

THE WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BULLETIN

MARCH 1967, VOL. III, No. 3

3rd Annual Charter Anniversary Dinner

April 11, 1967

Weston High School Cafeteria

6:45 P.M.

Mr. Roger S. Webb to Address the Society on "The Preservation of our Architectural Heritage"

Another rewarding year for the Weston Historical Society has come and gone. Reservations for its annual Charter Dinner, the social highlight of the year, should be made promptly and members are urged to bring guests. It will be held on Tuesday evening, April 11th at the Weston High School Cafeteria — a tear-off form for reservations is provided in the back of this Bulletin. Please help the Committee in their planning by mailing yours today!

The speaker of the evening will be Mr. Roger S. Webb, President of Architectural Heritage, Inc.. This is a non-profit corporation that stresses the importance of preserving artifacts and structures of historical interest as an important phase of telling the story of the past.

Mr. Webb is also president of R.A.R.E. (Rare Architectural Restorations Enterprise) whose function is true to its name. When we encounter a Colonial home moving down the main street of a community on rollers, we can expect that R.A.R.E. is busy again, saving another structure of historic interest from being razed. In Cambridge, the 114 year old Wells House owned by the Episcopal Theological Seminary was moved from Phillips Place to Brattle Street, and the Watson House from Russell Street to Elmwood Avenue. Both are excellent examples of early architecture and it was a real challenge to accomplish their moving in a heavily congested area. At Belmont Hill School, the "new" chapel, a handsome example of early American, Greek revival, was moved in pieces from West Thompson, Connecticut — another impressive project by R.A.R.E.. In his illustrated lecture, Mr. Webb will discuss these as well as many of their current projects.

Mrs. Reginald D. Wells and her Hospitality Committee have an excellent menu planned for the dinner. That evening they will be assisted by a group of 30 hostesses, each of whom will head up a table. This is a splendid opportunity for both old and new members and their guests to become better acquainted because everyone will be given a name tag and may sit where he wishes.

The Isaac Fiske Law Office

"As we go to press", the Selectmen advise us that under an article on the Budget for the annual Town Meeting March 27th, they plan to move that a sum of money be appropriated to include the expense of restoring this venerable, town-owned building to structural soundness. Inasmuch as our plans for occupying the house as our headquarters and for furnishing it in keeping with the year 1800 have been delayed pending such action by the Town, it is highly important that every member of our Society attend the meeting on March 27th and vote in support of the motion.

Welcome to New Members

The Society takes pleasure in welcoming the following new members who have joined since the publication of the January Bulletin: Mr. and Mrs. Graham P. Teller, 115 Brook Street, Wellesley and, from Weston, Mrs. John H. Higgins, 42 Partridge Hill Road, Mrs. Richard Campobello, 25 Westcliff Road, Mrs. Carlton W. Chamberlin, 346 South Avenue, Dr. Vera Laska, 50 Woodchester Drive, Mr. and Mrs. Nathan I. Greene, 713 Boston Post Road, Mrs. Donald W. Stowbridge, 33 Pond Brook Circle, Mr. Robert R. Hill, 30 Indian Hill Road, Mr. and Mrs. P. B. O'Toole, 449 North Avenue and Mrs. Stewart L. Chamberlin, 15 Linden Circle.

One of the surest ways of increasing the membership is the word of mouth contact by members with prospective members. One such illustration recently — Miss Mabel Burrage called Mr. P. F. Coburn, Chairman of the Membership Committee, giving him the name of an interested person. In his follow-up call to the prospective member, she said "My husband and I have lived in Weston for several years and we don't know too much about it. We are interested in learning." This is the way it should be. Keep it up. Mr. Coburn's telephone number is TWInbrook 9-2236. Membership fee is \$2.00.

Two Taverns and a Tree

In the center of Weston, a few hundred feet apart on the south side of the old Boston Post Road, stand three notable landmarks of individual character and historic interest. Coming toward Boston on the old stage coach route from New York and Pennsylvania, one glimpses first the stately Golden Ball Tavern, widely accepted in Colonial days as an important rallying point for the Loyalists or "Tories".

Approaching Central Cemetery beyond, one sees the venerable "Burgoyne Elm", now at least 240 years old, under whose branches on October 7, 1777, General Glover of the Continental Army quartered overnight a company of prisoners, captured while under the command of General Burgoyne at the "Saratoga Convention". How appropriate it is that today the 1795 law office building of Isaac Fiske stands on the same spot to be used as the headquarters of our Society.

Finally a few hundred yards beyond, and facing the Town Green, is the old Josiah Smith Tavern ("The Jones House") that through the same period became known as a friendly gathering place for the "Patriots". Today, in four of its rooms, it houses a rare collection of historic items that have been donated or entrusted to our Society.

In forthcoming issues of The Bulletin, we plan to tell more about each of these treasured landmarks and of the people who tarried there, — beginning now with The Golden Ball Tavern.



The Golden Ball Tavern

"We stopped at a tavern at the sign of the golden ball with an intention to get a drink and so proceed; but upon our going in the landlord pleased us so much. . . . that we resolved to lye there that night." So reads an account of two scouts, disguised as surveyors, who had been sent out from Boston by General Gage to travel to Worcester, taking sketches of the country they went through and making geographical observations.

Today, passing the ancient landmark in its tranquil setting, it is hard to visualize the excitement and plotting that went on within those walls nearly two centuries ago. Isaac Jones, a noted Tory, kept the tavern in Revolutionary times and there he frequently entertained General Gage and other British officers who came out for supper parties and convivial gatherings. No doubt he supplied these gentlemen with pertinent information as to rebel activities in the neighborhood, giving the gatherings a double significance.

Isaac Jones also kept a store, probably the oldest in Weston, and it stood to the east of the tavern. It has been said that this store did the most extensive business outside of Boston in drygoods, groceries, liquor, etc., and that it supplied taverns for many miles around with rum and molasses. Isaac also carried on a banking business of considerable magnitude and his credit rated high in Boston.

In spite of all this he was considered a dangerous and obstinate opponent to the cause of liberty. In the Worcester Convention of January 1775 he was denounced as follows: "*Resolved* that it is earnestly recommended to all the inhabitants of this county, not to have any commercial transactions with Isaac Jones, but to shun his house and person and to treat him with the contempt he deserves."

In April of that same year General Gage, planning to seize rebel arsenals before they became dangerously large, sent spies out again to estimate the preparedness of the countryside. One of these, John Howe, came through Weston. He first stopped at the Josiah Smith Tavern in the center where his accent betrayed his nationality and he was persuaded to move on to the more friendly atmosphere of the Golden Ball. However, word of his presence spread and a group of townsmen organized to seize him and subject him to the tar and feather treatment. By the time they arrived at the tavern, Howe had escaped to the house of Dr. Wheaton, another Tory, who lived in a more remote section of town. (The present Elwell house). Howe's report of this and other examples of unfriendliness along the way was a determining factor in General Gage's decision to attack Concord and fire "the shot heard 'round the world" there instead of Weston.

Isaac continued to run his tavern and store, still adhering to his principles even though days were becoming cloudier for the loyalist. After the British had been defeated in the Battle of Bennington, Paul Revere (August 1777), with a fairly sizable contingent, marched to Worcester to take charge of prisoners captured in that battle. He breakfasted at the Golden Ball Tavern and then went on to Sudbury where he received a letter from Mrs. Jones complaining that her store had been broken into and twelve loaves of sugar stolen, each weighing about seven pounds. She accused Revere's soldiers of the theft but a search of their packs revealed nothing. Revere, in his report, stated that he suspected the Joneses stole the sugar themselves;—it belonged to the government and they were Tories. Moreover, he continued, while at the Jones tavern the pocket of Captain Todd's servant was picked and two dollars taken from it.

In October 1777 General Glover escorted a contingent of General Burgoyne's troops, captured at the Saratoga Convention, to prison in Somerville. They travelled along Weston's main street and bivouacked under the great elm which, in memory of this occasion, became known as the "Burgoyne Elm" and which is still standing.

The less fortunate soldiers and their prisoners were forced to sleep out in the cold but the officers, both British and American, were given rooms in the taverns. One British officer (Thomas Anburey) wrote of the Golden Ball, "In Westown . . . we found the most convenient inn of any on the road;—it is equal to most in England, the rooms commodious, provisions good, and servants attentive; above all, the landlord is a friend of our government and like all of that description has been much persecuted. He was not without his apprehension of being sent to prison for attention shewn to officers who stopped at his house, which was nothing more than the common civility he shewed to all his guests; in short he was deemed by the Americans a rank Tory."

With the Revolution out of the way, Isaac seems to have put his shoe on the other foot and in 1781 we find him working on the side of the Americans and helping Lafayette. An agreement dated Dec. 8, 1781 states that "Isaac Jones will supply sufficient carriage to convey the King's (French) stores to Poughkeepsie. . . ." this to be done at his own expense and risk at an agreed rate per pound and per mile.

The Golden Ball Tavern was built in 1750-52. The original building, nearly square, had two chimneys and a large central hallway extending from the front to the rear. There were also two side entrances each with a small vestibule, occupying the space between the chimney and the outside wall. All four rooms on the first floor could be entered either from a vestibule or from the front hall. Upstairs there were four bedrooms and a small office with a miniature fireplace. The partition between the southwest chamber and the front hall was hinged at the top so that it might be hooked up to convert the space into a ballroom. A similar partition is found in the "Reeves Tavern" in Wayland.

The west ell, although added at a later date, is probably older than the main building. It originally stood near the foot of Highland Street and was used by Dr. Gowen as an office and apothecary shop. Dr. Gowen, it will be remembered, was the father of Hannah who received a kiss from George Washington as he passed through town.

Whether the Golden Ball Tavern was built as a tavern or a residence is, at the moment, a matter for conjecture. The large, typical fireplace in the tap room, the small office upstairs and the swinging partition support the former theory; the expensive detail of the paneling and turnings in the front hall, the latter. Perhaps such elegance is not out of order when one considers the prosperity of early Weston taverns; in fact, many of the larger houses dating back to the latter eighteenth century are said to have served as taverns at one time or another. For many years the main road through town was the most important thoroughfare in the east, connecting Boston with Connecticut, New York and Pennsylvania as well as New Hampshire and Vermont. It became a principal stagecoach route, and taverns where horses could be exchanged and travelers entertained, were a necessity. Added to this was an enormous amount of teaming from up country as well as large droves of cattle and hogs constantly passing over our roads — all of which contributed to the prosperity of our numerous taverns. Besides, Weston was an important trading center and people found it more convenient to stop here and trade rather than take the long circuitous trip to Boston. As there was no bridge across the Charles River, Boston was reached either through Cambridge on the north or Roxbury on the south.

During the early nineteenth century tavern business fell off drastically and in 1828 the Josiah Smith Tavern, the last survivor, became a private residence. Among the factors contributing to the death of the taverns might be mentioned the construction of the Worcester Turnpike (now Route 9) in 1805 which diverted long distance stagecoaching away from the Post Road; the advent of the railroad which rapidly superseded the stagecoach as a mode of transportation; and, finally, restriction on the sale of liquor which at the same time restricted the merriment afforded by the taverns. The Golden Ball ceased being a hostelry near the turn of the century although Isaac Jones lived on until 1813. His heirs continued to occupy the old house until 1963 when Ralph Jones, the last of a long line, died at the age of 82.

The above is the fourth in a series of articles on historic Weston buildings by our Historian, Brenton H. Dickson.

"Burgoyne Elm" Wood to be Made into Souvenirs

Recently it was necessary for the Town's Tree Warden to order the removal of one limb from the historic "Burgoyne Elm", now over 240 years old. Happening upon the scene with our fellow member and local artist, Mr. Henry W. Longfellow, our President arranged for the limb to be sawed into lengths that were then carefully hidden until such time as arrangements could be made for carrying out some of the ideas that quickly came to mind. Within 48 hours, Mr. Longfellow brought forth several rough samples and sketches of souvenir articles such as bookends, paper weights, candlesticks, etc. that could be made from properly seasoned elmwood.

Conferences with Mr. Duncan, head of Industrial Arts at the Senior High School, and with his contemporary, Mr. Green of the Junior High School, quickly evolved a project whereby their students will create for the Weston Historical Society a number of such objects that can be sold for the benefit of the Society's work. It is proposed that annual awards should be made by the Society to those students who thus contribute their imagination, creativeness, skill and awareness of Weston history in the most outstanding way. It can now be noted that just before the snowstorm of February 7th, seven huge logs, varying in diameter from 26" to 34" from this one limb, 100' in length, were safely transported to Sherborn, Massachusetts. There they were sawed into planks of 1", 1½" and 2" thicknesses and into 3" x 4" billets for wood-turning. February 20th they were brought back to Weston where they are now securely stored for seasoning under proper cover. The wood should be ready to be worked approximately one year from now.

"Gore Lea" History Highlights Winter Meeting

Blizzards and power shortage may occasionally postpone but never cancel our scheduled meetings. When the storm of February 7th paralyzed the community for a day or two, the meeting scheduled for that date was held on Wednesday evening, February 15th, before an enthusiastic and appreciative group of members and their guests in the spacious hall of the First Parish Church. With her characteristic charm and clarity, Jean Gorely (Mrs. Charles P., Jr.) gave a remarkable review of the history of this venerable and historic mansion. Her talk was not only interesting and entertaining but also an inspiration to her hearers, many of whom gained great insight into the steps that are involved in tracing past and remote records. As a charter member of the Society, she gave our Research Committee great impetus, and it is hoped that similar presentations of other old houses in Weston will be forthcoming. We are deeply indebted to Jean Gorely for sharing with us the results of her years of painstaking research. For restoring and preserving "Gore Lea" and for loving it as they do, Mr. and Mrs. Gorely deserve the thanks of us all.

New Appointments

President Harold G. Travis has announced the following new appointments: Mrs. James E. Fraser as Chairman of the Archives Committee, Mrs. Robert F. McLeod as Chairman of the Curator Committee, Mrs. Reginald Wells as Chairman of the Hospitality Committee and Mrs. Raymond Paynter as head of newspaper publicity. Mrs. F. Leslie Ford and Mrs. Harold G. Travis have been appointed by the Curator as co-chairmen of a committee to supervise the redecoration of the interior of the Isaac Fiske Law Office.

Recent Gifts to the Society

Three of our charter members have recently presented to the Society articles of unusually significant interest and value. Mr. Henry W. Longfellow has written that "if it is agreeable, my wife and I would be pleased to present to the Society the painting of the Burgoyne Elm now on display at the Weston branch of the Newton-Waltham Bank and Trust Company. Mr. Richard Lincoln, a vice-president of the bank, has been informed to see that if and when the Society wishes to have the painting he will be pleased to see that the Society receives it."

In memory of her husband, Mr. Frank S. Owen, his widow has donated a "Deacon's Bench" and a trestle table. These pieces were acquired by her husband many years ago and are in excellent condition. They are approximately six feet in length and the former is featured by a series of attractive stencils. At present they are on display at the Historical Society's rooms in the Jones House.

Also at the Jones House is a cross section, measuring 32" in diameter, of the famous George Washington - Hannah Gowen Pine Tree. This was transferred to us by Mr. John B. Paine, Jr. from his parent's home on Highland Street (the original site of the General Marshall House). Attached to it is the following framed description of its history as written by the donor on March 23, 1930:

"In October 1789, General George Washington, President of the United States, proposed a journey to the New England states which he had not visited since the evacuation of Boston by the British army. He travelled in his own carriage drawn by four horses, and was accompanied by Mr. Lear and Major Jackson, his secretaries, and six servants on horseback. Notice was given in Boston that the president would reach Weston on October 23rd. He passed the night at the Flagg Tavern*, now the residence of Mr. Emerson, and while at Weston he wrote Governor Hancock accepting an invitation to dinner the next day. On the morning of October 24th he was waited upon by the inhabitants of the Town, and Colonel Marshall* welcomed him in an address after which the notables of the Town were presented to him.

"It was while in Weston that Washington kissed Hannah Gowen, then a child, and it was for her a matter of great pride and glory as long as she lived. This tree was said to have been planted at that time to commemorate this incident, and a check of its age apparently bears this out.

"The tree blew down in May 1923 and was cut up, including this section, in May 1924. The tree stood a few feet off Highland Street opposite Hannah Gowen's house of which only the cellar hole remains on the left hand side of the road facing Central Avenue and about halfway between that and Chestnut Street.

"The Flagg Tavern of which only the chimneys are standing, was destroyed by fire November 6, 1902. It was for many years the principal stopping place for the New York mail coaches, and President John Adams also stopped there.

"The hill behind the site of the Gowen House on Highland Street is known as Sanderson's Hill upon which, during the Revolution, a beacon light

was established, Jonas Sanderson being its keeper. General Sullivan speaks of this beacon light in his memoirs as a connecting light uniting his command in Rhode Island with Boston, the town of Watertown, including what is now Waltham, Weston, Lincoln, and part of Concord.

"Halfway up Highland Street on the site of our present house stood the old *Marshall House* confiscated by the government after the War of the Revolution, and later bought by Colonel Thomas Marshall, great uncle of General James F. B. Marshall, who after service in the Revolutionary War, came here to live. It was later owned by William M. Roberts who in 1867 sold it to General Charles J. Paine. In 1882 it was moved from its former location to its present site on Church Street by Charles H. Fiske who now owns and occupies it.

"Hannah Gowen died May 23, 1870 at the age of 95 years and 8 months. She is said to have been very fond of skunks and to have kept several as pets in a closet of her house, and it may possibly have been a grandchild of one of these that took up its abode inside the famous tree during the year that it was lying on the ground."

J. P. B. Jr. March 23, 1930

* Washington himself is said by many to have spent the night with Colonel Marshall in his house on Highland Street. Reference: D. S. Lamson's History of the Town of Weston 1630-1890.

Projects with Schools Take Shape

Cooperation between the Society and the schools of the Town was gratefully noted by the President at the mid-winter meeting when he cited several recent instances of coordinated effort along historical lines. Through the courtesy of the High School, copies of Mr. Dickson's address at our November meeting on the Old Middlesex Canal were made by pupils in Miss Thelma Hoyle's Commercial Department from the tapes that are being played to the History classes of Mr. William Holman in the Senior High School. In time, the Dickson lecture will be published as one in a series envisioned by our special Committee on Publications which is headed by Mr. Homer Lucas.

Our Society is also working with Mr. Holman and his associates on an archaeological project being planned in Weston under a recent \$4000 grant from the Society of the Cincinnati. Through our associate director of Research, Merton E. Williams, we are glad to help guide the muscles and brains of our younger generation in this stimulating and significant project.

Society Members Invited to Visit Waltham Home

Mrs. Clinton Jackson, 244 Weston Street, Waltham, a guest at the winter meeting of the Society, has invited any interested Westonians to visit her home. She is the owner of a 1750 house in whose dining room has been uncovered an ancient mural that pictures what is perhaps the alleged hanging of a Tory in Weston, then a part of Watertown (as was Waltham). This may well be another field of exploration for our research-minded members, especially owners of old houses along the same Boston Post Road who themselves, by careful delving, might uncover similar murals. Such murals were presumably painted by an itinerant artist from Saugus late in the 18th century.

Charter Anniversary Dinner – April 11, 1967

Reservations \$3.50 per person, not later than April 3rd.

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

(If you have not yet paid your 1967 dues, you may enclose payment with this reservation slip).

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

Please reserve.....places at \$3.50 each for —

NAME

ADDRESS

Cut off and mail



Annual Dues: \$2.00 per person

Gift Memberships are suggested

Life Memberships (\$200) are available

Voluntary contributions to the Society are also welcomed.

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

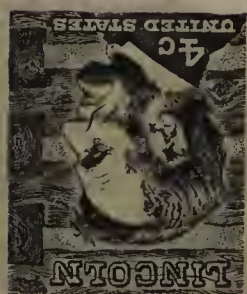
Extra copies of the "Bulletin" are available for 15c. Please contact Mrs. H. Eugene Jones, Bulletin Editor.

MR. & MRS. HAROLD G. TRAVIS
SADDLEHILL RD.
WESTON, MASS.

MARCH 1967

Bulletin

The Weston Historical Society



WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

Calendar Highlights

(Please save the dates)

1967

- April 8 Bay State League meeting at Lawrence on invitation from the Merrimack Valley Textile Museum.
For details call Mrs. F. Leslie Ford at 899-8171.
- April 11 3rd Annual Charter Anniversary Dinner.
6:45 P.M. — Weston High School Cafeteria.
Speaker: Mr. Roger S. Webb, President of R.A.R.E..
- May 10 Morning trip to Sharon, Mass. to visit the Kendall Whaling Museum.
(Details to be announced at Charter Dinner).
Open House at the Jones House (Josiah Smith Tavern)
Every Wednesday from 2 to 4 P.M.