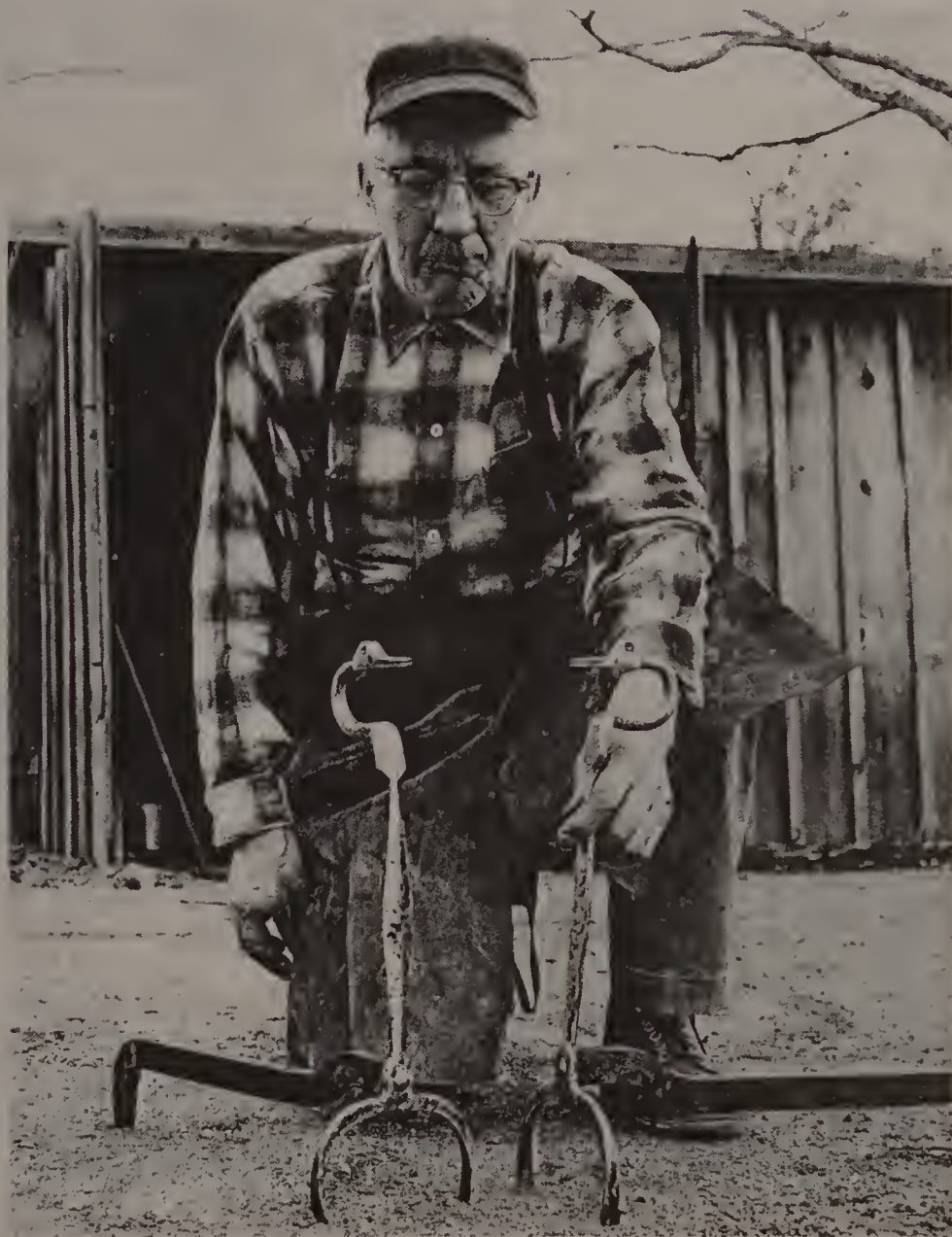


THE WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN



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Oliver Patriquin, Weston's Last Town Blacksmith

Letter from Calvin Patriquin to Pamela Fox, received January 29, 2001

[My father, Oliver Patriquin, the village smithy] came down from Nova Scotia alone at the age of twelve, settling in Boston first. It must have been an almost overwhelming experience to be in the melting pot with thousands of immigrants mainly of Irish, Italian, Jewish and German extraction, all struggling to make America their home. He told me that his first job was with an ice man carrying heavy blocks of ice up many flights of stairs in tenement

buildings while the Irish ice man waited for him in the nearest pub. Also at this time very gifted German ornamental iron workers took him in and taught him the blacksmith trade along with horseshoeing. I would like to mention that the Irish taught him the art of boxing. I have a number of medals awarded him in his youth. When the influenza epidemic struck Massachusetts he moved his young family to Chestnut Street, Weston, where he remained the rest of his life. He set up the blacksmith shop in the center of town. It was located between the red book store on the right [494 Boston Post Road, then the Village Book Stall, now Cambridge Trust Company] and the block of stores on the left [where Florentine Frames is today]. The barn [that] the shop was in was eventually torn down and the present brick building [486 Boston Post Road] was first a post office and I think now business office [now Weston Pediatric Physicians].

I remember as a child bringing my friends in the shop. If dad was not too busy he would make all of us rings made out of horseshoe nails. He had a number of employees at the time. It was a very busy shop with the ringing of hammers striking the anvils and horses milling around waiting to be shod. There was always a number of old timers sitting around telling stories.

Things went well for a number of years. All of the estates in town had something made from his shop: beautiful garden gates, driveway entrance gates, beautiful interior iron stair railings, fireplace andirons and screens, door hardware, and all sizes and shapes of plant holders. The ironwork I was most familiar with was at the Case estate, where I worked summers. Anyway, everything went well for my father until the great Depression struck. He, like many others, was forced to downsize, so he moved his shop up on the corner of Love Lane and Boston Post Road. The small building is still there. I would go around with him to the estates...to shoe their saddle horses, work horses, and sometimes oxen. He had horse shoes already made hanging all around the shop for all the horses stabled at these estates. He would do wagon repairs, etc. and horse shoeing for farmers who could not pay, so in return they would supply him with hay and vegetables. I remember one farmer who built us a stone wall that took two years. I suppose dad would shoe his horses and he would come over and work on the wall.

He was truly the village smithy with a large shade tree out front of his shop in the center of Weston. He did part time work right up into his later years. House restorers came to his home giving him orders for hardware...

Now a little bit about myself. As I mentioned before we lived on Chestnut Street a short distance up the street from the Thomas Allen house [One Chestnut St). When we were living there it was known as the Slayton House. A family with two boys, John and Holly, who we played with. There was also a large barn with the house—since torn down—that we would play hide and seek in on rainy days. There was a hill owned by Regis College across the street for sledding and tobogganing in the winter time. Perhaps the most enjoyable time on rainy days was the upstairs in the Slayton house. They had Lionell train tracks laid out everywhere, down the halls, in and out of all the bedrooms, anywhere there was floor there was tracks, stations, sidings, everything. They also had a pony. We would all take turns riding. This was a real fun time of our lives. Since then as you know the house has been



Blacksmith Shop, Love Lane, 2005



Calvin Patriquin, c. late 1930s

restored, the barn torn down, and a smaller structure replaced it.

I operated a small business in town for a number of years. I, like my father, did remodeling and general carpentry at many of these estates in town. I stored my building equipment in the right hand section of the Coburn red barn on Church Street [154 Church Street]. I also did all of the carpenter work on the Coburn house across the street —lovely home [No.153]. Mrs. Coburn was well along in years, middle or upper 90's. She loved to garden. She would work in the flower beds for hours. When she could not stand up she would call as loud as she could for help. She also liked to ride in the car. Her house person would take her out every afternoon and sometimes all day for long country rides. Sweet person.

I built and lived with my wife Joan and two boys John and David in the white saltbox house on the corner of Fiske Lane and Merriam Street [now 10 Fiske Lane].

Letter from Calvin Patriquin to Pamela Fox, received March 12, 2001

Shortly after arriving in Weston my father purchased a piece of land on Chestnut St...I am not sure, but probably from the Barkers [Amri Barker lived at what is now 52 Chestnut Street]. The property is long and fairly narrow, located on the first driveway on the left coming up Chestnut St. from Wellesley St. It fronts, of course, on Chestnut St. and the rear borders on Regis College land. Over time he was able to build four houses on this land. A lot of ledge was discovered when the foundations were being excavated. Huge fires made with brush & large pieces of wood were set on the ledge. When the fires died down and the rock was extremely hot, cold water was thrown on the ledge. It was like the Fourth of July. The ledge would then split up into manageable pieces used to build the stone foundations. Three of these houses had stone foundations built in this manner. He also set up a small saw mill to saw framing lumber, etc. The first house on Chestnut Street [No.40, c. 1920] was built by Bill Henderson, who lived up the street, after the foundation was in. The

second house [No.38] was built by William Compton [of] Golden Ball Road. The third house [No. 36] was built by my father with the help of several carpenters. This house has a beautiful wrought iron stair railing going up the stairs and down the hall. This was of his own design, ornamental leaves, etc. The fieldstone fireplace had his andirons, screen, and tools. The fourth house up [No. 34] was more of a summer camp. We lived there for several early Depression years. The roof and walls were covered with heavy tarpaper. The only plumbing in the house was a water closet in the bathroom, and a sink in the large room. For lighting, a large oil lamp that was suspended from the open rafters, and could be moved up or down by pulling on a small chain. The large wood stove in the middle of the large room provided enough heat to warm the three small bedrooms. Eventually my father finished this house. This is where they lived in later years. He also had his blacksmith shop here. These houses have had improvements made over the years—additions, garages, etc. and fit in well. He had a lot of ambition and drive to put all of this together, plus maintaining his blacksmith business. The same is true of others in your book, some like my father, who had very little education. I was able to find two of his ancient ledger books. What a simple way of doing business.

After working at Hillcrest Farm for two summers for small wages, and a very strong dislike of pulling weeds, my father was able to get me a job at the Dickson Estate for two summers. [The estate of Brenton H. Dickson Jr. was at the corner of Highland Street and Love Lane]. One of my chores was gathering vegetables for the kitchen. Upon entering the kitchen, the



40 Chestnut Street before recent renovations

Irish cook would sit me down at the large table and serve fresh baked bread dripping with home made butter, donuts, pie, cake, or whatever else came out of the over, along with a fresh cup of coffee. I looked forward to this ritual every day. It is said that later in life Ruth Dickson's eyesight began to fail, but she still continued to ride her horse along the many trails. Her favorite horse seemed to know of the dangers on all of these trails, such as low limbs, etc., and would automatically avoid them.

The Paine house [Highland Street]...[had a] great hall and the beautiful oak staircase. On a dark or rainy day, going up the stairs could be a little scary with all of those African animal trophies staring down at you. Especially the lion and tiger with teeth barred. The third floor workshop was of real interest. It was full of state of the art woodworking machinery. I often wondered where this machinery ended up...

Alexander Sauer [farmer at 412 Highland Street] did have a sour disposition. He would reprimand us if we walked across his property. He owned this large steam driven tractor used for plowing, etc. the farm. Probably one of the last steam tractors used for farming. We would hide in the woods near the edge of the field and watch [in] amazement as the monster moved up and down the field. We could only imagine what a ride would be like, but did not dare ask.

Editor's note: Memoirs are an important source of information on local history. This issue contains two examples. Calvin Patriquin (1927-2005) talks about his father, Oliver (1882-1972), the village blacksmith, and his childhood on Chestnut Street. If you know the whereabouts of any of Oliver Patriquin's ironwork, please contact the Weston Historical Society. Below, Charles Wells Hubbard (1856-1933) describes his family estate on Orchard Avenue. Information in brackets has been added by the editor. The Weston Historical Society encourages all residents to write down their memories of life in Weston and send them to WHS, Box 343, Weston MA 02493.

Selections from “Autobiographical Notes” by Charles W. Hubbard

In 1866 my father [Charles Townsend Hubbard] bought the old Slack farm where we first lived in the old farm house, close to the Mail (?) Road just below my daughter Nancy's present home [Nancy was his nickname for Anne Swain Hubbard Jr., later Mrs. Edward Wheeler] And since that time the family's greatest interest has been in our family estates on or near this original purchase—my sisters originally having had homes here. My sister Louise's home stood where my daughter Mrs. Wheeler now has hers [100 Orchard Avenue].

In 1880 the death of his father-in-law and more successful business results found my father so well off that he went to Europe for a year and built the house lived in by my father and myself for so many years—located above the Railroad.... [Ridgehurst at 80 Orchard Avenue]

In the early days when all my sisters were at home the old farm house was well filled with our guests – and we had at times 8 or 9 carriage and saddle horses. I believe the people passing on the R.R. thought we kept a boarding house and livery stable. In addition to our driving and riding we had boats on the river – which at that time could not have had more than 20 boats between our place and Waltham. In short we lived under ideal conditions for having a good time with our friends – one of my old friends in later years referring to these old times said he remembered sitting down with twenty at breakfast. One of the plagues of that time which recent science and care have almost driven away was the swarms of



*Slack Farmhouse
Courtesy of Stanley French Jr.*



*Ridgehurst, 80 Orchard Avenue
Courtesy of Paula Schwenk*

mosquitoes and flies. As I now look back I see the conditions for freedom there were perfect – but of course no one realized that. And this leads me to remark on the immense advance in the sciences in sanitation hygiene during my life. In various ways how much easier it has made life.

One rather unique feature of our life was our little private theatre. When the place was bought there was an outbuilding – a large billiard room – It was used by us as a Laundry – One summer when I was about 14 I fitted up a rough stage, and we children gave a little play. My father was so much interested that he had the building enlarged putting in quite a complete little stage; - in the fitting of which I had a chance to exercise my love of carpentry.

Each summer of 1871 72 73 we gave several plays in this theatre and there are now in my library two bound volumes of these plays. I have always felt that this amateur acting had an educational value – our company consisted of Carrie and Mabel Case who lived about three miles away and Will and Walter Bush. Their older sister Fanny our acting manager – my sister Annie and myself – with now and then a guest at the house to help out. I remember one amusing incident. Old Mr. Sewall like other slightly deaf people sometimes made audible comments – and in a scene where I was playing the lover he remarked – “Does it pretty well does he not – looks as if he really meant it.”



The young Charles Wells Hubbard (bottom right) and his sister Anne (top left) are pictured here with friends. Photo courtesy of Stanley French Jr.

Editor's note: Hubbard goes on to describe his "tramping" trips to the White Mountains, Adirondacks and Maine woods, his experience at the great Boston fire, his social clubs, and various other residences. The memoir continues below.

My sister Louise's home having been bought by our friend Livingston Cushing – and he and his wife being most congenial neighbors – I sold additional land to them including our original farm cottage – moving our other farm buildings to their present location – Years later after Mr. Cushing's death I bought back this property about 14 acres – including my sister's old home, the log cabin and the large stable and garage built by Mr. Cushing [now 140 Orchard Avenue] – the latter was later converted into the house in which I now live – under the following circumstances. At our entrance into the great war I offered our home Ridgehurst as a hospital – and in view of having to move out of this I decided to make the Cushing Stable into a home as we were able to design a very satisfactory plan – as it went on my wife and I became so interested that we elaborated it more than originally intended – and being satisfied that it would be a more comfortable and convenient house for our small family we decided to move in; and when able to dispose of Ridgehurst to do so – as I feared that none of my children could afford to support it, and I preferred to dispose of it myself rather than leave it as a White Elephant for my Estate.

Editor's note: Ridgehurst, which still stands at 80 Orchard Avenue, was never used by the Red Cross. After the Hubbards moved to Barnstable House at 140 Orchard Avenue, the main house was rented or left vacant until his son, Charles Wells Hubbard Jr., lived there for a time in the 1930s. The Hubbards owned the house until 1945 and were followed by George N. and Anna Chamberlain Jr. (1945-80) and Harold and Paula Schwenk (1980 to present). Further pages of the extensive autobiography discuss Hubbard's career as head of the Ludlow Manufacturing Company.



Livingston Cushing stable and barn, converted to Barnstable House. Photo courtesy of Tom Paine

The Transformation of 809-811 Boston Post Road

Until the fall of 2004, the property at 809-811 Boston Post Road was notorious for its dilapidated condition and ever-changing front-yard stockpiles of broken, water-damaged furniture and rusty vehicles. Today, the house and barn have each been transformed into two condominium units in a new development called Post Road Green. Behind the historic buildings are two new duplexes. The first residents moved in this summer.

Carol Seto undertook this challenging project as a Local Initiative Petition (LIP) under State Chapter 40B. The Town of Weston contributed \$380,000 of Community Preservation Act funds and required the developer to place a preservation restriction on the house and barn. Keeping the two mid-19th century buildings was considered a town priority because of their prominent position on the Boston Post Road, which is a National Register Historic District for its entire length in Weston.

Chapter 40B was set up to increase the state's stock of affordable housing and allows developers to ignore local zoning requirements. Twenty-five percent of the units must be affordable under state income guidelines and will be sold to eligible first-time homebuyers who make no more than 80% of area median income, adjusted for household size. The two lucky winners chosen by lottery will each pay \$165,800 for their condominium unit. The affordable units will remain so in perpetuity.

Since the town's 250th anniversary in 1963, researchers including myself have been incorrect about the age and history of the house at 809-811 Boston Post Road. The physical appearance of the house suggests a mid-century date rather than the early 19th century date previously assigned. Certain features are characteristic of the Italianate style, which dominated American house construction between about 1850 and 1880, for example, the narrow trim boards, 2/2 window sash, original front door (since replaced) and interior newel post. The Colonial Revival porch was added in 1910.

Researchers in the 1960s and 70s concluded, again incorrectly, that No. 809-811 was the house referred to on page 154 in Daniel S. Lamson's *History of the Town of Weston*, which states: "Ralph Abrahams, of the Isaac Jones family, kept a store on what is now the Minor property. The store stood east of the present house. In 1820, Abrahams sold the property to Alpheus Bigelow and Bigelow sold to Oliver Shed, who remained until 1830, when the store was destroyed by fire." I repeated this information in my book *Farm Town to Suburb* but I am now certain that Lamson was referring to another property, also on Boston Post Road but closer to the Wayland town line. Deed research does not support a link between this property and the owners described by Lamson. Also, Lamson says the store was "on what is now the Minor property" whereas the house in question was owned by the Green family during the years when Lamson was writing his history.

Adding to the confusion is the fact that the present house at 809-811 Boston Post Road is not the first on the site. A house appears at the foot of Love Lane on the 1822 map, labeled as belonging to "T. Pierce," whose first name was Thaddeus. At some point in the mid-century

19th century, this house was replaced. The question is, who built the present mid-19th century house and barn?

Thaddeus Peirce died in 1848 at age 84 and his son Abijah inherited the property. Although it is difficult to say for sure, Abijah is the person most likely to have replaced the earlier house. When Abijah died in 1859 at age 54, his widow Mary had to sell the house and three acres to



House and Barn at 809-811 Boston Post Road. May, 2004. Photos by Pamela W. Fox



*Post Road Green Development, September, 2005.
Photos by Pamela W. Fox*

pay his debts (Book 825, pages 335 and 336). Perhaps Abijah's debt was in part for the construction of a new house, barn, and shop on his father's land. Unfortunately, tax records from the 1840s and 1850s are not available to provide a definitive answer.

The buyer, Luther Fuller of Wayland, purchased the three-acre parcel with buildings for \$751.60 and an additional six acres directly from the widow for \$748, for a total of almost \$1500. In 1862, the first year that buildings are listed separately in the tax records, Fuller was taxed for a dwelling, a barn, and a "wheelwright shop." The already well-traveled Boston

Post Road would have been an excellent location for such a shop. Fuller's tax valuation increased only gradually during more than a decade of ownership, suggesting that he did not build a new, more valuable house.

In 1875, Mary E. Fuller, widow of Luther, sold the property to Edward C. Green (Book 1349/388). Green is listed in the 1887 directory as a farmer. The property stayed in the Green family for over a century. Edward and his wife Cora had a son, Edward Jr., and daughter, Cora. Edward Jr. initially worked as a farmer but was quickly swept up in the automobile age. In the 1911 and 1921 directories, Edward Jr. is listed as a chauffeur and in 1915 he is listed as a mechanic. From about 1920 to at least 1963, he operated an automobile repair garage known as Green's Garage on the premises.

In 1973, the property was sold to David Connolly, who rented rooms in the house. Tenants held frequent yard sales until town authorities were able to enforce by-laws prohibiting this practice. The condition of the property was a cause of considerable frustration for neighbors and town officials.

In 2004, Carol Seto purchased the three-acre property for \$1,080,000 for a 40B development. The selectmen and members of the Planning Board and Weston Historical Commission saw this as the only possible way to preserve the historic house and barn. Because the existing buildings are sited close to the road, they partially screen the two new buildings from view.

Pamela W. Fox

One Hundred Years Ago: Weston in 1905

Selections from the *Waltham Daily Free Press Tribune*, 1905

January 6, 1905. "The telephone service at Stony Brook is exceedingly annoying, the slot device not working properly and there being a considerable number of disputes between those who call and the central office as to the amount deposited."

January 13, 1905. "The First Parish Friendly Society will hold a poverty party Monday night at the Town Hall."

January 20, 1905. "The skating on the Coburn meadows is the best that has been for a number of years and is enjoyed by all."

February 24, 1905. "The coasting from No. 4 schoolhouse down Viles street across the railroad track is a very dangerous practice and should be stopped. If any serious accident happens no one will be to blame but the parents of the children who are allowed to do it."

March 31, 1905. "George Sanderson & Son have a beautiful display consisting of 200,000 fine pansy plants of good colors."

April 7, 1905. "Many of the children who attend District No. 4 school are sick with whooping cough. The school has been closed indefinitely."

April 21, 1905. "The 'speeding' of automobiles in the town is being stopped. It is thought that the resolution to enforce the law is diverting many automobiles to other locations."

April 28, 1905. "Many of the Weston summer residents moved from Boston during the past week."

May 12, 1905. "A wall, steps, and columns of fieldstone and concrete, forming an architectural feature of great beauty, are being constructed on the estate of Horace Sears."

May 26, 1905. "The Selectmen have very properly stopped the playing of lawn tennis at the Riverside recreation grounds and at the grounds of the Boston Athletic Association."

June 2, 1905. "The only serious drawback to Weston is the never-ending procession of automobiles, which raise so much dust that driving is not as pleasant as it once was."

June 30, 1905 "Considerable progress has been made in rebuilding the chair factory [on Crescent Street]. The walls are nearly boarded in and the roof nearly covered over."

July 28, 1905. "Steam was let into the cylinders of the engine of the reconstructed furniture factory Thursday. The plant is a well-equipped one."

September 1, 1905. "At an exhibit of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, S.W. Warren of Weston, the veteran strawberry grower, showed some Pan-Americans which were as delicious as if grown in June, and a new seedling apple, somewhat resembling an early Williams in color and taste."

September, 1905. "Guy and Bert Trask went fishing Thursday and for a while trout will be scarce around Weston."

September 22, 1905. "A touring car driven at an unlawful rate of speed, according to reports, ran into a herd of cows being driven along Central avenue."

October 13, 1905. "The Weston Water Co is extending the main along what is called Ice House road. By the way, isn't it about time the Town accepted that street and christened it with some kind of name? There are 10 houses there, an ice house and pumping station, property worth probably \$30,000. How would it do to call it Sears street? That's a name that has honored Weston." [Editor's note: Warren Avenue is the name finally chosen.]

October 13, 1905. "Mr. Philip Miller, foreman for Mr. E.J. Brown, shot a large eagle last Monday. It measured five and one-half feet from tip to tip and had a large horn pout in its beak when shot. The fish was still alive."

October 20, 1905. "Mrs. Lydia Ann Garfield... was fatally burned last Saturday at her home. As nearly as can be ascertained, a spark from the kitchen range set fire to her clothing...."

November 3, 1905. "Kenney Bros. & Wolkin (sic) are putting in a 26-foot water wheel to furnish power at the Chair factory."

December 8, 1905. "Tree Warden Cooper and his men have commenced the fight with the gypsy and brown-tail moths, and it promises to be a long and costly performance."

December 8, 1905. "The stove at the Stony Brook station is being relined. One wonders why such jobs are not done in the warm weather."

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This issue of the BULLETIN is the first since the spring of 2004, when Vera Laska gave up the editorship after ten years of dedicated work. I am pleased to take over as editor. Almost three years have passed since publication of my book *Farm Town to Suburb: The History and Architecture of Weston, Massachusetts, 1830-1980*, and I welcome the opportunity to continue exploring Weston history. In future issues, I hope to publish primary source material as well as articles and memoirs submitted by local residents or outside scholars. Please contact me if you have ideas for articles or if you would like to contribute photographs, memorabilia, or other materials that might be of interest to our readers. All such materials would be returned.

Pamela W. Fox

Membership dues: Individuals \$15, family \$15, life \$250. Contributions and bequests to the Endowment Fund are welcome. Make checks payable to the Weston Historical Society, Inc. and mail them to the Weston Historical Society, Box 343, Weston MA 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 or the Weston Historical Society. ISSN 1083-9712