

“ANNVILLE MEMORIES:

THE QUITTIE & STEINMETZ'S WOODS, 1939-1947”

Interview with David H. Wallace, October 2003

As far back as I can remember I was fascinated by wildlife, particularly birds and flowers. I'm not sure how it began, but suspect that it started with my watching birds in our backyard at 504 Maple Street when I was kept home from school for weeks at a time because of recurrent bouts of bronchial asthma. In those days before antibiotics, I had to stay in bed as long as I had a fever. Only after two days with no fever was I allowed to get up for half an hour, then for an hour, then two hours and so on until I was declared well enough to go outside and eventually back to school. During those prolonged home stays, when I wasn't making jigsaw puzzles or reading or playing with my blocks, I would look out my bedroom window and make lists of what I saw -- typically robins, crows, starlings, sparrows, and dandelions.

After I had my tonsils out at the age of eight, the bronchial problems disappeared, but my interest in birds continued, with outside encouragement. My third grade teacher, Miss Haas, gave me a book called *Our Bird Friends and Foes* and someone else gave me a book of nature verses. The latter included a poem about the meadowlark for which I composed a very simple tune. I was then in fourth grade, taking singing lessons from Mrs. Edith Frantz Mills. The school music teacher, Miss Hoover, impressed with my little composition, arranged a string quartet accompaniment for it, and had me sing it at the school's first arts festival. Not all my schoolmates were impressed, however; I remember one of them saying spitefully that I hadn't made the tune up at all, that I had copied it out of an old book!

Two other adults helped stimulate my budding interest in birds and wildflowers. Miss Helen Ethel Myers, librarian at Lebanon Valley College, used to let me accompany her on walks up to Steinmetz's Woods, north of town, on the gravel ridge above the Trout farm. I particularly remember her pointing out where to find bi-colored bird's foot violets and Indian pipes. She also gave me her brother's World War I canvas gas mask bag to carry my Chester Reed bird guides (red, green, and blue). The bag also held my cyanide bottle for collecting insects, given to me by Professor Derickson, head of the college's biology department.

By sixth grade, I was a fully-fledged birder, as you might say, and began making daily lists of the birds and flowers I saw around home or on my frequent hikes up to North Annville (Steinmetz's) Woods and down along the Quittie.

I have saved a few of these lists, dating from 1939-41 and 1947. Here are a few from 1939:

Saturday, March 12: Went to N. Annville woods with Paul Shettel in the morning. Started to snow. Went up again in afternoon. Snowed and sleeted. Sailed boats on the

way home. Saw many birds, especially Robins, Juncos, Chickadees, Downy Woodpecker & a Cardinal. The Skunk Cabbage has been in bloom since Feb. 27.

Saturday and Sunday, March 25, 26, and Friday April 21: Went down to the Quitti and up in woods with Paul Shettel. Observed Hepatica in bloom for first time. Saw about five Garter Snakes. Saw Kingfisher, Hermit Thrush, English Sparrow, White-breasted Nuthatch, Upland Plover, Marsh Hawk, Purple Grackle, Flicker, Crow, Blue Jay, Sparrow Hawk, Robin, Chickadee, Starling, Swamp Sparrow, Song

Sparrow, Hairy Woodpecker, Red-wing Blackbird, Fox Sparrow, Mourning Dove, Chipping Sparrow, Downy Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker,

Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Cowbird, Chimney Swift, Tufted Titmouse, White-throated Sparrow, Junco, Kill-deer, and Cardinal. Observed Corn Speedwell in bloom

Trips to the Quitti, as I called it, usually began with a walk down Bachman's Lane, often including time spent in the little creek, turning over stones in search of crayfish. We didn't go into the quarry, which at that time was still active, but went on past the mill, in the vicinity of which all the trees and bushes were coated with white lime dust. Crossing the bridge (this was long before it was washed away in the Agnes flood of 1972), we almost always turned to the right along the south bank of the creek, past a flourishing bed of watercress and into a well-grazed pasture. Two memories of that pasture stand out in my mind. One was the patches of Vipers Bugloss here and there, evidently too thorny for the cattle to eat. The other was a stone outcrop on which I discovered Walking Fern. This impressed me because in the 1876 edition of Gray's Botany the only locality listed for Walking Fern was either Mount Joy or Lititz. On the edge of the pasture there was a small inlet at the head of which was a spring. We called this spot "Snug Harbor" and spent many a happy time picking through its stone bed for crayfish and skipping flat stones across the Quitti. A little further along the south bank there were a number of old willow trees with low-lying, half-recumbent branches on which we used to climb and sit. This was a good area for birds, including my first Black-throated Green Warbler.

Although my walks continued along the south bank all the way to the old mill on South White Oak Street and occasionally even farther, I have only a sketchy memory of that stretch, at least until nearing the mill, where the bank became a wooded hillside. In the Spring that hillside was covered with Dog Tooth Violet (Trout Lily), Hepatica, Spring Beauty and other early wildflowers. I remember coming across a patch of Wild Ginger on the south bank west of the bridge. Sometimes, coming home from school, I would walk along the north bank, although that was not as interesting, mostly flat and grassy, as I recall. Once in a great while I ventured along the north bank to the east of the lime plant on Bachman's Lane. It was in those woods, now part of the Nature Park, that I discovered a small stand of Showy Orchids on May 14, 1939. A year later I tried to find it again to show a visitor from New York State, but without success. Ten years later, I took a number of photographs of scenes along the Quittie for the 1950 Quittapahilla, the LVC yearbook, a copy of which I am giving to the Friends of Old Annville archives. I remember swimming in the Quittie only once, with

my elementary school friend Jared Horn. We both got sick, presumably from taking in some of the highly polluted water, and never tried that again! The only other activity I associate with the area in the present Quittie Nature Park is ice-skating in the quarry. Then, as now, the floor of the quarry often contained a shallow pond which occasionally froze over and provided a much more accessible, and considerably safer, place to skate than the Water Works.

To get to Steinmetz's Woods, north of town, we sometimes crossed the railroad tracks at Saylor's lumber yard, walking up the dirt lane that led past Tom Trout's farm and into the woods just above the farm. Other times we walked out past the college athletic field and crossed the tracks next to the power station, guarded by fierce looking and sounding German shepherds. Where the lane divided, one way going to Myers' fruit farm, the other to the old farmhouse across from today's cemetery, we usually went straight ahead through the farm pasture along the little creek and up the steep hill where the water tower now stands. This hill, then a close-cropped pasture, was a favorite in winter, when we could ski down it or just slide on an icy crust down to the creek at the bottom. The descent was always somewhat chancy, owing to a number of rocks scattered about the hillside. Although Violet Hill (now known, I understand, as Pansy Hill, the site of the Grandview Cemetery) was just across the road we rarely went over there, as it offered little to entertain us and was not particularly rich in birds or flowers. I don't remember much about Steinmetz's woods themselves, although I saw lots of birds and flowers there. One particular memory is of eating the roots of Sweet Cicely, which we knew as Wild Licorice Root. When the snow was right we also used to cross-country ski through the woods. On the way home, we would sail little boats or sticks down the little creek. On at least one occasion we spent quite a bit of time making little dams in the creek, much to the annoyance of the farmer I suspect. My interest in birds and flowers, or at least my interest in listing, always seemed to taper off after school was out or soon thereafter, to be revived again the following January. By the time I entered high school, however, I was too busy with other things to do much hiking and it was not until the spring of 1947, when I was a student at Lebanon Valley College, that I resumed intensive bird-watching for a couple of months with my former birding partner, Paul Shettel. After that, thirty years were to pass before I took up birding again, in Maryland and in many great places across the country I visited in connection with my work as a Curator/ Historian with the National Park Service.

Dr. Wallace was graduated from Lebanon Valley College in 1947 with a BA in English and History, and received his MA and PhD from Columbia University. Beginning a remarkable professional career at the New York Historical Society, Dr. Wallace moved to work for the National Park Service -serving as Chief of both the Branch of Museum Operations and the Division of Reference Services for Harper's Ferry. Following an initial retirement in 1980, Dr. Wallace returned to the Park Service where he carried out research on historic furnishing for sites such as the Lighthouse Keeper's quarters at Cape Hatteras and the homes of Theodore Roosevelt, Carl Sandburg, & Martin Luther King. A resident of Frederick, MD, Dr. Wallace was honored in 2005 as AHS Alumnus of the Year.