

*The "Kelley Place." House built by Joshua Hulett, ca. 1815.
Barns and sheds built ca. 1890. Photo probably from 1920s.*

The Kelley Family Farm

Kelley Hill Road, Pawlet, Vermont

by Betty J. Kelley Daly

The following is based on Town Records, family records and traditions.

The People

According to Hulett family records, the Huletts arrived from England on the ship Hercules to Boston in 1634. Some Hulett descendants settled in Killingly, Connecticut.

The Kelley family migrated to Gloucester, Massachusetts, from Ireland (so the story goes) and the original name may have been O'Kellia.

The Land

In the fall of 1774, only a short time after his marriage, Daniel Hulett (1784-1838) traveled alone from Killingly, Connecticut, to Pawlet, which had been chartered under the English Crown in 1761, to begin clearing 640 acres that he had received as a grant from Benning Wentworth, the last Royal Governor of New Hampshire. At that time, Vermont was known as the New Hampshire Grants. He made the journey alone on foot drawing a sled on which, with other necessities, was a large kettle to be used for making potash from the ashes produced in clearing his land. Potash was a cash crop, which was sold to England. The potash was used in the processing of wool in English factories.

He erected a pole cabin, open on one side, a little to the south of where the Hulett Cemetery on Kelley Hill Road now stands. Daniel Hulett and his wife built their first house nearby in 1793; it is currently known as "the Whaley Place." Daniel Hulett was a Minute Man and fought in the Battle of Saratoga in 1777.

On April 17, 1813, written in his own hand, Daniel Hulett deeded a portion of his land to his son Joshua (later, Joshua, Sr.). Joshua (1782-1859) married Harmony Woodworth (1785-1861), and sometime between 1815 and 1817, they built a house on this property which was about a half-mile easterly from his father's house and near the Danby line. This is the house and property that later became the Kelley family home. It's location guaranteed a fantastically beautiful view. Joshua was a hard-working man and accumulated a handsome property. He built a family cemetery enclosed in an iron fence near his home. The cemetery is located in Cemetery District No. 6 almost across the road from where he lived and within sight of the Daniel Hulett House. Daniel Hulett, Sr. and Abigail Paul Hulett are buried there.

The Kelley Connection:

Joshua Hulett, Jr., (1815-1903) son of Joshua, Sr. and Harmony, married Lydia Kelley (1820-1901). They became the owners of Joshua, Sr.'s farm, but sold it in 1877 to Holden Kelley (generation 1) for "Five Thousand Forty Dollars." The sale of sheep, wool, apples and cheese as well as logging were mainstays of the Kelley family livelihood.

Upon the death of Holden Kelley, the farm was conveyed to his son, Dexter G. Kelley (generation 2). Dexter married Jennie A. Comstock and they produced two sons: John D. Kelley and Herbert W. Kelley (generation 3).

Dexter G. Kelley died May 7, 1919. Within three

months after the death of their father, John D. Kelley conveyed his interest in the farm to his brother, Herbert W. Kelley. John was a bit of an adventurer and wanderer. He had numerous professions one of which was writing for the *Granville Sentinel* newspaper.

Herbert W. Kelley was my grandfather. He married Jennie Fitzgerald. They produced two sons and a daughter. The farm was very prosperous in the 1920s; it had the latest in farm equipment, buggies, household equipment, radios, telephone, and a car which was stored up on blocks in the winter. In the years of my childhood, late 1930s and early 1940s, the house had four marble fireplaces, a large country kitchen, full pantry with summer kitchen, small bedroom off the kitchen, two parlors, dining room, music room and four upstairs bedrooms. The house had a main center hall upstairs and down. On holidays the downstairs hall was used for dining, with a table comprised of planks set on saw horses that could seat 40 to 50 relatives and guests.

The plaster on the walls of the rooms was made with horsehair mixed with the plaster. The walls were decorated with stencils. The closets were huge in each bedroom with pegs for hanging garments. The floorboards were often about 12 inches wide. The glass in the windows was very thick by today's standards to withstand the strong winter winds.

The outbuildings were comprised of the following: Cow barn, milk house, silo, horse barn (lower level of horse barn was a hog pen), hay storage, carriage storage, corn crib, outhouse, carpenter shop, storage barn, attic with antiques (oxen yokes, farm tools, spinning wheels, wool carders, etc.) smoke house, ice house and a woodshed. A large bell was located on the peak of the roof of the carpenter shop. The purpose of the bell was to call folks from the fields for meals or emergencies, such as a fire or an accident. A constantly ringing bell brought in neighbors from surrounding farms to help.

Wood and then coal was used for heating. The country kitchen was equipped with a rope bed and a huge wood-burning kitchen stove with reservoir for hot water and warming shelves. There were very few if any cars at this time and horses were used for heavy farm work. Each fall

a threshing troupe would come through the area and thresh the oats and wheat. My grandmother talked about having to feed 20-25 threshers during threshing season.

A trip to the store in Pawlet was done by horse-drawn wagon once every three or four months for staples: 100-pound bags of sugar, flour, molasses, etc. The nearest one-room school was located at Brimstone Corners near what is now Elsie Rogers farm. There were approximately 10 pupils and 8 grades usually taught by an unmarried woman. There were no hot lunches. The school had

a wood-burning stove and a two-holer outhouse. Drinking water was carried by students from a well located on

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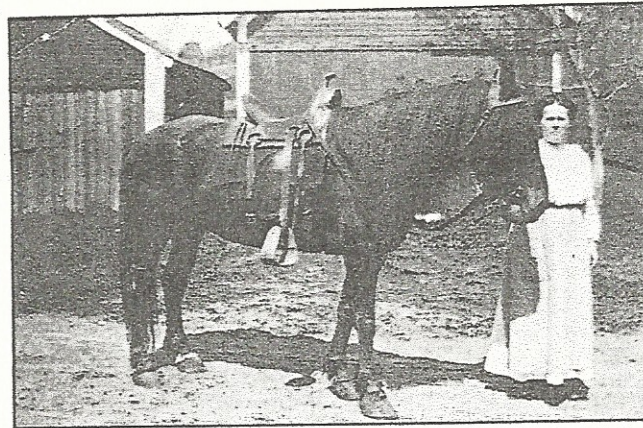
a nearby farm. The walk to school summer and winter was some distance "cross lots."

My grandfather had a passion for horses – all kinds. He had two frisky Shetland ponies which if we begged long enough he would saddle so that we could get thrown off and get back on and do it all over again. I had a favorite paint pony named Lightning. We all loved to ride the horses and operate the farm equipment. Our winter playgrounds were the barns as well as the great outdoors. With cooperative effort we would take turns riding the hayfork to the top of the barn and drop down

into the haymow. Two kids pulled you up and you were in for a great ride. I don't recall ever not making it.

My grandfather died in 1943. The distribution of the estate was made in 1945 and my father, Herman W. Kelley (generation 4), and my mother, Pearl H. Baker, and my grandmother, Jennie Fitzgerald Kelley, became the owners of the farm.

During the first three generations of Kelleys the farm was self-sufficient, and remained so in many ways when my parents and grandmother owned it. The vegetables and fruit were canned. I can recall my grandmother and my mother canning hundreds of cans of food that were stored in a special area on shelves in the cellar. Hams and bacon were smoked and cured in the smokehouse and stored on hooks



My grandmother, Jennie Fitzgerald Kelley (age 30) with her favorite horse, 1920

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located high off the cool cellar floor. There was a root cellar for the storing of apples, potatoes and squash from harvest through winter. I can remember the "men folk" looking forward to when the three wooden barrels of cider would get to the peak drinking stage to enjoy before it turned to vinegar. Salt pork was cured for the winter in large ceramic crocks. Salt pork was a mainstay – breakfast, lunch and dinner. There was always plenty of milk to drink and cream for churning butter.

My grandmother had her own herb garden and berry bushes (raspberries, gooseberries, blueberries, currants, etc.). She had a grape arbor, and in later years the vines decided to climb a nearby maple tree; we would gleefully climb the tree and compete with the birds for the grapes. My grandmother always saved and dried her flower seeds for the next season. She dried petals for her dresser drawers. I recall there was a patch of horseradish that we helped her grate. It was so powerful we would all sit there crying from the flying juice. Good hot stuff though.

The principal product of the farm during my father's tenure was milk. There is always the story of the milk inspector who got stuck in the mud and a clean inspection was requested in return for a pull out of the mud.

Lumber in the wintertime was a cash crop. Logging was a very dangerous job. The logs were hauled, or more accurately, dragged from the woods by horses through rough, icy or muddy terrain. The logs were stacked on a rise and rolled down onto a waiting truck of 1940s vintage. The whole operation was a cliffhanger.

The road to the farm was often very difficult to navigate and often not at all. It consisted of two parallel paths with grass growing up in the center and blocked by snow and ice in the wintertime or mud in the spring. There was no mail delivery to the farm. Our mailbox was located two farms down near the Roblee Mason farm.

I can recall one winter when the snow was so deep we were snowbound for several days – perhaps as long as two weeks. We finally drove out on a horse-drawn sleigh over hill and dale where the wind had blown the snow off to allow the horses to get through. It was spring before we could use the real road.

During my grandmother and grandfather's time they

had a crank telephone on a party line. The telephone line was run along the fence line. Electricity was not brought to the farm until much later during my father's time on the farm, and he had to install his own poles for the power line at his cost. While in grade school, my sister, brothers and I studied by kerosene lamp. We ironed our clothes with a flat iron heated on the

kitchen stove. My grandmother had a curling iron that was heated over the globe of a kerosene lamp. I was never successful in curling my straight hair – the smell of burning hair discouraged its use.

The only heat to my upstairs bedroom was a 12"x 12" register allowing heat from the first floor to rise. Needless to say, this was not sufficient. There were plenty of mornings when the glass of water on the bedside stand was

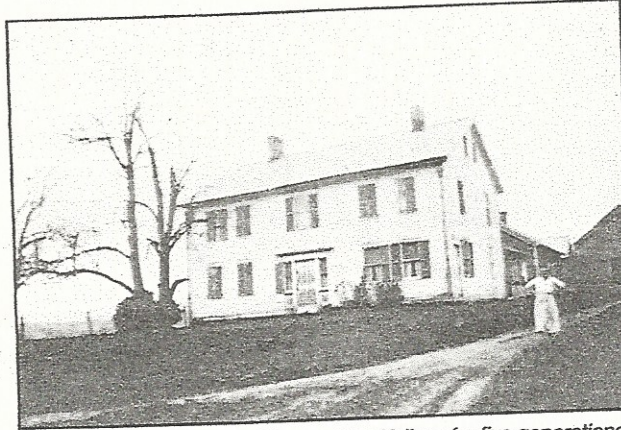
frozen. However, it did serve a very useful function. The sound of the radio programs could be heard from the kitchen if you lay on the floor and jammed your ear to it. I heard exciting programs like "Stella Dallas," "Only the Shadow Knows" and "The Lone Ranger" to mention a few. One had to use a lot imagination.

As I have mentioned most of the farm work was done with horse power. I can recall seeing my father hitch up as many as four to five horses to plow or to clear large rocks from the field on a stone boat.

On November 1, 1968, Thomas and Sarah Kirkwood bought the Kelley Farm from my parents and grandmother. My father had become disabled when he was attacked by one of his heifers and could no longer work the farm and it had fallen into disrepair. The Kirkwoods restored the house and installed some creature comforts, such as central heating, running hot and cold water, and bathrooms.

The farmland has since been sold and subdivided. The present owner of the "Kelley Place" has maintained the house and outbuildings very close to their original appearance, keeping intact their beauty and integrity.

The Kelley Farm was the place where our family lived for five generations; it was the home and playground for myself and brothers and sister (generation 5 of Kelleys) Probably reams more could be written about our adventures and misadventures. A special expression of our gratitude goes to the present owner who has maintained the home as it was in the time of our grandparents and great-grandparents. ❖



Home of the Kelleys for five generations.
Built by Joshua Hulett, ca. 1815. Photo, 1939.