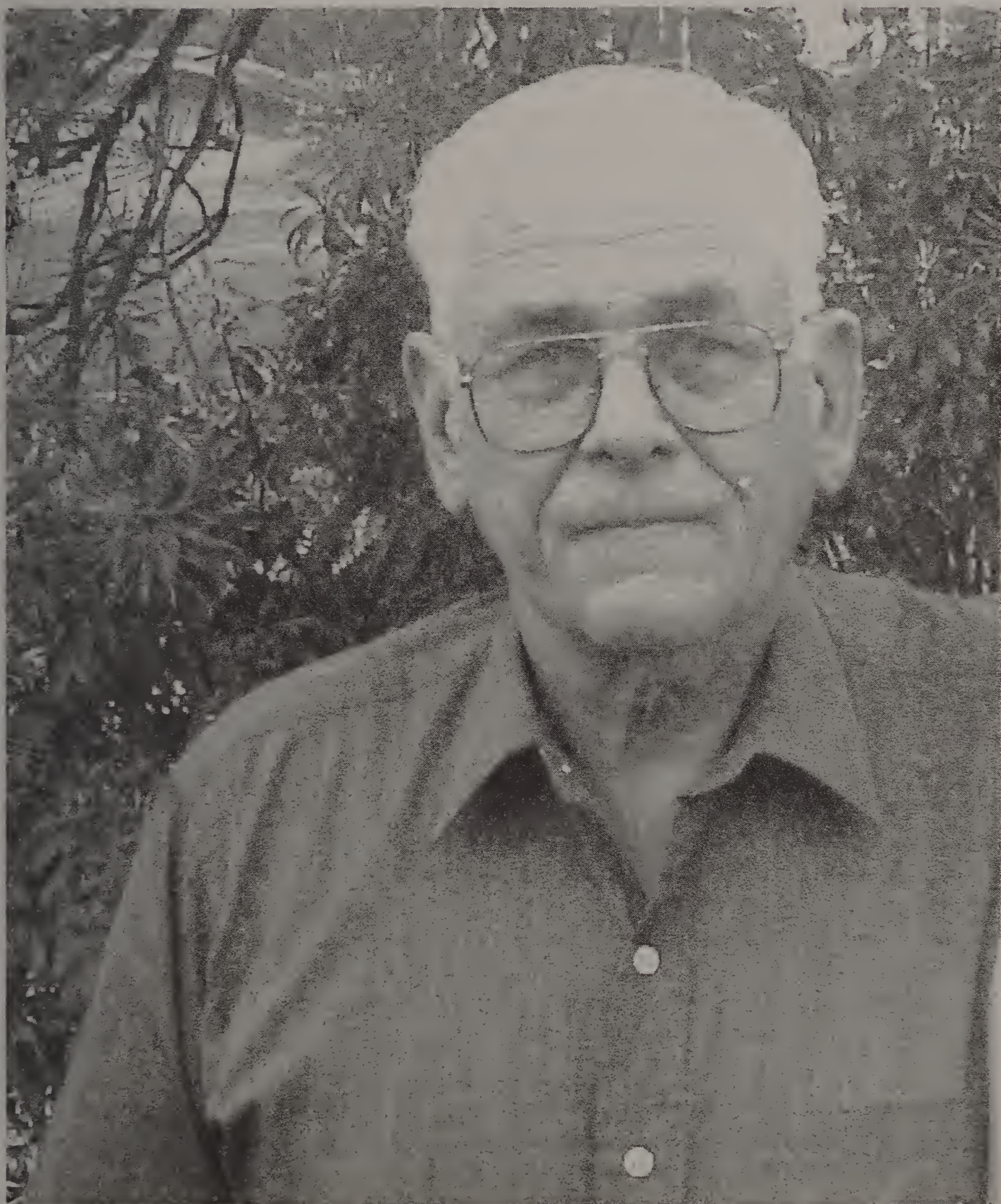


THE WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN



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Bill Livingston of Weston's Nobb Hill Press, who just retired after many years of service to our community. He printed our Bulletin with a few exceptions since its founding in 1964.

FORTY-FIVE YEARS IN WESTON CENTER

In 1956, when I bought the company Nobb Hill Press, Inc., I had no idea that I would be there in the same location for 45 years. Over the years I have seen many changes to the center; but most of all I have fond memories of the people I met and the relationships that developed.

We all know how difficult it is to park in the center now; but back in the mid-fifties parking was parallel on both sides of the street. In the summertime you might see three or four cars parked in the whole center of town. In the afternoon some of us would sit on the stone wall on the north side of the street and make bets if a car would drive into the center as to where they would stop. At the time the post office was located in the brick building where Weston Pediatric Physicians, P.C. is now, and the Newton-Waltham bank and Trust Company where Fleet Bank is now.

Back in the 1950's there were two markets in town, the Weston Market which was located in what is now The Gift Gallery in the DeVito Building on the south side of the street, and the Triple A Market which was located on the north side where Central Tailoring is now. Eventually the Weston Market moved to Wayland and Triple A Market moved into the shopping area on Centre Street.

I wonder if any of the older residents in town can remember the soda fountain at the Weston Pharmacy (now Eaton's), or the two gas pumps at Parker's Hardware (now Puopolo Hardware), with iron pipes extending over the sidewalk with the hoses and nozzles attached to them.

Many times I have been asked the origin of the name, Nobb Hill Press. My understanding is that the company started in a garage on Raynor Road off North Avenue by a Mr. Willard Frye in 1951. Before the garage was built, there was a flat field with a large mound of dirt which was called Nob Hill. It was carted away by horse and wagon and replaced by the garage. In Mr. Frye's wisdom the word Nob looked better with two "b"s in it. The company moved to its present location in 1955.

Before Nobb Hill Press there was a shoe repair shop located on the premises. For the first three or four years it was a common occurrence to have someone walk in with a pair of shoes in their hands. After that time it did not occur as often. Eleven years later someone did come in with a pair of shoes. However, twenty-seven years later an elderly woman came into my office with a pair of shoes and said, "I know I'm in the right place, where's the cobbler?". Being in a silly mood that day, I told her "I'm sorry but the cobbler couldn't wait any longer for you."

Over the years I have seen a lot of business come and go, and a lot of new proprietors of businesses which have been established for years in the center. Weston center is a very unique community. The people and business owners are very friendly and helpful to each other.

I remember an incident which happened many, many years ago. I had a customer who needed a job done for a presentation the next morning. He asked me if I would mind dropping the job off at his house on my way home that evening, and put it in the back seat of his car. I said I would but it would be late. That night I worked until two o'clock in the morning. On the way home I drove up to his house and opened the overhead garage door as instructed to put the package in his car. The bedroom was above the garage. Needless to say there was absolute panic inside the house. He forgot I was coming, and his wife knew nothing about it. Every now and then we see each other; and we still laugh about it.

Over the years I had many incidents which are unforgettable. What really stands out are

the individuals with whom I came in contact. The Town of Weston has been very fortunate to have many individuals interested in the history of the town. Mr. Harold G. "Red" Travis, the first editor of the Bulletin, for example: I can remember the enthusiasm that he had for its beginning; Mr. Brenton H. Dickson and Mr. Homer C. Lucas, who wrote the book One Town in the American Revolution - Weston, Massachusetts; Brenton Dickson also published two other books, Once Upon a Pung and Random Recollections. Mr. Howard Gambriel was founder of the Golden Ball Tavern Trust, an archaeological museum on the Post Road.

I mention these four individuals for the many countless hours that they would sit in my office and talk about their experiences. I do remember that occasionally they would mention that they spent the afternoon checking out the facts in an article that someone else had published. There was a little competition between them; and nothing would please them more but to find a mistake in their search for accuracy.

I cannot mention all the names of individuals who have a special place in my heart; but I must mention all of the people who work at the Town Hall and other departments in the Town of Weston. They are a great group of individuals and a credit to the people of the Town of Weston.

Finally, I cannot forget four very important people in my life at Nobb Hill Press, Dr. Vera Laska (now editor of the Bulletin) and her late husband, Andy. I was always fascinated by the stories of their lives and the places that they travelled together. I felt it was an honor to have them as friends.

Don Devereaux (the quiet one), my partner for over 35 years and his dry sense of humor; people would call the following day laughing because it took them that long to figure out what he had said. It was a joy to work with Don for so many years; and our customers realized how much fun we had together.

My wife Jeanne, our bookkeeper and secretary, spent many hours at home doing the work that Don and I did not like to do.

In September 2001 I retired from the company, but not from working. Jeanne and I have a passion for the disabled and handicapped kids in Grenada, St. Vincent and the Grenadines in the Eastern Caribbean. We got so involved with them that we started a non-profit charitable foundation called Windward Islands Charities, Inc. and are sending wheelchairs, medical supplies, school books, school supplies and personal care items to homes for the disabled and small medical facilities.

We now spend 5 1/2 months a year on an island in the Grenadines called Bequia, where I volunteer teaching a class in woodworking at the Sunshine School for children with special needs. Jeanne also volunteers her time at the school and at the Bequia Casualty Hospital. Both of us are very happy that we found a life after Nobb Hill Press.

Bill Livingston

THE WILD MAN FROM BORNEO - PART II

In the Spring, 2000 issue of this Bulletin I wrote about a song which my uncle Harry sang one summer day, when I was very young, a repetitive, additive song which began "The Wild Man from Borneo has just come to town."

I went on from that memory to a paper which I found in the Weston Historical Society's archives, entitled "Wild Man of Borneo", and which I reproduced in its entirety. This told

the story of two brothers, diminutive in stature, wards of Hanford A. Warner, resident on Crescent Street in Waltham. Mr. Warner had been associated with the Barnum Circus in some sort of publicity capacity.

This relationship with the circus led the two little men to travels throughout the United States, England and France, to be exhibited with other circus celebrities, as “Wild Men from Borneo.” The article’s writer emphasized their exemplary conduct and dignity, and in their retirement years, the desire for privacy.

Just recently, I came upon an undated letter, with nothing to indicate the address of the writer and recipient, which added significantly to the story of these men. I have excerpted pertinent portions of the letter to add depth to their image. The person whose recollections appear in the letter is Ella Frances Richardson of Weston, who taught in the Weston schools late in the 19th century.

Miss Richardson roomed with Mr. & Mrs. Hanford Warner on North Avenue for several years while she taught at a school located on a hill opposite the Hastings Organ Factory. The Warner’s son Henry was Miss Richardson’s pupil for some time.

The Warners also had, apparently as wards, two brothers, diminutive in stature, but in most other respects normal, except that they were only able to communicate by gestures and grunts. It is not clear how they came to be wards of the Warners, but this relationship lasted throughout their lifetime.

Mr. Warner was at one time a publicity agent for the Barnum Circus, and it was probably through this connection that they first appeared on stage as “The Wild Men from Borneo”. Their stage names were Waino and Platano, but there is no record of them doing anything wild, on stage or off. Their long careers in the entertainment world were marked by exemplary conduct and dignity.

Miss Richardson recalls that their room was always neat and clean. They may have done some farm work. Miss Richardson remembers one of them chasing the cows with a stick.

Miss Richardson left Weston in 1875 to visit her Uncle Charles Richardson in California, and in 1878 she went to Florida to stay with her father at Lake Braintiley. The next year she returned to Weston where she had relatives.

It was sometime in this period that her Uncle Warren Richardson, who lived in Waltham, told her that two of her old friends were at Austin and Stone’s Museum in Boston. When he took her there, the two saw the famous Wild Men from Borneo there on a high platform. Waino saw her and made signs to her to come to the front of the platform.

Miss Richardson realized of course that Waino had recognized her, so she had no hesitation when Waino reached down and removed her glove, pointing to the Lasalle (sic) class ring. He then put one of his hands on his knee and with the other went through the motions of spanking a child. She remembered that he was re-enacting the time she had punished Henry Warner.

The letter writer added one further detail. The Boston Herald (she did not remember the date) published an article about the little men, saying they did not come from Borneo.

This leaves me with one question. Did the song my uncle sang originate the name “The Wild Man of Borneo” or did the circus publicity agent (Mr. Warner) originate the title which was then incorporated into the song?

Douglas Henderson

GROWING UP IN WESTON IN THE EARLY 1900's

Weston was a small country town in an age without television, no radio, few telephones and no cars. All street light were turned off half an hour after midnight. You had the roads to yourself, and it was safe to walk them day and night. As I look back from my "golden age" point of view, I miss today the neighborliness that was such a part of Weston. It has all but disappeared. Perhaps I was more fortunate than many, but my neighbor's home was like a second home to me. There was always visiting back and forth with my parents and a sharing of everything with your neighbor. We were thoughtful of each other, interested in each other's lives.

Weston Center was where our present [meaning the old library as of 1984, ed.] library and the Unitarian Church are. The town flag was near the old iron watering trough for the horses. The Town Hall was across the street. Under the Town Hall were kept the horse-drawn fire trucks. To the left was the only country store, owned by George W. Cutting. The left hand side of the store was our post office, where we had to go to collect our mail. It was routine for us youngsters to walk uptown around five o'clock to get the mail. Mr. Cutting would be sorting it after it came by train to Weston station, then to the store in a wheel barrow. Sometimes one of the clerks from the store came in to the post office to assist Mr. Cutting. Because he had red hair, we always called him "red wing." Cutting's store did not carry perishable food, so milk was delivered to our homes in glass bottles by the milk wagon. Fresh fruit used to come from Waltham by a fruit car. We also had a fish cart and meat cart which would stop at our home once a week.

I lived within a mile from school, so I had to walk to school; otherwise "barges" and in winter "pungs" provided transportation for the students. On very cold mornings I would carry a hot baked potato to keep my hands warm, then throw it away for the crows to eat, as I neared the school. School days played a very big part in our growing up years. It was our social life. Those friendships formed in school have been for life. We did not need sports, as we got plenty of exercise when we got home from school, doing our daily chores, such as keeping the wood box full, finding the hens and collecting the eggs.

Weston's sections were Kendal Green, the North part, the South part near Norumbega Park, Stony Brook, Silver Hill, Cherry Brook, and so on. For me, who was very fond of wild flowers, Weston was a great garden. I knew where I could see certain flowers from year to year. On Old Road I could find Indian Pipes, on the short-cut to Weston station from the Boston Post Road near Mr. Horace Sears' greenhouses to Pat McAuliffe's home and livery stable there was a place where dog-tooth violets always grew. Going into Linwood Cemetery, that high bank on the left was covered with bluebird's foot violets, and so it went. Today new houses occupy much of my Weston wild flower garden.

We were among the few towns that had an early public library. Our town fathers then were good, far thinking planners. The library building was heated by a coal burning furnace. Sometimes the fire would go out overnight, sometimes we would have a poor lot of coal, and it would be impossible to get the heat up; then you brought a hot piece of soapstone to put your feet on, when there was little or no heat. The library was always kept open, even when schools were closed on account of bad weather. The hours over the years were always the same, so everyone knew when the library was open. In those days our library was rated near the top in Massachusetts by the Massachusetts Library Association. The alcove to the right of the main door as you enter was the children's room. It was very dark, poorly lighted, books bound in dark material and not attractive to encourage the young readers. Not many books for children were published in those years. There were no school librarians. One



High School graduation photo of Margaret E. Mosher.



Margaret E. Mosher in later years, date unknown.

person took care of our library year after year. By the 1920's changes took place. An assistant librarian was added. The Rosamond Freeman Room became the children's library through help from the two Case women, Carolyn Case Freeman and Louise Williams Case. For several years the Division of Public Libraries sent trustees, foreign visitors and many interested persons to see this room, as it was outstanding in our state. The room was finished in Honduras mahogany which provided a good background for books and added to keeping the room light. The long table in the center of the room proved to be ideal for children to look at books, study or do school work. There was also a storage room on the ground floor of the building. Only a few changes had to be made in this room. When Mrs. Freeman passed away, she left a sum of money for the Rosamond Freeman fund to buy children's books. For many years this was sufficient for children's books. Miss Louise Case was always very generous to the children's room. She donated several bronze statues that she thought would interest the children, a piece of Swiss wood carving of oxen, an ivory collection and cabinet from her father's collection, a bird bath, and stepping stones from the library to School Street, for the benefit of school classes walking to the library.

Changes took place in the adult section of the library as time moved along, some not so good, as the librarians have found out to their sorrow, such as the destruction of a pleasant reading room. The library in Weston has been fortunate to have so many former residents leave money for books to it. The trust funds were sufficient to purchase all our books at one time.

Margaret E. Mosher

Our archivist Douglas Henderson retrieved the manuscript of the above article from our archives. It was hand written by Margaret E. Mosher (1896-1996) and dated simply 1984. Many Westonites still remember fondly Margaret Mosher, who for many years was children's librarian in our town library. Ed.

THE BOSTON POST GOLD HEADED CANE

In August of 1909 Mr. Edwin A. Grozier, Publisher of the Boston Post, forwarded a gold headed ebony cane to the Board of Selectmen of over 400 towns in Massachusetts, New Hampshire and a few in Maine and Vermont, in a promotional effort to increase circulation of the paper. It was requested that it be presented to the oldest citizen of the town by the Board of Selectmen with the compliments of the Boston Post. It would be the property of the town, upon the death of the recipient to be reissued to the next oldest citizen, either man or woman. The cane was offered to towns only, not to cities.

Weston town records do not show the receipt of the cane. However, in the Museum of the Weston Historical Society, located in the Josiah Smith Tavern, is an oil painting by Miss Gertrude Fisk of Colonel Francis Ripley as an older gentleman in his Grand Army of the Republic Uniform, holding with both hands a golden headed cane.

Furthermore, an article in the October 1977 Weston Historical Society Bulletin states that both former Selectmen, Edward Dickson and his brother Brent, remember seeing Colonel



Francis Ripley with the gold tipped cane: this oil painting by Gertrude Fisk hangs in the Museum of the Weston Historical Society:

Ripley carry the cane on several occasions, particularly on Memorial Day. Most of the towns around Weston were presented the canes.

During the Civil War Col. Ripley was left for dead on the battlefield of Antietam; he was eventually carried to the Union Hospital at Chambersburg, Virginia, where he recuperated for seven months under the care of nurse Laura Ritner. After he was discharged, he returned home to Weston to retire from his business and purchase a farm of 100 acres now on Ripley Lane, which he ran as a prosperous endeavor. Shortly after the purchase of the farm he returned to Virginia and married his former nurse Laura Ritner, and we presume they lived happily ever after.

Many years later, Col. Ripley, then at 98 the oldest Civil War Veteran in Weston, passed away in 1939. But the cane has never been located to be passed along. The Ripleys' daughter Emma was to teach school for 42 years in Weston, then to write the book, Weston, A Puritan Town, an excellent history of the town's churches and houses.

The cane was gold tipped, with a 14 carat gold head with a two inch flat surface and inscribed: "Presented by THE BOSTON POST, to the OLDEST CITIZEN of WESTON, to be Transmitted". It had an ebony staff from the Congo. The canes were made by J.F. Fradley & Company of New York. The Weston Historical Society is most anxious to continue this tradition and has offered to provide a plain, gold headed cane to the Selectmen of Weston, should they care to carry on this unique presentation.

George F. Amadon

THE BLACKSMITH AND HIS ART

Excerpted from an unattributed document found in some papers in the Weston Historical Society Museum archives:

The first settlers in the British American colonies could raise or make almost anything the farm family needed to eat, wear or use, except iron and steel tools. For these they had to turn to the blacksmith's shop, one of the few places where the settlers had to spend money.

In much of America, surface iron occurred in soft crumbly stone, frequently found in swamps and bogs, called "bog iron" by the colonists; it was the raw material used by the early blacksmiths. The Saugus Iron Works in Massachusetts provided much of the material for smiths in the Boston area. There, the bog iron was heated over charcoal fires fanned by water driven bellows. The melted iron ran from the furnace into grooves in the clay or sand floor where it cooled to "pig iron."

This pig iron was re-heated (not melted) and could then be forged or hammered by hand into "wrought iron" shapes; it could be molded and poured into sand moulds to cool into the shapes of "cast iron" pots.

Wrought iron will not hold a cutting edge without a constant re-sharpening, so a crude blister steel was invented. Its outer surface was "hard as steel" but was soft inside. Re-heated and compacted under trip hammers, this was cut into thin strips and reforged into steel hard enough to make shears. Casting steel into desired shapes had to wait the introduction of steel factories in the early 1800s.

Blacksmiths still ply their trade, mostly for horseshoes, or the tourist trade. The last blacksmith shop in Weston was located at 486 Boston Post Road, run by Oliver Patriquin.

A personal note: My parents bought a set of heavy wrought iron andirons from him, and they are still in use in my home. As young boys, my brothers and I would occasionally pump the bellows for him, in return for which he would then bend horseshoe nails into finger rings for us. The shed was dirty, cobwebby and lighted only by a bare, electric bulb. It would be closed today by the Board of Health.

Douglas Henderson

JUST FOR THE RECORD

Here are a few trivia that might be of interest:

Citizens Against Government Waste released the shocking news that members of Congress in 2001 set aside for pork barrel projects \$20.1 billion (b as in boy!). Sample on state level: Alabama planned to refurbish a monument to the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis!

Item: Our food industry produces daily 3,800 calories per person; luckily, an adult male needs only 2,500 calories per day. Leftovers, anybody?

We welcome new life member to our society: Mr. Robert F. White of Weston.
Come and visit our Museum!



"The defendant hasn't a chance. He's engaged some green lawyer from New Hampshire by the name of Webster."

IN MEMORIAM: HARRIET ELLISTON



Harriet Elliston

Harriet Elliston, aged 97, left us forever this summer; she died in her home on July 8, 2002.

She and her husband, Dr. William A. Elliston, were long-time members of our Society. Harriet was the daughter of musician parents in Cambridge. Her father was a violinist (and judge), her mother a concert pianist. Harriet attended the Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, then spent two years in Europe between the ages of 16 and 18, mostly in Italy and in France. After returning home, she attended Harvard with special permission as a girl (girls were not admitted to Harvard until 1943!) in the Department of Anthropology; she was the very first female graduate of Radcliffe College in anthropology.

Harriet Elliston was a highly active person in the field of human rights, supporting at various times the Rev. Martin Luther King and his cause; she was instrumental in founding the Weston-Roxbury summer camp in Weston. She was an early supporter of the Weston Forest and Trail Association, among others. The Ellistons lived in Weston since 1937 at a small farm where they cultivated flowers and later raspberries.

Harriet Elliston will be sorely missed.

HOW EDUCATED ARE WE?

A recent GLOBE article published an interesting survey of household incomes and percentages of college degrees in the population in Massachusetts towns. Here are a few samples that should be of interest to us in Weston; the listing below contains ALL college percentages higher than Weston.

<u>Town</u>	<u>College %</u>	<u>Household Income</u>
Warren	10	34,583
New Bedford	11	27,569
Fall River	11	29,014
...		
...		
Wayland	68	101,036
Sudbury	72	118,579
WESTON	75	153,918
Wellesley	76	113,686
Sherborn	76	121,693
Dover	78	141,818
Carlisle	83	129,811

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.
4. Lee Marsh, comp.: Weston, photographs from the Museum of the Weston Historical Society, paper, \$15.00.

All 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.

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BULLETIN Editor

Vera Laska

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.