

THE WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BULLETIN

JANUARY 1969, VOL. V, No. 2

Mid - Winter Meeting February Fourth

For the Society's next meeting which will be held in the Country School Auditorium Tuesday evening, February fourth, at 8:00 P.M., we have engaged Mr. Arthur F. Schrader of Old Sturbridge Villige. From his treasury of Singing History programs, he will present "New England in Song and Story".

Through his lecture and renditions, he will chronicle our oral tradition as conveyed through folk music and popular song editorials. Thus will his hearers perceive and sense the moods and thoughts which evolved into our national character.

Mr. Schrader's programs have been widely acclaimed by schools, colleges, museums, historical societies, and countless service and social groups throughout the country. He will arrive in Weston early in the day and arrangements have been made for him to appear before history and music students in the Weston Public Schools from elementary to senior high school, adapting his program to those periods in history that are being studied at the time.

All members are urged to attend this amusing, interesting, and educational mid - winter meeting. Members who will be admitted free, are urged to bring guests at \$1.00 each. Any guest who wishes to join the Society at that time will likewise be admitted free. A large turn - out is expected for what is sure to be another lively and worthwhile event.

Weston Welcomes Patriot's Day Guests

On Saturday the nineteenth of April, representatives of two hundred other Massachusetts local historical societies will come to Weston and Wayland for the annual spring meeting of the Bay State Historical League. The Weston Historical Society is co-host with the Wayland Historical Society. Registration will be at the Josiah Smith Tavern at 10 o'clock in the morning. Delegates will be received in our Society's rooms and escorted on a tour of what might well be called "History Row" en route to Wayland Center where luncheon will be served at noon, in the parlors of the Unitarian Church, followed by the afternoon's business meeting which will be addressed by Mr. Stephen T. Riley of Weston.

Mrs. F. Leslie Ford, chairman of our Liaison Committee, is coordinating plans with our Wayland friends, and details will be announced in our next Bulletin. It will be a pleasure and a privilege to welcome these distinguished guests and to show them the historic sites of our Town on the 194th anniversary of the Battles of Concord and Lexington.

Retrospect and Prospect

Embarking upon our sixth year as one of the most active historical societies in the Commonwealth, we can record many accomplishments towards our goal. Those members who filled the ball room of the Josiah Smith Tavern on November thirteenth were greatly impressed by the variety and scope of the annual reports given by officers and committee chairmen. It was agreed that our work deserves the wholehearted support of every resident of the Town and that our membership list should shortly double. A check for \$3.00 single or for \$5.00 family, payable to Weston Historical Society and mailed to P.O. Box 343, Weston, Massachusetts 02193 would be welcomed from every Weston home.

Other features of the fall season were Hallock Marsh's lecture on "The Blacksmith and His Art" accompanied by his exhibit of "Grandpa's Tools" and the portrayal before a packed Town Hall audience of Weston's original 3-act play "Around The Cracker Barrel". The latter event benefitted the Isaac Fiske Law Office Restoration Fund, and on the request of the State Librarian, an autographed copy of the script has been presented to the Massachusetts State Library.

"New England in Song and Story" on February fourth, the traditional Charter Anniversary Dinner on April fifteenth at which our Historian Brenton H. Dickson will speak on "Post Rider to Sports Car", and the annual spring meeting of the Bay State Historical League here in Weston and Wayland on April nineteenth, are forthcoming events to which we all look forward.

Back of these most worthwhile programs, all sorts of opportunities for imaginative individual initiative and industry beckon. Listed below are the names of directors, officers, and committee chairmen, all of whom would welcome your voluntary cooperation.

NEW MEMBERS

We warmly welcome the following new members who have joined the Society since our last Bulletin:

- Mr. and Mrs. William C. Brown, 6 Perry Lane, Weston.
- Dr. and Mrs. Robert C. Cantu Jr., 211 Newton Street, Weston.
- Mr. and Mrs. Earl G. DeChristopher, 48 Ledgewood Road, Weston.
- Mr. and Mrs. Joseph E. Ewers, Old Coach Road, Weston.
- Mr. and Mrs. William W. Gallagher Jr., 10 Pigeon Hill Road, Weston.
- Mr. F. Douglass Garron, 803 South Avenue, Weston.
- Miss Eloise Kenney, 20 Maple Street, Weston.
- Mrs. Richard G. Nickerson, 225 Winter Street, Weston.
- Mr. and Mrs. W. James Parker, 33 Aberdeen Road, Weston.
- Dr. Henry P. Pendergrass, 195 Meadowbrook Road, Weston.
- Mrs. Frankford S. Sumner, 103 Circle Road, Staten Island, N.Y.
- Miss Janet Sumner, 33 Fifth Avenue, New York City.
- Mr. and Mrs. John H. Underhill Jr., 68 Robin Road, Weston.
- Mr. and Mrs. C. Inglis Wetmore, 681 Boston Post Road, Weston.



"PROJECT RESTORATION" NEARS COMPLETION

The above sign which now adorns the front entrance of our headquarters was appropriately made by Mr. F. Leslie Ford from a 24 inch native pine board that he salvaged from an old New England church built in 1810. The lettering he used is likewise typical of the early 19th century, and though the sign is new, its material and lettering are as old as the building itself.

Volunteers are still needed to help us apply the finishing touches to our 1805 Law Office. Call 899-8171 or 899-4515 for assignments.

DIRECTORS: J. Kenneth Bennett, John G. Brooks, Brenton H. Dickson, Erlund Field, Charles P. Gorely, Jr., Harry B. Jones, Grant M. Palmer, Mrs. Homer N. Sweet, Harold G. Travis, and Harold B. Willis, Jr., PRESIDENT: Harold G. Travis. VICE PRESIDENT: Charles P. Gorely, Jr. SECRETARY: Mrs. Robert P. Cook. TREASURER: Roy L. Dickson. ARCHIVIST — CURATOR: Mrs. James E. Fraser, PROGRAM: Mrs. Richard Albrecht. HOSPITALITY: Mrs. Reginald Wells. MEMBERSHIP: Mrs. Joseph Stubbs. LAW OFFICE RESTORATION: Mr. F. Leslie Ford, INFORMATION: Mrs. Frederick D. Bonner.

The Parson Woodward House *

Parson Samuel Woodward, Weston's second minister, was called to the church in the spring of 1751 and ordained in September of that year. The following March he bought thirty acres of land on Concord Road, opposite the present Fiske Lane, from a William Smith, and paid about two hundred and thirteen pounds for it. "Probably the buyer and the seller sought refuge from the bitter March winds in the neighboring tavern of Samuel Baldwin (1) and settled the terms of the bargain over mugs of flip, or a jug of hard cider. There were present at this interview, presumably sharing in the good cheer, Col. Francis Fullam, Elisha Jones, Esq., and mine host himself, — Weston worthies all three, who signed as witnesses to the deed." The Parson must have started building immediately, for in less than ten months he was married, and with his bride, moved into the new home.

The original house was rectangular in shape without either of the ells it has at present. "The interior arrangement..... has not been materially altered. There is the front entrance hall from which lead off the front stairs (with two square landings) going to the second story, the dining room leading off the hall to the right and the parlor to the left. Behind the parlor was the Parson's Study, and behind the dining room was the kitchen and back hall, communicating with the side door. The kitchen..... contained an open fireplace with a large crane where the cooking was done, and an oven on the side of the fireplace for baking, — the fire being only lighted under it on baking days. Upstairs were four bedrooms and the front and back halls, and from the latter, a steep flight of stairs went into the attic."

"The salary first offered to the Parson was a little over sixty-six pounds a year plus one hundred and thirty-three pounds to induce him to settle in Weston. On such meager income, supplemented by small amounts paid to him in lieu of firewood, he managed to support himself and his wife and twelve children with whom they were blessed, between the years 1753 and 1776. Although three children died very young, one smallpox, there yet remained nine to clothe and feed. Yet this was done, and two sons were sent to college."

Early in his married life, the Parson began increasing his income by boarding college students. "The names of a few of these written on the doors of closets in the house give unconscious testimony to the fact of struggle for existence which must have gone on."

The Parson died in 1782. He might be called "the War Parson of the Town," for his pastorate began two years before Braddock's Defeat and ended one year before the surrender at Yorktown.

After his death his widow remained in the house "with at least six of their nine children, and the struggle without the salary must have been desperate." The Town sympathized with the distressed family, paid the Parson's funeral expenses, and granted his widow a year's salary. Twice (1785 and 1786) she petitioned the Town for an abatement of her taxes and each time her petition was granted. Records show that "the Town was rather loathe to grant such petitions, so there must have been a real need, and a real affection of the people for their late Pastor.

"To increase the troubles of the widow, her horse died during the first year after her husband's death, and her barrel of pork and of corn meal and

**Excerpts from a speech by the late Andrew Fiske who was born in this house in 1854.*

(1) Between the present Trowbridge garage and the Post Road, — not on the knoll as sometimes "mislocated".

one of the two 'piggs' mentioned in the inventory of her husband's estate had to be used in the support of her family. Probably her daughter Sarah, who was a dressmaker, plied her trade in the house, and eked out her mother's scanty income."

"Nor were her straightened circumstances the least of the widow's troubles". Within eleven years of her husband's death Mrs. Woodward lost five children including her eldest son Samuel, a graduate of Harvard, and her daughter Abigail, second wife of the Rev. Samuel Kendal who succeeded Parson Woodward in the pastorate.

"But the darkest part of the night came as usual just before the dawn. Within a year after her daughter's death, Mrs. Woodward's second daughter, Miranda, became the third wife of Dr. Kendal" and soon afterwards she herself became the wife of Col. Thomas Marshall, a well-to-do widower who lived in a fine mansion on Highland Street. This building many years later was moved to Church Street and is now the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas West.

Shortly before the marriage, Mrs. Woodward conveyed all her dower or other rights in her late husband's estate to her son-in-law Samuel Kendal in consideration of his executing a bond to pay her \$46.67 annually for the rest of her life. As she lived for ten more years this consideration cost Dr. Kendal nearly \$500.00.

The Kendals owned other property in town and having no need for the old homestead, sold it to Artemas Ward, a well-known lawyer who held many town offices and represented Weston in the General Court. But Ward had his own house, (which still stands a few rods from its original location, at the junction of Concord Road and the Post Road), so he rented the Woodward house to a Dr. Amos Bancroft. This was in 1796. A short while afterwards Dr. Bancroft bought the house and two acres of land, and probably added the easternmost ell, a predecessor of the present one. "I know of no actual proof of this except that Rev. Mr. Woodward would hardly have been able to have built it, and there is a tradition in our family that the room in the ell, used in my day as a kitchen, had once been used for a doctor's office. As children we were told the story that from a certain nail or hook in the ceiling, the doctor used to have hanging a skeleton, and we used to glance at this nail half frightened."

In 1810 Dr. Bancroft moved to Groton but he retained ownership of his Weston house, renting it to various people until 1829 when he finally sold it to Jonathan Stearns, a Boston merchant. Stearns only lived there about a year before selling the property to John Jones of Weston, a member of the firm of M. & J. Jones, harness makers. Jones later became co-owner of the Josiah Smith Tavern and was the grandfather of Alice and Ellen Jones, often referred to as "The Jones Girls".

During the Jones occupancy, Mrs. Jones' sister kept a school for small children in the house, and one of her pupils was George W. Cutting whom many of Weston's older residents remember either in his capacity as Town Clerk or as proprietor of the general store. Also at this same time, a Marshall Smith carried on a shoemaking business in the most northerly of the upper rooms of the ell.

In 1848 John Jones sold the property to Augustus H. Fiske of Boston, a native of Weston and the son of Isaac Fiske who owned the law office now occupied by the Weston Historical Society. The house has remained in the Fiske family ever since, and now belongs to the Wilkinsons, Mr. Fiske's decendants.

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

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

JANUARY 1969

Bulletin

The Weston Historical Society



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FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT
U.S. POSTAGE



Annual Dues: \$3.00 per person, \$5.00 per family

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 P.O. Box 343, Weston 02193

President

Mr. Harold G. Travis

899-4515

Extra copies of the "Bulletin" are available for 25c.