

Part 5 3 Auburn Terrace Waltham, Massachusetts

The suburb of Waltham is located about 20 miles outside of the city of Boston as you see in the map, on the next page but was perhaps 6 miles from Belmont. We saw signs like this one when we arrived in Waltham and were impressed that it was incorporated in 1738. Note that the date of incorporation was specified, not the population. New England was acutely aware and proud of its age.



Figure 1

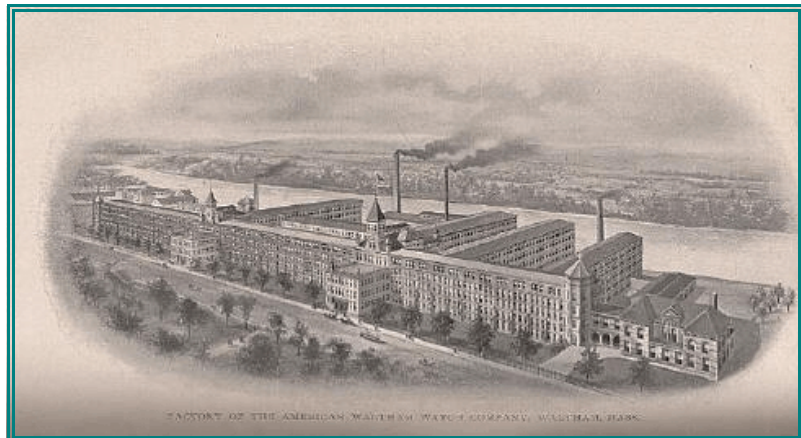
<http://www.city.waltham.ma.us/IMAGES/WELCO ME2.GIF>

The original inhabitants were farmers but as time passed and the industrial revolution revolutionized manufacturing, Waltham was a natural place for factories to be built because there was a good size river flowing through it that could be used for power. Factories were built everywhere in New England where rivers were found. At the time I lived there, Waltham remained primarily a manufacturing town.

Waltham Watch Factory

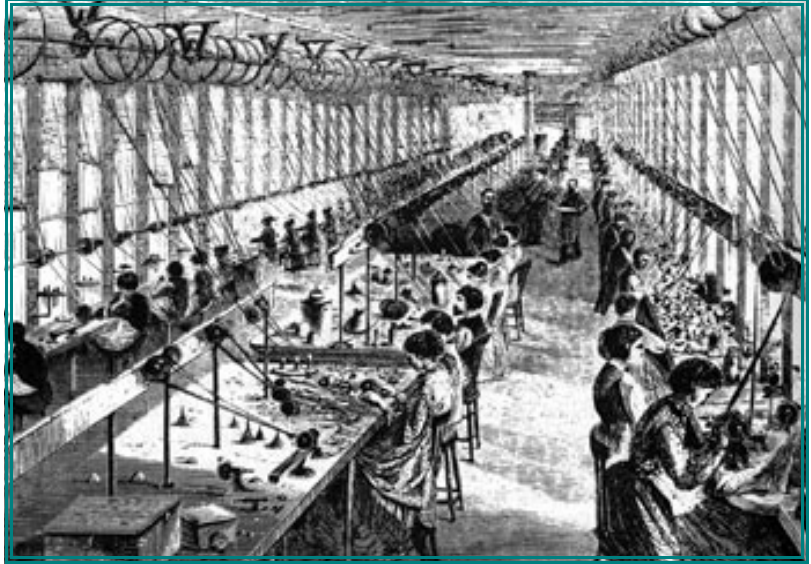
One of the largest factories ever built in Waltham was the Waltham Watch Factory. In its day during the late 1800's and early 1900's, Waltham Watches were among the most

reliable in the US so were preferred by railroad men who relied on their timepiece to maintain their schedules when there was no other means of telling time out on the rails. The watch manufacturing company had long since departed this building when we moved



there, but the building remained. This old image from the Waltham home page shows the huge factory sitting on the river. It was an enormous 5 stories building that sprawled along the river. Its size indicates that a large number of people were employed, which explains part of the early growth of the town.

In this drawing from the Waltham page you see the inside of the factory. Note the source of power. Each person as a bench received power for his or her tools by means of a long belt that is powered by an enormously long shaft attached to the ceiling, one on each side of the room. Each shaft is powered at one end by a powerful motor capable of producing the necessary power. This gives you an idea of the number of men and women who were hired. Looking at the first picture of the factory, one can see that several thousand people would be employed.



This ad gives an idea of the image the Waltham watch wanted to create with its "scientifically built watch." A beautiful woman, dressed as a flapper which indicates the ad is from the 1920's, stands in front of a fine car, fancy house, in a fine subdivision, with a child and two dogs. The curious thing about this ad today is that it shows refined, wealthy people when in fact the rich were a minuscule segment of the general population.

Following is a recent photo of part of the same factory from across the river. The structure obviously hasn't changed much other than the addition of the ubiquitous outbuildings that you kids attended school in, although the ownership and industries have:





Figure 5 <http://members.aol.com/erniewint/waltham/photo14.jpg>

Clevite Transistor Company

It turned out that this factory played an important role in our lives. The above photo shows the factory as it looked in the 1050's, minus the prefab temporary buildings along the river bank. The building was in disrepair for some time but segments were being purchased by manufacturers of various kinds. Clevite Transistor Co. was one of those companies. They were one of the early manufacturers of transistors that reign supreme today in computers and related gear of all types. This photo shows the version that was being manufactured when mom was hired on the line in 1957. It is large and clunky compared to today's designed but it did the job. It was manufactured with germanium which still used today and had three prongs out of the bottom.

Mom was initially hired to work on the line where the transistors were produced. She was not happy in the job because the women she worked with were

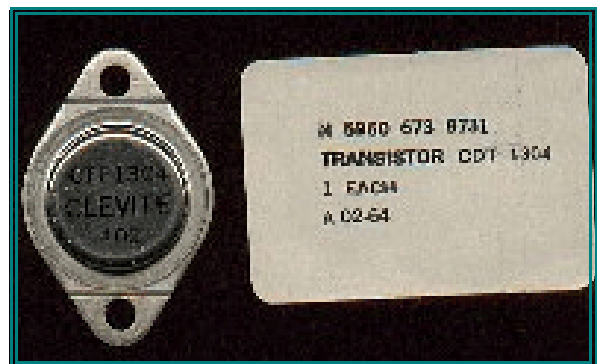


Figure 6

http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/Andrew_Wylie/CTP1304.HTM

pretty crude in her estimation. They were probably human. They told dirty stories, smoked, and swore, real evil things and she was offended in her purity.

But Marie was Marie and she worked hard. She had two speeds: off and overdrive. Predictably, in a few months she had set herself apart from the other women by the (a) quality and (b) the quantity of her work. It was natural for her in any job to learn the skills perfectly and then to refine them. Nothing she touched was left unmodified because she could always see a way to tweak this or that to improve the speed or quality of the work coming out. That was a fine thing with the supervisor, "Mary" was her name I believe.

There was a severe negative consequence of this trait however. The other women were married to union men so even though they were not unionized, they had adopted the simple unimaginative world view of employees who want to do only the minimum to get their pay. They had no interest in helping the company which they probably viewed as trying to take advantage of them. You can see where that went with Marie's performance. The women began to complain aloud to each other in mom's hearing about people working too hard, about people upsetting the status quo, or people trying to show off.

That bothered mom because she was actually human, too, but it didn't deter her. She continued to streamline her work station and output. The next step was also predictable. Mary the supervisor had an opening for a QA inspector and the rest in history. Mom was hired as the new QA inspector over other women with much more time with the company -remember union, remember seniority- which was the kiss of death as far as personal relationships went. She had none from that point forward, but I don't think it bothered her.

What she did was simply repeat her performance, but at the QA station. Once more she revised and refined the operation at the work station so she was able to test several times more transistors than before, obviously making Mary very happy and the other women mad as wet hens.

Mary was an interesting person who became a good friend to mom. I had the impression that she was also sort of an outcast for some reasons. They two of them started to do a few things outside of work together and that naturally didn't make points with the other women but mom had written them off on moral behaviors, i.e. they smoked, so it was no loss to her. The funniest thing about Mary was how she rewired her living room. This woman made her living in a world of electricity but she was a forgetful as anyone else.

She bought a new floor lamp and located it in a corner where it seemed to provide the best effect. The cord was too long, however, so she figured out how

to handle that. She went to the kitchen, got a pair of diagonal cutters and returned to the lamp. She plugged the cord in, pulled it to the correct length, and then cut it with the diagonals. Except that she got shocked and burned and made a mess out of the new cord.

The other interesting memory of the Clevite Transistor Factory was the "seconds". There was a candy manufacturer in another segment of the old watch factory and it produced its share of second quality candy bars. They were too deformed to be packaged and sold but they were fine for eating as long as you didn't think you were eating first quality stuff. So the company packaged the seconds in 4 x 8 x 10 inch boxes and sold them for a buck a piece. Even in 1957 that was a lot of candy. Most of it was peppermint patties but there were various other kinds. This is where we got our school lunch desserts.

3 Auburn Terrace place

As I recall the circumstances we located a house to rent at this address. We went to the "Mission Home" of the church located on Oxford Street in Cambridge, a short distance from Harvard university. Us kids were typically left in the car to "wait" for however long it took -which was tough and not infrequently resulted in irritated squabbles. I don't know how long it took, but we waited until mom and dad returned. It was an unsettling thing, sitting there in the car after that rugged trip across the country, sitting in foreign territory, seeing the large old unfamiliar New England houses and trees. They said a few words about having found a house, and immediately drove, as best they could, which wasn't too darn good considering that they could barely spell Mt. Auburn, to dig up Rolly Thomas and his wife to see if they would rent this house to us out there on Auburn Terrace, a small cul de sac in Waltham.

They would. So we ended up renting this peculiar house out of Hawthorne's "Scarlet Letter" to live in for the next 2 years, sort of a haunted place. Perhaps the most memorable occasion was when Dick sleep walked out of the house during a rain storm and had to ring the doorbell to gain entrance back into the house.

The house was 2 stories high and had a basement. But the space of each floor must have been something like 600 square feet, if that much. The rooms were extraordinarily small. In this view of the side of the house, you see a back porch door and screen. You can also barely see the left wall of the porch so get an idea of how small it was. The two windows are the width of the kitchen, there being an enormous sink under the shorter window.



The stair case was almost as steep as a ladder. No kidding. So little room was devoted to the stair case that the steps had to be short from front to back, not much more than a long shoe-length. You had to be careful walking up but more

so walking down but there was a railing to hold onto. Upstairs there were three bedrooms, a linen closet, and a bathroom.

One of the three bedrooms was converted into an "office" for dad. He had so much stuff that he needed a separate room. This is a self-portrait that he took, pretending to sit there sort of nonchalantly in front of that wonderful set of drawers that he got from MCZ. Those are his mukluks in the background. Since the camera is in the doorway, you get an idea of how small this room was. The other two upstairs rooms were the same size.



One room was mom's and dad's bedroom, a place that always felt "off limits" to me for no particular reason. The other room was for Dick and me. Initially, we slept in sleeping bags on the floor because we didn't haul any beds across country. After we were able to save enough money -mom and dad did not buy on credit at the time- they bought a pair of new twin beds, a remarkably extravagant thing for them to do. They were a good brand but it seemed reckless because Dick and I were content to sleep on the floor. In fact, I continued to sleep on the floor, lying by the new bed.

The only bathroom was upstairs and wasn't much larger than the one we used in Homebrew alley.

This photo is taken from the front steps of our house, showing the 1956 Bel Aire and houses across the cul de sac. Point of reference for yourself: this was taken in 1957 which means that dad was 39 years old and mom was 34 years old. There were a total of 5 houses on the circle, Rolly's being just to the right of our house in this image.



Rolly Thomas, Landlord

Rolly was our landlord so we got to know him well. A recent convert to the faith, he and his Canadian wife. Who claimed she was a witch. Looked like one though she was nice to us. Eccentric people like many we saw back there where they lived lives on short leashes from birth to death. She went shopping Every Saturday and while she was out she would always buy one, not two, small ceramic figures a couple of inches in size. They cost 15 cents or a quarter and it didn't matter if it was a cat or fish or person. Took it home, put it in large fish bowls and clear vases which sat about the house. There were dust covers over the furniture in the tiny parlor, with bottles full of tiny ceramic figures covering the piano and every horizontal surface.

We just moved from Alaska, across the continent. And Rolly excitedly described to us the big adventure of his life when he and his family "went out west." He went on at great length about the trip, where they went, who went and so on. It turned out that they went to the west end of the state and crossed over into upstate New York .

Lawn Mowing

This place had a yard of grass that needed to be mowed. What a job, because we had to use a push mower to do our own lawn, PLUS Rolly's. That was one of the "jobs" I was forced to do which did teach me about work - how awful it is! Rolly's mower was stored in a shed with other lawn implements. After raking the mowed grass up and putting it in a garbage can, we replaced the mower and left the job until the next Saturday.

Concord Grapes for Jelly

I had never seen a grape arbor. In fact, I don't think I had an inkling about how grapes grew and were trained and cultivated. In dusty dry Vernal they weren't welcome and obviously they didn't grow in Seward, so I first encountered them there at 3 Auburn Terrace. I'd obviously seen eaten them so knew that they grew in clusters but I didn't know about the vines and their habit.

There was a high school teacher across the street who had a grape arbor on his house. This photo is from Pennsylvania but if the house had board siding, this photo would reflect exactly where the arbor was in relationship to the house. The teacher's name was Mr. Smith and he was a nice person. I think he taught art.

Somehow mom worked out things with Mr. or Mrs. Smith -I don't remember ever seeing her although I must have- so that us "boys" could go over in the fall and harvest grapes. I was of two minds about that job. On the one hand, it was interesting to be able to harvest grapes. I came from farm stock so appreciated the concept of harvest which was the highlight of the growing year. I liked the idea.

But on the other hand, I understood that at least part of our underlying motivation for doing this was our poorness. I was embarrassed to be seen in that urban setting gleaning grapes like a migrant because of that poorness. Of course, I don't imagine today that anyone paid a great deal of attention to us other than the teenage neighbors -who actually tried to be friends- but what was actually going outside of my head was totally different than what was going on inside my head. Dad earned a small income so mom hunted for any way she could to economize, to stretch our income, to supplement our resources.

This was a natural thing then, and the Smiths graciously allowed us access to the arbor. After a short explanation about how to grasp the clusters and remove them from the vines, we were turned loose. I did enjoy it for many reasons. First, I was fascinated by the vines themselves. They are tough and woody but are flexible as a rubber hose, and are covered with a hairy loose layer of sloughing bark. The clusters of grapes all hung from joints created on the vines by leaves. Second, as mentioned already harvesting things gives me pleasure, a feature bred into me by farmers who worked hard to raise crops, who were pleased to see their crops produce. I also liked the tactile sense of handling these clusters of grapes and removing them from the vines, so different that picking squash or cucumbers that are prickly. I liked it that our buckets filled quickly compared to picking raspberries or blueberries. Plus we were in shade, enclosed under a ceiling of

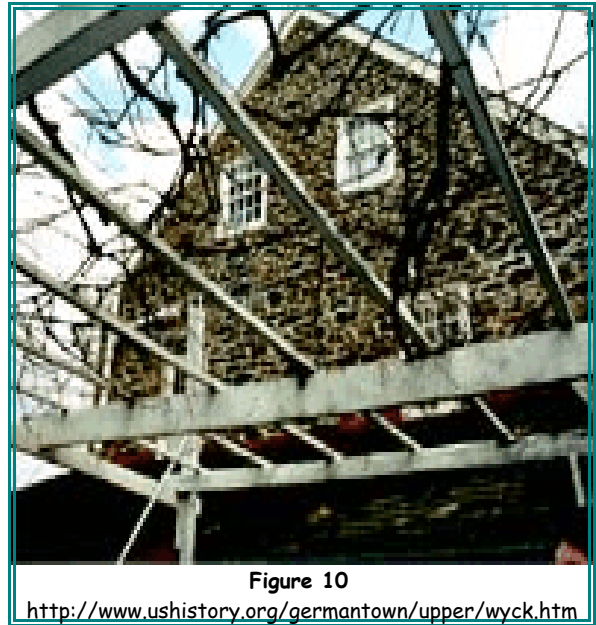


Figure 10

<http://www.ushistory.org/germantown/upper/wyck.htm>

dense large leaves. And we were standing in perfume, gorgeous sweet grape scent. After we filled our buckets we hauled them back to the kitchen for mom to process.

Mom's primary goal with the grapes was to make grape jelly. Fruit juices were not part of our regular diet so she wasn't interested in making grape juice. I don't remember all of the steps but remember how she removed the juice from the grapes. She put the grapes into a cloth sack and hung it from a small tripod on the kitchen counter over a kettle. I don't remember whether she crushed them or not but she must have done something to release the juice and natural pectin from the skins.

The primary use for this jelly was to make soggy peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for our school lunches. I got real sick of the stuff after two years. But our impecunious state made it mandatory. Either you ate it or you went hungry, and got no sympathy. This was particularly galling for a year or so there in Waltham because mom developed "colitis". That diagnosis carried two unhappy consequences: First, we were informed that us boys were the cause for her worry and stress, and therefore, her colitis, a rather nasty thing to accuse one's kids of doing, particularly when those particular kids are barely keeping their own heads above water. Of course, we didn't think about it in quite those terms, but now I see that her stress was caused by our poorness and by the strangeness and newness of everything where there was no family to support her. The other bit of baggage involved a diet change that was "required" for her to heal. She was "forced" more or less against her will apparently to eat broasted chicken, usually cooked a half-chicken at a time. Those savory, salty, peppery brown crispy things made me salivate. It did irritate me to see her pretend that she didn't really like to eat the stuff, as if she was also suffering from having to eat such wonderful stuff when we got canned vegetables.

Rolly & the platen press

Rolly worked for the Atlantic Register in Waltham. A job printing shop that produced any printed article you might want from business cards to posters, letter head, etc. Had worked there for 25 years and I'm sure he retired from there. Well, Ol' Rolly was dedicated to the art of printing and came to it honestly, having learned how to set type by hand years and years before. And had purchased a treadle run platen press and installed it in his basement along with the accouterments necessary to actually do print jobs. He also had sets of drawers of

various fonts which means different type faces and different sizes of each face. There were girly pictures pasted everywhere that he accumulated in the navy which bothered mom immensely but dad wanted me to learn to set type..

Thanks to Rolly, I, like my dad, was touched by the tail end of a dying manual trade. Rolly somehow ended up teaching me how to set movable type. An accomplishment that is totally worthless today, but one which I take great pride in having done exactly because it is a left over of a vastly different level of technology that even pre-dates the new fangled linotype machines that had replaced the manual process. Printing was an art that men learned and took pride in. They started as apprentices and advanced as they aged, learning a variety of clever tricks along the way, some of which they would share with a neophyte, others of which they would only acknowledge with a sly smile.

When I speak of "moveable type" I am referring to small pieces of metal that are narrow and long. In the mid-1450's, Gutenberg came up with the idea of making individual letters this way, which could be combined in words in rows to create whole pages, thereby bypassing the tedious process used up to that time of manually writing whole books. Wood was the first material used for making these individual letters.^[1] Here's a set of 26 letters and 10 individual numbers placed in rows.

I believe the metal, like Wood's metal, is a compound of antimony, bismuth and zinc. On the end of each of the little square metal sticks is a letter, number or character. When setting type, you pick up one letter at a time and put it in a hand-held device made for that purpose. They are machined but are still not perfectly sized which creates a challenge for the typesetter/printer. Some are fatter than others, some are longer than others.



Figure 11

<http://www.yale.edu/yale300/democracy/may1text/images/Metaltype.jpg>

¹It is a funny footnote to remember that Gutenberg's creation was viewed as supernatural. He could print thousands of books and pamphlets in less time that it took to make one copy of a book. That worried the clergy, but he worried them more by making the truth available to everyone because he printed the Good Book in English! Instead of Latin that only the clergy understood..

When you realize that the type must be evenly spaced and that all pieces of type must touch the sheet of paper with uniform pressure, you can imagine the kinds of machinations you go through before finally getting everything to come together.

The first step, then, was to learn the layout of a California Job Case which held the loose type. Here's a cabinet with several dozen California Job Cases holding different type faces and different sizes of type faces. Imagine, instead of clicking on a little window to change from 10 point to 12 point, you had to find a case of the right typeface in the size you want. This drawer is divided into three columns/sections as follows: the left column is for lower case letters only, the middle column is for upper case letters only, and the right column is devoted to everything else, numbers, and typographic symbols. Note the difference in the size of the little compartments. The position of letters in the case and the frequency of each were the basis for assigning letters to compartments. The three wide compartments in the left column are for from the left "l", "a" and "e" because they were the most common letters in English.



Figure 12

Go to the next page right now to see what I learned to do with this type. That's a finished block of type "locked up" in a "chase", ready to be locked in the press to print sheets of paper. Here are terms the help you understand what the different items are in that photo, all things I used:

Chase - that's the heavy cast-iron frame around the whole thing. The purpose of the chase was to hold the block of type together, and after it had been properly filled, it was locked into the press. The one in the photo has curved edges which means it was for a hand-fed platen press like mine. The curved upper surface was less likely to catch the edge of the paper stock as you hurriedly put it into the bed to be printed.

Wooden furniture - blocks of cherry wood used to fill the open space in the chase after you had installed the block of type that you just set.

They were too short to affect the printing and were simply fillers. Cherry was the preferred wood because it doesn't warp.

Quoin - a device (3 of them in the photo) consisting of two metal pieces constructed in such a way that you could squeeze them apart of pull

them together with a special tool. This allowed you to lock the block of set type securely in place. When finished printing, you used the tool to loosen the quoins at which point, everything would fall out of the chase if you weren't careful.

Metal furniture - in this photo you see a piece of metal like an I-beam at the top of the block of lines of type, just below to quoin.

Leads - thin strips of metal used to separate lines of type. These are as long as the lines of the text being set.

Spaces - small thin strips of metal used to create spaces between words.

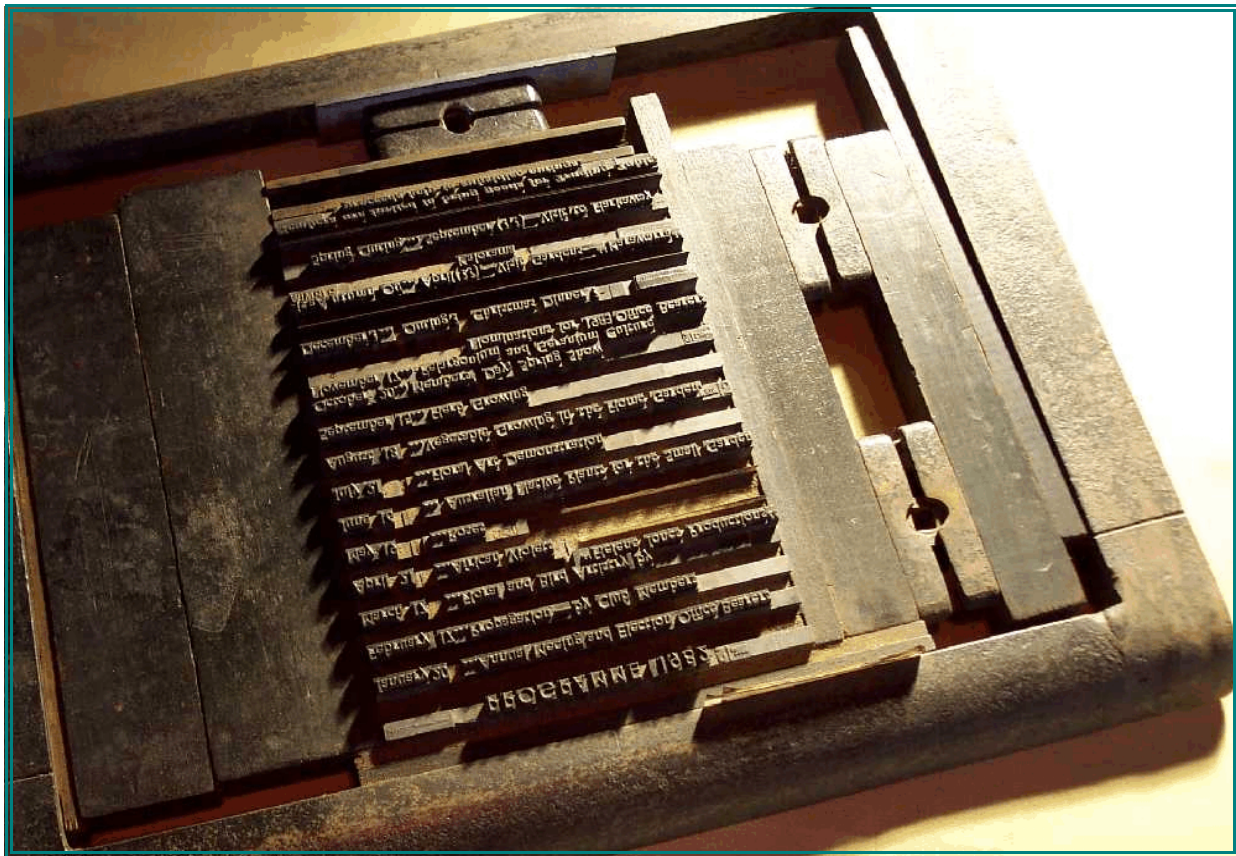


Figure 13 <http://www.balanceresearch.com/museum/gallery/typset01/enlarg01.htm>

Quads - long strips used to fill in the end of lines.

After I learned the layout of the California job case, I was ready to start setting type. Rolly explained and then showed me how to do it first. He held a rectangular metal device, the name of which I've forgotten, in his left hand and proceeded to collect pieces of type. He worked from a bit of "copy" -the text that is to be printed- and started at the top of the page as if he was reading it. The disconcerting thing, however, was that you had to compose the lines of type upside

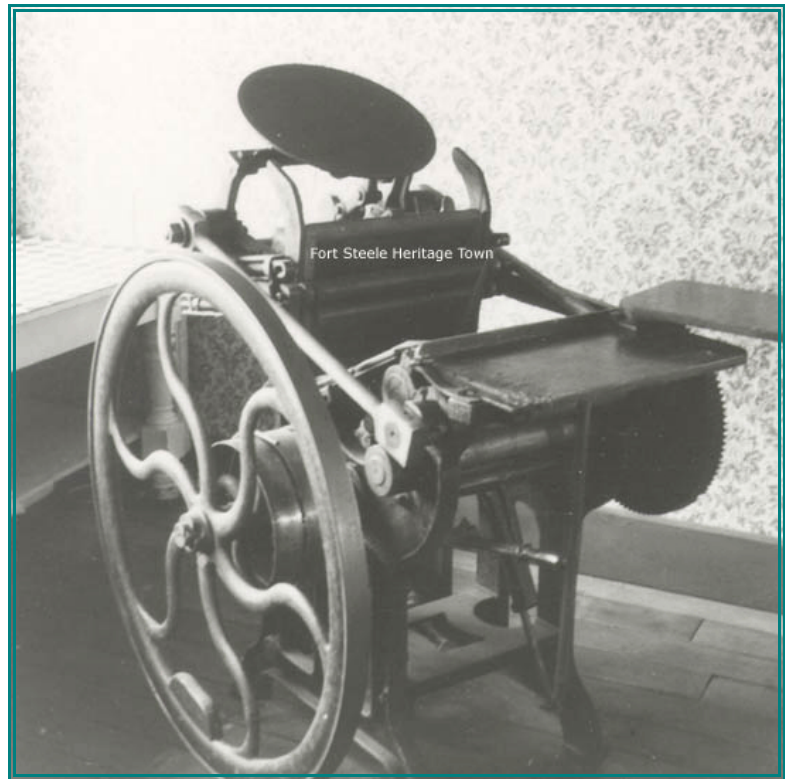
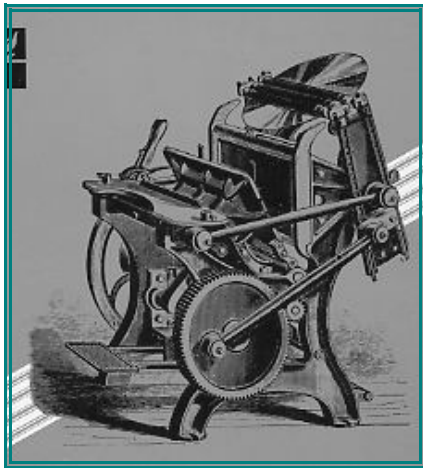
down and backwards in your left hand so that it will print out in the correct orientation. I had to get used to reading my type upside and backwards which was difficult.

After putting "t", "h" and "e" together to make the word "the", he put a narrow thin piece of metal after the "e" to create the space between words, and so on to the end of the line, the length of which you had already established before even starting. Then when you had finished setting a line of type and were ready to start the next one, you had to put in a "lead" -of the proper thickness- to make the space you see between these lines here. You continued this slow, tedious process until you got to the end of the paragraph. At that point you usually had a long space to fill so you used quads and spaces to fill it. Remember, each line had to be identical in width. If a line wasn't, it would fall out of the chase.

The steps involved in making the booklet were many. And complicated. Setting type itself is a challenge but that was only the first. The next one was getting the block of loose type you have set locked up in a chase in such a way that it's secure in all directions. Picking up a chase and having a line or two of type fall out is disheartening and frustrating. When you look at the above photo, you see the furniture and quoins that were used to get the type locked in place. There is nothing scientific about the process: just get the right size pieces required to tightly fill the chase so that when the quoins are tightened, nothing drops out, an experience I had several times.

In addition to the problem of lateral pressure on the lines of type, is the problem of uneven sizes of the individual pieces of type. To the eye, they look equal but in reality they can vary a fraction of a millimeter which isn't much. But when a block of type is picked up, any short piece will fail to print. There will be a missing letter or part of a line. The first way to deal with this problem is practical: the chase with the locked up block of type is turned upside down so that the letters themselves are resting on a perfectly flat piece of cherry wood. Then a rubber mallet is used to hammer on the bottom of the pieces of type. This will generally force the type pieces down flat on the other side, the side that will be inked and printed.

After the chase is prepared, it is locked into the platen press which looked like this large image. The only difference between this one and mine is that this one doesn't have the treadle in the front that you can see in this small image which means it has been converted to an electric motor for power.



These presses are constructed of iron so are enormously heavy.

The "platen" is the round disc sticking diagonally up on the top of the press. That's the plate that holds the ink and it was serviced by a pair of black hard rubber rollers that moved up and down on the heavy-duty steel 'ways' you see which are curved toward the platen at the top.

To ink the platen, you squeezed ink from a tube or scraped it out of a can with a putty knife and applied it in a thick row across the middle of the disc. Then you grabbed the big fly wheel, gave it a hard push to get things working, and started pumping the treadle. This made the pair of black rubber rollers begin to go up and down over the platen. In the small photo you can see that a pair of rollers is sitting on top of the platen. In the larger photo, the rollers are in a different place, lower and over the vertical half of the bed below the platen which is where the chase is locked up.

Those rollers serve two purposes: first, they spread the row of ink uniformly over the platen; second, the rollers which are now coated with a thin layer of ink roll down across the type to coat it with ink. The rollers finish their downward trip to deposit ink on the type and sit still at the bottom while the diagonal plate

you see moves up against the inked type at which point an impression is made, the point of this whole tedious exercise.

Running the platen press was even harder because it was a dynamic dance with a heavy cast-iron machine that could hurt your hands real bad. The flywheel itself weighed something like 800 pounds. But running it was fun, sort of satisfying actually - once you got the hang of it and developed the rhythm necessary to do it well. After the chase is locked into the machine, the platen is inked, you secure a layer of heavy paper to the diagonal bed and allow it to be printed. That way you can see precisely where the type is printing. In order to secure blank stock in the proper location, after you have made this impression on the heavy paper, you insert three specially designed wire stops into the heavy paper in the positions where they will hold a piece of paper. That way the blank stock will not fall off the bed in proper position.

Then you insert a piece of stock and make another impression. At this point a real piece of art is done. As you look at the first impression, you always see that in spite of the careful hammering you did to create a uniformly flat type face, there will be areas of the impression that are darker and others that are lighter. So what you do is take a pair of scissors and carefully cut out from that impression only the portion that is too light. Then you secure that piece of cut paper that looks like an amoeba directly over the corresponding section of the impression on the heavy paper so that the blank stock will be sitting on TWO pieces of paper, thereby being more likely to be pressed down into the sections of type that are too low. Then you print another piece of stock and repeat the process until you have a uniformly dark impression.

Finally, you are ready to begin printing. It took two months or more to get to this point. I printed a two-sided, 24 page booklet that was a dictionary of printing terms, in black and green ink. But it turns out that the actual printing of paper stock is much more difficult than I had imagined. I was basically dancing a dance with a malevolent cast iron machine that could crush my hand.

See the lever sticking out in front of the right press image? That is a god sent, a life saver. After you have the press fired up and moving, it will do precisely what it was designed to do, and if you drop stock through the machine or don't get it in place in time, you just hit that lever and it trips gears in such a way that while the bed moves up to the type, it is kept half an inch away. I used that thing many times, particularly in the beginning.

In this image you see a flat surface with a small shelf turned to the right. This is set up for a right handed person. The wide surface on the front of the machine was used to hold the blank paper and the other one held the paper after it has been printed. So you start pumping the treadle, just like an old sewing machine, take a deep breath and go. While you are standing on one foot like a crane, pumping the treadle with the other foot, you have to do different things with each hand. While you keep pumping the treadle.



You pick up a blank piece of stock in one hand, and quickly insert it into the wire paper holders just right so that it was securely in place, but of course the bed is actually moving while you are trying to do this. Then you get your hand out before it is smashed at which point the bed moves up to the type where the blank paper receives an impression of the paper. At this point, the bed moves back away from the type so you remove the now-printed paper with one hand, set it on a pile while simultaneously picking up a clean sheet with the other hand, and insert it in the moving bed, the machine rolling and moving distracting you, having to remember to push the treadle or things just stopped and so on. More difficult that patting your head, rubbing your stomach, talking and walking. Really. When things got bollixed up, as they would because you didn't get the paper in the right place fast enough, etc. you just pushed that life-saving lever and re-group.

And layout. Got any idea how complicated layout is? I'm talking here of the most simple layout, that is, single sheets divided into halves so you had four pages of print on a single sheet, 2 on the front and 2 on the back. As long as you only have 4 pages, that's easy. Fold the sheet in half, lay it down with the crease to the left like a book, and count pages 1, 2, 3 and 4 without difficulty in which order or which side they go on. But let's have 8 pages - keep it in multiples of 4 that are nested inside of each other to keep it easy. Well, this is not quite so easy is it. Try it. Fold two sheets of paper in half, nest one inside the other, with the crease to the left and number them from top to bottom, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. That doesn't seem to hard, does it. But take out the inserted sheet. Notice that page 2 is on the same side of the sheet as page 7! And 4 and page 5 are on the same side of a sheet. So when you set up the type in a chase, you had to include the two pages for the side of the sheet you were printing. Not impossible, but confusing, even

after making up a dummy and carefully numbering the sides and disassembling the dummy and using it to make sure you set the right pages up for the right side of the sheet. The booklet was 24 pages so it was 6 sheets of paper printed 2 pages to a side.

Just FYI, I saw the really interesting layouts at the Deseret News Press in SLC where they printed both sides of huge sheets of paper in flat bed presses, with 64 or even 128 pages on one sheet - which after it is printed is folded in half, folded in half again folded in half again and folded in half enough times to end up with one 'signature' that would then be cut on 3 sides to open it into book page! You should see how that works. Actually, it is not random, rather has a pleasing mathematical order to it AFTER you learn it, otherwise it is impossible.

You Buy Your Own Clothes!

I was about 15 when mom and dad announced another set of ground rules. Understand, please, that when those two set up rules, you could bet your life on them, you could go to the bank with them, you could threaten your friends with them, you could set your clock by them, you could probably undo the Federal Government with them - and you could die by them. They were the truth from that point forward. These new rules were simple:

- 1) "From now on you will buy all of your own clothes, suits, shirts, coats, shoes, belts, underwear, whatever you want to wear. We will pay for food and school supplies and utilities but that is all.
- 2) That obviously means that you will have to earn money to do this.
- 3) We suggest you buy everything at Filene's bargain basement to get the best deals. And be sure to work each summer, else you will have no new things in the fall.
- 4) Mom will continue to do the laundry for the family.
- 5) But if you wish to have anything ironed for church or school, you will personally iron our own things. Period. If we are leaving the house in 5 minutes and you're not ready, you have to go, but in unironed stuff or unwashed stuff. No questions asked - except, do you need to be

taught how to iron shirts and pants? I will show you how but I will not do it for you."

Remember that this was just prior to the advent of the era of miracle fabrics, of "wash-and-wear", or "drip-dry" fabrics^[2]. Just plain ol' cotton -or smelly wool, or rough wrinkly linen- that wrinkled terribly. So one had to sprinkle water on the shirt with a 7-Up bottle filled with water plugged with a device that allowed water to flow out in a spray after which it was wrapped into a tight ball, and put in a plastic basket overnight for the rough cotton to soften enough so that it could be ironed flat. Not a minor project. Of course, if you got lazy and didn't get to the project in one or two days, the darn things mildewed. Which made an awful smell, and required that they be rewashed, and worse, in some instances, the mildew managed to stain the cloth permanently, so you lost another white shirt or whatever was stained. Which was pretty awful when you had bought it with your own money.

When the miracle fabrics came out I was flabbergasted! What astonishing things, what a wonderful invention! They truly were and I loved the new fabrics for shirts or suits. It was actually difficult to believe that a fabric could be made to be like that. I relied on my personal experience to decide whether what I was experiencing made any sense and this didn't. Nothing in my 14 years had even hinted that it might be possible to manufacture fabric that didn't wrinkle badly, that held creases, that didn't mildew easily, yet here it was.

My favorite wash and wear garment was



Figure 17

<http://www.thismodernworld.com/media/gra/washwear.jpg>

²I have to enter another irritating footnote. Those of you who have never had to deal with cotton or linen that had not been treated to become wash-an-wear simply cannot comprehend what a remarkable development this was. For all people who had to 'iron' their own clothes. It was phenomenal that you could simply wash n article of clothing, hang it up to dry over night and could wear, WITHOUT having to iron it.

a powder blue suit. I loved this suit because it felt so good, being light in weight as well as a classy powder blue color. I bought it for something like \$15 in Filene's bargain basement and wished it would last forever. When the cuffs of the jacket or slacks became dirty from so much use, I could wash just that portion of the garment, rinse it thoroughly and then hang it up to dry. If I had rinsed it well, there would be no evidence that I had just washed a small part. Years later when I tried to find the same suit, I could find the color but not the fabric so it was not as pleasurable to wear. I believe the miracle fabric was orlon which apparently isn't made much anymore.

In retrospect, I see the wisdom and reasons for what they did. Truly. They had little money I discover, though they didn't admit that to us. Which was unfortunate, because that is something I would have actually understood and appreciated. But no. I don't know why. Instead, the notion was presented as "We are the adults and we are going to give you goals and rules all for the purpose of teaching you how to get along by yourself.." Too bad they didn't simply level say to us that they were having a tough time making enough money to make ends meet. Somehow that would have transformed this darn crusade about "work to learn to take care of yourselves" into something more palatable, into something that would have made us feel like we were worth something, like we were actually contributing to the welfare of the so-often-praised "family". But that was the last thing they would have done for us. I don't know whether it was pride, stubbornness or pure meanness but it was SOP for those two.

I also see now that it was reasonable to ask us to do these things. Buy our own clothes and do our own ironing. Mom worked full time so she wasn't too excited about standing over an ironing board each weekend when two able-bodied kids could do the work - which happened to be for them anyway. It made great sense to have us kids start taking over chores that were for benefit.

At this age I can also admit that there were benefits to their fixation on learning to work and to care for ourselves. Specifically, I did learn to take care of myself early. Going way back prior to even Seward, I remember cooking most of a thanksgiving dinner when I was a kid in Vernal. Now I realize today that it couldn't have been Thanksgiving Dinner because we lived in Vernal and there were a thousand and 10 of mom's relatives there who were part of our lives. Perhaps it was just an everyday dinner that I personally and individually prepared. But it seems in my inner child's memory today that it was a Thanksgiving dinner. It was to me. Literally. It was a huge undertaking.

I was around 7-8 and mom was 'down' again with some ailment so she wasn't

able to cook. She was laying in a cot in the kitchen is how I remember it. In my mind's eye I don't see enough room in the kitchen to put a cot up so perhaps she was in her bed in the next room. It wasn't a large house. But I remember cooking vegetables and some sort of meat. On the coal stove that I already knew how to feed and control. The water came from the bucket under the pump with its constant companion, the dipper. And I would have gone out to the root cellar for bottled vegetables that I knew how to open by pulling up on the lid with the ring.

The meal was probably nothing at all, just a couple of bottles of vegetables and one of bottled venison that I heated in pans on the coal stove. But to me, it was like making an 8 course thanksgiving dinner, all by myself, with my mother laid low and me saving the day in a Walter Mitty fantasy - except that it turned out to be real. I did it. I did it alone with her coaching. What an accomplishment for a kid, isn't it. So I learned independence.

Another lecture <grin>

Well, this next section is a sort of digression that was written on part of a lunch hour and fits right here right now. While I will complain about the negative things of my childhood I have to emphasize two things.

1. Every human being that ever has or will live will experience tough things in childhood.

That is a cosmic truth - because this devilishly sly and subtle experiment was set up specifically to stress and test and shape us, so poor parenting skills by kids who hardly know which end of a baby to hold up guarantee questionable quality parenting and -this is the real point- it is somehow intended that we all experience crappy parenting - and that we inflict it when it comes our turn. Uniformly. Across the specie. Everywhere. And the screaming baby contributes just as surely and powerfully^[3]. So I'm saying it's Ok to have pain and to have unhappy

³I think that one of the few original observations I've made is to admit that these little squirmy screamy uncontrollable things CONTRIBUTE to their own abuse. They do. That doesn't make it right, but it does make it clear that abuse isn't just necessarily a random act of violence inflicted by the big one on the small one. My first wife understood this well although she never said it. She wisely advised her own children that if you get so upset at your child that you might harm them, just put them down and walk away. Truly wise. Any parent who tells me they never considered throttling or seriously maiming their children are either out of touch with what they

memories. It's ordained to be so.

2. The other thing I want to emphasize is: I'm saying that while I had as painful an up-raising [4] as most people, even more severe in various respects, I also experienced one of the richest a person could have.

I have enough information and experiences -that all stem in various ways from my upbringing - for 2 or 3 average people. Just look at this dang book. That is truth also of a deep eternal sort. All good in my life has roots in that upbringing as surely as it has roots in my own essential being-ness. So my poor mom and poor dad who struggled with compassion and understanding made up for the failure -yes, failure but not unlike that of other parents such as me- with extraordinary gifts - yes, gifts- of love of this world and problem solving and independence.

Which is the greater, compassion or independence? What a silly question, my friends. What a silly question. How Christian - to take two things and try to pick out the higher-valued - as if that were ever and always possible. That's the inflexible, binary view of the universe that cramps our souls and hinders our growth. I find the choice between compassion and independence to be a comparison of apples and oranges. These things aren't even the same specie. Would you value a hawk more than a whale? Or a CD player more than a balloon? Silly, isn't it.

Filene's Department Store

I just mentioned this store above. It still exists but I don't know whether it still has the "bargain basement" that we frequented. This bargain basement was truly a bargain hunter's paradise. It was several levels down in the ground and was directly accessible from at least one MTA subway line. It was a mish-mash of things that were marked down to ridiculous amounts. It wasn't unusual to see thing selling at 10% of the price on the tag, wedding dresses to glassware, shoes, socks, coats, etc. An amazing place. Some of the items were the same tones that were for sale at full price a few levels above in the store.

experienced - or are bald-faced liars.

⁴ I hasten to add that I am not proud of how I raised my own kids. What can I say now?

In-coming college students from other states quickly learned about Filene's as a place to stretch their dollars. It was really an institution and the funny thing was that well-heeled women in furs could be found rummaging around in the bargain basement shoulder-to-shoulder with the students and working people. The main store is located in the heart of Boston, though I can't remember the street or the subway line. It was a lovely granite building of about eight stories, nestled amongst comparable buildings. This is a recent photo of Filene's and that's how it looked in the '50's.



Figure 18 <http://jim.rees.org/ca13/5050.jpg>

In addition to having ultra-low prices, Filene's also had sales now and again. Those were spectacles to behold, more because of the performance of the shoppers than for the prices. I was never at the store when the door opened but heard marvelous stories of the crowds pressed against the glass doors just waiting. They'd been in the store the day before scoping out what was there and had identified precisely where they needed to go to get items they wanted. When the door opened, it was like opening the infield at the Indy 500, or the Oklahoma Land Rush. Sheer pandemonium as women, some nicely dressed, pushed and quarreled and jostled each other to get to their chosen patch of store.

I went into the store later in the day during various sales and it was a sight to see. People, primarily women, would just grab handfuls of the sweaters, socks or whatever it was just to be sure they got the size or color they wanted. Two women sometimes pulled on the same item. Standing there in the press of people who totally filled the aisles between the bins, they unabashedly try on things to get what they wanted, and then, they'd just throw the unwanted items back on the top of the bin, sometimes the wrong bin, sometimes letting them fall to the floor, as they moved on to the next battle station they had picked out the day before. Clerks must have gone nuts straightening what was left of the displays on those days.

Clothespin guns & Peashooters

These items really belong in Volume 8 Seward but I forgot them so put them

in here. The most interesting thing about these do-it-yourself toys is that they were considered to be fun, real old-time let's-have-a-good-time fun. Today I don't imagine that most kids could be enticed to waste time to take an old-fashioned thing like a clothespin and convert it into a gun, and might regard shooting spitwads through straws as too childish. Times have changed as have the toys and the level of sophistication of kids who cut their teeth on battery powered toys that are lifelike and bright and colorful. They were right up our alley, however, coming from the dark ages.

To make a clothespin gun, you need two clothespins of the kind that you squeeze open. The other kind that is just a dowel with a groove cut through it don't do the job because you need the steel spring out of the first kind to be your trigger.

Take both clothespins apart and with an exacto knife or razor blade change the shape of curved hole that normally holds the rolled section of the spring. That curved depression that was made to fit around the spring must be squared off on the front end so that one arm of the spring can be pushed back and trapped into it. Here's a shot that shows the trigger. The left hole on the top side is the squared off hole that will hold one leg of the spring to create the tension for the trigger. You can see how the spring had been placed on that half of the clothespin. The woman is cocking the trigger with another piece of a clothespin. She'll push it to the left until it falls down into the squared-off hole. Where it will remain. At the same time, the body of the spring below will straighten out and be perpendicular to the piece, thereby creating a trigger.

Then you tape or rubber-band the other half of the clothes pin together with the trigger piece. This creates a space to hold you ammo. This is what the finished gun looks like. The lady is pushing to trigger back into the squared-off hole. Then she'll put a pea or b-b or rock in front of the trigger, aim the gun



Figure 19

<http://www.deuceofclubs.com/randumb/clothespingun/clothespingun04.htm>



Figure 20

<http://www.deuceofclubs.com/randumb/clothespingun/clothespingun04.htm>

and pull back on the trigger at which point it pops vigorously forward, ejecting whatever the ammunition was. The pea is ejected with some force because the spring is strong and it can really hurt a kid's eye if it hits there. If you make these for your kids, be sure to warn them about avoiding people's eyes.

Another variation of the clothespin gun is to make a rubber band gun. This is as simple as the preceding toy. Take a piece of one-by wood and cut out the outline of a pistol. For us it didn't need to be fancy, just the rough outline of a revolver or pistol. In those days, imaginations provided the details. The only requirement for this cut-out is that the top of the back edge of the handle must be curved. This was necessary to allow a rubber band to slip over it. You can obviously make these any size or shape you want, the only limiting factor being the length of the rubber band "ammo" that you have available to waste.

Then you tape a clothespin to the handle of the gun, near the top of the handle, with the open end of the clothespin near the top. At that point you're in business. You slip one end of a rubber band over the front end of the barrel and stretch it back and secure the other end in the clothespin by squeezing it open, sitting the other end of the rubber band in the teeth of the clothespin. Then you allow the clothespin jaws to close and are ready. At that point, you have a loaded, cocked gun ready to hunt anything that needs hunting. This is how they look, pretty simple, aren't they but they were a source of endless fun and were cheap to operate. All you had to do was con your mom out of a handful of rubber bands and then retrieve them after shooting them.

The pea shooter was even more primitive but was as fun. You could buy heavy duty plastic or paper straws for this purpose. Then you filled your mouth with peas or made a spitwad and held the straw to your mouth. All you did was aim the tube at the target, move a pea into the tube, and suddenly blow hard. That ejected the pea with surprising velocity at the target. Kids did this in school with spitwads, pieces of paper chewed into a pulp and rounded like a ball. Teachers took a dim view of this

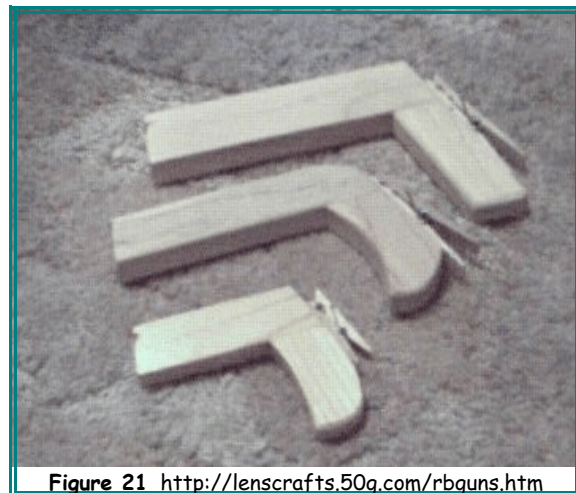


Figure 21 <http://lenscrafts.50g.com/rbguns.htm>



Figure 22

<http://cgi.ebay.com/ws/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewItem&item=5902577583&category=30#ebayphotohosting>

project. This is a box of dime-store pea shooters but any straw serves the same purpose. These are the simplest kind of blow gun and some kids got really fancy by taking narrow metal tubes a yard long, made darts by wrapping paper around the stem of kitchen matches to fit the diameter of the tube. When they shot these things, they went a long way and when they hit a hard surface like a sidewalk, the match would ignite in a small flame burning the piece of paper. These were dangerous and we didn't mess with them.

Back to Waltham --

RCA Victor Record-of-the-Month Club

I think it was in the second year we lived in Waltham that I fell victim to the lure of an ad that I saw many times. Prior to this event, mom and dad had been given a Bogen VP17X (amazing that I can even remember the exact model number) record player by Bill Cox. They needed something when they called square dances and taught folk dancing to the local congregation. Bill knew we had no money. He did and he loved dad - they stayed in touch until dad died. So he went out and, being an expert electronics amateur - bought the best portable record changer he could find, this particular model. Dick owns this unit now if you would like to see it. I don't remember the features of the turn table that guaranteed its consistent rate but was impressed with another thing: there was a lever that could be turned to vary the turn table speed from 80 RPM down to something like 16 RPM's. Any speed in between would play so you could adjust the turntable to produce a Mickey Mouse voice or whatever you wanted.

After we got this unit, mom and dad bought a handful of cheap LP's that they found in a grocery store, 50 cents apiece. They were all classical and the quality was pretty poor even then, but they wanted to get a variety of music - and having cut their teeth on really primitive record players, they weren't incommode by the quality that bothered me. They had some Mozart, Hayden, Bach, Rachmaninoff in this set, and later when a supermarket started to sell an album-a-week, with a special cover, so that you could build a collection of classical records, they started to shop that store and the collection is still at 2821 North.

Well, in this era RCA Victor advertised their Record of the Month Club, as did Columbia and other companies, all competing for your money. The special offer to hook you varied over time, but about now there was a delicious offer that finally wore me down. It was a boxed set of nine LP's of Beethoven's nine symphonies by

the NBC Symphony of the Air, conducted by Arturo Toscanini. You've seen his name earlier in this series so can perhaps intuit how susceptible I would be to such an offer. I was.

So I cut out the little coupon, filled it out, and mailed it in, not telling mom and dad what I was going. By now I was earning my own money so I didn't feel like I had to get their permission. When they found out what I'd done, they were ambivalent. But in the end, they knew that they had set things up so that it was reasonable for me to do this: when they told us boys that we had to earn money to buy our own clothes so that we could get what we wanted, they unintentionally set the stage for me to do this. I did.

I'd hurry home and check the mail, dying for the set to come. It was in the summer when we were working in truck gardens. It was agony to wait. The ad said it would take four to six weeks, and it did, but I wasn't capable of being patient. One day the set finally came and I was giddy. I opened the package and took out the LPs and admired them. I was fascinated by the cover photo of the man, a tiny fiery man with a shock of receding hair and an enormous moustache. In reality he was short, perhaps 5' 6" but he towered in my imagination.

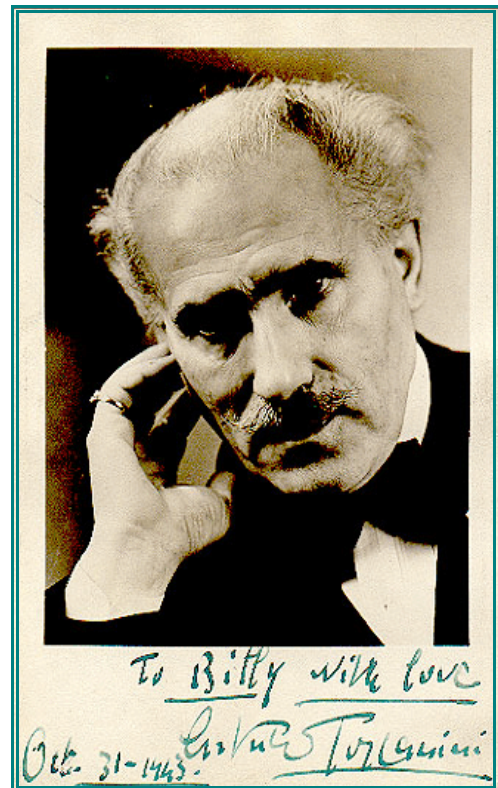


Figure 23

<http://www.cs.princeton.edu/~san/toscanini.jpg>

Dick Sleeping Walking

Dick turned out to have a remarkable ability, probably the same one that caused so much hell in Seward when "someone" took the toilet seat off sometime during the night, thereby shocking mom's bare bottom in the cold dark night. He sleep-walked. I had naturally heard of this trait, particularly in comic books and thought it a neat sort of thing to do. However, I was skeptical about how 'real' this business was. I actually found it hard to believe that anyone would actually be so deeply asleep that they could walk around in their sleep and do things.

Dick did it one day so convincingly that I knew it was true. I was the one who was summoned from my sleep to go down stairs to see who was knocking on the front door. I had been asleep but had no choice. When mom or dad said to go do something, you damn well did it, and right now. So I surlily crawled out of bed, turned on a hall light and descended the steep spiral stairs to the first floor.

Someone was knocking which was strange, it being something like 2:00 a.m. but in those days there wasn't fear of someone breaking in or assaulting you if you opened a door to a stranger, so I just went to the door and opened it. There was Dick, wet and cold from having walked around in the rain. I took him back up to bed and he went to sleep. I don't remember whether he was actually still sleeping when I let him in, but the next morning when things were sorted out, it became clear that he was actually sleep walking.

Boys' Club of America

Ever heard of this organization? I haven't outside of Boston. And I suspect that it underwent some pretty profound changes as time passed. As mom and dad cast about for things to occupy our time after school was out each day and before they got home from work, they located this Boys' Club which was on our way home from school. It was sort of a YMCA for boys, only for boys. It had a wide range of activities for kids of all ages, some were games, sports and so on. The program that mom and dad decided to sign us up for -note, there was no choice in this thing. It was an ultimatum- was swimming.

By now I had learned to swim and enjoyed it so it turned out that this ultimatum was not unpleasant in the final analysis. The program was simple: Dick and I were to go directly to the Boys Club after school, and we were to swim for an hour, after which we were to go directly home. That was not a burden really and we did that for the second year.

The pool was a large one that had a shallow end for beginners and a deep end with diving boards. There were probably 50 or so kids there each time we went. We'd go directly to the pool, go to the dressing room and find our locker for which we had been provided the combination, undress and put out clothes in the locker and we were ready to go swimming. Do you see what's missing? Trunks. No one wore trunks, indeed they were forbidden for some reason. Truly forbidden. If we had tried to wear some, we would be ordered to take them off.

Going into the pool made me feel like I was back in Greece 2 thousand years ago when athletes didn't wear anything. We were naked as jay birds, running and diving and swimming. We didn't know any of the other kids so kept to ourselves but they knew each other so played rough games, yelling and cussing. It took a while to get used to swimming naked in public and I always wondered if we were being watched. I didn't understand pedophilia at the time so hadn't been conditioned to worry about that. Indeed, had anyone broached the topic with me, I would have been shocked and embarrassed and confused. There was, in fact, a man of perhaps 25 years who also swam with us. He was large and fat, sort of grotesque looking, and he was always trying to play with any of the boys who would tolerate his presence. He'd try to participate in games, laugh at silly things the boys laughed at. He was the person who taught me how to squirt water with one hand. I stayed away from him because it seemed odd that an adult would participate in these swims that were populated entirely by boys. I imagine that as time passed and this problem grew, that trunks then became de rigueur.

In any event, we headed directly to the pool after leaving North Junior High school every day for at least one school year. Summer was devoted to working so we didn't have time to go. That's where I refined my ability to swim after I had learned at MIT. It was great exercise and filled part of the afternoon so we had less time to wait for mom and dad to get home from work.

Japanese beetles, Starlings & Forsythia.

During the first spring in Waltham, I was checking out some large spider webs out in the back yard. Seward actually didn't have many so this was a treat. I'd feed them to see what happened. Grab a grasshopper and throw it into the web and after a second during which the spider apparently evaluated the signal it detected in the web to see if it was dinner or not, the spider would hurry over to the grasshopper. It would grab it, stick the point of its abdomen on the insect and begin spinning a wide band of webbing while it spun the poor thing in circles.

This created a sleeping bag for the insect, preventing it from getting away. Then it was hung somewhere on the web for later use.

During the search for grasshoppers I found one of the most gorgeous beetles I'd ever seen, again, there were few in Seward. These insects were about half an inch long so were not large but the coloration was wonderful. They were iridescent, shimmering in the sunlight. They moved slowly which suggested that they didn't worry about predators so were easy to catch. I found out from Rolly that while these beetles were beautiful, they were pests. This image shows how they damage foliage, the damage obviously proportional the number of beetles, so these creatures are systematically poisoned. But they are still beautiful.



Figure 24

http://www.ppdl.purdue.edu/ppdl/images/japanese_beetle_adults_sm.jpeg

Another iridescent creature I'd never seen before was the starling. Again, while I thought they were beautiful, was informed that they are a pest. They were imported from Europe and have taken over an ecological niche that suits them well. They are abundant and noisy, flying in pesky flocks



Figure 25

<http://homepages.ihug.co.nz/~cie/starling.jpg>

In the front yard, a rather grassless plot because it was shaded by a large catalpa tree, was a large forsythia. Again, I was startled at the beauty of this bush. Seward didn't have ornamental bushes nor did our farms in Vernal so I was not prepared to see bushes that exploded into a ball brilliant of yellow blossoms -without any leaves- each spring.

This was amazing and later I was asked to "prune" it because it was too large, and was handed pruning shears. I had never handled this tool and had no clue about how to prune. The bush was obviously too large for the space it was in, that much I understood, but how to shape it? I didn't know so all I did was cut the longest branches back. In the end, even I could tell that I had butchered the bush but no one seemed to care so I didn't worry. But I did a bad job. The interesting thing about these is that many of the branches which erupt from the



Figure 26

<http://www.plantyfolia.com/photos31/forsyens.jpg>

center of the bush die off each year, sort of like raspberries so. That meant that pruning included shaping the outside of the bush, and cleaning out the deadwood.

Italians

My impression of Waltham was that it was fundamentally a manufacturing suburb largely populated by foreigners, Italian, French, Germans. I wasn't offended by the idea of foreigners - I wasn't offended by Indians or Eskimos. The reason they stood out is the fact that I had never lived near colonies of people like this, people who still embraced the culture and language of their European homes. In fact, I found it interesting to run into the different customs and foods.

For example, when I worked as a copy boy for the Hearst Syndicate, I wandered all over the metro region, often on foot. I loved walking around because I ran into nooks and crannies of history and exotic -to me at least- places that I stopped at for some education. One of the vivid places was Haymarket Square nestled down town amongst large building that I would expect to have driven it out. But it survived.

It offered produce and foods that were not available in the markets otherwise, and because it catered to specialty groups. Like the Armenians. I didn't dare to talk to the crusty old men in the tents, yelling in a foreign tongue, but I stared at the items for sale, fascinated by things I'd never seen. The most memorable was a circular loaf of bread, shaped like an enormous doughnut but obviously made out of braided bread dough. That was interesting but the finishing touch was half dozen chicken eggs that had been embedded into the dough and baked in place. If you stared at their items, they'd offer insults about what you were doing, sort of like New Yorkers, "Well, do you want it don't you want it?! I ain't got all day." I don't know why they did that. They weren't losing anything if I just looked but they were compelled to carry on. I suppose, today, that what they were doing was bantering with the customers who were expected to engage them in the same level, questioning the freshness of the produce, the quality of the clothing, getting ready to enter into



Figure 27

<http://www.boston-online.com/cityviews/haymarket.html>

serious bargaining by each side taking the offensive. I wasn't ready to do that.

I don't think that Waltham had an Armenian enclave but Italians were all over the place. The neighbors to the west of our house were Italian, hundred percent, big large mommas, loud voices and lots of garlic Italians. The daughter who was my age was named "Francis" and to this day I don't know what she was doing. Who sounded like Barbara Streisand. Large nose, heavy fluffy black hair, in your face, "whas-a-matta-you?!" And scared the pants off us. At least that's what it looked like. It did scare me.

I can see that perhaps she was just making friends in the manner of a city kid who had been raised in a big Italian family in a free-for-all Italian neighborhood. But it intimidated me. Francis was often eating something, chewing on a candy bar, slurping an ice cream cone and she would offer me whatever it was she was eating. She even offered to buy me something from the Good Humor man. Mom has taught me to not share germs with other people that way so for that reason I declined, but I declined on my own terms. She scared me and I couldn't imagine getting involved any way with her, sort of like a rat who is suspicious about the bait on a trap won't take the bait, not really knowing about the trap but fearful nonetheless.

The oddest thing Francis offered was an Italian "Meatball Sub". I had never heard of "submarine sandwiches" so didn't know what to make of them, and I had never heard of meat balls being used in sandwiches. They belonged in spaghetti. But Francis was insistent, saying, "Hey, Whassa matta U? You neva taste meatballs?! Taste it! You like it." While vigorously thrusting the dripping sandwich in my direction. About that time I realized that I needed to go do my home work so faded from the scene. She wandered away muttering something in a stage whisper that I couldn't make out and don't know whether it was complimentary or not. To her I was probably a weird kid because I was reclusive and quiet, not interested in getting involved with kids in the neighborhood. It was actually a friendly thing she did, wasn't it. I just didn't know how to relate to city kids who were so assertive that they felt aggressive, although they probably weren't.

Part of that mind state came from mom and dad and their fundamentalist faith. It creates a sense in believers of superiority of self and inferiority of all others. Oh, it will vigorously deny that, but it's nonetheless true. Only believers are good enough to be accepted without question, all others are suspected of being nasty, evil, unworthy, hence not really suitable to be friends with. So Francis and her other unwashed neighbors were not good enough for being my friends. Sad, isn't it. I should have taken up her offer of friendship and visited her in her home.

I would have seen a lot of interesting things. It was a perfect setting for doing a little field work on the sociology of the Italian Family in America!!

Elvis Presley

We moved in 1956 and it was about that time that this bizarre phenomenon broke out. I had never heard of this character while I was in Seward, although he was erupting at the time. The tiny radio station in Seward dealt more traditional fare, peaceful music, bits of history and some local personalities talking about local things. Elvis was not part of that scene and I was just amazed when I encountered him and I was equally amazed at the number of comparable singers and groups that were played on the radio stations.

The first Presley song I remember is "Hound Dog". It was not bad singing and tune but when I saw what the guy looked like I immediately disliked him. He looked so weird and extravagant. This image shows him as he was, oversized coat, and weird gyrations that were called dancing. He was actually called "Elvis the Pelvis" because of his pelvic gyrations. I have to chuckle today about my reaction to him and his style of dancing because I see that my own was comparable. Chuckle.

It wasn't his appearance that surprised me the most, it was the squealing teenage girls who adored him.



Figure 28

<http://www.indiesoho.com/liquidmusic.htm>

Ed Sullivan Show

The Ed Sullivan Show was a TV show that came on Sunday evening. It was an hour long show that was a really a variety show with singers, dancers, comedians, puppeteers, and so on. One Sunday evening when we had dinner at the Cox's we watched the Ed Sullivan show when Elvis appeared. Ed was one of the people who gave Elvis the massive publicity that turned him into a star - which convinced me that it didn't take talent, just a good agent.

Ed had Elvis on his show this evening and I was surprised that his singing was almost drowned out by the screams from the audience. When the camera panned the crowd, it was hundreds of teenage girls who were leaning toward the stage, frantically waving their hands in the air as if they would tear his clothes off, scream at the top of their lungs for some reason. I didn't get it. But it was how things were in the Lower 48. Even Martha Cox was overcome by Elvis' appearance. She had the same disease.

Because Elvis was so wildly popular, Ed had him on his show various times - good for his own ratings as well. But Ed received lots of severe criticism about showing such vulgar antics on public television. People told him that they considered TV a family medium and thought it was inappropriate to show a man wiggling his pelvis that way. The quantity of complaints was so severe that the next time Elvis was on the show, the camera man was instructed to show the top half of Elvis. His pelvic gyrations were taboo so they were not shown.



Figure 29

<http://www.fiftiesweb.com/tv/ed-sullivan.htm>