

Gardeners and Caretakers of Woods Hole

By Susan Fletcher Witzell

Many exhibits of the Woods Hole Historical Museum have featured the carefree activities of Woods Hole and Quisett summer families in an atmosphere of privilege and wealth. Their summer houses and surrounding estates depended on the labors of dedicated caretakers and gardeners, some of whom became as renowned as their employers and patrons for their skill as gardeners. Others worked unseen and uncelebrated for their daily labors.

In some families, there were two or three generations who worked on the same estate or who continued the family tradition of being caretakers. It was not unusual for there to be caretakers and boatmen in the same family.

The Woods Hole Historical Museum exhibit which has been on display during 2004-2005 celebrates the work and lives of these gardeners and caretakers.



Nims house. Courtesy Judith Lang Day.

Many estates were run by a complex staff of housekeepers, maids, cooks, stablemen and other help including caretakers and gardeners. This way of life largely disappeared after World War II. A few households and their gardens lasted beyond that era. To this day, there are still several estates that depend on their year-round live-in caretakers to maintain the premises and work in the gardens.

The following is a modified version of the text accompanying the exhibit.

THE LARCHES

Church Street and Nobska Road

The estate called The Larches was originally owned by John M. Glidden, the treasurer of the Pacific Guano Company, a fertilizer business which had occupied Long Neck in Woods Hole (later developed and called Penzance Point). Mr. Glidden was implicated in the failure of the Guano Company in 1889, at which time he left Woods Hole, never to return. The house, which had been designed by the prominent Boston firm of Peabody & Stearns in 1879, was a fairly plain example of the Shingle Style. It sat on a hill overlooking Nobska Pond with Vineyard Sound in the distance and remained empty between 1889 and 1923.

In 1923, Eugene Nims of St. Louis, Missouri, a very successful businessman and president of Southwestern Bell Telephone, purchased the abandoned and overgrown property after a number of visits to Mrs. Nims' sister Kate Ratcliffe in Woods Hole. It was the Nims' sec-



The caretaker's cottage at The Larches – Nims estate. Courtesy Judith Lang Day.

and country estate. Lotawana Nims had practiced her skill at garden creation at Bee Farm in Missouri, which they had purchased in 1916. She was not interested in the typical formal gardens which were standard for the estates of the wealthy in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. She worked with the shape of land and its natural beauties, creating curving paths, informal meadows and gardens, pools and rock which blended into the landscape.

Mrs. Nims removed the shingles on the Peabody & Stearns house and replaced them with English-style half-timbering and stucco, initially painted an earth color to match ancient Italian villas she had seen. Over the years this earth color (probably ochre) became various shades of pink; everyone knew the Nims house as the pink house.

Abandonment of the property had left acres of brambles and poison ivy. Mrs. Nims hired Sheffield Arnold of Boston to come up with a landscape design. He created a plan that was too formal for Mrs. Nims' taste and he was let go. She began to direct

work on the property herself, clearing an area to build a house for her sister Kate Ratcliffe, which was finished in 1926.

In 1929 the Nims hired Olmsted Brothers of Brookline to design garden areas and cut bridle paths. The land did not lend itself to the plan developed by Mr. Zack of Olmsted Brothers. The firm was not retained nor was any other professional company ever again involved. In 1930 Mrs. Nims herself began to direct the clearing of the meandering paths and plant the gardens of The Larches. She worked on it for over 25 years with the help of many laborers.



Lotawana Nims in her garden. Courtesy Judith Lang Day.



The Nims maids serving a picnic lunch at a table-like rock in the Nims estate woodland. Courtesy Judith Lang Day.



Nims house. Courtesy Judith Lang Day.



Nims wall garden. Courtesy Ted and Meg Fitzelle.



Gabe Bettencourt on the front steps of the caretaker's cottage with some of his prize squash. Courtesy Judith Lang Day.

Gabriel Bettencourt

The head gardener and caretaker was Gabriel Bettencourt who was hired in the early 1930s. He was born on Pico Island in the Azores and lived in Fairhaven, Massachusetts before moving to Woods Hole. He worked all year round, including the three summer months when Mrs. Nims was in residence. They were compatible working together; he appeared to understand her designs, her goals and desires and defended her unusual and artistic ideas. Gabe had great respect for the soil and spent years amending and improving it. Hundreds of truck loads of seaweed and sand were worked into the clay soil of the vegetable garden. Green cover crops were sown in the fall and worked in during the spring. Two small greenhouses were used to grow in-

numerable annuals, meaning months of exacting work for Gabe and two helpers. Hundreds of dahlias, gladioli and begonias were planted in late spring and removed in the fall for storage. A special squash was grown from seeds carefully saved every year whose color matched the "earth" or ochre-pink color of the stuccoed house. A row of Mrs. Nims' private squash was arranged for her pleasure on the terrace overlooking Vineyard Sound. A highlight of Gabe's career was a squash which weighed 98 pounds!

In his spare time, Gabe raised prize chinchillas. In 1945 he won 13 prizes for them. Mrs. Bettencourt, the former Rose Travers, worked in the house for Mrs. Nims. She was responsible for maintaining, polishing and waxing the downstairs floors. Every week she created 22 flower arrangements for the house. Gabe was quoted as saying: "I plant 'em, she cuts 'em."



Nims daylilies. Courtesy Ted and Meg Fizzle.



Ted Fitzelle sowing buckwheat in the cutting garden, 1981. This was a cover crop to be tilled into the soil. Courtesy Ted and Meg Fitzelle.



Ted in the cutting garden at The Larches. Courtesy Ted and Meg Fitzelle.



Mrs. Nims arranging flowers. Courtesy Judith Lang Day.

Gabe built a house on the edge of the property along Nobska Road near the vegetable garden. New Bedford fishermen friends came to help dig the foundation hole. In 1940 a housewarming featured a trio playing Portuguese folk tunes and Al Soderland playing Swedish melodies. Everyone danced to 1940s music. The house was a small Cape, its shingled walls trimmed with turquoise boards and shutters; the window boxes and garden bed at the top of the roadside wall were filled with luscious bright begonias, causing

drivers to slow down on the curve of the road to admire the effect. Gabe outlived Mrs. Nims by 12 years; he died in 1978 at the age of 82.

Manny Duarte and Ted Fitzelle

After Gabe Bettencourt, the caretakers were Manny Duarte and Ted Fitzelle. Ted worked at the estate for 15 years (1980-1995). During his time, the cutting and vegetable garden off Nobska Road was transformed into a field of daylilies, which remains at this time. The gardens in general were made much simpler than in Mrs. Nims' time. Ted is still working as a gardener and caretaker for the Clarks on Penzance Point. The Nobska Road house built by Gabe continued to be occupied by the gardener and caretaker of the Nims estate for some years. Currently the house is rented out and the estate has no full-time gardener. The estate, still owned by descendants of Mrs. Nims and her sisters, uses hired day labor, a trend echoed at many of the large gardens in the area.



Ted Fitzelle planting flower seedlings. Courtesy Ted and Meg Fitzelle.



The Glidden Tower with the H.H. Fay water tower-windmill in the left background and Nobska Lighthouse in the right background, 1890s. Photograph by Baldwin Coolidge. Courtesy WHHC.



The Glidden Tower during the period when it was abandoned and became a popular local attraction and trysting place. Courtesy WHHC.



William Chambers in the cutting garden, Carlton estate. Courtesy Mary Carlton Swope.

THE CARLTON ESTATE

Church Street

Newcomb Carlton (1869-1953), an engineer, was the president of Western Union Telegraph Company. In 1922 he bought a five-acre portion of the former Glidden estate, including the stone tower which had stored and supplied water for the 1879 Peabody & Stearns house (The Larches – Nims Estate). During the time the Glidden estate was abandoned (1889-1920s), the water tower became a popular tourist destination and a location for amusing photographs. Some thought it was a Viking tower.

The architect Welles Bosworth incorporated a round stone tower into the home he designed for the Carltons, using it as the entrance and stairway for the three-story house built at the top of a slope; it was topped by a conical roof. The distinctive rectangular Shingle-Craftsman-Tudor house with a stone base, shingled upper stories, large overhanging hip roof and numerous casement windows looks over Nobska Point and Vineyard Sound.

Newcomb Carlton was an avid yachtsman. He owned the gaff-rigged schooner *Sunshine*, which he kept in Great Harbor. After renting a house on Penzance, about 1919 the family began renting the Harrison estate (later Miramar) located on Little Harbor, which was more sheltered from the strong prevailing winds and had a substantial stone dock

which the Carltons used. They purchased the house in 1925 and rented to friends until they sold it to George Wright in 1936.

During the first few years the gardens at the Carlton estate were a mixture of formal rose gardens with a simple flower border against the stone base of the house. There were numerous large boulder outcroppings on the slopes. These were planted with privet trained to cover the rocks and became favorite climbing spots for Carlton children and grandchildren. In the 1950s, the slope on the south side of the house facing Nobska was filled and leveled and edged with a stone wall. Within this wall, protected from the constant wind, was an English-style perennial bed, something to be looked at from within the house along with the framed views of Nobska and the Sound.



A watercolor and ink drawing of the Carlton house with the Glidden Tower incorporated into the structure as an entryway and staircase. Courtesy Mary Carlton Swope.



Ann and William Chambers. Courtesy Mary Carlton Swope.

William and Ann Chambers

In 1923, William and Ann Chambers, both born in Nottingham, England, came to work on the Carlton estate. The Chambers had come to the U.S. in 1911 and worked in Montpelier, Vermont, and Wallingford, Connecticut, before Mr. Chambers became the superintendent of the Forbes estate on Naushon for six years. Newcomb Carlton employed Mr. Chambers as a caretaker-gardener and Mrs. Chambers helped the household in various ways, such as opening and closing the house each year and doing some cleaning and babysitting. In addition to the Chambers, there was a butler, a nanny, numerous maids and a cook. There were roses everywhere, a cutting garden and a vegetable garden. The Chambers had no children of their own and were very attached and attentive to the three daughters of Newcomb's son Winslow Carlton. The couple lived in a caretaker's cottage down the driveway from the house and spent the remainder of their working lives at the estate. William Chambers died in 1966 and Ann Chambers in 1984.



Mary Carlton at her wedding to Gerard Swope, talking to Mr. Chambers. Courtesy Mary Carlton Swope.

WHEELWRIGHT HOUSE

MIRAMAR
Church Street

The house at 55 Church Street was built in 1888 for Mahlon Ogden Jones of Chicago and was designed by Boston architect Edmund March Wheelwright. It is a superb example of Shingle-style architecture with an open interior and many porches extending the living space and framing views over Little Harbor and Woods Hole Passage. Alfred Harrison of Philadelphia purchased the house in 1892. The Harrisons made it the center of a lively summer social life, Woods Hole catboat races and other sailing competitions. A substantial stone dock was built in Little Harbor below the estate. The Harrisons stopped coming to Woods Hole before World War I and in about 1919 the house was lived in by Newcomb Carlton and his family. Mr. Carlton built a house across Church Street in 1922 and purchased the Wheelwright house in 1925 to retain use of the dock; the house was rented to friends. The Carlton family owned the house until 1936. In that year it was bought by George Wright and his wife Mary; she was the one who named the estate Miramar. The Wrights owned the estate until 1959.

Bernard Cavanaugh

Bernard Cavanaugh (1887-1968) was born in Paulstown, Ireland. By 1916 he had obtained "a fine position" as the gardener and caretaker at the Harrison estate. He married Miss Catherine B. O'Neil of Drumfrea, Ireland in 1916 in St. Joseph Church, Woods Hole, and

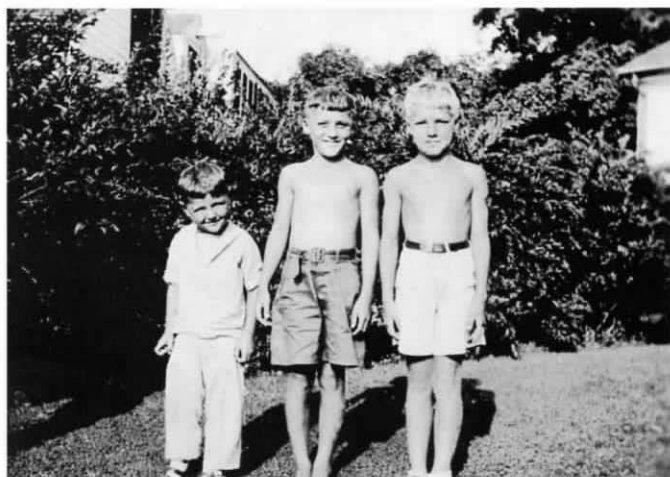


The Wheelwright House, from a postcard, 1918. Courtesy WHHC.

worked as a landscape gardener until his retirement in the late 1950s.

Frank Cassick

Frank Cassick was the gardener and caretaker at Miramar for both the Carltons and the Wrights, arriving in 1935. His wife Ann and Gabe Bettencourt's wife Rose were sisters. His son, Newcomb Cassick,



Jim Rogers with George and David Cassick. Courtesy James F. Rogers.

was named for Newcomb Carlton. All the Cassick children were friends with the Hallett and Rogers children at the Whitney estate. Newcomb Carlton's son, Winslow Carlton, called Frank Cassick "a wonderful man, a wonderful worker." Frank maintained the estate on his own unless there was a big job or project which he could not manage; in that case he hired temporary help. When his sons were old enough to help, they joined their father in his work. Frank Cassick died in 1954 while he was shingling the house.

THE WHITNEY ESTATE LITTLE HARBOR FARM Church Street

The estate overlooking Little Harbor and Woods Hole Passage was originally the Francis C. Foster farm and was called Fair View. The original rather plain Victorian house was built in the 1870s. In 1917-18, the house was completely remodeled in the Colonial Revival style by architect George I. Shephard for Geoffrey G. Whitney, a Boston stockbroker. Mr. Whitney and his wife were avid horticulturists and

called their property Little Harbor Farm. The garden, designed by H.V. Lawrence of Falmouth and planted in 1927, included a rose garden. Mr. Whitney developed roses for Jackson & Perkins. Mrs. Whitney imported many plantings for an English-style walled flower garden. There were also English hollies imported by noted local horticulturist Wilfrid Wheeler. There were several Cedars of Lebanon (now giant specimens, some of which arch across Church Street), a grapevine grown from a slip brought back from the Cape Verde Islands and perennials from Mrs. Whitney's grandfather's home in southern Ohio.

Alden Fuller Cahoon

Alden Cahoon (1842- 1937) came from an old Cape family of Scottish descent whose origins were in Harwich. He went to sea at the age of 15 on a cod fishing schooner. Alden first came to Woods Hole in 1870 to be foreman during the construction of the new Steamship dock in Great Harbor. In 1872 he married Rebecca Hinckley who later became the first telegraph operator in Woods Hole. After their marriage he became the gardener for the Francis C.

Foster estate and worked there for 30 years. He and his wife lived on the estate and it was there in 1878 that their son Samuel Thomas Cahoon was born. Sam became boatman for the Harrison family, a champion sailor and Woods Hole entrepreneur.

In 1906 Alden went to work for John Gardner in Monument Beach and remained there until Rebecca's death in 1915, when he returned to



Foster's house and caretaker's house and barn. Courtesy WHHC.



Mr. & Mrs. Geoffrey G. Whitney on their wedding day, June 1913. The wedding took place at Plum Orchard on Cumberland Island, Georgia, the estate of Mrs. Whitney's sister Margaret Thaw Carnegie. Courtesy WHHC.



Whitney gardens. Courtesy Linda Whitney.

Woods Hole to live seasonally with his son Sam. He returned to his home in Monument Beach occasionally during the winters.

James H. Hallett

James Henry Hallett (1872-1953) was the son of Freeman Hallett and the son-in-law of Alonzo Swift, a Falmouth whaler. About 1898 he began working as a caretaker on the former John Swift estate in Waquoit (presently the Waquoit Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve), owned at the time by the Bryant family. Mrs. Bryant expected Hallett to be the coachman as well as the gardener, which he found unsatisfactory since he had to change quickly from earth-covered gardening clothing to the formal attire of a coachman. The Bryants' son happened to mention to Francis C. Foster, Jr. that their gardener was not happy in his present situation; he recommended James Hallett to Francis C. Foster, Sr. to replace Alden Cahoon. On January 1, 1906, James



1941 photo of James Hallett with picked raspberries. Courtesy James F. Rogers.

Hallett moved from Waquoit to Woods Hole, the family's one cow tied behind their wagon. He worked for the Fosters until 1916 when Mr. Foster died. The Hallett family remained living at the estate's caretaker's house (combined with a barn) and wondered whether the new owners would keep them on.



The Whitney house, just completed, with the landscaping just beginning. Courtesy WHHC.

The Geoffrey G. Whitneys bought the property in 1917 and began a complete remodeling of the house and auxiliary buildings. The old caretaker's cottage was demolished and Braham Norton of Woods Hole constructed a new one, a Colonial-style gambrel-roofed cottage. The Halletts lived in the big new Whitney house while their new home was being built.

James Hallett worked at Little Harbor Farm until his death in 1953. Mr. Whitney died in the same year. Besides supervising the gardens and

The following quote is from a document provided by James F. Rogers about his grandfather James Hallett (*spelling and punctuation as in original*):

"It is interesting to look back at his relationship with the Whitney's...They rarely came across Church St. to the farm side Pop rarely went up to the "big house". In the winter he and Mr. or Mrs. Whitney would exchange a few letters about varieties of veg and sometimes about changes to be made around the estate, but Jim Hallett was pretty much on his own; they trusted him to run the Little Harbor



Tex, one of James Hallett's Guernseys. Courtesy James F. Rogers.

Farm. He had a large roll top desk in his bedroom for the business of the estate..they gave him checks which he deposited in an account to make the pay roll and buy materials.....they trusted him explicitly and in return he never took a cent that was not his.....he also had a reputation among tradesmen that he never took kickbacks....some caretakers expected kickbacks for buying or trading with certain businesses; this was the downfall of some of these over the years.

I think he and Mr. Whitney had annual conversations about how many full and part time employees to hire and what to pay them but he had authority to hire and fire. 'Lunn had two men in the 30's and 40's...Jim Razinha and Joe Tavares....Pop had three year around, Elmer (Hallett), Theodore and Manny Silvia from North Falmouth. I worked several summers and Saturdays after school. Summer help was usually two on the farm side in addition to me.....some of them stick out in my mind, Peter Gomes and Manny Texeira, both Cape Verdeans.

Lunn and Pop shared Manny Silvia and there rarely was any problem.. Manny helped with the milking in the mornings on work days and did the mowing, etc. for Lunn on his side, yet sometimes when we needed him he would hoe corn or weed as needed. Manny had a side line, he collected garbage during his noon hour from the restaurants in and around Woods Hole...he would then feed the garbage to the pigs on the estate.

I must add that Pop not only was the boss but he also did his share of the work. For this he would put on overalls over his pants and rubbers over his shoes sometimes and weed, hoe corn, milk, pick berries, cut hedges, etc. In his seventies he could swing a mean sythe and cut a field of grass with a steady rythmn.

Pop would rarely get mad...he could be stern...especially with me and Elmer when we fooled too much...we had a thing for hiding around corners and squirting water at each other or having a rotten tomato fight."



Elmer Hallett with his horse, Bill. Courtesy James F. Rogers.

grounds of the Whitney property, Mr. Hallett had a dairy business. In Woods Hole he added five more Guernseys to the one he had brought from Waquoit. Hallet favored the Guernseys which were renowned for their rich milk and disdained Holsteins, calling them "skim-milk cows." Hallett's milk was raw milk and was certified yearly by the Agriculture Department to be tuberculin-free.

Barns, one with four stalls and one with two stalls, were across the road from the Whitneys, next to the Woods Hole Cemetery. The cows were pastured on land behind rented from Mrs. Kate Ratcliffe at The Larches. Some of the cream was separated from the milk for sale and the skimmed milk was given to their pigs.

An extensive flower and vegetable garden was part of the farm property on the opposite side of Church Street, located where the parking lot for the Church of the Messiah and the new cemetery are presently.

Grant J. Lunn

James Hallett's son Elmer Hallett (1903-1981) worked on the estate also but was not caretaker. When James Hallett's health deteriorated, he was



James and Elmer Hallett. Note Church of the Messiah steeple in the background. Courtesy James F. Rogers.

allowed to stay on the estate and remained in the caretaker's cottage until his death in 1953. The position of caretaker was taken by Grant J. Lunn, who temporarily lived in an apartment over the garage which had replaced the stables. Mr. Lunn, born in 1898 in Windsor, Nova Scotia, had been responsible for the gardens, greenhouse, flower cultivation and the lawns on the estate since the 1920s. There was extensive growing of flowers for arrangements and for the gardens done from hundreds of cuttings every year, cultivated in the greenhouse. Lunn worked with Wilfrid Wheeler propagating slips from the English hollies. After 1953 he was in charge of the entire estate. He died in 1962.



Bill (horse), Theodore and James Hallett. Courtesy James F. Rogers.

Henry Alton Rogers, Jr.

Henry Alton Rogers, Jr. (Hank) was the caretaker of Cumloden in Quissett until the death of its owner, James T. Johnstone, when Cumloden was sold. Hank became the caretaker of Little Harbor Farm in 1963, following Grant Lunn, and remained there until his death in 1997.

James Hallett's daughter Martha married Bernard F. Rogers, a Coast Guardsman from New Bedford (no relation to Hank Alton Rogers, Jr.) who had arrived in Woods Hole

on the *Acushnet*. Their son was James (Jim) F. Rogers. Jim has made a point of preserving stories and history of Little Harbor Farm. He has a series of letters from Francis C. Foster to James Hallett offering him the job, and wonderful blunt letters from Geoffrey G. Whitney about Little Harbor Farm business and the personalities of the house and garden staff.

Other Cape Verdeans who worked on the estate were Sebastian Rezendes, known as Nene (pronounced Nanny) and his descendants, including Tony Di Miranda, and Vin who worked there until quite recently. Some of the Rezendes family came and stayed permanently; some stayed for a while and returned to the Cape Verde Islands.



Michael Walsh. Courtesy WHHC.



The Fay Homestead. Joseph Story Fay bought the house from Ward Parker in 1850. It was built about 1765 by Ephraim Manassah Swift. In this photo, taken by Baldwin Coolidge in 1896 just before the death of Joseph Story Fay, we see Fay in a wheelchair with his daughter Sarah Bryant Fay and several companions. Courtesy WHHC.

FAY ROSE GARDEN

Woods Hole Road

Joseph Story Fay (1812-1897) bought the 18th century Swift house across from Little Harbor from Ward Parker in 1850. He also gradually purchased many acres in Woods Hole, some adjacent to the house as well as in other parts of Woods Hole and Falmouth. A former cotton broker and businessman, he was a great benefactor to Woods Hole, replanting the stripped woodlands and giving the Cape its first Episcopal church, the Church of the Messiah in Woods Hole. Over the years he became a very much respected and beloved local gentleman.

Michael Walsh

Joseph Story Fay had a serious interest in horticulture. He brought Michael Walsh to Woods Hole to

develop his gardens. Eventually Walsh began experimenting with roses, developing a rambler rose from a white rose, the *Rosa wichuraiana*, a favorite of Joseph Story Fay, crossed with *Rosa multiflora*. Walsh won numerous prizes for the rambler rose. After Mr. Fay's death in 1897, Walsh's patron was Miss Sarah Bryant Fay (1855-1938), Joseph Story Fay's daughter, a woman of outstanding artistic ability and a fine photographer and artist. By the early 20th century, the fame of the Fay rose garden had spread far and wide. In June visitors arrived from all over the country to see the roses on the estate. Miss Fay welcomed the visitors graciously.



The Fay driveway with hydrangeas and agave, 1896. Photograph by Baldwin Coolidge. Courtesy WHHC.

Michael Walsh, who was of Irish descent, was born in Wales January 14, 1848, and died in Woods Hole April 10, 1922, in his 74th year. He came to America in 1868 and arrived in Woods Hole when he was

27. He had gardened since he was 11 years old when he became an apprentice on an English estate. It was there that he was introduced to the care of roses. Mr. Fay hired Walsh to be the head gardener at the Homestead on the harbor in Woods Hole in 1875. A small cottage was moved from the Woods Hole School property nearby to be the house for the Walsh family, and placed on the hill just above the greenhouses. Walsh planted a number of exotic trees on the estate, grew prize-winning vegetables, rows of cutting flowers and lined the drives with flowering shrubs, such as hydrangeas. It was his experimentation with roses that led to his fame, which made his name more well-known than that of his patrons.



Walsh roses in the sunken garden, Fay estate. Fay Collection. Courtesy WHHC.

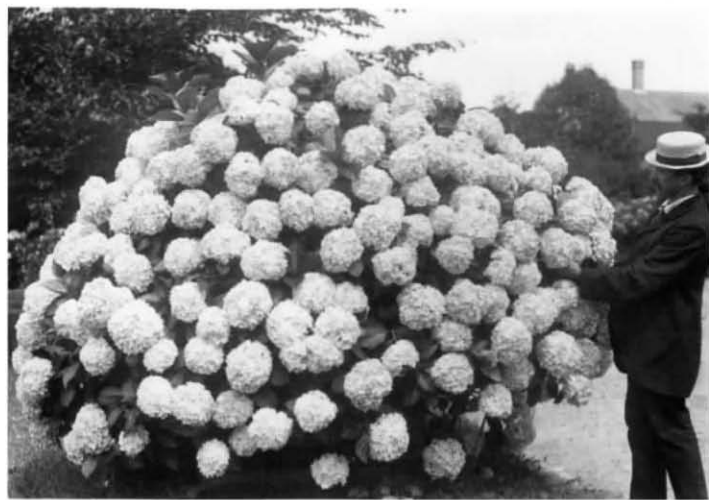
In 1897, the year that Joseph Story Fay died, greenhouses were built on the hill above the house by Sarah Fay.

She hired another gardener to take care of the day-to-day gardening chores and maintenance and allowed Walsh to work full-time on the hybridization of roses. Thousands of test plants were grown in the propagating greenhouse as he worked on developing the rambler. The hillside and areas around the old Colonial house became structured with rows of shrub roses and pergolas, trellises and cedar tree pillars on which to display the results of Walsh's genius with ramblers. Michael Walsh and Miss Fay exhibited roses together at major horticultural shows and received innumerable prizes, both paper certificates and trophies. In 1905 he was awarded a Gold Medal by the Royal National Rose Society of Great Britain for 'Lady Gay.' In 1912 the Massachusetts Horticultural Society gave Walsh the George Robert White medal for eminent service to



Beds of roses in the Fay garden. Climbing roses are supported on cedar pillars. The greenhouse is at right. Photograph by Baldwin Coolidge, 1906. Courtesy WHHC.

horticulture. In 1914 he received the Gertrude Hubbell Gold Medal from the American Rose Society for 'Excelsa.' The gardens, Michael Walsh and the prizes were captured on large sepia prints by Boston photographer Baldwin Coolidge from 1896 to 1906.



Michael Walsh with a hydrangea, 1896. Photograph by Baldwin Coolidge. Courtesy WHHC.

In 1901, the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad was in the process of building a new depot in Woods Hole. In order to demolish the old station building, they set it on fire. The fire burned for three days; its toxic smoke destroyed Walsh's entire crop, several thousand feet away and downwind of the blaze. He tried to get railroad officials to put out the fire but to no avail. He and Miss Fay sued the New Haven for damages and settled out of court for \$20,000.

During the years 1907 - 1917, Walsh published yearly catalogs of his roses, hydrangeas and hollyhocks. The roses, especially ramblers, were shipped all over the United States and to Europe, being extremely popular in England, as well as France. A federal inspector actually lived on the Fay estate to certify the enormous number of shipments out of the state.

There was a cordial relationship between Michael Walsh and the Fays. On February 24, 1922, in a letter to Sarah Bryant Fay about coal furnaces and detailing some of the work to be done on the Fay property, he attached a P.S., as follows: "Forty Six Years ago today I commenced work for Honored & Beloved Joseph S. Fay."

Michael Walsh also purchased land along Nobska Road, or Shore Road as it was called then, and worked on roses separately from the Fay estate until his death in 1922. This land was eventually purchased by Sidney Lawrence and made into commercial farmland.

Edward Walsh

After the death of his father, Edward Walsh, youngest child of Michael Walsh, continued to care for the rose gardens and be the caretaker of the Joseph Story Fay properties, d.b.a "Estate of Michael Walsh." His sister Elizabeth Walsh (Lizzie) was the accountant. During the 1920s and 1930s Edward worked for Sarah Bryant Fay as had his father. He also did grave excavation and landscaping work for others in the area.

After the death of Miss Fay in the 1930s, the rose gardens gradually disappeared. In 1943 Mrs. James P. Warbasse conceived the idea of a memorial boulder with a plaque to commemorate Michael Walsh and his development of the rambler rose. It was erected by the Falmouth Garden Club on a piece of land given by the Fay heirs. The Fay house was sold to Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in 1948. Eventually fences surrounded the boulder and a small selection of Walsh ramblers were grown on the fences. This memorial and garden have become part of the Woods Hole Historical Museum campus.



4251. C. R. CRANE ESTATE, THE WATER GARDEN, MORNING SHADOWS, WOODS HOLE, MASS.

Crane caretaker's house from a post card. Courtesy WHHC.

THE CRANE ESTATE

Butler's/Juniper Point

Albert C. Swain, Jr.

Albert C. Swain, Jr. (1878-1953) arrived in Woods Hole in 1901 from Fairhaven, where he had worked at the tack works. He came on foot, walking along the railroad tracks, and, because of his father's reputation working for Henry K. Dyer at The Anchorage on Penzance Point, obtained a job working for Daniel W. Butler who owned

the point between Little and Great Harbors. For a while Mr. Swain lived on Penzance Point at The Anchorage with his parents and walked into Woods Hole to work.

Charles R. Crane came to Woods Hole from his winter home in Chicago in 1902. His father, Richard T. Crane, had founded the Crane plumbing company there but the son sold his interest in the company to his brother and was much more interested in foreign affairs, diplomacy and service to the government. His sister Frances, a biologist and M.D., had married Frank Lillie, one of the earliest of the Marine Biological Laboratory scientists and supporters. Charles Crane bought land in Gansett, which he eventually made available to M.B.L. scientists for building summer cottages. In 1908 he became President of the M.B.L. Corporation. In 1909 he bought the Butler estate. Mr. Crane added to the Victorian-style main house and made renovations to the existing structure. Porch railings on the main house were designed in Craftsman style, probably by the Midwestern architectural firm of Purcell & Elmslie, who created a number of buildings for the Crane family. The wonderful English-style Craftsman caretaker's cottage with its steep overhanging roof was designed by Purcell & Elmslie and built in 1910 for Mr. Swain and his family. Purcell & Elmslie later designed and built the Airplane House in 1912 at the tip of Juniper Point for Mr. Crane's daughter Josephine Bradley.

Mr. Crane spent a lot of money renovating the grounds of the property. The gardens were designed by horticulturist Wilfrid Wheeler who had married a member of the Lillie family. There were at times 50 men from East Falmouth working with shovels and carts reshaping the land; this was standard procedure in the days before power equipment. Albert



1937 four-generation Swain photo: Charlie, Albert H. (Pete), Albert C., Jr., Albert C., Sr. (Cappy). Courtesy Theresa Swain Rapoza.

C. Swain, Jr. was the foreman for nine years and later the superintendent of the estate for 12 years. There was also a farm the Cranes owned in Gansett where there was a vegetable garden and horses; Swain and his men worked there as well. In 1922 he resigned and went into landscape business for himself, moving to Quissett Four-Corners. He transformed the rocky lot around his own house into beautiful thriving gardens.

Mr. Crane's role as U.S. Minister to China in 1920-1921 has given Woods Hole a number of Oriental items. The Crane cemetery plot in Woods Hole Cemetery is marked with the white marble statue of a Chinese god. A Chinese bell for peace was hung in an Oriental-style shelter below the main house. A small tranquil pond on the estate was enhanced with an arched wooden bridge leading to an Oriental pavilion.

James Goodfellow and John Tait

Two Scottish gardeners worked on the Crane estate: Mr. James Goodfellow and Mr. John Tait. James



Crane Pond from a post card. Courtesy WHHC.

Goodfellow came to work for Mr. Crane in 1908 to take care of the buildings and grounds. He was born in Carluke, Scotland, in 1871. He returned to Scotland to marry Miss Jeanie Berron (of Greenock, Scotland, born in 1873) in Glasgow in 1914. The Goodfellows spent their honeymoon on the ship which brought her to the U.S. for the first time and to the Crane estate to live. Mrs. Goodfellow died in 1933. Mr. Goodfellow fell into a period of ill health which began after the 1938 Hurricane and he retired from the Crane estate. From 1939 until his death in 1947, he lived with his daughters Clara (Adams) and Jean Goodfellow.

His position was taken over on March 1, 1939, by John Tait, a gardener who had been working in Megansett on the William T. Rich estate (which was on the site of the present Royal Megansett Nursing Home). John Tait was born in the Orkney Islands off Scotland. He and his wife Robina (Esson) waited to be married until they had tickets in hand for the

journey to the U.S. They were wed on March 17, 1910, in their native Orkney Islands. Three weeks later they embarked for America. They first settled in Waltham and eventually came to North Falmouth in 1927. In 1936 he was asked to become president of the Cape Cod Horticultural Society but he refused, in spite of his reputation as a successful gardener.

After coming to work for the Cranes in 1939, the Tait's lived in a Cape Cod cottage on the Crane estate; Mr. Tait kept a large flower and vegetable garden just below; there was a greenhouse there as

well. Mr. Tait was very active at the Church of the Messiah and served on the vestry. He retired from the Crane estate in the 1950s and moved to Leslie Street where he also grew flowers and vegetables. He was particularly fond of pansies which he raised in special hot beds. Mr. Tait's large garden is still visible at the edge of Woods Hole Road between Leslie and Sumner Streets. He died in 1985 at the age of 98.

THE ANCHORAGE

Penzance Point

The Anchorage was built in 1896 by Horace Crowell of Newton, the developer of Penzance Point. In 1897 it was purchased by Henry Knight Dyer. Mr. Dyer's daughter Agnes married James P. Warbasse and upon the death of her father in 1910, she inherited The Anchorage. The house was the focus of happy summers for the Warbasse family. Its landscaping was simple. There were lawns, kept cropped by a cow, meadows and a lily pool.

Later the house was rented to several families and in 1917 it was sold to the Herbert J. Blume family who lived there until 1934 when a spectacular fire destroyed the house. In 1935 it was bought by the Drapers, who rebuilt the house, leaving off the original third floor. Mary Draper established the first formal gardens on a lower level on the east side of the house, stepping down to Great Harbor and enclosed within a stone wall. The design for the gardens was done by H.V. Lawrence and was a classic example of an English-style perennial bed, including flowering bushes, roses, hollyhocks, delphiniums and many annuals. This walled garden has been maintained in various styles down to the present day.

Albert C. Swain, Sr.

Albert C. Swain, Sr. was born in New Bedford in 1855, the son of Captain George and Mary (Scollay) Swain. George had been a whaling captain and after his marriage to Mary (the daughter of John Scollay for whom Scollay Square in Boston was named), he took her by ship to several South Sea and Pacific islands, including Hawaii. The family spent some time in Pennsylvania after Captain George decided to try storekeeping rather than spending his life at sea. Eventually he moved his family back to Fairhaven. He was harbor master there for many years and was in charge of the embarkation of troops leaving for the Civil War.

Albert began shipping out on coasting, fishing and whaling vessels at the age of 14. Later he served on the U.S. Revenue Service bark *S.P.*

Chase and sailed in the Mediterranean and along the coast of Africa. Upon his return to Fairhaven, he purchased the two-masted schooner *The Charm*, using the vessel for fishing and lobstering. In 1896 he met Horace S. Crowell of Boston, part of a syndicate developing Penzance Point in Woods Hole for summer estates. Crowell offered Swain a position as the Boatman for Henry K. Dyer (President of the Dennison Manufacturing Company of Framingham) who had bought The Anchorage, the first of the large houses on Penzance Point. In June 1896 Albert Swain sailed *The Charm* with his family from Fairhaven to Woods Hole and began his work. Known as Cappy, he worked there until the death of Henry K. Dyer. Swain was left in charge of the estate as caretaker as well as being responsible for the boats. He remained at The Anchorage until November 1935 through several owners. When the estate was sold to Mrs. Mary C. Draper in that year,



Swain family at The Anchorage, left to right, Albert C., Jr. and his wife Susie, George and Eva, Albert C. Swain (Cappy) and his wife; Sargent Cushing and Lillie in foreground. Courtesy Theresa Swain Rapoza.



Staff at The Anchorage in the 1890s. Albert C. (Cappy) Swain second from right, back row. Courtesy Theresa Swain Rapoza.

Captain Swain decided to retire; he had been at The Anchorage for 40 years. He died in August 1938.

Manuel Tavares

Albert C. Swain was succeeded at The Anchorage by Manuel Tavares, who worked for Mrs. Draper for many years. After Manny Tavares' death, Mrs. Draper provided for his widow.

WARBASSE ESTATE (originally called GLADHEIM) Penzance Point

Gladheim was built by Dr. and Mrs. James P. Warbasse in 1912-1914 at the very end of Penzance. While it was under construction, the family lived at The Anchorage next door. The stone first story, constructed of local beach stones, was built by Italian

laborers who came from New Bedford accompanied by their families. The stone workers and their families were housed in barns which were remodeled into dormitories. In later years, Dr. Warbasse brought New Bedford textile workers' families to Gladheim for two week vacations in the same barns. The fathers came to stay on weekends. Dr. Warbasse was a founder of the Co-operative Movement in the United States and had great sympathy for the working man. The house was at first only a summer home for the Warbasses but in later years it became their year-round residence.

The low marsh between the driveway to the house and Woods Hole Passage was a productive cranberry bog.

Agnes Dyer Warbasse was an involved and skilled gardener who did much of her own work on the grounds, sometimes joined by her husband. She was president of the Falmouth Garden Club and a director of the Massachusetts Federation of Garden Clubs. She did a great deal to enhance the plantings along roads all over the state and was responsible for the planting of roses along the sides of many byways. Her rambler roses are still visible in June and July along Woods Hole Road, their bright blossoms running over the tops of old stone walls. The gardens on the estate were a well-known and beautiful place for the public to enjoy, in contrast to the plainness of the neighboring Anchorage. There was a sign at the entrance to the estate, welcoming visitors to walk the paths of the 12-acre property. At times there were so many visitors that the Warbasses' Penzance neighbors sometimes grumbled.

After the death of Mrs. Warbasse, James Warbasse made a number of changes to the house. In 1945 the service wing was taken down as well as part of the main house and its distinctive stone chimney. In 1954 the house was sold to the Van Alan Clark family who have also done much remodeling and rebuilding. After the ownership of the estate passed to the Clarks, a caretaker's house was built near the cutting and vegetable gardens. Ted Fitzelle, formerly at The Larches, has worked for Ruth and Jim Clark for ten years (1995-2005) as a year round caretaker-gardener and lives on the estate with his family. There are extensive gardens and informal grass paths running down to "The Gut" and Woods Hole Passage. Some of the gardens dating to 1912 have been restored by Ted.



A. A. Tilney's Holiday House garden, Penzance Point. Courtesy Joan Wickersham.

HOLIDAY HOUSE

A.A. Tilney

Penzance Point

The garden at the Tilney house was built in 1934, designed and constructed by H.V. Lawrence. Detailed topographical drawings were prepared for the sloping site, as well as fine plans for the foundation plantings, roadside plantings, flower beds and garden features (gates and arbors).

Myron Medeiros

Working for H. V. Lawrence was Myron Medeiros who had just emigrated from the Azores. Mr. Tilney



The gardens at Holiday House, Penzance Point. Courtesy Joan Wickersham.



Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Tilney in the Holiday House garden, Penzance Point. Courtesy Joan Wickersham.



The gardens at Holiday House, Penzance Point. Courtesy Joan Wickersham.

liked Medeiros and invited him to work at his estate full time. He accepted. He lived in East Falmouth and during the winter months he was the caretaker for the Tilneys. He knew everything about the house: the wiring, electrical fixtures and the plumbing. During World War II the upper cutting garden was turned into a Victory Garden with vegetables. Mr. Medeiros remained as gardener and caretaker until he died in the garden, hose in hand. A member of the Tilney-Wickersham family describes him as "the salt of the earth."

WHITE CREST

Frances A. Crane Leatherbee Estate

Gansett

Nelson Cahoon

Charles R. Crane purchased land in Gansett in 1902 and gave his daughter Frances this property in 1904. Nelson Cahoon (1903-1997) had been a chauffeur for the Fay estate when he was hired as the caretaker for the Crane estate in Gansett. He lived across from White Crest in a small cottage and worked for the Crane family until his retirement. His wife, Sigrid E. (Erskine) Cahoon, worked for Mrs. Crane as a secretary during the 1930s before working at the Woods Hole Post Office during the war years.

The numerous tall and dark hollies which guard the entrance to the estate were provided by and planted by Wilfrid Wheeler.

GANSETT POINT

Janney-Ware Estate

Gansett

Built in 1927 by Walter C. Janney (b. 1876), a Philadelphia banker whose winter home was in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, the Gansett Point house has passed on to the descendants of his daughter Marian Janney Ware. The long shingled Colonial Revival-Cape Cod style house contains the family rooms as well as sections (each like a complete house but attached to the main) for the maids, chauffeur, boat captain and caretakers, the entire length being 228 feet.

The gardens and landscaping were designed by Olmsted Brothers of Brookline and constructed by H.V. Lawrence in 1929. There are graceful sweeps of lawn edged by masses of low juniper and a hidden rose garden. Originally this walled garden had four-foot wide beds. A lovely cedar pergola with curved stone benches at the sides leads to grass paths meandering down to a low cliff overlooking Buz-



Janney estate, flower beds and the house. Courtesy Mary Lou Martin Botelho.

zards Bay. The rose garden has been used for many weddings.

John R. Martin

In 1932-1933 Mr. Janney hired John R. Martin (b. 1912) as caretaker and gardener of the estate. Martin was of Portuguese descent and had grown up in Waquoit on Martin Road, where his family had lived for several generations. He had decided that there was no future in being a farmer and had attended the Stockbridge School of Agriculture, part of the University of Massachusetts, where he received an Associates degree in landscaping. For a few years he lived on Davisville Road in East Falmouth. Mr. Janney gave him a day off in July to marry Olive Medeiros who had been born in 1912 in New Bedford. John and Olive's daughter



John Martin upon his graduation from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture. Courtesy Mary Lou Martin Botelho.

Mary Lou was born in 1941 and when she was two months old the family moved to the estate. John Martin was paid \$45.00 dollars per month and given the caretaker's house. He was responsible for paying for his own coal and other utilities.

The Martins kept chickens and ducks. When Mrs. Janney was in residence the noisy roosters were sent to Davisville to stay. There was a long vegetable garden and a cold frame which had to be carefully watched lest the seedlings get too hot. The cutting garden was on slightly higher ground closer to the

main house. The house was full of flower arrangements made from the cutting garden but only Mrs. Janney had cut roses in her room. Mr. Martin went up to Mrs. Janney's room each day with fresh roses. Roses were his passion and the rose garden his special place. The roses planted and tended by him still grace the pergola and the caretaker's cottage.



The Janney family in their Pennsylvania garden, 1923. Left to right: Priscilla, Walter Jr., Mr. Walter Janney, Peggy, Marian, Mrs. Pauline Janney, Anne and Wistar. Photograph by H.P. Rolfe.

John Martin supervised a big crew of gardeners. His other duties included making ice cream for the Janneys' dessert and a once-yearly clambake on Gansett beach. In the fall and winter ducks and rabbits were hunted for food; a large contingent of East Falmouth friends was invited to the rabbit hunts. In the winters, the Martins and their friends and family got together every Sunday for large dinners and often Saturday nights for card parties and music. When the Janneys came to the Cape from Bryn Mawr



The rose-covered caretaker's house at the Janney estate. Courtesy Mary Lou Martin Botelho.



John Martin on the Janney estate, 1930s. Courtesy Mary Lou Martin Botelho.



John Martin and his daughter Mary Lou, 1942. Courtesy Mary Lou Martin Botelho.

for the summer, they drove up in a chauffeur-driven car. A station wagon was also kept on the estate and John Martin was sent down to Pennsylvania with it to pick up luggage, tennis rackets and the family cat, Puss. Mrs. Janney insisted that the cat be allowed to have the freedom to run around the car. On the first trip with the cat, Puss spent the entire trip rubbing on John Martin's neck and meowing in his ear and soiled the car as well. After that, John would drive a few hundred feet with the cat loose and then put it into a cage when Mrs. Janney couldn't see what was happening. When he arrived at his destination, Puss was again let loose for the last few feet of the journey.

John Martin was also responsible for the Gansett gate, locking and unlocking it each night and morning.

Those trapped on the peninsula after a late party would come knocking at the caretaker's house to be let out.

Mary Lou Martin grew up on the estate and lived there with her parents and grandmother until she was 16. In the summer she played with the Janney grandchildren and was included in many of the family's activities. She was very aware of the contrast

between the life of her decidedly Democratic Portuguese parents and the politics and life-style of the conservative Quaker Janney family and she felt privileged to be able to share in both. In the winter the

Martin family was quite isolated on the estate, often snowed in. There was a low place where water settled into a pool and where they skated when it froze over. Mary Lou attended Woods Hole School and was quite an avid reader. She sneaked into the big house and spent hours in the winter-cold library reading in the sun or during better weather finding little nooks in the garden in which to curl up with a book.

Olive Martin was the laundress. She spent much of her time in a windowed basement laundry room ironing—sheets, towels, curtains, clothes. She filled in for the maids at times and

was also responsible for getting the house ready for the summer. In this chore she was helped by other women. Mary Lou remembers their laughter while they cleaned, waxed and polished and put up freshly laundered curtains. There was an enormous kitchen, innumerable pantries and service areas. The maids, at first Irish and later African-American, lived in a cottage next to the kitchen end of the house, connected by a porch. Behind the porch was the laun-



A photo by John Martin of the wedding of Marian Janney and Lindsay Ware. The rose-covered pergola where many weddings took place is in the background, left. Courtesy Mary Lou Martin Botelho.



Olive Medeiros and John Martin when they were courting, 1930s. Courtesy Mary Lou Martin Botelho.

dry-yard and the steps to the basement room where Olive Martin worked. The original apartment for the yacht captain became the chauffeur's summer home.

Mary Lou had the ambition to go to college. This was difficult for her parents to afford so her father and mother took on extra jobs in the winters, unbeknownst to the Janneys. Her father worked on the Oceanographic's ketch *Atlantis* during World War II and her mother helped another woman get a summer house ready for its occupants, washing and ironing.

Somehow Mr. Janney was aware that he would not live through another winter. He went home to Bryn Mawr with John in the station wagon, instead of riding with the chauffeur. He told John that this had been his last summer and he asked him to stay on and take care of the estate and Mrs. Janney. John stopped the car on the Bourne Bridge for a moment so that Mr. Janney could look back at Cape Cod for the last time.

After Mr. Janney's death, Mrs. Janney cut back on the gardening help. John Martin began to plan for the future. He established a nursery on Martin Road in Waquoit and raised geraniums and gladioli which he began to sell to all the A&Ps on the Cape. Mrs. Janney died in 1957 and the Martin family moved to Davisville Road, a tremendous change after the many years at Gansett Point. In later years John Martin worked at Ashumet Holly Reservation and with Kenny Rebello.

Even today, the Wares have live-in year-round caretakers. The present caretaker and his family have been there for twenty-five years. In the late spring the house must be prepared for summer occupancy, as it was in the past, with much cleaning, waxing and polishing and then the house is ready to be opened up to the summer breezes of Buzzards Bay.

RED OAKS

Pierce-Endicott-Lilly Estate

Quisset Avenue



The entrance wall at Red Oaks, from *A Trip Around Buzzards Bay Shores*, E.G. Perry, 1903.

Red Oaks was built in 1900-1902 as a wedding present to Mr. Edgar Pierce and his bride Lizzie May Whipple. Mr. Pierce's in-laws, proprietors of the J.R. Whipple Corporation, owned hotels in Boston, including the famous Parker House; Mr. Pierce became president of this company. Red Oaks was a Colonial Revival style house, originally ornamented with porches, many dormers and side wings. Great curving stone walls announce the entrance off Quisset Avenue. The house overlooks Quisset Harbor and is not visible from the road. The original landscaping was designed by the Olmsted Brothers of Brookline. One of the later owners of Red Oaks has generously given the Woods Hole Historical Collection the original drawings



Red Oaks, the main house, built 1900-1902. From *A Trip Around Buzzards Bay Shores*. E.G. Perry, 1903.

done by the Olmsteds for the landscaping, which show sweeping irregular informal beds of "wild" bushes, ground covers and trees.

Leander Blomberg

Anders Leander Blomberg was born in Sweden in 1877, one of four brothers; the family name was originally Carlson.



Leander Blomberg. Courtesy Avis N. Blomberg.

When at age 21 the Carlson brothers had to serve their one-year military service, they were asked to pick new names, since the name Carlson was so commonplace that confusion would have ensued in the ranks. Leander chose Blomberg, his brother Carl chose the name Frank, Fritz remained Carlson and Alfred chose Rosen. Upon leaving the service, they retained these last names and emigrated to the United States together around 1903-1905.

The brothers soon found their way to the Boston area. Alfred Rosen returned to Sweden but the other three remained. After several other jobs, Leander Blomberg was hired as houseman to the Whittemore family of Newton. There he met the second cook of the household, Miss Theresa Hedin, also a recent immigrant from Sweden. They were married in 1910. In the winter they worked in Newton and in the summer they worked on the large Whittemore estate at Quisset, presently Sea Education Association. The young married couple lived in one of the Whittemore cottages on Quisset Harbor, next to



Leander Blomberg and his son Lennart Blomberg. Courtesy Avis N. Blomberg.

the Eldred homestead, and also at Captain Levi Fish's house on Woods Hole Road.

Around 1912, Leander Blomberg heard of a caretaking job available at the 27-acre Edgar Pierce estate on Quissett Avenue, for which he applied and was accepted. With their first-born child, Lennart, the Blombergs moved to the Pierce estate and remained there for 26 years. In the early years, they lived in the garage quarters during the summer and in the winter months moved into the large house, part of which was closed off. Both Leander and Theresa were trying to advance their knowledge of English and spent some of their leisure time reading the books in the Pierce library. Three of their four children were born while they were on the estate: Linnea, Thure and Anna.

In his spare time, Leander fished, hunted, speared eels in Quissett Harbor, raised a pig yearly for ham, bacon and sausage and had one or two cows. The extra milk was peddled to neighbors. He was skilled at fixing up boats as well as building small rowboats. An abandoned catboat found on Racing Beach with a great hole in the hull was repaired, renamed Vega and used both for family sailing and rental.

In the early 1920s, Mr. Pierce sold the estate to H. Wendell Endicott of Dedham. He wrote a letter to Endicott, hoping that he would keep the Blomberg family on the estate. This was done and thus began a wonderful friendship between Mr. Endicott and Leander Blomberg. Together they walked the estate with ax and clippers, hacking new trails through the woods and discovering new places to plant gardens. A fern garden was established, also a blue garden, an "old" garden, a rose garden, the "outlook" garden, a rock garden and the "forgotten" garden, in a corner near the Webster estate. There was a six-hole golf course on the front lawn. The kindness of Mr. Endicott extended to having a caretaker's house built for the family, so that the Blombergs did not have to move twice a year. Leander dug the cellar hole and the square clapboard house was built at the entrance to the estate.

Thure by this time was old enough to tend the cows and call them home and to play with neighboring summer children. Mr. Endicott's oldest daughter Martha would sneak away from her constant companion, the governess, to play on the beach with Thure. Mr. Endicott's second wife, Priscilla Maxwell, was a famous golfer from Connecticut and made Thure her caddy when she was in Quissett. He also caddied at the Woods Hole Golf Club.

In 1934 Mr. Endicott sold the estate to J.K. Lilly of Indianapolis. Again the old owner asked the new owner to keep the Blombergs on. The Lillys were less interested in gardens and not at all in golf and spent most of their time on the water. By this time Lennart was out of high school and was helping his father, working on the estate. Thure had graduated in 1935 and after several other jobs, began to work on the Keith estate (formerly Harris) up the road in Quissett.

Leander Blomberg died of a heart attack in 1938. Lennart took over the caretaker's position. Unfortunately it was the year of the great hurricane which destroyed hundreds of trees on the Lilly estate and caused great damage to the shoreline. Lennart spent the following winter repairing what he could but when the Lillys arrived in the summer of 1939, Mrs. Lilly seemed to think that the damage was all Lennart's fault and he was fired. The Lillys hired another Swede, Henry Strand, who in turn hired Thure Blomberg to work on the estate where he had grown up. Thure remained there until he joined the Army in World War II.

The estate was gradually broken up and pieces sold off in the 1960s, so that today, beside the original large house, the carriage house and the caretaker's house (all owned by dif-



Leander Blomberg and probably Miss Martha Endicott and her governess. Courtesy Avis N. Blomberg.

ferent people), there are a small number of other houses on the original grounds, yet there is still a feeling of graciousness as one drives by the great curving stone entrance walls.

WEBSTER ROSE GARDEN

Quisset Avenue

Born in Boston and educated at M.I.T., Edwin Sibley Webster was the president and chairman of the engineering firm Stone & Webster, which built and shared the ownership of electrical utility companies. He made a great fortune from this business. In 1892 he married the former Jane de Peyster Hovey, whose sister Mabel was married to Henry

Harris, one of a large inter-related clan of Quisset Avenue summer residents. In 1914 the Websters purchased a house adjacent to the Harrises on Quisset



Webster house with turrets overlooking Quisset Outer Harbor; Indian Garden at right and Keith house (formerly Harris) at left. 1964 photo by Janet Burt.



"Captain Jack" and the Quissett Indian Garden, a section of the Webster garden, very popular with children. This garden was planted in annuals to complement the antique tobacco shop figure in copper, yellows and golds. This point of land on Quisset Harbor was the site of a Wampanoag clam and oyster midden. Courtesy Victoria Powell.

Avenue, originally owned by the Shearers (proprietors of Paine Furniture of Boston). The Websters' other residences were in Boston, Chestnut Hill and Holderness, New Hampshire, on Squam Lake. Prominent members of Boston society, they were philanthropists, patrons of the arts and avid horticulturists, winning many prizes from the Massachusetts Horticultural Society for orchids as well as daffodils, chrysanthemums and fuchsias. The two-story conservatory attached to Mrs. Webster's magnificent home on Dartmouth Street and Commonwealth Avenue in Boston was a vision at night when it was brightly lit. After World War II, during which the house had been closed, Mrs. Webster revived her custom of placing a magnificent arrangement of flowers in the bay window for passersby to enjoy. The revival of this display was welcomed by many with grateful cards and notes.

The Websters' summer home, although only used two months a year, reflected their serious interest in plants, especially roses. The shingled house bought from the Shearers with its French chateau-style corner towers, was eventually stuccoed and stained pink. The trim on the house and its carriage house across the road was always painted Mrs. Webster's favorite deep bright blue, the color used as well on many of the structures in the rose garden: benches, pergolas, trellises. There was a blue garden designed by the Websters with Peter Arnott, a Scottish gardener who had designed the Queen's thistle garden at Balmoral Castle and the round garden at Holyrood Palace in Edinburgh. The blue garden, containing such flowers as grape hyacinths, deep-blue lobelia, lavender-blue ageratum, azure delphiniums, Canter-

bury bells, gentians, violet-blue lupines, soft blue globe thistles and royal blue petunias, was a dramatic contrast to the warm colors of the roses. Lilies and stock provided white contrast among all the blue shades.



The Webster Rose Garden from a postcard. Courtesy WHHC.

The property ran steeply down hill from the Quissett Avenue level to the beach below on the edge of Quissett Harbor. The rose gardens terraced on the hillside were designed by Herbert J. Kellaway of Boston. The rosarian Harriet R. Foote, who had designed rose gardens in Grosse Point, Michigan, for Mrs. Henry Ford, supervised the landscaping. The construction was done by H.V. Lawrence in 1929.

Beginning in 1930, Mrs. Webster generously opened her garden to the public during the summer months when the roses were at their height of bloom. It became one of the most famous sights on Cape Cod and was mentioned in guide books. It was so popular with visitors that Mrs. Webster had to purchase additional land across the road to make a parking lot. In 1944 the Websters received a gold medal from the Garden Club of America for "their achievement in the realm of roses."

Lester Troop, Oswald H. Beames and Milton Kelley

Lester Troop came to work for the Websters in 1933 and left four years later to raise roses on his own and operate a milk route. In 1937, Oswald H. Beames succeeded him as the head gardener at the Websters. Mr. Beames had studied general agriculture and dairy farming at New Jersey State College (Rutgers). He had worked on private estates since 1906 and managed community farms in Peace Dale, Rhode Island, Delaware and Michigan. In 1924 he began his career in horticulture working on the estate of Walter Jennings in Cold Spring, New York. Prior to his arrival in Quissett he had worked on an estate in Woodstock, Connecticut. After taking over the care of the Webster garden, he and his wife made their home in a house on Woods Hole Road which had been built in 1901 by Milton Fish. Mr. Beames became an expert rosarian and for a number of years



Cordelia Ward enjoys visit to Mrs. Webster's Rose Garden, July 1967. Courtesy Graham Ward.

was President of the Cape Cod Horticultural Society. He suffered a sudden heart attack in 1950 near Quissett Four-Corners and died in his pickup truck a week after Mr. Webster.

Oswald Beames' successor was Milton Kelley. Born in New Hampshire in 1909, Kelley had been a gardener at the Websters' Chestnut Hill estate when he was asked to take over upon Beames' death. No changes were anticipated when he took over the rose garden. Mr. Kelley hired local teenage boys to mow the grass and pick up spent rose petals, a constant

BOSTON WILL REMEMBER THEM

The following tribute, written by Marjorie Sherman, was reprinted in the *Falmouth Enterprise* from *The Boston Globe*, August 29, 1969:

The little boy stood outside the big house on Commonwealth avenue so long that Mrs. Webster's chauffeur was concerned. It was early spring and pretty cold. If he was waiting for someone at the reception for the famous guest, wouldn't he like to sit in the car out of the wind? The child thanked him gravely but he'd rather look at the lights on the flowers in the conservatory.

"My mother and I often walk by here just to see them," he explained, and "I'm here to meet her. She's at the party and she's going to tell me how they look from the inside of the room. I've often wondered."

Five minutes later he stood on the threshold of that little glass room with Mrs. Edwin S. Webster and the day's honor guest, one of the world's great horticulturists, learning the names of the rarest fern and tiny orchids that filled that cool and fragrant place. Nothing pleased Mrs. Webster more. She was like that, and her family knew it, and all the people who worked for her, some of them for more than 40 years.

Thousands of people have watched for the lighted flowers, at Christmas, and at Easter, and even though the town house has been closed since 1966, Mrs. Webster always had the choicest pink and white poinsettias and azaleas, and the most gorgeous cinerarias and mimosa sent in town from the Chestnut Hill greenhouses.

Even when she could no longer see the flowers she chose, her fine hands would touch the fragile primulas, the delicate rubrum lilies, and she'd tell her gardener, "This one I think."

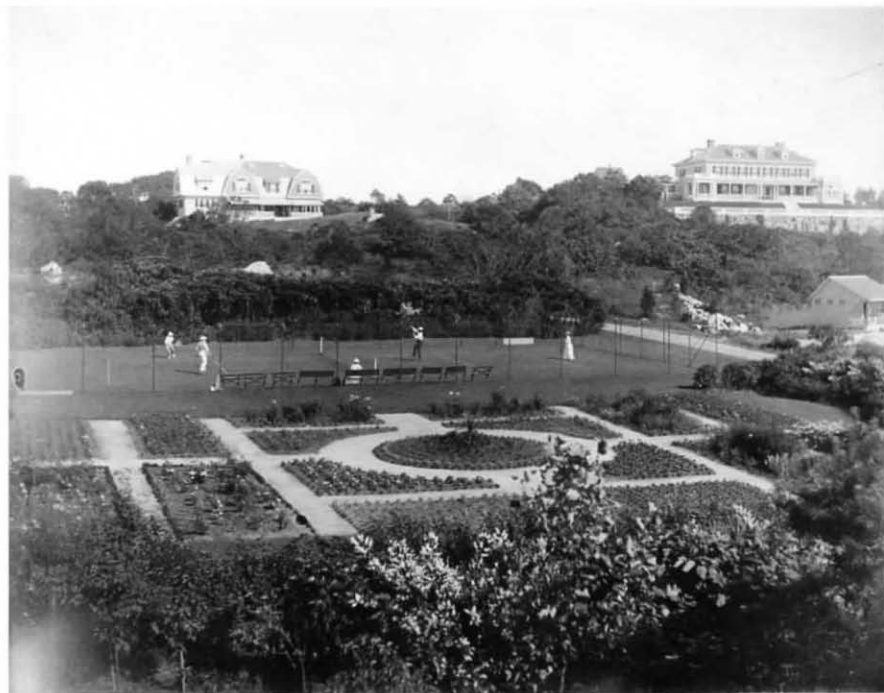
Blind and frail at 98, she yet managed to get to her place at Quissett, happy to find her big, open rose garden filled with admirers from all over America. This house by the sea, her favorite in June and July, had a blue and white garden she and Mr. Webster and Scotch gardener Peter Arnott (he did the Queen's famous thistle garden at Balmoral and the round garden at Holyrood Palace) thought up Quissett and many of the wonders at Center Harbor, N.H., where she loved to watch the fall turn into a blaze of chrysanthemums.

This spring, at 99, unable any longer to put on her favorite pink dress – Sargent painted her in this entrancing color – she still urged the Farm and Garden to bring their guests to roam her Chestnut Hill paradise of color, to enjoy the tree peonies and the trillium and bluebells, the blossoming fruit trees and thousands of tulips, as they have each May for so many years. And though they didn't feel they could disturb her this year, she sent her greenhouse treasures to the plant sale, and blueribbon exhibits to both the Horticultural Society's Harvest show on the Boston Common, and its Spring Flower show at Suffolk Downs.

She and Mr. Webster won gold medal after gold medal for their gardens, and both delighted in their paintings – the Copley self-portrait always had a little spray of rose-red orchids beside it to match the artist's velvet coat....

...But it wasn't always orchids and gold medals. When Mr. Webster founded Stone and Webster, his young bride helped impress clients by "making typing noises, although I couldn't type, in a closet...so it would look as though we had a staff."

They were wonderful people all their lives and Boston will remember them with affection.



Formal Marshall gardens, tennis court, John Marshall house and Harris houses above along Quisset Avenue. Marshall-King Family Albums, on loan to WHHC.

chore during the summer season. He also lived in the house on Woods Hole Road. He died in 1962.

It seems likely that the Websters purchased the charming shingled house at 276 Woods Hole Road built by Milton Fish since all their garden superintendents lived there. It is currently called Webster House and is owned by Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. Mrs. Webster had purchased 45 acres of land extending from Woods Hole Road and Oyster Pond Road to Surf Drive from Arthur Metcalf Morse of Hurricane Hall in Quisset in 1948.

Mrs. Webster died in 1969. The property was inherited by her grandson, Edwin W. Hiam, who decided to demolish both house and garden. Rose plants were given away to those who wanted them

and the demolition took place in 1971. A grass-covered piece of land graced by a few remaining large specimen trees overlooking Quisset Harbor and Buzzards Bay is all that is left. The tower-trimmed carriage house across Quisset Avenue remains in the family and is traditionally painted with deep blue trim. The Webster Rose Garden's reputation is so powerful that it is still spoken of with nostalgia and regret more than 30 years after its destruction.

THE MARSHALL ESTATE Quisset Avenue

The Marshall brothers, James and John, established their residences off Quisset Avenue in 1897. The original main dwelling was moved across the road in 1902 and replaced with a larger version of the gambrel-roofed Colonial Revival house. The Marshalls employed a great staff of gardeners and stablemen for their numerous horses. The heyday of the estate was in the period 1906-1910 when many photographs of life around the place were taken by their chauffeur-photographer John Miles.

Carl A. Frank

Carl A. Frank, son of Carl J. Frank, brother of Leander Blomberg, worked for the Marshall estate, the Hobart Ames section of the Marshall estate and for J.K. Lilly as did his uncle. He and his family

"Helpers on place." This is the way the Marshall family album, from which this photo comes, is labeled. John Scully, the coachman, is at left. The men near to him worked in the extensive horse stables. The men at right worked in the gardens and maintained the estate. One is holding the poodle Romeo, ca. 1906-1910. Marshall-King Family Albums, on loan to WHHC.



Frasar, feeding the chickens at The Farm on Woods Hole Road. The Farm included the Greek Revival house of Captain William Davis, built in 1860, and its adjacent barn and outbuildings. Cows were kept to provide milk. The Marshalls bought the house in 1902. With this purchase their land extended from Woods Hole Road to Muddy Cove on Quissett Harbor. Marshall-King Family Albums, on loan to WHHC.



Fenno house, Quissett. Now the main administration office for Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. Courtesy W.H.O.I. Data Library & Archives.

lived in the Davis farmhouse on Woods Hole Road that had been purchased along with the land stretching to Quissett Harbor which became the Marshall estate; this had always been the Marshall caretaker's home. Frank had graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture, part of the University of Massachusetts. Like many others he left the job of caretaking to pursue other careers after World War II.

THE FENNO ESTATE

Woods Hole Road to Oyster Pond Road, Quissett

Clarence Bradford Fish

Edward N. Fenno, a Boston wool broker, came to Falmouth in 1885. He and his wife rented various houses and invested in land along Great Pond in Maravista. In 1887 he bought 190 acres from James H. Davis between Woods Hole Road and Vineyard Sound. The large shingle-style house was built in 1902 on the highest point of land with a magnifi-

cent view of Vineyard Sound. A rose garden was laid out below the house on the south-facing slope above Oyster Pond Road. The caretaker for 62 years was Clarence Bradford Fish who lived in the former Davis family Cape Cod style house on Woods Hole Road at the entrance to the estate. Son of Jehiel H. Fish of Falmouth and Adeline A. West of New York, he was born in 1892 and had originally come to work as a young boy for his uncle, who was the caretaker at the time.

After the death of Mr. Fenno in 1931 and Mrs. Fenno in 1933, the property passed to their sons Bradlee Fenno, Edward N. Fenno, Jr. and daughter Marion. After this generation passed away, 138 acres of the estate were put up for sale. At this time Fish's daughter Helen Rogers wrote to W.H.O.I. Director Paul Fye:



Fenno estate caretaker Clarence Fish's house at the entrance to the estate on Woods Hole Road. The house was built about 1830, probably for John Davis. It has since been moved to a road off Quissett Avenue and the bay, porch and ell removed. Courtesy W.H.O.I. Data Library & Archives.

"...now that the property has changed hands he (Fish) is greatly distressed over the possibility he may no longer be needed there. In spite of the large number of persons he had to conduct over the estate this summer, which greatly interfered with his regular work, he still managed to keep the grounds in excellent condition. To such an extent many complimented him on the appearance of the place.

The estate will always require the services of a caretaker, and as he knows more about it than any other living soul, it is my fond hope he will be retained in his present position. I am certain you would find his services of great value, and would never regret keeping him in the employ of the Oceanographic.

He is a man highly respected by all who know him, and regularly attends church, so he can be trusted implicitly in all respects, for he has always lead a decent life."

Fye did reply and assure her that if W.H.O.I. did acquire the property, he would give the matter serious consideration.

Helen replied again and reiterated that, "As he [Fish] has spent his entire working life on the Fenno Estate, I greatly fear his being dismissed, and being ousted from the house wherein he spent all of the many happy years of his married life, would be a calamity greater than he could bear."

After purchasing the estate, the institution did indeed hire him as caretaker for \$150.00 per month plus the use of the caretaker residence as his own and all utilities paid. This was later raised to \$200 per month. He was also given medical coverage. Fish wrote a very nice letter to Paul Fye in November of 1969:

"Having worked for the WHOI for a little over a year, decided to write a few lines to express my great appreciation for the kindness shown me by the many officials I came in contact with, all of whom treated me with respect and consideration. Please accept my deepest thanks for what you have done toward keeping me employed, also extend them to Captain Scott, Mr. Mitchell, Col. Wessling and Mr. Clough, all having been very nice to me. It has been a great pleasure working under such understanding men, which I sincerely hope will be the case for some time to come." - Respectfully, Clarence Fish

Mr. Fish died in 1970.

The Fenno estate was purchased by the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in 1967 and combined with 50 acres of land sold by Mrs. Webster. The Institution has since purchased 146 additional acres and has made the Quissett Campus the main location of newer laboratories. Fenno house still stands. For years it was used for entertainment, parties and



Potting shed at the Fenno estate, originally attached to a greenhouse. Courtesy W.H.O.I. Data Library & Archives.

weddings. Presently it houses W.H.O.I.'s administrative offices. Several years ago, the shingle-style house was duplicated next to the original to give the administration twice the space. A glass solarium joins the two identical parts.

Susan Fletcher Witzell was born in New York City and grew up in Summit, New Jersey. After graduating with a B.A. in Art and Art History from Milwaukee-Downer College in 1962 and doing graduate work in Art History and English at S.U.N.Y.-Buffalo, she worked as an art and photo editor at several major publishing companies in New York. She moved to Woods Hole in 1972 and worked as an engineering draftsman at W.H.O.I. for many years. She is co-author with Jane A. McLaughlin and Mary Lou Smith of *New England Views, the Photography of Baldwin Coolidge (1845-1928)*, published by the Woods Hole Historical Collection in 1998. She started as a volunteer in the Woods Hole Historical Museum archives in 1992 and is presently Assistant Curator and Archivist. She and her husband Nick Witzell have made their home in the Racing Beach section of Quissett since 1977. She is an avid gardener.

Notes and Acknowledgments

For a more complete and detailed history of "The Larches" and the gardening of Lotawana Nims, see "The American Gardens of Lotawana Nims" by Judith Lang Day, *Spritsail*, Vol. 8, No. 1, Winter 1994.

The exhibit "Gardeners, Caretakers & Boatmen of the Woods Hole Estates" will be on view at the Woods Hole Historical Museum through October 2005. We hope you will visit the exhibit, which includes many more black and white photos, color photos, garden tools and artifacts. Collecting the history of the gardeners and caretakers is an ongoing project and I encourage anyone who has additional or different information to write to me (Susan F. Witzell) or the Editors of *Spritsail*, P.O. Box 185, Woods Hole, MA 02543, in both cases.

My grateful thanks to everyone who shared their memories, stories, letters, journals, houses, photos, news clippings and other written material for the exhibit and article: Avis N. Blomberg, Mary Lou Martin Botelho, Judith Lang Day, Ted and Meg Fitzelle, Laura Grosch, Marisa Hudspeth, Thomas J. Hynes, Jr., Mary Draper Janney, Victoria Powell, James F. Rogers, Margaret Hough Russell, Cynthia Smith, Doug Souza, Joe Sutton, Mary Carlton Swope, Jane Vose, Joan Wickersham, Robert Edson Swain, Theresa Swain Rapoza.

Sources

Woods Hole Historical Collection: photos and postcard collection.

Woods Hole Historical Collection: files on Individuals and Families.

WHHC Oral History Collection: Recollections of Albert "Pete" Swain, taped interview, January 15, 2000.

WHHC Oral History Collection: James F. Rogers, Conversation: "Estates of Woods Hole in the 1930s and 1940s," April 29, 2002.

Falmouth Enterprise.



Mr. Chambers with Mary Carlton and a friend. Courtesy Mary Carlton Swope.