

THE WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN



October 1981

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Annual Meeting will be held Thursday, November Fifth

Details on page two of this issue



Harold G. Travis 1898-1981

“ . . . so must we rededicate ourselves to love of country. . . and to the inculcation of the principles on which this country was founded. . . it is fitting that we should resolve to perpetuate the purposes of the Weston Historical Society which we are now establishing so that this nation, under God, will more surely become the land of Freedom, peace, reverence, tolerance, and faith that our fathers intended.” Words spoken by “Red” Travis upon election as first president of the Weston Historical Society, November 23, 1963.

HAROLD G. TRAVIS

Ever since the first issue of the Weston Historical Society Bulletin was published in 1964, I have worked closely with “Red” in putting subsequent issues into shape. Before a copy went to press he would invariably come to me or telephone me for my opinion of the material that he was publishing, and for any mistakes that I could detect. This seems a bit ironical in view of my having flunked American History in school! But still I seemed to be able to give him the reassurance he needed, and so the Bulletin went on with his untiring leadership and devotion. He did much original work on subjects unfamiliar to me, and I learned a lot from his research which often disproved what earlier historians had taken for granted. I look back on my experiences with him with pleasure and wonder. His courage and persistence under adverse conditions were phenomenal. The Bulletin was his baby, and if there is an afterworld, I hope that he can look down on future issues and give his nod of approval.

Brenton H. Dickson

ANNUAL MEETING NOVEMBER 5

At 8:00 p.m. on Thursday, November 5, at the Josiah Smith Tavern, we will hold our 19th annual meeting. Vera Laska, Professor of History at Regis College, will speak on "Women of the Revolutionary Era." Dr. Laska earned her Ph.D. in American History at the University of Chicago. She is the author of *Remember the Ladies: Outstanding Women of the American Revolution*.

Prior to Dr. Laska's talk, President Steve Riley will review the year's achievements and present a list of possible future activities. A pleasant social hour will follow. Don't miss the meeting!

A Letter to "Red" Travis

Dear Red:

I attended today the last gathering of your friends with you. You must have been gratified that the newly painted St. Peter's Church was overflowing with those of us who have loved you from the moment we knew you. You were that rare human being who had deep understanding for your fellow men and women, who could bear with our foibles, having always an encouraging word when our hearts were heavy.

You were the keeper of the flame for our Weston history. You marched the children of our town tirelessly from one historical landmark to the other; you labored as hard as anybody else on the celebration of our nation's bicentennial. You played midwife to the Weston Historical Society "Bulletin", and God knows that many an issue was like a complicated birth. You were our peerless leader, yet you could accept — with oh, such charm — advice about fussy scholarly documentation. That also demonstrated your greatness.

Red, my dear friend, wherever you are, I congratulate you upon your last hurrah. Your loving care in planning the services bore a rich harvest. I was delighted that "There was Music in your heart," and I was honored that I could "come and share your Muse." Let me assure you that I loved the songs and poems you have selected to share with us.

We shall miss you terribly. We shall try to walk in your footsteps, sowing love along the way, and strive for the "kindly deeds and virtuous life" that you have so masterly achieved.

Good-bye, my dear friend. Sleep in eternal peace of the just.

Vera Laska

REMINISCENCES OF AN OLDTIMER

A quaint little volume of modest 56 pages, dressed up in hard covers, takes us back to turn of the century New England. In *Growing Up In Weston*, Philip F. Coburn shares with us his memories of rural Weston, population hardly over 2,000 souls.

The High School graduated eight girls and six boys in 1920; it could not place a football team in the field. So boys from the center of town met in combat the Silver Hill gang or the Warren Avenue gang, with a Doberman Pincher participating, and often ending in stone throwing or name calling.

Those early years of the century come alive in vignettes from the pen of an oldtimer who turned back the clock to relive his boyhood days. For fun, kids would watch cars sliding backwards on steep roads, go fishing, or ride in a goat wagon. Sunday was strictly the day of rest, so the children entertained themselves by noting down the makes of cars that passed by their fences. After entering high school, they could serve on tables at church socials. Still the dancing school of Miss Mary Field, with children from Wayland arriving on a local train, did not seem too much fun, perhaps because boys had to wear white gloves, as they followed the instructor's "leap, slide, bend, one, two, three" for the waltz, or her "slide, slide, stamp, stamp, stamp" for the livelier polka.

At Mr. Sears' theatre, minstrel shows were produced to support the Weston Boys' Club. The Friendly Society started its shows in 1917. Cream soda or orange crush were to be had for 5¢, and an hour of caddying at the golf course brought twice as much.

In 1910 A. Lincoln Filene became a Weston resident, had his house cut in half, and before the middle was built up with additional rooms, had the shed roped and pulled through the gap. In the good old days, all of that seemed a sensational happening to youngsters observing it from the sideline.

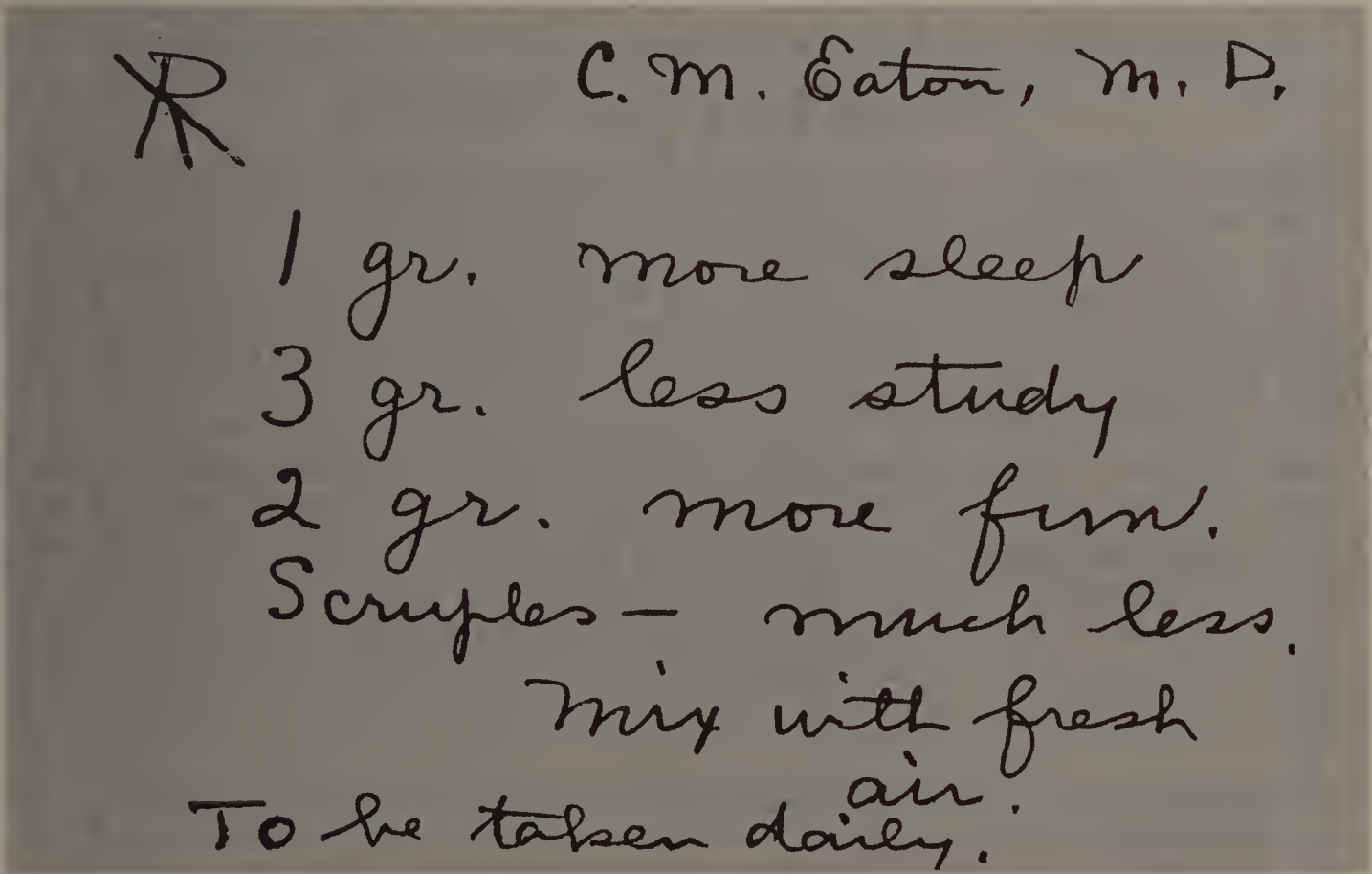
Regrettably for the historian, facts and figures are scarce in this contribution to local history. Nevertheless, the little opus has definite merits, adding flavor to the social and economic life of the town. Names abound, and many long time residents will recognize their former neighbors. Sections on the legendary police chief, Patrick J. McAuliffe, P. J. to all townspeople, on parson Perkins, on the fires, and on the one and only murder in Weston — until the 1970's — all are of interest and would deserve longer treatments for the sake of posterity.

The memoir, published by the author in 1981, is available for \$4.00 at the Chestnut Shop on Center Street, at Richardson and Weston Drugstores in Weston, while the supply lasts.

Dr. Vera Laska

Unfortunately the name of Marion Henderson was not included in the list of acknowledgements in my book *Growing Up In Weston*. Mrs. Henderson typed the original manuscript for me, and it was her painstaking work that expedited the final revision.

Philip F. Coburn



R C. M. Eaton, M. D.

1 gr. more sleep
3 gr. less study
2 gr. more fun.
Scruples — much less.
Mix with fresh
To be taken daily ^{air}.

Prescription from the Superintendent of Schools

Mr. Charles M. Eaton, Superintendent of Weston Schools from 1895 until 1928, was a strict disciplinarian. “You rose to your feet and stood at attention when he spoke to you. It didn’t matter whether you were in school or out — on the grounds or in the village, you were always under his jurisdiction. Every pupil was his personal responsibility twenty-four hours a day. Whenever you saw him coming you minded your manners, knowing that he never missed a trick.” *Once Upon a Pung*.

He also had a human side as evidenced by the prescription he gave to a sick pupil. The recipient, Clara Johnson Schacht, still enjoys excellent health.

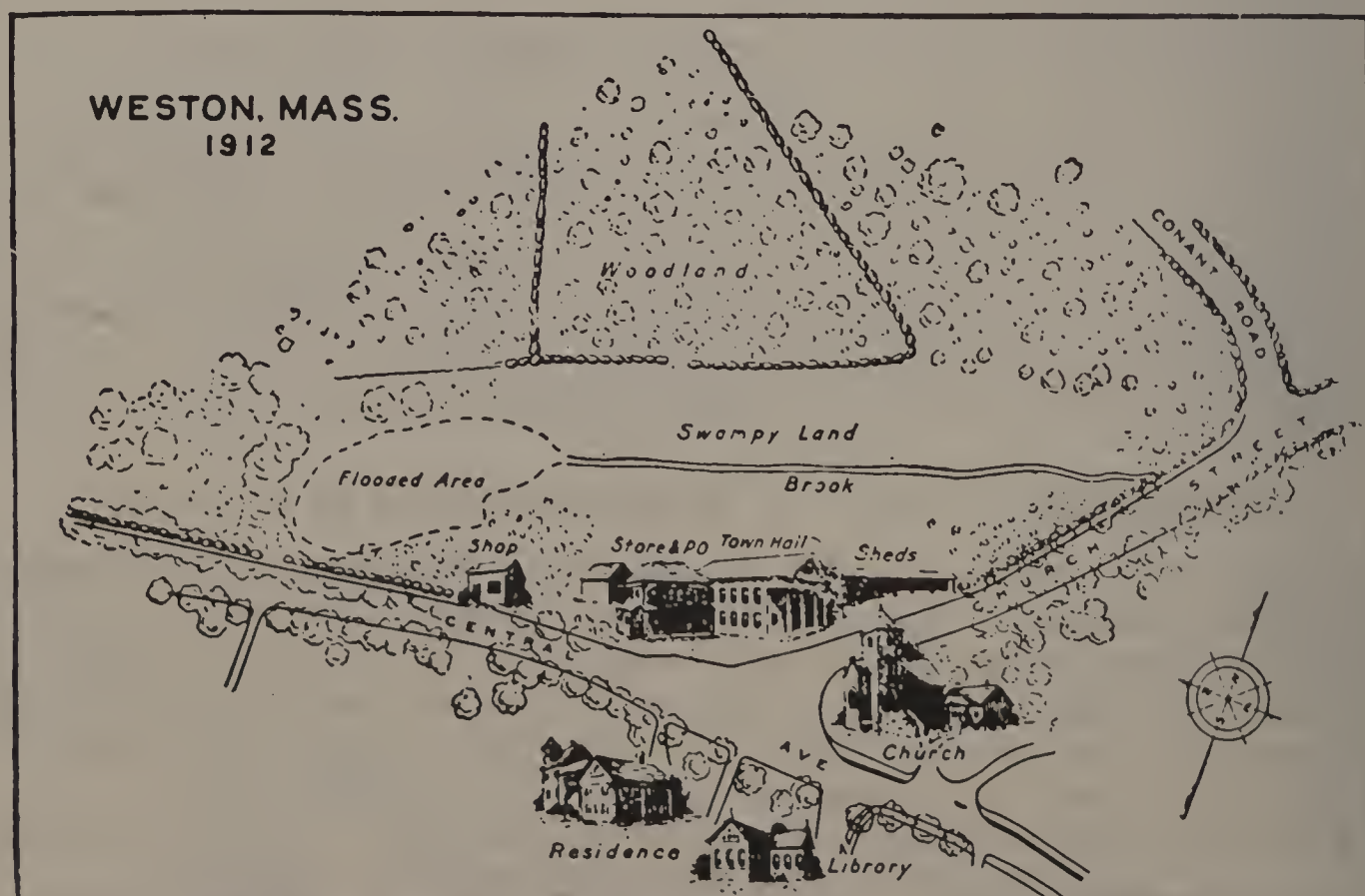
Brenton H. Dickson



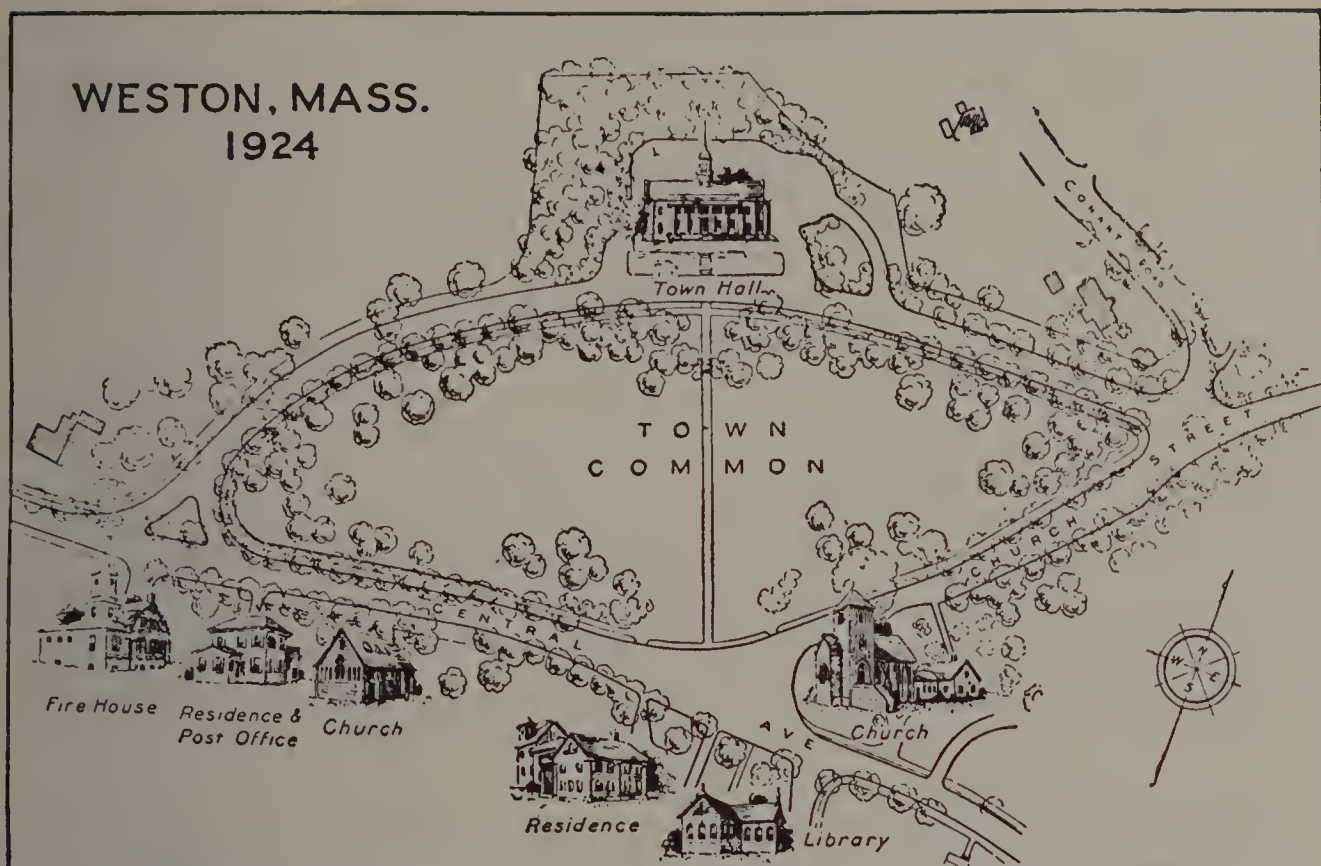
Cutting's Store, prior to the establishment of the "Town Green", circa 1910.

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT DESCRIBES WESTON'S TOWN GREEN

"Squalor", "ugliness", and "community without artistic standards and without taste" are hardly phrases one would expect to find in reference to Weston. Yet these appear in the *Farmers' Bulletin* No. 1441, a 1923 publication of the Department of Agriculture which was intended to encourage "the farmer of the new day" — America's rebirth after World War I — to take civic action similar to that of Weston. The text and drawings are from that pamphlet.



From *Farmers' Bulletin* No. 1441, United States Department of Agriculture, 1923



From *Farmers' Bulletin* No. 1441, United States Department of Agriculture, 1923

Re-Planning the Rural Village

One of the movements for the betterment of rural life is that which has for its objective the lifting of the tiny country town out of the ugliness which characterized it in the nineteenth century. In the old days, the store, the blacksmith shop, the houses and a church or two were built by a community largely isolated from the intellectual life of the world, a community without artistic standards and without taste. The intellectual awakening of the twentieth-century farmer has made the man of the soil dissatisfied with the squalor of the old-time crossroads hamlets. In the thoughtful magazines that the rural mail carrier brings to his door, he sees how it is possible to beautify the surroundings of human life in city and village. Traveling in his automobile on vacation, he sees the results of an artistic ferment that is working in American life. Perhaps a man from the city builds a country retreat near his farm. These are some of the influences that are lifting the American farmer out of the carelessness of the last century, encouraging him to beautify the surroundings of his house and buildings, and sometimes even to join in re-planning the villages. The movement is not universal; it is but starting. Yet, in a sense, it is not new. Far back in the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries an artistic instinct may be found, kept alive through the generations though almost stifled by the rude conditions of country life. Perhaps the true origin of the present development may be found in the pathetic little flower bed that the overworked farm wife tended as best she could as it grew in the unmowed "front yard".

Donald G. Kennedy



Tearing down the 1847 Weston Town Hall, 1917. The May 1979 and January 1980 issues of the *Bulletin* show other views of the Town Green.

FROM THE EDITOR

We will sorely miss "Red" Travis — and receiving letters from him bearing the salutation "Yours for Weston". He was a person of many interests. Shortly before he died, "Red" described to me his experiences as the coach of a sandlot football team in downtown Boston. "Red" spent much of his life enriching the lives of others. "Red" wanted us to thank Bill Livingston and Don Devereaux of Nobb Hill Press for their many years of help in publishing the *Bulletin*. Thank you, Bill and Don.

"Red" set a high standard for the quality of the *Bulletin*. The editorial board — Brenton Dickson, Stephen Riley, and Vera Laska — have pledged to help me keep the *Bulletin* up to that standard. We welcome your articles and your suggestions for improvement and for future pieces.

HELP! Beginning with the next issue, we would like to initiate a new "Weston Remembers" column. In it we will publish anecdotes of life in Weston within the memory of long-term residents. Here is a chance for some who do not have the time or inclination to do library research to become "authors." What are your memories of the Memorial (Decoration) Day exercises in Weston? What are your recollections of the old swimming pool at the corner of School Street and the Route 20 by-pass? We will attempt to do pieces on these subjects in forthcoming *Bulletins*. If you have memories or photographs of these or other topics of interest, please call or write to me.

Thanks in assembling this *Bulletin* go to Gale Parker for her photograph of "Red" working on the *Bulletin*, to Alice Fraser who located photographs of the old Town Hall and Cutting's Store, and to new member Eldridge Morgan who located the Department of Agriculture piece on the Town Green. If you know of photographs of the swampy area which is now the "Green" — prior to its improvement — or of the building of our current Town Hall and its site prior to construction, please let us know. We could not locate such pictures. Help us to make your *Bulletin* interesting.

Donald G. Kennedy



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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 the age span of our life members is from 4 to "over 80!")

Contributions and Bequests to the Endowment and Memorial Fund are welcomed.

All checks should be mailed to: Weston Historical Society, Inc., Box 343, Weston, MA 02193

Additional copies of THE BULLETIN may be obtained by phoning Mrs. Raymond Paynter, Jr., 899-3533, or Donald G. Kennedy, Editor, 893-1319; also by calling at the Josiah Smith Tavern any Wednesday afternoon during "Open House". If you have a spare copy of BULLETINS, vintage 1963-1970, our Curator, Mrs. J. E. Fraser, 894-2872 would be glad to have them.