

Recovered Treasures from the McCoord Incident

Alice McCoord was born in 1901, one of many children of Levi and Florence McCoord. Her grandparents were prominent property owners in Bushnell's Basin and Pittsford. Alice returned to the family farm on Austin Road in the 1940s to care for her aging father, and after he died, she decided to remain on the farm. Eventually most of the 114 acre farm was sold, creating the McCoord Woods subdivision. The agreement provided Alice McCoord with lifetime use of the old farmhouse. She lived a pioneer's life, with no electricity or indoor plumbing. She pumped water from a well, and sometimes filled buckets from a nearby creek. Her prized possession was an old piano, and she could often be heard through the open windows singing hymns. Some of her new neighbors decided she was peculiar, perhaps even dangerous, and they considered the old house an eyesore.

In June of 1970, Alice McCoord was admitted to Strong Memorial Hospital, after neighbors complained of her unusual behavior. While in the hospital, her house was ransacked and looted. Police confirmed that the crimes against Alice McCoord were committed primarily by adults looking for money. A large tree limb was used to ram through the doors and windows. Her piano was destroyed, and a woodstove was smashed to pieces. Mattresses were slit open, and her old cranking record player was destroyed. Everything was thrown to the floor, and witnesses said it looked like the aftermath of a tornado. After the adults were done, area teenagers took what was left. Perhaps it was just as well that Alice McCoord never returned to her home to see the destruction caused by the community around her. She died in the hospital on August 15, 1970.

Most people didn't really know Alice McCoord. They might have been surprised to learn that their "peculiar" neighbor was salutatorian of Pittsford High School's class of 1918, or that she earned her bachelor's degree from the University of Rochester in 1922. She went on to complete advanced studies at Cornell, McGill University in Montreal, the Eastman School of Music, and the Sorbonne in Paris. It is unlikely that her neighbors knew any of this, or that she was a respected teacher, librarian, and musician.

I recently received a small package from a former Perinton resident, now living in Texas. The contents included a fragile glass ambrotype photograph, circa 1850s, and a small leather covered Bible. They were sent by a man who, as a young boy witnessed, and in a small way, participated in the destruction of the home and property of Alice McCoord. The note accompanying the package described, with some remorse, that as a ten year old boy, he had entered the battered home after most of the damage had been done. He retrieved the old Bible

and photograph from the floor of the ransacked home, and for 43 years, has had an uneasy ownership of them. Now he has returned them to the community.



Notations in the bible indicate it was the property of Joseph S. McCoord, while attending Cornell University in 1887. Four years later he and his horse drowned in the Arkansas River in Colorado while on a missionary trip. The Bible became the possession of a niece that never knew him. As for the ambrotype photo, it may be that of a young Sarah Ann Simonson, Alice McCoord's grandmother. These two objects are but a tiny portion of the personal items pillaged from the home of Alice McCoord in 1970. We can only wonder where the remainder of her belongings reside.

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