

## The Squeamish Town Clerk - Spring 1939

As a ten year old kid on my way to Towpath Grammar School each day, I would pass by the Town Clerk's office on the side street near Simsbury Road. Twice a week on Tuesday and Thursday, I would stop by Mrs. Woodford's office to empty the waste paper baskets and burn the trash in the incinerator behind the building. I was paid five cents for this job and that was pretty good money in those days, especially since it would buy a small bag of penny candy at the Home Circle Store on Main Street.

Kids my age were always looking for a way to earn a nickel or a dime.

It so happened that my Uncle John, who owned a large farm across the road from Riverdale Farms, told me that Hartford County was offering a bounty of ten cents for dead woodchucks. All you had to do was cut off the tail of the dead animal and present it to the Town Clerk for your bounty.

One spring day, while visiting the farm, my uncle shot a woodchuck which was digging up his vegetable garden. I had the task of burying the critter, but only after I had cut off the tail.

The next day, Tuesday, on my way home from school, I stopped by the Town Clerk's office. I received ten cents from Mrs. Woodford in exchange for the smelly woodchuck tail. The squeamish Town Clerk didn't want to touch the bushy tail and asked me to throw it into the waste paper basket.

Excited with my shiny ten cent coin I ran for the door.

"Aren't you going to empty the waste paper basket today?" asked Mrs. Woodford.

"Oh, yes, I almost forgot."

While emptying the waste paper baskets in the incinerator, out fell the woodchuck tail. What a shame to burn a beautiful tail, I thought. I wrapped the tail in an envelope which I found among the papers.

Off I ran through Mr. O'Neill's back yard. Over the cemetery fence I climbed, and with that short-cut I was at Harry Rosen's store on Main Street in no time at all.

"Where did you get the money for all that candy?" my pal Casey asked.

"From the Town Clerk's office," I said. "They're giving a ten cent bounty for woodchuck tails."

A great idea occurred to me. I gave Casey the woodchuck tail wrapped in the envelope and he went to the Town Clerk's office to collect his ten cent bounty. Again, Mrs. Woodford asked Casey to throw the disgusting, smelly tail into the waste paper basket.

On Thursday, I couldn't wait to go to work at the Town Clerk's office to empty the waste paper baskets.

Casey and I knew we shouldn't have done it again, but that same bushy tail was worth ten cents every time!