

**Eleanor Holt Cobb**  
**b. 1938**

Eleanor Holt Cobb has family history records from her grandparents who settled in Huntingdon Valley back in the early 1800's. Eleanor lived on Huntingdon Pike, across the street from the Huntingdon Valley Presbyterian Church. In the spring of 2008, Old York Road Historical Society set up a showcase in the Huntingdon Valley Library. Major funding for this showcase was donated by Eleanor, and she was the guest speaker at the dedication ceremony. This was her speech.

**Memories**

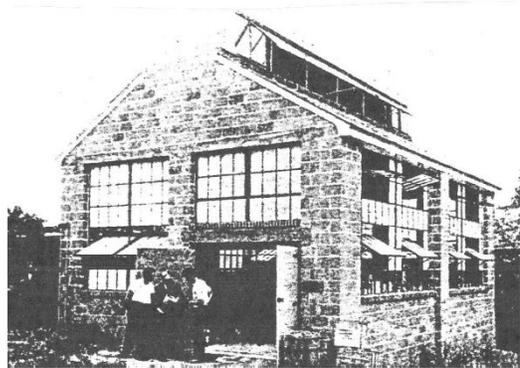
Just about right where I am standing in the Huntingdon Valley Library, the former Red Lion School, was my desk in the fourth grade classroom of Mrs. Williams. I can remember what a pretty woman she was with gray natural curls surrounding her face. She taught us how to use clay. A consummate artist, Mrs. Williams taught us to roll, cut, trim and, after kiln-firing, to paint our treasures. We used some slip, but basically were creatively encouraged to manipulate the clay into little candy dishes with handmade clay flowers that our mothers could keep. Mrs. Williams lived on Wyncoop Avenue about a half block from my grandparent's house on the Pike. Every Halloween all the kids headed to her house for a piece of homemade gingerbread.

Just over by that door in the hall was the classroom of Miss Neilson. A finer, more articulate sixth grade teacher didn't exist. She knew her students and their families well and thoughtfully took that knowledge into consideration; she was strict but always kind and fair. I still remember Longfellow, Poe, Hawthorne, and others she introduced to us and made us memorize, along with diagramming sentences! If one didn't know how to read and write the English language after her classes, it wasn't her fault.

Right next door down the hill was the little stone farmhouse of Schmidts' Dairy. My grandmother, Katharine Hoffman, was one of the first teachers in the valley, and, as the story goes, that is where she began her teaching career which ended when she married my grandfather. Just down the Pike was the Huntingdon Valley Bank and Trust Company. My grandfather, Jesse, served on the board there and when my father came uptown to do his banking, his second cousins, the Schultz girls, often waited on him.

Down the Pike on the left stood the home of Laurence Saint. I often visited there as a child. Mrs. Saint was a Proctor (as in Proctor and Gamble). She was a woman quite ahead of her time. She and her artist husband traveled to Europe on their honeymoon so that he

[Photo: Lawrence Saint's stained glass studio]

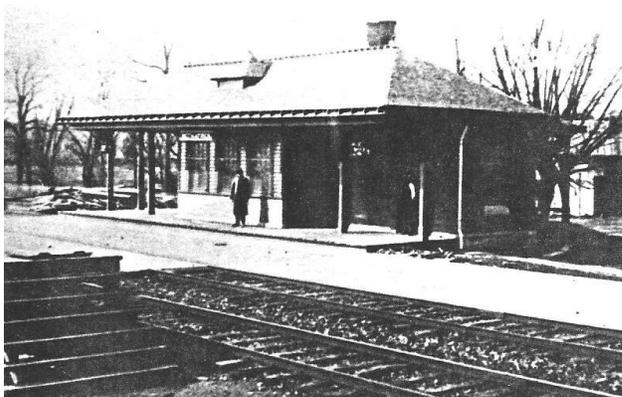


could study the making of stained glass and see the beautiful windows of the great cathedrals of Europe. The Saints, all eight or so of them, ate kelp, stone-ground wheat bread and were encouraged in every kind of inventive activity. I took art lessons from Mr. Saint in his wonderful studio that sat behind their Victorian house. I was nine or ten at the time. My mother and brother posed as Hannah and Samuel for one of his church murals, most of which are gone today. Mr. Saint looked and acted like his name. He had light hair and a white beard, with horned-rimmed glasses. A gentle soul, he surely left this world a better place because of the legacy of his faith, his magnificent art, and his wonderful children.

A house south of Saints was the home and office of Dr. Moore, a dentist. Before the doctor moved in, Jimmy Foxx, the baseball player, lived there for a brief time. He loved to sign autographs for the “lovely ladies”, all the high school girls who would pass his house on their way home from school.

A few doors down on the Pike lived my grandparents, Katharine and Jesse. Theirs was a magic house with a tile corner fireplace, a pocket-door parlor, stained glass windows, a wonderful pennant hung attic, and a wrap around porch where many an evening after catching lightning bugs, my brothers, sisters and I would sit with our elders and listen to the quiet chatter. I can't remember much of what was said, but it was always an atmosphere of quietness and gentility.

On Huntingdon Pike on each side of my grandparents lived cousins, the north side the Woodwards and south side the Heaton. Mr. Heaton was the superintendent of Lorimer Park for many years. At Murray Avenue and the Pike was the telephone exchange where I could look up into the window on my way home from Red Lion School and see the operators pushing and pulling plugs and saying, “Number please.” I still remember our phone number, Chapel Hill 1218J.



Down the Pike were the homes of the Yates and Jones families, and of course at the corner of Route 63 and Second Street Pike was the post office. Just below that corner were the Liebolds and across the street the Steinhauer and the DeShields families. Down the hill was the Bethayres train station where travelers took the trains north and south on the Reading Railroad.

[Photo: Bethayres Train Station]

On down the Pike were the Crowes, the Morgans, the Fesmires and at 2367 my home, directly across the street from the Huntingdon Valley Presbyterian Church. Fesmires built our house. My father designed it as an exact replica of a Georgian colonial home as seen in Williamsburg,

Virginia. It was an authentic rendering, the steps and risers, the walnut balustrade to the second floor and the dental molding at the edge of the roof, a very few of the examples of my father's precision. Unfortunately, it is scheduled for demolition. (July, 2008)

Pennypack Creek was down the Pike and there my brothers, sisters and I spent many happy hours building rafts that we sailed down the creek. Huntingdon Pike was just a dirt road and a turnpike early on. And as my great Aunt Caroline wrote in her diary in the later 1800s, when winter came she and my grandfather Jesse would take an open sleigh from Sorrel Horse across the snow covered fields, to "Singing School" at the Huntingdon Valley Presbyterian Church. They had no idea where the "Pike" was until they got right down into the town.