

The hearts of the Fisher-Richardson family are filled with an abiding spirit of pride, love and respect as they think of the living which has centered about this one old home as it has stood by the side of the road all these long years. I shall tell you some of the recorded historical facts and some of the family lore.

Built in the early 1700's it was only the east end of what you see. It first enters our family records in 1763, when Lemuel Fisher of Norton and his bride Mary White, daughter of the first minister, came here to begin their married life. Because all these ancestors seem so familiar I shall call them by their first names.

Lemuel was one of the Colonial minutemen. He left here April 19, 1775, and served periodically, as was the custom. The farm included all of the land in this vicinity. Lemuel was buried in the Town Hall Cemetery.

There were nine children born to this couple but it is their son Daniel whom we know. When he married Hepzibah Fillebrown the west end of the house was added for their home. Daniel was a blacksmith and cared for the needs of the villagers' oxen. Also, it was he who dug and sold the peat from the pond, thus giving us the Peat Hole around which many experiences center. Daniel and Hepzibah had two children, Daniel Jr. and Evelina.

Their son, Daniel Jr., married Mary Johnston of Easton. Then father and son divided the farm--Senior on this side and Junior across the road. Daniel and Mary built their home down near the river--it is now the east end of Maude Brooks' home. Aunt Mary, as we called her, was a remarkable woman, living in that same house

until she died at the age of one hundred years, two months. They are the branch of the family who are the ancestors of the Fisher cousins--Maude Brooks, the late Howard Fisher, Malcolm Fisher, Mary Swift, Madeline Wheeler, Helen FitzRandolph, and others.

Next we turn to Evelina whose life added greatly to the history of this home. In 1833 she married Ira Richardson of Attleboro. They drove to the former home of Ed Freeman in Norton, now restored by Mr. and Mrs. Phillips, to be married by Rev. Pitt Clark, well-known minister of what is now the Unitarian Church of Norton. It was this couple who gave us the Richardson name, so we are interested in his background. Born in 1801, Ira was the youngest of the eleven children of Sarah French and Seth Richardson, a Revolutionary War veteran. They lived on the farm located on the present Richardson Avenue, just over the line from Norton into Attleboro.

Lydia

Ira's sister married Emerson Briggs, and they became the ancestors of the prominent Briggs family of Attleboro--Judge Walter and Rev. Frank Briggs you may know.

The Richardson family came to this vicinity from Woburn in the early 1700's.

Here I have a family memento to read--

Ira held the rank of Captain in the Norton Artillery. His fame spread when he loaded his gun with green grass as well as powder in order to make a terrific bang welcoming Pres. Jackson and Vice-Pres. Van Buren on their visit to Rhode Island.

Ira and Evelina came here to live soon after their marriage because of the ill health of her parents. He took an active part in the affairs of the town and as a carpenter and wheelwright he made furniture and implements for the home and farm. My sister has a

chest, he made for our grandmother. When the first train went through Mansfield he was shingling the roof of the old Skinner Barn which stood across the bridge near the home of Jean McDiarmid Findlater. Another public service of his was "sexton" which meant he used his faithful horse, old Jim, and drove the town hearse--not much more than a box on wheels. He charged one dollar for this and a dollar and a half for opening and closing the grave. By 1865 the price for carrying the body was a dollar and a half. There are many tales associated with this position, the hearse serving dual purposes. At one time he drove by Norton Reservoir and overtook Merrill Blanchard, an uncle of Alice Blanchard Leonard, who was returning from a fishing trip. In his usual accommodating way he gave Merrill a ride. Can you picture him and his fish pole occupying the honor position in the hearse? On another occasion my grandmother rode home from school in it. When the town paid \$400 for a new hearse, Capt. Ira showed his objection by refusing to drive it, so the profession was taken over by Carroll Shepard, step-father of E. G. Sherman, grandfather of the present mortician Philip Sherman--another example of family tradition.

We must get on to the children of Capt. Ira and Evelina. Here their nine children were born and here they both died. There were three sons--Edward who died at eight years of age, Lloyd a Civil War soldier died at twenty-four, and George in 1897. None had children so the direct line of the Richardson name could not be carried on.

The oldest daughter, Mary, married John Selee of Easton (Poquanticut). They were the grandparents of the Selee children who formerly lived in Mansfield--John, Jessie and Mary now live in New York and Richardson (known as Richard) holds a responsible Government position in Panama.

Lodoyska married Elijah Morse of Sharon. They had no children but my mother told us how generous they were to all the family. For instance, when visiting here they would go for candy at "Old Lady White's" store which was in her home, ^{recently} ~~whichxxxxxxx~~ the nucleus of Clarence Ralph's modern home.

Caroline married Jared Dean of Easton and their children died as infants. One of the few remaining neighbors who remembers her especially among all the sisters is Jennie Walker, widow of Charles Walker, who has lived all her life in the house across from the pond.

Emma married Albinus Frost who came to town to be minister of the New Jerusalem Church and later became the first principal of Mansfield High School. They were blessed with ten children, one of whom, Emma Richardson Frost, is here today. It is to her that the Town is indebted for the gift of this old homestead. Her sister Marion is living in Florida and her brother, Ira, lives in Montana. The grandchildren and great grandchildren live in homes the length and breadth of the United States and even in England.

Outstanding in the memory of all the people who came to this old family home is the personality of Martha Richardson, who was known to all as "Aunt Martha". As the ~~only~~ unmarried daughter of Capt. Ira, she lived here all her life until ill health necessitated her moving to be cared for by Maude Fisher Brooks. To show the growth of this neighborhood I quote one anecdote about Aunt Martha--Word had been received that her brother Lloyd, two Fisher cousins and two other neighbors would be returning from the Civil War. She stationed herself on the house roof and her sister Emma stayed at the bottom of the ladder. When Martha spotted the five blue coats coming down the present South Main Street at a point near the McRae place she sent

Emma scurrying across the field to tell Aunt Mary Fisher. There wasn't much work done in these parts that day.

Through all the ups and downs of the family it was Martha to whom they turned for care or assistance. She was known for her sense of humor and her cordial welcome for all who dropped in. Her sayings are still quoted by her relatives--When leaving home she admonished each to check for "teeth, watch and key". When plans were made for any occasion she had one rule--"no matter what happens, there's to be no fussing." Her gardening and culinary skills added to her fame--molasses cookies from the big cookie crock, jellies, hulled corn, apple-sauce cake, milk, cream and "garden sass." Above all of these homely arts was her great contribution to the care of her many relatives, friends and neighbors. She was devoted to her church and practiced her religion in her daily living.

The youngest Richardson girl, Clara, was born here on August 14, 1851, and her mother, Evelina, died that day. She was the first to be buried in the family lot over here under the spruce tree. She left her husband, Ira Richardson, with the nine children and her feeble mother and father who were cared for by Capt. Ira and his children until they too were buried under the tree. Even with all this care and responsibility Aunt Martha stated that he was never known to say a cross word.

The tiny baby who was my grandmother was carried to Richardson Avenue in Norton by Capt. Ira's sister Rhoda Richardson Wheeler and brought up in her home. It was told that the horse was walked all the way and a cousin who was riding in another carriage often ran up to see if the baby were still alive as it was unusual to carry a new-born baby so far.

At the age of seventeen Clara married George Fiske. Here are her wedding hat, gloves and handkerchief. Because of Capt. Ira's declining

health my grand parents came home to help Aunt Martha care for him. He was a great favorite in the neighborhood and his many friends did much to cheer him in his last illness. Mr. Goodwin who lived in the house on South Main Street near the corner of Beech Street came regularly on Thursdays to read the weekly paper to him. Because of its contents, Capt. Ira called it "The Murders". On a special occasion my grandfather Fiske asked the local veterans group to call at the house. When they stood there in formation the aged Captain stood up, even in his feeble condition, and put them through the usual order of arms. It was a thrilling occasion for those participating and the family.

There were five Fiske children. My uncle Howard Fiske, now living in East Mansfield, was born here in 1882 and was the last baby to be born in this old home. Also surviving is my uncle, Leon Fiske of Dean Street. Five of the seven grandchildren still live in Mansfield. The name "Richardson" has been carried on by each branch of Capt. Ira's descendants.

When my grandparents lived here in the early 1880's, my grandfather worked in Attleboro for one dollar per day. Before taking the 6:30 train from Mansfield Station he always brought the water necessary for the day's activities from the well at the west end of the house-- this meant a lot on wash days. Also he must do the barn chores and walk to the station. To further help the womenfolks, Aunt Martha and Grandmother, each evening he threaded a pin-cushion full of needles sufficient for their needs when sewing straw the next day. In the house there is a pinchship which may be the size used. The straw was delivered to them from the Straw Shop on Park Street by a Mr. Dunham, great great grandfather of Edgar Vernon Jr.

Thus we have traced the Richardson family from 1763 to 1956. Many of the former furnishings of the old home are the prized possessions of the descendants. Emma now uses the furniture which was used by her great grand_parents, Daniel and Hepzibah, who were married in 1800. But over and above all of these is the undying pride we hold in tracing our ancestry from such a noble example of American family life.