

What's in a Name? - Mill Hill Lane

by Susan Mulgrew

Many who have strolled along Water Street in the Old Village have come across a street sign for Mill Hill Lane and wondered how this narrow road got its name. This lane was originally a road to the windmill/grist mill built by Solomon Collins (1703-1765). Collins' family moved to this part of Chatham in 1715. Windmills were an expensive investment, but Collins was a wealthy man, being the largest taxpayer in the town in 1755. It is thought that he built his windmill prior to 1745. Solomon Collins' house, built c. 1730, still stands at 63 Water Street, although the house was a much smaller half-Cape when he lived there.

By the early 1820s, the Collins homestead was occupied by the Crowell brothers, Mark and Thomas, with one brother operating a store located on the property and the other operating the mill. Mark Crowell already owned the house when, in 1823, Richard Gould (1744-1871) sold him the lot it was on, "reserving a road though said land to the windmill". This indicates the mill was probably owned by Gould. By 1841, the Crowells were no longer running the mill, as the house was sold that year following Mark's death.

The next known miller was Eliphalet Hamilton (1796-1858), who lived just northeast of the mill. Hamilton ran the mill for many of years, and at during his tenure it was called Lify's Mill. During this time the mill was still owned, at least in part, by Richard Gould. When in 1853 Francis A. Patterson, who owned a residence near the windmill, purchased an adjacent property the deed reserved "a way for Eliphalet Hamilton to pass and repass from the north end of said land" and "the right Capt. Richard Gould to pass and repass from the road across the south of said to the mill." There is no record of who ran the mill after Hamilton's his death in 1858.

On December 5, 1865 Richard Gould sold to his son, Cyrus Gould "a certain grist mill situated in the south part of said town of Chatham, with the land situated under and around, and within the sweep of the tail tree so called of the mill" and "reserving "a privilege of passing to and from said mill to the town road as a mill right or privilege." But the mill, which had been grinding grain for over a century, was in its twilight years. In January 7, 1875 Levi Atwood, editor of

the *Chatham Monitor* wrote, "The mill near the Lights having become enfeebled by age was taken down a year or two ago."

Today some physical evidence of Solomon Collins' windmill can still be found. Part of the boundary of the lot at 35 Mill Hill Lane is in the shape of an arc; this was the earlier-described land "within the sweep of the tail tree". Also on that property is an old millstone, currently used as the base of a flag pole. The other half of the millstone pair is the base of a flag pole as well but is located at a more visible location, 326 Main Street, also known as the historic Rear Admiral Charles Rockwell's home *The Moorings*. The admiral's first wife, Esther Helen (Gould) was the daughter of Cyrus Gould, explaining how one of the millstones migrated to the Rockwell property. Of course, the naming of Mill Hill Lane is a reminder of the windmill that existed for over a century in this part of Chatham.

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