

# The Holiday Herald 2

Christmas Eve 2021

Lenox, Berkshire Mountains, Massachusetts

## *James Taylor country*

*Now, the first of December was covered with snow.  
So was the turnpike from Stockbridge to Boston,  
Though the Berkshires seemed dreamlike on account of that frostin'  
With ten miles behind me and ten thousand more to go.*

Sweet Baby James  
James Taylor, 1970

*Home view*

Berkshire Mountains  
Massachusetts

The story for this newsletter is on Page 9.





*Ducks on a pond.*

Stonover Farm  
Under Mountain Road





# *Church on the Hill (1805)*

Main Street  
Lenox





*Beaver lodge*

Yokun Brook  
Pleasant Valley Wildlife Sanctuary





# *Icy pond*

Parsons Marsh Reserve  
Under Mountain Road





# *Blood on the Scrabble table*

Clockwise from top: Gordon, Edie, Martin and Emily  
Lenox





# *Tête à tête à tête*

Breakfast  
Frank and Ann's place





# *Descendants*

Breakfast  
Frank and Ann's place



# James Taylor country

When I imagine this nook in the world, I see the guy who wrote and sang the words on the cover of this newsletter, though James Taylor would never scream “New England” at the top of his lungs the way Lenox, Mass., does.

Taylor, three years older than me, was born in Boston at the other end of the state, where his father Isaac, a native North Carolinian, was a resident at Massachusetts General Hospital. But I first saw and heard James at a concert in 1970, the end of my first year at UNC, when Isaac was dean of Carolina’s medical school.

That’s when I first heard “[Carolina in My Mind](#).” (Here’s the [Wikipedia story](#) on the song.)

If you look closely at the cover shot of this newsletter, there is a thin white line on the distant ridge just below the central mountain. It’s the roof of one of the concert venues at the Tanglewood Music Center, summer home of the Boston Symphony, and where Taylor is scheduled to perform next summer’s Fourth of July concert.

I took the picture standing on the balcony of the vacation home of Emily’s and my new in-laws, Frank (officially Francis) Hutchins and Ann Congleton, who invited us to spend Christmas in the Berkshires with them and arranged a scenic Christmas Eve snowfall for us. There is no better way to merge families than in pajamas around the breakfast table over scrambled eggs, the British Empire, and the partition of India.

“As a historian, I have to say it was the fault of the British,” concluded Frank, [who literally wrote a book about it](#).

Emily and I first met their daughter Esther a few years ago in Los Angeles, where she – an actor – was attending a play Gordon was in. They moved in together in West Hollywood in 2020 just a couple of weeks before Covid hit. They emerged from their cocoon last fall long enough to get married in a tiny ceremony in their tiny apartment. The big bash will be next spring, barring the arrival of another Greek-lettered variant of our plague.

We got to meet Esther’s sister, Edie (officially Edith), and her husband, Martin, who are counselors and therapists in Philadelphia. That’s not far from where Frank and Ann live in retirement after their years in academia and globetrotting. He taught at Harvard, [she at Wellesley](#).

Frank grew up in Berea, Kentucky, son of medical missionaries to China, where his grandmother is buried. Ann was also from Kentucky but grew up across the river in Ohio. Frank had wanted to leave Berea for China, too, but the communist takeover there after World War II made that impossible. A good portion of his and Ann’s early time together was spent in India instead, where Frank worked on projects related to improving Indian-U.S. relations for private foundations and the U.S. government. That’s where they adopted Esther and Edie as infants.

Like me, Ann enjoys photography as a hobby. One of her memories of living in Asia was when Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, [one of Frank’s students](#), invited them to his 1975 coronation as king of Nepal. She said she pulled out her long lens and got a shot of Britain’s Prince Charles chatting up Imelda Marcos, the shoe lady of the Philippines. Ten years later, the newspaper I worked for, the *San Jose Mercury News*, won its first Pulitzer Prize for an investigation that drove her husband Ferdinand out of office as Philippine president.

“One day I’m going to sell that picture for a fortune,” she said.

I’m going to ask for her permission to publish it in a future newsletter if we can strike a deal.



# *Stockings were hung*

Frank and Ann's place  
Lenox, Massachusetts

