

OUR TRIP TO SILVER LAKE

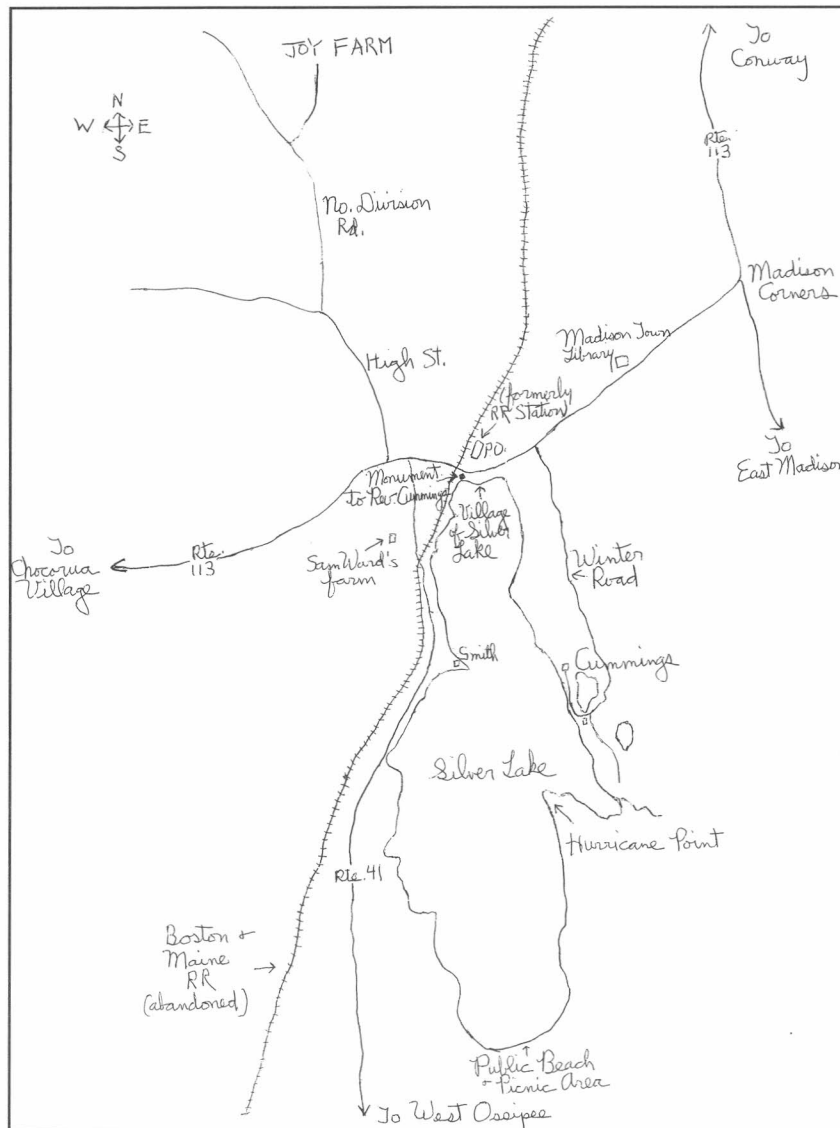
As Margaret (Peg) Foerster has a house on Silver Lake across from the Cummingses' house, she offered to help organize a visit of the Society to that area during the summer of 1996. She prepared auto, plane, bus, and train instructions. We mailed invitational postcards to the entire Society and then sent the instructions to those who responded.

Dave and Lynne Forrest, along with their son Daniel, a vacationing grad student, offered a ride to Norman and Zelda Friedman, and we drove up on Friday, August 9, 1996. It was a seven-hour drive from the New York City area, with a stop at Sturbridge, Massachusetts, to buy their famous candies and take lunch at The Publick House nearby. After arriving near Silver Lake, we got organized at the Wind Song Motor Inn, which offered reasonable and comfortable accommodations.

We then drove off to Peg's house by the lake itself, on Hurricane Point (see map). It is quite secluded, originally built by Cummings' father, and we were given a tour of the house. Peg arranged a wonderful salmon and fresh vegetable supper for the group here, and we settled in to get to know one another: Tom Ettinger, Peg's husband; Phil Smith, her cousin and a retired professor; Bernard Stehle, our Society's photographer; Barbara Seidman, a dedicated Society member; Marc Ettinger, Peg and Tom's son, who has set Cummings to music, his wife Jennifer, a math teacher, and their two children; Robert Wegner, who has appeared in these pages several times, and his wife, Phyllis—who had driven from Michigan in their camper.

We enjoyed the view of the lake from the porch (see cover photograph), samples of the Reverend Cummings' taxidermy, and an easel used by Cummings himself. As we watched the sunset, we could appreciate his fascination with painting that event over Mt. Chocorua. We clearly saw the red "skyrockets"—streaks of light apparent in some of the paintings. Bernard intoned, "i thank You God for most this amazing day." (Photos 1 and 2 show Mt. Chocorua and two Cummings paintings of the same scene, although not of the sunset.)

On Saturday morning we found our way to Joy Farm, where we were joined by Dr. Ted Robbins, friend and colleague of Dave, who divides his time between public psychiatry and his Trafalgar Square Publishing House in Pomfret, Vermont, on his horse and cattle farm. Dave and Norm and Zelda reminisced about their previous visits here in 1960 and 1962, respectively—Norm's new book, *(Re)Valuing Cummings*, containing his memoir of that



Silver Lake, New Hampshire

As a scale reference, Joy Farm is about two miles from the village of Silver Lake; drawn by Margaret Foerster.

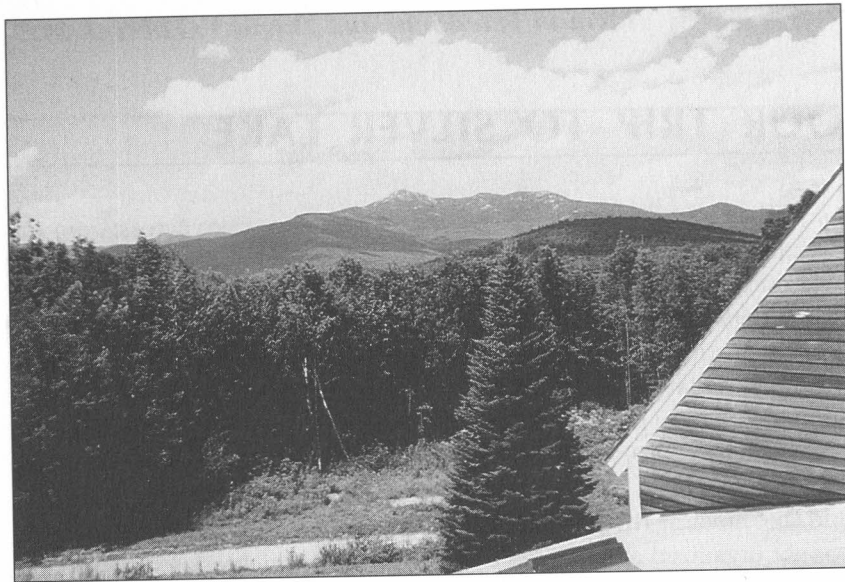


Photo 1. *The view toward Mt. Chocorua from Joy Farm*
 Photograph by David V. Forrest, M.D.



Photo 2. *Two paintings of Mt. Chocorua by E. E. Cummings*
 Photograph by David V. Forrest, M.D.

trip. They agreed it looked both familiar and different after such a passage of time—especially with the current remodeling now in progress (Photo 3; the original house is on the left).

We proceeded up the unpaved road and driveway. We had arranged with the present owners, Peter and Becky Mattison, to be able to enter the grounds and house. Because of carpenter ants and the spreading ivy, the house is being renovated, and half of it has been replaced.

Touring inside, we saw a fine Cummings painting of Anne Barton, a pencil self-portrait (Photo 4), and a drawing of a fish he'd done at age twelve (Photo 5). An old area of the house contained his mother's bed. We also saw his father's college yearbook and a landmark plaque (Photo 6).

As we were shown about the house, we learned that Peter is an accomplished stonemason and stained-glass-window restorer, and that he had rebuilt the large old fireplace. Becky is a grad student in paleontology.

Up behind the house, which is in fact its "front," across a pasture and just at the border of a wooded area, we found Cummings' two-story gazebo (Photo 7), an octagonal structure made of wood, from which one gets a view of Chocorua. We then visited the barn and its loft, and nearby a small wooden shack Marion once used as her photography studio. We took some group photos in front of the barn.



Photo 3. *Joy Farm; the original house is the structure on the far left*
 Photograph by David V. Forrest, M.D.



Photo 4. Cummings' paintings of flowers, himself, and Anne Barton

Photograph by David V. Forrest, M.D.



Photo 5. Robert Wegner (left) and Bernard Stehle hold a drawing done by Cummings at the age of 12

Photograph by David V. Forrest, M.D.

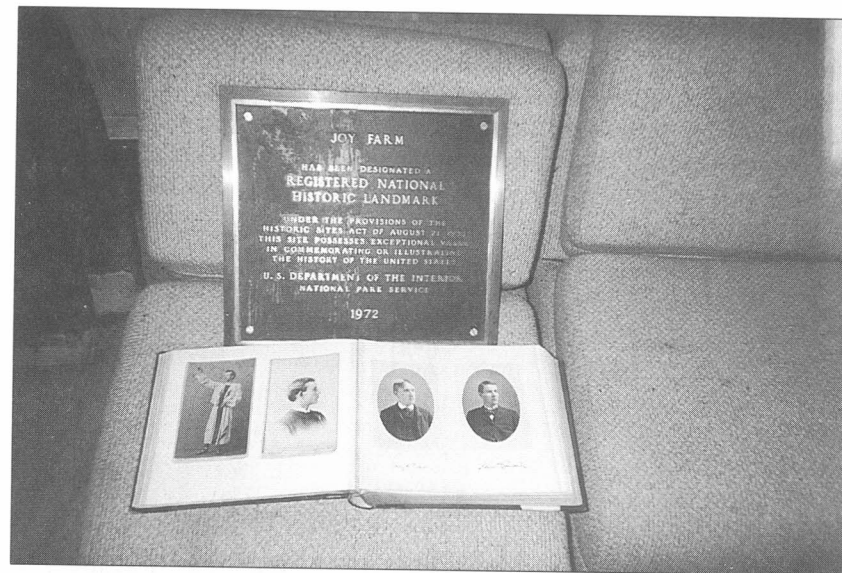


Photo 6. The Joy Farm landmark plaque and Reverend Cummings' college yearbook

Photograph by David V. Forrest, M.D.

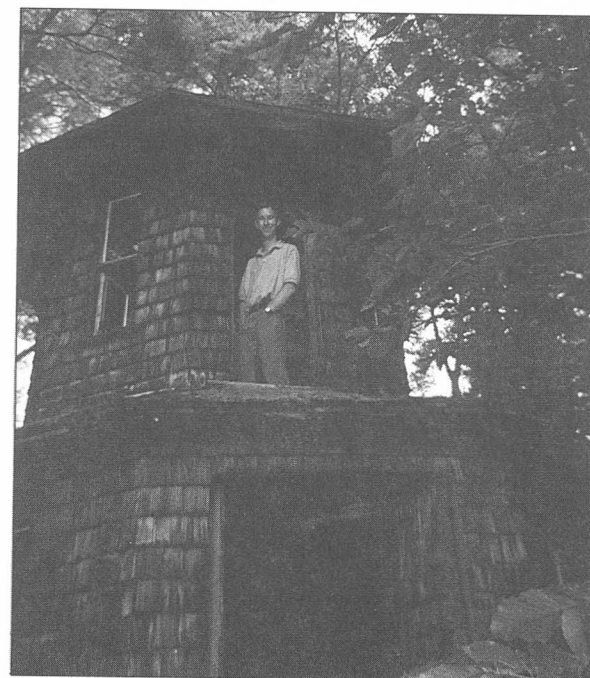


Photo 7. Daniel Forrest in Cummings' octagonal two-story gazebo

Photograph by David V. Forrest, M.D.

We went back to the town of Silver Lake, where we had lunch at one end of the lake. In the village square by the shore we noticed a stone pillar (Photo 8) dedicated to Walter Kennett, landholder and town father, and to Cummings' father, Reverend Edward Cummings (Photo 9). A Mr. Arnold, whom we met there, told us he was the great-grandson of a Mr. Al Stacey,



Photo 8. Stone pillar in Silver Lake dedicated to town father Walter Kennett and Reverend Edward Cummings

Photograph by Bernard F. Stehle

who built it sometime before his death in 1958. Mr. Arnold thought it was a tribute by the relatives of people drowned in a lake-storm—hence the lighthouse shape—but this story has not been confirmed.

Peg next invited us to the Smith House on the other side of the lake off Route 41, which was built three years after the Reverend Cummings' house by Sam Ward (see "rain or hail," *Complete* 568). There we found beach frontage where Society members reclined on the sand, bathed, swam, waded, boated, and watched the clear Silver Lake waters, better than drinking water, sweet, soft, and warm. Boats were sailing in the distance, and Dave—enjoying a cigar—waxed eloquent about Freud's cigar and the question of his not knowing what women want. Barbara suggested that we read some of Cummings' poems aloud.

Later that afternoon we all trekked off to the Annual Bean Hole outdoor picnic supper around the lakeside, where the town gathered to celebrate midsummer. Varieties of Yankee and Boston beans were being baked below ground in a sand pit filled with glowing wood embers, all handled impressively by burly men from the firehouse. Here we had another fine view of Chocorua benignly overseeing the festivities from a distance.



Photo 9. Memorial plaque for Walter Kennett and Reverend Edward Cummings

Photograph by Bernard F. Stehle

The Friedmans and Forrests returned to their motel, whereupon the tireless Dave and Lynne went off to a local summer theater performance of a musical version of *Gaslight* called "Angel Street," while the tired Norman and Zelda simply faded out after two such full days.

Sunday morning around 10:30 we attended a talk by Carol Batchelder (included later in this issue) in the Madison Town Library. There were around thirty people gathered—including Christine, Steve Scotti's wife, who had driven up for the occasion. In addition, Ruth Shackford had arranged to display Cummings memorabilia that Marion had given her after Cummings' death in 1962, including a portable typewriter (Photo 10), a bathrobe and a tie with elephant emblems (Photo 11), a cardigan sweater, the sled whose picture was on the cover of our 1993 issue, major paintings by the poet, and letters to Ruth and her husband, Bud (excerpts published elsewhere in this issue).

Carol's talk was much appreciated, and the Society members and the residents asked one another questions and came to know each other in a very warm and appreciative way. We learned that Cummings was rather



Photo 10. *Cummings' portable typewriter, given by Marion Morehouse to Ruth Shackford*

Photograph by Bernard F. Stehle

marginally connected with the townsfolk of Silver Hill, and indeed he often appeared in gloves lest he touch anything and aggravate his allergies.

We lingered until 1:30 p.m. or so, and then headed back to our respective homes. All three days gave us warm and sunny weather most amazingly.

—*Flushing and Rye, New York*



Photo 11. *E. E. Cummings' bathrobe decorated with elephant emblems*

Photograph by Bernard F. Stehle