

# THE WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN



January 1979

Vol. XV, No. 2

***HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR MEMBERS  
AND TO THE TOWN WE SO PROUDLY HAIL AND SERVE***



**WESTON'S FIRST FIRE DEPARTMENT  
HOOK AND LADDER NO. 1 ORGANIZED 1890  
See Story on Page 3**

## **PROGRAM COMMITTEE ANNOUNCES THREE ATTRACTIVE COMING EVENTS**

1. **WINTER MEETING:** February date to be announced.  
Speaker: *Kathryn C. Buhler*, well-known authority on American Silver, will give an illustrated lecture on that subject. Author of many books, she is Research Fellow on American Decorative Arts and Sculpture at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Also she acts as Consultant to the Society of Colonial Dames.
2. **SPRING MEETING IN WESTON OF BAY STATE HISTORICAL LEAGUE:** April 21st.  
Our Society will play host to delegates representing almost 400 local Historical Societies and Commissions from all over the Commonwealth. All our members are invited to attend and to assist. See story on Page 2.
3. **TRADITIONAL CHARTER ANNIVERSARY DINNER** in May.  
As usual it will be the high spot of our Society's year. Date, place, speaker, and other details will come to you in our next issue.

## WESTON CHOSEN FOR BAY STATE HISTORICAL LEAGUE'S SPRING MEETING

As announced on Page 1, our Society has the honor of hosting the annual spring meeting of the 76 year old Bay State Historical League on Saturday, April 21st. At its December 12th meeting in the Josiah Smith Tavern, your board of directors approved the proposed program which will be worked out with League officials by our president, Mr. Riley. Many Westonians, all members of our Society, have been and are individual members and supporters of the League. Mr. Riley is a former vice president. Your editor and Mrs. F. Leslie Ford each successively served three year terms as directors in the late 1960's and early 1970's. Because of our Society's membership, you automatically are invited to attend all League meetings. The winter meeting is in nearby Lexington on Saturday, January 27th, at the Museum of our National Heritage. If you're able to attend, call Mrs. Dumaine at 899-1098.

The theme of the April meeting in Weston will be "THE COLLECTING AND PRESERVATION OF PAINTINGS AND PRINTS". Our fellow member, Charles D. Childs, who so delightfully gave us his illustrated lecture, "American Life as the Artist Has Seen It", (Vol. XIV, No. 2), will be one of four prominent discussion leaders. The others are:

Georgia B. Baumgardner, Andrew W. Mellon Curator of Graphic Arts at the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, and

Mr. and Mrs. David Regamey, currently engaged as conservationists by the Massachusetts Historical Society and other institutions.

In view of the size of the affair, we are grateful that Regis College generously offered its facilities for the meeting and luncheon. The program is still in its early stages, but in general will be as follows:

9:00 A.M. — Registration, Coffee and doughnuts.

10:00 A.M. — *Welcome*: our President, Stephen T. Riley.

*Brief History of Weston*: our Historian, Brenton H. Dickson.

Business Meeting: Bay State Historical League.

12:30-1:30 — Luncheon

1:30-2:30 — Papers and Discussions:

"COLLECTING AND PRESERVATION OF PAINTINGS AND PRINTS".

2:30 — Tours to historic spots and places; i.e., Cardinal Spellman Stamp Museum, the Golden Ball Tavern, the Weston Historical Society rooms in the Josiah Smith Tavern and the Quilt Show in its adjoining barn, the Isaac Fiske Law Office, headquarters of the Society, and Weston Observatory.

4:30 — Reception in the Ball Room of the Josiah Smith Tavern.

Truly April 21st gives us all a rare opportunity to show Weston at its best. Resolve now to help — there is much to do, so please volunteer your time and talent. The following members are heading up some of the most important functions, and would be glad to hear from you.

Registration — Mrs. Dudley B. Dumaine

Program — Mrs. M. Kirkbride Patterson with Mr. Riley

Publicity — John S. Hodges

"Open House", Josiah Smith Tavern — Mrs. J. E. Fraser

Hospitality — Mrs. Reginald D. Wells

Golden Ball Tavern Tour — Homer C. Lucas

Transportation — Edward W. Marshall and George S. Pink

Book Table — Mr. and Mrs. Roy L. Dickson

The Quilt Show — Virginia C. Jones

"Open House", Isaac Fiske Law Office — Mesdames Lucas and Travis

## ANOTHER UNTOLD PHASE OF WESTON HISTORY AND THERE ARE MANY MORE!

Pictured on Page One, through courtesy of fellow member Warren Vittum whose father and uncle are among the 17 figures shown, is the truck that was donated to the Town by the Hook and Hastings Organ Company in the early fall of the year 1890. That was when the Town had good reason to be alarmed by an epidemic of 13 fires set by a pyromaniac between April 21st and June 9th in the northwest section. Then in mid-summer when, as related in our March 1974 issue, Vol. X, No. 3, the historic Isaac Fiske (Baldwin Tavern) house was destroyed, everyone agreed "Something has to be done!"

We must express our deepest appreciation to our fellow-townsmen, H. Bentley Crouch, for the courtesy he has extended in giving us access to the incredible amount of material he has collected and collated during the past three decades in respect to early fires of Weston during Colonial times through World War II, but which, because of its vastness, has not yet been published as it most surely should be. Let us give you the tiniest "sampling" of what's in that tremendous opus in the making!

"Early history of the town indicated that fire, while one of the Colonists' best friends, . . . could be used as a weapon against them . . . the only time the Indians penetrated (Weston) was in 1676 during their attacks on Sudbury. At this time they burned a barn in the western part of the town on land now fronting on Sudbury Road."

"Sep. 9, 1882: The house of J. B. Case, about a mile from the center of Weston, was destroyed on Tuesday night . . . loss about \$20,000 . . . had been unoccupied and a hot fire was started in the furnace to dry the house. The Waltham Steamer did good service saving the barn. The Weston Dep't., — consisting of two old fire hooks, — was prompt on the spot."

"Sep. 7, 1883: The Silver Hill station of the Fitchburg R.R. was totally destroyed by first early last evening . . . caused by spark from passing locomotive . . . It is hoped the company will erect a better depot."

"Oct. 25, 1884, 12:15 A.M.: Hall's Shoddy Mill on Church Street at the Fitchburg R.R. Grade Crossing (later known as 'Kendal Green') was completely destroyed . . . loss - \$18,000. The mill was of substantial size . . . following dimensions:

Mill - Main section - Wood - 3 story	119' x 36'
Mill - Ell section - Wood - 1 story	26' x 34'
Mill - Ell section - Wood - 1 story	32' x 34'
Picker House - Wood - 1 story	32' x 38'
Dye House - Brick - 1 story	36' x 38'

"Cause unknown - structure was immediately re-built only to burn down again for the final time almost exactly two years later, Oct. 23, 1886."

"One of the first recorded deaths by fire in Weston occurred on Nov. 7, 1885 when a blaze destroyed one of the boarding houses used by the contractors constructing the Stony Brook Reservoir, and fronting on Summer Street near River Street. Lantern overturned during drunken brawl and there were some 50 men in the building at the time. Through some miracle all but Patrick Sullivan escaped. Loss was set at \$3,000."

"Another Weston death occurred in November 1889 when one Oscar Coburn, attempting to save several horses from a burning barn on Church Street at the location of the present (1974) Kendal Green Riding School, was trapped by falling timbers, and burned to death."

Who, now, will take the initiative in our younger generation, and tap these resources so that posterity never loses the thrilling story that can be told of fire, police, political, educational, and all other facets of "good old Weston"?

THE GOVERNOR'S 1771  
THANKSGIVING PROCLAMATION

WESTON'S SAVAGE RESENTED IT  
MOST OF THE BOSTON MINISTERS REFUSED TO READ IT

Samuel Phillips Savage, Weston's renowned patriot, found the following 1771 Proclamation very distasteful:

By the Governor  
A PROCLAMATION  
For a Publick Thanksgiving

Forasmuch as the frequent Religious Observance of Days of Publick Thanksgiving tends to excite and preserve in our minds a due Sense of our Obligations to GOD, our daily Benefactor, the Mercies of whose common Providence are altogether unmerited by us.:

I have therefore thought fit to appoint, and I do, with the Advice of His Majesty's Council, appoint Thursday the Twenty first Day of November next, to be observed as a Day of Publick Thanksgiving throughout the Province, recommending to Ministers and People to assemble on that Day in the several Churches or Places for Religious worship, and to offer up their humble and hearty Thanks to Almighty GOD, for all the Instances of his Goodness and Loving-kindness to us in the Course of the Year past; more especially for that HE has been pleased to continue the Life and Health of our Sovereign Lord the KING — to increase His Illustrious Family by the Birth of a Prince — to succeed his Endeavours for preserving the Blessing of Peace to his Dominions, when threatened with the Judgment of War — to afford a good Measure of Health to the People of this Province — to continue to them their civil and religious Privileges — to enlarge and increase their Commerce — and to favour them with a remarkably plentiful Harvest.

AND I further recommend to the several Religious Assemblies aforesaid, to accompany their Thanksgivings with devout and fervent Prayers to the Giver of every good and perfect Gift, that we may be enabled to shew forth his Praise not only with our Lips, but in our Lives, by giving up ourselves to his Service, and by walking before Him in Holiness and Righteousness all our Days.

AND all servile Labour is forbidden on the said Day.

GIVEN at the Council Chamber in Boston, the twenty-third day of October, 1771, in the Eleventh Year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord GEORGE the Third, by the Grace of GOD, of Great-Britain, France, and Ireland, KING, Defender of the Faith, etc.

By His Excellency's Command,  
Tho's Flucker, Secr'y.

T. Hutchinson

GOD Save the KING

\*\*\*\*\*

BOSTON: Printed by RICHARD DRAPER, Printer to His Excellency, the Governor, and the Honorable His Majesty's Council, 1771.

Hutchinson relates (Hist., III.347) that in the autumn of 1771 his customary proclamation for an annual Thanksgiving was ill-received. Most of the Boston ministers refused to read it to their congregations, and several in the country. The Reverend Mr. Cook, uncle of Governor Hancock, took for his text on this occasion these words from the Book of Nehemiah (IX. 36, 37): *Behold, we are servants this day, and for the land that thou gavest unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof, behold! we are servants in it; and it yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom thou hast set over us because of our sins; also they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we are in great distress.*

“We were therein called upon to give thanks for the continuance of our Civil and religious privileges, and for the increase of our trade and commerce. Such a palpable affront to the people who are daily complaining of the abridgement of their liberties and the burthens upon their Commerce, gave universal disgust, and the proclamation was treated with greater contempt than anything of the kind had ever been in this part of the world. Out of twenty congregations in this Town (Boston) it was read but in one, and even there by far the greater part of the people signified their contempt by leaving the Church the moment the Parson began to read it.” (Letter of Palfrey to Wilkes, of October 30 and November 20). Quoted in John Gorham Palfrey, *History of New England* (Boston, 1905) Vol. 5, pp. 448-449.

The above two paragraphs, as does Samuel Phillips Savage’s own reaction to the proclamation as expressed in the following, come to us through the courtesy of Stephen T. Riley and The Massachusetts Historical Society.

B.H.D.

Revd and Dr. Sr.:

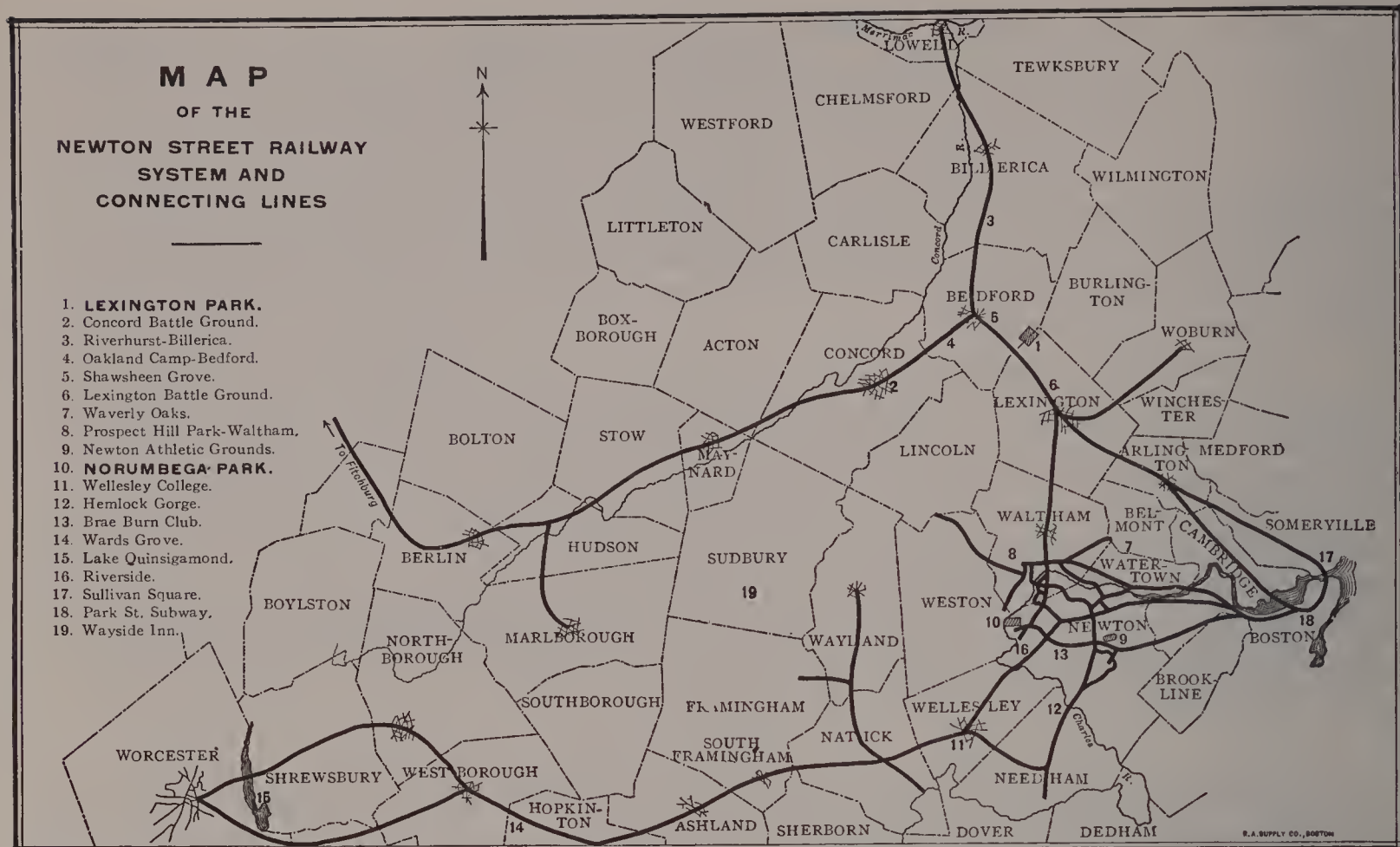
I believe you think my Conduct in Saying what I did to you when I last Conversd with you needs an apology — I think it does — and that you will forgive it. I confess I felt a righteous Indignation at the Penman of the Proclamation for Inserting that Clause that we must (among other Mercies) thank God for the preservation of our rights and privlidges — I with pleasure own we are deeply Indebted to a Gracious God that we have the Enjoyment of aney Mercies and it is to his Munificence alone they are to be ascribed — but for the man who has been the Instrument of stripping nay tairing (tearing) away from us our dear Birthright Enjoyments to Order a day to be Solemnly set apart to return our thanks to Heaven for the Continuance of them is such a degree of Insult as cannot be borne — to feel the Calamity is affliction enough but to be tantalized afterwards is Intolerable and the man who can bear it must have more Virtue or less feelings than I have — Is it concevable that aney people under Heaven can be more abject slaves than they who are governed by one that is without their controul and who are under the awe of a Naval and Military force and is not that the Case of this unhappy afflicted Province — One would think was he to Judge by the style of the haughty Mandate (that) our Master thought he had our Consciences under his Controul as he has our civil rights. What think you of the man who can Calmly pen such a peice of religious Mockery —? I said it was an Insult on heaven and is it now — should one of the Stuart race ascend the British Throne and should a Proclamation be Issued from the Authority that this comes from to set apart a day for this people to offer up their praises to heaven for the distinguished Blessing I believe you would think it an Insult and rather than spread go to a stake — where lies the difference. They are both false — the present that our privlidges are preserved the other that it would be a Mercy — The times call on all to fall down with the deepest humiliation before God and acknowledge his righteousness in all the Evils we suffer with him the Judgment is Just but with the Instrument Base and Traitorous. While on the one hand we should kiss the rod and the righteous hand of heaven that afflicts we may on the other wish to see the heads of our Enemies brought by the Just hand of an Injured People to the Block or the Gallows.

While I am writing I feel my own Insignificance and my obscurity forbids my proceeding but as a Small member of this Province I am afflicted to see my Country Bleeding at almost every vein and to be wholly silent at such a time is Criminal — if I have transgresd forgive me by Imputing it to a Love of what I hold very dear rather than a desire of finding fault at those that govern — I revere Government and honor the ruler that is father of his people — but in the same proportion I dread slvery and abhor a Tyrant.

I am my Dear Sr.

With great regard

Yours &c.



Point "8" on above map shows  
 "THE LINE THAT NEVER WAS!"

## MORE ABOUT THOSE LOCAL AND INTERURBAN TROLLEYS

The two nostalgic photographs which accompanied Brenton Dickson's article, *WESTON AND THE STREET RAILWAY* in our October BULLETIN, Vol. XV, No. 1, were supplied by our fellow member, Marjorie Childs Hunt of Newtonville, grandniece of Mary Frances Peirce (see BULLETIN, May 1978, Vol. XIV, No. 4). As longtime Curator of the Waltham Historical Society she recently allowed us to examine two fascinating but fragile 1908 publications, each about 6½" high and 4½" wide.

*COUNTRY RIDES BY TROLLEY* was published by the Rand Avery Supply of Boston for the Newton Street Railway of Newtonville. Both sides of the front and back covers honored its heaviest advertiser, NORUMBEGA PARK. The front cover comprised almost entirely an artist's drawing of an open, summer-season car under whose "Norumbega Park" sign at the front end proudly stood the trimly uniformed motorman with left hand on the brake throttle and the other on the speed regulator. Canoes on the Charles can be seen in the background and there's even a suggestion of Doublet Hill in Weston on the other side of the river. It well may have been a Sunday afternoon scene, because passengers sitting so erectly behind the pilot were immaculately dressed, ladies with hats and long dresses that touched the floor — their escorts with derbies, ties, coats and vests not ordinarily what would have been more appropriate for afternoon (or moonlight) canoeing.

Norumbega wanted, in its publicity, to promote high standards of attire and conduct. In its day it was one of the largest and most successful amusement parks in the country. Poor behavior and hard liquor, even beer, were not tolerated anywhere on the grounds, be it on the spacious dance floor or at the zoo with its bear pit, deer and elk parks and whose "Buffalo Enclosure" boasted of a complete family (bull, cow, and calf) of "the most perfect specimens of a race of animals nearly extinct." It is likely that the passengers shown on the cover were about to attend a performance on the famous Stage with its capacity for 3,000 — "the largest open-air theatre in the world" — rather than patronize the boathouse, merry-go-round, or swings.

The booklet's 64 pages described glamorous rides to "40 cities and town and points of interest" from Boston north as far as Lowell, and all the way to Worcester on the west. Picturesque prose and 19 photographs emphasized countless parks, reservations, and other readily accessible sights all over the northeast quarter of the Commonwealth. One page announced that "to those who wish to ride in greater luxury, the use of Parlor Cars can be obtained . . . of beautiful design, magnificent furniture, seating approximately 27, and can be used from any point on the local System to any point on a foreign road." Unfortunately, none of the photographs can feasibly be reproduced.

A two page double-spread map discloses how optimistic the advertising department proved to be in "jumping the gun" by locating the terminus at the Lincoln-Weston line instead of stopping at Stowe Street in Waltham, short of the Weston line. As the Dickson article relates, the extension by any route into Weston never materialized.

The second booklet, "Price 10¢", comprised 104 pages and was the 1908 official Street Railway Guide of New England, published by Rand Avery for the New England Street Railway Club, and entitled TROLLEY WAYFINDER. Routes and schedules were listed as far south as New York, thence northward on the west to North Adams, "downeast" to Portland and beyond, and even all the way to Monument Beach on Cape Cod. Almost 800 villages, towns, and cities were on the list and each time table itemized the mileage, fare, and transit time between points. Here are a few samples:

The 73 miles from Dudley Street Terminal, Boston, to Newport, Rhode Island cost only 95¢ but took 6 hours and four minutes. You could, of course, embark or disembark at any or all of the 28 intermediate points. The 47½ miles to Worcester from Park Street, Boston, cost 66¢ and took "only" 3 hours, 42 minutes. "Leave in the morning, return by dark, — what a wonderful way to spend a day!" The 81 mile trek to York Harbor, Maine, began to get expensive at \$1.11 and unless you really were a natural born sightseer, it could have been tedious. Most long distance riders really enjoyed that sort of travel. In some cases they couldn't afford the "horseless carriages" or they wanted different views than the ones they had enjoyed by train. What a bargain the 175 miles from Boston to Lewiston, Maine, through Portland seemed. The charge of \$2.61 figures just a hair less than 1½¢ per mile!

Thank you, Marjorie Childs Hunt for these glimpses you have given us. They prompt us to recall that in the city of our birth, a nickle took us "all the way downtown and back", and if we asked for a transfer when we boarded the vehicle, we could ride without extra charge to the cemetery in the next town where an older brother and some of our ancestors are buried.

H.G.T.

## IN MEMORIAM

The recent death at the age of 102, of our charter member and the Town's oldest resident, Miss Anna Hall, represents a real loss not only to our Society but to the entire community as well. Mentally keen to the very last, she died peacefully at her home on North Avenue. Our memories of her are many, and our sense of obligation to her for many favors and for consistent encouragement is complete. The January 1977 BULLETIN, Vol. XIII, No. 2, carried a picture of her at the top of Page 5 under the heading "BICENTENNIAL HIGHLIGHTS". She was seated on the knoll of Lamson Park in a group that was avidly "watching the parade go by!" To the end she prized, and indeed typified, the basic character and charm of old Weston.

## WESTON QUILTS: OLD AND NEW

As announced elsewhere in this issue, a quilt show in the barn of the Josiah Smith Tavern will be held on Saturday, April 21st, in connection with the annual spring meeting of the Bay State Historical League, now in its 76th year. The deadline for submitting your entries is Monday, April 2nd.

The quilts should be owned by Weston residents but not necessarily made by them. Each entry should be documented, if possible, as to when made and by whom. It is hoped that the final showing will embrace a wide span of years from our country's early times to the present. If you have a quilt to loan for this noteworthy exhibit, please communicate promptly with "Ginny" Jones, 899-0177.

## SURVEY OF OLD HOMES

Members are again invited to work with the Weston Historical Commission in its on-going "Old House Study Group." On motion of our Society, the Commission was established as authorized under Section 8D, Chapter 697 of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, at the annual Town Meeting of March 25, 1968. Its members, appointed as required, by the Selectmen of the Town, have been our fellow members, and we may well be proud of their capable and faithful work with which we often in the past have so happily cooperated. If you are able and interested in furthering this worthwhile study, please call its Chairman, Dorothy Ellis, at 894-3011.

## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

First we welcome into active membership, Messrs. Watson Grant Cutter who has moved here from Cambridge, and Charles P. Thomas, president of Wellesley Historical Society.

We also wish to express appreciation and gratitude to "the spirit of 76" faithful out-of-town members, most of them former residents, who now live in 13 states from Maine to California by way of Florida, and back via Wyoming and Michigan. Listed alphabetically these states are: Arizona (2); California (3); Connecticut (5); Florida (5); Maine (3); Massachusetts (42); Michigan (2); New Hampshire (4); New Jersey (2); New York (3); North Carolina (1); Vermont (3); and Wyoming (1).



## WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

President: Stephen T. Riley  
Vice President: Mrs. Reginald B. Elwell  
Secretary: Mrs. David V. Harmon  
Treasurer: Samuel R. Payson  
Editor of THE BULLETIN: Harold G. Travis

### Board of Directors

Brenton H. Dickson III '81; Roy L. Dickson '81; Mrs. Reginald W. Elwell '80; Mrs. Dudley B. Dumaine '81; Homer C. Lucas '80; Edward W. Marshall '79; Mrs. John A. Paine, Jr. '79; Mrs. M. Kirkbride Patterson '79; Stephen T. Riley '80; and Harold G. Travis '81.

## 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.