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July 2023

Edward Sullivan, correspondence with Edward D. "Sandy" Ives

Edward C. Sullivan

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1107002

421 Cherry Road,
Syracuse, N. Y. - 13219
October 18, 1975.

MR. EDWARD IVES,
Veazie, Maine - 04401

Dear Mr. Ives:-

It is with great regret that for reasons of health I was not able to come to Bangor for my high school class reunion. Therefore, I will not be able to see you.

I have been thinking about the Top Campbell you mentioned. It could be that he was a connection of Sara Campbell, wife of John O'Brien. They lived on the corner of School Street and the main road on the corner opposite the Reed Smith house and property. Perhaps if any of the O'Briens are left in Veazie they might know of Top.

There was a Campbell family who lived on School Street. I believe Mr. Campbell's name was John. The Campbells at one time lived on the east side of Thompson Road and about a quarter of a mile south of School Street. Their house burned. I was quite young at the time.

You may know that John O'Brien was a very well-known dam builder. He was in charge of building the coffer dams when the present Veazie dam was built around 1910. I remember him well for he was always willing to talk with a boy and answer questions. John O'Brien did the coffer dam work on a dam at Three Rivers, Canada. He said there was not a man on the job who could speak or understand English. John said he never worked so hard in his life. I know he was as thin as a rail, when he got back to Veazie.

What comments could you make about the "Rescue of Shep"? A friend of mine, who is the Outdoor Sports Editor for the Syracuse Herald Journal, told me I should get more detail worked into the story. Pages in books and magazines have been talking to me for many years. I would like to talk to these pages for a change.

Best regards.

Sincerely,



(Edward C. Sullivan)

Three Rivers, Canada
Syracuse, N.Y.
Veazie
Bangor

1107003

421 Cherry Road,
Syracuse, New York - 13219
September 12, 1975.

MR. EDWARD IVES,
Stevens Hall, South,
Orono, Maine - 04473

Dear Mr. Ives:-

I was very pleased to get your letter of September 8th. You have my sympathy in the death of your sister. My grandfather Sullivan, who lost his left arm in the old Veazie sawmill, used to quote an old saying: The old must go and the young may go.

The name "Sandy Plains" is new to me, although I know where it must be. You are most fortunate to share the house of Addie Weed. I remember her but can not say that I knew her. She organized the Campfire Girls and was active in civic affairs. A fine and highly respected lady. She must be very old. I did know here brother Alva, and the garage and sales of Haynes and Oakland autos. My cousin John worked at Weed's at one time. Alva Weed made what was the first, or among the first, of what is known as the "snowmobile". His machine was powered by one of his automobile engines. The thrust came from a propeller. At the time there was a write-up and pictures in the local paper.

As to Dingbat Prouty, he was killed while working on the new Veazie dam in perhaps 1910. I remember four men carrying a body wrapped in a blanket on a sort of stretcher. We asked who it was and the men replied "It is Dingbat Prouty. A bucket of rocks dumped on him". They left the body and after a while a horse-drawn wagon with a black boxlike body came and took Dingbat away. Dingbat must have been quite an old man at that time. He was a cocky little guy and quite talkative. Before his death he gave me a lot of information about river driving. He spoke many times about my mother's uncle, Tobias Johnston. Several old-timers have talked of Tobias as a fiddler and a singer. They said he could "make the welkin ring" with his singing.

Top Campbell I did not ever hear about. If my father, Michael Sullivan, were alive, he would have known

*Veazie
Orono
Syracuse, N.Y.*

Top Campbell.

Perhaps the Sullivan boys you refer to were my father and his brother, George Sullivan. I knew many drivers who knew my father, but only a few who mentioned George. George did not like driving. My father did.

I am inclosing an account of an adventure my cousin John and I had that involved Aunt Hat. Aunt Hat had a son Clayton. He was a redhead, quite tall, very quiet and a loner.

Perhaps you will give me your comments on "The Rescue of Shep".

I was always curious about the old Veazie Railroad. It started, I believe, at Bangor and went through Veazie near what we called the "back road". Where it went to I never knew. There was a small engine in a shed at the University of Maine. No doubt it is still there.

I have an old earthen jug that was owned by old General Veazie.

The good Lord permitting, I hope to go to Bangor for my high school class reunion in October. Perhaps at that time I could meet you.

Sincerely,



(Edward C. Sullivan)

Bangor
Veazie
U.M.D.

December 20, 1975

Mr. Edward C. Sullivan
421 Cherry Road
Syracuse, N.Y. 13219

Dear Mr. Sullivan:

This has taken me a long time. Sorry about that; yours was one of those letters I kept putting off "until I had time to write a decent letter." Let that be a lesson to me; you never have time, so you just go ahead and do it.

I've taken the liberty of writing on your story~~x~~, which, by the way, I enjoyed. And your newspaper friend is correct. It is one of the hardest things to make people understand: it is almost impossible to have too much detail. Oh sure, it's possible, but most people don't. Take a sentence like "This spring day the ice had started to melt and break up." O.K., fine. You can see it in your mind, and I can see it in mind because I've been on that same riverbank. How about the rotten snow. Did you break through it, get it in your shoes? Did grass show through it? Were there bare patches? How about the river? Was there clear water in the middle? How wide? How about ice chunks floating by: big, little, going round and round, floating like rafts, etc.? I've always remembered the kind of grinding noise of those floes as they knocked together or hit the shore ice. Let's get a whole lot more there.

And when we get to the saving of Shep, more detail, especially about how you felt, and what you did. Did you creep out flat? Was the ice wet? well, what'd that feel like? You cover it too quickly, and there's a lot to be said.

Now to the second part of the story. You've got to get in more about Aunt Hat here or the whole second half makes no sense. You know, and I know who Aunt Hat was, but no-one else will. I mean, there you two are, cold and wet, and there's Aunt Hat's. You two know you "shouldn't," yet you also know you'd damn well better. John hangs back, you let common sense take over. You've got to build this tension up. Give us more of your conversation here. But above all you need a good clear picture of what Aunt Hat's was, and best you don't pull any punches here.

Basically, it's a nice story, and I'll bet you could get it in print somewhere. First of all, the story of a boy risking his life to save his dog. Second, two boys going to a warehouse to get warm. It's got some real stuff. Show my letter to your Herald Journal friend and see how he feels about it.

I am trying to get together all the information I can on Aunt Hat. What I'm really doing is writing the history of the parcel of land I walk my dog over every day, and that includes walking right by Aunt Hat's front door and under her big balm-of-gilead tree (used to be two of them). If you could sometime take the time to jot down any anecdotes, facts, tales, reminiscences,-- nothing would be too insignificant, believe me, it would help me get it right. I'd either give you full credit, or I'd keep your name out of it completely, whichever you wished.

Syracuse, N.Y.

421 Cherry Road,
Syracuse, New York - 13219
January 20, 1976.

MR. EDWARD IVES,
Stevens Hall, South,
Orono, Maine - 04473

Dear Mr. Ives:-

I wish your letter of December 20th, had arrived sooner, for I sent a revised copy of the Shep story I sent you to the Readers' Digest. No doubt they will reject it.

Inclosed is the re-written story, which I hope follows your suggestions.

This re-write might not suit the straight-laced Readers' Digest, but I think the Atlantic Magazine might accept it. If the Atlantic would pay for it, I could use the money.

If any part of this true story would be of any use to you, go ahead and use it. You have been very helpful to me and I appreciate it. If you care to use my name as a contributor, I would also appreciate it. All men like to leave footprints in the sands of Time, even though they be a bit muddy.

Please advise me what you think about this re-write. I have tried to give some background to the doings of Don and me, that is that we were of the outdoor type of boys and had some knowledge of the River.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



(Edward C. Sullivan)

Orono

'Hogtown', mentioned in the Shep story, was a few scattered houses of hard-scrabble farmers along the old Veazie Railroad site, about what seemed to be a long mile out Chase Road beyond the Davis Farm. It was called 'Hogtown' because at one time a railroad train ran into a hog and killed it. The owner of the hog could not collect from the railroad.

The farmer's wife used the fat from the hog to grease the rails so that the wheels of the engines slipped and stalled the trains. Whoever the farmer was sold sand to the Veazie Railroad for enough cash to cover the price of the hog.

It was said that if anyone mentioned Hogtown to old General Sam Veazie, he would explode.

I have written the above because no doubt people in and around Veazie have long since forgotten about 'Hogtown'.

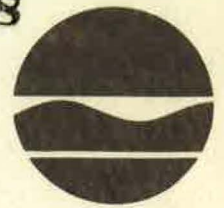
Ed. C. Sullivan

P.S. Mr. Fries where could I get a picture of the old Veazie Dam? It would have to have been taken before 1910 as the present Dam was completed in 1911.

*Veazie
Hog Town*

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

P.O. Box 292, Cape Vincent, NY 13618

Ogden Reid,
Commissioner

February 27, 1976

5:30 a.m.

Mr. E. Conners Sullivan
421 Cherry Road
Syracuse, New York 13219Dear Ed:

It's been a long time since I've been "turned on" by a fishing article as much as yours on the Penobscot salmon. I wouldn't change it except possibly the ending. Your style is real and represents you. I've attached minor suggestions you may wish to use.

I presume when you submit the article you'll send along a brief resume of your background to orient the Editor and reader. (I suspect it will be as interesting as the Salmon!)

I appreciate the compliment of mentioning my name, but honestly feel it detracts from your article. If I've been of help and possibly some encouragement, you, Bill Hicks, myself, and my wife will know--and who the hell else really counts!

Again, Ed--thanks for the opportunity to get a final look. I hope you are successful in getting it in print. The commercial magazines are very competitive, but your message would reach a large audience if the Editors are not too near-sighted and overlook a good article. There are also some fine non-commercial publications you may wish to contact, but their circulation is usually limited.

If I can be of further help, let me know.

Sincerely,

William A. Pearce, Supervisor
Great Lakes Fisheries Section

WAP:jss

Dear Mr. Ives:-

~~xxxx~~ WxHicks I am inclosing a letter from Mr. Pearce. It is self-explanatory. Mr. Pearce is a most dedicated and modest biologist who was instrumental in the establishment of the Cape Vincent Laboratory on Lake Ontario. He is intensely interested in the Coho and Land-locked Salmon. To date, he has been successful in spite of great odds. He has a brother in Milford, Maine, whom he visits, so he knows of what I write.

Bill Hicks is Director of Region #7 of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, and is also a dedicated man and a great leader.

I have marked changes as suggested by Mr. Pearce.

Sincerely,

Edward Conners Sullivan

Milford
Lake Ontario

421 Cherry Road,
Syracuse, N. Y. - 13219
February 28, 1976

MR. EDWARD IVES,
Stevens Hall, South,
Orono, Maine - 04473

Dear Mr. Ives:-

Your letter of February 18th was most welcome and encouraging, like a school boy getting a gold star on a school paper from his teacher.

I am inclosing a copy of a more or less historical narrative of my salmon fishing in the Penobscot in Veazie. Names and people are real. The Spencers I knew very well and George Hathorn was a second or third cousin of my mother. He was always very considerate of me.

Everything is based on fact and personal experience. Perhaps it might be of some interest to you. As you know, anything I might write you are free to use.

I have sent a copy to Atlantic Magazine as I know they are interested in the Atlantic Salmon.

Sincerely,

Ed. C. Sullivan

(Edward C. Sullivan)

P.S. I am starting to write about how the Penobscot Indians gave me the name of 'Swimming Bear'. You will get a copy as soon as I get it done.

*Veazie
Orono*

1107010

March 31, 1976

Dear Mr. Sullivan:

Thanks for the piece on Penobscot salmon. May I keep that copy for my files? If not, just let me know, and I'll send it along back. I am interested in writing something on the history of my part of Veazie, which is to say the old Weed property and environs. That includes Aunt Hat's.

What can you remember about that place of hers or about her? I can't even find a picture of the house the way it was before it burned? What did it look like? It must have been a good big place, for one thing. Any idea about what happened to it? Did somebody torch it or what (I've heard different stories). I should point out that I am as interested in what people say happened as I am in what really happened.

Right directly across from our shore there is the remains of one of those cribwork piers in the river-- almost to the other shore. Was there a sawmill over there? What in hell is that pier doing there? Any ideas?

I'm enclosing a letter from a friend to whom I showed "Shep." This guy, Edward Holmes, of our English Department, knoweth whereof he speaketh. I suggest you follow his advice. He has published a lot of stuff.

Again, good to hear from you.

Sincerely,

Edward D. Ives

Veazie

421 Cherry Road,
Syracuse, N. Y. - 13219
June 12, 1976.

Mr. Edward D. Ives,
Stevens Hall, South,
Orono, Maine - 04473

Dear Mr. Ives:-

Sorry to be so long in answering your note of April 7th. I have not been feeling too good.

Regarding your story on Dingbat Prouty, I believe I wrote you that Dingbat was killed during the construction of the present Veazie Dam in 1910 or -11. A bucket of rocks hanging from the boom of a derrick was accidentally dumped on Dingbat. As one of the men who brought his body up to the foot of School Street said: 'Dingbat is all stove up.' It was Dingbat, all right, for when the men left we looked under the blanket covering him. I knew Dingbat and had talked with him many times. He was an old man, but spry and talkative.

This booklet brought back to me the fire that destroyed the Morris Canoe factory. Wyatt Spencer and I were holding a fire hose. The heat forced us to back up. As we moved, a small canoe was going up the hill back of the Prouty farm all by itself. It developed that Warren Prouty was hidden over the brow of the hill, pulling a long rope attached to the canoe. Several days later it was found in Prouty's barn.

The Morris Canoe was without doubt the most beautiful canoe ever made. Bert Morris used to ship a carload every year to the Kaiser in Berlin, Germany. Bert and his brother Charles were perfectionists. Whatever happened to them, I don't know. The fire was a heavy blow to Veazie.

Jim Vickery called me on the phone a few weeks ago. We got to talking about old Bangor. We must have talked for half an hour.

Sincerely,



(Edw. Connors Sullivan)

P.S. There was no mention of Norman Prouty. He bought the old Thompson Farm located on Thompson Point nearby to your tract. Norman was a brother of Dick Prouty, sons of old Warren Prouty.

Bangor
Veazie
Orono
Germany

As boys, we used to call that area the "Plains". It was fairly flat. There was a legend to the effect that there was buried treasure there. I found what looked like a Spanish ten cent piece there. It was a hundred years older than I was. That would make the date of the coin 1801.

There are some interesting facts connected with this old Thompson Farm. I hope to be able to write more about them.



(Edw. Connors Sullivan)

421 Cherry Road,
Syracuse, N. Y. - 13219
June 19, 1976.

MR. EDWARD D. IVES,
Stevens Hall, South,
Orono, Maine - 04473

Dear Mr. Ives:-

Herewith I am inclosing a never-before-released photograph of my grandfather, Lawrence (Larry) Conners, together with a self-explanatory statement to correct previously published misinformation regarding him.

I am perhaps the only person who has a true knowledge of my grandfather. I am prompted to make this statement in order to set the records straight and because of questions of my children and grandchildren. If you feel that others may be interested, you are at liberty to do whatever you see fit. I know that in this Bicentennial year people are anxious to find out about leading and legendary characters of days gone by.

Sincerely,



(Edward Conners Sullivan)

Syracuse, N.Y.
Orono

In this Bicentennial year and with the present wave of nostalgia, and being in my seventy-sixth year, I feel that I should set the records straight. My Grandfather Sullivan used to say, at the age of ninety-five, 'The old must go and the young may go.'

Inclosed is a never before released picture of my grandfather Lawrence (Larry) Conners. Note, the spelling of "Conners" does not end "ors". As a boy, I was obsessed with getting all the information I could about him. I asked questions of old time rivermen who lived in Veazie. There were many who knew and some who worked with Larry Conners. My best source of information was my mother's uncle, Calvin Johnston, brother of Tobias Johnston (not Johnson).

When Larry Conners lost his life at Ripogenus Gorge in the Spring of 1867, he left, besides his wife, Rebecca Johnston, two daughters, Elva and my mother, Lora, who was born on June 7th, 1867. She never saw her father. It seems that John Ross gave Rebecca a hundred dollars, which reflects an unmentioned side of John Ross, and his regard for Larry Conners.

Rebecca was the daughter of Victor and Peace Hathorn. Some of the above information is on the backs of two old photographs of Rebecca and Larry Conners.

The early days of Larry Conners are not clear. My mother was told that he came over from Galway, Ireland, in the first half of the eighteen hundreds.

There is a brief description of the real Larry Conners on the back of the inclosed photograph, which is a copy of a picture made, according to the artist who made the reproduction, in about 1850. This was sixteen years before his tragic death. Old rivermen all insisted that no trace of his body was ever found. These two old photographs could have been the wedding pictures of him and Rebecca. They are set in heavy, deeply recessed, ornate frames.

I will not attempt to relate stories of his athletic ability or his fearless exploits. All agreed that he was a 'quiet, soft-spoken man'. Many mentioned that he could dance a jig or a lusty clog dance. They also said that Tobias Johnston could 'make the welkin ring' when he sang. Tobias was also a fiddler of note. Perhaps it was these talents that brought about the friendship and the marriage of Larry and Rebecca.

The Johnston and Hathorn families were of the old, straight-laced, God-fearing Puritan type of people.

Ripogenus Gorge
Veazie

All these facts make it difficult for me to believe that Larry Connors was the wicked man pictured by Fannie Hardy Eckstorm in her story in the book entitled 'The Penobscot Man'. After all, she was only two or three years old when Larry met his tragic death at Ripogenus Gorge.

These memories have lain dormant in my mind for many years. I feel that it is time I passed them along to the proper people.

Ed. Connors Sullivan

(Edward Connors Sullivan)

June 19, 1976.

*Ripogenus
Gorge*

Lawrence (Larry) Connors

Log Driver and Lumberman.
 Born: County Galway, Ireland.
 Came to America as a young man.
 Killed, Spring of 1867, breaking a
 logjam at Ripogenus Gorge,
 West Branch of Penobscot River,
 State of Maine. Body never
 recovered.

Black hair; blue eyes. Height about
 5'10"; weight about 165 lbs. He
 was left handed, lean and
 limber, and an expert axeman.

Married Rebecca Alice Johnston,
 daughter of Victor and Peace
Hathorn Johnston; sister of
Tobias, Calvin and Thomas
Johnston.

Father of Lora Emma Connors
Sullivan.

This is a copy of a reproduction
 of a picture made from an
 old tintype or photograph.

See photo #516

West Branch Penobscot
 Ripogenus Gorge
 Ireland

1107017

February 24, 1977

Mr. Edward C. Sullivan
421 Cherry Road
Syracuse, NY 13219

Dear Mr. Sullivan:

There is no possible way I can excuse myself for taking eight months to answer your letter. The hell of it is I was very interested in what you had to say about your grandfather, Larry Conners, and I am grateful for the photograph of him. May I incorporate both the write-up and the photograph into our Archives here, where they would be both preserved and (hopefully) used? Put it another way: the material would be both safe and appreciated. I'm a whole lot better archivist than I am a letter writer.

Outside of that, how've you been? I've been both good and poorly. Right now I'm fine!

Sincerely,

Edward D. Ives
Director,
Northeast Archives

SL:bc

Syracuse, N.Y.

421 Cherry Road,
Syracuse, N. Y. - 13219
March 5, 1977.

MR. EDWARD D. IVES,
Director, Northeast Archives,
Stevens Hall, South,
Orono, Maine - 04473

Dear Mr. Ives:-

Your letter of February 24th was most welcome.

There is an error in the date Larry Conners met his death. We had figured the date as the Spring of 1867 by going back from my mother's birthday. She never saw her father for she was an infant at the time. James Vickery, of Brewer came up with an old copy of the Bangor Whig & Courier, dated June 6, 1968 that recorded the death of Larry Conners.

I hope you know James Vickery, for he is an outstanding man in every respect. If by chance you don't know him (although I think you must), he is an historian of note. He published the Bi-centennial histories of Bangor and Brewer. I am indebted to him for his interest in my grandfather Conners.

Needless to say, I would be most grateful if you include the photograph and information I have gathered about Larry Conners in the Archives of the Northeast. Evidently Larry Conners, was not a 'run of the mill' river driver, for John Ross called on the grandmother, Rebecca Conners, and gave her, in addition to wages due, one hundred (\$100.00) dollars, a considerable sum in those times.

I was in the hospital for a week last summer, but am O.K. now. I am glad you are feeling better. Take care, for you have a great responsibility as Director of Northeast Archives. I hope people realize their value. I feel that the lives of people today are like the time showing on a digital clock, only for the present moment. I like the old wind-up clock that shows the hours gone by, but also indicates the future hours yet to come.

Thanks again.

Sincerely,



(Edward Conners Sullivan)

Orono
Bangor
Brewer