

BAY STATE HISTORICAL LEAGUE'S FALL MEETING AT DUXBURY OCTOBER 21ST LARGE CONTINGENT EXPECTED FROM WESTON FOR PLEASANT EVENT

The Duxbury Rural and Historical Society will host several hundred members of the Bay State Historical League's meeting on Saturday, October 21st. Get in touch with Mrs. Dumaine, Liaison Chairman, (899-1098) or any of our officers who will be glad to arrange pool cars in case you are in need of transportation. Advance reservations are recommended.

The host society includes several Westonians, and former residents who are still members of our Society too. Its president is James Otis Post, Jr., former Waylandite currently a director of the League. Of the League and of its meetings, he writes in the current Bay State Historical League Bulletin, Volume 4, Number 4: "The local host opens the treasures of the locality to the visitors. A wide choice is available, from seminars on common problems of historical societies, to field trips to historic sites, to participation in tours in company with congenial associates."

We have a dual purpose in urging Weston members to "come with us to Duxbury on the 21st." First, you'll have a short and easy drive to a place that's rich in history and in people dedicated to its preservation; you'll long remember the fun and fellowship that will characterize this gathering of kindred souls. And second, it's not too early to mention another great reason for your attendance.

Weston Historical Society itself has agreed to host the spring meeting next April, so the Duxbury pilgrimage will afford you an opportunity to get some ideas that will help us begin to frame and support a most attractive all-day program from nine in the morning to five in the afternoon. Weston knows how to put on a truly great day, and with all our resources, the directors feel sure of the active and enthusiastic support of each and every member. Come and observe with us at Duxbury on the 21st!

IN MEMORIAM

To the family of Mrs. Dean S. Edmonds, Jr. who lost her life in a tragic automobile accident a few months ago, we extend our most sincere sympathy.

ANOTHER BEQUEST SWELLS ENDOWMENT FUND INTO FIVE FIGURES

The Weston Historical Society's Endowment and Memorial Fund has passed the \$10,000 mark with the receipt from the Estate of Almira M. Boltz of a generous four figure bequest. She and her husband, the late Peter D. Boltz, were charter members of the Society. In typical modesty, she gave us no inkling of her intentions which has made her gift seem to be all the more genuine, generous, inspiring, and meaningful.

As we have often explained, the principal of the Endowment Fund comprises not only Life Memberships, Memorial Gifts, and Special or Designated Contributions but also bequests such as the above and that of our beloved charter director, the late Mrs. Homer ("Betty") Sweet. An attractive two-fold advantage of gifts to Endowment is that by policy of the Directors, (1) the annual interest only therefrom may be expended for special causes which seem to be beyond the realm of routine operations and programs, but which, on their own special merit, do or will serve an unusually significant purpose of benefit to the Town through the Society's work; and that (2), the interest of the preceding year if not thus voted, is added automatically to the principal and thenceforth becomes "untouchable" except to the extent its own interest, then currently earned, allows.

The next time you add a codicil to *your* will, think of the Weston Historical Society. Meanwhile a \$250 Life Membership, free thenceforth from annual dues, would be a nice Holiday, Birthday, or Friendship present to one you love, — even yourself!

WESTON AND THE STREET RAILWAY

"The publisher having travelled from Boston to Detroit, Mich., by trolley, studying the various lines, methods of operation and possibilities of business, is convinced that nowhere in the world is there a greater opportunity for the street railways to increase pleasure travel, nor anywhere for the trolley tourist to find such varying charms of landscape, historical spots and delightful rides as here in the old Bay State." . . . BY TROLLEY THROUGH EASTERN NEW ENGLAND: R. H. Derrah, 1904

Although the interurban street railway enjoyed only a brief existence, it was born with high hopes. Unlike the steam railroad whose stations were few and far between, the trolley car traveled along the street, picking up passengers at nearly every intersection. There was no competition from automobiles which were just playthings and too unreliable to be used as anything else.

Waltham and Newton were crisscrossed with streetcar tracks; — Wayland had its line connecting the village with Natick; Wellesley had lines to adjoining towns. Little wonder then that Weston felt neglected in not having its own modern transportation.

As early as the 1860's, Waltham had a horse car line which eventually went from Main Street to the Boston and Albany depot at West Newton; — then, with electrification, tracks were laid on many streets with lines running to Watertown, Newton, Lexington, etc. In 1890 the Waltham Free Press stated that "There is some talk about the extension of the electric railway service from Waltham through Church Street and down North Avenue to Waltham again. Several think such a road would pay."

Nothing further appears on this matter until 1899 when a public hearing was held at the Weston Town Hall on a petition of the Waltham, Weston, and Wayland Street Railway Corp. for locating tracks on Central Avenue, Weston, from Waltham to the Wayland line. Those speaking in favor of the location included Messrs. Alfred L. Cutting and Alphonso Dunn; those speaking against it were Messrs. Charles H. Fiske, Samuel C. Bennett, Charles F. Russell, and Robert Winsor.

Scrutiny of the 145 signatures on the petition showed that 76 were not property owners in Weston and that 20 of the 76 were not even registered voters, that many of the remaining 69 lived in remote parts of the town, and only 7 owned land abutting Central Avenue. Of the 106 votes recorded, 64 were in favor and 42 in opposition.

A public hearing was again held a year later, 1900, on another petition which met much opposition, and a majority of the board voted that the petitioners had leave to withdraw.

In the Town's 1902 annual report we find the Waltham Street Railway Co. and the Newton Street Railway Co. petitioning for an electric railway along North Avenue in Weston from the Waltham to the Lincoln line, and it appeared that the majority of real estate owners abutting the avenue were in favor of the proposed location. It also appeared that the town ways of Weston could be important links in the comprehensive street railway systems being developed through New England. The Board of Selectmen was convinced that in planning for future development, a double track system would be necessary, for the cars would be running at a rate of speed far in excess of the rate at which ordinary vehicles were limited by town law, and that the only way of avoiding danger to the general public would be to lay out the highway in accordance with a "boulevard plan" which reserved a space in the center of the highway for the street railway, with ample room on either side for vehicular and pedestrian use. The Board was influenced by the plan which had been granted by the Wellesley Selectmen to the Boston and Worcester Street Railway Co. in 1902.

The "boulevard plan" submitted for North Avenue required widening the road to 81 feet. This would provide 2 six-foot sidewalks, 2 roads for vehicular traffic, each 25 feet wide with a 25 foot right of way between them, to accommodate the double track system. The street railway company would pay all expenses of widening, altering, and locating the highway, and all land damages and drainage. The double track line would be of "T" rails weighing not less than 70 pounds to the yard, and crossings would be paved with granite. The ties would be 6 feet long, six inches wide and 6 inches thick; the poles or structures for conveying telegraph, telephone, and light wires as well and painted to protect them from decay, and of a height and diameter acceptable to the Selectmen. There would be adequate ballast for the rails, and all street crossings would be paved with first quality granite blocks. The fare for a passenger whose ride would be wholly within Weston could not exceed five cents, and no freight would be carried on the line. It is possible that stringent requirements were somewhat responsible for the Newton Street Railway's desire to abandon the project.

In 1907 The Boston, Waltham, and Western Electric Railroad Co. was organized. It was to go from Waltham to Marlboro. The Weston section would begin 1,000 feet north of Stony Brook railroad station and run westerly through private land to a point on Church Street just opposite

WHO'S GOING TO FIND THE WESTON OLDEST RESIDENT CANE?

In our October 1977 issue, Vol. XIV, No. 1, we noted that the last known holder of the now defunct Boston Post's gold-headed cane, was the late Francis Ripley, Weston's last Civil War survivor, who died in 1939. One of the Society's most prized possessions is the oil painting by Miss Gertrude Fiske, showing the old veteran proudly clutching that cane with both hands. Though a year has elapsed since our BULLETIN plea, no light has been shed on the missing cane, but hope springs eternal, especially since wider inquiry through the Bay State Historical League and otherwise, continues to uncover the whereabouts of similar canes from Stockbridge in the Berkshires to Falmouth on Cape Cod.

Last May 12th's *Falmouth Enterprise*, under the heading "*Boston Post Cane To Be Awarded Again*," informed us that "After more than three years of inactivity, selectmen have decided to award again the gold-headed Boston Post Cane to the oldest Falmouth resident . . . The cane has been in a closet of the Selectmen's office since the death in December 1974 of Zana Swift in her 100th year. Until it was awarded to Mrs. Swift it had been held successively by 19 of Falmouth's eldest residents since 1909 . . . (It) started as a promotion by E. A. Grozier who gave out canes to 692 New England towns . . ."

A similar article in the Stockbridge section of Pittsfield's *Berkshire Eagle*, was received by us from Lillian Preiss, retired president of the Sheffield Historical Society. In part, it read: "In ceremonies Monday at 7:15 in the Town Hall, the town's oldest male, best known for having played the chimes in the Children's Chime Tower for the past 43 summers, will receive the gold-capped cane, traditionally held by the oldest male resident."

Wouldn't it be fun to find Weston's missing cane and watch a Selectman present it to our 101 year old charter member, Miss Anna Hall? The oldtime spirit of Old Weston would once more rise to the occasion!

NEW MEMBERS

A most hearty welcome is extended to our newest members: Miss Janet F. Brodie, Mr. and Mrs. William L. Crowe III, Mrs. Laura Hersum, and Dr. and Mrs. Edward C. Dyer.

GLEANINGS FROM YESTERYEAR'S NEWS

In the Kendal Green section of Weston news in the November 9th, 1906 *Waltham Free Press-Tribune*, we came across the following:

"Rev. E. H. Thresher, pastor of the M. E. Church here in 1888, 1889, and 1890 — now pastor at Newton Upper Falls — will preach here next Sunday morning. It is hoped that people will come to hear him."

Under a Weston heading, the same paper's March 23rd, 1907 issue announced that "Dr. F. D. Hyde has moved his office to the old Golden Ball Inn." On the following July 18th, it noted: "The Tennyson (Tennis and? --Ed.) Racket Club had a good time on the river last Saturday afternoon and evening."

Finally its October 23rd issue informs us that "During the fall, the Selectmen of Weston fixed a speed limit of 10 miles per hour for School Street." Many complaints had been received from various riders and drivers that their horses had been badly frightened by horseless carriages which were beginning to roar over local roads.

WARTIME BURLESQUE IN THE OLD TOWN HALL!

Has anyone information about the 1861 benefit concert advertised below? This old handbill which is owned by the Massachusetts Historical Society, evokes and invites conjecture and speculation. Perhaps examination of press notices of that era will enlighten us. With tickets at 20 cents each, we wonder to what extent the "Benefit" prospered financially.

POSTPONED
UNTIL MONDAY EVENING.

PROGRAMME OF
TABLEAUX
....AND....
BURLESQUES!

—TO BE GIVEN AT THE—
TOWN HALL, - - - WESTON, MASS.,
....ON....
MONDAY EVENING, November 18, 1861,

—FOR THE—
BENEFIT OF THE
SOLDIERS OF THE NATIONAL ARMY
COMMENCING WITH A
BOHEMIAN CIPSEY SCENE,

—ENTITLED—
FLOWERS OF THE FOREST.

After which the following Tableaux :—

THE GODDESS OF LIBERTY!

Illustrations from the Poets!

THE CROSS AND THE CROWN;
THE TOMB SCENE IN ROMEO AND JULIET.

TO BE FOLLOWED BY

A BURLESQUE CONCERT, by a well-known Troupe.

After which the TABLEAUX—

NIGHT & MORNING;
BERENGARIA at the TENT of RICHARD.

To be followed by the Comic Song—in character—

SIMON, THE CELLARER!

—AND CONCLUDING WITH—

POOR FILLIS!

TICKETS 20 CENTS EACH, to be had at the door.

Doors open at 7.....Entertainment to commence at 7 1-2 o'clock precisely.

J. H. & F. F. Farwell, Printers, 112 Washington Street, Boston.

1757 JOSIAH SMITH TAVERN "OPEN HOUSE" EVERY WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON

Our Curator, Mrs. James E. (Alice Tyler) Fraser, and her faithful committee, remind all members of the hearty welcome they will get any Wednesday afternoon. Keep abreast of acquisitions and improvements — up to date on all that's happening. If occasionally you can lend a helping hand, perhaps are looking for a project, seeking information or guidance, or just "dropping by," you'll get a friendly welcome. This historic building, oldest in downtown Weston, was operated continuously as a tavern for most of its first 91 years by Josiah Smith and his family. For the next 102 years it was a private residence although once in a while, town meetings were held in its ballroom upstairs in early times. After almost a century the home of Marshall and John Jones and their descendants, it became the property 28 years ago of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities. It is leased by the Town of Weston and our Society occupies most of the original house. The abutting barn of the Josiah Smith Tavern was appropriately restored as a Bicentennial project by the Women's Community League and is a most attractive and useful adjunct. For a fuller account of the tavern where the Liberty Men gathered in Colonial times, see Weston Historical Society BULLETIN, January 1968: Vol. IV, No. 2, Pages 4-6 inclusive.



WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

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SCHEDULE OF DUES

Annual: \$5 per person: \$8 per family, including children under 21

Life: \$250 per person

Gift Memberships are suggested

Contributions and Bequests to the Endowment Fund are welcomed

Additional copies of THE BULLETIN may be obtained at \$1 each by phoning Mrs. Paynter at 899-3533 or Harold G. Travis, Editor, 899-4515.