

order, WHS collections; (14) WHS collections; (15) *The Civil War* by Ken Burns (website); (16)(17) WHS collections; (18) Report of Recruiting Committee, 1865 *Town Report*, 18; (19) 1889 Baptist church history, 14; (20) (21) WHS collections; (22) WHS military enlistment lists; (23) Sears, 14; (24) Lamson, 140; (25) WHS collections, Alonzo Fiske to William Schouler, Adj. General of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, August 30, 1862; (26) WHS collections; Drake was one of Weston's nine-months men; (27) (28) (29) (30) (31) WHS collections; (32) Sears, 7; (33) Hastings, "Re....Toplift" (sic), 1; (34) Sears, 11; (35) Faust, 85; (36) *Encyclopedia of Death and Dying*, Civil War, U.S (website); (37) Hastings, "Re....Rev. Toplift" (sic), 2; (38) *Town Report Year ending March 31, 1864*, 10; (39) Lamson, 143; (40) Letter courtesy Eloise Kenney, descendent of Stimpson; (41) Information provided by Eloise Kenney; (42) Faust, 236; (43) WHS collections; (44) Report of the Selectmen, *Town Report fort Year ending March 1863*, 4 (45) Lamson, 140, and WHS collection handwritten "List of men drafted from the Town of Weston at Concord, July 18, 1863" containing 33 names; (46) Report of the Recruiting Committee, 19; (47) (48) WHS collections; (49) Lamson, 143; (50) (51) Report of the Recruiting Committee, 19-20.

Weston's China Trader: Frederick Thomas Bush

By Isabella Jancourtz

China trader and diplomat Frederick Thomas Bush (1815 – 1887) arrived in Weston in 1856 with his wife Elizabeth DeBlois and their five young children: Charles, Frederick, Amelia, Fannie, and Sophia. The young family had lived in China for nine years, and the three girls were born there. They sailed home on the *Flying Cloud*, a record-breaking clipper ship.

The Bushes bought the old Starr Farm on South Avenue from a friend, Dr. Henry Ingersoll Bowditch, who had owned it from 1851 to 1856. Dr. Bowditch was the son of Salem's famous navigator of the seas, Nathaniel Bowditch. Frederick and Elizabeth called their new home *Brookside*. Soon there were four more children: William, Walter, Henry, and Donald.

F.T. Bush was born in Taunton in 1815 to a family of merchants who had started the first iron forges in America in the mid-1600s. Prior to that time, all pots, pans, swords, ploughshares, and other iron implements had to be shipped to the colonies from England. Trade was in his blood. His

Photo of Frederick Thomas Bush taken by his neighbor, Francis Blake. Bush, a China trader and diplomat, was among the first of many business and professional men to settle in Weston in the mid-19th century. (Courtesy Massachusetts Historical Society)



brothers Samuel Leonard Bush and James Phillips Bush were also Boston merchants.

As a very young man, Bush left his family in Taunton for the busy port of Boston, the hub of an ever-expanding universe of international trade. At age 26 he was married. Two years later he sailed to China aboard the *Probus*. It was 1843, one year after the Treaty of Nanking that ended the first Opium War. Hong Kong had been ceded to the British; and the ports of Canton, Amoy, Foochow, Ningpo, and Shanghai were open to foreign traders. Although the United States had not been a combatant, through diplomacy American traders were given the same rights that the British had fought for in the first Opium War.

Opportunities for trade had never been better. Soon Elizabeth Bush, accompanied by three servants to help care for baby Fred and toddler Charles, sailed on the clipper *Rainbow* for the trading center of Whampoa to join her husband. Within two years Frederick Bush had established his own firm, Bush & Co. and was also appointed the first American Consul to Hong Kong, serving in that capacity from 1845 to 1852. He was also a director of the China Mutual Insurance Company.

These were eventful years for the Consul and the fleet. There was the Sino-Portuguese War of 1849, as a result of which Macau was ceded to Portugal. That same year, 16 American sailors from the whaler *USS Lagoda* were shipwrecked on the Japanese island of Yeso and imprisoned. Commodore James Glynn sailed into Nagasaki Harbor on the sloop of war *USS Preble* and, after a show of strength, successfully obtained the release of the survivors, who were brought to Hong Kong before finally being returned to the United States. Commodore Glynn subsequently

proposed that the U.S. government open relations with Japan (then a “Closed Country”) through diplomacy or by force, if necessary. This led to the expeditions of Commodore Matthew Perry in 1853 and 1854.

The China trade was booming, bringing prosperity to American ports from Boston to New York City, Philadelphia, and San Francisco. American ships traded their cargoes of gold and silver bullion, tobacco, candles, coal, whiskey, ginseng, hides, and other products for spices, Rose Medallion and other Chinese export porcelain, many varieties of tea and silk, lacquerware, fans, and furniture. In India some traders also took opium on board to sell in China or trade for export items.

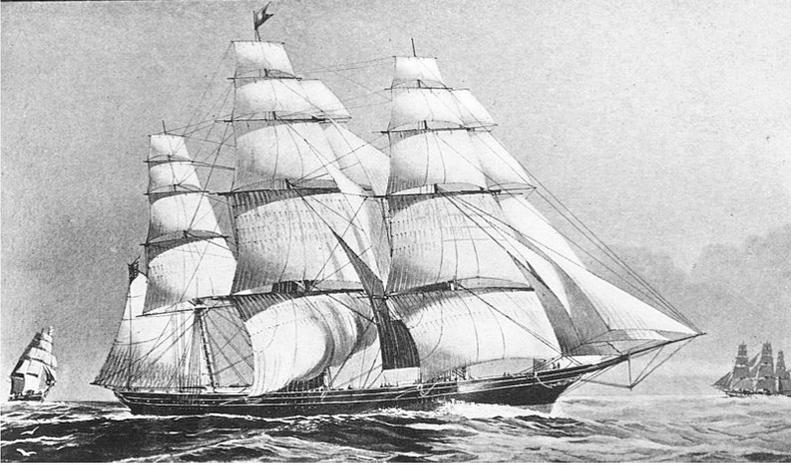
Like Frederick Thomas Bush, many of the China traders were Massachusetts men who took great risks and made (or sometimes lost) considerable fortunes, among them George Cabot, Thomas Handasyd Perkins and his brother James, Thomas and James Lamb, William and Russell Sturgis, John Murray Forbes, Robert Bennet Forbes and Joseph Peabody. Many of Boston’s great institutions, such as the Perkins School for the Blind, were endowed by these merchants and their families.

From 1842 until a few years before his death in 1887, Bush was engaged in a very successful international trade partnership with Samuel Comstock. Bush & Comstock owned ships that stopped at ports all over the world from Hong Kong and Canton to San Francisco, Manila, Hawaii, the West Indies, and South America.

The Comstock Family Business Records, located at Baker Library Historical Collections, Harvard Business School, contain a treasure trove of letters, ledgers, log books, and ships’ papers donated by the Comstock family. Included in the collection is an account book donated by Bush’s grandson, J.P. Lane, then living at 92 South Avenue. Dated January 16, 1945 and addressed to Professor Gras, it states in part: “My brother, next door, lives in the old Bush homestead, which you might enjoy visiting sometime. It contains many interesting bits of historical value, including grandfather’s commission from the British government to be the U.S. consul at Hong Kong. He was a merchant [and] one-time a partner in Bush, Comstock & Co and the owner of a number of ships.”

When the Bush family moved to Weston in the mid-1800s, the population was around 1,200. Then as now, much of the life of the community revolved around its schools, churches, and the entertainment provided by amateur theater groups, in which the Bush children participated.

Frederick Thomas Bush was very much a family man, by all accounts devoted to his wife and nine children. His unmarried sister Mary Burroughs Leonard Bush lived with the family in her later years. His famous



The Frederick Bush family returned from China on the Flying Cloud, a clipper ship that set the record in 1854 for the fastest voyage between New York and San Francisco. This image is from a 1919 book The China Clippers, 4th edition by Basil Lubbock. (Courtesy of Wikipedia)

neighbor Francis Blake took charming photographs of Bush and some of his children. Years later, Blake's son Benjamin married Bush's granddaughter Ruth Field.

Bush named his oldest son, Charles Green Bush, after an older brother who had died at age 22. Charles grew up to become "the dean of American political cartooning," working in New York for *Harper's Magazine* and various New York newspapers. He lived in Staten Island with his wife Cora Candler and their three children: Frederica DeBlois, Charles Green Bush III, and Lucy.

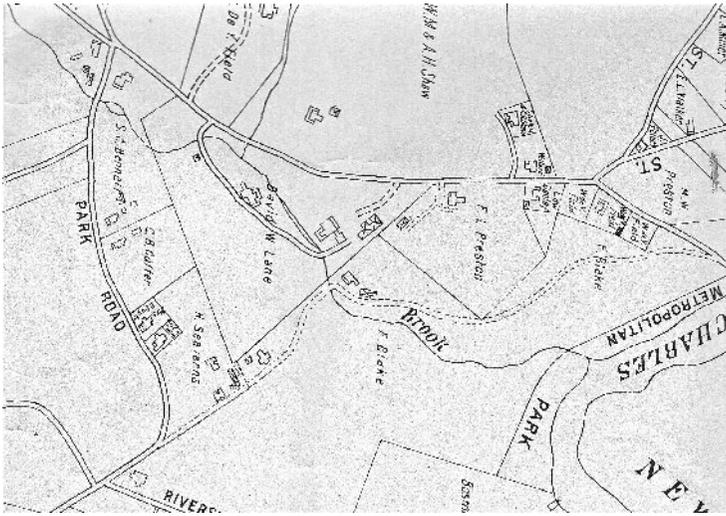
Frederick DeBlois Bush, second of the five children who had lived in China before coming to Weston, returned to China as a young man and lived much of his life in Shanghai. Of the three girls born in China, Sophia died at an early age, while Amelia and Fannie both married local boys and spent their lives in Weston, raising several children with their husbands, Joseph Warren Field and David Weston Lane respectively. Eventually the elder Frederick Bush had five grandchildren living nearby: Joseph Warren Field, Jr. and his sister Ruth at 639 Boston Post Road, and Elizabeth, Robert, and John Philip Lane living next door to him at 92 South Avenue.

William Caine Bush was a Boston merchant and never married. His brother Walter Murray Bush, also a merchant and unmarried, moved to

New York. Henry Sturgis Bush was a Boston stockbroker who also had a ranch in Cheyenne, Wyoming Territory. His first wife Lilla Goodell died young and he then married Lucretia McMurtrie, with whom he had five children: Maria Louisa (who died in infancy), Horace McMurtrie, Mary Pickering, Lucretia Goddard, and Jocelyn DeBois Bush. Henry Kenneth Bush, his only child with his first wife, died as a result of injuries sustained in World War I.



Two images of the F.T. Bush home Brookside, which once stood on South Avenue in Weston. The delicate pencil drawing, owned by the Weston Historical Society, was done by the Bush's oldest child, Charles Green Bush, when he was only 18, in 1860. The photograph below shows the house and barn from a different angle and was taken in the mid-1950s, before the buildings were demolished to make way for the Massachusetts Turnpike.

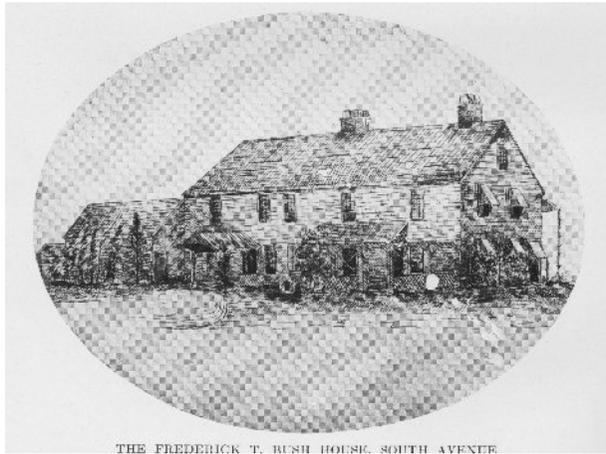


Detail of the 1908 Middlesex County Atlas showing the David W. Lane property on South Avenue. Frederick Bush's daughter Fannie married David Weston Lane and lived at Brookside. Note that there are two houses and a barn shown on the property. These buildings are depicted in the photos and illustrations on pages 33 and 35.

Donald Fairfax Bush married Edith Westervelt Low on April 26, 1897, in what the *New York Times* called one of the fashionable weddings of the month. They lived in New York City with their son, Donald Fairfax Bush, Jr. Donald Sr. was a wholesaler of iron and steel and a senior partner at Crocker Brothers, iron merchants. Although Frederick Thomas Bush died 10 years before his youngest son married at 34, he must have been delighted in his choice of careers, the iron trade of their ancestors

Sadly, the old Bush homestead *Brookside* and the adjacent house at 92 South Avenue are no longer standing. The two houses and the barn were demolished in the 1950s to make way for the Massachusetts Turnpike.

The author wishes to acknowledge the generous assistance of Pamela W. Fox, president of the Weston Historical Society and author of Farm Town to Suburb: The History and Architecture of Weston, Massachusetts 1830-1980 (2002) and of the late Elaine Bush Prince, author of the unpublished genealogy A Prominent Boston Family: The Descendants of Thomas Bush of Taunton (2000). She also thanks her husband, Samuel D. Bush IV for his support and encouragement. Frederick Thomas Bush is his great-, great-, great-uncle, In an interesting twist of fate, Samuel spent his teenage years living at 639 Boston Post Road, where his Uncle Fred must have visited often, as it was the home of his daughter Amelia and son-in-law Joseph W. Field.



THE FREDERICK T. BUSH HOUSE, SOUTH AVENUE



Three images of the second house on the Bush property, later numbered 92 South Avenue. (Above) Illustration from Lamson's History of the Town of Weston, showing the old Starr Farm before it was extensively remodeled by Frederick T. Bush in 1858. (Center) 1951 pencil and watercolor drawing of the house (gift of Mrs. Patricia Rice) (Below) Photograph from the mid-1950s, before the house was demolished to make way for the Massachusetts Turnpike. (Weston Historical Society photo)