Virginia Harding McGrath
Speaking on the Monomoyick Inn
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Description: Virginia Harding McGrath describes the Monomoyick Inn, owned and operated by her grandfather, John Pond Farmer Jr. She describes the history of the business and building. She then takes the listener on an audio tour of what the Inn would have looked like back in its heyday. She describes the employees and the layout of the property. She then goes on to describe some of the characters that stayed at the Inn when she was young.

Virginia Harding McGrath: This is Virginia Harding McGrath speaking about the Monomoyick Inn, which was run by my grandfather John Pond Farmer Jr. for many years. In 1884, Capt. Sylvester K. Small opened it as the Traveler's Home. In 1885, he added to the building to keep pace with growing popularity. I think perhaps that it would be interesting to note that the railroad probably had something to do with the growing popularity. In 1854, it had reached Hyannis. And in 1865, it had reached Orleans from Yarmouth and in 1887, it had arrived at Chatham from Harwich.

In 1898, grandfather, John Pond Farmer, bought it and renamed it Monomoyick Inn. He opened it in June. The family consisted of grandfather, aged 56, Mary, aged 46, my mother, Edith, aged 23 and my uncle John, 16.

1919 was grandfather's last season. He died in December. In 1920 to 1922, grandmother rented rooms, but had no dining room. She had no know-how on that end of the house. 1922, Uncle Herbert Crowell, grandmother's brother, died and she came to live with us for one or two summers. The mid-1920s, she sold it to Charles H. and Betsey Snow, who ran it until the early 1930s when Chatham Trust Company took it on foreclosure. In the mid-1930s, Charles and

Doris Chandler took it from the Trust Company and ran it until the mid-1950s. Mr. and Mrs. Noyes purchased it, renamed it the Cranberry Inn and in the late 1950s Mr. and Mrs. McGagh purchased it. Deyo's History of Barnstable County, page 599 to 600 says, “Sylvester K. Small in 1884 opened to the public The Traveler’s Home. It was on an elevation on Main Street, well towards the shore. In 1885, he added to the building in order to keep pace with its growing popularity. It is sought by pleasure seekers in the summer months, but is open all year.” Father had noted in pencil beside it, “Traveler’s Rest of Joseph C. Lincoln’s *Partners of the Tide*.”

In 1898, grandfather bought the place and renamed it Monomoyick Inn. He was very much interested in the local history and because this was the home of the Monomoyick Indians, he named it Monomoyick Inn. Grandmother, mother, and uncle John came by train, but grandfather drove down with a horse and carriage in two days from Swampscott. Grandmother, you may be interested to know, I had a bit of a session with Jimmy Hardy, who was doing the painting. She wanted the front door painted green, and he said no, he was not going to paint it green. Nobody there had a front door that was painted green and he wasn't going to do it. So she said, “Well all right, you won't do it, then I will.” She won. The door was green. The first guest was L.B. Rich, a tea salesman whose father, Bill Rich, who in the 1930s and 40s ran the South Inn (?) in Orleans.

That winter apparently was a humdinger. Grandfather went back to Boston to work. In November, there was the Portland Gale. Grandmother and mother were roused by Dan, the dog, and they found that the gale was blowing, the front bedroom windows had blown in. So they got up and nailed quilts over the windows until the next morning. The next morning during a lull, uncle John and another boy, rode over to North beach. They thought they had seen a

fox., boy style. They were caught over there for the second part of the gale, huddled under a dory until it was over.

John Phillips, the author of a sportsmen scrapbook, used to stay at grandfather's, going and coming from his gunning shanty on Harding's Beach. He wrote that "That winter of 1898 and 1899 was an arctic one and Chatham Bay froze clear over mid-February. And the glass hovered around the zero mark for days. After the ice had piled up on the brant bars, in great jagged walls, with towering peaks and saw tooth edges, so you could imagine yourself in Baffin (?) Bay, with a seal or a polar bear around the corner."

Later he wrote in it, "After that February freeze came a blizzard that Cape Cod remembered for years. Soon enough the snow began to fall and we headed for Chatham, bringing our goods on an improvised sled. For hours and hours we toiled through the drifts across the ice, dragging our suitcases and a box of live ducks after us until we made the town. That night we slept comfortably in Mrs. Farmer's parlor, moving a couple of beds close beside the stove. When we awoke, the whole town was buried. It took the train two long days and a night to run to Boston, almost a record I should think."

I put that in because I thought that- Mr. Phillips gave mother some ducks and she had them, they had two clutches of eggs and mother raised the ducks for pets. And they had quite a time because they were going to be in the way of the boarders and father gave them away and the ducks came back, he took them back, they returned. Finally, grandfather said you mustn't make any fuss over them and just let them find their way back, so they went back to their new owners.

In the summer of 1898, father and mother had their first verbal encounter. Mother and cousin Grace attended a whist party at the hotel Mattaquason, where father was manager. Aunt Grace and mother were seated at the same table as father. Aunt Grace asked mother, then 23 and a very popular belle in Swampscott, how she was ever going to get along in Chatham during the winter. And father gathering their innuendos, glared at them very icily and said, “We’ve managed to survive.”

The dining and the cooking of the Inn maybe of interest. The dining thoroughly styled at two long tables in the dining room. The small room, both off the dining room and parlor, was a grandmother’s bedroom in winter, held grandmother’s dining table. It was used for overflow or special parties. Pastry and vegetable cooking was done by Lizzy. Elizabeth McBrae, who cooked for a Boston family during the rest of the year. Meat cookery was done by grandfather.

A clue to the prices, a sign which I have hanging in my garage, near the back door, says “Breakfast: 25-65 cents, luncheons: 55 cents to one dollar, dinner: 75 cents to one dollar and a quarter.” I lost track of the men who came to the back door since the sign was put up and said, “I’d love a 25 cent breakfast, please.”

The next room from the dining room was the parlor. The stove was taken down in the summertime to make more room. Grandfather’s bedroom, where he slept all year, was right off this room. Father and mother were courting there, by the back of the stove. They thought they were fairly hidden and he was bravely holding the hefty girl in his lap. And thinking themselves hidden behind the stove, grandfather stood to go to bed, he’d almost reached his door when without turning he said, “Thank God that’s one burden I don’t have to bear.” And he went off to bed.

Here in this room, father and mother were married. And here I spent many happy hours with grandma and grandpa. The parlor, the little dining room, the front hall, and the front porch are all incorporated in the lobby of the Cranberry Inn. Next came the office. Here the guests registered in the register lying in the slope top of great-great-grandmother Sally Hasting's secretary (?). There they sat when they weren't occupying rocking chair row, on the front porch was a stove for cool nights and chilly days.

Next, there was the long hall, off which opened the bedrooms. There was a side hall that contained a toilet for the gentlemen and for the ladies a lavatory and a linen closet. The outside door from the long hall had frosted and engraved glass, which probably was Sandwich Glass. The upper hall was very much like the lower one. There were four bedrooms on the first floor. Grandpa's one, #14, was off the parlor, there was no #15. There were eight bedrooms on the second floor. As for the attic, grandma had a small one that was over the parlor part of the house. Here she had two cots, bureaus, sea chest, trunks, chairs, and so forth, and it was small girl's delight to spend the night with grandma up under the eaves. On the help's side, which through a connecting opening, which must have been made by a dwarf because it was so low that you had to duck your head. If you forgot the first time, you remembered it the second time. On the eastern part was the help's side, which was larger. Here slept Ms. Julia Eldredge the housekeeper, and the table girls slept on the side of the street on cots and the remainder.

The small attic over the little dining room here was where the cook and the laundress slept. One window was on the west, it must have been very cozy after a hot afternoon. The toilet facilities were somewhat primitive, the toilets I have already spoken of. Each bedroom had a a wash bowl, pitcher, and cup and slop jar. For the help, it was the bathhouse.

The bedroom equipment was simple. The bed was brass or wooden beds, a bureau, a commode with the various equipment, a lamp table with a lamp, a lampshade, chairs, and floors with a cover of straw matting.

On the second floor, there was a rope for fire escape coiled up near the window. For the lighting, gas was supplied by a gas plant at the rear of Atwood's store. Later, grandfather had his own gas plant down the garden, behind the well house. There were gas fixtures in the kitchen, dining room, parlor, office, small hall, and front room in the upstairs, one in the toilet hall, two in the long hall downstairs, and two upstairs. There were lamps in the bedrooms and the attic. Outdoors, beside the front door, was a large square lantern with a lamp inside. It behooves you to have settled down before dark or have night vision.

Out at the laundry, there was a kitchen stove for heating water and boiling clothes, heating the flat irons and the wash tubs. The flat kind you'd brace on two chairs and hope they'd stay put. Here I learned to iron, ironing napkins and pillow slips, and other small things, using one of those stove heated flat irons that had to be held with a holder. Over in the corner, there was a vat for drying out lard in a grinder for making sausage meat, for pig killing time. This was grandfather's domain, where he made lard, sausage, sauce, cheese and prepared the hams for smoking. Grandfather had his smokehouse, located near the garden, going the first time he smoked ham for bacon, one of the neighbors ran up to the back door and called, "Oh Mr. Farmer, your backhouse is a fire!"

Next to the laundry was the woodshed that had been a carriage shed. It had been converted to a woodshed. And next to that was the carriage house, where grandfather kept extra carriages. He had a walk-in refrigerator near the back door of the house. Next came the

barn or stable, whichever you prefer to call it. The other part held extra carriages and harnesses. There was a shed on the left where the hay could be brought in and could be forked down to the mangers through a hole in the floor. And behind this was grandfather's workshop. He made repairs on furniture or whatever needed to be put in condition for the next season. Here was a work bench and a stove for cold weather, and also for the times when grandfather and grandmother had a small spat and he'd say, "I'm going out to the barn to live." As all men do.

On the right was a shed, which contained a runway that led down to the lower part of the stable. As you went down, you came first to the pig pens. Grandfather always had four or five pigs, sometimes more. He had two sets of pens and there was a henhouse. And then in the main stable part there was- I forget how many stalls there were- about seven regular stalls and a box stall. I didn't get in there too much because Madge, grandfather's bay mare, was a she-devil and I was scared to death of her and so was grandmother. And she would get out of her stall and get loose in the main part of the stable. And you had to be very careful because she was a crowder and she'd crowd you right up against the wall.

Grandfather had to be very careful about reminding a new boy about Madge because the new boy had to bring Madge up the runway to hitch her to one of the wagons. And she'd come up in a very docile way with her head down and she'd come out over the yard, and the boy would have a very slack hold on the bridle, about that time Madge up with the head and get the reigns loose, off she'd right down here to Mary Stewart's lawn. Grandfather would say, "Oh Lord, she's gone down to Mary Rockwell's and is going to run round and round and I'm going to have to fix that lawn again."

I don't remember too much about the regular clients at the Inn because I wasn't allowed to be around too much because I would be under foot in the way and they were busy. But I want to tell you about the most colorful things.

The Norfolk Hunt Club, which grandfather and grandmother always called "the huntsmen," this was a Boston group that came down the day after Thanksgiving. They arrived about noon on the train and they left Monday morning. Later, someone asked me was it all men. When they stayed at grandfather's it was all men. After they stayed at the Wayside Inn, after a few years, I think some of the women came down, they didn't come down very long after they left grandfather's. They filled the Inn and the neighboring houses, there were different houses around but they had rooms. There were horses everywhere. You'd look out and see the grooms riding down the street, riding one horse and leading several down from the station. They came down in these big freight cars.

They were in the stable at grandfather's, in the upper part of the floor there. They were over at Joe Eldredge's stable. They put up temporary stalls and board and rope. They were everywhere. The hounds were in the woodshed and the grooms ate in the laundry. Grandfather had Willie Small cook for them. They slept there too when they got a chance, which wasn't very often because the huntsmen kept them hopping. They roomed out of neighboring houses. The master of the foxhounds was Henry Vaughn and his particular pal was Colonel Sweet (sp?). And they were the long and short of it. Mr. Vaughn was tall and thin and Colonel Sweet was very short. There was Judge Trask, Doctor Moss, Nelson Perkins, those are the ones that I remember.

Mr. Vaughn and Colonel Sweet always came to call sometime during their stay. And then there was Andrew McGregor, the head groom.

Their hunting clothes, they were so colorful in their redcoats, white britches, black boots, black velvet caps, white stockings, white gloves, and their purse. They were something out of an English hunting picture, really. And you've never known confusion until you've seen an Inn yard full of beautiful horses and their riders, some in the saddle, some mounting, some horses being held by the grooms waiting for their riders, horses pawing impatiently, some dancing to be off, chomping at the bit, froth flying, and hounds, some sitting down, some among the horses, some on leashes, some held in restraint by the long suffering McGregor, who had charge of them.

My first encounter with the huntsmen was when I was aged 39 days. On Saturday that year, they rode into the yard to see the new baby.

Mrs. Berry, and I don't know where she came from, was the cook. She came several days ahead and made mincemeat and got things started. They had beautiful liquor they bought and sent down. And grandmother's side board would be loaded with all kinds of it…and so would the men. It was in the men, it was in the mincemeat, and they even poured it in grandmother's piano.

And Mrs. Berry would say how she can finish making the mincemeat there, just as soon as they have the liquor unpacked, I'll have some to put it in the mincemeat. Mother used to say, "You shouldn't do that." And Mrs. Berry would say, "What's the difference, they're going to get it one way or the other."

1918 was the last year they stayed at the Inn. In 1919, grandfather was too sick to have them. They stayed at the Wayside Inn but kept their horses at the Monomoyick and Eldredge's stable. And McGregor, he brought his bagpipes to play for grandfather. He played outside first, but grandfather who had been deaf from childhood, from scarlet fever, couldn't hear, so he came inside. He played inside. Grandfather could hear beautifully, but grandmother, uncle John, mother, and I were deaf. And I mean deaf. Have you ever been caught in the same room as scurling bagpipes? I'm sure my brains were addled that day. McGregor told us stories of his clan McGregor and the Rob Roy branch, which he was so proud to be a member. The pouch of his pipes were covered with a Rob Roy pattern that matched the kilt he wore. Whenever I hear bagpipes, I recall that gray November day and I can still see that sturdy little Scotsman in a complete Scotch kit, marching back and forth outside the window. His bagpipes curling the old and beloved Scottish airs.

This was about the last of the Monomoyick Inn because December eighth that year, grandfather passed away and that ended the final phase of the Monomoyick Inn.

END OF RECORDING