

RIDEAU REMEMBERED - A DREAM COME TRUE

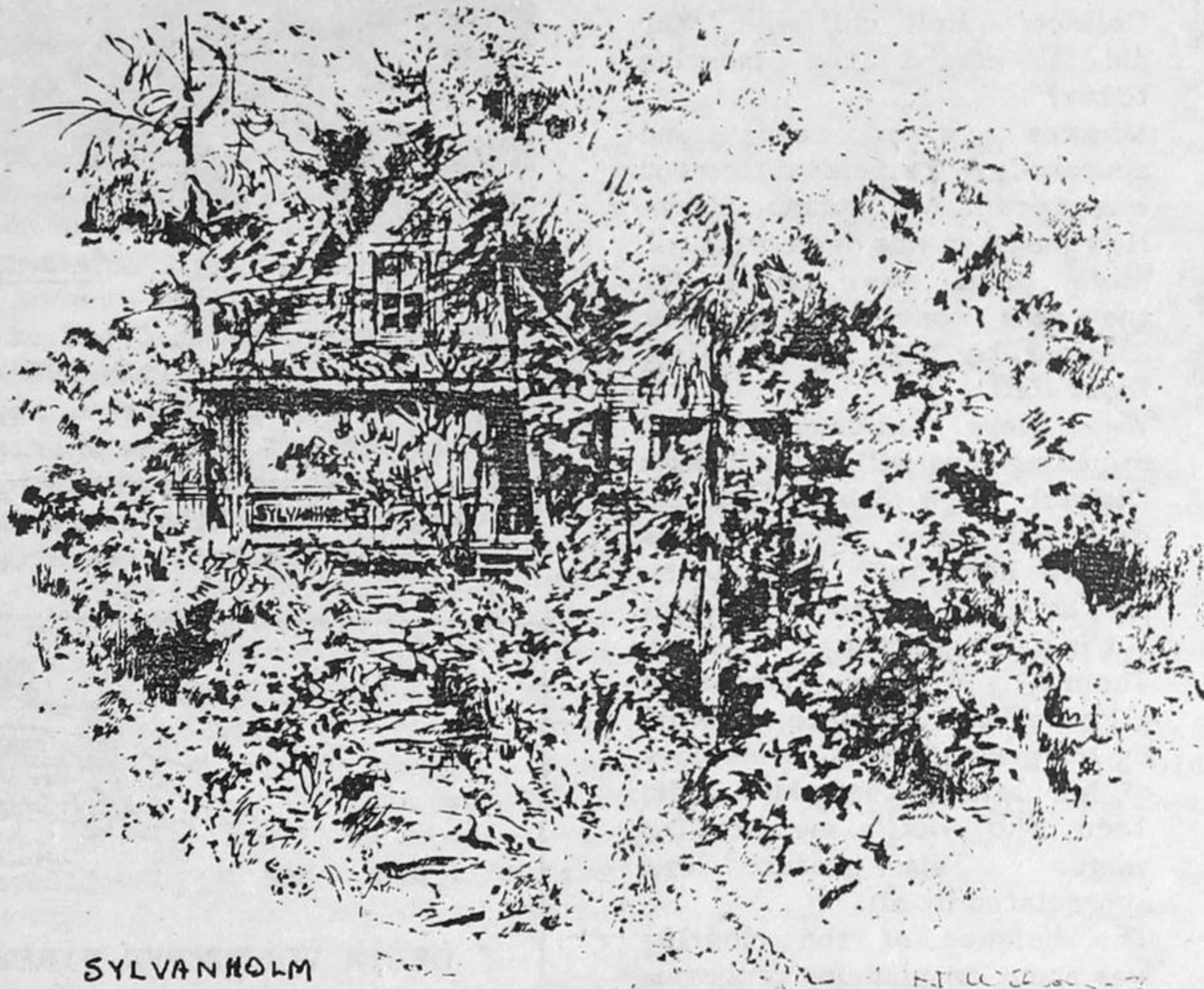
ELEANOR

My first recollection of the Rideau is of the long drive from Toronto with Mom and Dad, brother, two sisters, grandmother and the dog, all packed into the family car. I remember the excitement of getting closer, and the disappointment of delays such as not infrequent flat tires.

I also remember my father's stories of monster fish and of "putting" in a Dowsett d.p. boat from the mouth of German Bay to Houghton Bay for a day of tennis.

And the war years when gas rations and tire shortages prevented us making the trip. I remember my sister getting to Smiths Falls by train and not knowing how to get to Portland. She called Mr. Scovil, who put her at ease, suggested she get a taxi to his store, and when she didn't have enough money to pay the fare, paid it with what she perceived to be great gallantry.

School friends that I'm still in touch with recall wonderful weekends and fabulous holidays at Sylvanholm island - and Rideau visits were an important part in our courtship days.



SYLVANHOLM



SCOVIL'S STORE 1930

PATRICK

My first recollection of the Rideau is an afternoon picnic at Kingston Mills on visits to grandparents in Kingston. The drive home to Montreal with Mother, Father, two brothers and the dog was full of great fish stories and of plans for the next visit and how, when we'd grow up, we would boat on the Rideau.

I also remember my Grandfather having my brother and I "toot-toot" at the top of our lungs to get the bridge to go up by Knapp's Marina.

And the years when we lived too far away to visit our Grandparents and the Rideau. I remember my Grandfather taking me through a lock for the first time, and how the old cedar strip bucked and tossed in the churning water as I held on to the wall chain for dear life and thought it the most wonderful, dangerous thing I'd ever do in my life time.

Sylvanholm Island was an exciting time in the courtship of my wife, and I'm not only referring to my first visit when I took the wrong path to the outhouse and had my future mother-in-law correct my errant way with a well-guided flashlight beam.



Summer weekends and holidays at the Grandparents' Rideau cottage were dreamlike and even better. The children learned to swim, fish and waterski. They learned to paddle, to sail and most important - to enjoy the great good around them - without T.V., electricity, indoor plumbing or outside influences.

We spent time as a family and the children grew up with their cousins (for, being in Montreal, island times were the only times they got together). Lake friendships grew at Cow Island and helping with haying at the Rodgers, Hutchings or laterly, the Briggs-Judes. These experiences added to and strengthened these friendships. Working at Len's Cove provided opportunity and more friends so that now our children look upon Portland as their only continuing home. Seventeen years in Montreal and ten in Toronto don't count against an uninterrupted "lifetime" at the Rideau.

We remember the role that Sim Scovil played, relaying messages and holding anxious hands as we negotiated to buy Garrett's Rest island from the McCarthys. His Christmas greetings warmed the winter while his always cheery greeting brightened the dullest summer day. Mr. Scovil was a haven and a contact point. Our boathouse was just west along the shore and it was to Scovil's that messages and visitors went and were picked up. His wonderful counters and, early on, mail slots, were things from a rich past.

We talked, back then, of a dream, of giving up the city life, and of buying Scovil's, of living a carefree life as friend and benefactor to all. On the long drive from Montreal with the children and dog asleep in the back seat, we'd talk of how perfect it would be, and how happy the family unit would be.

Then one spring we arrived and Sim and Scovil's and the counters were no more, and our dream died a death full of memories and hopes.

And we looked at Len Horsfall and Ted Sled and Chet Good and talked different plans and dreamed different dreams. And along came Doug, Steve, Terry and again one spring Kirk and Kathie and dreams died again.

We watched German Bay become Briton Bay, Livingstons become Colonel By, Jack Byington and Bill Diamond take well deserved

retirement, the roof go from the Government dock, the tornado hit Colonel By, Couligans and the Pendletons. We've watched regattas come and go, the firework display get bigger and better, and the chicken Bar B Que become an annual event, not to be missed.

Our family survived running onto a shoal one dark and rainy night when we were rescued by some young people who saw us go off course after leaving Portland bay. As a family we were rammed and sunk in a canoe race at the Regatta. We got sand blasted going under a bridge at Perth. We were eaten alive by voracious mosquitoes when we slept in our boat at Jones Falls.

We held sales meetings at the Cross' Opinicon and got more time at the Rideau that way. Quality time.

We worked in Montreal and Toronto and we always lived for and dreamed of time at Portland-on-the-Rideau.

We once bought a painting at an outdoor art sale in Ithaca, N.Y. - an unspectacular painting, on plywood, with a crude wooden frame. It was going unnoticed until it caught our eye. It was Portland, as we saw it everytime we came to town from the island. The village spread out along the shore with the hill behind. The last light of day was reflected off the homes and trees. And at the heart of the picture - just about dead centre Scovil's store and wharf.

That picture has hung in every home that we had and as of May 10th it will hang in what we hope will be its final home. For our dreams have come true. Dreams we dared to dream but dared not count on - Dreams that died and were rekindled. Too good to be true - but we'll move into the Scovil Store - 2nd floor - and look out over the beautiful Big Rideau and remember.

It will be the living of our dream, finally living "in" our Rideau picture.

Eleanor and Patrick Dickey
Gallagher House
Portland-on-the-Rideau