

Auto - biography of

James Ezra Fleagle 1884-19

This sketch was begun on Mar. 1, '42 at the instance of son Willard who was wondering where his father had lived when he was young.

The subject of this sketch came to the world on Mar. 22, 1884 at Mayberry, Carroll County, Md. His father was Benj. Fleagle Jr. son of Benj. Fleagle of Copperville Md near Taneytown, who was an elder of the Church of God, a very stern and severe follower of the old ways, a great reader and teacher of the Word. He was a stone-mason and taught his sons the trade. There were four sons and four daughters. Mordecai, a fifth son, died when quite young. The children were Adeline, Ellen, Annie and Tabitha; Milton, Ezra, Obadiah + Benj.

Ellen's daughter Alma Waites, Mrs Joe Waites gave the writer the hand Bible and eye-glasses of this Elder Fleagle, that is in 1942.

The mother of the subject of this sketch hereafter noted as J.E.F. was Martha Jane Harner, daughter of James + Susan Harner of Longville above Taneytown, near Harney.

James Harner died about 1890. Buried at Taneytown. Susan Harner after his death lived with her daughter Martha. The latter had a brother Harvey who died young and a sister Clara who was married and died soon after in childbirth.

J.E.F.s father was born Aug. 24, 1842; died June 30, 1935. His mother was born Jan 27, 1850.

The family had been living on Frederick St. Taneytown but on Mar. 21, 1884 they moved to Mayberry, Md about 5 miles east of Taneytown where a small farm had been purchased. This place lay to the east of the village about ½ a mile, back of a line of forests with Bare Branch<sup>1</sup> creek running thru it. It was the next day that J.E.F. came to this world of light and of trouble. It is related that in those days when such a thing as hospitalization for child-birth was unknown that Father Benj. arose early, mounted his horse + went to Bankerts' Mill about 3 miles distant as you go to Uniontown to get some help in the form of Cousins Jennie Bankert, that is a first cousin of J.E.F.'s mother. It is also said that owing to some miscalculation the famly Hymilles had not vacated the House so that things were a bit cramped when J.E.F. arrived. Lest we forget, he was named after his maternal grandfather James and fraternal uncle Ezra.

Now for the house. It stood against the hill with a basement used as a kitchen, in summer the stove was pushed in the fireplace. Beyond the kitchen the cellar completed the ground floor. This cellar was used as a store-house + pantry. A large hogshead in the corner held the soft-soap which was made in the spring-time. At the other end were the potato bins. Sweet potatoes were kept in a [bbl] up stairs behind the stove pipe which came thru the ceiling of the lower room. In the cellar was the big lard can which if empty meant that butchering time was near. Some where near was a stone crock with a stone lid that made a horrible ringing sound if not replaced with great care.

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<sup>1</sup> Modern maps spell this name Bear Branch. I originally thought the maps were wrong, that perhaps the knowledge that the creek was named after a landowner named Bare had been lost over time, but as early as 1877 the township map displays the names Bear Branch and Samuel Bare right next to each other.

And how can you be extra careful if your hands are full of cookies. Over your head + above the potatoes you could see cured hams hanging.

You reached the 2nd floor by a winding stair. This had 2 rooms. A general living room and another used [as] the parlor but which was occupied by the Grandmother Harner until that eventful day when she took old Mr. Halter as a husband. It did not start out that way. He was an old widowed tailor, abiding in Mayberry. One Sunday he came over and made his wants known. Wanted Grandmother as a housekeeper. Had to use tears to produce. Well, she wasn't long there until they made a match of it. And soon thereafter while adjusting a window-blind while standing on a chair Grandmother fell and broke her hip.

She never recovered, had to be carried from bed to chair and back to bed. Finally in 1910 she passed away + was laid in the beautifully situated cemetery at Silver Run where after several years her husband Mr. Halter followed her.

To return to the 2nd floor. The 2nd room now became a parlor which was scarcely used until the day when thru the kindness of a cousin, Edw.<sup>2</sup> Christ, the husband of Annie, Aunt Ellen Segafoses' daughter a cottage organ was installed<sup>3</sup>. That was a 7 [day] wonder to the little J.E.F. Later it vanished + was replaced by one bought by big sister Lillian. J.E.F was then old enough to be interested and in case he could not be found it was a safe bet that he was at the organ. Many years after about 40 [yours] the organ found a home at Reisterstown with J.E.F. who treasures it on account of its origins.

The living room had a [chink]-stove, table, – perhaps we might call it a work + study table because on it and around it the children studied + the mother and sisters did their sewing. Then in one corner was a cupboard for schoolbooks. In another was a 3 corner'd cupboard where glassware and the treasured dishes were placed. On top of it might be seen the little toys that Santa had brought; such as a horse hitched to a cart or a jack-in-the-box.

Another winding stair led to the 3rd floor divided into 3 rooms. Above it was a garrett.

The house was unpainted but rec'd a coat of white wash at one period of the family stay there, which was 24 years.

Adjacent to the house was a large woodshed with a bake-oven under the same roof. This oven had its opening for the loaves a bit higher than breast-high.

A fire was made in the oven of wood. When heated the embers were scraped out and down a passage in the wall for that purpose and the loaves pushed in and an iron door closed upon it. In the front yard was a large Catalpa tree that grew on a slant. Another grew upon the south side. The house faced east. These trees had very large leaves. Their seed pods were the refuge of numerous long caterpillars. Lilac bushes and a large snow-ball bush were in the yard. There was a 2nd story porch surrounded by a balustrade in which the bumble bees were fond of making their home. Under the outside stair to this porch was a protecting wall that [had] a huge stone, upon which was a favorite spot for cracking walnuts. The wood shed roof adjoined this porch and its

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<sup>2</sup> This looks like Edw. or Edm.

<sup>3</sup> I believe the name without a possessive is Segafos.

roof was convenient for placing [buds] of drying apples or sweet corn and of apple leather which was apple-sauce spread thin on a shingle and dried in the sun.

The Spring and spring-house were in front of the house at about 100 ft. Over the spring and close to the spring house stood several silver-maple trees. The spring house had a large trough of brick and cement thru which the spring water was always running. Here the mother kept her milk, cream and butter. Over the spring house the meat was smoked and walnuts were stored. From the sp-house running water was supplied for the animals at the barn thru pipes laid under ground. These pipes were chestnut logs bored by hand and carefully joined. Below the springhouse the water made a little pool where little waterwheels were made to turn. Below this spot along the branch<sup>4</sup> and near the large or lower garden was a patch of peppermint. In this large garden were sweet corn and beans laid out in rows so that the end fences being removed from the supporting posts the plot could be worked with a horse + plow. This garden was ploughed but the smaller garden near the house had to be spaded.

South of the house about 150 feet were the hog pen and barn. The farmer had a 2nd story upon which was a corn granary. Here corn was shelled by a 1 legged stool resting on a ½ bu measure into which the corn dropped when the ear was scraped over a piece of steel in the end of said board or stool. Below in the entry was a cool place for husking sweet-corn in summer.

Up the north side of the hog house grew the luxuriant grapes that J.E.F liked to present to a loved teacher. A Smoke-house apple-tree furnished material for similar gifts.<sup>5</sup>

The barn was nothing to brag about but was a nice cozy place to store pumpkins in the winter near the calf stalls and had a huge box for storing soft feed for cows + horses. Either bran or chop. Above was a threshing floor of heavy planks. Here much heavy work was done. Father Fleagle had a threshing machine with a shaker to separate wheat + straw. The machine was run by a horse – power driven by 6 or 8 horses. The driver usually stood on a platform in the centre as the horses walked around the circle. Of course the platform + driver rotated with the machine. The horsepower drove the thresher by a belt over a large fly wheel. Some times an iron rod connected the two machines as at Foglesongs where Allie hurt his hand by getting it in the knuckle of the rods.

To the end of the barn was a hay shed covered with the straw made into small bundles, that is a thatch roof.

Between the house and barn to the right and up against the hillside were in turn the wagon shed, buggy house and chicken-house. All of these took a lot of digging and removal of ground. The

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<sup>4</sup> I assume branch means the creek, Bear Branch Creek.

<sup>5</sup> James Ezra's cursive is very slanted but also very reliable and consistent. This word truly looks like "Smoke-houne" and didn't make sense to me until I googled "apple variety smokehouse" and sure enough:

"Smokehouse (Gibbons Smokehouse, Mill Creek, Red Vandevere) - A wonderful and very flavorful apple that originated in the 1830's with William Gibbons of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. The original tree grew up near the smokehouse of Mr. Gibbons and thus its name was derived. Besides its excellent eating qualities, Smokehouse is a fine cooking and baking apple. The apple has greenish-yellow skin covered with shades and stripes of red. Flesh is yellowish, crisp and firm with a pleasing spicy flavor. Ripens September or later depending on the locale."

(fr. <http://www.bighorsecreekfarm.com/descriptions4.htm>)

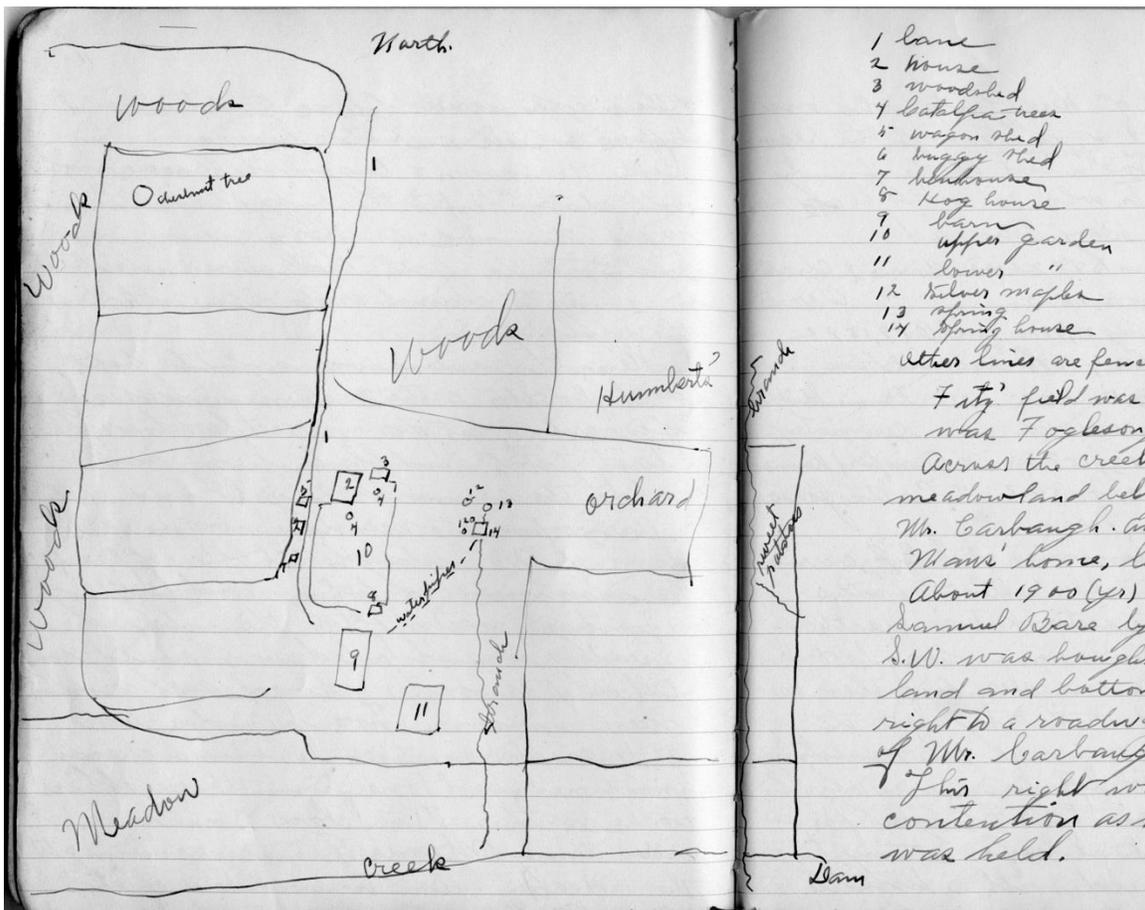
walls were of mud. That is, upon a low stone wall side-boards were placed with iron rods holding them together. In these facing stones were placed against the boards, the interior filled in with stones smaller, with a maximum of mortar. Boards were removed when dry and a new layer superimposed. Such a wall was made only in the clear. The outer side of the wagon shed had a corn crib with a slanting floor and a trough with cover to receive the corn and thus keep the store of corn on the move to interrupt mice + rats. Over the top of the wagon was a place to store old stuff as wheels and old lumber.

Bothe the wagon + buggy sheds were roofed with slate. Next to the buggy house was a wall thru which was a stair way leading to the path that was used in going to church or the store. That is to Mayberry.

Near the garden was a potato patch and farther to the eastward was a favorite spot for sweet potatoes. The first patch had black heavy soil while the second was light and slaty.

Across from the meadow was the Mill dam of Mr Carbaugh. It offered a minimum of fishing and bathing.

In high waters often the entire meadow was flooded and it would [make] you feel as if the water stood and you were moving. Two branches ran to the creek. One from the spring already mentioned and one from the neighbors on the north. The place was called Runny Meade Farm according to the deed. Here is a sketch of it.



1 lane	5 wagon shed	9 barn	13 spring
2 house	6 buggy shed	10 upper garden	14 spring house
3 woodshed	7 henhouse	11 lower "	
4 Catalpa trees	8 Hog house	12 Silver maples	

Other lines are fences of the fields.

Fitz' field was east and beyond it was Foglesong's.

Across the creek was a narrow meadowland belonging to the Miller, Mr. Carbaugh and beyond it was Mans' home, later Jonas Heltibridle's.<sup>6</sup> About 1900 (yr) the property of Samuel Bare lying to the west + S.W. was bought. This was woodland and bottomland with a legal right to a roadway thru the property of Mr. Carbaugh, the miller. This right was a matter of contention as long as the property was held.

Now as Al Smith of New York who once ran for President says "to keep the record straight here follows a list of the family of Benj. Fleagle, Jr. who is not to be confused with his son Benj. Edward.

Carrie May born Jan 1, 1872 or 3. Married Chas. Bay of Harford Co in 1896

Lillian Naomi " Jan 28, 1874 " Oscar Baker " " " in 1900 or 1901

Susan Catherine " Aug 29, 1876. Died Oct 9, 1892

Annie Charity " Mar 1, 1878 or 80 Married Thos Keefer, Mayberry June 1898; He died Nov. 1923.

Benj. E. " Aug 17, 1882 " Fannie Guthrie of Romney W.Va. in Aug 1913.

James Ezra " Mar. 22 1884 " Jennie Coffin Genoa, Neb. June 30, 1916

Rena Belle " Jan 23, 1886 " Crawford Kennedy of Nebr. at Washington D.C.

Ruth Ellen " Jan 2, 1889? " Carlton Jones of R.I.

Martha Janette Jul. 9, 1892

The earliest memories of J.E.F carries him back to the time when on the upper porch he waited for his older sisters + brothers to come from school and several events connected with his sister Katie's death. Such as several neighbors carrying the dead girl into the room where he + his brother were abed as most of the family were sick with the measles. And then on the funeral day a neighbor lady Mrs. Boring suggested that they he + the brother look out at the funeral. But they were too young to sense the reality of the event.

Then when school life began many things happened. Such as being spanked by the teacher Cousin Louis Fleagle for being untidy at the water pail. Also when somewhat older for attempting to ride on the runner [of] the mail man's sleigh. An adventure that ended with a tumble in the snow and a spanking on the return to the school.

But then there were the good lunches carried in a tin bucket and stored in a large cupboard until noon hour. Hard boiled eggs and sirloin pieces eaten as taken from the lard in which they had

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<sup>6</sup> This name was extremely difficult to read (Keltchside? Heltchrille?), and the fact that I'd never heard it made it difficult to guess. However, I found a Jonas E. Heltibridle, born 1866 in MD, son of William Heltibridle, who "works in farm" in the census taken c. 1880 at Uniontown, which is a few miles south. This would put him in his twenties when James Ezra was growing up. William Heltibridle was born in 1834, which meant that if Jonas had inherited the neighboring farm after his father's death, his father lived only into his fifties or sixties, depending on how early James Ezra's memory is of the place belonging to Jonas.

been packed at butchering. But there were no lunches in fall + spring time as the cows had to be turned from one pasture into the other for water. So on the return to school there was little time for play of any kind.

Among the school mates of those early days was Roland Yentz, Clarence Feeser[,] Hugh, John + Brooke Heltibridle and Howard Heltibridle, Geo Humbert + sisters Annie. Annie Marber. Howard + Henry + [C]Alvin Eckard. Mabel + Lilah Heltibridle. Later there was Flora Fowble + brother Edgar.

His teachers at Mayberry were as far as he recalls Louis Fleagle, Charley Bittle, Nania Hill, his sister Lillian and Herbert Davidson.

It was during the latter's term that J·E·F + Clarence Feeser climbed to the bell after night + tied the bell clapper. Next day Clarence had to climb up + untie it. Whether the teacher knew anything about it was never learned.

One Fri. P.M. when Mr. Bittle + the older pupils were singing at the rear of the room Geo Fleagle + Willie Senft who were sitting behind the two F brothers started to stick J·E·F with pins to make him remove his arm. Instead of doing so he used his pens as [*if*] they were the pins until the teacher remarked, "Boys I see you." No more was needed. But the boys were surprised since the school closed without further incident. However on Mon following the teacher suggested that the last week should be finished ere another was started. Willie was absent but the other two helped considerably in shortening the long sticks that stood in the corner. Willie was not forgotten when he came several days later.

Some years later Mr. B. became afflicted. Lost the use of his legs completely. And then J·E·F, who was a college student called upon him with his violin. Mr. B. knew his walk ere he ascended the stair.

After School at Mayberry was over. Recreation – opportunities for this were somewhat limited and lacked the modern necessity of money to obtain them. We will name a few. Going to a sale. Some farmer intended to retire. On the day of sale as you approached the place you might see all kinds of machinery set out for sale and if he were breaking up housekeeping a lot of household goods, tools, etc. More than likely the big barn yard would be leveled off, strewn with straw and the place full of boys passing a ball with the middle full of boys who if struck with the ball would take their turn with the ball.

Then there would be refreshments stands. A gasoline stove for frying oysters; later hot dogs. Cigars + perhaps oranges + candy. If the sale was a big one \_\_Riggle the taffy man from Westminster would have a crowd around him as he heated his candy and drew it on a big hook cracking jokes the while. The center of all interest was of course the auctioneer. The one I knew of best of all was Jim Smith of Taneytown. He of course kept the crowd in good humor with his remarks about the articles offered for sale. To keep the crowd, the cows + horses were sold last. There would be an outside and an inside clerk. The former to follow the auctioneer + the latter to straighten out matters in the house. Perhaps write notes for purchases.

Then there were the S. S picnics. But in the Fleagle family these did not cut much ice. Pater familias believed that church dues should not be paid by merchandising + frolicking around in the

woods until nearly Sunday morning. We well remember how on several occasions when the Mayberry S S. had their picnic on Sat.

*Transcribed by Matthew D. Fleagle, December 2010, from the original text. Footnotes by mdf.*