

Box for Octagon House Article

To write these articles, many pleasant hours must be spent in reading the letters - all of them - from week to week and year to year. On average only 3 or 4 of them can be used in each article, making the selection process very hard. Anyone who would spend that much time reading the Octagon House Letters would come to know Hattie, Emaline and everyone they mention, as friends and neighbors. So there is a constant challenge to try and use that material which best conveys the essence of the personalities and lives of the participants.

It is an extraordinary experience to become absorbed in their world. To feel the dust of Main Street, Barrington 1890 under your feet, and hear the wagons and their teams clopping by the front gate. Because so many landmarks are still there, it is possible to walk in imagination from Barrington to the Porter farm - some of the marvellous old trees on Oak Knoll Road are survivors from Hattie's time. In fact, it is quite astounding to recognise how much of the Brown's environment remains in Barrington.

The combination of the physical surroundings and the articulateness of Emaline and Hattie in their written words, enables a late twentieth century interpreter to live back in their world - to walk step by step through their days - bake their bread, sew their garments, feel their tiredness, gather their harvest, watch the sunset with them, rejoice at birth, and realise, perhaps with a modern sense of shock, that death, once the rituals were observed, should be a closed book.

As the preparation of these articles has progressed, so has the sense of amazement grown that Barrington should inherit not only the historical document that is Arnett Lines History, but the human document to be found in the Octagon House Letters.

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