

## Then & Now - Princeton News Tidbits #3

### April 2024

Two years ago, we shared sharing historical Tidbits and short "Stories" (oral history). We hope you enjoy this year's edition:

- The photo on the front is a lookout tower built on the common in the center of Princeton during World War II. Because of Princeton's elevation, it was used to watch for a potential air strike from our enemies. The tower was demolished soon after the war. This picture was taken and donated by Mary Gregory, the Town Clerk at that time.

### **Not a Can of milk – Princeton Farmers Will Not Sell Except at Their Price**

- **April 29** - Farmers in Princeton are preparing for the struggle with the milk contractors, which begins May 1. The same mind seems to be present everywhere among the producers. All agree that they will keep their milk from the contractors until their demands are met.
- Charles H. Thompson (207 Thompson Rd.), one of the largest producers in Princeton, said today, "I attended the meeting in Boston and never have I seen such enthusiasm at a producers' meeting in former years as was shown yesterday. Every man seemed determined to stand by his fellow producer and fight for his just rights. The producers are better organized this year than ever before. At the meeting were delegates from Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, Connecticut and York states, and in all they represented 80 per cent of the Boston supply of milk. They are firm in their stand to withhold every can of milk until their demands are granted. I shall send no milk after tomorrow. It will mean quite a loss to me, but the time has come when we have got to fight for a fair price to pay us for the cost of production. I have today bought a separator and with my neighboring farmers will begin Sunday to separate the milk. The cream we will ship to Worcester and the skim milk we will dispose of as best we can. I don't believe there will be a can sent from Princeton depot, Sunday morning, where now there are 200 sent daily."
- William S. Brooks (50 Worcester Rd.), another large producer in Princeton, who also attended the Boston meeting, said today: "Today we received circulars from the Boston Dairy Co., urging us to go slow in the matter of making a decision regarding what we shall do with our milk after April 30. He says he can get milk enough and urges caution on the farmers' part. Today, we received only part of our usual allotment of cans. I can't say just what the shortage means. I feel confident that we will stand firm to the end, this year and being bettered organized, we shall win. I have made arrangement with A.B. Wetherbee to take

my milk and separate it. The cream I shall send to Worcester and Mr. Wetherbee will retain the skim milk. I shall go to Worcester tomorrow to make final arrangements regarding cans, etc. My team will go to Princeton Depot Sunday, but not a can of milk will I send the contractors unless our demands are met. I dislike the idea of a strike, but the present agitation is pretty serious business and means the success or failure of the farm as a milk producing proposition, and I believe the farmer is justified in making a decided stand."

- **April 30.** - No cans were thrown off the milk car this morning and on the afternoon train, on which the cans usually are brought there was the same story to tell: Not a can.
- The agent in charge of the car, this morning, attempted to persuade the farmers to agree to send milk after today, but there was not much encouragement given him as all the men said: "No, not until you buy our milk at our price."
- The men are all making preparations for the struggle and are endeavoring to make arrangements whereby they can dispose of their milk without being forced to sacrifice too much. C.H. Thompson and William S. Brooks have arranged for their product to be separated into cream. Today, Herbert P. Houghton (65 Houghton Rd.) and John Chandler, representing 75 cans, made temporary arrangement with A.B. Wetherbee who is to take the milk and separate it for these men.
- Mr. Houghton said: "Mr. Wetherbee will take care of Chandler's and my milk for a few days until our separator arrives. We will have a machine large enough to separate more milk than we both produce, so that we shall be in a position to help out our neighbors if they wish it. The men must stand firm in this struggle and I believe there is more strength in the producers' camp today than ever before."
- H.P. Houghton, John Chandler and Harry Gleason (72 Gleason Rd.) ship their milk to Alden Bros. from Sterling Junction. H.R. Hastings, Q.E. Pratt, and David Gilway ship to D. Whiting & Sons from Quinapoxet. W.H. Bryant, A.F. Way, S.F. Gleason, Roger Gleason and Fred P. Hall ship to the Worcester Dairy Co.
- To the Boston Dairy Co. from Princeton depot: Warren Clark 10 cans, Moses C. Goodnow 23, W. S. Brooks 40, C. H. Thompson 45, J. C. Harrington 6, Alfred Olsen 4, John Simontis 5, Joseph Ustanet 3, Nels Nelson 4, A.T. Grow 2, H.C. Richardson 2, Leslie Clark 7, J.E. Bigelow 2. Total cans 205.

- The milk from the farms of H.C. Delano, J.E. Merriam, F.A. Skinner, C.H.R. Rugg, C.H. Hobbs, Myron B. Beaman is sold in Fitchburg. Only the milk sent to Boston will be withheld tomorrow.

**May 1** - Princeton farmers stood as one man today, and refused to send their milk to Boston.

- From Princeton Depot, where usually 205 cans are sent to the Boston Dairy Co., not a can was sent this morning.
- From Quinapoxet, where 75 cans of Princeton milk is shipped to D. Whitney & Sons, not a can was sent today.
- John Chandler, H.P. Houghton and Harry Gleason, who together produce 100 cans and ship to Alden Bros. from Sterling Junction, today held back every can.
- The men seemed firm in their determination to held back the milk until what they claim a fair price is received.
- At Princeton depot this morning, when the train drew up there was not a can awaiting to be put in the milk car. The agent in charge smiled and attempted to impress the men with the fact that he had lots of milk on board, but a glance into the car showed up many empty shelves. Many of the farmers are anxious for their pay from the contractors for the milk shipped in March and April, and the agent was asked if he had their checks, but they were told "not today, perhaps tomorrow."
- Instead of going to the station with their wagons filled with cans of milk this morning, many producers were present just to see what was going on. The men who had arranged to have their milk separated were on hand with cans filled with cream consigned to the Worcester Dairy Co. This company received over 150 quarts of cream from Princeton today.
- Justin M. Clark, who formerly sent 25 cans of milk to Boston, said today: "I have been working the separator last night and this morning for milk brought to me from the farms of M.C. Goodnow, Monton Gates and C. H. Thompson, and everything works all right. Tomorrow morning, I think there will be fewer cans of milk in the milk car than there were today."
- A. B. Wetherbee began today to separate the milk which was brought to him from the herds of Herbert P. Houghton, John Chandler and William S. Brooks. There is a

possibility that the stream separator belonging to John B. Marcou will be brought into service, if there is enough milk to be separated.

- Herbert R. Hastings, who with I.E. Pratt and David Gilway, ship to W. Whitney & Son from Quinapoxet, said that he had set up a separator in his house, and in this way was taking care of his milk and also the milk from I.E. Pratts's farm. Never before have the Princeton farmers been so well prepared to fight the contractors as now, and never before have they hung together as in this struggle.
- **June 6.** - Some of Princeton's farmers are getting tired of the milk situation and are disposing of their product. William S. Brooks, the largest single producer, began yesterday to ship his milk to Worcester. Mr. Brooks is making 43 cans of milk a day and expects to raise the amount to 50. His head is one of the best in town and at present comprises 65 head of cattle.
- Mr. Brooks said today: "I began sending milk to Worcester yesterday morning and have made a better price than I could with the Boston contractors."
- **Strike Ends – July 1<sup>st</sup>** – After getting paid, Princeton Dairy Farmers resume shipping milk to Boston .

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### **Malcolm Chase Give the City Slicker the "Run Around"**

From 1947 to 1967 Malcolm Chase ran the store groceries, with two gas pumps, the Post Office, and coffee shop. He was a tall spare man with big ears and a dry wit. Perfect for a small New England town. A bunch of us were sitting in front of his store one fine day when a large black car with New York plates pull up. Out stepped a man dressed in a business suit and smoking a large cigar. He looked at Malcolm: "Hey Pop! You got a phone in this town??" Nobody ever called Malcolm "Pop" and got away with it! Malcolm smiled and leaned forward a bit. "Well, I'll tell ya", he said. "You go up the hill past the white church. Go all the way to the top. About a quarter of a mile on the left, you'll come to a road. That's Allen Hill Road. You take a left and go to the next intersection. There you take another left. Keep going and pretty soon you'll come to a grassy area on your left and a bunch of white houses. Keep going around to the left and through the next intersection. You'll see a phone booth on the right."

The man said "Thanks Pop!" and off he went. About ten minutes later, here comes the black car. Malcolm, of course had sent him around in a circle. The man drove through the intersection. Never noticing us, and pulled up to the phone booth.

As he got out Malcolm leaned forward again: "Well sonny, I see you found the telephone!!" The man spun around, looked at us and then at the phone, climbed in his car, and drove away with a spray of gravel. I laughed so hard my sides hurt for a week.

Nobody ever called Malcolm "Pop".

*By former resident and teacher Phil Rand*

**If you have a funny/unique story about Princeton, please email us at:  
[princetonmahistory@gmail.com](mailto:princetonmahistory@gmail.com)**