

DOLLY COLE'S HILL

By Mrs. Clara E. Clemence

Dolly Cole's Hill is not to be fooled with, as one hunter, who did not give his name, can testify. "Mr. Hunter" started down the hill which bears the name of an old lady who once lived at its foot.

Dolly Cole's house was a gambrel roofed structure which, in its old age, leaned toward the east. The big city of this state is in that direction. People, as well as houses, leaned, in those days, toward the big city.

The hill was a hill in Dolly Cole's day. A mile in length to Chopmist. It was steep and not extremely smooth. She would not recognize it, if she were taken over it today. The bridge at its foot was little above the brook which bubbled under it. An approach by the side of the bridge was made easy for horses to obtain a refreshing drink. My Grandmother, Amey Ann Place, remembered riding on the pommel of her mother's side saddle. Grandmother cried because she was afraid the horse would step on the minnows she saw in the brook.

The present bridge is much higher than the old structure and there is no provision made for horses to refresh themselves in Dolly Cole brook. The sunken orchard on the north was once on a level with the road and there was no cut at the top.

The four fresh horses, on the stage coaches, dragged their huge yellow chariots up the steep incline, never thinking that man could reduce the mountain. Horses were changed, in those pre-railroad days, at Hopkins Mills. How I wish that easy, graded roads had come in before horses went out. The cars, for which we have built them, are insensible to fatigue.

Years ago, a farmer started up this hill with his faithful mare on his way to Providence with a load of produce. I will tell the rest in his own words: "Got to Dolly Cole Hill, the old mare we-wared, flip-flopped, laid down and died." That was a tragedy.

Dolly Cole, who lived at the foot of the hill, was not a spinster but a widow since 1818 when her husband, Hugh Cole, died leaving his wife with a family of three children. For forty-four years she remained a widow. That is the reason we never heard of her husband, but of Dolly. When she had rounded out a life of more than four-score years and ten, Dorothy Cole went to her reward. Her body rests in Hopkins Mills Cemetery a short distance from her home. Her husband had been a Colonel in the War of 1812. Colonel Hugh Cole lived to return to his native town. But privations of the war had impaired his health. Hugh Cole and Dorothy Cole lie side by side.

In the days when Dolly lived at the foot of the hill there was one stage coach a day from Danielsonville to Providence and one from Providence to Danielsonville. Dolly Cole's Hill was famous as long ago as that. The drivers had it on their minds and there was a great cracking of whips on the up-grade

and a furious clattering of wheels on the down.

Drivers were exposed to all conditions of the weather as they were seated upon the top of those stages. One bitter cold day, the well-trained horses halted, as was their wont, at the Ansil Barr Wayside Inn on Chopmist. The driver did not dismount. He still held the reins, but he was frozen at his post.

At what is now West End Garage, there was a toll gate. The basement door that you will notice near the road opened to the room where the toll-gate keeper sat as he waited for horse-drawn vehicles, whose drivers must pay four pence. In this way the road was maintained. When one got into Scituate, on this pike, there was a road around a toll gate. This road is still called Shun-pike.

A house on the site of Dolly Cole's is large and ornate, compared with her own. A part of the original Dolly Cole house is contained in this dwelling. The house is owned by Mr. and Mrs. Harry Catuna. It is still taxed as the Dolly Cole Homestead.

Every house on the hill didn't boast a clock in the olden days. People knew the time of the day by the noon mark on the south sill by the stage coach. An uncle of mine, as a little boy, was riding over this road with his big brother one day, on their way from South Killingly, Connecticut, to Providence. They stopped at a house on Dolly Cole Hill to inquire the time of day. A woman came to the door and in answer to the boy's inquiry said, "We ain't got no clock in the house. We know when to get up and when to go to bed, but the devil of it is to tell the time of day between sunrise and sunset."

The Yankees wouldn't pay the tax England levied on brass. They whittled out wooden works for clocks in winter, made beautiful hand-carved cases and, when the weather was good, peddled those clocks.

Perhaps these people my uncle questioned had heard of a family in a near-by town who bought a clock of a travelling agent. It was a grand-father clock that was "Taller, by far, than the old man himself." By day its voice was lot and light, but in the silent "Dead of night" it disturbed the rest of the man of the house. He had retired early and was just in his first doze when the new machine boomed nine. At ten it awoke him again and at eleven his slumber was disturbed for the third time. He was so "mad he didn't fall asleep readily. At twelve the new clock slowly began to mark the "dread hour of midnight." That was too much for Mr. Man. He jumped out of bed, and, dashing to the foot of the chamber stairs, called to his grownup son in tones distinctly audible above the striking of the clock: "John, come down, and help put this go-devil out of the house." This they did, with more speed than caution, and were content after that to tell time by the sun dial.

But I have wandered far away from the hunter who started down Dolly Cole Hill Friday, December 7, 1917 with his faithful dog in his automobile with him. Perhaps he didn't observe the tactics of John Richards and Bill Stone

and other drivers of stage coaches who dashed down the hill. Perhaps he too faithfully observed those tactics. Safe to say he was coming down the hill at an unsafe speed. Trouble is there was, in those days, an unlucky curve on that hill. More than one man had come to grief on that run. This man saw his steed was out of control and threw his dog to safety, after which he saved himself by jumping, and let his modern go-devil go where it would. The last we heard of him, he was hunting a garage. Other game escaped his attention that day. He was a hero, whoever he was. He saved his dog first,