

THE WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN



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Alice Cutter Tyler (right) and her cousin, Marion Cutter, leaving for Sunday School. "Sundays Elinor and I and my cousins, Marion and Charlie, walked to the Congregational Church in Auburndale to Sunday School."

Growing Up in Weston: 1903-1920

Continued from October 1984

Elinor and I went to #5 District School at the corner of Ware Street and South Avenue. She was a year ahead of me. Miss Rebecca McKenna was our teacher. There was a big iron stove in the room, and a woman in the neighborhood made the fire in cold weather. In back of the school were separate outhouses for boys and girls. Washing the blackboards and clapping the erasers was a chore we liked to do after school. When there was a bad snowstorm, Miss McKenna usually stayed overnight at our house. She and my aunt were old friends. Miss McKenna retired to Weston after many years as a teacher in the Teacher's College in Pawling, New York. She was horrified when I told her that she once made me stand in a corner when I was in first grade and once had tied me in my chair. Perhaps today I would be called an "over-active" child. Miss McKenna became Archivist of the Weston Historical Society.

Elinor went over to the Center to the Gray Grammar School [on the site of Brook School Building "C"] to grade 5. There were only two of us in grade 4, and Aunt Sue asked if I might go over to the newly built third and fourth grade rooms in Building "B". Mr. Eaton and the School Committee had hoped to close the South School when the number of children dwindled to ten or twelve, but parental pressure kept it open for several years more. [Parents on the South side preferred their neighborhood school

because in the Center were children of unknown strangers! Ed.] I enjoyed the larger class in the Center. The last Friday of the month we had poetry recitations. "School Days," "October's Bright Blue Weather," "Little Boy Blue," and "'Jes 'fore Christmas" are some that I remember. I usually learned most of the other pupils' poems as they rehearsed. School Committee members visited our classrooms at least once a year.

The barges [school buses] lined up in the circular driveway, and we marched from our classrooms to stand in line until our barge number was called. This practice lasted through high school.

Our sixth grade teacher, Miss Jameson, was terrified of mice, and one day one scurried across the floor. Dave Perry and Weston Blake and other boys chased it while Miss Jameson stood on top of one of the desks. The boys killed the mouse.

In grade 7 Miss Kerwin taught the girls to knit, and we made wristers for the Belgian soldiers [in WWI]. She read to us while we worked.

In eighth grade Miss Hildredth became ill, and her place was taken by Mrs. Hill, who taught us to darn socks so smoothly the wearer would not complain. On nice days she would take us to the wooden grandstand at the edge of the baseball field near the corner of Maple Road. Toward the close of the school year we had a Field Day with all sorts of races. I later used many of Mrs. Hill's methods of teaching arithmetic. We loved her. She lives in Littleton and is now nearly 100.

In the seventh grade Elinor and I went to Miss Field's dancing classes held in the Town Hall. Margaret and Elizabeth Nash went, and the Nashes took us in their car. Miss Field could be very caustic, and when Elinor overheard her commenting about Elinor's dancing, she refused to go a second year. Miss Suzanne Johnson taught the younger children, and she asked me to help her with them. So I went an hour earlier and then to my own class later. I enjoyed it, but I learned to *lead* too well!

I started going to the Unitarian Sunday School, and Miss Charlotte Perkins was my teacher. She was the Rev. Palfrey Perkins' sister, and our course was about liberated women who had dared to espouse causes: Jane Addams and Hull House, Dorothea Dix and the insane, Florence Nightingale, Clara Barton, and others. She also was a capable actress, and she and Helen Wheeler gave memorable performances in the Friendly Society's production of "Arsenic and Old Lace."

Automobiles were increasing in numbers every year. Mr. Livingston Cushing had a Stanley Steamer. He would come up South Avenue, stop in front of the house to build up steam, then go hissing down Park Road to Orchard Avenue. Uncle Charlie bought a Peerless or Stevens Duryea, and we felt very big climbing up into the front seats and blowing the horn.

The Cider Mill and Barn at Cutter's Corner were large buildings. We used to jump off of the high cross beams into the haymow. Once Margaret Nash and I thought it would be fun to break one of the heifers to the saddle. We closed the big barn doors and spent the afternoon trying to saddle and ride one of them. When Uncle Charlie caught us, he told Aunt Sue to please keep the girls out of the barn. Even the cows were upset by the commotion.

The mill had three floors; the big presses were in the basement. The apples, brought in in barrels, were poured into the grinding hoppers on the first floor, gradually. The pulp landed on big squares of cloth, and when enough pulp had been spread all over the cloth, the sides were folded in and a big slotted board was placed on it. There were six or eight layers. Then the big presses were turned down on top of the pump, and cider came out in a wide spout. I was usually there with my mug for the fresh cider. Barrels were stored on the second floor, and on the third, big casks of cider aging into vinegar. The barrels and casks were hoisted to the third floor by heavy rope pulleys. One rope had clamps that hooked over the ends of the barrels. Margaret Nash and I would pull each other up and down by the ropes at the side of the opening. Sometimes we would climb the stairs to the third floor and go from cask to cask opening the spigot and tasting the vinegar.

Grandfather Cutter had made champagne cider. He brought fine white sand from Ipswich beach and filtered the cider. I remember some Harvard boys coming to the house once, trying to buy some of the champagne cider.



"Elinor and I went to #5 District School at the corner of Ware Street and South Avenue . . . a woman in the neighborhood made the fire in the big iron stove . . . in back of the school were separate outhouses for boys and girls . . . Miss McKenna once made me stand in a corner . . . and once had me tied in my chair. Perhaps today I would be called an 'over-active' child".

We were not encouraged to hang around the mill or barn, but down back of the barn the tar barrels for road work were stored, and we did chew some of the drops that collected on the edges. Our teams of horses were used for road work in the south part of town, as were Mr. Tom Coburn's in the north side. Sidewalks were plowed. Before automobiles, rollers sometimes packed the snow down for sleighs and pungs. Sometimes we hooked our sleds onto a pung and rode to Auburndale, hoping to catch another one back—the watering cart in summer.

In June, 1915, the Nashes took me on my first long auto trip when I was in the seventh grade. Mr. Eaton was quite provoked that Aunt Sue let me skip the last day of school. The car was a seven-passenger Buick touring car. We drove to Deerfield and spent the night at the Deerfield Inn. Next morning we visited the old houses and heard of the Indian attacks. That afternoon we drove to Springfield and stayed in a hotel. The third day we drove back to Weston, stopping for lunch at the Hotel Bancroft in Worcester. Dirt roads were bumpier, but we enjoyed every minute.

Thanksgiving and Christmas were always celebrated, and we usually went to Uncle Charlie's and Aunt Nellie's for dinner. Once we went to my great-aunts Antoinette and Agnes Brooks in Hanover, Mass. We had goose, but my vivid memory of it is that I tipped the gravy boat over on the table and felt that I was in disgrace. Uncle Walter Brooks was treasurer of the Walter Baker Chocolate Company, and we went in to his office in Boston once in a while, and he always had samples of chocolate for us.

Birthday parties at the Nashes', at Aunt Nellie's or at our house were happy occasions.

The gypsies came every spring and fall and camped in the woods on Loring Road—about where the entrance to Meadowbrook Road is now. We were afraid of them but went near enough to see their wagons and horses and ponies. The men were horse traders. The women did go to the houses and tried to sell trinkets and scarves and tell fortunes.

Tramps also stopped in the spring and fall, and Aunt Sue always gave them a sandwich and milk and an extra sandwich to take with them. Somehow all the tramps seemed to know who would feed them. The Town Reports have records of the numbers housed overnight in the town.

The fruit man came by with his horse and wagon, and bananas and bags of peanuts were a treat. My aunt had oranges sent from Florida in the winter, and we had a tangerine in our Christmas stockings. Mr. Heard, the fish man, came on Thursdays, and we always had fish chowder or oyster stew on Fridays. Once a year a man drove in with a gaily decorated cart pulled by a huge Belgian horse. He sold all sorts of harness equipment and ornaments for the horses.

One summer Margaret and I had a lemonade stand at the triangular plot between Newton Street, South Avenue, and Park Road. That ended when Mrs. Nash found all her lemons and sugar disappearing. Later Margaret picked a lot of corn from her father's garden, and we sold that. Her father forbade that.

In the fall of 1914 a medical unit of the Mass. Volunteer Militia left Boston on the way to join units being sent to the Mexican border. They camped overnight on the grounds of the South School. There were wagons and mounted men. I went up to see what was happening, and a Major Woodworth, in charge of the unit, allowed me to ride his horse. Later on, the fear of sabotage to our railways led to squads of soldiers being stationed by the bridges along the Boston & Albany Railroad! A squad under the command of Sgt. Bowes camped south of the railroad bridge on Riverside Road. I used to ride horseback and went down and got acquainted with them. Later, in 1916 after war was declared, they went to the Framingham Muster Field and then to France. As war approached, the military supplies had priority on the railroad. Once a carload of apples that Uncle Charlie had purchased in New Hampshire was shunted onto a siding for days. When it finally reached the siding at Roberts Station (now Brandeis), all the apples were rotten.



Miss Jameson's class, the sixth grade in 1914, outside of Building "A" of the Brook School. Front row, left to right, Winfred Scott, Seldon Peakes, Stanley Cullen, C. Francis Whittemore, Benjamin Adams, W. Harrington, Weston Blake, and Randolph Powell. Second row, Hazel Smith, Alice Tyler, Doris Cullen, ?, and Gladys Ayer. Third row, Maurice Giles, J. Irving Connolly, David A. Perry, C. Stanley Morse, Jack Wagstaff, Andrew DeAmbrose, ?, Fred Foote, Lawson Foote, Lytt Strong, Joe Tulis, Earle? Foote. Fourth row, Priscilla Allen, Hazel Hobbs, Evelyn Small, Emma Gebhardt, and Bertha Small. Of the twenty boys and ten girls pictured here, eight girls and seven boys graduated from Weston High School in 1920.



Alice, Elinor, and Marion in front; Harold, Theresa, and "Grandpa" Pope in back. This 1913 photo was taken at the junction of Newton Street, South Avenue, and Park Road — see sign in left background.

At this time the use of glass bottles and jugs was becoming popular. It meant installing new equipment at the mill. There were *four* heirs to the property, my uncle in California, my Aunt Sue, my mother, and Uncle Charlie. It was decided to sell the farm. Uncle Charlie, who had built a barn at 17 Park Road, took one pair of horses and what equipment he needed to his place. Mrs. Bancroft C. Davis bought the farm, and for several years the haying and farming were done by the Popes, who ran Ferndale Farm.

Mrs. Davis allowed Aunt Sue time to buy land on Oak Street and to build a small house. Mr. Frank Pope had come from Vermont in 1910 to manage Ferndale Farm on South Avenue. Mr. Bancroft C. Davis had built a beautiful stone barn for \$60,000, now the riding school, and wanted a farmer to manage the farm. There were three children, and we got acquainted with them going to school on the barge.

In 1913 Mr. Frank Pope's father, Winslow Pope, and his son, Plumer, came on from North Dakota to visit. We all called him "Grandpa Pope." His second wife had died and had left his homestead in charge of a daughter and son-in-law. When he went back a couple of years later, they had sold off all his livestock and left the farm. So he came back to Weston to live with his son.

Grandpa Pope was full of fun and stories. He had homesteaded in Iowa, lived in Minnesota, and then gone to North Dakota. He sang the old folk's songs, "Sweet Betsy from Pike" and "The Foggy Dew" and others that were popular out West. He told about blizzards and prairie fires and sod houses and "the Rooshans" and Indians. He began to come calling on Aunt Sue, and in January of 1916 they were married. The Rev. Mr. Russell did not approve, but it was a happy twelve years for my aunt and uncle, although we still called him "Grandpa". He became the man in our household. As a young man he had cooked in a lumber camp in Vermont, and he made wonderful pancakes. He even cooked *liver* so I liked it! He took us — usually Theresa and Elinor and me — to matinees at the old Boston Theatre to see Denman Thompson in "Way Down East" and "My Old Kentucky Home". Aunt Sue's health had its ups and downs, so she didn't go to many affairs. Grandpa took me to Buffalo Bill and His Wild West Show. We had been brought up to be well-behaved young ladies and not to be conspicuous in public, and at first we were embarrassed by Grandpa's free and easy ways. He would sing on the train and chat with everyone as we rode out from Boston. He was so jolly and friendly that people were amused.



Alice at Ferndale Farm in 1918 with riding skirt, puttees, and leggings.

Grandpa had bought a Morgan mare that spring, and Uncle Frank Pope let us have a cow from Ferndale. Grandpa taught me how to milk the cow. The horse, "Belle", was an excellent road horse but hard gaited for a saddle horse, but I rode her, anyway. One afternoon in the spring when Elinor came home from school she heard the cow bellowing. She went down back of the carriage shed and discovered that the cow had fallen through the planks of the large cesspool! She had a halter on. Elinor grabbed it and held her head up, and then she screamed until she roused Aunt Sue, who was resting. Aunt Sue telephoned Ferndale, and Uncle Frank and several men came and finally got the cow out. She and Grandpa scrubbed the cow but said, "Don't tell Alice, and have her milk the cow tonight." I thought she had a peculiar odor, but not until I finished did Grandpa and Elinor tell me what had happened!

We moved to 18 Oak Street in the fall. Clearing out a ten-room house to move to a five-room house was a task. Many things we would like to have kept were discarded — among them the newspaper account of the Mabel Page murder and Aunt Sue's testimony at the trial. Part of the house at Oak Street had been a small store in Auburndale. It was moved to the trolley yards on Auburn Street, where Grandpa bought it. It was moved up to Oak Street on rollers and pulled by a team of horses from Ferndale. Then the carpenters added on the other three rooms. Since then two rooms and a bath were added upstairs. We had electric lights!

The land was purchased in two small lots, one part from Willard Morse and the other from Mr. Frank Morse. There was a barn owned half by Frank Morse and half by Mr. George Morse. Grandpa persuaded Mr. Frank Morse to let us use half, with a small ell for "Belle" and the cow from Ferndale. Once, when a portion of the barn roof leaked, Grandpa and I climbed up on the roof from the ell. He put a rope around my waist, and I crawled carefully down the other roof until I found the leaks and nailed on some shingles. I had nightmares for years about the high drop from that roof to the ground!

We had a large garden, and I rode "Belle" when Grandpa cultivated the corn and potatoes. "Belle" was too quick to drive, and handle the plow or cultivator, too. Grandpa cut hay on any available fields nearby, and we pastured the cow in another of Mr. Frank Morse's fields — where 34 and 38 Oak Street are now.

In the fall of 1916 Uncle Frank Pope asked me if I would like to take over the small milk route that his son, Harold, had been handling. Harold was going to Newton Technical High School and didn't want to do the route. I said "yes" for \$2.00 per week, seven days a week. Grandpa called me at 5:30 a.m., and I dressed and ran from Oak Street across by the barn and down South Avenue to Ferndale. I harnessed "Dinah" or "Chub" to the Democrat wagon and drove around to the milk room, where Lee Turner loaded the two cases of milk and cream into the wagon. At first the route covered South Avenue, the Youngs, the Blakes, Mrs. Davis on Orchard Avenue, over Ox Bow and Ridgeway Road and up Glen Road to the Glen House—a summer hotel similar to Drabington Lodge on North Avenue—then back through Hubbard's woods to what is now Bullard Road and down Shaylor Lane to South Avenue and back to the farm.

By 1918 and 1919 we had added a number of customers in Wellesley Farms and Wellesley Hills and doubled the amounts of milk and cream sold. In the winter of 1919-1920 [Alice's senior year in high school] no milk trucks were used for six weeks, only pungs, and it was decided that I could go every other day and deliver two days' milk. So I went after I got home from school in the afternoon.

One very stormy Saturday we hitched up "Freddy", a horse I had ridden out from Boston to Ferndale Farm a few weeks before, to a double-runner pung. Elinor said she would go with me. We got halfway through Orchard Avenue, and the snow had drifted so badly across the fields that "Freddy" quit. He would not go on. So we took "Freddy" out of the shafts, walked him to the back of the pung, and hitched the chain traces to the back runners. Then Elinor led "Freddy" while I kept the front runners straight by steering with the shafts. We got back to Park Road and drove back to Ferndale Farm.



Grafton and Alice on Grafton's motorcycle at Ferndale Farm in 1918. In this photo, Alice was still an underclassman in high school. Have times really changed? Ed.

The milk was delivered after the storm was over.

I mentioned Mr. Shaylor as one of our customers. He lived in a big house on the top of the hill on Shaylor Lane. He was a famous horticulturist and developed many new varieties of peonies. Later he built a stucco house halfway down the hill. The Squibbs lived there and were milk customers. Mr. Samuel Warren lived on Newton Street and grew strawberries and developed new varieties. Mr. George Morse on South Avenue was well known for his strawberries and raspberries and catered to the carriage trade.

Uncle Frank planted strawberries and beans for the Boston Market. He would drive the white truck around at 5:00 a.m. picking up young people to pick berries. We got 2¢ per box, and one day I earned 80¢. The wholesale price was 13¢ per quart. For years I also picked blueberries on Newton Street and Ridgeway Road, and Judge Kennedy paid me 18¢ when the going price was 15¢ per quart. Sometimes we took a picnic lunch and drove the horse and buggy to Nonesuch Pond area to pick.

Every Friday night Uncle Frank drove the White truck to Waltham for groceries for the house and the boarding house where the hired men ate. It is now the Ellistons' house. Usually five or six young people went with him, and we went shopping or to the first movie show at the Rex Theatre on Moody Street, admission 10¢.

During the years I "ran the milk route," I also took the milk wagon horses to Al Morrill's blacksmith shop in Newton Lower Falls when they needed new shoes. This was usually on Saturday mornings when I got back from my route.

Ferndale Barn housed about seventy cows. In the annex were pens for the heifers. Out in the back field there was a bull pen and pig pens. It was modern, up to date, and kept very clean. The men who worked there never used coarse or cheap language. The Popes were very hospitable, and the young brought friends home often. Aunt Ella was never surprised to have three or four extra for meals. They went to the Baptist church and at that time there was an active young people's group.

On Sunday nights we would go down for hymn sings. Thelma played the piano. They had been to Tremont Temple to hear Billy Sunday, and we sang a lot of new hymns that I had not heard at First Parish. Theresa had a beau who brought her new sheet music every week, so we learned all the newest tunes and the World War I songs.

During the summer I tedded and raked hay and Ferndale cut hay at the Cutter place as well as fields at what is now Brandeis University. They figured I raked over 500 tons of hay. As Daylight Saving Time came in, we often finished getting in the last load after supper. Uncle had bought two Morgan colts in Vershire, Vermont, and he wanted me to ride them every day.

Sleigh rides, hayrides, and corn husking bees were planned for Thelma's and Theresa's classmates and friends, and parties in the winter with parlor games you all remember. My high school years were shared with life at Ferndale Farm, and I think Mr. Eaton [the teacher-principal-superintendent] often felt my marks would have been better if I hadn't been delivering milk or riding the colts. I had the pleasure of sometimes riding with Mrs. Dickson, and once with the Wellingtons.

In 1920 Ferndale Farm combined with Willow Farm in Newtonville, and most of the land was sold to the Pine Brook Country Club. The house and a few acres are now the Fagans' property; the barn is now the Riding School.

In school, classes were small and we got a lot of individual attention. There was no gym, but—wand drill until World War I. We also had military drill without the wooden guns the boys had. I was First Sergeant and conducted the drill for the girls; Polly Coburn was First Lieutenant.

Miss [Helen B.] Green asked me what I planned to do after high school, and I said I'd probably go to normal school. She urged me to try for B.U. I found I needed half a credit, so I asked Mr. Eaton if I could take Mechanical Drawing—as I hated the art courses. He said yes, but I couldn't take it with the boys' class. So I took it Monday and Friday afternoons after school and walked home. School parties, dancing in the auditorium after we had eaten our lunches, made school pleasant for me.

On Memorial Day we were required to attend the exercises in the Town Hall. The barges were sent for us. The high school sang as part of the program. Then we marched to the cemetery and back, and a band concert followed. The exercises were at 2 p.m. for many years. Music was taught by Mr. Boyd for many years. I took part in Prize



Alice in her high school graduation dress, June 1920.

Speaking twice and was in the senior class play, and I won one of Miss Case's prizes for an essay. There were fifteen students in the class of 1920, and I am sure that I have never known as much as I *thought* I did on graduation day. The graduating class was a guest at the Weston High School Alumni Association in the evening, and the girls wore their graduation dresses. My aunt had made me a white organdy dress.

In 1922, I think, Mr. Horace Sears entertained the Weston High School Alumni Association at an outdoor supper at "Haleiwa". I had been there once before to his theatre to see [the Friendly Society's production of] "The Red Mill". We had a tour of the downstairs rooms and his Napoleonic library. In the fall of 1920 I entered the College of Liberal Arts at B.U. and walked back and forth to Riverside or Auburndale station for four years. This year will be the 60th reunion for the Class of 1924.

Alice Tyler Fraser

A MESSAGE FROM THE NEW PRESIDENT

I am picking up the presidential gavel of the Weston Historical Society with some trepidation. Our beloved and highly capable president for many years, Steve Riley, is a hard act to follow, indeed. I shall make all possible effort to follow in his footsteps. He has been a brilliant example for me — and I know for many others as well.

I mentioned on Thursday, November 20, 1984, at the time of my election, that there will be no discrimination against the gentlemen, even though the new president is of the female “persuasion.” Jest aside, I wish to state openly that my dedication to Weston and its fascinating history has been genuine. I shall support our ongoing programs, especially the oral history project, which is of essential importance if we want to record for posterity the life and the lives in Weston.

I am asking for your support. We need ideas and we need people in our Society. Please send me a note with your suggestions for speakers and/or for programs. Do consider my suggestion that a membership in the Weston Historical Society *IS* a very good idea all around, and I am informed that it is tax deductible. It would be wonderful if all of us could get at least one new member for the coming year. Think of your children, grandchildren or any other candidate.

I am looking forward with great expectations to share with all of you our cares, concerns and love for Weston history.

Dr. Vera Laska

FROM THE EDITOR

Editing these fourteen issues of the *Bulletin* has been a labor of love! As most of you know, Jean and I have moved to Duxbury where I am the new superintendent of schools. This is my final issue. I wish Lee Marsh well as the new editor, and promise to finish the stories I have partially completed! My thanks to all of you who helped me, but especially to Steve Riley, Brent Dickson, Alice Fraser, and — of course — to the memory of “Red” Travis, Pat Palmer, and Phil Coburn.



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

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Gift memberships are suggested

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 1963-70, our Curator, Mrs. J. E. Fraser, 894-2872 would be glad to have them.