

THE WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

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The Old Southwest Schoolhouse

Four of the six district schoolhouses built as replacements to older buildings in the early 1850's, are after 120 years, still in existence. Pictured above at the southwest corner of Brown and Winter Streets is No. 6, now altered quite beyond recognition. No.'s 1 and 2 at 280 and 700 Boston Post Road respectively, are the nuclei also of attractive private homes.

No. 5, visible on Ware Street some 250 feet from South Avenue, is the only one of the four survivors to retain its identity. Moved back 200 feet many years ago it has withstood usage quite foreign to education. For most of its life it had stood on the Ware Street-South Avenue corner, glancing across South Avenue diagonally to the house in which Mabel Page was murdered. Recent studies as to its restoration and return to its historic corner produced thoroughly discouraging cost estimates.

Of the other two mid 19th Century structures, No. 3, where President-to-be James Garfield once pondered the 3 R's, was located on Concord Road a few hundred feet beyond Merriam Street. Until the early 1940's, No. 4 from a vantage point on the North Avenue hillside, looked down Viles Street toward Hastings Station. Both 3 and 4 no longer exist, though the former's foundation can readily be discerned.

The Legends of Allen's Farm

Weston, like most Massachusetts towns, has its store of cracker-barrel tales and family legends, in many of which, with the sobering passage of time, Revolutionary Patriots and Tories keep a somewhat easier company. Such stories, carefully examined and verified, can point the way to hidden facts, and bring to life neglected aspects of local history.

The paradox of conflicting Revolutionary War traditions belonging to Weston's oldest house, at the corner of Chestnut and Wellesley Streets, is a case in point.* (*See *Bulletin*, Vol. II, No. 3, March, 1966, "The Scott House.") Now the residence of Mrs. John W. Scott, its original name was Allen's Farm. According to one legend a British or Tory "spy" was hidden in the smoke room by the great chimney. Other legends, however, relate to the patriot activities at Allen's of Thomas Rand and his sons, said to have cast and trimmed bullets for the Weston Minutemen in the lean-to at the rear, and to have been at work on a barn when the Alarm of April 19, 1775 was carried to Weston.

It is of record that the Rand family were keen patriots. Thomas Rand and his son Thomas marched to Lexington and Concord with the Weston Company under then Captain Samuel Lamson. Both Thomas Rand, Jr., and his brother Benjamin later served in the Continental Army, Benjamin taking part in the expedition to Quebec in 1777. Thomas Rand, Senior, was a Selectman, member of the Weston War Committee, and for a time, one of the townsmen who kept the warning beacon on Sanderson's Hill.

The Rands appear hardly the sort to have harbored a Tory or spy for the British in Boston. Yet the legend of the hidden man at Allen's Farm came into being, and for long afterward both the tellers and their hearers had witnessed the trying years of the Revolution. Public scorn being the traditional — and effective — sanction of the cracker-barrel, one is led to the assumption that, however contradictory, all these tales of Allen's Farm — later written down — are based in fact.

The published histories of Weston say little about the coming of the Rands to Allen's Farm, or the circumstances under which it took place. Part of the mystery is resolved, however, by eighteenth-century documents in the Public Record Office, London, which show that for some time after the outbreak of the Revolution Allen's Farm was in Tory hands. Until March, 1781, it belonged to the estate of Col. Elisha Jones, a Justice of the Peace for Middlesex County, Selectman and holder of town offices, and for many years Weston's representative in the General Court. Col. Jones was a Tory, and Allen's Farm thus could well have afforded refuge for persons who then opposed armed revolt and called themselves "Friends of Government."

Allen's was a family farm in the best of Weston's pioneer tradition, passed down as the old custom was usually from youngest son to youngest son. When, in 1758, David Allen, a great-grandson of Walter Allen who settled at Watertown Farms in 1665, sold the sixty-acre property to Col. Elisha Jones for £250, it did not pass to strangers: Col. Jones's wife Mary was a daughter of Deacon Nathaniel Allen of Weston, and David Allen's cousin.

After 1758 Allen's farm continued as a mixed farm of tillage and pasture, "much improved" in the years before the Revolution, however, by Col. Jones. Like Brig. Timothy Ruggles of Hardwick and James Putnam of Worcester, he was among the handful of well-to-do Massachusetts landowners who by mid-century had begun to apply the English ideas of "New Husbandry." In 1786 one of Col. Jones's younger sons, Lt. Jonas Jones of the 20th Regiment of Foot, valued Allen's Farm at £350.

With the coming of the Revolution the history of Allen's Farm garnered that store of mystery — and silence — which still cloak the fate of many a Tory property. After repeated threats of violence by the "Liberty Men" of Weston and surrounding towns, Col. Elisha Jones fled to Boston and the safety of the British lines at the beginning of October, 1774. He never returned home, and died in Boston shortly before the evacuation, February 13, 1776.

Col. Jones's mansion house* (which then stood in Highland Street on the present site of the Paine House) and hundred-acre "home farm" was for several years occupied with permission of the Weston War Committee by his son-in-law, the Rev. Asa Dunbar, colleague of the Rev. Thomas Barnard of Salem, and his wife, Mary (Jones) Dunbar.

(Continued on Page 5)

Charter Anniversary Dinner, April Thirteenth

Features Colorful Edward Rowe Snow

A large turnout is expected at the annual Charter Anniversary Dinner in the Senior High School Cafeteria on Tuesday evening, April 13th, at 6:45 sharp. Mrs. George J. Pink of the Hospitality Committee is in charge of the dinner and decorations. Reservations, payable in advance, should be mailed not later than April 8th so that the record crowd can smoothly be served. All members of the Weston Historical Society are invited to the dinner and to bring guests. The charge for both the four-course dinner and subsequent illustrated lecture is four dollars per person.

Our guest speaker, engaged by Mrs. Marshall Dwinnell and her Program Committee, is the widely popular Edward Rowe Snow, a Massachusetts descendant with one exception of sea captains back to the Revolution. He has been called by the New York Times "the best chronicler of the days of sail alive today." His daily series of articles in one of Boston's largest newspapers reveal his outstanding personality, but Weston is to have him in person where he is at his best.

Mr. Snow has lived dramatically. He sailed the ocean highway as a seaman in the forecandle, been an "extra" in Hollywood, was a fullback and punter on Harvard football teams in the early '30's, and won over 170 medals in swimming and track competition. During World War II he was wounded as an Air Corps officer in the African invasion. His greatest interest has centered on a study of pirates, treasure, lighthouses, shipwrecks, and ghosts. Publisher of sixty-six books on his hobbies, his correspondence is vast. Adding to his color is the revelation that he has been the real "Flying Santa" who has flown over lighthouses from Labrador to Florida, the Great Lakes, and the West Coast.

Such a man wholesomely exudes robust dedication to the ways of the sea and to the men that mastered it in all its moods. For that reason, attendance at the dinner is expected to reach capacity. In order then to ensure that the maximum number of Weston people enjoy his lecture, tell your neighbors who may be unable as guests to attend the dinner, that they will be able to hear Mr. Snow in the Auditorium at \$1 each. The price for teenage students has been reduced to fifty cents each, for even though it is a "school night," we'd like to see a big turnout of that generation too.

FILL OUT THE FORM BELOW AND MAIL TODAY
BE WISE MAIL EARLY (Deadline is April 8th).
WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P. O. BOX 343
WESTON, MASS. 02193

Please reserve _____ seats in my name for the April 13th CHARTER ANNIVERSARY DINNER at \$4 each. I enclose check for \$_____.

Signed _____ (Member)

NOTE: Of course your check may include also voluntary contributions for special or general purposes as well as for dues that may be past due. If in doubt, consult our treasurer, Mr. Dickson, at 899-2450.

Two Centuries Ago They Kept The Cost of Government Down

At the Town Meeting of November 22, 1771 it was "VOTED by the Inhabitants that they do not allow Mr. William Whitney's account of what he charged for work in repairing the roads and bridges in his district."

Also, "PUT TO VOTE . . . if they allow Samuel Train, Jr., Surveyor, £3-11-0-0 which was the account that he gave in to the Town and it passed in the negative, but VOTED to pay said Samuel Train, Jr., Surveyor, £0-15-9-0 for Plank and string peaces."

Finally it was VOTED by the Inhabitants, the Sum of Sixty Pounds to support Schooling and Defray the usual charges of the Town the present year," and that it "have 5 Reading and Writing schools in the winter season."

Editor's Note: We must salute the gentle politeness of the recorder who, two centuries ago, in reporting the defeat of a motion, declared it to have "*passed in the negative.*"

Other parts of Col. Jones's estate in Weston, however, appear to have been "detached" and appropriated by various persons to their own profit with little or no sanction by the Weston authorities. In May, 1775 the Committee of Safety complained to the Provincial Congress that Jonathan Brewer of Waltham had seized two horses belonging to Colonel Jones and given "a lease of a part of Colonel Jones's real estate, without the least pretense of right, taking security therefor in his own name . . ."

Before this, and before the Lexington Alarm, Thomas Rand, who already owned land on the north and east boundaries, had taken possession of Allen's Farm. But it was to be more than six years until he gained title to the property, through purchase from the government of Massachusetts at the sale of Col. Elisha Jones's confiscated estate in Weston on March 9, 1781. The price to Thomas Rand was the very low figure of £185, considering the inflated prices and depreciated currency of the time a bargain of suspicious proportions. The official schedule of Allen's Farm, prepared by order of the Provincial Assembly, described it as follows:

"...about Sixty Acres of Land situated in said Weston called Allen's Farm, bounded northerly on land of Jonas Harrington, Nathan Hobbs, Oliver Barber, and Thomas Rand and John Allen. Southerly on land of Isaac Jones and John Coborn, Westerly on land of Isaac Jones and John Coborn . . ."

Doris Whipple Jones

*see *Bulletin*, Vol. VII, No. 2,
January 1971, "The House That Traveled."

Editor's Note: Doris Whipple Jones, (Mrs. Lionel F. Baker), lives in Hertfordshire, England. A member of the Weston Historical Society, she is a descendant of Elisha Jones of Weston, and is in fact, related to several of our members.

Dates To Remember

We are one of more than 200 local Massachusetts historical societies that belong to the Bay State Historical League. Weston Historical Society members are invited to attend all regular League meetings which are held in various sections of the Commonwealth. The program is always stimulating to several hundred people from all over the state who get together at historic places, hear interesting speakers, and exchange ideas. Our president is serving a three-year term on the Board of Directors, and Mrs. D. S. Thrall is chairman of our Liaison Committee. The next three meetings are at Berlin, (Mass.) April 19th, Plymouth, June 26th, and Billerica, October 16th. Call Mrs. Thrall at 899-0723 for further details.

Welcome New Members

Mr. and Mrs. Edwin S. Avery, 55 Chestnut Street
Dr. and Mrs. John S. Banas, Jr., 65 Rolling Lane
Mr. and Mrs. Richard M. Greenwood, 30 Intervale Road

Spring Is Near

Keep your eye on the old-fashioned bulb garden at the rear of our Law Office headquarters.

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Bulletin
The Weston Historical Society



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, 893-4346.