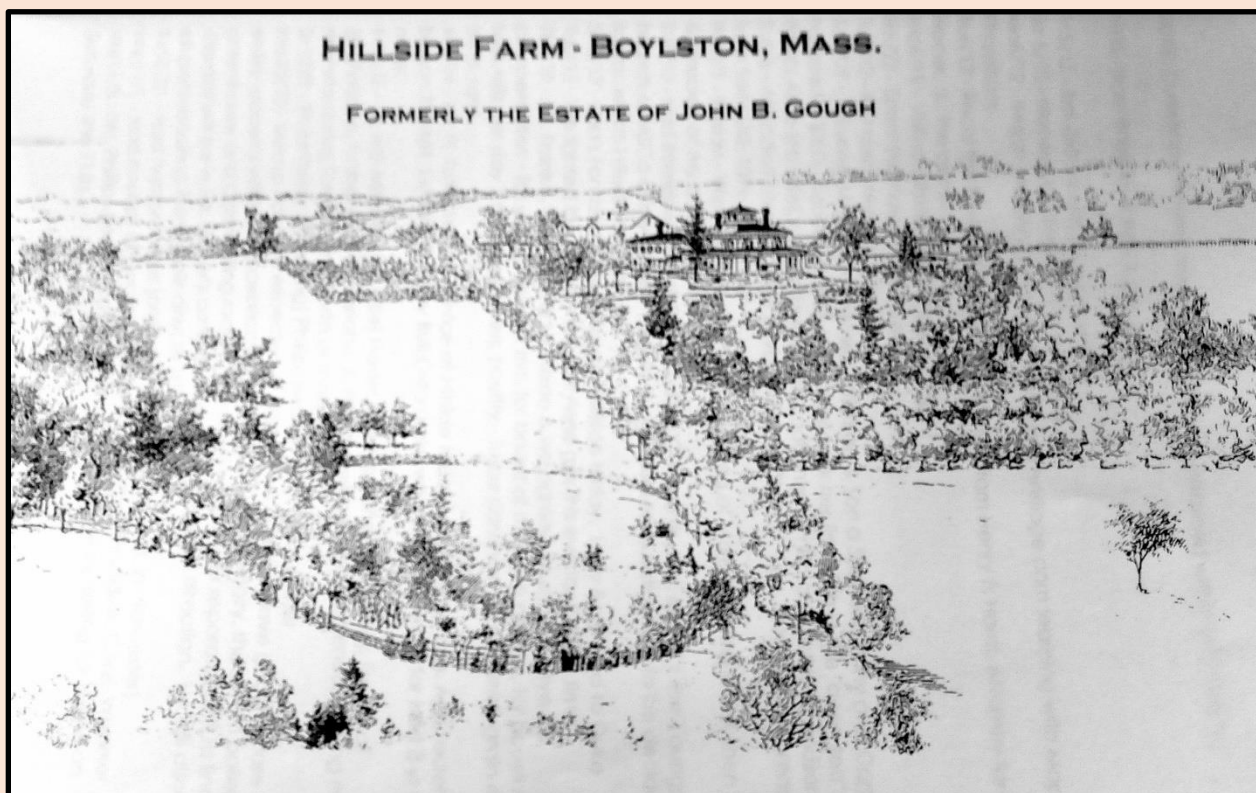


# If A Barn Could Talk

By Judy Haynes

The red barn at Hillside was erected circa 1855 shortly after the time John B. Gough built the Italian styled residence for himself and his wife, Mary (Whitcomb) Gough. On the 1856 U.S.G.S. topographical map for Boylston, only two structures are shown on the Gough property, the house and the barn. The barn would have at that time been used to house livestock. The barn was later depicted in the Woodbury sketch produced mid to latter 19<sup>th</sup> century, after a balloon had flown over for an aerial view of the Hillside property. The architectural style of the red barn comes closest to that of a New England side-of-the-hill bank barn with dry fieldstone foundation and dirt floor cellar.<sup>1</sup>



**Etching of the John B. Gough estate of Boylston Massachusetts  
Depicting house, barns, and carriage house**

**Note the "Red Barn" is located directly behind house**

*Etching of Woodbury & Company, according to Kimball R. Woodbury*

The size of the farm and number of buildings grew over the years through the various ownerships. Mary Gough raised specialty hens and by 1868 had three poultry houses.<sup>2</sup> These buildings held various chicken breeds raised at Hillside. A notebook with the varieties of chickens and eggs owned by Mary is held at the Worcester Historical Museum.

After the deaths of John in 1886 and then Mary in 1891, Mr. William J. Hogg of Worcester purchased the property as a summer home to breed cattle and horses from 1891-1906. He operated the property as a gentleman farmer and made it into a Jersey dairy farm. Following Hogg's ownership was Charles Morgan (1906-1914), also a rich gentleman farmer who supplied milk for his employees as he had added dairy barns and a creamery. A Dr. William Bloom, a dentist, owned and lived at Hillside from 1915-1922, when again the property changed hands into New England Power Company (1923-1929). In 1930 George F. Fuller bought it and leased the area for farming.



**Members of the Hogg Family  
at "Hillside"  
1900**

*BHSM Photograph Collection*

<sup>1</sup> Hubka, Thomas A. Big House, Little House, Back House, Barn, Univ. Press of New England, 1984.

And Visser, Thomas D. Field Guide to New England Barns and Farm Buildings. Univ. Press of New England. 1997.

<sup>2</sup> Assessors/Tax Records of Boylston, Massachusetts, 1868, Boylston Historical Society, 7 Central Street, Boylston, Massachusetts

### The Pig's Sunroom

One of the unique features of the red barn was its tunnel leading from the cellar to an above ground small structure, a sunroom (no longer standing) for piglets. It seems that pigs need sun and this small room with a glass top allowed the animal to gather in its needed vitamin D, yet kept the animals confined. Donald Rich, whose family leased the farm 1935-1938, kept pigs in the basement of the barn and he recalls the sun 'parlor' and provided a picture of it behind the barn.<sup>3</sup>



**The Pig's "Sunroom" (on right)**  
*Pigs had access from barn to pen area with glass roof*

Corn was the crop grown at Hillside by the Rich family and Don Rich describes a husking bee:

*"We had a row of corn – probably 20 feet long, 4 feet wide, and 18 inches high. You invited all your friends and neighbors in to have a party. The idea is to husk the corn and then it would go to the mill and be ground for feed. Anybody that got a red ear [a rare corn] could kiss any of the girls, or the girls could kiss any of the men. The idea was to find the red ear. The red ears made their circuit many times around!"*

### What other tales would the building hold?

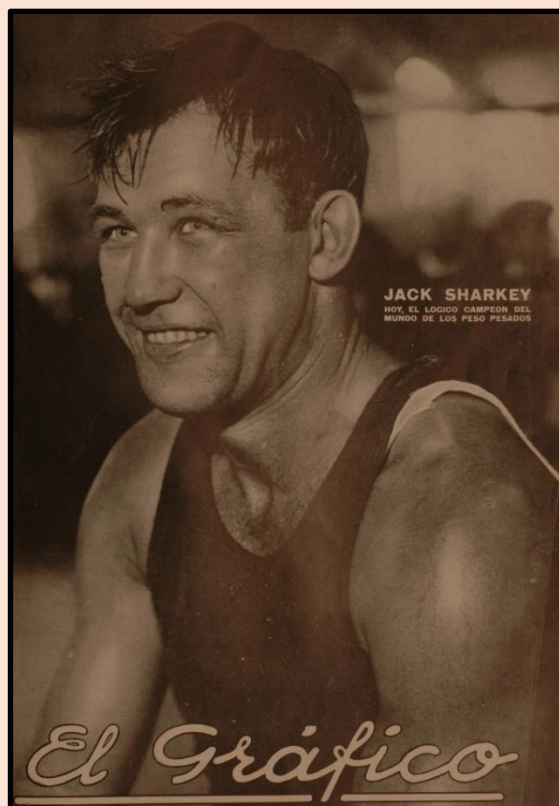
According to an oral history of Andrew Bunikis,<sup>4</sup> when Jack Sharkey, nee Josef Paul Zukauskas, was training as a world heavyweight champion boxer, there was an area in the barn set up for sparring and a punching bag for practice. Andy was a teenager at the time he remembered Jack Sharkey, while Andy was working at the Hillside farm. It was his Lithuanian family background and a young boy's interest that led him to become aware of the boxing celebrity, whose roots were also Lithuanian and who was known to the Worcester Lithuanian Clubs (Moronis Park and Vernon Hill).

Andy worked several summers at the Hillside farm, leased from George Fuller by the Carroll family, also Lithuanians. So how did Sharkey end up in a barn at Hillside? It seems at the time ca. 1932 -1934, when the Carroll family was leasing the farm, that in addition to farm work, young Joe (born 1911) and Peter Carroll (born 1916) were heavyweight champions of New England. Andy suggests that Jack Sharkey likely met them at the Lithuanian clubs and found it convenient to spar with the Carrolls in the barn at Hillside. Jack Sharkey went on to become world heavyweight champion June 21, 1932.<sup>5</sup>

How did a name like Sharkey come from Paul Zukauskas? When he entered the Navy, they were recruiting for a boxer to represent them. He told them his name and it was said,

*"That will never work as a fighter. You need something more catchy or colorful."*

Thus, Paul Zukauskas took the name 'Jack' from Jack Dempsey and 'Sharkey' from Tom Sharkey another boxer, both men he admired, and his name was created.



**Jack Sharkey**  
*Heavyweight Champion  
Who sparred with locals  
in the Red Barn at Hillside*

The barn likely held some other stories no longer known. The farm hands who bunked in the upper rooms may have dreamed of riches, for the era when the Carrolls and the Rich families lived there, in the 1930s, a Great Depression was raging. Don Rich tells how just about every

<sup>3</sup> Haynes, Robert and Judith, interviewers of Donald Rich Oral History, 2006, p. 4, 8.

<sup>4</sup> Haynes, Robert and Judith, interviewers of Andrew Bunikis Oral History, 2004, pp 3-7

<sup>5</sup> www. Heavyweight Champion Jack Sharkey

week some fellow would wander onto the property and beg his father for work. Often Mr. Rich couldn't afford another farmhand, but the man would agree to work for room and board, and no pay. That provided at least a full stomach and a place to sleep for a short time.

### A Tribute to a Robert Haynes for a Job Well Done

Over the years the barn showed serious signs of disrepair.

The Hillside Restoration Project, turned to Bob Haynes, to coordinate with the Department of the Interior and have the barn added (2010) as part of the National Historic Landmark and addendum to the Landmark property that already included the John B. Gough House (1974).

Bob then coordinated with Uwe Tobies, an historic barn restorer to strengthen the barn and bring it back to its former glory.



**Bob Haynes identifying internal work to be done**  
*BHSM Photograph Collection*



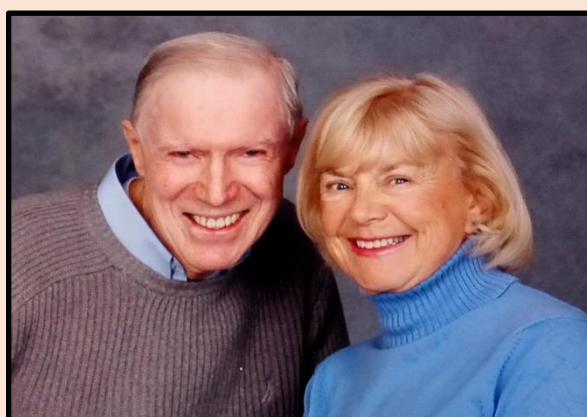
**Red Barn at Hillside**

*BHSM Photograph Collection*

Bob, who died in 2016, was honored recently with a plaque noting his work to secure its Landmark addition and to his dedication to have the horse barn restored. Since a decade has gone by since the barn was looking its best, once again it appears another coat of paint is needed.



**Plaque Awarded on behalf of the Restoration Efforts of Robert "Bob" Haynes**  
*by Hillside Restoration Project in 2016*



**Bob and Judy Haynes**

To read more details of farm life at Hillside, stop in at the Historical Society to read the oral histories of Andrew Bunikis and Donald Rich. For other subjects in local history, please visit us and explore our library at the Historic Old Town Hall, 7 Central Street.

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Acknowledgements:

Photograph, Jack Sharkey,

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