

# THE WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN



May 1974, Vol. X, No. 4

HERE ONCE STOOD—BUT NO MORE,—



## “THE HOUSE OF ONE WHEATON IN A REMOTE PART OF THE TOWN”

In March of 1923 the late Helen E. Kelsey paid the City of Newburyport \$700 for the above house “as is” at 42 Milk Street in that city. Three weeks later she had Stone Brothers of Boston for \$200 move it to Weston in four trips. On April 3rd 8.2 acres here on Ash Street were conveyed to her by Eli Brock, native Englishman and well-known local poultryman who had come here from Wellesley in 1894 and had built his house at 229 Ash Street. She had hers reassembled on land that abutted his house. It was assigned the number 221. When she died in 1960, trustees of Wellesley College to whom she bequeathed it, sold it to Deborah K. and L. Whitman Smith, the latter being one of our present Selectmen.

While the old house could no doubt tell quite a story from its own youth, it would be as nothing compared to the secret its cellar has so closely held from its owners and from all Weston people for lo these many years. The Brock to Kelsey deed 50 years ago men-

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## IN MEMORIAM: EVERETT SCHWARTZ

Faithful charter member, Weston native, Everett Schwartz died on April 20th. As did his late, beloved uncle, Austin Hale, Everett loved this town and its people,—this country and its flag. His grandfather, Benjamin Schwartz, lived in the old Jonas Sanderson house near the corner of High Street and Love Lane. See January 1973 BULLETIN Vol. IX, No. 2. Our sympathy is extended to the widow, two children, two granddaughters and two grandsons.

## NATHANIEL HARRIS' DIARY

On one of the shelves in the Isaac Fiske Law Office is a little book with intriguing contents. Its author, Judge Nathaniel Harris of Watertown married our own Hannah Fullam on Jan. 30, 1718. The diary that he kept through his long career as Justice of the Peace and as Trial Justice for Small Causes is replete with humorous comments. Like so many others, it is the gift of our fellow member, James B. Muldoon.

On Feb. 2, 1737, "George Cutting Junior and Samuel Whitney came and confessed that they had severally Broke the Peace by Stricking Each other and were fined 3 shillings & 6 pence each." Weston apparently had trouble keeping its roads in proper repair, for we found complaints filed in 1741 by Abraham Gale, Surveyor of Highways against 10 of his fellow townsmen "for not attending by himself or by a sufficient person in his stead with cart & team." Judge Harris fined each of them 10 shillings and costs.

Gale was indeed a diligent prosecutor, Witness this entry: "On complaint of Abraham Gale of Weston, Informer, — — — — — was charged with being drunk with strong drink. 10s to be paid to the Poor." Again at random we caught this May 31, 1738 notation:— "Jacob Wendall jr. and Henry Jonson Both Belonging to Boston in the County of Suffolk, Merchants, Confessed that they had Broken the King's Peace by Strikeing one Samuel Severns of Weston, Yeoman" for which they "were ordered and accordingly Paid as a fine to the King the Sum of five shillings each."

On June 4, 1753 "Personally appeared Bradish Smith of Weston and was sworn clerk of the Milltey Company in Weston under the Command of Capt. Sam Bond." Closing the book and putting it up for another day, we spent a while admiring the gorgeous daffodil blooms in the peaceful and remote but convenient garden below. How peaceful it is to live in Weston with so many memories of people who through the years have given it character and charm.

## WESTON'S YOUTH COMMISSION AND ARBOR DAY

Members of the Village Improvement Association which we now find was actually founded in 1886 with General Charles J. Paine as its first president, would be pleased to learn that Weston's Youth Commission on Arbor Day, April 26th, emulated their fine example of planting so many of the venerable trees that now grace our principal streets. Reacting to the query "Should not we in turn plant trees for our own posterity too?", (March 1974 BULLETIN, Vol. X, No. 3), a group under William McElwain's direction, with fullest cooperation from the Tree Warden, and with the blessing and gratitude of the Weston Bicentennial Committee, helped to plant a dozen healthy maples in the front yard of the Junior High School, close to the new Sugar House. Now it would be great if parents and grandparents would in turn emulate these youngsters and "Plant A Tree." Too many of our old ones have been neglected too long. Here especially "Do we not owe better maintenance to those who planted them for us?"

## SPECIAL REQUEST

When you move, it's not enough to leave a forwarding address at the Post Office. The BULLETIN is mailed under special permit classification which saves the Society money, but it is *not forwardable*. Whenever you move, be sure to write us at Box 343, Weston, Mass. 02193 with your new address.

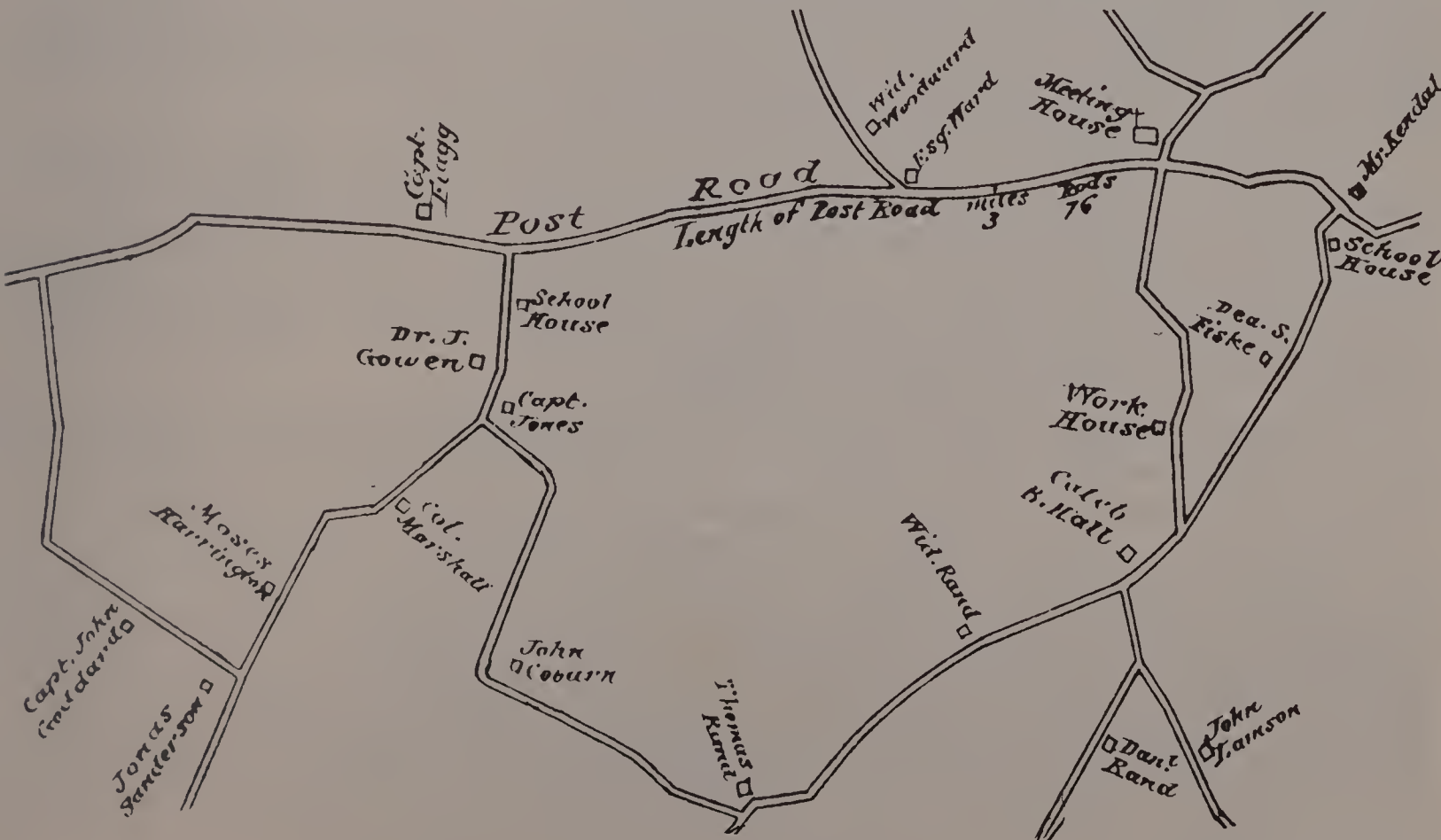
tioned neither any cellar hole that Brock himself filled after buying the place in 1894 nor the toppling remnants of the old barn that Miss Kelsey had sketched at the bottom of her agreement of sale. But we have letters from two fellow members, both former town officials and scions of old Weston families, affirming their recollections of the barn that stood behind the open well alongside the Ash Street stone wall, and of the cellar hole filled to the brim with dirt and rubble. These gentlemen are respectively Gilbert M. Upham of Barre, Massachusetts, longtime Superintendent of highways, and Charles H. Stimpson, Jr., our recently retired Town Engineer, now living in Bradford, Vermont. Each of them grew up here roaming these fields as boys.

By now you have guessed of course that the foundation at 221 Ash Street had held the “mansion house” which Nathaniel Wheaton, housewright, bought of John Brown of Newton, Gentleman, in 1772 with a barn and 67 acres plus two 13 acre parcels for 525 pounds.

If John Howe, British Spy, were in Rip van Winkle style, to revisit Weston, now that 199 years have come and gone, he’d never think of “the house of one Wheaton” as being “in a remote part of the town.” He’d be very close to Weston’s exact geographical center where four streets could provide everything that might be found in the form of confronting, converging, colliding, and challenging while cyclists, drivers, pedestrians, and riders race toward daily tasks and pleasures. Except for the town’s business section, no other area of Weston could be less “remote.”

For he would be at 221 Ash Street, facing the Case Estates of world famous Arnold Arboretum. The sounds he heard would come from a conglomeration of trucks, school buses and cars. Those headed north and east on Ash and Wellesley Streets would come to a halt at Newton Street. Those destined for every direction would engage in tilting matches amongst themselves and others. Cars and school buses to and from Case House, Field School, and Alphabet Lane would swell the raucous chorus.

*Remote* it was, though, in 1775. Kingsbury’s 1794 map shows how isolated was the house marked “Dan’l Rand.” Except for straightening out a few sharp angles 50 years ago at the junction of Newton and Wellesley Streets, those roads are the same as in Nathaniel Wheaton’s time. The stone walls have no doubt been shored up and rebuilt a few times. The map shows that even 17 years after Nathaniel died, the nearest house to his was that



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of John Lamson on Newton Street, now known as “The 1740 House.” Via a stonewall that ran northwest as the crow flies stood the home of Thomas Rand about half a mile away where Mrs. John W. Scott, our fellow charter member, lives. A little closer by road would be only the house of Caleb B. Hall where the Case House has stood since the 1880’s, and the house at 137 Wellesley Street now occupied by Richard A. Howard, director of the Arboretum.

When Isaac Jones’ faithful kitchen servant told those belligerent Liberty Men who threatened her that “they sent them off to Jericho swamp,” she was telling only a half lie, or if you prefer, a half truth, because as many of our old timers recall, the Route 20 By-Pass, which was built under the guidance of another of our fellow charter members, Raymond W. Coburn, in 1930, was constructed over what was until then quite a “dismal swamp.” Sections of those lowlands beset us even today in our struggle with traffic and parking.

Before releasing this issue of the BULLETIN to the printer, we climaxed more than a year’s research by satisfying ourselves that our statements are solidly documented. To ensure the safekeeping of this sizeable material for all time, we are donating it to the Weston Historical Commission for storage in the Town Hall vault. It is unfair to ask why previous owners didn’t trace their titles back to the beginning as we were able to do. Let’s put ourselves in Eli Brock’s position 80 years ago when he bought “with the buildings thereon” what was known as “The Caswell Place.” Three months previously perhaps he had read about that British spy, John Howe, in the First Parish Calendar-Supplement for March, 1894. There he was told “The house on Mr. Ripley’s farm was built previous to 1740 by Dr. Wheaton . . . . . evidently wealthy . . . hardware, locks, etc. were brought from England . . . . the double faced walls built on the estate by Dr. Wheaton, were known as the finest in town.” And continuing, the writer declared “During the Revolution, tradition says, the Tory doctor secreted the British spy . . .” What reason or right would we have had to question such authority?

If, 8 decades ago, that tale was already an established “tradition,” the exposure of the fallacy in our January issue, Vol. X, No. 2, was more overdue than we had first thought. At least a whole century of misconception and wrong information had saturated the minds and writings of several generations. It would not be enough just to prove the “tradition” false. We had to find out who the real Mr. Wheaton was, where he lived, what his political affiliations were, and what became of him and his family. Our plan to bring out the colorful history of the people who did own and live in that venerable Ripley Lane house that so innocently had been “doctored” would have to wait.

Cue after cue and clue after clue led us into dead ends and dark alleys as we worked our way from Wellesley northward, dodging first to the east and then to the west. One of the two 13 acre parcels was easy to spot as a woodlot because of being “bounded southerly on the line Between the Towns Weston and Needham.” This plot was south of Bogle Street west of Dr. Riis’ house at 765 Wellesley Street and east of the Winter Street residence of our fellow members, the John deCamps.

Nathaniel Wheaton died July 4, 1777 of smallpox, having lost his wife, Molly, and their younger daughter, Amy, from the same dread disease within the previous few months. He left only son Caleb and a daughter Molly. Caleb moved to Cambridge where he died intestate in 1815, leaving no issue. Molly returned to her birthplace, Roxbury, and married Samuel Davis, Yeoman, and changed her first name to “Polly.” In East Cambridge Probate Court we found an affidavit signed on July 5, 1777 by Nathaniel’s brother-in-law, Joseph Richards, and by Joel Smith saying, “We being at the House of Nathaniel Wheaton in Weston on Tuesday, the fourth of July inst., Mr. Wheaton called us to have witness that it was his will that Mr. Sam.’l Fisk of Weston should administer upon

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his estate and take care of his effects and it appeared to us that Mr. Wheaton was sound in mind though but an Hour before he Died.” Fisk was appointed administrator, and Messrs. Josiah Smith, Lt. Abraham Jones, and Thomas Rand appraisers.

In 1785 Caleb of Cambridge and Molly of Roxbury sold the mansion house and barn with 19 acres plus a 13 acre parcel of land to Daniel Rand, Cordwainer, for 210 pounds, and 22 acres to his brother, Benjamin Rand, for 110 pounds, making 67 acres in all. Here we ran into a maze of transactions between many Rands, involving wills, estates, guardianships for two non compos mentis relatives. After Daniel Rand’s death in 1847, his brother Willard seemed steadily to buy out the widow and the other brothers. Thence through him title passed to Stephen C. Bent, John McAuliffe, George Coolidge, John Coburn, Francis Caswell, Eli Brock and his wife, Agnes Peirce Coburn Brock. The Brocks were married Oct. 10, 1894, the bridegroom having taken possession of the 22 acres with buildings thereon for \$3,600 from Mr. Caswell the previous June 2nd. In 1900 Brock lost 9.93 of this acreage through landtaking by the Metropolitan Water Works. He and his wife died within nine months of each other in 1942.

Finally, the terrain being what it was and still is, the servant and the spy the next evening probably avoided roads as much as possible and set out over fields in a straight line. Part of the Wheaton 67 acres is that part of the Arboretum running from Ash to Wellesley Streets. It is probable that a path along the stone wall often described in the deeds was used. Coming onto Wellesley Street in front of Thomas Rand’s (Scott) house at the corner of Chestnut, the pair again could have struck across fields for the corner of Love Lane and in so doing, skirted the edge of Sanderson’s Hill. In a later issue we shall discuss the patriotic status of our friend Wheaton during those anxious days of ’75 when he so gladly cooperated with his friend Isaac Jones’ request that he hide the spy overnight. A miracle could turn up a picture of the old house where the spy slept. Who knows,—we might uncover a story of the present house’s youth in Newburyport. Our work is never done.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I want to thank Homer Lucas for starting me off on this exciting chase more than a year ago when he voiced some skepticism regarding the fabled Dr. Wheaton. A detailed search over several months resulted in the exposé in our January issue, Vol. X, No. 2. At the same time he handed me several other papers including the 1772 Brown to Wheaton deed and the 1777 appraisal of the latter’s estate. The task of locating the real “Wheaton Place” proved the most arduous, frustrating but always fascinating experience of all. An inspiration in January to contact old friend Gilbert Upham for his knowledge and guidance in putting together various puzzles as to Weston’s old roads and terrain, proved most fruitful. It was he who excitedly reminded me a month later that the Wheaton House is shown “in plain sight” on Kingsbury’s 1794 map!! It was shown then as “Dan’l Rand” who had bought it 9 years before. For his many trips and letters from his home in Barre I am equally grateful. And finally, of course, I would not have had the temerity to release this story without the reliable assurance of our beloved historian, Brent Dickson. After he went over every step of every deed, pronounced the reasoning sound, and put his stamp of approval on the conclusion reached, we could only say for the thousandth time, “Thank you, Lord, for WESTON.”

H. G. T.

## BRING THEM TO US

Limited editions of certain publications dealing with New England and its people soon become rare and hard to find. Before submitting them for re-cycling please bring them any Wednesday afternoon to our Curator, Mrs. Fraser, at the Josiah Smith Tavern between the hours of two and four. Duplicates create no problem. The Public Library and those at our Isaac Fiske Law Office and the Junior and Senior High Schools would welcome such publications as *OLD TIME NEW ENGLAND*, *THE RURAL VISITOR*, *NEW ENGLAND GALAXY*, and *THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF LEGAL HISTORY*.

## CONGRATULATIONS SHEFFIELD!

Happy word comes from the president of the Sheffield Historical Society in the western part of the state that it has received a matching grant of \$2,700 from the Massachusetts American Revolutionary War Bicentennial Commission. Four of us visited Sheffield and gave our colored slide lecture last fall on the fun we had in restoring the 1805 Isaac Fiske Law Office. Our Sheffield friends then voted unanimously to make restoration of the Parker L. Hall 1822 Law Office (see BULLETIN for October 1972, Vol. IX, No. 1) their own chief Bicentennial project. Also April's MAINE HISTORY NEWS contains Part I of a 2-part article on Maine's early law offices under the caption *STEPPING STONES TO GREATNESS*. Part 2 is scheduled for the July issue, and again we are hopeful that Weston's example and efforts will prove equally contagious "down East."

## REMINDER

The Endowment Fund grows in several ways:—special contributions, memorial gifts, and life memberships.

## WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

We are happy to list below the names of those who have joined our Society since our last issue:

Mr. and Mrs. Leon J. Atamian, 4 Pheasant Trail, Weston  
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph C. Ferguson, 17 Conant Road, Weston  
Mr. and Mrs. Burton Foster, 29 Woodchester Drive, Weston  
Mr. and Mrs. James B. Howard, 41 Juniper Road, Weston  
Mr. and Mrs. David J. Kingsbury, 21 Boulevard Road, Wellesley  
Mr. and Mrs. M. W. Ling, 55 Silver Hill Road, Weston  
Mr. and Mrs. Gregory Plunkett, 100 Black Oak Road, Weston  
Mrs. Frances Upham Spaulding, Providence Road, Danielson, Conn.  
Miss Charlotte A. Stevens, Arnold Avenue, Manomet.



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.