A 100 Year Life Well-Lived

One Extraordinary Woman: Barbara Leighton

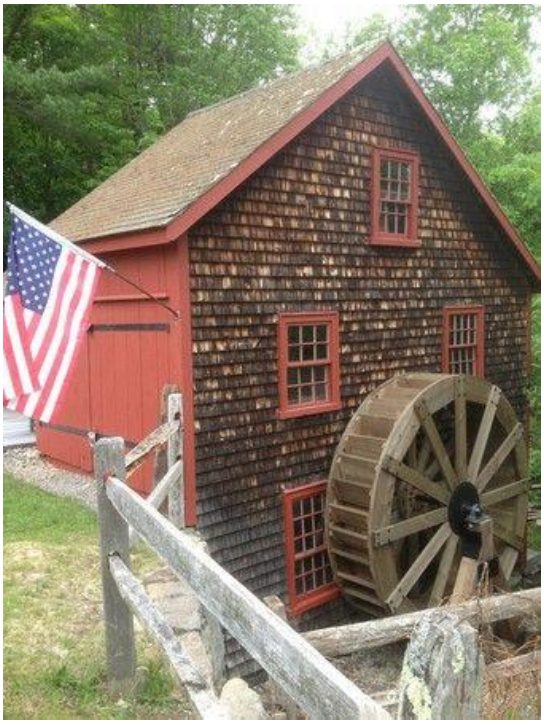
Medfield native Barbara Leighton was a woman before her time due to her interests and achievements over her long life. As reported last July when she celebrated her 100th birthday, Ms. Leighton grew up in Medfield doing the physical work of men such as chopping wood, tapping maple trees and clearing brush, plus she was an outdoors person who enjoyed fishing and hunting! In addition, Barbara's love of Medfield and history collided to make her an unofficial historian for our town, holding archeological digs for middle school children at town historical sites for decades, donating 7.4 acres of conservation land in 1989, serving for years as both the curator of the Medfield Historical Society and caretaker of the Peak House.



Barbara Leighton (2016)

But Barbara really put her Medfield history interests and out-sized skills together at the Kingsbury Pond Gristmill where she worked for decades doing everything from scrambling up ladders to hammer roof shingles, to replacing and renovating windows and other elements, helping to make it another Medfield historical gem. Dick Judge, Chair of the Kingsbury Pond Gristmill Committee relayed, "As an original member of the Gristmill Committee, just one of the many projects Barbara undertook was about thirty or so years ago. She took apart a ruined fireplace brick by brick, cleaned the bricks, and then used them to build a brick floor in the Gristmill...that still exists today!"

Dick Judge further noted, "Without Barbara's incredible decades of dedication to our circa 1718 grist mill, I fear not only would it literally have fallen to pieces, but she served as a constant reminder of how one person's conviction and example can motivate so many of us to save and preserve such an important and beautiful Medfield historic site."



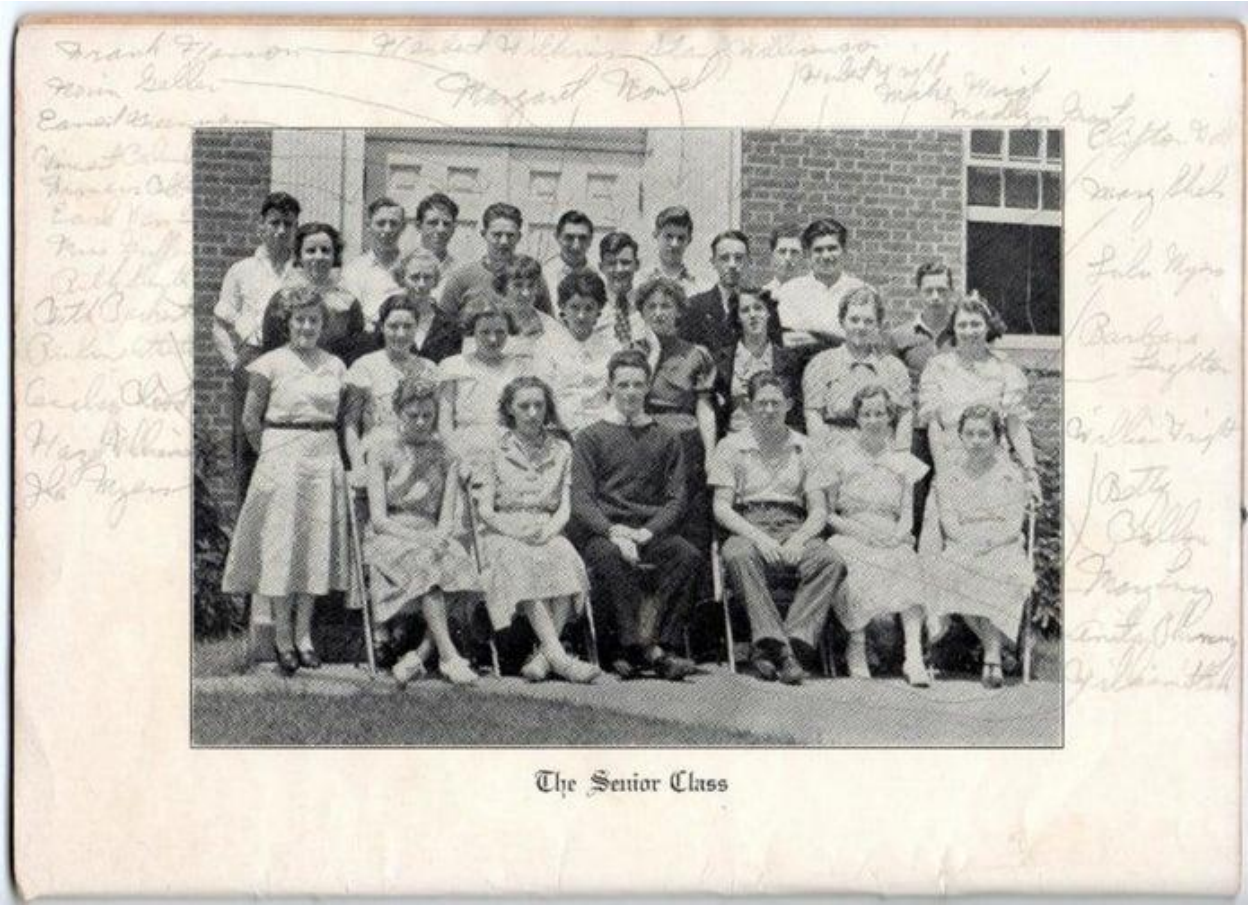
The Kingsbury Pond Gristmill Committee (KPGC), a Medfield Foundation Initiative, is a group of adult volunteers dedicated to preserving, maintaining and improving one of Medfield's most visible historic buildings built around 1718 by Captain Joseph Clark. Located on Spring Street (Rt. 27S) at the serene Kingsbury Pond. The committee hopes to reopen the mill for people to see how milling has progressed through the years.

After Ms. Leighton passed away last August, she ensured her life's work will continue because in her estate she left a significant planned gift to the Kingsbury Pond Gristmill Committee, through the Medfield Foundation, for the amazing work the team has done on the facility. Thus, Barbara Leighton's unique legacy as an extraordinary woman whose influence and service-oriented life's-work over an impressive 100 years in Medfield will extend for many years beyond what would have been her 101st year.

Evan Weisenfeld, President of the Medfield Foundation, said, "This large planned gift from the estate of Barbara Leighton means generations of people in Medfield will continue to enjoy the Kingsbury Pond Gristmill, and volunteers now can continue its preservation."

He continued, "Furthermore, the Medfield Foundation urges you to thoughtfully consider making gifts in your estate plans to support our town through the Medfield Foundation and its signature programs and community initiatives such as the Gristmill and other town landmark preservation efforts, the Legacy Fund, Public Need Fund, and many others, to ensure your unique legacy continues the work of ensuring Medfield is a great place to live now and in the future."

In this time of change, when many people are revisiting their wills, please consider making provisions to better our town via planned giving to the Medfield Foundation, Inc. Residents considering planned donations in their estates to MFi can designate a specific initiative or sector of interest, or the Legacy Fund, an endowment fund that leaves a lasting legacy for our town's future needs.



Medfield High School Class of 1936 in front of what is now the Pfaff Center.
Barbara Leighton is the second from the left in the front row!

Barbara Leighton left a legacy of countless examples of service to Medfield over her 100-year life, but also ensured her legacy will live on through her planned gift to the Kingsbury Pond Gristmill through the Medfield Foundation. Would you please consider leaving a lasting gift in your estate planning?

There are many ways to donate today, too! Just check out the website: https://www.medfieldfoundation.org. You will find a complete list of current campaigns such as the COVID-19 Support Fund and Summer Camp Fund, plus information about MFi, signature programs, community initiatives, and much more.

For information about Medfield Foundation planned gifts and more please email info@medfieldfoundation.org, phone (774) 469-0260, or mail Medfield Foundation, c/o Medfield Townhouse, 459 Main Street, Medfield, MA 02052.

The Medfield Foundation (MFi) is a 100% volunteer run 501(c)(3) non-profit charitable corporation whose mission is to enrich the lives of Medfield residents, build a stronger community, and facilitate the raising and allocation of private funds for public needs in the town of Medfield.