

Notes From the Firehouse

Home of the Annisquam Historical Society

April, 2024

Connie Mason

&

The By Water Inn



Rita L. Teele & Betsey Horovitz

Earlier this spring, Connie graciously agreed to relate her story of how an invitation from a school friend led to a home in Providence, Rhode Island, and summer holidays in Annisquam.

Constance Stoney was born and raised in Charleston, South Carolina. She attended and graduated from St. Ann's, a boarding school in Charlottesville Virginia. Entrance to the College of Charleston followed. Because the B.A. degree was awarded only to those who took Latin and Greek, Connie reluctantly selected the four-year Science course with graduation scheduled for 1951. When given an invitation from a school friend to visit Annisquam in the summer of 1950, Connie happily accepted without knowing that it would change her life thereafter. Walker Mason Jr. and his family were in Annisquam at the same time as was Connie. And, of course, Connie and Walker met each other....and then kept meeting each other!

After summer ended, Connie and Walker stayed in touch via daily letters. Walker paid a visit to Connie's family in Charleston S.C.; Connie went to Providence, Rhode Island, to meet Walker's parents. The pair was formally engaged on New Year's Eve.

Two weeks after Connie graduated from College, she married Walker in Charleston. They began their lives together in Providence, Rhode Island where Walker was working. Invited to join the Junior League in that city, Connie's new life included a course designed to acquaint young women with the city's agencies. That introduction was the beginning of her long association with charitable work. Connie and Walker's first child, Constance, was born on June 12, 1952. After her children were born and in school, she had time to spend weekday mornings in a community "Settlement House" where she taught sewing to adults.

During summer holidays before 1950, Walker and his brother, Scott, had stayed with their parents in a rented house in Manchester. Throughout the 1950s, after learning about Annisquam, they stayed in a number of places in the village that were made available for summer rentals. These included 10 River Road, Haines Barn, and a house on Leonard Street.

In 1962, the **Annisquam Inn*** as it was then called, had seen better days as a hotel. It was listed for sale and the Mason brothers bought the property and planned to use it as a two-family summer house.

Photographs of the building from its early life through to the nineteen sixties are shown below.



AHS220, 1885. Glass Plate, Thomas Clark, photographer

By Water Inn ("Mrs. Dudley's") circa 1885. Photograph is of the southern side of the building; the ocean is to the left.

*Built circa 1880, and when Sophia Dudley was managing the building as a place to stay, it was called "Miss" or "Mrs. Dudley's". (The inclusion of "Mrs." was likely an honorific. Note reference to *Miss* Sophia Dudley in the newspaper article below.)

The building was later the By water Inn or By-Water Inn, and, finally, Annisquam Inn.



AHS1826, 1891. Glass plate, Thomas Clark, photographer

(Gift from Connie Mason.) Beach and bathing cabins are in the foreground.



AHSPC236

Undated postcard shows the addition that was added to the western side of the Inn but later removed. Bathing cabins have also increased in size.

The road to the inn has since changed from Highland Avenue to Planter's Neck Road.

COMMUNITY LEAGUE HELD OUTING ON 50TH YEAR OF BY WATER INN

By Water Inn, Annisquam, nearing the end of its 50th season, was the scene of an autumnal celebration yesterday afternoon, when some 80 members and friends of the Cape Ann Community league attended an outing and basket picnic in that pleasant spot, as guests of Mr. and Mrs. A. B. Clark.

Ideal Weather.
It was an ideal day for an outing, and in spite of the extreme drought Annisquam looked gay and lovely in her fall apparel. In the afternoon 30 ladies enjoyed a walk along the shore, visited and admired the beautiful gardens at "Sheeprock," the summer home of Mr. and Mrs. H. A. Wise Wood, and finally visited Annisquam lighthouse.

To some the visit to the lighthouse was the first time one of Uncle Sam's beacons had been inspected at close range, and to all it was a most interesting experience. Mr. Davis, the genial light keeper, evidently enjoyed being host to so many pleasant ladies and gladly explained and illustrated the way his beacon functions.

Inspected Old Coach.
Returning from the light the party wended its way through Bent's pasture, past Young's great rock, and to the coach house, where the old Annisquam coach is housed. The coachhouse was open and a pleasant hour was spent examining the mode of transportation between the village and the "harbor," only 40 years ago. The ladies all had the pleasure of signing the guest book and a few lucky ones had a star placed beside their names, showing that they had been passengers in the old coach long before automobiles were invented. The Village Hall library was also open for inspection and was enjoyed and admired.

On returning to By Water Inn some of the party enjoyed a program of beach sports conducted on Cambridge avenue beach, while members of the committee prepared the evening meal.

The tables were set in the pleasant dining room of the inn overlooking Ipswich bay and needless to say full justice was done to all the good things prepared. Beautiful bouquets of garden flowers added to the attractiveness of the room. After supper and while the ladies still lingered over "another cup," Miss Flagg, president of the league, in a brief, but well chosen talk explained a little of the summer work of the league and urged cooperation and renewed interest.

Its 50th Year.
She also said it would be most interesting to know that By Water Inn was just rounding out its 50th year of active service to the community. For 26 years it was under the management of the late Miss Sophia C. Dudley, remembered and loved by so many, both summer guests and village residents. In those days it had but 18 rooms. Now, and for the past 24 years, it has been conducted by Mr. and Mrs. A. B. Clark, who have kept the reputation of making it a place of friendly memories. Today it has 45 rooms and two cottages.

A rising vote of thanks and three rousing cheers were given Mr. and Mrs. Clark for their hospitality to the league and for what they have achieved.

Played Bridge.
During the evening those who deserted remained and bridge was enjoyed, five tables being in play. The high score prize was won by Mrs. Charles E. Cunningham, while Mrs. E. J. Steer received the consolation prize and Mr. Olson received the men's prize.

On all sides words of praise and appreciation were heard, not only for the successful efforts of the committee in charge of the affair, but more especially for Mr. and Mrs. Clark.

1930

Hallowe'en Social.
Cape Ann Village Hall Association
Office—17 Duncan St., Tel. 2520
Crafting, Packing and Storage.
All Loads Insured.
Furniture and Piano Moving.
Van Service—General Trucking
FORD'S EXPRESS

Pre-Hallowe'en celebrators were out in force last night and police were called to various parts of the city to break up gangs of children and send them to their homes.

Washington square, Eastern avenue, Harrison avenue, Summit street, Prospect street and Chestnut street were the sectors where the celebrants gathered to make the early evening uncomfortable for householders in protecting blinds and gates. On Washington street shortly before 11 o'clock two boys, the first to be picked up under the curfew law, were brought to the police station by an officer and detained there until the father of one of the youngsters look Marshal Casey stated this morning that Hallowe'en or no Hallowe'en, the

*From "The Bass
Rocker" August
1931*

Clipping is from the Annisquam Village Hall Association Scrapbook. (Archive.org) This 1930 article makes mention of the building being in its 50th year.

With 80 people present at the "Outing" in 1930, it is likely that the addition to the building, as shown in the image below from 1924, was still present.



AHS1829, Aug. 1924, Photographer unlisted. Glass Plate

This photograph, (artifact from crack in glass slide), was taken from a point southeast of the building, which at the time was completely shingled. The addition remains partly obscured. There may be a hyphen between BY and WATER on the sign.

By 1964, the By Water Inn/Annisquam Inn had been closed for two years. Walker and brother, Scott Mason, with help from their mother, put together a downpayment for the building. That was the beginning of a long multi-year effort to refashion the building into liveable space for use in summer by each of their families. The very large addition that had been erected on the shoreside of the existing building was torn down.

In 1880, Sophia Dudley had been in charge; she rented out 18 rooms for "summerfolk." The place was then known as "Mrs. Dudley's". (The "Mrs." may have been an honorific, so as to sound respectable!) The name changed to the By Water Inn and later, the Annisquam Inn. Circa 1906, Mr. and Mrs. A.B. Clark advertised having 45 rooms and 2 cottages for rent. In the North Shore Blue Book of 1912, Mrs. Harriett Edgerton was advertising the By Water Inn. Miss Kraft was the last person to run the building as a hotel until it closed in 1962.

Connie remembers that the interior of the building needed a lot of work to be functional in order to house the Mason families. For example, there were no bathrooms on the ground floor.

6 bedrooms, with wash basin in each, a laundry room with shelves, and two toilets were located on the second floor. The third floor had 7 bedrooms, two toilets, a bath tub, and a shower stall. Outside the building was a shower with running hot and cold water. It took many years for conversion of the building into a family holiday home.

At right, Connie and Walker Mason at their daughter's wedding reception in 1979.

Below, the living room area at the western side of the house (undated).



Thanks to Connie Mason for the two photographs above.

Now, after further remodeling, it is a smaller version of its earlier self.



AHS 5277 Remodeled house, 4 Planter's Neck Road; winter 2022, Rita L. Teele

In 1986, Connie and Walker bought the house at 25 Leonard Street. They continued ownership of the remodeled By Water Inn as their summer place until 1998. (There was no problem in finding housing for visitors!)

Connie had grown up with women in the family who knew how to ply a needle: both her aunt and grandmother did smocking and needlepoint and knew more complicated needlework such as Italian hemstitching--a decorative stitch for napkins and placemats. Membership in the Anglican Church provided impetus for making "kneelers": rectangular box-shaped cushions, often decorated with needlepoint on canvas, and used when kneeling in prayer. Connie remembers making such an item with Noah's Ark as its theme.

Jill Lovejoy, herself a talented needlepointer, had bought some of Connie's doorstops. In Annisquam, Jill paired with Connie to provide instruction for those who were interested in learning the craft. This became the group familiarly known as "Needles" which began meeting year-round about 7 years ago. The Sewing Circle's Christmas fair wouldn't be the same without a new rendition of a Christmas ornament, created in needlepoint, by each "Needler." The very first ornaments featured the Annisquam lighthouse and boats. Ornaments for the 2023 Annisquam Christmas Fair were based on Connie's pattern of the restored Annisquam stagecoach.

Below:

Connie working on the paper pattern and a finished ornament (by Connie) at right.



Connie, as a longterm member of the Annisquam community, began volunteering at the Exchange in the nineteen eighties. In 1987, she was invited to join the Sewing Circle. For 20+ years, she donned an apron and cooked the lunch that was served at the Christmas Fair. The lunch may be past history, but Connie's red pepper jelly is not. From a southern recipe that includes habaneros to give it a real kick, jars of the jelly are literally a surefire success in terms of sales at the Fair!

If you can't find Connie at the Exchange, "Needles", the Sewing Circle (or the hairdresser on Friday afternoon), you can try the Annisquam Village Library. An avowed Anglophile, British books are at the top of her reading list.

She well remembers a childhood favorite: *Raketty-Packetty House*, written by Frances Hodgson Burnett. Having inherited an antique dolls' house when still a baby, dolls and their houses have always been part of her life.

And, of course, tea is served at the Annisquam Library on Monday afternoons.



AHS5103, Dec. 17, 2018. Christmas Tea at the Library. Photograph: Rita L. Teele