

# Pennsylvania

North Street Tales

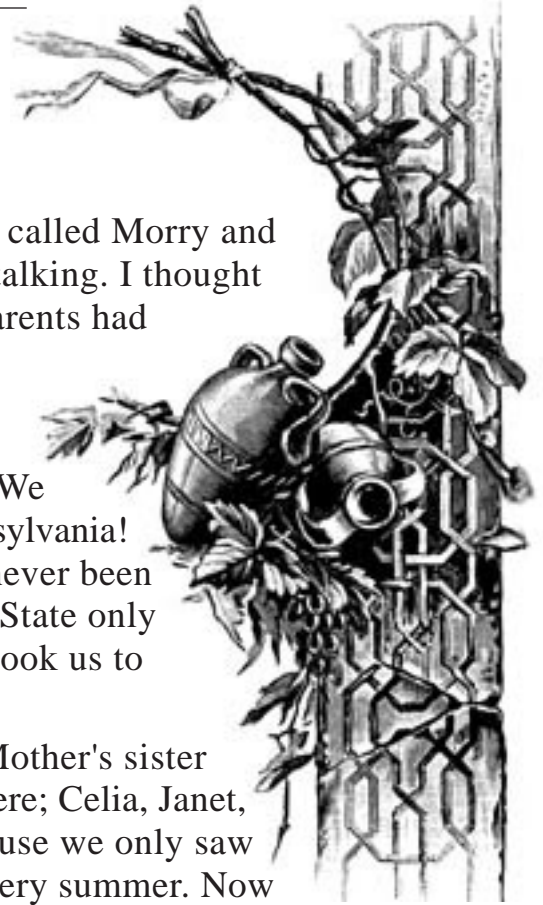
One day in the month of June 1945, Mother and Dad called Morry and me into the kitchen where they had been sitting and talking. I thought something terrible had happened because both our parents had somber looks on their faces. That feeling was soon dispelled when Dad said, "Now you boys know that your mother is going to Pennsylvania next month to visit Aunt Jessie. Well, you two are going with her!" We could scarcely believe our ears. We were going to Pennsylvania! It was a far away place in our imaginations. We had never been there; in fact we had only been outside of New York State only once and that was in August 1941 when our parents took us to Canada to visit relatives there.

We were going to the big city of Pittsburgh to visit Mother's sister Jessie and her husband Ralph. We had four cousins there; Celia, Janet, Ralph, and Dian. We didn't know them too well because we only saw them for about an hour when they came to visit us every summer. Now we were going to spend a whole week with them. We could hardly wait for the day to arrive when we would start our great adventure.

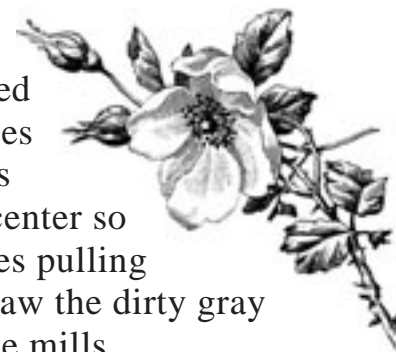
Finally, the day arrived. It was very hot and humid that July day when Dad took us to Mt. Morris to the bus station. We had been on trains however this was the first time we were to ride on a bus for such a long journey. Mother purchased our tickets in the store that also served as the bus station, the big vehicle finally arrived, our luggage was stowed away, and we boarded the bus. We waved to Dad as we pulled away from the curb and began the journey south to Pennsylvania. What a thrill it was to ride that bus. We passed through the southern counties of New York and finally reached the border between New York and Pennsylvania. As we crossed the border it was as if we were going into a foreign country.

We traveled through the mountains of northern Pennsylvania, through many small towns with the houses located right next to the sidewalks as is typical in that state. Our eyes hardly ever left the window so as to make sure we missed nothing. Every two hours or so the bus would stop at a restaurant or a filling (gas) station so that we could use the restrooms. Mother had packed us a lunch because eating in a restaurant was a luxury we couldn't afford. Dad had given both Morry and me a fifty-cent piece for spending money. We were saving our treasure for later.

Eventually we emerged from the mountains. We began to look for signs that we were approaching Pittsburgh. Traffic increased on the highway, a sure sign that we were nearing the city. We had been about ten hours in that bus and were beginning to get rather tired. Another sure sign that Pittsburgh was near was that



we began to smell fumes from the steel mills, the odors produced from the smelting of iron ore into steel. All the smelting furnaces were operating at full capacity because the United States was still at war with Japan. Pittsburgh was also a transportation center so there was also the smoke from hundreds of steam locomotives pulling freight and passenger trains in and out of the city. Soon we saw the dirty gray clouds that hung over the city, the result of pollution from the mills.



It was early evening when we arrived at the bus terminal in downtown Pittsburgh. It was still light outside because of daylight savings time. The heat and humidity were terrible. That combined with the strange smells of a steel city made us feel rather uncomfortable.

Aunt Jessie was at the terminal to meet us. How good it felt to see her. She hugged and kissed us all. We retrieved our suitcases and outside to catch the inter-urban trolley for Trafford a suburb of Pittsburgh. We boarded the trolley for about a 45-minute ride to our destination. After we had reached the terminal in Trafford we went outside where Uncle Ralph was waiting to take us to Level Green. They weren't using their car much in those days because of gas rationing but this was a special occasion.

Our cousins were eagerly awaiting our arrival. We talked continually through dinner, but soon after we had eaten it was good to take a bath and climb into bed, as we were very tired.

What a week we spent. The sun shone everyday. It was hot and humid but that didn't seem to bother us. When Morry, Ralph and I got too warm we went skinny dipping in a creek that ran through a farmers pasture. I shudder now to think what was in that water. However, it couldn't have hurt us because the three of us are still around 57 years later!

We saw many things when we went to tour the city. The beauty of the Heinz Memorial Chapel, built by the Heinz catsup family awed us. I shall never forget Aunt Jessie leading us down one of the side aisles inside the chapel to show us a little pink pig in a stained glass window. We saw the Cathedral of Learning - a whole university located in one skyscraper. We had great fun riding the trolley cars down to the golden triangle. That is where the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers meet to form the great Ohio.

We quickly learned that we couldn't sit on the grass at Aunt Jessie's. The smoke and soot from the steel mills settled on the grass. If you sat down your hands and clothes would soon be black. Aunt Jessie never hung curtains at her windows because they were soon dirty from all the pollution in the air.

Soon it was time to go home. Our cousins didn't want us to leave, however we had to return to New York. After tearful goodbyes at the bus depot, we boarded our bus for the trip home.

What Morry and I didn't know was that Mother had another surprise for us. Our bus brought us through Buffalo on our return journey. We didn't think anything was strange about that though it did seem out of the way. We were soon headed down route 5. When the bus got to Akron Mother had the driver let us off right in front of our sister Carolyn's home. We were going to stay there for a few days. Our vacation had been extended.



The following Monday we caught the bus which took us to Mt. Morris in a rather short time. Dad was waiting for us. We had just completed a wonderful trip one which we would remember for the rest of our lives.

That summer was memorable in more ways than one. The second week in August I went to Camp Sam Wood, a Boy Scout camp in the wilds of Wyoming County. It was there I became acquainted with hot dog soup. Meat was still rationed so the camp cook became very inventive in thinking of different ways to serve hot dogs!

It was during that week at Sam Wood that we learned that Japan had surrendered and that World War II was over. We all wanted to go home because we wanted to be part of the great celebrations that were going on in every town. Church bells were rung, fire sirens went off, people cheered and danced in the streets. The camp officials wouldn't let us go home. We had to complete the week. When we got home we had to hear about the celebrations second hand.

The week after the war ended one of my favorite uncles, Bill O'Mara died while he was doing the milking. The next month my grandmother Barkley died in her kitchen while she was removing pies from her oven.

Thus ended a memorable summer, a summer of joy, a summer of sorrow.



Edward Barkley