

A Green's Farms Man

By Mary Maynard, a Greens Farms resident

There is an apocryphal story told about the definitive Green's Farms citizen, Alan Parsell. He was born on Maple Lane in 1902, beginning his life in a farming town and ending it 91 years later in a different world.

He never stopping working for his living and for his town; he was a Justice of the Peace at the age of 22. He was elected to the Board of Education in 1953, where he was important in choosing land for many of our schools. He served on the RTM for twenty-two years. Other committees and advisory boards are too many to mention.

The story is – and I can't quite believe it – that he stood one evening, perhaps in the '50s, before the RTM members, many of whom were new residents in the growing town, paused and asked, "Who are you? Where did you come from?"

Given that one of his jobs as a little child was collecting coal from the railroad tracks to help heat his home and that he said he was on his own at the age of nine when he worked in a livery stable on Colonial Road for ten cents an hour, it seems a fair question. He farmed shares (New England phrase for sharecropping) in Greens Farms and stopped going to Staples because he felt he was on his way. Later he went to the Agricultural School to learn landscaping and plant husbandry.

The 1934 aerial photo shows the town as it was when Alan Parsell was a young man. This part of Connecticut was the main onion-producing area in the United States because onions grow easily in rocky soil. Many barrels were shipped on schooners from Southport to New York, and if you look in seed catalogs today you'll see the Southport Onion still being offered.

He married Evelene Couch, whom he met on their first day of school in the little schoolhouse on Clapboard Hill Road. He walked her to school every day – even to Staples, which was then across the Saugatuck River. Evelene's family was among



What you are looking at: Greens Farms Elementary School is in the upper right corner. At the upper left, Hillspoint Road meets the Post Road (Sakura would be there today.) Greens Farms Road is met with Center Street and Prospect Road at the bottom of the photo.

the early settlers of Green's Farms and had held a grant of land that ran from the Sound to Redding, a distance of twelve miles! They married in Green's Farms Church.

His voice is recorded on four wonderful tapes in the Archive of the Westport Historical Society. His deep knowledge of Green's Farms gives a history of each piece of land he passes on a ride through his neighborhood. His high-pitched, Yankee voice points out that "from that stone wall, over about to the dogwood was where was where the Bulkley barn stood. Frank Bulkley was the ice man and cut ice 12 inches thick

to send as far away as Bermuda!" (Beginning the 19th of February, 1934, it was between 12 and 20 degrees below zero from Monday to Wednesday, he tells us.) "Ovah there was the cranberry bog on Greens Farms Road."

The farmers all used oxen – it's a yoke of oxen and a team of horses, he said and he pointed out that every house had a barn. Today, as I drive around, I see that it's true: the barns are there!

In 1937, he began his landscaping and flower business on the Post Road at Morningside in Greens Farms because farming land had been worn out by greedy onions and land prices were climbing too high for farming.

Parsell's was a successful business, too. His father said that "If the mare will trot, the colt will follow," and his son, Alan, proved him right.

Alan Parsell was our last Yankee.



Do you have a story to tell? We want to hear them! Please send to Julaine.Davis@npub.com