

THE WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN



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222 YEARS OLD AND STILL SERVING THE COMMUNITY ACTIVELY AND WELL

This picture of the 1757 Josiah Smith Tavern was taken last April during the dramatically successful annual spring meeting of the Bay State Historical League. After a most impressive quilt show in the Tavern Barn (see Pages 4 and 5) our guests from all over the state were given a final send-off reception in the second floor's spacious ballroom which extends from one end to the other of the view pictured above. Succeeding stories will tell more about the parents, William and Mary, and of Josiah, his 3 brothers and 3 sisters. For example, eleven direct descendants of Josiah Smith's younger brother, James, still live in Weston within a stone's throw of each other on Sudbury Road, the ninth of successive generations so to do.

ANNA HALL'S BEQUEST IS OF REAL SIGNIFICANCE

Miss Anna Hall, who died in her second century last November 10th, aged 101 years, 110 days, left to the Weston Historical Society an old oil painting, signed "Ennerkin '84", which is of unusual interest and value to us of both the "now" and the "henceforth". She was our oldest charter member, and during her lifetime was a constant source of accurate and colorful information.

The painting, beautifully and sturdily framed, shows a nostalgic rural scene from the front yard of what has long been the large estate at 190 North Avenue, built in 1880 by Francis Hastings, husband of her aunt Anna Coburn Hastings. It was here that their niece, Anna Hall, lived from 1917 until her demise. In that long span of three score years and one, Anna Hall contributed much with grace and graciousness to this community and to a great tradition.

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Looking across old North County Road, by then North Avenue as now, the famous artist showed first what was once called “the stable”, western wing of the old barn that now bears a neat sign: “Old Homestead Farm”, at No. 191. In the foreground, to the left, a farmer is shown putting up the bars while across the road, his horse still hitched to the plow, patiently waits for him in front of the grain drill that plainly shows inside the open door of the ell that abuts the barn. Leftwards toward Lincoln on the same opposite side of the road, No. 199 built about 1830, and a couple of auxiliary buildings that also still stand today in good condition, can be seen with a low (now missing) white picket fence in front. Oldtimers will recognize at the extreme left on the knoll facing Viles Street, old No. 4 School, more familiarly known as the “Northeast Schoolhouse.”

Anna Hall left many relics and records which we hope to hear about, see, and share with you after they have been most carefully sorted and classified. We feel optimistic that much additional Weston lore will be brought to light.

THE LAW OFFICE GARDEN

A Most Grateful “THANK-YOU!”

For several years in a row, we’ve had the growing problem of finding enough people to take their turns at keeping those avaricious weeds from “taking over” (particularly in summer when so many of us are away) and literally smothering in that fertile soil, the shrubs, plants, and plantings back of the 1805 Isaac Fiske Law Office, our Society’s historic headquarters at 626 Boston Post Road (“The Great Country Road” as it was known in the days of its beginning).

Volume VI, No. 2 of our January 1970 BULLETIN showed on its front page the design which had just won a handsome award the previous year in the Bay State Civic Beautification Contest. All of Page 2 in the same issue described how the garden had been planted in an article entitled “A LIVING MEMORIAL TO WESTON’S CIVIC SPIRIT”. After paying tribute to the three cooperating garden clubs of Weston, the writer concluded: “This quaint and simple garden will, with faithful care, always remind us that Weston cherishes its past and the natural charm of its countryside.”

During this past summer, a group of neighbors under the inspiring leadership and example of Mrs. William McElwain, aided and abetted especially by ever-faithful charter members, Mr. and Mrs. Leander F. Rafuse and their daughter Martha who live too far away to be considered immediate “neighbors”, had literally, not “from the ground up” but rather, “up from under the ground”, performed an herculean task in successfully clearing out the rest of the stubborn and persistent poison ivy roots, the heavy clumps of grasses and weeds, etc., and thus restoring the little gem to all its tasteful and dainty charm and glory.

With tremendous appreciation to Mrs. McElwain and her group, we are delighted to relay her assurance that volunteers who share their pride in Weston and are able to give some time and effort, will be welcome at any time to join them and supply the stint that makes the difference! Why don’t you consider calling her at 893-5775? The faithful few oldsters who did their best to “keep up with it” for so many years and are now unable because of unwelcome arthritic and other reasons of age, to continue, will silently bless you too.

IN MEMORIAM

With the greatest sadness we record the tremendous loss we have sustained in the recent deaths of three of our most loyal members who steadily through all the years actively supported not only this Society but also everything that was good in and for the great little town in which we so happily live. We haven’t space to eulogize them properly or especially to enumerate all they did, but suffice it to say that Dr. Theodore B. Bayles, Mrs. Russell (“Allie”) Dorrance, and Mrs. Albert B. (“Peg”) Hunt were each “at the top of the list” in the hearts of countless neighbors, fellow members, and not only fellow citizens of Weston but of vast areas beyond. The memory of their spirit and of all they did will keep on inspiring us in our own support of the causes they served so capably, effectively, and with such charm.

“WESTON AS IT USED TO BE”

By Brenton H. Dickson 3rd

Continued from our last issue

“For many years the Great Country Road held an important position as a thoroughfare to the west. The first Boston-New York postrider chose this as his route. He made his initial round trip in 1673. It took him a month to do it. At that time, much of his journey was on old Indian trails, going from one isolated community to another. He was a well-informed individual, for he read and digested the mail he carried, and no doubt had pretty good audiences at the taverns he visited along the way.

“As the needs for agricultural products increased in Boston with its growing population, the roads were widened to accommodate teams for transporting these supplies, and during the daylight hours there was a constant procession of them along important thoroughfares. Taverns sprung up in many towns to accommodate the teamsters. It is said that sometimes as many as a hundred teams would stop at a single tavern for the night.

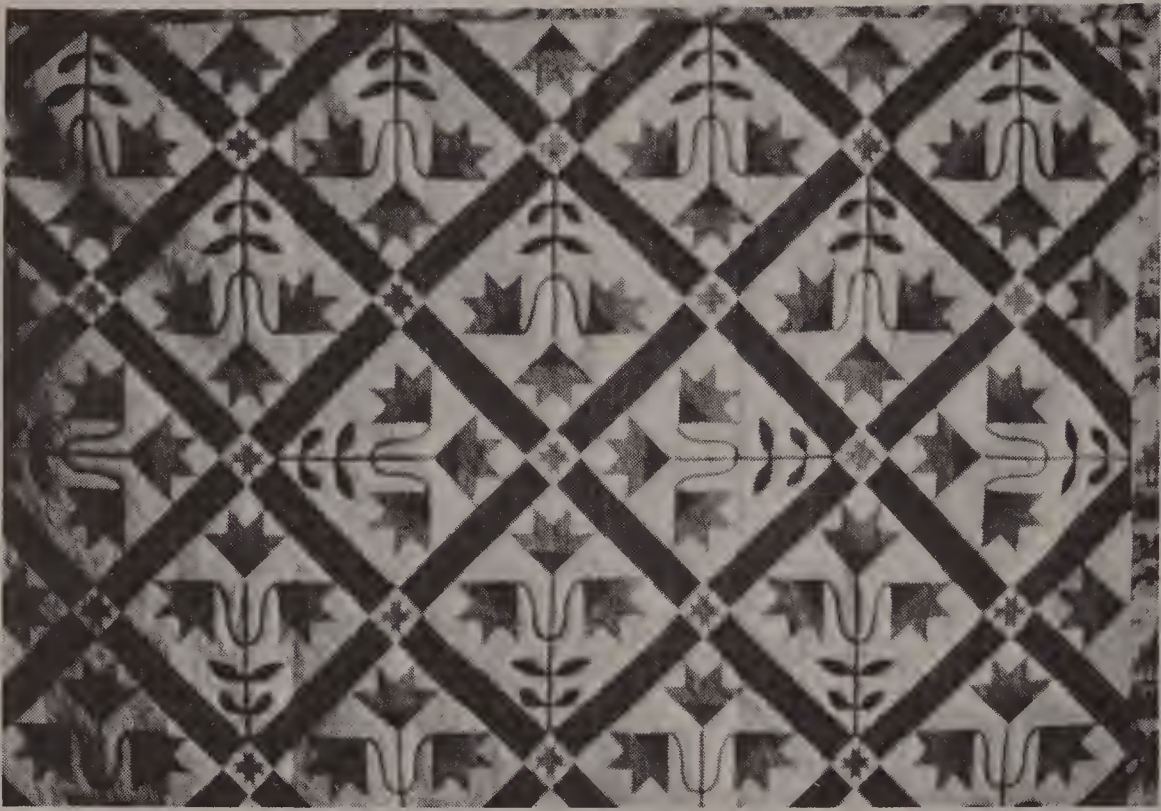
“Finally after the Revolution, the stagecoach era began. In 1785 Levi Pease of Shrewsbury, often called the father of stagecoaching, inaugurated service along the Great Country Road through Weston. For the first year he only went as far as Hartford. After that, he extended his service to New York.

“This was the most uncomfortable form of transportation imaginable. Then there were those miserable nights at taverns. An account of a trip from Boston to New York attributed to Josiah Quincy, tells about going on one of Levi Pease’s coaches. ‘The carriages were old and shackling,’ he wrote, ‘and much of the harness was made of ropes. One pair of horses carried the stage eighteen miles. We generally reached our resting place for the night, if no accident intervened, at ten o’clock, and after a frugal supper went to bed with a notice that we should be called at three the next morning which generally proved to be half past two. Then, whether it snowed or rained, the traveler must rise and make ready by the help of a horn and a farthing candle, and proceed on his way over bad roads, sometimes with a driver showing no doubtful signs of drunkenness, which good hearted passengers never failed to improve at every stopping place by urging upon him another glass of toddy. thus we traveled eighteen miles a stage, sometimes obliged to get out and help the coachman lift the coach out of a quagmire or rut, and arrived at New York after a week’s hard traveling, wondering at the ease as well as the expedition of our journey.’

“We have no specific record of any stagecoaches changing horses in Weston, but just over the Wayland line there is supposed to have been one. We know little about what important people stopped at Weston taverns. We do have a record of George Washington spending a night at Flagg Tavern on the Post Road, and of John Adams having a meal there. Paul Revere had breakfast at the Golden Ball Tavern. General Glover and his prisoner, Burgoyne, undoubtedly spent a night either at the Golden Ball or at Baldwin’s, close by. We have records of Samuel Phillips Savage, president of the Board of War, stopping at Baldwin’s, and also Reverend Samuel Cooper who went around the countryside preaching revolution and who, according to Peter Oliver, ‘was one of Sam Adams’ psalmsinging myrmidons who made the New England clergy everlasting monuments of disgrace and who turned the House of God into a Den of Thieves.’

“Samuel Phillips Savage moved to Weston ten years before the American Revolution, and bought a farm on North Avenue. (North County Road). In Revolutionary days he was the most prominent citizen in town. In 1773 he moderated the meeting at the Old South Meeting House in Boston that led up to the Boston Tea Party; he became President of the Board of War in 1776 and continued as such until the Board was dissolved in 1781. The Board of War was organized to keep the army supplied with food, weapons and ammunition and to build storehouses at strategic locations. Great quantities of these supplies were carted through Weston and many local people were hired to transport them to their respective destinations. There was a large storehouse in Sudbury, now marked with an historical plaque. Many references are made to magazines in Weston but there is no plaque to pinpoint them. They were probably on Savage’s place or adjoining property.

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The Society's Quilt Show in the barn of the Josiah Smith Tavern was one of the features of the Annual Spring Meeting of the Bay State Historical League, held in Weston on April 21, 1979.

Shown above is the 1976 Bicentennial Quilt made by ladies of Weston. Facing it on the preceding page are three of the more than eighty quilts, "old and new", which were displayed by our talented committee. The Society is grateful for the contributions of so many to the success of this event, and would welcome additional photographs for its archives.

“Weston was incorporated in 1713. Up to then it had been a part of Watertown, often called Watertown Farms, and was first inhabited as an agricultural community about 1640, give or take a few years. But antedating this early settlement are the mysterious evidences of civilization known as *Norumbega*. Professor Horseford attempted to prove that this was the lost city of the Norsemen and dated back to the tenth century; Justin Winsor, the historian, felt it is more likely a stockade — possibly the first attempt at starting the city of Boston, well inland from attack by battleships. The diggings are definitely man-made and some day an archeologist may come up with an answer and then we will have a better idea of when Weston had its true beginnings.”

**MERCY SCOLLAY WROTE A LETTER TO
SAMUEL PHILLIPS SAVAGE
THE BRITISH HAD JUST LEFT BOSTON:
SHE WANTED TO COME HOME**

In 1774 Miss Mercy Scollay visited Dr., later General, Joseph Warren as a patient in his Boston office. His first wife, Elizabeth Hooten, had died, leaving him with 2 sons and 2 daughters. Mercy Scollay and Joseph Warren fell in love. He persuaded her to make use of her lively intelligence in writing for the Revolutionary cause. She wrote a satire on the female love of dress, and had fate decreed that Warren not fall at the Battle of Bunker Hill and that instead she had become his bride, Mercy Scollay might well have joined the circle of Abigail Adams and Mercy Warren as one of the leading ladies of her day. Shortly before his death, however, Warren asked her, in the event of his death, to care for his children. Such was his confidence in his fiancée, and Mary did conscientiously take care of the four little children. At one period during this time, she was offered the assistance of Benedict Arnold.

She came of great stock. Her father, John Scollay, (ca 1711-1790), was a firm supporter always of civil and religious rights. Selected as a fire-ward in 1747, he continued in that office for most of his life. Chosen a Selectman of Boston in 1764 and again in 1773, he served as chairman from 1774 to 1790 inclusive. His son, Colonel William Scollay, (1756-1809), was Mercy's brother, and himself most prominent as Clerk of Market in 1788, Selectman 1792-95, and Fire-ward from 1792 to 1806 inclusive. Incidentally, one of his daughters married Colonel Thomas Melville who was known as “the last of the cocked hats”. He took part in the Boston Tea Party. We are indebted to Mr. Riley for the above information which makes excellent background for the letter which speaks for itself that Mercy Scollay wrote to Samuel Phillips Savage in Weston just as it appears below.

Worcester March 22nd 1776

Dear Sr

I have only time to tell you that I sincerely rejoice with you and all my Dear relatives and friends, on the redem(p)tion of our Metropolis from the hands of our oppressors, and I exult in the thot that 'tis Heaven alone must have the Glory, for it is not our own bow or arm that has done it, but Deliverance has been sent us at a time when we expected the greatest carnage and wrought out in such a way, that Proud man has nothing to boast — and I can think of no paralell except the flight of the Assyrians which I think a similar case — for they heard a rumour and fled. Pray God we may not, like that favoured people again rebel against our great deliverer — I never thot that Boston would be destroyed and “only inhabited by fishermen;” my faith had been as strong in that as it still is in another instance and as our blessed Lord said to Nathanael “believest thou this Thou shalt see greater things than these”, so I believe (and I have a sure word of promise to ground my faith upon) that New England has not seen half the wonders that are yet to be reveald; if we receive this mercy aright so we may expect further blessings — I suppose my brothers and sisters are all gone from Weston and I yearn to fly with them to the arms of my Parents, but my friends hold me fast, and will not let me go — the Dr. says if he sends me down (for he

cant come with me himself on Mrs. Dix's account) it will look as if he wanted to get rid of me, and he fears Boston is not yet safe enough to venture my residence there — My amiable Mrs. Dix is expecting every day to be confind and while she rejoice(s) with me in my happy prospect, the tear trembles in her eye least I should leave her till her difficulties are over — thus I am divided between filial attachments and tender friendship — should be glad to hear from some of my friends, and if they insist on my coming down immediately, they must contrive to get me conveyd as the Doctor cannot leave home and I dont love to travel with a stranger — I wrote some days ago to Mr. Melvill and sent a packet with it to Baldwin's hope he has got it safe — should be glad of a line from you by the first opportunity — I have begd the lad that brings this to stop at Baldwin's on his return, to see if there is any letters for me — If you see my Dear papa and mama before me tell them I long to be with them, but I fear to leave my friends yet least I should appear ungrateful to such uncommon benefactors — I would wish papa to write a line to the Doctor if he does not to me accept my Dear Sr of my best wishes for yours and familys happiness and believe me ever with great respect your affectionate and unalterable Friend

(s) M Scollay

the Doctor and Lady joines me in congratulations and regard to you and all friends.

Editor's Note: Miss Mercy Scollay never married. Born in Boston on September 11, 1741, she died in Medfield at the age of 84 on Sunday, January 8, 1826, true all her long life to the man who undoubtedly was the most famous hero of Bunker Hill.

H.G.T.

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL ON SAMUEL SAVAGE BECOMES AVAILABLE

While browsing through recently acquired additions to the Samuel Phillips Savage Collection at the Massachusetts Historical Society under the aegis of our president and its retired director, we examined a scrapbook put together by Savage's great granddaughter, Sarah Jane (Bancroft) Lawrence (1808-1884). She attributed its beginning to one Lawrence Park in 1762 when he was in his mid-fifties. It came to the Massachusetts Historical Society from Mrs. George T. Skinner of Groton, who as Mrs. Lawrence's granddaughter, is the great great great granddaughter of "Weston's Greatest Patriot". With each issue, we'll try to run extracts from that fascinating scrapbook as part of our on-going series on the SAVAGE STORY. Many of them will entail some additional research for identification and the fullest significance. Two examples are given below.

On April 11, 1765, Nathaniel Carter, a friend in Newburyport, succinctly averred in a terse note: "I can't look upon my children but with a damp on my spirits, viewing them as born for slavery,- and futurity as a time when blessed will be the womb that never bore and the paps that never gave suck." We suspect this unhappy and disillusioned father was the merchant by that name who was asked in a letter dated August 1, 1776 if he'd be willing to ship, for the service of his country, some of the furs he had on hand.

The other letter we have selected for this issue is one dated almost a month later. Writing to Mr. Savage on May 10, 1765 from Portsmouth, Sarah Barrell wrote: "I assure you I have often thought if our [women] were more generally employed they would not find leisure to think of a thousand superfluities that now appear to them of consequence. I think a thimble and needle as great ornaments to a lady's fingers as a diamond ring, and am sure I must long be deprived the use of the one before I should pine after the other."

At the time, Mr. Savage had been a widower for about a year, his first wife Sarah Tyler Savage having died at 46 the previous year. He moved to Weston in 1765 and did not marry Bathsheba Thwing Johnson of Boston until Dec. 21, 1767. It is quite

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plausible that in expressing herself as above, Sarah Barrell knew what a “catch” this prominent ex-Bostonian might be. The fact that Savage kept her letter always may indicate that she was perhaps high on his list. Altogether he had 3 wives. The third was not acquired until June 21, 1794 when, at the age of 75, he married his housekeeper, Miss Mary Misserve of Weston.

NEW MEMBERS

Since our last issue we have been delighted to add to our membership: Mrs. Arthur E. Bent, Mr. and Mrs. Abram T. Collier, Mr. and Mrs. John P. Larkin, and Mr. and Mrs. Floyd A. Yearout. Even though we are one of the largest and most active historical societies in the Commonwealth, no waiting list will ever be established inasmuch as we would like to have the support of every resident of our most exceptional New England town. When conversing with your neighbors, old or new, don't hesitate to spread this message to them. No application blank is absolutely or technically necessary. Simply send checks with their full names and addresses as described at the bottom of the last page of this BULLETIN.

WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOOKS MAKE GREAT CHRISTMAS GIFTS

Contact Mrs. David M. Kellogg, Jr. at 893-0824 right away if you want some of those publications listed on the back page of our last issue: Vol. XV, No. 4, May 1979. All proceeds come to the Society's Endowment Fund, and everyone of them is a “must” in your own library or bedside table. The story of Weston and the people who made it what it is today, is told authoritatively and entertainingly. Any one or all of them will let your friends know why *you* live in and love Weston!



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

(Currently our youngest life member is 3 - our oldest in his 80's)

Contributions and Bequests to the Endowment and Memorial Fund are welcomed
All checks should be made payable to Weston Historical Society, Inc., and mailed to its Post Office address: Box 343, Weston, Mass. 02193.

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