

# THE WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN



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## THE BALDWIN TAVERN

The old Baldwin Tavern which later became the home of Isaac Fiske, stood diagonally across the street from his law office and was destroyed by fire in 1890. According to Lamson's *History of Weston* it was in 1762 that Captain Samuel Baldwin succeeded Isaac Woolson in this tavern which thereafter was known as *Baldwin's Tavern*. Isaac was a grandson of Thomas Woolson who kept Weston's first tavern, the story of which is to be found on Page 3 of this issue.

Captain Baldwin figured largely in town affairs throughout the Revolution. At the time of the Shays Rebellion in 1787, the troops from Boston are said to have bivouacked one night along our road, the officers lodging at the Baldwin Tavern. In 1815 the tavern became the property of Isaac Fiske and here he made his home until his death in 1861.

Rebecca, the wife of Captain Baldwin, kept a diary from 1756 to 1787 which is quoted in both *Lamson's History* and Ripley's "*Weston, A Puritan Town.*" It is also listed among various 18th Century New England manuscripts but so far this diary has eluded our search. A more complete history of the *Baldwin Tavern* is being prepared for a subsequent issue.



## ANNUAL CHARTER ANNIVERSARY DINNER APRIL 26, 1973

The featured speaker at our annual Charter Anniversary Dinner on Thursday evening, April 26th in the Senior High School Cafeteria is to be Mr. Dean A. Fales, Jr., well known authority on antique furniture, author, historian, Cooperstown lecturer, and consultant to various museums. He lives in Kennebunkport, Maine, was formerly the director of the Essex Institute in Salem, and is active in many interests, including Old Sturbridge Village where he serves as a trustee.

His subject will be *WILLIAM BENTLEY, COLLECTOR, DIARIST, AND NOSEY MINISTER OF SALEM*. Mr. Fales in his delightful style will talk of this nationally important man who was one of the first collectors of 17th Century historical materials. Bentley lived most of his life in the famous Crowinshield-Bentley House of Salem.

Early in April you will receive all details by mail from the Committee, but it is important meanwhile that you save the date: Thursday evening, April 26th. Plan to attend this traditionally enjoyable and worthwhile highlight of the Society's year.

### DR. KENDAL'S CENTENNIAL SERMON TRUE THEN – TRUER NOW

Rev. Samuel Kendal, D.D. spoke to his Weston Congregation 160 years ago, January 12, 1813, on the "Termination of a Century", and his opening sentences are significant today. He was speaking in our old 1722 meetinghouse as the climax of the Town's Centennial commemoration of its incorporation. He died in the following year and of all his orations, this has proved the most enduring.

"To examine the records of antiquity is not an idle curiosity, nor useless labour. They not only gratify an inquisitive mind, but impart profitable instruction to every succeeding generation. They exhibit virtues worthy of imitation, or rear beacons to admonish those who live in subsequent times, of the dangers to which they are exposed . . .

"We can contemplate transactions and events of a remote date without that excitement and interest, which those of a similar nature, passing in our time, often produce in our feelings; and we can always judge best what is right when passion and interest have the least influence on our decision . . . It is therefore a dictate of sound wisdom and of common prudence, to consider the days of old, the years of ancient times."

Since the Weston Historical Society started just a decade ago, it is gratifying to note the ever increasing research activities of so many Weston people. They are coming to agree that one *find* is worth a dozen frustrations. As we contemplate many forthcoming commemorations, we invite more members to join in uncovering bygone days and people, and in preserving the precious relics of yesteryear that are still here. If you're looking for a project, we have many suggestions, for indeed, the more *diggers* the greater treasures.



The motto of Weston's Independent Light Infantry was:

"Let all the ends thou aimet at, be thy Country's  
Thy God's and Truth's."

## THE WOOLSON TAVERN

As far as we know the earliest tavern in Weston, or "Watertown Farms", was run by Thomas Woolson. At present the exact location is not known. We find that in 1672 he bought 250 acres of land from Richard Norcross, and in 1697 the farm of John and Richard Coolidge. This second acquisition was made eleven years after he was issued his first license to sell liquor (1686).

In 1737 his grandson Isaac Woolson petitioned the Court of Sessions for a continuation of his license "having moved his house some distance from the original site." This probably means that he moved his business, not the building. There have been theories expressed that the second site was near the corner of Fiske Lane and the Post Road where Samuel Baldwin kept a tavern for many years in the 18th century.

There is no record of how long Woolson had been selling liquor before he got his license in 1686. We find the following entry in the 1685 court record: "Thomas Woolson of Watertown appearing before the court and being convicted of selling strong drink without license contrary to the law, is fined twenty shillings or to sett one hour in the stocks and to pay costs of eight shillings."

Evidence presented to the court indicated that Woolson had more friends than enemies in the neighborhood. His principal enemies, Joseph and Benjamin Harrington, testified in writing that they "saw Woolson and some of his family sell both cyder and rum to some persons, and received money for same," and they presented a receipted bill as evidence. Among his friends we find John Perry and Jonathan Stanhope.

STATEMENT OF JOHN PERRY — "that in the last 10 or 12 years he has spent much time in the Woolson family and took notice that Woolson went to great trouble and expense to take care of travellers with meat and drink and cared for their horses. When asked what they had to pay, Woolson replied he kept no ordinary and they were welcome to what he gave them."

STATEMENT OF JONATHAN STANHOPE — "that he had received food and drink of Woolson and that he never demanded or took satisfaction for the same."

In a petition to the court Woolson stated that he did not "entertain town dwellers, children or servants by selling them drink nor did he sell for gain but only for the relief of persons in their necessity." He further stated that "he does not fully understand the matter for which he is complained of (selling liquor) and also asks the favor of the court that he shall not be wanting the means for obtaining an ordinary legally."

In answer to the petition of Thomas Woolson "for respiting the fine of 20 shillings imposed upon him at a former court for transgressing the law . . . this court doth order a respiting the taking of said fine until further order be given. He giving bond in five pound not to transgress any more of that kind, 5 pound to be forfeited on condition that after the first of May next he will in all respects obey the law."

So it looks as if he was spared the ignominious hour in the stocks which must have been a disappointment to the Harringtons!

—Brenton H. Dickson 3rd—

*In the year 1686 when Thomas Woolson took out his first license, Middlesex County Court Records tell us that the following were the*

### DUTIES OF AN INNHOLDER

"All the licensed persons . . . to Retail within Doors, did acknowledge severally bound unto our Sovereign Lord James the Second of England, Scotland, France and Ireland King etc. in a Recognizance of ten pounds to be paid by each of them unto our said Sovereign Lord the King—his Heirs and Successors. On condition that they and every of them (being licensed for one whole yeare from the day of the date herof, and not longer) shall not permit, suffer, or have any playing at Dice, Cards, Tables, Quoits, Loggers, Bowles, Ninepins, Billiards or any other unlawful game or games in their or any of their Houses, Yards, Gardens or Bucksides, nor shall suffer to be or remain in their Houses any person or persons not being of their owne families on Saturday nights after it



is dark, nor on the Sabbath day; nor shall entertain as lodgers in their Houses any strangers, Men or Women, above the space of forty-eight hours (other than such as they shall engage for their forthcomming) without acquainting their Constables or Selectmen with the same. Nor shall entertain in their Houses, or sell any wines or liquors, to any Indians or Negroes; nor suffer any children or servants or any other persons to remain in their Houses, tipling or drinking contrary to law; nor yet to be there tipling or drinking after nine of the Clock in the night time; nor buy or take to pawne any stollen goods; nor willing to Harbour in their House, Barnes, Stables, or otherwise any other notorious offenders whatsoever; nor shall sell any Beere, Ale, Cyder, wine or other Liquors but by due and sealed measures . . . nor shall entertaine any person or persons of whom they shall be prohibited by any of His Majesty's Council or Justices of the Peace as persons of an idle conversation and given to tipling. But shall in their said Houses use and maintain good order and rule . . .”

#### ANOTHER WESTON MYSTERY: WHERE IS (WAS) “CORNWALLIS FIELD?”

Page 911 in Bigelow's HISTORY OF THE WESTON INDEPENDENT LIGHT INFANTRY tells us: “The anniversary of the surrender of Lord Cornwallis (October 19, 1781) was celebrated this day on ‘Cornwallis field’ in Weston.

“General Washington was represented by Alpheus Bigelow Jr. Esq. and Lord Cornwallis by Captain Abraham Hews. The Weston Independent Light Infantry under Orderly Sergeant Francis A. Pickering, and the Waltham Light Infantry represented the British troops under Lord Cornwallis, and a company of continentallers commanded by Captain Alpheus Bigelow, with Captain Nathan Fiske as Lieutenant and Captain Josiah Hastings as Ensign, together with the Weston company of militia Captain John Jones commanding composed the American forces. An aboriginal tribe under the command of Jonathan Warren, Jr. was present and acted . . . The Indians were the wonderment and terror of the small boys being ‘appropriately dressed primed and armed.’ in addition to their warlike performances they also indulged in some fun of their own as opportunity offered. Among the spectators was Mrs. Joab Leadbetter a well known resident of Weston, – no sooner was she observed by the red men than, brandishing their tomahawks and uttering the terrible warhoops, they chased the frightened woman from the field.

N.B. Mr. Abijah Coburn informed me as to the troops present and their officers. When the ceremony of surrender took place, Lord Cornwallis's part thereof was performed in silence, he made no speech. So my father Alpheus Bigelow, Junior informed me.  
(s) Frank W. Bigelow”



## A REMARKABLE JOURNAL

Not many people have had the opportunity to read the handsomely bound, meticulously handwritten *HISTORY OF LIGHT INFANTRY COMPANY THIRD DIVISION MASSACHUSETTS MILITIA* which was compiled by Frank Winthrop Bigelow (1833 - 1904), son of Alpheus Bigelow, Jr. In his preface, this compiler of almost one thousand pages modestly notes: "As opportunity has offered, many which might otherwise have proved idle hours, have been agreeably and as I trust not unprofitably passed in making these researches and collecting them in book form." Quotations from this volume follow:

**TUESDAY, MAY 2, 1797.** The Weston company of Independent Light Infantry assembled at Flagg's Tavern for an annual May inspection and drill. Present Captain Bigelow, Lieutenant Whitney, Ensign Fisk, four sergeants, 3 drummers and fifers, 36 rank and file. The place of exercise for Captain Bigelow's company was the piece of ground opposite the Lamson estate whereupon Mr. Charles Merriam afterwards built a house and resided some years; in later times the home of George Bigelow, Thomas Bigelow Jones, and E. O. Clark. Amos Harrington also allowed the I.L.I. Company the free use of the field opposite their regular place of parade, i.e., Flagg's, afterwards Stratton's Tavern.

During this day's parade the company having halted and being at rest the Ensign was much annoyed by the boys running to and fro in front of him, and kicked at them, losing his patience and balance at one and the same time, the colours going in one direction, his chapeau in another while he himself lay sprawling on the ground.

Amused at the sight, Captain Bigelow exclaimed "What's the matter Ensign Fisk?" "Matter", he replied, "Matter enough, damn it!"

On this or some other occasion while he commanded the Weston I.L.I. Company occurred the following incident which affords an example of the captain's ready wit. Marching in front of his company he came to a sudden stop on the very brink of a stream of water; turning hastily to his men he gave the command "Whoa" instantly correcting himself and adding "If you will act like steers I must talk to you like as if you were."

(From the History of the Weston Independent Light Infantry, Pages 135-6. The compiler notes "The above was given to me by Mr. Benjamin Roberts of Weston, and Mr. Isaac Child of Waltham whose father was the tenth Captain of the Weston I.L.I. Company.")

## DEATH OF GENERAL WASHINGTON

### GENERAL ORDERS

HEADQUARTERS, BOSTON, Jan. 1, 1800

In order to express the deep regret and heartfelt sorrow with which every American citizen must be affected by the decease of General George Washington, America's best and most endeared friend, the Commander-in-Chief orders that the Officers and Soldiers of the Militia of this Commonwealth wear their Military Uniforms every Sunday for six months from the date hereof, with a black crepe on the left fore arm, just above the cuff, and that the hilts of the Officers' swords be also covered with black.

By Order of the Commander-in-Chief,  
William Dennison, Adjutant General



## AT WESTON

When a Washington dies, who can restrain the tears? Patriots weep: Genius and Literature bewail their bereavement: not a city, town, nor village on the continent that feels not the loss! On Friday last, the inhabitants of Weston met to mingle their sorrows, and weep for the loss of their Father. Every movement was mournful,—every countenance expressed the sad feelings of the heart.

A large procession judiciously arranged by a respectable committee under the escort of Capt. Bigelow's Light Infantry moved with solemn step from Capt. Flagg's Tavern to the Meeting-house. The music was expressive of sorrow.

The Meeting-house was clad in the vesture of mourning.

Solemnities upon the occasion were introduced by a pertinent prayer by the Rev. Mr. Stearns of Lincoln,—Sermon by the Parson of the Town,—concluding prayer by the Rev. Mr. Bridge of East Sudbury. After services several ceremonies were performed by the (Light) Infantry Company with regularity, order, and decorum. Each citizen soon returned to his dwelling, immersed with sad reflections.

Columbia Centinel of Saturday, January 18, 1800.

Sir:

Feby. 18th, 1800

Having for some time past enjoyed a state of health which has unfitted me for performing the duties of a military life, and continuing so unwell as to be wholly unable to do active service should I be called thereto, I am induced to request your Honor's permission to resign my command of a Company of Light Infantry in the first Brigade and Third Division of the Militia of this Commonwealth.

I am with the highest respect  
your Honor's most obed't humble Serv't.

(s) Alpheus Bigelow

His Honor Moses Gill, Esq.  
Commander-in-Chief of the Militia of  
The Commonwealth of Massachusetts



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.

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