Fairfield Dairy : World Renown – Tribulations – Failure – Legacy


The story begins with a Newark Pediatrician (Dr. H.L. Coit) who was concerned with his infant son’s bottled cow milk. He visited the Dairy that was supplying his home and was devastated with the filthy and unsanitary conditions of the entire milk supplying process. As a ‘Baby Doctor’, he felt that many young children were being practically poisoned with contaminated milk that likely contained disease causing bacteria. The ‘germ theory’ was then gaining general medical profession acceptance as a result of studies by Louis Pasteur, Robert Koch, and many of their late 19th century Contemporaries.

Drinking water and contaminated milk were the main cause of child mortality with about 20% dying before reaching their first birthday. In 1893 Newark received its first
clean water supply from the Pequannock Watershed bypassing Belleville’s Passaic River intake that contained raw sewerage and industrial waste from the upriver cities of Paterson and Passaic.

At that time there were dozens of Dairies supplying milk to Northern New Jersey with only minimal involvement of the various Boards of Health (local, county, or state). These Boards were often filled by political patronage appointees who were seldom fully committed to milk purification initiatives.

Dr. Coit began to search out a Dairy Business that would adhere to a strict code of sanitary conditions utilizing the latest technologies available at the time. He was directed to an already successful Dairy Farmer in Caldwell Township (specifically Fairfield and parts of West Caldwell today) Stephen ‘Dutch’ Francisco.

The Francisco Family was well established in the area going back to the original land purchases from the Lenape/Delaware Indians. The Francisco operation called “Fairfield Dairy” was already a leader in all aspects of ‘modern’ Dairy Farming. But Dr. Coit imagined even higher standards that would guarantee the purest and most wholesome milk product possible. His ‘babies’ deserved nothing less.

Dr. Coit and Dutch Francisco worked together and developed a master plan that scrutinized every detail of pure milk production. The extraordinary level of detail for each and every aspect of the process cannot be emphasized enough. A ‘cost was no object approach’ was taken because they knew that they could create a market for a pure ‘Certified’ Milk fully endorsed and prescribed by Doctors and the Medical
Community at large. Selling a normal 8 cent quart of milk for nearly double was predicted and found readily acceptable by judicious Customers. The more affluent communities, especially Montclair, wanted nothing else. In 1893 a sixty eight point contract was drafted detailing the terms and conditions Dairy Farms needed to comply with to qualify as a ‘Certified’ milk producer. Of course these stipulations fit snugly around Fairfield Dairy like a cowhide glove. For example, restricting intoxicating liquors was a condition of employment at FD. Francisco recruited Polish workers who had to sign a pledge against drinking liquor before they even left their homeland. Potential competitors found full compliance nearly impossible because of these sixty eight Certified Milk obligations and their associated capital expense.

All Milk Men thoroughly ‘washed up’ and ‘gowned up’ for milking with their custom designed and sterilized milking pails. The first Federal Food and Drug Act was still 13 years in the future (1906).

The venture was hugely successful and a depot established in Montclair also tweaked the raw milk to Doctors prescriptions. This was mostly adjusting the milk fat percentage as we do today when buying skimmed, 1%, 2%, or whole milk. In later years pasteurization was another option when so prescribed.

But pasteurization was not universally accepted back then, and many felt that the nutritional value of the milk was significantly reduced. (Note: Anyone who has tasted raw milk chilled immediately after milking will tell you of its incredible flavor and sweetness. But nutrition value makes a much better argument).
So now we have the great ‘milk question’ : Certify or pasteurize. A discussion we still have in 2018. There’s no doubt that ‘Certified Milk 68’ can be pure with only minimal natural and mostly harmless bacteria. But there was a lurking highly contagious killer in dairy cattle ‘bacterium Mycobacterium bovis’ or Bovine Tuberculosis.

Although regular testing was required in the 68 rules for both cattle and workmen, some germs could elude detection and could quickly infect a dairy herd. Pasteurization (when perfected) destroyed this bacterium, but purists felt that careful testing along with the other 67 rules of purity, sterilization, refrigeration, etc. made for a better milk product. The key was prevention, early detection, and immediate culling of the BTB ‘reactors’.

We need some important context here, so we have to put on our reality goggles and set them to 1908.

Very early in the 20th century there was much confusion about the causes of disease and epidemics, transmission, etc. For example, Dr. Robert Koch the German Scientist who won the 1905 Nobel Prize in Physiology and Medicine for his work with tuberculosis updated his research in 1908. Koch concluded that bovine TB could NOT be transmitted to humans by either milk or meat consumption. Of course this is not true, but it well illustrates the contrary deductions of even the most eminent scholars of the time.

* * * *

The ‘Certified Milk’ crusade was already being spread from coast to coast. Coit and Francisco were ‘rock stars’ in the pure milk business. Milk Commissions similar to Coit’s in Essex County were being formed in major cities across the Country. Francisco trademarked the ‘certified milk’ designation but it was too late to benefit from it because it had already become a common term within the industry. (With hindsight, Francisco could have retired a rich man if he registered and certified dairies for fees like ‘Kosher’ and ‘Organic’ as Producers are so authorized today.)
Fairfield Dairy was by far the most famous and envied Operation in the nation. Virtually the ‘King of the hill’ in the Dairy Industry, even receiving worldwide recognition and frequent visits from prominent Doctors and Dairymen looking to duplicate Certified Milk’s lofty status. After 25 years of growth and success a major setback occurred around 1915. Natural calf births were not sufficient to keep up with FD’s needs, so dairy cows were purchased from some New York farms. These “Yorkers” were somehow infected with bovine TB but it went undetected when they were initially purchased. (Substitution ‘foul play’ cannot be ignored as a possibility – though a remote one). When routine testing revealed the BTB it had already spread throughout the entire FD herd. 35% of the cattle had to be destroyed. These losses were not bad enough, but the damage to FD’s reputation was even more significant as newspapers highlighted the problem, and highlighted it again frequently. The final blow was the Medical Milk Commission’s ruling that adding off premises birthed cows to the herd was now prohibited. Repopulating the herd would now take an enormous amount of time.

It’s my belief that all of these factors led to the steady decline of the business with the burden of expenses likely weighing down any hope of recovery. Ironically, many area Dairies with much inferior practices and facilities benefitted from FD’s decline.

At least Dr. Coit went to his grave in 1917 knowing that he saved many baby’s lives with pure Certified Milk. Stephen Francisco was to see his great ‘Dairy Disneyland’ die off slowly before his own death in 1923.
Milk bottle sterilization and filling operations for 4,000 quarts of daily output.

Despite its eventual commercial failure, FD was a great success in many regards. Dr. Coit and Mr. Francisco ‘raised the bar’ for proper sanitation practices, by demonstrating that the highest goals and objectives were achievable. Perhaps not ‘double the price’ practical, but identifying the highest ideals of purity that should always be worthy of consideration.

Many 21st century books about milk often reference ‘Certified Milk’ with reverence. These books were ‘skimmed’ by this writer (a little milk humor there) and a great link found to parts of Ron Schmid’s book “The Untold Story of Milk” (2009).

https://www.realmilk.com/safety/pasteurize-or-certify/
FRIENDS OF LITTLE CHILDREN

Stephen and Lydia Francisco - Prospect Hill Cemetery 1923

Respectfully dedicated to Dr. Henry Leber Coit and Stephen ‘Dutch’ Francisco

................Paul Pollio - November 12, 2018
COPY OF THE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE MEDICAL MILK COMMISSION OF
ESSEX COUNTY, N. J., AND STEPHEN FRANCISCO, OF CALDWELL, N. J., DATED
MAY 19, 1893

The following agreement, made this nineteenth day of May, 1893, between Henry L.
Coit, M. D., of Newark, New Jersey; Theron Y. Sutphen, M. D., of Newark, New Jersey;
William B. Graves, M. D., of East Orange, New Jersey; L. Eugene Holhster, M. D., of
Newark, New Jersey; Joseph W. Stickler, M. D., of Orange, New Jersey, and James S.
Brown, M. D., of Montclair, New Jersey, parties of the first part; and
Stephen Francisco,
of Caldwell, New Jersey, party of the second part: Witnesseth as follows: That the party
of the second part doth hereby bind himself to a fulfilment of the provisions of this
contract, for and in consideration of the benefits hereinafter named by the parties of the
first part.

Furthermore, the following named persons: Frank A. Wilkinson, of Newark, New Jersey;
Isaac Lane, of Caldwell, New Jersey, and William Bush, of Caldwell, New Jersey, all
acquaintances of the party of the second part, hereby affix their signatures to this
agreement, attest to the honor of the party of the second part, and become sureties for
the execution of this agreement.

1. The party of the second part doth hereby agree to conduct such parts of his dairy
as may be hereinafter named, collect and handle its products in conformity with the
following code of requirements, for and in consideration of the promised endorsement of
the parties of the first part, as hereinafter indicated. The milk thus produced shall be
known as certified milk; shall be designed especially for clinical purposes, and when at
any time the demand shall be greater than the supply, and is required by a physician,
either for infant feeding or the diet of the sick, it is hereby agreed that such shall be the
preferred purchaser.

2. The party of the second part further agrees to pay for chemical and bacteriologic
examinations of the aforesaid certified milk, at such times as in the judgment of the
parties of the first part is desirable.

3. He also agrees to defray the cost of a bi-monthly inspection of his dairy stock, or
oftener, if necessary, by a competent and approved veterinarian, all of which persons,
namely, the chemist, the bacteriologist, and the veterinary surgeon, shall be chosen by
the parties of the first part, to whom they shall render their reports in writing.

4. It is expressly understood and agreed, that the party of the second part shall not
pay more than the sum of five hundred dollars in any one year for the services of
chemist, bacteriologist and veterinary surgeon, and the party of the first part shall limit
the expense of such service to that amount. It is furthermore agreed that the party of the
second part, on receipt of a certified copy of the reports of the experts, shall mail to the
persons indicated by the parties of the first part, and not to others, a duplicate printed copy of the aforesaid reports, bearing the signatures of the experts and the names of the physicians. The same to be issued at such intervals as in the judgment of the parties of the first part is desirable; also that the necessary expenditures for printing and circulation be met in the same way as herein provided for expert examinations.

_Location of Lands_

5. It is hereby understood and agreed, that the lands used by the owners, agents or assigns of the dairy, conducted by the party of the second part, and employed for pasturage, or any lands that may be hereafter acquired for such purposes, or such lands as may be used for the cultivation of hay or fodder, shall be subject to the approval of the parties of the first part.

_Buildings_

6. It is also understood and agreed, that the buildings, such as stables, creamery, dairy house and spring house, shall be constructed after the most approved style of architecture, in so far as construction may affect the health of the dairy stock, or the character and conditions of the milk.

7. That the buildings used for the housing of the animals shall be situated on elevated grounds, and capable of being properly drained.

8. Said buildings to be sheltered from cold winds, lighted and ventilated according to approved hygienic methods. The buildings shall be constructed so as to favor the prompt and easy removal of waste products.

9. The apartments used for the storage of either feed or fodder shall be removed from possible contamination by stable waste or animal odors.

10. All buildings shall, in addition to healthful location, approved construction and proper ventilation, be kept free from animal or vegetable matter in a state or process of decomposition or decay, and always free from accumulations of dust or mould.

_The Water-supply_

11. The dairy shall be supplied with an abundance of pure water.

12. No water from shallow wells or springs holding surface drainage shall be used for watering stock, cooling milk, or cleaning vessels.

13. Nor shall any well or spring be located within three hundred feet of the stable.

_Surroundings_
14. It is further understood and agreed that the immediate surroundings of the buildings shall be kept in a condition of cleanliness and order. There shall not be allowed to accumulate in the vicinity any loose dirt, rubbish or decayed vegetable or animal matter, or animal waste.

15. Nor shall there be within three hundred yards of any building any constantly wet or marshy ground or stagnant pools of water.

16. Nor shall there be kept within three hundred yards of any building used for dairy purposes any fowl, hogs, horses or other live-stock.

17. It is hereby understood and agreed that the following unhealthful conditions shall be a sufficient reason to exclude any animal from the herd used for any purpose in the aforesaid dairy: Any animal that is judged by a competent observer to suffer from tuberculosis even though the disease be localized or latent.

18. Any animal with fever. Any animal suffering from septic absorption or other disease followed or associated with parturition.

19. Any animal suffering from mammitis or mammary abscess.

20. Any animal with persistent diarrhea or any other abnormal physical condition which could in any way be detrimental to the character of the milk.

21. It is furthermore agreed that when an animal shall be found by a competent observer to be in a state of ill health, prejudicial either to the other animals in the herd or to human health, the same shall be removed immediately and if necessary shall be killed.

22. It is also understood and agreed that the party of the second part shall exclude from the herd used for producing certified milk, immediately after discovery, any animal subject to the following conditions: Any animal that was bred through consanguinity within a period of three generations.

23. And from this time forth, any animal of those bred by the party of the second part, used for producing certified milk, that was not, as a heifer, kept sterile during its first twenty-seven months.

24. Any phenomenal milker, except that glandular disease or tuberculosis has first been excluded by a competent observer.

25. It is furthermore agreed that if at any time it is desired by the parties of the first part, that a different breed of milch cows should be substituted for the one in use, in order that the standards of quality in the milk may be raised, the party of the second part will endeavor to carry the same into effect.
Housing and Care

26. It is furthermore agreed, that the dairy stock employed in the production of certified milk shall be properly sheltered from the influences of weather and climate prejudicial to their health; also that the animals shall be kept clean, groomed every day, and treated kindly at all times.

27. The waste products of the stable shall be removed so frequently, and the stable floor so thoroughly cleaned, that the same shall be as free as possible from animal odors.

28. It is also agreed that no milch cow shall be used for dairy purposes while in a state of excitement, either as a result, or during the period of estrux, or which has been made nervous either by beating, whipping, kicking, prodding, or running.

Feeding

29. It is hereby understood and agreed that the methods of feeding the cows furnishing the certified milk shall be subject to the approval of the parties of the first part. The feed and fodder shall consist only of nutritious and wholesome materials; such as grass, clover and timothy hay, whole grain, or the entire result of the grist. No materials shall be employed which are or may become injurious to the health of the animals. There shall not be fed at any time, or in any quantity, either alone or mixed with other feed or fodder, hulls, screenings, wet or dry brewer's grains, sour ensilage, or any waste by-product in the treatment of grain, low marsh grass, or any of the questionable or exhausted feeds or fodders employed either to increase the milking capacity of the animal, or that will produce an impoverished milk, or that will impart to it unnatural odors or flavors. Nor shall the cows be allowed to eat green or worm-eaten fruit, poisonous weeds, or to drink poisonous or stagnant water.

Collecting and Handling

30. It is furthermore understood and agreed, that the cows from which is obtained certified milk shall be milked only in a clean building, and not in an ill-ventilated stable containing foul odors and bad air.

31. No animal furnishing certified milk shall be milked until the udder shall first have been cleaned in a manner approved by the parties of the first part.

32. No person shall be allowed to draw the milk who has not within fifteen minutes of the milking first washed his or her hands, using soap and nail brush, and afterward thoroughly rinsing the hands in clean water.

33. The person or persons engaged in milking shall also be dressed in clean overclothes.
34. No person shall be allowed to draw the milk who has been engaged with the care of horses, in the same clothing or without first washing his hands.

35. No milk shall be represented as certified milk that is not received from the udder into vessels, and from these into cooling cans, both of which are perfectly clean and dry, having been cleansed and heated, at a temperature adequate to effect complete sterilization, since the last milking; and have been kept inverted in a clean, dry and odorless atmosphere.

36. No milk shall be represented as certified milk that has not been passed through a sieve of wire or other cloth, either while milking or immediately thereafter, having not less than one hundred meshes to the linear inch.

37. No milk shall be represented as certified milk that does not consist of the entire contents of the udder at each milking, including the fore-milk, middlings, and strippings.

38. No milk shall be represented as certified milk that has been drawn from the animal at abnormal hours, such as midnight or noon; nor from any animal for a period of nine weeks before calving, or that has not been separated for nine days after parturition.

39. No milk shall be represented as certified milk which has been exposed to the emanation or infection of any form of communicable disease, either in the person or persons handling the milk or by accidental contamination in cleaning milk containers, or by the association of any person engaged in handling the milk, with person or persons sick of contagious disease.

Preparation for Shipment

40. It is hereby understood and agreed, that all milk represented as certified milk shall receive every known detail of care that will promote its keeping qualities, and favor its safe transportation.

41. That the milk on being drawn from the cow shall be treated by ice, or clean, cold water in motion, and proper aeration, in order, first, to remove its animal heat, and, second, to reduce its temperature to a point not above fifty degrees, nor below forty degrees Fahrenheit; said temperature to be acquired within forty-five minutes after milking, and maintained within the above limits while held for shipment, during its transportation, and until it is delivered to the purchaser.

42. That the cooling of the milk shall not be conducted in the same building in which it is drawn, nor in an atmosphere containing dust or tainted with animal odors.

43. That all the foregoing provisions concerning the cleansing and condition of vessels or utensils shall be complied with in the said cooling process.*
44. It is furthermore agreed, that no milk shall be represented as certified milk, that has been changed or reduced in any way, by the addition of water or any solid or liquid substance, in or out of solution, or the subtraction or removal, in any manner, of any part thereof.

45. It is hereby understood and agreed, that all milk to be represented as certified milk, shall be packed in flint glass quart jars immediately after it is cooled.

46. Said jars to be of pattern approved by the parties of the first part.

47. It is furthermore agreed that the bottles or jars, before being used, shall be cleaned by hand, separately, with the aid of hot water, alkaline soaps, rotating brush and steam, and that they shall be rinsed in two separate baths of clean, hot water, and then thoroughly dried and kept inverted until used, without covers, in a clean, dry atmosphere free from odors.

48. It is agreed that the jars shall be filled by a method approved by the parties of the first part.

49. That they shall be sealed after all air has been excluded, by the most approved device for closing them.

50. The bottles after being filled, shall be labeled across the cap, bearing the words "Certified Milk," with the name of the dairyman, together with the date of milking.

51. It is furthermore agreed, that no milk shall be sold as certified milk that is more than three hours old when bottled, nor more than twenty-four hours old when delivered.

Transportation and Delivery

52. It is hereby understood and agreed, that the transportation and distribution of all milk represented as certified milk, shall be conducted by the party of the second part, either in person or by persons employed by him.

53. That in transit, the milk shall not be exposed to any of the foregoing prohibitory conditions.

54. That it shall not be subjected to agitation.

55. That it shall not be exposed to the heat of the sun.

56. That the delivery wagons shall be so constructed that the required temperature of the milk may be maintained during transit.

57. That before the wagons are filled for shipment, the body, the trays, and compartments shall be flushed with boiling water.
58. It is furthermore agreed that the distributing agents shall during the transfer of the milk from the dairy to the purchaser, be subject to the following restrictions, namely:
   That they shall use no tobacco.

59. That they shall take no intoxicating drinks.

60. That they shall not collect the empty containers, nor receive money or milk checks from houses in which an infectious or contagious disease is known to exist.

61. It is also hereby agreed that the collection of empty bottles from places where infectious or contagious disease is known to exist shall be made by other persons than those employed to deliver the milk.

62. That these collections be made with wagons not employed in the distribution of the milk.

63. That before these empty bottles shall be returned to the dairy, they shall be carried to a separate building and first be subjected to the process of cleaning bottles indicated in a former clause of this contract.

64. It is hereby understood and agreed, that if any further precautions or changes in method, calculated to improve the quality of milk, or guard the same from impurities or dangers, is desired, that the party of the second part will cheerfully be governed by such additional rules and regulations as may be laid down by the parties of the first part.

65. It is understood and agreed by the party of the second part, the same binding the owners, agents or assigns of the aforesaid dairy, that the product known as certified milk shall be under the following restrictions in its sale, namely: That until the amount required within the boundaries of Essex County shall first be supplied, it shall not be sold beyond these limits, except that the parties of the first part shall give their consent.

66. It is furthermore agreed by the party of the second part, the same binding the owners, agents or assigns of the aforesaid dairy, that in the event of a failure to comply with any or all of the requirements of the foregoing contract, the party of the first part shall reserve the right to withdraw from the contract, and publish the fact in such manner as they deem best.

67. Finally: It is understood and agreed, that nothing in this contract shall prevent the abrogation of any of the provisions of the same by the parties of the first part, provided that it shall be done for the purpose of substituting other provisions, designed to promote the objects of their organization.

68. It is further understood and agreed by and between the parties hereto, that the party of the second part shall be at liberty to cancel this agreement by giving two months' notice in writing of his desire to do so, in case of inability for any reason, to comply with the terms of the same.
IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the said parties have hereunto set their hands, the day and year first above written.

HENRY L. COIT, THERON Y. SUTPHEN, WILLIAM B. GRAVES, STEPHEN FRANCISCO, L. EUGENE HOLLISTER,

Party of Second Pari. JOSEPH W. STICKLER,

FRANK A. WILKINSON, JAMES S. BROWN,

ISAAC LANE, Parties of First Part.

WILLIAM BUSH,

Sureties. Office of

GUILD & LUM,

Counsellors-at-Law.

This contract has been the model for other contracts made between medical milk commissions and interested producers.

In return for carrying out all the exacting conditions of the agreement and paying the expenses of experts, the Medical Milk Commission gives the dairyman certificates which are placed on all bottles. The milk then carries the endorsement of the milk commission, but the certificate does not absolutely guarantee the quality and purity of the milk in the bottle to which it is attached. It guarantees efficient supervision of the methods employed in production, shipment, and delivery. It is not surprising, therefore, that certified milk is sold at a price higher than that of ordinary milk, retailing for 15 cents or more per quart.

Since the Essex County Milk Commission commenced certifying milk 81 medical milk commissions have been organized in the United States. Legal protection has seemed desirable to counteract the influence of the unscrupulous dealer, who has used the word "certified" for inferior milk in order to command the superior price. For instance, the writer found a "certified" milk which, upon inquiry, turned out to be milk "certified" to by the producer to contain at least 3 per cent, butter-fat. New Jersey, Kentucky, New York, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire have passed legislation to protect the term "certified milk." A copy of the New Jersey law follows:

MEDICAL MILK COMMISSION LAW

The following act was inspired by the Essex County, New Jersey Medical Milk Association, was introduced in the Legislature by Senator Joseph S. Frelinghuysen, received the affirmative vote of every member of the Senate present except one, and
the unanimous vote of the House of Assembly, and was approved by Governor J. Franklin Fort, on April 21st, 1909.
This WAS Fairfield : Adelia Melissa (Van Ness) Collerd ( 1903-1984 )

This is a biographical sketch of Mrs. Morris E. Collerd born Adelia Melissa Van Ness who wrote the Fairfield Chronicle Newspaper Column ‘This WAS Fairfield’.

Adelia Melissa Van Ness was born in a Rockaway Neck – Hanover Farmhouse on the corners of Old Bloomfield Avenue and Edwards Road February 5, 1903 ( now Montville/Pine Brook border ).

Her parents were Charles Sylvester Van Ness and Sadie Matilda Van Duyne. Charles was part of the seventh generation of Fairfield’s first Van Ness ( Simon, B. 1666 ). Simon could easily be designated as ‘The Father of Fairfield’, then called ‘Horseneck’ when he settled here in 1701.

When three years old, Adelia’s Family of four including older sister Leah Esther (B. 1898) moved to Dutch Lane ( now Fairfield Avenue ) in West Caldwell. Adelia and Leah would often visit their Grandmother Ella Melissa Van Ness ( B.1852 ) who also lived on Dutch Lane with Grandfather Simon Munson V.N. ( B. 1849 ). After school, Grandmother Ella often told the girls about their many Van Ness ancestors. There must have been a lot for the young girls to absorb and distinguish because there were so many Van Ness’s who married other distantly related Van Ness’s during the previous two generations.

Grandfather Simon Munson V.N. was the Supervisor of Cigar Production at the large Lockward Tobacco Factory on Bloomfield Avenue. When he was spotted walking home from work, it was time for the young girls to scoot home. This may have been the point where Adelia caught the ‘ancestry bug’ that followed her throughout the rest of her life.

Father Charles was a Farm Laborer and did ‘odd jobs’ to supplement the Family income. He also had a six mile Newark Evening News newspaper route that he ran daily ( except Sunday ) by horse carriage or sleigh. Adelia accompanied him on the route and collected the two cent per copy subscriptions. Tending to the Family horse was a major part of her daily chores.

“Every two weeks I went to the door to collect 24 cents and in that way became well acquainted with all of the family living in each particular house and many of their habits and ways”
Charles developed a serious heart condition and could no longer perform strenuous work, but everyone helped to keep the Family going. Children then, seldom went beyond sixth grade because of the necessity to support their family households. Adelia was a good student and cherished her eighth grade diploma as something very special.

![Adelia's 1917 Eighth Grade 'poster size' Diploma measured 14” x 17”](image)

Sister Leah and Adelia had to seek steady employment while Mother Sadie did housework and chores for nearby neighbors. Adelia’s first big job was at Westinghouse where she worked on light bulb assembly. This required a walk to Caldwell to pick up the trolley for a long commute. When World War I ended, so did employment there. Bell Telephone was her next Employer with an even longer commute from West Caldwell.

During the heavy winter snows, the Fairfield Dairy ‘heavy wagon sleds’ bound for Caldwell created wide packed down ruts for walking to Town. Without these, walking up to Town would be impossible.

![Adelia Melissa Van Ness (1921)](image)

Dating back to earlier days in Montville/Pine Brook, the Van Ness, Van Duyne, Collerd, and Edwards Families were all close and worshipped together at the Pine Brook and Clinton (section of Caldwell Township) Methodist Churches. The Collerds moved to the area before 1810 from Bergen Township in Bergen County N.J. (now Jersey City N.J.). They soon became one of the largest families in Montville/Pine Brook with large homesteads on Hook Mountain Road and Changebridge Road. Both not far over the Horseneck Bridge from Caldwell Township.
Abram Van Duyne Collerd ( B. 1870 ) married Della Martin Cole ( B. 1873 ). The Cole Homestead was on Horseneck Road in Caldwell Township, and a choice fifty acre farm was being sold by the Pearce Family less than a mile away. Two of their sons were already born in Montville, Morris Edwin ( B. 1893 ) and Ray Elwood ( B. 1895 ). In 1896 Abram and Della moved to the new farm and had three more children there. Lulu M. ( B. 1897 ), Alma Beatrice ( B. 1905 ), and James Wilson ( B. 1912 ).

* * * * *

The Pearce Homestead on Horseneck Road ( #22 ). The Collerd Family moved here in 1896.

Oldest Son Morris started calling on the Van Ness Family at their Dutch Lane home. Adelia was sure Morris was interested in Leah who was much closer in age. But when Leah became engaged to Jean Louis Morrison, Morris continued calling. Adelia then realized that Morris was interested in her. They married November 21, 1923 in the West Caldwell Union Church Parsonage with Leah’s new Husband and two stepsons attending. Mother Sadie was there also, but Father Charles had passed away earlier that year.

“The Collerd and Van Duyne families were the good old type of living people for most part, kind – helpful – loving – and Church going people “
Plans to build a house next to the Collerd Farmhouse on Horseneck Road started immediately. Oddly enough, the large Farm had very narrow frontage on Horseneck Road, requiring the newlyweds to buy a 1/3 acre piece from neighbors Henry and Nancy Schmitt for $300. 1924 continued to be a very busy year as Morris became a Caldwell Township Constable, Fairfield Reformed Church Sexton, and School Attendance (Truant) Officer while still working with his Father and Brothers on the Farm.


Fifty acres is pretty large for four men to handle, but in most respects, the Collerd Farm was typical for the day in rural Caldwell Township (Fairfield). Adelia described it this way:

“The farm was very productive and proved to be very satisfactory. Almost every kind of fruit trees were planted and most every kind of vegetables were raised. Cows and pigs were animals on the farm which furnished milk, butter, cheese and meat. Chickens produced eggs and also meat. All surplus was taken to Paterson and delivered with horse and wagon. And on (Abram’s) return, all supplies needed, food for the Family and grain for the animals (which could not be furnished from the farm) were bought. The pasture lot was productive also. Both high and low bush huckleberries were plentiful and some were sold in crates.”

The new house was ‘closed in’ but far from finished when they moved in late 1924. The only heat was a kitchen range which made it a one room abode during that first winter.
“No electric – fixtures not installed or kitchen cabinet or floors varnished or woodwork......We managed with a borrowed oil stove – kerosene lamps and a hand pump. There was no furnace or bathroom the first year.”

Morris’ responsibilities as Constable, Church Official, and School Attendance Officer provided almost total knowledge of everybody and everything going on in ‘small town’ Caldwell Township. His life partner Adelia, as his unpaid/unofficial Deputy Assistant, soaked up all the details that would – someday much later - become part of Fairfield’s ‘Story’.

In October 1927 they were “blessed” with their first child Carolyn Anita Collerd. Nearly three years later they were “blessed again” in July 1930 when Lawrence Edwin Collerd was born.

Constable Collerd patrolled the Township with his motorcycle about four hours every evening armed with one of his several revolvers. Highway Route 6 (Fairfield Road) was now a major east-west statewide thoroughfare requiring constant patrol and traffic control on weekends. Now as Chief Constable, Morris had several Constables on call when needed (Charles Voelker Sr., John Filipow, Rudolph Geiger, and Robert Henning).

Adelia and Morris’ new home (1924) and ‘Police Station’ #14 Horseneck Road

The Collerd home became the Township’s first ‘Police Station’ with residents frequently stopping by to voice complaints or report crimes. At times, Adelia kept a revolver on her lap if there was any possibility of disturbance. There’s no doubt that Morris or Adelia could name the areas ‘usual suspects’. They also had one of the few telephones in the area. It was a six customer ‘party line’ where each party had a distinctive ring sequence. This also attracted phoneless town folk who needed to reach the ‘outside world’ in an emergency or a matter of great importance.

Municipal Court was scheduled in the former Clinton Schoolhouse, but some cases that were criminal or needed immediate resolution were brought directly to the Judge’s home.
Fairfield’s first ‘Police Car’ (1932 Chevrolet).
Owned by Chief Constable Morris E. Collerd

As the Township grew, so did the workload of the Constables. Although Chief Constable was a part-time job, it now had many full-time responsibilities. At the end of 1935, after 11 years, Morris resigned and “never regretted his decision”. Less than two years later, the Township organized a two man Police Department with first Chief Robert Henning assisted by Officer William Vanderhoof Sr. who later became Chief as well. They were headquartered in a newly constructed Municipal Building on Fairfield Road (1937) across from the greatly expanded Elementary School that Carolyn and Lawrence were attending at the time.

* * * *

Abram V. Collerd was now a Widower in his late sixties and his Sons were beginning to work jobs off the Farm. Ray was a self employed master carpenter specializing in interior woodwork, and James was a watchman and utility mechanic. The Kemp Brothers Construction Company was seeking a new source of coarse sand for fill and making concrete on highway projects along Route 6. They offered to buy forty acres and their offer was accepted in 1938. The large Collerd orchard soon became a ‘sand pit’ and eventually ‘Boulder Beach’ when the excavation pit later filled with spring water.

The Collerd homes and large barn remained on ten acres along Horseneck Road. Some years later, U.S. Route 46 took a wide right-of-way swath through the Kemp Brothers’ property, and another two acres from the Collerd property.

* * * *

Morris and Adelia were very active in the Fairfield Reformed Church. Adelia (often shortened to ‘Delia’ by her Friends ) kept busy with the Missionary Society and many other charitable Church activities. Delia also handled many administrative aspects of the cemeteries, including
maintenance fundraising for Hillside Cemetery. This became another source of ancestry knowledge and also provided a comprehensive list of descendant contacts of those interred there.

Morris was similarly involved in all aspects of the Churches welfare, and worked diligently on the Church buildings, grounds and cemetery. It was on his way to perform these duties when he was struck by a hit-and-run motorist along Route 6. Morris’ injuries left him unable to perform heavy tasks such as digging graves, but he remained Sexton for another fifteen years. The Children could care for themselves by then, so Delia sought employment to help with the Family expenses. Soon after, she started as a Housekeeper/Locker Room Attendant at the Mountain Ridge Country Club in West Caldwell.

Sister Leah moved back home with Mother Sadie shortly after her Husband Jean died in 1939. Leah and Delia began mapping out the Family Trees together ( Edwards, Van Duyne, Jacobus, Mandeville, Vreeland, Ackerman, etc. ). Grandfather Simon Munson Van Ness spent his last years with Delia and Morris and shared his 90 years knowledge of Family lineage, descent and heritage.

“Much of the (Family) information........came from him “

Daughter Carolyn graduated from Grover Cleveland High School and went on to Secretarial School in Paterson. Then soon took a secretarial position with Bell Telephone. Lawrence graduated High School a few years later, served in the US Army and then went on to became a Surveyor in Caldwell.

Local farm ownership was turning over quite rapidly now as northeastern New Jersey Farmers were selling out and moving west. The Holland Tunnel, George Washington Bridge, and the Lincoln Tunnel had all opened up between 1927 and 1937 raising property values in Hudson and Bergen Counties dramatically. One such relocating Farm Family were the Pollio’s from Moonachie, N.J. In 1941 they bought the former Wisniewski Farm near the Horseneck Road/Fairfield Road intersection within a few hundred feet of the Collerd homes. One of the two Pollio boys, Peter, would eventually marry Carolyn who made Delia and Morris Grandparents in 1948 (Martha). Peter and Carolyn had five more children, 1950 (Patricia). 1951 (Paul). 1955 (Thomas). 1957 (Carol). And 1962 (Janet).
Lawrence married Bernice Heath in 1950, and they had two daughters. 1953 (Susan) and 1956 (Donna).

Unfortunately, Morris took a bad fall and was now virtually bed ridden. Delia retired from Mountain Ridge C.C. to look after him full time, and also watch over her Grandchildren allowing Carolyn to work part time.

“We were very happy those years in spite of accident difficulties which could not be helped and happy because we were able to raise two lovely children. And we also have eight lovely grandchildren. May God bless them all richly”

* * * *

Delia also had time to occasionally visit Historical Societies and N.J. State Archives to research genealogical and historical records. All of her Friends, Relatives, and Acquaintances were well aware of her passion for genealogical research, local history, and folklore.

About this time Jim and Anne Harte began publishing the Fairfield Edition of “The Chronicle”. Anne learned of Delia’s extensive knowledge of the areas past and convinced her to write a column entitled “This WAS Fairfield”. Delia also had an extensive collection of old-time photographs to accompany dozens of potential subjects. If Delia didn’t have a photograph, she would locate one through her network of peers. There was never a lack of determination or resourcefulness with Delia.

The Chronicle’s ‘This WAS Fairfield’ Column was written by Mrs. Morris E. Collerd (1971 - 1975)
As already noted, Delia’s life experiences as Newspaper girl, Constable’s Wife, School Attendance Officer, Cemetery Administrator, and Church Volunteer allowed her to build a reliable network among Neighbors and Relatives that reached back over a century.

The new Chronicle Column was a success and became a new source of research when calls and letters arrived from near and far inquiring about Fairfield ancestors and other historical topics of interest. Delia never missed an opportunity to learn more and a few of these inquiries were developed into future Columns.

* * * *

At age 82, with 52 of these years with Delia, Morris’ health was failing. Sadly he passed away October 19, 1975 the very day the Fairfield Reformed Church celebrated its venerable designation as a New Jersey and National Historical Landmark.

Delia was now dealing with diabetes and lost one leg, than another due to poor blood circulation. Her fate was to spend her remaining days wheelchair bound at the Hilltop Nursing Home that overlooked her 1903 birthplace. Despite these devastating setbacks, her mental acuity and sharpness never faded. She wrote and rewrote her notes repeatedly, rechecking and reinforcing her incredible memory. This, her love of God and Family kept her very much alive.

Mr. and Mrs. Morris E. Collerd - 1974
Nothing on this earth made Delia happier than her great grandchildren crawling up into her wheelchair to give her hugs and kisses. It didn’t matter if their surnames were Eisenhour, Plumb, or Pollio. Like her, they were all descendants of the ‘Father of Fairfield’ - Simon Van Ness.

“The Ancestors if they could live today and see what they had produced with Gods help, would be so amazed they would hardly believe it to be possible in just 275 years of living in America. Morris and myself ( a Van Ness before marriage ) have had wonderful God loving parentage for most part which in its self has made for us a happy life in spite of our many handicaps so far. We have spent 51 years of our life together and we know God will take care of us in the future as always.”

Delia made sure that all internment details were planned well in advance of both Morris’ and her own burials at the Fairfield Reformed Church Cemetery. She had the Button / Collerd Plot ( Emma Button was a Van Duyne relative ) headstone completed with everything except the last two digits of the year of their death. This was three years before Morris passed away and twelve years prior to her own death July 23, 1984. If it was going to be for eternity, Delia made sure it was going to be right.

Snapshot of gravestone taken by “Adelia M. Van Ness” Collerd herself Sept. 15, 1972
Exactly thirty years after her death, a great grandson Thomas P. Pollio* became engaged to Erin Van Duyne and they married a year later. (Thomas had two lines of ancestors who were Van Duynes ) You can almost imagine a loving voice from above: “How truly wonderful, God Bless you both, and............I’ll be looking into that “

Rest in Peace Adelia. You are a true Fairfield legacy that will never to be forgotten.

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