

History of the Hob Knob Inn

Once a private home, later a popular boarding house, and since 1983 operated as a hotel, the property now known as the Hob Knob Inn has a long history on Martha's Vineyard.

It is not entirely clear when the building was originally constructed. An inventory of historic properties in Edgartown suggests the home was built between 1860 and 1890. But the Edgartown assessors' record for the property attributes a later date of 1900.

What is certain is that beginning some time before 1915 the property came into the ownership of Mary Lester Jernegan, daughter of Mathew P. and Eliza Stewart Norton of Chappaquiddick.

Mary L. Jernegan was actually the name she took on the last and briefest of her three marriages. She married her first husband, Franklin S. Sills, at age 17, on June 12, 1869. Sadly, Sills passed away before their first anniversary.

She was remarried in 1871 to Samuel C. Smith of Edgartown. Mary and Samuel had one son, Samuel Lester Smith. Mary's first and only child, Samuel tragically died of diphtheria in 1884 at age 10. Four years later, Mary's second husband passed away, and she was married for a third time on July 26, 1889 to Edgartown resident, William F. Jernegan. This marriage did not last long and by December 1900, William F. Jernegan had married someone else.

When Mary L. Jernegan died on June 26, 1915 at the age of 62, the building now known as the Hob Knob Inn went to her sister, Seraphina E. Collins.

In 1917, Seraphina conveyed the property to her son, Wayland S. Fuller. Three years later, Fuller died at the age of just 27, leaving the home to his young widow Norah, and their two children Catherine and Wayland Jr.

For many years thereafter, the home came to be known as the Fuller House. In an announcement for Norah Fuller's second marriage to Patrick T. Delaney, the Vineyard Gazette reported that Norah "since becoming a widow has conducted a boarding house with much success on upper Main street. She is much esteemed in the community."

Unlike so many of her forebears, Norah Fuller lived a long life, passing away in 1979 at the age of 96. In 1981, her son Wayland S. Fuller Jr. sold the property to a summer resident, Theodore Swanson, who sold it to the Keyland Corp. Owned by a father and son, Arnold W. and John Kheary, the Keyland Corp. established it as The Governor Bradford Inn in 1983.

On April 26, 1996, the property was sold to Margaret H. White who renovated and renamed it the Hob Knob Inn. "The name comes from the initials of Ms. White's grandmother, Helen Osborne Bruch, and her grandmother's Ohio estate, located on a hill known as the Knob," the Gazette reported.

In November 2015, the property was acquired by VIC Partners.