



UNTOLD TALES OF FALMOUTH

from the archives of Museums on the Green

Old Fashioned Winter Fun: Reminiscences

I remember seeing the snow piled high in front of where the Elm Arch is now located, so high that a tunnel was cut through to allow both the foot passengers and the sleighs to pass under. Piled so high from the present Alms House to the cross road beyond in the locality called Davis Straits, that the roads for the sleighs were over the fences and anywhere the driver chose to travel. Shiverick Pond was also sometimes frozen over and we had good skating when there was not too much snow, and then some skating where we had been industrious enough to clear the ice. I remember father's high back, low seated, yellow sleigh and the horse with a long string of bells (each one as large as your fist) hanging entirely around his body. When the weather was propitious I had many a pleasant ride in that sleigh over hill and dale, being unusually polite with my bows and thank-you-mams.

I would not have you children think that we did not know the pleasure of coasting down hill. The environs of Falmouth were not adapted to this sport. Huckleberry Hill was back of the present railroad depot near where Mr. Beebe has a house. It was far from our homes and was hard to keep in order, on account of the annual growth of coarse grass and bushes. It was not a popular place and we only resorted there in case of necessity.

There were two hills that were hardly long enough. One was on the east side of Shivericks pond nearly back of the present town library building. The other in a field vacant at that time, extending from the Episcopal Parsonage to where a Mrs. Shiverick used to live.



Top: Falmouth residents skating, perhaps at Quissett Harbor, ca. 1890. From a glass plate negative in Museums' collection.

Middle: Main Street, 1900, looking towards Shivericks Pond. Postcard in Museums' collection.

Bottom: Flexible Flyer Airline Pursuit sled, 1947. Owned by a Falmouth child and now in the Museums' collection.

Shiverick Pond hill was better, but we were forbidden to go there without first asking permission to do so, and some of our parents deciding that the ice on the pond was safe, however—for we might slide in our wild-est plunge over its surface.

A third place was the resort of us all. The hill was formed by a deep hollow. It, at that time, served as a draining place from the street, which usually formed a small pond at the bottom. When that was frozen over and the snow on the hill was well worn down, it was quite a respectable place to enjoy ourselves. On very cold evenings water was poured over the hill, which caused it to become smooth and doubly acceptable for our fun. It was called Watties Hollow, or Mrs. Shiverick's bottom. I remember a boy saying, "Come Ollie, let's go and slide down on Mrs. Shiverick's bottom, it is just as slick as glass."

All kinds of sleds of every size or description could be found there. My cousin, Eugene, had a sled painted all over with Indian and wild west scenes, and the name Oseola put on the side. It was the boss sled, the same as the old chief was the boss of his tribe years before. I have heard it said that the boys and girls of Cape Cod slid down hill on dried codfish, but they did not so use a codfish on Watties Hollow. I don't believe they used them in that way anywhere.

Oliver Franklin Swift
(1840-1918)

[On Christmas morning] the parlor door was opened. I entered with my hands before my eyes but with fingers spread apart just enough to see if the big gift was there. . . . I had seen it! My little red sled. I touched it and marveled how I could be so lucky. I could hardly wait to try it. My Father from the doorway of the parlor spoke words of doom. He said, "No slid-



Tanglewood and its water tower, ca. 1970. Photos by Karen Rinaldo. This former home of J. Arthur Beebe once stood near Highfield Hall. It was after Oliver's time but would have been familiar to Eleanor, from a distance.

Oliver Franklin Swift, ca. 1850.

All images from Museums' collection.

ing today, the snow is too slushy and Kelly's Hill has two feet of water at the bottom." With that he hustled out of the room already late for his job at the railroad station. Mama looked at his retreating figure and sighed.

My sister and I played with our things. The ducks were in the oven awaiting my Father's return. When Mama went upstairs to take her nap I bundled myself up, took my sled, and went out. I thought there was no reason why I couldn't see for myself what Kelly's Hill was like. It was a short walk to the hill and from time to time I glanced back to look at my little red sled. I thought how lucky I was to have a sled of my own instead of waiting at the top of the hill for some friends to ask me to ride down with them. The hill was deserted and there *was* a pond at the bottom. "Oh," I thought, "I'll just get on my sled and when I'm half way down I'll slide off, grab the rope before I reach the water." I sat on my sled, held onto the rope and pushed off. It was a speedy little sled and in spite of my careful planning, I didn't take into consideration the swiftness of the flight. I rolled off all right, but failed to grab the rope and my little red sled continued its journey and was lost in the murky waters of the pond below.

I picked myself up and ran home. I knew my Father was due home from the office before too long. Mama was up from her nap and she and my sister were setting the table and in spite of my dilemma I thought how good the kitchen smelled, and how hungry I was.

"Mama, Mama," I shouted. "Something awful has happened." After I told her, she appeared calm, but she did glance at the old kitchen clock with the loud tick and the funny face, and said, "Well, there is no time to lose."

She rummaged around the back shed for a moment before getting into her heavy "feeding the hens" coat. The next step was getting into the hip boots then grabbing a long pole used for trimming apple trees. We set forth for Kelly's Hill.

We were silent all the way over, both wondering if



The pictures above were all taken by Ray Hall in his North Falmouth neighborhood. The top photo shows the Old Nye Tavern at 229 Old Main Road. The date is likely either 1952, when 28 inches of snow fell between February 18 and March 1, or 1956, when 25 inches fell over four days in March. The Ray Hall slides are part of the photograph collection at the Museums.

we could find the sled and if we did, how we would get it out. But, with the determined look on Mama's face I knew she would manage somehow—she always did. We approached the hill from the bottom; she waded around for a minute probing the water with the pole. Then she found it dripping with mud and weeds from the little pond. We hustled home still not talking. My sister met us at the door saying my Father had called from the office and was on his way home. Mama handed me a rag and a bucket of suds. I washed and polished my little red sled until it was as good as new. Just as I put it under the tree my Father called from the side door, “Merry Christmas everyone, I'm hungry.”

Eleanor (Conant) Yeager
(1905-1981)



Eleanor's mother, Margaret (Nutley) Conant, wearing her determined look. Digital scan in Museums' collection.