

Excerpt from
Memories for My Grandchildren

by Louise Van Horsen Jack Collins

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Note about the author.

Louise Collins, 1902-2000, was the eldest daughter of the Rev. Robert Bonner Jack and Margaret Louise Van Horsen Jack. A graduate of Mt Holyoke College, she worked briefly as a nurse in New York before marrying William George Collins in September 1929. They moved to Waukegan, Illinois shortly after Bill was employed as a chemist for Johns-Manville Corporation. Louise, or Bunny, as family and friends called her, was a homemaker, mother of three sons (Jack, Robert, George) and a prolific chronicler of the times and family history past and present.

Contributed to the Rustic Ridge Association by her granddaughter,
Catharine Louise Collins Kristian, October 2015.

OUR FIRST YEAR AT EAST NORTHFIELD, MASS.
CLIFF CHATEAU ON THE 7TH RIDGE (RUSTIC)

It was decided that summer spent in Cunningham Valley it was too near for Father to really get away from the area for a vacation. So they looked around for another vacation spot and settled on East Northfield for a variety of reasons. It was 300 miles roughly from Hazleton and Father would not be called back easily; then there were the Dwight Moody Conferences each summer lasting from June when college closed and a different conference came every week or two; Y.W.C.A., Y.M.C.A., Sunday School, Foreign Missions and ending with the General Conference which took most of the month of August. The buildings on the beautiful campus of the East Northfield girl's prep school (Female Seminary) were used to house the guests. Many of the students furnished help and there was a huge auditorium for the meetings. Doors of this opened on all sides for ventilation - this was long before air-conditioning. To the last conference came famous ministers and notable speakers from this country and abroad, especially England and Scotland. Father would attend these study seminars they held and get material for the next year's sermons. As a result of all this, most of the cottages on the 7 ridges called Rustic Ridge were owned or rented by ministers' families like ourselves or missionaries home on furlough from foreign lands.

We rented Cliff Chateau sight unseen and it turned out to be the last cottage on the last ridge right next to the woods - lovely pine woods with a thick carpet of pine needles. There was a "cow path" as we called it which made a short cut to the campus but it was steep and endless. Father would carry my sister, age two, up part way on his shoulders. Of course, there were

dirt roads through on each ridge and the grocer came in the morning for orders and delivered them that afternoon. The ice man came several times a week, the garbage man once a week, and the meat man came with his cart full of meat and you went out to see what you wanted. Then there would be various village boys selling vegetables fresh from their gardens and berries - lovely raspberries and blackberries. Sometimes we could find these ripe on the top of the mountain called Strowbridge where there was an orchard planted by early farmers who had gone up here to escape from the Indians. It was no longer kept up and the apples were not much good. We used to picnic up here on Garnet Rock, called so for the small garnets to be found in the mica of the rock and we would dig these out. Once you got to the top of the rock the view of the valley was superb but the last bit was very steep.

Getting ready for our first trip was quite a production. It included getting up at 3:30 a.m. so that we could have breakfast and clean it up before we walked to the station carrying our bags to get the 6 a.m. train. Our trunks had been sent ahead the day before.

Always we had to have one leather suitcase full of lunch enough for two meals. This was always prepared the day before and Father insisted on ground up Pot Roast sandwiches on homemade bread - they were very good - oranges peeled ready to be eaten in sections, bread and jelly sandwiches (peanut butter came much later) and cookies and cake. There was a thermos of milk for us and coffee for the adults. We had paper plates, copious napkins and the thing was always to find three seats together on the same side of the train so that we could pass things back and forth from Mother, Father, Alice, me and Anna. The children were given seats by

the window. The final touch was a pasteboard cutout toilet seat carefully concealed in brown paper with an X on the side which went down next to the seat. This was strapped onto the outside of the suitcase and Anna took charge of it and our use.

Going down the mountain to Mauch Chunk, the junction where we changed to the through train, was really a beautiful ride with laurel blossoming on the mountains and a rocky mountain stream which should have been brown but was black from the coal dust of the mines. If the windows were open, and it was usually hot so they were, you were apt to get a cinder in the eye and taking it out carefully with a clean handkerchief was a regular process. I often wonder now what the other passengers thought of our lunch hour for the oranges smelled good but also smelled up the car and to this day I always connect the two odors. It was great fun to eat and watch the scenery go by - you see we were not used to auto travel and this was a new experience.

Arriving in New York was rather a panic as to whether we'd make the connections from the Pennsylvania Station thru the subway tube to the Grand Central Station where we boarded the New York, New Haven & Hartford. Again the rush for three seats together. You followed the red and the green lines to get the right subway train connection and I think we even had to change subways in the middle. Everyone stayed close together and went as fast as possible, hoping not to get lost.

After boarding the New York, New Haven & Hartford we went out through Park Ave. from the station and always on the left sidewalk were beautiful masses of Dorothy Perkins roses in full bloom. Past Bridgeport, New Haven, Hartford (stopping, of course, at each) and finally arriving at Springfield where we changed train again to the Boston & Maine. This train stopP^ed at Holyoke, Greenfield, and

finally about 5:30 p.m., having been on the move since 3:30 a.m., we arrived at East Northfield Station. This is about a mile or so from the village across the Connecticut River, crossed by the only bridge there called Schell Bridge. I think Mr. Schell of Schell Castle there had something to do with its building.

The trunks were waiting, having been sent on ahead, and two large stage coaches, one drawn by two horses, to go to the campus and the Northfield Inn and the other with four horses to take passengers up the mountains to the various cottages on the Ridge. These coaches were open with a top to keep off the sun and rain and a series of seats, about four counting the driver's one in front. Each seat could easily take care of three to four persons depending on their size with luggage tucked under your knees. On the back of the coach was a flat platform held up on each side with strong chains. Here the trunks were placed and large pieces of luggage. We were off down a country dirt road full of stones and bumps. We crossed the bridge and those going to the Ridge went on to Burnam Road and the narrow, winding dirt roads of the various ridges letting passengers off at the cottages. We went on and on, it was getting late and dark. Finally we arrived at the Chateau, the last cottage on the last ridge. The driver helped unload the baggage, now having to use a kerosene lantern, and we all stumbled up the porch stretching across the cottage front, into the living room which smelled dusty and close as any room shut up in hot weather.

The driver noticed our inexperience and showed us how to light a two-burner oil stove and find other kerosene lanterns (no electricity) and lighted the shaded living room lamp. Then he left. All there was to eat was the remains of that lunch but we were too tired by then to care and fell into what passed for beds in the four small upstairs bedrooms. They were really cots. My memory of

that night was the chatter of squirrels dancing on a tin breadbox left out on the small open back porch. There was also a galvanized washtub and washboard here, suggesting how one did the laundry. Marvelously there was a bathroom and plenty of running cold water. Hot water was heated on the stove and we were warned to go down the road to a spring which ran between two ridges where everyone went to get their drinking water. This became a regular routine, later the town built a fine reservoir on the mountain top which gave everyone plenty of clear, cold fresh water.

In the morning we took in the situation. Father got the important things settled, Mother and Anna did much cleaning and airing of blankets, etc. Then Father left to go home and "batch" it for six weeks until his regular eight-week vacation began the middle of July. So Mother's friends, the Merriam twins, Miss Helen and Miss Grace, who were New York grade school teachers having graduated from Mt. Holyoke College, came to spend the six weeks with us and brought my Grandmother Van Horsen with them. She always spent the summers with us and after she broke her hip came to live with us summer and winter. We grew up with two Grandmothers, a part of the household most of the time. There was plenty of room and they were much a part of our lives. Grandmother Jack spent the summers with her daughters at Ogunquirt, Maine where the Smiths had a cottage.

Aunt Robbers was their social secretary and traveled with them whenever they went to Europe, the thing to do in those days. She and Grandmother Jack roomed at the seaside resort right on the ocean with a long, long porch full of rocking chairs for all of the old patrons to rock, exchange news and gossip while they looked at the waves breaking on the beach.

The grocery boy, the meat man, the ice man, and the garbage man all alled at our cottage but we were the last ones. This is how we got our supplies and Alice, 2, and I, 6, were really not much help! We played a great deal in the

pine needles and made ridges of them to make separate rooms and played house using acorn cups for dishes and other improvisations. We had brought a few toys including Christmas, our precious teddy bear. We shaved off all the fur on his stomach once but he was always loved. I have no idea what happened to him finally.

There were other children on the two upper ridges and we made friends. One of the cottages on the 6th ridge burned to the ground one night. That was very exciting and a worry for the village fire department took so long to get there that they weren't much help. One of the families had a piano and Sunday evenings the neighbors would gather around and have a hymn sing. We always ended with "God be with you till we meet again!"

The twins and Mother studied birds, picked berries, made some jam on that kerosene stove and took walks. Alice and I were too young to venture far. Of course, you had to go down the Ridge and down North Lane to the Post Office if you wanted your mail. Everyone had a lock box with their own combination and got out their mail or a card which told you there was a package. Across the hall was the bookstore selling the New York papers, cards, a bit of everything, and ice cream cones. One of these, 5¢ for a single and 10¢ for a double, would last half-way up North Lane.

This was the summer for looking around after Father came back and the twins left for the city. He liked the conference meetings, they looked at many cottages and finally decided on Ramona, a large beach type summer cottage on the Third Ridge belonging to the Rev. Dr. Lusk from New Jersey. It looked like a beach house, white with an open latticed basement under it to store wood, a huge veranda and off the front of this a small bandstand type of porch with steps leading to it from the big porch, no roof over it and you felt you were sitting right in the trees.

We also had a fine clay tennis court, a large lot, and a really gorgeous view over the valley to the hills and the sunsets. In the early days you could see all the way to Mt. Herman, the boys prep school to the south, and to the north the curve in the Connecticut River and the towers of the auditorium. Some of this disappeared when the trees on the lower ridges grew taller but all of our trees were trimmed up high so they didn't interfere with the view and this made shade. These trees were mostly oaks and chestnuts but finally we lost the chestnut trees in a blight which ruined them throughout New England. There were also several clumps of beautiful white birch, some evergreens and low brush. Grandmother V.H. bought the cottage for us for \$2,000 and during the next fall and winter the folks had many repairs and additions to it.

Our next door neighbors, the Goodriches, he was a baker, drove up each year all the way from New Jersey in their carriage with a horse, Ginger, and a black maid. No one had autos then.

RAMONA 1908

While the folks were spending the first summer at Cliff Chateau in East Northfield, they looked over the various cottages on the Rustic Ridge - seven ridges of cottages in rows, not too close and in wooded areas. They finally settled on Ramona, a large white cottage with green trim on the third ridge. It was the second cottage to have been built on the ridge and owned by a Dr. Lusk from New Jersey. This resulted in its being a model of a beach house. All the other cottages were built of logs, leaving the bark on the outside so that they blended with the woods.

Ramona stood on the middle of two large sloping lots extending from the second ridge road to the third directly in back of our lots. The cottage has a gorgeous view which the others didn't and you could see across the valley from the large porch to the hills and the sunsets. To the south as far as Mt. Hermon, a boys' prep school six miles away, and then you could see nestled in between the Northfield Inn and Schell Castle built by Mr. Schell, the oil man. He even built the hill the castle stood on so you could see the turrets and the building was modeled after those in Europe. To the north the view showed the Auditorium towers and the far bend in the Connecticut River. All of this was in the early years but we spent 30 summers in the cottage at vacation times and during those years some of the view was concealed by trees on the lower ridges. The front of the lot was a steep hill filled with low brush and many tall chestnut and oak trees, also two lovely pairs of white birch clumps; these always reminded me of ladies with long white gloves. All the trees were carefully trimmed each year, not a sprout on a

trunk to spoil the view and the tops afforded shade. There were a few pines and hemlocks near the house.

On one side of the cottage was a level grass area, rather unusual and handy for drying clothes. Others had to dry theirs in woods under the trees. On the other side was a fine clay tennis court well kept and we used it for tennis for many years. Eventually it became a croquet court. In the back yard were trees, rough ground, and a mound with trees growing on it where Indians were supposed to be buried. We used to wonder about this and feared ghosts walking when we were small.

Before we came to occupy Ramona the next year the folks had many changes made. In the middle of the large living room was a round green topped dining table set on white brick bark legs - the bark still on and other tables were smaller and made in that rustic way. The fireplace at the end was a beauty, made of native stone shining with bits of mica and embedded with garnets. It was the only way of heating the cottage and worked. We used it constantly in cool weather, popped corn and toasted marshmallows on long forks. Off the living room was Grandmother V.H.'s room with five small windows (all windows and doors were screened) and the windows opened like two panel doors and were curtained. Most of the time they were kept wide open and it was something like living out of doors comfortably. The folks had a wash bowl with hot and cold running water in Grandma's room and a comfortable new bed. All the bed and dressing rooms had built in bureau shelves and closets and in the corners a built in desk. Then they had cretonne curtains tacked to the tops of the bureaus or closets and open in the middle to give an uncluttered look. Each room had a different pattern of cretonne,

a heavy cotton material used for draperies because it hung well. There was another small dressing room off the other side of the living room with a big window and a door opening onto the porch. This had heavy curtains hung between it and the living room in case someone slept here. Usually it was just a living room addition. It had a big boxlike board couch with spring and mattress - very uncomfortable - and there was one in the living room and one in each of the front dressing rooms upstairs. I suppose the former owners used them as beds. We used the living room one as a sofa with many pillows; it was in the corner by the fireplace.

Off the living room was a fair-sized room which had been the original kitchen but we turned it into a pantry. It held the ice box, drip pan underneath, a sink with hot and cold running water, and in front of the two windows which looked out on the grass lot was a fine work table covered in white oil cloth with a drawer underneath for the cottage silver, my Grandmother V.H.'s silver plate. On either side of the work table were shelves - one side for dishes and the other for pots, pans, and groceries. The steep stairs to upstairs led straight up from these china shelves. Once my mother fell all the way down and the noise shook the ridge - fortunately she didn't break anything but it took several days to recover from the shock.

Off the pantry had been a back porch - this was enclosed and turned into a utility room with two set-in stationary tubs with hot and cold running water. You washed clothes in one with the clothes rubbed on a washboard and rinsed in the other tub and had a hand wringer which screwed onto the tub when in use. You emptied the clothes into a big basket and you took them out to hang up in the grassy lot. Each tub had a lid of wood on hinges that you could let down and make

a work table. Here the grocery boy etc. left the groceries. It was very convenient. All of this setup was pure luxury compared to the washing systems of the other cottages consisting of a galvanized tub on a bench in the yard under the trees. You heated the water on a kerosene stove and carried it out. Usually you wrung the clothes out by hand and hung them on lines under the trees. They took forever to dry. Mother would have none of this on a vacation.

Then came the kitchen - a real luxury. It was a large room - one story built onto the rear of the cottage with huge windows on two sides that slid back into the walls and were mostly open, making it like a porch. These did have white curtains so the room when closed was used on cold mornings to dress. At the end of the kitchen was a big coal and wood burning stove with stove pipe to the chimney, oven, and six places to cook. Father had once hoped to be an engineer, in fact studied this through his Junior year at Princeton, and every so often his ideas came out. One of these was the coal bin with a bottom sloping to the house. It was built out from the kitchen, held a ton of coal, and had a wooden lid. Then in the kitchen was a small opening by the stove with a door you raised and lowered and you could shovel the coal right from the bin into the stove. No coal scuttle was necessary and in the corner was a large hot water boiler. This, too, was an unheard of luxury on the Ridge. There were windows on either side of the stove and a separate good chimney. Across from the stove were shelves built to keep all kinds of big utensils. In front of one window was a table that could be lowered against the wall and here we had breakfast and hotcakes right from the griddle to your plate. This was a regular affair and lots of butter and maple syrup. Once in a race I ate 13 of these large pancakes!

And we had a real bathroom - this too was a Ridge luxury and I think was there when we bought the cottage. We improved the fixtures consisting of a large tub (hot and cold running water), a Johnny that worked, and a wash bowl. All of these were in a very small room with an upper window for ventilation and a regular one by the tub. Our neighbors, the Alysworths, had a sunken tub, you stepped down into it in their room.

The steep stairs with a bannister led to four dressing rooms furnished as the downstairs ones but the two back ones had no cots. Alice and I had one together when we had a maid who had one. Mother and Father each had one. There was a large linen closet for blankets and linens at the end of the small hall and Father had a cupola ventilator put in the hall ceiling. You could open and shut its windows with a rope which was secured on a wall fixture. This helped take out the hot air but could be closed if cool. All the rooms were open at the top - the walls only went up $3/4$ of the way. Then off the two back dressing rooms on either side of the cottage you stepped down to two huge sleeping porches - all open with screens, long eaves to keep out rain, and canvas curtains you could hook up half way if it really stormed. There we slept. Father and Mother had a big double bed on their porch and a huge wooden table where Father did any written work. Our porch could hold three twin beds easily and Alice and I slept here with the maid when we had one. I had the bed in the open corner. So you can see the cottage became much more liveable and comfortable than when we bought it. The front porch was never screened - that wouldn't be living out of doors - so we never ate there but lived there, doing all the vegetables, knitting, and all kinds of hand work. There was a big couch swing or hammock like a bed on the side porch and Alice and I

played circus swing on that. At one time our big doll house was hooked to the house wall on that side and we played dolls. My Grandmother's favorite spot was on the small bandstand porch - steps led down to this from the middle of the front porch and it had no roof - open to the trees above. Here was her favorite small rocker, a table and some chairs - we used the steps to sit on. The top one had a big cushion and was popular in the evenings watching the sunsets.

The cottage wouldn't have been complete without the slanting dirt basement open to the outside through lattice work and here we kept the fireplace wood and tools.

We also had a large flagpole on one corner of the lot and the flag always flew when we were in residence. It was my job to put it up properly and take it down properly at sunset. Mother was very particular about this.

Every year Father dreamed through the winter of the rock project he would do in his first vacation weeks before the General Conference. He devoted the mornings to this and here again his engineering bent came out. There were many large rocks on the lot and the roads nearby. These were much too heavy to lift and he loved puzzling over how to get them where he wanted them. He came in from this effort filthy dirty (thank goodness for the hot water and the wash tubs) and either despondent or triumphant depending on the morning's success or failure. Eventually all these summers of work and winters of planning resulted in a remarkable native rock wall across the back of our lot, carefully surveyed so as not to exceed the boundaries; a path up the steep hill to the cottage with many stone steps at intervals and bends and turns to make the ascent easier, and at the very end a birch bark railing for the last steep steps. Then he reinforced the south wall of the

tennis court. This was a long project over several years. Mornings were spent like then, then an afternoon nap and then reading the papers in his favorite chair in the corner of the porch (more air here). Father's vacation weeks were carefully planned around his schedule - he always lived by schedule. In the six weeks when he was "batching" it in Hazleton Mother had her girlhood friends the twins, Miss Helen and Miss Grace Merriam, school teachers in New York City, visit her and Grandmother Van Horsesen always spent the whole summer with us. Her sister, Aunt M, would occasionally visit us then. We did much porch work and during World War I I learned from my Grandmother how to knit - I did mufflers (scarfs) of khaki yarn for the soldiers. The twins had a nephew in the war in France and were ardent patriotic knitters. I think they did 85 sweaters between them and helmets and socks.

Aunt M (Emma Demarest) was purely a career business woman. She was a graduate of Mt. Holyoke College in the days when they even had smallpox and she spent some time in the "pest house" where they put the patients. This was before the time of vaccination. She was a spinster, very much of a business woman, and raised a good deal of money for the college in her day. She was secretary for Sir Wilfred Grenfeld of Labrador and Editor of his magazine "Deep Sea Fisheries". Once when she came to visit she brought 12 Japanese lanterns and we had them strung all over the porch one 4th of July and even had candles in them. Another time she came down with the mumps and we had her quarantined on Father and Mother's sleeping porch. (We'd all had them.) She kept busy turning a large wooden box (really a coffin) on end and made a doll house out of it with four stories. Some of the furniture was made from spools and wooden cigar boxes.

My Uncle Norman Jack smoked Pell Mell cigarettes which came in boxes like red trunks with a curved top lid and in each a miniature silk oriental rug. He saved all these for us and our dolls were small Japanese ones from a Japanese gift shop on Highland Ave. We had many years of fun with that doll house.

Of course, for the first few years on the Ridge there was no electricity and everyone used kerosene lamps and lanterns and most cooked on kerosene stoves. We had a large kerosene lamp with a lovely colored shade like a dome hanging over the dining room table from the ceiling and you could pull it up and down to adjust the light. Then all used a kerosene glass lamp with a strong glass handle (you could see how much fuel you had) and you lighted the mantle and carefully put on the glass top. These smoked and you put them out by holding your hand a little to one side at the top and blowing down. It was my job to clean the chimneys every morning. Under the china shelves in the pantry hung a row of kerosene lanterns and we took these to light our way home if we went out in the evening. There weren't any flashlights. We did have one or two candles around - one a brass one. You could adjust the candle by putting it in different notches to make it small or tall.

The routine of the cottage would not be complete without "going for the mail". This occurred twice a day at about 11:15 a.m. and 5:15 p.m. when the mail train arrived. People wrote letters in those days and our lock mailbox was always full of at least one of the newspapers; the Plain Speaker from Hazleton and the Philadelphia Ledger. If you had a package there was a red card in your box and you asked for it at the window. Then across the hall from the Post Office

(a place where everyone met and exchanged news) was the bookstore full of souvenirs, papers, ice cream cones, and the New York papers. We always took the Tribune and had a standing order for they sold quickly. The New York Times was a liberal democratic paper and not allowed in the house. We brought the mail home in the morning for Father's afternoon perusal. The evening jaunt was usually cooler and more pleasant - down North Lane.

Telephones were unheard of on the Ridge. After a good many years they did put a change phone (pay phone) at the end of each lane. You went down to the phone, attached to a pole, and cranked it. After figuring how it worked and dropping in some change you might get an operator to put through your call. Woe be if you wanted to make a long distance, not a local, call. A long distance one was the kind you mostly made when some unusual circumstance arrived. Sometimes you might find a telegram in your post office box. They were never delivered on the Ridge. This was the age of silence, one might say, perhaps with some relief.