



266 Cochran Hill Road in 1988 – the “Doc” Moriarty homestead 1935-1963

The Conleys of Cochran Hill

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In May of this year, I received an unexpected but delightful phone call from a man named Bob Conley, whose memories of Cochran Hill go way back to the 1940s. Bob lives in Massachusetts now, but for many years he spent his summers in New Boston.

I’ll pause here to remind readers where Cochran Hill is... Drive up Old Coach Road (the dump road) a little over a mile from the center of town and take your first left, which is Greenfield Road. At the top of Greenfield Road is the Four-Way Farm at the intersection of four roads. The farm has a big red barn with moose antlers over the barn doors. One of Bob’s uncles, John Conley, lived near this intersection until his house burned down – more about that later.

If you make another left here onto Cochran Hill Road, the first house you’ll see on your right is where the Cochrans, early settlers of New Boston, lived 250 years ago. Bob’s uncle Dr. William Thomas Moriarty lived part-time in this house from 1935-1963. It’s owned by the Cardone family now.

“Doc” Moriarty was married to Bob’s aunt, Margaret Conley. He bought his New Boston house for a summer home. His medical practice was in Malden, Massachusetts, just north of Old Boston. Some of his patients who couldn’t afford his fees (which were \$3 for a house call, \$2 for an office visit) drove up to New Boston to work on Doc’s house. His friends did, too – Wilfred Fox, a Malden alderman, was a plasterer by trade.

Bob’s parents were Frank and Ruth Conley. Frank was a letter carrier in Medford and Malden who sent his family to New Boston in the summertime, from June to Labor Day. Their children were Bob, twins Janet and Janice, and a younger brother William.

Doc's New Boston house had five bedrooms. There were fireplaces in the living room, dining room, and Doc's bedroom. The kitchen sink had a faucet and an old pump, too. Bob's father was a good cook who made supper for 21 guests at Doc's table for Bob's first birthday. There were back stairs off the kitchen.

Bob remembers listening to The Lone Ranger on a big radio. Once lightning struck the house, knocked the phone off its hook and Doc off his couch.

Doc owned about 50 acres including a woodlot and an orchard of Macintosh and Baldwin apple trees plus a few peach trees. They'd take a truck down to the river to fill a tank with water to spray the trees; Doc had a poison room in his barn.



Uncle John Conley, Bob Conley, and "Doc" Moriarty

Another of Bob's uncles, John Conley, and his wife Alice moved in with George Goodwin near the Four-way Farm sometime before 1946 to take care of the old man, and they inherited the house when George died in 1956. After the house burned in 1959, the Conleys moved to the Creamery briefly, then to Valley View Road. Their Cochran Hill house burned due to an electrical fault in the attic. Alice grabbed her son Patrick – her two other children, Jack and Diane, were at school – and ran to the neighbors to use the phone. Fire engines couldn't get to the house because of all the snow. Bob said that all that remained after the fire was the chimney and a blue and white statue of the Blessed Mother Mary.

Cochran Hill neighbors included "Commander" Clarence Johnson (US Navy, retired) and his wife Elsie Lewis – a very pretty woman, according to Bob. Commander Johnson always drove a Chrysler New Yorker. He and Elsie would sit with the Moriartys on their front porch Monday through Friday and drink sarsaparillas, a root beer-like beverage.

Bob thinks his uncle John Conley came up to New Boston with Doc Moriarty when Elsie was married to her first husband, Alvin Lewis. Elsie and Alvin had a big chicken farm above their home opposite the cemetery gates, and Doc bought manure from her for his garden. Bob thinks Alvin offered John Conley a job which is how John came to live in New Boston.



Bob (age 14), "Doc", and cousin Jackie Conley

At the Four Corners lived Frederick and Stella Moses whose daughter Phyllis married Don Byam. Jerry Coleman, a 2nd baseman for the New York Yankees, had a summer house nearby in the 1950s, possibly where Susan and Frank Woodward later lived.

Bill Nichols was a big man who'd come visit from the Gorge (I think this refers to High Bridge) on a donkey, with Bill's feet almost touching the ground. Bill was a great ballplayer – "could hit the ball a country mile." He once hit a home run but was so drunk he forgot to turn left after 1st base.

Bob Conley would ride a horse down Cochran Hill to the old bridge, now gone, that connected Lyndeboro Road to McCollum. He and his siblings would walk downtown to buy ice cream at the drug store. They'd eat their ice cream where the gravity monument is today.

Bob remembers Goodwin's Mill on Old Coach Rd (a small saw mill near the turn to the Friendly Beaver Campground), Corthell's brick house (now the Floreani's), and Henry Friedrich, who was a blacksmith, ice man, and town selectman.

I thank Bob Conley for the phone conversations we've had – I'm always delighted when people call to share their memories of New Boston! – *Dan R.*



Frank Conley, Bob, the twins, Mighty Whitey, and Betsy the Calf – c.1946



"Doc" and Bob – priming the pump