



# The Marston's Grist

The newsletter of the Marstons Mills Historical Society  
P.O. Box 1375 Marstons Mills, MA 02648 [marstonsmillshistorical.org](http://marstonsmillshistorical.org)

A few words from the President...

## HISTORICAL REFLECTIONS

*In recent months, our Society has enjoyed a variety of experiences. Beginning with a Happening in January, which featured poetry readings, displays of artifacts and the playing of a historical oral interview videotape, the activities continued with a presentation on writing Cape Cod-related literature, by local author, Jeannette de Beauvoir, and then extended to a discussion of a historical report written about the Burgess House by a Marstons Mills middle-school student. The big event for this month, of course, is the Tour de Force—a joint venture with the Marstons Mills Public Library, which will feature six different important sites in the Village (the Community Church, the Burgess House, the Underground House, the Airfield, the Sabatia Flower Farm and the Cranberry Sunset Horse farm), concluding with the performance of an original play in Liberty Hall, “The Birth of the Marstons Mills Library,” by Sandra Bolton. All of these activities are the result of significant contributions by different members, and the level of involvement of our members is noticeably high; we really appreciate it!*

*Possible Fall plans include a driving tour to see the various historic mill sites that in past years comprised what we know as Marstons Mills—how our village name originated. In addition, through all of these activities, we have enjoyed the support of the Marstons Mills Village Association members who share our enthusiasm for and pride in our village and its fascinating past (and present). We hope to see you on Saturday, June 18 for the Tour de Force.*

-David Martin, President

### Burning the Brush

“We’ll burn the brush as soon as we have rain,”  
We said when first we saw it, driving in.  
On Sunday afternoon the rains began,  
And promises are promises, although  
Unspoken, or spoken only to ourselves.  
The cutting had been done by younger arms  
Than ours, capably using a mower  
That gives to one man’s day a week of work.  
The blueberry bushes now stood round and free,  
That had been cut and now awaited fire.  
Ours but to crumple paper, light a match,  
And rearrange the brush as the fires progressed.

The raincoats in the lodge were very good  
Or very bad. From these I took the best,  
While Peter chose a ragged gabardine  
To wear not as a coat (it was too small)  
But as a cape. Later, I’d smile to see  
The cape swaying about him as he worked,  
Breaking the fall of raindrops, nothing more.

The fires were started fifty feet apart  
But only one—the largest of the three—  
Caught on, and though it had to battle rain,  
The gases in the smoke were heard exploding  
In crackles of victory, each breeze a fan,  
A water-laden fan, but still a fan.

-by Lois Grant Palches

The Mission of the Marstons Mills Historical Society is to foster an interest in the story of our village. We preserve historical images, documents and artifacts, research historic resources and support educational opportunities for all ages for villagers and other interested persons, in order to better understand and appreciate the past, present and future of Marstons Mills.

# Coming Events...

- ◆ **Tuesday, June 14 @2:30 p.m.** - Monthly meeting of the MMHS at Marstons Mills Public Library
- ◆ **Saturday, June 18, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.** - Marstons Mills Tour de Force! (details on next page)

*All are welcome*

## MARSTONS MILLS HISTORICAL SOCIETY OFFICERS

*President: David Martin*

*Vice-President: Claire Melix*

*Secretary: Jim Gould*

*Treasurer: Bebe Brock*

### BOOK STORE

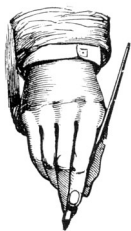
***Barnstable 375th Anniversary.*** Marstons Mills is one of several villages highlighted in this publication. The coffee table book includes a fascinating brief history of the town. ***Available for purchase at MMPL.***

***Images of America: Marstons Mills.*** An Arcadia Publication written by local historians James Gould and Vivian Cushing. Limited signed copies. View this publication at [marstonsmillshistorical.org/publications](http://marstonsmillshistorical.org/publications). ***Available for purchase at MMPL.***

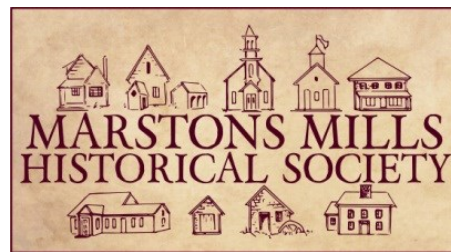
**NOTE: prices of some books have been reduced!**

***Explore! Contemporary Marstons Mills, Cape Cod***  
A limited edition, full-color book by Sandra Bolton. Mail a check payable to MMHS for \$32 plus \$5 shipping and handling to P.O. Box 1375, Marstons Mills MA 02648. Also available by emailing [boltonslanding@comcast.net](mailto:boltonslanding@comcast.net), subject line: order book.

The MMHS meets on the second Tuesday of every month at 2:30 p.m. at Marstons Mills Public Library. All are welcome!



Comments and articles for submission should be sent to [astephens@clamsnet.org](mailto:astephens@clamsnet.org).



## MEMBERSHIP FORM

I / we wish to join the Society and enclose payment for my / our Individual Membership(s) at \$15 each.

I / we wish to make a charitable contribution to the Society to support the development of its Village Archives and the Preservation of its Collection.

\$250    \$150    \$75    \$25    \$10    Other \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street / POB: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

I / we wish to be notified about MMHS Meetings.

The Marstons Mills Historical Society is  
a 501 (c) 3 Charitable Organization

P.O. Box 1375 Marstons Mills, MA 02648  
[marstonsmillshistorical.org](http://marstonsmillshistorical.org)

Cut out and return to the address on the bottom of the form.

# HISTORICAL INVENTORIES ONLINE

We are pleased to announce that the collection of Form Bs—the historical building inventories submitted by the Barnstable Historic Commission to the state—have been put online at the Society’s website, [marstonsmilshistorical.org](http://marstonsmilshistorical.org). You can access the forms by clicking on “Historic Building Inventories” on the bottom of the navigation bar on the left side of the home page.

At present, properties are only listed by their Area and Form number, but we will begin adding property address and common name to make it easier to find properties of interest.

See a property with incorrect or incomplete information? Please feel free to email your comments to [davidmartindr@aol.com](mailto:davidmartindr@aol.com)

*-by Antonia Stephens*



## MARSTONS MILLS TOUR DE FORCE!!

Have you been curious about what is inside some of Marstons Mills’ historic homes and gardens? Would you like to learn more about the history of the Mills while seeing some fascinating places with historic stories? If you answered “yes,” you will definitely want to reserve SATURDAY, JUNE 18, 2016, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. for the first MARSTONS MILLS “TOUR DE FORCE.”

Come to enjoy such unique places as the Burgess House (dating from the 1800s), the Cape Cod Airfield (the only grass airport on Cape Cod, with a rich history), the Underground House (a house that is built almost completely under ground), a working horse farm, a beautiful garden; and the historic Community Church.

Tickets are \$25 per person, and children under 18 are free. Pick up your ticket of admission, which includes a guide and a map, at the Liberty Hall registration booth, 2150 Main Street (beside the Library) at any time from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.; the self-guided Tour concludes at 3pm.

Watch for more information about reserving tickets on our web site, [marstonsmilshistorical.org](http://marstonsmilshistorical.org).

**SPECIAL FEATURE:** A free performance of an original stage play written by Past President Sandra Bolton on the birth of the Marstons Mills Library—an interesting story with actors from the village. The performance starts at 3:30 p.m. in Liberty Hall.

The Tour de Force is sponsored jointly by the Marstons Mills Historical Society and the Marstons Mills Public Library (celebrating 125 years of service this year).

Questions? Contact David Martin at [davidmartindr@aol.com](mailto:davidmartindr@aol.com). JOIN US ON JUNE 18th!!!

# CRANBERRIES: A CLAIM TO FAME

Marstons Mills's greatest claim to fame is its cranberries. The lush swamps of the upper river in Newtown were the birthplace of the modern large-scale cranberry industry.

The first local cranberry grower was Russell Hinckley of what was to be Gifford Farm. However, he overlooked the potential of his own fine swamp and instead picked berries on Sandy Neck, where he gathered 12 bushels to win first prize in the 1849 County Fair.

By the 1860s, several Newtown families farmed cranberry bogs on the upper reaches of the Marstons Mills River. At the western source of the river, Luther Hamblin built a bog on land he had acquired in 1858; the bog is still harvested by the Hamblin family.

Another cranberry pioneer was Isaac Sprague Jones, who was born in 1801 in his father's 1786 house where River Road curves west. Mr. Jones farmed cranberries next to his house on an acre and a half on the west side of Muddy Pond, which was originally located between River Road and the ponds, and on 5/8 acre on the other side of the road. His nephew Thomas Jones Jr. also had a small bog to the south on Muddy Pond.

At the north end of this marshy area, a bog of nine acres was planted by Thomas Jones's second cousin Jedidiah Jones, whose son Frederick worked it. It was later inherited by James Crocker, husband of Jedidiah's granddaughter. All four of these small bogs were probably created by the time of the Civil War.

In 1864 Newtown's potential was recognized by outside investors. Captain Samuel Nickerson of Cotuit brought in

his nephew, the successful whaling master Seth Nickerson Jr., and Captain Alexander Childs, as well as the Harwich pioneer cranberry growers Emulous, Zebina and Benjamin Small. They bought a bog on the west side of Muddy Pond from Thomas Jones Jr. and gave an eighth interest to the only local investor, Nathaniel Hinckley, owner of the downstream grist mill who vigorously defended his rights to the flow of water.

The transformation from the small individual bog of a few acres to large-scale production was the product of the enterprise of Abel D. Makepeace, known as the Cranberry King. Before 1875 he had a harness-maker shop at the west end of Hyannis, where there is now a pretty town-owned park. Abel Makepeace was a great experimenter in crops, growing turnips and potatoes, as well as a variety of berries. At the back of the park is a swamp, the headwaters of Stewart's Creek, where he first tried to grow cranberries.

In 1875, Abel Makepeace made his first investment in Newtown, in about 80 acres of Muddy Pond, which he bought from Thomas Jones Jr. for a thousand dollars. Mr. Makepeace alone could hardly pay such a large sum of money, so a quarter came from Boston investors Clarence A. Gay and an eighth each from Charles C. Poor and George F. Baker. The latter was to be the main source of Makepeace's investments. Mr. Baker was a Boston cranberry commission merchant who had established the first New York commission house in 1857, but he was born in Hyannis, son of Captain Timothy Baker.

Two years later, in 1877, Mr. Makepeace bought 19.11 acres that was known as Baker bog from Cynthia

Hamblin, widow of Ellis Hamblin, for \$552. This bog was on the west side of River Road above what was then Crocker Pond, now misnamed Muddy Pond. Today's Muddy Pond west of River Road used to be called Crocker or Black Pond; the original Muddy Pond, now gone, was east of River Road.

George Baker owned a quarter, and one-eighth was owned each by Mr. Makepeace, Zebina and Emulous Small, George and A. C. Snow II of Harwich, and fractions by others.

Mr. Makepeace's diaries show what the purchase price was but not the starting expense of creating a working bog. Much engineering, clearing maple trees, digging surrounding ditches, damming the stream and channeling water flow, leveling the sloping turf, spreading sand and planting





vines was all done by heavy hand labor, assisted only by horses. Quite a lot of this engineering was done by Stephen Crocker Hamblin, born nearby in 1851 to Luther Hamblin. In 1878 Stephen Hamblin married Ruhamah, the widow of Mr. Makepeace's brother Alvin, and Mr. Makepeace helped them build the house at 950 River Road overlooking Baker Bog.

Mr. Makepeace finally moved to Marstons Mills from Hyannis in June 1880 and paid Stephen and Ruhamah Hamblin rent while he supervised work in the bogs, including the new 14-acre Santuit Bog built by Stephen. Later Mr. Makepeace moved to West Barnstable. Finding more big marshes on the mainland, he had Stephen Hamblin build the Wankinko Bog in Wareham, where the 30-year-old man died of unknown causes, surely after hard wet labor in the swampy ground. His widow remarried—to the Cotuit whaling captain Seth Nickerson Jr., one of the first investors in Newtown cranberries.

The cranberry grower Malcolm Ryder told John Hamblin, who is currently the largest cranberry bog owner and grower in the area, that the three Makepeace bogs—Baker, Santuit and Big Bog—were the most productive in this area. Mr. Makepeace's Big Bog, also called Marstons Mills Bog, completely altered the hydrology of the area, filling in Muddy Pond, moving the herring run from Middle Pond to a new course to the south,

and canalizing the river. In 1888, Mr. Makepeace created the Marstons Mills Cranberry Company, which included the three bogs, with George Baker as president, himself as treasurer and Emulous Small as third trustee. This company dominated cranberry production for the next century.

**-by James Gould**

*(This article first appeared October 8, 2010 in the Barnstable Enterprise).*

(photos courtesy of Jeannette M. Hamblin)



# SANDY SNEAKERS WALKS THE VILLAGE



There's something about old farm equipment that arouses my curiosity and makes my walk an adventure. This is a vintage tractor that lies in rest on a historical farm site in Marstons Mills.



Climbing an antique tractor wheel is a first...these tractors are on the Fuller Farm on Route 149.

Photos by Sandra Bolton



Sitting in a cast iron tractor seat is a trip back in time. You see, cast iron tractor seats are significantly important. Farmers did not have to trudge on foot behind animals plowing fields. They could sit! Cast iron seats were manufactured after the Civil War when factories that were casting cannons cast the useful seat.