

# I was a boy

**Glassboro 1926-1932**

By Kenneth C. Anderson



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A steam train hiss and the clay on Miss Herckner's pottery wheel are part of Kenneth C. Anderson's memories of his boyhood years in Glassboro. From 1926 until 1932, he spent summers on campus while his father, Charles D. Anderson, taught at the Normal School before his appointment as State Assistant Commissioner of Education. Anderson's poem recounts his sensory impressions of those idyllic years.

The train at the station across the campus  
hisses and steams.

The clatters and voices in the cafeteria  
are high, and the faculty dining room  
is quiet with the sounds of conversation.

The waters of Lake Savitz make watery sounds  
as they fall through the weir,  
and in the morning I can hear  
Dr. Savitz himself beating his chest  
outside the Whitney House.

I was a boy hearing this Glassboro World.



The 1920s colonial cupola  
of the Normal School  
towers above the trees.  
Our 1928 Oakland is parked  
below the elaborate portico.  
An old, long, brown-shingled garage  
from the glass factory's time  
sits back in the woods.  
In the evening there is heat lightning,  
and a few miles away the vast forest  
of The Pines begins.

I was a boy storing up these things.

**Rowan Magazine**

Volume 4, Number 3

Summer '99

Pages 24-27

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I can taste Miss Peet's  
chocolate cream puffs,  
and the peanut butter crackers I share  
in the practice teaching classroom,  
and the sun-bottled strawberry jam  
Mrs. Winans makes is on my tongue.

The fresh new Normal School building  
smells like a new building.  
Behind it are the woods aromas of oak and pine.  
The vestibule and tower  
of the old Whitney House  
have the smell of historic dust.  
There are sweet flowers at the door.  
And there are the dank airs  
of the decaying buildings  
at Lake Savitz, and the fumes  
of hand-held fireworks on the Fourth.  
The far stretching ploughlands  
smell of oiled roads.

I was a boy tasting my way and living that  
twenties and thirties air.



*A camper enjoys Jersey Corn and a rest  
in the woods.*



*Students at Camp Savitz, 1929.*

I am feeling the oak newel post  
where the Simpkin's stair turns,  
and the wet clay on Miss Herckner's pottery wheel,  
and Lake Savitz's water, and the pain  
of sniffing too much of it far up my nose,  
and of trying out another South Jersey lake  
and falling in, at the Sangrees' camp.  
I feel underfoot the crunching pine cones and acorns.

I was a boy who couldn't help walking on  
cones and acorns.

And the houses of Glassboro!  
 The Winans house has a turret,  
 The Simpkins, a gladiolus farm.  
 Theirs and the Prosches' look out  
 on the sandy fields and orchards  
 and second growth on the broad flat land.  
 Esby's has terrace lawns near Pitman Grove.  
 The Rodgers house has two little girls.  
 And we live in the Whitney House,  
 the old glassmaker's mansion.

I was a boy, living in the Whitney House,  
 Hollybush, forty years before  
 summitry made it historic.



*A coed prepares a bonfire.*



*Dare*



*Merriman*



*Hammond*



*Sangree*

I see the faces again,  
 of the Misses Merriman and Hammond  
 and Dare, and Mr. Sigman.  
 Mr. Townsend is behind the counter  
 in the bank, and Mr. Sangree  
 is teaching us how to draw cobwebs.

And there are Grace...  
 and Marian...  
 and Eileen.

I wonder why I didn't fall in love with  
 them but I was a boy.