day, I was free - on my own - trusted and expected to find my own way among crowds of people. After school I was free for about three hours far from home waiting for the return train.

There were three of us who hung together. One, as crazy headed as I was, had the same train problem as I had. The other, a fun loving but more

sedate person whose mother worked and so did not return home until 5:00 p.m.

For \$.25 we could see Rudolph Valentino with his patent leather hair as the sheik of Theda Barra or etc. at the Bijou Theater down Washington Street a little ways. One went upstairs over glass steps that had a cascading fall of water underneath that somehow intensified the glamour. There also was the famous Schraffts confectionery shop nearby with the most delightful display of chocolates and pastel bonbons etc. on the first floor. Upstairs they had an ice cream parlor deluxe with more different kinds of sundaes than Heinz has pickles.

The Boston Public Library - we loved it - but I do not think we studied much there. Most of the time we whispered or giggled under the disapproving glare the policeman who strode up and down to keep order. Perhaps we would not have gone there without the challenge he represented.

There were the Public Gardens and the Boston Common and do not ask me what else. Too bad, as I look back now, that I did not know how important my ancestors are to me. They lived in and around Boston for generations. I seem to remember only one teacher and one subject, Miss Atwood who taught English History. But study was a terrible bore and I have no idea how I was ever accepted into Wheaton College, for I did graduate from Chamberlain somehow.

Since I still was a poor history student, I was forced to commute again during one summer to a tutor in English History. She was a stern old lady of British descent who lived further down on Commonwealth Avenue, nearer the Boston Common. She whacked me with a pencil when I gave a wrong answer, but somehow managed to teach me enough so that I was

able to enter college in 1925. When I asked my mother about some of the events of the American Revolution as taught by my teacher, she used to laugh. She said that my British teacher's English version of those struggles for freedom and American "factual" history were not the same. Mother was a real American patriot. I was also accepted into another famous old New England school of women, but did not go there.

It was the age of the "Flappers" and everything we wore either flapped or streamed out behind us, wind or no wind. To button galoshes (mine were fur-topped but had buckles that flapped and clanked) or to button a fur coat, no matter how cold or snowy the weather was, was unthinkable. Our cloth hats all but hid our eyes and our long scarves, in bright colors, streamed behind us in the wind. It seemed we were always running: running to catch trains, running to get to a movie or what have you. Running noisily, happily, breathlessly and wild - dangerous to our own health. We were the break with convention; we smoked cigarettes, we laughed too loudly, we ran helter-skelter and I think we swore as to seem fashionable.

My sisters had felt delightfully wicked with their perfumed cigarettes, with violet paper and golden tips that came in exquisite boxes made just for women. I do not think they ever really smoked them. It was a pose, a mark of sophistication they thought, and it went along with the white spats, the canes that servicemen - officers I suppose - brought back from war and presented to the loveliest girl. The latter were called swagger sticks and if you had one you could swagger elegantly.

But we were of the next wave of youth and we smoked men's cigarettes. We wore sailor pants and had boyish bobs. That was the end of the Gibson girl, for we were brassy. The waltz was superseded by the

fox trot and the Charleston - all knobby knees and sharp elbows and short hair and no waists, no hips and long beads and spangles.

When I arrived at Wheaton College, I was not so shy anymore. I felt I had been around in the he world a good bit and knew my way.

I do not remember studying at all for two years at college. Oh yes, Freshman English seemed surprisingly hard. It seemed I could not write a decent theme. Oh yes - I do remember that my fifth (?) year of Latin was hard. We had to translate a passage of Virgil at one time and then turn our translation into an English poem (maybe blank verse). Surprisingly I enjoyed this and the results were good. Fresh 5 was awful, but it was my last year of it so it was tolerable.

Botany, I thought, was a very interesting subject. We had a textbook entitled "The Living Plant." Every time I took a glimpse into it I saw something interesting, which I planned to read - but I never got around to it. I slept through all the boring lectures and was never quite sure what I was supposed to be seeing under the microscope. How did I pass?

There is one thing I do know for sure - I never cheated.

I supposed I studied more than I remember because there was an Art 1 class I loved and a course on the Old Testament that I enjoyed along with a "funny lady" English teacher who always wore a black wig awry and whose taste in style was for hideous dresses with a wide neck that were perpetually sliding off of a long shoulder. This lady had a rather distinct likeness to "Emma" in the used-to-be Moon Mullins cartoons in the funny papers. Speaking of the Old Testament course, I need to tell that religion had really never touched my life. Or had it? My father went to church occasionally and mostly alone, although sometimes I went with him. However, I do not ever remember hearing anything that interested or stirred

me. Then when I went to Bradford Academy, I had befriended a girl who was a Catholic. I took to going to early mass with her and I was impressed because it was new and different. The Latin chanting of the priest, the censers with incense, the singing that came from an unseen choir in a balcony behind the congregation, the beautiful stained glass windows, the golden candlesticks with the burning candles and the kneeling and rising I thought was mystic and deep and exciting. Quiet different it was from the puritanical New England meeting house. I was enthralled. But my coming and going was noted and before long I was taken aside and told that my parents would not approve of my attending Catholic mass and I was to discontinue my Sunday visits to the Catholic Church. I was stunned a little, but was not rebellious. I do not remember going to any church after that, although I may have. The most I remember of these escapades is that I learned to sing "Ancient of Days," "Who Sitteth Crowned in Glory," "Through all the Ages" and some more.

Anyhow, here I was in college and had friends and a great old time - for two years - without really buckling down. This resulted in my flunking Medieval History and spending another summer commuting to Boston and Harvard University to take a course in American Literature, which I thoroughly enjoyed. Going to Harvard was fun. Best of all was browsing around in the old secondhand bookstore there or going into Boston and doing the same there. I was more serious minded now with the loud flapper stage behind me. I was no longer a tomboy but had acquired a passion for collecting good books at tiny prices.

It was in my junior year that I suddenly buckled down and got busy on the studies. By then I was a member of another triumvirate - Dorothy Smith and Anna Ingalls (both from Danvers, Mass.) and myself. I really do

not know how we gravitated together. However, our friendship became famous. Three other girls were extra friends, but we three, Dorothy and Anna and I, did everything together.

At this writing (1976) we are still firm friends and since we started in 1927, that is 49 years!

I guess we had the same majors and minors because I remember the three of us burning the midnight oil for exams, term papers etc. For some reason I always got the edge on the grades between us, so they got to thinking of me as the brain, but I really was not. There were many girls in the class who were really brilliant scholars and possessed a great many other talents besides.

Anyhow, there are a hundred thousand memories of these two dear, supremely good people and not one single unpleasant one. Not one! We were graduated from Wheaton College in 1929 but I do not know that any one of us was prepared for anything.

Dorothy then took business courses and after that became a teacher in a girl's school in Los Angeles, California.

Anna got a job in a bank and married George Bell. Then living in Marblehead, Mass., she got a job as a teacher.

I was totally unprepared. In my last year I was supposed to practice teaching in a school in Taunton, Mass. However, an epidemic of measles, smallpox or what have you broke out at the last minute and all schools were closed. So there was no practice teaching experience for me.

I had not wanted to be a teacher in the first place. I was, at that age at least, certainly not fitted to teach and had no knowledge of teaching techniques. I had never been exposed to the male - female student body of public schools, having lived among women only for the past seven years.

As I mentioned, I graduated from Wheaton College. My parents used this occasion to present me with a new Ford automobile. It was a model "A" and one of the first of the 1930 model year, even if it was bought late in 1929. It was a shiny two-seater, a coupe without a rumble seat, in a dark gray-green color. What a gift! I actually had expected nothing and certainly not anything like this, so I was most thankful to my parents. Now came the question of learning how to drive the car.

My father tried to teach me. Once on the way back from our Lynnfield Center farm he let me drive his big Chandler car. All went well for a while but eventually for some reason or other, it could have been a large tree looming ahead, I steered the car into a ditch, well - only half way into a ditch, where we stopped dead. My kind and peaceful father never said a loud word. He never scolded me for my misdeed. Only after a moment he got out of the car and surveyed the damage. One fender and the running board were somewhat bent. There was stony silence in the back seat, from my mother. Naturally, my father, after getting the car back on the road, drove home the rest of the way.

However, the end result was that my mother soon got a young minister of "our" church in Essex to teach me the art of driving an automobile. Once I had a driver's license I drove my car all over the country. During summer vacations I visited my ex-roommate from college, Anna Ingalls, at her father's farm quite often, using my car. Her father used to say when he saw me come: "Here comes 'Hell on wheels Hart'!" But really the car raised more dust than speed.

In my second two years of college I really dug into the books and studied seriously for the first time. All these courses were stimulating except the education courses, which were a laugh. I would have liked to

become a librarian but my mother expected me to teach. Since my sisters were teachers I went along without a struggle until I finally was graduated. Then it was a panic to find a job, as this was the great depression of 1929. How many interviews I had I do not remember - but not many. Teachers were keeping the jobs they had and there were not many vacancies, and nobody wanted me.

Finally, through knowing the daughter of one of the school committee, I landed a job as English teacher in the high school of the small town of Newport, New Hampshire, and right away I knew I hated teaching, not the teaching but the discipline problems. I had the senior homeroom and it was murder. I was scarcely older than the oldest senior boys, and they had it all over me. You see I did not know much about boys. I had never been with boys. I had always been in girl's schools. The male species I knew only slightly. They were mature and fairly predictable. I was not prepared for these rogues. I liked them but I did not know in the least how to deal with them. It also was a nightmare for the principal who was an old hawk of a man and as dry as an old stick and as friendly.

Every morning as I walked to school I was scared to death of what the day might bring with no confidence in myself to bolster my courage. So I took a long look at the mountains and from somewhere in my not too religious past came the words: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from which cometh my strength, my strength cometh from the Lord who made heaven and earth." For years after that I could not stand the smell of chalk and accompanying school odors, since that took me back to the horrors of these days.

Then my sister Dorothy's husband became seriously ill with a very bad heart condition. She was forced to go back to work as a teacher and

wanted me to come and help with her three-year-old son. So I went to Woodstock, Vermont, and soon had a job as a private teacher to two wonderful young girls whose father had recently died. The mother felt she simply could not send all her children away to school, so she wanted to keep the younger two at home with her. I taught them everything but Latin for four or was it five years.

It must have been a real jolt when they went later to a real finishing school, as they were older. Theirs was a very wealthy but tragic family. The girls were both of sweet and good dispositions, never condescending nor apparently conscious of their wealth.

During this last period of time, the late summer of 1931, I met through the designs of my older sister Grace, a young man from Germany by the name of Erich Carl Pletsch. My sister phoned me and said she was having a large dinner party for businessmen from overseas who were considering the possibility of locating a luggage plant in Fitchburg, Massachusetts (where she and her husband lived). Since her husband was the manager of the electrical sales department of the Fitchburg Gas and Electric Company, he was elected to entertain this group. Would I come and help her, she asked.

Well, I did not want to since it disrupted plans of my own, but she sounded urgent and I loved her very much, so I said "yes."

Innocently I packed a few necessities, got into my new Ford coupe and stared out, little dreaming that this one act, this one decision, would change the whole course of my life.

When I arrived, the huge number of guests had decreased to ONE. The others, it seemed, had gone on urgent business to another place. Only that young man from Germany was the whole party - and that was it! From

then on I thought of nobody else but this young man. I had to go back to Vermont to teach my little girls, but we wrote every day to each other and visited back and forth as often as possible on weekends.

Things went badly with the new business venture, which was, it seemed, in trouble from the start. The original owners had to sell out because their money support had to come from Germany through Czechoslovakia because of the Hitler regime. There was a curb on money transfer and the German border patrol at the Czech frontier would not allow any money exportation. They would shoot first and ask questions later. Thus the money supply for the Fitchburg company was cut off.

At that time Erich's sister Irene's fiancé, Vladimir von Dattan, Ami, wished to invest some money he had inherited from his father. He bought the machinery and supplies on hand at a public auction as the original company had gone into bankruptcy, and started the luggage factory over again. Having had no business experience other than that of an apprentice clerk in the Hamburg office of an international exporting house, he had to rely on Erich and Oscar Payor quite a lot in the beginning - at any rate on Erich, who had technical skills and who now became plant manager. There did not seem to be a lot of agreement between Ami and Oscar Payor (grandmother Pletsch's second husband) and even Erich as to how the plant should be run as well as sales policy and prices etc. Also Oscar wanted to be the general manager of the company, while Ami, who had all his money invested in the business, objected. Eventually these disagreements led to lawsuits and a parting of the ways.

After this almost continuous hassle, we should have been tickled to death when Ami, needing more money to invest in the company, decided to

take a man named Keller into the business. Under these conditions Erich would not have been needed in the Fitchburg area.

Leaving the Travelware completely, Erich found a job with the Milton Bradley Company in Springfield, Massachusetts. A few weeks with them showed him that this was one place he did not want to be.

Eventually, through the good offices of professor John Wulf, Erich began experimental work in powder metallurgy at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. A pilot plant was soon established with Erich at the head. The plant was located at 2 Erie Street within easy walking distance of MIT in Cambridge. This plant was originally organized to make metal powders, especially stainless steel powders. But due to the existing war times, high alloy tool steel, already in small pieces, grindings, if I remember correctly, was added to the efforts.

I was soon added to the payroll, as Erich needed a person part time to do the clerical work. Other than a few letters, mostly to the New York office once in a while and the payroll, (there were first only one then later three or four employees) there was not a lot to do for me. For this I went twice a week with Erich to 2 Erie Street, which got me out of the house two days a week.

By this time we were married for several years and living in Wakefield, Massachusetts where we could be near my mother who was advanced in years and in poor health. Now it was 1943 and son Carl was born on the ninetieth of May. What an event! - the point at which his parents started to grow up. I had stopped working at the office by that time.

To record life from then on is next to impossible. To leave out one detail, it seems, would make the whole incomplete. It was a perfectly wonderful time except that papa had asthma; Grandma Hart was ill and

unhappy in a small house in Reading, Mass. And every time papa left home on a business trip with Mike Bock, poor little Carl became very, very ill with ear infection, mumps or what have you. Nevertheless we were now three and the third member was the most fascinating little person we had ever seen. Life revolved around him. It was no wonder he was sick now and then. Mama kept him so scientifically clean that every time he chanced to meet up with a germ it invaded, as Carl had no resistance to such things.

At last the development powder metallurgy had advanced to the point where it had become feasible to manufacture such as well as exothermic powders. It had also been determined that we should proceed. Erich and I had investigated the New England area to find a factory site, but without success.

The work at the 2 Erie Street plant had sifted to exothermic materials as Erich told me. At first this was all on U.S. Navy contracts. Eventually the war was over and civilian work became the main line of product. I think at this time Erich worked for the Unexcelled Manufacturing Company of New York. The term "Risotherm" was invented. Mike Bock had joined the work and he and Erich had coined that name and a lucrative business got started. This soon necessitated moving the plant to Ohio.

But I am a little ahead of myself, I think. Around this time "Unexcelled" had a proxy fight after which the Cambridge plant was bought out by Mr. Rickerson and two of his business associates. After that it was decided that a new company should be started and a new plant should be located in the area where supply of iron ore was plentiful and a good market for the end product was near. Conneaut, Ohio, a Great Lakes shipping point, was an ideal place. Furthermore, in this small city there was a partially completed factory building available that was designed as a

cast iron foundry. This building was a source of embarrassment for the city's bankers who had sponsored it, but then were disappointed when it came time to rent or sell it.

It was decided that we should move to Conneaut and there set up this plant. Well, our move from Wakefield, Massachusetts to Ohio was a really exciting yet difficult time. Carl was then about four years of age and Peter was on his way soon to become a citizen of the world and a joy to our family. He was not scheduled to arrive until October and we were to move at the end of August or early September.

The newly formed company was to pack and move all our worldly goods. My sister Dorothy had promised to clean the house after the movers had left. I think sadly now of my mother who was then old and ill and for whom I had been able until now to do shopping etc. and helping her when needed, always with a willing heart. We had found her a small, neat house in Reading, quite near us, and moved her out of the dear old farmhouse, which she and we all loved so much.

I must admit I was glad to be leaving, ungrateful wretch that I was. I am sure that I never shed a tear when I said good-bye. Mother had a personality change in her later years and had become very difficult to deal with. I was young and very stupid and maybe heartless. Erich had already left for Ohio and I was to follow with Carl on the train. Mother had us over for our last meal and although Dot may have prepared most of it my mother waited on me and brought me everything. I noted it at the time and was impressed but I do not think she ever knew that.

A young girl who had been secretary at 2 Erie Street, the pilot plant in Cambridge, was to go with Carl and me on the train to Conneaut as I was already at the physically awkward stage in my pregnancy with Peter. So we

took a night train and had to have a sleeper etc. That was quite a trip in the summer heat and I certainly was happy when the train pulled into the Erie Station and there was Papa and Mike too to meet us.

The house in Conneaut, when we reached it, was another matter. In those days housing in that city was scarce. This was the only place the bank had been able to find for us. (They were the people who had convinced us to establish the new plant there and had been good enough to guarantee housing for us). An elderly widow had lived there and all her furniture was still in the house. I really cannot remember how we ever managed during those first days and weeks. There was everything double except for the stove, since it had belonged to the house there. We crawled over and around the two sofas, chairs, dining room tables and whatever. It was very hot and the humidity so high that salt spilled on the metal kitchen table turned immediately into a blob of water.

The house was filthy with coal dust so thick it stood out on the walls. But somehow we ate, we slept, we survived. Our friend, the young girl, soon returned to Boston and then I became ill. The doctor that we dug up said I probably had the mumps as Carl had just gotten over them before we left Massachusetts. He was also good enough to inform me that he would not attend me in my pregnancy but he may have given me the name of a doctor in Erie who would.

Then it became necessary for Erich to return to Boston to finish some of the business there. It was decided that Mike would sleep at the house while Erich was gone so that I need not be completely on my own. I remember with what difficulty I got dinner for Erich and a man who was to go with him back to Boston. It seemed an endless task.

It is family history what happened next. In the morning I woke up and heard Mike get up and get ready to go to work. He ate his breakfast at the hotel so I did not have to get that for him. It was very early - and suddenly - that little person gave me one enormous kick, Whang! It frightened me! I wondered should I call to Mike, who had not left yet, to ask him not to leave me alone? What should I do?

Well he was an unmarried man and I decided everything was going to be all right. I remember how my heart quaked as I heard him drive away. At last little Carl woke up and then I got up, got dressed and made our breakfast. Then I began to wonder if the time had come. I phoned the wife of one of the other men who had come out from Boston also to work at the plant. I knew her only slightly but she worked as a practical nurse in the past. When I told her what was going on and she had asked me a few questions she said, "You are going to the hospital right now! Get ready, I will get Mike and we will be there soon." She phoned the plant and told Mike to come. Then she snatched up two clean towels and started to run.

Everything went pretty fast and I remember being worried about poor little Carl. Olive, the ex-practical nurse, said that she and her husband would stay at our house and look after him. It seems to me that I told her over and over not to forget to give him his orange juice and to tell him to drink it every day. I can see him now, my little fellow whom I loved so much, as he was holding onto his back seat of Mike's car as we zoomed those 35 miles to Erie.

We had to stop for a red light and a man standing on the curb shouted to Mike: "Hey Mister, I think your front wheel is coming off." Mike shouted back: "I can't help that now, I am in a hurry." The light changed

and we zoomed on. Thank goodness the man was wrong and we got to the hospital without trouble.

By now it was all like a funny movie. I did not have a room reserved, had never seen the doctor - my first appointment with him had been scheduled for that very afternoon.

Thank goodness Carl knew Mike well and liked him very, very much. In fact Mike was his hero, so maybe that softened the experience. I remember his serious little face and how helpless I felt knowing that there was no way I could explain to him what was happening. I had not expected this situation to occur quite so soon or with Papa absent.

At last the hospital! Olive rushed me right in. Between pains it seemed all very comical. Whoever would have imagined this? At the desk they took one look at me, put me in a wheel chair, took my name and the name of the doctor I had planned to have and the nurse who was pushing the wheel chair started to run with me in the chair. Somehow the wheels were not geared for this amount of speed and CRASH - we bumped right into the cement side wall of the corridor. I nearly bounced out, but did not. When we got started up again we were both hilarious with laughter. My hat was on the side of my head and my overnight bag had nearly flown out of my lap.

Somehow we made it to the delivery room but it was too late for shots or medication. I remember wishing Papa was there or at least near at hand - when suddenly they showed me a moist little puckered face, his eyes closed. We had won the race with the help of many kind people.

P e t e w a s b o r n !

I was awakened by a harsh voice that said: "Here is your lunch. Eat it!" Out of groggy eyes I saw what appeared to be a piece of thin leather on

a plate. There must have been other things too, but the leather is all I remember. I got up on one elbow and started to eat it. What looked like leather turned out to be well done calves liver and it tasted good even if I normally dislike any liver.

Later my surrounding came in focus and I saw that I was in an enormous room with ten hospital beds on each side, all full. There were several colored women. One could see no flowers anywhere! When Olive came to visit me she told me that since I had no room reserved they had had to put me in a 20 bed ward. Some of the women were common law wives, some not even that, and all very very poor.

It was tremendously interesting: a picture graven forever on my mind. No "service" in this ward! At six a.m. or whatever time it was, the doors were thrown open and a nurse like an army sergeant strode in and shouted: "All right girls, sit up! Fold your blanket, put it at the foot of the bed." Without a word each woman sat up, folded her blanket and placed it as directed.

There was food but no frills, no gentle words but all were safe and taken care of. Unfortunately I had been put into a bed, which was the first of the ten on my side. I had only one neighbor. She was older than I, married, mother of I forget how many children, uneducated but very cheerful. This was her vacation from the endless cares of motherhood to a large family.

Mike had sent Erich a telegram to the Copley Square Hotel where he was staying and he hurried back as soon as he could. I can see him now as he came quickly toward me. He was thin, had on a gray suit and hat and carried a bunch of roses. The first words he said were: "Your mother would kill me if she could see where you are!" My mother would have been

upset but I was all right and although Papa pleaded with me to let him get me a private room I did not want to. I had only two days left to stay there and in a private room it is cold and I would have been lonely. In the ward, however, I could see first-hand a side of life that fascinated me because in my protected life I had never imagined that these "goings-on" existed.

I never got to see much of Pete. The nurses had not time for "Ohs and Ahs", just bring 'em in take 'em back. He was smaller than Carl had been, I knew, but his eyelashes were very long and he seemed well formed and had a high intelligent forehead, well-spaced eyes and close neat little ears, a jewel! But I was a bit afraid of taking care of him. It seemed to me it was many years since I took care of Carl at birth instead of only four years.

When we took him home and he began to howl with the colic 24 hours a day, I was horrified - what to do to help him? Carl had not had this problem; his allergies were to show themselves later in his life. Poor Pete was allergic to milk - all kinds of it. He lost weight and we had to leave him at the hospital in Ashtabula, Ohio for almost a week, but then, on a special formula, he grew out of his trouble.

