

# THE WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

JANUARY, 1966, VOL. II, No. 2.



"THE ISAAC FISKE LAW OFFICE

## President's New Year Message

This will be the year when the momentum of our various programs will sharply accelerate. At long last, it appears that we shall have a home of our own, for as we go to press, an informal agreement has been reached with the Board of Selectmen whereby we shall have the care and custody of the historic Isaac Fiske Law Office on the Post Road between Central Cemetery and the Burgoyne Elm. By the time you receive this Bulletin, it is probable that final papers will have been signed and the responsibility for its preservation and maintenance will be ours.

Here in our "House by the Side of the Road," official headquarters will greet visitors, give out information, and serve our members. Records will be set up as a reference library, and displays of papers, pictures and other items of historic value are contemplated in this charming setting.

The Directors are counting on the active support of all members to the end that our many activities can be expedited at both our new office with its archives and records, and at the Jones House where priceless heirlooms of Weston are on display.

To all the Board and to our dedicated officers and committees, I cannot adequately express my appreciation for their stimulating cooperation. Though we are young in years, we are old in historical background and our membership is among the largest in the country. The Minute Man Pageant of last April 19th, the superb production of "Around the Cracker Barrel" at our annual meeting on November 11, 1965 (undaunted by the November 9th "Northeast Power Blackout") and the steady, conscientious activities of our many officers and committees all augur well for the preservation, protection and promotion of Weston's exceptional heritage.

Harold G. Travis

## History of the Isaac Fiske Law Office

As far as can be ascertained, the Isaac Fiske Law Office was built about 1800 by Artemus Ward, son of General Artemus Ward of Shrewsbury, but no relation to Charles F. Browne, the humorist, who wrote under the pen name of "Artemus Ward."

A number of small, country law offices were erected in Massachusetts during the latter part of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Very few remain. They were approximately the same design with a small entrance hall opposite a large, central chimney and a single room on either side, each with its own fireplace.

For a while Ward shared his office with Alpheus Bigelow who later built his own, a prototype, near the Weston-Wayland line. Soon after Bigelow's departure, Ward took Isaac Fiske in as a partner. Later, when Ward left Weston, Fiske became the sole proprietor of the office.

Isaac Fiske was born in Weston in 1778, graduated from Harvard in 1798, and practiced law in Weston for more than thirty years. He served as town clerk from 1805 to 1826 and was Register of Probate of Middlesex County for a number of years during which time he probably resided in Cambridge. He married Sukey Hobbs, daughter of Ebenezer Hobbs in 1802 and, upon her demise, married her sister, Sophronia. He died in 1861 and, presumably, his widow inherited his real estate. When she died, the law office went to the heirs of Isaac's late son, Augustus H. Fiske. Many of their descendants are still residents of the town and members of our Society.

Augustus was born in Weston in 1805 in the house now belonging to Mr. Harry Starr on the corner of Church Street and North Avenue. This was the home of his mother's family. After graduating from Harvard in 1825, he resided in Boston where he was eminently successful as a lawyer. He was a "man of knockdown logic . . . with a memory that can clinch a thousand new facts with greater ease than it can let go of an old one . . . Whoever seeks an engagement with Augustus H. Fiske in modern financeering is bound to come off second best." (Rich Men of Massachusetts, 1851).

Augustus moved back to Weston in 1848 when he purchased the Parson Woodward house (now Wilkinson) on Concord Road. He died in 1864 at the age of fifty-nine, having "enjoyed more of the substantial fruits of success than has perhaps ever fallen to the lot of any other member of the Boston bar." (F. C. Pierce: Fisk and Fiske Family).

Augustus's heirs divided the Fiske real estate in 1920 and the law office became the property of his grandson, Charles H. Fiske, Jr., who modernized it and erected the rear wing for living quarters. He occupied it spasmodically for a few years and finally sold it to the town with certain restrictions. Used as an office for the town's historical committee until World War II, it then housed a veteran until recently when the Selectmen voted to convey its custody and maintenance to the Weston Historical Society, Incorporated. Thus is the preservation of its traditional character being safeguarded and the facilities of our Society enhanced.

## Society to Greet Newcomers to Weston

Through the facilities of the Welcome Wagon, newcomers to Weston will now receive a letter written by Mr. Harold G. Travis, President, on behalf of the Historical Society. This letter contains information about the work and activities of the Society and, of course, encourages new memberships.



## *Captivating Speaker to Address Society at Charter Dinner*

### **SECOND CHARTER ANNIVERSARY DINNER, January 28, 1966**

On Friday, January 28th at 6:45 P.M., the Weston Historical Society will hold its second annual Charter Anniversary Dinner in the cafeteria of the Weston High School. A tear-off form for reservations is provided on the back of this Bulletin. Please expedite the Committee's work by mailing it today.

The Charter Anniversary Dinner is considered to be the highlight of our Society's annual get-togethers and another record crowd is anticipated. Mrs. Julio Correa and her Hospitality Committee are working hard on plans for the event. The tables will be arranged for sociability, each having a hostess, and members with their guests may sit where they wish. To save time and get us home early, the gathering will adjourn to the auditorium at the conclusion of dinner.

The speaker of the evening will be Dr. Robert E. Pike of Eatontown, N. J. and northern Vermont. His lecture on the early days of logging and river-driving in New England comes enthusiastically recommended. He has worked in the woods and on the rivers himself and tells his story with gusto and humor—"earthy but in good taste."

Dr. Pike has been Chairman of the Foreign Language Department at Monmouth College in New Jersey for the past 16 years and had previously taught at Minnesota and Harvard. A native of Vermont, he holds degrees from Dartmouth, University of Minnesota and a Ph.D from Harvard. He writes extensively for what he terms "popular" magazines such as "LIFE" and "ATLANTIC," contributing both stories and articles and also has had many scholarly articles published in professional journals. He is currently engaged in writing his seventh book.

### **Robin Hood Plays Part in Naming Kendal Green**

In 1885, a new Post Office was to be set up to serve the northern part of Weston and a name had to be decided upon.

Miss Anna Hall, a member of our Society, has in her possession a letter written by General James F. B. Marshall, grandson of Rev. Samuel Kendal, defending his position in suggesting the name "Kendal Green." The General had had strong opposition from those who had wanted a "North Weston," an office named after a living citizen such as Hastings, Hagar, Gregory, Brown, Coburn, etc., or a name chosen because of the natural features of the locality such as Cat Rock, Hobb's Brook, Brown's Hill

The following is quoted verbatim from his letter which he had addressed to "Mr. Editor" after having written this quotation, "How couldst thou know these men in Kendal Green, when 'twas so dark thou couldst not see thy hands?" (King Henry IV, Act II, Scene IV.)

"In this dilemma the name of "Kendal" was suggested as a good name, commemorative of a good man, Rev. Samuel Kendal, D.D., or "Good Parson Kendal," who was the last of the colonial village pastors and whose name is identified with the early history of the town. As, however, there are already "Kendalls", "Kendalvilles", and "Kendall Station" post offices, the name of

Kendal Green, immortalized by Shakespeare, of pleasant sound and significance, was finally fixed upon. There is no post office of the name in the U.S.

"The family name of Kendal from which Parson Kendal was descended, is said to have originated with a forester of Queen Elizabeth whose name was John, who lived in the valley of the river "Ken" (now called Kent) and who was called after the custom of those days "John of Ken Dale" which by easy transition became John Kendal.

"The town of Kendal in the same valley of Westmoreland County is noted for having the ruins of the castle of Catherine Parr, one of the wives of Henry VIII, and for its manufacture of green cloth called Kendal Green, which was adopted by Robert, Earl of Huntington, when he was outlawed, and took the name of Robin Hood, as uniform for himself and followers. The Kendal factory is still in operation and the green cloth formerly worn by 'Robin Hood and his merrie men,' is now put to more peaceful as well as more useful wear as the uniform of the Kendal fire department.

"The Shakespearean quotation which heads this already too long story of explanation was Prince Hal's reply to Falstaff when that doughty warrior boasted of having slain seven of the eleven misbegotten knaves in Kendal Green. We trust we have no knaves in our Kendal Green though it must be confessed that not long ago we had one who got away for the same reason given by Falstaff for allowing his other four assistants to escape. He was the hen thief, one of those vagrant men whom the valiant and vigilant Dogberry advised that we let steal out of our company and thank God we are rid of a knave—we let him steal and now we thank God we are rid of the knave.

"I will only add that when the petition for a P. O. was circulated the name Kendal Green was written in pencil that it might be altered in case a better one was suggested, but we found no serious objection was made." Weston, Dec. 14, 1885

J. F. B. Marshall

## Jericho, Jericho, Where Art Thou?

As soon as the leaves were off the trees, the Committee on uncovering the lost settlement of Jericho went to work. The first step after receiving the kind permission of the owner was a brush-clearing operation at strategic spots. Messrs. Charles P. Gorely, Jr. and Brenton H. Dickson enlisted through Henri Atkins the help of several energetic and husky Boy Scouts, after which, with "pick 'n shovel," compasses and courage, they began their careful excavations. As is typical of research, the project presents frustrating but tantalizing problems that call for patience and perseverance. Already certain discoveries, meager though they are at the time of writing, are sufficient to support the theory that, as was true over the Wayland line, relics of life and living here in the 17th century do indeed lie beneath several inches of mold and humus in this forest region.

The President said in his annual report about the general activities of the Society: "The more we accomplish and the deeper we dig, the more we widen the scope of our field. For indeed after scratching the surface for two years, we are still opening up new vistas of exploration, so our work will never be finished, as day by day, we recapture more of the lore and relics of the past three centuries in Weston." Until the work at Jericho has proceeded further, members are asked to understand why they cannot yet be invited to inspect "progress to date," as inadvertently the disturbance of processed areas might nullify some of the Committee's partially completed studies.





## **"Around the Cracker Barrel" a Great Success**

Shown above are two members of the cast, Mrs. Allan T. Wheeler and her granddaughter, (in fact and fiction), Tracy Larkins, in the costumes they wore as "Mrs. Russell" ("Goody") and "Melissa." Because of her triple role as co-author, actress and coach, Mrs. Wheeler's name appeared on the program as H. Patterson Wheeler, Helen Wheeler and Mrs. Allan Wheeler.

Originally scheduled for November 9th, the play was staged two nights later at the postponed annual meeting of the Society. A large and enthusiastic audience paid tribute to the cast throughout the entire performance. Other members included: Henri Atkins as "Josiah Smith," John Fiske as "Joel Smith," C. Inglis Wetmore as "Sam Train," Donald Douglass as "Deacon Jones," Aubrey Jones as "Abner Chubb," John Gates as "Nathan Coolidge," Reed Amadon as "Uriah Gregory," Peter Magie as "Tom Beal," a Tory, Tom Combellick as "The rider from Boston," and Brenton Dickson as "Parson Samuel Woodward."

The play was as remarkable in the scope and veracity of the historical research represented by its costumes and script as it was in the high quality of the acting. It is hoped that this is but the forerunner of many similar plays, based on early days in Weston, written in collaboration with our Research Committee.

## “New England is My Nation”

Descendants of both the Train and the Jones (The Jones House) families of early Weston, the Misses Alice Train Clapp and Marion D. Clapp of Boston, have recently presented the Society with a framed tax bill to Lewis Jones, dated 1782, and two samplers in excellent condition. One sampler was made by Betsey Train, great-grandmother of the Clapp sisters, in 1811 and the other by Betsey Train's mother, Betsey Seaverns, is undated but must be 20 to 25 years older.

Judging from the rhymes on the latter, a ten year old girl of the late 18th century could grow just as weary of her tasks as her counterpart might do in 1966. The following is what was laboriously embroidered—no wonder that the child never got around to finishing or dating it!

Betsey Seaverns is my name  
New England is my nation  
Weston is my dwelling place  
And Christ is my salvation

\* \* \* \*

When I am dead and laid in Grave  
And all my bones are rotten  
When this you (U) see  
Remember me  
I may not be forgotten

\* \* \* \*

The Rose is Read  
The Gras is Green  
The days are past which I have seen  
And when the Bel for me doth . . .

\* \* \* \*

One of our members, Miss Jenny C. Kroll of Exmoor Farm is responsible for these gifts to the Society. A few months ago she had an unexpected visit from the Clapp sisters whom she had known when she lived in Jamaica Plain during World War I but had no idea that they had Weston connections. The subject of the samplers came up because they were troubled that nobody in their family seemed to care about them and they wished that they could be put in the possession of someone genuinely interested. Miss Kroll lost little time in assuring them that the Weston Historical Society would be delighted to have them, display them, and cherish them!

Charter Anniversary Dinner – January 28, 1966

Reservations \$2.00 per person, not later than January 18th.

Please make checks payable to The Weston Historical Society, Inc.

(If you have not yet paid your 1966 dues, you may enclose payment with this reservation slip)

MR. HARRY B. JONES, Treasurer  
 448 Concord Road, Weston, Mass. 02193

Please reserve.....places at \$2.00 each for —

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

Cut off and mail

Officers, Directors & Committee Chairmen for 1966

President ..... Harold G. Travis  
 Vice-President ..... Harold B. Willis, Jr.  
 Second Vice-President ..... Charles P. Gorely, Jr.  
 Recording Secretary ..... John G. Brooks  
 Corresponding Secretary ..... Mrs. C. Vinal Cooke  
 Treasurer ..... Harry B. Jones

Directors

J. Kenneth Bennett  
 John G. Brooks  
 Philip F. Coburn  
 Brenton H. Dickson III  
 Erlund Field  
 Grant M. Palmer, Jr.  
 Henry W. Patterson  
 Mrs. Homer N. Sweet  
 Harold G. Travis  
 Harold B. Willis Jr.

Committee Chairmen

Archivists: Miss Rebecca McKenna  
 Curator: Mrs. James E. Fraser  
 Finance: Leonard H. Dowse  
 Historian: Brenton H. Dickson III  
 Hospitality: Mrs. Julio Correa  
 House: Harold B. Willis, Jr.  
 Information: Mrs. H. Eugene Jones  
 Liaison: Mrs. F. Leslie Ford  
 Membership: Philip F. Coburn  
 Program: Mrs. Boardman Bump  
 Research: Erlund Field

Annual Dues: \$2.00 per person

Gift Memberships are suggested

Life Memberships (\$200) are also available

Checks should be made payable to Weston Historical Society, Inc., and sent to: Mr. H. B. Jones, 448 Concord Road, Weston 02193.



MR. & MRS. EDWARD W. MARSHALL  
10 CRESCENT ST.  
WESTON, MASS.

January, 1966

Bulletin

The Weston Historical Society



## WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC

### Calendar Highlights

(Please save the dates)

1966

- January 28: Charter Anniversary Dinner  
6:45 P.M. at the High School  
Speaker: Mr. Robert E. Pike
- April 12: Panel Discussion: Teaching History  
in the Weston Schools
- Every Wednesday from 2 to 4 P.M.  
Open House at the Jones House  
(Josiah Smith Tavern)