

Brief Biography of Edward Durand Mulligan

Information from Mike Mulligan

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Born in Rochester and raised at 788 East Avenue, Edward Durand Mulligan's young life was spent in a city setting. His father, Dr. Edward Wright Mulligan, was once a farmer in Canada, though he disliked this way of life and became a doctor. After graduating with a Bachelor of Arts from Yale, young Edward was discouraged from a farming life by his father, but he took a short course in agriculture at Cornell shortly after his marriage to Frances Taylor in 1918. She also attended a course to prepare her for their new life. As a practical introduction to the field, literally, they spent the first year of their marriage on a farm in Phelps, NY, where Edward worked as a laborer. Their first child, Mary, was born in 1919.

After looking at other area farms, such as the Deuel Farm in Caledonia, NY, he settled on the decidedly grander Barber Farm in 1920. Edward purchased it with assistance from his father. The money was deducted from his eventual inheritance, his father adding the sentiments that he could buy the farm if he wanted "to be a damn fool." He pursued his vision despite his father's lack of support, and soon set to work improving the infrastructure of his new farm.

Aaron Barber III's hired man, John Koval, stayed on after his first employer sold the farm, and continued working on the Barber-Mulligan Farm under the direction of Ed. Koval and his family lived in the Barber Tenant House down the road. He was the small farm's main employee, and assisted Ed in moving Barber's shorthorn's box stalls from the cow barn to the shed, which would eventually house the horses. In their place, about thirty stanchions were built, and by 1922 or '23 a herd of about thirty Guernsey cows occupied them. These animals were bought from neighbors Markham and Puffer of Elm Place on River Road, a well-established local dairy. Ed was one of the first in the area to purchase an electric milking machine, which was brought to each cow's stall in the cow barn at milking time. Since a gasoline generator powered the machine, Ed likely never had to milk his herd by hand.

In addition to a dairy business, there were always sheep on the farm, and horses for work and riding. Ducks, geese, turkeys, and even guinea fowl were raised on the side for the family's use. Crops supplanted the income, and corn, hay, and wheat were some of the main harvests.

Frances, known as Nancy, led a life with independent enterprises. She raised the four children, Mary, Edward "Pat," John, and Livingston "Mike" on the farm, beginning a school in her home during their young years. A number of local children, including her own, attended the elementary school, fashioned around the Calvert Curriculum, which originated in Baltimore.

Nancy also developed a poultry business, keeping her flock of 700 to 800 hens on a large upstairs floor in the northern barns, while sheep or calves were housed below. The quantity of eggs produced were sand-cleaned and packed into large cartons for shipment to New York City. They were taken down to the depot in Avon to be delivered by train. She also raised about 200 broilers per year outside in moveable pens on Barber Road, in the fields across from the Barber Tenant House and the Lacy House. The birds were butchered on site and sold to friends in Rochester. These operations were continued into the 1960s.

Other infrastructural changes included recreational ones, their construction overseen by Ed. These included a tennis court in the 1930s and an in-ground swimming pool in 1958.

Ed died on August 8, 1964 from leukemia. The farm came into the full possession of this youngest son, Mike, at this time. A red oak tree was planted in Ed's memory in the northwest corner of the pond area, across the road from the main barns. A sycamore tree was planted beside it, under which his wife Nancy's ashes were eventually spread when she passed away in July 13, 1983.