

Westford Recollections

by June W. Kennedy

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The story of a boy and his pig

By JUNE W. KENNEDY

As I was autographing copies of Westford Recollections 1729-1979 at the "Book-tique" a few weeks ago, I turned to a friend, and said, "Gordon, you really ought to write a book sometime, it's fun!" Little did I know that this newspaperman of many years had done just that. "The Story of My Pig" by Gordon B. Seavey, Westford, Mass., Middlesex County, written at the age of thirteen, coincidentally came across my desk this past week - it not only sheds some light on my own recent book in the character of Soot and owner, but likewise establishes the existence of G. B. Seavey and Co., Printers and Publishers, as early as 1918. As a surprise, and with "Happy Birthday Wishes" to its author, I present in its entirety. "The Story of My Pig."

Preface

"To the mind of the fastidious woman the pig is one of the dirtiest of all of the barnyard animals. This probably is because they have seen a few pigs living in unsanitary conditions, running on a manure pile and are dirty because they do not have a chance to keep themselves clean. To my mind a clean kept pig is a profitable one.

"To the farmer, swine are kept to supply the table with pork and also to help out a little by their rooting, manure and young.

"For the disinterested boy it is a beast to ill treat and to plague with stones and sticks for amusement. Evidently they do not think that pigs have feelings.

"To the mind of the club member pigs are pigs, PLAY and PROFIT. The government employees are ones that show club members how to raise a PIG, and I think we boys and girls can raise a porker better and cheaper than hundreds of farmers.

"To me my pig is a great pet and if anyone handles and cares for one properly a pig can be trained to do a great many tricks and also be a pet, making a profit. The government is backing all the clubs and this is an assurance that these clubs are well worth joining.

The author.

The story of My Pig

Chapter I.

"With a rattle and a roar a "fliver" came bouncing along the road from Boston to Ayer and as it reached the lower part of the common at the Littleton the klaxon rattled and made an addition to the noise already produced by the little Ford. The sound of the klaxon was a signal for "air brakes" I guess, because the man driving was no other than Mr. Trask, my county club leader, and he had applied them for he had spied me sitting on a bench waiting for my pig. I had been waiting nearly an hour and having a lonesome time of it but when I saw the car appearing all my lonesomeness disappeared because this was the beginning of my second year of the pig club and I fit in any where there are pigs. Mr. Trask produced a bag in which was a pure-bred Berkshire pig from the back of the auto and handed it to me. I accidentally touched her nose and the returns made me sure that it was a pig.

"After saying good-bye to Mr. Trask, I put my pig in the wagon and settled down for the four mile ride home to Westford.

"Upon my arrival home I deposited her in a vacant horse-stall with piles of hay to rest her weary bones on after her dangerous ride in the Ford. I then fed some feed to her.

"That night piggy had a sick stomach and was very lonesome as I could tell by her cries and I sat on a pile of hay near her while Miss Pig either layed down beside my outstretched leg or between them more like a dog than a pig.

Chapter II.

The feed, care, name and record.

"I had read the Pig Club Primer before I got my pig and so I had everything ready for her when she came. At that time I could only get middlings and so I bought one half a ton of them at the lowest price in July. I figured that I saved nearly six dollars by making this purchase.

"Not until September could I get ground oats and tankage. My pig was about eleven weeks old the first of June and I began feeding her middlings mixed with water three times a day and taking care that I did not mix it too thin which is the mistake of many.

"Seeing that this pig was rightful to a good name, I named her Queen Tadmuck. Later I changed it to Soot for short because Queen Tadmuck was too long a name to say in a hurry and when she did anything wrong my tongue was all tied up because I said it in such a hurry. So now it is Soot for general use and Queen Tadmuck officially. I named her Queen Tadmuck after the old Indian name of the hill on which I live and she is and was the best pig on it. 'Nuf ced.'

"The next thing to do was to build her a permanent pen outdoors and with my father's help we built her court which was a movable pen 12 by 14 feet and castle by putting a large packing box with the side and bottom knocked out, covered with used oil-cloth and putting hay on the bottom.

"Soot seemed to enjoy chewing gum and candy and she would get up on a stand for them.

"I can drive her around by a harness fixed about her shoulders, guiding her by a switch.

"I kept the following record by making entries of each bag of grain used as this was easier than by the quart or measure.

From June 1, 1919 to Dec. 1, 1919:

June 1st. 45 lbs.	
Red Dog Middlings)	\$1.64
June 10th. 675 Middlings)	19.57
Sept. 190 lbs. Ground Oats)	5.88
Sept. 10 lbs. Tankage	.46
Total	\$27.55
Cost of pig	\$12.00
Cost of grain	27.55
Total	39.55
Final value	\$150.00
Total cost	39.55
Profit	\$110.45

"N.B. I had exceptionally good luck in having such a good pig and Mr. Rice, the state pig club leader, valued her for \$150. Of course if this was a pork pig her value would be much less. She is worth so much because she is registered and will make a fine brood sow.

Chapter III.

The Summer Months

"During the summer months she did not gain as much as after I changed her feed because all I could buy for grain was middlings and an unvaried diet does not produce as much gain. We changed the position of the pen often so Soot could always have fresh ground to root.

"I mixed a mineral mixture composed of wood ashes, sulphur, salt and charcoal. This is a stomach regulator and helps build a frame to put



Boost 4-H Club Work. Local boys and girls found plenty of useful activity after school in 4-H Clubs, first organized during World War I. Animals, poultry, sewing and homemaking were popular. Here's thirteen-year-old Gordon Seavey (in 1918) with "Soot" who won top prizes at county and state fairs. She took no prize for speed, however, on snow packed Main Street in front of the Town Hall. Remember the old farmer's saying, "As helpless as a hog on ice?" (From WESTFORD RECOLLECTIONS 1729-1979 by June W. Kennedy)

fat on. Later I nailed a box of it on the fence but as she rooted it off I had to feed what she wanted by hand. I also made a rubbing post of a stake with a burlap bag tied around it and saturating it with crude oil. This was to free her from possible lice and scurvy. She didn't drink much water and as she was under the orchard all summer she had plenty of shade.

"Mr. Trask came and saw me and my pig and Mr. Rice also came to talk with me about her.

"Occasionally I would drive her over to the town scales and note her gain in weight.

"In July I went to the Boys' and Girls' Club Camp at Massachusetts Agriculture College for a week as a reward for winning the 1918 pig championship of Middlesex County. Here I learned a good deal about pig judging and when I came home I found that my pig, with the exception of being a little too heavy in the shoulders, was perfect.

"In September she outgrew her 'packing box' house and so we combined two moveable pens into a large stationary one with a small colony chicken house for Soot to sleep in.

Chapter IV.

The Fairs

"The last of September Mr. Trask asked me if I would like to send Soot to the Eastern States Fair at Springfield. I really wanted to know what prize she would take so my answer was yes.

"I gave her a bath with warm water and soap. This she seemed to like on a hot day. After she was dry I then rubbed linseed oil on her to make her hair and skin soft. A crate was borrowed from a neighbor and then shipped her to Springfield in it.

"A girl from Waltham and I were on a pig demonstration team for Massachusetts. We received the first prize for the best demonstration at the fair. This made me near Queen Tadmuck and in the 4H club pageant held at the fair I decorated her with ribbon and drove her in it.

"At the Eastern States Fair my pig received fourth prize and she was the only Massachusetts

pig to win one of her class.

"In October I sent her to the Brockton Fair and here I received the second prize of six dollars.

"I now thought I had a real pig after winning these prizes and Mr. Rice said she was worth one hundred and fifty dollars and I think so myself because I wouldn't sell her for that.

"On November 30th I drove her on the town scales and she weighed 250 lbs. 'just before dinner.' This made a 202 lb. gain in six months and the cost of grain was \$27.55.

"Her heavy shoulders were not noticeable because the rest of her body had grown to fill out the unproportionable shoulders.

Chapter V.

The Conclusion

"I wish to state that Queen Tadmuck was entirely grain fed as you can readily see by the record.

"I always found that by moving the trough about the pen, especially when feeding garbage, the surroundings would be cleaner.

"A wealthy man living near me always raises two or more pigs each year for pork. They are fed on nice garbage from the house by the hired man and so they make a good gain. The food is fed in a trough nailed on the fence and when the hogs do not clean it up in the hot weather a terrible odor comes from that small filthy pen hardly ever moved. Nine times out of ten these are the kind of pens that are infected with hog cholera the death bearing disease of the swine.

"Inoculation or vaccination is the only way to prevent this disease and it is a good plan to take every possible step to protect these animals from it.

"I found that it took a good deal of time to care for my pig and although it was hard I feel that it paid me more than double not only taking profit in consideration, but the fun and knowledge gained.

Boost 4H Club Work

(This article is No. 46 in the continuing WESTFORD RECOLLECTIONS - 250th Anniversary Series.)