



The Melone Homestead at 27 Crescent Street as it looks today. (Courtesy of Judy Markland.)

Preface to Part II: Diary of a Researcher

Part I of this article presented evidence that the older front section of the Melone Homestead was moved to its present location and enlarged after the move. The relocation and enlargement occurred prior to 1859, when the house in its present location and configuration appears on the “Plan of Land of the Heirs of Luke Brooks, deceased, Weston, Mass. August 10th, 1859,” shown on page 21.

Assuming that the original house stood in the Crescent Street neighborhood, I investigated the following four possible original owners and locations: 1) the Cutter/Brooks tenant house just north of Mill Site A behind 293 Boston Post Road (See neighborhood map on page 18); 2) the original Bingham house at 39 Crescent Street; 3) the original Harrington house at 29 Crescent Street; and 4) a house constructed on William or Samuel Shattuck’s property.

When Part I was published in the *Bulletin* last spring, I had concluded that census and map evidence pointed to the Cutter/Brooks tenant house and that the moving took place in 1859. Since that time, I was able to obtain a better reproduction of the 1856 Walling map of Middlesex County, which shows more clearly a mark in the name S*HF Bingham. (see detail on page 20) This mark is in the approximate location of the present Melone Homestead and roughly matches its present T-

shape. The problem is that the map also shows the Cutter/Brooks tenant house in its original location.

The 1856 map provides the first evidence for the Melone Homestead in its current location. An 1850 deed from Samuel Hobbs to Luke Brooks makes no mention of buildings on that site. These two data points bracket the date of the move between 1850 and 1856. Because census data from 1855 show no evidence of an occupied house in that location, it seems most likely that the original two-over-two structure was moved in late 1855 or early 1856, with the rear addition added at that time.

This discussion assumes that the motive for moving the Melone Homestead to its present location was to provide housing for school furniture factory workers. William G. Shattuck, owner of the factory, would have arranged the move. He had the financial means. Furthermore, moving houses was common enough that the technical means were also available. Based on the dates of his real estate transactions and the inclusion of his enterprise in the manufacturing census for the year ending May 1, 1855, Shattuck probably built the school furniture factory in 1854. His motive for housing workers would not have existed until production commenced.

If the Cutter/Brooks tenant house was moved sometime in 1855 or 1856, why would the 1856 map show it in its original location by the dam and also in its new location and expanded shape? It is conceivable and not unprecedented that these two houses are one and the same: in other words, that the map maker showed the house in both its original and new location. The information on the 1856 map is slightly out of date, as evidenced by the Shattuck label on the two buildings at 21 Crescent Street, which had been sold to William Stimpson in May, 1855.

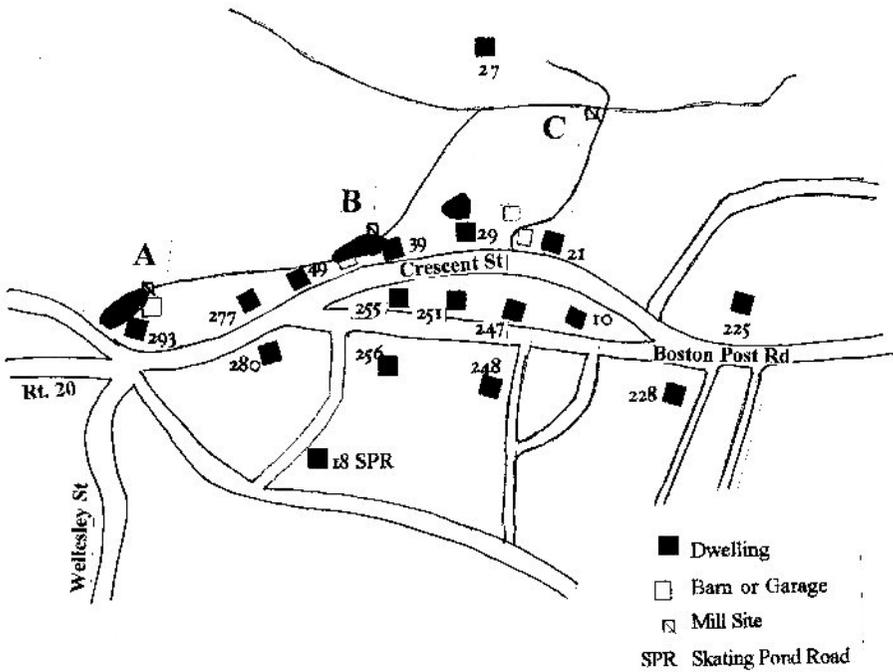
Despite the questions raised by the 1856 map detail, I continue to believe that the Cutter/Brooks tenant house is the one that Shattuck moved about 1855. This theory is consistent with the fact that the Cutter/Brooks tenant house does not appear on the 1859 Plan of Land of the Heirs of Luke Brooks. Also, the likely date of construction of the tenant house, the mid-1830s, is consistent with the architectural evidence that the earliest section of the Melone Homestead was constructed sometime in the 19th century but well before the 1850s remodelling.

Analysis of the three other possibilities all fall short on critical issues relating to the age of the original dwelling and/or the possibility of a relocation in the 1850s. A full analysis of these arguments can be found in an appendix of the full version of this report, which will be available at the Society and Weston Public Library.

What follows is based on the theory, corroborated by considerable evidence, that the original dwelling was originally a tenant house behind 293 Boston Post Road.



(Above) Mill site at 293 Boston Post Road, looking west (Photo by Cindy Bates)



(Above) Crescent Street area in 2005. This map serves as a reference to the location of houses by street address. (Courtesy of Cindy Bates)

Origins of the Melone Homestead, 1830s to 1885

The Melone Homestead was probably built by Alpheus Cutter (1798-1878). After thirteen years at the Bemis Manufacturing Company in Watertown, Cutter, his wife Emilia, and their children moved to Weston in 1834. Cutter purchased the house at 293 Boston Post Road opposite the end of Wellesley Street, along with 60 acres of land lying north and south of what was then called the County Road. He and his son farmed the land, and Cutter also re-established what had been an 18th-century fulling mill on Three Mile Brook just behind the house. Fulling is the process of shrinking and thickening woolen cloth by moistening, heating and pressing. After a time, Cutter changed his machinery and began the manufacture of cotton batting. Today, the mill pond and dam remain behind No. 293, along with a foundation that may belong to Cutter's mill and/or to a later mill.

Cutter employed two hands at the mill. It was for these men and their families that he built a house now known as the Melone Homestead on the north side of the brook, probably sometime between 1834 and 1837. The first known residents of the workmens' house were Edwin and Harriet Stearns, who moved to Weston in the spring of 1840 and lived in this small house with their six children and a seventh born later that year. An older daughter Louisa married Sylvester Smith in the fall of 1839 and may also have lived in the house or possibly in a second tenant house on Boston Post Road. Edwin Stearns was a machinist, and both he and his son-in-law worked for Alpheus Cutter. By the spring of 1842, the Smiths had left Weston. Sylvester went on to become a successful cotton manufacturer in Millbury. The Stearns family moved a year or two later. In 1842, a possible resident was Michael Taylor, who worked and/or lived at Alpheus Cutter's.

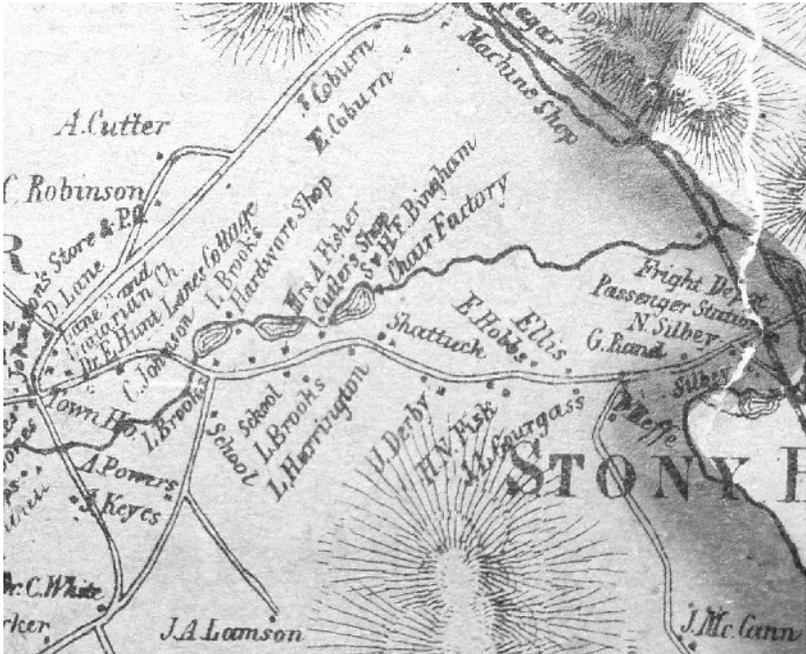
In 1845 Cutter sold the land "with the buildings thereon" to Luke Brooks of Cambridge and moved to Old Road, subsequently building the house at 72 Church Street. Luke Brooks (1791-1856) was a leather merchant with the Boston firm Moses Hunt & Co. When he moved to 293 Boston Post Road, he established himself as a gentleman farmer. Luke and his wife Miriam had three children. Also living with them were two Irish employees: a maid and a farmhand. Luke Brooks owned two tenant houses. These and his own house are marked L. Brooks on the 1856 Middlesex County map (see detail on page 20). The small dwelling north of the brook was probably the Melone Homestead in its original form: two rooms upstairs and two rooms downstairs, with a central chimney between, for a total of about 900 square feet.

Evidence for the identity of those who lived in the Melone Homestead before 1883 is found primarily in federal and state censuses of 1840, 1850, 1855, 1860, 1865, 1870, and 1880. Some Weston tax records give hints of additional occupants. The census is but a snapshot in time, but it reveals the names, ages, occupations and other demographic information about all the occupants of a house-

hold. Tax records can help determine how long a man lived in Weston, but if he did not own property, there is no consistent information as to his place of residence.

Luke Brooks' nephew, Silas S. Brooks, came to live in the Melone Homestead about 1850 with his wife, Elizabeth, and their three-year old daughter. They boarded five Irishmen— three farmers and two laborers—all but one in his twenties. At least some of these men may have worked for Luke Brooks on his farm. A young woman also lived there, presumably helping with childcare and the boarding house. None stayed long. Silas and Elizabeth eventually moved to Wisconsin; the fate of the others is unknown.

Within four years an Irish couple, John and Bridget Qualters, occupied the house with their four children and several boarders. In the 1855 census John, a laborer, was 55 and Bridget, 44. They had immigrated after the birth of their second child about nine years earlier. The boarders would have helped the Qualters family pay their rent. In 1855 there were eight Irish boarders, all men working as laborers. None of them owned any real or personal property



Henry F. Walling. *Map of Middlesex County, Massachusetts*. Boston: Smith & Bumstead, 1856 (detail). The Melone Homestead in its original location is probably the dwelling labeled "L Brooks" just north of the outlet from the pond behind 293 Boston Post Road (the westernmost pond or "first" pond) Note the location of the chair factory straddling the brook just downstream of the outlet from the third pond. Note also the new location of the Melone Homestead just north of the chair factory (between the S and HF of Bingham's name).

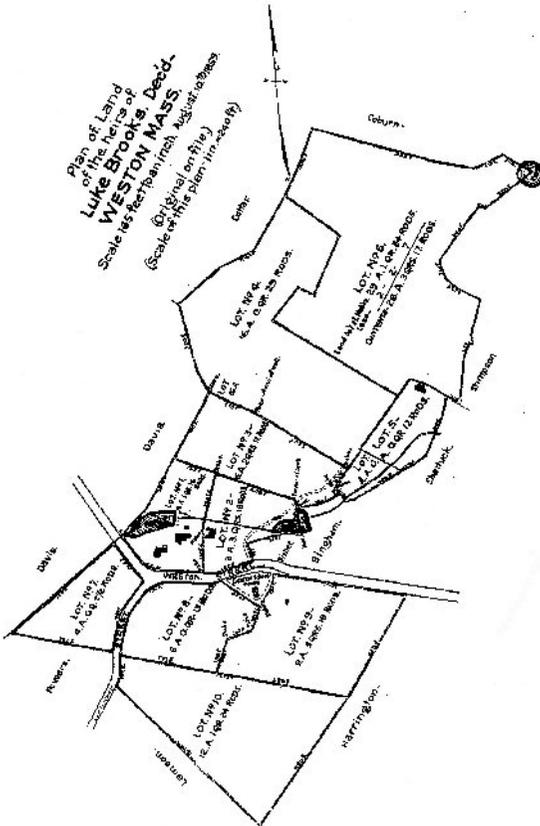
The Melone Homestead and School Furniture Factory

The next chapter in the history of the Melone Homestead revolved around a school furniture factory established downstream from 293 Boston Post Road. In addition to the mill site behind No. 293, there had long been a second mill site behind what is now 39 Crescent Street. Alpheus Cutter reportedly developed the third mill site, located behind 29 Crescent Street, about 1845. In 1855 William G. Shattuck established a furniture factory at the third mill site. The foundation, especially the stonework around the site of the water wheel, is still visible next to the bridge over Three Mile Brook on the driveway to the Melone Homestead.

The 2.5-acre parcel on which the furniture mill stood was landlocked and was accessed via a right-of-way along the present driveway. This former farm lane

dates back to colonial times.

The mill lot had been part of a 100-acre farm belonging to the Harrington family from the time of the Revolution. About half of the Sears Conservation Land was once part of the Harrington farm. The other half was historically part of the Cutter/Brooks parcel. In 1855 William C. Stimpson bought all of the Harrington farm except for Shattuck's 2.5 acres and so owned land north, south, and east of Shattuck's mill. Luke Brooks owned the land to the west.



Plan of Land of the Heirs of Luke Brooks, Deceased, Weston, Mass., August 10, 1859. Plan Book 9B, Plate 57, Middlesex County Registry of Deeds. The Melone Homestead is on Lot Number 5.



Advertisement for William G. Shattuck's school furniture from the 1852 Boston Directory, advertising section, p.43. Available via Googlebooks.

Shattuck's business was making school furniture, especially chairs and desks for primary schools. An enterprising man, he saw an opportunity to house his factory workers in Luke Brooks's tenant house. It appears that in 1855 or 1856, Shattuck persuaded Brooks to allow him to move the tenant house to its present location, still on Brooks's land. An 18th-century farm road and causeway across the swampy area led from one location to the other and offered a convenient route for the relocation. The house would have been moved on greased skids pulled by horses or oxen. Luke Brooks died between August and November of 1856 and within a few years his widow decided to move back to Cambridge.

After the tenant house was moved, it was expanded and divided into two units to accommodate more people. Shattuck probably undertook the renovations at his own expense. The front door was boarded over and new entrances built on the east and west sides. A rear addition created two new rooms on each side of the first floor and unfinished attic spaces on each side of the second. The living area was nearly doubled, to approximately 1730 square feet.

By 1860, Shattuck employed seven men at his Weston factory and produced 5,000 seats and 2,500 desks, as well as other chairs and settees. Production revenues increased from \$5,000 in 1854-55 to \$8,000 in 1859-60.

When the back land of Luke Brooks's estate became available in 1860, Shattuck purchased 47 acres including the Melone Homestead. He also obtained a right-of-way across the Brooks front land to the County road. Technically, access to the Melone Homestead at that time was along this old farm road on the Brooks property. Practically speaking, however, it was much more convenient to use William C. Stimpson's road.

Focused as he was on his business, which he ran from his residence in East Boston, William G. Shattuck managed within a few years to severely antagonize Stimpson. Neighbor Stimpson complained that, within a year or two, Shattuck's men had cut down four of his six apple trees along the ditch. More seriously, in widening the canal, its sides were weakened to the point where water seeping out flowed across the road and flooded Stimpson's hay field. Stimpson's chief complaint, however, was improper use of the right-of-way and resulting damage to the road by heavy traffic. Stimpson had unsuccessfully asked Shattuck for money to pay his share of the road repair—such cost sharing being stipulated in the deed. Stimpson acknowledged the right of way to the school furniture factory but denied Shattuck's right to continue 200 more yards to the Melone Homestead.

As time went on, what had begun as a private disagreement between Stimpson and Shattuck escalated to the level of a public issue. It was eventually resolved in 1863 by the selectmen, who laid out a private way along Stimpson's farm road with explicit allowance to Shattuck and others to use it to access Shattuck's land. Shattuck was required to pay \$500 in damages to Stimpson.

Two families occupied the Melone Homestead in 1860: the Cooledges and Cutlers. These would have been the people described by Stimpson in his 1863 letter of complaint to the selectmen. In the course of seven pages, he wrote that in 1859 William Shattuck "hired a Dwelling House in Brooks' pasture ... and put in it two or three families." As he described, Shattuck's people brought "heavy teams of manure, lumber &c. cutting up the road." Charles Cooledge (52) was head of household at the Melone Homestead in 1860. He lived there with his wife Nancy (48). Charles and Harriet N. Cutler, a young couple, also lived in the house. Charles Cooledge, his son Frank, and Charles Cutler all worked for Shattuck in the chair factory. Neither family appears to have lived there for more than a year.

They were probably succeeded by John Colton in 1862 and William W. Cole in 1863, both Shattuck employees. William G. Shattuck himself lived in the Melone Homestead in 1863—the only known instance of an owner so doing. The following year his nephew George W. Shattuck and Shattuck employee James Morse probably occupied the house. 1864 was also the year when William G. Shattuck



Undershot waterwheel at the school furniture factory c. 1915. Photograph by Alfred Wayland Cutting. Courtesy of Historic New England)

built the barn that stood near the Melone Homestead until it blew down in the late 1970s.

From 1864 to 1883 no record positively identifies the occupants of the Melone Homestead. Productions revenues of the school furniture factory were not reported in 1865, but by 1875 had increased to \$12,000. The seven employees worked 10-hour days, six days a week. According to Massachusetts industry statistics of 1875, the average daily wage, \$2.75, was the highest reported in the state among furniture manufacturers.

William Shattuck died in August 1875, a month shy of his 60th birthday. An obituary in *The Boston Daily Advertiser* of Saturday, August 28, 1875 reads:

William D. [sic] Shattuck, a well-

known citizen of East Boston, died on Thursday afternoon. During the past forty years he has been engaged in the furniture business, and has furnished many churches, schools and public buildings in a style which has given him a high character in the trade. He leaves a wife and two children.

The Boston Daily Globe of the same date reads:

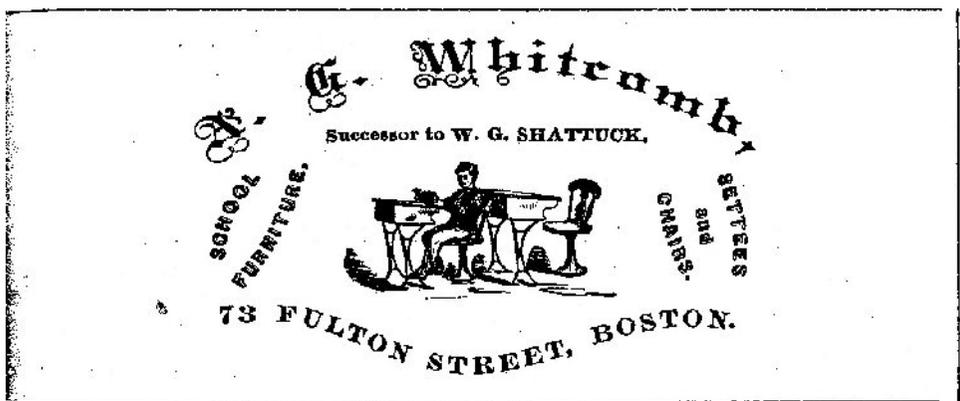
Mr. William G. Shattuck, a prominent resident of East Boston for many years, died, Thursday, at the age of sixty, after a long illness, leaving a wife and two daughters. He was a gentleman of exemplary character, and greatly respected in this community, for the interests of which he always felt the highest regard. He was born and educated here, and during the past forty years had been engaged in the furniture business. Many of the churches,

schools and public buildings have been furnished by him. Mr. Shattuck was a member of the Church of Our Father, and before his health became impaired was a most constant attendance upon public worship.

William's widow, Eliza R. Shattuck, sold the manufacturing business to the partnership of Miller & Kenney. Weston residents James Miller and Oliver Kenney were both former employees of William G. Shattuck. Mrs. Shattuck sold the Boston-based distribution side of the business to Amasa G. Whitcomb of Chelsea, a 25-year Shattuck employee. She leased the mill site—the 2.5 acres with the dam, ditch, pond, mill, and machinery—to Miller & Kenney. In 1886, the mill site, together with the 47-acre parcel where the Melone Homestead is located, were put into a trust for Eliza's benefit.

James Miller (b ca 1834) probably lived in the Melone Homestead in 1884, possibly beginning in 1881. He and his wife, Eliza, had four children. They came to Weston in 1869 and were enumerated in the Stony Brook neighborhood on the censuses of 1870 and 1880. He began working for William G. Shattuck in 1869 but gave his occupation as "ship joiner" on the 1870 census. His occupation "school furniture master" on the 1880 census suggests that he managed production. Oliver Kenney, listed as a "school furniture manufacturer," appears to have assumed the owner/administrator role. The partnership ended in 1881, at which point Kenney became the sole proprietor under the name of O. N. Kenney.

In 1885 Gilbert and Ella Blood settled into the Melone Homestead for what would be a nearly 30-year tenancy. Gilbert Blood was born in 1849. As a young man he worked as a clerk in Waltham. Soon after his marriage, he rented the house and land including an apple orchard from the Shattuck trust and began operating a farm. For many years, the Bloods shared the Melone Homestead with Ella's sister and brother-in-law, Caroline and John Galbraith. In 1900-1902 and



A. G. Whitcomb's advertisement in the 1876 Boston Directory.



*Detail of milk bottle from the G.A. Blood dairy
(Courtesy of Anna Melone Pollock)*

1910, Blood's cousin George M. Hutchinson was boarding with the Bloods. In 1900 his occupation was given as "land lord;" in 1910, as "dairy farm laborer."

Beginning about 1891, Gilbert Blood began keeping cows, chickens, and pigs. His dairy operation peaked in 1902 with 23 cows. He kept between 100 and 300 chickens for all but three of the next 18 years. He always had two to four horses that he used to work his farm and pull his milk delivery wagon.

There is no evidence of workers at the school furniture factory living at the Melone Homestead after 1880. In the early 1890s George S. Perry (1855-1904) acquired the distribution side of the business from Amasa Whitcomb. Perry had

grown up next door at 21 Crescent Street on the old Harrington farm, which his father, David, had purchased from William C. Stimpson back in 1866. When George S. Perry married Charlotte Johnson in 1883, they settled in a new house at 225 Boston Post Road built on land bought from his father. He renamed the distribution business George S. Perry & Company and added school supplies and slate blackboards to the list of products.

Oliver Kenney ran the school furniture factory from 1881 until 1893 when he was succeeded by his son Ralph. In 1894 George S. Perry acquired the machinery from William G. Shattuck's estate and leased it back to the Kenney brothers until 1897, the year of Eliza Shattuck's death. In the settling of her estate, S. Louisa Logan, Eliza R. Shattuck's only surviving daughter, became the sole beneficiary of the Shattuck trust. In 1900, George S. Perry purchased the Melone Homestead, the school furniture factory, and about 40 acres of land, being all the Shattuck land south of the Massachusetts Central Railroad. In so doing, Perry became Gilbert Blood's new landlord.

In 1901 Ralph Kenney, his brother Charles, and Henry Wolkins bought the distribution side of the business from George S. Perry. They formed a new partnership, Kenney Bros. & Wolkins, for the manufacture and distribution of school furniture, and leased the mill site from Perry. Charles Kenney lived at 315 Boston Post

Road, Ralph at No. 256, and Wolkins in Boston. The chair factory operated until 1917, when Kenney Bros. & Wolkins moved it to a larger site in Baldwinsville.

George S. Perry died in 1904 but the property remained in his estate until 1918. His widow, Charlotte, his sister, Hattie, and his brother, Henry, all continued to live on Perry land on the east end of Crescent Street.

In 1909, the second unit of the Melone Homestead was probably occupied by one Louis Furbush. From 1910 to 1918 Ephraim and Cora Cutter of North Cambridge and Melrose probably rented the second unit. Ephraim was a music teacher.

**“PERRY’S
ADJUSTABLE DESK.”**



GEO. S. PERRY & COMPANY,

Manufacturers, Importers, and Dealers in

School Furniture & School Supplies

73 Fulton Street, Boston, Mass.

(Left) This image is from the back page of a catalog dating to the 1890s, when George Perry took over the previous firm of A. G. Whitcomb. (Courtesy of Eloise Kenney)

Following Gilbert Blood’s retirement to Waltham in 1912, two couples moved into the Melone Homestead: James and Agnes Constable and John and Alice Coolidge. The Constables were both English immigrants. James, a gardener, spent time in Lowell before moving to Weston. He lived for a short time on North Avenue before moving into the Melone Homestead in 1913. He worked as a gardener for the Perry family until 1918, when they sold the property. At that time he and Agnes moved to Waltham.

John and Alice Coolidge came from Waltham. John had worked as a foreman at a stone quarry, probably for Waltham Trap Rock Company, predecessor of Mass. Broken Stone. The Coolidges probably lived in the Melone Homestead from 1913 until 1928. John Coolidge ran a small farm on the Perry prop-

erty, first a dairy, later a piggery.

In 1918, the Perry family sold the house at 21 Crescent Street and the Melone Homestead, together with 66.81 acres of land, to Horace S. Sears. He in turn conveyed it to his nephew Francis B. Sears Jr., known as Frank. Frank Sears's mother, Mary Elizabeth Sparhawk Sears had grown up in the house at 293 Boston Post Road. Frank Sears Jr. started out working for his uncle Horace S. Sears. In the 1920s, after twenty years in the dry goods business, he left to become president of Waltham National Bank. Frank Jr. and Marian had three children, Francis Bacon III, Rosamond, and Edwin Buckingham "Buck."

After Frank Jr. took over the farm, the Constables left the Melone Homestead and the Sweeneys moved in. John H. Sweeney worked for the Searses as a general man and coachman. He and his wife, Anna, were both born to Irish parents in New Brunswick about 1869. The Sweeneys probably lived in the Melone Homestead from 1919 to 1923 or 1924.

The Coolidges left the Melone Homestead in 1928 or 1929. The new tenants were the Crocker family. The 1930 census shows the Crockers renting the house for \$25 per month. Charles A. J. Crocker, 34, was the Sears' gardener. His wife Hermintine, 32, was French-Canadian, and they had six children ranging in age from one to nine. The census states that the house was situated on a farm. After a brief stay, the Crocker family moved to Waltham. One of the children, Albert J. Crocker (born 1926) was still living in Waltham in 2005. He remembered the outhouse by one of the ells. His wife characterized the Crocker family's time in the Melone Homestead as "hard."

The Melone Homestead probably lay vacant for a couple of years after the departure of the Crockers. In 1932, just after the birth of their fifth child, Joseph and Maria Anna Melone moved there from Waltham and began working for the Sears family. A friend and former neighbor of the Melones, divorcé Michael Chiarelli, stayed with them for a while and worked as a chauffeur. He soon remarried and moved back to Waltham.

The story of the Melone Family is a testament to the values of hard work, persistence, entrepreneurship, and generosity. The following is an account related by Anna Melone to Pam Fox for the book *Farm Town to Suburb: The History and Architecture of Weston, Massachusetts, 1830-1980*:

Guiseppe "Joseph" Melone (1892-1979) came to the United States from Penne, Italy in 1921 settling in Waltham. His brother Antonio worked at Mass. Broken Stone. Joseph found work as a landscape gardener with a regular Weston clientele [...]. He was part of the workforce that completed the new town green. In 1924 he returned to Italy to bring back his wife, Maria Anna, and young son, Vincent. When they arrived at the port of Naples, he



Above: The Melone family in the dining room, c. 1956. Back row: Vincent, John, Daniel, Anthony, and William. Front row: Cecilia, Maria Anna (Mrs. Josph), Joseph, and Anna. (Courtesy of Anna Melone Pollock)

found that their visas had expired, and he had to return to the United States without them. Five years passed before the family was finally reunited in 1929. Joseph and Maria Anna rented a third-floor flat in Waltham, and Joseph rode his bicycle each day to Weston. As the country sank into the Depression, the Melones struggled to provide for their growing family.

While working for Dr. [Fresenius] Van Nuys, Joseph Melone discovered the former chair factory tenement, vacant and in disrepair. One room was filled with rotten apples placed there for storage and abandoned; other rooms were overgrown with weeds and infested with snakes. At the urging of Van Nuys, Francis and Marian Sears agreed to allow the Melones to live in the house if they repaired it themselves and assisted with work on the estate.

The first priority was renovating the house. Sears paid for the materials and Melone did the work with the help of friends. Sears left modernizing the house to

the Melone family, so for the first several years, the house had no electricity, central heat, running water, or indoor plumbing. Over time, Joseph Melone upgraded systems and installed a water closet in the basement and a pitcher pump in the kitchen sink that drew water from the well. Initially, they painted the house yellow with white trim.

Along with the house, the Melones rented the barn, shed, and surrounding land. The family grew much of their own food in extensive vegetable gardens and kept cows, pigs, and goats in the barn. They had a chicken coop in the back. Joseph kept a team of horses to work the farm and clear the snow in winter. He had a pony to pull the hayrake and a little red punga for the children.

The Melones maintained the fields and woods and farmed for themselves and the Sears. The boys milked the Sears cows and took care of their chickens, bringing milk and eggs to 21 Crescent. They also took care of the horses, stoked the stoves in the main house and garage, and did odd jobs as asked. At haying time, the Melones filled the Sears barn and then their own.



Haying on the Sears Estate, 1941. (Courtesy of Anna Melone Pollock)

On top of his obligations to the Sears family, Joseph Melone continued his landscaping work. In 1935 he started his own company with a single Ford truck. J. Melone and Sons, formed in 1946, has become a large corporation dealing in sand, gravel, cement, road construction, and property development. The eight Melone children graduated from Weston High School with outstanding records in scholarship, sports, and citizenship. Anthony Melone acquired what had been the Perry property at 225 Boston Post Road and de-

veloped Hillcrest Road in the 1970s. Anna Melone Pollock lives at 29 Crescent Street and Daniel Melone lives at 277 Boston Post Road.

Frank and Marion Sears both died in 1943. They left their estate to their two living children, Rosamond and Edwin or “Buck,” as he was known. Their oldest son had taken his own life in 1928. Pam Fox describes the siblings thusly:

Rosamond (1910-1992) had enjoyed a brief career as a sculptor, and [...] Buck (1911-1987) was a competent “gentleman” painter and musician who loved New England history, architecture, and antiquarianism. Both suffered from mental difficulties. Buck has been described as a timid, reclusive and cautious man, set in his ways. Neither he nor Rosamond ever married, and both required the services of a legal guardian in their later years because of failing competency. Buck maintained residences in Weston, Boston’s Back Bay, and Camden, Maine.

By the 1970s, momentum for land conservation was building in Weston. The Conservation Commission identified land of particular interest throughout the town, and its members approached owners regarding acquisition. Buck Sears was pleased to give the town his undivided share in 61.47 acres. Rosamond’s share was sold by the conservator of her property, presumably with Buck’s encouragement, she being unable to act for herself.

Conclusion

The history of the Melone Homestead reflects the shifts that have shaped the Town of Weston from its farming roots to the development of small industry, to the consolidation of land into large country estates, to the post-WWII subdivisions and planning for green space.

In the period when the house was probably built, 1834-1837, manufacturing was becoming increasingly important to the Massachusetts economy. Shoes, boots, textiles, and the machinery to make them became important Massachusetts industries. The utilitarian Melone Homestead, built as housing for workers in a cotton mill, was a by-product of the early industrial revolution. At the time, Weston had about 1,100 residents living in about 150 houses. About two-thirds of the men were engaged in agriculture and another quarter in manufacturing and trades.

The farmers and farm laborers who lived in the Melone Homestead beginning about 1845 reflected two demographic trends: westward migration and Irish immigration. The young farm family that lived in the Melone Homestead in 1850 headed west to Wisconsin. The farm laborers who lived in the Melone Homestead in 1850 and 1855 were but a few of the thousands who left Ireland during the Great Irish Famine of the late 1840s. Luke Brooks, owner of the Melone Homestead, represented a third trend: wealthy businessmen from Boston and

Cambridge who established country retreats in outlying towns. Some of these men kept homes in Boston where they lived during the winter.

Beginning about 1856, after being moved, the Melone Homestead once again housed mill workers, this time men employed at the school furniture factory. The mill owner as both employer and landlord was typical: for example, Weston mill owner Nathaniel Sibley boarded 14 machinists in 1860.

A new relationship between tenant and landlord was established when Gilbert Blood moved into the Melone Homestead in the mid-1880s. Blood was an independent farmer who rented the house and land. The Coolidges appear to have had a similar arrangement. Nearly all previous tenants had also been either employees or kin of the property owner.

With the late 19th-century establishment of country estates came the need for staff housing. Men such as Constable and Sweeney were said to be employed by a “private family:” James Constable as gardener for the Perrys, John Henry Sweeney as general man and/or coachman for the Searses. Not all tenants worked the land or chauffeured their employers. The nine-year tenancy of Ephraim Cutter reflects the desire of the Perry family in particular and Weston families in general to educate their children in music.

Joseph and Maria Anna Melone, who moved into the house at 27 Crescent Street in the depths of the Depression, were part of an early 20th-century influx of immigrants from eastern and southern Europe. Their success in creating a new life for themselves and their family in the United States represents thousands.

The estate era drew to a close in the 1930s and 1940s. After World War II, large tracts of land were subdivided and developed. The mid-20th century was a time of population growth in Weston and growing awareness of the value of open space. By 1975, the population had grown to 11,500 in 3000 dwellings and concerted efforts, both public and private, to conserve land were underway. Acquisition of Melone Homestead and the Sears Conservation Land in 1975 is a prime example of cooperation between landowners and the Town to preserve open space. More recently, the Conservation Commission’s 1997 Melone Homestead lease agreement with Land’s Sake represents Weston’s commitment to responsible and sustainable use of its conserved lands.

By Cynthia B. Bates