

Una Clingan, Colebrook Photographer

In the interview with Wilbur and Nellie Mills, reference was made to Una Clingan, who took a photo of the young couple riding in their buggy. In a taped interview in 1979 with the late Grace Seymour, she spoke extensively of Una – here is that interview:

“The Clingans used to own the house where the Robert Googins live now. [This is 368 Sandy Brook Road today.] Una Clingan, their daughter and my friend, was born in Winsted on Brook Street, the first house back of the package store now. She was quite young when they moved up here, because she remembered that the Birch Mill was still standing, over by the bridge beyond their house. [This is the first bridge after leaving CT Rt. 8.]

Mr. Clingan worked in the Gilbert Clock Shop, the only place I remember him working. He was an elderly man and he was a very well read person, and could talk very well. Mrs. Clingan was a beautiful lady. She was kind and friendly and always glad to see you.

Una had finished school before I went. She probably had John Moore as her teacher. His last year of teaching was the year before I went to school. I remember going to the last day of school when he was there and a great big wooden or paste board pail there full of little hard candies, and oh, I thought that was the most candy I ever would see! He used to sit with his feet up on the desk and fall asleep! The children used to tell about it. I remember him well, of course, he lived across the street from here. [That would be 294 Colebrook River Road today.] He was with Hattie and Homer Deming at times. He died in 1923.

Una Clingan helped in the post office when it was across the street in the Homer Deming home. At that time the mail came from Winsted to Riverton, to Robertsville, to Colebrook River, to New Boston and ended in Montville. That was the driver’s route. The first thing that I remember they used horses, but later they had cars, of course. In fact, I guess one of the first [Stanley] Steamer automobiles in this area was owned by Charles Slater and used to carry the mail for awhile. It used to stop across the street over there, make a funny noise and then it started on again. It was sort of bus-like. It carried 8 or 10 people.”

“Una Clingan started taking pictures apparently as soon as she was able to use a camera. I remember her camera – she always had to put the old black cloth over her head when she took pictures. She didn’t use any other kind of camera until after she went up to Alaska. She used to go all around the area to take pictures. I remember going to Hartland with her – she took pictures of an old schoolhouse there – of course it’s gone now. She also went to the parsonage and took pictures of the minister and his family that day that I was with her. She did it for a business. She sold them. I guess she got five cents apiece for the pictures on post cards.”

“Una did several paintings, too after she went to Alaska. I don’t think she ever did any before she went up there. She picked it up by herself. She went to Alaska each time her four grandchildren were born. She flew up there. She was in the Philippines during the war with her husband and two children. She travelled a great deal for a country girl.

Her son was a teacher in ‘Ol Miss’, the place down in Mississippi where the governor stood across the doorway and wouldn’t let Julian Bond into the room. Her son left after that. He

didn't agree with the governor, I guess. He went up to a college in North or South Carolina far as I know he is still there. I've only seen him once. He came here with his mother. His name is Robert Rands."

"Una and I used to go up that mountain behind Clingan's house; we called it Clingan's Cobble. We could see down Route 8, see the traffic and it was a pretty sight.

We could look up Sandy Brook for quite a ways, see the brook and a few houses. I guess I went up there all alone sometimes, but I wouldn't dare go up there now. It's so very steep – a very rocky place. I don't know who owns it now.

The Clingans went to Wealthia, Virginia March 20 1913 when they left here, but then moved to Maryland later. We went down to visit them in about 1920. The Browns were the next occupants of the Clingan house.

Una Clingan sold her films when she left to Frank DeMars, who had an art store in Winsted near Colt's Store on the west side of Main Street. So many pictures of this area that we have today are the ones Una Clingan took while she lived here. We should be grateful to her. *This is the end of the 1979 interview with Grace Seymour.*

John N. Brown

The family that bought the Clingan's house also left their mark on Colebrook. John Brown conducted the "Brown Brothers of Winsted Music Company". Amelia Wilber remembers taking piano and vocal lessons from him for several years. "He was a big man who worked with wood, and his hands were very big, and you'd marvel that he could play the way he did. He could play just wonderfully. Many of the pieces that he gave me as part of my lessons and some of the drill and study books he had arranged and written himself."

Ruth Deming Everett, Homer's daughter, said: "my twin brother Bob and I both took lessons from Mr. Brown. We were probably about 10 years old at the time. I still have pieces of music which Brown most always wrote by hand. He was a very kind man and always gave us a piece of chocolate candy if we had a cold or a cough when we came to his house for a lesson. Needless to say, we pretended to have colds quite often!

His house was owned at one time by my great, great grandfather, D.C.Y. Moore, later by his son, John A. Moore, who was my mother's father."

Grace Seymour recalled that Brown did not have a phone, and one day a telegraph came to our house for him, and it was quite a large order for a large selection of his music. It was a big order for him, and he said over and over 'Oh, that's fine – Ann Arbor, Michigan, the University of Michigan!'"