Childhood Memories of Vivacious Fanny Howes

Picture Friends Village A Century Ago

At a recent meeting of the Historical Society of Old Yarmouth, President Ann Maxton-Graham produced a book written by a great-aunt, Fanny (Howes) Bartow, a sister of Mrs. Graham's grandfather. In the slim volume are pictures of Fannie Howes and her sister Nellie. Fanny, at about 8, had mischief written in every feature. Her book "Memories of a Happy Childhood," was privately printed in 1925. She was born in 1851 in Boston, the night of a terrific gale which wrecked Minot's Light. She was one of nine children of Osborne Howes, a Cape sea captain turned Boston merchant in the firm of Howes and Crowell and Abba Crowell, a daughter of his business partner. Following are excerpts from Fanny's memories of the Cape in about 1859: - Ed.

The Bully

I must disgress here and tell a very amusing story which was related to me some years ago by an old Quaker, a distant connection of the family.

"When your grandmother was a child, she lived in Barnstable with her parents and grandparents. The house was on the main road leading down the Cape. It was the universal custom at that time on Election Day to hold a wrestling match, among the men of the town. The winner of the match was known as the "bully," which proud title he kept until it was wrested from him.

Your great-grandfather, being a man of unusual strength and a good wrestler, held this honor for a number of years. His fame spread throughout the Cape and stirred the envy of the "bully" of the town of Plymouth, Mass, so that he resolved over from Hyannis by David Chubbs, the stage driver. He drove one of the old-fashioned stagecoaches, common in those days, and it was great fun to climb up on the top by the driver. David Chubbs was quite a character in the village. I believe he was a Quaker, but certainly he was quite different from most of the others. He conducted the only livery stable in the village, and we children used to sneak up to his stable when he was away and gaze with awe at the sign he had hanging in large letters, so it could be seen by everyone entering. It went this way-

"To trust is to bust, to bust is hell.

"No trust no bust, no bust, no hell."

I am sure we expected some awful visitation from heaven would descend upon him for owning and daring to display so blasphemous a sign.

My trunk was landed on the side verandah and we went in to dinner, and as soon as the meal was finished and my grandparents retired for a nap, I quickly made my way over to Aunt Margaret's and induced her to say she would take me in for the summer. Having settled this business to my satisfaction, I returned to Grandfather's and borrowed a wheelchair from his barn; and, that no time might be lost, with the help of one of the village girls hoisted my trunk on the wheelchair, and started through the village.

Naturally there were a great many comments made by some of the old Quakers, "What's the matter, Fanny? Won't thy grandmother keep thee any longer?" etc. You can imagine the surprise of grandmother when she awoke and found her bird had flown.

Bass River Bridge

Quakers. They were, as a rule, seafaring folk, either owners or part owners in ships or vessels, and some of them were fishermen. Another source of income was the manufacture of salt. All along the banks of the Bass River were windmills which pumped the salt water into the salt works or vats. These windmills were most picturesque, and reminded one of Holland. The salt works were quite a distance back from the river and stretched back to what is now known as the stylish part of the village, but in our early days was known as "down below," and we were warned not to go there as the "rough folks" lived there. The salt works, as they were called, were square vats, with wooden covers which could be swung aside or opened to allow the rays of the sun to evaporate the water. When the covers were on, it was one of our chiefest pleasures to make a trip home from the lower village by jumping from one salt works to another. If discovered, our interesting journey came to an end.

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At the further end of the village stood the Friends' Meeting House, just at the beginning of the pine woods. Here every first and fifth day the good old Quakers met for worship. In my early days those services were well attended. Dressed in their quiet Quaker garb, the men with Ruth," and so break up the meeting.

Strong Bonds

The only time when any man was privileged to sit on the women's side was for his marriage service. At the conclusion of the morning service the couple to be married would rise in their seats, and holding hands declare their intention of becoming man and wife in the presence of witnesses. No further ceremony was considered essential. It seems to have been a very binding ceremony, as I have never known of any Quakers who were divorced.

Our father and mother were married in this little Meeting House. It is never used now although it is kept in beautiful order and left unlocked so that anyone who chooses may enter. The Quakers are nearly extinct in the village now; only a handful remain, not enough to form a meeting. Outside is the burial ground with its rows of simple white marble stones, all of a uniform size, and here in this peaceful quiet spot rests much that was blessed and precious to me in life.

Grandfather Crowell

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Grandfather was not noted as a conversationalist, so most of his remarks were addressed to the horse in the effort to make him quicken his speed. "Gang, Gang, huddup,
kept until it was wrested from him.
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Arriving in the village he inquired for the residence of the "bully," and knocked on the door of his house, which was opened by the great man's wife. He explained his errand, and was told the good man was out on the marshes cutting hay, but would soon be home. She invited him to wait for her husband, assuring him it would give her husband much pleasure to have a match with him.

During the conversation she expressed her interest in athletic sports and stated that she also enjoyed wrestling, and sometimes had a bout with her husband, and once in a while got the better of him. This astounding piece of news greatly appealed to the "bully," who at once suggested that they have a trial match, while waiting for the return of his husband. She promptly agreed, and called in a few neighbors as witnesses, with the result that she polished him off so neatly that he did not wait for her husband." So much for a fighting Quakeress.

Friends' Village, South Yarmouth
I do not remember the exact year, but it was probably when I was seven or eight years old, that Grandmother Crowell sent me an invitation to spend two weeks with her at the Cape. This was only fairly pleasant news to me, as I had always longed to go to the Cape for the whole summer, as Frank Howes, Fannie, Frank and Henry Crowell were all there, boarding with a dear old Quaker lady known to us as "Aunt Margaret Wood." I had a very strong desire to form one of that party. Finally Mother said that if Aunt Margaret would take me, I might stay all summer.

I remember that I arrived at Grandfather's about noon, being brought comments made by some of the old Quakers, "What's the matter, Fanny? Won't thy grandmother keep thee any longer?" etc. You can imagine the surprise of grandmother when she awoke and found her bird had flown.

Bass River Bridge
One little episode occurred that summer that I remember well. The bridge across Bass River to West Dennis was a wooden bridge, and a toll bridge at that time, and the daughter of the tollman was named Imogene. She was about sixteen years old and I thought her very beautiful. One day when we children were fishing off the bridge, Imogene came out of the house all dressed in her best to go over the river to make some calls. The high wind lifted her flapping hat off her head and sent it flying into the river. She was much upset, but I called to her "Never mind, Imogene, I will get it for you."
So I threw my line, which had two hooks on it, as hard as I could; but unfortunately for me it hit the top of the rail, and bounding back went right through my thumb. We could not get it out and some old man on the bridge cut the line and said, "Run to thy grandfather's."
So off I started through the village only to have grandfather give one look at it and say, "Oh dear me, run to Aunt Margaret's." Back I started, only to have her say "Oh dear me, I can't stand the sight of blood; do run to thy grandfather's."

So back I ran, screaming louder than ever, when someone in front of Stephen Wing's store hailed me, put me between his knees, gave the hook a yank and it was out. I was told that I must not go in bathing for ten days for fear of lockjaw, but as I sat on the pier a day or two later, watching the others in the water, I accidentally fell in, and, as nothing serious developed, I was allowed to bathe.

Peace and Quiet
I wish I could adequately describe the little Friends' Village as it was when I was a child, - the atmosphere of peace and quiet that seemed to brood over it. Most of the prominent people in the village were

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I do not recall ever hearing anyone speak except Aunt Ruth Baker. She invariably sat with her eyes closed and her hands meekly folded in her lap, in deep meditation. If the impulse to speak moved her, she would tell the strings of her bonnet, remove it from her head, and very carefully place it in the lap of the person next to her, then, rising and holding on to the rail in front of her, begin always with these words, "The spirit moveth me to declare the wonderful works of the Lord."

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Savings Bank Book as listed below is lost and application has been made for the issuance of a duplicate book, in accordance with Section 40, Chap. 590, of the Acts of 1908 and as amended by the Acts of 1909. Payment has been stopped.

BASS RIVER SAVINGS BANK LOST PASS BOOK NO. H-2088
April 11, 18, 25

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BASS RIVER SAVINGS BANK LOST PASS BOOK NO. H-7357
March 28, April 4, 11

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BASS RIVER SAVINGS BANK LOST PASS BOOK NO. H-8848
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Then there was the nice old Quaker lady, Phoebe Kelly, who became insane and was also kept in seclusion at her home. She was immersed in a room on the lower floor and we felt that we literally took our lives in our hands when we tried to peek in to see what she was doing.

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Very often, however, the meetings would be silent ones, and then we children, weary of the quiet and the hard seats, would anxiously eye David Akin, longing for the moment when ye would shake hands with Seth Kelly and then with “Aunt Ruth,” and so break up the meeting.

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iron supports to the dashboard, so that I faced Grandfather. I was always provided with a small basket of luncheon to help beguile the time.

Grandfather was not noted as a conversationalist, so most of his remarks were addressed to the horse in the effort to make him quicken his speed. “G’lang, G’lant, huddup, huddup,” accompanied by the slapping of the reins, which fell on either side of his head and always served to keep me in terror.

The bait which induced me to take this trip was the chance of playing with the Davis children, of whom I was very fond, and whose father was the cashier at the bank.

The “Shaking Man”

There were the usual eccentric people so often found in small villages and naturally they were of absorbing interest to us as children. I remember Alvin Jenkins who took to his bed at quite an early age and remained there for life, carried for most tenderly by a devoted mother who wore herself out in his behalf. “Bedridden” or “feeble folk,” as father used to call them, and the Cape had many of them. Alvin Jenkins’ room was on the lower floor, where he lived in semi-darkness, and we used to creep up and pry open the shutters and peek in to see him.

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Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Goodspeed have returned home after spending the winter in Florida.

Memorial flowers at the altar Easter Sunday were placed by Mrs. Claude King in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Hedge and Dr. Claude King; Mrs. Leslie Sears in memory of Leslie Sears; Howard B. Sears in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Sears; Mr. and Mrs. Robert VanSant in memory of Mrs. Ida Jane Smith and Mrs. Esther VanSant; Mrs. George Canham in memory of the Rev. and Mrs. J. O. Clancy; Mrs. Myra Walker in memory of Miss Maude E. Field; Mr. and Mrs. Homer Morrison; Mr. and Mrs. Nathan Crowell in memory of Captain and Mrs. Howard Kelley and Mr. and Mrs. Joshua Crowell; Roy Nyberg in memory of his mother, Mrs. Helma Sears; and Mr. and Mrs. E. C. Williams in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Williams and Ludwig Johnsen.