

# My Grandmother

by Clara Gray

My grandmother was a beautiful woman. She dedicated her life to the creation, cultivation, and preservation of beauty. She loved music, poetry, books, history, fresh flowers, and old buildings. She loved sailing and skiing and cocktails at 5:00. She loved her husband, her family, and her community here in Woods Hole.

My grandmother was a gardener. Her spring table was dressed in tulips, and her summer kitchen was stocked with sun-ripened tomatoes. I'll always remember her coming in from the yard, bringing with her the smell of salt air and fresh mint. She always put mint in our lemonade, which we'd bring in a big cooler to Nobska Beach for sandy picnics.

My grandmother was a musician. She played the piano and cello, and sang loudly with heart and with pride. As my grandfather likes to boast, she was the only wife among his Yale Glee Club friends who knew all the words to their songs and sang right along with the men at the Glee Club reunions.

My grandmother was a historian. She found pleasure and adventure in exploring the currents of local history. She took such pride in her community, and devoted much of her career to the conservation and celebration of Falmouth's "splendid maritime past."

My grandmother was also a wife and mother. She was no older than I when she met her future husband,

the dashing Paul Ferris Smith. Her zeal and passion proved to be quite the match to his, and she was his devoted companion for over 70 years. She even waited until he was by her side holding her hand and said, "I love you, Honey Girl," before she completed her passing last Wednesday the 17th. Together, Mary Lou and Paul had four incredible daughters. This quartet continues her service of manifesting and protecting beauty in the world. Then came a new generation of children, five grandsons and one granddaughter, eager to play among the waves and friendly faces of Woods Hole.



Mary Lou in her garden, 1994. Photo by Paul Ferris Smith.

My grandmother planted many seeds in her life. Some blossomed and faded with the passing of time, coloring the world for those lucky witnesses. But like the perennials in her yard that continue to bloom, many of her creations and accomplishments live on to enrich the

community that she cherished so much. Her beloved Highfield Hall stands strong and lovely, ready to be used and admired for generations to come. Her Sprintsail publication yields new issues every season. The Woods Hole Historical Museum continues to exhibit new collections of local history every summer. Her books will forever commemorate the story of Falmouth. Her mint is still growing in the garden at the end of Whitney road. And I can still rub its leaves under my thumb, smell its fresh sweetness, and think of my grandmother.