

One Man's Family, 1932 to 1959; Radio's Rich San Francisco

An Archival Note by Bart Lee, K6VK, CHRS Archivist

*The most popular radio program ever,
and its related graphics.*

The most popular radio program ever, *One Man's Family*, and the longest lasting, flourished as America flourished, besting the depression and World War Two, and going well into the 1950s. The lives of the fictional Barbour family in San Francisco provided the *personae* and the action for decades.

This long-running San Francisco program was sort of like "Reality Radio," but with distinguished radio actors and actresses.*

CHRS Deputy Archivist Bob Rydzewski has donated to the Archives of the California Historical Radio Society a trove of program public relations ephemera. These graphics seem to have been offered to the listening public by the sponsors of the Barbour family radio program, first Standard Brands (Tender Leaf Tea) then Miles Laboratories. Public relations outlet(s), or advertising agencies, likely put together and provided to inquiring listeners, by mail, these multiple and complex story-related materials.

They tell, in detail, about the radio program and its *personae*, their relationships and their backgrounds. The charts help to keep track of people. The photographs charm the viewer. The texts fill out who is doing what to whom, from the perspective of one persona or another.

* See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One_Man%27s_Family

Audio recordings of some of the programs are available,[†] as are many of the scripts.[‡] As it happens, San Francisco radio station KGO was the root of it all.

The newly acquired ephemera tell an (almost) real life story of much loss and tragedy, emotional disorders, and all sorts of conflict. The radio dramas span the depression and World War Two, and into post war prosperity. The graphics production reprises much of the radio episodes and stories. Pollyanna it ain't.[§] Nor was the radio program.

But it did make for compelling radio and then television, because the program did not shy way from a great deal of the reality of the era.

And it could not have had a nicer setting: Sea Cliff in San Francisco, looking out to the Golden Gate Bridge. Mr. Barbour was a securities broker who had prospered.^{**} The family also held “Sky Ranch” down the peninsula. His daughters married well. His sons, on the other hand...

A selection of the donated materials, especially the graphics, follows this note.

[†] See <https://archive.org/details/OneMansFamily> for recordings. Specifically, go also to: https://bayarearadio.org/audio/one-mans/One%20Man's%20Family_49-Xx-xx_Promotion.mp3

[‡] See <https://www.worldcat.org/title/radio-and-television-scripts-1929-1965/oclc/86166236> for scripts.

[§] “All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.” So declared Leo Tolstoy in *ANNA KARENINA*. But as will appear, the auteur set out to compensate for the dark radio crime dramas of the time.

^{**} An ocean-view Sea Cliff house in 2022, 90 years later, lists for \$39,000,000; some list for less. The family held four on the cliff edge (see graphics).

The strengths of the radio program in changing times:

John Schneider at the CHRS website BayAreaRadio.org explains much of the strength of the program for its vast audience, and the importance of its writer, Carlton E. Morse (who had lived in Sea Cliff):

“ONE MAN'S FAMILY

“By 1932, Carlton E. Morse was the biggest name in radio drama on the Coast. But, he had tired of the continual diet of murder and violence. As an antidote to this, he began working on a series he called ‘One Man's Family.’ Morse was appalled by what appeared to be a coming deterioration of the family life style in America. He later told an interviewer:

“After the First World War, there was a beginning of a deterioration of the family, of parent-child relationships. I had been brought up with very strict, conventional home life, and it rather appalled me to see what was going on.”

“He decided to write a series giving ‘a down-to-earth, honest picture of family life.’ Further influenced by John Galsworthy's ‘Forsyte Saga,’ he began working on pilot scripts for ‘One Man's Family.’

“‘One Man's Family’ told the story of the Barbour family, an affluent, moral family residing in the Sea Cliff district of San Francisco. This series did not fit into any previously-used program formulas — it was unlike anything that had been done on radio up to that time. It simply told the story of everyday life in a model family. Morse hoped it would become popular because the public would identify closely with its characters.” [fn omitted]^{††}

^{††} <https://web.archive.org/web/20180518055326/http://bayarearadio.org/schneider/nbc.shtml> (used by permission).

John notes:

“Carlton Morse passed away on May 24, 1993, in Sacramento at the age of 91. He was elected to the CHRS [Bay Area Radio Hall of Fame](#) in 2006 with the first class to be enshrined.”^{‡‡}

Morse’s accomplishment staggers the imagination. He wrote each episode that morning, as if in a trance, for decades. The actors also had much to do with the story lines, as if living the *personae*. Births and deaths moved the stories along. Wealth and privilege smoothed some ups and downs, but the Grim Reaper had a hand in the lives of all. Barbour daughter Claudia epitomizes at least the aspiration of the *oeuvre*, all the stories taken together:



Kathleen Wilson, from the show’s sponsor-provided graphics.

^{‡‡} <https://web.archive.org/web/20180429100010/http://bayarearadio.org/schneider/radio025.shtml>

She inherits a fortune when widowed (about \$7,000,000 in today's money), goes to England and ends up marrying a rich baronet, and gets captured by the Gestapo. And then... And then... And then ...

THE BAY AREA RADIO MUSEUM PRESENTS
JOHN SCHNEIDER'S
VOICES OUT OF THE FOG

HELP CHRS & THE BAY AREA RADIO MUSEUM SAVE ITS HOME!

*NBC Radio, San Francisco
A Broadcast of "One Man's Family"
1934*



John provides this working cast photo, writing:

"The popular program 'One Man's Family' is being broadcast from Studio C at 111 Sutter Street, San Francisco, 1934. Created by [Carlton Morse](#), the program was heard on the NBC Pacific Coast Network. Shown are (left to right:) Kathleen Wilson (Claudia); Barton Yarbrough (Clifford); Bill Andrews (announcer); sound effects man Ed Ludes and his water effects machine; Bernice Berwin (Hazel); Mike Raffetto (Paul Barbour); Minetta Ellen (Mother Barbour); Page Gilman (Jack); J. Anthony Smythe (Father Barbour)."^{§§}

^{§§} <https://web.archive.org/web/20180513123909/http://bayarearadio.org/schneider/radio004.shtml>

Another (sponsor-provided) image shows Morse at work:



The caption for the image above:

“The broadcasting studio in San Francisco from which ‘One Man’s Family’ pour their story into millions of receiving sets. By this time, you’ll recognize them all — wait a minute, who are those two peering through the window of the control room? Those gentlemen should certainly be introduced. The one on the left is William Andrews, the announcer, whose pleasant voice you know so well. And on the right – well, if it’s really One Man’s Family, it’s his, for that’s Carlton Morse, the writer who went out and gathered together a family to see how they would behave. Apparently he’s a little anxious about them even yet.”

Note the NBC (Red Network) microphone.

A splendid and detailed history of the radio program and all of its people, real and fictional, is available in the **ENCYCLOPEDIA OF OLD TIME RADIO**.^{***}

^{***} John Dunning, *THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF OLD TIME RADIO*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) at page 514; widely available.

Time Flies and Times Change: That which was wholesome becomes nettlesome:

For an excellent presentation of the radio program's development and structure, see: *White Noise 2012* by Joy E. Hayes.^{†††} She also writes [footnotes here omitted]:

“Although a study of a single program is inherently limited, *One Man's Family* warrants close attention for a number of reasons. First, it was a highly influential program that spanned the history of network radio and even made the transition to television. One scholar estimates that it may have been ‘the most popular program ever broadcast in America, for the longest period of years.’ One Man's Family was recognized by critics for the quality of its writing and production, and by civic groups for its promotion of positive family values.

“By 1940, with radios in over eighty percent of U.S. homes, and sponsor-produced programs dominating primetime, the ‘penetration of the family’ by commercial propaganda was well underway.

“As [one critic] argues, whiteness secures its power by claiming to be normal and ordinary and, therefore, universal.”

TRIGGER WARNING: RACISM AHEAD

^{†††} From the SELECTED WORKS OF JOY ELIZABETH HAYES, University of Iowa.
Available at: https://works.bepress.com/joy_hayes/21/WhiteNoise2012_stamped.pdf [footnotes omitted]

So, many, many decades later, America's now Marxist academy now finds that *One Man's Family*, to which millions retuned time after time for decades, is:

"performative" "whiteness"

This sort of vocabulary signals the Wittgensteinian "Language Game" that neo-Marxist academics now play for money and prestige, unmoored from the reality of the other "99.9%". For example, "[W]hiteness [Ms. Hayes] define[s] as the cultural performance of white racial subjectivity." Thus "performative" "whiteness" becomes in the 21st Century academic invective by which to tar an old and much loved (by millions) radio program of 90 years ago.

The root of the neo-Marxist critique of *One Man's Family* goes back to the 1930s Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci. The wiki summarizes his views:

"Hegemonic culture propagates its own values and norms so that they become the 'common sense' values of all and thus maintain the status quo. Cultural hegemony is therefore used to maintain consent to the capitalist order, rather than the use of force to maintain order."^{##}

An academic's discovery of "whiteness" in a 1930s radio serial is like Moliere's *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* discovering that he's been speaking prose. As one cited academic writes:

"Whiteness represents stability and normality because 'non-whiteness' is marked as unstable and disruptive of the norm."

^{##} https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antonio_Gramsci [1891 - 1937]. Consent to the "capitalist order" (if there be such a thing) likely owes much more to increases in wealth, health and well-being than to "cultural hegemony" (if any there be).

This critique denigrates – as “other” – whatever “whiteness” may be,

(a) without regard to any objective measure of any value in its creation of stability and normality;

(b) without regard to any value in stability and normality themselves; and

(c) contrariwise, without regard to what have been the effects on American society of what the critic calls “non-whiteness,” say, since 1932, the date of the inception of the radio program.

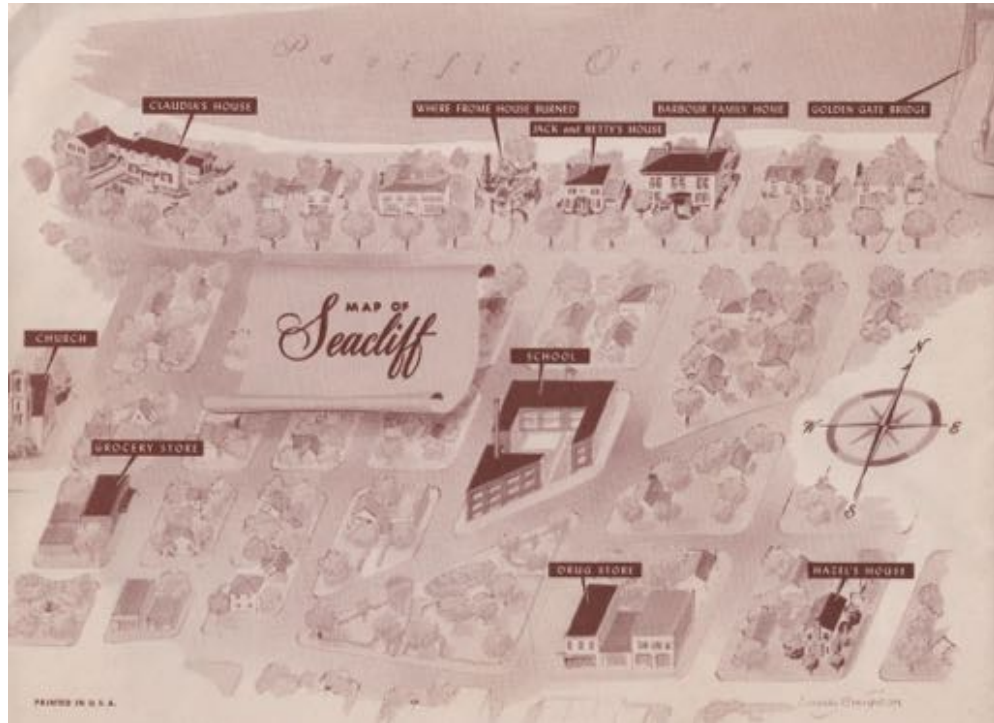
The fact that the United States now has about a million more guns than people suggests that stability ain’t what it used to be. This Marxist critique implies its own answer to its implicit question: what is unstable and disruptive of the norm. It certainly wasn’t *One Man’s Family*, in San Francisco.

True enough, *One Man’s Family* was all about fictional people of the “color” “white” (as opposed, say, to *Amos and Andy*). But today’s academic 0.1% seems to be missing the point that the program was about the socio-economic top 1%. An old-time Marxist might have asked: would you rather be “white” or would you rather be “rich” – especially in the midst of the Great Depression. Given the choice, the millions of people of all hues who listened, aspirationally, to *One Man’s Family* would likely have chosen “rich”; this despite F. Scott Fitzgerald’s insight:

“Let me tell you about the ... rich. They are different from you and me. *** They are different.”

One Man’s Family fantasized being rich, not being white. Are not we *now* to judge them by the content of their character, and not the color of their skin?

(Selected graphics follow; 04 VII '22, v3.2 de K6VK) ##



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THE fact that millions share their private lives when they're the Barbours on the air doesn't mean, naturally, that they lack private private lives which are shared only by a few . . .

J. ANTHONY SMYTHE (Henry Barbour) was born in San Francisco. He played with Florence Reed in "Magda" and "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray"—in fact, played 1200 leading-man roles before he returned from roving to his native California. And here's the pay-off—he's a bachelor.

MINETTA ELLEN (Mrs. Barbour) was born in Cleveland. Her travels have been so far and wide, and her sympathies and scoldings for lonely folk so generously bestowed around the world, that her personal mail is almost as great as her vast "fan" mail.

MICHAEL RAFFETTO (Paul Barbour) was born in Placerville, Calif. Educated to be a lawyer. Diction coach to Hollywood luminaries when fate tossed them from silence into the talkies. Then creative ability plus a grand speaking voice brought him into radio—first as a writer, then as an actor.

BERNICE BERWIN (Hazel Barbour) is the wife of A. Brooks Berlin, San Francisco attorney, and the mother of a sturdy baby son. Since 1928, she has starred in radio productions, and has written a number of them herself.

KATHLEEN WILSON (Claudia Barbour) one-time woman fencing champion of the University of California, one-time companion of her father in his campaigns with Ramsay MacDonald for the British Labor Party, one-time dancer with

Ruth St. Denis, is even now only 23 years old.

BARTON YARBOROUGH (Clifford Barbour) was born in Goldthwaite, Texas. He was 17 when he ran away from home. From vaudeville to playing in "Outward Bound" with Sir Gerald du Maurier. Then to parts with Eva Le Gallienne, May Robson, Robert Edeson.

PAGE GILMAN (Jack Barbour) has only turned seventeen. But he's a Microphone Veteran of eight years' standing. One of the original air-men, you might say. He's been Billy Smithers, he's been Penrod, he's been many another.

WINIFRED WOLFE (Teddy) really is 12 years old. Presidio Junior High School, San Francisco, Class 7B. She writes poems to her mother, because she hopes to be a writer some day, and because she loves her mother.

"*W*ONDER what a typical American family thinks about? . . . Is there any such thing as a typical American family?"

Carlton Morse, radio writer, was wondering in 1932. His method of answering the questions was unusual. He picked out a group of people who, in his opinion, might be members of a typical family. A father, a mother, three sons, and two daughters. All of them real people. All of them interesting people. They weren't actually members of the same

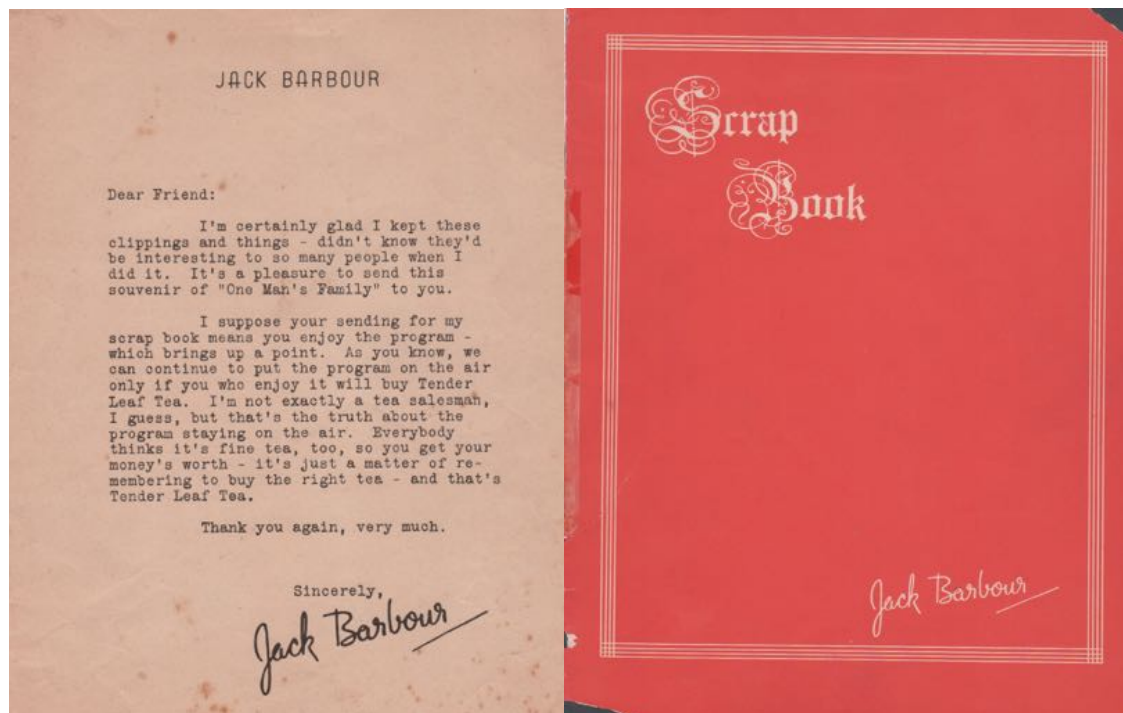
family. But they were certainly the right types and they were about the right age. Mentally, he put them all under the same roof, and waited to see what happened.

What happened proved fascinating to radio listeners on the Pacific Coast. So much so that strictly on a public demand basis, more and more radio stations were added to the chain broadcasting the programs, until now, under the sponsorship of Tender Leaf Tea, it is reaching the whole country.

Morse seldom writes more than one episode in advance, the reason being that he wants to see how the members of the family behave in the situations as they develop. If the actors feel that they are behaving naturally, he is satisfied. If he puts them in situations where they feel strange—where they have to "act"—he changes the direction of the plot.

So—what does the typical American family think about? What does it do as a result of its thinking? Is there any such thing as a typical American family? Are the Barbours it?

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MOTHER-IN-LAW LEAVES FORTUNE TO SON'S WIDOW

A fortune estimated at \$350,000 of Mrs. John Roberts, Sr., her entire personal estate, was willed to her daughter-in-law, Mrs. Claudia Barbour Roberts, the widow of her son, Johnny, and to their infant daughter, Joan. The estate is to be administered by John Roberts, Sr.

From SF News, July 21, 1933. Dad doesn't like the idea of Claudia having all this money. He says it makes her too independent, and who knows, WHAT a girl her age will do with all that money.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER



PAUL BARBOUR, famous war ace, and his new daughter Teddy, receiving congratulations from Judge Glen Hunter following the adoption proceedings in Judge Hunter's court which made Barbour the legal father of the little girl.

World War Ace Adopts Orphan

by Marion Malone

LITTLE TEDDY LAWTON, 5, didn't have either a father or a mother and that was rather tragic, especially when it was her avowed belief that "fathers were the most important thing in the world."

But Paul Barbour, world-war flyer who lives at the family home of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Barbour in Sea Cliff, came to know Teddy. And if Teddy thought "fathers were important," Barbour thought the same about daughters.

And so today Teddy and Paul went down to the court of Judge Glen Hunter, friend of the Barbour family, and were made officially father and daughter.

August 30, 1933. Gosh sakes, what are we going to do with another GIRL around the house?

SAILING



MRS. JOHN ROBERTS, the former Claudia Barbour, sailed today on the liner President Hoover for an extended vacation in England and on the Continent. Sailing with Mrs. Roberts were her year-old daughter, Joan, and Miss Beth Holly.

From Financial Page, August 10, 1934. Dad tried to get Cliff to finish college but he wouldn't.

From SF News Shipping Page, June 8, 1934. The trouble between Claudia and Dad over the inheritance from Johnny's mother is the reason for her leaving. I guess it'll be a good thing for her to get away awhile.



JOINS FATHER'S FIRM

CLIFFORD BARBOUR, former University of California student, has given up his studies to enter the Henry Barbour Stock and Bond Brokerage House.

Notice of Intention to Wed

LACEY-ROBERTS: Sir Nicholas Lacey, 23, of London, England, and Claudia Barbour Roberts, 23, of Sea Cliff, San Francisco.

Chronicle June 5, 1935. That Englishman followed Claud all the way from England and then was called back to duty in the Army. He resigned from the Army and came back about a month ago and now he and Claud are engaged. Oh, yes, his father dies so now HE'S a Baronet himself—

MARRIAGE LICENSE ISSUED

LACEY-ROBERTS: Nicholas Lacey, Bart., 23, of London, England, and Claudia Barbour Roberts, 23, of San Francisco.

— June 14, 1935. Well they were married on June 24th Nicky's turned out to be a swell guy. He's bought a horse ranch down the Peninsula in the mountains and they're going to call it the Sky Ranch—

UNITED IN MARRIAGE



CAPTAIN NICHOLAS LACEY, BART., and Claudia Barbour Roberts, were united last evening in a simple wedding ceremony at the home of the bride's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Barbour of Sea Cliff. The Rev. Dr. J. C. McArthur officiated. Lady Lacey, the former Miss Claudia Barbour, is the widow of John Roberts, Jr.

*From Society Page, June 25, 1935.
Cliff was Nicky's best man—*



ON HONEYMOON VOYAGE

Sir Nicholas Lacey and his wife, the former Claudia Barbour, photographed on shipboard yesterday as they sailed from San Francisco for England, where Captain Lacey recently inherited a title and large estates.

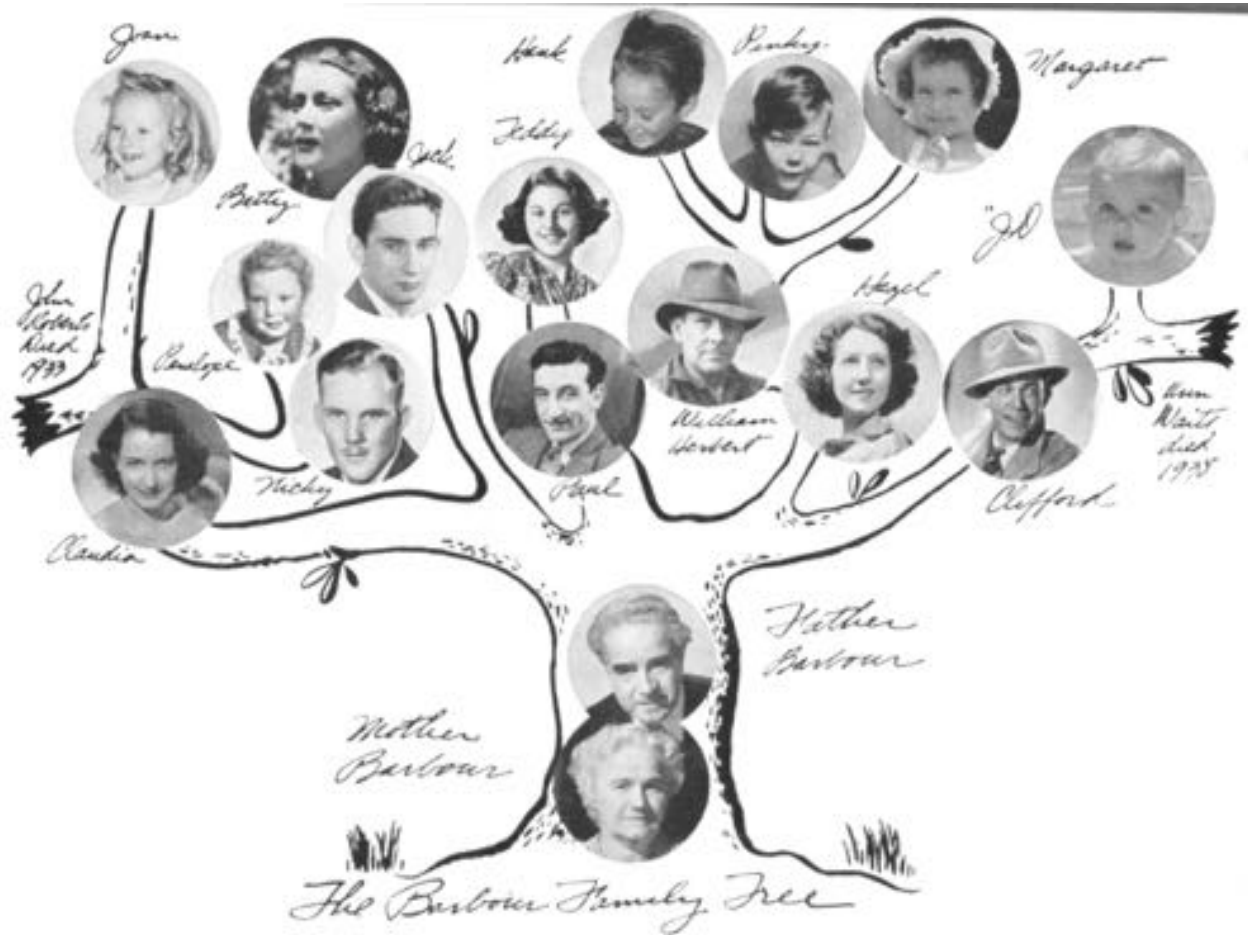
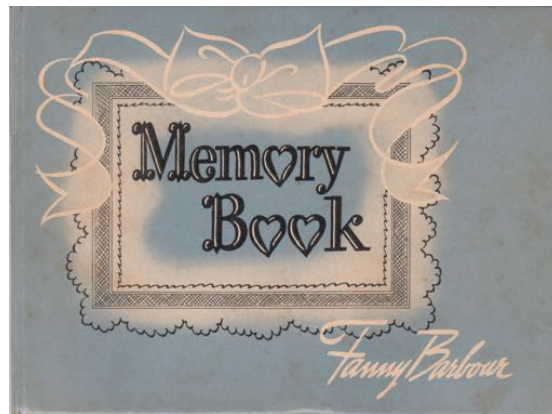
From S.F. Chronicle, June 25, 1935—

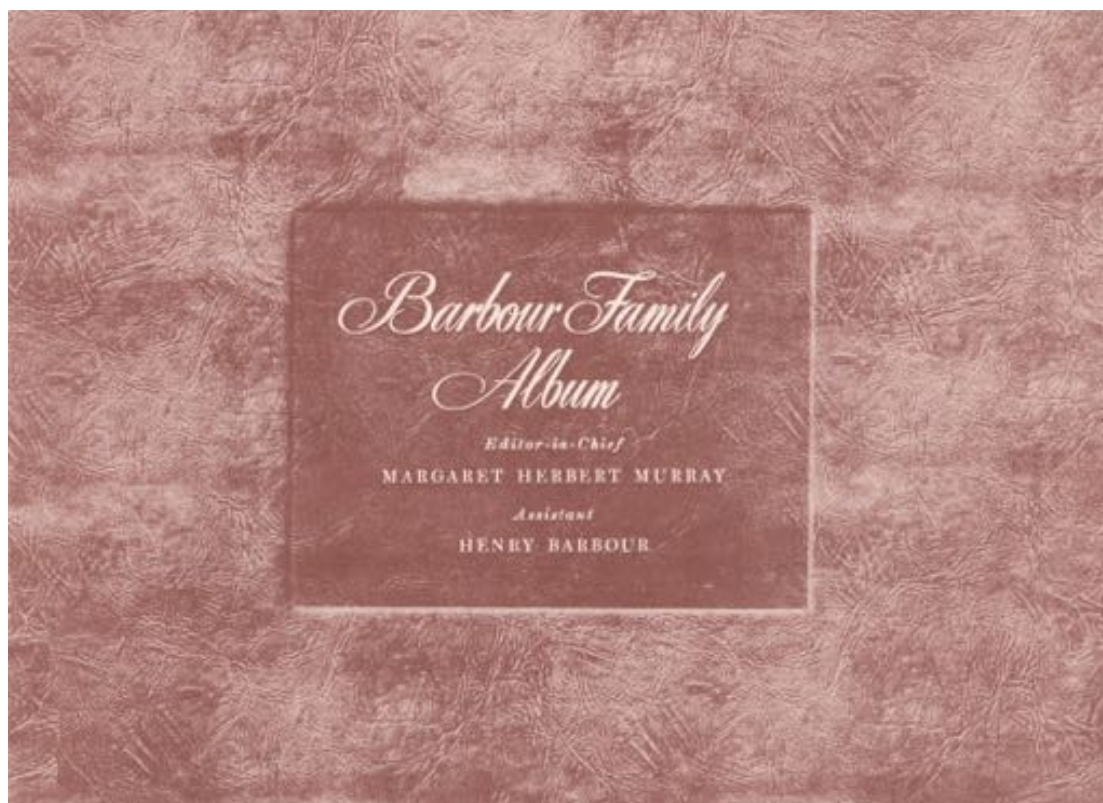
Skippy Takes a Bath, Barbour Takes Prize



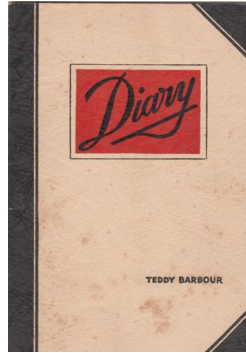
First prize in the Chronicle's Amateur Photography Contest has been won by Jack Barbour, 18, of Sea Cliff. Barbour saw his niece, Joan Roberts, bathing her dog, Skippy, spotted a picture possibility, and collected the \$50. Second prize was won by

Chronicle, September 29, 1935. Not only won the prize but fifty bucks to boot. What do they mean AMATEUR photography?





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Diary

TEDDY BARBOUR

Dear friend:

Here is my diary and I am glad you wanted to read it and see Paula's drawings. It makes both of us feel awful good inside to know you like us enough to want to have my diary.

And I am glad you like us enough to buy Tender Leaf Tea. Paul says if you keep on buying Tender Leaf Tea, you can keep on hearing us on the radio, because when you buy Tender Leaf Tea that is what keeps us on the air.

Anyway I guess you will just naturally use Tender Leaf Tea because it tastes so good.

Your friend
Teddy

P.S. I hope you like my diary as much as you like the tea.

T.B.



P.S. This is a picture of Paul and me being happy about you liking us. Paul drew it.

Diary

grow right back she was coming home. I hope Miss Holly comes too. Dear Diary, here is a picture of Claudia that all this is about.



August 9, 1936

I saw Baby Margaret today. She was so funny and cute. I just wanted to hug her. I'm going to have babies and babies and babies when I grow up except Paul says I have to have a husband too and I think boys are stupid.



Diary

August 16, 1936

Claudia is home! I heard Mother Barbour tell Father Barbour she'd never seen such a chased young woman. Whatever that means. Claud said it wasn't her fault at all. Claud says it was all that Deering man's fault.

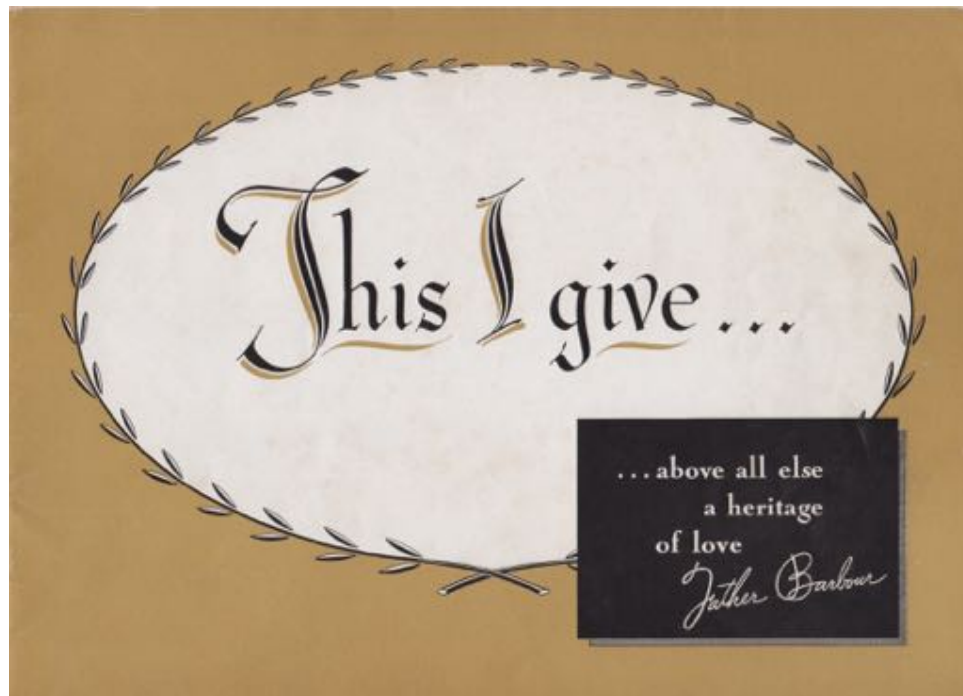
Claud says the Deering man followed her around and she had to be nice to him or make a scene. She didn't want to make a scene because he knew all Nicky's friends in England. and it would make a scandal. Claud has made everything all right with the family but not with Nicky yet.

August 17, 1936

Claudia and Nicky are together again. Here is their picture, Diary. Anything's



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D E D I C A T I O N

The American Family Tradition is as old as the Original Thirteen States, as dear to our national life as the American Flag; as necessary to our Nation's structure as the Constitution!

This Parent-Child Relationship is based on Family Integrity built on a foundation of mutual love and mutual respect, and is so devised to develop in each succeeding generation honorable self-respecting men and women and noble Citizens.

What follows in this volume is Barbour Family Memorabilia, portions of which are out of Father Barbour's dusty and aging files and part of which are out of the deep places of his secret heart.

In one sense then, this pertains to a single family, but in a greater sense what belongs to the Barbour Clan belongs to Every American Family. And it is in this sense that this volume has been devised and it is in this sense that it is Dedicated.

Therefore, Father Barbour's Holographic Will and Memory Book is dedicated to the Foundation Stone of our way of life, The American Family.



This I give...

*To my beloved daughter, Claudia,
I bequeath the special care of
Providence, who in its infinite
wisdom knows so much better than
human knowledge, how to comfort
and quiet a restless spirit. May
she come to know peace; may she
finally find inner contentment;
may God grant her in her physically
mature years also maturity of mind,
of emotions and of spirit, and may
she and all that are close to her
be finally and happily blessed with
peace and tranquillity.*

My favorite proverb for Nicholas in reference to Claudia: Beauty
adorns a man as candles a church.



Nicky and Claudia represent the Barbons
in Society and do it charmingly. This I believe
was on the occasion of a Junior League
Charity Ball.

My favorite proverb for Penelope: Take care lest everything you do is out of line and
you are wedded on Wednesday



It's self-evident my granddaughter Penelope
is going to emulate her Mother, Claudia. Our
goodness little beauty is preparing herself for
a colorful role with the new generation.



Now on her way to sixteen Penelope will
walk on her way towards charming the hearts
out of the opposite sex.



When Claudia became a grandmother, after a heart-breaking struggle with her con-
science she decided she must ACT like a grandmother. So she gave up this role suit.



And she gave up her ice-creating be-
havior as giddy and frivolous.

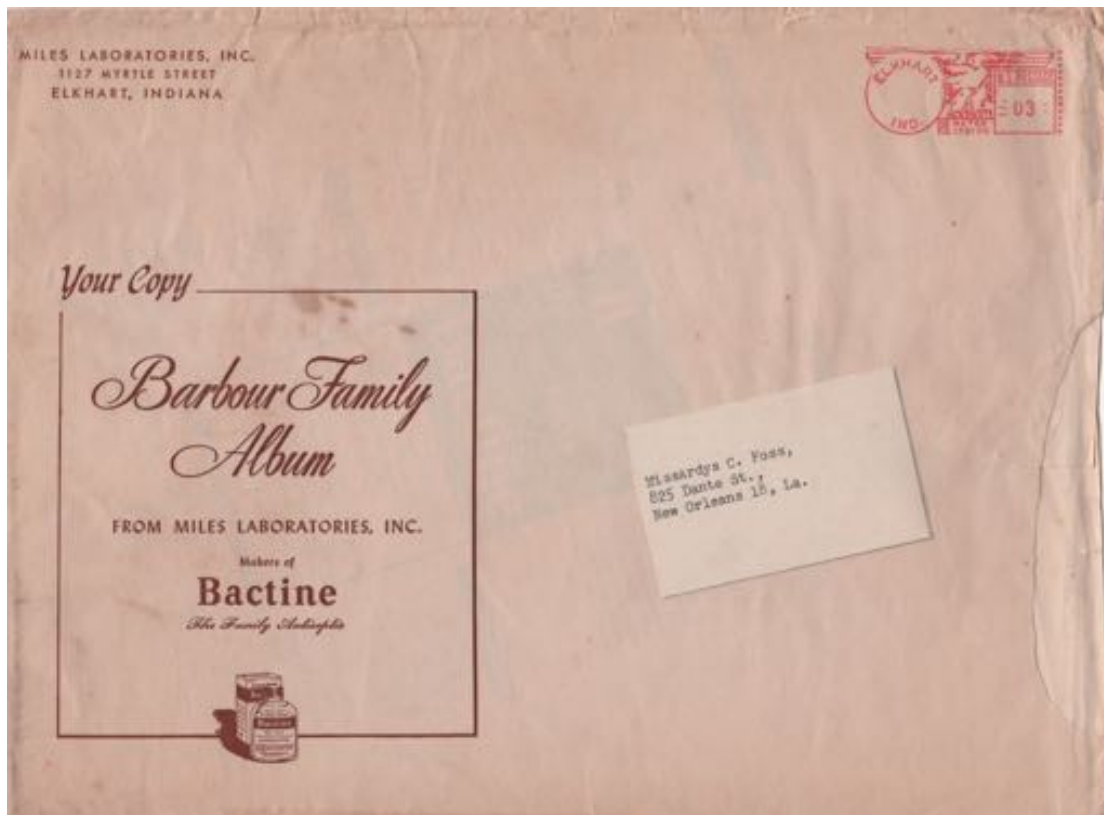
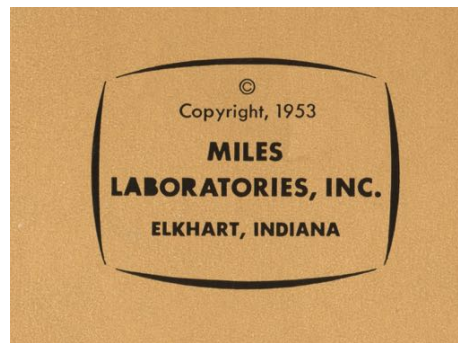


AND this one suit Will Grandson Nicky
Find EVER appropriate. His grand-
mother's sacrificed!



But the DIDNT give up her role as a
great hostess and she and Nicholas
have plunged deeper than ever into
their social activities.

All the resentment over
becoming a grandmother
so young is now gone
from Claudia and once
more she is a happy
woman. Claudia, of all
my children finds it the
most difficult to accept the
inevitable, but she DOES
come around, given time.



Archival ephemera donated by CHRS Deputy Archivist Bob Rydzewski ##