

THE WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN



March 1979

Vol. XV, No. 3



THE BARN OF SEVEN CUPOLAS ANOTHER HISTORIC AND PICTURESQUE LANDMARK OF WESTON

Pictured above is the north side of a late 18th Century barn to which were added, one by one during the 19th Century, two major extensions of comparable size, and a silo. Known in modern times as "The Wellington Barn", it is located on Wellesley Street between the Massachusetts Turnpike Underpass and the western end of Glen Road, across the street from the handsome and even more historic residence of its owner, our fellow charter member, Nancy Wellington (Mrs. Nicholas W.) Danforth.

BAY STATE HISTORICAL LEAGUE COMES HERE APRIL 21st ALL OF OUR MEMBERS ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND

For its 76th annual spring meeting on Saturday, April 21st, the Bay State Historical League will attract representatives from more than 300 historical societies and commissions throughout the State. As we are the host society, we urge each of our own members to attend. Since our incorporation in 1963, we have been a prominent member of the League and all of you, as members of our Society, have been invited automatically to attend the quarterly meetings of the League which are held at various places throughout the Commonwealth. Saturday, April 21st, offers us a rare opportunity not only to enjoy the lectures and view the exhibits but equally, to help our officers and directors host this statewide gathering of distinguished and friendly colleagues who share our concerns and interests in historical matters.

The following digest of proceedings and program for the day has been given to us by Mrs. Dudley B. Dumaine who is in charge of registration. Call her for further details. She will put you in touch with the proper party if you are willing to volunteer to help us extend a welcome to our town that will live long in the minds of all.

Members and Directors of the Weston Historical Society are completing plans for the day-long visit of the Bay State Historical League on Saturday, April 21. The theme of the morning program, which will be held in spacious Alumnae Hall at Regis College, is the *Collecting and Preservation of Paintings and Prints*.

Continued on page 6

RIDING AND TYING

In the seventeenth century before roads were suitable for wheeled vehicles, traveling was done either on horseback or on foot. Quoting "One Town in the American Revolution: Weston Massachusetts" we are told:

An ingenious method of travel known as "riding and tying" made it possible for two to share a single horse. One person would ride an agreed distance, while the other followed on foot. At the end of the distance the rider would dismount, tie his horse to a tree, and walk on ahead. When his companion reached the horse, he would mount it, overtake his walking friend, and proceed to the next tying point. This technique gave both rider and horse a chance to get some rest and to travel all day without stopping.

The authors, Dickson and Lucas, had assumed that this custom had been permanently discontinued when roads became suitable for wheeled vehicles, but an article in a California magazine, "*Runner's World*" September 1978, has lately been called to their attention, which says in part:

What sport is a cross between marathoning, motorcross, horse racing, football and chess? If you attended the 8th Annual Levi's Ride and Tie, you would have the answer. This year's rugged 35-mile wilderness course demanded the utmost endurance, toughness, equestrian skills, teamwork and strategy.

"Ride and Tie" was originated by Levi Strauss & Company's director of corporate relations, Bud Johns, in 1971 and the sport combines the talents of a three-member team — a rider, runner, and a horse. The runner and rider start the race at the same time. At a predetermined spot along the trail the rider dismounts, ties the horse to a tree or post, and continues the course on foot. When the runner reaches the horse, he mounts and rides past his companion, and to another tying point. Several rides and ties are required and the first team with all the members to cross the finish line wins.

This differs from the 17th century system in that the 35-mile course is very rugged with bottleneck passages, loose rocks, steep hills and many other obstacles, including a 1400 foot climb out of a valley — and most of all, *competition*. In 1978 the speed of the winning team was approximately 8.5 m.p.h.

Moreover, the physical condition of both horses and runners is checked at various points along the way, and failure to pass means elimination from the race. This of course was unnecessary in the old days when riding and tying was utilitarian and not competitive.

B.H.D.

WHAT NEARBY SOCIETIES ARE DOING

Through Bay State Historical League's Calendar, members of Weston Historical Society are invited to many events. Currently here are a few examples:

March 6 — Dedham Historical Society: "The Fine Art of Collecting."

March 14 — Dorchester Historical Society: "The Early Boston Irish."

March 15 — Lowell Historical Society: "The Flood of 1936."

March 20 — Watertown Historical Society: "Life of a Sailor on *OLD IRONSIDES*."

March 28 — Easton Historical Society: "Quilts, Coverlets, and Counterpanes."

Also the League's Workshop Committee has scheduled conferences as follows:

March 3 — Peabody Museum, Salem

April 7 — University of Massachusetts Library, Amherst

April 28 — American Studies Center, Boston College

May 5 — American Antiquarian Society, Worcester

If you are interested in attending, call either the local society or, in Weston, 899-4515. Better still, why not consider joining the League as an individual (associate) member so that not only its attractive BULLETIN but also its CALENDAR and other notices reach you directly and promptly?

Write to BAY STATE HISTORICAL LEAGUE

G.A.R. MEMORIAL ROOM #27, THE STATE HOUSE
BOSTON, MASS. 02135

THE MYSTERY OF THE ABEL ALLEN HOUSE*

Who could have been the able housewright who changed the primitive, one over one, homestead of Abel Allen to a two over two salt-box with the intricate winding stair? This change occurred about 1760 according to Philip W. Baker, the expert who renovated the house in 1961. Who cared for the house from its sale by Abel Allen's son, David, to Elisha Jones in 1758 until its purchase by Thomas Rand from the Commonwealth in 1781? David Allen was killed in 1760 at Louisbourg while in His Majesty's Service. The property of Elisha Jones, the Tory, was confiscated by the Commonwealth at his death in 1775.

Stephen T. Riley, Director of the Massachusetts Historical Society at the time, brought to our attention the Journal of Thomas Rand, (1752-1763), now owned by the Society. We read with great interest of Rand's work on the Samuel Woodward House (19 Concord Rd.), of his work for William Lawrence (208 Boston Post Rd.), and for Isaac Jones of the Golden Ball Tavern. We turned to the year 1759 with great expectation. There was inscribed an account of a major construction for John Allen. Could this account refer to work on the old Abel Allen House? Who was John Allen?

The account covered a period from 1759 to 1762 during which time Rand charged for 51½ days for himself and for 10 days for "fuller" (fellow) or "Richard" for "pullen down" and for building a house.

Items from the account:

	"Mr. John Allen deter to Labor"
May 12 (1759)	"To myself to hue timber"
May 19	"to pullen down his house"
May 24-June 4	"framing"
June 5	"raised the house"
June 6	"to pining (pinning) of the frame and (?) the Sque (square) studs"
September 1759	"my team and myself to Cambrig for brick"
October 1759	"to turning the arch bords 0/8/0."

The account was balanced March 8, 1760. Additional work and materials were listed for December 1760, January 1761, and August 1762.

This account records a major construction beginning in 1759. The date corresponds to that obtained from internal evidence by Philip W. Baker for the reconstruction of the Abel Allen House. He believes that about 1760 the old 1720 lean-to was torn down and that the two east rooms, the winding stair with the three small rooms and the new lean-to, extending the whole length of the house, were built.

Who was John Allen? Was he John (1699-1764), the second son of Abel? Research showed that it could not be he, for he had followed his elder brother, Robert, to Walpole.

There was another John Allen (1713-1790) son of Ebenezer, Abel's brother. This John in 1746 purchased a farm in Lancaster. However, the same year he sold the Lancaster property to his father and purchased in Weston his father's farm, whose western boundary touched the Abel Allen property. (Book 70, p. 511).

John Allen was active in the affairs of the town. He was assessor, tything man, constable, selectman and overseer of the poor. He was on the committee of inspection during the Revolution and was one of the two representatives of the town to frame the Constitution for the Commonwealth. He lived in Weston until 1780 when he removed to Fitzwilliam where he died at the age of 77. His leaving Weston occurred just one year before Rand purchased the Abel Allen farm from the Commonwealth.

John Allen was the only surviving male descendant of Abel Allen in Weston. He lived on an adjacent farm. He would be the logical one to be interested in the old family homestead which had belonged to his great-grandfather before 1685. Therefore, it seems possible that the house listed in Thomas Rand's Journal under the account of John Allen was the old Allen homestead and that the reconstruction about 1760 was done by the able housewright, Thomas Rand.

Frances V. Marshall

* See "The Oldest House in Weston" (1 Chestnut St.) in *Weston Historical Society Bulletin*, Oct. 1977, Vol. XIV #1.

EIGHT EARLY INDENTURES OF EARLY WESTON

In the Archives of Weston is a leather-bound book entitled “Miscellaneous Papers of Weston, 1683-1769”. Here are to be found records of 8 indentures which between 1757 and 1767 had been signed by the Selectmen of Weston and “two of his Majesty’s Justices of the Peace.” Up to now, only one of these has had much publicity: a voluntary indenture which a teenager, Benjamin Brown, Jr., arranged on January 16, 1762 with Isaac Hobbs and Mary, his wife, as reprinted in full on Page 66 of Lamson’s History of Weston, Massachusetts 1630-1890, and on Page 5 of Weston Historical Society BULLETIN, March 1972, Vol. VIII, No. 3. For a term of 5 years and 2 months he apprenticed himself to said Hobbs “to learn tanning and curreing Art, Trade or Mystery.” The indenture was endorsed by his father* whose house just over the line in Lincoln on Conant Road, is even today marked with a plaque and until 8 years before, had actually been part of Weston’s “second precinct.”

The 7 additional indentures, beginning to show signs of age, are:

Year	Apprentice	Master	Art, Trade, or Mystery	Term
1757	Phineas Jones	Nathan Jones	Husbandry	14 years, 20 days
1757	Roger Bigelo	Israel Whittemore	Husbandry	16 years
1761	William ?	James Mirick	Husbandry	3 years
1761	John Norcross	Jonas Harrington	Husbandry	18 years
1763	Hannah Hager	Thaddeus Spring	Household Business	11 years
1767	John Hager	Thomas Upham	Husbandry	6 years, 3 months
1767	Lucy Hager	Nathan Parkhurst	Household Business	13 years

All seven of the above, unlike Brown, were designated as poor children. Their ranges in age were somewhat startling, for at the time of indenture, we note that of those 2 girls and 5 boys, John Norcross was 3, Lucy Hager and Roger Bigelo were 5, Hannah Hager and Phineas Jones 7, John Hager 14, and William (last name undecipherable) 18. The townspeople of Weston, according to Lamson on Page 32, were:

extremely watchful that no persons should be permitted within town limits who would be likely to become a charge or burden upon the town, and any inhabitant . . . who harbored any such person . . . was prosecuted . . . and responsible personally for all charges the town incurred.

Our town records are indeed filled with the names of people who were warned out of town, — 4 in 1756, 5 in 1757, and 32 in 1771! Obviously Weston was not escaping the problem of the “wandering poor”.

The prevention of poverty was of course the principal concern, but not the sole objective, of our own founding fathers. Whereas for example, two early English indentures, one of 1396 and another of 1414, made no mention of the master’s obligation to teach “reading, writing, and cyphering”, the earliest American indentures did — reflecting no doubt the Utopian ideals of such leaders as John Winthrop. In his “Notes on Life in Plymouth Colony,” John Demos cites on Pages 76 and 77 the case of a wealthy man’s daughter. He brings out a new angle - the fact that no social stigma was attached to servitude here. The same view is supported by Edmund S. Morgan in his 1944 book on “The Puritan Family” wherein this 17th century historian observes: “Wealthy and aristocratic parents showed no hesitation in making their children servants to their friends or even to strangers.” The English “Poor Law” of 1601 had made it lawful for “wardens to apprentice all poor children, males until 24 years of age, females until 21 or marriage.” American indentures reduced the age limitations to 21 and 18 respectively.

In addition to getting the customary two suits of apparel (“one new”) at the conclusion of their terms, two of the seven Weston indentured servants were paid. In the case of Phineas Jones he was promised ten pounds, and John Hager 13 pounds, 6

* “Town of Weston Records of the First Precinct 1746-1764” notes that the Inhabitants of the Town voted on November 27, 1752 to “Return Deacon Brown their Hearty Thanks for his Generosity in Giving his Said Pew which is Joyning to the East Side of the Pulpit in the meeting house . . . so they may Give the Same to the Rev. Mr. Samll Woodward and his Heirs as their Property.” Ed.

shillings, and 8 pence by their respective masters. Conversely, the Selectmen agreed to pay Nathan Parkhurst 12 pounds for agreeing to raise 5 year old Lucy who was described as a poor child of the town whose widowed mother was “late of Weston but now removed to some distant parts.”

While it is difficult to draw any conclusions from 8 indentures out of Weston’s unknown number, each does show the consistent preoccupation of Puritans in creating a society which would escape the heavy burden of poor and undisciplined children, and instead would promote economic, political, and social homogeneity as the rule. A system that can be traced back to England’s early 14th century and was brought to this country when the Virginia Company and the Council of New England picked up poor children off the streets of London in the early 17th century, could not have survived through the first third of the 19th century without having had real merit and substance. Had it continued, how would it fare, we wonder, in coping with today’s welfare dilemma.

Editor’s Note: The above article is a condensation of a thesis on “INDENTURES IN COLONIAL ENGLAND” by “Kathie” Sprole, a history major at Wellesley College. She and her husband, Frank Jared Sprole, both members of our society, reside in one of Weston’s most historic houses. See our January 1969 BULLETIN, Vol. V, No. 2, Pages 4 and 5.

“MY Situation Lying So Far From the Meeting House . . .”

Five years after becoming a resident of Weston at the age of fifty, through the purchase of a farm at what is now 479 North Avenue, Samuel Phillips Savage wrote the following letter which speaks for itself and is reprinted through the courtesy of The Massachusetts Historical Society.

*To the Select Men of Weston
Gentlemen- - -*

My Situation lying so far from the Meeting house in Weston hath induced me for several years past to attend Divine Worship at Lincoln, to which Chh I should before now have changed my Relation, had I not thought it an Impropriety to join with any Society in full Communion where I could not enjoy the Priviledge of chusing my own Minister, and of other Matters, which, to me, appear of Importance.

I have therefore thought of applying to the General Court in their approaching Session for so much of my Land being set of to Lincoln, as Lyeth north of the great County Road leading from Cambridge to Concord — and would beg the Favor of the Town of Weston to favor my Request.

Your inserting this Request in your next Warrant for calling a Town Meeting will be esteemed a Favor to me.

Gentlemen

Yr most hble Servant

Sam Phillips Savage

Weston

19 Feby 1770

We have no record of any action taken, or reply of any kind made, to this letter from “Weston’s Greatest Patriot.” Rather, we rejoice that when, at the age of 82, he died in Weston on December 9, 1797, he had lived out his days in Weston and is buried in our oldest cemetery, The Farmers’ Burying Ground.

NEW MEMBERS

Since our last issue, we have welcomed into our Society Mrs. Roy Baker (nee Lamson) of St. Albans, Vermont, and our fellow townsmen Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Henderson, David B. Melville (life member), and Mrs. Roger B. Woodbury. Each of them has already made significant contributions to the town and our society in the form of substance, talent, and/or tradition that we are sure will prove the forerunners of happy association in the years ahead as we all strive to keep Weston among the leaders of “Towns That Care”.

Continued from page 1.

Charles D. Childs will speak at 10:30 following the business meeting of the League. His topic will be *"From Colony to Nation: Two Hundred Years of Collecting Paintings in New England."* The second paper of the morning session will be *"Prints for the Local Historical Society"*, presented by Georgia B. Bumgardner. Following luncheon at the college, David and Faith Regamey will talk on *"Preserving Oil Paintings: A Basic Study of the Restoration Process."*

From the conclusion of the meeting until the 4:30 reception in the Ball Room of the Josiah Smith Tavern, our guests will visit the Isaac Fiske Law Office, the Golden Ball Tavern, the Weston Observatory, and the Society's rooms at the Josiah Smith Tavern. At the Fiske Law Office they will be welcomed by Mrs. Harold G. Travis and Mrs. Homer C. Lucas, while the Golden Ball Tavernkeeper Guides will lead tours at that historic landmark and museum.

Mrs. James E. Fraser, curator of our collections, plans to display some of our rarely seen costumes in the Society rooms of the Josiah Smith Tavern. Aunt Flora's Ballgown, given by Mrs. John (Cynthia Smith) Akers, will be on view, as will a Paris Ballgown worn by Mrs. John A. Paine Jr., daughter of its donor, the late Mrs. Henry W. Patterson. Special arrangements have been made by Father Skehan at Weston Observatory for small groups to tour the facilities there throughout the afternoon, to observe the work being done in seismology, geomagnetics, and the New England coal basins.

Simultaneously a major exhibition of quilts mounted by Mrs. Virginia C. Jones and her committee, will be on display in the Josiah Smith Tavern Barn, as more fully described in a separate article that follows.

"WESTON QUILTS: YESTERDAY AND TODAY"

Plans for the Quilt Show to be held in conjunction with the visit of the Bay State Historical League have expanded. The Josiah Smith Tavern Barn will be open to the general public on Friday afternoon, April 20th, and until 2 p.m. on Saturday, the 21st, when League members will arrive.

Mrs. Virginia C. Jones, 899-0177, is chairing the Quilt Committee, and would like to hear from more members of our Society who would be willing to loan their quilts for this exhibition. Facts relative to their history will make your quilts even more desirable. The deadline for calling her is Monday, April 2nd, to allow time for printing a short history of each entry.



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

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.