

Chapter 1: Sewell

On a warm day in 1920, John Fry hopped into his father's Model T. He was excited because today his family was moving. John had lived all his life in west Philadelphia. He had been born there on 6020 Kershaw Street in 1914. Father had lost his job after the end of World War I and he had been able to find employment in Sewell, New Jersey. After traveling for one hour, they arrived at their house. John and his brothers Samuel and James were glad to get out of the car and stretch their legs. Samuel was nine years old; John's younger brother was four. John was in the middle: he was six years old.

A few days later, they had finished their arranging and were starting to settle down to life in south New Jersey.

That fall, John went to the school at Barnesboro, New Jersey. Every morning he would leave the house and walk the mile or so to school with his older brother.

Once, as they were walking along the road, John thought he heard a truck coming. Sure enough, there was one only a few hundred feet behind them. Soon the truck was next to them. Then it stopped. The driver leaned his head out of the window and called, "Want to ride?" Samuel answered, "Yes, sir, we're going to school." The driver replied, "Then come along with me; I'm going down that way anyhow." John and Samuel were

glad to. In those days, parents didn't worry so much about drivers picking up children along the roads.

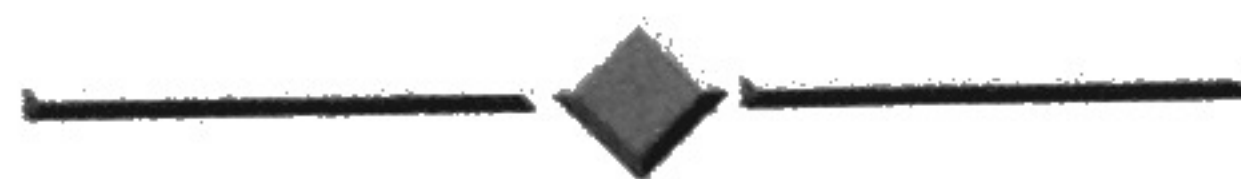
A few minutes later, the truck pulled into the school yard. After thanking the driver, John and Samuel walked in. Soon they were working hard on their lessons. John was only six, so he worked on his letters and easy words. Then it was time for lunch.

That day was cold and stormy. John was glad that there was something hot for lunch. Some people had brought potato soup, which they cooked over a space heater. When it was ready, a girl handed John some soup. It was pleasant to eat the hot potato soup on such a cold, stormy day. That afternoon, they worked on reading. Then after school, John and Samuel walked home. They hoped that they would see the truck again, but no, they had to walk home in the rain.

When they arrived home, supper was cooking. Mother called, "John, come and set the table."

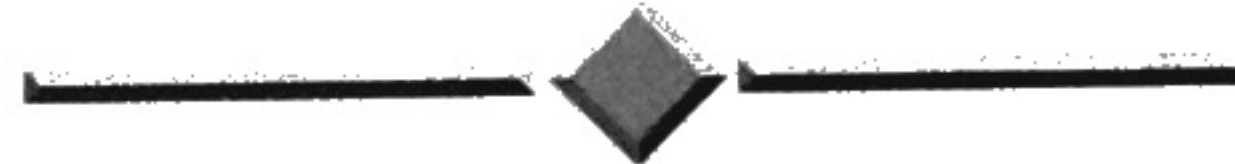
At supper, Mother told them a story about when she made fish. She would buy the fish from a German peddler. One day, she bought a fish from him. He then proceeded to clean it—on the curb!

For dessert, they had tapioca pudding. It was John's favorite dessert. After supper, the family read from the Bible. Then, at 8:15, they went to bed.



Around Christmas time, John's teacher announced that there would be a party at the school. It would include a play: *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens. After the play, refreshments were planned.

Samuel was to act in the play. His part would be to play Bob Cratchitt, the poor clerk who worked for Scrooge, a miser. All week, John helped his brother study his lines. Soon the day came. After school, John hurried home with his brother to help him study. Then he put on his best clothes. The family drove to the school. Samuel did well in the play; it made a big impression.



January, February, March, April, May, and finally June: the school year sped on. It was warm enough to wear short sleeves to school. John was excited because on Friday there would be a school party. Friday would also be the last day of the school year! John was glad that school would be out. It was hard to concentrate on school work when the weather was so pleasant.

On Thursday night, Mother baked some cookies for the party. The next morning, John was to carry them to school. That night, John went to bed early so he could get ready for the party.

The next morning, he woke up and looked outside. It was a bright and sunny day, perfect for baseball! He hurried into his clothes and woke up Samuel, who tended to sleep later. Then they grabbed the cookies and walked to school. That afternoon, they had a picnic. Then everyone played outdoor games until dessert time.

At dessert, John was given a bowl of something pink and cold. It had red pieces in it. He went over to the edge of the school property and sat on the fence. Then he began to eat. He picked the red pieces out with his spoon. *What are they?* John wondered. John didn't know it, but he was eating strawberry ice cream. The red specks were pieces of strawberry.

It had been a good school year in Sewell and John was making friends.

Chapter 2: Collingdale

In the early part of this century, many people moved from place to place, trying to find a job. John was only six years old when he relocated for the first time. Now after living in Sewell for only one year, the Frys were moving to a suburb of Philadelphia—Collingdale, Pennsylvania.

It was late August, and John was working outside in the garden, pulling weeds. Mother called from the back porch: "John, it's time for supper!" John put away his hoe and ran into the house. He washed his hands and sat down.

Just then, Father walked in the door. He seemed very happy about something. As they were eating supper, he told them.

"I went to the post office today."

"Oh," said Mother, "was there any mail for us?"

"Yes," he replied. "Do you remember when I applied for that job with Russell Burleigh, the builder in Pennsylvania?"

"Yes, and you went to an interview," answered Mother.

"Well," he continued, "I have his reply. I'm hired!" He pulled the folded letter out of his pocket.

"Oh good!" said Mother. "Will we be moving?"

"Yes, to Collingdale, which is west of Philadelphia. We will moving in two weeks."

Father had been doing odd jobs around their neighborhood, so they were glad he was getting steady employment. John, however, did not like to leave Sewell and go to school.

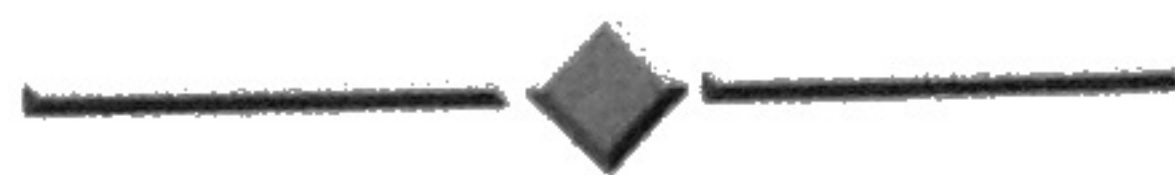
During the next few weeks, Father went to Collingdale several times to look at the house and to get acquainted with the neighborhood. Once he took the whole family with him. John found time to tell his school teacher and other acquaintances his family's moving.

Finally moving day came. They packed their things for most of the morning. Then they ate lunch. They were ready to go.

When they arrived at the house, John and Samuel helped unpack the car; Father went back to New Jersey to get the rest of their belongings.

The next day, John did not go to school, but stayed home to help his parents with the arranging of furniture.

The next morning, Father took John and Samuel to the local school. This was different from their old school, because you couldn't walk to school. You had to drive.



As John grew older, he had different subjects. He enjoyed biography and science. He also liked literature, particularly poems. Two of his favorite poems were Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem "Evangeline" (1847) and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem "The Ancient Mariner." "Evangeline began:

This is the forest primeval. The murmuring pines and the hemlocks.

Bearded with moss, and garments green, indistinct in the twilight,

Stand like Druids of eld, with voices sad and prophetic,

Stand like harpers hoar, with beards that rest on their bosoms.

Loud from its rocky caverns, the deep-voiced neighboring ocean

Speaks, and in accents disconsolate answers the wail of the forest.

Chapter 3: Employed

"I work for Wanamaker's, now, Father!" John walked in to house in Collingdale.

The year was 1932.

After leaving Sewell, New Jersey, John's family had moved to Collingdale, Pennsylvania. Father had a job there building houses. He worked for a Christian named Russell Burleigh. The family had really moved around in Collingdale. They had lived in three different houses! After working for Russell Burleigh for about ten years, Father lost

his job. That year John's brother Samuel, who was about twenty years old, started to work. His job was at a real estate office. John was now following his older brother into the work force. He had gotten a job in the John Wanamaker's store in Philadelphia.

As an employee of Wanamaker's, he worked as an office boy. The job of an office boy was to carry messages. There were several other boys who did this job, and some girls. Each messenger was assigned a route. Then the messenger would deliver his messages along the route. John's route took him between the Wanamaker's warehouse and the Wanamaker's store. The warehouse was on 22nd and Chestnut streets. Inside the building they not only stored products but they had work rooms. In these rooms, employees did on site work so that customers could have things changed or altered immediately. For this reason, John often carried messages to the warehouse. Another place he delivered messages was the phonograph department. Of course, he carried messages to other departments, too.

Although the pay was low, the conditions of John's job were good. After John had been working for Wanamaker's for awhile, the company decided that it had some extra employees. John was discharged.

He looked around for work. In the 1930s, employment was hard to find. After some time, he got a job with Kingsbury, Inc.

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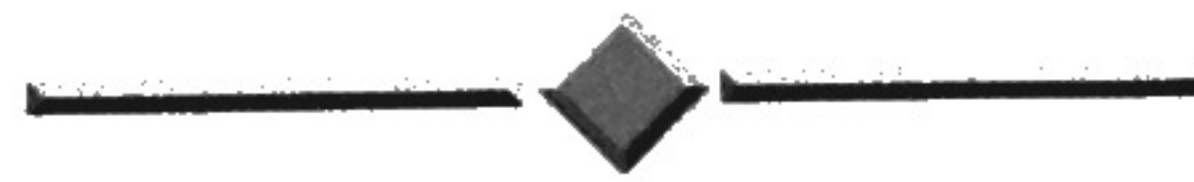
John worked as a record keeper for several years. He would get up in the morning and go to work, and at the end of the day, he looked at his mail.

World War II broke out. John was still working at Kingsbury. One day he came home from work and started to flip through his mail. He opened the first letter without looking at the return address. It was from the United States government. John Fry had been drafted into the army.

Chapter 4: Pacific Theater

John was soon in basic training. He had been spared from combat. Instead, he would be a medic. After some quick (and somewhat incomplete) medical training, John was told where he would be sent. He was to be traveling to New Guinea. His group was the 1913th Aviation Engineer Battalion. Of course, he was under General Douglas MacArthur.

The 1913th Aviation Engineer Battalion mainly built airstrips. John was one of their medics. The battalion sailed in the *Sea Snipe* to New Guinea.



“Watch out! Duck!” John’s battalion was under fire. Men were being wounded and he gave them assistance. John’s own captain was killed.

After staying in New Guinea, John was transferred to New Britain Island. From there he went to the Philippines. While in the army, John was in the hospital several

times because of sickness. One sickness that was especially dangerous was malaria. John was sick with it once or twice.

Sometimes, the men didn't have certain foods. Once they didn't have eggs for days. One morning, the men found a whole truckload of them! For the next few mornings, they had all the eggs they wanted. John ate six eggs one morning.

After the fighting with Japan ended, military life became monotonous. As you can imagine, John was glad to go home.

He and the other men of the 1913th Engineer Aviation Battalion boarded a cargo ship. When they reached the United States, John and the men were discharged at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. He was finally home!