

THE FAIRFIELD~CAMPTON CRIER

"HE LIVES TWICE WHO ENJOYS BOTH THE PAST AND THE PRESENT" ~ MARCUS MARTIAL

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"To one and all or whomever may be interested..."

The Charles O. Morgan Letter

Beyond just surviving the challenges of life, leaving a mark, not being forgotten is a most curious desire many of us have. It provides a hint of immortality so a line of descendants, grave stone epitaphs, prominent deeds, sacrifices for others, are just a few of the many things people will do to leave a trace of their existence and perhaps more importantly try to answer the question of why we are here at all.

This spring, one Steve Bingham arrived at the museum door with his great grandfather's **August 7, 1920** letter in hand. Rarely are family letters saved and rarer still do people take the time to put to paper remembrances of an everyday past unmarked by any high drama or great historic events. Mr. Bingham could not have come to a more receptive place with his ancestor's letter.

Once common, but increasingly unusual in this fast pace world, do any of us live an entire lifetime in one place. Residing a decade or two in one place seems like a long time, so the familiar becomes so commonplace in one's mind, little significance is attached to it. Only the incredible acceleration of change in the last 150 years makes 40 year old daily routine so different from present day customs and habits.

For Charles Morgan, aged 72 in 1920, his return to his boyhood neighborhood inspired the letter as nostalgia, longing to connect to his youth, and making a statement to his family and future generations what was once so important and integral to his childhood experience.

On Timothy Garfield's 1850s map of the Campton community was the name F. Morgan on a 40 acre parcel next to the one room red schoolhouse just a mile west of Garfield's farm. It was not a familiar name, no Morgans live in present day Campton, and researching the 1840s neighbors of Timothy Garfield has been on the back burner with all the fundraising and restoration work that must be done.

Yet this letter gives tantalizing hints the museum could never anticipate learning. For Mr. Morgan was recounting what he remembered of the neighborhood where he lived between the ages of 2 and 14 years. His account is of his initial outing with friends leaving from St. Charles and driving up Campton Hills Road past Garfield Road to his boyhood home, by then long since gone. Eight days later he would return to the area and spend more time meeting up with families whom he had known as a boy.

There are a number of local history facts revealed in the letter but of most interest are references to Garfield Farm. The museum has few photos of the farm's landscape. An unusual view dates a from around 1910 at the junction of Garfield Road and Campton Hills Road. Before the 1930 LaFox Road connection of Campton Hills to Rt. 38, all north south traffic had to take Garfield Road which was established around 1854 after the innkeeping period. Campton Hills Road (the Chicago-St. Charles Road in the 1830-40s)

originally came out of the northeast directly to the log house where it split heading onto Sycamore and the southwest branch to Oregon, IL

That north end of Garfield Road was Morgan's first reference to Garfield Farm. Below is the c. 1910 photo of the



junction. Morgan's letter reads: *"The next place of notice was the road turning into Garfield's to the south, this struck me forcibly for we halted a little and sure enough there was the same old Burr Oak tree which was always used on which to post notices and my memory flew back in an instant to the time I used to go clear down there to pull tacks out of that tree to use when I could't get them otherwise. The next was the crossing of Garfield's creek and oh how small and narrow it seemed then things began to look more natural. Beatty's place to the right look very much the same."*



The left most building in both pictures would be Campton's first settler John Beatty's farm (by 1920 it was owned by the Mongerson family). *"I looked for the large hickory tree in Garfield's pasture to the right going west but all was changed a few of the younger growth Hickory's were to be seen but nearly all the woods gone."*

In the 1850s, Timothy and son Green Garfield owned land as far as 3/4 mile west of present day LaFox Road. The museum's Mill Creek Prairie is on the southside of Campton Hills Road and about 5 shag bark hickories are at roadside, perhaps descendants of the big hickory Morgan recalled on the northside of the road. This gives great environmental evidence of conditions over time. On his return trip 8 days later he also wrote of *"Eli Barbers boyhelped us catch a big string of fish in Garfield's pasture"*. The Mill Creek Prairie was used as a pasture in the 1850s though Morgan's memory maybe mistaken as no record of Eli Barber having a son can be found - it may have been a nephew of Eli's. Eli owned south of Garfield Road at Rt. 38.

Life of Mill Creek

Last summer 12 acres of the farm were enrolled in the USDA Conservation Reserve Program and planted with native grasses and forbs. Eleven of those acres were next to the 16 acres of the unplowed Mill Creek Prairie and Sedge Meadow. Unfortunately, it was too wet this spring to burn any of the prairie but mowing the CRP acreage has taken away weeds shading the prairie seedlings. Already native grasses, blue vervain, partridge pea, black eyed Susans, and sneeze weed are blooming. The next 2 years should really be prolific. Beside from making us humans happy, this adds to the life of the creek. This summer for the first time three surveys of the creek were made. The first was by the Illinois Natural History Survey looking at the presence of mussels in the creek.

Whiteheel splitters are the biggest in the creek. (below left)



Also found were paper pondshell, lilliput, fatmucket, giant floater, and slippershell mussels, a threatened species. A favorite of ducks also occurs which is the tiny fingernail clam. These mussels were found by feeling along the bottom of the creek bare handed.

A few weeks later the IEPA came out to do a macroinvertebrate survey which is used to determine water quality. Here primarily larva forms of insects are found, some species tolerant of pollution or low oxygen, others less so. Damselfly larvae turn into iridescent dragon fly like insects that fold back their wings when perched. Dip nets are used to



drag the bottom stirring up invertebrates that are then collected for further study and analysis.

The fourth week of August, the IDNR was out to conduct its 3rd survey since 2004 of the creek. Black nose daces, johnny darters and some sizable creek chubs were of note. Use electric shock, the stunned fish were netted and then measured, weighed and counted. The smallest were pickled to go back for counts and studies this winter in the lab. Hopefully the three survey reports will be available by next spring.



2027 50th Anniversary Bucket List Challenge for 2022

Over \$35,000 of the \$60,000 has been raised to win a \$30,000 grant by year's end. These funds will be applied to ongoing restoration and construction projects amongst other items listed in the 2027 Bucket List. Donations to this fund are crucial to keep up our momentum as contractors are recovering from the Covid and supply chain issues that have impacted so many. We have a goal of \$2.6 million of projects to spare the coming generation of the most challenging work that needs to be accomplished. Supporting the museum is so important as getting to a point where major capital outlays become more modest maintenance and operational expenses will most benefit the educational impact of the farm. Anyone who can help with this fundraising and is willing to step forward is more than welcome.

Remembering Sue Jacobson, Garfield Heritage Society Board Member

Longtime volunteer and board member of Garfield Heritage Society, Beverley 'Sue' Jacobson, passed away on June 28, 2022. Involved with the museum since 1984 she recruited her late mother Genevieve Wolf and her late husband Carl Jacobson



as volunteers. She has served as a Garfield Heritage Society board member since the late 1980s until her death. She had a knowledge of many traditional skills and demonstrated soap and candle making at many of the fall festivals. She brought AFS students to the farm and her experience as an educator was of great value. Always of good spirit she will be missed by all who knew her.

Remembering Mel Mongerson

Many people have had a large impact on the success of the museum but Mel Mongerson and his cousin Nancy Mongerson Warner permanently impacted the museum's



Mel at right on a most serendipitous day when by chance at the Mongerson Farm dedication, Timothy K. Garfield, (at left) 2x great grandson and family stopped by from California and joined in the celebration.

setting in 2002 when they sold the 95 acre Edward Garfield/Mongerson Brothers Farmstead to the museum. For many years, Mel, who had a Chicago LaSalle St. stock brokerage, donated his services processing stock donations to the museum. The Mongerson Family's cooperation was so significant in preserving the museum's setting.