

Marstons Mills Historical Society
Interview with Maurice "Cop" Hinckley
(by Barbara Hill)
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marstonsmillshistorical.org

I was born March 15, 1915, right here in a house on Main Street. It is that green house to the south of the church. George Gifford is just a few months younger than I am. He was born in June. Merrill Gifford was a year older than I am. Merrill is dead now.

My grandfather bought that house after the old house on Round Pond was burnt. He paid a \$1000 for it. He gave it to my father. Then grandfather bought a house across from the fire station in Osterville. He kept his old black horse in the barn at Wilton Cammett's. That barn was located where the new post office will be built. There used to be a farm there. The only thing saved from the farm on Round Pond was the horse. Everyone was working in the cranberry bogs when the fire occurred. It was the fall of the year. I don't know what caused the fire, but it could have been an overheated hay barn.

That old Crocker house on Round Pond belonged to Mrs. Thomas. Way back she was related to the Crockers. My grandfather was also a relation. My grandmother was a Jacobs from West Barnstable. My wife's grandfather had the farm where Dr. Leach is today. My wife's father and my father went to work on the roads for 75 cents a day. I have some old town reports that tell that.

The first job I had when I got out of school was working for Hugh Long Construction Company building the first power line from the canal to Orleans. It was a small one running along where the big one does today. There were sub lines down to Provincetown.

We never had electricity until I was about ten years old. The power company was the Cape and Vineyard. We didn't have an inside toilet either. We had a backhouse. We also had an old hand pump outside. In winter we had to get the water for the day and shut off the pump at night to keep it from freezing.

When I was ten or twelve my father sold that house and bought the land where I live today. My daughter lives in the house we moved into. My other daughter, Debbie, lives out back. This land was a farm belonging to Edgar Weeks. He was the tax collector. He lived next door where the Mosses live now. Edgar's father was the minister. On a rice day like this he'd walk up and down the street in boots and a raincoat carrying an umbrella. He wasn't going to get caught out in a rainstorm. Willie Weeks lived where Frank Dick lives. Mr. Savery had the blacksmith shop where the Joneses live. Revilo Benson also had a blacksmith shop behind the McClusky home. Mr. Benson was also a wheelwright. We used to roll the iron hoops he made for the wheels.

Charles Ed Fuller ran the grist mill. He was a hump back. He'd bent over that mill wheel too long. He lived upstairs in the Benson (McClusky) home. He rode a high bicycle. He was also caretaker of a summer home that E. K. Davis bought and tore down. That house was carted to

the dump. Mr. Owens, who runs Parker's Liquor Store on Route 132, is the great grandson of the man who owned that farm.

When I was young I practically lived at the Giffords. I had no brothers or sisters, so I went up there for company. I'd stay over night. Merrill and I would start out early in the morning and go hunting all over the place.

Maynard was the one who built the cars, but Merrill and I built one too.

I think my mother made some of my clothes, but we used to go up to Chester Crocker's in Newtown for our school clothes. He was a representative for the Nash Clothes Company and he sold the clothes right from his house.

Bea Lapham was my wife's mother. Her sister is Hazel Aittaniemi. That house that Hazel lives in is one of the oldest. The Lawrences from Lawrence Pond bought that house from the Laphams. Emmie Lawrence was an old maid. She willed the house to Hazel,

I went the first eight years of my schooling to the village school. It had two rooms, four grades in each room. Then I went one year of high school to Elizabeth Lowell in Cotuit. Then they sent us to Hyannis. We went by bus. Sometimes in the winter we never got to school. By the time we had changed the tires and dug ourselves out of the snow, the school was over and we turned around and came home. Mr. Savery was the bus driver. Ernest Cameron, Ruth's father, drove the bus to Cotuit.

This Main Street was Route 28. It went over to Putnam Avenue into Cotuit. You had to go through every village to get to Falmouth. The road past the Star Market going to Mashpee was a dirt road. River Road and Prince Avenue were oyster shell roads. They resurfaced Route 149 after 1928 because it was the mail route from West Barnstable to Cotuit,

The passenger trains were still running when I was in the war. That service must have ended in the fifties. The Osterville-West Barnstable Road was the old stage road. That old barn at Lumbert Mill Road was once on the Hallem Farm. It was a stage stop. Some people came all the way from Boston on the stage. They could come down Route 6A which was the Old King's Highway from Boston to Provincetown. The Mid-Cape Highway was begun in 1947.

I graduated from high school in 1929. In 1938 I became a policeman. There were only fifteen policemen then. Now there are one hundred. The police station was in the basement of the old town hall. The chief's office was on the first floor and the men and the lockup were in the basement. The station across from the bus station was built in 1938. I was only part time at first. In 1939-40 I became a regular member of the force.

The Village put up a monument on the square to those who served in World War II. The marker at Lovells Lane and River Road is to those who lost their lives in that war. There is a marker on Route 28 to Sherman Crocker who was shot down over Germany and killed. He was Sheriff Malcolm Crocker's son.

Oliver Crocker's father built the house where the Shermans live—next to the church. Nancy

Crocker, George Hamblin's wife, was Oliver's daughter. That is a very old house. I found Oliver. He committed suicide. Oliver had three wives. They all proceeded him to the grave. I was just going on duty when someone called me and said they thought the house was on fire. He had his old Model T Ford wound up and a hose from the gas pipe into his bedroom window. He had a note pinned to the door with an ice pick. It said if you want me you'll find me in the bedroom. I found him too late. I don't know why he did it. I guess he was tired of living. He was a very old man. He used to have a road right down to the river where the elementary school is now. He kept his boats down there in the cove. He used to sail to Nantucket.

He was a brother to Esther Crocker, Foster Crocker's wife. Foster sold Singer sewing machines, hardware and Stanley Steamer cars. Foster was a big, fat man. He used to steer the car down the street with his stomach. He did a lot of fishing in the mill pond. He used to feed us kids on cherries out of the cherry tree. I got so sick eating cherries down there one day I've never eaten cherries since.

Edgar Weeks, who lived next door to us, had an ice cream parlor and he also sold gas. He'd be sitting on his front porch with his brother playing cribbage. If you wanted gas, he'd say toot your horn and toot it loud. He'd get out after a while, when he'd finished his game. There was a gas pump at Crocker's store. The Joneses had one too. Loring Jones had a car agency for a while and when he moved to Hyannis he leased the store to Preston Fish for a time. Preston had an ice cream parlor with tables and chairs.

Barnard Hinckley, Cyrus Jones and George Hamblin all had oyster shanties in the cove. Eldridge Doane had a fish house where the town dock is today. He sold fish to the summer people.

People on the Cape made a living in the winter working as carpenters, plumbers, etc., for the summer people. They would get things ready in the spring for the summer people and then do more repairs in the fall after the summer people left.

There was work in the cranberry bogs, sanding and mowing the bushes around the bog. You pick the bog one way and mow it the other. Sand acts as a fertilizer and keeps the vines upright. The berries were picked to the edge of the bog. They are now picked under water and the berries are floated. Trailer trucks are backed up to the bog and the berries are pushed onto an endless belt and carried into the truck. They don't use cranberry boxes any more. Cranberry boxes are now antiques. It takes more work to gather berries on a dry bog. That makes them more expensive.

There was more work in the winter cutting wood for the brick yard in West Barnstable. My wife's grandfather and mine had wood land around the bogs. When they built the high school in Hyannis on High School Road, they used the last of the bricks from that brick yard. I went to that high school my last few years. Before it was built there was a wooden school in front of it. We played ball in Hallett's Field where Zayre's used to be.

Where the airport is, that was the Walker Farm. Ozzie and Eddie Walker went to school with me. The farm was their grandfather's. They used to peddle milk in the area. Charlie Ayling came in the summers and he bought that farm for his son, Bobbie, to land his airplane. Bobbie

was a wild kid. He didn't use that airfield long because he drowned while canoeing over at Centerville, at Craigville Beach. The town now owns the airport. I don't remember if they bought it or if Mr. Ayling gave it to them.

Mr. Van Arsdale owns the Marstons Mills Airport. It used to be Bill and Daniel's farm. Fred Bill's sister married a Daniel from Osterville. Hay was grown where the airport is now. I baled hay for them. It was the first time I ever saw a hay baler. Across the street, they raised potatoes and turnips. That was Jenkins' field. Nestor Alto was the last one to farm that area. The Danforths bought the Bill and Daniel farm.

The Army Air Corps, 26th Division, used to camp up there. They had the Skyline Restaurant to entertain them. Sheriff Crocker's brother, Zenas Crocker, owned the restaurant. One night they had a big raid and that was the end of that. Skyway Airline used to fly to Boston and bring back a little booze. They'd sell it at night during Prohibition.

During Prohibition, small boats would come in at night bringing liquor and dump it in the shallow water. The fishermen would go out and hook it in. The bootleggers would buy it from the fishermen. It saved the bootleggers a lot of money. They paid the fishermen \$5 a case. If you were making only \$4 a day, that was a lot of money, wasn't it?

The fishing boats had only one cylinder inboard motors. They didn't go very fast and they didn't use much gas.

Mrs. Hinckley used to swim in Prince Cove. You can't do that any more because of the oil slick from the boats. There is no patrolling down there to keep out people without stickers from parking. I always buy a sticker and take my boat down for clamming or quahogging, but very often I can't find a place to park. If there is no place to park I don't go fishing. I find cars down there with no stickers. They should be towed away. First is first for those with stickers, I agree with that. But I don't agree allowing people down there illegally. My family has been here for generations and we should be able to use our waterways.

The Town of Barnstable employs people to monitor the landings, but they don't come out here. I suppose that's because we are Marstons Mills. When you do find a policeman to talk to he says he can't do anything until he talks to his sergeant. I said, "If someone stabs me in the back, you have to call the sergeant first?" "Yes," he says. "Gee, it's about time you change. You're a police officer twenty-four hours a day. If anyone breaks the law you are supposed to do something about it," I said to him. I presume they're supposed to know the laws, but they don't do anything. Maybe they are too busy working the landings in Hyannis.

My grandson tried to go to Craigville with his girlfriend. He has a sticker on his Ford pickup. He couldn't get in there, so he drove over to Sandy Neck. He couldn't get in there either. Hamblins Pond was full too, full of people from elsewhere. There it is again. Our families have been here since the 1800s, probably before that, and we can't use our own facilities.

It is the same way with Route 28. It is full of outsiders. Route 28 was laid out in 1927. It has never been changed. It should have been widened years ago. Now it is too late.

There was a fellow renting a house here and when he left he dumped his garbage on the front lawn. Some one saw him and took the license number of his car. They called the police, who found out the name and address. The chief took all the rubbish, put it in a box and mailed it home to the fellow. That's what some people do when they come down here. You came, but you behaved yourself.

These kids have wild parties and they send out a woman. You can't send a woman out on a call about rowdyism. There are women on the police force who don't weigh a hundred pounds soaking wet. It's all right to have a woman on the desk, but not to send one out like that. The force has surely changed since I was on it.

I was on the police force for thirty years. I came back on it after service in World War II. What changed this Cape was after Kennedy became president. People wanted to come and see what the summer place of the president looked like. The airport had to be enlarged. That airport is doing twice the business it did last year at this time. Sometime a plane will land on Main Street, Hyannis.

The Navy took over that airport during the war. They had fighter planes based there. Our little airport was the Cape Cod Airport. It was the airport for the whole Cape, That's when Van Arsdale had it. He started the Boston and Provincetown runs.

I work for the Airport Parking Corporations down at the Hyannis Airport. It's a worldwide operation. They run parking for airports, hospitals, railroad stations. I've got to work. I cant just sit around. I check cars, work the booths, do backup work. I go in on Monday at five in the morning and work until noon. I do that for four days and then I have three days off.

If you go to Dowses Beach, you have to get there when it opens at nine. My grandson works in the parking lot over there in the summers. Only cars with stickers can use that beach. You don't have to have a sticker at Craigville because you can pay a fee to get in there, The same at Kalmus Beach or Sandy Neck.

People in the town knew long ago we were going to need more beaches. They should have bought up more beach land long ago. One thing I 'm proud of is the Board of Water Commissioners for the Centerville, Osterville, Marstons Mills Fire District. Somebody foresaw what would happen with the water situation and bought up the property off Crooked Way and behind the Cotuit Star Market. We don't have to worry about water. Some places you turn on the faucet and get poison, but you don't have to worry about that in this district. It is still well water. Falmouth and Provincetown have salt water. They did a good job in this district. There is plenty of water for our children.

I guess Red Pierce told you a lot. His sister can't remember being in Marstons Mills. I asked Betty if she remembered being down at the old house. "No," she said, "I don't remember." They must have moved in 1920, not, as Red says, in 1917. I went fishing in the mill reservoir with Barnard, Betty's twin. You wouldn't let a two year old go fishing in a pond would you? I was about five when they moved out of Marstons Mills. We used to catch pickerel, trout and eels.

Have you taken a picture of the old school across from Harvey Sinnett's house? Harvey's mother was a sister to Chester Crocker. There were two boys, Ernest and Harvey. There was another school house across from Dr. Leach's. They tore it down. My wife's father and uncles and my father and uncles went to that school. Ada Jones, Loring's mother, also went to that school. She was a Fuller. Her brother went there too. All the people around the Ponds went to that school. They used to call that area Skunknet Timberland. Your place they called the Plains.

Talking of old buildings, that house next to Ruth Cameron's is an old house. That house of Ruth's is some old too. It was moved when they rebuilt Race Lane. Across the street by that little pond is the Carlton Hallett house. Ben Hallett had a house in there, but it burned up.

Where Swede Nelson lived, that was an old house. My wife and her sister, Hazel, used to play in that house. It was part of Parker's Nursery. It is all changed now. We always got a couple of deer in there. I used to go down there with Merrill Gifford in the mornings when we were school boys. Sometimes all we would take was salt and pepper. We'd shoot us a rabbit and cook him over a fire. We'd be gone all day, roaming around the ponds. I'd help Merrill get his chores done and off we'd go hunting. He'd have to be back by four to milk the cows. I got a 16-gauge shot gun when I was about 13 or 14. We'd go fishing in the ponds. We'd go skinny dipping. There was no one around. You could go around all the ponds and never see anyone.

They had an old Indian guide at the Tan Apple Club. They used to have hunting stands around the ponds. Eben Quebish was the old Indian guide. I think Wilbur Cushing still has a picture of them hanging up the ducks and geese at the club. Elwood Mills, who runs the Flume Restaurant, is the grandson of Eben. Preston Cobb, who lived on River Road in a house that has since burned up, was also a guide. He was Wilhelmina Cobb's uncle. Both those men showed us a lot of tricks about fishing and hunting when we were kids.

All the wild turkey was gone by the time we started hunting. There are still some deer left around the conservation area. I've got a couple of old beagle dogs up there that I still use. Sandwich has deer. There are plenty of deer up around Otis. The Mid-Cape Highway is fenced in so the deer don't get run over. A lot of deer were hit around Otis, but they've fenced that area in too.

Sure, they should quit feeding the ducks and geese at the Mill Pond. However, are you going to tell some old girl she can't take her grandchildren down there to feed the ducks? It was a bad mistake to let that get started. These are wild birds. It is the same way in Sandwich. People started feeding the wild birds and now they have come to depend on it. The Canada geese would come up on someone's lawn when they built a house near the water and the people would start feeding them. The young geese would stay for the food and they'd breed and their young wouldn't migrate either. Now they are all over the golf courses and everywhere.

When I was a kid I used to go swimming sometimes in the Mill Pond. We'd all duck in once in a while. It was never very deep, only about four feet.

No, you can't shoot those ducks on the Mill Pond. You have to be about 500 feet from a

dwelling in order to shoot. You might be able to shoot a bird from the middle of Shubael Pond.

I wish the Town would take the old airport and the old fairground. They just spent a million dollars to take that old piece of swamp land over in Hyannis. They should have bought this land out here. Now they are going to wait a year. By that time it will have been sold from underneath them. They should have taken that money they spent to keep that motel from being built in Hyannis because they couldn't build a motel on that swamp anyway. That was all fill land, the fill dredged up from the bottom of the harbor. You can't build on fill. We have these new people in town who don't know anything. They wouldn't listen to Dolfie Richards. He's lived here all his life as did his folks. His grandfather was a town selectman. He's a responsible man. His wife is a school teacher. He's raised a nice bunch of kids. Now the town is going to put in a walkway to great big Lewis Bay that is all filled with sewage. If a motel had been built there it would have washed out to sea. But the Town gets sucked in. Old Klimm gives them a million dollars for it, the Hofstetters, old Wimpy. If I were a town representative, I'd get so mad I'd take somebody by the nape of the neck and throw them out the window. Well, it is too late now--it is gone. Forget about it. Those other town "reps" say, "what does Mr. Richards know about it?" I told you what he knew. He was born and brought up by Hyannis Harbor. He fished there. He had a boat there. But you can't tell these people who come in here anything. They know it all. If you say anything, they laugh at you as much as to say you are a god-damned fool.

I remember years ago when Crawford Hollidge and Nestor Aalto were on the Conservation Commission. There wasn't all this building of houses near or on wetlands, it was turned down. That's the law. We even have a governor in this state, that piddle-assed Dukakis, who allows a shopping mall to be built on wetland in Attleboro against the protests of the residents. He signed a bill so the developers could build the mall. Now, the Conservation Commission we have in this town will allow building on wetlands. They'd fill in a swamp and build on it. Right over there at the entrance to Dowses Beach they've built a house, right on marshland. They filled it in and built a great big house on it. Now who in the hell--somebody is getting paid off for that. That's against the god-damned law. Then they wonder why there is pollution. You tell me, a little guy from Marstons Mills, to become a town "rep" and stop that. How the hell are you going to stop it? Wang built two houses across from East Bay Lodge, two foolish-looking houses right on the marsh. I hope a hurricane will come and wash them right out. It did one time.

New Seabury. You never hear of a fellow going up there with a cesspool truck. The tide comes in and takes all the sewage out.

I went to a meeting last winter in Hyannis at the town office. The state comes in and puts up pollution signs down here on the Marstons Mills River. They said the ducks and geese were polluting the river. It was all right when Hofstetter built all those houses on the cranberry bogs. They said it was dry land, it may be dry land this time of year, but in the winter they flood those cranberry bogs and bring the water level up to ten or twelve feet. That washes out the sewer systems and washes it down the river. You can't tell the conservation guys anything like that.

This billy goat, Bruce McHenry, who lives over on the pond; the fellow that just lost his wife, he's impossible. When they started building those houses on Route 28 on the left on the way

to Hyannis, I said to him, "Are you going to let Dacey build those houses in there? They are building on wetlands," I said. Well, he's a newcomer. He asked how I knew it was wetland. I said, "Look a here, my grandfather owned those cranberry bogs. When he flowed those bogs he flowed them with artesian wells and those wells were on the uplands. That is where Dacey is building those houses, right on top of the artesian wells." "You don't know what you are talking about," he told me. Well, I had to walk away from him because I'd have plugged him right between the eyes. And the second day they dug on top of the hill they had to close off Route 28 because it was just like hitting oil. They hit those artesian wells and they flooded Route 28. But still Dacey was allowed to go on building.

Then they wonder why they have pollution in the Centerville River. Where are all the oysters? You know where they went. Mr. McHenry is on the Conservation Commission. I said those houses are on the Skunknet River, The Skunknet River runs into Bumps River. Bumps River runs into the Centerville River. So—. He says, "It does?" "Which way do the rivers run on the Cape?" he asks me. I says, "You god-damned fool, they run into salt water. On this side of the Cape they run to the South and over in West Barnstable they run to the North!" "They do?" he says. "Yes," I said, "If those rivers in West Barnstable got blocked up we'd be pretty-well flooded out on the south side!" How stupid can you be? And he works for the National Seashore Parks. He sits up there in Boston and tells everyone what to do with an umbrella over his head. And he knows what is going on in Marstons Mills? That is what you have to put up with.

Builders and contractors come into town. They get a friend to come in. They slap that friend on the Conservation Commission. And what the hell do any of them know what is going on around here? That's why they let them build on the wetlands. It is too late. They just keep on wondering why we have pollution.

I was in the barber shop in Osterville the other day, when the fellow who owns the cheese shop came in. He bought some property on Old Stage Road, off Andrew Small. He said, "You know all of us people are having trouble with our lawns. We are having a lawn specialist come in and fix our lawns." He said it was all turning a sort of goldish brown on top, but it was still green underneath. I said, "What do you suppose causes that?" He didn't know and the lawn specialist didn't know either. "You have a lot of white pines down there don't you? That 's all bog land down there," I said. Alan Small has a lot of property dawn there. "My grandfather owned that land and so did my wife's grandfather," I said. "It is too acid from layers of pine needles, that is what causes the browning. "