

Morning View  
10 January 1957

Hello Mr McCarthy,

The week end of 5-6 January brought this winter's first christmas-card snow fall to the tree patch. Not all snow falls in this category, the one at Thanksgiving, for instance, being too small of flake and much too swirled about by heavy winds.

The great, heavy, damp flakes which, throughout the day Sunday, obscured all but the closest objects, silently but effectively converted even the most ordinary stretches of horizon into realms of enchantment. As the snow abated toward evening, scattered small houses and big barns loomed on the tangled ridges or peered from the pinched little valleys. The slopes and tiltings of the white blocks that were their snow covered roofs accentuated the far hills as no bare roof could ever do. Areas of woodland were so heavily snow clad that they seemed vagrant clouds or frosty bits of mist, about to drift away at any moment. Fences and their accompanying weeds lay across the fields in the faintest of visible lines, a mere roughening of the uniform whiteness. Progress has detracted slightly from this christmas card -- due to the installation of oil burners and stokers, few peaceful trickles of smoke rise from the distant chimneys any more.

One of the best christmas cards is off to the southeast, across the twisted steepness of a little valley. Pasture land billows upward on the far side in great steep but smooth curves. Just below the ridge top stands a fence dark with briars, weeds, and young sassafras, beyond which the ground rises open and bare to the broad crest. Atop this smoothness stands an abandoned little house, its color the inimitable grey found only in old wood that has never known paint. Its front wall is broken by the black openings of long departed windows and door, a window to each side, the door carefully centered. Above the middle of the white slope of its simple roof juts the tumbled remnants of a chimney. Across the dooryard, meticulously spaced in long-forgotten planting, stands a guardian row of old maples, their trunks heavy, their tops black and sharp and windblown against the sky far above the little white roof and crumbling chimney. Perhaps it is a christmas card with a certain depth of somberness, but it is nevertheless incredibly lovely.

By Sunday afternoon the tree patch itself was so encrusted and adorned with snow that only the massive solidity of the great tree trunks prevented its assuming the delicacy of a highly ornamented wedding cake. Twigs and branches bore such bulkiness of snow that the sky was almost as obscured as when they wore leaves. On the windward side, the trunks themselves were sheathed with whiteness, the snow pattern varying with that of the bark to which it adhered.-- smooth on the maples, more ragged upon the rougher bark of the oaks, and clinging in extravagant drapery on the broad, curving, irregular plates of the shagbark hickories.

My best christmas card is a living one. It was most beautiful Saturday morning when the sky had cleared after the night's snow.