

The Real Calvin Coolidge

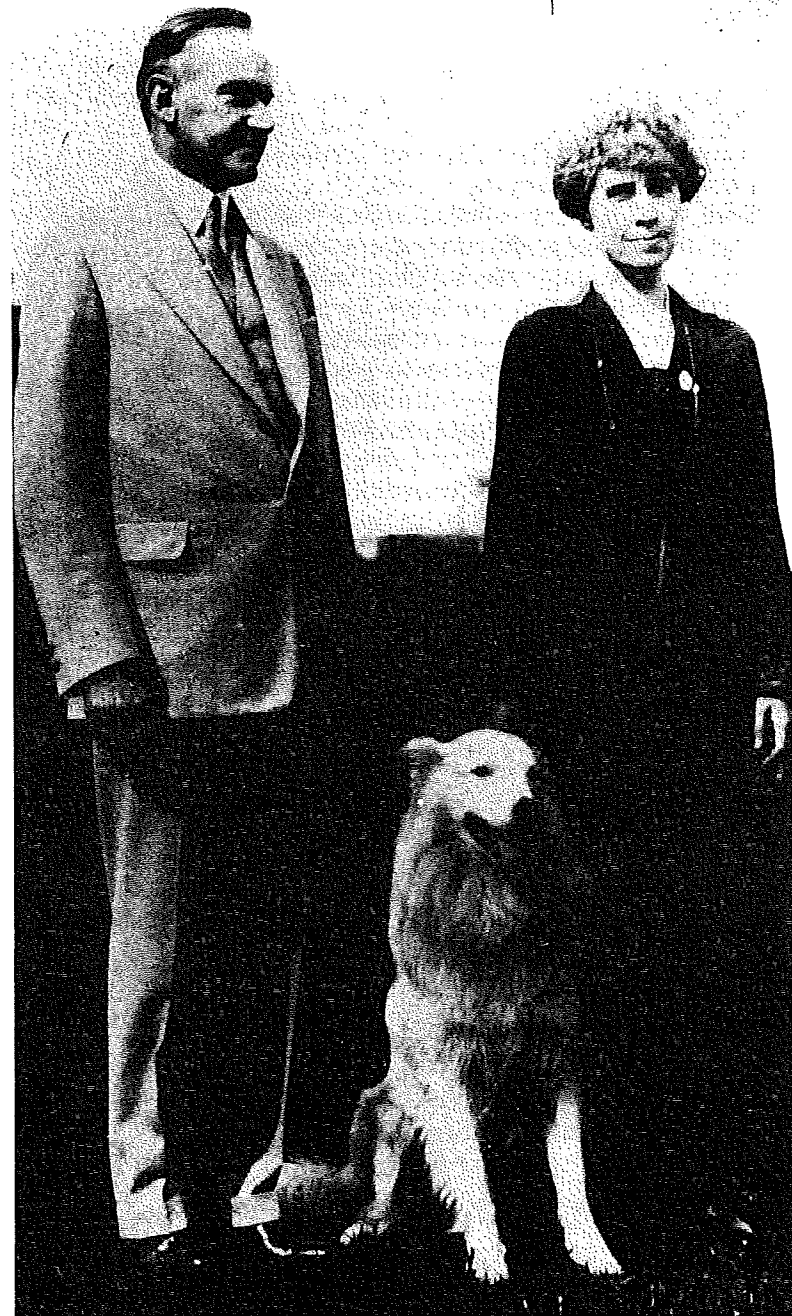
*An Annual Publication for The Members of
The Calvin Coolidge Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

- 4 -

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Opinions stated and conclusions drawn in The Real Calvin Coolidge are those of the contributing authors and may or may not necessarily reflect those of The Calvin Coolidge Memorial Foundation, Inc.



Former President and Mrs. Coolidge in retirement with their white collie Prudence Prim.

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

It has been rewarding and heartwarming to receive your messages of approval regarding the format changes made in The Real Calvin Coolidge. If you liked issue 3, you will be extremely pleased with the current issue, as it will be one you will reread many times.

Issue 4 offers a first-hand account of the early childhood of Calvin Coolidge. We, therefore, are greatly indebted to Arthur J. Kavanagh for sending us the article "Coolidge's Boyhood" written by his uncle Ernest S. Kavanagh. Some of the tales will seem as old shoes, reassuring; others will be new, a welcome addition to your collection of Coolidge lore. Mr. Kavanagh gives his readers a broader insight into the early days of the Plymouth Notch boy who grew up to become President.

Those of us who have heard Richard Norton Smith deliver "The Twilight Years" in person recall an emotional experience. For the occasions of the last annual meeting of The Calvin Coolidge Memorial Foundation and as part of the 1986 Coolidge Commemorative Week celebration in Northampton, Mr. Smith presented his speech and was given great praise in both instances. It is with Mr. Smith's gracious permission that we reprint that presentation for you to reflect upon and enjoy.

Through the kind courtesy of The Burlington Free Press, our book review section reprints Fred Stetson's excellent critique (August 22, 1985) of the latest literature about Coolidge, Return To These Hills.

This year has been a busy one for The Calvin Coolidge Memorial Foundation and this publication. Distribution of issue 4 has us back on schedule; our members can expect issue 5 in August of 1987.

John A. Waterhouse, Editor

Coolidge's Boyhood

By ERNEST S. KAVANAGH

Fifty years ago in Plymouth, Vermont, a cat of the female species was a necessity. She was the family mouse trap, and being the female of the species was more deadly than the male, as many a venturesome mouse found to his sorrow. Her husband was less popular, for by day he was prone to sleep in the most comfortable chair and to make the nights hideous by howling defiance to his enemies,--chasing the inconsequential mouse was beneath his dignity. Mrs. Tabby had her shortcomings, for she was likely at the most unexpected moments to emerge from a few days' seclusion leading a procession of newly acquired kittens. The popular Plymouth method of reducing the surplus cat population was to place the newly born kittens in a bran sack and submerge them in the watering trough, or the nearest brook, until they were defunct.

Mrs. "Galusha" Coolidge, grandmother to the late President or "Aunt Mede" to all her neighbors, was faced with a problem of this nature and decided that Tabby's latest family must pass out via the water route. But, grandson Calvin, from either a Vermonter's regret at seeing anything wasted or a humanitarian motive, determined otherwise. Appealing for executive clemency, he secured a stay of execution and in a few days every one of the six kittens had been adopted by Cal's neighbors. One of my brothers, caught when his sales resistance was low, reluctantly consented to furnish a home for one, provided it was a male, for he was averse to acting in the capacity of executioner at any future date. "Tom" was duly delivered by the future President and took his place as the family pet. He grew and prospered, and a few months later disappeared, only to re-appear with a half dozen prospects for the watering trough and a feline suggestion that a more appropriate name be given him, or her.

The fact that Calvin Coolidge once gave my brother a cat, and that I was born and reared in the same town and knew him since earliest childhood gives me an excuse, if

not a reason, for attempting to portray something of his early years and his environment that the world at large does not know. If this is not sufficient excuse, I might add that his grandmother, in the absence of the family physician, officiated at my arrival in this world.

The life of the Plymouth boy fifty years ago was a hard though happy one and idle hours were few. During winter months, he was up and active long before daylight. Dressing in an unheated room, with the temperature sometimes 30° below outside, he was likely to start the day most actively. Lighting his lantern, he made his way to the kitchen to bathe, more frequently than not in ice cold water. Then, out to the barn where the first task was to feed the stock. Next, the cows were milked and the milk carried to the house to be strained into large pans and skimmed later by hand, for these were the days when cream separators were unknown.

Then, breakfast, and ah, what a feast! Hot oatmeal, or mush and milk, homemade sausages, buckwheat cakes, hot and smoky, with maple syrup, and coffee. After breakfast, back to the barn to break the ice in the watering troughs. Then, turn out the cows for their morning drink and, while they were drinking, clean out the stables. When this was done, drive them in and tie them up.

Next, fill up the wood box for the kitchen stove,—and then off to school, ploughing through the snow drifts, at times several feet deep, to the old stone schoolhouse to get his "schoolin'". Or if by chance it was a Saturday, he shouldered his ax, or crosscut saw, and started for the wood lot to help cut the supply for the coming year.

Summer meant a change, but hard work was always in order, with longer hours of labor. In summer, however, the farmer boy had two periods of daily respite—driving the cows to pasture in the morning and driving them home at night.

In all this, contrary to popular belief, Calvin had little part, for he was not a farmer or the son of a farmer. It was his grandfather "Galusha" Coolidge who owned a small farm and kept seven or eight cows. In Calvin's early boyhood, his grandfather died but his grandmother continued to live on the farm and a hired man did most of the work. Calvin's active participation was largely confined to driving the cows, "raking after" during the haying season, or

driving the horse rake.

The old stone schoolhouse where Calvin's career as a student began was replaced by a wooden structure over forty years ago, but its old box stove and straight-back spruce seats are still a pleasant memory to many of the late President's contemporaries. In the spring and fall session it was an orderly assembly, but the winter term was the scene of many a prank and fight. With the crops all harvested, the average farm activities were greatly reduced until sugaring time, and, outside of chores, there was little for the older boys to do; consequently, many of them attended the winter term of school until they were eighteen or older. School teachers were chosen as much for their ability to maintain discipline as to impart knowledge, and if perchance the teacher were a man, to keep an orderly school, one of the first things he had to do was to demonstrate his ability to thrash any boy in school. Before the term had very far advanced, he usually had the opportunity to prove his ability, and woe to that teacher who could not. The life of a woman teacher was no sinecure, and, unless she assumed command early in the term and maintained it throughout, life was anything but a bed of roses for her.

On one occasion there was a boy in the school who was able to imitate the language of a cat from the soft purring of a mother to its kittens to the violent yowling of the males in battle. Above the schoolroom was an unfinished loft, separated from the schoolroom proper by thin layers of lathe and plaster. The entrance to the loft was over the wood shed, through a door accessible only by shimmying up the beams. One morning the school duly assembled. Roll call showed one boy missing. When the first class was about to recite, from the loft above came the plaintive meow of a cat. As the class continued, the outcries grew louder and more insistent. When the teacher stopped the recitation to unearth the culprit who had imprisoned the hapless victim in the loft above, Tabby began a series of hissings, scratchings and yowlings that sounded as though all the cats in the township had gathered up there for a battle royal. Naturally, the school was in an uproar. The teacher, selecting one of the most agile, ordered one of the larger boys to climb the loft and undo the door which had been securely fastened on the outside. As it swung

back on its hinges, the grinning features of the absent boy appeared in the opening, ready to come down and take his punishment at the hands of the infuriated mistress.

It was this boy's brother who, at another time, angered the teacher to such an extent that she seized him by the collar and gave him a savage shaking, tearing off the upper button of his blouse. The next day he appeared with a needle and thread and another button, and in the meekest of tones, asked the teacher if she would kindly sew it on. The boy knew what was coming. This time, he was seized by the collar and dragged down the aisles to the center of the room, where punishment could be more thoroughly administered. The boy had, however, concealed a piece of rubber in his hand, and as he was being dragged by the hot box stove, he tossed it upon the cover. So intent was the teacher upon administering suitable punishment, that for some time she was unaware of the nauseating odor that arose. Finally, feeling that her revenge was complete, she sent the boy back to his seat, and for the first time realized that most of the pupils were holding their noses. So sure was she that some other boy during the excitement had thrown the rubber upon the hot stove, the teacher did not question the lad whom she had so severely trounced. Active study was delayed for some time while the rubber was scraped from the stove and the was schoolroom thoroughly aired.

Calvin, although he was rarely caught in practical jokes upon the teacher, contributed his share. One school year, the teacher was a husky Amazon nearly six feet in height with weight in due proportion, who possessed all the proverbial old maid traits and believed discipline was corporal punishment applied in frequent and violent doses. A switch always stood in the corner, ready for instant use. This finally became worn out, and she dispatched Herb Moore to a nearby wood to cut another. After considerable time, he appeared with a long, slender, hollow reed, which would almost break of its own weight. Berating Herb soundly for his joke, she dispatched him once more to the nearby woods and ordered my brother Charles to go with him to see that the proper switch was secured. The two hunted long and diligently. Finally, they found a long, slender, birch branch, six feet in length, which they knew would meet with the sincere approval of the teacher. The

branch was cut and carefully trimmed. Then, with a small jackknife blade, they cut circles about six inches apart for its entire length, through the bark nearly to the heart of the stick so that any blow would break it. Bearing this instrument of torture, they returned to the schoolhouse, where the teacher, whose sight was none too good, instantly approved and ordered the boys to stand it in the corner. For a considerable time conduct in the school was unusually good and continued so until the birch stick was thoroughly dried and brittle. Calvin Coolidge, who was in on the secret, decided it was about time for the stick to be brought into play. At geography class one day he suddenly displayed a particularly arrogant attitude. The conversation which ensued was something as follows:

Teacher: "What is the capitol of Spain?"

Calvin: "Lisbon."

Teacher: "Wrong. Try again. What is the capitol of Spain?"

Calvin: "Lisbon."

Teacher: "I told you that was wrong. Lisbon is not the capitol of Spain."

Calvin: "I say Lisbon is the capital of Spain."

Teacher: "I say it is not and I guess I know because I have the book in front of me."

Calvin: "I say it is and I guess I know because I studied my lesson."

This was too much for her dignity and patience. She strode to the corner, seized the stick by its butt end, and made a savage blow at Calvin's shoulders. It descended with a crash upon the desk, from which Calvin ducked just in time, and broke into sundry pieces which flew to all parts of the room, leaving the amazed teacher holding only a fragment in her hand.

The taciturnity characteristic of Coolidge in more mature years was lacking as a boy. He was always ready to discuss any subject at length. To those of us who knew him from infancy up, he was just one of the gang. He was more studious and a better scholar, but otherwise there was little to differentiate him from the crowd. His pranks were not uncommon, with a predilection for teasing younger boys and, particularly, girls. One of my sisters relates with glee how he had insisted upon throwing snow down her neck and had infuriated her to such an extent that

she turned upon him and gave him a severe trouncing, never dreaming that in later years she would be able to say she had thrashed a president of the United States.

Though mischievous as any normal boy, a sense of justice was early prevalent and he could usually be found taking the part of the underdog. Unless it were a gun, no possession was more precious or important to the Plymouth boy than a jackknife. My brother had just acquired a knife as a Christmas present. Proudly displaying it at school, one of the boys, a burly bully nearly six feet in height, who was attending the winter session, took it away from him and refused to return it. Coming upon the scene, Calvin inquired of my brother why he was crying. He replied, "Charlie has my knife and won't give it up."

"What are you doing with his knife," inquired Calvin.

"None of your business," Charles replied.

"I'll make it my business," said Calvin.

"Yes, you will," sneered the bully.

"I'll give you until I count ten to give it back," replied Calvin. Then he slowly counted up to ten. The bully made no move to return the knife. As words were of no avail, Calvin stepped back, slowly removed his coat, rolled up his sleeves, and said, "You give back that knife."

The bully hesitated no longer but returned the knife and said, "Aw, I was only foolin'. Can't you take a joke?" He knew enough of Calvin's temperament to realize that if he did not get thrashed he would have occasion to remember that he had been in a fight.

Coolidge came from a family of politicians. His grandfather "Galusha" farmed in a small way but devoted much time to the various town offices he held. John, Calvin's father, carried the political activities of the family much further. There was almost no office of any importance in the town which John, at various times, did not hold. He served as selectman, tax collector, constable, road commissioner and school commissioner, and administered all of these offices with unusual economy. One winter, he hired me as fireman of the schoolhouse stove. I tramped through the snow each morning, an hour ahead of time, to build the school fire so the room would be warm when the pupils assembled. At the end of the winter, he paid me the munificent sum of one large silver dollar, which was the first one I ever earned and likely for that reason seemed

sufficiently remunerative. As road commissioner, John was particularly adverse to spending public funds. But his frugality was to the detriment of travel, and people from neighboring towns said they always knew when they got to the Plymouth line, for the first thing they struck was a mud hole.

For a few years, in conjunction with Frank Moore, John ran the Notch store. He later sold out and devoted most of his time to politics and private affairs, the latter in a rural fire insurance business.

There were no party politics in Plymouth fifty years ago--the town was almost 100 per cent Republican and a Democrat was as popular as a woodchuck in a cabbage patch. But the town was divided into two political factions, the Coolidge and the anti-Coolidge. The Coolidge faction usually had the edge, but only a slight one, and many a torrid battle was waged between the two at the town meeting. This was a town holiday and the setting for the political fight was in Levi Green's hall. In preparation for the day, the floor was liberally sprinkled with sawdust, which was less expensive than the more fashionable cuspidors. The men and boys gathered early in the morning prepared to work and fight for their favorite candidates, for the Vermonter takes his politics seriously. For many years Mrs. Levi Moore was town clerk and the presence of a lady in the room tempered the language of many a fiery speech. Some people brought their lunch. Those who did not adjourned to Moore's General Store to partake of a simple repast of crackers and cheese and to lay plans for the afternoon's fray.

In the role of constable, John Coolidge was a source of terror to the boy who had been guilty of any escapade, and well I recall, after having been guilty of some boyish misdemeanor, of leaping a stone wall and hiding when I saw him approach behind "Rarus", his old white horse. On one occasion, with some other boys, I had been guilty of an unusually serious escapade. We had decided to raid the cheese factory at night and help ourselves to some cheese curds which were unusually delicious. Anybody was welcome before the cheese was put into the press to enter the factory and help himself to some curds, but on this occasion the craving seized us after nightfall. We stealthily went to the cheese factory, broke open one of the

cheese presses and helped ourselves. Made bolder by this daring adventure, we then proceeded to raid some of the orchards, filling our stomachs and pockets with the most luscious apples and, as a climax, proceeded to the home of one of the most unpopular men in the community and threw stones at his roof. All through the village the next morning, rumors of the cheese factory raid spread. There were threats of prosecution, which, however, never took place, but, for many weeks after, the appearance of law and justice in the person of John Coolidge was enough to send me scurrying to cover.

The pleasures of the youth were fewer in number and of a different nature than that of the young people in the towns, and the longer hours of labor made them of less frequency. There was, however, the occasional dance with the Virginia Reel, as well as the "Square" and "Round Dances." At one time the town was very much interested in amateur theatricals and some fairly good plays were staged. One pleasant diversion was the straw rides on cold winter nights when the long double sleds were piled high with hay and the young people burrowed in, ten or more to a sleigh, and covered many miles in the sparkling moonlight behind the sturdy Morgan horses, to the music of tinkling sleigh bells.

The annual Sunday School picnic was the occasion of a village holiday and a trip was usually made to some grove or nearby lake for the picnic dinner and the games and outdoor sports. I well recall one such picnic in 1887, a photograph of which I still possess. Over the years, I have shown it to many friends, but not one has succeeded in identifying the lad who was later to become president of the United States, for in that entire assemblage there was probably not a more unprepossing lad in appearance.

Clothes did not distinguish one socially in those days. Most of the lads had a Sunday suit and the rest of the week wore overalls. Occasionally, a youth had a pair of shoes for Sunday wear, but cowhide boots were more common. I well recall the first pair of my own which had the highly desired copper toes. As I slipped them upon my feet and strutted down the road to display them to my playmates, I felt more dressed up than I ever have in later years sheathed in formal evening dress.

Fishing and hunting were favorite sports of the Ply-

mouth boy. The old muzzle-loading shotgun with a hound dog and a day in the woods in search of rabbits or partridges was the Plymouth boy's idea of a good time, exceeded in pleasure, perhaps, only by those days in summer months when, with a home-grown pole, we fished for brook trout. On the stream that flowed through the farms of Jim Brown and John Wilder, Calvin Coolidge, with his old pole and can of fishworms, was a familiar figure. The fishworm, more widely known as the angle worm, was the bait the Plymouth boy used. He could lure those speckled beauties to his hook many times, when his more sophisticated city cousin, equipped with a split bamboo rod and the most modern array of flies, would meet with failure.

Plymouth Notch was the section of the town in which Coolidge was born and reared. Plymouth Union, one mile below at the foot of the mountain in Black River Valley, was a sharp contrast to its neighbor. Just as the town was divided into two political factions, the Coolidge and the anti-Coolidge, the former centering in the Notch element and the latter in the Union element, so were there two distinct social groups. The Notch was the center of an extensive agricultural area. Plymouth Union was a manufacturing village. To the young people of the Union, the Notch population was composed entirely of "rubes", and to the notch people, the Union was inhabited by a crowd of village "toughs."

A spirit of rivalry was inevitable, and was augmented by a cannon. Soon after the Civil War days this cannon of two-inch bore was cast at the furnace in Tyson--a township village--from iron mined nearby. It was purchased to celebrate the Fourth of July. Not long after it came into existence, controversy arose as to whether the Notch or the Union should be custodian of the cannon through the year. What event started the controversy, I do not know, but I do remember the pitched battles for its possession. First one group had possession and then the other, and throughout the year it was diligently sought by the side that did not have it. It was kept in careful concealment three hundred and sixty-five days a year, brought out early July Fourth morning to be fired frequently throughout the day. The booming could be heard distinctly from one village to the other. On one occasion it had been for some time in the possession of the Notch people. Early

Fourth of July morning, it was loaded upon a wagon and taken to the top of Notch Mountain, barely a quarter of a mile above the Union. The Notch boys intended to fire it two or three times, load it back on the wagon and haul it to the Notch Common, where they felt it would be safe for the remainder of the day. Rumors of what the Notch boys had intended to do trickled down, and the Union boys at once went into executive session. A group of them, outnumbering the Notch boys two to one, long before daylight climbed to the top of Notch Mountain and secreted themselves behind boulders and trees near the point where they thought the cannon would be discharged. Soon after daybreak the Notch boys appeared, unloaded the cannon, and drove the horse some distance away so that it would not be frightened by the noise. The roars of the first discharge were still echoing through the mountains when the Notch "rubes" found their retreat cut off by a determined crowd of Union "toughs" charging down upon them. The fight which took place was a memorable one and ended with the cannon being returned to the Union, where it was successfully defended for some years. Later, by a successful coup, the Notch people gained possession of it and have retained it ever since. Long rumored to be on John Wilder's premises somewhere, many a secret expedition was made to his barn, but no trace could be found. It was learned later that after each Fourth of July it was carefully dismounted and carried to the attic of his house. I have often wondered if in later life the violent clashes between the odd and the even classes at Amherst for the famous Sabrina did not carry Coolidge back to his boyhood days when he fought so valiantly for the possession of the old cannon.

About this time, a farmer boy of Vermont, one Thomas Moore by name, appeared at the Union as a clerk in the store of Norris Wilder. This intrusion of a Notch "rube" into the village life of the Union "toughs" was unexpected and unprecedented. Tom, therefore, was greeted with a good deal of suspicion, but this wholesome and likeable farmer boy soon won a place in the hearts of the Union people. Soon after his advent, Tom suggested a series of dances and other social events in which both the villages should take part. To the surprise of most of the people concerned, it was found that in customs and habits there

was little difference between the Notch "rube" and the Union "tough." These social events marked the passing of the old-time rivalry, and in the past forty years I have heard of no further controversy.

When the biography of the late President Coolidge is finally written, it will be unfortunate unless due credit is given to his saintly grandmother. A day to Aunt Mede was misspent if devoted entirely to her household duties. She was the village angel, the dispenser of comfort and inspiration. Possessing soundest judgment, lofty ideals, sterling character and deepest sympathy, she was a welcome guest in every home. In times of sickness or sorrow, she was the first to respond. Her skill as a nurse was remarkable, her knowledge of homely remedies profound. Her neighbors' burdens and sorrows she made her own. Aunt Mede likely helped bring more children into the world than did Doctor Scott, the only physician in the township. When a brother and sister of mine died, words of deepest and most lasting comfort came from her. During her long and busy life, she was a living exponent and example of practical Christianity. On one occasion, one of my sisters was seized with an exceptionally severe attack of the croup in the middle of the night. Frightened because it did not yield to ordinary treatment, my mother dispatched my oldest brother to her house, at that time nearly a mile away, to ask for advice. It was then midnight, and Mrs. Coolidge had been asleep for three hours. Finally, aroused from her slumber, Aunt Mede opened the window to inquire what was wanted. On hearing the nature of my brother's errand, she said, "Wait a minute, I'll be down." Then, instead of sending back the information required, Mrs. Coolidge roused her husband, who "hitched up" the horse, and they drove back with my brother, spending the greater part of the night caring for the sick child. The sterling qualities of Calvin were I think in part due to heritage, part to the training in his early boyhood by his own mother, but I believe that the influence of his grandmother was one of the most ennobling and lasting of his whole life.

Some people think that Coolidge was a child of destiny and the darling of the gods; others regard him as just lucky. Granted, the police strike in Boston started him on his meteoric rise and the spectacle of a president taking the oath of office by lamplight in his boyhood home fo-

cused upon Cal the attention of the world in a dramatic way. Nevertheless, Calvin Coolidge was a self-made man. And indications that he knew what he wanted and where he was going were borne out by his mental make-up and by his conduct in early boyhood. He was very resourceful and usually succeeded in what he undertook. Calvin was always testing himself, seeking to find his limitations and to level them. On one occasion, my brother helped Calvin drive his cows to pasture. When they were about half way home, Calvin suddenly stopped and pointed to the ground, where the edge of a penny was protruding from the mud. "Why, Cal," my brother said, "you've found a cent." "No," he answered, "put it there when we went up. Wanted to see if I could find it coming back."

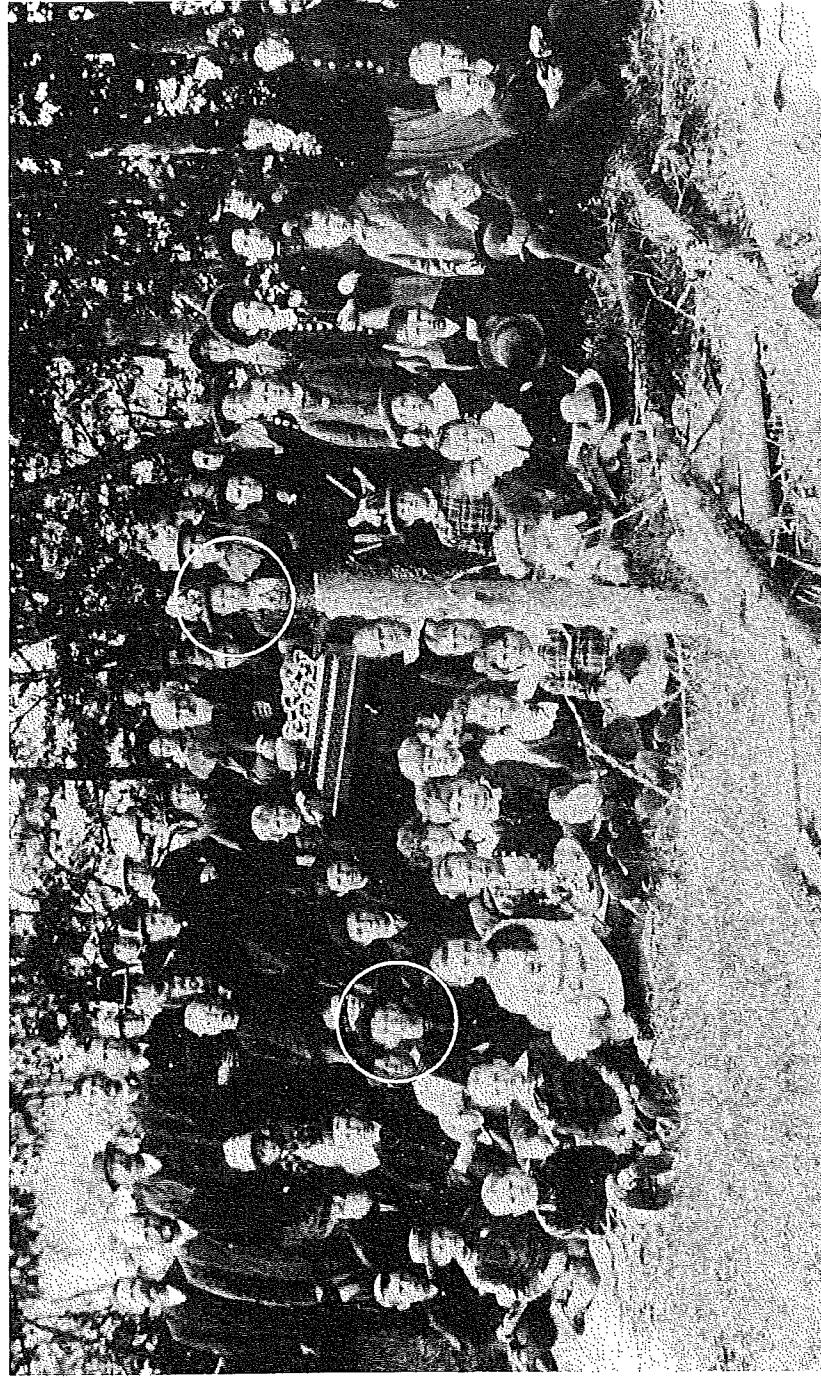
Even as a small boy one of the impressive things about him was that he worked on a schedule. Before one job was completed, he knew what his next job was to be and he did it. His whole day was planned out ahead--he never loafed or loitered like other boys. When he was idle, you felt he had stopped work because he had planned it that way from the beginning--it was on his schedule to stop, so he did.

Calvin Coolidge may have been taciturn in public life, but he certainly was anything but that when talking with his boyhood friends. I saw him at Plymouth Notch after his name had become a household word and spent a most pleasant half hour with him. When he left me, he extended a cordial invitation to come to see him. As we turned to part, his father walked with me to my car and said, "Be sure to drop in on Cal whenever you get a chance. He loves to see the old Plymouth boys."

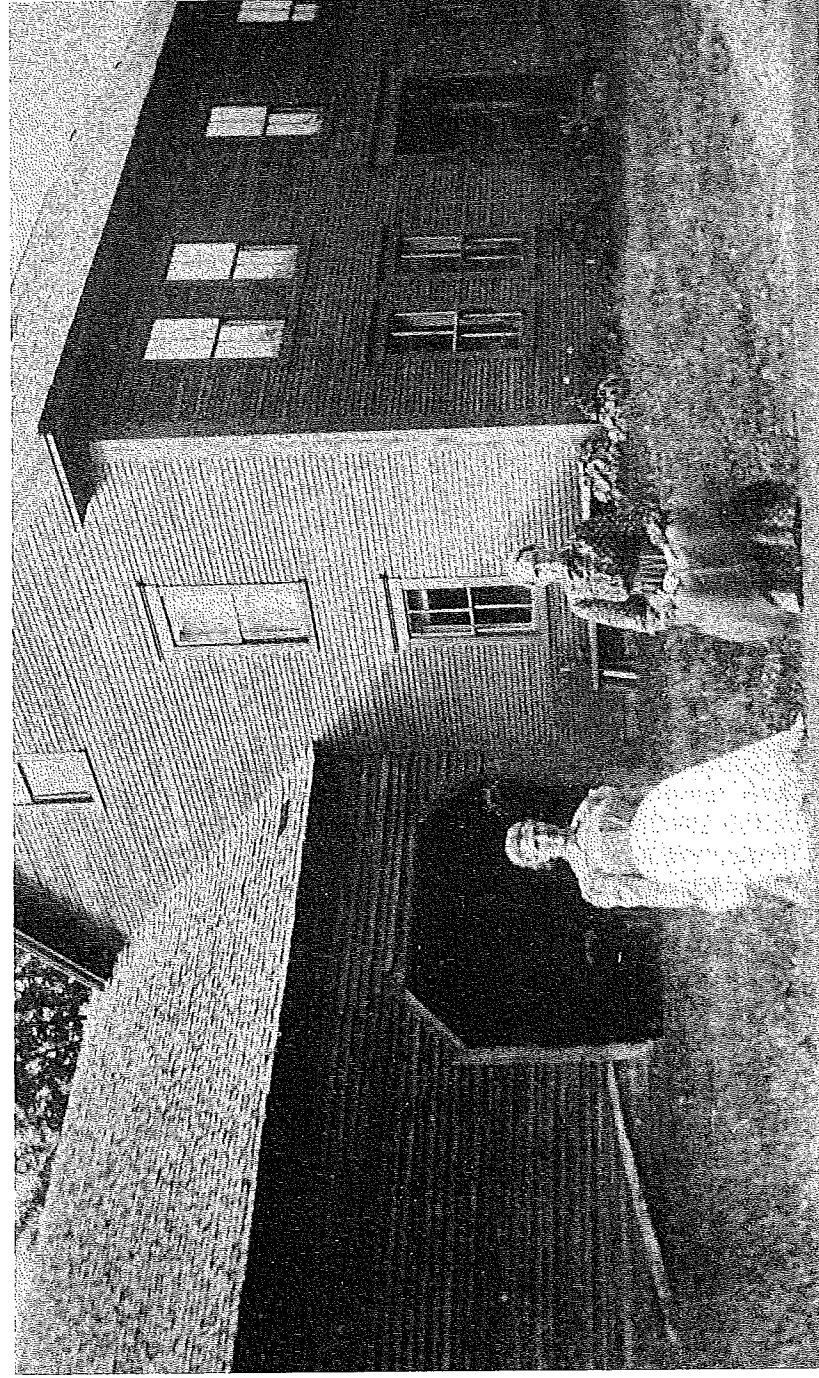
While Calvin was Vice-President and living at the hotel in Washington, one of my brothers spent an evening with him, reliving their boyhood escapades, the picnics, the old stone schoolhouse, the fishing trips and the old swimming hole where Calvin had taught my brother to swim.

Of all the boys from the town of Plymouth who have gone out into the world, none maintained a greater loyalty to or a greater love of his boyhood environment. The granite rocks and the eternal hills were a powerful factor in molding the life and character of this great American, --they helped teach him the great truths of life, helped to keep him just one of the people when fame and power

were given him, helped instill in him an appreciation of the things that are simple and homely. To us who shared his youth, it seems fitting that now his life's work is done, Calvin Coolidge has gone home to rest among the hills and neighbors that he loved.



*Sunday School picnic — Calvin Coolidge circled at left, his sister Abigail circled at right.
Col. John Coolidge behind Calvin with hat in hand.*



*Seated on the right in front of her home at Plymouth, Notch is Sarah Almada Brewer Coolidge (Aunt Mede)
wife of Calvin Galusha Coolidge and Grandmother of President Calvin Coolidge. (A companion is on the left.)*

Calvin Coolidge: The Twilight Years

By RICHARD NORTON SMITH

Many summers, nearly sixty, have passed since Calvin Coolidge's unforgettable, if ambiguous, renunciation of a second full term: "I do not choose to run for President in 1928." That phrase became an instant classic. As early as the next morning, reporters, on a road not far from the Summer White House in South Dakota's Black Hills, came upon a broken down Model T. On its fender sat a hand-lettered sign proclaiming, "I do not choose to run in 1927." The rest of his countrymen might be stunned by the news, but to those around the President, the only surprise lay in the timing of his withdrawal. For Coolidge meant it when he said the power and the glory of his office were sadly diminished by the 1924 death of his son and namesake. His own health uncertain, his wife's was sufficiently delicate as to give them both pause when considering the effect of four more years in the muggy Washington climate. Grace had her own explanation for her husband's decision. As she told one friend, "Poppa smells a depression coming." It was a theory Coolidge himself gave credence to shortly before leaving office, in a prophecy he made to Colonel Edmund Starling of the Secret Service.

"Well," he told Starling, "they're going to elect that superman Hoover, and he's going to have some trouble. He's going to have to spend money. But he won't spend enough. Then the Democrats will come in and spend money like water. But they don't know anything about money. Then they will want me to come back and save money for them. But I won't do it."

Herbert Hoover was the man at the center of this uncanny forecast. Afterward, when memories of the Great Depression had faded a little, he was asked how he had managed to survive the years of ostracism following the collapse of the American economy. His reply was characteristically pungent. "I outlived the bastards!"

Calvin Coolidge enjoyed no such revenge. His own post-White House career was brief, less than four years in all.

Calvin Coolidge: The Twilight Years | 21

"We draw our Presidents from the people," he wrote in the spare albeit revealing prose of his autobiography. "I came from them. I wish to be one of them again."

The story of Coolidge's twilight years is largely one of a wish frustrated. Accustomed to doing the day's work, he found his professional options restricted by the narrow walls of his political past. In this, Coolidge was hardly unique. The fact is, that America has never quite figured out what to do with her ex-Presidents. In 1929, they left office without benefit of staff, pension, franking privilege, or Secret Service protection. Like Cinderella when the clock struck twelve, their temporary splendor melted away. Yet their fame lingered on, that and the public's curiosity.

That spring, even before the changing of Washington's guard, speculation about Coolidge's future was rife. Perhaps he would go on to the Supreme Court, it was whispered, or run a railroad, or edit a newspaper. The Metropolitan Life Insurance Company might hire him, or the Encyclopedia Britannica. A Boston journal urged him to run for the Senate in 1930. Broadway producer Flo Ziegfeld proposed him as the perfect censor for the licentious Great White Way. Coolidge himself cracked a smile at the suggestion that he teach a course in thrift at Scotland's Aberdeen University.

And why not? On the President's last night in Washington, Colonel Starling had his attention directed to a White House table all but groaning under the weight of jams and preserves favored by his employer. "I'm not going to leave them here," Coolidge told Starling. "I'm going to eat them in Northampton."

The next day, it rained on Herbert Hoover's parade. It always rained on his moving day, said Coolidge. When cheering crowds at Union Station demanded a farewell speech, the now ex-President said only that he hoped they would enjoy the future as much as he had the past. Then he turned to a radio man on the platform. "I'm not getting much private life," he remarked. It was a lament which would grow familiar with repetition.

Back in New England, the people of Northampton wondered about their famous neighbors, returning home after a dozen years in the public spotlight. Local papers that winter had taken to printing pictures of fine old dwelling

places--a not so subtle hint that perhaps the former inhabitants of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue would be happier somewhere besides 21 Massasoit Street. Members of the Edwards Congregational Church pondered the wisdom of assigning the Coolidges a more prominent pew than the one, all but hidden under a balcony, which they naturally favored. Grocers speculated as to whether they would lose trade to fancier establishments in Boston and New York.

Could a man really be happy, it was asked, exchanging a large white house with a curving driveway and handsome portico for a nine-room duplex with no garage and a mailbox beside the door? No one pretended that the former President would be able to house his library and other belongings in the \$32-a-month establishment shared with a high school principal. Grace herself remarked that 21 Massasoit Street could easily fit into the State Dining Room of the White House, with room left over. But her own attachment to the place was unmistakable. As she once wrote, "In it both of our children were born. The hum and buzz of the toy electric trains set in motion by childish fingers...have faded with the years, but a mother's ear is attuned to hear them in a quiet hour when other sounds are hushed."

Over the mantle of their once and future residence, the Coolidges hung the time-honored words which might have served the ex-President as a personal credo:

"A wise old owl lived in an oak;
The more he saw, the less he spoke.
The less he spoke, the more he heard,
Why can't we be like that wise old bird?"

From the start, Coolidge hoped to emulate the wise old owl. He settled into a comfortable routine, arriving most mornings around eight in his unpretentious office on the second floor of Northampton's Masonic block, quarters he shared with Ralph Hemenway, his nominal law partner. Coolidge made no pretense of practicing law. The office was a place to kick off his shoes, lean back with a freshly clipped cigar and read the morning papers or ever-present mail. The latter poured in upon him: requests for autographs, speaking invitations, appeals for inside information, advice on how to conduct his ex-presidency. Secretary Herman Beatty recalled one day when a package with a diamond bracelet arrived, mailed by a woman who would

only feel safe knowing it was in Mr. Coolidge's keeping. As Beatty put it, "He treated that diamond bracelet as if it were a scorpion. He inquired carefully as to whom it was from and had it immediately packed and sent back to the sender, taking care that the post-office receipt was filed and that there were ample witnesses to its return."

The unsolicited gifts were by no means the only evidence of the tendency we Americans have to regard our Presidents as public property. From Coolidge's first days back in Northampton, 21 Massasoit was besieged by a flood of tourists, some in cars all but choking the once quiet sidestreet, others on foot. It was all but impossible for the former President to sit on his porch at night, or elude the familiarity of fellow citizens, who liked nothing better than to approach in search of a friendly handshake. Worse yet were reporters, who peeped in his windows at night, wrote stories about missing putty, informed readers that Coolidge preferred old-fashioned nightshirts to modern pajamas. In Washington, a city accustomed to living with Presidents, he was able to indulge his taste for daily window-shopping. In Northampton, such simple joys were ruled out. Henceforth, Coolidge rode to work in a handsome Ford touring car, brought back from Washington and chauffeured by the youth he took to calling Johnny Jump-up.

Ralph Lerch was one journalist who didn't badger him, a reporter from the Springfield Union and stringer for the old Boston Post who still recalls his first encounter with the newly returned Coolidge. It was the first Sunday after Hoover's inauguration, and the Northampton streets were covered with a late winter snowfall, when Lerch spotted the bright yellow wheels which made the Ford instantly identifiable. Coolidge invited him into his office. It was Sunday, he noted, and Lerch couldn't have much to do. "Come in and talk awhile." Coolidge offered him a cigar, which Lerch politely declined. "You're the first newspaperman I ever saw who didn't smoke," said Coolidge, his own stogie firmly in hand.

Best of all, Lerch differed from his fellow journalists in treating their conversations as privileged. Thus, the two men became friends, the former President of the United States wandering down the hall to where an Associated Press news ticker carried the events of the day, displaying

little interest in stories datelined Washington. Never once did Coolidge mention his successor. He preferred to catch up on local gossip, to learn what had become of this store on Main Street or that lawyer's practice in the years he'd absented himself from his old hometown.

About his own accomplishments, Coolidge was modest. As he told Lerch, he had entered the presidency illprepared, even by a lifetime of officeholding, for the unique demands which the modern world makes on its occupant. "I inherited a messy thing from Harding," he explained, with typical understatement. "But I chose good men. I got Andy Mellon and Dwight Morrow, and Herbert Hoover, and Frank Kellogg. They did pretty good. And what they did came out to my credit. Yes.", he went on, pausing between puffs of smoke, "I think I came out looking pretty good."

About this time, Coolidge was asked to fill out a card accompanying his annual dues to the National Press Club. Writing out his name and address, he came to "Occupation".

"Retired," he wrote. Then, he came to "Remarks". He thought for a moment, before putting down, "Glad of it."

Coolidge may have regarded himself as retired, but the press did not look at it quite the same way. Reporters noted his one return trip to the nation's capital, for the June, 1929 signing of the Kellogg-Briand Pact. The Press tagged after him at the Eastern States Exposition in nearby Springfield, snapped his picture when he climbed into an airplane--a plane Coolidge pointedly refused to fly in--and reported the publication of a forthcoming autobiography based, in part, upon a series of articles composed during his final months in the White House. The book sold well, and in between its laconic lines, so stingy with official revelations, one could glimpse much of the shy, sensitive boy from Plymouth, who kept the world at bay yet exerted a powerful hold upon its imagination. A loner who hated to be alone--this is the Coolidge of the Autobiography, a man with a surprising streak of sentiment, and an almost mystical attachment to the purple hills and plain-spoken virtues of his youth. Consider the author's verbal portrait of his mother, whose picture he carried with him to his dying day...

"It seems impossible that any man could adequately de-

scribe his mother. I can not describe mine...Whatever was grand and beautiful in form and color attracted her. It seemed as though the rich green tints of the foliage and the blossoms of the flowers came for her in the spring-time, and in the autumn it was for her that the mountain sides were struck with crimson and gold. When she knew that her end was near she called us children to her bedside, where we knelt down to receive her final parting blessing.

"In an hour she was gone. It was her thirty-ninth birthday. We laid her away in the blustering snows of March. The greatest grief that can come to a boy came to me. Life was never to seem the same again."

Early in 1930, the former President commenced a less satisfying project. Having dedicated South Dakota's Mount Rushmore national memorial three years earlier, he was now persuaded by sculptor Gutzon Borglum to contribute a five hundred word history of the American people, to be carved into the mountain alongside the heads of four of America's Presidents. The London Daily Telegraph printed that it must be "quite jolly" for a nation to be able to tell its entire story in just five hundred words. But the real fracas broke out later, when Coolidge's first two paragraphs were released, only to be greeted by a torrent of critical response from editors and professors alike. Not surprisingly, what enraged the former President was the fact that the paragraphs were not as he had written them. Instead, Borglum had taken it upon himself to edit the prose--without checking back with its author. Turn about was fair play, one reporter suggested--perhaps now Coolidge would have the right to edit Borglum's design for the mountain!

Mightily displeased by the whole affair, Coolidge withdrew into a stony silence. Early in 1931, he showed that he hadn't forgotten the sculptor's high-handed treatment. Visited by another principle in the Rushmore project, he inquired, "About how far would y' say 'tis from here to the Black Hills?"

"Oh, I don't know, Mr. President," replied his visitor. "I'd guess maybe fifteen hundred miles."

Coolidge took a thoughtful puff on his cigar, and his eyes twinkled. "Well...Y'know, Mr. Bellamy, that's about as close t' Mr. Borglum as I care t'be."

By then, the former President was immersed in a far greater literary undertaking, a daily newspaper column which neatly summed up both the prerogatives and the limitations visited upon a man in his position. "Calvin Coolidge Says", designed as 200 words a day of cracker-barrel wisdom, was to be syndicated to nearly a hundred newspapers at the highest prices ever paid for such a feature. Guaranteed \$3,000 a week, allowed absolute freedom to choose topics, supplied with secretarial assistance and a supportive editor, Coolidge set out on his new career with considerable enthusiasm. The first column was typical of the more than three hundred which followed. Published just eight months after the sudden break on Wall Street, it urged less criticism of American leaders and institutions, more sympathy with their efforts to stem the economic tailspin.

Only later would Coolidge inform Ralph Waldo, the McClure Syndicate's editor, that he had embarked upon the series after a leading New York banking firm advised him that the worst of the depression was over. As a result, he expected his journalistic career to coincide with better times. "They seem to have been mistaken," he concluded.

Before long, he was referring to his daily article as "the chore," and counting the days until the contract was up. Coolidge made plain to friends that he felt guilty making so much money at a time when so many of his countrymen were reduced to desperate straits. No less important was the self-imposed silence he felt obliged to keep where his successor was concerned. His response to people pressing him to set forth his own plan for combatting the worsening economy was something close to exasperation. "I won't do it," he snapped. "I refuse to be a Deputy President."

Early in June, 1931, the stock market plunged again. In Congress, Democrats anxious to build their case against a beleaguered Hoover demanded quick action to lower tariff barriers. Sharing the nation's front pages with the headlines was an inconspicuous box announcing Calvin Coolidge's plan to take a three-month respite from his editorial chores.

"The brass of the country need relaxation and refreshment more than ever this season," Coolidge wrote about this time. "They owe to themselves, their businesses and their associates to get more than the usual period of

rest...Just now we need that replenishment of body and soul that comes only in withdrawing from work and familiar scenes and seeking diversion in new activities and new surroundings."

This was doubly ironic, given the frustration of his own travel plans. Coolidge, upon leaving the White House, intended to visit remote corners of his own land, perhaps even parts of the distant globe, hitherto known only from books and State Department cables. Early in 1930, he and Grace set off for the South, spending a few happy weeks in the Florida sunshine. The Coolidges then journeyed to New Orleans, where their naive hopes of anonymity were rudely dashed. Five thousand people surrounded them at the rail depot, and a near riot ensued, when the former President tossed away a spent cigar. In California, they stayed at newspaper mogul William Randolph Hearst's San Simeon castle, maintaining a discreet silence about the presence of actress Marion Davies, their host's Hollywood mistress. The Coolidges lunched with Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks and watched movies being made at Warner Brothers and MGM. When a letter, warning of a plot to kill him, was delivered in Los Angeles, Coolidge blandly handed it to a nearby guard and said, "Guess this belongs to you."

The uproar which accompanied his first transcontinental jaunt insured there would be no other. Coolidge thereafter limited his travels to once-a-month visits to New York, where he served on the board of the New York Life Insurance Company and where he seemed to enjoy startling blasé New Yorkers who had never seen a President riding their subway. Or he went fishing in the Connecticut Valley, attended commencements at Amherst and, on rare occasion, appeared at ceremonial functions commemorating a local anniversary or civil festival. He declined every invitation to speak, breaking his rule in the summer of 1931 to join President Hoover at the dedication of Warren Harding's memorial in Marion, Ohio.

According to Arthur Krock of The New York Times, it was at Marion that Coolidge and Hoover compared notes about the various steps being taken to combat the depression. For his part, said Hoover, he was losing patience with carping critics, who failed to take into account his own tireless campaign to reverse the economic spiral.

Said Coolidge: "You can't expect to see calves running in the field the day after you put the bull to the cows."

"No," replied Hoover, "but I would expect to see contented cows."

No such repartee crept into Coolidge's daily column--and for good reason. When the editors of *The Nation* compared his articles to advertisements from Wanamaker's Department Store, the sage of Northampton was unfazed. Indeed, he promised, only half in jest, to write a book entitled "The Importance of The Obvious." After all, he concluded, if Americans would only do the few simple things they knew to be their civic obligation, "most of our big problems would take care of themselves."

Coolidge was not seeking notoriety. When his self-proclaimed "three months' vacation" was over, he was content to let "the chore" go hang. Thereafter, he had even less activity to fill his days. Ralph Lerch recalls one afternoon when stationmaster John Slocum, having arranged for a parlor car en route to New York and Coolidge's regular directors' meeting, was surprised to see Coolidge appear at the station an hour early. Slocum explained that it was daylight savings time. After politely thanking him, Coolidge returned to his office, to wait out the southbound train. When Slocum recounted the incident to his friend Lerch a few days later, he capped with the significant remark, "Time don't mean anything to him."

Not that his retirement years were devoid of pleasure. There was always Plymouth, and after 1930, Coolidge began spending more and more time in the old farmhouse, which was a pilgrimage for thousands of tourists eager to see the spot where he had been sworn into office on that dramatic August night less than a decade before. Not all were impressed with what they saw. After one visitor remarked audibly that he didn't think much of the place, Coolidge answered the insult with a one-word dismissal: "Democrats!", he cracked.

In an attempt to insulate himself from the swarm of admirers, Coolidge added a new wing onto the simple homestead, large enough for many of his four thousand books, and made comfortable with running water and electricity. Like many elderly men, he seemed to find refuge in the haunts of his youth. Here, he could escape from the hay fever which plagued him for much of each summer. He

could tramp his ancestral acres, check up on adjoining lots of sugar maples, hunt partridge or lunch at the Woodstock Inn.

Coolidge became president of the American Antiquarian Society, headquartered in Worcester, and faithfully attended each of its meetings. He served, along with Al Smith and Bernard Baruch, on a national commission appointed to investigate the nation's railroads. He settled out of court when a St. Louis insurance salesman filed suit in 1931, alleging that the former President, in a New York Life-sponsored broadcast, had harmed his livelihood when Coolidge had warned listeners against agents who were forever trying to get them to alter their policies.

Such incidents pointed up anew the particular vulnerabilities attending Coolidge's position. Refusing to capitalize on his status--Coolidge even directed a secretary to remove any tailor marks or nametags on some old suits he wished to resell--he gradually cut off all but the most formal ties to the Republican Party structure in his state and nationally. After April of 1930, he retreated behind the gates of The Beeches, a handsome shingled estate of twelve rooms, perched above the meadows beside the Connecticut River. Purchased for \$40,000, the place was a source of immense pride to its new owner, who gleefully noted that from now on, no policeman could tell him to shovel off his sidewalk!

When a visitor remarked to Grace that home seemed to agree with her, she let out an almost audible sigh of relief. "You just can't imagine how good it is," she told him. For her husband, The Beeches provided some semblance of privacy at last and a porch overlooking the river, where he and Grace liked to sit on summer evenings, she knitting, he staring off at Mount Tom in the distance, while canary birds sang and the sun waxed a golden glow. The former President's routine became a gentle decrescendo, now that the column was behind him, and his strength was visibly ebbing. His daily visits to the office grew shorter, the mail was less urgent, and his conversations with Ralph Lerch centered on the smalltown gossip of a streetcorner sage.

Outside his door, the Depression deepened, and while he said little, his own unhappiness was apparent. Coolidge confessed to bewilderment at the turn of events, telling

Al Smith that he frankly didn't understand Wall Street's gyrations, and informing his barber that "the big men" of America would have to get together and do something soon. Early in 1932, in an article submitted to American Magazine he refused to turn his back on the old values of work, thrift, and faith. It was impossible to point to any general collapse of morals, Coolidge wrote, or any widespread dishonesty. "We may say that it was the result of greed and selfishness. But what body is to be specifically charged with that? Were the wage earners too greedy in getting all they could for their work? Were the managers of enterprise, big and little, too greedy in trying to operate at a profit? Were the farmers too greedy in their efforts to make more money by tilling more land and enlarging their production?"

"The most we can say is that there has been a general lack of judgment so widespread as to involve practically the whole country. We have learned that we were not so big as we thought we were. We shall have to keep nearer to the ground. We shall not feel so elated, but we shall be much safer."

Anyone who doubts Calvin Coolidge's essential humanity need only read Ralph Hemenway's account of the morning his partner Coolidge placed a check for \$5,000 on his desk, with the words, "And as much more as you want." Or they can find James Lucey's account of how his old friend presented him with a wooden chest containing five twenty-dollar gold pieces one Depression-era Christmas. Or Herman Beatty's recollection of a shiny, expensive new traveling bag put on his desk without a word. "For you," Coolidge finally remarked.

"But I have one," said Beatty.

"Too small," said Coolidge.

"Mr. Beatty," Coolidge remarked the day of their final parting, "I don't know that I expressed myself sufficiently at the office this morning, but life hasn't ended for either of us."

His sense of humor had not deserted him; when someone urged him as a replacement for Amherst's retiring president, he vetoed the idea out of hand. "Easier to control a Congress than a college faculty," Coolidge said. And then, there was the famous incident, late in the 1932 contest between Herbert Hoover and Franklin D. Roosevelt, when

Cornelia Otis Skinner turned to the former President and declared, "Oh, Mr. Coolidge, I wish it were you that we were going to vote for in November. It would be the end of this horrible depression."

To which Coolidge replied, "It would be the beginning of mine."

His own participation in the campaign was limited by the state of his health to one radio telecast from Madison Square Garden, augmented by an election-eve appeal from the library at The Beeches. "I don't suppose anyone knows how much I hate making speeches," Coolidge grumbled, but a desperate GOP could hardly relent.

When Hoover was swept from office, he admitted surprise at the size of the loss. "I no longer fit in with these times," Coolidge told his friend Henry Stoddard in mid-December. "When I was in office, tax reduction, debt reduction, tariff stability, and economy were the things to which I gave attention...When I read of the newfangled things that are now so popular, I realize that my time in public affairs is past...We are in a new era to which I do not belong, and it would not be possible for me to adjust myself to it."

Coolidge remarked to another acquaintance that he felt all burned out. He apologized for missing an alumni dinner at Amherst. He had wanted to go, he said, but it was made difficult by all the attention which invariably attended an ex-President. He grinned when he said that it was his past life that made all the trouble. "If I could only get rid of my past life! But that always stays with one." Then the smile vanished, and he confessed to a twinge of despair. In other periods of depression, it had been possible to see rays of light, grounds for hope, but at the beginning of 1933, his reliance was in religion alone. "That continues as a solid basis for hope and courage."

Thursday, January 5, dawned crisp and bracing--a beautiful midwinter day. The former President put in a short morning at his office, said he felt unwell, told an associate he was getting to be an old man and that he might confine future work to The Beeches. Back home, Coolidge offered use of his car to Grace, who preferred to walk that day. Among her errands was, according to Ralph Lerch, a visit to a local dressmaker, where on a whim she purchased a black dress--it seems she didn't own one.

Grace returned home a few minutes before one, to find her husband slumped on the floor of his dressing room. He had gone there after a restless prowl about the house and grounds, a few minutes spent fiddling with a jigsaw puzzle, some conversation with his secretary about Plymouth, and a brief exchange with the hired man.

He faced himself in the mirror, when death reached out to clutch him, massively, noiselessly. As Grace sensed the moment she discovered his lifeless form, his heart simply gave out. The news spread down the block, then across the land. Reporters calling at the old homestead in Plymouth found Aurora Pierce, the family's long-time housekeeper, weeping at the kitchen table.

"Calvin was a great man," she sobbed, "a good and a kindly man."

In Washington, President Hoover left for his office, to scribble a personal note of sympathy to the widow. That night, as The Beeches lay bathed in the light of a single bulb, journalist friend Bruce Barton addressed a national radio audience. "You have heard many people say many different things about this man," said Barton. "I shall say something about him that I doubt you have heard any man say. I loved him. Morrow loved him. There was a very lovable side to Calvin Coolidge. He was unique. God broke the pattern when he was formed. There never has been anyone like him in the White House. There never can be. The nation will remember his personality and his dry humor long after it has forgotten most of the events of his administration. And to some of us, those memories will be tinged with a pang of loneliness."

Two days later, the guns boomed early, and the streets of Northampton filled with mourners, the prominent and the not so prominent. There was no Boston or Washington lying in state. Instead, a youthful Northampton pastor's twenty-minute service, deliberately simple at the widow's request, and a dull silver casket with a floral tribute from the White House. The Largo from Handel's Xerxes. Psalm 46. Then the long, somber journey over rain-slicked roads, past knots of bareheaded farmers and factory hands gathered spontaneously to bid farewell to the Green Mountain Boy on his way home. The cortegé, when at last it reached the Notch in the late afternoon, was greeted by a requiem of hail. Across the road from the lot where five gener-

ations of Coolidges lay, townspeople and reporters alike huddled against the elements. In Northampton, a life had ended--and now, a way of life was being laid to rest at Plymouth.

That night, the sky opened up, pronouncing a snowy benediction and obliterating the new grave by morning. But in all the years which have passed since, the place has not lost its beauty, or its simple eloquence. Today, more than half a century after America said goodbye to her thirtieth President, the grandchildren of Coolidge's generation make their way to the little graveyard in the shadow of Salt Ash Mountain. And we, keepers of his legacy, are still moved to repeat the words Grace Coolidge had read that wintry January afternoon in 1933:

"Warm summer sun, shine kindly here,
Warm southern wind, blow softly here;
Green sod above, lie light, lie light,
Good night, dear heart, good night, good night."

Jane Curtis, Will Curtis and Frank Lieberman, Return To These Hills: The Vermont Years of Calvin Coolidge (Woodstock, Vt: Curtis-Lieberman Books), 96 pages, \$17.50.

While recovering in the hospital a few weeks ago, President Reagan found time for some leisurely reading. One of the books at his bedside, which the White House communications office confirms he read, was a slender new volume called "Return To These Hills: The Vermont Years of Calvin Coolidge."

That the current commander-in-chief, who prizes Republicans and Republicanism, should identify with a Yankee raised in the hills of Plymouth, Vt., is hardly peculiar. Nonetheless, it's reassuring to know that he has the impeccably good taste to read such an excellent book.

Here are a few lines that give the flavor of President Coolidge at work:

"Much of the time, he simply didn't feel like talking. He did his duty one day in Washington by planting a tree. He took a few jabs with the shovel, then fell silent. Won't you say something sir? Mr. Coolidge peered into the hole for a moment. 'Mighty fine fish worm down there.'"

Reading this book is enough to make you yearn for the good old days, when times were simple and life centered on the farm and village. Coolidge's "Hills" are the hills that give character to the state and its people, that harbor the values and ways that so many cherish, and no one cared for them more than Coolidge himself.

Although he left the state to practice law and launch a political career in Massachusetts, this book, as authors Jane and Will Curtis and Frank Lieberman explain, is about Coolidge's Vermont years. This is, "the story of a time, a place, and a president illustrated with many (80 or so) rare old photographs."

"All through my father's political life he returned to Plymouth whenever he could," the president's son, John Coolidge, writes in a foreword.

The photographs alone seem to convey a strong sense of

Calvin Coolidge and his ancestral home. At age three, he has an engaging smile, when dressed in a frock, with his left forearm perched on the arm of a wood chair as though he were a happy young man. Years later, he often wears a favorite garment, one of his grandfather's hand-woven woolen smocks.

Some pictures show the president doing everyday farm chores, guiding a horse-drawn plow, pitching hay, and mowing fields. Others are of relatives, neighbors, schools, family homes, stores, roads and scenes that give a sense of rural life in Plymouth and during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Together with the text, these photographs portray Calvin Coolidge as a compassionate and devoted man. At age six, "struggling with some of the longer words," he read from the Bible of his grandfather, Calvin Galusha Coolidge. Of his wife, Grace, the president said, "For almost a quarter of a century she has borne with my infirmities and I have rejoiced in her graces."

"All his life," the authors write, describing another of the man's traits, "Calvin Coolidge possessed a refreshing lack of social pretensions... One of the first letters he wrote on returning to Washington as president was to his old shoemaker friend in Northampton, 'Mr. Lucey... I want you to know that if it were not for you I should not be here. And I want to tell you how much I love you' (Mr. Lucey had been one of Calvin Coolidge's earliest supporters in his first try at political office.)"

Frank Lieberman, whose meticulously-arranged meals appear regularly in four-color photographs at the back pages of Vermont Life magazine, designed this book. He shapes and positions the Coolidge family portraits beautifully, sometimes with thin magenta frames; once in a while, he trims the corners of the photos and these touches give the book the feel of a family album that is clean, neat and inviting.

Jane and Will Curtis are the other co-authors. Will Curtis is perhaps best known for his radio commentaries, *The Nature of Things*, sponsored by the National Audubon Society and heard on National Public Radio.

Fred Stetson
The Burlington Free Press
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*John J. Wilder (Uncle of Calvin Coolidge)
Seated on the Old Plymouth Cannon*