

Marstons Mills Historical Society
Interview with Charles Hamblin
(Jim Gould & David Martin)
November 5, 2009
At his home the day before
his 87th birthday
Revised November 21, 2012



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Charles' uncle Charles (1889-1974) was a builder who worked for Z. Jenkins of Barnstable and learned the trade from him. He was a Socialist and nudist. Some of the houses he built were on Newtown Road, Marstons Mills, Santuit and Osterville. He also built commercial structures such as the round-roofed storage shed for Hyannis Marine and the administrative building at the airport.

The ponds in the area have names that have changed numerous times over the years. A pond called Muddy Pond was called Black Pond. The original Muddy Pond was east of River Road, in the middle of the bogs (just a very wet swamp, but with clear water in the middle). Shubael's Pond is named for Shubael Hamblin.

His great grandfather Luther [1810-88] built a house in 1836 on Santuit Road in Newtown [#611 see inventory MM N-50]. The building still stands, although the outhouse and the hen house (which had a root cellar underneath) are now gone. A fruit cellar is under the main house, and the barn survives. A painting of this house, in which his brother Seth still lives, done in 1936, is over the mantle in Charles' home [painted by Wilson H. Barrett].

Charles' grandfather Luther started cranberry bogs, on which Charles worked, using the scoop method. Although Makepeace drew strings across his bogs for pickers to use, the Hamblins just picked across the bog to the edge, then started a new path. One could talk to John Hamblin, his adopted brother, who successfully runs the bogs today. During the war their mother took in several children as state wards, and liked him so well that she decided to adopt him.

Farther up the road was the house of Uncle Edmund Hamblin [1837-1911], later the Whitcomb farm. He and his wife Rose inherited it from her father, Tom Jones. The barn burned down in 1922, the year I was born. My father's house was built in 1921 [# 722 Newtown Rd. inventory MM N-4; Seth Hamblin 1898-1960].

Charles' Uncle Stephen [1884-1965], a Professor in the School of Horticulture at Harvard, built a house on Long Pond [#715, Inventory MM N-3].

Charles's Uncle Charles [1889-1974] built his first house on Long Pond in his teens [1916 #580 Wakeby Rd. Inventory MM N-2]. When asked why he built a house as an unmarried man, he replied, "Once you get the cage, you can always get the bird." He poured the concrete by hand. He mixed the cement all day long and poured it into the forms. He established a nudist colony, "Sandy Terrace", next to the house in the early 1940's, though he had been bathing nude at his home from the early '20s; the colony is still there. The terms of the deed are that if the nudist colony closes, the land must revert to the Roger and Paul Hamblin branch of the family.

The Hamblins were the first to welcome Jewish people to the area; they built a house for a Jewish man, Julius Price. Uncle Charles's wife Mary rented to Mrs. Charles Odense, widow of a cigar manufacturer

of Boston. Mary Odense married David Halpert; they rented the Isaac Crocker House, home of the Warners.

The Homestead area, now developed since 1988 with houses, belonged to the Warner family; the Warner children sold the area. Warner raised beef cattle, pigs, horses, and chickens.

Uncle Henry Hamblin's house was the first one on the south side of River Rd. going east. The Hamblin cranberry bogs are north of River Road, and the Makepeace bogs are to the south of the road. The descendants of James Crocker, whom they called "Uncle Jimmie" owned a bog east of the Hamblin bogs; they included three sons: Chester the Selectman, Harvey, and Ernest. The bogs on both sides of Bog Road were also Crocker bogs. Grandfather [Luther] married Caroline Crocker.

The small red house at the corner of Lovell's Lane and River Road was owned by Gideon Lovell, a cobbler. One day Gideon was walking along the road to some destination, and someone stopped by to offer him a lift; he replied, "No thanks, I am in a hurry," and continued to walk. He died in his nineties.

Charles' mother's family, the Rogers [aka Rodrigues] family, controlled the land at one end of Long Pond, and the Hamblins controlled the land at the other side. Charles' mother was a Rogers, daughter of the immigrant [John] who came from the Azores.

As a boy they all hunted deer, pheasants, grouse, and quail. They ate a lot of game. Cousin Walter Hamblin [Uncle Stephen's son] loved to fish. Once he caught a 15-inch bass in Long Pond. They grew all kinds of vegetables and fruits and berries. Among the fruit were Bartlett pears, plums, peaches and a variety of apples: Baldwins, Macintoshes, Russetts, and Williams Favorites.

Movies were shown in the church by Rev. Raymond W. Hubbard, who baptized him. He was married in the church by Rev. Jackson on May 5, 1946.

Ice was cut on Long Pond after it reached a depth of 8 inches, and stored successfully in an ice house insulated by sawdust, throughout the summer. He donated the big ice saw and the pike used to haul the block to the Cotuit Historical Society. The ice house is still standing. Charles' job was to guide the horse as they dragged the ice up to a long chute, and later did the same job in a Model A Ford.

The house at the corner of Wakeby Road and Long Pond Road was owned in the mid-fifties by Manuel Medeiros from the Azores.

Before development began in the area in the 1950's, Charles used to go hunting for deer in season, rabbits, quail, and pheasants. No electricity was available in this area until about 1944.

Newtown Road was finally blacktopped in the mid-1930's by the William Jones Construction Company of Barnstable, after being a dirt road until then. The name of the road was changed to Santuit-Newtown Road some time in the 1990's when it was resurfaced – a requirement by the state in order to be eligible for state funds.

Then there's Race Lane. Charles himself built a house on the bluff overlooking Mystic Lake for the Wool Shop girls, Esther "Herky" Herschenroeder. There was also the house of the candy maker Daggett, where the concrete boat was built. Every week Charles used to attend band concerts during the 1930's

on the army field across from the Cape Cod Airport. Hilding Hord's Mystic Lake Dairy Farm on the north side of Race Lane near the airport had a tunnel under Race Lane to allow cows to go across the road to drink water from Mystic Lake. There was a fine spring between Daggett's and Ernest Cameron's house from which people got their drinking water.

On Patty's Pond, east of Santuit-Newton Road and south of Wakeby Road, Charles' uncle built a house and wheelbarrowed dirt out to make an island on which he planted spruce trees that still stand. There was a fire that burned the building where the Portuguese Holy Ghost Society met. Chester Crocker planted red pines in precise rows in the mid-1930's on School Street, and they still stand. Chester raised pigs, which he bathed every week --"Cleanest pigs I ever saw!" His daughter Zilpha married Fred Gordon who ran the Ropes farm in Cotuit.



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