

THE WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

MAY, 1966, VOL. II, No. 3⁴



The Pact is Signed – The House is Ours!

Shown above are, l. to r. seated: Herman Koester, Jr., Chairman of Selectmen; Harold G. Travis, President of the Weston Historical Society; John G. Brooks, Clerk; standing: Philip F. Coburn, Mrs. Homer N. Sweet, and J. Kenneth Bennett, Directors. This picture was taken April 26, 1966 at the historic signing of an agreement whereby the Society, for its headquarters, acquired the old Isaac Fiske Law Office.

Nestled under the famous Burgoyne Elm at 626 Boston Post Road, this "little house by the side of the road" was built in 1800 and is in excellent condition. Prior to World War II it fittingly was used as an office for the Weston Historical Committee. For a detailed description and history of the building, see the January 1966 issue of the Bulletin.

Our New Headquarters

A Sacred Trust and Challenging Responsibility

We are sure the entire membership shares with the Directors a full appreciation of what the office of the Society can mean to the Weston of all our yesterdays and tomorrows. We urge you to join with us actively in realizing its possibilities.

Here will be a central spot for our records, a convenient location for welcoming friends and for guiding visitors. In every sense, it can be the heart of Weston's rich heritage. Mr. Leslie Ford is Chairman of the Maintenance and Protection Committee under the supervision of the Society's House Committee Chairman, Harold B. Willis, Jr., a descendant of Isaac Fiske. Mr. Ford has had many years of experience in the restoration of colonial buildings. He is busily engaged in research about old, office signs, interior details and finish to the end that what is finally done will be in authentic, good taste. Mr. Edward C. Briggs will serve as watchman and a burglar-fire alarm system is being installed. Mr. and Mrs. Merton E. Williams have donated a safe to hold our most precious archives. We shall need a good sized filing cabinet.

During the summer, committees will be hard at work with the objective of having an official opening in the Fall. The exterior has recently been painted and is in good condition. Landscaping improvements in the front will be made and an attractive sign installed. Inside, a great deal of scrubbing, sandpapering, painting and restorative repairs will be necessary. Appropriate wall paper will be selected and applied. To give our members a chance to see what needs to be done, the house will be open Saturday, May 21st and Sunday, May 22nd from 2 to 5 P.M.

Furnishings, suitable to the character of the building, will have to be carefully acquired. We have already been promised the original desk of Isaac Fiske from his heirs and 2 hand-carved, oak chairs, made prior to 1750, which were in the study of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the gift of Barbara Hudnut Boston of New York City who is the daughter of Mrs. David I. Hudnut, 276 Glen Road, Weston.

Outside of the sunlit lower room an old fashioned herb garden can be planned as a background to the spacious lawn, providing a setting for any activities that in pleasant weather may overflow the house itself.

A great deal of activity on the part of all members is obviously ahead. Volunteers are welcome. If you have materials or service (including "elbow grease") to donate, please advise Mrs. H. Eugene Jones, 899-0177, who will report all offers of assistance to the Directors. Your cooperation will facilitate the prompt organization of the necessary working groups.

We now can make the Weston Historical Society the vital, living force that this town deserves. From our headquarters we can extend friendliness to our visitors and give out literature describing the Town's history and its most significant sites and buildings. Through exhibits and teas both here and at the museum in our Josiah Smith Tavern rooms, we can re-live the days of yore and re-instill a sense of gratitude to our predecessors who left us a record of service to community and country.

Another Important Committee Being Formed

As our program accelerates, an era of significant cooperation between the Society and the Weston schools has dawned as the logical outcome of informal discussions that took place at the First Parish Hall on April 14th between members of the Weston school department and the Weston Historical Society.

The evening began with a brief description of the teaching of history in the Weston schools presented by Mr. Ernest Hunter, Principal of the Brook School, Mr. Phillip R. Wicky of the Junior High School, and Mr. Robert Lewis of the High School. Representing the Society were Mrs. Stanley G. French, Chairman of the meeting, Mrs. Ramsay MacMullen and Mr. Stephen T. Riley.

This spring meeting revealed an eagerness on the part of the school staff to have our resources made available to them and the need for work by our members in developing such materials into useful form. Most of the school staff lives out of town, without knowledge of Weston's background, and unable to ferret out or digest information available without our major help. The information in our files will be useful to the schools in direct proportion to its ease of access and its readability.

Many suggestions were made both by school and Society, designed to stimulate interest in the study of Weston history and its correlation to the wider world. Among the suggestions were the layout of a local Heritage Trail, an annual essay contest with a prize from the Historical Society, bus trips for pupils to points of historic interest, a Society-sponsored collection of books, documents and micro-films of records in the school libraries, involvement of high school students in local, archaeological research projects, dissemination of our "Bulletin" at strategic spots throughout the schools, and even student memberships in the Society.

A committee comprised of experts in the fields of education and history is about to be formed so that each Weston child may be imbued with a sense of patriotism and civic pride.

An added feature of the meeting was Mr. Riley's presentation to the Society of photostated copies of letters written by Samuel Phillips Savage of Weston on April 19, 1775. These copies will be framed and hung in our headquarters office as evidence of the anxieties and pressures of that fateful day.

Merton E. Williams To Be Associate Director of Research

Mr. Merton E. Williams, 321 Boston Post Road has been appointed Associate Director of Research for the Weston Historical Society. Mr. Williams has been a resident of Weston for the past 21 years and is particularly interested in the economic history of the town since its early days. He will assist Mr. Erlund Field, Chairman of the Research Committee.

“Jericho,” An Intriguing Mystery

“Jericho” is bounded on the west by the Wayland Town Line, on the north by Concord and Sudbury Roads, on the south by the area north of Gun Club Lane, and it extends east through the Town Forest and land of the Fiske Estate to Concord Road just north of the bridge at Cherry Brook Station on Concord Road.

Crisscrossed with stone walls, it comprises swamps and heavily forested knolls two to three hundred feet high. Numerous cart paths remind us that once upon a distant time considerable travel took place here. What evidence can still be found of any industrial complex that might have flourished here in the early 18th Century? The most likely conjecture is a grist mill, though lumbering might well have induced a woodworking plant, and a pottery works was possibly, but no written record has been found of any such enterprises. A search therefore was recently undertaken of Cherry Brook itself to ascertain the prospect of adequate water with enough fall to turn a water wheel.

Cherry Brook originates in springs that feed Foote’s Pond. Thence it runs under Warren Avenue, winds northward almost to Concord Road while tending in general to follow the course of the Massachusetts Central Railroad, and with a final bend northward, pours its waters through a bridge at Concord Road into College Pond. Irrelevant to our study is its continued devious route into Stony Brook from whence it spills into the Charles River and finally into the deep, blue sea.

At most times of the year the water flowing through Cherry Brook seems ample and reliable. Its drop in elevation however is very slight and the current is lazy. We found four replicas of old dams built with earth and stone, but none of these exceed four feet in height and the surrounding features are only a scant few feet above water level. Without doubt these dams served as causeways over which farmers drove to their fields. These causeways were wide enough for horses and wagons, but there’s little likelihood that any mills could have been constructed on their lee sides. These very dams undoubtedly caused the brook to back up into several small ponds inundating much of the swamp land.

In company with our neighboring and neighborly “Pick and Shovel” historian, Mr. Roland Robbins of Lincoln, your Research Committee followed Cherry Brook from its source to College Pond, (east of Concord Road), through underbrush and swamp. Almost at the outset we came to a bridge that obviously spans what was once a small dam, but it was not until we reached the bridge under Concord Road that the scent grew warm.

At that point our noted friend suddenly pointed out features that indicate a distinct possibility of the one-time existence of an old mill site. Here two substantial shoulders rise precipitously on both sides of the brook. A dam at this point could have created a large reservoir, available winter and summer, perhaps as much as ten feet above the present road level.

In recent years Concord Road has been straightened and improved but its predecessor is still in clear evidence at an elevation of more than seven feet above the present stream, with high banks on either side. Is it possible, we wonder, that our very earliest “Concord Road” was higher than the present one and that traffic to Sudbury, Acton, and Concord went over a causeway spanning or adjoining its dam? When the mill with its water wheel between

the road and College Pond then passed from the scene, was the road lowered to its present location?

The answer may well lie buried under the asphalt and tons of stone, but we can't, under conjecture alone, start to destroy this scenic highway. According to Mr. Robbins, one Saturday morning with a Back Hoe criss-crossing the road, plus plenty of volunteer member labor might produce a revelation similar to what occurred last fall in Lexington when the original site of the Hancock-Clark House, headquarters of the Lexington Historical Society, was uncovered, — a project that now under Mr. Robbins' guidance has that town highly excited in an exercise that plans to move the landmark back to its 17th Century location, there to become a museum. Our committee and the President have paid several visits to this undertaking and urge our fellow members to view the work that is now in progress on Hancock Street, Lexington.

If anyone can produce suspicious and significant artifacts from the immediate vicinity of Concord Road where Cherry Brook passes under the bridge into College Pond, or if any "old timer" can recall having heard of any mill long ago on that site, communicate post haste with Erlund Field, our Research Chairman, or his associate, Merton Williams. It should be emphasized that all work to date has been decidedly "preliminary," and that before any further work is undertaken, we must uncover more authoritative clues.

Simultaneously the Committee has been attempting to uncover three possible sites where preliminary observations indicated the possibility that some of our early settlers of this, "The Farmers Precinct of the Town of Watertown," might actually have erected houses, barns, or mill buildings in "Jericho." Just across the Wayland line is a well-defined cellar hole conforming to the specifications known to have characterized 17th and 18th Century houses, with a stone-lined well a few feet away.

Less than 200 yards to the east in Weston, we found three distinct areas where depressions in the ground seemed to indicate that houses might once have stood there, and, having served their times, had been destroyed and their cellar holes filled with dirt. With probe rods, crowbars, and shovels the Committee set vigorously to work last fall, aided by volunteer Boy Scouts, in a fruitless endeavor to resurrect pieces of brick, clay pottery, ironware, etc., to locate areas where not only the topsoil but the earth, clay, and sand layers underneath had been disturbed, or to bare evidence of man-made rock installations. Despite one or two uncoverings of suspicious rock formations, Mr. Robbins for the time being, recommends other methods of investigation, for without specific clues, the effort is meaningless.

"Jericho," according to Mr. Field's father, was a segment of the land parcels allotted to early settlers of Watertown for the purpose of farming. It was the custom in those early times for those early settlers to send out their indentured servants in the spring to mind their flocks and herds until fall when they were taken to Watertown for the winter months. Quite likely the only dwellings erected on Jericho would have been of "lean to" character. When permanent settlements were built, sites were chosen nearer to church, roads, and water. This plausible theory could well prove erroneous, however, should any of our members, wandering through the natural beauty and peace of this area, come across an artifact or other evidence that "Jericho" was once indeed an actual community in early Weston days.

“Errata”

The staff of your “Bulletin” pledges accuracy as its watchword, and it will be our policy in subsequent issues to correct any item that has been found wanting in that category. We recognize that in the years to come, the “Bulletin” should be a bible of factual veracity. We are sorry that gremlins got into the last issue and made Ellen M. Jones the prompter of “Friendly” plays, as the credit should have gone to her sister, Alice E. Jones. Likewise to our fellow members, Elizabeth C. and William O. Kenney, who were not available when our March issue went to press, we bow in abject apology to correct our statement on Page 4 that it was their father who had put the finishing touches on Captain Daniel S. Lamson’s “History of the Town of Weston, Massachusetts 1630-1890” following the latter’s death.

The “Editor’s Preface” in the front of the book is signed merely “W. S. K. Belmont, Mass. February 24, 1913,” and it took a trip to the dusty vaults of the Belmont Town Hall to establish the fact that, according to the Assessors’ list for the year 1913, a William S. Kennedy, “Writer”, lived then on Old Concord Road, Belmont. In his closing sentence, Mr. Kennedy expresses our contrite sentiments today when he inquired “Hence over our shortcomings would it be too much to ask that kindly charity draw the veil of silence?” If in the future any discrepancies are caught or suspected, we would count it a favor to have any of our material corrected in the cause of meticulous accuracy.

Welcome To New Members!

The Society takes great pleasure in welcoming the following new members: Dr. Robert J. O’Doherty, 25 Columbine Road; Miss Elizabeth O’Doherty, 25 Columbine Road and Mr. Richard B. Hodges, 144 Sudbury Road.

Membership

The Society now has 521 paid members with 7 Life members. There are, however, 79 of last year's members whose dues have not been received. We realize how easy it is to forget a \$2.00 dues notice and hope that their lack of payment has simply been an oversight!

Annual Dues: \$2.00 per person

Gift Memberships are suggested

Life Memberships (\$200) are also available

Contributions to the Society are always welcome

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

President

Mr. Harold G. Travis

899-4515

Information Chairman

Mrs. H. Eugene Jones

899-0177



MRS. JAMES E. FRASER
24 OAK ST.
WESTON, MASS.

MAY 1966

Bulletin

The Weston Historical Society



WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC

Calendar Highlights

(Please save the dates)

1966

May 21 and May 22

2 - 5 P.M.

Inspection of new headquarters — 626 Boston Post Road

June 18

Annual Meeting of Bay State League with the Nantucket Historical Society as host. Please contact Mrs. F. Leslie Ford if interested in attending — 899-8171.

Every

Wednesday

2 - 4 P.M.

Open House at the Jones House (Josiah Smith Tavern)