



809-811 Boston Post Road, photos taken in May 2004, before renovations. The original secondary storage building at the lower right was demolished and replaced with a new garage. The house and barn were each remodeled into two units of condominium housing, and new units were built toward the rear of the site..

The Transformation of 809-811 Boston Post Road

Until the fall of 2004, the property at 809-811 Boston Post Road was notorious for its dilapidated condition and ever-changing front-yard stockpiles of broken, water-damaged furniture and rusty vehicles. Today, the house and barn have each been transformed into two condominium units in a new development called Post Road Green. Behind the historic buildings are two new duplexes for a total of 8 units on the property. The first residents moved in this summer. [2005]

Carol Seto undertook this challenging project as a Local Initiative Petition (LIP) under State Chapter 40B. The Town of Weston contributed \$380,000 of Community Preservation Act funds and required the developer to place a preservation restriction on the house and barn. Keeping the two mid-19th century buildings was considered a town priority because of their prominent

position on the Boston Post Road, which is a National Register Historic District for its entire length in Weston.

Chapter 40B was set up to increase the state's stock of affordable housing and allows developers to ignore local zoning requirements. Twenty-five percent of the units must be affordable under state income guidelines and will be sold to eligible first-time homebuyers who make no more than 80% of area median income, adjusted for household size. The two lucky winners chosen by lottery will each pay \$165,800 for their condominium unit. The affordable units will remain so in perpetuity.



Renovation of the existing house (top left) and barn (top right) and construction of new units. Photos taken between December 2004 and March 2005 by Pamela W. Fox.

Since the town's 250th anniversary in 1963, researchers including myself have been incorrect about the age and history of the house at 809-811 Boston Post Road. The physical appearance of the house suggests a mid- century date rather than the early 19th century date previously

assigned. Certain features are characteristic of the Italianate style, which dominated American house construction between about 1850 and 1880, for example, the narrow trim boards, 2/2 window sash, original front door (since replaced) and interior newel post. The Colonial Revival porch was added in 1910.

Researchers in the 1960s and 70s concluded, again incorrectly, that No. 809-811 was the house referred to on page 154 in Daniel S. Lamson's *History of the Town of Weston*, which states: "Ralph Abrahams, of the Isaac Jones family, kept a store on what is now the Minor property. The store stood east of the present house. In 1820, Abrahams sold the property to Alpheus Bigelow and Bigelow sold to Oliver Shed, who remained until 1830, when the store was destroyed by fire." I repeated this information in my book *Farm Town to Suburb* but I am now certain that Lamson was referring to another property, also on Boston Post Road but closer to the Wayland town line. Deed research does not support a link between this property and the owners described by Lamson. Also, Lamson says the store was "on what is now the Minor property" whereas the house in question was owned by the Green family during the years when Lamson was writing his history.

Adding to the confusion is the fact that the present house at 809-811 Boston Post Road is not the first on the site. A house appears at the foot of Love Lane on the 1822 map, labeled as belonging to "T. Pierce," whose first name was Thaddeus. At some point in the mid-century 19th century, this house was replaced. The question is, who built the present mid-19th century house and barn?

Thaddeus Peirce died in 1848 at age 84 and his son Abijah inherited the property. Although it is difficult to say for sure, Abijah is the person most likely to have replaced the earlier house. When Abijah died in 1859 at age 54, his widow Mary had to sell the house and three acres to pay his debts (Book 825, pages 335 and 336). Perhaps Abijah's debt was in part for the construction of a new house, barn, and shop on his father's land. Unfortunately, tax records from the 1840s and 1850s are not available to provide a definitive answer.

The buyer, Luther Fuller of Wayland, purchased the three-acre parcel with buildings for \$751.60 and an additional six acres directly from the widow for \$748, for a total of almost \$1500. In 1862, the first year that buildings are listed separately in the tax records, Fuller was taxed for a dwelling, a barn, and a "wheelwright shop." The already well-traveled Boston Post Road would have been an excellent location for such a shop. Fuller's tax valuation increased only gradually during more than a decade of ownership, suggesting that he did not build a new, more valuable house.

In 1875, Mary E. Fuller, widow of Luther, sold the property to Edward C. Green (Book 1349/388). Green is listed in the 1887 directory as a farmer. The property stayed in the Green family for over a century. Edward and his wife Cora had a son, Edward Jr., and daughter, Cora. Edward Jr. initially worked as a farmer but was quickly swept up in the automobile age. In the 1911 and 1921 directories, Edward Jr. is listed as a chauffeur and in 1915 he is listed as a



September 2005, photographs of the completed project by Pamela W. Fox

mechanic. From about 1920 to at least 1963, he operated an automobile repair garage known as Green's Garage on the premises.

In 1973, the property was sold to David Connolly, who rented rooms in the house. Tenants held frequent yard sales until town authorities were able to enforce by-laws prohibiting this practice. The condition of the property was a cause of considerable frustration for neighbors and town officials.

In 2004, Carol Seto purchased the three-acre property for \$1,080,000 for a 40B development. The selectmen and members of the Planning Board and Weston Historical Commission saw this as the only possible way to preserve the historic house and barn. Because the existing buildings are sited close to the road, they partially screen the two new buildings from view.

Text by Pamela W. Fox originally published in The Weston Historical Society Bulletin, Fall 2005.