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Memories of the Ketchins of Tariffville

Part 5: The Ketchins' Tobacco Business

With their construction business growing, Andrew and William Ketchin had an increasing need for workmen. In his memoirs, William explained, "Here is where I got interested in tobacco as a business." He wrote this brief account of his cigar tobacco ventures:

> The firm of A. J. K. & Son [was] doing a special class of stone building. They called it "Rock Faced Hammer dressed" and no matter how good a stone mason was, it took about a season to break him in to the firm's method of stone building. As soon as fingers got cold in November, masons left for the city to pick up any inside job where they could keep warm. In the spring they scattered, compelling the firm to school new men. So my father and I conceived the idea of buying enough tobacco from the neighboring farmers to keep some of the best men through the winter season, assorting and packing tobacco. This arrangement was carried out successfully.[1]
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> To start the business, I formed a partnership with W. J. Hayes, an experienced tobacco grower, and we bought local tobacco and packed it in an old building belonging to A. J. K. & Son for one year.[2] Then it was decided to incorporate and I, Hayes and A. J. Ketchin, my father, incorporated under Ketchin and Hayes.
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> A fine stone warehouse was built in Tariffville and some land purchased. This enabled us to carry over some of our best masons as the warehouse employed 85 hands through the winter.
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> It soon became evident that sun grown Havana could not compete with shade grown, so it [was] decided to buy lands, build proper barns and raise shaded tobacco. Hayes could not put in more money and at that time, having a splendid offer from Cullman Bros. of New York, he sold out to us and we formed a new corporation under the name of the Ketchin Tobacco Corporation, with $30,000 capital.[3] This was a family corporation under A. J. Ketchin, president, W. M. Ketchin, vice president and manager, A. B. Ketchin, secretary and Hattye M. Ketchin, treasurer.
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> I designed and built several 100-foot and 200-foot curing barns, bought more land, and the Ketchins were in the tobacco business. We helped materially in establishing the Connecticut round tip shade tobacco. We grew 60 acres of shade and 40 acres of sun grown Havana.
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> My father managed the quarries and I managed the building and the tobacco business.

Later, William expanded on these bare facts. He pointed out that by the fall of 1907 he and his wife had four small girls and another child on the way. Ethel Moore Ketchin had been born in 1895, Pauline Spencer Ketchin in 1898, Elisabeth Buckley Ketchin in 1899, Dorothy Arthur Ketchin in 1903. William Andrew Ketchin, their last child, arrived on May 16, 1908. William needed more income to support this growing family.

In the past, he had sorted and packed cigar tobacco during the winter for others in their warehouses. So it was a logical next step for him, with the help of his friend William J. Hayes of Tariffville, to buy tobacco from local growers and, during the winters of 1906-07 and 1907-08, to use an old blacksmith shop that A. J. Ketchin & Son owned in Tariffville to sort, pack and store tobacco until they could sell it for a profit to dealers.

William soon conceived the idea of building a large stone tobacco warehouse and began drawing up

plans. More than a month before the Ketchin & Hayes Tobacco Corporation was legally incorporated in 1908 the local newspaper began announcing that the warehouse would be built.[4] William wrote,

> We managed to build an all stone and concrete two-story warehouse at a cost of $1,200.[5] This warehouse was 55 feet by 80. The ground floor was for assorting and packing, and the second floor for receiving and forced-sweating. The north side of the ground floor was fitted with overhead glass for assorting tables.

The Ketchin & Hayes tobacco warehouse was featured in the *Hartford Courant* on December 1908, with photographs of the outside and inside and a detailed description. The paper stressed how fireproof it was, with "not enough wood in the whole building to kindle a furnace fire."[6] The article says that the building, built by A. J. Ketchin & Son, was brownstone on the outside, with concrete used for the interior, including floors, stairway, partitions and roof. It noted, "The second floor is of 5½ inch concrete with a holding capacity of 200 pounds to one square foot and the roof is of 4-inch concrete figured to carry 40 pounds to the square foot, both floor and roof figured with a safety factor of 4."

William wrote of the reaction that one of his workers, a man called "Judge" Murray, had to the second story's reinforced concrete floor, "When the concrete was set and we began to knock out the lumber on which the concrete was poured, the Judge quit. He said that no one could tell him that concrete would hold up and he didn't propose to risk his life working under it."

Judge Murray figured in a few of William's other stories. He observed that the Judge "could murder the English language better than anyone I ever knew." Besides including the man's malapropisms, this story illustrates the tobacco packing process:

> The "Judge" was working in the Mitchelson warehouse "packing" sun grown tobacco. This class of tobacco was tied in hands of about 20 leaves, then packed in a large box that would hold from 350 to 450 lbs. The hands had to be laid in the box straight and lapped so that there would be no spaces or lumps when the tobacco was put under pressure and nailed up. Mitchell came along, and looking into the "Judge's" box said, "Judge that's rotten packing. Those hands are not laid in straight and your laps are bum." The Judge replied, "I know Mr. Mitchell, it ain't very unanimous, but I can mortify that before I get to the top."[7]

Soon after beginning their sorting and packing operation in their warehouse, the Ketchins began to grow tobacco, too. Here is what he told of their start:

> After we entered the tobacco business, [we bought] 27 acres of land on the Northampton Highway [Route 10] at Hoskins Station, Simsbury, of Jay Barnard, and several acres west of the Barnard lot of Nobles Bros., and ¼ mile west of the above we bought the [Abraham] Soper farm of 80 acres. At that time, W. J. Hayes was with us to care for the tobacco growing.[8] The Soper farm was run down and covered by a tangle of low-bush blackberry bushes which greatly hindered plowing. Hayes looked the field over and decided, as the wind was right, to burn off the berry bushes. The fire was well under way when the wind changed and before it could be brought under [control] it burned over 18 acres of woodland adjacent to the Soper lot, and to settle the damage we were obliged to buy the 18 acres. This gave us in all 140 acres.
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> We had learned by this time that the best method for growing tobacco was to use new land for tobacco for three years, then plant it in potatoes. The reason for this was, we found that planting tobacco on the same ground more than three years produced a poor crop the fourth year. It was evident that our heavy commercial fertilizing put something in the ground that the tobacco plant refused to eat, although we fertilized by government direction.
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> We made a guess that it might be a muriatic potash element which tobacco does not like, but potatoes thrive on. So after 3 years in tobacco we planted potatoes without *any* fertilizer and not only got a good crop of potatoes, but they cleaned the soil so we could plant tobacco for another three years

with this method established.

We tried to prepare some new land every year. As most of the land aside from that purchased of Barnard was woodland, we cut the trees, turning them into lumber and charcoal, pulled out the tree stumps, smoothed up the land for tobacco. This was quite a process. First we sawed everything that would make building lumber. Then [we] cut smaller trees and branches into 4-foot lengths for charcoal.

The toughest job was pulling stumps, some of which were 24 inches in diameter. To do this job we bought a Hercules stump puller capable of exerting an 85,000 lb. pull. This is the way it worked – A windlass was anchored, from which a young oak tree, 6 inches in diameter and 16 feet long, projected. This was called the "sweep." A team of horses were hitched to the end of the sweep by chain and whiffletrees. As the team traveled around the "drum," making a circle 32 feet in diameter, it wound a steel cable on the drum. The cable went through pulleys which multiplied the pull four times, and when chained to a stump, something had to give. Sometimes the stump was tough enough to exert all the strength of the pair of horses, and would bend or spring the 16-foot oak lever. If the driver walked directly behind his team, it would place him directly behind the 16-foot lever, and if the chain or whiffletrees should break, it would be apt to kill him, as the lever sprang back. So I cautioned the driver to always walk beyond the end of the lever to be safe.

But "familiarity breeds contempt" and one day while pulling a particularly tough stump, the unexpected happened. The whiffletree broke, and the 16-foot lever flew back and caught the Polish driver just below his ribs and threw him 15 feet. The men thought that he was dead, but when I arrived, he was trying to breathe. I hustled him to the hospital. There they found no bones broken. His urine was bloody and it was feared that his kidneys were injured. However, they cleared in 3 or 4 days, but his body from ribs to hips turned black. The doctors said that they thought he would be OK, but I worried until that terrible blue-black began to clear up. He was back at work again in two months. I paid his doctor's bill and wages, and he went back to the same job, but never again to walk back of the "sweep" or lever.

Cigar makers use three grades of tobacco in their ware: filler, binder and wrapper. The unattractive but good tasting filler is encased by the binder to give the cigar its shape and the smooth, unblemished outside wrapper gives the cigar its pleasing look. When the Ketchin Tobacco Corporation began growing tobacco, Connecticut Valley growers were beginning to shift from growing the leaf in traditional fields open to the sun to growing it

FINE WAREHOUSE

Tobacco World Says That New Ketchen & Hayes Warehouse Will Be the Best in the Country

The Ketchin & Hayes Tobacco Company which will be the name of the corporation which will take over the interests of Ketchin & Hayes in the near future are putting up what is admitted to be the most complete plant for the sorting and storage of tobacco in the United States. This plant will be constructed of brown stone which is found in a quarry not over a mile distant and the interior work will be of reinforced cement so that there will not be a thing made of wood in the whole building except the table used by the tobacco sorters. This building will be 56x85 and the first floor will contain a sample room in one corner and an office in another, the sorting, sizing and packing room occupying the remainder of this floor space. The second floor will be where the tobacco will be received and it will be used for storing it after it has been put into the cases. A feature of this building will be a lean-to addition on the north side where the sorting will be done. The roof over this part of the building will be made of reinforced glass. There will be 975 square feet of this glass which will make it the lightest sorting room in the world. This building will be as near fire proof as it is possible to make anything constructed by human hands. The plans have been looked over by government experts and they have been pronounced perfect. It is expected that it will be ready for occupancy in time for the fall business of packing tobacco. This is one of the big contracts which Ketchin & Son have on hand this season, the other being the new Methodist church in Simsbury.

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This is a facsimile of the article that appeared on the front page of the Farmington Valley Herald *on May 8, 1908.*

Sports in Tariffville: Baseball and Tennis

I never had a chance to get into athletics much in school, on account of working before and after school hours. However, I got off one Saturday to see a game of ball between Tariffville and Simsbury. When the game was called, it was found that Tariffville was short a man, and as I looked like a husky chap, I was asked to fill in. I protested that I had little or no experience. But as they promised to station me in the field, I agreed to play. Everything went OK until Tariffville was called to the bat. When I was called, I picked up a bat and, stepping up to the plate, made up my mind to knock the ball out of sight.

The Simsbury pitcher was Tom McCollum, noted for pitching a fast ball. The first ball pitched, I fanned the air as the ball struck my jaw. The momentum caused by fanning the air, assisted by the crack on the jaw, spun me around a few times and put me out of the game.

Later I got interested in tennis and built a dirt court where the Catholic Church was later built. I built a court on the corner of Center and South Streets where play was continued until Dr. Munson built a house there. The third court was laid out at the home of Annette Newberry at North Bloomfield. This was a grass court and many pleasant hours of play were spent there.

When the Tariffville Lace Co. mills had become idle, Chas. Smith, a former bookkeeper for the Co. was placed in charge of the buildings. One of the main buildings afforded ample room for a tennis court, and one was laid out on the solid wood floor, and there Dr. Munson, Dr. Wooster, Chas. Smith and I played through the winter months.

I later became interested in golf and played with my close friend George Forbes every Saturday afternoon for several years at Goodwin Park, Hartford.

By William Mansfield Ketchin

in the shade of mesh "tents" to produce perfect wrappers. William Ketchin wrote of the reason for this shift and early experiments in shade tobacco cultivation:

> For some time the Sumatra Islands had been sending to this country a beautiful cinnamon brown wrapper leaf, thin, tough and stretchy, which made an exceptional wrapper because it blended in taste with any binder. In 1901 the Connecticut growers were aroused because Sumatra was taking the wrapper trade. The Islands were sending in a beautiful wrapper leaf and, although it cost considerable more than the Connecticut Havana or Broadleaf wrapper, the cigar manufacturers could afford to use it.
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> It was assorted, packed, graded and color-marked so that the manufacturer could tell how many wrappers he could get from 100 lbs. to suit his particular brand. Then the "New England Tobacco Growers Association" was formed and they sent a committee to Washington to see if a protective duty could be put on the importation of Sumatra tobacco so that Connecticut growers could stay in business. Despite the fact that they succeeded in getting a duty of $1.85 pr. lb. on Sumatra, the cigar manufacturers continued to use it.
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> In 1902 the growers of Havana and Broadleaf in Conn. decided to find out if Sumatra could not be grown in the U.S. The American Tobacco Co. bought land in Gadsden and Madison counties, Florida, and started to experiment with Sumatra seed. They set wooden posts in the ground and connected them 8 feet above ground with 2x4's and four feet apart, then covered the whole top with common lath nailed 2 inches apart. This construction allowed too much sunlight and no protection from millers and other bugs and the leaf produced was so thin that it would wrap 800 to 1000 cigars to the pound. After being assorted into 17 different grades (to match Sumatra grades and colors) and packed as to size in about 150 pound bales, it sold readily. The first year proved its absolute failure, for it would flake up and leave the binder in about three weeks after being wrapped on the binder.

Various experiments continued in Florida and Connecticut until about 1907, when a system was settled upon in Connecticut that was considered would do the trick. The new idea was to take Havana seed to Connecticut, erect wooden posts set three feet in the ground and 7-8 feet above ground [to] allow horse or tractor cultivation, set posts 16 feet apart each way and nail 14 gauge wire acrost the top each way to carry cloth. After much experimentation, it was decided on a cloth with heavy selvage edges woven to 64 openings to the square inch. This was found to allow enough sun to supply gum, allow air to circulate, and by carrying the cloth to the ground on all sides to greatly help in keeping down the bug trouble.

Will Hayes and I had become very much interested in the new development and decided to [plant] seven acres of the Havana seed under cloth. This we did at our land (owned by K. T. C.) at Hoskins Station. The crop grew well to the cloth top and before it was ready to harvest, Yocum Bros., dealers of New York, agreed to give us one dollar pr. pound as weighed in at the warehouse and to pay the cost of "Force Sweating," assorting and packing. We weighed in at 1400 lbs. to the acre, which left a good profit. This was the year that Will left us and accepted the offer of Cullman Bros.

All the time that experiments were going on in developing Conn. Round Tip Shaded Wrapper Tobacco, we kept the building construction part of our business going in our area having as many employees through harvest time, as many as 100 to 150 at times.

William went into detail about the successes and failures that Connecticut growers had. One major problem was that the growing season was so short. They overcame this by planting the seeds in early spring in covered beds and later transplanting the young plants to the covered field. He described the process and the problems that were overcome:

Experimenting was continually carried on by all of the growers and results shared. The heavy cost of seed bed weeding was wiped out by sterilizing. The seed beds were 3 feet wide, covered by glass frames. The Ketchin Tobacco Corporation had 2,200 feet in length of such bed, and each spring a galvanized pan 8 inches deep and 16 feet long was inverted in the bed. This pan was connected to a steam boiler by a steam hose, and steam under 100 lbs. pressure was introduced under the pan for 30 minutes. This was enough to cook an egg under the pan 8 inches under the ground, thus killing all weed seed. The boiler and pan was then moved along the bed. After the bed was cool, the tobacco seed was sown. Thus weed seeds were killed and only tobacco came up.

Well shaped, vigorous plants were carefully selected and the blossoms were bagged to guard against contamination. Each year this careful selection [of seed] was practiced until the present beautiful Conn. round shade cigar wrapper was developed. [It was] sold in Bass bales of 125 to 175 lbs., sized to an inch, light in weight, stretchy, tough, with 16 color marks, enabling the manufacturer to know how many wrappers to the lb. he could expect to get from a bale of wrappers of certain size and grade to fit his trade. This method was a tremendous advance in handling tobacco leaf.

The old way of handling tobacco leaf was much less work for the tobacco farmer and packer, but much more work for the cigar manufacturer, William wrote. He described the old method:

The sun Havana was stripped from the stalk after barn curing and packed in bundles of about 40 lbs. It was then assorted into three grades (wrapper, binder and filler) and packed in a large wooden case (300 to 400 lbs.) and allowed to *sweat* for a year. When it was ready to sell, several hands were drawn out for inspection and, if found sound, it was sold to the cigar mfgr., who had to take his cigar makers from their benches and assort it all over into various sizes, color and grades. This put the buyer in the position of "buying a pig in a poke," for he would find only a small proportion to suit his trade in wrappers and would have to sell the balance. However, it was a pretty clean business because a good buyer could tell nearly from the drawn sample about how the case would work out and if a farmer put trash in the case, it would be whispered to other buyers and he would be passed by when the buying season came.

As he pointed out, sun grown tobacco was harvested by cutting down the whole stalk and hanging it in the curing barn. Using this method meant that the stalk was cut "when the bottom leaves were over ripe and the tops were green," he wrote. Under the new harvesting method eventually used by the shade grower, he explained:

> About 20 leaves are taken off as they become ripe, and as soon as they are hung in the shed, small charcoal fires are built on the ground, the shed closed and fires kept burning for three days. The Ketchin 100 ft. shed held about five acres of shade tobacco, requiring 100 small fires pr. shed. This wilted the leaves quickly and prevented "pole sweat." One year we burned 10,000 bushels of charcoal.

As noted earlier, the Ketchin Tobacco Corporation produced its own charcoal from the trees that they cleared to prepare growing fields.

The perils of weather were legion. William remembered some of the worst tricks that weather played on him as a tobacco grower.

> At our lower farm on College Highway, our seed beds were located. And, as mentioned before, we had 2,200 linear feet of seed bed 6 feet wide. This was covered by glass frames 3'-0" x 6'-0". One day a baby tornado ran over the bed and lifted 20 frames straight up in the air about 30 feet. Some came down on other frames, smashing in all 40 frames. These baby tornados were capable of doing considerable damage. Sometimes they were just a whirling gust of air picking up dust and leaves and at other times [they] would form a whirling dust cloud a hundred feet high and traveling ten miles pr. hour. However, they usually faded out in going a mile or two.
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> One day I saw one coming and it looked as if it would pass over one of our tents. We [were] erecting a tobacco barn nearby and had several of the bents up but not braced. I called the men off the barn and sent 25 or 30 men under the tent, telling them to jump up and grab the wires to hold the cloth in case the baby tornado came over the tent. It did and the men on the wires were jumped up and down like Jumping Jacks, and all the unbraced bents in the barn under construction were knocked down.
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> All growers of shaded tobacco had many sleepless nights after the tobacco had reached full growth (seven to eight feet) because a heavy wind would topple it over and make impossible to get through the rows to harvest as the harvesting, or priming, is done as the leaves become ripe. This covers four periods. Seldom does a shaded tobacco grower get his crop harvested without using lath to strut up leaning or fallen plants.
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> On the 12th of June 1912, a hail storm hit us. In many places it broke the cloth. In other places the hail rolled together forming bunches of ice on the tent and in some places heavy enough to carry the tent to the ground. The tobacco was about three feet high and in many places the tent was down on it. The storm came just at quitting time. I sent the men home for supper, then brought about 30 back. We happened to have a pile of car stakes on the farm, and we worked all night shoring up wires to lift the tent off the tobacco. The bent tops had not gotten set, and the sun did the job of straightening.
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> Another tough part of that particular job was the ice water dripping on the backs of the men all night. At this writing the crop would be ruined under the same circumstances, as today's labor could not stand it, or would not.
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> Hail was our worst enemy on sun grown tobacco, and until we got together and insured the whole valley, hail insurance cost $50 pr. acre. Later Fred Griffin was elected president of the New England Tobacco Growers Association and Joseph Alsop, secretary. And by bunching up the growers, they secured a rate of $25 pr. acre, saving hundreds of thousands of dollars for the tobacco farmers of [the] Conn. Valley.

William Ketchin was a member and officer of a number of tobacco growers' associations. A charter

Here is a Tobacco Story Which Shows What the Smart Yankee Farmers Did

In 1925 I decided to go to Florida to live. I had previously bought 480 acres of rich land south of Lake Okeechobee, so I took several packages of select Conn. round tip seed with the idea of trying it out in the Everglades south of Lake Okeechobee where the black soil was eight feet thick to the rock.

Knowing that Connecticut seed, or round tip shade, had been developed from sun grown Havana from Cuba, I decided to go to Cuba and get the real Cuban. As Cuban growers had begun to grow under shade, I figured, as Florida was semi-tropical, the real Cuban seed would be better than the Connecticut seed which I had brought from Connecticut. So to Cuba I went and located a large shaded tobacco grower, about 100 miles from Havana in a place called Porto de Goff in the Pinar del Rio district. This grower had three grown sons and one daughter. They raised not only tobacco, but practically everything they ate.

All the children were married and had large families. None of them could speak English except one son who had been sent to the U.S. and graduated from Cornell. When he asked about my family, I very proudly replied that I had five children and ten grandchildren. When this was translated to the father, he had a hearty laugh and told his son to say that he had three sons and one daughter and thirty-two grandchildren.

They did not know how many acres in the farm, but it extended twenty-two miles along the railroad. The tobacco fields were scattered in patches of 10 to 20 acres each, and the tobacco was about to harvest. I said, "Your soil resembles our Connecticut soil, your tent is exactly like ours and, what surprises me most, is that your type of leaf is like our Connecticut round tip." They smiled all around and said, "In 1900 you took our sun grown Havana seed which grew a pointed tip like this (putting his extended fingers together) and you smart Yankees developed it to a leaf with a round top like this (bending his fingers) which enables you to cut two more wrappers from the leaf. We take advantage of your years of experimenting, and now get our seed from Connecticut." Needless to say, I went back to Florida and used the seed which I had raised in Connecticut.

By William Mansfield Ketchin

member of the Connecticut Valley Leaf Board of Trade, formed in May 1908, he served as their treasurer.[9] When the Farmington Valley Farmer's Association was formed in 1915, he was a charter member.[10]

The Ketchin & Hayes Corporation employed women as well as men at harvest time as early as 1909.[11] During World War I, when many of his farm laborers were in Europe fighting, particularly the Russian and Polish nationals, the Ketchin Tobacco Corporation increased the number of women employees and expanded the range of jobs they were given to include many traditionally considered men's jobs.

William told a reporter who wrote a feature article for the *Hartford Courant* in 1916 that they had begun using women as "setters," that is, the workers who set the plants in the field after they have grown large enough to be transplanted from the seed bed. The writer reported that William told him that "women who had worked but a few days are as fast as men who had set for years and that he considers the experiment a great success." William also said that the women had agreed to replace their skirts with overalls if they were needed to harvest the leaves.[12] In contrast, a general statement later issued by Simsbury farmers declared that women college students called "Farmerettes," who came in groups from schools such as Columbia College, were unsatisfactory. They quit rather than do jobs harder than what could be accomplished by a small boy, the farmers said.[13]

By 1920 William Ketchin was experimenting with growing crops in the Florida Everglades with the thought of moving to Florida someday. The *Hartford Courant* carried a feature on his pioneering 460-acre agricultural venture in the upper Everglades with Gregory and Warren H. Hale, sons of the editor of the *East*

Hartford Gazette, H. B. Hale. Both young men were veterans of World War I and Warren Hale was soon to marry William's daughter Pauline. The three men raised potatoes, sugar cane, tobacco, oranges, grapefruit, avocados, and vegetables. William praised the weather, the fertility of the soil and the abundant wild game in the area in this article and in talks given to interested groups, including the Men's Club at Simsbury's Congregational Church.[14]

A less rosy picture emerged in William's memoirs. He told of ineptness and cheating on the part of his hired overseers. One big tobacco crop was ruined when his instructions for handling the leaves during the crucial sweating process were overruled by a less knowledgeable person. In short, being an absentee grower did not work.

At the end of March in 1921 William left Hattye, Pauline, Billy, and their housekeeper/companion Beula Parmelee in Miami and returned to Tariffville as he always did to begin preparing to plant tobacco. "I had been home ten days," William wrote, "and eating my lunch at Father's when the following telegram came from Pauline. 'The Doctor says Mother has pneumonia and there is no hope.' I immediately packed my bag and had a car take me to Hartford and left New York that night, hoping that I could reach Miami in time, but at Richmond the conductor handed me another telegram saying that she had left us at 7 p.m. She was sick only twelve hours."

Looking back over their marriage, he wrote in part,

> Hattye: My Sweet Little Wife and companion for 27 happy years. She was five feet, four inches tall, wearing a No. 3 shoe, When I married her she weighed 105 lbs. Afterwards she reached 127 lbs. and carried that weight throughout life. She was an excellent housekeeper, good natured, patient, and a most excellent mother of five healthy children. I cannot recall that she ever found fault or spoke a cross word to me. I am sure that my disposition through those hard working days was not the best. She made friends everywhere she went and was happy in her home. And as a consequence she made a happy home for me and her children.

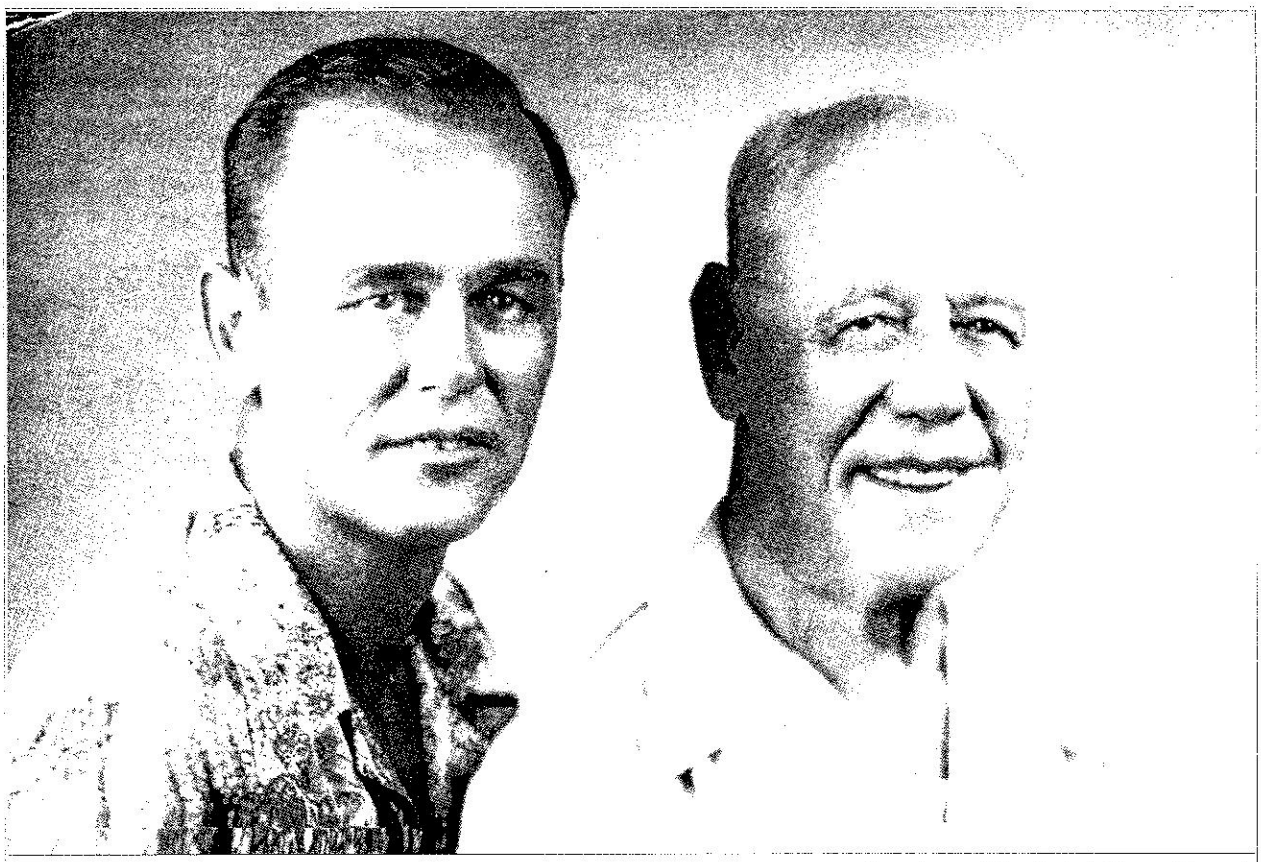
William Ketchin wrote that after Hattye's death he lost, for a time, his zest for living. He remained in his house in Tariffville and Beula Parmelee stayed on as his housekeeper even though she had become engaged to Ralph L. Granger of East Granby. In his memoirs he praised Miss Parmelee highly for her devotion to Hattye in her years of delicate health and for keeping her promise to Hattye to stay with him until he remarried. William wrote that in September 1924 he married Margaret Reid, a matron at Simsbury's Ethel Walker School for Girls, "to release Beula and keep my home."

"Margaret was Scotch, a maiden lady, 50 years of age," he wrote. "I became acquainted with Margaret while we were both members of the Simsbury Choral Club. We were also members of the Eastern Star." Margaret was a Girl Scout leader and a drum major of a girls drum and fife corps which had been trained by his brother Archie, he wrote. They were married in the home of Simsbury's Methodist minister.

"The day after we were married, the Sphinx Shrine Temple of Hartford, of which I was a member and a drummer in the Fife, Drum and Bugle Corps, entrained for Atlantic City for a Shrine Convention. I took Margaret and we spent the week in Atlantic City. That was the only Honey Moon we had until I decided to go to Cuba for tobacco seed to try out tobacco growing in the Everglades. I took Margaret with me and we spent two weeks there covering most of the interesting places," he wrote.

William's father lived just long enough to see his son married again. Andrew J. Ketchin died of pneumonia at the age of seventy-six on January 2, 1925, in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. William wrote, "How I missed his sound advice. Even for [the] 15 years he had not been active in the business, he was always a ready help. Our lives were together in everything until his death."

At the time of his second marriage, Williams' daughters were grown. The oldest three were married



Courtesy of Frederick Henry Herpel

William Mansfield Ketchin is shown in this photograph with his fifth child and only son, William Andrew Ketchin. Bill Ketchin was born on May 16, 1908, when his father was almost thirty-seven. The picture was taken about 1947.

and the youngest, Dorothy, was twenty-one and living in California. (Buela Parmelee went there to visit her before returning for her own wedding.)[15] His son Bill was sixteen and lived at home when he was not away at boarding school.

In addition to those already mentioned, William Ketchin was a member of many other civic organizations. He records that in 1889 he was a founding member and the first captain of Simsbury's Oliver O. Case Camp of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. He and his whole family were very active in Tariffville's Village Improvement Society. He also belonged to the Masons, Knights of Pythias, Woodsmen of America, Foresters of America, Odd Fellows and, later in Florida, the Rotary and Chamber of Commerce. He was a director of the Simsbury Bank and Trust. In the town's government he served as a constable and on the board of education. He was elected to the Connecticut House of Representatives for the 1924-1925 session.

"Shortly after I married Margaret, I decided to go South to live," he wrote. "I was at that time representing Simsbury in the Conn. Legislature. The House closed on my birthday, June 3, 1925, and the next day I went to Fort Lauderdale, Florida." There he found himself in such a real estate boom and housing shortage that there was no place to rent. Margaret and his son Bill joined him in August after he managed to buy a houseboat which he placed adjacent to the property that he had bought in 1920 on the south bank of the New River.

Before leaving Connecticut William had begun to divest himself of his property. The *Hartford Courant* reported his sale in February 1924 of Ketchin Tobacco Corporation fields and six large tobacco sheds in the Hoskins area of Simsbury to Alexander T. Pattison. He owned the general store on Hopmeadow and Wilcox Streets and was, according to the paper, "the largest individual grower in the valley." The land had been fallow the previous year, the paper said.[16] Simsbury Land Records show numerous transactions, including the sale of the Ketchin quarry to the Ensign-Bickford Company in 1925.[17] The fireproof stone tobacco warehouse that he had built at 7 Church Street became, after he sold it in 1941, the fire station for the Tariffville Fire District.

Toward the end of his memoirs William Ketchin wrote in detail about his life in Florida. To summarize briefly, he recounted the terrible destruction Fort Lauderdale suffered because it was in the direct path of the hurricane of September 18, 1926. The hurricane helped to put an end to the infamous south Florida real estate bubble and almost ended his newly established business of manufacturing Duntile concrete blocks and tile for building construction and concrete pipe for drainage. The Great Depression brought another downturn in his fortunes. He confided, "At one period during the six years following the 1926 hurricane and depression, it was all we could possibly do to get enough to eat. Taxes lapsed here and in Conn. on the old homestead and on the stone warehouse."

In 1938, just as his business prospects had begun to rise, Margaret died of what the doctors called "sleeping sickness." Of her he wrote, "Throughout it all Margaret was a brave, helpful little Scotch woman. Never a growl or complaint. She was a woman of fine character and a loyal, faithful wife."

After Margaret's death, his son Bill joined him in his business. Then World War II halted most construction and the younger Ketchin literally rode out the war as a navigator for Pan American Airlines, which transported materials for the war effort. William barely held his overextended business together. Later he proudly wrote, "By keeping 4 or 5 men making pipe and selling off the stock on hand and finally leasing the plant at 450^{00} pr. month, I managed to cancel all indebtedness and when leased to my son Bill and son-in-law Thomas E. Welch, the Ketchin Brick and Tile Co. was entirely clear of debt."

William retired from the business but continued to live in the company's demonstration house surrounded by a garden. He remained active in his many fraternal organizations and kept in touch with friends in both Florida and Connecticut. Like his father before him, he was always ready to share his business knowledge with his family. One of the last entries in his memoirs is the record of the marriage of his grandson Henry Ketchin Herpel to Patricia Blocher at West Palm Beach, Florida, in August 1948. Henry Herpel was his daughter Elisabeth's son. Two months later William was again in West Palm Beach "to help locate a warehouse for starting Henry Herpel making K Tile."

William Mansfield Ketchin was eighty-seven when he died on April 19, 1959, in Fort Lauderdale. He is buried along with his parents, his brother Archie and his widow, and his own two wives in Simsbury Cemetery on Hopmeadow Street.

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The business that Henry Ketchin Herpel established in West Palm Beach in 1948 is an offshoot of William Mansfield Ketchin's Fort Lauderdale business, now Ketchin Concrete Products. Mr. Herpel's business is continued by his son, Frederick Henry Herpel. He is president of Herpel. Inc, Cast Stone & Columns, which produces all manner of exterior and interior architectural elements. (See www.herpelcaststone.com) Among other things, the company supplies materials for restoration work on the grand buildings and houses designed in the 1920s in the Mediterranean Revival and Spanish Colonial Revival styles by architect Addison Mizner and for new construction in those styles. Several Mizner buildings are on the National Register of Historic Places.

Mary Jane Springman edited the manuscripts of William Mansfield Ketchin's memoirs provided by his great grandson Frederick Henry Herpel. She thanks him for this most significant contribution to Simsbury history.

Notes

1. As noted in previous installments, William Ketchin wrote the first section of his memoirs in the third person. For consistency all his writing has been changed to the first person. Also, he sometimes wrote several accounts of the same subject. These have been combined in some instances.
2. Later in his memoirs, William Ketchin indicated that they used this building, a former blacksmith shop, for two years. He and William J. Hayes both contributed $500 capital to the original venture, he wrote.
3. William Ketchin later wrote this about William Hayes' exit from the partnership: "Will [had contributed] a lot and a small amount of cash, but [that] still left him a minority shareholder. It worked out nicely, however, for just at that time Cullman Brothers of New York, one of the largest tobacco dealers in the U.S., offered Will a fine job as a buyer for them and, after considering the matter and the fact that he had formerly worked with Cullman Bros., Will decided to take their offer. We gave Will his cash share and deeded back to him his lot and later changed the name to The Ketchin Tobacco Corporation."
4. On June 12, 1908, the *Farmington Valley Herald* said in the Tariffville column on page two, "The Ketchin & Hayes Tobacco Corporation was incorporated and the papers were sent to the office of the Secretary of the State Tuesday. The certificate shows that the capital stock is $50,000 authorized and $1,000 paid in." William wrote that, in addition to William J. Hayes and himself, the other partners were his wife Hattye, his father, and his invalid brother Archibald.
5. According to the Inflation Calculator at www.westegg.com/inflation, $1,200 in 1908 was equal to $28,748.92 in 2010.
6. *Hartford Courant*, December 11, 1908, 12.
7. William Ketchin is referring Ariel Mitchelson of Tariffville, one of the most successful tobacco men in Simsbury.
8. The Ketchin & Hayes Corporation's purchase of "thirty-three acres of excellent tobacco land from J. Barnard" was reported in the *Hartford Courant* on January 28, 1910, page seventeen. The purchase of the Soper land was reported in that newspaper on February21, 1911, page ten.
9. *Farmington Valley Herald*, May 8, 1908, 1; *Hartford Courant*, May 9, 1908, 13.
10. *Hartford Courant*, March 14, 1915, 5.
11. *Hartford Courant*, July 29, 1909, 14.
12. *Hartford Courant*, January 13 1916, 18.
13. *Hartford Courant*, August 18, 1918, 7.
14. *Hartford Courant*, June 19, 1921, X1; Warren Hale married Pauline Spencer Ketchin on July 23, 1921. For the notice of the address at the Congregational Church, see the *Hartford Courant* April 8,1923, page eighteen.
15. After moving to Florida William kept in touch with his friends in Connecticut. On October 14, 1948 he wrote, "Today I received a long newsy letter from my lifelong friend "Net" Newberry Case of N. Bloomfield, Conn. She told of Beula Parmelee Granger of E. Granby being endorsed by both Republicans and Democrats to represent them in the Conn. Legislature, which will make Beula's third term."
16. *Hartford Courant*, February 3, 1924, 2.
17. Simsbury Land Records, 65:10.

Correction: In footnote 10 of the Spring 2012 issue, the name of one of the previous owners of the Ketchin quarry was incorrect. He was Chauncey H. Eno, not Chancy F. Eno.

The Simsbury Free Library's genealogical and historical research library recently received donations of two books. The board of trustees and staff are sincerely grateful for:

•*Representative Citizens of Connecticut* donated by Pam Bartlett Little in honor of James and Virginia Connolly and Thomas and Margaret Donohue

•*Bidwell Family History 1587-1982*, vol. 1, donated anonymously on behalf of our late member and benefactor A. Irene Weldon.

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