

LA maison natale

D'UN GRAND HOMME

La maison d'Elizabeth (Eliza) Cowan, grand-mère de Neil Tillotson.
The home of Elizabeth (Eliza) Cowan, grandmother of Neil Tillotson.
Beecher Falls, Vermont
© Zackary DeLong

The Birthplace OF A GREAT MAN

NEIL TILLOTSON (1898-2001)

Neil Tillotson was born on **Hereford Hill, in Canada**, in the home of his grandmother, **Elizabeth Cowan**. Hailed from Ireland, Elizabeth married Nathaniel Tillotson, an American Civil War veteran, before later divorcing him. She was renowned for her strength of character and her independent mind; qualities that she passed on to her grandson. She worked as a midwife and supported her daughter-in-law, Achsa Anna Hodge, during Neil's birth. Luckily, the Tillotson family remembered the date, because no birth certificate was issued in Neil's name. In fact, Tilly—as he was nicknamed—would only obtain official documents as an adult through his army personnel file.

GROWING UP IN BEECHER FALLS (VERMONT)

Some time after Neil was born, the family moved to the **Beecher Falls** home built by his father, Benjamin. Shortly after, his grandmother Elizabeth's house was relocated to stand alongside his parents' home. **It was probably rolled on wooden logs from Hereford Hill to Beecher Falls, very likely along Reservoir Road.** Neil spent his childhood near the Connecticut River, walking in the woods, taking bicycle rides to visit his extended family and tobogganing in the winter.

From the age of 12 or 13, Neil would often be found in his father's general store, and his curiosity often led him to listen to the customers as they chatted. Their stories fostered in him a strong sense of empathy for the difficulties experienced by farmers and factory workers. He often said that these people were his teachers and that they taught him what he needed to know about life in his corner of the world.

CHILDHOOD READING

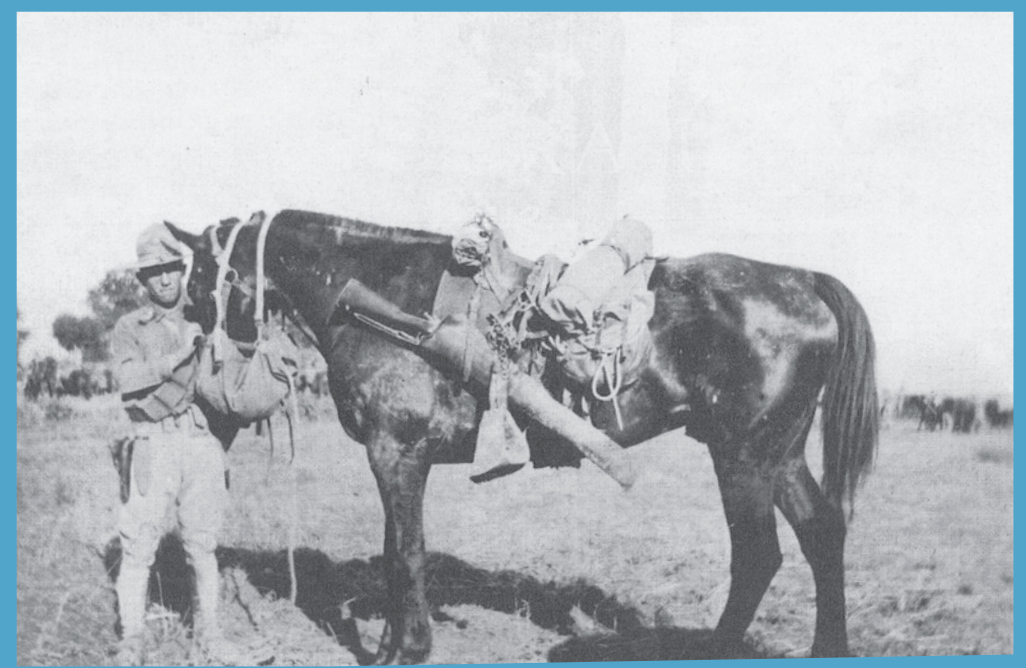
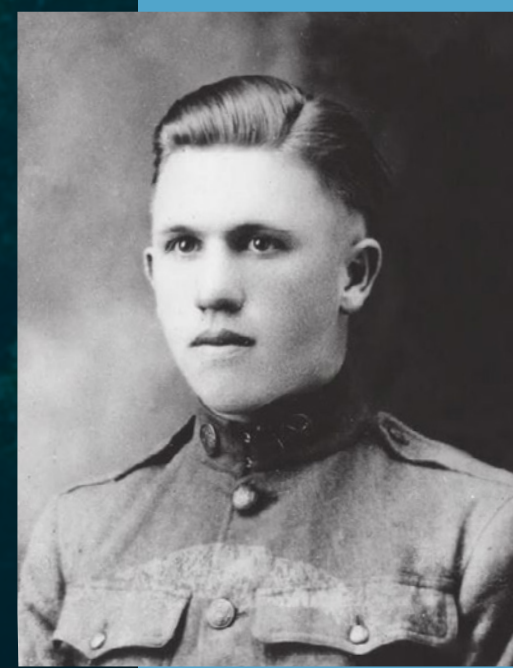
Although Neil did not finish high school, he was always extremely curious and an all-rounder, as well as a voracious reader. The novels of Horatio Alger, in particular *Work and Win*, left their mark on him as a child. The Massachusetts author's writings introduced Neil to the American myth of the self-made man. At 16, following his parents' divorce, **he took the advice of his uncle Charles Hodge, and left to earn his living first in Lowell, then in Boston.** He was driven by his immense intellectual curiosity, his knack for business and the inspiration he found in the stories of his favourite author.

And the rest, as they say, is history.



La première équipe de basketball du High School de Canaan (VT) a été formée en 1915 par Neil Tillotson, qui en est devenu le capitaine.
The first basketball team at Canaan (VT) High School was formed in 1915 by Neil Tillotson, who became its manager.

De gauche à droite / from left to right, première rangée / first row : Maurice Young, Neil Tillotson, Russell Holmes; deuxième rangée / second row : Murray Marsh, Albert Fuller, Guy Davis.
© Canaan Historical Society



Neil Tillotson a rejoint la 7^e cavalerie de l'armée américaine en 1917.
Neil Tillotson joined the US 7th Cavalry in 1917.
© Tillotson Family

L'ENFANCE À BEECHER FALLS AU VERMONT

Quelque temps après l'accouchement, la famille a déménagé à **Beecher Falls**, dans la demeure construite par Benjamin, le père de Neil. La maison de la grand-mère Elizabeth a par la suite été relocalisée à côté de la résidence des parents de Neil. **On imagine qu'elle a été roulée sur des billots de bois entre Hereford Hill et Beecher Falls, fort probablement sur le chemin du Réservoir.** C'est près du fleuve Connecticut que l'enfance de Neil s'est déroulée, entre les promenades dans les bois, les visites en vélo à la famille élargie, les glissades en traîneau l'hiver.

À partir de l'âge de 12-13 ans, Neil a passé beaucoup de temps au magasin général tenu par son père. Curieux, il aimait écouter le bavardage des clients. À travers leurs histoires, il a développé une grande empathie à l'égard des difficultés rencontrées par les fermiers, les ouvriers d'usine. Il a souvent dit que ce sont eux qui avaient fait son éducation, lui avaient enseigné ce qu'il devait savoir à propos de la vie dans son coin de pays.

LECTURES DE JEUNESSE

Bien que Neil n'ait pas fini l'école secondaire, il a toujours été très curieux, touche-à-tout, en plus d'être un lecteur vorace. Les livres d'Horatio Alger, notamment *Work and Win*, ont marqué sa jeunesse. À travers l'œuvre de cet écrivain ayant vécu au Massachusetts, Neil a été mis en contact avec le mythe américain du *self made-man*. À 16 ans, à la suite du divorce de ses parents, mené par sa grande curiosité intellectuelle, ses talents d'entrepreneur et inspiré par les écrits de son auteur préféré, **il a suivi les conseils de son oncle Charles Hodge, et est parti gagner sa vie à Lowell, puis à Boston.**

The rest is history, comme on le dit.



La maison construite par Benjamin Tillotson pour sa famille
The house built by Benjamin Tillotson for his family
Beecher Falls, Vermont
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