

Roscoe and Ella Case Farm History

Written by granddaughter, Jane Case French
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My paternal grandparents bought the 80 acre farm on Route 80 between Apulia Station and old Apulia from the Hotalings (note no house shown on the 1874 Sweets map at this time, but the farmhouse would be built just west of the I. Babcock residence in Lot 22). The house and barns were built by Mrs. Hotaling's parents and sold to Grandpa and Grandma in 1916. They had been living in Keeney Settlement with their 2 children, Ceylon and Greta.

At the time of the move, my father was 16 and Greta was 10. Until her 96th year, she had vivid memories of riding her pony, "Trixie," on moving day and stopping to rest herself and the pony at the home of a family friend in Fabius.

Grandpa kept dairy cows and raised their feed. He always had two well-cared-for teams of horses, plus a riding horse or two.

I remember Dad telling how stony the land was and how backbreaking the work of picking stone off the fields year after year was.

My brother and I were born and grew up in the smaller house on the farm (Sweet's 1874 Lot 22 I. Babcock). I believe it was considered an old house when Mom and Dad moved in and had it renovated by Charlie Peters, a carpenter who lived east of Fabius.

When my brother, Merritt was a pre-schooler, he was given a "kid" by my mother's uncle who raised sheep and goats out in Ovid. I remember seeing him being bottled fed. Merritt and "Billy" grew up loving one another. What fun it was to play hide-and-seek with Billy. If he found Merritt, he'd jump straight up in the air with joy, but if he found any other female, or me he'd give us a bunt with his rock hard head. Thank goodness he never grew horns.

When Billy grew up, my Grandfather had a harness made for him and bought a cart so Merritt could hitch him to it and drive him around. Billy lived until his teeth loosened and eating was impossible. It was a sad day for my brother when he had to be put down.

Dad bought Grandma some chickens, so there were not only eggs, but also an occasional chicken dinner. When I was small it was quite a sight to see Grandpa chopping off the hen's head and watch it flop around on the ground before it could be hung up to bleed out. Grandma would boil water on the wood stove, bring it out and pour it in a pail so the bird could be dunked. The boiling water loosened the feathers so it could be plucked. What an odor!

Despite all the work, those fresh killed chickens, which had been free to range around the back yard, had such a wonderful flavor when cooked compared to those we get today.

I believed Grandpa and Dad raised cabbage one year before changing to russet potatoes for a cash crop. Of course there were always fields to corn, oats and hay. Many years ago farmers prided themselves on raising tall corn. I particularly remember one severe summer storm, which left the corn so beaten down that it had to cut by hand. Dad went out to the Onondaga reservation to hire for that job.

My Grandfather loved his horses, particularly "Tom", his strong, gentle and intelligent workhorse. Merritt and I drove him on the hayfork, or rather; we held the reins while he pulled a big forkful of hay from the wagon up to the top of the dairy barn. Tom knew just when to stop and when to turn around. While we waited for Grandpa or Dad to set the next forkful to be pulled up, we'd try to keep the sweat bees off Tom, pet and talk to him. It was a sad day when Dad bought a tractor and horses were no longer needed. I do remember one year when Mr. Collins, a horse dealer in the Syracuse area talked Grandpa into letting him show Tom at the State Fair. We were all so pleased when he came home with a blue ribbon.

One Christmas we were surprised with a pony named "Red". My brother enjoyed him the most, since he was more of a horse lover than I was. On top of that, I soon outgrew him. We have a snapshot which Mother took one winter showing Grandpa with Tom, Grandma with Bess, me holding Red and Merritt with Billy.



Grandpa ē "Tom"
Grandma ē "Bess"
Jane ē "Red"
Merritt ē "Billy"

Some of our winters in years-gone-by created havoc with farmers getting their milk to the creameries. I remember Duane Skeele using a team of horses to pull the sleigh with his milk cans and getting stranded in a big snowdrift in front of our house. Duane never forgot that experience. Every time I'd see him years later, usually at someone's funeral, he'd retell the story of Merritt and me helping him shovel through the drift. He had some memory!

When we were growing up, Dad baled hay, despite the fact that he had asthma. I have vivid memories of him sitting upright in bed to breathe at night and the Fabius doctor coming one day. He told Dad, "Mr. Case, you'd better give up farming and buy a bank, you're so allergic to dust and animal dander."

One year Grandpa bought a retired racehorse. "Tony" was a pacer that my mother loved to ride. She said that it was like sitting in a rocking chair, his gait was so smooth. She and Grandma sometimes rode on summer mornings when work wasn't too pressing. I used to think it so strange that Grandma would take her saddle horse "Bess" to the concrete block in front of the house to mount. Now that I am elderly, I understand completely. The aging process and arthritis take all the bounce out of one's knees.

A happy memory I cherish was the beautiful winter day Grandma hitched "Bess" to a sleigh and gave Mom and me a ride. We covered our legs with an old bear rug. What fun that was!

Of course there was always a pet dog on the farm, the first being a beautifully trained Airedale named "Sin". He was so gentle and intelligent and never wandered off the farm. I remember Grandpa wheeling him back and forth from the house to the barn in the wheelbarrow when he became old and was paralyzed in his hind parts.

Aunt Greta always lived with Grandpa and Grandma. We saw her every day and I grew up feeling very close to her. She worked for Niagara Mohawk Power Co. until taking an early retirement to look after Grandma in her declining years. Grandpa died in 1960.

When the time came for Grandma and Grandpa to retire from farm work, they bought Bertha Ellis' house in Apulia Station and sold the farm to Dad. He and my brother ran it for awhile before selling it to Duane Hunsinger in the 50's. The Hunsingers lived there several years and sold it after the cattle barn burned.

I never lived on the farm after graduating from Fabius High School in 1942 and entering nurse's training in Syracuse. Ken and I were married in 1945 while he was in service and I was completing nurse's training, so my knowledge and memory of activities on the farm are not too vivid. It's been an

experience reminiscing about growing up. Things, which a child found interesting and entertaining, were exhausting and often dangerous work for both the men and the women, as anyone who has ever operated a farm knows all too well. However, despite the long hours, uncertain weather conditions and hard work, I'm sure most farmers enjoy working the land and caring for animals. Last of all, I want to say how satisfying it is to drive by one's former home and see it being cared for so beautifully.