

RURAL DANVERS

By Kathryn J. Morano

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In the 30's, long before I was born, my grandfather, William Earl Clay, would milk the cows, hitch the horses to the wagon, and deliver fresh milk to his Danversport neighbors. That must have been a fairly common sight back then. By the time I was growing up in the fifties, most home deliveries were made by truck, although I do remember once a man with a horse and cart sharpening knives and scissors, and my grandmother running out of the house to buy a haddock from a fish monger's cart.

The home I first lived in as a child was an upstairs apartment at 40 River St, owned by the Wilkins family, a house which has since been torn down. Also gone are the chickens and the coops in the backyard along with the horse that I was allowed to offer an apple to occasionally. A couple of years later, when we moved to Purchase St., my parents removed the chicken coops that were in that backyard. Across the street lay Wrest Farm, now the location for several new homes, condos, medical and office buildings, banks, a motel, and the Liberty Tree Mall, which, along with the Woodvale development, virtually put an end to rural Danvers.

Nevertheless, before Wrest Farm and Cherry Hill Farm got sold off for development, I got to experience some of agricultural Danvers. Looking out the front window, I could see a lone cow tethered near the road. We children were warned to keep out of kicking distance of it. In the fall, teams of men and horses would arrive to cut and bale the hay from the fields. Sometimes, my mother would send me to ride my bike up to the farm on Sylvan St. to buy a dozen ears of newly ripened corn. However, what gave me the most joy, was a visit to Cherry Hill Farm dairy to watch the milk production going on in the barns and to wander around the lush green expanse on a beautiful summer day.

Today, one can still go berry-picking at Connor's Farm, or stop in for fresh vegetables at Clark Farm. There is a man with a tractor who harvests a crop at the Rebecca Nurse Homestead, and families can visit the animals at Endicott Park, almost lost to developers until a group of concerned Danvers citizens said "enough!" to the loss of historic properties such as John Greenleaf Whittier's Oak Knoll on Summer St., and saved historic Glen Magna and its surrounding land. Unfortunately, most of what remains of rural Danvers is just a memory, and once those people are gone, the only vestige of Danvers' rural past will be found in books.