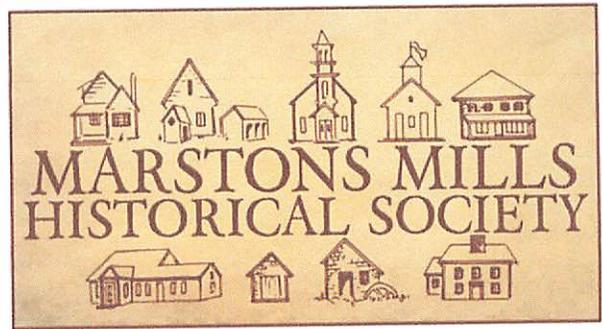


Marstons Mills Historical Society
Interview with Lena Childs
(Jim Gould & Dave Martin)
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marstonsmillshistorical.org

Lena Childs is a life-long resident of Marstons Mills, born here in 1922, daughter of the storekeeper Loring Jones Sr. She attended Marstons Mills School for the first years, then in Cotuit and Osterville schools for grades 5 and 6 after that. She attended junior high school in Hyannis and went to Barnstable High, graduating with Charlie Hamblin. Her nickname was “Peanut” because she was smaller than some of the other children.

She lived in a house that was on the back of what is now the Cash Market; the house was once owned by Allan Marston, and was torn down by her father to extend the store. The family moved from there to River Road, one house away from her grandmother Affie. As a child she swam in the Marstons Mills River – it was cold! – courtesy of Mr. Trainor who let children swim off of his property; he had built a small house where the children could change clothes and a pier for jumping into the river. In the past, the river was “black with herring” in spring; Lorenzo Gifford “scooped 'em up and filled barrels” with fish to put on his garden for fertilizer.

The Cash Market belonged to Loring Jones, Lena’s father. Before it was the Cash Market, her father sold Nash cars from that building; it had a big display window facing Route 149. As a child, she remembers eating ice cream when tables and chairs had been set up, with a marble countertop by the soda fountain on the opposite side. Ellsworth Backus, a man with a stooped-over figure, from time to time came into the store and deposited a basket of apples on the counter; when he did that, he straightened up!

She recalls that an airplane from the Barnstable Airport was towed to the gasoline station to get gasoline, since there was none at the airport. She took part in cutting ice from the frozen Long Pond in winters, and swam there in summers. That was on the other side of the pond from the nudist colony

The family doctor was Dr. Higgins; Grace Higgins had maypole dancing and hot chocolate and cookies for the children in the springtime. “She was a nice lady who fixed us up too when the doctor was not there.”

They all grew up with Cape Verdeans, like the Pina’s who lived across River Road, and the Perry’s. Like “one family” they all played games together, football, baseball. Her best defender against bullies in the school years was Baptiste.

Among the local characters was Ted Hamblin, a big coon-hunter. Gideon Lovell, who preferred to walk rather than ride once accepted an offer of a lift. When he got out he thanked the driver, who said, “You’re welcome”. “Oh, that’s good, he says”.

Lena was married in the Methodist Church in 1948, and then moved into her present house (#1954 Main St.) at that time. Her husband, Braddock, in World War II went to OCS, and was a paratrooper in Europe. During the war, Lena drove Priscilla "Pill" Higgins over to Otis Base where she worked in the Motor Pool, storing and distributing vehicle parts. After the war, her husband came home. "That first year in the house we went up to Long Pond to cut our ice, before we got a refrigerator. We used to skate on the pond and watch them cut ice."

Howard was the son of Braddock Childs of Hyannisport, and Mary Stewart who came to the Cape from Dunvegan, Ontario to work as a maid. Lena's husband then worked for Bartlett Tree Co. and then Barnes Tree, then set up his own business, known as Braddock Childs Tree Service; She sold the company to her nephew.

She has belonged to the church for 67 years since she joined in 1940. The church was temporarily lost for 12 years when it was absorbed into Osterville church, but was "rescued" by Rev. Philip Sherman.

Foster Crocker had a hardware store across River Road from her father's store, which was moved up to the Gifford Farm. Hattie Mecarta, a nice lady, had a knick-knack store for thread, needles and candy; "if we had a penny, we bought what we could with it". The building [called the Post House] was also the post office, and Hattie was the postmistress. The post office behind the store just open slots for mail—no locks or combinations. Her father and brother built the "new" post office, now a real estate office. Lena worked for her brother Loring in the post office behind the store, and later also worked for him in the "new" post office. Her brother's wife Adele and Irene Hadfield from Yarmouth also worked at the post office. Her brother Loring "Junior" had a lot of pain in later years from an injury to his leg which had caught in the spokes of grandfather Ephraim's wagon, either jumping on or off the wagon. He was about nine at the time.

Lena has three married daughters and six grandchildren, of whom three are now married; she also has three great-grandchildren.

