

THE WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BULLETIN

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"Reverend Joseph Fiske (left) and Isaac Fiske Esq. Probably taken in 1861 by the east entrance of the Fiske Field House".

Charter Anniversary Dinner ***The Year's Biggest Event***

Several hundred of us and our guests are looking forward to our traditional "Charter Anniversary Dinner" on Tuesday evening, April 15, 1969 at the Cafeteria of the Senior High School when our Historian, Brent Dickson, will talk about how people and goods were transported from the earliest times up to the present. Make your reservations early, for you won't want to miss this delightful evening of fellowship and good food. Dinner will be served at 6:45 and Mrs. Reginald D. Wells is in charge of decorations and hostesses. Between courses there will be appropriate music by several members of the talented "Dixieland Jazz Group of Weston," headed by Raymond C. Boshco. Our Program Committee, of which Mrs. Albrecht is chairman, is once again to be congratulated for arranging the highlight of the year.

Reservations must be received no later than April 10, but please send your checks now, payable to "Weston Historical Society," addressed simply to P. O. Box 343, Weston, Mass. 02193. The charge will be \$3.50 per person and as no tickets will be printed, you will be checked in as you arrive. The amount of your check indicates to us the number in your party. Come, bring your friends, and enjoy a most worthwhile evening. This is the only notice you will receive.

Weston Honored by Bay State League's Annual Spring Meeting April Nineteenth

Our Society welcomes to Weston the members of the Bay State Historical League, as co-hosts with Wayland Historical Society, on Saturday, April 19, 1969. Members of more than 200 local historical societies of Massachusetts will begin arriving at 9:15 a.m. to register at our rooms in the Josiah Smith Tavern, ("The Jones House"). We want you on hand to help us welcome them. Doughnuts and coffee will be served under the direction of our Hospitality Committee, headed by Mrs. Reginald Wells. Delegates will be treated to a tour of our historic museum under the direction of Mrs. James E. Fraser, Curator. Members of her committee will be attired in costumes of various early periods. A special exhibit of old Weston records and photographs will be on display in the ball room upstairs.

From the Josiah Smith Tavern our guests will be guided to the Isaac Fiske Law Office where Mr. and Mrs. F. Leslie Ford and their committee will demonstrate progress and plans for its restoration. Thence they will proceed across the street to the Rev. Joseph Field House, now owned and recently restored by Mr. and Mrs. Horace Nichols, as described elsewhere in this issue. Re-crossing the Post Road, the delegates will enter the Golden Ball Tavern where hostesses headed by Mrs. M. Kirkbride Patterson, Mr. and Mrs. Howard Gambrill Jr., Mr. and Mrs. Homer C. Lucas and Mrs. Lewis W. Mustard III will guide them through this historic restoration. A map and short description of each place to be visited has been prepared and will be distributed.

From the Golden Ball Tavern, the tour proceeds to the Heard House in Wayland Center, headquarters of the Wayland Historical Society, and to the residence of Mr. and Mrs. George E. Vinsonhaler, next door to the Wayland Unitarian Church. Our co-hosts will serve luncheon in the Church rooms at noon. Promptly at 2 p.m., a meeting of the Bay State Historical League will be called to order. All our members are invited to attend. It will be of double interest to our Society, since one of our charter members, Stephen T. Riley, who is vice-president of The League, will give the address of the day. His subject will be The Honorable Samuel Savage, a Westonian prominent in the Revolution.

We hope every one of our members will turn out for this occasion and host our guests from Nantucket to North Adams. It will be a pleasure to meet so many interesting people. We need you.

Membership Grows Steadily

Since our last Bulletin, the following have been welcomed into our Society as members: Mr. and Mrs. John T. DeCamp, Mr. and Mrs. John N. Fisher, Mr. and Mrs. T. G. Rand, Mr. and Mrs. Frederic C. Talbot, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Uhler, Miss Claudia A. Resulis.

The Fiske-Field House

Jean C. Nichols

I first saw the Fiske-Field house about ten years ago and fell in love with it at first sight. "Someday I'm going to own that house," I remarked boldly, fully realizing the idea was preposterous. Yet, whenever I had a mission to perform in Wayland I purposely went out of my way to drive by it and sometimes I went so far as to park at a discreet distance across the street and gaze at it. Many a cloudy mood was dispelled this way!

Shortly after I began dreaming about "my house" I met the owners, the George Sauerweins, and with unaccustomed audacity mentioned that if they were ever to consider selling it to let me know. Major Sauerwein remembered and when I went to look at the house on a lovely sunny day, it almost seemed to speak to me. For financial reasons my husband and I decided not to buy it and we shed many a tear over that necessary decision. Then, in an attempt to put the house out of my mind I found a new route to Wayland.

In the spring of 1967 a friend of mine asked, "Did you know that the Sauerwein house is for sale again?" All I could say was "Oh, no," as forbidden dreams came flooding in, paint colors, wall coverings, winter porches removed etc. etc. I called my husband as soon as I got home. "Guess what?" I asked. He sensed my excitement and replied, "The Sauerwein house must be for sale again." I went to see it that afternoon; my husband went that evening, the appraiser went the following morning and before the day was out, it belonged to us. The rest of the story should go, "And they all lived happily ever after." But such a statement can't be made when there is an old house to be restored — it must be postponed until the restoration work is complete. And restoration work, properly done is a slow, laborious job, outrageously expensive and hampered by an acute shortage of skilled workers. We were shocked when the estimates came in and considered doing only the necessary structural work and re-selling. What a gray morning! The house looked especially cold and damp and we questioned our sanity in undertaking such a project. A Rockefeller or a Ford might, but not a Nichols!

Suddenly my husband remarked, "Let's go ahead. If we don't do it now we never will." From then on it was I who faltered and he who upheld me and his confidence in its feasibility even during those darker moments when we discovered that sills had rotted in places and were non-existent in others, that the powder post beetle had been at work and that all the wiring and plumbing and heating must be replaced at astronomical prices. Although my interest in old houses dates from childhood and I had made studies concerning interior architectural detail, appropriate colors, fabrics and furniture, the enormity of the task ahead was too much to tackle without assistance. We got Mr. John Cole of Boston as a consultant and through him secured the services of Mr. John D. Sullivan of Newton as contractor. Mr. Sullivan's impressive work at the Golden Ball Tavern has been admired by many; his men are all great artisans who take pride in their workmanship. We felt lucky to be in such good hands.

The restoration began in September 1967 and was completed in August 1968. Making the house as structurally sound as possible was the first great project — replacing sills, stemming beetle activity and bracing the front foundation against further onslaughts of time, then a new cedar roof, checking the chimneys and installing new heating, wiring and plumbing — and a fire alarm to prevent any recurrence of the disaster of December 10, 1900 when the Weston Fire Brigade laid 800 feet of hose to the closest hydrants and saved the house from being burned to the ground. Behind the partitions etc. we found nothing so romantic as Paul Revere silver or cans filled with money, but we did find, under our breakfast-room, a twenty foot well which we have glassed over and lighted as a conversation piece.

The Fiske-Field house stands on land bought by Isaac Fiske between 1802 and 1805. There was a building on the land when Mr. Fiske sold the property to Widow Bigelow in 1808. Five years later he bought it back from her. Both transactions were in consideration of \$1,000. By 1815, the house seems to have been considerably enlarged and that year it was sold to the Rev. Joseph Field for \$4,500. Mr. Field was the minister of the First Parish in Weston for fifty years and upon his death was laid to rest in the

cemetery across the street. His descendants lived in the house until the early nineteen-thirties. For the next several years the house was rented and finally sold to the Sauerweins. They occupied it for twenty years and in 1964 sold it to Samuel D. Bush, who in turn sold it to the Horace S. Nichols in 1967.

There is some evidence supporting the theory that the house you see today was built in three stages—at first a simple one-over-one dwelling with the present side door its front entrance. The present dining room and the bedroom above it constituted the first alteration while the remainder of the house—the front hall and two living rooms were added around 1813. This part of the house seems closer to the Empire period although the center hall running through the house is certainly Federal in feeling.

In restoring this house we have tried to create an atmosphere compatible with an early nineteenth century dwelling, using appropriate colors, wall coverings, hardware, lighting fixtures and furniture. Stripping paint and adding new materials have been held to a minimum. The bathrooms and modern kitchen are utilitarian and need no further comment.

On entering the front door, one is greeted by a gracious front hall at the far end of which is a door communicating with a formal English garden dating back to 1910. The hall is probably late Federal with Zuber wallpaper (manufactured in France) of the El Dorado pattern. As this pattern was not introduced until 1849, the paper was probably hung about 1850. At the left of the front hall is a double living room. When we bought the house, the dividing partition was placed in such a way that a beam across the ceiling was necessary to support the second floor. It was probably installed about 1910. We were able to remove this beam by building a new wall where it should have been placed originally and we incorporated shelves between it and the existing wall. The fireplaces were restored to their former size. We had a hunch that they had once been deeper and underlying charred bricks proved us right. The old floor boards have long since gone and what one sees now is of a later type.

Across the hall from the back living room is the kitchen. It is equipped with Shaker type cabinets which seem to be compatible with modern appliances yet give some feeling of transition to an earlier time. The breakfast room adjacent to the kitchen was the old shed. It is Shaker in feeling though not authentically so. The ceiling is rough flooring taken from the master bedroom during elimination of the living room beam. Between the kitchen and dining room is a side hall. At one time there was a box stairway going to the second floor from here. The original position of the kitchen door and that of the bedroom above were found by markings on the old plaster.

The dining room is perhaps the most formal room in the house. The brass chandelier has been used out of personal preference although crystal would have been more correct. The fireplace has been rebuilt and the new mantle is a copy of one at "The Vale" in Waltham. The old wooden shutters have been made operative again and these add greatly to the charm of the room.

When we bought the house there was a bathroom at the top of the front stairs occupying an area that was originally part of the hall. Removing this has given a feeling of space that was lacking when the bathroom was there. The first bedroom on the left, which had been reduced in size prior to our ownership, made possible a bathroom between it and the master bedroom. The master bedroom is still its original shape and size. The wall to wall carpeting and the king-size bed are hardly in keeping with 1805 standards, but from the point of view of comfort they are certainly not out of place.

Across the hall from the master bedroom, over the dining room, is a room more authentically furnished. No king-size bed here but one with a canopy and claw and ball feet. Adjoining this room is a narrow hallway with stairs going up to the quarters of two teenage boys. There, upper floor rooms are furnished in teenage boy style. There is ample headroom for during the 1910 renovation the roof was raised and made more Georgian.

Beyond the narrow hallway on the second floor and with a door leading into the front hall is the fourth bedroom, furnished with commercial adaptations of colonial furniture which are more boyproof than originals. A passageway from this room leads to several rooms of 1910 vintage—a sitting room, study, bath, laundry and playroom. Though not historic, these rooms are livable and add a comfortable dimension to our life.

The Weston Historical Commission

The Society is delighted to congratulate its five members who have been appointed by the Board of Selectmen under the article that was unanimously voted at last fall's special town meeting on motion of our Recording Secretary, Mr. John G. Brooks, to comprise the Weston Historical Commission. Appointed are: Mr. Brenton H. Dickson, Mr. Erlund Field, Mrs. Margaret Floyd, Dr. Vera Laska, and Mr. Homer C. Lucas. Each is eminently qualified to see that our historic landmarks and records are protected.

Recent Gifts

Our Curator, Mrs. Fraser, advises that the Society has recently been the grateful recipient of the following; — Flax wheel and raw flax fiber: Mrs. Dorothy Rice; — two handmade nightgowns of the 1860 period: Miss Anna Hall; — old letters and papers: Estate of Helen Warren Cutting; — three photographs of the Town's 200th Anniversary Pageant: Mrs. Helen Crouse Lovewell and Miss Lenore Crouse; — Day Book of Edward L. Cutting: Estate of Mrs. Edward P. Ripley. A large list of donations to our headquarters in the Isaac Fiske Law Office will be published in our next issue. We are grateful to all who thus are keeping faith with Weston's historic past.

Dr. Laska Receives New Honor

A recent issue of "The Regis Herald" announced that Vera Laska, Ph. D., Assistant Professor of History, has been named to the Directory of American Scholars 1969 which is published in cooperation with the American Council of Learned Societies. The same issue featured a long article by Dr. Laska which describes the continuing work of her history students toward the college's objective of publishing a history of Weston as their contribution to the town in 1975, on the occasion of the Bicentennial of the Revolutionary War. In her article she says "Especially helpful are the members of the Weston Historical Society Our young historians are contributing to the friendly relations between Town and Gown Over one hundred Westonsites have been interviewed already, and many more will be asked for the same favor in the future".

Dr. Laska came to Weston and Regis at just about the time our Program Committee conducted a panel discussion for us on the teaching of history in Weston's schools. She attended that meeting, joined our Society, and went immediately to work with results that have already been noteworthy and stimulating both to her students and ourselves. Her enthusiasm and energy for Weston are not only applauded and appreciated but will be generously reciprocated, we feel sure, by every member of our Society to whom she and her students may turn for assistance and guidance.

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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. Please contact Mrs. Frederick D. Bonner, Bulletin Editor, 893-4346.