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Sept. 27, 1999

C-Span
400 No. Capitol St. NW, Ste. 650
Washington, DC 20001 Re: Coolidge Program

Gentlemen:

I have just seen the Presidents program on Calvin Coolidge, all but the very beginning of the program.

One of the participants on the program mentioned that Coolidge was a member of a Congregational church in Washington when he was President.

I tried to get through on the telephone while the program was in progress, but was unable to do so. When he was in Northampton, at least during and following his Presidency, the Coolidges regularly attended our church, Edwards Congregational, now part of "The First Churches." They sat two pews behind us, a little forward of the middle of the church on the right-hand side. On the first Sunday following the Coolidges' return from the White House, my Mother told us, "Boys, many people will be looking at the Coolidges. Don't you turn around." We did not need to, as my brother [REDACTED] was the usher for that aisle and told us all about them.

I was excited by the newsreel of the Coolidge funeral. His body lay in state in the church. The film showed the casket through the open doors on the day of the funeral. Two soldiers are seen standing as guard of honor. One of them is my brother [REDACTED] who is still alive.

As I understand it, the writers of your program did not know what Grace Coolidge did after her husband died, or where she lived. After a trip (around the world, I believe) with her friend Mrs. Hill(s) she had another house built.

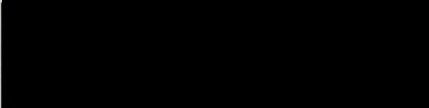
If you, or the participants on your program, wish to corroborate the above, I suggest consulting the records of The First Churches and the files of the (Northampton, MA) Hampshire Gazette. The paper will not tell Coolidge's

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religious affiliation, since newspapers did not normally do so in those days. The church records would show whether he formally joined. I presume that he did. The Gazette would have had several stories on the house Grace built.

I have a number of personal and family anecdotes about the Coolidges. One of them is enclosed.

Sincerely,



ON MARCH 4, 1929, FORMER PRESIDENT Calvin Coolidge left the White House and returned to Northampton, Massachusetts, where he rented half of a duplex frame house on a quiet residential street. This quite suited Coolidge's well-known Yankee thrift.

Mrs. Coolidge, however, felt that his position called for more than this, and the Coolidges bought a secluded estate called "The Beeches"—a sizable house on a relatively small piece of land, set way back from the street. A gravel drive led from the gates to the house.

My paper route took me to that part of town. After giving the Coolidges a few days to settle in, I rode my bicycle up the gravel drive and punched the doorbell, which was answered by the maid. I said that I had delivered the paper to the people who had lived there before and would like to deliver it to the Coolidges. She said fine.

The Hampshire Gazette was two cents a day, 12 cents a week, payable Saturday (there was no Sunday paper). For several weeks I tossed the paper without stopping on Monday through Friday. On Saturdays I would put my bicycle down, walk to the door, and push the bell. The door would open. The maid would see me, reach be-

Calvin Coolidge kept a sharp eye on the change.



hind her to a table in the hall, take from it a dime and two pennies, give them to me, and I would be on my way.

Whereas most customers made me make change when they paid me, the Coolidge maid's routine never varied. A paperboy's job is a lonely one, and you think a lot on your rounds. Every time I rode onto that gravel drive on a Saturday I thought, "Twelve cents, 12 cents, 12 cents." One Saturday, I was thinking "12 cents" when I pushed the doorbell. After a fairly long pause the door finally opened, and there stood the Great Man himself!

This was unexpected, and I was astounded, awed. Mr. Coolidge was so close that I could have reached out and touched him. I had seen the president at a distance, but never this close! It was almost too much for a 12-year-old.

"What do you want, boy?" he asked.

"Twelve cents, sir." That I knew.

Mr. Coolidge reached into his pocket and pulled out a quarter.

I reached into my pocket, pulled out some change, and gave him a dime and two pennies. I picked up my bicycle and started to ride away.

"Just a minute, boy! You owe me a penny."

I had ridden several yards. I put my bike down and, overcome with confusion, went back and gave him his penny. He was absolutely right, of course. Cal Coolidge did indeed watch his pennies. □□

— Yankee archives

Yankee, April 1994

Cal Coolidge did indeed watch his pennies. It's only fair, however, to point out that at Christmas time they gave their paper boy a generous Christmas tip.

This part
of story
omitted
in printed
article.