



"THE FORGES" OF CHILTONVILLE

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Pilgrim Society Notes, Series One, Number 26, 1978

EBEN JORDAN AND "THE FORGES"

The estate known as "the Forges" was first settled by Englishmen who had received land grants on which to raise food crops and graze their newly acquired cattle and sheep. As time went on, their descendants engaged in seafaring, farming, and manufacturing.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century a new occupation emerged, the erection of hotels and homes for a tremendous influx of vacationers. Nathaniel Hoxie and his son, also Nat, were sportsmen's guides. Their homes were open to professional people interested in hunting and fishing. Among their guests in the early 1890s were Eben Dyer Jordan, developer with Benjamin Marsh of the massive Jordan Marsh Company, with his son, Eben Dyer Jordan, Junior. Avid fishermen, the father and son were much attracted to the settlement.

Soon after the death of his father in 1895, Even Junior purchased the land called "the Forges," piece by piece.

He had been born in Boston in 1857, married May Sheppard of Philadelphia in 1883, and sired two children, Dorothy and Robert. As a young man he had resisted involvement in the store, but, after a few months at Harvard, followed by a vacation in California, he returned to the store and began his education for the business. He had a fine singing voice, but unable to take the time needed to sing professionally he turned to the sponsorship of music by securing the money to build Jordan Hall of the New England Conservatory in Boston.

He stocked the Eel River with trout for his family, guests, and the public. For a game preserve, he fenced sixty acres and stocked it with jackrabbits, English pheasants, and deer. On the estate he raised exotic and domestic birds and put them into the preserve.

In 1895, the hunting lodge was built at the top of the hill overlooking Forges Pond. Between the lodge and Sandwich Road he located the first stable. Later, in 1896, he completed a much larger stable, Tanbark Ring, with box stalls and exercising track. The best animals for breeding were imported from Europe. This blooded stock rivaled that of Senator Stanford of California and Thomas Lawson of Scituate.

His animals began to win ribbons in 1898, at shows in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Newport, and at the Brockton Fair. Two of his horses competed in England.

During his ownership of the estate he made many changes and improvements to the public roads of the region. In 1900, he offered to furnish the crushed stone necessary for hard-surfacing the road from Jabez Corner to his stock farm free of charge, with a gift of \$1,000 added to the town toward the building cost. It was not until late 1904 that the town hard-surfaced the heavily traveled road from Jabez Corner to the center of town. Jordan purchased a twelve-ton steam roller to smooth the roads around the estate, public as well as private.

He requested permission from the town fathers to close the ancient Bump's Rock and adjoining Mast Road, which passed through his property, connecting Sandwich Road to Long Pond Road. This old road passed along the edge of the pond, just below his lodge. In return, he offered to build a new, better road to Long Pond Road. Although there was some dissension among neighbors and others,

his offer was accepted, and he built the present Jordan Road and presented it to the town. In 1899, he invited the Selectmen and County Commissioners to inspect the wooden bridge over Shingle Brook to consider straightening, widening, and regrading the road, beginning at the bridge. Following the inspection, he invited the men to see his new coach, called Tally-Ho, and then provided them with a fine lunch. The Commissioners ruled that the wooden bridge was inadequate, and ordered a new stone arch bridge, English style, should be constructed, and the road rebuilt. In 1896, following a serious forest fire, Mr. Jordan ordered a new LaFrance engine, fully equipped for forest or building fire control. It would draw water from brooks or ponds - there were no water mains in the village. This private fire engine had its own company, trained and uniformed, mustering up to fifty men to fight a dangerous fire.

This engine and company were called to fires in all sections of the town to assist the Plymouth Fire Department. In January, 1904, they were informed of a bad fire in the Odd Fellows Block in Town Square. Breaking through five feet high drifts on Sandwich Road completely exhausted the lead horses. They rested at the Chiltonville Grammar School until two more animals could be brought from the stables. With the fresh horses leading, they struggled along as far as Jabez Corner, where they could proceed along the open streetcar tracks to town. Despite their heroic efforts, the building was a complete loss, and many lodges and businesses were burned out. (The CVS Pharmacy now occupies the corner where the building stood.)

During the same week the company fought a fire at the Boston Woven Hose and Rubber Company at Russell Mill Pond. The Old Stone Mill, a grist mill of ancient history, filled with supplies, was gutted. Each of the Jordan firefighters received a five dollar gold piece in appreciation of his work from the mill owner.

In 1899, noting the desperate need for a hospital to serve the town, Dr. E.D. Hill approached Eben Jordan to request a contribution to initiate a building fund drive. Jordan gave ten thousand dollars right away and later another contribution in the same amount. The directors chose to name the institution Jordan Hospital and included Mr. and Mrs. Jordan among the incorporators. Among his other gifts were thirty-five hundred dollars to Christ Church for rectory renovations and later ten thousand dollars for the church, which had conducted a mission church each Sunday evening at the Forges. The little church at Russell Mills received a Mason and Hamlin organ.

There may still be a few people who remember that when Mr. Jordan returned from Boston by train, he was met at the station by his Tally-Ho. The coachman drove the four horses from a high seat at the front; a footman stood on a step at the rear. Two Dalmatians ran along behind or rode inside. Upon coming abreast of the hospital, they sounded the huntsman's call, or Tally-Ho, to the delight of patients and nurses.

In 1904, Jordan moved the original stable standing below the house to the other side of Sandwich Road and planted flower gardens on the original stable grounds. That same year he constructed the cow barn, the main portion of which is still standing on Jordan Road. It housed forty cows, calves and heifers, and contained calving and bull pens, sand room, dairy, manure pit, and piggery. A silo, twenty-one feet in diameter, held silage.

To the villagers the most memorable events between 1898 and 1904 were the annual Christmas parties and field days. In 1898, Dorothy Jordan canvassed the neighborhood and listed those who would come. The Jordans sent carriages to pick up the guests and joined their houseguests in greeting the villagers. The crowd sang carols and attended a reception and a stereopticon show performed by a Boston entertainer. Then the Jordans distributed gifts, chosen by Mrs. Jordan and grander than the children could have wished for. During following years the parties were held at the Casino, built in 1900. The Jordans always greeted their guests, provided choir singing and usually a professional entertainment; then Santa distributed gifts. About 150 children and parents attended these parties.

The Jordans held a May Festival at the casino in 1901, with children from the town invited to participate. They also held Fourth of July Field Days, with all types of races, a hammer throw, and climbing a greased pole for the boys; and foot races and tug-of-war for the girls. All the neighborhood children took part, and Mrs. Jordan presented loving cups, engraved with the winners' names, date,

and event. In the afternoon the Forges team won a baseball game over Plymouth High School. In 1901, while the Jordans spent several months in Europe, workmen rebuilt the lodge and made it a portion of an English Tudor-style manor house. Massive stone piers supported three half-timbered stucco-faced gables at the front of the building. The rooms all had tall windows facing the forest at the north, the pond at the south, and at rivers and hills at the front. A porch enclosed the building, floored with red Welsh quarry tile and edged by a granite wall. Around the building were English formal gardens with box hedges, bordered by a granite retaining wall.

The great hall and principal dining room were paneled with black oak. The floors were highly polished oak. Beyond the dining room was a music room with off-white, soft-luster paneled walls. Between these two rooms were two lighted niches, each containing a brilliant stuffed peacock. Beyond the music room was a billiard room with fieldstone fireplace, the mantle sporting a collecting of stuffed small native animals. This English-type manor house was called Chilton Hall, and it contained twenty-three beautifully decorated bedrooms and thirteen baths.

the Casino was completed the same year. Queen Anne in style with multiple roof dormers, it contained a music hall seating four hundred persons. At the south end was a stage; at the north were altar and pulpit. During church services the chairs all faced the altar with the stage curtained; for entertainments the chairs were turned to the stage and the church area closed. Roof timbers and paneling were black, the walls dark red, and the ceiling cream. The building also housed a circulating library, reading room, and engine room for the steamer, with tackle for the horses suspended from the ceiling, to be dropped instantly upon the animals and buckled by the firemen for immediate takeoff. In June, 1904, Mr. Jordan's new French-built automobile arrived, dark green body and red interior, reportedly costing ten thousand dollars.

It had been suspected for some time that the Jordan family had become disenchanted with life on a stock farm, so Eben rented Inverary Castle in Scotland for the summer of 1905. Reports came to Plymouth that they were delighted with life in an authentic castle.

Mr. Jordan's purchase in 1906 of the old Hayden Mill, the Hayden houses and pond, and thirty-two acres of land was his last. Shortly thereafter he sold the game preserve and bird farm, covering sixty acres.

Things were beginning to run down at The Forges. Mr. Winterbottom, principal trainer of the show horses, left and took a similar position in new York. In March, 1907, Frederick Pabst, Jr., of Milwaukee, purchased the one hundred and twenty-one horses in the stables, the finest collection of their type of the country.

Beginning in June there were no church services in the Casino.

Eben Jordan was very ill. The land and all the buildings were put up for sale.

He did regain his health for a time, purchased another home at West Manchester, Massachusetts, on the North Shore, and brought with him many of his English employees, who had come to him in 1897 to work and manage the estate. Other employees found work on estates in Beverly, Hamilton, and nearby towns. He went back to his early interest in music, created the Boston Opera House, and paid the expenses of the Boston Opera Company until World War I caused its dissolution. He died in 1916.

Eben Jordan, Jr., was a man of many facets - an enigma - a man who loved music, but business gave him no time to sing; who built an English country estate in a Yankee village, but his family wanted the real thing. He left a legacy of the enjoyment of music to others, a thriving hospital, good roads, and a legend never to be forgotten.

SHERMAN WHIPPLE and "THE FORGES"

It was not until January, 1910, that "The Forges" formally changed ownership from the Jordans of Boston to Sherman Leland Whipple of Brookline. It had been on the market since 1907. Mr. Whipple and his family had examined the estate and had been delighted with the possibility that they might occupy it. He made an offer, the best that he could arrange, and shortly afterward took a trip to Europe. He notified Mr. Jordan of his sailing date and overseas itinerary, but while on shipboard on the way over he received a cable from Mr. Jordan stating that his offer was accepted. It noted,

however, that Tanbark Rink could not be included; it had been completely destroyed by fire. Mr. Whipple immediately cabled back that he was certainly interested in the purchase.

Sherman Whipple was born in New London, New Hampshire, the third son of Dr. Solomon Whipple and Henrietta Hersey Whipple. His father, a physician whose practice took him far out into the sparsely inhabited New Hampshire hills, was respected and needed, but paid, probably to a large extent, in produce from the farms. His son, Sherman, had prepared for college at the school that is now Colby Academy, and at the age of fifteen was ready for college. Preferring a large university, he sent to Harvard and Yale for catalogues. Yale provided one, but Harvard requested a fifty cent fee. Sherman went to Yale. He helped to pay for his college expenses by tutoring, and graduated with an excellent record in 1881. He taught school for a year, then went to Yale Law School for a year. He followed this routine until graduating with honors from Yale Law School in 1884.

After practicing law in Manchester, New Hampshire, for a short time, he went to Boston. There his first legal cases were personal injury cases, and it was not long before he became known as perhaps the best plaintiff's attorney in the city. He had a natural ability as a trial lawyer, was a fighter, always thoroughly prepared, and was not afraid to tackle anyone when he felt he was right. He worked for court reforms and wanted all facts essential to a case disclosed during a trial in order to insure a true verdict.

In 1893, he married Rebecca Louise Clough in Manchester, New Hampshire. They had three children, Dorothy, Katharyn, and Sherman II.

A well known neighborhood story relates that not long after the Whipples had moved onto the estate, the steamer was called out to help battle a fire in the center of Plymouth. A man could handle the horses, but apparently no one could operate the engine. Sherman II, a twelve year old, small for his age, said, "I can," and could. He had spent much of that summer figuring out its operation. After the fire was extinguished, the Fire Chief asked, "Who is in charge of this vehicle?" and the youngster answered, "I am!"

When Dorothy was about sixteen she started her "Wild Birds School," for girls from a settlement house in Brookline. She taught them to ride and swim, she took them on picnics, and she taught them to recognize wild birds and flowers. They lived in one of the houses with a housekeeper who looked after them, but each girl had to care for her own clothing, keep her own bed made and place her part of the room in order.

Both Whipple girls were married at the Casino at high noon. After each ceremony there was a reception followed by a wedding breakfast at Chilton Hall. Some neighbors, invited to Kathryn's marriage to Lothrop Withington and the following reception and wedding breakfast, had not answered, so Mr. Whipple dropped in to ask if they had received the invitation. The lady of the house allowed that she had, but they could not go. She explained that she and her husband got up at six o'clock, and could never wait that long before having breakfast. The same lady had married in the harvest season and went to Niagara Falls alone, since her new husband could not leave the ripening vegetables.

In September, 1914, cattle were taken from "the Forges" to the Brockton Fair in two express cars over the Plymouth and Brockton Street Railway. This was the first time animals had ever been shipped in box cars over a street railway.

The registered Guernsey cattle were Mr. Whipple's hobby. It was said that when he came home from his work in Boston, he went first to the barn to look at the cattle, then to check his peach trees, afterward to see his family. These cattle were all registered with the Guernsey Club in Peterborough, New Hampshire, and as each new calf was born, Mary Hoxie sketched its picture showing its exact markings and any other description needed for registration. These cattle consistently won blue ribbons at cattle shows, due in large measure to the care they received from Mr. Thomas Prentice and his workers.

The horses were a different story, however. No animal from his property could be sold in its old age - each was kept for as long as it was comfortable, and when the end was inevitable, humanely put to sleep and buried in a special place in the woods.

Because of this practice, ladies who had horses getting along in years would present them to Mr.

Whipple, knowing they would graze in the fine fields for the time left to them. Some of them had colts. A family friend once remarked, "And such a motley lot they were!" Eunice, the proud grey mare who was ridden by Mr. Whipple as Chief Marshal of the Tercentenary Parade in 1920, sometimes could not remember whether she should singlefoot or high step. Her father was a show trotter, but her mother was a tiny mare of gentle nature but dubious beauty, once called "the mildewed plug" by someone who did not appreciate her attributes.

In the early years at the farm Mrs. Whipple cultivated flowers and restored the gardens, planting spring bulbs in the woods and along the pond shore. She took great pleasure in furnishing the house with articles purchased during trips to Europe. One of her most famous purchases was a carved Russian sleigh, which inspired much awe in her visitors and friends.

One summer she planted water lilies, pink, yellow, and white, at the westerly end of Forges Pond. She had mentioned wanting to plant lotus tubers, but no one knows whether she did or not. Her water lilies bloomed for several years, and then they bloomed no more, until the summer of 1976, at considerable distance from the place where water lilies had been planted, appeared tall beautiful lotus pads and blossoms. They have bloomed in Howland's Pond each summer since. Mrs. Whipple died in 1914, and her husband spent as much time as he could with his children, walking, riding, or fishing.

When the grandchildren appeared, they spent much time at Chilton Hall, playing hide and seek in the many rooms. They rode horses through the woods as their parents and grandparents had, and swam in the pond with neighbor children.

Sherman L. Whipple died on October 20, 1930, without a day's illness. He had spent that Sunday fishing. Memorial services were held at Trinity Church in Boston, with his children and grandchildren all seated together at the front of the church. Friends from all walks of life were present.

Because of his death, the Depression, and difficult times for large landowners, the family reluctantly decided that "The Forges" should be sold. However, the same conditions made the sale of large properties unlikely. It was reported that Charles A. Lindbergh had considered it as a retreat after the kidnapping and death of his eldest child, but the sale never materialized. Years later the family was faced with problems of weakened supporting timbers, floors, and the possibility of fire or injury to possible trespassers at Chilton Hall, so the building was demolished. At the present time the children and many of the grandchildren continue to live in houses on "The Forges" land, seventy years after the original purchase by Mr. Whipple.

The Guernsey herd has gone; the outbuildings of the great barn have disappeared as have the Casino, the greenhouses, and the stables. But beefalo graze the fields, horses are still trained and graze, and hay and corn are harvested. Swans float on the ponds and streams and there is still some of the serenity that first attracted Eben Jordan and later Sherman Whipple to the woods and fields of Eel River Valley.

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Edited by Laurence R. Pizer, Jeanne M. Mills