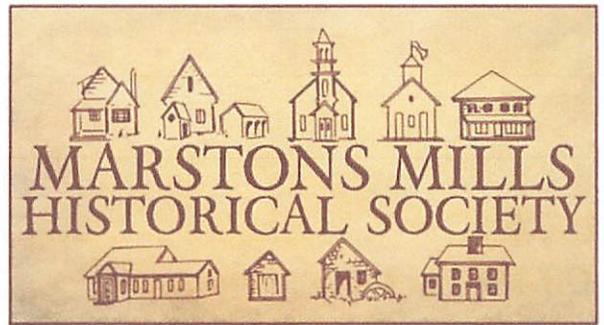


Marstons Mills Historical Society
Interview with Bob Childs
(by David Martin & Jim Gould)
June 2016



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

The Childs Family Homestead

I was born December 8th, 1926 in Medford, MA. I am the seventh generation of one of the oldest houses in Marstons Mills. The house is located at 1876 South County Road. The homestead was built as a 1 & 1/2 story Cape with a large central chimney in the early 1700's. My great, great Aunt Ann E. Merrill of Melrose added on the front parlor. Our family is direct descendants of the original passengers on the Mayflower. Namely Thomas Rogers, John and Elizabeth Tilley, Edward and Ann Fuller and John Howland. The homestead was mainly a summer estate from 1889.

The farm consisted of 175 acres. It included cranberry bogs and a small pond we named Gifford pond after our ancestors. It was a great fishing hole. Around 1926 the construction of Route 28 cut the property in half. The money received from that was spent to install electricity and indoor plumbing at the homestead.

We were on the water every day during the summer months. We would go swimming and fishing at Captain Crocker's dock on Warren's Cove. We were lucky enough to have a boat with one of the first Evinrude outboard motors. The whole family would regularly picnic on the back of the east side of Oyster Harbors. Warren's Cove is now part of the 3 Bays Preservation.

My father, Paul Childs, died when I was 3. In 1936 my mother, Dorothy M. Childs, her sister, Addie F. Webster, my brother Fred and I moved permanently to the family homestead. My mother and Aunt Addie were dressmakers. The detail in the dresses they made was exceptional. They also opened the homestead as a bed and breakfast for visiting Christian Scientist's, which was their religious belief. The bed and breakfast was named "Cedar Crest" probably because the property consisted of a lot of cedar trees. My mother and aunt had beautiful flower gardens all around the property and always had bouquets around the house. They were also great cooks with the produce that was grown on the property.

When I was 10 I planted an acre of corn and potatoes. I bought 50 day old chickens for .24 cents each from Crooked Pond Farm in East Falmouth. Morris Williams owned Crooked Pond Farm and I still have that paid receipt. I also at 10 went to work for Allie Coleman who had a cow farm on Bumps River Rd in Osterville, which is now the Johnson Tree Farm. There was a big hayfield at the corner of Route 28 and Putnam Avenue. We would go haying and drive the horse and wagon right down Route 28. We would also cut firewood for the winter and haul cords of wood in the wagon to the Skunknet, on the East side of Osterville West Barnstable Road.

When I was 15, I worked for I. Crocker Grocery Store in Osterville, which is now a Kinlin Grover office. I would go to the houses in Osterville, Wianno and Oyster Harbors in the morning to take the orders from the maids, fill the orders and deliver the groceries in the afternoon. I drove a 1935 Chevy delivery van, even though I was not old enough to have a license. They never asked if I had a license or not.

I went to grade school in the schoolhouse that is now the John Lawrence Funeral Home. Bob Hayden Sr moved the building from a sandpit above the village center near the new fire station. Old Bob Hayden was a character. He always wore a soft hat and a necktie. Bob had a crew of 6-8 guys that enjoyed their .50-cent wine early in the day.

Everyday about 3 in the afternoon we walked to the post office at Gifford's Farm, which was directly opposite the new fire station. The town folk all gathered to get their mail and pass on the news of the day.

Mo, Morris Hinckley was the policeman in town. He lived in Marstons Mills on Main Street but mostly did duty in Osterville. He would help himself to cherries at the fruit stand at the 1st National, which is now the 3 Bays Restaurant.

I went to school with Tom Roderick who lived on River Road, a real nice family. He performed at the minstrel shows at Barnstable High School and was a wonderful tap dancer. He worked for the Kennedy's in Hyannis Port.

I went to Barnstable High School. When World War II started I was a Senior and Captain of the Football team. I left school in December 1943 and joined the Marine's.

I was a corporal in the 3rd Marine Division in the Pacific in transport. From 1945 to 1947 we were in Tientsin China disarming the Japanese. Nearly all men in the Mills served in one way or another in World War II. Those who did not go abroad built the barracks at Camp Edwards. There are memorial stone's opposite the Cash Market by the old horse-watering trough to remember the veterans of the war.

In 1947 after my discharge, I had hoped to return to Capeway Motors in Hyannis, a Ford dealer garage, where I had worked in high school as a grease monkey, but was not needed. I went to work for the Osterville Ice Company on Fire Station Road. In June of 1948 I bought the business with 1,100 customers. In 1949 I built my own icehouse on the family property on Route 28. The Turner Brother's in Mattapan Square delivered the ice at 7 am, Monday, Wed, Friday and Saturday. They would bring 100-108 blocks of ice that weighed 300 pounds each and measured 10" x 22" x 44".

I would start the deliveries by 8 am. The Oyster Harbor Club took a ton a day. They were my best customer's from start to finish. They would put 100 pounds on the tees and let it melt to cool the drinking water on the tees. We delivered to East Bay Lodge run by a nice couple from Winchester. Also, the Wianno Golf Club, The Pine's Hotel, Aunt Tempie's, Crosby Brother's, private homes in Wianno and the Davis Mansion.

The Clear Lake Duck Farm bought 15 tons of ice regularly. The Duck Farm was on Route 149 and was owned by Lloyd Hadley. The Duck Farm was one of the biggest operations in Marstons Mills. They had a railroad that brought feed around the pond for the ducks. A Rabbi would come down to see to the proper slaughter of the ducks. They had a conveyor system that dipped the ducks in wax to clean the feathers off the birds.

I had 3 half-ton pickups, Fords and Chevys. I still have one of the 37 Ford's. One truck covered Cotuit, one in Osterville and one was for the wholesale accounts. We fueled at Midway Garage run by the Harding's. The ice business was busy from May 30th till October 12th. In 1950 in the off-season I built the house on the corner of Main and Cammett opposite the Barry's House.

Eventually, refrigeration reduced the demand for Ice. I then operated a gas station in Dennisport where I met and married Ann Finley in 1951. I built the same house I built in the Mills in West Dennis. I then started a construction business that three of my children still run successfully. In 1976, I bought an English Tudor built in 1928 at the mouth of Bass River in South Yarmouth where I still live with my wife Ann.

In October 2001, I was planning on subdividing land from the homestead into 40 house lots. Instead I sold 80 acres to the Barnstable Land Trust. 40 acres is on Route 28 where the old icehouse was and the other 40 is in the Skunknet area.

My two nieces, Ann Childs and Ellen Arvidson, being the 8th generation, now own the family homestead. I have so many great memories of life in the Mills!

Bob Childs

