

The Buckland Times #3

C. June 1993

Established in 1992. Inspired by the notion that Buckland is one of the villages that gave Manchester its charm, and by Dick Keeney who died Feb. 5, 1993. Dick seemed to enjoy telling me about his family, friends, neighbors and customers more than anything else during his last months. He wanted to be sure I didn't miss anybody. Usually the first thing he'd tell me was what kind of car that person was driving at that particular time. He often said he wished he could see someone one more time, or that he wished he had a chance to say goodbye to someone. I think he'd like me to pass that on to all of you.

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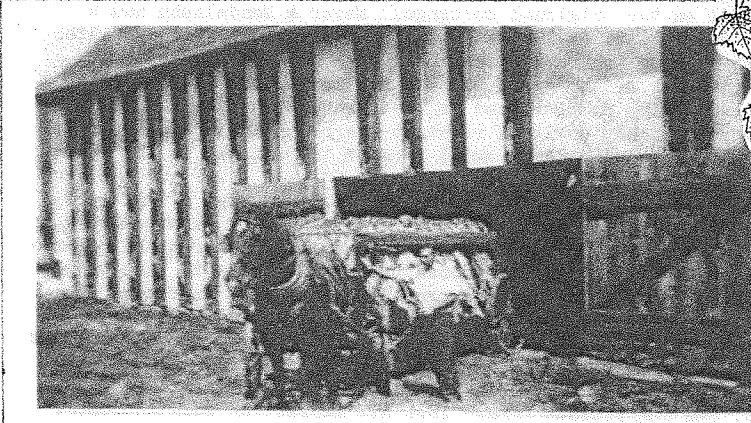
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↑ Karl Reichenbach in front of one of his tobacco barns

I received a letter from Mr. Richard Reichenbach, who lives on Woodland St..

To Ms. Sue Way,

Your story and map of Buckland in your Times #2 was very interesting. Apparently you went to the same school our (former) Vice President did for you spell "potato" just as he did. I am 78 and did not spend very much time in Buckland but for many years my dad sent me to the blacksmith in Buckland to have new shoes put on the horses. And for many years Lou Grant sold asparagus from the storage cellar about where you show a square with his name. The tobacco warehouse was built by the association of farmers who felt the buyers were not offering enough for their crops. When it was completed, a party was held in it and I remember that I watched the dancers when I wasn't racing around with the other youngsters. Apparently the timing was wrong, for not long after the market for cigar tobacco died. In the 20's the Hartman Tobacco plantation used to import manure by the carload from Kentucky horse farms. Several boxcars would be parked at the siding near the blacksmith shop while crews hauled it by dumpcarts to the various plantation fields. Hartmans had 2 distinct operations locally. The upper farm (part of which is now occupied by The Mall) grew Broadleaf, while the lower farm (now north of J.C. Penny warehouse) grew only shade-grown Sumatra. (Shadegrown meant the fields were covered with cloth. In recent years we can see some such fields on the way to Bradley Field)

Richard Reichenbach

I promise to work on my spelling.

I called Mr. Reichenbach to ask a few questions. First of all I wondered where he was living in the 1920's. He was born in 1915. His father and mother were Karl and Lena Reichenbach. They were immigrants from one of the Baltic nations that have recently regained some of their independence from the U.S.S.R.. In 1919 the family moved to Deming St. in the Wapping section of S. Windsor. It was the spring of 1919 - the mud season. They couldn't get the wagon with the furniture up the hill from Oakland, so they brought the wagon around to Buckland St. Mr. Buckland lived at the corner of Deming and Buckland St's. He hitched a few extra horses to the wagon and they finally made it up the hill to the "old Never's farm". Mr. Reichenbach tells me that the house they lived in was built about 1803, and is still there today. Karl Reichenbach grew tobacco on that farm, and was a member of the tobacco grower's association that built the warehouse in Buckland. He also delivered milk, later with Richard's help. They left at about 2 or 3 Am. picking up milk directly from the farmers. They delivered to such places as a Polish store and a bakery on Kerry St. in North Manchester, and a woman on the 3rd floor on Middle Turnpike. She took just 1 pint of milk, but left a cookie for the milkman, so she was Richard's favorite customer. They were home by 8 or 9 AM to start the farm chores.

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Family History - Genealogy

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If you would like a copy of the Buckland Times #1, #2, or #3 sent to someone, fill in address below and send 50¢ to Sue Way, 180½ Center St., Manchester, Ct.. If you'd like all three, send \$1.00.

Name _____ Street _____
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There's more investigating to be done on this story. If you have anything to add, I'd be very interested.

Hoping to learn more about the warehouse, I went to the Town Hall and found that land records show that the property on Adams St. was sold to the Wapping-Manchester Warehouse Co. in 1923 by Charles E. Thresher. Anton Simler Jr. was president of the W-M Warehouse Co. at that time. The men who signed the incorporation papers were Donald G. Grant, Chas. L. Hevener, Lucius J. Grant of S. Windsor; Charles E. Thresher, Stanley J. Straugh, and Forrest N. Buckland of Manchester. The warehouse was probably built during the next year. Records go on to show that in Oct. 1927 an attachment in favor of the Ct. Valley Tobacco Ass. Inc. was placed on the warehouse property for damages in the amount of \$14,000. In Dec. 1927 the building was leased to Alfred I. Mendelsohn. In Jan. 1929 the Attachment was released and in May 1930 the property was sold to Meyer & Mendelsohn Inc. for \$1 and other valuable considerations. It has been suggested to me that Meyer & Mendelsohn must have taken on the mortgage for the property, but not so. On that same day Herbert S. Keeney accepted \$1 as payment in full on the original mortgage. Meyer & Mendelsohn had an office in Hartford, their main office was in N.Y. at 169 Water St.. B.C. Meyer had signed earlier deeds in Manchester in connection with growing tobacco. Bad timing does seem to have played a major part in this story, 1929 being the year of the great stock market crash and the beginning of the Depression. It seemed as if the farmers who invested in the warehouse had lost their investment putting many of them in a very difficult position right at the beginning of the Depression. Common knowledge says that banks foreclosed on many small farmers in Buckland in the years that followed.

In A New England Pattern, The History of Manchester, by W.E. Buckley I found some of the early history of tobacco growing in Manchester. "A minor change in public taste during this period (1850-1861) of major importance to Manchester farmers was the increasing popularity of cigars. According to the 1850 census, only five Manchester farms produced tobacco for sale in that year. The 1860 census lists 41 Manchester farms raising tobacco commercially, a decided increase." He also explains why this was so important. ". . . In the northeastern states generally, more specialized types of farming became necessary. The great fertile areas of the upper Miss. Valley could produce cereal crops, wool, beef and pork far more cheaply than did the thin soil of New England hillsides. As soon as cheap transportation became available for getting these commodities to the Atlantic coast by canal and steamboat, the Connecticut farmer lost his market for such products. Fattening of beef cattle for the market continued to be profitable in Ct. for many years, but most farmers in the state had to turn to fruit or tobacco raising, dairying and market gardening. The demand for products of these types of agriculture was steadily expanding as industry developed in the country towns." (p. 31)

This brings us up to 1861. The railroads were completed soon after this, and as I understand it with a lot of gov't assistance. Farmers and businessmen would have to adjust ever more quickly. Buckland certainly still feels the power of gov't transportation dollars.

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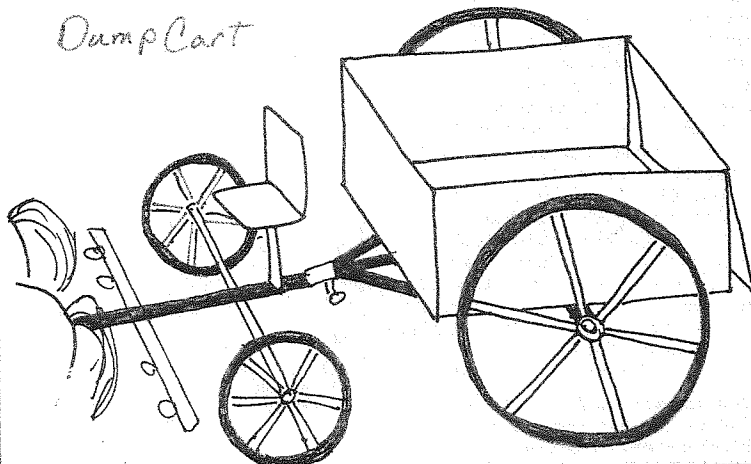
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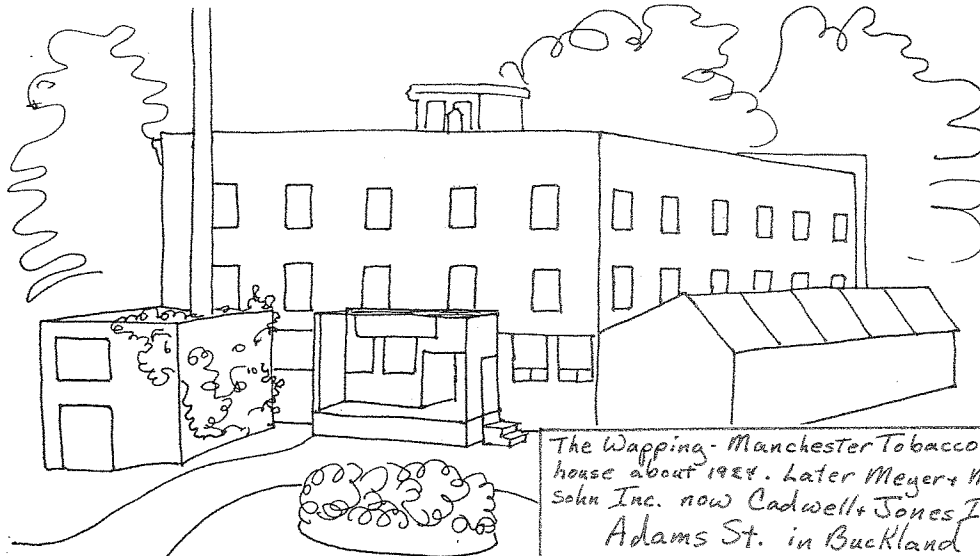
Dump cart - drawn roughly according to the descriptions of Charlie Glode and Fred Griffin. The pin behind the seat was pulled and box would pivot on the rear axle and dump. I could not find one of these, so the details are sure to be incorrect.

Next I found a book called East Granby, the Evolution of a Ct. Town, by Mary J. Springman & Betty F. Guinan which gave more Connecticut tobacco history. "Before the beginning of the 20 th century, cigarmakers introduced a fine quality, light colored cigar, It was wrapped in very light-weight, smooth textured, almost odorless (?) leaves grown on the Indonesian island of Sumatra, where low-lying clouds shade the fields and keep them humid. Although these cost cigar manufacturers more per pound than dark leaves, a pound of them served to wrap more than twice as many cigars. The light cigars caught the public's fancy and very soon the market for local tobacco crops diminished." Ct. farmers rose to this challenge with the help of gov't agricultural dept's and agents. One of these was Marcus L. Floyd who in 1900 assisted with experiments in growing tobacco under cloth mesh tenting. These experiments were very successful.. In the years that followed tobacco farming prospered in the Ct. river valley. During WWI the boom expanded as "the importation of foreign tobacco virtually ceased" p. 293 The price a farmer could get for his crop went up and this naturally encouraged more farmers to grow more tobacco. When the war was over and commerce went back to normal, there was too much tobacco on the market and prices began to slump. While tariffs, production costs, taxes, and disease all caused problems, according to this book "Worst of all, cigar smoking began to go out of fashion as cigarettes caught the public's fancy." (p.293) It appears that Mr. Reichenbach was right.

In 1921 the prices the farmers received for their crops dropped by 50%. "By 1922 the prices for cigar tobacco were so poor that independent growers were willing to try a cooperative marketing venture, even though similar experiments had produced mixed results in the past. They formed the

Connecticut Valley Tobacco Growers Association with members throughout New England." Divided into 17 districts, " The new assoc. helped its members to secure bank loans and arranged for insurance companies to cover hail and fire losses. It proved less successful at selling all its members' tobacco, primarily because it had no way to stop farmers from producing more than the dwindling market would bear. In 1925 the association warned that dealers and manufacturers already had a 3 yr. supply of tobacco in their warehouses, when the customary supply covered only one yr..

The independent growers coop. , which had the potential to set prices, made tobacco dealers and cigar manufacturers uncomfortable. So, according to a news account, they took advantage of the tobacco glut to undermine the growers assoc. by purchasing almost exclusively from farmers outside the membership or from renegade members who would sell to them directly." One writer called the members of the assoc. . "individualistic, self-sufficient, and unsuited for cooperative programs. The Connecticut Valley Tobacco Growers Association succumbed to internal dissension in 1928, leaving its former members carrying heavy debt." (p. 293-4)



The Wapping-Manchester Tobacco Warehouse about 1924. Later Meyer & Mendelsohn Inc. now Cadwell & Jones Inc. Adams St. in Buckland

The "internal Dissension" mentioned above concerned certain policies of the Assoc. & the salaries that were being paid. The top salaries were \$30,000 a considerable amount in the 1920's. It was a Mr. Newberry of S. Windsor who first brought up the complaints and asked that the salaries be made public, but it was a meeting held in Wapping on Oct. 27, 1924, which was attended by some 80 farmers from District #6 -the Manchester-Wapping section of the Assoc.-that turned the tide of opinion against the president and general manager of the Assoc. - These two men Mr. Alsop and Mr. Fred B. Griffin were forced to resign. Mr. Griffin's nephew, also wearing the name Fred B. Griffin was nice enough to let me look through the scrapbook of clippings kept by his family following the career of his uncle. His resignation was by no means the end of a long and distinguished career. It would take more study to determine where the truth lies in this dispute. The farmers did not seem to have a good understanding of basic economics. They could not be convinced to grow less tobacco. Perhaps the leadership of the organization did not appreciate the difficulties the small farmer was facing. \$30,000 was a lot of money in the 1920's. The farmers didn't feel they could pay it. Noone seemed to understand the size of the problem. According to an article in "The Windsor Locks Journal" dated Mar 20, 1936, the gov't finally stepped in with an adjustment program that reduced the number of acres being planted. By 1936 tobacco farming in the valley had finally gotten back to the level of 1929 which was just $\frac{1}{2}$ that of 1920. That's how big the problem was. It's not hard to imagine how many farmers must have been forced out of growing tobacco.

While this does not tell us exactly what happened to the Wapping-Manchester Warehouse Co., it does give us some idea. It's clear that the warehouse was sold after the Assoc. collapsed, but this was by no means the end of tobacco growing in Buckland. The farmers who managed to hold on eventually recovered, and under the management of Meyer & Mendelsohn Inc. the warehouse became a successful operation.

Charlie Glode went to work for Meyer & Mendelsohn in 1937, and worked for them for 46 years. He was nice enough to answer a few questions. Mr. Glode was born on Tolland Tnkp. in Buckland and his wife tells me that when asked he always says that he lives in Buckland, Ct. His parents were John and Margaret (Dameroth) Glode. They moved to Buckland from the Bronx, N.Y. in 1905. John Glode came to America on his own at age 14 from Bannenburg, Westphalia (now part of Germany) John Glode worked for the railroad, Margaret Glode operated the farm at home with the help of her sons. Charlie and his brothers cut ice from a pond near their home and delivered it from 1921 to 1937. Perhaps I can write more about the Glode Ice business in a future edition.

Mr. Glode remembers Alfred Mendelsohn as a good man to work for. He never met Mr. Meyer. Mr. Mendelsohn had an apartment in Hartford, and under his direction the warehouse saw it's busiest years from about 1936 to 1950. There were sometimes 10 or 12 trucks lined up on Adams St. waiting to unload their tobacco. The warehouse at times had as many as 130 employees and shipped tons of tobacco in a year.

The warehouse operation was not as simple as it looks from the outside. The long shed on the side at one time had a glass roof and was used for sorting and grading the tobacco. On the 2nd floor they "sweat" the tobacco at 106° for 6 weeks. The small extension on the front of the building is the boiler room. It produced heat for the building and steam for the sweating process. The tobacco was stored on the 3rd floor.

Changes in the economy of course were still at work, and in 1978 the property was sold to Cadwell & Jones Inc. which was established in 1972, and first located on Main St. in Hartford. They later moved to Park Ave. in East Hartford. They are Wholesale dealers in fertilizer.

Visit the John E. Luddy Conn. Valley Tobacco Museum in Windsor's Northwest Park at 135 Lang Rd. Open T,W,TH,&FR 12:00-4:00 P.M. I'd like to say thank you to their curator Marion M. Nielson and to Fred Griffin of Granby, Charlie Glode and Richard Reichenbach.