



DODGE FAMILY JOURNAL

*Memorial Issue in Remembrance of Ray Preston
Of Offerton, Stockport, England, friend of all Dodges*



It is difficult to know where to begin and how many of the very special memories to include that I have of Ray and Muriel. In researching through photos in the computer that were taken when we viewed the many Dodge related items in Offerton/Stockport, I realize even more what the loss of Ray Preston is to all of us.

I suppose that we should start with the 2 AM phone call that came in from England one night in early 1986. When Earl answered the phone, it was a call from a BBC radio program in northern England, probably Manchester. I did not pay much attention as to who called, only what the call was about. Earl was 34 at the time. Where do the years go? Earl thought it was so funny, because they played music from one of our well known westerns...I think it was the theme for the movie, "The Big Country".

Ray learned of the Dodge Family Association through the generous gift of Association member Dorothy Richardson of Lafayette, California who left at the local library, a copy of Genealogy of Essex Dodges by Joseph Thompson Dodge that was published in 1879. Ray found that Halliday Hill house was mentioned in in that genealogy and because the Dodge Family Association information was on a sticker inside the book, he was able to contact Earl F. Dodge who was at that time Association Secretary-Treasurer. Ray sought help of the Association in saving Halliday Hill house from the wrecker's ball.

The powers that be were planning, or at least strongly thinking of tearing down Halliday Hill House to make way for a highway that would go to Manchester Airport, (I believe it was to be called the 'blue route'.

Ray, being an historian, knew that this house went back to at least the early 1400s, and very possibly earlier.

In our May 1986 edition of the Dodge Journal, an accompanying letter asked help to save Halliday Hill house. In response to that letter, many of our members wrote letters to Mr. S. A. Dobson, Director of Administration. Mr. Dobson promised that a public hearing would be held in the matter.

From our August 1986 Journal we read: "In July, as a result of the effort to save the Historic Halliday Hill Farmhouse long associated with the Dodge Family in Offerton, Cheshire, England, the BBC, the British National Radio network did a program of about eight minutes in length on the Dodge Family. Ray Preston who has led the fight in England to save the home and Earl F. Dodge were interviewed. Even though the announcer thought that Dodge City was settled in colonial times, the presentation was delightful. The BBC kindly presented us with a tape of the program and we have made many copies. Any member wishing a tape of this segment can obtain it by sending \$2.50 to cover tape and mailing costs..." *

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**Does any reader still have a copy of that tape? We would love to have it to put on our website.*

Also, as a result of Ray Preston's efforts, Earl had telephone interviews with English newspapers, a television station, and of course BBC.

Thus, we started on our long friendship with Ray and Muriel Preston, Mike and Julie Wilson who occupied Halliday Hill House, Pearl and Eric Wilson, parents of Mike Wilson who lived in a cottage on Halliday Lane leading up to Halliday Hill house and Bill & Beryl Thornberry.

Whenever someone came by to view the house and land, if Mike or Julie were not there, Eric Wilson, Mike's dad, would walk up to the house to show it off.

I cannot find all the old Journals, but I think it was in 1989 that Earl and I made the trip to England so that Earl could testify at the Board of Inquiry as to how important Halliday Hill house was to Dodges in America.

Having never been to England, we arranged to spend 3 days in London. We were in awe of the architecture of the very old buildings and we wondered HOW those vaulted ceilings, massive stones, etc. could have been used in an age when there was none of the later technology. Everything, from the Tower of London, to Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's Cathedral, Parliament, Buckingham Palace, etc., just amazed us.

After 3 days, we took the train to Stockport and were met by Ray Preston. He took us to his home to meet Muriel and then to Halliday Hill house where for the first time in hundreds of years, a DODGE would be in occupancy. The Wilsons very kindly gave us their bedroom, and fed us a wonderful truly English breakfast complete with beans and tomato. They then showed us all around the property, and the house.

The rest of our time in Stockport was spent at the home of Ray and Muriel who also gave us their bedroom to use.

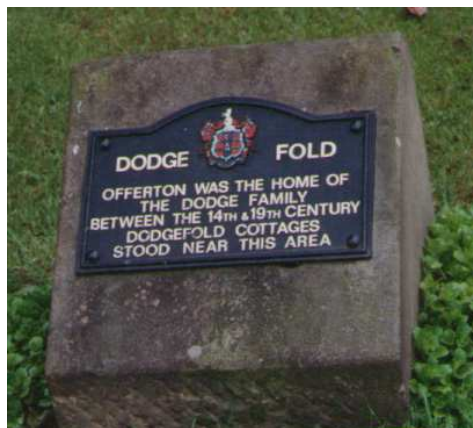
Ray enthusiastically showed us all the points of interest around Stockport which included Dodge Fold which was marked with a plaque on a large stone. This is where Dodge families first settled in this area.

We stopped at St. Mary's Parrish Church and Ray proudly showed us the Dodge Pew. On the wall right opposite that pew is a plaque which reads: "Mr. Robert Dodge of Halliday Hill in Offerton interred in Offerton Pew May 7th, 1765 aged 54" (photo below)



Surrounding the outside of the church are cemetery stones laid to use as 'pavement'. Many years ago, the stones had been removed from where they stood marking graves and laid around the church. I cannot remember why. Ray told the whole story, but we were overwhelmed with all we were being shown not to mention this was the first time we had ever visited England.

Some of these stones were for people who had lived at Halliday Hill. Among those stones there was a Hannah Dodge, and a John Dodge Also, pictured on the next page is a stone for a James Dodge,



Mary Dodge, Mary Ann Dodge, William Dodge. One of our DFA members, Simon Dodge is in hopes of traveling to Stockport this coming spring. His ancestry hails from that area, and he grew up in England but lives in America now. We hope that he will be able to take much better photo of those stones laid in the ground around St. Mary's church.

In 1989, we were thrilled to have Ray and Muriel come visit us out here in Colorado. They were here from May 27 to June 10. We had special reunion type meetings set up here in Lakewood, Colorado, and in Pasadena, California. Ray presented a progress report on the campaign to save Halliday Hill House and showed wonderful slides of the home with complete explanations of each slide, talking about the construction which proved the age of the house.

We drove them to California, a trip which truly awed them. Among other places they visited the London Bridge which now resides at Lake Havasu City, Arizona; the Grand Canyon and many other spots in Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah and California, including Disneyland.

They marveled at the quantities of ice tea consumed and tried it themselves but much preferred coffee. At the California reunion, Ray was presented with an inscribed world clock for his generous labors on behalf of the Dodges. He also announced that he was the proud brother-in-law of a Dodge, since his brother had married a Dodge girl.

Also visited by Ray and Muriel were the Dodges in Seattle Washington, and the Lawtons in Portland Oregon. So much was packed into those wonderful years that I am unable to recall the sequences and dates for everything. I checked with Eileen Dodge as to her memories and she wrote:

"In Washington state we took a chartered coach ride through the countryside to a cranberry bog near Graylands, Washington. We had lunch at a restaurant while there.

Also, you brought the Prestons here twice - one time we had a Dodge Family Reunion at Norman's church - we



had a Pot Luck for that reunion and I remember Muriel asking what a Pot Luck was and when I explained it to her she said that sounded like a Methodist Faith Dinner...she explained that a Methodist Faith Dinner is that you have faith there will be enough savory and enough sweet. I thought that was so funny at the time, but she is right - at a Pot Luck we have faith that there will be enough savory food and enough sweet food and not too much of either."

Ray, Muriel, Earl and I were also entertained at the home of Donald and Abigail Lawton in Portland Oregon and as I recall did a little sightseeing with them. The photo on the right is of Don and Abigail with Ray and Muriel. I do not know the name of the lake.

After Ray and Muriel returned to England, we were notified by him that Halliday Hill had been saved!

The next year, 1990, we had our very first Dodge tour to England and Earl was working on the 7th tour that

was to be in 2008, when he died Nov. 7, 2007. When we went on tour in England, we always picked up Ray and Muriel and they accompanied us in our coach. Ray is the one who put us in touch with Bullock Coaches of Cheadle. Alan Bullock was wonderful and we always ended the last evening with a dinner at the Bells of Peover Inn, so named because of the famed bells at the next door parish church. We heard those bells played when on Tour Number five. This Inn was used

by General Eisenhower and by British Military leaders to plan the D-Day landings. American and British flags are both flown here every day of the year.

Between 1990 and 2004, Earl and I, Barbara, took a couple of trips to England to spend time with the Prestons who took us on trips to the Lake district, Yorkshire, the Edinburgh Tatoo, a view of the Irish Sea from up north...BRRRR! What a cold day, the nuclear power plant (from a distance), the Beatrix Potter home/museum, and if I could remember it all, there would be a much longer list!!

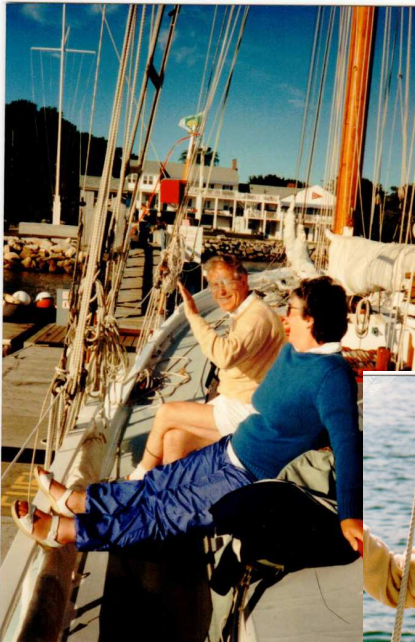
In 1998, Ray and Muriel Preston flew to Boston and we drove there to meet them. We had with us, two grandchildren. Our oldest daughter's son, Micah, and our oldest son's daughter, Raven. One of the things we HAD to do, was take Ray and Muriel on the famous swan boats on the lake in the Boston Public Gardens. The photo on the next page is of that Swan Boat Ride.



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While we had the Prestons with us in New England, we also spent a night in Plymouth at the home of Mary and David Cobb. The next day we rode in David's Yacht from Plymouth bay to Boston. Mary made Blueberry Pancakes but I could not really enjoy them because once we hit open water and could feel the waves, I became very nauseous and spent the whole trip to Boston on my stomach on the deck.

Below: starting at the 2nd row, from left to right, are Raven Dodge, Muriel Preston, Barbara Dodge, Earl Dodge, and in the row directly behind them are Micah Pitman on the left, and Ray Preston on the right.



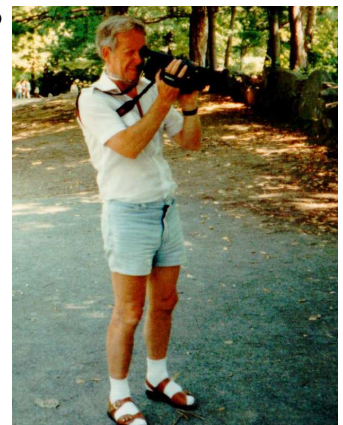
On the yacht of David and Mary Cobb. We also drove to their Vermont home and I played their little organ while Ray sang.

On our drive back to Colorado from New England, we went through Niagara falls. The photo above is from that drive but I do not know where it was taken. The same with the photo on the right.



Ray and Muriel with Nancy Skiotis at the 1998 New England reunion

While in Arizona, we visited with and stayed at the homes of Virginia and Larry Campbell and Nancy and Fred Skiotis. I cannot find any photos of those visits. They may be somewhere in my tub of well over 1000 photos. Virginia and Nancy were Earl's two sisters. We had a great time and did a lot of singing as I recall.



The Dodge Family Journal in Remembrance of Ray Preston of Offerton, England

Below, Dent, Yorkshire, England, Earl, Muriel and Ray.



Ray in Massachusetts



The Pheasant Inn, Casteron, Cumbria, England and Ray Preston and below, Earl Dodge, Ray and Muriel Preston ready to order

Below, Ray grabbed any chance to sing. A stray organist practicing obliged Ray's delight in singing. I do not recall the name of the town or church.



On the right, viewing the Irish Sea, Ray, Earl, Muriel (BRRR!)



The Dodge Family Journal in Remembrance of Ray Preston of Offerton, England

At the time when Earl and I were conducting the Dodge Tours to England, and visiting the Prestons a couple of times on our own, and having the Prestons make 3 trips to the United States so that we could show them some of our country, we did not think of memories being built, nor did we think that the time might come when some of us would not be here anymore.

A trip to Branson, Missouri, and driving through the south; driving through the west and viewing the massive red cliffs and dessert, the prairie dog towns, the fact that there seemed to be no clotheslines ... this was something that Muriel asked about and we said ... well most people don't use clotheslines anymore, but dryers; stopping at little restaurants and no matter how small or faded they were (and some restaurants out in the dessert can indeed be very faded!) the food was amazing and delicious and in over abundance.

I will never forget eating at a buffet type restaurant in Pueblo, Colorado on the way home from a trip, and after we had filled our plates, the staff brought out to add to the buffet molded jello salad. Ray helped himself to some of that and came back to the table and said to Muriel "Mew (I am sure that I not spelled right but it was his nickname for her) did you see the wonderful jellies?"

As I looked through what photos I could find, I saw that so many of the people who were on our tours, and at reunions, and even some of those like Blanche Day, who the Prestons visited, are no longer with us.

If Earl were alive to write this remembrance of Ray, I am sure he would be impacted as I have been with the memories.

Earl and Ray by an old stone bridge in Yorkshire.



Ray and Muriel, Branson, Missouri?

From The Stockport Trust:

"Ray was an early member of Stockport Heritage Trust who actively supported our charity since around 1989, two years after it started. He was known as 'Mr. Offerton' as he was THE local expert and champion of Offerton. He single-handedly was able to change the proposed line of a planned motorway route which had been planned to pass through Halliday Hill House in Offerton, which dates back to the 1300s, and is the ancestral home of the Dodge Family, which emigrated to Dodge City in Kansas, USA.

Ray's early detailed research on the Dodge connections enabled other Trust members In 2002 to visit Dodge City, to formally sign a Friendship Charter between Stockport and Dodge City in recognition of a common heritage. These parchment Friendship Charters are now on display in both Dodge City Town Hall and Stockport Town Hall.

Ray wrote several books on Offerton and was also a keen member of Stockport Operatic Society.

He joined the Friends of the Plaza when Stockport Council had plans to demolish it. (note: and I got to play the big theatrical organ at the Plaza on two visits to England, Thanks to Ray) after it had been saved, Ray continued to be an enthusiastic Front of House volunteer for many years.

The Trust will sadly miss him."

I think a good final farewell picture is the one on the right. I think Ray would say he was being 'cheeky'.

