

The history of the Strong family and the farm written by Norman R. Strong in the winter of 2009.

In writing the history of the Strong Farm, it is beneficial that you have the history of the Strong family as given to me by father as given to him by his grandfather. So it is with me working with my dad being in partnership with him and later operating the farm by myself.

He told me of Elder Jonathan Strong coming from England to Taunton, Mass. and later on drifting down to Connecticut to Hebron and later to Bolton with his family.

He told me of Daniel Strong in Bolton running a gin mill and selling it in New York City. He lost all his money and broke up his large family. He was the father of Nathan Morgan Strong in 1829. He gave Nathan at 6 years of age to a cousin in Glastonbury.

At a young age, Nathan worked in a mill in East Glastonbury and also in Cheney Mills in Manchester. Later he worked for a man named Ellis now on Route 85 making charcoal. One afternoon when he was about 15, he gave him a pair of cattle and a horse to take a load of charcoal to Hartford to pedal. He put the cattle in a livery stable with the horse and he slept under the wagon on a blanket so the other wagons wouldn't run over him as they came in. He pedaled the charcoal all day and got home about 12 a.m. Mr. Ellis woke him up at 4 a.m. in the hay mound where he slept and told him it was time to go to work.

He told of him going to church in Buckingham and then walking to Groton to see his mother, Sabra Morgan (1830) with only enough money to buy a pound of cheese and crackers in Colchester. Later he worked for J.B. Williams making soap. Mr. Williams spilled lye on him severely burning him with the scars showing all his life.

I have seen a notebook where he kept a list of his jobs and what he made. It was here he wrote who he worked for and what he received mostly at .50 a day mowing fields for John Hollister in the meadow. It was here he met Abbe Louise Hollister whom he married. Two children were born in the marriage – Norman

Hollister and Mary Jane (1859). Abbe became subjected to malaria and the doctor suggested she move to higher ground, away from the CT River, so they came to Vernon Center and bought a farm on Bolton Road in 1859 near the tower. This was across the road that was the slaughter house run by Oliver Clark who shipped sheep down from Vermont by train to Willington. He would put a black goat in a carriage, take it to Willington and let it lead the sheep home. At night he would slaughter the sheep by lantern to avoid the flies and put them in a horse wagon to Hartford so no refrigeration was necessary. Nathan only stayed a short time there due to the odor.

Nathan became a carpenter by trade. He learned this from a Mr. Hubbard he worked for 6 years in Glastonbury. He bought, sold and rented places around Vernon. One of his jobs was to raise the roof of the school house to make room for the children of the county home that came from Andover, later to become the first firehouse in Vernon.

He hauled the bricks from Windsor with horse and wagon in 1878 to build the present house which has 2 floors, 5 bedrooms, 1 parlor in the front to entertain the pastor, a living room with a bay window, a dining room, butlery, pantry, kitchen with a wood stove for cooking and heat in the winter. The land he bought from Ben Ellis which was across the street. It was composed of two lots. The one on the west was enclosed by a stone wall used to pasture. A lead pipe came from the Ogden Brook for water. The upper lot ran to West Street containing an orchard with both having many large stones. He built the house on West Street in the orchard as there were few stones to contain with. He used his wife's money to build this house and from then on when he got the urge to move, he was cute short on that idea by her. Later he built a large barn south of the house with a dug well for the animals, selling cream to Vernon Creamery. The apples he would pick in the fall were put in barrels and a head was put on the barrel. An agent would come from Providence and go among the farmers buying them. They were taken to Vernon Depot, put on a freight car and shipped to Providence. (I still have one of these barrels.)

There was a 17 acre wood lot on West St. that went with this land that was used for fuel. Central heat was put in the house other than the kitchen. A small boiler supplied heat for the rooms on the first floor. Also there were large water pipes hung on the wall in the corridor leading to the bedrooms. Coal was used in the boiler in the winter time. Often the rooms were cold. He would light the fire in the kitchen stove in the morning to thaw out the hand pump in the kitchen cast iron sink.

Nathan was very religious man. He would never allow anyone to work on the farm on a Sunday and always asked the blessings of God before meals.

He was walking to Rockville during an ice storm. A neighbor asked him why he didn't take his horse. He told him he had just had the horse's shoes sharpened and did not want to get the horse shoes dull. (Charlie Lanz told dad this story.)

He was brought up a democrat but was disgusted with the first one ever voted for and swore he'd never vote for another democrat. He was very conservative in his thinking.

NORMAN HOLLISTER STRONG

Norman did not get along good in school, so at the age of 15 he went to work for Fred Walker by the month so he could get room and board. His job was a tail sawyer – one who takes the lumber and slabs and piles them after they come off the saw. At night he would have to shut the gate to the reservoir to build up a head of water for power the next day. He also had to care for the horses and milk the two cows. For supper he was given bread and raw salt pork. He went home on Saturdays to his mother's cooking. At that time, they live in the house across from the school in Vernon Center. On Monday mornings, he got up and walked to the reservoir, open the gate so the sawyer would have power at 7 a.m.

He married Ella Dart who went to the same church.

Abbe was very sickly and Nathan asked Norman and Ella who were living in a house on the corner of Petersen and Center roads with 3 acres of land. They sold this and moved into the house on West Street.

Norman Strong bought the 30 acres between Rte. 30 and Cemetery Rd. Bought the barn connected. He refused to buy the house for \$500 (red house) – he didn't want it. The land was run down with yellow birches and brush. They proceeded to dig a ditch to drain the swamp. There was a good spring on the land that ended up supplying a house on Bolton Road and the County Home and the pasture with water.

It was very dry in the year of 1908 and the County Home ended up digging an artesian well. Since the equipment was there, they dug a well at the farm and house. They hulled water for the cattle from Ogden Brook that winter with a horse and barrels and a stone bolt. They built a wind mill to pump the water from the artesian well since there wasn't electricity at that time.

They kept 2 driving horses and a pair of work horses, milking cows and 8 pigs.

They had a herd of Asyhere cows noted for their long horns. The mild which was stored in creamery cans that were slim to fit in the wells to keep cool as there was no ice. A man collected the cream by drawing off the skim milk and recording the cream which was taken to the Vernon Creamery.

They raised 2 acres of corn so they could feed the cows and chickens, also some rye that was ground into flour

Norman became a painter by trade, but only painted outside of buildings, as he didn't like interior painting and hang paper. My father, N. Morgan, Norman's son, had to deliver the ladders to his jobs. He would put lead and oil on dwellings and skim milk and prince metallic for barns. His ladders were all of 4 feet in different lengths, the longest being 30 feet. This ladder wasn't tall enough to reach the top of the County Home, so they put the ladder on top of a wagon.

I still have the 30 foot ladder which my father, N. Morgan, would put up against the silo and then carry up the pipe and putting the elbow over the edge. I hated this job and the pipe was very heaving and it was dangerous. One thing I learned at a firemen's meeting was how to tie a rope on a round pipes that wouldn't slip. Using a pulley, it was much easier to pull it up from the ground.

The herd of cows and a bull were driven to pasture through Vernon Center and up Cemetery road to a bar way to the pasture. This was my father's job both morning and night. He had a large bull which my father complained about being scared of. His father told him to take a club for his protection and he would have no trouble. As they were threshing the rye it became time to do the chores. He told my father to clean up the barn and he would get the cows home. Everything went fine. The bull always led the cows home with his long horns. It so happened that the ladies of the church were having a tea that day with tables of linens and silver tea pots on the front lawn of the church. When the bull got to the center, he lifted his head and blatted throwing gravel with his front feet across his back. My grandfather kicked him in the hind chins to go with the cows. Instead of going with the cows, he started towards the church. The ladies screamed and ran into the church and shut the doors. Norman had an awful job to head him off as he only had his fists. He hollered MORGAN! MORGAN! My father thought he should get his own darn bull. When he got home he inquired if he didn't hear him calling for him. He said no, he didn't hear him, but the bull never went back to pasture.

N. MORGAN STRONG

My father never got along in local schools so he quit and was sent to Huntsinger Business School in Hartford for a term. His father paid for him to work with his grandfather, Nathan Morgan, on the farm. He got along good with his grandfather. After he picked all the apples in the fall, he was given a gold watch by him. He would let him use his driving horse when he was refused by his father.

Having the age of 21 in 1910, he announced to his father that he was getting married to Mary (she hated that name) Gwendolyn Randall, much to this father's disgust. He asked his father what he thought of this. His father replied, "I think it is none of my business." My father rented the house on the corner of West St. and Hartford Turnpike for \$16 a month with \$2 off if you paid in advance. He was left with \$4 to support his family. My mother worked in Hartford.

Deep sorrow struck the Strong family in 1911, as his grandfather, father and grandmother all died in that year, leaving my father, his mother and his sister alone on the farm.

His Uncle Charles Dart, who was an influence, urged him to run the farm and take care of his mother and sister, which they refused to do. My father continued to rent the house on the corner, for it was where his first child was born in 1912 and died shortly. He had a box made in a shop in Rockville, had the baby placed in it and buried the box in the family plot in Elmwood Cemetery. He took the death certificate to the Town Clerk to have it recorded. The Town Clerk inquired who the funeral director was. My father said there wasn't a funeral director, where upon the clerk told him it was a serious offence and he could go to the State prison. My father replied, "So I have nothing." The Town Clerk said he would let it pass now, but don't ever do it again.

He continued to sell cream to the Vernon Creamery and working out with his team of horses buying and selling firewood. He became a member of the Ecclesiastical Society of the church, but did not join the church because a deacon cheated him on a cord of wood. He said he did not want to be associated with such a crooked organization. He never did join, but always attended and contributed to the church.

My father gave up selling his milk to Vernon Creamery as it was not profitable to turn milk into butter. He signed a contract to a dealer in Hartford and was told the milk would spoil traveling such a long distance. It proved to be more profitable as my father fixed up the upper bedroom in the farmhouse. Electricity became available to the house; wired water was pumped to the kitchen that was made in the upper hallway of the house. A water tank was placed in the cellar with a pump in the artesian well with automatic controls. The windmill being no longer needed, was abandoned.

He bought his first car – a 1917 Buick – with all its troubles, which were mostly tires. He also expanded his dairy herd, which included a silo. The dealer became slower in paying for the milk and so my father cut him off and was sued by the dealer for breach of contract. He won the case, but had to put the milk in

his car, hunt up dealers and beg them to buy some milk. Finally a dealer came who had a model T car and also worked in a paper mill in E. Hartford. This dealer, J.A.Bergren Dairy began to build up his business collecting the milk with a Mack truck chain driven with solid rear tires. Finally they put on pneumatic tires as the solid tires were inefficient in mud and snow.

NORMAN RANDALL STRONG (teller of the tale)

I was born on October 3, 1916 in the house on the corner of West St. and Hartford Tpke. I was the 3rd child of the family, the first having died in infancy weighing 8 pounds. Gwendlyn, my sister, weighed 10 pounds and I weighed 12 pounds. That was when my mother gave up having children!

The barn burned in July of 1917, when I was still a baby in a carriage. My father decided to move to the farm house upper floor, though it only had 5 rooms and a large hallway for a kitchen in the back. There was no running water in the cast iron sink and not indoor plumbing. There was my father, my mother, her mother, my sister, myself and the hired hand living upstairs. He soon got running water and drainage for the sink and a cook stove to the hallway. It was here I learned to walk and climb stairs. I had to keep the wood box filled. My mother, not having time to look after me, sent me with my father. He bought a new team of horses after losing the last team in the fire. They were called Pete and Dick. My mother made me overalls and he would carry me by a strap in one hand and the reins to the horses in the other, teaching me to follow him in the lot. As I became tired, he would lay me down to sleep and cover me with his jacket. My mother always wondered why the straps of the overalls broke.

My father worked out with the team a lot while the hired man kept the farm work running. Father's fee for outside work with the team was \$9 an hour. His Uncle Charlie Dart gave him several days work with the team, as he was in charge of the roads.

Before prohibition, he would go to Hartford and get a load of brewery grain for \$2 every Saturday. After prohibition, he would buy grain for the cows from local

stores which was very expensive. This caused the farmers to form the Ellington/Vernon farmers exchange with grain shipped in by rail carload.

Building the new barn:

Father decided to move the new barn further from the road in the orchard. The apple trees had to be removed and land excavated. Uncle Charlie was of great help and advice. He was a large farmer, raising 12 acres of tobacco, number of fruit trees, a milk route, 6 chicken coops, many purebred Holstein cattle which he showed at Willimantic, Rockville and Stafford fairs. He kept 4 or 5 hired men, steady boarding 2 in his large house next door that was an old inn. As his farm burned in 1896, he had a lot of experience.

Father went up in the woods, off West Street where there were lots of dead chestnut trees from the blight and cut several large beams to make the foundation. These were hued on one side and used to make the barn floor and the floor for the hay mow, horse barn and grain room. He also had to dig a foundation for the large hay barn, 40 x 60 and one 32 x 52 for the cow barn. The gravel was drawn from a pit on Wooster Rd with a team of horses with the help of Uncle Charlie (my grandmother's brother). As the Wetstone family was building a large house near Vernon Station; they moved the cement mixer up here and poured all the cement for all the barns. My father engaged Frank Hutchinson, a local builder, to construct the barns. Where there plans came, I am not sure but maybe from the Storrs Agricultural College at the time. The silo was made by the Amos Bridge Company in Hazardville, CT - 14 x 28. The hay fork for the barn was purchased from Star Hardware in Rockville.

Father bought a 1917 Buick before the barn burned which gave him a lot of trouble, so he traded it in for a 1921 Buick touring car. This also gave him trouble with the radiator having to buy 2 new ones, it having flat belts to run the fan. He decided to run the car without any radiator cooling fans which proved well in both the summer and winter. He stored the car in Uncle Charlie's 2 car garage which was built with a stove and chimney.

I can remember hauling wood to the Sullivan house from Valley Falls wood lot, through the Tankerusan River with Pete and Dick, the horse team. At night he said to come with him to collect a bill for the work. He drove down Tunnel Road and knocked on the door with an answer to come in out of the dark. The room was lit with a kerosene lamp on the table and the room was full of smoke. Hattie Sullivan sat in the rocking chair next to the window on the further side. In her hand she was smoking a corn cob pipe which she lit from time to time with the smoke sailing over her head.

This was a new experience for me to see a woman smoking a pipe. As I grew older and heard storied, I realized why my father wanted me to accompany him.

As he now had a car, there was no need for him to build any rooms for driving horses and carriage in the new barn. He also could go places to shop and see places with the family.

One night he went shopping with my mother and sister and me. He parked in the horse hitching place while they shopped, leaving him to watch over me. At the same time, he was buys visiting with some friends. Finally she came back wanting to know where I was. They looked all over and I was no where to be found. Finally, a friend checked with the Police Department who was unable to identify me as I couldn't give them my name. I had left the center to go home and a good women found me at the corner of Brooklyn and Vernon Ave. My mother was not happy with my father.

The new barn had 14 stanchions on the east side and 12 on the west side with a barn stall for calving animals on the west side. As there wasn't any pasture for the bred heifers, which were housed in a shed past, the manure pit where the manure was dumped every day. This had to be taken out every week. To stop any run off my father would buy straw to bed the cows and put pigs in a pen nearby. If the pigs became inactive, he would put a little whole corn on top to attract them. Uncle Charlie and my father hired a pasture from Manchester Rod and Gun Club in Hebron. It being to large for them, other farmers also chipped in to cut costs. Uncle Charlie's barnyard would hold some farmers cattle. On a given time, he would open his gate giving my father a sign for him to also open

his. They would all meet at the corner of Hartford Tpke. and West St., run down to Bolton Rd. My father would chase them down the road with his car, then 2 other farmers would let their heifers go by the time they got to Bolton, they would be willing to walk to Hebron. There was a family next to the pasture that would look after them if they got out. This procedure was reversed in the fall.

There was an outbreak of Tuberculosis. In the early 20s that caused Uncle Charlie to have his herd tested for TB in order to peddle raw milk in Rockville. He had this wonderful purebred cow that gave a lot of milk. He brought this down to my father saying he knew they were going to take a lot of the herd, but here was one cow they weren't going to take. He wanted my father to keep her and let him see her once in awhile. As I was 8 years old, I learned to milk on this cow.

My father lost a lot of his herd as the cows reacting to the TB test were condemned and destroyed. The federal government paid 1/3, the State paid 1/3, and the farmer suffered 1/3. All replacement cows came from certified areas as established by the government. The cows had to be branded on the jaw and the barn disinfected. Uncle Charlie went to Vermont and bought some purebred to supply his milk route.

My grandmother and father's sister, Edna, lived downstairs. Auntie worked at Traveler's Insurance where she met William Johnson from Hartford. They decided to get married, but Aunt Edna did not want to leave the farm or her mother. William didn't want to come to Vernon where there was no inside plumbing. So they agreed to share the cost of making improvement to the house. These proved to be quite extensive and some were welcome by her mother thinking of toilets in her living quarters. However these arrangements were made on raising the roof in my mother's kitchen, adding 3 dormer windows with porches on the North side, the bathroom was made by using an area of the bedroom and closet on the second floor. The butlery on the first floor served as the area for the bathroom off the dining room. The stairway to the cellar off the dining room was blocked off giving room for a much larger boiler in the basement which was needed with several more radiators on both floors. These improvements made Uncle Bill happy, but he still had to travel to Hartford daily

Soon my father found out he could get 1 cent more a quart of milk if it was commanded class #1. However he would have to test his cows for TB and alter many things on things in the barn. This included putting in a ceiling in the cow barn with a ventilation system. Also, he had to get rid of the lanterns and wire the barn for electricity. In the milk room, he had to put in a new milk tank with hot and cold running water, caroms to keep out flies. The milk had to be at least 4% butter fat, which would make him get Jersey cows. This was in 1927 when the State Vet came and tested, with about half of the cows showing signs of TB and must be destroyed. All the reactors had to be branded on the jaw. He did this with a tool that was like a blow torch with the letter T going at full blast. This was an awful experience for me to hear the cow blat and smell the terrible black smelling smoke in the barn. A truck came in a few days taking them away. I had to help my father clean the wood work, spray the walls with a disinfectant. An inspector would come and put his nose against to wood to see if it was done. A check came in a few days for the meat with a report of each animal infected with TB. A notice was also sent that the herd would be tested again in 90 days.

Father went to Vermont and bought a herd of Jerseys that went back to Connecticut trucked on a railroad car to Willington to continue milk production, leaving me at home to milk the remaining cows at 11 years of age.

They came back in 90 days and took some more reactors and this went on a few times. As he had pigs on the manure pile, they would show signs of TB.

There was a cow that showed each time a very slight sign of reaction. Finally my father got them to take this cow which showed signs of TB in her intestines. This was the cause of all the reactors and the farm was certified clean.

Then the herd of cows came down with bangs disease called abortion. This caused my father to sell all that had it for beef as they gave little milk. The State wanted to test the herd and slaughter those infected by a blood test. A vaccine was invented to prevent it by vaccinating the calves under 8 months. The State would pay the Vet. to do this and tattoo each in the ear to prove it. It proved to be successful, as no cases have appeared to this late. The Bangs disease was the cause of undulant fever.

We never had any water on the table, always a picture of milk, which I drank every day. At my age of 92, how lucky I am to be alive. As I was always with my father, I didn't want to go to school, but I had to. So I thought of an excuse of a stomach ache to the teacher who was Miss Starkey where upon she sent me home. My mother asked me about the place of my stomach, which I showed her the wrong place. Back to school I went.

I remember all the horses my father had for they all were different. There were 3 and all had a stall in the barn. The old one was Prince which Uncle Charlie peddled milk with until it got too old to pull the milk wagon in the hills of Rockville. He was very trust worthy, therefore I, being 5 years old, could ride him to pull up the hay in the barn to the mow. Father put me on old Prince and everything went well until I turned him across the rope and it formed a half hitch around the hind legs causing him to fall almost on top of me if my father hadn't jumped off the hay wagon and grab me. He gave me a stern lecture about crossing the rope with the horse. The next year I had to lead him, being able to reach his bridle. Then I had to rake, scattering and tether hay with him.

After haying, my father would work spearing tobacco for Uncle Charlie. That was my first job of handing tobacco for my father to spear. My hourly pay was .10 / hour when needed.

When my father was done working for Uncle Charlie, he would go over to Skinners to help them, leaving me home to do odd jobs that I could do.

The two horses my father had for a team were Pete and Dick. The Pete horse would fall down often causing a lot to trouble to unhitch wagons and harnesses to get him up, so Father put him in the horse cemetery and replaced him with a bulky mare that the Skinners had. He bought a rubber bit which proved to help with the baulking.

One morning he woke me up early and had me take her by riding her to the blacksmith shop on West Main St. to have her shard. He told me he'd get me home. On the way he said you hitch Dick and Prince on the wagon after lunch, go up to the blacksmith shop with the mare on back, go up the railroad tracks and

Mr McKnight will give you grain to bring home and put the horses up. Everything went well until I got up to Daily Circle to rest old Prince, suddenly Dick fell against Prince nearly knocking him down and fell in the gutter, dead as a doornail. A girl came out of the house and asked if I needed help. I said will you call 989 and tell them I have a dead horse. It so happened that Fred Ecker came along in a Ford pickup to get grain. He helped me unhitch the dead horse and put the harness on the baulky horse to get home, leaving old Dick. Fred told me to take it easy with Babe, the baulky horse. Getting home, my father was there and told me to get Uncle Charlie's low down wagon and go to get the dead horse, which I began to cry. Much to his disgust with me, he went with me with 2 planks to get the dead horse. I being only 11 years old, the next day he had to bury old Dick in the horse cemetery.

He bought a large black horse from a man that shipped in Western horses. He noticed a swelling between the hind legs where he was altered and called Dr. Dimock to examine him. Dr Dimock said bring him over to his farm and he would fix him up in a week. My father took him over to his farm in Tolland and called him later to see if he was cured. Dr. Dimock said not quite yet, to leave him another week. At the end of that week, Dr. Dimock called and said he was now through haying and to come and get him, but the growth will come back, so you better get rid of him.

My father bought a bay chunk horse from a dealer and the black horse was sent to an auction in Providence. The bay horse was a good mate to Babe, the balky horse, until 1933 when my folks went to the World's Fair in Chicago with Bill Johnson and Aunt Edna, leaving me in charge. He came down with the blind staggers and died. He replaced him with a fast spirited horse he bought from Fred Worthington of Somers.

In 1928, there was a 4-H Dairy Club with the boys from Ellington and Vernon called the Typhoid Dairy Club. Uncle Charlie gave me a calf which I raised and showed at the Rockville Fair. We were taught many things by our leader, George Dart, about dairy animals, how to raise them, show, judge, and other things of dairy nature which my father never had time to do. There was a State 4-H Fair in

Durham where I showed my calf and participated in a judging contest. I took part in a demonstration at the State Fair in 1929 and won a trip to the National Dairy Show with Francis Lyman in St. Louis. I remember boarding the train in Springfield with 2 locomotives pulling the passenger train and Pullman car over the Berkshires. We traveled through New York State, through cities into the level land of the mid-West and across the Mississippi River and backing the train into the train station in St. Louis. We put on our demonstration at the Fair after staying at a hotel and being entertained by the Pawina Company. On the way home, we took a side trip to Niagra Falls. I will never forget sleeping on a Pullman car at night.

There was a one room school in Vernon Center which I had to attend for 6 grades. I had a problem reading for which the teacher, Mr. Rouse, said if he could get results through my head, he would get it through my hide. He would haul me often out of my chair, shake me for such things as looking out the window. Today he would be arrested for doing such a thing as to take me over his knee. My father would say I guess he didn't hurt you any. One day, when I got to 6th grade, weighing about 150 pounds, I made the point of coming down on his feet as he was shaking me severely. He called me in later that afternoon and inquired if I had done that intentionally. Of course, I didn't confess, but he never did that to me again. The next year after 6 grades we all went to Rockville for 7th and 8th grade, where I hated to mix with all those city kids. I hated them, but had to attend where I had a wonderful teacher, Mrs. Kibbe. She was very strict, but I got wonderful help after standing in the corner the first day. Then to the 8th grade where the principle was Mrs. Andrews, who said you have a bad reputation and a big boy, you may sit in the back seat, but you cause any problem, you will sit in the front seat. I lasted 5 days in the back seat. She made me memorize poetry, instead of beating me like the small children. Then off to High School to learn Latin after having so much trouble with English.

The local forest fire warden approached and wanted to know if I'd be willing to job a forest fire group I was forming with 10 members. Their duty was to be available to fight fires when called with pay by the State Fire Marshall at .50 an hour. We would have to be trained to the satisfaction of the district warden. The

money and thrill seemed good, so I volunteered with David Shea, an 8th grader. There were older men in the crew which was named The Box Mountain Forest Fire Fighters. I saved all the money with others not knowing. That would come handy in 1932 when President Roosevelt closed the banks. My folks had to borrow from me so the family could eat. My job with David was to find water and keep the men supplied spraying the forest line.

I remember cutting the brim off an old soft hat, painting the letters RHS on both sides becoming a high school big shot.

There was next door to the farm a County Home, that was a home that 19 Selectmen of 13 Towns in Tolland County could place neglected children . There were 3 committees appointed to have control of the home and county jail. Originally they farmed the land making their own milk, eggs, and garden produce. This was given up as one overseer was not proficient to run the farm and my father rented the land. There were 2 playgrounds with a high board to separate the boys and girls. We, as outside children, were not allowed to associate with any of them. Why I never knew. The sat on one side of the church during service and retired like an army, staying behind bars to the next week.

It wasn't until 1930 that the commission hired Mr. McClain, a man from New York to run the place, under great criticism being out of State when so many people in Connecticut were out of work. He found the place infected with bed bugs, lice, cockroaches, and many other body scars. One of the first things he did was to install fire sprinkler system as the third floor was a fire trap. He had all the play ground fences torn down and burned with the bed linen. He hired an exterminator to fight the bugs. Children went to church where he was a teacher for me as well as those in the home. Catholic children went to Rockville by taxi. For all that graduated from the home, he saw to it they went to high school. He opened the door to me and others to associate with the children, teaching us that we were all God's children and equal in His sight. He built a ball field and back stop and saw to it that the field was mowed. Ball teams came from out of Town to play against us. He took us in his car to play outside of the home field. He called on every service club in Rockville for donations to convert the barn into a

place to have basketball games. It was there that I spent every night after work on the farm playing with the boy of the home. He made a shop in the basement for the boys to do woodworking. The gym was dedicated to Henry Conklin Smith, Chairman of the Commission for his cooperation in making improvements. The boys and girls were allowed to choose their own clothing at the store in Rockville. He got the boys interested in poultry by converting a two story tool shed into 4 laying pens with 2 boys assigned to a pen. A 4-H Poultry Club was organized which I became the leader. He had an acre of land plowed for a garden where both boys and girls were assigned to care for the plants. Mrs. McClain taught the girls sewing and cooking with one girl going to college and becoming a registered nurse. Mr. McClain was noted as a fund raiser for the church and other things. If you had \$2 and gave him \$1, he would have you pledge the other dollar and apologize that you didn't have another dollar. My father complained that he hated to ask people for money. Mr. McClain replied that he just loved to ask people and see if they would cooperate.

As I look back, this was the most wonderful time in my life with no cares and with very little money. Mr. McClain was like a father to me, never did he have a harsh word to me and I always felt welcome at the home and probably he had reasons to throw me out.

Having graduated from Rockville High School in 1934, my playmates at the county home were all leaving and I had to seek other interest. My father asked what I was going to do and I replied I didn't know when up he told me he did. He told me to hitch up the team of horses and go out back and mow that grass. He kept me busy until fall when he replaced me with a hired hand and gave me the \$20 per month that he paid him. He let me use his car after getting a license with his 1930 Buick that had automatic windshield wipers.

1938 was a very disastrous place in the Town and State with the hurricane of September. There was a lot of rain before the storm struck. Roads and bridges were being washed out. Snipsic dam was being sand bagged and people were warned to flee if the dam let go.

The storm came about 2 when first the church steeple blew over onto the church organ. Then the popular trees in the home play ground went over like ten pins. We at once grabbed hammers and nails to reinforce the windows of the cow barn. They were already in the barn having been flooded half way up the back as the bridge on West Road could not take the water and acted as a dam. Trees were falling over by their roots, taking wires down. A large elm tree by our driveway was broken off by the crotch, leaving tall splints. The barn on Hartford Turnpike blew in leaving only the 2 small sides with farm machinery all in a pile. Parts of the roof boards from the barn blew over the road hitting Fred Ecker's barn. Having no power for 12 days caused a problem. We learned Lyman's large barn blew over on the cows. Men would use ropes to haul them out. Five were never able to be rescued.

In 1939, as Rte 84 was not operating, it was necessary to go from New York to Boston through Vernon Center to Stafford by Crystal Lake. This was a main route for vacationers and large trucks and buses. It so happened that a family named Ford was passing through from Minnesota, whose mother was married in the church. They wanted to see the inside was their mother told them. Not knowing how to get permission to see the inside, they went to the large county home to find out how to get in. Mrs. McClain invited them in after they explained they were from the manufacturers Ma Stewarts Blewing. As there were no restaurants in Vernon, Mr. McClain excused himself, went to the kitchen and ordered the cook to kill some chickens and prepare a meal. He had a key to the church so he gave them a guided tour to the church with a big hole in the roof where the steeple fell in. He entertained him while the cook prepared the dinner. Before they left, he had them replacing the steeple, hiring an architect from New York and a contractor. This was dedicated in the fall of 1939 in memory of Mr. & Mrs. Luther Ford.

There are those in our lives that make impressions on how one lives. So it is with me, Mr. Albert S. McClain. He invited me into the home as a teenager, into a place I never was allowed, not even to talk through a knot hole in the play ground. He was my Sunday school teacher, encouraging me with a smile. I had lots of playmates at the home with the ball field and gym. These children have all gone,

but the memories I will never forget. Many thanks to you, Mr. McClain. You were a second father to me.

My father, now that I had a drivers license, let me take his car and I had the opportunity to pursue other interests after working 70 hours a week and on Sundays. I met up with a good looking Yankee girl, Geraldine Risley, a little young but knowing she would grow. I had a lot of fun at the Grange dances and other places. I don't know if her mother approved of me, but she never complained to me and was always good to me. I finally married her on August 29, 1942 after haying and before silo filling with a honeymoon on West Hill Lake in New Hartford at a cottage her family owned.

My father said he hoped I knew what I was doing but he wished me good luck without much money and no place to live. So he bought a house next to the Grange Hall for \$4000 wondering if he had made a mistake. I guess he wasn't worrying too much about me. He borrowed a 39 Massey Ford to put in an old corn harvester due to a shortage of farm help. I told him I was leaving if he didn't get a tractor. He finally got a Ford tractor, 2 14 inch plows double as foot harrow with a belt pulley for \$990 saying " let me try plowing – you take the horses"

He took me in on a partnership with each taking \$8.50 a week to live on. We had to increase production to pay for any new farm equipment. The horses were sold and their stalls were replaced with cow stalls and calf pens. We still needed cash to buy equipment, so Fred Ecker agreed to pay his share of any new item. These were a hay bailer, elevator tractor mower, silage blower, field chopper and other small items. All of these have problems and were replaced by the partnership. We put up a new silo while Fred put up 2. Things went fine for both of us for each could not afford to do it alone.

My father was offered a State job for the Department of Agriculture for \$5000 plus benefits in early 1950. I told him to accept since he would never earn that on the farm, which he did leaving me but also helping me in his spare time. He turned all the stock and equipment over to me at that time and I continued to work with Fred.

Carol was born in 1945, Morgan in 1950 and Nancy in 1951. As we had to send these children to college, it became necessary for Geraldine to pay the awful expense. This she did as a teller at the Savings Bank of Tolland. As an employee at the bank was getting old and she had book keeping experience, she advanced to become Treasurer of the bank.

In late 1960, Fred Ecker, who had bought Uncle Charlie's farm, decided to retire, selling the farm and milk route. The Town bought the land, giving his wife life use of the house. He let me use the farm buildings for a couple years, until the Town decided to take possession and build a 64 room middle school. I continued to farm here under very difficult problems having no one to milk the cows in the case of sometimes being in the hospital. The Town acquired the County Home property from the State and began to build a 32 room elementary school on land I was using as a night pasture.

I hired a full time worker at the end of the year and he bought a new car. Geraldine said to me – you have to do something as there is no profit making milk at the price received. So in 1965, I sold the milking cows with tears in my eyes. I drove a school bus for a year and a half before being offered a job as superintendent of Grove Hill Cemetery and later becoming superintendent of all the Town cemeteries under the consolidation of Rockville and Vernon Fire Districts.

At 65, I sent a card to social security asking what they would pay me upon retiring. After receiving notice it would be the same as working without having the taxes, I decided it was time to retire with my good wife and have a good time, upon turning the operation of the farm such as raising the turkeys and other things to my son.

During the years of operating the farm, I always found time to pursue civic and fraternal endeavors, such as being a member of the First Congregational Church of Vernon Center and serving on most committees for which I was elected Deacon Emeritus. I became a member of the Fayette Lodge of the Masons, with both York Rights and Scottish Rights. I became a member of the Sphinx Shrine and it's Temple Guard. I am a past Master of Vernon Grange and also am a member of

North Central Pomona, CT State Grange and the National Grange for about 75 years. I was a member of Vernon Board of Assessment Appeals for over 30 years. I was a member of the Vernon Fire Department that I helped to organize because there was no protection in the rural area. We entertained 2 young farmer from Greece and Turkey through the IFYE program, the one from Greece returning and receiving his doctorate. After retiring, I went on the Vernon Cemetery Committee. I was a 4-H member and leader and got the 4-H Advisors Award. I served on the Tolland County Soil & Water Conservation Commission. I was awarded the Vernon Liberty Bell May 1, 1986.

All of these I could not have done without the help and encouragement of a good wife and happy family for which I'm grateful.

Yes, I am really blessed.

Norman Randall Strong

March 2009

History of the Strong Barn

The original barn burned down on July 7, 1917. They didn't know what caused the fire. There was speculation that a hired hand they fired might have set it or it could have been that they put the hay in the barn when it wasn't dry enough. They lost a good set of draft horses and pigs. Dad, Norman Randall Strong, was just a baby born Oct. 3rd of the year before.

N. Morgan Strong went up in the woods, off West Street where there were lots of dead chestnut trees from the blight and cut several large beams to make the foundation. These were hued on one side and used to make the barn floor and the floor for the hay mow, horse barn and grain room. He also had to dig a foundation for the large hay barn, 40 x 60 and one 32 x 52 for the cow barn. The gravel was drawn from a pit on Wooster Rd in Vernon with a team of horses with the help of Uncle Charlie Dart, his mother's brother and a farmer next door. As the Wetstone farm was building a large house near Vernon Station; they moved the cement mixer up here and poured all the cement for all the barns. They engaged Frank Hutchinson, a local builder, to construct the barns. Where there plans came, I am not sure but maybe from the Storrs Agricultural College at the time. The silo was made by the Amos Bridge Company in Hazardville, CT - 14 x 28. The hay fork for the barn was purchased from Star Hardware in Rockville.

They had the barn complete and move in on Nov. 17th of that year. It was a cold winter.

The next year the ice house part of the barn was added.

No sheathing inside of the barn and the condensation would build up on the inside of the barn during the winter. When they were milking and it was getting warmer, it would melt and be like a rain storm in the barn. To get grade A milk, they were required to put sheathing up and also put in electricity

Cows:

Uncle Charlie Dart, who owned the farm up the street, was the first to have TB free herd. He brought a prize cow down here so he wouldn't lose it w/ the herd extermination. This is the cow Dad learned to milk on.

The herd was required to be tuberculosis free to be a certified herd. 1 or 2 were tested every 90 days. They would inject them in the hind quarter and if they had TB a pea size bump would show up. The cows infected the pigs, too. The government established a program in which when the farmer had an infected cow, they would match the price the butcher paid for the animal. They finally determined this one cow that didn't test positive was the source of the problem

They blended straw with the manure from the farm up the street owned by Uncle Charlie Dart to prevent the run off.

Bangs disease (abortion) was the next round of disease. Grandpa got a law passed to vaccinations – he worked for the Dept. of Agriculture.

Milking machines/room:

Before the milk room, they had a wooden hog's head tub under the apple tree to store the milk in w/ ice.

Wiring came in 1928. Before then all milking was done by lanterns. The first milking machine was designed to suck the milk out and not efficient and they went back to milking by hand. This was before they were married.

After the war, there got to be a lot of farms around. You had to have about 80 milkers to make it worth it and we couldn't do it with small acreage. Grandpa turned the farm over to Dad and he went to work for the CT State Dept. of Agriculture. They got rid of the horses in the early 50s and expanded the cows, turning the horse stalls into cow stanchions and put in gutters. At this time they also built another silo for grass silage and mixed it with molasses and then powdered sulfur. The top number of cows we had was 38 tied up. Artificial breeding came in and got rid of their bull.

Horses:

They had to get a new set of horses and went to Hartford and found a team (Pete and Dick) and it took time to break them in. There was an incident in which the butcher's apron scared the team, they threw grandpa off and rolled the wagon. This team scared Dad, as he was only a little guy.

The horses had stalls right to the right inside the main barn. They didn't have iron hay holder – were stall fed

The changed the horse stalls to cow stations after the war when they got married.

Water and Electricity:

It was very dry in the year of 1908 and the County Home ended up digging an artesian well. Since the equipment was there, they dug a well at the farm and house. They hulled water for the cattle from Ogden Brook that winter with a horse and barrels and a stone bolt. They built a wind mill to pump the water from the artesian well since there wasn't electricity at that time.

Wiring came in 1928 when they put the sheathing up. There was a demand for Grade A milk.

Hay Mound:

The main barn was kept mostly for loose hay with fork. (NOTE FOR ALL: DON'T TAKE DOWN THE FORK – might not get it back.) They had to find someone to splice the rope. There were 3 horse staffs and a grain room. They didn't start bailing the hay until after the war. In 1942 Dad partnered with Grandpa and they went in with Fred Ecker, who bought Uncle Charlie's farm, to buy a 1938 Ford Ferguson tractor. It was small and efficient. They had 2 14" plows with a double 6 wheel harrow and belt wheel for \$990. It was a life saver and efficient.

Grain:

Grandpa went to the brewery in Hartford to get the used brewery grain – the waste. He paid \$2 and it would last a whole week. He put it in an old piano box in the grain room and it drained down through the floor of the barn. During prohibition he would buy from local dealers, but it was very expensive. The farmers of Ellington and Vernon joined together and form the Ellington/Vernon Farmers Exchange and bought grain by the railcar load.

Hired Men:

Clifford Haring, Albert Glacier (ate horseradish like applesauce), Fred Kielwisher (German Jew whose father beat him and he ran away and worked and lived here) lived upstairs in the house with the family.

Early in the 1920s they built the garage so the hired man and Dad to sleep in the rooms over the garage. Chestnut was taken to Bradley's lumber yard for this project. Before then the hired man slept off the kitchen. In 1926 Auntie Edna got married and Uncle Will came from Hartford and put in plumbing and raised the roof to the house and built the garage.

Otto Schatz, a Romanian immigrant that the Church sponsored, worked for Fred Ecker and helped out on our farm when he could. The Dart boys, especially Dickie Dart, worked on the farm in the 60s until he graduated and got a far of his own. During the 70s and 80s, John DeCarli worked on the farm after doing a days work for the Town of Vernon. Now we have my cousin, Richard Steele, helping out doing tasks around the farm and keeping an eye on Dad.

Silos:

Dad still has his grandfather's 30 foot ladder which my father, N. Morgan, would put up against the silo and then he would carry up the pipe and putting the elbow over the edge. He hated this job and the pipe was very heaving and it was dangerous. One thing I learned at a firemen's meeting was how to tie a rope on a

round pipes that wouldn't slip. Using a pulley, it was much easier to pull it up from the ground.

Mom and Dad had to postpone their wedding to get the silo rebuilt. They got it sided but waited until after the wedding to get a roof on it and fill it.

After the war they went to grass silage, but it wasn't strictly grass because it wasn't strong enough.

They bought a blizzard cutter to do the grass. The grass got wilted. The cutter got clogged and wouldn't go.

They were supposed to mix molasses on the green grass. They filled barrels in the cellar and got a pump. They hired a man to fill the silo and they thought he was going to get killed because he was sloppy and careless.

When it was time to get the silage out it really stunk. This was right after the war.

Then they got a sulfur powder and in hot weather that stunk. They got a funnel that held the powder that was attached to the fielded chopper with a blower and auger that got stuck at times. Otto Schautz, a Rumanian immigrant after the war, didn't speak English, but knew the word "Awful" when the stick drove him out to the silo.

Everyone working in the silo had to leave their clothes in the cellar.

They went back to corn and got rid of the blower and auger (in Ellington someone got stuck). In 1952-53, they bought a blower with 2 augers but it blew corn back. Then they went back to chains and a man rode on the corn to set it in the chopper.

The second silo was added in the late 40s.

Cattle dealers:

Grandpa's Jewish cattle dealer was Oscar Sefhire in the 20s/30s. They would barter for \$2, say goodbye and then leave – back up and start again. Fred Kealwalsar could speak or understand German. He would rat them out when they were talking German.

Kurt Joseph was our last major cattle dealer in the 50s and 60s– a war refugee. He would haggle with my father over the cost of a cow. You could see Kurt jumping up and down trying to convince Dad to sell and Dad would just say no very calmly. Kurt died young of a heart attach. He would bring every new barn dog a bone and become friends with the dog. The barn dogs had a way of not letting the cattle dealers out of their trucks.

Dogs-

We mostly had border collies all of our lives. Tammie was the best. She would follow behind the cows as Dad let them up the street to the upper pasture after the morning milking and home at 4:30 for the evening milking. One day Grandpa decided to follow the cows with the dog. Tammie took one look at him and turned around and went home.

Barn Roof:

The original roof was asphalt shingles, but they only lasted 4-5 years when they started to leak. They came out with a roofing cement that you paint over the shingles, but you'd have to do that every year or so. Grandpa got sick of that so put another layer of shingles. Then they painted that layer and then another layer of shingles over the years. About 25 years ago Dad stripped the west side and put new shingles on that and that is beginning to leak. The west side is still holding except for the area where the barn connected to the silo. At this point do we pull off all the shingles or just layer it again.

FROM MY GRANDFATHER CHECK BOOK – FOR BUILDING THE BARN

9/26/17 – Amount deposited		2683.33
9/26	E. G. Hehenthal for foundation	20.26
10/2	E. K. Schindler & Son – team & labor	65.70
DEPOSIT		1341.17
10/5	Star Hardware – Silo	200.00
10/16	M. Bidwell – Sleepers	10.50
10/22	G. H. Allen – lumber	878.56
10/22	A.P. & E. Co. – tank & pump	136.21
11/1	F. Hutchinson, builder	411.84
11/1	E. K. Shindler – labor	36.94
11/22	Geo. W. Hill Est. – lumber	449.49
11/30	F. W Bradley – lumber	562.69
12/3	F. Hutchinson – contractor	300.74
12/4	Star Hardware Co – Stanchions	44.15
12/4	Geo.Lutz – roofing	13.95
1918		
1/2	F. N. Bidwell – painting	24.50
1/7	Frank N. Tyler – Chestnut lumber	54.30
1/7	Est. of Geo. W. Hill – Paint	46.77
1/21	B P. Woodward – labor	36.00
1/24	DEPOSIT	275.00

2/5	B. J. Wiegel – plumbing	41.00	
4/23	DEPOSIT – Mother & Edna share of barn expense		593.00
6/4	Star Hardware – Hay fork	117.43	
7/19	Arthur Banforth – lumber	20.00	
9/12	DEPOSIT -		57.00
9/12	Ben J. Weigel -	20.26	
9/12	F. Hutchinson	37.92	
1919			
10/17	DEPOSIT		200.00
10/17	B J. Weigel – plumber	13.60	
10/17	Jackson Bros. – painting	88.39	
10/17	F. W. Bradley – lumber	181.14	
10/17	Est. Geo. W. Hill – paint etc.	118.88	
10/24	C.W King – lumber	147.08	
	TOTAL COST OF BUILDING BARN	4078.82	