

Finding Aid

Mead Family Collection

Accession Number 2024.9

Extent:

This collection fills five document boxes and one box album of photos. (See attached container list).

Dates:

1913-1980 [inclusive] 1913-1950 [bulk]

Provenance:

The collection was donated by Chuck Mead and his siblings, who were emptying the farmhouse in the summer of 2023 after their mother's death. Half of the archival items, those pertaining to the Mead family's origins in Greenwich, Connecticut, were donated to the Greenwich Historical Society.

Biographical/Historical Context:

Three generations of the Mead Family owned and operated the Mead Orchards farm, located at 15 Scism Lane, Tivoli (off West Kerley Corners Rd), in Red Hook for more than a hundred years, from 1916 to 2018. It was originally named White Clay Creek Orchards before being changed to Mead Orchards in 1980s.

George Gordon (known as "G. Gordon") Mead of Greenwich, Conn first came to Upper Red Hook in 1914. His grandfather was Nelson Bush (related to Presidents Bush) and his father was Nelson Jr. The family was wealthy and had a farm on Long Island Sound. Gordon had graduated from Yale, and being interested in farming, took a two-year course at Cornell that included farm internships. (Gordon Sr., his son Sidney and grandson Chuck all attended Cornell College of Agriculture). Hearing about Will Teator's farm, Meadowbrook, in Upper Red Hook, he chose to work there for a summer. Will Teator thought Gordon should buy his own farm – originally suggesting the Hefferman Farm on Spring Lake (Deer Run). Gordon thought it was too rocky and bought the Elmer Boice farm, once the Coon farm, instead, in 1916. Gordon met Fay Kennedy (the family lived in the Nelson house in Upper Red Hook) at the Grange and they married in 1920. Fay's parents divorced (the house was sold to Saulpaugh's) and Mrs. Kennedy moved in with Gordon and Fay. Gordon served as deacon and son Sidney as elder and deacon at St. Johns Reformed Church. Gordon also served on the school board during the building of new school in 1939 and was the first treasurer at the Red Hook Golf Club, formed in 1930. He kept complete records of the early years of the Golf Club.

Gordon and Fay's children were George Gordon, Jr. b 1921; Elizabeth ('Piz') b 1923, Sidney b. 1924, Rachel b.1927, and Margaret, b. 1929 (later institutionalized). Sidney met Elizabeth (Beth)

Mead who spent summers with her aunt, Dorothy Hayes Freeborn. (Dorothy's first husband was Ernest Hayes and they lived for a time in Shanghai, China. Her second husband was William Livingston Freeborn of Tivoli). Beth had a job at Ward Manor and Dorothy Hayes set Beth and Sid up on a blind date. They were married in Dec 1951, and moved into the Mead farmhouse, sharing it with Gordon and Fay.

Sidney and Beth had three children, Karen, Chuck, and Nelson. Sidney bought the farm in 1959 and son Chuck began managing the farm in the 1980s. Sidney and Beth were avid advocates of farmland preservation. Sid served as Chair of Red Hook's Planning Board for 20 years and President of the Dutchess Co. Farm Bureau. He was Master of the Grange and a fireman with the Tivoli Fire Co. Beth reported for the *Gazette Advertiser*. They sold the development rights in 2001. The farm was sold in 2018 to Scott Blasdel of Apple Eden LLC (Pleasantville, NY) and Beth Mead was given life tenancy in the farmhouse. Beth died in 2023.

Family Genealogy Notes:

Nelson Bush Mead (1860-1929) and Anna Rachel Mead (1861-1952), Greenwich, Conn. Buried Putnam Cemetery. (Nelson was director of the Greenwich National Bank, Town comptroller).

They had two daughters, Elizabeth L and Anna R, and four sons, including Augustus, George G., Nelson Bush, Jr., and Oliver Philip. Anna L. Brush was a niece who lived with them for a time.

Their son George Gordon Mead "Gordon" (1888-1978) married Margaret F. Kennedy "Fay" (1892-1980) Fay's mother was Emma Kennedy, her father was John S. Kennedy.

Gordon and Fay had five children:

George Gordon Jr. – who married Margaret "Peggy" Hanscom

Sidney B. (1924-2008) – who married Elisabeth "Beth" Baker (1929-2023) in 1951 and managed the farm

Elisabeth ("Piz") – who married John E. Bishop of Upper Red Hook. (John's mother was Virginia Bishop, who lived at 'Sunnyhome' on Old Post Road North in Upper Red Hook).

Rachel – who married Robert Platt

Margaret - (institutionalized from age 10 due to Down's Syndrome)

Sid and Beth had three children: Karen, Chuck and Nelson. Chuck took over the farm.