Mapledale Country Club: The First Recorded 19-Hole Golf Club Owned and Operated by African Americans

Robert C. McDonald Stow, Massachsetts Friday, February 5, 2021

According to local lore in the town of Stow, Massachusetts, America's first full 9 hole golf course open to Black men was established in this town on the site of the present Stow Acres Country Club Golf Course. Residents in Stow who were alive during this time were interviewed to assess the social reactions in the all-white farming community and to flesh out the recreational activities made available to negros only. Regional and Boston newpapers were searched to identify the chronology of events defining the rise and economic fall of the course. Legal notices and town records describe the involvement and activities of Robert H. Hawkins, a black business man born in 1889 in Adams, Massachusetts, who managed and owned Mapledale.

Residents in Stow have recalled seeing caravans of automobiles with Negro golfers traveling down Great Road and Gleasondale Road to the course in the 1920's (1). Although there were as many as 14 black golf clubs were documented in the 1920's, there is no evidence that they were both owned and operated by African Americans (20). Mrs. Carrie Jones, of Maynard, Massachusetts, related much of this information to the author in 1988. Her first husband, John Russell, was treasurer for the course under the original name of Mapledale Golf Course (2). Other African American officers of the Mapledale Golf Course included Franank Booker and Clarence Rhone. The address of the course in those early days was on Riley Street in Stow, since changed to Randall Road. In addition to Golf, a toboggan run, swimming pool, restaurant and banquet hall were provided (3,4).

Individuals around the country have been contacted in an effort to fill in some of the historical gaps in this important period of black history. This was a period when recreation for American Blacks was developed in facilities separate from those of White Americans. The following narrative is a summary of this search, including information from census reports, newspaper articles and directories, listed in the references below.

The land was originally owned by Steven Randall, one of the original Stow settlers, in the 17th Century. His descendants, including Silas Randall, Dr. John Randall and Dr. John Witt Randall, continued to occupy the homestead and farm until the late 19th century. For the most part the Stow residence was a summer home for the Randalls of Boston. Dr. John Randall was married to Elizabeth Wells, granddaughter of Samuel Adams (1). On September 29, 1856, Elizabeth sold the land and buildings to B.W. Gleason and business partners (23). In the early 1900's, the land was purchased from the Randall estate by Charles M. Cox, a wealthy grain merchant and philanthropist from Boston. He owned the Wirthmore Grain Company in Boston and used the Randall homestead as a summer retreat (1).

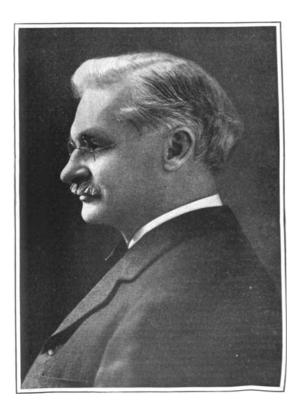


Figure 1 Marshall W. Cox in 1914 (1a)

In the 1920's, he sponsored a full 9 hole golf course exclusively for Blacks to use, because of the segregation then existing at contemporary American golf courses. He hired Robert H. Hawkins, a Black man who was working as a steward of the Sandy Burr Course in Wayland, Mass., to manage the course in the summer of 1926. Hawkins was born in 1888 in Adams, Massachusetts to Thomas Hawkins and Elliza Roberts. His interest in golf began when he cadied at the Forest Park Club in Adams in (24). When his family moved to Burlington, Vermont, he continued as caddy at the Waubanakee Club and promoted to caddy master. After graduating from High School, he he worked as steward at some of the finest courses in variaous capacities at a number of Vermont golf courses and started a business as the proprietor of a restaurant in Washington County Vermont (4a). Hawkins was to compete in subsequent Negro golf turnaments in the amateur class. He co-founded United Golfers Association (U.G.A.) and was elected vicepresident in 1927 (14a). Ralph Thomas from the Sandy Burr Golf Course in Wayland, MA designed the original 9 hole layout on the east side of the present south course. The course was opened for play in the spring of 1926 (1b). The victorian era Randall Homestead was modified to accomadate vacation rooms and annual club membership fees ranged from \$15 to \$35 (14).

In 1917, John A. Riley sold the property together with its home and farm buildings to Stanley J. Tripp, a Boston land speculator (21). In 1923 and 1924, Tripp (not a resident of Stow) was taxed for 160 acres, a house, two barns, cottage, hen house and windmill.

During the 1920's, the Randall estate was operated also as a farm, alongside the 9-hole course. The land was maintained by various stewards and farm hands, including Robert H. Hawkins, with individuals outside of Stow appearing in the annusal tax reports. Over the years, ownership of the 160 acre parcel with its large home, adjoining buildings and structures was shown in the Stow Assessor's reports was as follows:

1917	John A. Reilly of Stow
1924	W. Stanley Trip of Boston
1925	Fred E. Johnstone of 209 Washington St. Boston
1926	George J. Wilson
1928	Robert H. Hawkins of Stow
XXX	Mr. Honeywell
XXX	Major Collins
1954-1986	Page Brothers of Weston and Stow, MA
1986-2007	Walter Lankau of Sudbury, MA
2007-present	Peter Brown of Essex, MA

The first Negro American men's golf tournament was played at *Mapledale* in 1926 (5). The course was the first in the country to be designed, operated and managed by An African American, Robert H. Hawkins. In 1926, the colored Knights Templar organization (formerly the African Grand Lodge) held their ninth convention with a parade in Boston. On the following day, an outing was held at *Mapledale Country Club* in Stow (13). Members of the United Golfer's Association have given their recollections of this early event (10,11,12). In 1927, Robert Ball of Chicago took the title at *Mapledale*, with J. Shippen in second place and Harry Jackson and Elmer Stout tied for third. Porter Washington, a *Mapledale* professional, won the 1928 United States Colored Open Championship 4 up from Robert P. Ball. Frank Gaskin of Philadelphia defeated B. Barker of Washington to 7-6 to win the Colored Amateur Championship while A. Tanksley of Philidelphia defeated T. Edwards of Washington to take the amateur second division by a score of 6-4 (16). Qualifying scores for the 1928 Open at *Mapledale* including four local players were as follows:

AMATEURS

Ball, Chicago	38 34 -72
Gaskins, Philadelphia	39 34 -73
Barker, Washington	35 40 -75
Greeene, Washington	37 42 -79
Friesson, Chicago	40 39 -79
Williams, Washington	40 42 -82
Brent, New York	43 39 -82
Hawkins, Mapledale, Stow	43 43 -86
Hilliard, Brockton	44 43 -87
Wilson, Mapledale, Stow	45 45 -90
Fortune, Washington	47 43 -90
Johnson, Chicago	45 47 -92
Adams, Washington	49 44 -93
-	

Walker, Mapledale, Stow	45-49 -94
Kinerly, New York	50 45 -95
Vinston, Philadelphia	52 50 -102
Lawrence, Mapledale, Stow	51 51 -102

PROFESSIONAL

Shippen, Washington	38 34 72		
Jackson, Washington	37 36 -73		
Washington, Mapledale, Stow 37 38 -75			
Person, New York	39 38 -77		
Aaron, New York	41 39 -80		
Edmonds, Providence	38 44 -82		
Taylor, Norfolk, VA	42 40 -82		
Shippen, Jr. Washington	40 42 -82		
Gains, Wesfield, NJ	46 39 -85		
Petty, Westfield, NJ	45 40 -85		
Harris, Washington	43 43 -86		
Hunter, Washington	43 47 -90		

This parcel corresponds to the building and acreage of the old John Randall Estate. By 1927, Robert Hawkins and his wife (14a) were in charge of the 9-hole Mapledale course, a "a colored members organization" along with the old Dr. Randall mansion with its new dance hall. On February 27, 1926, Hawkins purchased the 160 property with buildings for \$10,000 from real estate dealer George J. Wilson of Boston (22). In 1928, Robert H. Hawkins was also involved with farming on Riley Street (now referred to as Randall Road) as he was taxed for 14 hens, 2 horses, 1 cow, 2 yearings but no house or out buildings. It seems likely that he was using the land and buildings of the Randall estate in 1928. In 1929, the course was renamed Stow Golf and Country Club as a pubic pay-as-you-play facility (15). By 1930-31, Hawkins was still manager and perhaps part owner of the business on Riley Street, later called Randall Road (6). His name appears in the 1930 Stow Directory as living on Riley St. and managing the Mapledale Course (7) and there are recollections that he lived there with his wife who was a waitress, and a son, Russel Thomas Hawkins (3,6), who attended Gleasondale School in Stow. These were confirmed in the 1930 U.S. Census for Stow listing the only two Negro residents, Robert H. Hawkins with his wife Edith S. Hawkins, working as a steward on the golf course, owning a substantial home valued at \$10,000 and residing on a farm. At the time, the 20-room Randall home was one of the most valuable homes in the town. Unfortunately, Hawkins appears to have fallen victim to the declining economy in the late 1920's leading him to file for bankruptcy in 1931 with no assests and \$8,401 in debt. He was listed in this filing as a laborer in Stow (7a). At this time, the course was acquired by Charles M. Cox of Malden (25). By 1930-31, regular playership had become mostly White, although 41 year old Robert H. Hawkins and his wife, 37 year old Edith S., continued to manage the business (6) for some time, listed as living at the club house in 1930 (6b). A contemporary town directory lists Benjamin G. Cox as manager of the course (listed as Stow Golf Course) in 1931. The Crowell history of Stow states that Charles Marshal Cox (1851-1944) was still involved in the operation to the Stow Golf

Course in 1933 (6a). One Stow resident remembered meeting Hawkins around 1935 while the two occupied themselves cutting ice at Boone's Pond (also known as Lake Boone) nearby (1). There were remembrances of occasional convoys of automobiles driven by Black golfers on there way to the course from Boston in the 1930's (9). In 1935, Hawkins lived in Arlington, Ma. and in the 1940 census, Robert and his wife were listed as owning a home at 89 Elm St. in Framingham, Ma., he as a self-employed steward and she as a self-employed housekeeper. In 1938, he organized the *Green Acres Country Club* which he operated until forced to retire due to poor health (24). His wife, Edith S. (Gibson) Hawkins, passed away in 1967 in Dorcester (7b).

Robert Hawkins was also involved in an earlier but failed attempt at establishing a 9-hole golf course open to Blacks. Several Negro businessmen, railroad workers, doctors and others from North Cambridge, West Medford and Winchester purchased land from a farmer in Billerica around 1920. They were able to create a 3-hole (executive) course but this operation went bankrupt and was sold to another farmer, Mr. Joe Kapitsky. The farmland eventually returned to use as a golf course under the ownership of Mr. Stan Toloutis who created the Webb Brook Country Club and Tavern. Among the original Black businessman, were Messrs. Miller, Jackson, Smith and Robert H. Hawkins. The businessmen then moved their interests to Stow where they became involved with the golf course built on the land of Charles M. Cox (8). Other early black golf courses included smaller 5-hole courses including Chesire Country Club (18) in Chesire, CT (1917), Shady Rest Country Club (19) in Scotch Pines, NJ where black investors took over a whites-only 9-hole course in 1921 and Acorn Country Club (20) in Richmond, VA founded in 1924.

Marshall W. Cox of Concord, MA (1889-, a nephew of Charles M. Cox took over the operation of Stow Acres from the original Negro management (1,3). Marshall and his wife Helen lived for a time in Stow around 1935 and moved to a rented home in Concord by 1940 (28). He struggled as a businessman, operating a small candy business during winters. History records that in 1948, he became despondant over a collapsed roof at the club house and, after going home that night he murdered his wife Helen "out of an act of kindness" so that he could be executed and "join her in heavan" (26). The ensueing trials debated the core defense of insanity and the ultimate justification of capitol punishement. He died at age in Boston in 1948 at age 57. Marshall was ultimately deemed mentally ill and his estate passed into probate court in 1960 (27).

Subsequent owners and operators included Mr. Honeywell, Major Collins (9) and in 1954, the Page brothers: Fred, Bob and Tom bought the land. Adding many adjoining acres, the Page Brothers expanded the course to 36 holes, creating *Stow Acres Country Club*, one of the most successful public golf courses in the nation. **Figure xx** shows a local press photo from 1986 of the eldest brother, Fred Page.

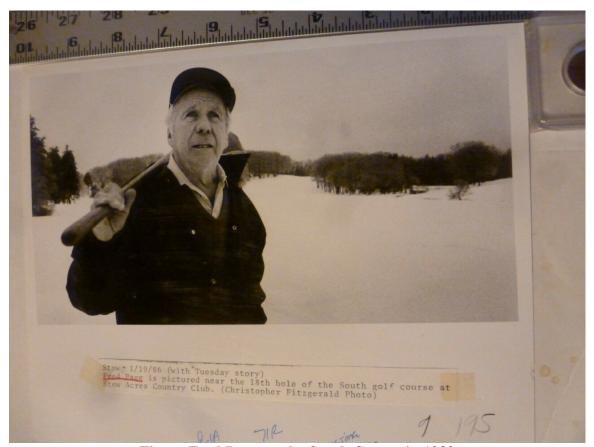


Figure Fred Page on the South Course in 1989

By 1987, the three brothers were getting on in years a so sold Stow Acres to Walter Lankau of Sudbury. Bob Page and his son Robert decided to build another course called Butternut, ajacent to Stow Acres, after purchasing land from Charlie and Dorothy Legett on Gleasndale Road.

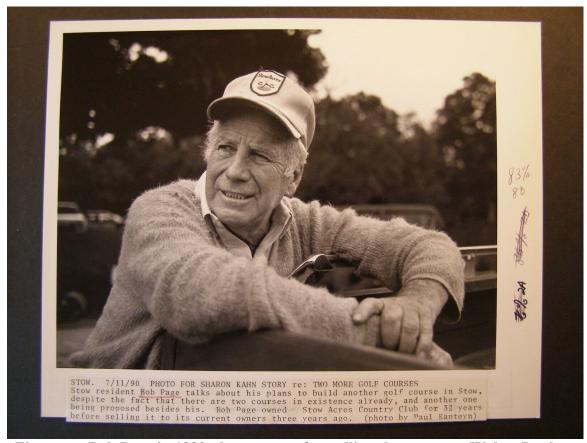


Figure xx Bob Page in 1990, three years after selling the course to Walter Lankau

The memory of Mapledale has persisted among local negro civic and religious groups. In 2007, members of the Greater Framingham Community Church sponsored an official reconig, a certificate of historic preservation was presented to the owner at that time, Walter Lankau.

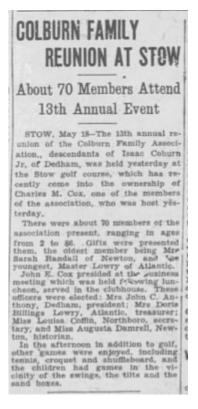


Figure xx Representative Pat Walrath, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Lankau and members of the Greater Framingham Community Church commemorate Mapledale Golf Course

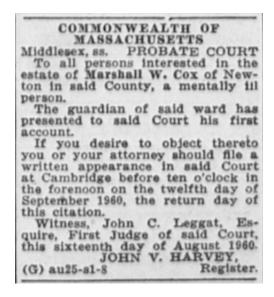
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- 1b. Boston Sunday Globe, "Golf Club in Stow for Colored People: Mapledale C.C., believed only one of its kind", page 13, August 5, 1926
- 2. Mrs. Carrie Jones and her daughter, Marsha, Maynard, Ma.
- 3. Mr. Alan Ferguson, Stow, Ma.
- 4. Mr. Frederick page, Weston, Ma.
- 4a 1910 U.S. Census for Washington County, VT
- 5. Pamphlet: "Invitation to Membership: United Golfer's Association (U.G.A.), Inc.", obtained from Mrs. Louise Simpson, Secretary of the U.G.A. in 1997

May 22, 1931, The Boston Globe



September 1, 1960 Newton Graphic Marshall W. Cox estate probate notice

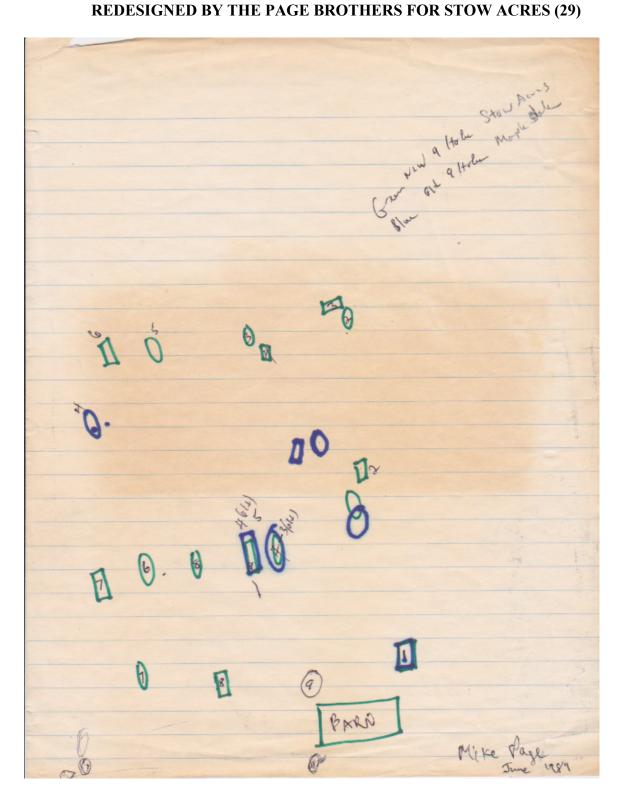


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- 8. Mr. Stanley Toloutis, Billerica, Ma.
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- 11. Mrs. May Campell, Associated with U.G.A., Chicago, Il.
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- 29. Mike Page recollections, 1989

LAYOUT OF THE ORIGINAL 9 HOLE MAPLEDALE GOLF COURSE AND AS

APPENDICES



August 5, 1926, The Boston Globe

June 31, 1940 The Boston Daily Globe

GOLF CLUB IN STOW FOR COLORED PEOPLE

Mapledale C. C. Believed Only One of Its Kind

A golf and country club exclusively for colored people is the most recent addition to the Bay State's quota of clubs.

This organization, which is known as the Mapledale Country Club, is situated in Stow, and as near as can be recalled is the only one of its kind in the country.

The Mapledale Club is the creation of Robery H. Hawkins, who for many years has been connected with the administration of country clubs in this vicinity. Hawkins at the present time is connected with the Sandy Burr G. C. of Wayland, but is expected to leave the latter organization the middle of this month to devote all his efforts toward the development of this new and

this month to devote all his efforts toward the development of this new and
unique club.

Mapledale is a nine-hole layout, and
forms but a part of the 190 acres in
the property, which gives plenty of
room for further development of the
course. Ralph Thomas, professional
at Sandy Burr, laid out the links, and
he has already drawn plans for additional nine, to be started next Spring.
The present nine-hole course was
opened for play early this seasop, and
while temporary greens have been
used so far, the permanent putting
surfaces, it is expected, will be playable within a fortnight.

Stow's new club, it is proposed will
be the scene of the first colored open
golf châmpionship held in the United
States. Labor Day is the tentative
date set for the event, and the officials
have announced that already entries
have been received from points as far

have been received from points as far distant as Chicago and Washington. Prize money to the sum of \$300 has been raised for the contestants to play

The main building at Mapledale is

The main building at Mapledale is of the colonial type.

There were 15 rooms in the structure, and it is being rapidly transformed into a home fitted modernly. There is at present to be completed the large dancing room and some minor details in lighting and plumbing. Also the men's locker room, in a separate building, will not be ready for probably another week.

There are rooms where the people may spend a day, week or weeks, turing vacation periods, where they may have practically all the enjoyments of other real golf and country clubs, and at very reasonable rates. The maximum fee for membership is \$25 and the minimum is \$15.

When the proposition is in full swing there will be in addition to golf, tennis, trap and gallery shooting, croquet, quoits and horseback riding for Summer sports, as well as the Winter enjoyments, for Mapledale will be an all-year-round proposition.

Charles M. Cox

Prominent, for Years in Grain Business

in Grain Business

MELROSE, June 13—Ex-State
Senator Charles Marshall Cox. 84,
683 Franklin st., who helped thousands of the boys to go to college
and was one of New England's most
successful business men, died today
at Melrose Hospital after a sickness
of two weeks.

A man who was loved by business
associates and employees alike, he
was one of the first to institute employee profit-sharing and four-week
vacations in the many enterprises
which he controlled.

Born in Dedham, he graduated
from Dedham High School and entered the grain and feed business
in 1885, founding the very successful
Boston company which bears his
name. In addition, he became the
head of 60 New England grain companies which operate more than 106
feed stores.

He was a great public benefactor
who gave to Melgree the Messenser.

He was a great public benefactor who gave to Melrose the Messenger Playground and the playgrounds at the Lincoln and Washington Schools and the site of the Roosevelt School. And he was very instrumental in the erection of Melrose Hospital, of which he was a trustee: Memorial

which he was a trustee; Memorial Hall and the Melrose Y. M. C. A.
He was a state Senator for one term, in 1914. He founded the Boston Businessmen's Art Club, and oil painting was his hobby in recent

years.

Mr. Cox was owner of the Dedham Transcript and the Stow Golf Club and director of the Corn Products Company of Delaware. He leaves a son, Moulton, and daughter, Mrs. Frank C. White, both of Melrose, and four grandchildren.

September 6, 1927 Boston Globe

BALL CAPTURES COLORED OPEN GOLF CHAMPIONSHIP

STOW, Sept 5-Robert Ball of Chi-cago easily led the field today in the medal play for the colored open golf

cago easily led the field today in the medal play for the colored open golf championship of the United States on the Mapledale Country Club course. Harry Jackson, last year's champion, tled with Elmer Stout for third prize. These officers were elected: B. C. Gordon of Newark, N. J. president; Robert H. Hawkins of Boston, vice president, and Landry Taylor, Norfolk, Va. secretary.

Prizes were won as follows: by Robert Ball, medal, championship cup and \$100; second, J. Shippen Jr. \$75; third, Harry Jackson, \$50; fourth, Elmer Stout, \$25; fifth, Landry Taylor, \$25. Medals were awarded to the seven next following. The scores: Robert Ball, Chicago, 293; J. Shippen, Washington, 313; Harry Jackson, Washington, 317; Elmer Stout, New Jersey, 317; Landry Taylor, Norfolk, Va. 318; Porter Washington, Chicago, 322; Howard Anderson, New Jersey, 327; Clifford Edmunds, Chicago, 328; Robert Petty, Pinehurst, N. C. 338; B. R. Coombs, Pocasset, 339; J. M. Shippen Jr. Washington, 347; Robert H. Hawkins, Boston, 331; Lawrence Frierson, Chicago, 339; J. Thomas, New York, 361.

October 3, 1928, The Concord Enterprise

FIRST BANQUE

Nearly 100 Guests At Mapledale Inn

Maynard, Oct. 3—St. Anthony Crusaders, a society devoted to the progress of the Italian people of the community, held its first banquet and dance at Mapledale Inn, Stow, Thursday evening. Wives, mothers and sweethearts were mothers and sweethearts were guests and nearly one hundred were gathered about the banquet board. John Tombeno was toastmaster and Nicholas Petricelli, former corporation counsel of the city of Poulos and Present F. C. Me of Boston and present K. of C. district deputy of that city, was the orator of the evening. Mr. and Mrs. Levinstein of Sudbury were guests and the former spoke on "Italy".

A splendid program of vocal and instrumental music and dance specialities was enjoyed and there was dancing before and after dinner.

St. Anthony Crusaders organized but recently have had a remarkable increase in members as well as in spirit and enthusiasm. Its first annual banquet and dance was one of the leading social events of the season and it was much enjoyed by all present.

November 23, 1928, The Concord Enterprise



April 25, 1928, The Concord Enterprise

The members of the cast of "The Fortune Hunter" recently given by the Maynard K of C players, and all those who assisted in producting the play will be tendered a banquet by Maynard Council at the Mapledale Inn, Stow, Thursday evening this week.

April 11, 1928, The Concord Enterprise

MARLBORO TEAM TO BE BANQUETTED

Maynard Council K of C bowling team will tender a banquet to Marlboro Council K of C team at Mapledale Inn, Stow tonight. Marlboro was victor in a tournament in which 36 bowlers were on each team. Many beside the bowlers will attend the banquet, which will be a fitting close of a tournament that was marked by keen rivalry, close scores and much goodfelowship.

July 18, 1928, The Concord Enterprise



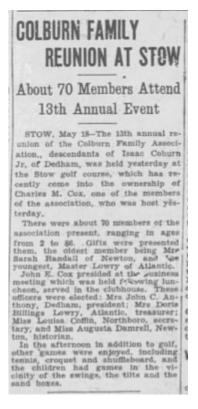
Maynard, July 18—The Overseers Association of the Assabet Mill held annual outing Saturday at Mapledale Inn, Stow. There were 55 present and a good time was had by all. Dinner was served shortly after the arrival of the party at the inn and a program of sports followed. The menu included clams in various ways. blue fish stuffed with sausage, broiled chicken, broiled live lobster, baked potatoes, water melon, ice cream, cake and coffee. William Brayden was toastmaster and brief remarks were made by O. C. Drechsler, agent of the Assabet Mill.

A baseball game between rival teams was a feature of the program with victory to Capt. W. Bray den's team after a desperate struggle with a team captained by Albert Drechsler. Ernest Wollerschield won first prize in pitching quoits.

August 1, 1928, The Concord Enterprise

Paul Hilander, owner of the Maydale Bottling company entertained his sales force at a dinner at Mapledale Inn, Stow Saturday, Miss Mary Rusk of Somerville entertained with estehetic dancing.

May 22, 1931, The Boston Globe



September 1, 1960 Newton Graphic Marshall W. Cox estate probate notice

