

THE WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN



January 1975, Vol. XI, No. 2

NEXT SOCIETY MEETING, JANUARY 22ND

On Wednesday evening, January 22nd, at 8 o'clock in the Ball Room of the Josiah Smith Tavern, fellow member Homer C. Lucas will share with us many of the new items he has uncovered about the colorful, eventful and versatile life of **WESTON'S MOST PROMINENT PATRIOT: SAMUEL PHILLIPS SAVAGE**. The topic is particularly timely in view of the oncoming American Revolutionary War Bicentennial, and we hope you will bring friends, young and old, to pack the hall.

The directors at a recent meeting endorsed the continuance of our series of member talks. More than a dozen have already been given over the past several years, and we are asking for your help in uncovering additional talent which we all know exists. We are contemplating other activities such as perhaps an historic "Show and Tell" evening. Indeed we would welcome suggestions regarding topics and talent. Quite likely many people,—too modest to volunteer,—would gladly exhibit their wares if *you* were to ask them. The stories of Weston's past that are untold are numerous. Address your suggestions to the directors, c/o Box 343, Weston, Mass. 02193.



BUTTONWOOD TWINS ON THE OLD POST ROAD

WESTON'S BICENTENNIAL TREES

After a townwide canvass by road, we've spotted only 10 trees in Weston that may have been standing as far back as the Revolutionary War. Only two are white oaks while all the rest are buttonwoods, the native variety of sycamore bearing the Latin name of "*Platanus Occidentalis*" and sometimes called "planes" or "plane trees." According to George B. Emerson's authoritative "Report on the Trees and Shrubs Growing Naturally in the Forests of Massachusetts", originally published by the State in 1846 with a 4th edition in 1887, "it is the largest, grandest, and loftiest deciduous tree in America."

(Continued on Page 3)

IN MEMORIAM

We deeply regret the deaths since our last issue of two loyal and loved charter members of this Society, Messrs. Francis G. Goodale and Thomas H. McFarlin. Our sympathy goes out to their widows and to the members of their families.

NEWS OF BAY STATE HISTORICAL LEAGUE

The annual winter meeting of the League whose membership comprises more than 350 Historical Societies and Commissions of Massachusetts akin to our own, will be held on Saturday, January 18th, with Boston University as host, at its George Sherman Union, 775 Commonwealth Ave., Boston. Registration begins at 10:30 A.M. and our own Mrs. Elizabeth Amadon, Director of the Massachusetts Historical Commission will be one of the principal speakers. The theme of the Conference will be "THE STATE AND THE LOCAL HISTORICAL AGENCY. It involves both the local historical societies and the local historical commissions. Speakers and discussions will center on new funding sources for historical projects and preservations. Officials of the Massachusetts State Archives, Council on the Arts and Humanities, Revolutionary War Bicentennial Commission, and the Supervisor of Public Records will be there to answer questions. It is a great opportunity for members of our Society to participate and to bring back ideas that can prove most worthwhile to us in our program planning. Registration, coffee hour, luncheon and all sessions both morning and afternoon are available at a total cost of \$5 per person. Reservations with checks payable to Boston University must reach American Studies Program, 226 Bay State Road, Boston, Mass. 02215 not later than January 13th. We hope you will join us there.

In the following article, Dr. Laska describes the benefits she and Mrs. Marylee C. Marsh as teachers of history at Regis and Weston High School respectively, derived from the last meeting. We were also delighted to greet again Mr. and Mrs. F. Leslie Ford, so Weston's representation numbered five in all. Since our Society is a member of the League each of us is entitled to attend. Inspirational indeed have been those gatherings of the past few years at Plymouth, Falmouth, Newburyport, Uxbridge, Pittsfield, Sterling, Cambridge and other fascinating towns throughout the Commonwealth. To receive the Bay State Bulletin, filled with what contemporary societies are doing and other historic material, call the Editor 899-4515, about becoming an associate member for a nominal sum.

A MOST SUCCESSFUL CONFERENCE

Dr. Vera Laska

The annual fall meeting of the Bay State Historical League took place in Barre, Massachusetts on Saturday October 19, 1974. Co-hosts were Barre Historical Society and the Barre Historical Commission. The meeting was the concluding event of the Bicentennial celebration of this charming town. Its celebrations started in early April and continued with about a dozen events throughout the year. We are happy that our sister Massachusetts town was blessed with gorgeous weather during the entire day—as if the heavens wanted to contribute to the joy of the whole town.

We wish to comment especially on the careful, efficient preparations for this meeting. Not only were the logistics of meeting places, lunch, and sight-seeing perfectly arranged, but the memorial pamphlet was thought through in a logical manner. Participants could read between the lines, the loving care that went into its writing.

One of the main events was a presentation by Professor Richard L. Bushman and his able assistant, Betty Pruett, who acquainted us with Boston University's project in the nation's bicentennial, their subject being "The Town of Concord." The end product is a series of guidelines for secondary and perhaps college level teachers and students who may undertake similar studies of their own towns. This part of the program "Massachusetts Towns and the Revolution—Teaching Local History in the High School" was most interesting and, in itself, worth the trip. It was lucky for Weston that Mrs. Marsh of the High School History Department was also present.

We were entertained with "Historical Sketches" by Rev. Francis B. Kelly who reminisced over the past two centuries of Barre's history. After lunch we visited several historic buildings and especially enjoyed the commentator who was our guide at the Historical Society's town museum:—he turned out to be our November guest speaker, former Westonite, fellow-member, Gilbert M. Upham! Thank you, Barre, for your hospitality!



THIS TERCENTENARY TREE WAS PARTLY IN WESTON TILL 1951
Has been known as THE STATION TREE since 1749

The owners of the two oldest oaks which span their entire front yard on Skating Pond Road just off the old Boston Post Road, are fellow members, Mr. and Mrs. John J. Doyle, Jr. Both oaks are in good condition and are estimated to be from 200 to 250 years old. Three other large oaks abutting the Doyles are felt to be slightly younger.

The 8 venerable Buttonwoods are located as follows: Two, close together, are on North Avenue across the street from the Weston Dog Ranch and about 200 feet west of Viles Street. One is in healthy shape, the other needs food and care. Our third veteran, the only one not at roadside, is found to be excellently fed and pruned in the side yard of the historic Nathaniel Bemis house at 216 Conant Road. Four more are to be found on the old Boston Post Road. Driving westward from the Town Green, we soon come to the hillside immediately beyond the Christian Science Church. There opposite the bank building and just before coming to the cellar hole of the old Lamson house which was condemned and destroyed in 1940, looms a graceful tree on whose broad base rests a "sucker" that may, in another century or so, attain the height but not the girth of its parent. A few hundred feet ahead on the left, beyond the old Farmers' Burying Ground and just this side of the bole of the historic "Burgoyne Elm" is another healthy buttonwood surrounded by tall pines and the fast-growing scion of the old mother elm under whose majestic branches the disheartened, bedraggled, and hungry remnants of Burgoyne's army, more than 2,000 of them, slept one cold October night in 1777 as the last stop before Boston after their capture at Saratoga.

Crossing the Post Road to a point just barely beyond Soldiers' Park and the intersection of Fisk Lane, we find the two aged sentinels that for centuries faced the Burgoyne Elm, and since 1792 and 1805 respectively, Central Cemetery and the Isaac Fiske Law office. Since its restoration in the late sixties by many of us, the law office has been this Society's headquarters. Finally the eighth of our Bicentennial Buttonwoods is to be found immediately south of 119 Park Road, erstwhile East Newton Street, where it proudly presides over the Leo J. Martin Memorial Golf Course of today. It may not have seen any presidents or generals ride by on horseback or by stage, but in 1892 it watched the capture in the haymow of Ralph Seaverns' barn across the road, of four armed robbers. They had bombed and burglarized the grain store of Keefe Brothers in what we know as the Hersum Block in the Town Center. See Weston Historical Society Bulletin, March 1972, Vol. VIII, No. 3.

We only know of one other buttonwood in the town today. Even it has seen more than a century, but is not old enough to recall the Revolution. It faces the driveway entrance to 21 Chestnut Street and we keep wondering why there aren't more of them; also were the 9 that we have thus far "spotted" planted or did they sprout from seed? Once they start, they stay a long time. According to Emerson, the buttonwood was cultivated



SAMUEL LIVERMORE'S 1749 MAP
SHOWS "THE STATION TREE" ON THE LINE
BETWEEN WESTON, WELLESLEY (then Needham), AND NATICK.

in England 345 years ago. There it was called the "occidental plane." ("Plane tree, or platane, is classical; but buttonwood is the good, English, descriptive name which belongs to it.") Very little use of its wood is made in the arts because of its tendency to warp.

Think of the history our Bicentennial trees have witnessed, especially those on the old Post Road! The list of notables who passed them includes first General and then President George Washington, President John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, the Marquis de Lafayette, Paul Revere, Generals John Glover, Henry Knox, and of course innumerable times, our own General George Marshall who lived a short distance up Highland Street and whose beautiful home—twice moved, has stood since 1882 at 22 Church Street. Yes, our old Revolutionary War heroes have long since gone, but our buttonwoods live on and on, century after century.

Now without straining too much of a point, we could rightfully add to Weston's list of Bicentennial Trees a white oak that until 1951 actually was, in large part anyway, in the Town of Weston. Two of our illustrations support this assertion. In 1749, Samuel Livermore, Surveyor to the King, made the map reproduced herein through the tracing made by Mrs. Roy Dickson, wife of our Treasurer, of the original map now so weather-beaten and worn with age that it would not photograph clearly. After failing to locate it at the State Archives or the offices of any of the State, County, or local engineers we were ready to believe that it no longer existed. Interviewing our Natick neighbor, Henry Prunaret, owner of the historic Jennison 1738 house about a mile beyond the Weston line at the corner of Winter and Frost Streets, he suddenly surprised us by saying that in 1945 he had presented it to the Planning Board of the Town of Natick and that today it is in the safe custody of the Morse Institute, Natick's public library. That's where we found it. We were jubilant because so many of the deeds of Weston citizens in that vicinity specifically refer to "The Station Tree."

Why isn't it still in Weston? It was ceded to Natick by Weston Selectmen who in the Town's annual report for the year 1950 stated: "We magnanimously agreed to cede to Natick eight or ten houses on about two acres of land . . . and have asked the legislature to pass a special act establishing a new boundary." In the following spring, the Legislature did pass such an act and it was signed into law. Were the Weston line restored southwestward only 20 feet along Winter Street, the famous landmark of which Natick now can so rightfully be proud, would have been on Weston's list of Bicentennial trees without question. We can be sure that it was part of Weston during the Revolutionary War and for a century and three quarters thereafter.

How do we know it is at least 300 years old? Well, it was big enough in 1749 to have been chosen as "The Station Tree" by Samuel Livermore of Sudbury. It must have been at least 75 years old to have been selected. Today we measured its circumference as fourteen feet!

Why aren't more old trees standing today where so much Weston land is still uncleared? Our guide and counsellor in all the above is Mr. Gordon P. DeWolf, Jr., horticultural specialist of the Arnold Arboretum, who lives on the Case Estates. He points out that until the early 1800's most of the country's population huddled close to the seacoast, extending only to a limited degree into the wild and dangerous interior. Thus lands near the settlements were first cleared, step by step for farming, fuel, and grazing. Indeed we know that for its first 75 years, Weston was "The Farmers' Precinct" of Watertown. Only roadside trees and those on untillable rocky land were spared the woodman's axe.

By 1830 much of this clearing was abandoned as migration pushed first into upper New York State and then steadily westward. Thus much land hereabouts that had been needed before was allowed to go back to nature. Thankfully over 60% of Massachusetts is still covered by verdant forests and 33,000,000 of all New England's 40,000,000 acres are still wild growth. Our very own Sanderson Hill where the Beacon stood watch during the Revolution is now overgrown with timber but the stone walls on its summit and slopes attest to the existence of farms and pastures during Colonial days.

We're anxious to add to our list of Bicentennial trees. Some members may find candidates in the woods and other undisturbed areas of the town. If so, call the Editor, 899-4515, and an expert will investigate.

Harold G. Travis

SPEAKING OF BEACONS

Since descendants of Jonas Sanderson always maintained that Jonas burnt tar barrels at the beacon near his house to alert the countryside of British movements during the Revolution, the following quotation may lend some credibility to the family tradition. It is from the journal of Madame Riedesel, wife of the general who commanded German troops fighting under Burgoyne, and was written during the summer of 1778 in Cambridge where she and her husband were "Saratoga Prisoners."

"The Americans, when they desire to collect their troops together, place burning torches of pitch upon the hill tops, at which signal everyone hastens to the rendezvous. We were once witnesses of this, when General Howe attempted a landing at Boston in order to rescue the captive troops. They learned of this plan, as usual, long beforehand, and opened barrels of pitch, whereupon, for three or four successive days, a large number of people, without shoes and stockings, and with guns on their backs, were seen hastily coming from all directions, by which means so many people came together so soon that it would have been a very difficult thing to effect a landing."

Such informal practises proved to be the forerunner of the beacon system ordered by General William Heath September 7, 1778.*

Brenton H. Dickson, III

*See *Weston Historical Society BULLETIN*, October 1974, Vol. XI, No. 1.

JOSIAH SMITH TAVERN

Open House Wednesdays one to three through February,—two to four rest of year. Come and inspect our newly decorated rooms. The original 1757 colors, professionally analyzed, have been brought back. We are pleased and hope that you, too, will enjoy them.

OBSOLETE WESTON WORDS

Many changes have taken place in the everyday vocabulary of Weston residents since our town was settled more than three hundred years ago. Some of these words are still used but certain old meanings of these words have disappeared.

Perhaps there is no better way to show this than to present a brief glossary of obsolete words, or common words with obsolete meanings. We have tried to confine these to Weston deeds on file in the Middlesex County Registry of Deeds,—to old Weston wills, or inventories of estates filed in our Probate Court, or to old Weston account books used in Weston stores as follows:

alien; To estrange. To transfer ownership of property to someone else.

allotted lands; Land which has not been transferred from the original owner to whom it had been allotted.

barleycorn; A measure of length, equal to the average length of a grain of barley,—one third of an inch.

behoof; To make use of, advantage, benefit.

calamanco; A European woolen fabric of satin weave and plain or striped design, imitating camel's hair cloth.

chain; A linear measure of 100 links, each 7.92 inches long, or 66 feet in all.

cordwainer; A shoe or boot maker.

cowpen farm; In his will, dated 1684, John Livermore left the property "comonly caled the cowpen farm" to his son, John Jr. The cowpen had been the enclosure for the town's stray cattle. On July 17, 1649, it was voted "to git a penn of one aker of ground fenced in with 4 Railes for the lodging of a heard in the woods — towards Sudbury (now Wayland) Bounds".

currier; One who curries and dresses leather after it is tanned.

dividend lands; On July 25, 1636, a grant of the "Great Dividends" was allotted to the freemen of Watertown. Beginning at the south boundary of Cambridge the land west through northern Weston was divided into four divisions east and west, each division being 160 rods (one half mile) in width. The divisions were numbered from the north. The most southern division was division four.

Each division was called a "squadron", and the lines between the divisions were called "squadron lines". There are many references in early Weston deeds to "dividend lands" and to "squadron lines". Very often a squadron line became the boundary of a property.

durra; A grain sorghum having medium sized, dry pithy stalks and narrow leaves.

ell; A measure, chiefly for cloth. It had different lengths in different countries. We have seen references to the English, the Flemish, and the Scotch ells which were 45 inches, 27 inches and 37 inches respectively.

entail; To settle lands on a person, or his descendants.

exonerate; To free one from further financial obligation.

fear nothing; English overcoating of the cheviot group. Heavy in weight,—the filling yarn aids in obtaining the characteristic shaggy face finish of the fabric. Much shoddy and other reworked fibers are used.

feoff; To invest, to put in possession, to enfeoff. This word or some other member of this word family (such as foeffee, feoffer, feoffed, feoffment, feoffing, enfeoffed and its corresponding words), are used in hundreds of early deeds.

freedom suit; (a) Designated clothing given a boy or girl upon completion of apprenticeship as indentured servants until age 21. Nathan Jones of Weston, son of Elisha Jones, gave Phineas Jones "A Hatt and Freedom Suit" on April 15, 1771. Nathan paid £5/8/3½. We have a copy of the indenture. Nathan had agreed to supply Phineas "with two good suits of apparel, one whereof to be new and give him four pounds in money." Phineas Jones was born March 29, 1750 and had just reached his 21st birthday. He was not a relative but his father, Moses Jones, had died July 21, 1755 when Phineas was five years old. The Town of Weston had helped with the expenses of his last illness. (b) Albert Bushnell Hart in his *Commonwealth History of Massachusetts* applies this term also to the several court cases brought by negroes seeking freedom from slavery after the adoption of the Massachusetts constitution of 1780. This constitution freed the slaves in Massachusetts, but it did not work automatically.

- freeman*; In general, a term applied to church members. Church members could vote! There were rare exceptions, however. (Josiah Jones, the grandfather of Isaac Jones of the Golden Ball Tavern became a freeman in 1690.)
- garlix*; also garlitz or garliz; The Oxford English Dictionary says it is a kind of linen cloth imported from Germany or Russia. This is the cloth most commonly sold in the store of Elisha Jones, according to his account book for 1745 - 1761.
- gentleman*; Anyone above the social condition of a yeoman. Many yeomen became gentlemen.
- groat*; An English silver coin worth four pence. Also any of several continental coins resembling this. "Not worth a groat."
- hereditaments*; Any form of property that can be inherited.
- hogreave*; (hoggreave, hogreve, hogreeve, Hog Reeve) a town officer whose duty was to impound stray hogs. Samuel Baldwin and Thomas Mansfield were appointed in 1755, and in 1826 seven men were appointed to this post.
- homestall*; A farmyard, or a homestead. A word which was used frequently.
- husbandman*; A farmer. A cultivator of the ground, his land or that of others.
- jointure*; A Joint tenacy of an estate,—the estate so held.
- Land of contention*; In southwestern Watertown (now Weston) there was much dissatisfaction among the earliest settlers about the "allotments in the remote meadows -- which led to much contention and repeated surveys". In 1649 in "a publique Town Meeting" it was voted to give the seven Selectmen the power to decide the boundaries but "the dissatisfaction and contention continued many years, at least until 1663". It was this state of affairs that gave the name "The Land of Contention" which is found in a great many Weston deeds. The area contained 1102 acres including that covered by water (Nonesuch Pond) and was bounded on the south by Dedham, west by Natick and Sudbury, otherwise by Watertown (now Wellesley, Natick, Wayland and Weston) farm land.
- lighterage*; The price paid for lightering. Also loading or unloading, or transportation by lighter. A lighter was a large boat or barge.
- manumitted*; To release from slavery, to liberate from personal bondage. Jonathan Bullard, innholder, who lived on the property which is now Weston High School wrote in his will, "and I do order that my negro slave, Cuffee, shall be manumitted at my Decease and that he shall have a Home, or Habitation allowed and provided by my son Jonathan in my now dwelling House if he desires it." The will is dated May 24, 1773.
- messuage*; This much used word means a dwelling house with its adjacent buildings.
- moidore*; A gold coin of Portugal and Brazil having an intrinsic value of \$3.27, used until 1735.
- moiety*; Another much used word, especially with regard to real estate. One of two equal parts, one half.
- nail*; A measure of length, one sixteenth of a yard or 2¼ inches.
- old tenor*; Mr. Francis Fullam of Weston made a will on December 12, 1757, in which he provided that each of his three living daughters should receive at his death money in addition to that which they had already received which "makes up about 500 pounds *old tenor*" for each. The Oxford English Dictionary came to our rescue as follows: "The value of a bank note or bill as stated on it; in the phrases, old tenor, middle tenor, new tenor, referring to the successive issues of paper currency in the colonies of Massachusetts and Rhode Island in the 18th century".
- pistareen*; A debased piece of Spanish money of the early 18th century. Its value was one fifth of the old piece of eight, or dollar.
- preservers of deer*; Annually appointed town officers in Weston who had control over the enforcement of laws governing the hunting of deer. This office existed from early days until 1791 when Joseph Stone and John Lamson were appointed.
- shalloon*; A woolen fabric of twill weave used chiefly for linings.
- tythingman (tithingman)*; A Parish officer chosen annually to preserve good order in the church during divine services, to make complaint of disorderly conduct, and to enforce the observance of the Sabbath. In many of his duties he corresponded to the modern constable.
- yeoman*; A small proprietor who cultivates his own land.

Homer C. Lucas

DATES TO REMEMBER OF IMPORTANT MEETINGS

Saturday, January 18th: Bay State League: See Page 2,
 Wednesday, January 22nd: Members' Get-together: Josiah Smith Tavern: 8 P.M., Homer
 C. Lucas Speaker: See Page 1,
 Thursday, April 24th: Annual Charter Anniversary Dinner: Details in our next issue.

A SPECIAL INVITATION TO EVERY FAMILY IN WESTON
 IF NOT ALREADY A MEMBER OF THIS SOCIETY.

The Directors of Weston Historical Society, Brenton H. Dickson 3rd, Donald D. Douglass, Mrs. Dudley B. Dumaine, Mrs. Marshall Dwinnell, Erlund Field, Homer C. Lucas, Edward W. Marshall, Grant M. Palmer, Jr., Mrs. M. Kirkbride Patterson, and Harold G. Travis, have authorized the mailing of this issue of the BULLETIN to every Weston household. If you are already a member,—your continued support is always helpful. If you're a newcomer or have simply neglected to affiliate, we especially invite you to enroll now.

We are involved in every facet and phase of Weston's history. We are dedicated to the preservation and protection of every important landmark of the Town. Our active interest runs up and down every street. Our work involves the students of all our schools and our leadership comes from our fellow citizens, oldtimers and newcomers alike,—each with a contribution to make. As a result, our meetings are stimulating and enjoyable as well as educational. The BULLETIN is issued quarterly and its contents over the years form the nucleus of Weston history. Our activities have led to significant restorations, to the saving of structures, to the adoption by the Town of an Historical Commission, to improved teaching of Weston's history in our schools, to awards for craftsmanship from historical materials, and in all ways the Society has been a great morale builder in developing civic pride through its example, its meetings several times annually, its stimulating programs and get-togethers.

With the advent of the American Revolutionary War Bicentennial, it is our aim to have every Weston citizen a member of our Society. Names of new members and of all regular members will be published with our next issue. Be sure you and all your neighbors are 100% enrolled. Act now by returning this application blank (a fresh copy of The BULLETIN will be mailed to you promptly).

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

Please accept the enclosed check for \$ _____ to cover membership as follows:
 Family at \$5 per year _____ (Covers children under 21)
 Single at \$3 per year _____ Life at \$200 one-time _____

Name_____

Town_____ State _____ Zip Code_____

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WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

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