

Marstons Mills Historical Society  
Interview with Trafton Hinckley  
(by Dianne Kavanagh & Jim Gould)  
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INTERVIEW WITH TRAFTON HINCKLEY 1 August 2014 by Dianne Kavanagh Potter and Jim Gould.

Trafton, a commercial fisherman and trapper of East Falmouth was born in Marstons Mills in 1942, the son of Moe [Maurice] "Cop" Hinckley and Frances Lapham, and grew up in the village on Main Street across from the school.

"The river was chock full of heron [herring]. There are two types of heron: Alewives come first, then bluebacks which are born in the river—I can't tell the difference. The heron are coming back. Darn seals grab them—I'd shoot all those seals! We used to get a bounty of \$5 for shooting seals.

I used to catch muskrats and raccoons in the swamps and cranberry bogs, and sell the hides—Still do. I learned from John Walo, a Finn. We sold the pelts to a fellow from Abington. We'd get a couple of bucks for one. We caught a lot near the Kavanaghs. There was a bog up there we called "Pa's Bog", probably belonged to Oliver Crocker. I remember when we got to the Kavanaghs you'd honk your horn when you went around that bend.

My grandfather who lived 'til he was 87, used to take me huntin' and trappin. He was one of the first cops in town, along with Seabury Childs of Cotuit. I still have his badge, a big one.

My great-grandfather Charles Hinckley had cranberry bogs, one above Lumbert's Mill and another – maybe off Rosa Lane. They had a big farmhouse by a pond down near the Macomber house on Old Falmouth Road. One day they came home and the house had burned down—probably the wood stove. My grandmother Hinckley was born in 1892 in the house on the far side of the Millpond. My grandmother Alice Pierce's sister was Nora Gifford—so Bobby Parker and I are third cousins. There was "Walrus" Hinckley, as my grandmother called Barney, because of his moustache.

My Mother was Frances Lapham. Her grandfather owned the farm that became Dr. Leach's. The Laphams were a Scottish family that came from Rhode Island. My cousin Paul Lapham, Jr. has done a family history. My cousins are Beverly O'Connell and Kurt Lapham. I got named Trafton for my great uncle, who had a relative named Triphosus, but my mother changed the "ford" to "ton". I sure got kidded for the name which they spelled all different ways.

I did commercial shellfishing in the Marstons Mills River. Before they dredged it (about 1955) it was like a regular river, and loaded with clams. We raked quahogs from a boat. I worked five years for Andy Post of the Cotuit Oyster Co. There were lots of mussels along the river; every one had a little oyster seed attached. Fifty years ago we got lots of scallops in October. They're gone because there's no eelgrass – too much nitrogen in the water I guess. Down at the mouth of the river there used to be a patch of eelgrass; every single blade had a little scallop attached. Now there's so much boat traffic

there's no place for scallops to spawn. I sold a couple of pounds of eels to the former Selectman Chester Crocker, who made eel stifle (like chowda), cooked with potatoes.

I didn't finish school, but started here in the building off Route 28. My first grade teacher was Miss Hall from Harwich. My favorite was second grade teacher Dorothy Moore. They were strict teachers—I'm glad, because you needed a whack sometimes. Lunch favorite was macaroni and cheese made by Mr. Kearney. He walked all the way to school from Cammett Road.

Marstons Mills was a great place to grow up—a nice playground. We had meadowlarks all around out in the open fields, quails. It had a slow pace. Can you imagine today walking up 149 with shotguns over our shoulders? My father would take 3 or 4 beagles out on a leash, and go rabbit hunting all day. There were fields and bogs, and all the rest was woods. Loaded with deer.

There were probably ten houses at most up in Newtown. Chester Crocker had a big turnip patch at his house on Old Mill Road; we'd have them at Thanksgiving. Harvey Crocker lived up on School Street in what used to be the Newton School.

Pret Cobb lived on River Road. There was a spring where his sister Izorah kept the butter. She found Pret cooling his feet in the spring, and yelled 'get your feet out of the spring!' Pret was a guide at the Tenampo Club. Pret, Fred Davis, and I would go fishing at Middle Pond and catch small-mouthed bass at the point over near Hollidges.

At Mrs. Dick's house, there was Professor Weeks who went to Africa and other places. He was always dressed up fancy with a bowler hat and cane. He'd hold a kerosene lantern for light while his mother, a little woman, split up the kindling.

Then there was Gideon Lovell who lived on Lovell's Lane, and came from Mashpee. He chewed a cud of wild herbs. Gideon knew a lot about herbs and collected them in the woods — sort of a medicine man. He'd walk to Osterville carrying a long stick with a sack on the end. My grandfather once stopped and offered him a ride, and he replied: 'I'll get there faster walkin'!'

I remember Allie Coleman driving his team of two big workhorses to plow the fields. You could hear them coming, 'clomp...clomp...clomp'. His little dog sat up in front next to Allie. Allie lived on Bumps River Road, where the Johnson Tree Farm is now.

Curley Wiseman had a bait shop in the old ice house on Old County Road—long gone. I worked there, delivering ice with Allen Pierce. In the mid-50s there were still lots of iceboxes around.

Marstons Mills was a great place to grow up. It was slower and more open, unlike today where there are too many people