

THE WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BULLETIN

March 1972, Vol. VIII, No. 3



THE BURGLARS WERE CORNERED HERE

The Seaverns' Barn stood on the river side of Park Road (known in '92 as East Newton Street) a short distance south of the railroad trestle. The land on which it stood is now part of the Metropolitan District Commission's Memorial Golf Course.

~~SIX~~⁸ DECADES AGO

THE BOSTON EVENING RECORD (Price "one cent")
PUT THIS WESTON STORY ON PAGE ONE.

CORNERED IN A BARN.

WALTHAM OFFICERS CAPTURE FOUR BURGLARS

Exciting Midnight Chase Through Town of Weston.

Found Sleeping in a Haymow, Fully Armed.

Waltham, March 3, 1892—"The neighboring town of Weston was visited early this morning by a daring gang of burglars and a store entered, a safe blown open, and the entire corner of a building wrecked by the rascals. The arrest of four men during the night under very suspicious circumstances and having in their possession revolvers and jimmies was the commendable work of Waltham officers, and all believe the parties to be guilty of the outrage, although each stoutly maintains his innocence.

"Weston has been singularly unfortunate for the past two years, and for several weeks last year a perfect reign of terror pervaded the quiet little town because of several incendiary fires. The place visited this morning was the grain store of Keefe Bros. on Central Avenue in the center of the town. Having forced the front door with a jimmy, the office was entered. The burglars placed a quantity of powder around the edge of the safe door; it was blown open, the shock completely wrecking the office furniture, blowing all the glass out of the windows and tearing out the door and even the door and window casements. In fact, the entire corner of the structure was wrecked by the terrific explosion which was heard for a long distance.

"W. T. Burrage heard the explosion, and rousing Officer Smith, they learned the cause, and telephoning from Dr. Jackson's to the central police station at Waltham, Serg't. McKenna and Officer Carney immediately started for the scene three or more miles away. They looked the ground over and, believing that the gang had secreted themselves somewhere in the vicinity, returned to Waltham where the entire force, with the exception of two men, were organized into a searching posse.

“Weston was reached soon after and with the assistance of Selectman Jennison and several Weston officers the men were tracked for two miles to a barn on the Seaverns farm. Entrance was easily effected and lying sound asleep on a mow of hay four men were discovered. Lights were produced and the men were placed under arrest. Hidden away in the hay were found jimmies and revolvers for each one of the men.

“The men were brought to Waltham, and in the district court this morning each was held in \$3000 . . . They found in the pockets of one of the gang a handful of money and trinkets, but it is not known what was obtained from Keefe’s safe.”

A somewhat fuller and more detailed account appeared in the Waltham Daily Press of March 3, 1892—just ~~sixty~~ sixty years ago. Burrage (William T.) who heard the explosion was sleeping in the building to the east, above his dry goods store. He dressed and rushed to the residence of Constable J. M. Smith who stayed at the store while Burrage ran to Dr. Jackson’s house to phone the Waltham police. Sergeant McKenna and Officer Carney lost no time in getting to Weston and, suspecting where the robbers had gone after the break, they aroused Selectman Jennison to obtain authority to make the search. “Immediately after four o’clock Sgt. McKenna, taking with him the entire night force that went off duty at that time, drove to the old Seaverns place (now owned by Mr. Blake) at the south part of town. Here they were met by Selectman Seaverns and Officers Smith and Barker. The officers entered the barn and there found under the hay asleep four men who were immediately arrested . . . Officer Carney made a second visit to the barn and after a short search found drills, a can of powder, fuses, bits, a tube used for



SCENE OF THE CRIME

Tenants of this long wooden structure on the south side of the old Boston Post Road in Weston’s downtown section, have changed frequently during the past sixty years. In 1892, the Keefe Grain Company occupied the eastern portion at the left of the picture where now are located a greeting card shop and travel agency. The old Weston Hand Laundry, which succeeded it, has in turn been superseded by today’s barber shop, taxi office, and printing establishment. The western end (right) long since ceased to be residential. First changed to a drug store with an ice cream plant downstairs, it is now a television and electrical store. At the extreme right, the old village blacksmith shop of Mr. Milledge Crouse can be seen behind a horse-drawn contraption that needs no explanation!

blowing powder into the safe, two revolvers and other portions of the ordinary outfit of a burglar . . . The safe was a heavy Morse and Ireland one weighing nearly three tons. The door was blown completely off and the cash box inside, containing about \$20, was carried away. A window in the loft over the office was also broken, and the entire damage to the building amounts to some \$25 . . . The officers have little doubt they have secured the guilty parties. If so it is a piece of work rarely equalled for celerity . . .”

Professional rivalry born of a zeal for recognition, entered the picture, for the following commentary appeared in the Daily Press of March 11, 1892!

TRADITIONAL CHARTER ANNIVERSARY DINNER
THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL TWENTIETH
SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL AT SEVEN

This is your only notice; mail reservations today

The most enjoyable and worthwhile feature of each year's program has always been our Charter Anniversary Dinner. This year's event will be held in the Senior High School Cafeteria. Promptly at seven o'clock on the evening of Thursday, April 20th, members will be served a sumptuous dinner arranged by our Hospitality Chairman Mrs. Reginald D. Wells, and her large committee. Decorations will be appropriately historical. For such a large gathering it is important that reservations be made well in advance of the occasion. You are urged to fill in and mail the reservation blank below as promptly as possible. The deadline is Monday, April 17th.

At the conclusion of the dinner, Program Chairman Mrs. Marshall Dwinnell, will present two most talented speakers. Mrs. William B. Floyd, a charter member who is currently chairman of the Weston Historical Commission, will outline the all-important work of the Commission and will point out several vital areas where all Society members can be unusually helpful. In view of many threats to our landmarks, her talk will be most timely. She will be followed by Mr. Earle G. Shettleworth who holds a graduate fellowship granted by the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, in the American and New England Studies Program at Boston University. He will give an illustrated talk of which several of our directors who have heard it, speak most highly. A member of the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, Mr. Shettleworth's message will be of great inspiration and interest.

Mark April 20th on your calendar and plan to be with us.

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Tear here.

Weston Historical Society, Inc.
P.O. Box 343
Weston, Mass. 02193

Please reserve _____ places in my name at the annual Charter Anniversary Dinner, Thursday, April 20th at 7 P.M. at \$4.50 per person.

I enclose herewith my check for \$ _____.

Signed _____

Address or Phone No. _____

WE WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Joining the Society since our last meeting are: Mrs. Karl Adams, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. Halcott G. Grant, Rev. and Mrs. Miles Hanson, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. Geoffrey A. Sawyer, Mr. Edwin B. Sears, Mrs. Reginald W. Stevens, Mr. and Mrs. John P. Sullivan, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Wheeler, and Mr. and Mrs. Jackson W. Wright, Jr.

Our Endowment Fund has been augmented by the addition of two life members. Inasmuch as the principal is never to be used, it should be kept in mind that such a membership is more than a lifetime membership. Rather it permanently, year after year, keeps supplying a steady, helpful income for the work of the Society long after the member has gone. Contributions of any amount may, of course, be made to the Endowment Fund, to the running expenses of the organization, or to any specific purpose specified by the donor.

The Treasurer asks us to remind the membership that annual dues for the year ending August 31st are now overdue. If you have not paid yours as yet, please take care of this detail now so as to render unnecessary the sending out of reminder notices next month.



Annual Dues: \$3.00 per person, \$5 per family

Life Memberships \$200

Gift Memberships are suggested

Contributions to the Society are always welcome.

Checks should be made payable to Weston Historical Society, Inc.

and mailed to P. O. Box 343, Weston, Mass. 02193

President: Mr. Edward W. Marshall 893-7388

Editor of the "Bulletin": Mr. Harold G. Travis 899-4515

Extra copies are available for 25¢ each. Please contact Mrs. Frederick D. Bonner 893-4346.

“WESTON OFFICERS WERE ON DECK.

“Weston’s constables are hardly satisfied with the testimony given by Waltham officers in district court in the matter of the recent burglary at Keefe’s store. According to the testimony of the Waltham police, the Weston officers were “not in it”. They think very decidedly that they were. The break was discovered by W. T. Burrage who aroused Constable J. N. Smith. They went to the store, made a hasty examination, and Mr. Smith remained in the store while Mr. Burrage went to Dr. Jackson’s and telephoned to the Waltham police station. Sgt. McKenna and Officer Carney drove at once to Weston, and with Messrs. Smith and Burrage, looked the work over again. It was the suggestion of Weston men to make the raid on the Seavern’s barn. Mr. Smith suggested that the Waltham officers call at Selectman Jennison’s and Mr. Keefe’s on their way to Waltham. They did so. Mr. Smith also notified Constable Barker to meet the Waltham officers. They are willing to give the Waltham men every particle of credit due them but they think a little of it belongs to Weston officers”.

Of local interest is the fact that the William T. Burrage who sounded the alarm was the uncle of our charter member, Miss Mabel Burrage, and that another charter member, Mrs. Stephen L. Colpitts was the daughter of Officer Charles Barker who guided the posse to his ~~land her~~ grandfather, Ralph Seaverns’ barn.
father-in-law,

Two Centuries Ago

“THE GOOD OLD DAYS?”

Indeed one does not find it difficult to extol the schools of present day Weston either for the splendid physical plants existing or for the superior quality of teaching by its highly trained staff. This has recently been emphasized by the relationship between the school and some of the members of the Historical Society who have been taking students and teachers on tours of the town and on expeditions such as gravestone rubbing, digging and inspections of historic sites and buildings. The history of the development of the school system is fascinating. The vast contrast with the way our young people were treated some two hundred years ago and now perhaps brings home the unbelievable changes that have taken place. Contrast the present care and upbringing of the youngsters today with the learning of a trade or mystery of two hundred years ago through the then common apprenticeship training.

In our archives is a paper here presented as an example of the arrangements made for a boy from just over the Lincoln line with a Weston tanner.

This Indenture Witnesseth that I Benjamin Brown Jr. of Lincoln in the County of Middlesex, a minor, Hath put himself, and by these presents doth voluntarily; and of his own free will and accord, and with the consent of his father Benjamin Brown aforesaid, put and bind himself Apprentice to Isaac Hobbs and Mary his wife of Weston in the County aforesaid, to learn tanning and curreing Art, Trade or Mystery, and with the said Issac & Mary Hobbs after the Manner of an Apprentice, to serve from the 16th day of January A.D. 1762 for and during the term of five years and two months, to be complete and ended: During all which term the said Apprentice the said Isaac Hobbs faithfully shall serve, his secrets keep, his lawful commands gladly everywhere obey; he shall do no damage to the said Isaac Hobbs nor see it to be done of others, without letting or giving Notice thereof to the said Isaac Hobbs, he shall not waste the said Isaac Hobbs’ goods, nor lend them unlawfully to any: he shall not commit Fornication, nor contract matrimony within the said term: At Cards, Dice, or any other unlawful game he shall not play, whereby his said master may have damage, with his own goods nor the goods of others: he shall not absent himself by day or by night from his said master’s service without his leave; nor haunt alehouses, Taverns, or Play houses, but in all things behave himself as a faithful Apprentice ought to do towards his said master and mistress during the said term of five years and two months. And the said Isaac Hobbs does hereby covenant and promise to teach and instruct, or cause to be taught and instructed in the Art, Trade, or calling of tanning and curreing by the best ways or means he may or can be taught, (if the said Apprentice be capable to learn) finding unto the said Apprentice suitable meat, drink, washing and lodging (and also to be well instructed in reading, writing and cyphering, during the said term): And at the expiration thereof to give unto the said Apprentice two good suits of apparel for all parts of his body, one for Lord’s days the other for common use—suitable for such an apprentice. In Testimony whereof the parties to these presents have hereunto interchangeably set their hands and seals the 16th day of January in the 2d year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord, George the 3d King of Great Britain, A.D. 1762.

The document speaks for itself and yet another example comes to mind in the following extract from a book, The Thomas Lamonts in America, recently donated to the Society by its editor, Corliss Lamont.

“The story is that Archibald, the eldest son, preceded the other in coming to America (about 1745); that while a boy he was enticed on board a vessel lying off Coleraine (Ireland); and while with boyish curiosity, he was inspecting the vessel she suddenly sailed away. When he begged to be set ashore to return to his mother, the heartless reply was: ‘It will be many a long day, my boy, before you see your mother or home again.’

“So Archibald was brought to this country and sold to someone on Long Island to serve as an apprentice and to furnish a profit to those who had kidnapped him, a not uncommon occurrence in those times.”

All things were not better in the “Good Old Days.”

E. W. M.

~~SIXTY~~^{EIGHTY} YEARS NOT MUCH HAS CHANGED

From the Friday evening, March 25th, 1892 issue of the Waltham Daily Free Press, these two extracts speak for themselves:

Article 1 of the Warrant for the annual Town Meeting was “to see what action, if any, the Town will take relative to the removal of the telephone poles from Central Avenue”. (In those early days of Mr. Bell’s sensational communication innovation, it is quite obvious that while the poles were considered to be unsightly they were accepted as inevitable.)

“On the night of Thursday, March 17, all the street lamps from the Baptist Church to the Wayland line were broken. Some were carried off. It is too bad the rascals who commit such acts cannot be apprehended and punished at once.”

DECISIONS DECISIONS DECISIONS

Here are a few sample notes from the talks already given by our fellow charter member, James B. Muldoon. His next will occur at the Isaac Fiske Law Office Society headquarters, Tuesday evening, March 7th.

A Speakeasy in Canton is revealed in Volume 49, Page 530 Commonwealth vs. Roxanna Tower (1844) when the latter and Caroline Leonard, spinsters of Canton, kept a speak-easy—wine, brandy, and rum.

On Page 363 in Volume 51 on our shelves is the case of Bosworth vs. Swansea in 1845. Travel on the Lord’s Day was perilous, for although Bosworth was injured because of a defect in a public way in Swansea while en route from Rhode Island to Fall River, the verdict was for the defendant because the statutes forbade travel on the Lord’s Day under penalty of \$10 unless it was a necessity or a purpose of charity.

Volume 53, Page 231, Commonwealth vs. Thompson (1847), the defendant was found guilty as charged in East Boston under the statute that read: “Every person who shall smoke or have in his or her possession any lighted pipe or cigar in any street, lane, or passageway or any wharf in said town shall forfeit and pay, for each and every offense, the sum of \$2.”

The first overtime parking case is found on Page 438 in Volume 59 when in 1849, Commonwealth vs. Robertson, the latter was fined for having left his hackney carriage with two horses harnessed thereto, for more than fifteen minutes on Tremont Street at the entrance to the Boston Museum.

These, and countless more, may be read at our Law Office headquarters, open by appointment.