

Marstons Mills Historical Society

George Thomas Gifford, Jr.

(Autobiographical Narrative)

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marstonsmillshistorical.org

My name is George Thomas Gifford, Jr., I am also known as Thom Gifford, more about that later. My Dad was G. T. G. Sr.. I grew up on the Gifford Farm at the corner of what is now known as Lovells Lane and Cotuit Road (Route 149). Originally Lovells Lane only went North from Cotuit Road. The road to the South was called Hog Alley, it was the path to my Grandfather's pig lot.

My mother and father lived originally in the old Post Office building that sat in the drive way to the north end of the house. The new Fire Station is on land that was our summer cow pasture. As a boy it was my job to fill the old bathtub that served as a waterer for the cows. I would get playing and wandering around. Most times I would know when the tub was filled by the water running down Cotuit Road toward the Cash Market. The Farm's water supply was from a old well with a decrepit pump and water was precious. I was 'spoken to' many times about my lapse of attention.

Gifford Farm was a gathering spot for relatives and friends from miles around. There were always several men working at putting in hay during the Summers and in the slaughter house during the Fall. The rest of the time they were there to enjoy the good home cooking and old time camaraderie. I remember my Dad saying that the net profits from the Farm operation were about \$15.00 one year. He would have to take outside work at the Clear Lake Duck Farm, carpentry work with George Lapham and he did mechanic work to help ends meet. He also had a grain route. I would sometimes go with him delivering grain, hay, milk and other farm products. The delivery "truck" was an old Model A. Dad would pile grain bags, which weighed 100 pounds, all over that truck to distribute the weight.

The brand of grain he sold was Wirthmore Feeds. Withmore eventually foreclosed on the Clear Lake Duck Farm and it was sold to be developed into house lots. Before the Duck Farm closed there were thousands of ducks and turkeys there. The sound of about 3,000 turkeys all gobbling at once was quite loud and us boys would tease them.

The turkeys would gobble when we did, I'm not sure who was more stupid, the turkeys or the boys. When the Duck Farm property was developed I built the first house in there. The place is now Indian Lakes Estates. Last I knew the Martin's owned it. Some of the homeowners in Indian Lakes would be surprised to know the history of their land. My Dad found a huge fire pit near the Town Beach on Middle Pond, we called it Run Pond back then, while stripping the loam off a field. The charcoal went down at least 5 feet and the stones lining the pit went down that far and covered the bottom. The land that is now Indian Lakes had been originally been bought by my Grandfather Lorenzo Gifford. He in turn mortgaged it to his brother Charles Gifford. Charles was then a United States Senator. When the land was sold to Clear Lake the mortgage of \$5,800.00 was retired. Before Indian Lakes

there were two families that maintained summer homes on Run Pond (Middle Pond). The access was right through the ducks and turkeys. The locals also used a beach there until I built that house right on top of it. The summer families were the Kavanaghs and the Phelans. Mr. Kavanagh was a salesman for a food service company and Mr. Phelan was a lawyer and at one time an Assistant Attorney General.

As I said, my Dad was George. I had an uncle George Pierce (second uncle I think) the neighbors across the street were George Cabral senior and junior and George Bearse lived on the opposite corner of Hog Alley and Cotuit Road, Mr. George Thomas was around there a lot too. They had to start calling me Tommy because when my mother called 'George' everybody but me came running! As I grew older 'Tommy' as a name sounded odd so I went by Tom. While building that house in Indian Lakes a reporter for the Boston Globe did an article about it in the Real Estate section of the Sunday paper. My charge account at the old Hinckley Lumber Co. was printed out as G. Thom Gifford due to a lack of space on the imprint machine. The article identified me as G. Thom Gifford. I have kept that spelling of my name to this day.

The building that was added to the back of the Farmhouse and called the "Store Buildin'" was just that. The General Store that had been at the Village Square was rolled up Cotuit Road on locust rollers and placed behind the Farm house. My sister Nora Eldridge still has a cabinet from the old store in her home in Connecticut. I had my first wood working shop in the back portion of the store and I am still doing wood working (September, 2006) although I have left the Cape and live in Middleboro, MA.

My Dad sold the property where Cape Resources is now near the dump. He got \$15,000.00 for it. I heard that it has sold in the last few years for \$15,000,000.00. Us Giffords sure are shrewd in the real estate business!

The former Post Office building where I lived as a small child was struck by a car one night. I remember that night like it was yesterday. (I can't remember what I did this morning though!) Dad and a bunch of men were up at the slaughter house when we heard a screeching of tires and a horrible crash. Then mother set to crying and holler ing. She had been just walking out of the house when the car struck and an old cast iron flatiron came off a shelf and hit her in the head. The scene in Grandmother's kitchen a few minutes later was memorable in that everyone was fussing over mother and the guy that was driving the car that hit the house was just sitting in a chair over by the window with a huge hole in his throat and blood as running everywhere. Eventually the Police and Fire people came and took care of things. after that we moved into the main Farm house on the South end. Curiously, that part of the house had been the Post Office before my Grandparents bought the place. My Grandmother Nora was the Post Mistress until Junior Jones was appointed and he then moved the Postal business to a building behind the Cash Market.

The Cash Market was Mrs. Savery's Store in the 1940's. I remember Mrs. Savery bandaging my hand after I fell and cut it on broken glass while walking "downstreet" one afternoon. I

still have the scar from that cut.

It's amusing to me to go into the new Stop & Shop and see pictures of my ancestors all over the walls. I go in there and nobody knows who I am yet my family was the center of the social life of the Village until my parents sold the Farm and moved into a house I built on Hog Alley, now Lovells Lane. Even then Dad had the Gulf Station 'downstreet' and helped to keep the families rolling stock rolling and their lawn mowers mowing. He even loaned money to help some of us through some rough spots. When my parents passed on we sold that property for \$167,500.00. It's on the market today for \$1,200,000.00, us Giffords are damn sure shrewd in Real Estate!

That's all I can get written down for now. Sometime soon I expect the spirit to move me and I will think about some more things to "recollect". If anyone is interested in what be came of me just go to www.swallowsnest.com. I would enjoy email or a phone call from any of my friends, all the information is on our web site.

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