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ECHOES OF MEMORY

BY

Florence Elizabeth Chase



DECEMBER TWENTY - FIFTH
NINETEEN HUNDRED AND SEVEN

Echoes of Memory

Wishing to while away the hours one dull, rainy day, I decided to look over my father's collection of Indian arrow heads. Taking the collec-



tion in my lap to a comfortable chair by the fire, I soon became oblivious to all save the thoughts that were awakened by these old mementos of the past. What brave warrior fashioned this one, or what animal of the forest was brought to his death by this long black one? Were these chips ever arrow points, or were they broken while being made? At last I came to the almost perfect arrow head which my father found here on the farm. Long I held the arrow, fascinated by its hidden story. How had it happened to be lost in the soil near my home—what brave had carried it in his quiver? The concentration of thought seemed to create an atmosphere about me of old-time lore and stories. The present faded into the past and the dim old forest rose on all sides. Shadows stealthily drew near and the red man was once more treading his native soil. The life of the woodland seemed revealed in the visions thus engendered, and I seemed to hear the very sounds of all Nature. Then voices broke the silence, and finally one that seemed more insistent than all the others gained all my powers of attention. It came from the very atmosphere around me, and my mind became a willing subject to its influence. I still held the old arrow head; but my mind's eye seemed to be directed inward. The voice that became audible wove the story of my arrow.

"It was early one morning in June, 1644, that I was placed in the quiver of an Indian brave whom I afterwards learned to be Tamuggut. How well I remember the day. The eastern sky was all ablaze with its golden rays, and there was hardly a sound save the chirping and twittering of the birds in the branches. The pond which I had heard Tamuggut call Quassuck (Lead Mine) was like a mirror. For days we journeyed towards the setting sun; and at last reached Agawam (Springfield). Here he soon found William Pynchon and delivered a letter which John Winthrop, Jr., had sent by him. William Pynchon detained us over night and then entrusted the answer to the letter with Tamuggut. As he had had instructions to deliver the letter to John Winthrop, Jr., who was stopping in Boston before going to his

Gift - Dr. Charles H. Leonard - Apr. '46

home in Windsor, Conn., we took the Old Bay Path, which led towards the rising sun. How often in these later days have I heard the palefaces exclaim over the beautiful scenery, and how it has made me wish they could have seen the grandeur of the hills and forest as I saw them before they were plundered and cleared by the palefaces. Tamuggut stopped to see his friends, the Agawam Indians, who had their village but a short distance southward, and thankfully availed himself of their hospitality. Then after partaking of their fish and corn he took the trail he had left, and was soon gliding noiselessly along the shaded path where squirrels frisked among the branches of the tall trees, and now and then a rabbit stopped motionless to watch him as he journeyed. The path led through the valleys and over rounded hills bordered by the under-shade of tall fern.

"At one place Tamuggut turned from the path towards the south to reach a large rock which he called Steerage Rock. Here he spent several minutes gazing over the hills and valleys. Continuing his journey, we soon came to the north shore of Little Alum Pond, which looked like a large mirror with the reflection of the overhanging trees; and intertwined among the branches were wild grapes, which filled the air with their perfumed blossoms.

"Before the sun had quite gone down behind the western hills we reached the southern shore of Cedar Pond, where Tamuggut was gladly welcomed by the Tantousque Indians, and soon all were gathered around the evening campfire listening to the latest news from their neighbors, the Agawam Indians. Again in the dew of the early morning we continued on our way. We had not gone far and Tamuggut had just forded a small stream when he stopped to listen. Noiselessly he left the beaten path and went a few rods towards the north. Taking me from his quiver, he quickly and cautiously placed me in the bow and, with one swift motion, I brought death to a wild deer. Very deftly Tamuggut took the skin and some of the venison from the deer and securely fastened the bundle to his shoulders. I meantime waited patiently for him to reclaim me, his trusted friend. But seemingly I was forgotten, for he turned and retraced his steps through the thick, dark forest to the path as noiselessly as he had come. All I could do was to lie and watch my brave Tamuggut, of whom I was so proud, go from my sight forever. What bitter, lonesome days those were which followed. Altho' I made friends with the tall white pines which surrounded me and was proud of their stateliness, yet they never took the place of my old brave Tamuggut. As years went by I was soon nearly buried in the soft pine needles, while a large green fern grew at my side, and the partridge vine brightened the carpet of brown needles with their scarlet berries.

"One day as I was wondering where my old brave was, and if he ever passed over the path, which was only a little way from where I was, I was awakened from my dreaming by strange sounds — sounds which I had not heard for a long time. How I wished the pine needles would not crowd about me so closely. The sound was coming nearer and from the same direction where I had seen Tamuggut the last time. The sound was of the palefaces



MILESTONE PLACED BY BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

talking; and soon they came near enough so that I could hear their voices. They selected one of the tall pines which was near me, and sat down in the shade to rest. By their conversation I soon learned that it was the summer of 1732 and that the land where we were was part of the two thousand acres owned by the heirs of Governor Gurdon Saltonstall, who had died some years before.

"These two men seemed to be very much interested in the lay of the land, the kind of trees, the water supply, and even brushed away the leaves to see what the soil was. I think they were satisfied, for they settled down under the trees to continue their talk. I learned that the tall, dark-complexioned man who seemed to be the most earnest was John Chandler, Jr., attorney for the Saltonstall heirs; and that he was trying to sell the land to the other man who was William Ward of Southborough. He finally decided to take half the two thousand acres, buying the shares of Mrs. Christopher and Mrs. Miller, while the other two heirs—Mrs. Brattle and Mrs. Davis—retained the other thousand acres. Before leaving, Mr. Chandler showed Mr. Ward a paper on which he had drawn a plan showing the division of land. I learned that it began at Cedar Pond and ran down the west line of Thomas McCarty's place, as it was before the fair grounds were located there, to his southwest corner; then E. 40° S. about on the north line of what is now the town farm and the old Dr. Corey place, now William Farquhar's. I soon learned by the conversation that Mr. Chandler was a surveyor, and for quite a while they planned and talked. Mr. Ward did not wish to cut the trees or build, but to sell again to other parties. Finally they too went back to the Old Bay Path, and I was left once more with the pines and oaks.

"For many moons I lay in my bed of pine needles or was covered deep in the soft snow. Now and then timid deer would pass noiselessly along, browsing on the tender twigs, or stop to rest in the shade; squirrels stored their winter food unmolested in decayed knots of the giant trees; but all this peaceful quiet was not to go on forever.

"Again in September, 1735, I heard the steady tread of horses' feet, and they seemed to have turned from the Bay Path and were coming towards me. Soon the thick underbrush was pushed aside and several men came in sight leading their horses and making a path as they went along. They came to a halt not far from me and I soon recognized the energetic little man as William Ward. He seemed to have business with only one of the men, whom I learned to be Rowland Taylor of Leicester. The other two men were the color of my old Tamuggut and took care of the horses. I little thought at that time that they would live so near me. But what is Mr. Ward saying? All the thousand acres he had purchased of the Saltonstall heirs he was planning to sell. Long and eagerly the two men studied papers, and before they left I knew that Mr. Ward had sold to Mr. Taylor two hundred seven acres of the one thousand acres.

"As the shades were growing heavier beneath the thick pines the men departed, leaving me once more in the lone forest with my wood companions. But this time I was not left alone long, for before many months had

passed I heard, one clear, cold day in winter, the ringing sound of an axe. Several days that sound echoed and re-echoed and gradually grew nearer. Towards the close of one day the woodmen came in sight, and I saw that they were cutting a wide path and clearing between the Bay Path and the place where I rested. All winter these sturdy men felled the forest giants about me. The woods grew lighter and thinner until at last they had cleared a large tract of land. The men gathered the branches in piles and burned them. The next day Rowland Taylor, with other men, rode into the clearing and was soon selecting a building spot. Very glad I was when he chose a place not far from me.

"Spring came and passed, and as the log house with its big stone chimney neared its completion, Mr. Taylor spent most of his time here directing his workmen. Soon they began another one-story log house to the south of this one, for what, I did not at that time know. After the two houses were completed Mr. Taylor and his workmen went away and several days passed before I heard the sound of voices again. No longer was I visited by the shy deer, but I could hear the busy chattering of the squirrels at the edge of the clearing.

"One clear morning in Indian summer of 1736 I knew that horses and a large covered wagon were turning from the Old Path into the new cleared road. Very soon I saw Mr. Taylor mounted on his big bay horse, galloping to catch up with his men. With much noise and creaking of wagon wheels they stopped at the door of the first house. All the colored people were new to me, but I knew that they were what were called slaves. There were six of them—four children and a man and woman. Mr. Taylor called the man Tom, while I found the woman answered to the name of Dina. I had hard work to learn the names of the younger slaves, who were running here and there viewing their new abode, but finally found the two girls were Rose and Betty, and the two boys Caesar and Dick.

"Mr. Taylor had the big frame door opened and then gave his orders to his slaves in his strong, commanding voice. Tom was to back the big wagon up to the door, while he and Dina unloaded the household furniture; the children were told to find water for the horses and to give them their feed under some nearby tree. I became very much interested in what was being taken from the load. At the time I did not know what to call the articles, but I afterwards learned that they were a dark, round table, some chairs, a chest, a secretary, a few books and a post bed. The rest of the goods were taken down to the other house which was to be the slave quarters.

"What a commotion there was the morning Mr. Taylor set the slaves to digging a well. After spending several hours in looking over the ground he at last selected a spot very nearly in front of his house. For days Tom, Caesar and Dick dug the deep, rich soil, and still no water came, until at last Mr. Taylor nearly became discouraged. Once when Tom went early in the morning to look in, he clapped his hands with joy. The unusual sounds brought the rest of the folks to the spot and there, down in the deep, damp well, was seen the glistening surface of water. They dug a little



CROSS IN PICTURE DENOTES SITE OF OLD SLAVE CABIN

deeper and then walled the sides with stones from near by. The water soon became clear and always from that time have I heard praises of that never-failing well where many wayfarers have quenched their thirst.

"Many horsemen and covered wagons passed by the house along the county post road, and one day in 1764 an equipage passed, one of the occupants of which I learned to be Benjamin Franklin, who had been having milestones placed along the post road from Boston to Hartford, one being placed less than a mile to the north of here.

"During the remaining years that Mr. Taylor lived I learned from his talk that a town called Sturbridge had been incorporated in 1738, and for several years he was one of the selectmen. Years came and went and what busy years! The land was cleared, crops planted and harvested. Old Tom and Dina passed away, while Cæsar, Dick, Betty and Rose grew up strong men and women. I do not know for what reason, but Betty was called a free woman while the others were called slaves.

"The summer of 1765 (August 8) Mr. Taylor married Abigail Stacy. During this year much work was done on the farm, and many times was I brought to the surface by the plowshare; but to these men I was only a piece of stone of no value or interest and was passed over only to be partly buried by their next crop of grain.

"During the next winter (1766) Mr. Taylor died. I often wondered if the slaves missed their master as I did mine, for altho' they had to work hard, yet their master was kind and gave them much freedom. Weeks passed and snow at last gave up to the mild winds and rain of spring. One day there were hurried movements about the slave's cabin. All seemed excitement, but what it meant I could not tell. It could not be that any of them were to be sent away, for all were so happy and joyous. There was much passing between the two houses, and finally the savory odor which the wind wafted to me told me there was a feast being prepared. At last, July 21, 1766, which was a clear, warm, summer day, the excitement seemed to have reached its height, and I then learned the cause. There were to be two weddings that day. Betty, the free woman, was to marry Dick and Cæsar would marry Rose. After the morning farm work had been completed Rose and Betty appeared at the cabin door. I did not know them at first; their bright new dresses of pink calico, with their snow-white kerchiefs about their necks, seemed to change them from the Betty and Rose whom I had been accustomed to seeing. Their anxious looks down the road were soon rewarded by the appearance of Rev. Joshua Paine, who came mounted on his horse. At the same time Mrs. Taylor, with some folks who were staying with her, passed from her house down to the other cabin. For a time all was quiet and I was left to my own thoughts, but ere long all was life and work was again taken up where it had been interrupted in the morning. From this time to 1773 very little change was made. During this year (1773) Dr. Erasmus Babbitt sold his house (where the hotel now is) to Mr. Crafts and bought this farm; and Mrs. Taylor, with her slaves, passed from my life as the others had.

"The coming of Dr. Babbitt brought many changes; he started immediately to build a two-story house a few feet west of Mr. Taylor's cabin, facing the south, while he moved the cabin up to the big house, which made a little ell on the back. As soon as the house was completed he started another large building north of the house. A long time I eagerly watched, wondering what it could be for, but it proved to be a barn, and from that time to this has it weathered the storms and given shelter to the harvests and animals, and playroom for the children. For thirty years sorrow and joy passed over this house; three sons and three daughters grew up to manhood and womanhood, the sons all graduates of college.

"Many of the long winter evenings were made merry by the neighbors, the Fiskes driving down from Fiske Hill to have a sing or perhaps quilting bee, and late in the fall many were the apples pared and quartered for drying or for their mince pies to be used at their Thanksgiving gatherings. One day Dr. Babbitt started on a journey to Vermont on horseback, but was taken sick and fell from his horse dead.

In 1803 David Wight bought the place, but did not reside upon it; so for a few years all was quiet except during the summer months, when Mr. Wight came with his men to do the haying. In 1807 Mr. Wight sold the place to a Captain Benjamin Bullock of Salem, a very decided and quick-tempered man. I remember the day he came to look the farm over. Mr. Wight had taken him over quite a large part of the farm, and after a short rest on the steps of the side door they prepared to go farther, but Captain Bullock, in his quick, abrupt way, said, 'I've seen enough, here's your money.'

"During all this time a village had grown up a mile to the south, which could be seen very plainly down through the valley. Captain Bullock made no changes on the buildings, but planted a few apple trees and grape vines; he seemed greatly interested in fast horses and had the road measured from his house to the hotel in town, which was found to be just a mile. Many times have I seen him start out to race from the farm to the hotel, and it was thought very surprising in those times when he could make the mile in three minutes. On Sunday he and his wife would get ready for church, and then he would go to the corner of the house and watch for the minister to start from the parsonage (later owned by Southwick, now owned by William Whittemore). The minute he saw the minister start he would start, and I have heard him say that he would always reach the church first. One Sunday, I remember in particular, he had been watching for the minister to start, and when he saw him drive from his door, he turned to start also; but Mrs. Bullock had not yet appeared and his quick temper getting the best of him he, in his anger at the delay, broke the carriage so they could not go at all. About this time, in 1811 and 1812, the Worcester and Stafford turnpike road, which led by the house, was completed.

"Funny wagons called stage coaches ran daily each way carrying the United States mail, and I heard Captain Bullock tell that some of the heavy wagons which passed were transporting ammunition of war.

"During the war of 1812 Captain Bullock died, and in 1813 widow Bul-



THE SAM WELDON BRIDGE

lock married Dr. Jacob Corey, Jr. Some years later, not desiring to live on the place longer, Mrs. Corey sold her third of the farm to the inhabitants of Sturbridge for a pauper establishment; and for many years it furnished a comfortable home for those who were unable to furnish a home of their own.

"I do not remember much about the paupers, except one or two. One by the name of 'Sam' Weldon, half Negro and half Indian, seemed to interest the folks the most because no one could find out anything about him or how old he was; some said he was over a hundred when he died. He used to spend a great deal of his time on a large rock beside the brook down in the meadow fishing, and the old stone bridge just above the rock was built by him. I have often heard him tell of setting out some elms while working for Mr. Crafts, who lived where the hotel (The Elms) now is; whether they are the two big elms which now grow in front of the hotel I do not know. In 1857 and 1858 the lane which extended from the front of the house directly south to the 'Old County Road' was closed, and the present lane and its wide walls leading out to the turnpike road was built by the then warden, Damon Nichols, and others employed by the town.

"The year 1860 stands very clear in my memory, for one night during April there were loud cries of 'fire,' and in what seemed a short time neighbors came with buckets to fight the fire. The paupers were so dazed they hardly seemed to realize what was happening; one old lady, who was deaf and dumb, by the name of Oral Morris, seemed much distressed on account of losing her hoarded silver. She at last, when no one was noticing, made a dash into the burning building, but she did not have the strength to withstand the dense smoke, and with her silver she perished. By this time all efforts were being made to save the barn. The house was all ablaze and its bright light reflected deep into the shady trees. Some of the men stayed all night to keep watch over the remaining buildings, and I heard one of them say that the folks had filled the oven with green wood, in order to have dry wood to start a fire in the morning, and had gone off to bed, leaving a hot fire with the wood still in the oven. Their first sight of the fire was about that stove, which fell through to the cellar before the flames had progressed very far, so they suppose that is where the fire caught. The next few days the men were busy in taking away what furniture was saved, also the stock from the barn, and again I was left alone.

"During the next years Mr. Emery Bates and Mr. John Haynes bought the farm of the town, and as soon as they had cut all the timber on the east side of the road they sold to Mr. D. R. Wight. He and his son worked here haying and picking stones. He sold to Royal Smith, who had borrowed a thousand dollars of Chester Dresser to buy the farm. Mr. Smith made great plans to build, but died before they could be carried out. In the settlement of Mr. Smith's estate Mr. Dresser bought the land at public auction in order to save his own thousand dollars.

"Years passed; squirrels feasted on the fruit of the apple trees; the straggling clump of lilacs and dark green leaves of the tiger lilies marked the grave of the garden, and soon the square hollow in the earth with its

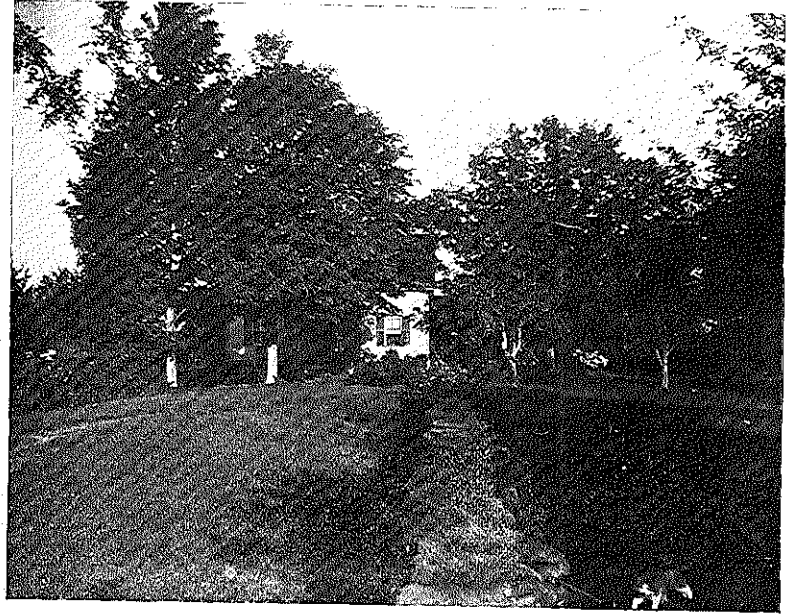
crumbling chimney standing sentinel was covered over with briars and weeds with here and there a sumach sending forth its bright berries; while the site of the old slave cabin was only marked by a slight depression and stone foundation.

"Thus was the state of affairs when Levi Badger Chase came from Fiske Hill to look over the place. He decided to purchase the farm and obtained the eighty-two acres through Lawyer Bartholomew as agent. This was June 6, 1873. During the summer Mr. Chase bought the old house on Nathaniel Upham's place and used some of the material in building his new house. How glad I was to see the house go up, and I soon learned that there were children, for many times during the summer and fall did I see them come scampering down through the east lot from Fiske Hill, accompanied by their dog Bose, which sometimes was adorned with the children's bonnets. I remember one day in the fall of 1873, while the house was being built, there was a big wind storm; the pines hissed and swayed, and the old oaks strained and struggled like giants; a full half hour the storm lasted, and at last when the wind lulled and the storm passed, the big walnut at the corner of the main road and turnpike was found uprooted.

"The house was not completed until the next March, and during that month the family was moved here. In the spring of '74 work was begun on the farm. The field south of the house was first ploughed, and from year to year many shade trees were planted, besides the east and south orchards. I remember the spring Mr. Chase set the maple trees out in front of the house; there was a fence extending along beside the trees from the north lane wall to the south wall, and on July 4 one of the children climbed onto the fence and could just reach to the top of the tree, and there she tied a flag. From that time to this has a flag been tied to some branch of that tree on the Fourth. But joy came to me at last, for one day as Mr. Chase was hoeing in the garden he accidentally hit me and brought me to light; with an exclamation of joy he carefully brushed the soil from my side and looked at me long and intently. How pleased I was to find that some one at last could read my hidden, silent life and appreciate my value." * * * * *

"Like April morning clouds, that pass
With varying shadow o'er the grass,
And imitate on field and furrow
Life's streamlet of the mountain north,
Now in a torrent racing forth,
Now winding slow its silver train,
And almost slumbering on the plain;
Like breezes of the autumn day,
Whose voice inconstant dies away,
And even swells again as fast,
When the ear deems its murmur past;
Thus various, my romantic theme
Fits, winds, or sinks, a morning dream."

—[Scott's Marmion.



OLD LANE WALL