GRANDMOTHER STORIES

Number 3

Mary Harkins Frisbie

Mrs. Frances Knox Childs

Your Grandmother Who Was Bound Out

MARY HARKINS FRISBIE - 1858-1941

A biographical sketch of an unfortunate city waif, early made a ward of the State of Massachusetts; yet who became in time a noble mother and New England farm housewife, skilled and respected by her many descendants, and a proper example for all who would be similarly honored.

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Written by one of her grandchildren who remembers her well:

Mrs. Arthur W. (Frances Knox) Childs

Enfield, New Hampshire

1979

Foreword

When we read in the Bible that "none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself" (Romans 14:7), we are reminded that no person who lives solely for the furtherance of his own interests will ever accomplish any lasting good. It is to be of help to others, through example, precept and service in compliance with the laws of God, that all men are created and granted existence on earth. If any person's life adds nothing constructive to his society or to the coming generations, he may consider himself to be a failure.

Let those, then, who read this account of Mary Harkins Frisbie realize that it is possible to rise from obscurity and misfortune, and to become what the Creator intends. That obstacles can be overcome, and noble goals achieved. For we are not great nor successful because of our forebears or our possessions, or the caprice of fate. We may become great - that is, worthy of respect and gratitude - only as we build into our own character virtue, service and love.

Mary did that.

Jesus said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me." (Matthew 25:40)

- A. W. Childs

MARY HARKINS FRISBIE

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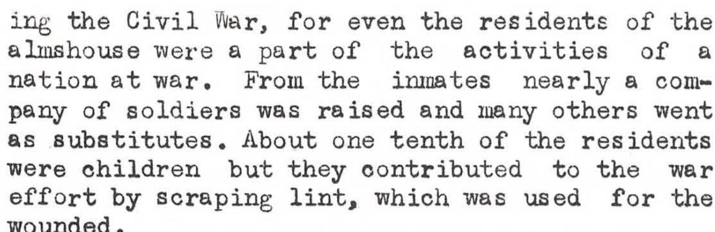
1858 - 1941

During the nineteenth century so many private charitable organizations developed in Boston that it would seem as though every person in need would have been cared for by them, and that soon there would be no poor person remaining. Although the activities of these organizations were beneficial and extensive, they were not adequate to care for all the needy whose numbers were swelled by the thousands of immigrants that landed at Boston fleeing from the famine conditions of Europe caused by the wide-spread failure of the potato crops.

In 1852 the Commonwealth of Massachusetts voted to build three Almshouses. To care for the poor in state-supported institutions was an experiment originating with Massachusetts. The buildings at Tewksbury, Monson and Bridgewater were filled soon after their official openings in 1854, and became crowded way beyond their capacities by 1857, a year when the suffering of the poor was very great.

The following year on December first, Mary Harkins was born in Boston. Her mother, Hannah Harkins, was unable to care for her, and eventually relinquished Mary to the Tewksbury Almshouse, about twenty-five miles north of Boston. Quite a number of years were to pass before the careful and wise cultivation of the poor sandy soil of the almshouse acreage would transform it into a productive farm. Mary was at the Tewksbury Almshouse in the early years when, as one historian states, "the neglected appearance of the buildings was a disgrace to the state." The stark building was surrounded by a sandy prospect where not a tree provided shade and where neither a grassy lawn nor a bed of flowers had been planted. Perhaps part of the neglect was due to the unsettled conditions prevailing dur-


ing the Civil War, for even the residents of the almshouse were a part of the activities of a nation at war. From the inmates nearly a company of soldiers was raised and many others went as substitutes. About one tenth of the residents were children but they contributed to the war effort by scraping lint, which was used for the wounded.

Mary began her schooling at the Tewksbury institution, but when she was seven years old was transferred to the Monson Almshouse. When the three state almshouses were opened all ages were accepted at each institution. After a few years the state decided to use the Bridgewater Almshouse for the needy who were able to work. It became known as the Bridgewater Workhouse. The Tewksbury Almshouse was kept for those who, because of age or physical condition, were helpless. The Monson Almshouse became the State Farm School. The children from the other two homes were transferred to Monson, and it became the center for housing and educating the children who were wards of the state. There was great hope that the training they received would enable them to lead useful lives which would be a benefit rather than a burden to the state.

The town of Monson was between Worcester and Springfield, and the almshouse was located in its northern section overlooking the village of Palmer Depot a mile away. About five acres of land around the wooden building were enclosed by a fence. Surrounding this was a large farm of nearly three hundred acres which provided ample space for large gardens where potatoes, a basic food of their diet, and other vegetables grew well. Chickens supplied fresh eggs, their own cows provided fresh milk, and pigs were raised to supply the residents with pork.

When Mary Harkins entered the Monson State Farm School she was assigned a bed in a pleasant clean room; was provided with comfortable, neat

clothing, and simple nourishing food. Mary soon learned the meals' routine. For breakfast each day she and the other children were served bread and milk or crackers and milk. The bread "of the best wheat flour" was made fresh each day in the school kitchen. At noon the main meal of the day was served. The regular round of dishes varied somewhat with the season, but all were designed to preserve good health. Twice a week beef soup with potatoes was served; corned beef, bread, rice and molasses, also twice a week; fish with rice and bread twice a week; beans, pork and bread once a week. Supper for Mary and the young children was another bowl of bread and milk. When a child was sick, special diets were prepared with rice, molasses, chicken, beef tea, or creamed toast tempting the appetite, and care would be given in the hospital rooms.

Every morning Mary gathered with the other children for devotional exercises led by the chaplain. The administrators of the school believed their most important work was the development of Christian character, and the superintendent, chaplain and teachers worked together with that purpose. On Sunday mornings, Mary went to the chapel for the worship service and in the afternoons attended the Sunday School.

Each weekday morning school classes were held. Although most of the students had unfortunate backgrounds, they showed a general quickness of apprehension and good musical ability. Discipline was mild, firm and paternal.

Following the afternoon session of school, Mary played with the younger children. When the weather was pleasant they enjoyed the large play area that was nearly enclosed by the building and its wings. The office of the superintendent overlooked the yard, and he often observed the activities of the children. The older children had duties to perform either in the kitchen or some other part of the building, or on the farm.

As the month of May drew to a close in 1866 an event took place that was to change the entire pattern of Mary Harkins' life. A middle-aged gentleman, a farmer from the Berkshire hill town of Granville, Massachusetts, arrived at the State Farm School. Mr. Cyrus Phelon had made arrangements with the Inspectors of the Institution to take two children by indenture. He was seeking a boy to help with the farm work and a girl to assist his wife with the housework. They were to perform certain duties for him, and in turn he was to provide certain benefits for them. If, after a trial period of a month or two, they proved satisfactory, indenture papers would be signed.

During early colonial times the system of indenture had provided most of the servants in the homes. People who wished to migrate to America but were unable to pay their passage would be "bought" by someone desiring their services. The ship captain would accept such people as passengers and "sell" them when he reached a harbor. A contract would be signed whereby the captain received the passage money, the person would agree to a term of service, and the master would agree to provide certain remuneration. The terms varied considerably and some were unusual and very interesting, but they generally included clothing and maintenance with a sum of money at the end of the indenture. If the indentured person was young the contract usually included a promise of some schooling.

The system of indenture continued to some extent through the nineteenth century and was practised by town and county authorities who had the care of orphans. They had the right to bind out orphans at any age to masters who would look after them and bring them up in some trade or profession.

Mr. Phelon completed his business with the Inspectors and began the journey of about thirty-five miles to Granville. With him were fourteen

year old Joseph Welch and eight-and-a-half year old Mary Harkins. Joseph was to serve as an apprentice in agriculture, and Mary in housekeeping. Of the several hundred children at the almshouse they had been chosen as the best suited to the Phelon family. No doubt Mary already gave evidence of the industriousness and sprightliness that would characterize her later lafe. Probably they travelled by train from Palmer Depot to Westfield, from where the Phelon team and carriage would take them to the farm in Granville. Cyrus Phelon was a prominent, respected citizen of Granville. He was fifty years old and had been a farmer all of his life. Recently he had sold his home, Farnham Farm, and moved his family, farm animals and equipment to a hundred acre farm on Clement Road (now Phelon Road) which was to become the Phelon homestead and to consist eventually of three hundred and eighty acres of fields, pasture and woodland.

It had been a very long day for Mary. The level river plains around Westfield had given way to the foothills of the Berkshires, and the horses had stopped often to rest as they pulled the carriage up the steep country roads. Through woods where the leaves were still a tender spring green, past farms where the stock enjoyed the succulent young grass that grew in the stony pastures, stopping at a roadside spring where sparkling mountain water refreshed both the travelers and the horses, they finally reached the schoolhouse where Mary would study her books. Another mile passed and Mary caught sight of the farmhouse and buildings which would become lovingly familiar during the next eight years. Scarcely a level area could be seen, but fields spread over the rolling countryside. Various small buildings clustered around the large white farmhouse that was nearly one hundred years old (built in 1782), and across the road was the new barn.

The Phelon family, wondering about the new

children, was watching expectantly for the well-known carriage to cross the brook in that last dip and climb the last rise to pull into the yard. No less curious was eight-and-a-half year old Mary about these strangers among whom she was to live.

Fourteen-year-old John Phelon and his brother twenty-one-year old William helped Mary from the carriage, unloaded the parcels and led the horse to the barn. Celia, the sixteen-year old daughter and school teacher, and Ellen, her sister who was nineteen, brought Mary and Joseph into the house where they met Lucy Phelon, their new mistress. She welcomed them kindly.

The trial month passed satisfactorily for Mary Harkins and on June twenty-eighth the formal indenture paper was signed. Mary was eight and a half years old when she was bound out to Mr. Phelon as an apprentice in housekeeping. She was to be in the care of Mr. Phelon until she reached her eighteenth birthday. In addition to having her instructed in the duties of housekeeping, Mr. Phelon agreed that he would "give her suitable opportunities at school, so that she may learn the several branches of spelling, reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, grammar and other things usually taught in our common schools; that he will give her or cause to be given to her proper Moral and Religious Instruction, and allow and require her to attend public religious worship on the Sabbath, providing her with suitable apparel therefor: - that he will treat her kindly, exercising over her a parental care and control; that he will watch over her morals, endeavoring by all means to guard her against vicious habits and practises, and train her up in such a way that she will become virtuous, intelligent and useful."

The contract further specified that Mr. Phelon would provide Mary with "suitable board and clothing" and care for her "in a suitable manner.

both in sickness and in health." When Mary should reach the age of eighteen, he pledged, if she had served him faithfully, to provide her "with two full suits of good clothes, one for the Sabbath and the other for working days, and also a cloak, and shawl, and will also give her a Bible."

Under the planning and direction of Cyrus Phelon his farm was to become one of the most prosperous in the area. Both of his sons and a number of hired men were needed to carry on the many activities of hand farming. The number varied with the season and the work in progress. Some of the men were neighbors in the community and worked by the day at the farm, but always there were one or two who lived with the family.

When Mary joined the Phelon family the spring activities were well under way. The gardens had been planted which must provide enough vegetables for the household during the summer and through the long winter. The tobacco field had been set to plants and would provide a cash crop. Corn and oats for the farm animals were making good growth. The sheep were about to be sheared and soon the haying would begin. The many hours of daylight were scarcely enough to accomplish all that needed to be done on the busy farm. The men needed hearty meals to provide energy for their many tasks. No doubt Mary's first responsibility was in the kitchen helping with the food preparation and the dish washing.

During the eight years Mary was with the Phelon family she would gradually learn to assist with all of the activities that made up the yearly routine of a prosperous Berkshire hill farm. As far as possible all food for the family was raised on the farm. To pay for what was needed from the store such as flour, sugar, molasses or salt, surplus farm products were sold or bartered.

Late in the winter the lambing time would

arrive. Often a little lamb, rejected by its mother, would be brought into the kitchen and kept in a box near the big kitchen stove where Mary would feed it with a bottle until it was strong enough to join the flock. Just before it was time to turn the flock into the spring pasture the older sheep would be sheared of their thick fleeces. At the time of Mary's stay at the farm all of these would be sold. Mrs. Phelon was not strong, and the process of turning the fleece into yarn was left to someone else.

In the course of time Mary learned to milk the cows. During the summer the cows remained in the pasture day and night, but at milking time, morning and evening, they followed their worn and winding paths through the pasture to the barnyard gate. When the weather was fair Mary did the milking outdoors. She tied the cows to the fence and filled her pails with their rich milk. The family used a lot of milk. At every meal a large pitcherful was placed on the table. Enough cream was saved so that butter could be made for the family needs, but the surplus milk was made into cheese. In the ell back of the kitchen was the cheese room. On its shelves the cheeses ripened until they were ready for market. The town of Granville had the reputation of producing fine cheese which was in demand in the markets of a wide area.

The whey from the cheese-making was fed to the pigs. Added to their regular fare of corn and "pig potatoes" (those too small for family use), and other surplus vegetables, the pigs grew fat for butchering in early November. The pork roasts would be frozen and preserved in a bin of oats. Scraps would be ground and spiced for sausage. The hams and lean fat would be preserved in a salt brine. All other fat would be rendered into lard. This last process was the women's job and Mary would have helped. The long strips of fat were cut into small pieces, cooked until the heat turned the fat to liquid,

and then strained into pails where it became solid when cold. This was the shortening used for making the pies which were an almost daily part of their diet, and for filling the great iron kettle for the weekly frying of doughnuts.

Not far from the kitchen ell was the hen house. During the winter when the cold was severe and the hours of daylight few, the hens laid almost no eggs, but in the spring they resumed their egg laying. When they were allowed to roam outside their house during the warm spring days many of them would find secret places for their nests. When Mary gathered the eggs she would hunt for these nests, but no matter how carefully she looked, a nest or two would be hidden so well she never found it. She would be aware she had missed a nest only when a hen escorted its brood of little chicks into the open where they scratched for grain and chased grasshoppers. Some of these chicks grew to become layers in the flock and others provided chicken pies for the family. Usually two or three of the largest roosters were raised to provide roasting chickens for the Thanksgiving dinner or some other special occasion.

Mary was very fond of the horses. How she loved to hear the jingle of their bells as they drew the sleigh over snow packed roads on winter Sundays or when some member of the family needed to go to town! Horses were needed for their travels and to help with many of the farm jobs, but the Phelons also had teams of oxen. These slow, patient, strong animals brought from the woods the cords of firewood needed for the farmhouse stoves, and logs to be sawn into lumber.

The first winter Mary spent at the Phelon homestead brought snow and cold with all the severity of the Berkshire hills. At the end of November and two days before Mary's ninth birthday, Mrs. Phelon gave birth to her fifth child. Fourteen years had passed since the birth of her last child, and during the nine years remaining

of her life she never was to be strong. The little baby, though, must have been endowed with special strength from his parents and the invigorating hill country, for he was to enjoy the land of his birth over one hundred years. The baby was named Austin, and became the special charge and constant companion of Mary.

The year that Cyrus Phelon decided to replace his tobacco field with an apple orchard was a time of great interest to the entire family. Mary no doubt took little Austin often to the slope where the young nursery stock had been planted, and together they identified each variety. There were baldwins and greenings, russets and spies, and other old varieties. One of Austin's earliest memories was the setting of the orchard, and when, following his father's death, he became the head of the Phelon homestead, the care of the apple orchard and the producing of excellent apples were his great pleasure.

By the time the young trees reached maturity Cyrus Phelon had built a cider mill under the barn. All apples that fell short of his high standard for marketing were made first into cider and then into vinegar. To make vinegar the fresh cider would be poured into wooden casks and set aside in a cool, dirt-floor cellar where, as the weeks passed, the sweet cider fermented and then soured. When it passed Mr. Phelon's exacting tests the vinegar was marketed.

Throughout the long winter, apples stored for the family provided tasty pies and between-meal snacks. During the school term Mary often had an apple in her lunch pail. The schoolhouse stood in the corner of neighbor Stowe's lot, a mile's walk from the Phelon farm, and Mary attended each term. The teacher boarded around at the homes of her pupils and Mary looked forward to the walk to school with the teacher when she stayed with the Phelons.

By the time Austin reached school age, Mary was one of the oldest of the pupils in the one-room schoolhouse. With its vaulted ceiling, the building was yet plain and simple; but when the sunshine left brilliant rectangles of light across the wooden floor, or the wood stove radiated heat on a chilly day, the room was bright and cheerful. Opposite the door was the teacher's desk, and behind it was the blackboard. On each side of the blackboard and extending in a continuous line the length of the room were the pupils' desks. They were attached to the wall, and a continuous bench in front of them provided seats for the pupils. When they were writing or studying they faced the wall, but when it was time for reciting, the pupils swung their legs over the bench and faced the center of the room. It was no problem at all for the boys to swing their feet over the benches, but the girls had to do it carefully and modestly. Their long skirts and petticoats were bulky and could easily catch on the rough benches. Boys were required to divert their eyes from the girls, but many a boy had to stand before the teacher to be punished because he looked at some girl while she manipulated her feet over the bench. Family tradition says that such a punishment befell young Austin, when his eyes strayed to a little girl as she swung her skirts over the bench.

The stone walls of Mr. Stowe's farm separated the school yard from his fields and the temptation was strong for the children to run along the top of them during recess and the noon hour. Mr. Stowe objected to having stones dislodged, and put a stop to it; but there were plenty of other games for the youngsters to play.

Austin spent many hours at home playing with models of inventions which his father had made and patented. These were a "scow cart" and a four-wheeled wagon equipped with automatic brakes. When oxen or horses would pull a wagon

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on the level or up a hill the brakes would be free, but as soon as the team started down hill the forward pressure of the wagon engaged the brakes and prevented the wagon from proceeding too fast. Mr. Phelon also had solved the problem that a team of oxen might encounter in the woods when a stump or rock in the path made it necessary for one of the oxen to go on one side of it, and the other on the opposite side. He invented a yoke that expanded from the sidewise pressure of the oxen and returned to normal width when they had passed the obstacle. The models were so sturdily built that they have remained in the Phelon family over a hundred years and have provided happy hours of play for many children. Mary was to observe that little Austin's play with these models developed into the skill of managing full sized wagons and real ox teams. Many a day he preferred to stay away from school so that he could drive an ox team in the farm work.

On Sundays all unnecessary work was set aside and Mary with the other members of the Phelon family attended worship services at the church in West Granville. From the farm to the church was a distance of about five miles, and the younger members of the family often walked. Scattered farmhouses marked the way along North Lane, but after the turn onto the main road and for the last mile, the houses were closer together. Past the cemetery at the top of the hill they travelled; then down into the hollow, across Pond Brook, and up the grade to the store and academy and church at the crossroads. Setting back from the village green was the church that had been built in 1778 while the country was in the midst of the Revolutionary War. Three identical doors opened into the vestibule, where Mary climbed the few steps leading to the sanctuary and took her place with others in the choir which gathered in the front around the small organ. The little choir would lead the

congregation in the singing of the old familiar hymns. Following the church service Mary and the other young people attended Sunday School.

Occasionally during the year, socials were held at the church or school, and with the Phelon family Mary participated in them. There were the Christmas program and tree, a harvest supper, ice cream parties in the summer, and fourth-of-July picnics with patriotic songs and speeches. On Memorial Day, when the graves of the soldiers were strewn with flowers, many Civil War veterans wore their uniforms and recalled the days of camp and combat which were still fresh in their memories.

It had been only a year after the end of the conflict between the states that Mary had come to live with the Phelon family. At about the same time another family had moved in to the neighborhood. Baldwin Augustus Frisbie had bought a farm on North Lane which for a short distance bordered the Phelon farm. In Milton, Connecticut, he had kept a store where some of the stock had been the carpenter and farm tools which he made. On his farm he continued to make tools to add to the income needed for his family of four sons. A daughter, Hattie, was born after they had lived in Granville about five years. Nelson Moses Frisbie, the oldest son, was about twelve years old when the move was made. Within a few years he became one of the hired hands at the Phelon farm when Cyrus Phelon needed extra help with haying or wood-cutting or lumbering.

It was not long before Nelson took more than a neighborly interest in Mary Harkins. He decided that the pretty, small, teen-aged girl was the one he would like to court. He was not the only young man, though, who came to the Phelon farm to see Mary; but Nelson soon let the others know that she was his girl. One suitor was permanently discouraged when, after spending the evening at the Phelon homestead, he tried to

drive away from the farm in his carriage and found it almost unmanageable. Tipping first to one side and then to the other, only three wheels touched the ground at one time. During the evening someone had removed the large rear wheel on one side of the carriage and placed it on the front axle, and put the smaller front wheel on the back!

During his twentieth year Nelson approached Mr. Phelon to see if he could take Mary Larkins as his bride. Mary was only fifteen and her indenture contract had pledged her services to the Phelon family until she was eighteen. By October a satisfactory arrangement had been made between Mr. Phelon, the Almshouse Inspectors, and the young couple. The records state: "October 1874. Indenture with Cyrus Phelon of Granville settled by mutual consent and girl married to a respectable young man."

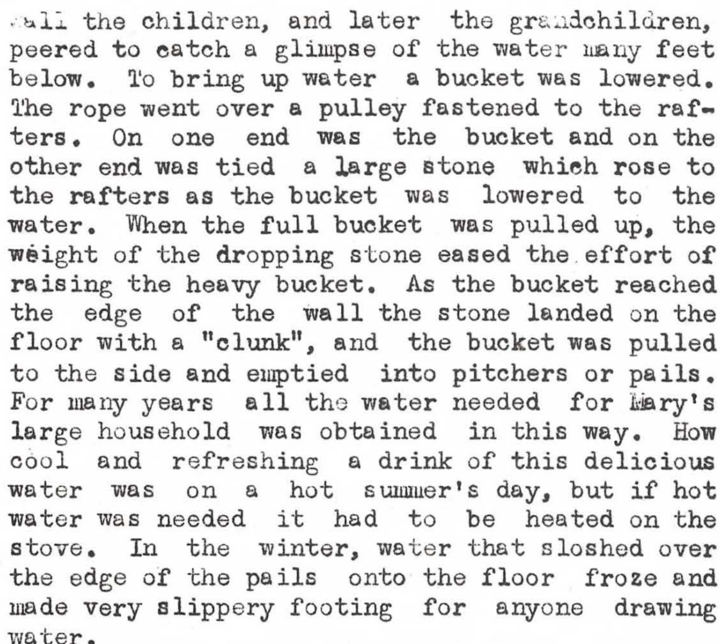
On Nelson Moses Frisbie's twenty-first birthday, October 21, 1874, he and Mary drove to the parsonage in Granville and asked the minister to marry them. No doubt Mary was dressed in the new "full suit of good clothes...for the Sabbath ...and also a cloak" which Mr. Phelon had agreed to provide her with at the completion of her indenture. In a bag were the "workingday" clothes, shawl and Bible which he also was to give her. But best of all she carried with her the knowledge that she had served the Phelon family well; while the memory of their kindness and their good wishes for her future were a pleasant recompense.

Nelson and Mary arrived at the parsonage in the evening, having made plans to start early the next morning to visit relatives of Nelson's in Connecticut. They had a long wait, though, before the brief ceremony could be performed. The minister's wife was to be the witness, but she was not at home. She had been called to another home in the community to help deliver a new baby, and several hours passed before she

returned. Just before the clock struck three she came; the vows were exchanged, the ceremony completed, and Mary and Nelson climbed into their carriage and turned the horse toward Riverton, Conn. Thus began their marriage that was to last more than sixty-six years.

Mary and Nelson's first child was born a year later at their home on North Lane. Nelson's mother, in a letter to his grandmother, December 17, 1875, wrote of the baby Charles: "Nelson and Mary have got a nice baby boy. It was born the first day of November. It waid 7½ pounds. It has a nuf to eat and is a good baby. It looks as Nelson did when he was a baby. Mary is very smart."

During the early years of their marriage, Nelson began his logging and lumbering business which he continued until his age forced his retirement. For several years Mary with her children joined him as he set up camp on various woodlots. Both Stella and Ellen were born "in the woods," but before their sixth child, Grace, arrived, Mary gave up the woods camplife. The family had lived in a number of different houses on the main road in West Granville before Nelson bought the house in which Mary was to live the rest of her life. Just west of Pond Brook on the South side of the road, this story-and-a-half house with a porch around two sides became her home. On the left of the hall was the parlor with its black horse-hair furniture. On the right was Mary and Nelson's bedroom. At the end of the hall was the large kitchen with the black wood cookstove and a long dining table where there was room for the whole family, which came to number ten children. Upstairs were the children's bedrooms whose ceilings sloped under the low roof. In the ell was the summer kitchen where, during warm weather, the baking and cooking were done. In the center of the summer kitchen was the well over whose protective stone



wall the children, and later the grandchildren, peered to catch a glimpse of the water many feet below. To bring up water a bucket was lowered. The rope went over a pulley fastened to the rafters. On one end was the bucket and on the other end was tied a large stone which rose to the rafters as the bucket was lowered to the water. When the full bucket was pulled up, the weight of the dropping stone eased the effort of raising the heavy bucket. As the bucket reached the edge of the wall the stone landed on the floor with a "clunk", and the bucket was pulled to the side and emptied into pitchers or pails. For many years all the water needed for Mary's large household was obtained in this way. How cool and refreshing a drink of this delicious water was on a hot summer's day, but if hot water was needed it had to be heated on the stove. In the winter, water that sloshed over the edge of the pails onto the floor froze and made very slippery footing for anyone drawing water.

Shortly after buying the property Nelson built a barn back of the house. His lumbering business provided the timbers. One night, before the frame had been sheathed, Nelson was awakened by the sound of the outside kitchen door opening and closing. He discovered that Mary was no longer in bed and wondered where she could be going. It was a night when moonlight flooded the landscape. By the time he arrived outside he could see Mary, her nightgown white in the moonlight, climbing a ladder that had been left against the barn framework. Higher and higher she climbed until she reached the ridgepole. She walked the length of the ridgepole, turned and walked back, climbed down the ladder and started to return to the house. Nelson stepped toward her, spoke her name and reached for her hand---- and Mary woke up! During the entire adventure she had been walking in her sleep.

Another night both Nelson and Mary were wak-

ened by the sound of the front door being opened very cautiously, and muffled footsteps in the hall. Nelson was up in an instant, calling, "Who's there?" The only answer was the thump of running feet on the porch as the intruder fled. Nelson often had large sums of money in the house because of his lumber business, and someone must have been trying to get it.

When Mary was thirty-eight years old her tenth child, May, was born. The boys had been named Charles, Frank, Arthur, Fred and Porter; the girls were Louise, Stella, Ellen, Grace and May. Grace was thirteen when May was born and became like a second mother to her. May was a beautiful curly-headed little girl and a favorite with the entire family. When she was five she started school at the one-room schoolhouse beyond the church, but before her second year she was taken seriously ill with spinal meningitis and died when only six years old. Her little grave was next to Frank's, Mary's second child, who lived only two years.

West Granville was a pleasant country community extending over the broad tops of the Berkshire hills of southwestern Massachusetts. The first white settler had built his rude cabin in the unbroken wilderness in 1736, but Toto, an Indian chief, and generations of his forebears had roamed these hills. On a trail that crossed the West Granville hills they travelled to and from the "Great Wigwam," an area in what is now Great Barrington. Tradition claims this Great Wigwam as the central capitol of the Housatonics from earliest times down to the coming of the English. During King Phillip's war, Captain John Talcott, in 1676, with a body of Connecticut soldiers and friendly Indians had pursued a band of fleeing Indians along the trail to the Great Wigwam. With the establishment in the 1700's of the Indian school and mission at Stockbridge and the beginning of other settle-

ments, the trail became known as the "Great Road" and was the main route for the travellers from Westfield to Albany. The Great Road crossed the Great River, the Housatonic, at a ford near the site of the Great Wigwam. With the passing of time a road through towns to the north of Granville became the main road between Westfield and Albany, but the route of the Great Road continued to be the main road through West Granville. Mary and Nelson's home was beside it. During the latter part of the 1800's several people from cities in Massachusetts and Connecticut traveled this road to their summer homes in West Granville. They welcomed the village's unhurried life, rugged landscape and bracing mountain air.

Mary, noted for being a good cook, provided home-baked food for many of these summer residents. Pies, cakes, doughnuts and bread were made to their order. Always on baking day Mary made an extra pie "for the minister" and one of the children carried it to the parsonage.

It was not unusual for Mary to have extra people for meals, and with his increasing age and varied experiences Nelson acquired many interesting stories and provided entertainment for the guests. It might be someone who stopped to do lumbering business or to talk over town affairs when Nelson was selectman. His family were also frequent visitors, for his parents lived nearby on North Lane until their deaths in the 1890's, and his brothers and sisters were in towns not far away. As his children married and established homes of their own they returned for visits to the homestead and some of the grandchildren spent their summer vacations with Nelson and Mary.

No guests were more happily welcomed by Mary than Ellen Lucy Phelon. When Mary first became a part of the Phelon family Ellen, eleven years older than she, must have received her with great kindness, for they became life-long

friends. Mary showed her appreciation of the relationship by naming one of her own daughters Ellen. Even when Ellen Phelon and her husband "Vin" Barnes were both in their eighties and frail in body they made the trip from their home in Westfield to spend an occasional day with Mary and Nelson. One granddaughter recalls the seemingly endless conversations "Vin" Barnes and Nelson had about land transactions, boundary lines and corners; but Mary's delight was in the company of Ellen, who at first had given a forlorn child affection, and who through the years had been as close as a sister.

Porter, the youngest son, married Alice Hoskins who had come to West Granville to teach school. After living for a time on North Lane they bought a house up the hill from Nelson and Mary. Porter and Alice were always giving a helping hand when Nelson and Mary needed one, and eventually provided all their care. They were the ones who took them to visit their children. Louise had married Frederick Johnson and lived on a large farm in Goshen, Conn., where she entertained summer guests in the big house. Arthur and his family lived nearby in Torrington, Conn., and Stella was in Winsted until eventually moving to Illinois. Grace had married Almon G. Knox, a carpenter in Huntington, Mass. Fred and Baldwin, and Charles and his wife, "Frank", lived in Westfield, and so did Ellen and Roy Barnes. Nelson and Mary always spent Christmas with Ellen's family. It was Porter and Alice who drove them over the Berkshire hills to these family gatherings, doing the morning chores before they left, and the evening milking when they returned.

On October 21, 1924, Nelson and Mary celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary. A family dinner party was held in the afternoon at the Academy building next to the West Granville church. All eight of their children and sixteen

grandchildren were present as well as Nelson's three brothers, Fred, Theron and Frank, and his sister, Hattie. In the evening friends and neighbors greeted them and enjoyed a social time at the Academy.

Their sixtieth anniversary was observed with an open house at the Frisbie homestead where friends and relatives offered their congratulations and best wishes. Dressed in their "Sunday Best", Nelson and Mary were a striking couple. Tall and spare, his hair and beard as white as snow, Nelson loved to talk of days gone by. Mary's hair was white, too, and when she stood beside Nelson her head was below his shoulder. She had never been tall. She used to tell her grandchildren that she had worn her legs short by running so often back and forth from the pantry to the cookstove. "My little woman," she was affectionately called by one of her friends as she put her arms around Mary.

Nelson and Mary were to note their sixty-fifth anniversary still in their own home. Nelson celebrated his 86th. birthday on the same day, and Mary was 80.

Following the next anniversary Mary's health began to fail. After being confined to her bed for several weeks and having only partial awareness of her surroundings, her last moments were marked with a smile that, spreading over her face, lightened her countenance and blessed the family at her side; her earthly "indenture was settled by mutual consent."

Mary's life had begun in Boston and came to a close in the Berkshires. Her body was laid to rest under the trees in the hilltop cemetery of West Granville. Nearly eight years would pass before Nelson would quietly slip away in his sleep, but he would remember Mary during that time with the esteem expressed in her funeral tribute:

"The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her...She will do him good and

not evil all the days of her life...She
looketh well to the ways of her house-
hold, and eateth not the bread of idleness...
Her husband praiseth her."

And her children "call her blessed."

- -

Mary Harkins Frisbie

born in Boston December 1, 1858
indentured June 28, 1866, aged 8½ years
married October 21, 1874, aged 15 years
died in West Granville, June 4, 1941, aged 82
married to Nelson Frisbie for 66 years.

GENEALOGY

Mary Harkins Frisbie
born in Boston, December 1, 1858
died in West Granville June 4, 1941

Grace Frisbie Knox
born in West Granville June 3, 1884
died in Westfield May 29, 1963

Frances Knox Childs
born in Huntington February 16, 1919

Anne Childs Blodgett
born in Greenfield, Mass., August 21, 1942

Gwendolyn Deborah Blodgett
born in Anchorage, Alaska, May 21, 1969

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