

THE WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BULLETIN

January 1973, Vol. IX, No. 2



An old photograph of the Jonas Sanderson place at the southwest corner of Highland Street and Love Lane.

The house was destroyed by fire in 1897. It commanded a sweeping view to the north, east and west. Jonas Sanderson is said to have kept a beacon near his house for transferring signals from the seacoast to the interior. When the beacon was erected or how often it was used is not known. In the town records for 1778-9 we find reference to payment for guarding the "Baken erected in sd Town of Weston" and in 1779 Jonas Sanderson and others were paid 12⁷ pounds 8 shillings for guarding the "Bacon". In 1781 however Sanderson's name does not appear among those who were paid for guarding the *beacon*. Further research is currently being done on this interesting subject.

WINTER MEETING SET FOR JANUARY 30TH

The next meeting of our Society will take place on Tuesday evening, January 30th, at 8 P.M. in the Ball Room of The Josiah Smith Tavern. The speaker will be one of our own charter members, Mr. Homer C. Lucas, whose topic will be "THE FUN OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH."

Since his retirement as head of Ginn and Company, Mr. Lucas has thrown himself vigorously into the work of our Society. He was one of the five members of our organization to be named as members of The Weston Historical Commission when it was adopted by the Town in 1969. Currently he is its chairman. His outstanding accomplishments as President and Director of the TAVERNKEEPERS of the GOLDEN BALL TAVERN speak eloquently not alone of his leadership but of his dedication to this community and of his devotion to its history. In whatever he undertakes he exhibits a joyfulness and zest that is contagious. We can look forward to an unusually happy evening January 30th as he takes us behind the scenes of some of his fascinating and fruitful research activities. Refreshments by our Hospitality Committee will be served.

SEQUEL TO THE ARTICLE ON EARLY LAW OFFICES OF NEW ENGLAND

Immediately after our last BULLETIN had gone to press featuring THOSE EARLY 18TH AND 19TH CENTURY LAW OFFICES, a lady in Sandwich, Massachusetts sent us a photostatic copy of an old-time RIPLEY "BELIEVE IT OR NOT" cartoon which contained a sketch of Seth Nye* beneath which appeared the following caption:

AN ATTORNEY OF
Sandwich, Mass.
FOR YEARS BEFORE
HIS DEATH IN 1850
NEVER CHARGED ANY
MORE THAN
\$9.99
-BECAUSE HE FELT NO
LAWYER COULD JUSTIFY
A FEE OF \$10

As expected our article created widespread interest and many copies have been distributed in the communities where the fifteen early law offices are still standing. Weston has received much favorable publicity. One letter even suggests that the article be enlarged and put into book form. Within the past month two more such buildings have been revealed and after their stories have been developed and verified, we shall include them as a supplement in a forthcoming issue.

*See Page 7 October 1972 BULLETIN.

A SPECIAL "THANK YOU"

At its December meeting, the Board of Directors voted to express through these columns its sincere appreciation for those many special 1972 contributions by members in addition to their regular dues. The schedule of dues is kept low enough to enable anyone to belong and share in our fellowship and program.

Every effort is made to keep expenses within our budget and each year to date we have succeeded in spending less than our income. The additional amounts added as voluntary contributions by those who are able and so inclined, have enabled us to do more than would otherwise have been possible. Such contributions are welcomed at all times and will be put to good use either for a special project designated by the donor or as the directors may determine.

In addition memorial gifts are added as *Memorials* in our regular Endowment Fund. The aim is to double the present size of this Endowment Fund, the income of which only may be spent. To date the directors have not used any Endowment Fund income, their policy having been to let it accumulate until the capital sum attains the \$10,000 figure.

According to established policy all life memberships are automatically placed in the Endowment category. The balance of the Fund has come from bequests and from special gifts earmarked for that purpose. At an annual rate of 5½%, the income on a \$10,000 Endowment is \$550, the equivalent of 110 regular memberships. It would obviously be useful year after year in furthering the purposes of our Society.

THE STORY OF A DOORSTONE

By Brenton H. Dickson 3rd

The granite doorstone at the front entrance of the Golden Ball Tavern, given in memory of Mrs. John B. Paine, has an interesting history. At one time or another it belonged to an innholder, a Governor of Massachusetts, and a President of the United States.

It was originally at the front door of a hostelry kept by one Jonathan Bullard on Wellesley Street a little south of its intersection with South Avenue. Today only a few lilac bushes mark the location of the old building. All other traces were obliterated when the land was graded for the High School playing fields.

From 1757 until 1770 Jonathan Bullard had a license to sell liquor. At present nothing is known about the inn other than that licenses were issued for all of those years and that Bullard continued living there until his death in 1778. Under the terms of his will, the easterly end of the house was left to his widow, the northern wing with the easterly portion of his land to his eldest son Jonathan, and the south end of the house and the westerly portion of the real estate to his youngest son Isaiah. His will also specified that his slave was to be provided for . . . "if he deserves it."

Son Jonathan moved to Oakham, Massachusetts and in 1788 sold his share of the Weston farm to Moses Gill whose 3,000 acre estate in Princeton, Massachusetts with its pretentious mansion house, was considered one of the grandest places "this side of Delaware." In 1795 Gill acquired the rest of the Bullard farm in Weston as well as adjacent properties so that in 1799 his Weston landholdings exceeded 348 acres.

Moses Gill (1734-1800) became Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts in 1794 and when Governor Increase Sumner died in 1799, its 4th chief executive. Gill lived beyond his means and when he died on May 20, 1800 he was indebted to his brother-in-law Thomas Boylston to the extent of over \$106,000. The executor of Thomas Boylston's estate, Ward N. Boylston,* went after the Gill estate to recover what he could of the debt. In the settlement all Gill properties were turned over to the Boylston estate at appraised value. In 1819 Ward Boylston bought the Weston land himself. When he died in 1828 he left it all to his personal friend and counsellor, John Quincy Adams, sixth President of the United States.

As manager of his father's properties, Charles Francis Adams made frequent trips to Weston to inspect the farm which was let out to tenant farmers. The following excerpts from his diary have to do with these trips. " . . . we stopped to look at the farm which father had obtained by the singular bequest of Mr. Boylston. It is in miserable

*Ward N. Boylston was the son of Benjamin and Mary Boylston Hallowell. As a young man he changed his name to Boylston and according to Bond's History of Watertown, "has made it illustrious by his benefactions."

condition and not likely to be better in his hands. He had better part with it if we can find any purchaser.”

“. . . to Weston to see about the sale of hay off the place. This took an amazing long time but sold tolerably well. I amused myself with entering into conversation with the different farmers and attempting to extract information on various rustic subjects. The farm appears in tolerable condition since the tenants undertook it, and though it is pretty much of a dead weight upon his hands, all he (JQA) would wish would be that it did not run him into debt.”

Subsequently the tenant farmer, Mr. Conant, “came to tell me that he was apprehensive he should be unable to keep it on his lease . . . He appeared discouraged and said the farm would be likely to run him in debt . . . but I tried to encourage him by telling him he now saw the worst side and that it would improve.” And on a cold September day he wrote “We immediately took to the kitchen fire, and with the assistance of this externally and the revivifying influence of something internal properly administered, we began to feel able to do something.”

Adams then went into the woods with the tenant and auctioneer to decide what wood was to be sold. “This job being finished, we returned to the house and dined. The tenants had made preparation for us and it was essentially necessary that I should so far assent to their arrangements as not to appear too proud to sit down with them. We made quite a dinner party and had a very tolerable meal upon chickens.”

On another expedition to Weston to sell wood at auction, he wrote “We remained out all day, having only some crackers and cheese and rum for the whole of our dinner. I confess I did not like much the nature and character of the company, because they were very coarse, but I adapted myself as well as I could to my situation which in all places is wisest, and so I talked with all who would talk with me.”

Annual sales from the farm brought revenue each year in excess of \$500, and the Adams family retained possession of the property until 1822 when it was sold to General Charles J. Paine. The old building used to be called the “Soldiers’ Home” because at one time some Revolutionary War soldiers were boarded there by a tenant farmer. Certain unmarked gravestones in the old cemetery on South Avenue are supposedly where two of these soldiers lie buried.

As for the doorstone, it seems certain that it dates back at least to Jonathan Bullard’s ownership, as neither Gill, Adams, nor Boylston ever lived there. By Paine’s time the house was in such poor repair that it had to be demolished. During its razing, wooden shutters and wainscoating were rescued and later installed as panelling in another Weston residence. The door stone remained on the old Bullard property until the 1930’s when it was moved to the Paine house on Highland Street and installed in the floor of a conservatory. Last July when this house was demolished, the historic stone was most appropriately moved to its present location.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

"A YEAR OF ACTIVITY"

As reported at the Annual Meeting on November 2nd, numerous valuable historical papers, books, and artifacts have been donated to the Society during the year,—a fact that is most gratifying and which we hope points to a continuing realization that such items are of great value, particularly when assembled in a convenient and readily available place such as the Josiah Smith Tavern most certainly is. At this point it is perhaps well to remind members that our Historical Society rooms there are open every Wednesday from 2 to 4 P.M. (1 to 3 please in January and February) and by appointment. During the year many individuals, groups, local school classes and scout troops have been greeted by our Curator, Mrs. Fraser, and her committee.

Our Historian and several active members, have continued the research and sorting of historical material and have made progress in authenticating or disproving many facts of Weston's history. As the Historian puts it there are numerous cases of "overdocumented hearsay" (see January 1972 BULLETIN: Ed.) and it is not only fascinating to track down the true facts but it is historically significant to do so.

As has become our custom, we had three lecture meetings, including the annual Charter Anniversary Dinner in April, which were well attended and well received. Also monthly through the winter small discussion groups were held under the aegis of Mr. James B. Muldoon on interesting and unusual legal aspects of historical happenings and cases in Massachusetts' earlier days.

The officers, directors, and members involved themselves in numerous other affairs. Here are a few examples: the taking of land involving historic buildings for a possible cross town road,—a measure that was defeated at Town meeting,—the conducted historic tours of the Town by bus and by foot for Junior High and younger students and scouts,—the deterioration of the controversial but nonetheless historical Norumbega Tower,—the survey of houses along the historic Boston Post Road for the Weston Historical Commission, and the microfilming by the Mormon Society of our Society, Church, and Town records.

The BULLETIN which has received so many commendations not only within our membership but from outside have, we trust, been of interest and have kept our members informed as to our continuing activities. An active membership is vital to the Society and we hope this will never slacken. Be proud to solicit your neighbor for membership, and finally thanks are due to you all for your membership and to those many who have contributed over and above their annual dues either in material gifts or through giving of their time and talents.

Edward W. Marshall

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome into membership Mrs. Harold Alcaide of 105 Westchester Drive, Mr. and Mrs. Robert W. Ellis of 3 Viles Street, Miss Helen Green (daughter of charter member the late Marion Green) of 811 Boston Post Road, and, from Wayland, Mrs. Edmund H. Sears, granddaughter of Judge Edward Mellen whose 1826 law office was one of the features of our last issue.

IMPORTANT COMING EVENTS MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Winter Meeting: January 30, 1973 8:00 P.M.

Josiah Smith Tavern Ball Room

Speaker: Homer C. Lucas: *THE FUN OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH*

ANNUAL CHARTER ANNIVERSARY DINNER

THURSDAY, APRIL 26TH

Speaker and Location will be announced in our March BULLETIN. Meanwhile *save the date* for this traditional evening, and plan to bring a new member.

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

The following directors were elected at the annual meeting of members on November 2nd to serve for three years or until their successors are elected: Brenton H. Dickson 3rd, Mrs. Dudley B. Dumaine, Grant M. Palmer Jr., and Harold G. Travis.

The directors then elected:

Edward W. Marshall, *President*

Donald D. Douglass, *Vice President*

John G. Brooks, *Secretary*

Roy L. Dickson, *Treasurer*

Mrs. Allan W. Fulkerson, *Recording Secretary*.

The following committee chairmen have been appointed by the President and ratified by the Directors:

Auditor: Harry B. Jones

THE BULLETIN: Harold G. Travis, Editor

Curator: Mrs. James E. Fraser

Garden: Mrs. Dudley B. Dumaine

Historian: Brenton H. Dickson 3rd

Hospitality: Mrs. Reginald D. Wells

Law Office: Mrs. Harold G. Travis

Legal Counsel: Grant M. Palmer, Jr.

Program: Mrs. Kirkbride Patterson

Public Relations and Membership: Donald D. Douglass



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.