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FARMINGTON NEWS
Out Of The Past

July 12, 1929



Supt. Chester W. Doe Moved To Northwood With Family

Mr. and Mrs. Chester W. Doe and family are moving to Northwood where Mr. Doe will be in closer touch with his duties as superintendent of schools of Union No. 17. The change of residence is necessitated by transfer of Farmington schools to another union of the state, and the loss of Mr. Doe's capable service in local school administration is felt with a universal sentiment of regret. He has given a year of most satisfactory management and not only in the schools has his influence of intelligence, character and diligent application to his work been felt but in the church work and affairs of community he has proven a loyal patriot. Mr. Doe always receives the assistance of a remarkable family. Mrs. Doe is a fine soloist and chorister and the Doe children are especially talented, so the removal of this family is a real loss to Farmington. Although Mr. Doe is not going into a new field of labor, having pursued the administration work of Union 17 for a year, his recognized ability among the superintendents of the state will be sure to further his progress in the profession. Not only is he an educator of promising career, but he is an ordained clergyman of high standing, and a teacher of theology and educational text. He knows the problems of these professions from adult experience and applies his knowledge with vision and liberal understanding. It is sincerely hoped the associations of the Doe family often may be renewed with the friendship of this community.

"Uncle Sam" Comes Home

by Niki Pzonosky
FARMINGTON - Joseph Judd and A.J. Cameron, both lifelong residents of Farmington, have brought "Uncle Sam" back to town after being away nearly 25 years. Stated Judd "I've always thought 'Uncle Sam' should be back home where 'he' belongs." "Uncle Sam" is "thought to be the longest bobsled in the country, if not in the world, in the early 1900's." According to the March 27, 1969 issue of FOSTER'S DAILY DEMOCRAT The quadruple runner sled was built in Farmington about 1890, though no definite date has been established. It was designed and owned by the late Hervey Pearl, of Farmington.

Pearl contracted B.F. Perkins to do the actual building of the huge sled. It is said to have taken over 2 1/2 years to complete the 1,600 lb 90 ft. "Uncle Sam." Sitting comfortably at least 75 adults and said to have carried as many as 108 children and adults at one time, the sled, when loaded, weighs in excess of 6 1/2 tons. The sled was originally painted with a red, white and blue design.

Four sled segments were connected in "train" fashion.

However, this proved too much for even the rugged 6'2", 250 lb

Pearl, of whom some had called the strongest man in the state and after deciding the 4 section

sled was unsafe, Pearl removed the fourth section. The section removed later became the "Nebraska".

Pearl was the only man ever to steer the huge sled, with the possible exception of Harold (Strip) Pearl on at least one occasion while Hervey his father, was away.

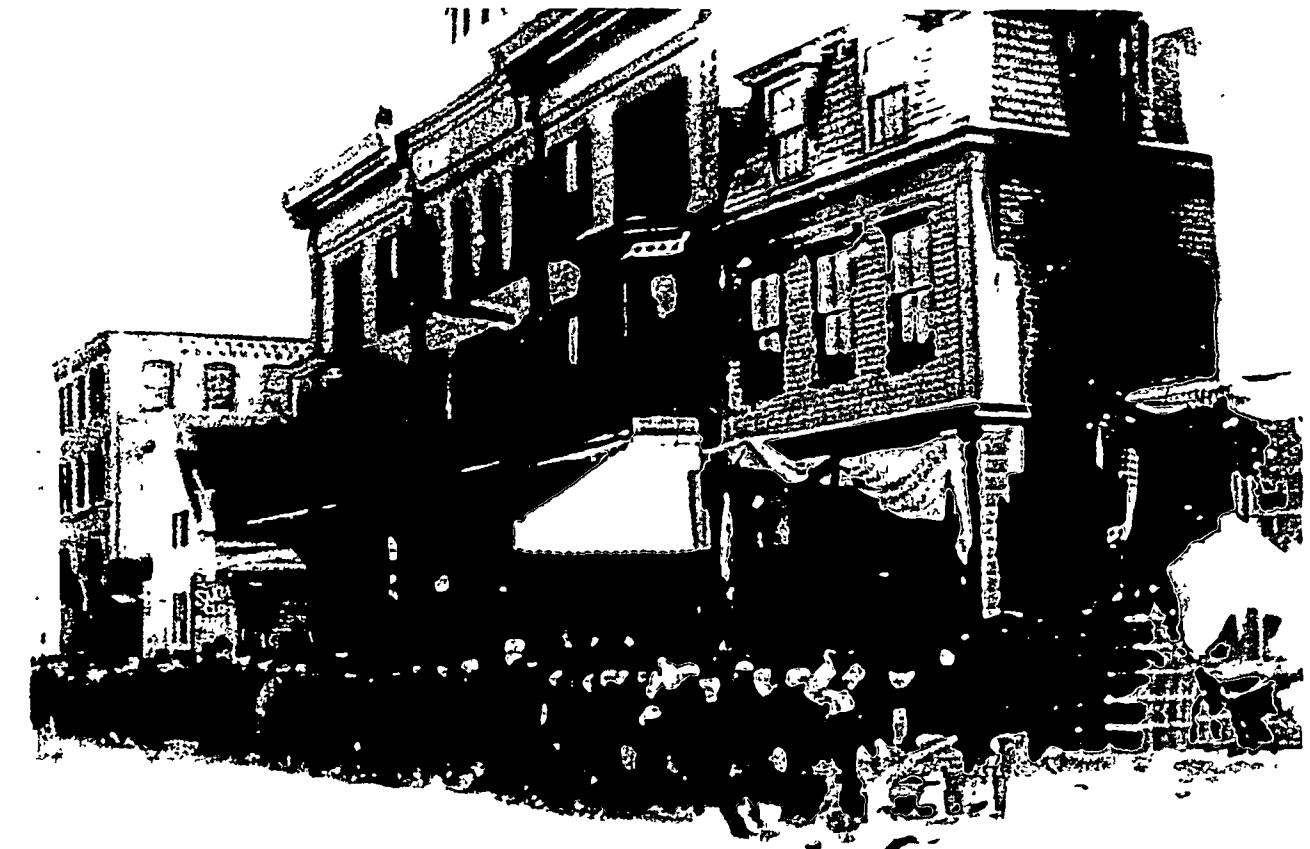
The "run" would start by a horse towing the sled to the top of Main St. hill. Their route followed Main St. 3/4 mile to end at Peavey Hill on South Main St. The side roads had been posted with guards to block off traffic and as the loaded sled roared down the hill with steel runners clattering over icy roads it sounded deceptively like a freight train. The sled reached speeds in excess of 60 mph and quite possibly reached as fast as 80 mph before stopping at Peavey Hill.

The sled was constructed with two brakes, one placed about 8 ft from the front of the first section the other was at the end of the last section. The rear brake required two men to operate it. The front brake needed only one man. To steer the sled Pearl would lie down and have two men sit on his legs to secure him and holding the front runners with his hands would guide the huge sled down the hill. For nearly 40 years the people of Farmington were thrilled by the 3/4 mile run through town on self-declared "holidays" when snow conditions permitted. The last run probably occurred in the late 20's or early 30's after which Pearl stored the sled for the next 20 years.

Joe Judd, a resident of Farmington was one of the early riders on "Uncle Sam." Judd worked for Pearl at one time and since then was an employee of the Navy yard for 19 1/2 years until his retirement in 1965. He has held an avid interest in the 90 ft sled through the years since it was last used. In the 1950's Judd made an offer to Pearl for the sled which Pearl "turned down for half that amount" stated Judd, and he continued "Pearl preferred to sell to a man from Cornish, Maine to get the sled out of town." Pearl was convinced that the ordinary man could not control the sled. He did not want the people of Farmington to use the sled for fear that someone would be hurt.

In the entire history of "Uncle Sam" only two accidents had occurred. One occurred when a spooked horse jumped into the sled, and once when the run started too far up the hill and failed to negotiate a curve. "Uncle Sam" was sold to the man from Cornish and apparently stored until his death when the sled was turned over to a bank to settle the estate. Then Mrs. Gilbert Knight of Naples, Maine brought the sled from the bank and took "Uncle Sam" to Sebago Lake to be pulled by a truck across the frozen lake occasionally for the amusement of the lake residents. "Uncle Sam" was changed to "Miss Sebago" and later to "Miss Maine" which is the name on the sled at this time.

In April of this year Joe Judd and A.J. Cameron of A.J. Cameron and Sons in Farmington went to Limerick



YEARS AGO-"Uncle Sam" in front of the Richards block on Main Street with the horse that used to tow the sled up the hill (photo courtesy of Paul Place)

Maine on business. Judd who had followed the sales of Uncle Sam knew that the owner Mrs. Knight lived in Naples. The two men decided to go see the sled out of curiosity. While there Judd and Cameron made an offer for "Uncle Sam." Mrs. Knight almost accepted right then commented Judd but she decided instead to think it over. The sled had been stored for the past few years in a barn. Kept dry and in good condition until this year when they decided to move the sled down behind the house, stated Judd who was anxious to get it back under cover. He called her back after two weeks to negotiate the price. She accepted the new offer so Judd and Cameron made plans to bring the sled back to Farmington the first week in June.

Transporting the 90 ft sled even when broken down to the 3 sections presented several problems. Cameron had volunteered the use of his 40 ft truck but to find the time when the truck was not in use at the Cameron's sod business proved delaying. Finally definite plans were made and kept for Sunday, July 1. With Bill Cameron of Farmington son of A.J. Cameron driving the truck and 10 men to assist in loading the sled they succeeded in bringing "Miss Maine" back to Farmington hopefully to become "Uncle Sam" once more.

Judd and Cameron are storing the sled at the A.J. Cameron and Sons' buildings just off of Rt. 11. These buildings were originally owned by B.F. Perkins and are in fact the same buildings where "Uncle Sam" got his start more than 80 years ago. Judd commented that "Uncle Sam" is finally home.

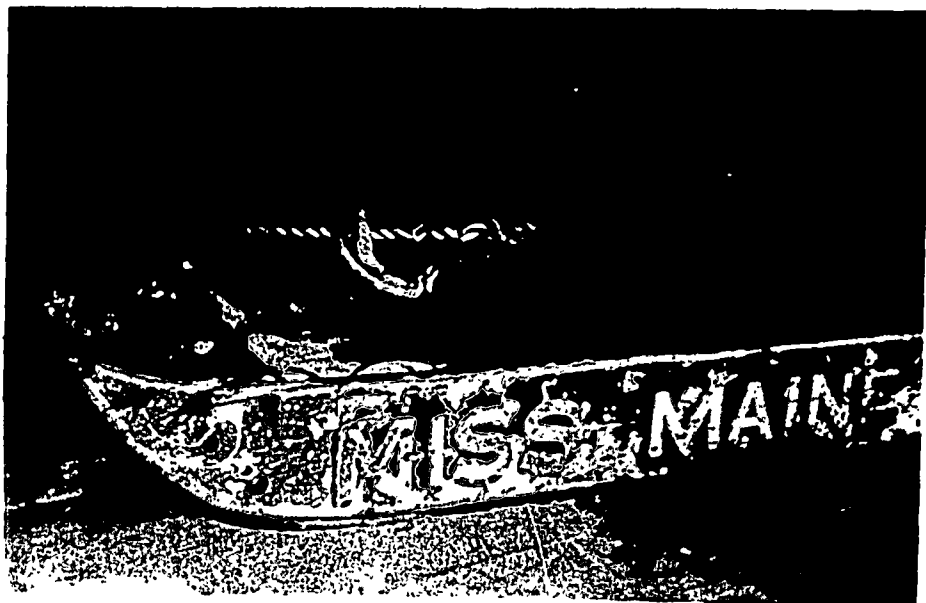
When asked what plans he and Cameron had for "Uncle Sam" in the near future Judd replied "We plan to restore it. I would

say it (Uncle Sam) is in great condition for being as old as it is." Judd continued "We might put it on exhibition or maybe if the weather conditions are right we'll take it for another run." Judd added that they will paint Uncle Sam's three sections one red, one white and one blue. Some of the older citizens in town would certainly remember Uncle Sam like Andrew Foss on Main St. He watched them building the sled and Arthur N. Berry took pictures of it, offered Judd.

William Card a resident of Farmington for 75 years has lived for the last 49 years at 118 Central St. Card now retired worked for the Public Service Co. for nearly 40 years from 1920 to 1960. "I've seen the thing (Uncle Sam) go clear to Peavey Hill tho I never rode on it," remembered Card. "My folks weren't too thrilled at the thought of me riding the sled and I wasn't too enthusiastic about it either," he added. When asked what he thought about the possibility of Uncle Sam running again Card replied "The cars are too numerous now."

Florence Pike wife of Harry Pike of Spring St. Farmington whose home was recently damaged by fire remembers being in the selectman's office about 40 years ago when Uncle Sam was being taken for what was probably its last run. Florence continued "That day my son (who is now 4") and I were looking out the window to watch Uncle Sam go by."

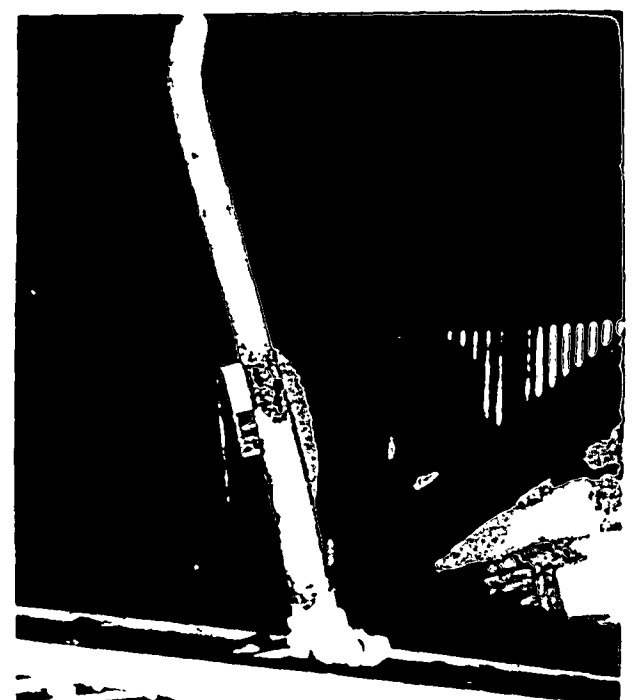
"Certainly there are many more in town that either rode or watched Uncle Sam" and will be glad to know that he has come home to Farmington after nearly 25 years. With nostalgia of 50 years ago some perhaps will wonder if "Uncle Sam" will make at least one more run to share with their children and grandchildren the thrill they knew so long ago.



MISS MAINE-The front runners of the first section of "Miss Maine" alias "Uncle Sam" before Judd and Cameron have started to restore the sled (photo by Bill McClintock)



TRANSPORTED HOME-The three disassembled sections of "Uncle Sam" still on the flatbed truck on which Judd and Cameron brought the sled 'home' (photo by Bill McClintock)



FRONT BRAKE-This is the front brake on the 90 ft sled "Uncle Sam". It took one man to operate it (photo by Bill McClintock)

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