

Marstons Mills Historical Society
Interview With Joel Davis
(by Barbara Hill)
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I was born in Pittsburgh. I moved to the Cape when I was two. My Father worked for ALCAN. He came to the Cape in his spare time, either driving down from Boston or taking the train.

In 1930 he bought the Seapuit Company, which was bankrupt. The parcel contained 250 acres, a nine-hole golf course and a hotel. My Father operated the golf course 1942. The hotel Bay Lodge. A Mr. Parsons had run it well for people from Boston and New York who had come down for limited sailing and for golf. P. Barnard Hinckley, who had the oyster shanty, used to serve oysters on the half shell to the golfers and also something stronger - so I'm told. The hotel closed in 1926. By 1932 it was in a dilapidated state.

I went to the second and third grades on the Cape and then I went to school in Cambridge.

From 1930 to 1950 my father acquired more land mostly in Marstons Mills, along Rt. 28, Prince Ave., Old Post Rd., and Baxter's Neck. My father never did any so-called developing of the land. He kept it purely for pleasure.

The red barn which is on the line between Osterville and Marstons housed the cow barn, which now has a greenhouse attached. The chicken house, which is now an office, and the garage were part of the barn complex.

There were eight Jersey milk cows and there was a bull for breeding. I believe it was Vernon Childs who ran the dairy; one of the Childs anyway. The cows produced about fifty quarts of milk a day. What we didn't use was sold in the neighborhood.

There was a large staff to care for the flower and vegetable gardens. Leonard Fish of Marstons Mills was the head gardener. He grew superb vegetables. Father also bought the Cross Nurseries in the thirties, which were in operation until 1965.

My Father was very fond of horses and bred Arabs and Morgans. He also kept Percherons, which are draft horses. Father had carriage roads made through the woods. Every afternoon at 3 pm he would go out for a drive in his Victoria.

After my Father died in 1955 the farm operation was scaled down. There were still people available to run the operation, but it was no longer economically feasible. The value of the land on the Cape was rising steadily and the land was taxed as residential. Farming was no longer practical.

My Mother died in 1972 and the big house was torn down in 1973. The estate has since been divided up.

The hotel's old carriage house, which was in Osterville, was eventually torn down, but I'm told it once housed the first Cape radio station in the late nineteen twenties.

The white house on South County Rd. that has been enlarged and moved was the Lebel home. It was a few hundred yards over the Marstons Mills line into Osterville. The Seapuit property just skirted around it.

John P. Marquand had his summer home on the Marstons Mills River. There are several coves on the river after Prince Cove. His house stood on a bluff overlooking one of these coves. After Mr. Marquand left, the family, his wife and daughter continued to summer there. Father bought the property from the Marquands in the thirties. Halloween night, 1971, the house was burned to the ground. It was arson. The fire hydrants in Osterville had been opened and there was no water pressure. David Clark, who lives there at present, had his home built on the same site.

When Father came, taxes were minimal. The Cape land was principally for farming and for recreational use. The thought that the land might be a fragile one was never mentioned.

We had an acre and a half of asparagus. There were two cranberry bogs. One was in Marstons Mills. Father bought it from the Moosaka brothers. I think they were Finns. The bog was no longer worked after 1953. It was no longer practical, although it might be today with the price of cranberries rising. There was a peat bog. Trees on the land were sold for cordwood. The hurricane of 1944 took more than half of our trees.

