

MR. AND MRS. HIATH

At Halloween, we'd go from house to house collecting candy but on Center Street we had to go inside Mr. and Mrs. Hiath's house to get stuff. Theirs was a big three story painted-white wood house, a mish-mash of three or four different house plans with a "witch's hat" on top; really it was just a turret (actually it was just an unfinished attic) with a really long wrap-around-on-two-sides fieldstone porch. Their house was really, really warm, almost too much. They were an older couple; he always wore a bright white shirt with a coat and tie; she always had on a dark dress with a pretty little pink cameo pinned onto it. (I swear she looked like the Queen of England without the little white purse.) We'd all gather around in the living room with tons of plants – especially two great big ferns, enormous windows and really high ceilings and then they would tell us how excellent our costumes were. Mrs. Hiath gave us stuff she'd cooked, usually chocolate chip or sugar cookies ("for now"), and Mr. Hiath would give us store-bought candy and a nickel ("for later"). They sure were happy for old people. You'd have thought they'd never seen kids before. They carried on and on – Mr. Hiath kinda running around and tending to every little thing; Mrs. Hiath, with her hands usually folded in her lap, in a big old tan stuffed cozy-chair – the center of attention. But she was never moving around; just telling Mr. Hiath what to do; where to go; when to do it. They fussed a lot but because

of the way their voices sounded you could tell they actually liked each other a lot. (*"You don't know what you're doing." "I know. But you want me to do it faster."*)

But no one ever saw Mrs. Hiath out and about town, though, or even in her own garden, only Mr. Hiath by himself, smiling, singing, tipping his hat and giving a "Good morning" to folks. They didn't have any kids of their own and over the years, they became sorta everybody's "stand-by grandparents." Much, much later, after she had passed away, I found out; Mrs. Hiath couldn't walk.