

THE WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN



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THE COBURN HOMESTEAD: 153 CHURCH STREET

Here still is OLD WESTON at its best. The house was built "circa 1726" and in the past 247 years there has been only one change in family ownership. Jeremiah Whittemore and his wife, Patience, moved to Weston early in 1726 from Rumney Marsh, Suffolk County. They were "received into This Church" on February 26 of that year and on the following November 15th, their third son, Isaac, was "Born in Weston." In time he headed as Captain a small company of Artillery during the Revolution and served many years as Selectman. The house remained in the Whittemore family through Aaron, his son, until 1801 when the latter, for \$4,400, sold this place to Jonas Coburn.

Its 120 acres extended almost to the center of town to land owned by Rev. William Williams, and westward to Lamson land that ranged from what is now the Town Green northward as far as today's Fairview and Pinecroft Roads. Jonas's father lived on Chestnut Street in the "Luther Upham House" and in the 172 years that have elapsed since 1801, the house pictured above has remained in the Coburn family through Jonas's son, Isaac, his grandson Arthur L. Coburn, and the latter's daughter, its present occupant. From 1789 to the present, we can quickly count 52 years of Coburn service as selectmen and 5 years as representatives to the General Court. A recital of all offices filled would be lengthy indeed. The story of the part this family has played in the development of our town would make a most worthwhile book, an inkling of which is suggested on Pages 58 and 59 of ONCE UPON A PUNG.

This house and its setting is a favorite of painters at all seasons of the year. A great-granddaughter of Jonas Coburn is one of our charter members and lives today at 190 North Avenue. We refer to Miss Anna Hall and during a pleasant morning recently spent with her, she brought forth from a drawer in her desk a neatly written little booklet, unsigned but dated December 1893. Tied with blue ribbon it instantly caught our fancy and as it gives such clear insight into what wholesomeness prevailed in those faraway days, we share it verbatim with you on the following page.

John Howard Payne has told us in his worldwide, famous song "There's No Place Like Home", but how doubly interesting this sentiment is, when the house proves to be the old homestead of several generations and also one of the oldest houses in town.

To learn definitely any facts in regard to the first occupant of the Coburn Homestead is more than I have been able to do, although mention is made in the Town Records in 1754 of a certain Jeremiah Whittemore, presumably father of Aaron Whittemore, who in all probability lived in this house.

My first knowledge is that a certain tract of land of 120 acres, be the same more or less, was sold by Mr. Aaron Whittemore of Weston, November 1801, to Mr. Jonas Coburn of Waltham for \$4,400.

It is supposed the whole farm originally extended to the center of the Town.

The elm trees when the house was bought in 1801 were probably from 50 to 75 years old then. The house was situated as at present, but was then minus the shed and in its place a sloping roof extended nearly to the ground, forming a one story room with bouffet.

The back door was on the north side and opened directly into the kitchen.

The house was built to face the south and the old chimney was the guide for the noon hour, when the rays of the sun were on a direct line with the face of the chimney.

What was used as the shed in those days was built on a high bank wall 80 feet from the house on the southeast side of the front. It was open at both ends so an oxen load of wood could be driven into it.

During a great snowstorm the first or second year after the Fitchburg Railroad was started say in 1844 the engineer on a certain train got out of wood and was much pleased to get firewood here which had been stored for two or three years, for it made the old engine "hum" as all on board said.

In the back part of the shed were placed the vinegar hogsheads. A Hog pen was near and on its sloping roof they put things out to dry.

A chaisehouse stood nearby with a chamber overhead, built after Jonas Coburn, the owner, was married. In front of the house was a board fence, but in 1847, Mr. Otis Wheeler of Watertown built the present picket fence to replace it. A well with bucket and chain was at the back door, and the well house curb was sold years ago and removed to the house owned by Mr. E. J. Brown and occupied by Mr. Otis Houghton.

In the garden below the house grew oldfashioned herbs, such as horse radish (to be found there even now), sage, balm, sweet majoram, and catnip, and it is related that when one of the sons of Jonas Coburn was selling balm, an Irish woman remarked "Balm, oh yes, Balm of Gilead,—good for sores, I'll take some."

The house originally had but one cellar, but another was dug out under the west room. The Chaisehouse had for its occupant an old family chaise, and rumor says one of the sons took this vehicle to go wooing his fair lady in the southern part of the town. This house and buildings adjoining were torn down after the present barn and shed were built in 1841.

Previously in 1830, the roof at the northeast corner where a low chamber had been, was raised and an attic (in those days called a garret) was added above.

There were no back stairs till then and all the corn had to be carried up the front stairs to steps directly above the landing to an old attic and often at night the slumbers of the household were disturbed by the rats and corn rattling overhead.

A porch was built on in 1841 for the old folks and the lovers now wedded desired to make two distinct households and the rooms were divided accordingly.

Inside the house are the customary brick oven and ash hole, fireplaces with the cranes, churns, and chests, but no weights to the windows can be found.

The old house has sheltered many happy hearts and if sometimes the inmates bore less joyous faces, still to all comes joy and sorrow alike and every cloud has its silver lining.

"WHAT LIFE BUT HATH ITS TEARS:
SO SWEETER MADE
WHAT WERE THE SUNSHINE BUT
FOR THE SHADE?"

DEC. 1893

Miss Hall believes the above was written by her Aunt Edith Laura Coburn (Aug. 3, 1854 - April 8, 1904); "the house owned by Mr. E. J. Brown and occupied by Mr. Otis Houghton" is today the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Hazen Ackles, 70 North Avenue. . . .Ed.

HE SAID IT WELL

On Page 95 in Volume XII of *THE HEATH PAPERS* in the library of The Massachusetts Historical Society, we found a letter that one G. Washington wrote to General William Heath on October 27, 1778. In it the future father of our country declared "The Americans are generous, and where satisfied that people are their friends - - they are not wanting in hospitality and acts of benevolence."

THE BEGINNING OF OUR SCHOOLS AND HOW WE PAID FOR THEM

When Weston was still part of Watertown and we were known as "The Farmers", we find in *WATERTOWN RECORDS* (prepared for publication by the Watertown Historical Society in 1894) that at a town meeting on August 15, 1649 it was agreed "... to Build a Schoole - house . . ." Then at a meeting of "the 7 men" less than three weeks later, September 2nd, 1649

John Sherman is apointed to procuere the Schoole houle
Built: and to haue it built 22 foot long: and 14 foot wide and 9
foot betwene Joynts— also to git a penn of one aker of ground:
fenced in with 4 Railes for the lodging a heard in the woods:
and to procuer a small house for lodging the heardsman: and to
be done in such a place as Deacon Child and himself shal thinke
best: towards Sudbury Bounds

and a few pages later,

Janeu. 12: 1651

A Generall Towne meeting

An agreement Betwene the

Towne and m^r Richard norcros

That m^r Richard Norcros shall attend the keeping of ascoole
Within the Bounds of Wattertowne where the Towne shall
appoynt, That he shall vse his best Indeaouer to instruct all such
psons as shall be sent vnto him in Inglish writeing or Latten
according to the Capaffity of the psons and that it is in the
Li[berty] of any Inhabytant to send his sonnes or seruant for a
weeke or two and to take them away agayne at his plesure, and
therfore the sayd M^r Norcros is to keepe a strict accounte of the
number of weekes that euery one Dooth Continew, And that
euery pson that learneth Inglish only shall pay 3^d a weeke and
such as write or Lattin shall pay 4^d and that M^r Norcros is to giue
notice to the pertickler parents of theyr Just Due accord ing to
this order and If any pson shall neglect to bring vnto his house
his full Due by the 29 of the 8 month in 52 that then he shall
bring anote of the names and the sum of theyr debt vnto the 7
men who are hearby required to take some speedy Course to []
him to his due

Year after year it seems, Richard Norcross was re-engaged and re-engaged but finally at a meeting of the selectmen on the 27th of March, 1677 we find that a *Lieutenant Shearmon* was engaged to "ceep an inglish scoole" and that at the same meeting, a

Joseph Underwood was hired to teach a certain Davis child to read and wright and sum authordox cattice!!!

Agreed wth leftenant shearmon to ceep an: inglish scoole this year and to begin the (9th) of eaprill at the scoole houle and the town to alow him twenty pounds in the town Reat that shall be raized in this yeare (77) and if the said leftenant dezireth to lay down his imployment at the years end then he shall giue the town a quartur of ayeares warning and if the town dezyreth to chang ther scoole master thay shall giue the like warning: the felect men agree allfoo that the said scoole shall be cept from the furst of may to the last of august: 8 owers in the day to witt to begin at feuen in the morning: and not to break vp: vntill fiue at night, noone time acsepted and from the last of august vntill the last of octobur 6 ouers in the day foo allfoo in the munths of march and Eaprill and the 4 winttur munths to begin at tenn of the clock in the morning and continnue vntill 2 a clock in the afternoone.

Agreed wth Jozeph vndurwood that he shall haue the childe of marah Dauifes which was wth his father put to him by the town and that he shall be bound to him vntill he be 21 years of eage and Jozeph vndurwood to teach the boy to read and wright and sum authortox catticife and to find him meat drink and apparell futabell vnto such an aprentis and at the end of his time to alow him dubbell apparrell throw ought and Simon Stone to make the agreement betwene him and the boy and to record it in the town booke. Jozeph vndurwood apeating
in presents of the
felect men of wat-
turtowne Befoore the felectmen this 20th of octobur 1684 owned this agreement as apeares by fetting toe his hand

Joseph V yndurwood
His mark.

NO SUSPENDED SENTENCES IN THOSE DAYS!

Browsing through a Rhode Island Orderly Book of Revolutionary days recently, we came across this entry dated June 11, 1779 “Headquarters Field Officer Major Ball; At the same court Martial Cruix Cardale or Matross was tryed for Striking Peter David, a Bombadier, found guilty and Sentenced to receive Fifty Lashes on his Naked Back, to ask Bombadier David’s pardon on the public parade, and to wear his coat wrong side outwards for a week.”



INDEPENDENCE DAY AT WESTON 1801

The fourth of July was celebrated with that spirit of harmony and genuine federalism which has long characterized the inhabitants of that town. Firing, ringing of the bell, and the display of an elegant flag above the center of a beautiful grove near the Meeting House, announced the return of the joyous Anniversary of American Independence. At 9 o'clock, the Independent Light Infantry Company, highly respected for its military discipline and patriotic spirit, under the command of Capt. Nathan Fiske, paraded at the Meeting-House and performed various evolutions with its usual adroitness. At 11 o'clock it escorted a respectable procession to the house of the Rev. Mr. Kendal . . . The Rev. Mr. Kendal addressed the Throne of Grace in an appropriate and animated Prayer after which a spirited oration was delivered by Mr. Isaac Fiske . . . The company then escorted the procession to the grove where under its cooling shade all partook of an elegant dinner and with innocent hilarity drank the following Toasts.

1. The Day We Celebrate: May the glory of it never be tarnished by a dereliction of the principles of liberty and independence.
2. The government of our choice: May it bear the test of ages, and command the affection of all who enjoy its blessings.
3. United America: May she avoid the errors, and be exempted from the destiny of other republics.
4. The Commonwealth: forward in asserting, may she be firm in supporting the rights of man.
5. The President: May his administration be guided by wisdom, integrity, and impartiality; and appreciated by the scale of truth and justice.
6. Governor Strong: the man whom we delight to honor.
7. The high Departments of State: May they be freed from men of a *strange language*.
8. The able and faithful federal officers who under the *new order* of things have retired from office.
9. The Late President—great in office, dignified in retirement.
10. The Memory of Washington: America's glory, the world's admiration.
11. Peace to all Nations.
12. A speedy end to tyranny and oppression of every name and form.
13. The Clergy: May they never be denied the rights of citizens.
14. The Farmers: May their information and virtue equal the importance and respectability of their station.
15. The learned professions: May they be honoured by men of abilities and integrity.
16. The Fair Sex, heaven's last noblest work of creation: May they correct the taste, refine the manners, and improve the morals of man!

VOLUNTEERS: By Rev. Mr. Stearns: Military merit and patriotism deserve the most public notice: The Independent Light Infantry Company of Weston.

By Artemus Ward, Esq. The inhabitants of Weston: Adorned with moral, political, and social Virtues. May he never know what happiness is who interrupts their felicity.

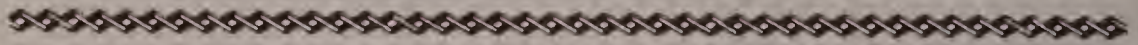
By Another Person: The Orator of the Day! May the sentiments of liberty he inculcated, be imbibed and forever maintained by those who heard them.

The above account was from the *Columbia Centinel* of Wednesday, July 15, 1801.

NEW MEMBERS

Our roll of members steadily grows. The preservation of Weston's charm and character depends largely upon its people, and it is our aim to have the support of every family in Town. Don't hesitate to invite all your neighbors whether oldtimers or newcomers. It is easy to join. A check for \$5 family, \$3 single, or \$200 life sent to Box 343 Weston, Mass. 02193 with their full names and addresses will be appreciated by the Membership Committee and by all officers and directors. With this issue we extend a hearty welcome to:

Miss Anne Cutter Coburn, 153 Church Street
Mr. and Mrs. Lewis E. Darby, 211 Meadowbrook Road
Mr. and Mrs. James B. Greason, Jr., 12 Conant Road
Mr. and Mrs. Rodney C. Little, 12 Jones Road
Mrs. Donald E. Magill, Jr., 132 Country Drive
Mr. and Mrs. James P. Maynard, 406 North Avenue
Mrs. William Hart Nichols, 19 Pelham Road
Mr. and Mrs. James W. Noonan, 136 Ridgeway Road
Capt. and Mrs. Allan P. Slaff, 5 Deerpath Lane
Dr. and Mrs. Donald R. Sohn, 55 Black Oak Road
Mr. and Mrs. Hollis K. Thayer of Brooklyn, New York



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.