

# SHARING OUR STORIES

VOLUME I

Excerpts from Conversations with Some of Windsor's Long-Time Residents

OCTOBER 2020



## CATHY HALL

*Catherine Sturtevant Hall lives on Flintstone Road, just a couple of miles from the house on Route 9 where she grew up with her parents, brothers and sister. She remembers a childhood of outdoor play and hard work, and a family that functioned as a team.*

### There were the Barn Chores . . .

“We had to pick stones and weeds out of the garden every morning — none of us enjoyed that. We raised enough cattle to have our own milk and beef, so we had barn chores. And then during hay season, when Dad got home from work and on weekends, we were in the hayfields. We mowed for other people in town. Whatever you were big enough to do you did, whether it was stack bales of hay, drive a truck, or drive a tractor.”

### Lots of Time Spent Outdoors . . .

“During playtime we were off in the woods climbing trees, exploring, building, hiking . . . (In winter) we would hike over half a mile to our favorite sledding hill and slide all morning, come home for lunch and dry mittens, and go back out until just about dark . . . I just loved fall, I loved to go hiking in the fall even as a kid. As a teenager, just to say, ‘I’ve had enough of it around here,’ and just

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take off up through the woods — we knew the trails, we knew where we were going . . . never gave a thought as to

whether there were bears or bobcats or anything else, you just went in the woods and forgot about everybody.”

### School Days at Windsor's Crane Community School . . .

“There were two school buses in town. One of them covered from Notchview or thereabouts towards Dalton, and one went way out to Windsor Bush. If you lived near the school you had a short ride, but if you lived further away, it was very long because you went up and down every side road. There weren’t that many kids, but they lived all over town.”

“I can’t say I loved school, but I think the teachers were good . . . it was helpful having multiple grades in a classroom. If you were ahead of the program, you could listen in to what the next grade up was learning, and if you struggled with something there was always reinforcement as the teacher taught a lower level . . . I loved recess. It was my favorite part of the day. We went outside just about every day. We had a huge swing set and slide. There was kickball. As we got older, we girls would sit around in little groups under the lilac bushes and chat away.”

### And Showing at 4-H and Summer Fairs.

“My brothers showed dairy and beef cattle, and I entered my clothing. On Friday mornings we would make a trip to whichever fair to bring my sewing.

Friday night or Saturday morning my dad would make two trips with the truck carrying cattle. Saturday afternoon, two trips to bring back the cattle, and Sunday afternoon, go pick up my sewing and whatever trophies anyone had won.”



Programs from past agricultural fairs in western Massachusetts (collection of Windsor Historical Commission).

“I think the year started with Littleville, then Middlefield, Cummington, Hancock, a 4H fair, Great Barrington, and ended up with Blandford around Labor Day. . . every week just about, from the 4th of July. We’d be out there on Fridays scrubbing the cattle to get them all clean and shiny.”



## DICK JACOBS

*Richard Middleton Jacobs, born in Windsor in 1948, remembers the rhythms of a Windsor farm, helping out his grandparents, Middleton “Mid” Richard and Mildred Jacobs, at their place on East Windsor Road (on land most recently owned by the Finkelsteins), just up the road from where Dick grew up.*

### We Planted Potatoes . . .

“There was a machine. You’d ride on the back of it and there was a wheel where all the potatoes would sit. Mostly they would feed into the wheel automatically. You sat on the back of it, and if one of the slots was empty, you’d put a potato in it. While you did that, your feet were on a set of pillars that you pushed down on (to make the potatoes drop into the furrow) . . . and the guy in front had a bucket of fertilizer he was pouring at a steady rate into the furrow. The furrower in the back would hill it up as it went along.” The end result? “Sixteen rows of potatoes, as far as you could see . . . We always had plenty of potatoes.”

**“Sixteen rows of potatoes, as far as the eye could see . . . we always had plenty of potatoes.”**

### Hayed the Fields . . .

“We didn’t have a baler right away. We had a loader hooked behind a truck. It would bring the hay up and put it in the back of the truck and we’d have to tread it. Treading means to pack it down. It would all kind of weave in together, you could get more in the truck that way. Eventually we went to a baler. We’d just pick up the bales and throw them up on the truck.”

### Then Harvested the Potatoes . . .

“It was a mighty big task . . . It probably took three weekends. We had a potato digger that would dig them up, sift the dirt off, and lay the potatoes in a row. That made it easier for us to pick them up. We had these wire baskets and the dirt would sift right through. You’d fill those up and and put them in a bag and at the end of the day we’d pick all the bags up and bring them home.”



Mid and Mildred Jacobs' Farmhouse on East Windsor Road (August 1968 photo, courtesy of Dick Jacobs).

*Dick remembers harvesting evergreen boughs for the holiday market, and then there was a winter pause until the highlight, from a child’s perspective, of maple sugaring time.*

### And Welcomed Sugaring Season.

“My grandfather hired a guy to go around and drill the trees . . . Then we’d put in the spigots and the buckets, and we’d start going around once the sap started running. My grandfather had a tractor and a trailer and gathering tub, and we’d go through the woods, and we

kids would run and get the buckets and dump them in it . . . when it was full we’d bring it back to the sugar house. He had an evaporator and we got to see the whole process. The smell of the sugar

**“After sugaring season, my grandfather would always put on a sugar eat. You boil the syrup so it’s almost like caramel and you pour it on snow, then pick it off with a fork to eat.”**

house . . . it was warm inside. We really enjoyed that. After sugaring season, my grandfather would always put on a sugar eat. You boil the syrup so it’s almost like caramel and you pour it on snow, then pick it off with a fork to eat. You had crackers and pickles and a whole bunch of other stuff with it, that was a fun time for us kids.”



Mildred and Mid Jacobs, Dick’s grandparents (undated, courtesy of Dick Jacobs).

*Thanks to the Central Berkshire Fund of Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation for making this project possible!*

