

"The OLD CODGER'S CODGITATIONS" from the *Manchester Evening Herald*, Manchester, Conn., Fri., November 22, 1974, p.24. See webmaster note** below for more info.



Cheney Bros. had silk mills in Hartford, also. They were on the north side of Morgan Street between Market Street and the big freight yards and depots next to the river.

A Mr. Grant was the superintendent of the mills. He invented the Grant Reel with a traverse that laid the successive layers of threads reeled at an angle with those next to them. That prevented snarls and saved much wasted time and product. That system was adopted by the textile mills all over the world.

Mr. Grant lived on the west side of Vine Street almost opposite the end of Capen Street in Hartford.

North of the big Grant mansion was quite a large lot where we used to play ball. North of the lot was O.C.'s cousins' home. Their father was Mr. Grant's cousin. Their north boundary was the south boundary of the land that became Keeney Park. It was mostly big woods then with some open spaces that had been cultivated at some time.

There were no roads in the park land. In fact, Vine Street itself was not paved and had no hard sidewalks. It was gray dust in dry weather and when wet was a gray clay slippery as soap.

The horse cars only went up Windsor Avenue as far as Capen Street. Then we had to walk the whole length of Capen to Vine. It was pleasanter to ride our bikes all the way from Manchester.

We would walk west from Vine Street through the lots to the Hog River (now Park River) where we had a swimming pool. Our cousin had a 22-caliber Flobert rifle with which we hunted in the Keeney Park woods. It wouldn't do well to get caught doing it today.

Chief Bill of the Hartford department lived across the street from Mr. Grant, and opposite our cousin's home was a dairy farm with herds of cows in pasture along the road to the north.

Some of the store keepers in Manchester drove their own horses and wagons to Hartford for merchandise. Often we could get rides with them. They usually put the horse in a livery stable and spent the forenoon walking around placing orders for things to be put up ready for them to pick up later.

After they had their dinner at Long's Restaurant on State Street they would hitch up their horse and start around picking up the load they had ordered in the morning. The trip home with a load might end late in the evening.

We boys liked to get a ride in and have all day to explore the city, the Capitol, store windows, etc. but had to be sure to be at a prearranged place when the ride home was to start over the bridge.

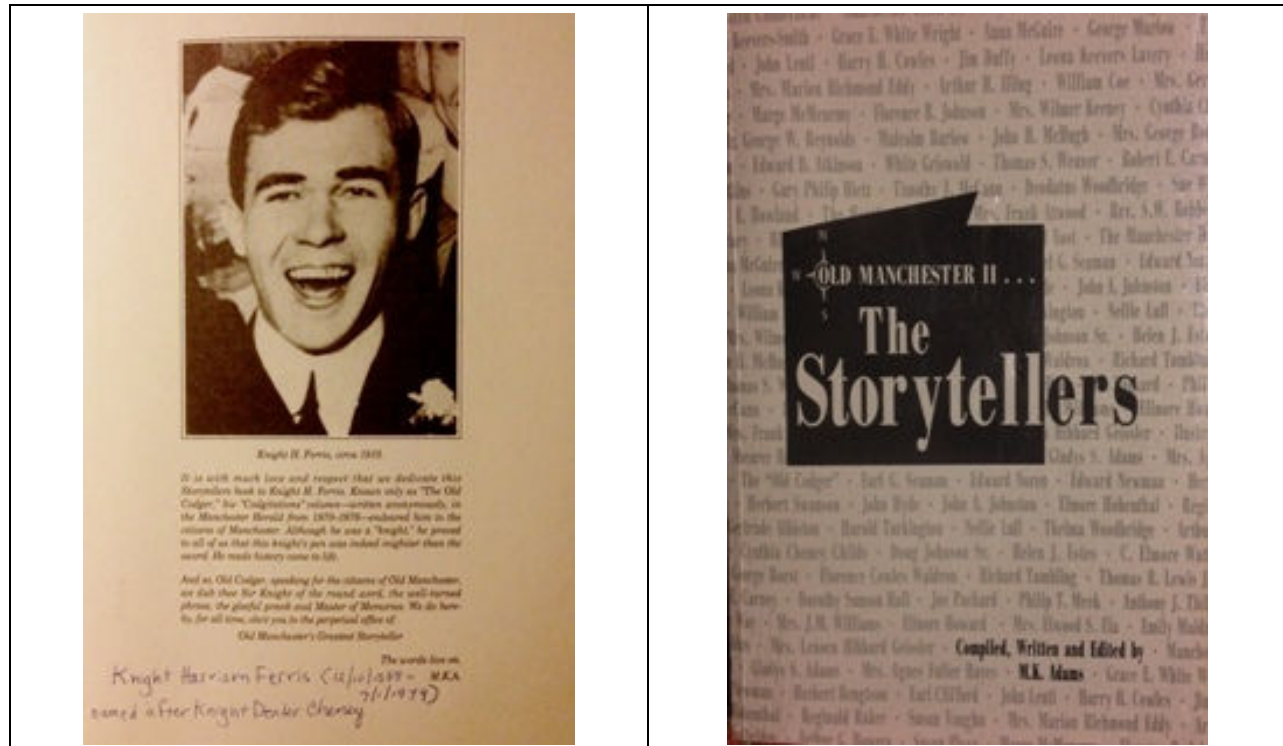
There was always at least one expressman in business shopping for businessmen who didn't have horses of their own. The system was the same as the others but they wouldn't give a boy a ride unless he paid for it.

The earliest O.C. can remember was Jerry Maher. Later Charlie Sweet was an expressman for years. Jerry was always smoking a cigar.

There was only one bridge over the river at Hartford. It was a covered wooden one. There was a lane for westbound traffic and one for east. Between them was a line of massive timber lattice girders and the same at either side. Between the timbers of the middle girder were painted barrels, the blue ones for papers and trash, the red ones full of sand for smothering any fire that might start.

One night the bridge was completely consumed by fire. A piece of Hartford's fire equipment and its horses were lost in it.

Jerry Maher was the last person known to have crossed. It was thought that Jerry intended to throw his cigar butt or a match into a sand barrel but hit a trash barrel by mistake.



Above left, Knight H. Ferris photo with tribute by Milton K. Adams. Above right, cover of *The Storytellers* book in which the page on the left appears as a dedication. *The Storytellers* book was published by the Manchester Historical Society in 1995. Copies are available for sale in the Museum Store.

****Notes by Susan Barlow, webmaster, October 2015:**

The "Old Codger's Codgitations" was a *Manchester Evening Herald* column, written anonymously from 1970 to 1976, by Knight Harrison Ferris (12/10/1888-7/1/1979), father of Faye Ferris of Manchester, who noted recently that her father was named Knight after Knight Dexter Cheney. Knight and Faye's grandfather – Knight's father – and uncle built the Ferris block in downtown Manchester about 1901. Faye said her father graduated as valedictorian of the Manchester High School class of 1906, a class of 19 students. "He was going to go to Yale, but he loved the outdoors and wanted to go to the School of Forestry there, but his father wanted him to become a minister." So Knight didn't go to Yale. Knight and his wife, who had graduated from Manchester High School in 1909 and became a teacher, lived in New York and Michigan, but moved back to Manchester in the 1930s. Faye said her father swore the family to secrecy on the identity of the "Old Codger," and she thought the anonymity might have been because her parents were both rather private people and didn't want their personal stories made public. There are copies of many of these columns in the Historical Society's "Storytellers" book.