

# THE WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN



Spring, 1995

Volume XXVI, No. 1

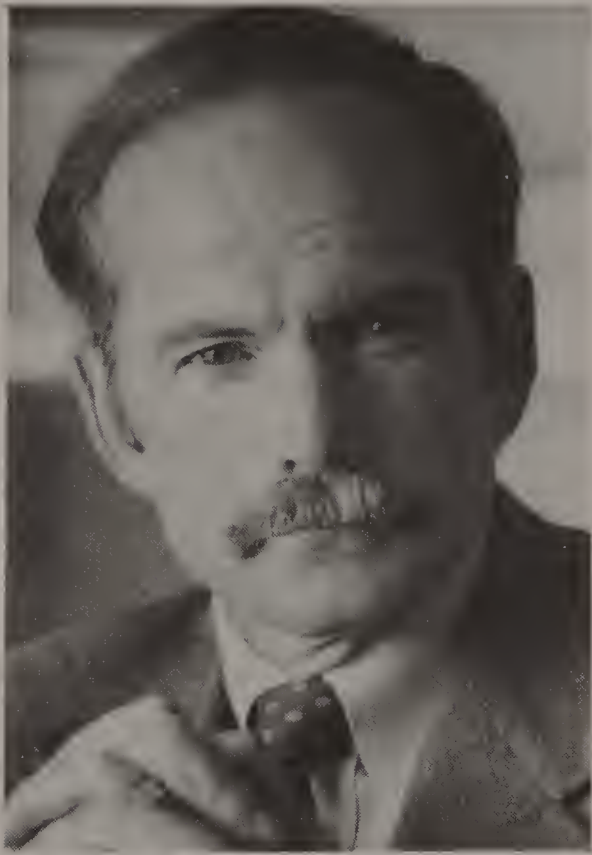
## IN MEMORIAM



**Alice Cutter Tyler Fraser,**  
Honorary Director Of The Society,  
July 24, 1903 - February 14, 1995

**We Shall Miss You!**

*(see "Remembering" on page 17.)*



*Jack Beatty*

## “HIZZONOR” AMONG US

November 15th, 1994 was a memorable day for us at the Weston Historical Society. First the directors participated in a dinner at the Weston Golf Club, then at the “Barn” of the Josiah Smith Tavern we were truly treated to an intellectually witty talk by Jack Beatty, author of *THE RASCAL KING: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JAMES MICHAEL CURLEY* (1874-1958).

Curley certainly had a checkered career. Son of Irish immigrants, he used the church as a springboard to politics. He was among others Congressman from Massachusetts, thrice mayor of Boston and once governor of the Commonwealth. We all know about his term in jail, yet that did not much diminish his fame among the local patriots.

In a way, he is still in Boston, this “Rascal King.” He sits on a bench in a downtown park, with space enough for residents to join him and reflect next to his seated statue.

He lived and he departed from life in style. His funeral was quite a show. He lay in state not in City Hall but in the Hall of Flags in the State House; 100,000 mourners filed by his catafalque and an estimated one million people lined the streets to watch the hearse of “Hizzonor” pass by to its final resting place.

The subject of the talk was a super-colorful figure, and the speaker did him justice with his flowery language. It was a sheer and undiluted joy listening to Jack Beatty, as he described Curley, who lived ten men’s lives, who was a mayor of the poor with the taste of an aristocrat, who never stole from anybody who could not afford it, who depicted a politician as “14 ounces lighter than a straw hat.”

His private life was tragic. He buried his first wife and all but two of his seven children. He married again, and both his marriages were happy ones.

We need more lively speakers as Jack Beatty!

*Vera Laska*

The annual dinner of the Weston Historical Society will take place on Thursday, May 11th, 1995 at Regis College: wine and cheese at 6 p.m., dinner at 7 p.m. and speaker at 8 p.m. Northeastern history professor William Fowler will discuss the history of Boston harbor. See included flyer.





Deeds indicate that Sears' account is not precisely correct, and that in 1883 Winsor purchased nineteen acres directly from Hollis and Hannah Davis, for \$2,000. The first Parish Church, of which "Mr. Russell" (Rev. Charles F. Russell) was minister, was to benefit greatly from Winsor's settlement in Weston, as Winsor would become one of the church's most prominent supporters. This was a period of reorganization and consolidation in American industry, and Winsor was a leading figure in this process. A newspaper article published just after his death discusses the distinguished Harvard Class of 1880, which included Theodore Roosevelt:

Perhaps Robert Winsor was the greatest of the '80's great young men, at least in the business world... He conceived great projects... Winsors had the insight that saw the transportation needs of the last four decades. He saw the needs of and the demand for illuminating and heating gas. He saw the demand for communication... Robert Winsor saw these things. He grasped their importance and he... found the men to develop them. Not only did he find the men, but he found the money, millions of money, for the developments.

His first "coup" was the reorganization, with classmate William A. Gaston, of the old West End Street Railway into the Boston Elevated Railway Company. Winsor merged several greater Boston gas companies into the Boston Consolidated Gas Company. He and Gaston consolidated nine existing banks to establish the National Shawmut Bank, one of the largest banks in New England. Winsor and his firm became the representative of the Morgan interests in New England. He was involved in the financing of the expanding AT & T and United States Steel Companies. He served as a director of dozens of companies and for a time exerted strong influence in the affairs of three large New England railways. Under Winsor's leadership, Kidder Peabody developed from an eminently respectable investment bank of little more than local influence to one of the greatest banking institutions in the world. His obituaries describe his "forceful personality and constructive mind" and his "far sightedness, broad vision, ability, conscientiousness and natural leadership." Several articles note Winsor's modesty and dislike of personal publicity.

With business success came financial prosperity, and Winsor began purchasing additional property in Weston. In 1887, he acquired two parcels at the southeast corner of Wellesley and Boston Post Road for a total of 18 acres. By 1890, he had laid out a right of way, now the first few hundred feet of Winsor Way, and built the two houses which are now numbered 1 and 10 Winsor Way. Research suggests that one of these houses, the present 1 Winsor Way, was built for his widowed mother in 1893. That year, the Weston directory lists five of Winsor's siblings - Mary, Annie, Elizabeth, Frederick, and Jane - living with their mother at the corner of Central Avenue and Wellesley Street.

In 1895, Jane Winsor married Lyman Whitman Gale, and the couple built the house still standing at 22 Conant Road. By 1900, all of the siblings had married except Mary, who continued to live on Winsor Way at least until her mother's death in 1907. Winsor's brother, Paul, and his two sons, Paul and Felix, lived next door at this time as well.





*Line drawing of the Winsor estate mansion  
(built ca. 1901-3, demolished 1946). (Photo courtesy of Elise Winsor Palmer)*



*Aerial view of the Winsor estate mansion, which stood on the site of the present Canadian  
Consulate at 63 Winsor Way. (Photo courtesy of Elise Winsor Palmer)*



In 1894, Winsor was admitted into partnership at Kidder, Peabody. Four years later, in 1898, he made his first large land purchase, the 83 acres commonly known as the Bryden Farm, for which he paid \$24,000. The farm included much of the land which was to become the Weston Golf Club, along with the farmhouse which still remains at 279 Meadowbrook Road, and the cow barn which was to become the core of the present Weston Golf clubhouse.

By 1903, Winsor owned 185 acres, including the site at 63 Winsor Way where he built his estate mansion, known as "Chestnut Farm." The mansion, thought to have been built about 1901-1903, was demolished in 1946. Described as "a beautiful estate, where comfort, not lavishness, is the keynote," the 2½ story shingle Tudor house was shaped like a W, with picturesque gables facing in all directions. The site was accessible from a winding driveway extending the length of the present Winsor Way and Bryden Road. The garage was later remodelled into a house at 4 Bryden Road. A fieldstone and shingle outbuilding known as the "duck house," probably built about the same time, still stands at 283 Meadowbrook Road and once overlooked a pond, which was drained about 1926 when the duck house was converted into a residence. Two other converted estate buildings are located at 4 and 8 Hidden Road, the latter a converted chicken coop.

The main estate mansion reflected Winsor's prosperity and also accommodated his growing family, which numbered six children including four who survived into early adulthood: Robert Jr. (1884-1944), Philip (1893-1918), Alexander ("Sandy," 1894-1966), and Mary P. ("Bud" Trumbull, 1896-1968). The Weston home was the family's principal residence. Summers were spent at Cataumet, in a home built by Winsor overlooking Buzzards Bay and, in later years, at an estate on Mt. Desert Island in Maine.

To provide convenient private schooling for his children, Winsor was instrumental in establishing the Pigeon Hill School, the predecessor of the present Meadowbrook School. According to the oral history by Winsor Gale, a nephew,

The Pigeon Hill School was founded by a group of parents who wanted their children to have a private education as opposed to the public schools. They included my Uncle Robert Winsor, the John and Carlie Paines, the William and Authur Coburns, and also a group from Wayland.

The school had its origins in Waltham in 1890 but moved to Weston in 1905 and was renamed to reflect its new location on Pigeon Hill Road. Winsor purchased the lot where the school was located from Horace Sears in 1903 and owned it until 1918. The early 20th century school building is still standing at 10 Pigeon Hill Road, where it was converted to a house in about 1925-26. The school's location was presumably chosen for its convenience to the Central Massachusetts Railroad line which linked Weston to Wayland and points west.

To provide skating and swimming facilities for his children, Winsor dug the large pond on Skating Pond Road out of marshland. Elise Palmer, Winsor's granddaughter, dates this pond to 1902, while Winsor Gale's oral history gives the date as 1910. The pond, which measures approximately 150 feet wide and 300 feet long, was open to

all children of the town in the early 20th century. In “*Growing Up in Weston*,” Philip Coburn describes playing hockey here with the stars of the 1915 Harvard team who were friends of the Winsor boys. According to Coburn, “at the west end of the pond was a curling rink where a horse drawn plane made the ice as smooth as glass.” At the end was an area for “fancy skating.” The whole pond was lighted at night, with a switch that could be used by anyone to turn the lights on if they wished to skate. A log shelter still remains beside the pond. Here, according to Coburn, “Mrs. (Robert) Winsor sat in front of a table, serving hot coffee and tea to the grown-ups and marshmallows and cocoa to the children.” This custom, which lasted until the Winsor boys went into the service in 1917, provides insight into the gentility of estate life in Weston in the early 20th century.

Winsor’s daughter, Mary Pickard Winsor II, nicknamed “Bud” or “Buddy,” married Walter H. Trumbull Jr., and their son, Philip, still lives in Weston. The three Winsor boys followed their father’s footsteps at Harvard, Classes of 1905 (Robert), 1915 (Philip) and 1916 (Sandy), although Sandy left during his junior year and did not graduate. Robert Jr. and Sandy Winsor, along with their brother-in-law Walter H. Trumbull Jr., joined Kidder, Peabody and were made partners in the late 1920s. Robert stayed at Kidder, Peabody throughout his career. His colonial revival style home at 29 Winsor Way was demolished about 1987. Philip died of pneumonia in France in World War I while serving as an ambulance driver. Sandy left Kidder, Peabody in the early 1930s, spent some time as an insurance salesman, and beginning about 1936 worked only for the family real estate trust, serving as treasurer.

When Sandy married Elizabeth Hope Bancroft in 1916, his father built the young couple a picturesque shingled house in the English revival style, still located at 37 Skating Pond Road. This house stayed in the Winsor family until 1994, when it was put up for sale by Sandy Winsor’s daughter, Elise (Mrs. Sanford Palmer). The Alexander Winsor House is the most architecturally distinctive of the remaining buildings associated with the Winsor estate.

In the first two decades of the 20th century, Winsor purchased additional land, bringing his acreage to 203 in 1905, 329 in 1910, and 471 in 1915. One of his largest purchases was the Hagar farm, purchased in 1903 and 1906, for a total of 149 acres. By 1918, Winsor is listed in town tax records as owner of 472 acres, making his estate second in size only to the estate of Charles J. Paine, who had owned 658 acres at the time of his death in 1916.

In November, 1918, Winsor made a dramatic change in the ownership of his land, forming the Weston Real Estate Trust “for the purpose of holding, managing, and selling certain real estate situated in said Weston” with Winsor and his three surviving children as the initial trustees. Winsor turned over 422 acres to the trust and retained 16 acres for his own use. At the same time, Winsor deeded 50 acres to the Weston Golf Club.

The formation of the Weston Real Estate Trust coincided with the resettlement of the Weston Golf Club on Winsor’s property. Winsor was one of the original directors of the club, which was founded in 1894 and was originally located in the Kendal Green area on land hired from several owners. Winsor served as president of the Weston Golf Club





*Robert Winsor. Photo undated, probably ca. 1913  
(Photo courtesy of Elise Winsor Palmer)*

from 1914 to 1925. In 1916, the club was looking for an alternate location, since one owner planned to sell his part of the course for house lots and another owner refused to allow golfers to play on Sundays. Winsor proposed the use of his land, and by 1917, a nine-hole course had been completed, several tennis courts constructed, and the Winsor barn renovated into a clubhouse which included four bowling alleys. The architect for this renovation was Harold Graves, a local architect who was a member of the club at the time and offered his services free of charge. Graves' design for the remodeled clubhouse was much altered after a devastating fire in 1938.

Contrary to popular belief, Winsor did not donate his property to the golf club. The 1918 deed to the Weston Golf Club makes it clear that Winsor financed the purchase of the property and renovations by holding a \$38,500 mortgage, payable with interest charges which rose by  $\frac{1}{2}$  per cent per year from zero during the first two years to  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. Although Winsor sold, rather than donated, the land, he included a clause in the deed stating that "the granted premises shall be used only for a course or country club" or the property would revert to himself or his heirs.



The Weston Golf Club was fortunate to secure the services of Donald C. Ross to design and supervise the building of new golf course. Ross, a Scotsman, has been described as “one of the world’s outstanding golf architects.” Construction on a nine hole course was done by Hugh Nawn Construction Company, with labor provided by men working with picks and shovels aided by horse drawn vehicles used for earth moving. An additional nine holes, also designed by Ross, were initiated in 1920 and completed in 1923, again financed by a mortgage from Winsor.

Ray Heist, Weston Golf Club historian, has pointed out how Winsor’s resettlement of the golf course onto his land enhanced its residential value, allowing him to transform farm land into prime residential tracts. The Meadowbrook Road area may be among the first examples in the country of a high-priced residential community developed around a golf course, making full use of the fairways as design elements.

A second institution which enhanced the value of the Winsor land holdings was the Meadowbrook School, which moved from Pigeon Hill to its present site in 1923 and was renamed at that time. As with the golf course, Winsor made his land available for purchase. In September, 1924, the first year at the new site, Winsor’s daughter, Mary (Mrs. Walter H. Trumbull, Jr.) was president of the Executive Committee and his daughter-in-law, Mrs. Alexander Winsor, was a member of that committee.

When ground was broken for the Meadowbrook School, the road from Wellesley Street was extended and renamed Meadowbrook Road. The new accessibility of the area led the Weston Golf Club to initiate a winter sports program here utilizing the pond next to the school for skating and the hill for a toboggan chute and sledding. Golf club historian Ray Heist describes how the pond was lighted, a warming shack installed, and the school kitchen used for preparation of warm drinks and snacks. Sections of the pond were reserved for different types of skating, and “mechanical music provided an air of festivity.” This tradition continued until 1966.

Development of the Meadowbrook Road area began in earnest in the 1920s. The Weston Roads Trust was founded to build and pave roads. New owners were required - and are still required today - to become members of the Roads Trust and contribute to the support of the roads, which are still privately owned. Seven to eight miles of private roads traverse the property.

According to Phil Coburn’s memoir, “*Growing Up in Weston*,” Winsor wanted to attract young married couples to live around the golf club, so he sponsored a competition with a \$1000 prize to the architect who could design a house that a young couple could easily expand to accommodate a growing family. According to Coburn, the designs of two leading local architects, Samuel Mead and Harold Graves, were displayed at the club. Coburn states that the seven houses on the golf club side of Wellesley Street are the result of the competition. However, only six houses (numbers 40,44,56,60,64 and 70) were actually built, one of which, 64, is on a double lot.

The Weston Real Estate Trust had a small sales office and published a promotional brochure reflecting Winsor’s desire to protect the rural character of the land for the benefit of the new development. Under a full-page picture of a waterfall is the caption “The path along the brook is open to the neighborhood but is not for sale.” Prospective buyers were advised that “The owners are very anxious to preserve the appearance and the atmosphere of the Country. No lots of less than two acres are sold. A very pleasant





*Family of Robert Winsor. Top Row: Alexander (Sandy) Winsor, Walter H. Trumbull, Mary "Bud" Winsor Trumbull, Robert Winsor, Jr. Second Row: Hope Bancroft Winsor (married to Sandy), Eleanor Magee Winsor, Robert Winsor, Susan Baker Winsor (married to Robert, Jr.), Third Row (grandchildren): Elise Winsor Palmer, Philip Trumbull, Robert Winsor III. Forth Row: Alexander Winsor, Jr. Photo taken about 1920-21. (Photo courtesy of Elise Winsor Palmer)*

neighborhood has developed" and "No restrictions are made in regard to the cost or size of houses built on the land. It is felt that large and small houses have the same chance for beauty, and that the people who come to this community have the perception to adapt houses to the natural beauty of the surroundings." The brochure adds that "Before land is shown, it is asked the name of prospective buyers be given the Trust." It is important to point out that, although some lots were, in fact, less than two acres, the lots were large in this era before municipal zoning regulations.

Toward the end of his life, Winsor suffered from ill health. The death of his wife in 1924 took an emotional toll, and the stock market crash of October, 1929 has been described as "devastating" to Winsor and his firm, where he was by then the senior active partner. Winsor died of a heart attack in New York City on January 7, 1930 at the age of 71.

The Weston Real Estate Trust was managed by Sandy Winsor until his death in 1967 and thereafter by Philip Trumbull, son of Winsor's daughter, Mary. In 1986, after nearly 70 years of operation, the land had all been sold and the Weston Real Estate Trust was dissolved.

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** I would like to thank Elise Winsor Palmer and her daughters Hope Palmer Taylor and Sally Palmer Bishop, as well as Ray Heist, Weston Golf Club historian, and Philip Trumbull, all of whom I consulted on the details of this article.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This article is an abbreviated form of a longer paper on this subject, which contains all the necessary footnotes regarding sources; it is on file at the Museum of Weston Historical Society. Pamela W. Fox, as a preservation consultant, carried out an architectural and historical survey for the Weston Historical Commission between October 1993 and June 1994.





*The new flagpole being delivered to the Town Hall, 1968*

## **MORE ABOUT THE FLAGPOLE**

It was pleasing again to receive the Weston Historical Society's Bulletin and to read that you are resuming publication. As almost always in the past, the minute the Bulletin arrived, I read it. The tidbits of Weston history and old photographs have an unfailing attraction for me.

Now I am responding to Dr. Laska's invitation "to one and all" to put down a memory. This one is a footnote to Sam Payson's article "The Two Weston Flagpoles."

What is missing from the Payson article is the politics of that town meeting in 1968 when Ralph Woodworth proposed that the town spend \$8,045 on replacement of the 110 foot Douglas fir flagpole. The dominant national political event was the U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. The anti-war movement was just getting underway, and many in Weston were in the vanguard. Their reading of Woodworth's proposal was that it was a symbolic statement in support of the war. Displaying the flag, and how the flag was displayed, were ways people showed what side they were on.

There had not been much discussion about this warrant article before the Special Town Meeting. Those who raised questions about the article and spoke in opposition probably took Bud Koester and the selectmen by surprise. Opposition appeared to be spontaneous. There were objections about the expense and about the necessity for Weston to have one of the tallest flagpoles in the nation. The supporters replied that it had to be this high to be seen over the pine trees. An opponent suggested that height could be achieved in the same way the tallest mast were constructed, by binding together two long spars.

The vote was finally taken and the yeas and nays too close to call. A standing vote was required. A photographer from the Town Crier snapped a flash picture of those voting “no” to the purchase. In the 1960s, sensitivity about patriotism questions was still fresh enough from the McCarthy hearings that the prospect of a published photograph of those voting against the purchase of a flag pole caused an immediate objection. The moderator’s attention was promptly sought, and his intervention requested, to prohibit photographs being taken during town meeting votes. The moderator concurred, and the nay vote was again called while the photographer stood to the side.

In the Weston tradition, once the vote was taken there was no lingering discussion, but there were complications. Transporting the World War I flagpole from Boston to Weston by way of Portsmouth, N.H. was nothing compared to transporting that Douglas fir from Washington state across country by truck.

One truck could not handle it, and a second trailer bed had to be attached. Perhaps Ward Carter could add a further footnote on what he remembers about that operation and the pole’s erection-yet another challenge.

Thank you all for your efforts at preserving Weston’s history.

*Deborah Ecker*

Mrs. Deborah Ecker is a long time resident of Weston. She served on the Finance Committee. She has been an active member of the League of Women Voters and member of its State Board. She was also president of the Weston League of Women Voters.

*Town Administrator J. Ward Carter does not recollect the details of the Town Meeting at which the flagpole was discussed, but he does remember that there was a lot of lively discussion about it. He writes:*

*“The new pole came to East Boston to the Pigeon Hollow Spar Company where it was finished and shipped by truck from there to Weston. The original pole was some 100 feet above ground originally, but a small section had been cut off when it was rotted out. The present pole has approximately 10 feet buried in the ground.”*

*Mr. Carter kindly lent us the picture showing the flagpole as it was delivered, unpainted, to its site in Weston. Many thanks!*

*Vera Laska*



## MORE ABOUT THE WESTON - WATERTOWN BRIDGE

The Weston Historical Society Bulletin of Spring, 1994 came to hand a few moments ago. I was immediately struck by the configuration of the old bridge as I had wondered what it might have looked like. Approximately ten years ago while researching a 1784 Lottery ticket I had purchased - proceeds to benefit the Watertown Bridge - I believe I may have learned the story of the Weston Bridge picture on your Bulletin.

Before and after the Revolutionary War, Rt. 30 was the main thoroughfare in and out of Boston to and from the West. A ferry operated there and was a great inconvenience to those who used the muddy track filled road, as I have learned from reading original letters of merchants and travelers of the period. After the end of the Revolutionary War in 1783, one of the first efforts citizens of our new nation undertook was to rebuild and improve the infrastructure and transportation system of the 13 original states which had always been badly neglected by Mother England. The financing of the Charles Street Bridge, also across the Charles River, in 1785 was the largest single project undertaken in this country up to that time.

As I recall, differences of who (Weston or Watertown) was to pay for the needed bridge improvements and how, was an issue. In any case the Massachusetts legislature sometimes in 1784 authorized a lottery to be held - proceeds to pay for the bridge which is most likely the one pictured on your Bulletin. I have in my collection one of the original 1784 Watertown Bridge Tickets signed by Isaac Jones himself, and sold at his still familiar Golden Ball Tavern on the Post Road in Weston center. This leads me to speculate that only Weston's side was financed via this lottery, as Weston was predominately a sparsely populated rural farming town in 1784, and the more populous neighbor, Watertown, had more means to draw from.

I seem to remember that the lottery was not too successful, perhaps also contributing to the less ornate Weston side of the bridge. In any case further research may turn up the definitive answer. In the meantime it's nice to see a Weston Historical Society in action and encouraging others to be involved. History can provide wonderful entertainment! Keep it up. Enclosed is my family membership

*Ned W. Downing*

*Ned W. Downing is a Weston resident and retired investment banker. He is a curator for autographs, letters, books, broadsides and Revolutionary War financial instruments in Wellesley.*

## MESSAGE TO THE READERS

The Editorial Board of the BULLETIN has been gratified by the responses of our readers. As you see in this issue, there was a good echo on our articles about the Weston - Watertown (Newton) bridge and the flagpole. We also had two offers of the missing issue of an old BULLETIN, from Mrs. Raymond Paynter and Mrs. John Chisholm. All this is very encouraging, and we thank the contributors.

While you, the readers, are not in the category of "publish or perish," nevertheless, please sit down and write us about your experiences in Weston. This is an easy way to become a published author!

## UNINVITED GUEST - A RACCOON

On a dusky, tenebrous afternoon not too long ago, it must have been in the late nineteen seventies, my husband Andrew and I were returning home. As the automatic garage door went up, lo and behold, who sits in the back of the garage but a portly, corpulent raccoon, staring right back at us.

For several days we had been noticing that some animal keeps nibbling at our apples stored in the garage. Whatever creature it was, its mother did not teach it to finish an apple once it started eating it; no, dozens of lovely golden delicious apples were bitten into then left for the next. An expert exterminator summoned for consultation determined on the basis of droppings that the intruder and freeloader must have been a rat, or more likely several rats. He (the exterminator) was rearing to do business with us. He was scheduled to do his deadly intervention in a few days, to the tune of a three figure charge.

Facing the raccoon, we knew we had the real culprit. The raccoon was growling and hissing, showing its teeth - which pretty well matched the imprints on the apples. Feeling cornered, the raccoon, we hoped, would run out of the garage. Not so. Instead, it took a beeline to the little swinging door from the garage into the house, built for Gypsy the Cat, so he could commute to his toilet in the garage. At the same time, Gypsy appeared, hoping to escape from the house on an illegal outing. The cat stared at the raccoon, the raccoon stared at the cat. We feared for the safety of the cat, in case they got into a fight. But we were wrong again. The cat marched out into the falling night, with utter contempt toward both raccoon and its masters' restraining voices.

The raccoon meanwhile went through the little swinging door, or rather it wanted to get through it, but it was so fat that it got stuck in the door. It was the perfect moment to grab the raccoon by its bushy tail, but I thought better of it and desisted this temptation. The raccoon kept wiggling in and out, until finally he squeezed itself through the little door into the house.

It was facing three possible dark refuges, where it could hide. But no; instead, it chose the stairs leading to the main level where lights were on. We did not see it. What ensued was a lively debate between my husband and myself, he claiming that the raccoon run up the stairs, while I claimed, with total logic, I am still sure, that an animal when pursued tries to hide in the dark. Well - I lost that one, as the raccoon ended up upstairs, ran along a corridor and found a hiding place under our beds in the bedroom.

What now? If in doubt, call the Weston firemen, of course. I thought that they would be utterly amazed that we have a raccoon under our beds. Not so, again. "Another one?" they asked; "we'll be right over." And true to their word, they were. They isolated themselves with the angry animal, moved the beds hither and yon, and finally threw an old blanket over the growling raccoon. It took both of them to hold the wiggling shape inside the blanket. They called us and ordered us to open a window. While I expressed anxiety over the safety of the raccoon, my spouse obligingly opened a window. In a nick of time, the raccoon flew through the air, landing, still inside the blanket, in the back yard. It emerged, shook itself, threw a disapproving glance upward, and hightailed it into the woods.





*Dave Granlund's cartoon of the two Weston firemen chasing the raccoon in the Laskas' bedroom.*

So this was chapter one of our raccoon story, perhaps entitled "The Encounter," enough by itself to tell your grand-children about.

I thought that the two firemen, Carl Clark and Paul Young, were truly brave, and should be memorialized; so I wrote a letter to the editor in the local newspaper, the Town Crier, lauding these stouthearted men, who willingly exposed themselves to danger to save both us and the raccoon. Call that chapter two, "The Announcement."

But there is more: chapter three came about in the shape of a marvellously funny cartoon. It seems that Dave Granlund, the cartoonist of the Middlesex News, read about the episode and found it worthy of his pen. He drew the wonderful cartoon of the raccoon, fleeing the two firemen. Just look at it: the expression of the face of the masked, bushy tailed raccoon, the speed that shows from the whole drawing - you can see for yourself that here is strategy and action!

The post scriptum to the story is that once we saw the cartoon, my husband contacted the artist, Dave Granlund, and he gallantly donated the original to us. He also kindly gave permission for the cartoon to illustrate this article in the Bulletin, and this we gratefully acknowledge.

Vera Laska

*Just a note of fact: raccoon (or racoon) is a word of Algonquian origin; the raccoon is a nocturnal, plantigrade, largely carnivorous mammal, called in Latin *procyon lotor*. Fireman Bill Hourihan informed me recently that the fire station receives between 50 and 75 calls per year lately about raccoons sighted on Weston property. By no means should people try to catch them, as they might carry rabies and bite.*

## MUSEUM NEWS

The Board of Directors at their meeting on Tuesday, February 21st, 1995 unanimously appointed Dr. Vera Laska as the new Curator of the Museum of the Weston Historical Society. This post was unfilled ever since the first Curator, Mrs. Alice Fraser, resigned in 1991.

Dr. Laska has a PhD in American history from the University of Chicago and has been teaching at Regis College since 1966. She moved to Weston in 1964 with her husband, Andrew an international business executive, now retired, and her son Thomas. She directed for five years the Weston History Project at Regis College, the fruits of which cover various aspects of Weston history, such as education, taverns, firefighting, police forces, historic markers, etc. Among these research projects are the inventory of the historical archives in the Town Hall and an Index to Lamson's history of the town.

She is the author of seven books and of over 200 articles and reviews in professional journals and newspapers; she has a column in the TOWN CRIER since 1972. She is the recipient of numerous awards, among them Outstanding Teacher of America (1972), the Kidger Award for Excellence in History (1984) and the George Washington Honor Medal in Communication (1990). In 1993 she was Fulbright professor of U.S. History in Prague.

The Museum is still in a preparatory stage, but visitors are welcome on Wednesdays between 10 and 12 in the morning. (We are closed when the schools are closed). If you have a research project and the above time does not suit you, please call for an appointment Douglas Henderson at 893-1303

The Museum Committee of Vera Laska, George Amadon and Douglas Henderson is still working on the compilation of the inventory of documents, photographs and artifacts on the premises.

Our next project is to have the place painted and have it ready for viewing by the public. New town displays and the slide presentation by Ted Kingsbury of Wellesley are ongoing.

We still are in urgent need of some rugs and would welcome donations of the them from some good soul. Remember, it is tax deductible.

### Weston Historical Society's Board of Directors

George Amadon (893-8870)

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Harold Downing (893-1895)

Marjorie Harnish (893-1246)

Doug Henderson (893-1303)

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Vera Laska (237-1447)

Lee Marsh (891-4662)

Bill Martin (235-2490)

Mary Maynard (899-0605)

Sam Payson (899-1802)



## **REMEMBERING**

### **Alice Cutter Tyler Fraser (1903 - 1995)**

It is with deep sorrow that we are recording the passing of one of the most faithful and dedicated members of the Weston Historical Society, Alice Fraser. She was for many years the Curator of the Weston Historical Society collections at the Josiah Smith (Jones House) Tavern.

She was born on July 24, 1903 and died on February 14, 1995, on Valentine's day, in the Weston Manor Nursing Home.

While born in Medford, she soon moved with her parents to Weston. She went through the Weston schools, then graduated from Boston University in 1924. She became a teacher in Wellesley and retired thirty years ago. She remained highly active both in the First Parish Unitarian Church in Weston and in the Weston Historical Society. She was a co-founder and trustee of the Weston War Memorial Scholarship Fund and belonged to the Women Descendants of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Boston.

Her cousin Charles B. Cutter of Weston reminisced about Alice and her family recently. Below are his vivid memories for all to share about this extraordinary and memorable woman whom we shall all miss.

Vera Laska

### **VIGNETTES FROM THE LIVES OF ALICE FRASER AND HER FAMILY**

Alice Fraser was born on July 24, 1903, the same day that her father died of heart trouble and pneumonia. The doctors advised not telling his wife Helen. She remained in the hospital for two weeks, before coming home with her baby Alice. When she was told of her husband's death, the shock so affected her mind that she could not care for the new baby and her older sister Elinor. She was confined to a hospital for the rest of her life.

Helen's sister Susan, a Weston school teacher of thirty-six years, gave up teaching to stay with the two children at the family homestead at Cutter's Corner. In November, her father Benjamin F. Cutter, died. He had been a selectman for eight years in Weston and also served as Road Commissioner. A relative, the attorney Frank Bond, was in charge of the estate.

Elinor graduated from Weston High School in 1919 and after finishing Framingham Normal School became a school teacher. Alice graduated from Weston High School in 1920 and four years later from Boston University. She was a member of Delta Delta Delta Sorority and its president. After graduation, she joined the National Sorority and was president of that organization for several years. She also became a teacher in Wellesley.

She married James Edwain Fraser, who was a captain for the United Fruit Company and later for the Matson Line. He was away from home a great deal. He had an adventurous life. His ship was sunk while in a convoy in the Atlantic during World War II; he survived eight hours in a life-boat with his crew before being rescued. Then his ship carried a cargo of 100 drums of aviation gasoline and bombs from Norfolk, Virginia, to Bombay, India. German submarines were lurking off Norfolk. He said that there would have been fireworks had he been hit! He blacked out his ship and after a week's waiting,

on a very dark night, he ordered “Full speed ahead!” and rushed out of Norfolk and did not slow down until he was forty miles out at sea. In Bombay he faced another problem, how to unload and get the cargo quickly out of town; the Japanese were set to bomb Bombay; he managed to unload and get his ship out of port before the Japanese bombed the city. A brave man!

Alice’s son Norman was also a courageous man; he received an award for completing over 1,000 parachute jumps. He now builds, flies and sells hot air balloons in Kissimmee, Florida. Another son, James D. Fraser, lives in Weston.

Alice Fraser was both morally and phsyically a courageous person, as the following story will tell you. Alice at one time delivered milk for Frank Pope, who owned and ran the Ferndale Farm on South Avenue in Weston. She did this by pung in the winter and by wagon in the summer. Pope’s father, called by all “Grandpa Pope,” came from North Dakota and had twenty wild horses shipped to Weston. Alice was considered an expert rider, so the cow-hands saddled a colt and boosted her into the saddle, telling her to hang on! That she did - the colt took off bucking and weaving with Alice aboard. She brought the colt back to the stables and demounted safely. This again showed her courage.

Charles B. Cutter

Charles B. Cutter is a native and lifetime resident of Weston. His father was the brother of Helen, Alice Fraser’s mother. He is a charter member and was president of the Weston Rotary Club.

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