

RUSSELL'S PENNSYLVANIA¹

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“Russell’s Pennsylvania” focuses on Bertrand Russell’s days residing in Pennsylvania during the Second World War. It draws from contemporary local newspaper accounts, published memoirs of authors who visited Russell and his family then, as well as reminiscences from people with first-hand accounts who were able to be contacted recently.

In the late 1970s, I felt as though I had discovered a kindred spirit when I started to read Bertrand Russell. I was to discover shortly thereafter that, in addition to whatever I had in common with Russell philosophically, I also had something in common with him geographically, namely, life in Pennsylvania. For that was where Russell resided in the early 1940s.

To be sure, prior to Russell’s residence in Pennsylvania during the Second World War, he had hardly been a stranger to the state. His first wife, Alys, was from a Pennsylvania Quaker family that Russell visited in 1896. That same visit Russell lectured at Bryn Mawr College to which he returned in 1914, notwithstanding the protests of the president of that college. Also, Russell’s last wife, Edith, whom he married in 1952, was a part-time instructor at Bryn Mawr. However, the early 1940s constituted Russell’s most extended stay in Pennsylvania.

In the wake of the 1940 judicial finding that Russell was unfit to teach

¹ First in this series was J. Bourke’s search for Plas Penrhyn (see n.s. 14 [1994]).—Ed.

at the City College of New York,² Russell was without a job, for he had already resigned from his professorship at UCLA. Russell was rescued by Dr. Albert Barnes, the inventor of Argyrol,³ who gave Russell a five-year contract to lecture on the history of western philosophy at the Barnes Foundation in Merion just outside of Philadelphia. Barnes also provided⁴ Russell with Little Datchet Farm, which was a 200-year old farmhouse complete with orchard, barn, and peach trees—“the most delicious peaches I have ever tasted”, Russell claimed (*Auto.*, 2: 221). Little Datchet Farm was located in Chester County, Pennsylvania, about 25 miles west of Philadelphia. With his third wife, Patricia (“Peter”), and their young son, Conrad, Russell moved there at the end of 1940. He provided correspondents with his new address: “Little Datchet Farm, R.D. 1, Malvern, Pa., U.S.A.”

The first volume of Anglo-American novelist and playwright Christopher Isherwood’s *Diaries* provides us with a contemporary account: “Bertrand Russell’s farm ... is tucked away in one of the lonely valleys out beyond Paoli, which so much resemble the Derbyshire Peak District, especially in winter.”⁵ And Russell himself spoke of how “There is ... no means of transportation beyond Paoli, except taxi. The distance is seven miles, and the way hard to find.”⁶ In December 1941 Einstein wanted to visit Russell at his farm. He asked for instructions. Here’s what Russell gave him—instructions fit for Einstein’s genius: “We are hard to

² A good account of this extraordinary incident is Thom Weidlich’s *Appointment Denied: the Inquisition of Bertrand Russell* (New York: Prometheus, 2000).

³ Argyrol is a remedy for ulcers on the cornea and prevents blindness in the children of mothers who have suffered from gonorrhoea.

⁴ Reports vary from Barnes having “provided” a house for Russell (*Daily Republican*, 19 May 1952) to Russell having been “purchased” a home by Barnes (*Daily Local News*, 17 Oct. 1940), to Russell having “rented” (*Auto.*, 2: 221, and Clark, p. 478). (Unless otherwise noted, all newspapers cited are, or were, local papers of Chester County, Pennsylvania.) The late Barrows Dunham asserted that Barnes was Russell’s landlord, but this has not been documented. See *BRA*, 1: 196–7. Russell soon told Elizabeth Trevelyan that he was renting “the old farm-house” (letter of 19 Jan. 1941, RA).

⁵ *Diaries*, Vol. 1: 1939–1960, edited and introduced by Katherine Bucknell (New York: Harper Collins, 1996), p. 202. Curiously enough, Russell himself is here described as “that monkey-gland lobster in a woolly, toy-sheep wig”. Perhaps this less-than-adoring depiction of Russell is the result of interrogations to which Isherwood was subjected at Little Datchet Farm—interrogations, namely, that ranged anywhere from whether Aldous Huxley really prayed to whether reality could be arranged in gradations.

⁶ Russell–Dale Pontius, 29 Jan. 1941, RA.

find 8 miles north of Paoli. Near Chester Springs. When there, ask for Rapp's Corner (where you will find Rapp's Store) and then ask again."⁷ Einstein was being driven by Paul Oppenheim, so the responsibility doubtless fell upon him to turn these meagre directions into coordinates.

"Rapp's Corner" seems to have served as something of a municipal headquarters, to the extent that an area as sparsely populated as Little Datchet Farm and its surrounding environment can be viewed as a "municipality". According to local newspaper accounts, it was at Rapps Corner that the Russells' furniture was auctioned off after the Russells moved from the farm.

In 1988, when I moved to within several miles of Little Datchet Farm, my father, Philip Trainer, drew my attention to newspaper articles in the Chester County Historical Society's archives from half a century ago detailing Russell's Pennsylvania days.⁸ According to these sources, the Little Datchet Farm furniture auction (some furniture dating back to 1782) netted an estimated \$2,500 and occurred on Wednesday, 4 October 1944.⁹ Approximately 150 people, mostly "curious", from Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New Jersey were in attendance:¹⁰

All but five items originally advertised for sale went under the hammer. The five items were held after ... one of the auctioneers received a cable from Russell requesting that they be sent to England.¹¹ These included a hand-carved blanket chest made in 1762 and worth approximately \$300 today [i.e. in 1944], a Queen Anne chest of drawers, two Van Gogh prints, and one antique Pennsyl-

⁷ Russell-Einstein, 6 Dec. 1941, RA (original in Einstein Archives, Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem).

⁸ The libraries in the general vicinity of Little Datchet Farm were also very helpful in referring me to old-time experts on the local area's history who could pinpoint the exact location of Russell's farmhouse for me.

⁹ *Daily Republican*, 3 Oct., 5 Oct. 1944.

¹⁰ While the *Daily Local News* (5 Oct. 1944) reports that "A crowd of about 150 persons mostly 'curious', made their way", the *Daily Republican* (5 Oct. 1944) claims that "More than 2,000 persons ... stripped the furnishings ... at an auction sale...." In any case, "The high prices paid by those curious onlookers who wished to 'sport' a former possession of the Lord and Countess before their next bridge club sent many home early" (*ibid.*).

¹¹ "Many antique dealers, who were attracted by a large advertisement, travelled many miles and were disappointed when several of the finer pieces were withdrawn from the sale. A cablegram received early that morning reserved a carved chest and two prints which had been the centre of attraction" (*Daily Local News*, 5 Oct. 1944).

vania print of the “going to Heaven and Hell” type. (*Daily Republican*, 5 Oct. 1944)

While Russell was certainly concerned with the war during these years,¹² he was able to enjoy the good life for some time. He described his job at the Barnes Foundation as a “soft job—one lecture a week,¹³ with enough to live on.”¹⁴ In a letter to the English classical scholar Gilbert Murray, he explains:

I am giving a 4-year course of lectures on history of philosophy in relation to culture and social circumstances, from Thales to Dewey. As I can't read Greek, this is rather cheek; but anyway I enjoy it. I divide it into 3 cycles, Greek, Catholic, Protestant. In each case the gradual decay of an irrational dogma leads to anarchy and thence to dictatorship. I like the growth of Catholicism out of Greek decadence, and of Luther out of Machiavelli's outlook. (Russell–Murray, 18 Jan. 1941; *Auto.*, 2: 249)

¹² A sense of the impending doom related to the war that comes out strongly in much of Russell's correspondence of this period is captured in a letter to Gilbert Murray:

As to the future: It seems to me that if we win, we shall win completely; I cannot think the Nazis will survive. America will dominate, and will probably not withdraw as in 1919; America will not be war-weary, and will believe resolutely in the degree of democracy that exists here. I am accordingly fairly optimistic. There is good hope that the militaristic régime in Japan will collapse, and I do not believe China will ever be really militaristic. Russia, I think, will be the greatest difficulty, especially if finally on our side. I have no doubt that the Soviet government is even worse than Hitler's, and it will be a misfortune if it survives. There can be no permanent peace unless there is only one air force in the world, with the degree of international government that that implies. Disarmament alone, though good, will not make peace secure.

Opinion here varies with the longitude. In the East, people are passionately pro-English; we are treated with extra kindness in shops as soon as people notice our accent. In California they are anti-Japanese but not pro-English; in the Middle West they were rather anti-English. But everywhere opinion is very rapidly coming over to the conviction that we must not be defeated. It is rather dreadful to be out of it all. (Russell–Murray, 18 Jan. 1941; *Auto.*, 2: 248–9).

¹³ Russell lectured at the Barnes Foundation on Thursdays. (See also Russell–Dale Pontius, 29 Jan. 1941, and Russell to G. E. Moore, 18 Feb. 1941, RA.) He was also able to take the summer off. (See also Russell–Constance Malleson, 1 June 1941.)

¹⁴ Russell–Elizabeth Trevelyan, 19 Jan. 1941, RA. Also see Russell–Allen and Unwin/St Stanley Unwin, 24 Jan. 1941.

However, to Elizabeth Trevelyan, wife of the poet, Robert Trevelyan, he remarked: "My pupils are dull, and I am on bad terms with my employer, who is very difficult. But I am making a book out of my lectures, and I enjoy getting to know a lot of interesting history."¹⁵ Indeed, while Russell, according to Isherwood, had to waste his lectures on a small, rather unintelligent group,¹⁶ it was these lectures that formed the nucleus of Russell's classic *History of Western Philosophy*.

A glimpse of Russell's daily routine at Little Datchet Farm can be gleaned from accounts of other visitors he had at the time. The author Daphne Phelps sought out Russell during his Pennsylvania days (no thanks, reportedly, to the Barnes Foundation¹⁷). She stayed with the Russells at Little Datchet Farm for three months. She describes how Russell would absent himself for most of the day while working on *A History of Western Philosophy* and would surface only for meals. "In the evenings, while David and Peter washed up at one sink, Bertie and I would be at the other. As always, he couldn't keep his hands off any woman, but I was firm; he did not attract me physically, but the scintillating wit which flowed over the sink each night was riveting...."¹⁸ One time she drove Russell to visit Einstein, presumably at Princeton, New Jersey, but stayed outside and so did not hear their conversation.

Architect Peter Blake, while studying at the University of Pennsylvania, had befriended Pamela Campbell, a young Englishwoman who worked as a combination secretary-housekeeper for the Russells. As a result, Blake was able to rent a pump house on Little Datchet Farm which he used as his "second home". Peter Blake cherished his experience of Russell's Pennsylvania as "the best of times".¹⁹ That Russell exerted an enduring influence on Blake's own ideas is attested to by his words that "Although neither Diddy²⁰ nor Peter showed much interest

¹⁵ Russell-Elizabeth Trevelyan, 9 July 1942.

¹⁶ Isherwood, p. 202.

¹⁷ Phelps writes: "... David, having discovered the Barnes Museum and enquired for Lord Russell, had met with suspicious hostility. When he had persisted, a tough Irish policeman had threatened to manhandle him" (*A House in Sicily* [New York: Carroll & Graf, 1999], p. 175). Phelps then discovered that a guest had Russell's telephone number (*ibid.*).

¹⁸ Phelps, p. 176.

¹⁹ Peter Blake, *No Place Like Utopia* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), p. 38.

²⁰ "Diddy" was evidently what Russell's son Conrad called him and was the name

in architecture or city planning, the ways in which they approached any issue, in whatever field, taught me more than a dozen learned lectures at Penn.”²¹ Something that made a lasting impression on Blake was how Diddy said that he sometimes played a game with himself:

“I assume that everything I have always known to be absolutely true is, in fact, not true at all that the very opposite is true. Most of the time, of course, the result is utter nonsense. But sometimes I find it opens up some very interesting new perspectives.” (Blake, p. 42; see also pp. 216 and 290)

For all the wit and wisdom that Russell was able to furnish visitors, Blake recounts how Russell was not always as gregariously inclined as one might have expected:

On Sundays, at Little Datchet, young couples—philosophy professors or students from CCNY—would arrive from Manhattan to express their solidarity with Diddy. On one such occasion, as a young, adoring couple bade him farewell at the door of Little Datchet, we overheard the wife saying, “Lord Russell, it was so wonderful to bask in your light.” Ever after, we would remind Diddy, come Sunday, that some people were expected for lunch “to bask in your light”, a prospect that did not amuse him quite as hugely as one might think. (One Sunday, when the usual visitors arrived, Diddy could not be found, and Peter sent me off to look for him; I found him sitting in a tree, quite far up, fully and properly dressed, puffing away at his pipe and looking out at the Pennsylvania Dutch landscape. “Diddy, come down! They’ve come to bask in your light!” He said “Damn them” and that he didn’t quite know how to get down from his perch. I lent him a hand, while he grumbled.) (Blake, pp. 41–2)

In any event, there was a regular flow of “intimidating visitors”.

Prior to the Bertrand Russell Society’s 2000 annual convention at Monmouth University in New Jersey, Ken Blackwell contacted me expressing the interest that he, Nick Griffin, and Stefan Andersson had in seeing “Russell’s Pennsylvania”. While I had seen Little Datchet Farm from afar a decade earlier, I did not set foot on the property until 31 May 2000, the day before Ken, Nick, and Stefan were going to arrive. My immediate objective then was to see if I could arrange a meeting for

that gained currency among the inner circle at Russell’s Pennsylvania.

²¹ Blake, p. 42.

them with the current owners of the property. When I got to the farmhouse, though, nobody was home.

But when Ken, Nick, and Stefan were with me the next day, we were lucky enough not only to find the owners at home but to be greeted with the utmost hospitality. Mr. William Quain gave us a tour through places like the “crystal room” (where Russell often listened to radio reports on the Second World War) and then the rest of the house and the surrounding farmland. Indeed, “There were fields sloping down to a river, and pleasant woodlands” (*Auto.*, 2: 337). Ken also drew attention to the servants’ cottage across the road that was the particularly tight quarters where Russell, his wife Peter, and his son Conrad had to stay when Russell’s dismissal from the Barnes Foundation made it imperative to rent out the main house in order to make ends meet.²² Mr. Quain was very hospitable, providing the Russell Archives with a written history of the property, and the visit was a most enjoyable three hours. He mentioned that Conrad had paid a visit to the farm in recent years.

The following day we all went to the Barnes Foundation. At first, we inadvertently entered a room for officials of the Foundation only. When asked to leave, Ken struck up a conversation about Russell’s previous employment there, and, instead of having to leave the room, we were encouraged to meet then and there with executive director and CEO of the Barnes Foundation, Kimberly Camp. Dr. Camp gave us a good 40 or 50 minutes of her time as we exchanged information about relations between Russell and the Barnes Foundation. We then toured the spectacular gallery. Thus ended our tour of Russell’s Pennsylvania days at Little Datchet Farm and the Barnes Foundation.

Eventually, in December 1942, Barnes broke his own contract²³ with

²² *SLBR*, 2: 394–5, and Katharine Tait’s *My Father Bertrand Russell* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), pp. 160–1.

²³ The exact grounds for Russell’s dismissal were, at the time, at least, a little unclear. Chester County’s *Daily Republican* reported that:

Mr Russell couldn’t drive a car, so Mrs. Russell used to drive him, and enjoyed hearing him lecture. She took a seat at the back of the classroom with her knitting. Dr. B. walked in one day and saw her there.

“Who”, said he, “invited you to attend a class in my school?”

She explained why she was there.

“I must ask you to leave at once”, he said angrily. “No one attends our

Russell after Russell had given a series of lectures on politically oriented topics at New York's Rand School of Social Science.²⁴ Russell was once

classes without special invitation.”

Since he was their meal-ticket at the time she apologized with as much dignity as possible and went out and sat in the car (it was a winter day). After the lecture Mr. Russell asked what had happened and was informed by Dr. B. that Mrs. Russell was not welcome.

In fact, in his well-known brusque way, he said, “Who does she think she is anyhow? Just because she is Lady Russell, she thinks she can go anywhere. No snooty Englishwoman can walk into my building unless I say so.” (This remark was quoted in the newspapers at the time.)

Mr. Russell, as we heard it, observed that anywhere he lectured he expected his wife to be welcome. Dr. Barnes replied, “Very well then; here is the exception and you needn't come back yourself, either.”

So that is why Bertrand, third Earl Russell, spent a hungry winter in the house at Rapps Corner.

One Russell biographer cautions readers to understand that:

It is not entirely true that the initial cause of the trouble was Lady Russell's occasional practice of knitting during her husband's lectures; but there is enough in it to indicate the level at which the attack was made, and the knockabout air of the proceedings.... Behind the scenes ... Dr. Barnes ... had learned that Russell was to give a series of popular weekly lectures at the Rand School in New York.... “With this gross breach of contract”, he [Barnes] later said, “we began to consider the question of his dismissal from the staff.... (Clark, pp. 480-1)

Another biographer states that “It is possible that what irked Barnes was that Russell resolutely refused to become intimate with him or his family, preferring to live a private life with Peter and the children” (Moorehead, p. 441). As Freda Utley would have it, “The real reason was in all probability Peter's undisguised dislike of America where she found life very difficult, and Bertie's desire to return to England now that he had become an all out supporter of the war against Hitler” (Freda Utley, *Odyssey of a Liberal* [Washington: Washington National P., 1970], p. 170). Feinberg and Kasrils mention that “Russell tended to keep very much to himself”, which probably disappointed Barnes (*BRA*, 1: 187). In any case, according to Barnes, Russell “failed to meet the standard of personal and professional conduct inherent to his position” (Wood, p. 195).

²⁴ Incidentally, it was at the Rand School of Social Science that the late U.S. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan recalls, in a letter to me, having met Bertrand Russell:

I went to hear him [Russell] talk about 1943 at, I do believe, the Rand School. I had brought along a copy of *Why Men Fight*, which he autographed and

again out of work. Russell did succeed, however, in getting reestablished back in Cambridge but not until 1944 and not without some brooding reflections in the interim:

[Barnes] is a man who likes quarrels; for no reason that I can fathom, he suddenly broke his contract with me. In the end, probably, I shall get damages out of him; but the law's delays are as great as in Shakespeare's time. Various things I have undertaken to do will keep me here till the end of October; then (D.V.) I shall return to England—Peter and Conrad too, if the danger from submarines is not too great. We can't bear being away from home any longer. In England I shall have to find some means of earning a livelihood. I should be quite willing to do Government propaganda, as my views on this war are quite orthodox. I wish I could find a way of making my knowledge of America useful; I find that English people, when they try to please American opinion, are very apt to make mistakes. But I would accept any honest work that would bring in a bare subsistence for 3 people.

It is not growing fanaticism, but growing democracy, that causes my troubles. Did you ever read the life of Averroes? He was protected by kings, but hated by the mob, which was fanatical. In the end, the mob won. Free thought has always been a perquisite of aristocracy. So is the intellectual development of women. . . . My Peter's whole time is absorbed in housework, cooking, and looking after Conrad; she hardly ever has time to read. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were a brief interlude in the normal savagery of man; now the world has reverted to its usual condition. For us, who imagined ourselves democrats, but were in fact the pampered products of aristocracy, it is unpleasant. (Russell—G. Murray, 9 Apr. 1943; *Auto.*, 2: 251–2)

Before Trinity College invited Russell to return, he still planned to return to England and was awaiting ship space.²⁵ He gave up Little

which I still cherish. As he gave it back to me, he said, "You know I never did authorize that title." An American publisher had put it out. The British original, as I recall, was called *Principles of Social Reconstruction*. A fellow standing next to me asked what the original title was, but at the time I had no idea. (21 June 2001).

Moynihan's copy of Russell's *Why Men Fight* is replete with Moynihan's underlining and marginalia. It was recently offered for sale on the Internet, and I am indebted to the editor of this journal for having brought the sale of this book to my attention. Since 5 November 2004, Moynihan's autographed edition of Russell's *Why Men Fight* has been in my hands. But this is the subject of a separate article. The full text of his letter to me can be found in *The Bertrand Russell Society Quarterly*, no. 113 (Feb. 2002): 35.

²⁵ In the summer of 1943 Russell's daughter, Kate, who was a student at Radcliffe,

Datchet Farm, apparently sub-letting it furnished. During this time, Russell, Peter, and Conrad remained nearby in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, at the Bell & Clapper²⁶—the home of Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth A. Rhoad. The archived accounts from newspapers have a certain Phoebe Gilkyson relating of Russell that “When we knew him here, and entertained him at our house, he looked like a white-haired, humorous and kindly gnome with a wrinkled face; a small frail man who loved nothing better than to have young people²⁷ gather around and ask him questions” (*Daily Republican*, 19 May 1952). As another report has it:

There were many children around the Bell and Clapper, which is itself a hub-bub of kindly hospitality, and at times they would interrupt him at an important task. He would stop, answer their questions, tell them that he was busy and promise to play with them later—promises he never broke. (*Saturday Evening Post*, 3 June 1944)

These are the contemporary accounts. Additional information has come to light through quite recent correspondence. The Bell & Clapper’s aforementioned hospitality certainly did not end in the 1940s. For in the summer of 2000, I was driving down Route 29 in Phoenixville when I passed a sign reading “Bell & Clapper”. It only took a moment’s reflection to recognize the name from articles about Russell’s years in Pennsylvania while he was awaiting his return to England. I decided to pull over and inquire of its occupants whether this was indeed the same Bell and Clapper where Russell had resided during the Second World War. I was greeted with a hearty assurance that it certainly was the very same place and that Lord Russell had probably been its most famous guest. It was explained to me that the ownership of the Bell and Clapper was happily back in the hands of the Rhoad family (G. William [“Bill”]

“cracked two vertebrae in a fall and had to be immobilized in a body cast for three months. This forced them out of the cottage at Malvern, where there was not enough room for her and the rest of the family. Friends came to the rescue and lent them a house at Bryn Mawr for the summer” (*SLBR*, 2: 396). This was the family of Kate’s friend, Joan Sangree. They lived at 2 Pennstone Rd., Bryn Mawr.

²⁶ Russell had also stayed at the Bell and Clapper at the end of September 1940 when he may have seen Little Datchet Farm for the first time.

²⁷ Indeed, “there was perfect rapport between the 72-year-old philosopher and the children who tagged along with him. Mr. Russell loves children in the way of a man who has never misspent his birthright of wonder ...” (*Saturday Evening Post*, 3 June 1944).

Rhoad, Jr. and Dee Rhoad), and I was cordially asked by the Rhoads to join them on their porch for some leisurely conversation. Mr. Rhoad brought out various documents pertaining to Russell's residence at the Bell & Clapper, and I was also provided with names and addresses of people who might be happy to give me more information about Russell and his stay there. I contacted these people with queries of "What memories do you have of Russell's stay at the Bell & Clapper? What were the related legends and lore?" An uncle of Bill Rhoad's, Edwards L. ("Ted") Rhoad, describing Russell, recalls:

I remember him, of course, but I was but a boy of perhaps 12 or 13 so we did not engage in deep conversation of any kind. I have this image of a rather old man with flowing white hair down over his collar. I can still picture him strolling the front lawn of our estate smoking a strangely shaped pipe, à la Sherlock Holmes. My recollection is that he ate most of his meals in his upstairs bedroom. You must understand that the upstairs bedrooms were very large, each with its own fireplace. I can still picture his wife, who was much younger than he and very attractive with her reddish hair, carrying his meal trays to the upstairs. (Ted Rhoad-Trainer, 5 Dec. 2000)

Harriet [Rhoad] Swanson, an aunt of Bill's, took particular time and trouble to share her reminiscences of Russell. She says: "I remember him always with a pipe, and smoke curling up around his ruddy face, and snow white hair, which incidentally seemed to go up in a point above his forehead."²⁸ "I can always picture him with a huge tuft of pure white hair, walking around the house with a cup of tea in his hands, clasping the cup in both cupped hands trying to keep them warm."²⁹ She continued with an amusing tale:

As a rule, all the guests living in the house, would eat their meals together with our family, at the huge dining room table. These gatherings were fascinating, as the conversations included many diverse opinions and subjects. At times they were quite lively, and a real history lesson to the younger set. However, on Sundays, my mother would often fix a buffet, and everyone sat in the library. The month was early November, and a neighbour had been pheasant hunting on our property. As a token of thanks, he dropped off one of the birds for my

²⁸ Swanson-Trainer, 30 Nov. 2000.

²⁹ Swanson-Trainer, 22 Nov. 2000.

father. There was hardly enough for such a gathering as we would often have, so along with the rest of the meal she had prepared, my mother also cooked the pheasant, so that everyone could have a “sample”. But when it came time to divide this small bird, lo and behold, it was gone! Lord Russell, being closest to the serving table, had helped himself to the entire bird!! Nothing was said, not then, not ever! But it made for a wonderful story to be told, over and over, to others gathered at our table. (Swanson–Trainer, 24 Nov. 2000)

I asked Harriet if it was her impression that Russell consumed the pheasant as a result of absent-mindedness or selfishness. She replied: “I really don’t think it was selfishness on his part, but that he was so used to eating well, and most likely was used to lavish meals, that he thought the whole bird was for him alone. He was often so oblivious to others in the house, and seemed to be up in the clouds most of the time! Of course, he was a philosopher!!!”³⁰

Ida Rhoad Wrenn, another of Bill’s aunts, told me:

My memories as a little six year old child were the times after mother served tea to Bertrand Russell, in the blue room, he would invite Conrad, his five year old son and me into the Blue Room, to play. “Bertie” would proceed to get down on all fours and roughhouse and romp with us. Some afternoons we would take a walk outside over to the railroad tracks, where a daily train came by, over the trestle,³¹ which crosses over Rt. 29, just beside the Bell & Clapper property. He would give us couple of coins to place on the tracks, prior to the train coming by, and we would delight to find them afterwards, all flattened out. He and his wife believed children needed to lie under special lamps and get vitamin C so as to be healthier in the winters. I remember Conrad and I doing that from time to time. Mrs. Russell was a delightful lady. My two special memories are of her coming out to the kitchen, after dinner and lending a hand with doing up the dishes. She smoked a very small, seemingly diamond studded pipe, which we children thought to be very daring. She had flaming red hair and was a lovely

³⁰ Swanson–Trainer, 30 Nov. 2000.

³¹ “Around four o’clock in the afternoon, the quiet of the country is ravished by sounds which you’d think could only come from a Pennsylvania Railroad locomotive which had lived a very wicked life on earth, had consequently and justly gone to hell.... Almost any afternoon last winter there appeared to watch this railroad operate a man with flowing white hair, accompanied by his seven-year-old son, several other children, probably, and a nondescript company of dogs. The man was Bertrand Russell, distinguished English philosopher and mathematician ...” (*Sat. Evening Post*, 3 June 1944).

lady. I have fond memories of visiting them farther up in Chester Springs when they bought a home there. (Ida Rhoad Wrenn–Trainer, 3 Jan. 2001)

Indeed, for those with whom I communicated, Russell's late son Conrad was a special object of attention and favourite subject of stories. Harriet goes so far as to say:

Some of my most vivid memories of my childhood are about this man and his family.... His son, Conrad, was about five years old at the time. We were charmed with this little boy, because he had such a lovely English accent, and was very friendly. Mr. Russell, as we called him, was also very friendly, and would often get down on his hands and knees, and play "horsy" with Conrad, crawling all over the place. He truly adored that boy.³² (Swanson–Trainer, 22 Nov. 2000)

Every night when Mr. Russell and his wife would put their son Conrad to bed, there was a ritual of first finding his favourite stuffed animal, "Fa-Fa". In that big house, it often was lost, and we all helped to find "Fa-Fa". (Swanson–Trainer, 30 Nov. 2000)

Peter Blake tells us that:

Diddy himself, though very grand when he wanted to be, was utterly charming *en famille*:³³ every night he would tell Conrad a long bedtime story, made up on the spur of the moment and dealing with one of the seemingly endless and varied adventures of one Captain Niminy Piminy, a famous explorer who had been sent to deepest Africa to catch some exotic animal for Uncle Julian's zoo. (Sir Julian Huxley was the director of the London Zoo in those days—a fact which gave him very special cachet in Conrad's eyes.) Conrad was completely mesmerized by these stories—as were we—partly because Diddy was able to draw upon his encyclopedic knowledge of geography, biology, zoology, astronomy, and everything else to embellish the bedtime fables, and to add vast credibility to every detail of the captain's exploits. (*No Place Like Utopia*, p. 40)

Ted Rhoad says:

³² Interestingly, Freda Utley's son, during a 1948 stay with the Russells in Wales, found Conrad to be a "spoiled youngster" (Utley, p. 171n.).

³³ To be sure, Russell's effective rapport with children is a recurring motif in researching "Russell's Pennsylvania". Also see Utley, p. 66.

My mother used to tell a story about Conrad after a fire occurred at our home which engulfed the third floor. It seems there were two Pennsylvania Dutchmen painting the dining room as a result of water damage from the fire. Mother was in the dining room talking to the painters when Conrad came bouncing in and, in his very stylish English accent, said: "Mrs. Rhoad, the third floor is in complete ash." With that, one of the painters turned to the other and in broken Dutch/English accent said, "I see he has truble mit de language as ve do."

(Edwards L. Rhoad-Trainer, 5 Dec. 2000)

A certain Anne Brooks reports:

We were given the room that Bertrand Russell and his family had just vacated, which was in itself a thrill. Dinner at The Bell and Clapper was, to say the least, an experience. The rule that children were fed first and put to bed necessitated a late dinner (8–9 p.m.). Around the formal dining table, candle-lit, would be men and wives.... Perhaps the best story I heard second-hand, since it happened just before we arrived. Lord Russell's wife left him for a few days with a long written list of instructions for the care of their son (was he about four or five?). About half way through dinner, conversation came to a standstill with the realization that the little boy was standing in the doorway in his pyjamas. "Daddy", he said, "please look at the list and see if I can take a pee." (Anne M. Brooks-Trainer, 20 Dec. 2000)

On the subject of Peter Russell and how she fared in Russell's Pennsylvania days, the most helpful source is the author and political activist Freda Utley, who had "frequently stayed with the Russells for weekends at their house at Malvern".³⁴ As Utley would have us believe,

Peter was not really a snob although this was the unfortunate impression she gave to many Americans. She was simply unhappy and maladjusted and became

³⁴ Freda Utley had known Russell since 1926 from having tutored John (Russell's elder son) and Kate at Porthcurno in Cornwall, and hailed him as "the greatest man I ever knew" (*Odyssey of a Liberal*, p. 65). "... I will still account him as one of the few great men of our age, worthy to be ranked among the ancient Greek philosophers who took the whole purview of human knowledge as their domain and were not simply observers but also participants in the political struggles of their time" (p. 183).

One of Utley's favourite insights of Russell's appears to have been his observation that "yesterday's underdog when he gets on top is most brutal because he has learned underneath to scratch harder in the battle for survival than those born on top" (p. 55; see also p. 1), and she credits Russell with being the "strongest influence which held me back for a time from joining the Communist party" (p. 64).

ultra-British in her disappointment at finding life in America as the wife of Lord Russell difficult, disappointing, and dull. Even her accent became a little too ultra-top drawer British U. She told everyone she preferred to educate Conrad at home rather than send him to an American public school.³⁵

Utley provides one of the more insightful and poignant accounts of Peter's plight:

[M]uch as I loved Peter, and kind and loyal as she continued to be to me even when I had quarrels with Bertie, I realized by now that he had a stormy petrel on his hands. She was a young and beautiful woman and needed to be courted and entertained as well as loved. While never, I feel sure, unfaithful to Bertie, whom she adored, she needed the society of younger men as escorts to parties and admirers and for youthful companionship. She was totally unsuited to live in a remote house in Pennsylvania often without servants³⁶ (because few couples stayed long) while expected by herself as well as Bertie to maintain the kind of household which English people of the upper classes take for granted. (Utley, p. 171)

Come 1942, a "temporary estrangement" was in store for Freda Utley and Russell as he had come out in favour of the Second World War.³⁷ Utley and Russell were soon able to reconcile their differences,³⁸ but not without some misgivings on Utley's part about what she had come to think had really been at the bottom of Russell's various views on world politics over the years, namely, "the security or salvation of England" (p. 175). Indeed, Utley was later to come away from reading the second volume of Russell's autobiography settled in the impression that "his aversion to America was old and deep seated.... [T]hese United

³⁵ Utley, *Odyssey of a Liberal*, p. 171.

³⁶ Daphne Phelps mentions the domestic squabble resulting from Bertie's decision to get rid of the servants, Charles and Geneva. Russell also refers to the loss of servants in a letter to Elizabeth Trevelyan: "At present, for the summer holidays, we are employing her [Kate] as a servant, because ordinary servants can't be got. They are all engaged in war work. For Peter it is a terrible slavery; she has hardly any time for reading or writing.... Peter is fairly well, but sad at being exiled from all mental life by house-work" (9 July 1942, RA).

³⁷ Utley, p. 169. On Russell's change of mind, see his letter to the editor, "Long-time Advocate of Peace Approves Present War", *New York Times*, 27 Jan. 1941; reprinted in *Yours Faithfully*, ed. Ray Perkins (Chicago: Open Court, 2002), pp. 177-82.

³⁸ Utley, p. 170.

States were his milch cow until England took Earl Russell back to her bosom” (p. 169). She thought the worst aspects of Russell’s character to have been epitomized during his last year in the States, when a generous American businessman³⁹ offered to support Russell by endowing a special chair for him either at New York University or through the Council of Learned Societies. “Bertie, however, refused the offer unless he could be subsidized in England instead of in America, which, of course, was impossible” (pp. 172–3). Perhaps Russell, understandably now, merely wished to be independent of rich patrons.

Freda Utley reports that Russell “had by this time conceived such an aversion to America that he was inclined to see some sinister motive behind American generosity” (p. 172). She also mentions that “However heated the arguments between them, Bertie and Peter got together in blaming America for their troubles. Admittedly America is a difficult country in which to live graciously since domestic help is hard to get and expensive” (p. 171). Utley explains:

Neither she [Peter] nor Bertie, in spite of their straitened means, could reconcile themselves to simplifying the routine of daily existence. In telling me about their search for a house near Philadelphia, Peter had expressed her horror or shock at finding a Pennsylvania Dutch family in their beautiful old house “eating in the kitchen in their short sleeves”. This to me seemed only natural and sensible, but to Peter it was “appalling”.

Servants or not, guests or not, the table had to be properly laid in the dining room with candles, gleaming silver, snowy table cloth, wine glasses and wine. I remember an evening when Peter, exhausted by her efforts to serve dinner in proper style after the departure of the last couple she had lost, and needing also to attend to young Conrad, started getting hysterical. After she had left the dinner table in a tantrum Bertie took me out for a long walk in the calm countryside in the moonlight and unburdened himself to me concerning his troubles. He loved Peter dearly, but she was becoming very difficult.

If only I had noted down the record of this conversation, I might be able to explain better why Peter and Bertie eventually separated. At the time I felt sorry for him because Peter was behaving so unreasonably. Now I sometimes wonder whether Bertie was not equally or more at fault. (Utley, pp. 170–1)

By some accounts, while Russell lived in Pennsylvania, he “received

³⁹ Identified as C. V. Starr.

no friendliness: on the contrary, some mysterious persons manifested such active animosity as to throw stones through his windows.”⁴⁰ And a 1944 local newspaper article says: “Lord Russell and his wife, Countess Particia [*sic*] Russell, are now residing at Cambridge, England, evidently not to the sorrow of Russell’s farm neighbours. According to many of those that live close by Countess Russell was ‘continually fighting with some one’.”⁴¹ One reads as well that “Why they didn’t get along with their neighbours there we’ve never heard, except that they were very British and rather stiff and shy. Anyhow, the only Nobel Prize-winner we’ve ever had in Chester County used to have his windows broken at night by mysterious vandals, who probably disliked his British accent. We doubt if it was because of his book.”⁴²

It is, perhaps, a tribute to Russell’s positive outlook as a septuagenarian that the foregoing circumstances did not prevent him from musing about how “People in the Eastern States are passionately pro-English, and everybody is kind to us because of our nationality.” Nevertheless, it is worthy of note that Russell saw fit to clarify that “Some people have said I wished to stay here permanently; this has never been the case.”⁴³ Nor was it the case after two years at Little Datchet Farm, as he told Beatrice Webb.⁴⁴

While Chester County, Pennsylvania may have had only one Nobel Prize winner to its credit, it was particularly fortunate for me that it was no less a luminary than Bertrand Russell.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ *Daily Republican*, 19 May 1952.

⁴¹ *Daily Local News*, 5 Oct. 1944.

⁴² *Daily Republican*, 19 May 1952.

⁴³ Russell–Elizabeth Trevelyan, 19 Jan. 1941.

⁴⁴ Russell–Webb, 31 Jan. 1943; *Auto.*, 2: 257.

⁴⁵ A draft of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Bertrand Russell Society at Plymouth State University, 20 June 2004. The author is grateful to the editor and his copy-editors for their interest in, support for, and assistance with this research.
