

Right: 1999 photo of 225 North Ave.

*Below: 225, 227 and 231 North Avenue,
c. 1900.*



Organ Factory Cottage Destroyed in Explosion

On the morning of September 12, 2005, a massive natural gas explosion and fire destroyed the house at 225 North Avenue. Fortunately, the owners, Habib and Sandra Rahman, and their two daughters were not at home. The accident occurred after a septic contractor struck a gas line. Firemen and police called to the scene narrowly escaped serious injury. The Rahmans lost the house and all its contents. The historical society extends its best wishes to the Rahmans as they work to rebuild.

225 North Avenue was one of three North Avenue cottages built in 1893 by Francis Henry Hastings for workers at the Hook & Hastings organ factory. The factory, which moved from Boston to Weston in 1889, was located nearby in a massive wood frame building on Viles Street just north of the railroad tracks. Hastings was born in the Hastings Homestead at 199 North Avenue and built his own Shingle-style house at No. 190 in 1885. In addition to the three cottages on North Avenue, he built workers' housing on Lexington Street, Viles Street, and White Lane (now Brook Road) and also built Hastings Hall as a community center. His aim was to create a harmonious "community of labor" and a "neighborhood like a family."



Views of North Avenue at the Turn of the 20th Century

Editor's note: The mid-1890s photographs on the next three pages depict a short stretch of North Avenue between No. 260 and No. 306. The photographer has not been identified, but the quality of images and the way they are mounted suggests the work of a professional. The most likely candidate is William Franklin Tucker (1845-1907), son of Ebenezer and Martha Tucker of 306 North Avenue. W. Frank Tucker is listed in the 1893 Weston directory as both an organ finisher with Hook & Hastings and a photographer. At the time of his death he was listed as an organ decorator. His advertisement (below), which appears in the 1893 directory, gives his initials as F.W. but this seems to have been in error, as his listing in the same directory is as W.F. Tucker.

What is remarkable about these images is that they record the "ordinary" streetscape of North Avenue in the immediate vicinity of Tucker's family home, including houses which were then brand new. Many of these images are part of the Lucy Boyd Collection donated to the Weston Historical Society by David and Bobbie Boyd Bradley. Information for some of the captions comes from Pam Fox's interview with long-time local resident Betty Rafuse in December, 1999.

F. W. TUCKER,
" ~ **Photographer** ~ "

The Photographs for the Illustrations in this
book were taken by F. W. Tucker.

Residence, North Avenue,
Kendal Green, - - - Weston, Mass.



297 North Avenue (left). George N. Stevens, an organ factory employee, bought this lot from the Fiske family in 1890 and built a house that was destroyed by fire shortly thereafter. He then built the Queen Anne house shown in this photo and sold it in 1896.

306 North Avenue (top right) was built by Ebenezer Tucker in 1838 and is still standing. At some point the house was updated with Italianate double brackets. Tucker was a farmer and blacksmith and his shop (demolished in the early 20th century) can be seen to the left of the house. The shop also appears on the right side of the photo below. Ebenezer Tucker took his handmade tools to Boston and sold them to a seed company which became "Brecks." Tucker's daughter, Mary Elizabeth (Mary Lizzie) married Henry Goddard Russell (see 272 North Avenue, next page) Their daughter, Ethelyn, married Wm. E. Otto, and their daughter, Betty, married Leander Rafuse.

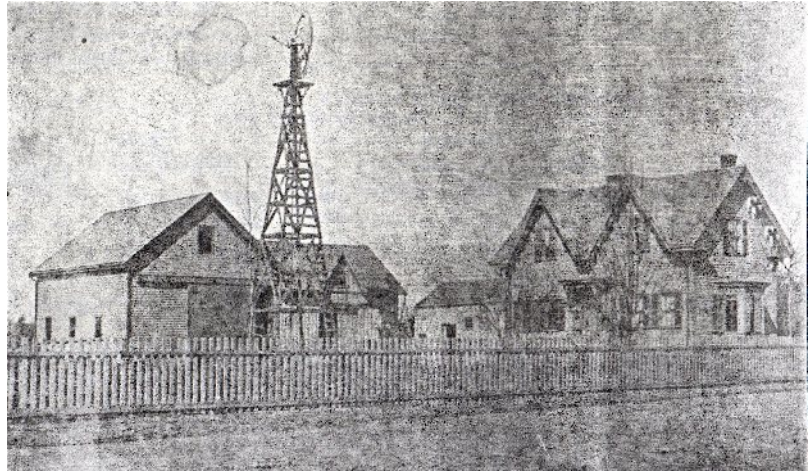


277 North Avenue, visible on the left side of the photo above, was built by George W. Garfield (Sr.) in 1821 and is still standing. The photographer took the photo from a vantage point between the Tucker house and blacksmith shop at 306 North Avenue.



269 North Avenue (left) was probably built about 1860 by Hiram Garfield, son of George W. Garfield (Sr). In 1887, he sold the house to Hiram Bennett, a house painter who built the wing to house his wife's maiden aunt.

272 North Avenue (top right) was built in 1843-44 and altered in the Gothic Revival mode. The location of the original photo is unknown, and this reproduction is from a xerox copy. No. 272 was built by wheelwright George W. Garfield Jr. A later owner, Henry G. Russell, was from New Hampshire, where he made barrels and brought them by horse and wagon to Boston. According to his granddaughter Betty Rafuse, he met his future wife, Mary Lizzie Tucker, on route and came back to marry her. Russell is listed in directories as a farmer. The windmill was used to pump water for the house until town water came to North Avenue in 1922. Behind the barn was a cow yard and bridge across Stoney Brook to fields beyond.



266 North Avenue (lower right) was built in 1891 by organ factory employee Frank Gowell and owned at the turn of the century by Albert Brown, who also worked at the factory. The open piazza was later enclosed. The house is still standing. At right you can see part of the windmill and barn owned by Henry Russell (see above).



The two double houses at 126 and 130 Viles Street (left) were built in 1887 to house organ factory workers. The third house from the right, since demolished, was an existing tenement with four apartments. Hastings Hall is at left. (Photo c. 1892)



263 North Avenue (top left) was probably built in stages beginning about 1875. Owner Samuel Patch Jr. had both a barn and a shop. The shop still remains behind the house.



263 North Avenue (lower left) from another angle, looking north-west. At left is No. 272.

Recent Donations to the Weston Historical Society

From the estate of Phyllis Wheeler, photos and memorabilia (see article on page 9)

From Mrs. Marie J. Valle, 1934 photographs of the H.L. Stone Dairy in Waltham. (Milk from Weston farmers on the north side was picked up and processed by Stone Dairy.)

From Joan Patriquin, contribution in memory of Calvin Patriquin

From John Sallay, three scrapbooks of Edith May West (see article on page 4)

From Vera Laska, bequest of money, videotapes from Weston 2000, and other items

From Ivy and Roy Carlson, photocopy of the E.T. Ryan Inc. Catalogue (undated)

From William Gallagher III, contribution toward purchase of Francis B. Sears Jr. papers

Other acquisitions:

Bills and receipts from the estate of Francis B. Sears, Jr., 1906 to 1920s

Milk bottle from Ferndale Farm Dairy

Drabbington Lodge golf tournament prize plate, 1912

1973 Town of Weston Dog Tag