

## Julia Wharton's Colebrook, Conclusion

*Julia Wharton, wife Henry Wharton, minister of the Colebrook Congregational Church from 1937 to 1955, was asked to record her remembrances in Colebrook while in her 91<sup>st</sup> year.*

“Following are some of the happenings that I remember: One afternoon Mrs. Charles Colebaugh came to call on us at the parsonage. She was French, attractive, vivacious and delightful to know. She told us some things that recently had happened to her in New York. It being their maid's day off, she went around the corner to a delicatessen to purchase something for lunch. As she walked in, the proprietor said, ‘Mrs. Colebaugh, I have just made what I think is a marvelous fish entrée. Please sit down at the table and taste it.’ She replied, ‘Sorry, I have to hurry home. ‘Sharley’ will be arriving any moment for lunch.’ As she was leaving, he said the secret of the dish was a fresh-caught fish, and when he had one, he'd send it over to the apartment. One evening later, as they were about to leave for a dinner party, there was a knock at the door. It was a man delivering a fish nailed to a board, a present from the delicatessen owner.”

“The only solution was to put it in the bathtub, where it immediately began to swim. It was promptly named ‘Albear’ (Albert). The next morning ‘Sharley’ said ‘Georgette, that fish has to go. I need a shower.’ Somehow ‘Albear's soul, having been dispatched to fish heaven, it was served that night for dinner. Placing her finger on her throat, Mrs. Colebaugh, with a deep, sad sigh, said, ‘I took one bite and ‘Albear’ stuck right there’

Mrs. Irvin S. Cobb spent several summers in a cottage on Beech Hill Road. [21 Beech Hill Road.] Her daughter, ‘Buffy’, who lived in New York, often visited her mother. On a trip to Rome, she joined a group of tourists being shown around the Catacombs by a priest. He asked Buffy where she lived. When she said Colebrook, Connecticut, he asked, ‘does Mr. Stotts still sell that stale cheese? Who he was, we never heard!’”

“Roy Chapman Andrews’ summer home was on Church Hill Road, now owned by William Haskell. [61 Church Hill Road.] There being a pond across the road inhabited by ducks, Mr. Andrews had a sign painted that read, ‘Beware of wild ducks and tame cats’

The Colebrook Inn, (now housing the historical society and Town Hall) at one time was operated by Mr. and Mrs. Tomlinson. A guest, unable to sleep, finally went downstairs to look for something to eat. Next morning he told Mrs. Tomlinson he had raided her refrigerator and had eaten something in a certain bowl that was unusually tasty. He hoped she didn't mind. ‘Not at all’, she replied. What he had eaten was cat food.

There was a long and treasured relationship between the Bob Whittings and our family. On his way back home to “Seven Brooks”, he would bring me an azalea or an Easter lily or a Christmas poinsettia. He started Betty collecting stamps with gifts of the latest blocks.

When Harry had a problem, Bob was always there with counseling and encouragement. He was generous and thoughtful and a friend in the true meaning of the word.

From the beginning and through the years, Mary and Bob invited us to share Thanksgiving and Christmas with them and their family. Caroline and Bob Nash would be there,

Dorothy and Colonel Terrell, sister Mary, Betty and Serge Korff, Ann and Edward Samuel, the grandchildren and friends from out of town. We would chat and exchange stories while enjoying pre-dinner refreshments in the living room. Sometimes Caroline would play the piano and we she spent putting the finishing touches on the dinner. She insisted on doing it alone – no one was allowed in the kitchen in spite of frequent offers to help. When all was on the table, we gathered ‘round – Bob at the head of the table, Mary at the foot. After the blessing, Bob carved the enormous turkey and the many dishes of delicious food were passed around. When the evening was finally over, we left with the warm feeling that this indeed had been a day to remember.

It is with love and gratitude that I remember the great friendship we were privileged to share with Bob and Mary Whiting and their family.

This is the Colebrook we knew for 56 years – the nicest, friendliest place one could imagine.”

In addition to Mrs. Wharton’s other involvements in Colebrook, she was our postmaster for many years. This began when the Post Office was housed in the side addition to the Colebrook Store, where it had been since 1943, when it moved across the road from the Cooper Store. The first postmaster at that location was Blanche Turbarg, who served until her retirement in 1959. Julia Wharton was appointed as acting postmaster at that time, a position she held until being appointed by President Lyndon Johnson as postmaster in 1966. She remained in that capacity until she retired in July, 1972. The position was then filled by her substitute, Ellen Fredsall.

Mrs. Wharton was a truly wonderful lady, one who enriched the lives of all who were privileged to have known her. Statements like that are somewhat overused, it seems, but in her case, it is truly accurate. As a small example of how the community felt about her, here is an item from “The Winsted Evening Citizen”, September 20, 1960:

“Colebrook residents are going about Colebrook Center with broad smiles and even the most wary have succumbed to the charms of the town’s new “public relations officer.” The position is very capably filled by a most attractive young male, just loaded with personality. His name is Barnaby; he’s 10 weeks old and the title was conferred on him by his owner, Acting Postmaster Mrs. Julia Wharton. Barnaby is a basset hound.”

#### **Historic Bytes**

Bob Grigg