

Setting Roots in Sandwich – Twice

by Marilyn Newkirk Butler

Our family arrived in Sandwich in 1977, but I have found out through my genealogy research that was our family's second relocation to Sandwich! In 1637, three of the Ten Men From Saugus who came to Sandwich were my ancestors. Those ten men and their families received permission from the Plymouth Colony to make the journey from Saugus to Cape Cod. They came to Sandwich in 1637 and named the town after Sandwich Kent England.

My immediate family - husband, Brian, son Kevin, and I settled here in October 1977 after the loss of our youngest son, Patrick. Brian was offered a job in Boston and we heard about a quaint, small town on Cape Cod. We investigated and fell in love with the beauty and serenity of Sandwich, the nearness of the bay and beaches, the canal for bike rides. The town had only one light which was located at the corner of Jarvis Street and 6A . Sandwich was populated by only about 7,000 people. Real estate was incredibly affordable at the time.

We found a rental, newly built by Norm Ayotte on Dexter Avenue, a pretty little cape style home high on a hill. From the back upper deck we could see the bay and on rainy or foggy weather, hear the steady fog horn, it was reassuring and soothing. Our backyard had wild blueberry bushes. Kevin, our 7 year old son would come into the house with palms filled with tiny blueberries bursting with flavor.

We became a family who spent all our time outdoors. I made picnic lunches and Kevin and I rode the canal and found perfect spots for lunch. Most summer days we would bike to the nearby beach with towels and lunch stowed in the bike basket. They were glorious days!

Sandwich was a small, safe town. As our son grew, he was allowed to ride his bike around the town. In the 1970's the feeling of a tight community and its safety made that possible. The police were always present and made the children feel they were their friends. Kevin carried dimes in his pocket and called me from various phone booths around town and at the marina.



As he got older, he'd stop at Quail Hollow Farm and Georgette Pola would give him peaches or plums to eat. Retired men at the canal were always seen fishing and they loved to encourage and help young children like our son to fish. One day he came home with a nice sized pollack! What a life for a boy growing up!

We were there during the great Blizzard of 1978. Our little rental home sat firmly on the hillside as winds battered us from the bay. My husband took it upon himself to leave the house and walk to the marina to take photos. The phone booth there was half under water, covered by ice blocks and snow. A second huge storm, the Nor-easter of 1993, the "perfect storm" changed the dune structure at Town Neck beach, how sad, yet it is Mother Nature at work. Living on Cape Cod brings you closer to nature.

Speaking of Mother Nature, the wonderful jewel of a museum, the Green Briar Nature Center and the Thornton Burgess Society educate children and adults about the natural world around us. It was a special place that our son enjoyed visiting to see and touch their animals and learn about them.

We moved away in 1993 for business reasons, our son had graduated from college, and we left Sandwich for NC. Those long, hot summer days in NC kept me indoors and I decided to dig into my family's genealogy, starting with my Mother's side of the family. It was in 2007 that I discovered information about my family which still gives me chills!

I learned of my family's FIRST arrival to Sandwich in 1637. I will never forget the evening I made the discovery that my mother's side of the family were directly related to 3 of the 10 original founders of Sandwich! I discovered that the Ellis family of Sandwich and my Stevens family of Rochester/Dartmouth MA made that connection. Sarah Ellis, daughter of John and Maria Landers Ellis of Sandwich, married into our Stevens family in 1777. Exactly 200 years after their

marriage we moved to the Ellis's hometown! I was totally ignorant of the greater meaning of that move at that time! My genealogy interest didn't start until 2007.

I was in awe and filled with joy to discover my roots in Sandwich! Three of the Ten Men of Saugus were my direct ancestors: Thomas Dexter, Thomas Tupper and Edmund Freeman. Very soon after other family relations arrived: John Ellis, Thomas Burgess, Michael Blackwell, Thomas Landers, Richard Kirby and Edward Perry and Benjamin Nye.

Sandwich's Town Historian and Archivist, Barbara Gill, was so very helpful while I was making my discoveries. Her correspondence to me was always filled with information and copies of original documents, and where she was unsure, she made that clear too. I've visited her many times over the years to do further research. I'm so grateful for her help. Barbara is definitely an asset to the historic town of Sandwich.

The town's beautiful historic homes and buildings stand in testament to the rootedness and pride in the community, flowers are in abundance, and as you walk the paths around town, the past is ever present. Suddenly, I was looking at the town in detail with a new interest, realizing that my ancestors had to do with the founding and growth of Sandwich so long ago. What a small world it can be.

Kevin and I found ourselves missing Sandwich terribly after our move to NC. We've been gone 18 years and we've made our pilgrimages every summer to Sandwich. Sometimes we've made it to the Sandwich performances of "The Nutcracker" in December in which very dear friend's daughters danced. Now that he is married, his wife, a SC girl, has also adopted Sandwich as a home in her heart. It seems it is in our DNA, we are drawn to Sandwich, we thrive while we are there, there is a great void while we are gone from it.

Those wonderful years in Sandwich are full of memories that we cherish. Our family enjoyed Little League games, Ice Hockey, and Cape Cod League Baseball. Back then, the marina was small. We loved going to Cap't Scotts and getting take out dinners of fried clam strips and driving to a grassy spot overlooking the marina and watching the few boats that the marina could hold coming and going.



The Wing School was a place of learning and discipline. The teachers were dedicated to the children. Many parents, including myself, enjoyed helping in the classrooms. The school also had, and still has the art program in which “art ladies” would bring art into the classrooms. The children seemed to love it and many teachers encouraged that love of art. Mrs. Virginia Lewis is one teacher that stands out in my mind.

My husband enjoyed coaching baseball and hockey. One early Saturday morning we found ourselves running late to get to Gallo ice arena and we had the keys! We were speeding at 6:30 that morning, the police stopped us, but hearing that my husband was a coach and had the keys, let us go and just told us to be careful!

There was a kindness and a goodness to the people! Marshland was a home away from home. Eileen who worked there for decades, and still does on weekends, would reprimand us if we did not finish our plates! It was all done in the kindest of ways, although she hated wasted food, we could laugh about it!

The memories of those days seem like a magical time for us. There has never been another place that was truly “home” as Sandwich. Is the longing we have for Sandwich while we are gone the fact it is in our DNA from its beginnings? Is it because Sandwich truly is so special in so many ways, a perfect place to raise children, a place that soothes the soul? I conclude it is all of the above! It is our magical place.