

# THE WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN



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*OVENBIRD, a long distant migrant, with a habitat preference in the interior rather than on the seashore, is a ground loving warbler. It is 5-6 inches long, olive-brown above, with a striped light vest and an orange crown with black borders.*

## FOREST FRAGMENTATION EFFECTS ON THE BREEDING BIRDS OF WESTON

David C. Morimoto

Deep history repeats itself every spring in the forests of Weston, as thousands of birds move like rivers through town. Having spent much of the year away in Latin America, the West Indies, and the North American southeast, these neotropical and subtropical migrants return to the temperate zone to take advantage of longer days, abundant food, and perhaps reduced pressures from competition and predation. They have been taking this journey for generations, as the forests have followed the retreat of glaciers for ten thousand years.

The phenomenon is spectacular, and a walk through Weston's conservation lands in mid to late May can be a whole body experience. Actively foraging birds in fresh breeding plumage eat newly emerging insects on greening and flowering trees, shrubs, and herbs, on the ground, and in the air. The air fills with a concert of songs and calls, with migrants and residents alike participating, all with a deeply ingrained anticipation of breeding soon.

Surrounded by permanent residents like chickadees, titmice, nuthatches, and creepers, along with recent arrivals like warblers, tanagers, thrushes, and flycatchers, one can easily feel like a participant in, and not merely an observer of, a phenomenon of global extent and deep historical significance.

Many of the birds settle here to breed in the forests of Weston, often returning to the same woodland year after year, before dying somewhere in their vast range. We are fortunate to have the opportunity to experience the daily lives of these fantastic creatures as they raise their young in town. Just knowing they are here and will return gives much substance to the spring and summer. We would notice their absence, for sure.

Although this awesome spectacle of migration and breeding has unfolded annually for thousands of years, the landscapes through which the birds move and in which they settle have undergone many changes. These changes, particularly the rapid and dramatic transformations brought about by humans, have no doubt affected the lives of birds.

By the turn of the century, most of the forests in Massachusetts had been cleared for agriculture and grazing. These land use practices, together with a land ownership system of fixed property boundaries, led quickly to declines in soil fertility and subsequently to the abandonment of the land for the more productive soils to our west (Cronon, 1983). Eastern forests began to regenerate, and today Massachusetts is nearly seventy percent forested. Weston itself is about forty percent forested, and much of the forest is protected as conservation land, particularly along watercourses which, I suspect, are among the preferred routes of birds migrating through the region.

The effects of this forest regeneration on Weston's birds can be glimpsed by comparing today's situation with historical records. For example, forest birds like the magnificent Pileated Woodpecker, a permanent resident, and the Hermit Thrush, a breeding migrant with a beautiful flute-like song, are both listed as being rare in Charlotte Smith's 1952 annotated checklist of the birds of Weston (Smith, 1952), while today they are encountered quite commonly on walks through the forest. Additional changes in bird distribution and abundance can be expected as the forests mature further into old growth stands, should we allow this succession to continue.

Although regional forest cover is higher than it has been in over a century, eastern forests are being increasingly fragmented by the current land use practices associated with the development of urban, suburban, and rural lands for human living; a development is no stranger to Weston.

How has fragmentation of forest influenced the birds that breed there? We can gain some insights from long term monitoring studies, which have documented global and regional population declines in several species of forest birds, particularly the long distance migrants coming from Latin America and the West Indies, and especially those migrants that prefer to breed in the interior, as opposed to the edge, of forests (Terborgh, 1989). Many factors, including habitat alteration on the wintering and breeding grounds and along migratory routes, could be conspiring to contribute to these declines. Therefore, ecological research is essential if we want to untangle the mystery of these declines and conserve the populations of migratory birds that enrich our forests and our lives every year. It was in this spirit of concern that I began studies of Weston's breeding birds in 1995 with Michelle Frankel, a Ph.D. candidate in general studies at Boston University.



Together, Michelle and I mounted a tremendous effort to determine how forest fragmentation affects the communities of birds in Weston, and in particular, how it affects the reproductive success of the Ovenbird (*Seiurus aurocapillus*), a migrant that settles to breed in large numbers in our forests. With the cooperation of many local constituencies and the help of over forty volunteers and paid research assistants, we have begun to get answers to our questions.

Our three years of field work involved early morning censuses of birds, countless vegetation measurements, and intensive observations of Ovenbirds in three large (120-315 hectares) and 17 small (3-60 hectares) forest fragments in Weston (one site was in Wellesley, and one was in Wayland). The field work was personally very rewarding. When one spends the better part of spring and summer in the forest year after year, its riches and subtle complexities become familiar and welcoming. This euphoric sense of place contrasts with the tedium of data analysis, but together the two lead to deeper understanding.



Black and white warbler, long distance migrant, with interior habitat



Black throated blue warbler, long distance migrant, with interior habitat

The results of our analyses of bird censuses revealed significant effects of forest size on the composition of the local bird community. Bird communities in larger fragments had more long distance migrants that prefer to breed in the forest interior, like Ovenbirds, Scarlet Tanagers, Wood Thrushes, and Great-crested Flycatchers. This result is expected as a by-product of area differences alone. When we controlled for area effects, we discovered that some differences between large and small fragments persisted. For instance, we found that the larger forests had more interior species and fewer edge and interior-edge species in

any one census area (100 meter radius circle). Densities of interior species were also higher within census areas in the larger forests. The implication of these findings are that forest fragmentation in Weston does affect the bird community, and that large fragments provide better habitat for interior birds and, therefore, must be protected in order to conserve their population in Weston.

The results of our analyses of Ovenbird reproductive success provided more detailed information on how forest fragmentation can affect population processes within a species. The Ovenbird is a type of warbler that forages and nests on the ground and tends to prefer the forest interior. Its name comes from its nest, which is built entirely by the female and resembles a rounded Dutch oven with a side entrance. Ovenbirds are not always easy to see, as their brownish olive plumage and spotted underside blend in with the vegetation. A close look, however, reveals an orange crown flanked by black borders, and pink legs. Ovenbirds are much more often heard than seen, with males singing their loud *teacher, teacher, teacher, teach* song repeatedly, primarily from the lower branches of large trees.

Ovenbirds did not occur in forest fragments smaller than 9 hectares. In the remaining seven small forest fragments they experienced lower pairing success (74% of 33 males with mates) and lower reproductive success (48% of 33 males with at least one young fledged from the nest) compared to the three large forests (98% of 62 males with mates, 79% of 62 males with at least one young fledged). Furthermore, Ovenbird males occurred in higher densities in large forests, where their territories were smaller than those defended by males in small forests. Males may have been compensating for poorer habitat quality in small forests by expanding the area they had to defend in order to reproduce successfully.

What these findings tell us is that forest fragmentation affects Ovenbirds adversely, probably through decreased food abundance (Burke and Nol, 1998) and increased rates of nest predation and brood parasitism by Brown-headed Cowbirds, who lay their own eggs in other birds' nests to be raised by unsuspecting hosts. Michelle witnessed nest predation by chipmunks, and we have video footage of Blue Jay nest predation. We discovered both depredated nests and nests with Cowbird eggs, more often but not exclusively, in small fragments. The Ovenbird's social system might also be upset by forest fragmentation. Ovenbirds tend to settle in loose aggregations, probably because of the ample opportunities for "adulterous" copulations made possible by group living (Ovenbirds and other species engage in this behavior routinely). Reduced habitat availability for groups of Ovenbirds in small fragments might discourage their settlement in these forests.

What do these findings mean for Ovenbirds? Can their populations in Weston sustain themselves? When we plugged the numbers for Ovenbird reproduction rates into equations designed to model population processes, we discovered that the reproductive success of Ovenbirds in small fragments is not sufficient to sustain population in these forests. Continued occupancy of these fragments through the years depends on colonization by birds born elsewhere. Ovenbirds in large fragments experience higher reproductive success, but the rates we observed are barely enough to sustain them without colonization by birds born elsewhere.

Despite these sobering findings, the rates of reproductive success by Ovenbirds in Weston are much higher than in more heavily deforested landscapes, such as the agricultural landscapes of Missouri, New Jersey, Pennsylvania (Wander, 1985, Porneluzi et al., 1993, Villard et al., 1993, Wenny et al., 1993, Van Horn et al., 1995). It seems clear that the amount of regional forest cover plays a significant role in buffering against the effects of forest frag-



mentation on Ovenbird populations (Robinson et al., 1995). Because the relationship between reproductive success and forest cover is not linear, there likely exist critical thresholds of fragmentation beyond which populations would not be able to sustain themselves (With and Crist, 1995). We would be wise, therefore, to conserve large forest fragments and minimize fragmentation and habitat loss if we want to conserve populations of Ovenbirds and other species in Weston's forests.

Our studies of Ovenbirds continue today, with a focus on their mating systems, the work required by parents to raise their young, and nest predation. In the future, I hope to complement our studies of communities, populations, and individual behavior with studies of the habitats preferred by birds migrating through the Weston landscape in spring. Together, these studies will help us identify the limits of tolerance by birds to our landscape-transforming activities, and develop strategies of adaptive management and land use planning



Blue Jay, a permanent resident,  
with habitat in the interior and  
its edge toward the seashore

that will allow us to continue to share the forests with them. With nearly 120,000 hectares of municipally administered forest in Massachusetts (More, 1984), it is clear that management at the level of the municipality will be of critical importance in the absence of any regional management planning.

The fast pace of our modern lives often leads our minds far away from the forest outside our doors. Thus our individual and collective actions often reveal disregard for the integrity of the forest ecosystems across the landscape. The more we remove and fragment the forest, the more we impact the populations of forest interior migrant birds like Ovenbirds. But the forest is more than a living place for nonhuman creatures; it can provide us humans with a sense of place, continuity, and transcendence. Margaret Morse Nice (1987) grew from her experiences observing an Ovenbird at its nest: "It seemed as if life stood still for me while I devoted myself to this nest, as if I had endless leisure to look, to enjoy, to think, alone in this pleasant place in the woods... A great admiration for this quiet little bird arose in me, for her self-sufficiency, the simplicity of her life unencumbered by the possessions that overwhelm us human beings."

That the forest can teach humans should not be overlooked when making decisions about development in the name of human progress, because the loss of forest will affect us as adversely as it affects the birds living in it. As Harrison (1992: xi) remarked, after having walked through remnants of an ancient forest in Italy, "There and then I perhaps realized that the forest, in its enduring antiquity, was the correlate of the poet's memory, and that once its remnants are gone, the poet would fall into oblivion." Our historical landscape, born of our interactions with nature, does not allow us to consider the poem separately from the poet. As Cronon (1983: 15) noted: "To search for that poem would in fact be a mistake. Our project must be to locate a nature which is within rather than without history, for only by so doing can we find human communities that are inside rather than outside nature."

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*David C. MORIMOTO is a native Bostonian, who recieved his Ph.D. in biology in 1989 from Boston University. He is involved in the Children's Rainforest Workshop in Peru, sponsored by the Children's Environmental Trust Foundation International, a program for middle school students. In preparation is his book on unifying features characteristic of living systems. He has been teaching at Regis College since 1988. Michelle Frankel contributed to this article.*



## TRACING THE HISTORY OF THE NATHANIEL JENNISON HOUSE II.

*Continued from Fall, 1998 issue.*

While living in Barre, Nathaniel Jennison (Junior) served twice as moderator, in 1784 as a delegate to a convention in Worcester on Impost Grievance, in 1787 on a committee on Shays' Rebellion, and in 1797 on a committee to Persecute for Monopoly. He died in 1803 deeply in debt.

On March 1, 1772 (in the twelfth year of the King's reign), Nathaniel, son of Nathaniel Jennison, of Rutland District, Worcester County, Province of Massachusetts Bay in New England, sold certain tracts of land containing about 100 acres of which six acres were in Needham and the remainder in Weston for 433 pounds, 6 shillings and 8 pence to Josiah Seaverns. Apparently as time passed and the boundary between Weston and Needham (now Wellesley) was more accurately surveyed, part of the original land grant was determined to be south of the town line. The first tract, being on the north side of the highway in Weston, was conveyed with the dwelling house standing thereon. The second tract was located on the south side of the aforesaid highway and included a barn and "Pot-Ash House." The conveyance was subject to a lease which was granted by Nathaniel's father to Caleb Wilder for the use of the "Pot-Ash House."



*Oldest photograph of the Jennison house.*

At that time, potash was a very important commodity. Potash is an alkali which was used in the manufacture of soap and glass. As a soap it played an essential role in the cleansing and manufacturing of woolens and linens. The wool industry in particular was of vital interest to England. By the eighteenth century, England no longer had even a fraction of the forest resources to produce the potash needed in the woolen industry. The American colonies with their vast resources of timber offered England a reliable source of potash. Potash became the first great staple of trade between the American colonies and England.

Returning to the sale of the real estate to Josiah Seaverns in 1772, it is interesting to note that the description of the second tract on the south side of the highway includes the mention of a brook flowing through the property. This brook would have been essential for the operation of the "Pot-Ash House;" it continues to flow in that same location.





northeast to a Chestnut tree in the wall which bounds the Cranberry Meadow Lot, then northeast by a wall and by the Cranberry Meadow Lot and the Raspberry Lot to the Long Orchard, then southwest by the Long Orchard to Glen Street, then southeast by Glen Street to the point of beginning, said 1 1/2 acres enclosed by walls." Elsewhere in this deed there is the following reference: "Glen Street, leading from Rice's Crossing to Weston." The location where Glen Street crossed the railroad tracks at Wellesley Farms was known as Rice's Crossing. This was a grade crossing located a short distance east of the present overpass.

Edward finally obtained all the interests in the property on October 19, 1886 in a deed from his mother Charlotte Maria Jennings. Next on July 29, 1899, the property was conveyed by Edward Jennings to his wife, Ella M. Jennings, by way of a third party, Mabel A. Dodmun. Prior to 1912 conveyances directly between husband and wife were illegal. The deeds transferring title to Ella conveyed a total of 12 parcels. Parcel six was described as the lot on which stands the old homestead of the late Levi Jennings and the large cow barn containing about 1 1/2 acres.

During the period that the property was owned by the Jennings family, its predominant use was that of a dairy farm., known at least in its later years as Glen Farm. (see accompanying photographs.)

Edward's brother Willard operated a summer resort east of the farm at Wellesley Farms, which was known as Glen House (see copy of promotional brochure below).

## **GLEN HOUSE AND COTTAGES**

**HIGH LOCATION NEAR STATION, IN WELLESLEY FARMS.  
THE BEAUTIFUL SECTION OFTEN CALLED THE "LENOX  
OF THE EAST." OUR NEIGHBORHOOD IS COMPOSED OF  
A SELECT CLASS WHO COME HERE TO SPEND THEIR  
SUMMERS.**

**BUSINESS MEN FIND THE PLACE CONVENIENT TO BOS-  
TON, AS WELL AS A HEALTHY LOCATION.**

**AUTOMOBILE PARTIES ACCOMMODATED.**

**TENNIS, BILLIARDS, AUTO SERVICE, GARAGE, ETC.**

**W. H. JENNINGS**

**WELLESLEY FARMS, MASSACHUSETTS**

**TELEPHONE**

**WELLESLEY, 21730**

Edward Jennings must have been a remarkable person, judging by the record of his activities. In sharp contrast to all the previous owners of the farm, he built up a substantial dairy, and after the disastrous fire on December 16, 1903, a chicken and egg business. Most likely as a result of the fire, he had to sell part of his property in 1904. He was a man of action: he found time to deal with real estate and also served as Inspector of Animals in Weston from 1911 until 1939, shortly before his death in 1940. During the time of the Great Depression, his cows became infected with tuberculosis and had to be destroyed.





*George and Nancy Bates in front of the house, 1985.*

The house that was originally built by Nathaniel Jennison in 1732 saw several additions; in 1924 it was moved across Glen Road to its present location at 266 Glen Road. It went through several owners (year in parentheses indicate date of purchase):

- Paul K. Thomas (1925)
- Waltham Savings Bank (1937)
- Rachel Hammond (1938)
- Frederick S. & Helen B. Mann (1942)
- Albert P. & Lucy R. Everts (1953)
- Nancy & George Bates (1961)

George Bates lived the first years of his life in Lexington and Concord, and later in Gloucester, Massachusetts, before moving to Weston in 1958, when he married Nancy Brownell Biddle. George's father, George E. Bates, and Nancy's father, Clinton P. Biddle, were both professors at the Harvard Business School. The newlyweds lived in a rented apartment at 27 Wellesley Street until they purchased the home at 266 Glen Road in 1961.

Nancy moved from Cambridge, Massachusetts, with her family in 1937 to 100 Orchard Avenue in Weston, where her mother lived in another antique house until her demise in 1998. Nancy graduated from Concord Academy in 1951 and from Smith College in 1955. The Bateses have maintained their residence at 266 Glen Road through the writing of this history (in 1985) and still live there at the time of this publication. They have no plans to move.

*George Bates*

*This article has been severely abbreviated by the editor from the lively original paper by its author, George Bates. Readers are strongly urged to look into the original typescript, available at the History Room of the Weston Public Library and/or the Weston Historical Society Museum Archives. They will discover some fascinating characters and interesting events connected with the history of the Jennison house.*



# NEW ENGLAND BLUE LAWS.

## FROM THE RECORDS OF MASSACHUSETTS BAY, PLYMOUTH AND NEW HAVEN COLONIES AND CONNECTICUT.

“Upon the Sabbath they’ll no physic take,  
Lest it should worke, and so the Sabbath breake.”

— Ancient Poet.

*Following are selections from the old records, showing the most interesting of the genuine blue laws of the early colonial times, concluding with the majority, the curious ones, of the “Peter’s Blue Law,” which good authorities believe are largely distortions and concoctions. The old Massachusetts Sabbath laws were little stricter than now, with the exception of marked instances that are quoted.*

### SUNDAY LAWS AND ORDERS OF THE GENERAL COURT OF THE COLONY OF MASSACHUSETTS

Taken from the Records — 1630-1760.

1635. Whereas, complainte hath been made to the Courte that dyvers persons within this jurisdiction doe usually absent themselves from church meetings upon the Lord’s day, power is therefore given to any two assistants to heare and sensure, either by fine or imprisonment (at their discretion) all misdemeanors of that kind committed by any inhabitant within this jurisdiction, provided they exceed not the fine of 5 shillings for one offence.

1630. It is ordered that John Baker be whipped for shooting at fowl on the Sabbath day.

1669. Any p’son or p’sons that shall be found smoaking tobacco on the Lord’s Day, going too or coming from the meetings, within two miles of the meeting house shall pay 12 pence for every such default to the collonie’s use.

1692-93. All and every justices of the peace, constables and tythingmen are required to restrain all persons from swimming in the water, unnecessary and unreasonable walking in the streets or fields in the town of Boston, or other place; keeping open their shops or following their secular vocasions or recreations in the evening preceding the Lord’s day, or on any part of the said day or evening following.

An Act in addition to the Act entitled “An Act for the better observation and keeping of the Lord’s Day” made and passed by the Great and General Court held at Boston in 1692.

1716. Whereas, in and by the said act it is declared: “That no tradesman, artificer, labourer, or other person whatsoever, shall upon the land or water, do and exercise any labour, business or work of their ordinary calling, nor use any game, sport, play or recreation on the Lord’s Day, or any part thereof (works of necessity and charity duly excepted) upon pain that every person so offending shall forfeit 5s”; and further, that no traveller, drover, horse-courser, wagoner, butcher, higler, or any of their servants, shall travel on that day or any part thereof, except as by the said law is excepted, upon the pain of 20s.” Notwithstanding which many persons do presume to work and travel on the said day.

Therefore, for the effectual preventing such immoral and irreligious practices, be it resolved: — That whoever shall for the future, contrary to said Act, do or exercise any labour, business or work of their ordinary callings, or use any game, sport, play or recreation on the Lord’s Day, or any part thereof, shall forfeit and pay the sum of 10s; and all persons travelling contrary to said act, the sum of 20s for the first offence, and upon a second conviction of either of the aforesaid offences, double the respective sums afore-mentioned, and be also

bound with sureties for their good behavior to the next Sessions of the Peace in such county where said offenders shall be convicted. And that if any person being able of body and not otherwise necessarily prevented, shall for the space of one month together absent themselves from the public worship on said day, the Grand Jurors are hereby directed and required to present such persons to the General Sessions of the Peace, who, unless they can make proof that they have not so absented themselves, but have attended divine worship in some public assembly, shall forfeit and pay the sum of 20s. And in case any of the offenders mentioned in this Act shall be unable or refuse to satisfy their fine, they shall be adjudged to be sent in the Cage or Stocks not exceeding three hours, according to the discretion of the Justices.

A provision made in 1760, when the Lord’s Day laws were remodelled:

Be it further enacted that no person shall keep open shop, warehouse or workhouse, or hawk or sell any provisions or wares in the streets or lanes of any town or district, or be present at any concert or musick, dancing, or other public diversion, on the evening next preceding the Lord’s Day, on pain of forfeit 10c, for each offence; and no retailer, innholder or person licenced to keep a publick house shall entertain or suffer to remain, to be in their houses or yards or other places appurtenant any person or persons; (travellers, strangers or lodgers excepted), drinking or spending their time on the said evening, on penalty of 10c for each offense.

*To be continued.*

**CHARTER ANNIVERSARY DINNER**

Save Wednesday, April 14, 1999, 6 p.m., for the Charter Anniversary Dinner of the Weston Historical Society. Speaker T.B.A.

MERRIAM VILLAGE SONG

(Tune: “My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean”)

1. We’re living in Merriam Village  
And all of us like it a lot.  
We’re living in Merriam Village  
It’s worth every cent that we’ve got!

CHORUS

(Tune: “Bring Back, Bring Back,  
Bring Back my Bonnie to Me”)

Come what may - here we’ll stay  
Working together is really fun!  
One for all - all for one -  
We’d hate to be moving away!

2. We love every bush in the Village,  
Each flower no matter how small.  
We love every bush in the Village,  
We ought to - we planted them all!

CHORUS (reprise)

3. Our houses in Merriam Village  
Are handsome and have a fine view!  
Whenever we look out the windows,  
Our neighbors are looking out too!

CHORUS (reprise)

4. Because we are all over sixty,  
We don’t want our friends to forget  
That those of us here in the Village  
Have plenty of life in us yet!

CHORUS (reprise)

CLARA HUTCHINS  
1981



# JUST FOR THE RECORD

Just so you know where your money goes and what you are getting for it, we reprint the Weston data from the April, 1998 Boston Magazine, from a chart prepared about 130 communities, made possible by Century 21:

<u>Weston</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>1997</u>
tax rate \$	10.40	13.37
expenditure per student \$	4.762	8.027
SAT scores	1014	1196
Graduating class size	176	100
teacher/ student ratio	1:19	1:19
average teacher salary \$	34.200	51.479
median house price \$	480,000	470,000

The 1997/98 enrollment in the Weston School System, K to 12, was 1966, with a budget of \$16.6 million. According to Dr. John Stayn, assistant superintendent for business services, the school administration is expecting a 4.9% increase in enrollment, hence a higher school budget in the near future.

Most importantly, Newsweek in its March 30, 1998 issue (pp.52-56) presented a list of “The Top 100 High Schools” in the United States. While Weston High School placed 31st in the country, it occupied the number 1 place in New England. Only 6 New England high schools made the list, 4 from Massachusetts and 2 from Connecticut.

\* \* \*

In the November 3, 1998 elections, Weston contributed to the final Republican victory of the Cellucci-Swift team for Massachusetts governor and lieutenant governor with 2590 votes, versus the Democratic team of Harshbarger-Tolman’s 1920 votes; Libertarian Party’s Cook-Israel received 58 votes in our town.

It is regrettable how few people vote in the United States. Consider this: in 137 countries (of 163) a higher percentage of voters go to the polls than in the U.S. Some samples: Malta – 97%, Costa Rica – 85%, Czech Republic – 84%, U.K. – 72.4%, Canada – 60.1%, Russia – 55%, United States – 44.9%!

\* \* \*

Another statistic to ponder: of the 21 rich nations of the globe, we are the last ones to share our wealth with poor nations. Tiny Denmark and Norway contribute 0.97% and 0.86% of their gross national product to developing countries; the United States 0.08%. To add insult to injury: Massachusetts, 3rd in income rank, is the 50th state in the U.S. to contribute to charities. Arkansas and Mississippi, 48th and 49th in income rank, contribute most.

**WESTON** is a town of unusual scenic beauty, in the south-easterly section of Middlesex County, 13 miles west of Boston. Lincoln lies upon the north, Waltham and Newton (from the latter of which it is divided by the circuitous line of Charles River) on the east, Needham on the south, and Natick and Wayland on the west.

The land is charmingly diversified by picturesque hill and valley, forest and glen; and, though somewhat rocky, the soil is strong, and well adapted to the growth of fruit and forest trees.

Cherry Brook, Hobb's Brook, and Stony Brook, drain the northern section. A beautiful streamlet flows through the Centre; while two other small affluents of Charles River traverse the southern sections of the town. There are some rough ledges, and a romantic gorge called "The Devil's Den," near Stony Brook, upon the line of Waltham.

The principal settlement is along the street, which runs centrally through the town from east to west; yet many of the hills are crowned with beautiful mansions, owned by gentlemen doing business in the metropolis. The people are temperate, intelligent, and refined.

The highways, bridges, and buildings are kept in excellent order. The population is 1,261; the number of voters, 336; of dwelling-houses, 226; and of farms, 181. The valuation is \$1,340,683, and the rate of taxation only \$0.90 per \$100.

The town is divided into six school-districts; and there is a high school, which is well attended and well taught. There is a good town-house and a well-selected public library. The clergymen are the Revs. Edmund H. Sears, D.D., Unitarian (settled in 1865); A. F. Benson, Baptist (settled in 1870); and H. W. Meredith, Methodist.

The territory of this town, anterior to its incorporation, was the westerly part of Watertown; and from this circumstance it probably received its name. It was incorporated Jan. 1, 1712.

An excerpt from *Gazetteer of Massachusetts*,  
written by the Rev. Elias Nason, M.A., in

**1873**

*Correct date is Jan. 1, 1713, not 1712. Ed.*





*Harold A. Downing, Treasurer*

## INTRODUCING: HAROLD A. DOWNING

Born in Corning, New York, Harold, “Hal” Downing earned a B.S. in accounting from the University of Illinois and a C.P.A. diploma in New York. He served in World War II in the Navy in the Supply Corps. He followed up a 25 cent vet-ad in the Herald and became a controller of Industrial Steels in Cambridge, Massachusetts; after 25 years, he retired as Executive Vice President. He then maintained his own CPA practice, which he sold a few years ago.

He and his wife Ruth moved to Weston in 1957. He is one of the earliest members of the Society, and its treasurer since 1989. He was also scoutmaster of Troop 151 for ten years. Ruth has been active in the Women’s Community League of Weston, having served as President and as co-chair of the Clothing Exchange, which provides scholarships to our high school graduates to attend college.

Their three children are graduates of Weston High School. Barbara has an MA and is an art teacher at Ten Acre School in Wellesley. Ken has a Ph.D. and is a senior scientist at the University of California at Berkeley. Doug also has a Ph.D. and served with the Peace Corps in India, and is Vice President of MBNA Corporation.

Hal has many hobbies, music, genealogy, woodworking, gardening, travel, golf and skiing, the latter taking him to the Alps almost annually since 1972.

## HUMOR THE BEST MEDICINE

When God passed out brains,  
I thought he said trains,  
And I missed mine.  
When God passed out looks,  
I thought he said books  
And didn’t want any.  
When God passed out ears,  
I thought he said beers  
And asked for two long ones.  
When God passed out legs,  
I thought he said kegs  
And asked for two fat ones.  
When God passed out noses,  
I thought he said roses  
And asked for a big red one.  
When God passed out heads,  
I thought he said beds  
And asked for a big soft one.  
When God passed out hips,  
I thought he said lips  
And asked for two large round ones.  
God am I a mess.

*Anonymous*  
in Ann Landers’ column,  
6/13/97, p. C9, Globe

**WESTON 2000:** REMINDER: Organizations that failed to submit their reports, photos and possible contributions, may do so immediately to Post Office Box 343 in Weston.

**TIME CAPSULE:** Please let us have your ideas!

**QUESTIONS:** Call 237-1447, Laska.

**WESTON HISTORY**

- 1. Brenton H. Dickson: One Upon a Pung, delightful stories about Weston of yester-year; hardcover, \$7.50.
- 2. Brenton H. Dickson & Homer C. Lucas: One Town in the American Revolution, Weston, Massachusetts; hardcover, \$7.50.
- 3. Daniel S. Lamson: History of the Town of Weston, Massachusetts, 1630 -1890; 1997 reprint, with new Introduction and an INDEX; this book should be in every Weston home; hardcover, \$29.95.

All three books available at the Museum of the Weston Historical Society, Wednesdays 10a.m.-12 p.m. or by phone 237-1447. Out of town orders: please add postage & handling \$3.00.

**THE WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.**

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Membership dues: Individuals \$10, family \$15, life \$250. Contributions and bequests to the Endowment and Memorial Fund are welcome. Make checks payable to the Weston Historical Society, Inc. and mail them to the Weston Historical Society, Box 343, Weston, Massachusetts 02493. Contributions are tax deductible. Additional copies of the BULLETIN may be obtained at \$2 each by mailing payment to the Society. Statements and/or opinions expressed in the articles are not necessarily those of the editor, the Editorial Board or the Weston Historical Society. ISSN 1083-9712.