

Ans. Nov 13 75

Mrs. Henry A. Kingsbury

September 28, 1975

Dear Mrs. Randall -

It has taken me a very long time to answer your letter of October 16<sup>th</sup>, 1974 regarding my erstwhile home which is now part of William Paterson College.

My reason for procrastinating was really my shameful lack of knowledge of the history of the place we called "Ailsa Farms."

The original house was owned by a Scotman whose name I do not recall. Nor do I remember when it was purchased, or when the house was renovated. Ailsa was named by this gentleman after a small island "Ailsa Craig"

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off the west coast of Scotland (near his home.)

The first floor dining room, pantry and kitchen were part of the original building, as was, I believe the building directly behind the kitchen, the old carriage house, known to me as "the old garage" as distinguished from the new garage which was later built on top of the hill and which comprised, as well, the laundry and 2 apartments for chauffeur and laundress.

(I do not know what changes have been made or if the old carriage house is still in existence.)

The most helpful suggestion I have received (second-hand) was from an old friend of my mother's who recommended con-

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tacting the Passaic County Historical Society (Lambert Castle, P.O. Box 1729, Paterson.)

She (Mrs. Olive Benson Carlyle from Passaic) is a member and felt that the Society would love to pursue such a project as the one you are undertaking.

The sole documents in my possession are a guest book dated 1902 and a composition book of my father's in which he mentions a dynamo in the tower which powered the electricity and which frequently required his attention.

The contents of the guest book

are not too revealing, but it appears that my grandmother (Mrs. Garret A. Hobart) and my father (Garret A. Hobart Jr.) then aged 18, first entertained these Christmas 1902.

Few prominent names are mentioned, aside from the former Governor and Attorney-general John W. Griggs, General Russel A. Alger (former Sec. of War) and of course William P. Frye, my mother's grandfather, former Senator from Maine and President pro tempore of the Senate during my grandfather Hobart's final illness when he was unable to fulfill his duties as Vice-President.

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Other friends and visitors include Senator and former Sec. of the Navy Sumner N. Kimbrey, Gov. Walter Edge of N.J., Senator Wallace White of Maine, Senator Warren Barbour, and Sir Miller Barbour of Belfast (who I believe<sup>(?)</sup> was former Prime Minister of Ireland.)

I surmise that Ailsa during the early years was used as a sort of week-end country retreat.

I am sorry I have so little information of historical interest, but will at least try to give you a few reminiscences of my life there.

I moved there after the 1<sup>st</sup> world war (when I was about 5) with my mother, father, brother and sister. We had formerly lived with my grandmother at Carroll Hall, Peterson. I cannot remember whether she came with us at that time or whether she joined the household at some later date.

By this time the renovations had been completed and the house seemed, to my 5-year-old eyes, enormous. We three children and nurses lived on the main floor, which of course from the vantage point of the bedrooms located on the hillside appeared to be the

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second or third floor.

Our parents and grandmother lived on the floor above. At one time Mother employed a house-keeper to oversee the domestic problems, but she turned out to be more of a liability than an asset, added to which the lady owned a parrot and Mother was terrified of anything feathered.

The usual number of help, as I recall, included cook, kitchen maid, houseman, 2 chauffeurs, laundress and assistant laundress, waitress-parlor-maid, butler, one or 2 chambermaids. All these people except chauffeurs

and laundresses lived in the main house on the floor below us and on the top floor 2 flights above the kitchen. (I believe there were 2 bedrooms there.)

The farmer was also an important member of the staff. He lived with his family in one of the cottages near the barn, cared for the livestock and supervised the gardeners. At one time or another there were pigs, chickens, sheep, a cow, my father's saddle horse and several working horses. There were always beautiful flowers, fresh vegetables and fruits.

The house, though large, was a wonderful place to live. As children, we found all sorts of exciting

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stood in the upstairs hall. We had music rolls for this, which my father loved to play, adjusting the various stops and pedals to create marvelous crescendos, tremolos, flute solos, etc.

Many happy hours of my childhood were spent in the playroom, a large room on the help's floor which was later cut in half, one half being made into an extra bedroom. It was here that we kept our doll houses and electric trains, a piano, and later a sewing machine.

The winters seemed to be colder and snowier in those days than they are now. I remember a wondrous moonlit night after a heavy snow when we were

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allowed to go coasting down the road from the house almost to the gates at the main road.

It was fast and thrilling and unbelievably beautiful.

On the north side of the house we used to go tobogganing, down the steep hill, across ~~a~~ a field, generally coming to a halt in the middle of a brook.

One hot summer night I shall never forget. The barn caught fire and many of the sheep were trapped and severely burned. The heat was so intense that we could hardly stand outside the front door. My mother and father were having dinner at

Arcola Country Club on the other side of Town. They could see the fire from there and when they tried to get home the traffic on Pompton Road was so congested that it was almost impossible to get up the hill.

due to various speculations

An unusual experience stands out in my mind though I cannot place a date on it. My brother was an electronic buff and had a fascinating laboratory in the old garage. For sometime he had been working on a secret project, and one day he asked me to assist in an important experiment. I was to stare at a screen encased in a box which he had rigged up in his bedroom.

He would go to the "lab" and project a picture. I stared, and

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suddenly there was Garret on the screen in front of me. It was incredible! My first look at T.V., and long before anyone had heard of such a thing.

Sunday afternoon at Casa was always open house. Family friends came for tea and often several stayed for supper.

We did have some marvelous parties, — spooky Hallowe'en ones, fancy dress ones, and once we had an orchestra and 2 Arthur Murray teachers to instruct us as we danced on the roof terrace.

Dinners in the upstairs dining room were very special. The dining table sparkled with the

most lovely Venetian glass of soft pastel shades, and often we used my grandmother's handsome set of Fabergé Russian enamel, which pattern had been designed for the Czar.

In the little room off the dining room which was used at one time as my father's office, there stood a stunning white gold ink-well replica of the Capitol, a gift to my grandfather from, I believe, the members of the Senate. This beautiful piece is now, I believe, at Lambert Castle.

\* See P.S. → In 1941 my grandmother, aged 92, passed away, and 6 months later my father died suddenly, at the age of 57.

Mother later moved to Montclair,

as it is by tall buildings of questionable beauty. Well, such is progress!?

Anyway you can imagine my surprise at finding your letter awaiting me upon my return to Florida.

I am wondering what photographs you already have. In a copy of the "Peterson State Beacon" dated May 14, 1956, there are some pictures of interiors. I wonder if those are still at the college or whether they were just borrowed for the occasion. I have the original prints (not the negatives) and could have them copied.

When at our camp in Maine this summer I found 2 stereopticon pictures of the original house and had copies made (which I enclose.)

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If I can be of further help let me know and I promise not to wait a year next time.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth H. Kingsbury

P.S.— While re-reading this lengthy letter I found I had neglected to include one paragraph, the following:

\* After my brother married and moved away the old garage "lab" was converted to a studio for me. Here I painted portraits and still lifes and battled an army of determined wasps. (B.B.S. - before bug sprays)



MRS. H.A. KINGSBURY



Mrs. Virginia R. Randall  
The William Paterson College of N.J.  
300 Pompton Road  
Wayne  
New Jersey  
07470

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In 1941 my grandmother, aged 92, passed away, and 6 months later my father died suddenly, at the age of 57. Mother later moved to Montclair, Ailsa was sold and, as you know, became Paterson State Teachers College.

I had always said I would never return and chance spoiling happy memories. However last year (October 16 to be exact - the day that you wrote me, - E.S.P. ?) I had a sudden urge to go back. We were in New York and planning to visit our children in Morristown, so I suggested we stop at Ailsa on our way back to the city. We went, but we did not stop (and you were probably there watching us drive around the circle.) I must admit it was all pretty depressing. I could hardly find my beloved home, surrounded as it is by tall buildings of questionable beauty. Well, such is progress! Anyway you can imagine my surprise at finding your letter awaiting me upon my return to Florida.

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