

# My Dad



## My Dad

Jean Flanigan Wetherbee's Memories of  
her Father, Winfield I. Flanigan

2003



*Jean, Ruth, and Dick Flanigan  
in 1924 before Fay was born*

**Front Cover:** *Perhaps our only family photo:  
Elnora, Fay, Winfield with Laddie (front),  
Jean, Ruth and Dick with goats on family rock (rear)*





My earliest memory that included my father was that of several men sitting under the trees by themselves, talking, laughing and smoking big cigars. I was cuddled up on an uncle's lap. Suddenly, I began screaming because cigar ashes had fallen into one of my eyes. I was snatched by my father, I think, who called Mother to help pour water over my face. Quick thinking.

In later years, whenever an accident occurred, it seemed Dad was there to take charge. My older sister, Ruth, once held her hand too close to the knife bar of a grain binder, someone turned a wheel, the sharp blades moved; Ruth yelled. Dad grabbed her with one arm, held the severed finger in place with his other hand and raced to the car. Off went Dad, Mother, and Ruth to the doctor to get sewed back together.

He was there too when Dick and I one early spring waded in the icy water of the creek and son Dick contracted pneumonia. Every day the doctor came to check on him and every night our parents took turns watching by his bedside. No penicillin in those days. I recall Dad wryly noting (after the crisis was past) that the doctor always made his visit just before lunch and then just happened to get invited to stay for the noon meal for several weeks.

Sister Fay's accident was the worst. She was just a little girl the night she was in our parent's bedroom. She had watched my mother heat a curling iron by hanging it down the chimney of a kerosene lamp. Picking up a celluloid comb, she imitated mother. Everyone else was way out in the dining room. The comb burst into flame and she ran yelling out of the bedroom, across the large living room, past the stairs still hanging on the comb. By that time her sleeve and dress were on fire. Mother

grabbed her and rolled her in a rug. Off to the doctor again. Many nights of rocking and holding and rolling the crib. Her arm was bandaged to the shoulder. I remember Dad making tea every morning, letting it cool and later pouring the tannic acid over her bandage. He definitely believed that nursing and caring was not just a woman's job.

Maybe this sense of responsibility developed early since he had had five younger sisters.



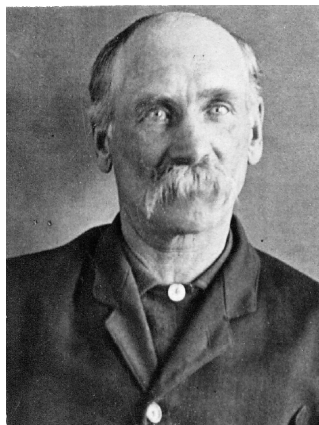
*Gertie, Eva, Myra, Ethel, Blanche, and Winfield Flanigan*

Sadly, he had a father who sometimes came home inebriated. The last time Win saw his father he was angry with him and told his dad to stay away. Soon after that confrontation he joined the navy in 1906, never contacting his father again. That was really very sad even though his father was an alcoholic.

His sisters told us that Dad had continued to send money home to his mother while he was in the navy, after his 1913 marriage, and on through the 20's.



*Winfield, High School*



*Marcellus "Tim" Flanigan*



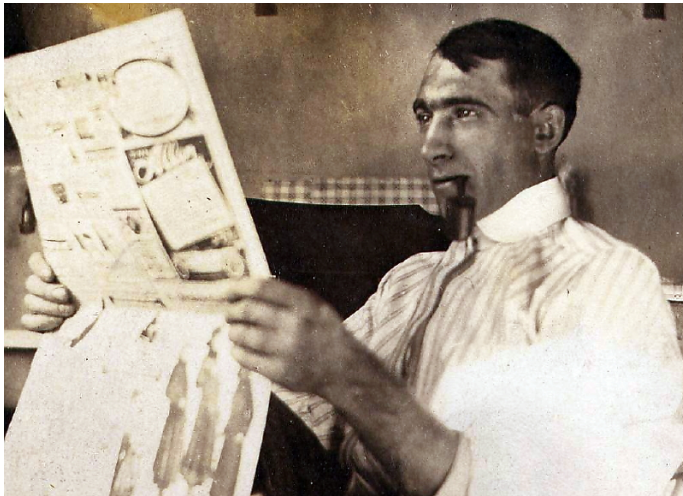
*Emily Parry Flanigan (upper rt. corner)*



Apparently, his father was still able to work even though he had trouble with drink. When Marcellus died in 1927, his pension (as the children agreed) was to be given to his divorced wife, Dad's mother. Two of the children attended the funeral and someone of the family had a belated headstone put on his grave in Manila, Iowa. It showed his nickname: "Tim". I never heard my father mention his father. Wish I had known you, Grandpa.

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The picture of Dad that returns to my mind most often was of his sitting at the far end of our oval oak table reading a magazine.



Behind his shoulder were about three lamps to give enough light to read. Both my mother and father sat half-turned away so that the light came over their shoulders. Mother was either sewing or reading. We four children sat around the sides reading or doing homework.

Dad loved to read. We received a daily paper, the Saturday Evening Post (his favorite), Colliers, Literary Digest, Farm Journal, Good Housekeeping, etc. One of my jobs was to straighten the

four shelves of the Mission oak magazine stand. It took me a good half-day to sort and read and read. I read and re-read all the books in our small library and grew fond of historical fiction by authors that Dad enjoyed: Jack London, Robert Chambers, Charles Dickens, etc.

I remember that at one time the daily paper had a continued story in it. Dad decided to read it aloud to us every night. It was really fun to do that and listen for the next day's episode. All too soon, the story was finished. We begged and Dad started to read the new story. After two days, he decided that the story was too immoral for us to listen to. "No more," he declared. I tried to watch for it but I was only lucky enough to be able to read an occasional excerpt. I figured out it was about a countess from Vienna who loved too many men. Never did figure out what the problem really was. Darn!

Then there was the winter Dad actually played cards with us. Something about 'high,' 'low,' 'jack' and 'the game.' It would have been fun to play more games together, especially in the long winters.

After breakfast, which always included bacon and eggs, hot cakes, bacon, gravy and corn syrup, Dad used to draw Mother out of the kitchen into the dining room. The china closet and the buffet were arranged at right angles from each other, leaving a neat corner place. It was supposed to be just out of sight from us children. Then Dad held Mother and kissed her soundly before beginning the day's work. We peeked sometimes.

During the difficult 1920's and 1930's, keeping enough food on the table for a large family and a hired man must have been a challenge. Our father planted extensive gardens, regularly decapitated the chickens that produced no eggs, and butchered a cow and at least three pigs every winter. We children were kept away from the actual slaughter but our labor was often enlisted for dividing and grinding. No freezer in those days. Most of the beef and chops were packed in canning jars and cooked for hours. The men did all the lifting. We really ate well while many people were hungry during the 30's.

Hams and bacons were packed in the family-recipe brine in huge stone jars down in the cellar for six weeks. Then came the smoking outside over low fires in the little window-less building erected away from the house.

Our very favorite meat was the dried beef that Dad soaked in brine and smoked and hung in a meat room off the pantry. We often carried sliced dried beef in our school lunch boxes. In the one-room schoolhouse situated across six fields and down the road, other children used to beg to swap store-bought cookies for those tasty red slices. I still am drawn to those chocolate marshmallow cookies on store shelves. I now know it wasn't an even swap!

In all these labors, my father was the quiet organizer and director with my mother a cooperative first lieutenant. His intense dark blue eyes were confident and he used few words. He expected us to obey and we did. The hired man and Dad naturally did the heavy tasks. There was some times a little laughter mixed with orders. No singing or whistling, however. Years later, on college entrance exams, I was to be labeled tone deaf, with little or no aptitude for music. Maybe, I inherited that? Fortunately, I had other gifts.



*Fay (right), Jean (middle) and friend with horses about 1939 in front of the cheese factory on the farm*

Dad liked his horses. Ginger (that was his color) and Joe (who was white) were the large dependable team. Tom and Parker, the second team, were real individuals. We were allowed to saddle the beautiful gentle sorrel, Tom. Dad had to remind us to be careful when passing homes of neighbors. You see, Tom had been a mailman's horse and he was determined to stop near every house. Sometimes he won and sometimes we won.

I think Dad felt a kindred spirit with Parker who supposedly had some mustang blood. That horse bit and kicked whenever he could. He opened locked wooden gates and could run like the wind. Dad usually had an extra pat or slap for him. It was Tom who adapted to pulling the ropes that lifted hay into the loft. If left up to Parker, he would have started and stopped only when he wanted to. Somehow, Dad trained Parker to help drive the cows back to the barn. Parker was able to place a well-planned nip here or there to encourage the girls along.



*Dick with Ruth (left) & Frances Conover & Fay on horses*

I remember finally being old enough to lead a horse (Tom, of course) hitched to a one-row cultivator in the garden. Dad steered the cultivator and gave exact, successful commands. No room for "please" or "thank you." I suppose we children realized even then that the gardens fed us too. We were needed, a part of a team.

There was a certain amount of enjoyment or fulfillment in working together. Carrying cans of water to 100+ dry tomato plants went by rather fast while several people dipped and dumped. Potato bug picking by the group was endurable. After supper and the heat of the day, we were taught to gather ripe tomatoes and cucumbers, and the vegetables for the meals for tomorrow.

I recall being pleased when I was finally able to move down a row, hoeing in time and keeping up with my father in the next row. Step by step, chop by chop.

Sure, we sometimes got tired of picking beans or husking corn. The messiest job, as I recall, was canning corn. Dad, the hired man, and Dick gathered the ears and piled them on the lawn. Everybody but Mother husked. She was preparing the canning jars with perhaps one helper scrubbing and scalding the containers. Meanwhile, outdoors, an occasional corn borer had to be done away with. Then, we girls sliced the kernels from the cobs. Mother packed the pint canning jars tightly with raw corn. The full jars were placed in a long oblong rack; Dad lifted the heavy load over the stove into a copper wash boiler—half-filled with boiling water.

Outside, another load was being prepared. As soon as one load had boiled long enough, the men raised the cans by loops on the rack. Mother used holders and turned the hot jars upside down on heavy towels. Finally, the last ear was husked and stripped. Clean up time! Corn, sticky corn, everywhere! On the tables, the chairs, the floors. Gratefully, we scrubbed all surfaces and were almost done.



Dick and the hired man were sent outside to begin the evening chores. Dad usually stuck with us through cleaning. Did I mention the flies? Constant door-openings tempted them to seek the raw sweet corn.

After the last scrubbing was done, Dad grabbed the home-made chasers (short poles with strips of flour sacking tied to the end) and chased the flies out the door that I was holding open. The very last step was spraying to finish off the last of the critters.

Still, that corn tasted great. There had to be at least two or maybe three corn-canning days to provide a can a week for those times when there was no fresh produce.

I didn't realize until I was older that all fathers didn't help with canning and preserving as much as Dad did. Did he learn that as the oldest child in his mother's family? I don't know, and he never mentioned his childhood.

We were never hungry during the depression. Often our produce was shared with visitors. When an aunt and uncle lost their business, they ate the evening meal with us. It was years later before I realized that those meals were more than social. Later, those same relatives were to help us when there was an opportunity.

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My mother's sister Alice and her husband Stuart Perry lived in the town of Canajoharie in a



beautiful house on Moyer Street. They were next door to historic Fort Rensselaer. There were bedrooms and sleeping porches upstairs. I remember the stone railing along the sidewalk where we used to walk.

We always spent Christmas Day at Aunt Alice and Uncle Stuart's house with an elaborate meal (black service plates) and lots of gifts for us children. Each of us was invited to stay a week with them during the summer. They let Dick and I stay together so we wouldn't get homesick. At night, no crickets or peepers but lots of strange motors. Sometimes we went to band concerts in the part. We ate breakfast on off-white dishes with painted nasturtiums.

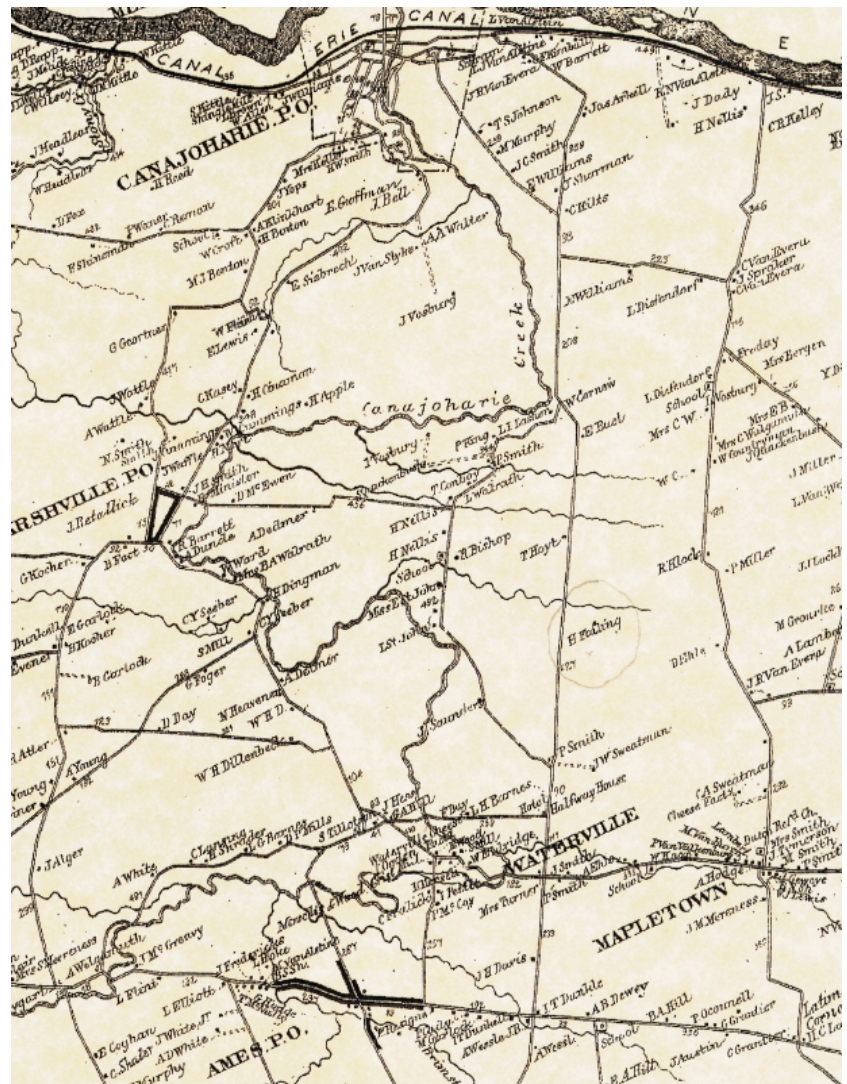
Our parents seemed to communicate to us children that our family was somehow better than the neighbors who lived in the circle that included the Mapletown one-room schoolhouse. Mother pointed out that at least five of the adjacent farms had once been a part of the original patent that my great-grandfather had secured. Two of the farms had been deeded to daughters (and their husbands) and other land had been purchased outright by neighbors. Mother and Dad pointed out that they were the only college graduates in the area. "Remember who you are," we were told.

In that little school, there were four of us in my grade, 2 girls and two boys. A generation later, two offspring of those four were high school valedictorians. Neither of them had a drop of Flanigan blood.

Later, when my husband Bernard and I took over the family farm, I became re-educated. Bernard took time to get to know and respect those independent, capable families. Too bad Dad and Mom didn't really get acquainted with those interesting individuals.

The Edelmeyers, who lived on a neat little farm next door, did get close to us. Mrs. Edelmeyer always seemed to sense when Mother needed help. That tiny, 95 pound woman scurried over from next door to help with sick children, scrub floors, help feed the threshers or silo-fillers, can produce, or change babies. Dad had real respect for her. Sometimes she was hired to help but she would have helped anyway. She seldom laughed but a twinkle in her eye revealed a sense of humor. We children were welcomed often at her house as we sat on the front steps munching a fresh-baked cookie or two.

Dad had less patience for Henry, Mrs. Edelmeyers' husband. He'd wander over to our farm regularly watching work in progress or just family activities. He used a cane and persistently kept track of things at our place. In spite of himself, Dad became fond of this neighbor and "supervisor". I can't think of my childhood on that family farm without including the Edelmeyers.





Another neighbor was "Uncle" Amundaeus Lasher. He was related to my great grandfather's (Henry Failing's) third wife Eliza. Harvey Failing called him cousin. He lived a mile below our farm. He lived very frugally and was considered a miser.

Mother and Dad took him to live with them for six weeks before he died. He liked children and we loved him. I remember his making us little baskets by fastening burdocks together. When he died it was discovered that he had about \$40,000 in the bank which went to his cousins. Mother and Dad were surprised since they could hardly get a nickel out of him to get medicine, doctor's help, or food.

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At the close of my junior year in high school, I was awarded five dollars for getting the highest Regents score in English for that year. I was surprised when Dad took me aside to tell me that he was proud of me. Rare praise, indeed. Still, we always knew, we were to do our best at school.

My brother Richard and my older sister Ruth used to fight a lot. From my present viewpoint, I now think they both competed and both rather enjoyed the combat. One day I remember Dad got really tired of trying to separate them. He went up to the attic, grabbed a pair of boxing gloves he'd used in the navy and told the two that he wanted them to fight it out. Because Ruth was four years older, he tied one of her hands behind her back, put two gloves on Dick, and told them to go for it. By that time, both were wary of this new method of discipline. I remember Dick started crying but the bout was continued a little while. As for me, the observer and the eternal coward, I was frightened out of my mind. As I recall this event didn't lessen the daily bickering.

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In 1927 my mother, Uncle Stuart and Aunt Alice drove down to Luke, Maryland to visit their brother Henry who was the manager of the West Virginia Pulp and Paper Co.

I suspect that Ruth and Dick did the fighting and were sometimes separated to keep the peace. Aunt Maggie (never married) and her sister Lizzie Ehle (Henry Failing's first and only daughter married an Ehle who lived on the adjacent farm on the Mapletown road to the east of the family farm) stayed with Win and us children while the others took the trip to Maryland. My dad wrote my Mother a great loving letter below. I remember he used to call her "Old Top."



*Sunday*

*Sweetheart- Everyone in bed but Dad. Stuart has been keeping us informed as to your progress down thru Penn. including your tire trouble. He called Maggie today and told her about calling Henry up and that you landed in Luke yesterday. Harvey and I have been working on the shed but haven't made much progress yet as the rain held us up two half days.*

*Maggie and Eliza and the kids have been along all right. An occasional scrap between the kids once in awhile that I have to stop. Dick, Fay and I were up to Harvey's today for dinner and Dick and Fay stayed with Mrs. Ingram while Harvey [Ingram] and I picked a few berrys on the hill.*

*It sure is lonesome here without you Old Top.*

*Give my regards to everyone and have a good time.*

*Your Own  
Win.*



This photograph shows Fay (sitting) and, clockwise, me, our cousin George Failing (Henry's son), Ruth, and Dick. We are standing around my favorite family rock. Later it was dragged on a stone boat and put over the well in front of the house.

George spent the summer with us (around 1930) and was always full of mischief. The whole family took an outing to pick blackberries in a swamp a few miles away. George filled his large pail with leaves and covered the top 3 or 4 inches with berries. Dad applauded him for picking faster than anyone else. We took a goat (named Trouble) along and she followed like a puppy, carefully selecting an occasional berry to clasp with her lips and then gobble.

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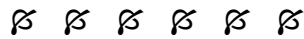
When I was almost eleven, Uncle Howard who lived in Scarsdale and commuted to work in New York City, invited me to spend the summer at his home. I was about the age of his daughter Anne and her parents thought I would be good company for her. They motored to Canajoharie to pick me up. I crawled into the far side of the back seat of their car. I turned around and saw Dad crawling in after me. I was startled, thinking something was wrong. He put his arms around me to give me a hug good-bye. It was so unexpected. I know my parents loved me, but hugs were few and far between. A different generation!

On that visit to pick me up at the farm, my Aunt Flora, Uncle Howard, and cousin Anne were delighted with the new baby goats. So along with my cousin and me, there rode a frisky little kid. The houses in Scarsdale had a lot of large rocks in their dooryards and that little goat pranced up and down and bleated loudly early every morning. So the little goat, Nonsense, had to be moved to the home of a farmer nearby. Too bad.



In front of our house there was a grape arbor that had great grapes for marmalade.

These photographs show the sidewalk between the arbor and porch looking out past the large rock that had been put on the well. In the field there are bundles of oats shocked up, waiting for the threshing machine.



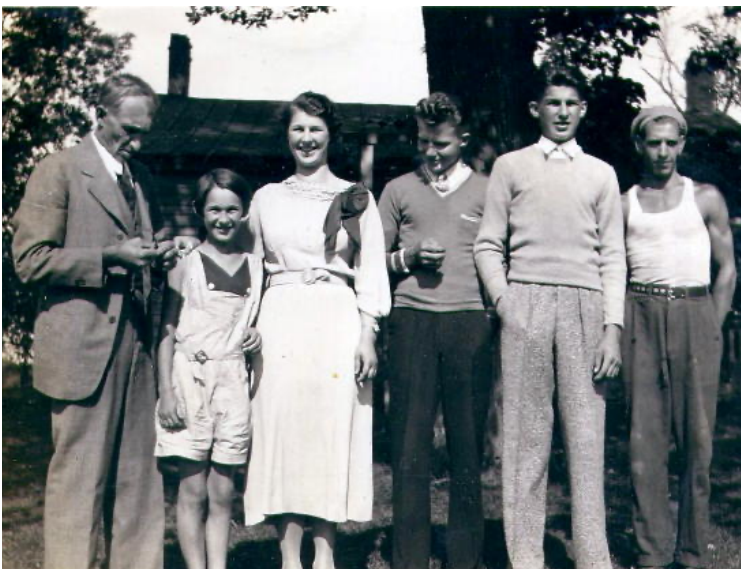
One year Dad decided to get more money by raising a cash crop. He chose the richest soil, an acre or two that edged the creek that flowed across the flats below the house and next to the road. Along toward the end of June, he plowed that black dirt up, marked it into squares with a harrow. At each cross point he dug a large shallow hole. Into each hole, he shoveled barn manure, added fertilizer and a layer of dirt. On top of that he scattered dry squash seeds that had been scraped out of several squash and dried on top of a high cupboard. Those seeds were then lightly covered with soil. The warm sun and the July showers sprouted the seeds and the project was on. Only a few harrow trips and a one-time weeding by hand kept the plants growing. Oh, yes, let's not forget the spraying to get rid of pesky squash bugs. By early September, there were lots of large and small green fruit under the large leaves along the vines.

Just after the first frost, the whole family except mother went out to gather the harvest. Hay was spread on the bed of a hay wagon and the squash carefully laid on the flat surface. It took several trips from the field to the barn to bring the squash to rest on a layer of hay above the stables.

Here, for a few weeks, the hubbards matured, ranging from 3 or 4 pounds to 15 pounds or more each. Then on Saturdays, Dad and Dick loaded a small pick-up truck with the produce and a scale. For several autumns in a row, they visited every street of three valley towns and also the tiny town of Ames, New York. They knocked on doors or rang bells to tell the house wives that it was "squash time" again.

The squash was ready to sell. The cost was 3¢ a pound for the little ones and 2 1/2¢ a pound for the large ones. Dad also provided recipes and directions on how to store squash so that the vegetables could last all winter. After several seasons, the housewives waited to buy from Squash Flanigan. Dick (or I if I chanced along) got 1% of our sales. Change for our pockets!

Dad got enough money from this cash crop to pay the taxes every fall and provide our winter clothes. I still recall his lining us all up – Mother, too – in a row in the shoe store and saying, "Shoes and boots for everyone!"



"It's quite a family you have," the clerk replied. Dad's eyes had a pleased twinkle in them. True to form, he made no answer.

*About 1937, Win, Fay, Ruth, Johnnie Oviatt, Dick, and Ernie Bobolin (hired man)*



Most of the time, Dad and Mother worked well together with meals exactly on time, excursions planned together, children relegated to certain jobs. However, for a few years, about once a month, just when the paltry depression milk check arrived, there was an explosion. Dad wanted more money to run the farm and mother wanted more money for the house. Voices rose and, to my childish ears, seemed to go on forever. I was frightened but didn't seem able to go away and hide so I couldn't hear. It's strange, later, when I asked my adult siblings if they remembered, they didn't especially recall. I do remember seeing tears in Dad's eyes after one really bad session. Once a month, and then all was peace again. Strange, strange.

My mother told me that Dad had become disillusioned with church while he was in the navy. He and his buddies went into a large church, sat down ready for the service to open when a couple came in and said, "You're in our pew!" The blue jackets got up and left. Dad stopped going to church. In thinking it over, I think his anger had started earlier when his parents separated while he was in college. They divorced about that time and Dad joined the navy lacking one year to earn his degree as an engineer. He told us he finished his course in the navy. I haven't been able to get official confirmation of this. His enlistment began as an electrician, 3<sup>rd</sup> class and was soon changed to an electrician 1<sup>st</sup> class. Does that tell the story? I don't know. (I finally was able to get the records of his service that verified that his first five months of service were spent getting his degree.)

As we children grew older, we attended daily vacation Bible school, and then Sunday school. Dad and Mother began attending too, though they were not too deeply involved.



Win's enlistment in the navy happened at an exciting time in history. The optimistic president, Theodore Roosevelt, planned the famous trip around the world by the Great White Fleet which left Hampton Roads, Virginia in December of 1907 and returned there in February of 1909. Our father owned a camera and had learned to develop his own photographs from glass negatives. For nearly a century, those glass negatives have been carted from place to place along with other souvenirs that he collected on that long voyage. He did write a diary as they cruised from San Francisco back to Virginia.

Included with the other materials he gathered was a roll of duplicate world maps that showed in red the day-by-day route as the sixteen battleships circled the globe. When Dick, my brother, and I were small, I remember that our father would paste one of those maps up on the wall just above the wide baseboard. There on the floor back of the warm stove, we'd crouch and play "map" for hours. One of us would choose a place and the other had to point to the location. When one detailed map became worn, another fresh one was fastened right over the top.

Both of us learned to love geography, being especially attracted to all kinds of maps. It's sad that only one of those treasured maps survives. Too bad we didn't save the one autographed by Admiral Sperry.

Our oldest sister, Ruth, used to contrive ways to prompt Dad to talk about his trip. Since he was not a waster of words, this was quite a challenge. Dad would expound about the boxing contest for all the blue jackets in San Francisco, beautiful Hawaii, the friendly inhabitants down under, the sports practiced on board, and his comrades who served with him on board the flagship, the Connecticut.



*Win (2<sup>nd</sup> row, 2<sup>nd</sup> from let) pointing at Baldy Oviatt*

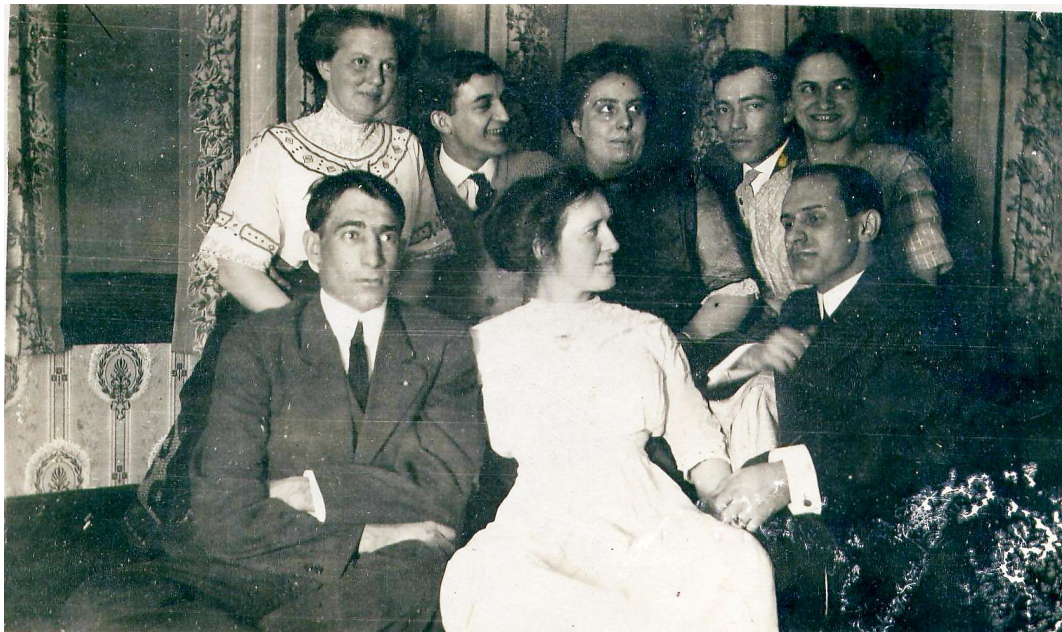


He treasured those memories but didn't follow up on the lives of his fellow "blue jackets" except for "Baldy" Oviatt. Baldy died in the early thirties and his wife Henrietta was left to raise their two sons, John and Winfield. She asked if teen-aged John could stay on the farm for a summer. We enjoyed John that season and he and his brother returned on their motorcycle for a visit just before Dad died.

I recall that in his diary, Win wrote that Baldy and he were on leave in the western Pacific (for several days). Someone who didn't want little eyes to see the account tore two pages out—so there were four missing days in the diary. How we'd love to know what happened. Maybe, those two pages pictured his most exciting days on that long cruise.

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*Winfield, Elnora (on left in front) with friends in New Jersey*

After Father and Mother Nora were married in 1913, I think he worked for Terry Steam Turbine near New York City. During World War I, Mother told about how Dad repaired the early small submarines and then, by himself (?) would take a run down to Sandy Hook along the Atlantic shore to see if all was in working order. She seemed to think that those thirty-hour shifts affected his health.





Once when Win was working for another company, he was moved up to a better position in the company. When he found out that an older man had been discharged so that he could be promoted, he was furious and immediately resigned. After that, I think that he then worked for Singer Sewing Machine. There was a move to Hartford, Connecticut and Ruth, their first child, was born there.

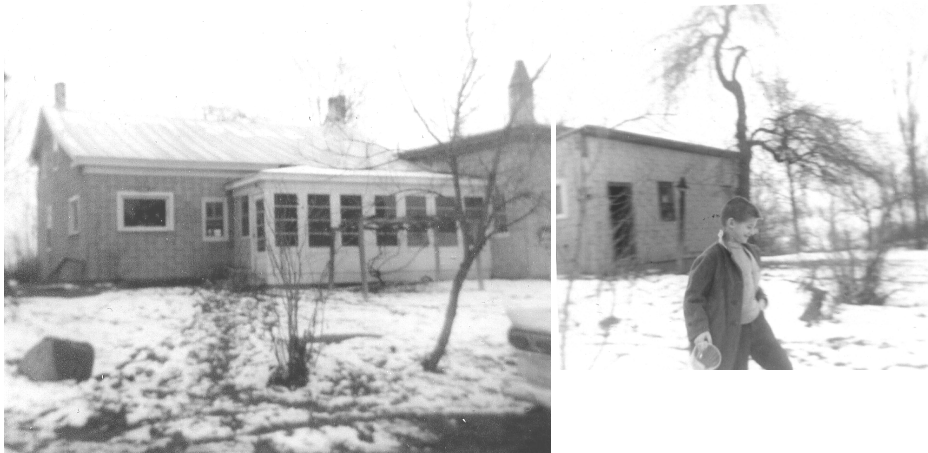


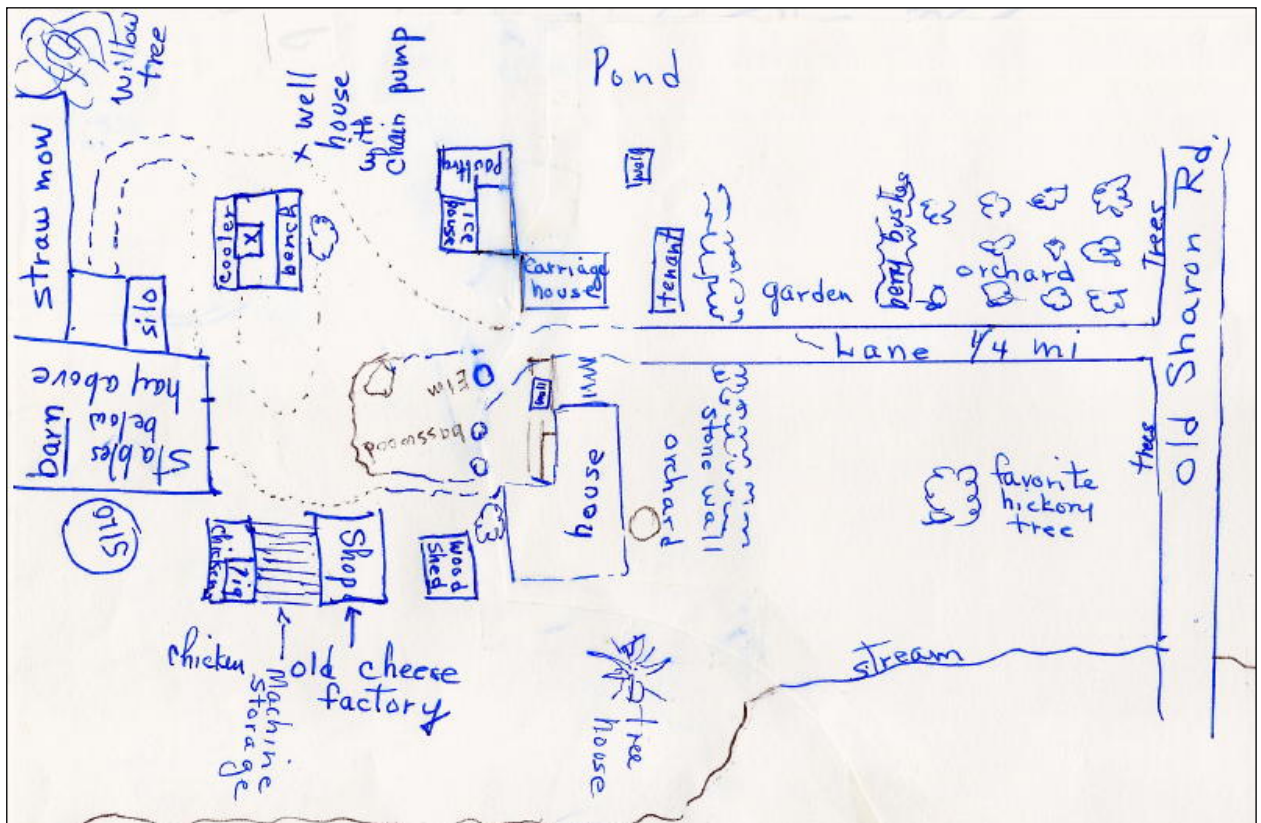
*Winfield Flanigan with wife Nora (Elnora) and daughter, Ruth*

He became prone to serious sinus infections. He had some sort of operation on his sinuses and the doctor recommended that he should have a "fresh air" occupation. That probably prompted his move to the family farm in upstate New York. He sometimes struggled with hay fever although he seldom complained about it.

They moved to the Mohawk Valley around 1918. Mother's grandfather, Henry Failing, had secured a land grant and built the saltbox house, barn, and other buildings himself.

There was a tenant house on the farm not far from our house where hired men and sometimes their families had lived through the years.





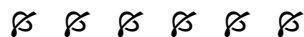
Winfield invited his sister Ethel and her husband and small children to come from Iowa to live in the tenant house and share in the farm work. He also invited his mother to live on the farm, too. Maybe Grandmother lived in the main house. I don't know how long they stayed but I suspect that she and Mother, both strong-willed women, didn't get along. Anyway, back to Iowa for Grandmother Emily.

Grandmother Emily Parry

I recall that Dad was the guardian of our Christmas candy. In the 20's, organizations used to give a small box of hard candy to every child each year. I can still picture the ribbon candy, mints, and especially tiny logs that had a picture made inside them. Every year, the Sunday School, the Grange, and the little country school had Santa jingle his bells, ho-ho-ho, and hand each child a box. Just so we wouldn't stuff and kill ourselves, Dad gathered and hid the treasures and slowly doled them out.



Dad and Ruth with horses (earlier than Ginger & Joe) in front of woodshed, with Laddie, our shepherd dog.



Oh, yes, going to school a mile away in the winter! I don't recall a "snow-day" ever declared as my own children were to be offered years later. Nope, when it snowed, Dad hitched up Ginger and Joe to his "jumper" sleigh and carried us to school.

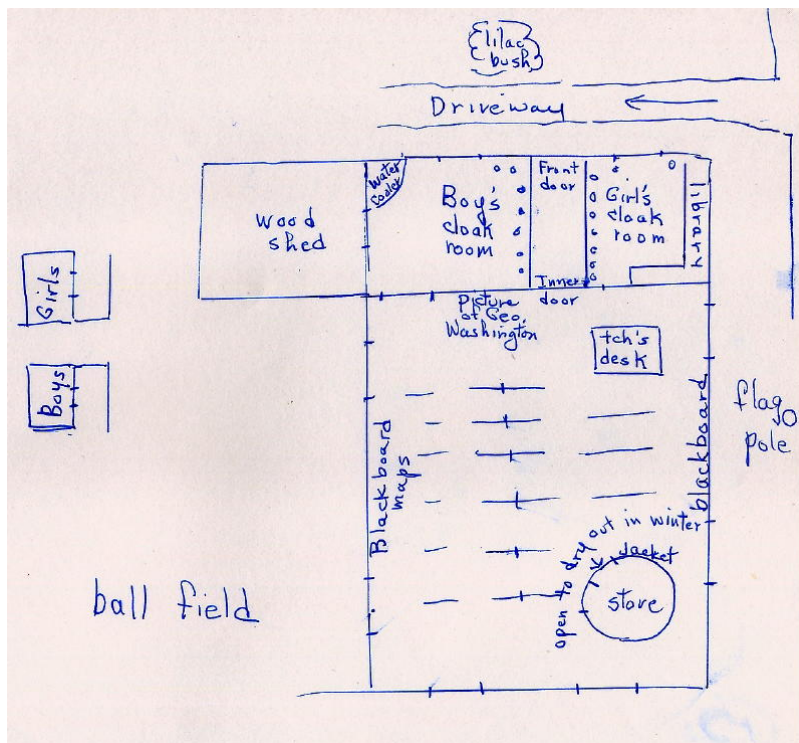
In those days, farmers used long sleighs to drag logs out of the woods. On each sleigh, were two separate bob sleds, one at each end of a long platform. The sled in the back was fixed. The front sled had a semicircle attached to the tongue that allowed the sleigh to turn easily on metal. Win harnessed the horses to a large box fastened on the front sled, filled the floor with hay, tossed a couple of bear skin rugs on board, pulled on his fur hat with ear flaps, donned a long buffalo skin coat and invited us on board. We were snuggled together with hot soap stones at our feet. Those stones had been heated in the oven of the huge black kitchen range.

Off we went down the long driveway, crossed the road, and slid through seven or eight fields until we reached a parallel road on which was built the Maple Hill Schoolhouse. As we traveled down that road, other pupils hopped into the box sled too. How wonderful it seemed if the "jumper" appeared at four o'clock when school was over.

If the weather had warmed, sometimes Mother with her white hair and rosy cheeks came driving up, carefully avoiding the lilac bush that old white Joe, with his blind eye, sometimes side-swiped. Unbelievable, no mile-long walk home that night.



Early one day at school, Dick was sitting near the large heater. Mr. Abel, the teacher, and the pupils began to notice a strange smell. Our brother confessed that he had surprised a skunk near the barn that morning. "Please, go home for the day," was the teacher's order. Everybody was relieved. Dick had a free day and the others were free of the horrible smell.



*Drawing of Maple Hill Schoolhouse, west of the farm on Maple Hill Road*

Pupils in that little one-room schoolhouse attended from grade one through grade eight. Then we were expected to go to high school in Canajoharie four miles away. Transportation was a responsibility of the parents. Sometimes Dad paid a neighbor who drove an early wooden-sided station wagon to pick up neighborhood students. One winter Ruth and Dick stayed with Aunt Maggie and Aunt Lizzie at their Maple Street home so they could go to the high school. The aunts tried to keep the young people happy with cookies and love. It was a big change from life on the farm, I'm sure.



In the thirties, there was a milk strike in the Mohawk Valley. My father was adamantly against strikes, thinking they were socialist in origin. He held offices at times in the Grange, the local dairy association and the Farm Bureau. I still recall words he used like "the middle man," "cooperative," etc.

During the strike, some of the local farmers, even some of whom who were sympathetic to the strike, banded together and guarded the two gateways to the farm to protect Dad. This quiet man had been quite verbal in his opposition to this method of raising milk prices. In fact, the strikers had seized his milk cans and dumped the milk several times. The neighbors watched his gates several nights, without his

knowledge. However, one morning a group of strikers arrived and started yelling at Dad. He tried to tell them how wrong they were. One man picked up a sledgehammer and threatened my father with it. Mother immediately stepped forward and with her schoolteacher manner and raised finger, declared, "Now, young man, you put that right down!" And, he did.

After the middle of the thirties the government offered subsidies to farmers for not raising 20 acres of a grain crop. Dad didn't plant the 20 acres as requested but refused to accept the cash offered. "Against my principles," he stated.

A year or so later, he was squeezed against a building by an enraged bull. He was able to escape but felt that that was the beginning of his ill health. It became harder for him to accomplish what he had always done. This was a threat to his pride. His independence was threatened.

A year or so earlier, a new pastor, Albert Eisenhart, came to the Ames church. On a visit to the farm, he found Dad taking a tractor apart. Pastor Eisenhart put his hands right in and began to help. It seemed that he loved machines and engines too. For several days, they enjoyed working together. During those hours, they talked about machinery and also about God. During the process, Dad committed his life to God again (as indeed, he had in his youth).

He attended church with his whole heart, trusted his Savior, and even taught a Sunday school class on angels. I remember the only public prayer I ever heard him make in that church. Simple just like Dad, the words were: "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want."



The fall of that year, my first in college, Dad was diagnosed with stomach cancer. Finally his doctor decided he needed to go to the Lahey Clinic in Boston to have an operation. Dad wasn't able to drive; Dick didn't have the right license; Mother didn't drive. There were no blood banks in those days and the doctors wanted blood donors on hand. Pastor Eisenhart decided to drive the family to Boston. Everyone went except me (I was a little miffed, I think). I stayed home to run the farm with Ernie, the hired man.

The children came back after the operation and Mother stayed on in Boston to be near Dad for six weeks. To help fill in the hours, she sketched flowers and other plants in Arnold's Arboretum. (She was an art teacher, remember?)



The doctors removed three-quarters of Dad's stomach and the recovery was very slow. His weight got down to less than 90 pounds. Early in that summer of 1938, he decided he wanted to go camping. He chose a lake that could only be reached by foot. The family helped him pitch a tent, build a fireplace, and brought the supplies he needed. Mother certainly didn't want him to go but finally agreed if at least one child stayed with him.

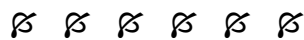


I remember during my turn that he cooked the fish he'd caught that day. That night there was a scratching overhead.

"Jean, go out and chase that porcupine away. He'll chew the ropes and the tent will collapse." I remember, I didn't want to go—no matter what kind of creature it was. I crept out and sort of slapped at the tent but I didn't want to know or see what was out there. After all, bears had jaws and porcupines had quills, didn't they?

I crept back into the tent and the intruder, whatever he was, left. I was thankful. We went back to the farm.

A few weeks later, my mother woke us in the middle of the night, to tell us that Dad was gone.



Two pictures of Dad's funeral day have stayed in my memory. In the thirties, it was the custom to display the diseased at the family home for a few hours before the memorial service at the church. I remember that about thirty relatives, friends and neighbors filled our living room around the coffin. The creamery operator invited Dick and I outside and we all climbed into the front seat of his vehicle. He spent about half an hour talking to us about the discussions and moments of laughter he had shared with Dad, how Dad related to the members and displayed good leadership. I can't remember his face or name but I haven't forgotten how his kind and gentle words reached us.

We went inside and my only recollection of that experience still amuses me a little. Aunt Lizzie Ehle, almost totally deaf, was sitting in the back of the room. She couldn't gauge how loudly she was speaking. Above all the murmurs, we heard her words, "He just worked himself to death. He always had to be taking care of someone." I think you were probably close to the truth, Aunt Lizzie.





Occasionally, I wonder what kind of an adult relationship Dad and I might have had if he had lived longer. Would he have been interested in why I wanted to teach? Would he have liked my husband and rocked my children? I hope so. Gone to basketball games and little league meets? I'm sure, of course, he would have been right there on the bleachers.



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