



Fall 2013

The Marston's Grist

The newsletter of the Marstons Mills Historical Society

P.O. Box 1375 Marstons Mills, MA 02648 marstonsmillshistorical.org

Dear Readers,

Welcome to The Marston's Grist, the official newsletter of the Marstons Mills Historical Society, where we celebrate the unique history of our village located in the Town of Barnstable, MA on Cape Cod.

The Society's 30th Anniversary Year has provided some delightful moments of community remembrance and fun, and we look forward to the observance of Barnstable's 375th throughout 2014. For the holidays, keep in mind that our book *Marstons Mills* features over 200 images from the MMHS Collection and is a great gift item! *Signed copies can be purchased on our website, through the mail, or in person at the Marstons Mills Public Library.*

My thanks to all and best wishes for the coming year,

Bob Frazee, President

MMHS 30th Anniversary



Cast of the original radio play, "On the Shelf," by Sandra Bolton. (photo by Bill Bolton)

provided historical information about a number of the old photographs from the book and was followed by an Ice Cream Social—delicious sundaes for everyone. Next was a walking tour of the village on 3 August, led by James Gould, in which members personally visited and learned about the history of at least 12 different sites located on Route 149, Main Street and River Road. The tour was followed by a performance by local children of an original radio play, which told the story of the first librarian of Marstons Mills in the 19th century. The play was written by Sandra Bolton and directed by Renee

continued last page

The 30th Anniversary year of the Marstons Mills Historical Society was observed with several different events, which were developed by a special committee beginning in January. Members included Alex Frazee, Nancy Wong, Claire Melix, Donna Lawson, Sandra Bolton, Renee Voorhees, Donna DeFlorio and David Martin. The first event was an historical exhibit in the Library, developed by Antonia Stephens; the exhibit was on display from June to early September and included an old school desk from the Marstons Mills School, a school bell, various pictures with captions, genealogies of the Marston and Goodspeed families and other interesting artifacts. The second event was a book talk on 29 June, conducted by Vivian Cushing and James Gould, co-authors of the new Marstons Mills History book. The talk

See the new Arcadia publication, "Marstons Mills," by Jim Gould and Vivian Cushing:

www.marstonsmillshistorical.org/publications

Coming Events...

- **Tuesday, 17 December @1:00 p.m.** Meeting of the Marstons Mills Historical Society, followed by a holiday reception @2:30 p.m., Burgess House (559 Cotuit Road, Marstons Mills).
- **Tuesday, 21 January @2:00 p.m.** Annual meeting of the Marstons Mills Historical Society, Liberty Hall (2150 Main Street, Marstons Mills).

MARSTONS MILLS HISTORICAL SOCIETY OFFICERS

President: Bob Frazee

Vice-President: Claire Melix

Secretary: David Martin

Treasurer: Nancy Wong



Barbara Hill, Jim Gould and David Martin at Jim's walking tour. (photo by Sandra Bolton)

The MMHS meets on the third Tuesday of every month at 2:00 p.m.



Comments and articles for submission should be sent to the editor at sturgisreference@comcast.net

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



MEMBERSHIP FORM

☐ I / we wish to join the Society and enclose payment for my / our Individual Membership(s) at \$10 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

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT MOVES FORWARD

The collecting of oral histories of Marstons Mills residents, recalling the earlier days of the village, is continuing at the present time. Starting with a set of interviews completed by Barbara Hill, and also by Tales of Cape Cod, the project has moved forward since 2009 with additional interviews conducted primarily by Jim Gould and David Martin. The Oral History Committee has expanded to include Donna De Florio, who keeps careful records of completed interviews and projected interviews; interviewers now include Nancy Wong, Diane Potter, Claire Melix and new member Philip Roy, in addition to Jim and David. Approximately 35 interviews have been completed and are mostly in Word document form and able to be scanned for purposes of digitization and word-search. A few interviews remain in audio format and need to be transcribed—volunteers to do transcription would be appreciated; interested persons should contact David at davidmartindr@aol.com or at 508-420-0224. Any reader who has a suggestion of a person who should be interviewed (including themselves!) is invited to contact David also. Excellent candidates for interviews are either people who have lived in the Mills for a long time or who have knowledge of Mills history, even though they may not have lived in the village for a long time. The interviews will form an important part of the collected archival material on Marstons Mills history and will be available to be read by all interested people as soon as they are digitized.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE LANDS AT “CAPE COD AIRFIELD,” Part 2

...continued from the Summer 2013 issue of Marston's Grist

On the north side of the airstrip, Zenas built a polo field to realize a plan that Frederick Law Olmsted had laid out at Osterville's Dead Neck, but had never completed. Today, the radio-controlled plane field lies approximately on the polo ground. In a pretzel-loop around Bald Hill was a dirt track nine-tenths of a mile long, intended for sulky racing and subsequently used as an auto race track and a motorcycle course. In the summer of 1935, the Sportscar Club of America held its races on the track. Hilma Danforth encouraged Zenas to build stables, which were later removed to the Oyster Harbors golf shop. Crocker also built an office, dormitories and two hangars, one of which boldly advertised Socony Mobil's flying red horse.

On the lake was a seaplane base. On the south side of Race Lane, a field was the site of the Massachusetts National Guard bivouac in the summers of 1929-1934, where square tents were pitched. The Air National Guard flew in Douglas O-38 biplanes from East Boston. On the lakefront below was “Soldiers Cove,” where the guardsmen swam in their birthday suits. But the biggest attraction was the Aviation Country Club, which advertised “Dining, Dancing, Open Bar, Bert Lowe's orchestra” under management of A. Dawson Berry. Before the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, it served drinks, to the annoyance of Zenas's brother, Laughlin Crocker, the County Sheriff, who raided the night club.

In the summer of 1930, the Skyways Flying School was opened by one of Zenas's associates and friends,



Souvenir button from a 1934 event sponsored by Boston furrier I. J. Fox.

Crocker Snow, who later became the first Director of the Massachusetts Aeronautics Commission. Snow, who was an avid polo player and pilot, is said to have said “It's not hard to fly—I'll solo someone in one day!” So, early one morning, he took up Harvard football player Joseph Choate and a young mother, neither of whom had ever been in a plane before. By the end of the day they flew solo.

The most famous flyer to land here was Amelia Earhart, in 1933. Another noted flyer here was Joan Shankel Fay, the first woman to fly solo from coast to coast. Wilbur Cushing believed that Jimmie Doolittle, who had been a stunt flier in the '20s and was noted for his B-25 raid on Tokyo in 1942, landed here, as did the first man to fly solo around

the world, Wiley Post, and Will Rogers, who died in a crash with Post in 1935, but we have not been able to confirm the visits.

Zenas lost his fortune in the Wall Street Crash, and in 1935, he sold the property to his Oyster Harbors neighbors Hilma and William H. Danforth. The Danforths renamed the property Green Acres Farm and added an office in the form of a windmill replica of the Grand Island gate house. In 1941, the 26th Aviation Division of the guard trained on the field, as honored on the monument just north of the intersection of Route 149 and Race Lane. The inscription is a tribute to Brigadier General Harold R. Harris, chief of staff of the Army Air Force Transport Command, and to Captain Harry P. Kornheiser, who later became Danforth's pilot and the airport manager. The captain was succeeded by his son Rick Kornheiser, who was killed in 2000 in a banner-towing accident at Norfolk airport. Rick had carried on flying six-foot high advertising over the summer beaches, which involved the potentially-hazardous operation of diving down to hook onto a banner strung between two volleyball posts and climbing steeply back up to unfurl the letters.

The field was neglected during World War II, and the 1944 hurricane knocked down one of the hangars. After the war, Danforth leased the field to "Jack" John Van Arsdale, who opened a flying school in May 1946 that included seaplane landings on Mystic Lake. The airport took on the form of three grass runways: one running 2,700 feet NE-SW; a cross runway of 2,100 feet; and a 1,700 foot strip parallel to Route 149. Van Arsdale started with three Piper Cubs, a Cessna 120 and a Boeing Stearman Kaydet trainer, but had 27 planes by 1947. Among his trainees was the future chief pilot of Delta Airlines, H. Angus Perry, and state senator Allen F. Jones. The stables were removed (as noted above), and the night club was moved to Hyannis for the Elks Club. In 1952, Van Arsdale started the first airline service on Cape Cod, PBA (Provincetown-Boston Airlines) and moved to Provincetown. The Jenkins farmhouse was sold by the Danforths in 1951 and is the present day home of Grace and David Lytle.

In 1967, the town bought the 1130 acres to the north on the moraine for \$350,000. Most of the area became known as "The Trail of Tears," so named for the inevitable accidents of mountain bikes on this rocky terrain, but too reminiscent of the shameful deportation of the southeastern Indians to become a permanent name. Now called the West Barnstable Conservation area, it includes the highest point in the town, Great Hill, which is over 230 feet above sea level and near which is a tall viewing tower. The

Conservation area also contains the town shooting range and "The Field of Dreams," where controlled burns have been set and Boy Scouts have planted trees.

The most exciting event of the postwar period was the "Miracle of Mystic Lake." In 1960, a 20 year-old telephone operator called Lois Ann Frotten survived a free fall of 2,000 feet from a Cessna. When her parachute failed to open, she landed in the lake backside-first and recovered with two broken vertebrae. 1984 marked the start of several new activities. Blimps advertised Hood milk, Fuji cameras, the cartoon character Snoopy for Met Life, as well as Gulf, Virgin Atlantic Airways and Budweiser beer. For several summers, these blimps were used to survey whales off Stellwagen Bank. In 1984, Discover Flying R/C Club was founded and has flown radio-controlled model planes from the site north of the main runway since. That same year, Randy Charlton of Marstons Mills began a glider service, starting with the Czech-built Blanik glider, and operated at the field for many years. Charlton has an accident-free record, but in 1996 a Woods Hole cancer specialist died in the crash of his glider here. The fertile glacial outwash was still producing great crops of hay along Route 149 in 1999 for cattle farmer Peter Watts of Forestdale, and haying remains part of Airfield operations today.

In 2003, the Danforth lease to Cape Cod Flying Service was not renewed, and the closing of the airfield was announced for 30 April 2003. A number of proposals were made for development of the property, including 360 single-family homes, a research and development park, a sports megacomplex, an RV campground and baseball and softball fields. When it became apparent that the area might be sold for development, and that there was tremendous popular support for saving the historic airfield, the Barnstable Town Council unanimously voted to preserve the area for recreational open space



Crocker Snow (1906-2000), the pioneer aviator who ran the 1930s Skyways Summer Flying School.

in March 2003. The Danforths sold 217 acres to the town for \$11.2 million, money procured from Land Bank funds. A stone monument at the corner of Route 149 and Race Lane was erected in memory of the Danforths, as required in the sale agreement.

On 7 August 2004, the airfield, now officially known as “Cape Cod Airfield,” was reopened with a formal celebration that included the landing of antique planes like a DC-3 and a Stearman trainer. This celebration, held on a perfect summer’s day, attracted hundreds of Barnstable residents as well as numerous state and local officials, many of whom spoke to the crowd about the process of saving this remarkable piece of Cape Cod’s aviation history. Chris Siderwicz, good friend of the late Rick Kornheiser, secured the first Management Contract with the Town, operating as the owner of Mills Air Service, Inc. Chris is a retired Boeing 737 captain who first learned to fly at this airfield at age 18. The Airfield is currently managed by Chris’ son, also called Chris, and sports a number of traditional activities, including Sky-diving, flight instruction and scenic flights in a bright red vintage bi-plane.

At the northwest side of the field, the model plane flying area has continued under separate agreement with the Town, as a Radio Controlled (RC) field operated by the Discover Flying RC Club. East of this location, the Barnstable Police used to operate a canine training area that has since been moved to the Massachusetts Military Reservation (recently renamed Joint Base Cape Cod). This area was briefly considered for the site of Barnstable’s first Dog Park, but was passed over, partly for safety reasons because of its proximity to busy Route 149.

MMHS 30th Anniversary, cont.

Voorhees. A final event took place on Village Day on 8 September: a scavenger hunt in which players had to correctly identify five of eight photographs of historical sites around the village in the Main Street region; six other more challenging sites were also included. A drawing was held, using tickets from those who completed the hunt, and the winner got an autographed copy of the Marstons Mills History book. Alex Frazee, Renee Voorhees and Sandra Bolton updated an older scavenger hunt brochure created by Barbara Hill and Antonia Stephens, adding attractive photographs, more detailed explanations about each site, as well as additional sites. Sites were also linked to the appropriate chapters in the Marstons Mills History book. Sandra Bolton is assembling a photomural album for the entire year as a record of the events. To wind up the 30th Anniversary year, plans are being made for a Holiday Reception at the Burgess House.

Today, various public recreational uses are made of the Danforth Property, under careful supervision and management by the Town. In 2009, a small parking area and trail-head were installed on the south side of Race Lane, with trails connecting to both the waterfront at Mystic Lake and, via the historic Cow Tunnel beneath the busy roadway and through the Danforth Recreation Area west of the Airfield, to a well-established network of trails in the West Barnstable Conservation Area.

By James Gould, with updates by Robert Frazee

Useful links:

- Cape Cod Airfield: <http://capecodairfield.com>
- An article in the July 2013 edition of Cape Cod Life Magazine entitled “Up and Away”: <http://capecodlife.com/life/stories/2013/07/up-and-away>
- Discover Flying RC Club: <http://www.discoverflying.org>
- Trail Maps Link: <http://www.town.barnstable.ma.us/Conservation/TrailGuides/WBARN.PDF>

Sources: Mark Robinson, Lindsey Counsell, Zenas VI Crocker, Zelma Crocker Griffin, Martin Wirtanen, Norman Hord, Barbara Hill, Rob Gatewood, Eben Johnson, Frank Gibson, Zilpha Wright, Darcy Karle, Mary Sicchio, Soil Conservation officer, Gay Black, Chris Siderwicz, Robert Frazee, Bunny Zenowich, David Chase.

Primary sources: Barnstable deeds 331/137, 462/415, 515/342, and supporting deeds; National Register forms WBB 72, 911; Martin Wirtanen, “The Marstons Mills Airport” (ms. June 2003); Barnstable Vital Records; Walling map 1858.

Printed sources: Donald Trayser, Barnstable, 133-4, 74-5, 419-20; John VanArsdale in 3 Centuries..Barnstable, 205; Vivian Cushing, 7 Villages, 227-8; Franklin Andrews, History of the Hamblin Family (1894, 126); Mass. Soldiers of the Revolution (VII:138); Amos Otis, Genealogical Notes 204; Andrea Leonard, A Crocker Genealogy; Robert Oldale, Cape Cod: The Geologic Story; Beth Schwartzman, The Nature of Cape Cod; James McLaughlin, Records of the Proprietors, 43, 45, 27; Nathaniel Philbrick, In the Heart of the Sea; Hattie Fritze, Horse & Buggy Days, 125-6; Frederic Freeman, History of Cape Cod, 1:443, II:252; John Nye Cullity, “Cedarville Journal”, Sandwich Enterprise, 11 April 2003; Discoverflying.org; Barnstable Patriot; Register; Cape Cod Times; Indian Ponds Assn., IPA Newsletter.



Sue Martin, Sandra Bolton and Sue Davenport volunteer on Village Day 2013. (photo by David Martin)