

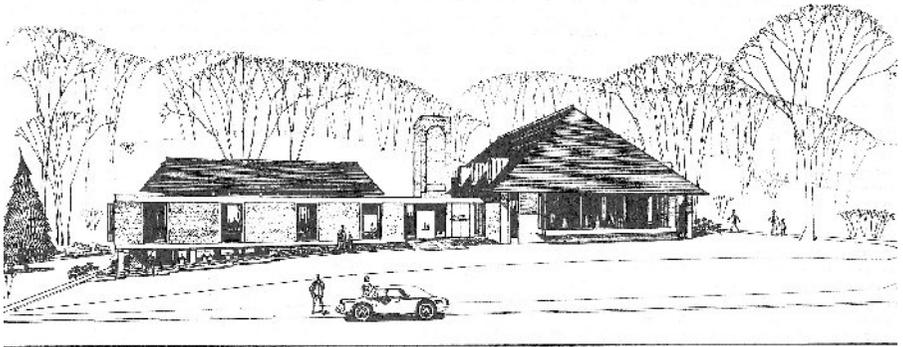
WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

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What Weston Avoided: Part II



(Above) Architect's rendering of the library building proposed for Lamson Park next to Town Hall in 1965. (Below) This drawing by Janet Jasperse compared the library design to that of the Howard Johnson chain of ice cream stores, which boasted "28 Flavors." The drawing appeared in the Town Crier on March 10, 1966.

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In the Spring 2014 Weston Historical Society Bulletin, Deborah Ecker wrote about two proposals she felt would have adversely affected the development of Weston as we know it today: decentralized schools and a septic system in the town center.

To this list I would add two other proposals I believe would have been detrimental to town character: locating a new Weston Public Library in Lamson Park directly west of Town Hall; and constructing almost any part of the elaborate road circulation system of highways, parkways, and feeder roads included in the 1965 Master Plan authored by Charles Downe. To these I have added two proposals that I believe would not have been good solutions to the need for more library space: enlarging the existing building and moving the library to Field School

The Lamson Park library proposal was passed by Town Meeting in 1965 and rescinded one year later. Turning the mothballed Field School into a Library/Community Center was defeated at Town Meeting in 1985. The idea of expanding the existing library was explored for decades. The road circulation system was never seriously considered, with the exception of a north-south corridor.

*Pamela W. Fox
WHS Bulletin Editor*

What Weston Avoided: A Library in Lamson Park

Background

In 1900, Weston proudly dedicated its first library building. At the time, the population of the town was 1834 and the collection of 12,423 volumes was kept in closed stacks, staffed by one librarian.

Over the next 90 years, trustee reports often mention lack of space, but the building had major modifications only twice. In 1922, Miss Louisa Case, a library trustee, made a gift of \$5000 to convert former storage and town office space on the lower level into a children's room named in memory of her young niece, Rosamond Freeman. In 1960-61, alterations were made including construction of workspaces, a kitchenette, and bathrooms along with creation of additional shelf space, all within the original 7,500- square-foot structure.

In 1957, town leaders began studying space needs in earnest. Reports were done in 1957 (Humphry – McNiff Survey), 1959 (Cahill Survey), 1960 (Weston Citizen's Committee Survey), 1963 (League of Women Voters Study), 1964 (Richmond – Goldberg Detailed Study of Space Problems and Building Potentialities) and 1965 (Report of the Special Public Library Expansion Committee). All concluded that additional library space was urgently needed.

The 1964 study by architects Isidore Richmond and Carney Goldberg concluded that the existing library could be satisfactorily altered and enlarged "only if unlimited funds are available."¹ They did test borings to consider whether the low land south of the building would be suitable for parking and reported that a layer of very soft peat covered the entire area for an average depth of 10 feet. To build a parking lot there "all of this peat would have to be removed and replaced with an equivalent depth of gravel which should go at least 3 feet higher than the present surface" and then covered with black-top.² (This was before passage of the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act in 1972) Their conclusion:

"It is neither prudent, practical or [sic] economically feasible to try to up-date or up-grade the present Weston Public Library Building to make it function as a modern, up-to-date building."³

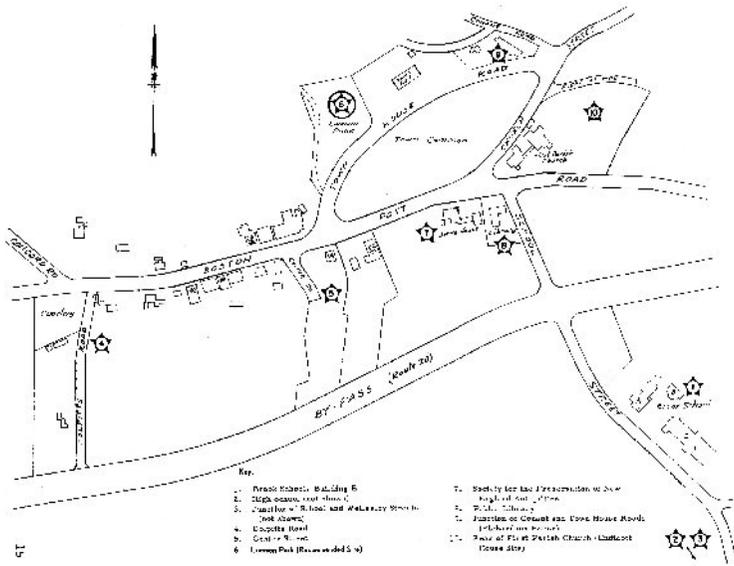


Figure 4. Sites Examined by the Committee

(Above) Sites examined by the Special Public Library Expansion Committee, as printed in its March 18, 1965, report.

The Search for a New Location

Richmond and Goldberg also argued against the idea of building a separate branch library or children’s library, or adapting Brook School Building B for library use. They examined three sites for a possible new building and recommended Lamson Park, a 1.8-acre parcel just west of Town Hall.

In early 1965, the Special Public Library Expansion Committee examined 10 possible sites and narrowed the choice down to two parcels that met their criteria of a central location, space for parking, an attractive setting, and relatively easy development potential. One was Lamson Park; the other was land between the “Jones House” [Josiah Smith Tavern] and St. Julia Church.

The *1965 Master Plan Weston Massachusetts* echoed these recommendations stating: “Geographically, and in terms of population concentrations, the Town Common is now, and will continue to be the Town’s gravity center” and therefore the appropriate location. In addition, “since the present library building could be readily converted to other uses, the whole package will be economically favorable.”⁴

Lamson Park had been taken by eminent domain from George H.D. Lamson in 1927 to protect the integrity of the Town Common. The old Lamson stable and

barn had been removed at that time.⁵ Supporters of Lamson Park as a library site argued that it was away from heavy traffic, parking could be shared with Town Hall, and a building could be designed to harmonize with the Town Hall and other civic buildings around the Common.

Using the larger “Jones” parcel, 6.6 acres including the house, would allow for more freedom in designing the building and site. Parking could be shared with a town shopping center also being studied. On the other hand, “community acceptance” and Town Meeting action would be needed to acquire the site from the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA, now Historic New England), which owned it from the early 1950s until 1983. The 1965 Master Plan recommended against this alternative because of ownership issues and historical significance. Newspaper articles indicate that SPNEA would have fought attempts to take the property by eminent domain.

In March 1965, at 11 pm on the second night of Town Meeting, residents voted 213 to 192—a margin of only 21 votes—to transfer Lamson Park to the library trustees and appoint a Library Building Committee. The warrant article passed despite opposition from the Finance Committee, chaired by Richard A. Hill, which questioned the extent, priority, and cost of the proposed expansion. Speaking against the proposal for aesthetic reasons were Harold G. “Red” Travis, president of the Weston Historical Society and chair of the Park and Cemetery Commission; Charles P. Gorley, Jr., landscape architect; Margaret Floyd, architectural historian; William H. Brine III; and J. Kenneth Bennett. In subsequent debates, opponents of the Lamson site pointed to the fact that the vote on this important issue took place at the end of a long night; and the decision was made by only 405 people, nearly half of whom voted against it.

Noted Architectural Firm is Chosen

The Library Building Committee (Ronald Eames, chair, Jane Abbott, Dr. Thomas Fitzpatrick, Gale Haydock, Kenneth Leach) contacted 29 architectural firms and interviewed six. In September 1965, the committee selected architects Shepley, Bulfinch, Richardson and Abbott, a distinguished Boston firm that traced its history back to H. H. Richardson. In Weston, the firm later designed the police station, in 1974. Philip J. McNiff, director of the Boston Public Library, was chosen as the library’s planning consultant.

Jane Abbott is reported as saying: “every one of the 29 architects considered by the committee . . . stated that the Lamson Park site was the most desirable in every way.”⁶ Several opponents attended the September meeting where the announcement was made. When it was suggested that they wait to see architectural plans before commenting, opponent J. Kenneth Bennett responded: “I am not interested in waiting to see any building on that site.” He urged the committee not to spend any more money.⁷

A “Modern Vernacular” Building

The planned red brick structure had a slate roof and white trim. It was “basically a split level building” that “hugs the contours of the land” and was of a design “compatible with the town house.”⁸ Gale Haydock later stated that all six architect finalists recommended using these materials in a “modern vernacular” building that would “blend well with the Georgian town house without competing with it or mimicking it.”⁹

The library roof peak matched the level of the Town Hall cornice. The interior was laid out around a central work core, allowing maximum supervision with minimum of staff. Capacity was 75,000 volumes. The planned new building was 15,500 square feet, more than twice the size of the existing, with off-street parking for 30 cars. All public areas were on one floor, with a basement slated for future expansion. The library would have a septic system but was expected to tie in with a future town sewer that was never built.

The \$450,000 cost was enough to construct the building but not equip it, with private funds to be solicited for interior furnishings. In February 1966, the building committee petitioned the Board of Appeals for a variance to build the library closer to the road. In anticipation of a March 10, 1966, public hearing, the committee mailed to all residents a tastefully designed report entitled “A new public library for Weston,” with the architect’s rendering on the cover (see page 1 of this *Bulletin*). The Chairman of the Library Building Committee was quoted in newspaper reports as saying: “The proposed library will in no way detract from the natural beauty of the town green. On the contrary it is the feeling of many persons that it will enhance that beauty.”¹⁰

Grant Received and Land Transferred

Library proponents received a boost at the end of the year when Weston received a federal grant of \$100,000 toward the cost of construction. Weston was one of 14 out of 27 Massachusetts communities selected and given preliminary state approval, with Weston receiving the maximum amount.¹¹

In future discussions, the fact that this money would not be available in the future was used to appeal to those who questioned the perceived high cost of a new building. Final plans had to be submitted by April 15, 1966, or the grant would be lost. The federal act expired on June 30.

Because the proposed site was a park, the town had to petition the State Legislature to transfer it from the jurisdiction of the Park and Cemetery Commission to the Library Trustees. Weston Selectman Edward M. Dickson, who was also a State Representative, obtained the transfer through a special act of the House. (House bill 2052)

The report of the Library Trustees in the 1965 *Town Report* predicted:

1966 will be a turning point for the Weston Public Library. The long struggle to maintain a high standard of service in an inadequate building must be resolved. The impressively farsighted work of the Building Committee offers the people of Weston an opportunity to have a handsome library¹²

The report reiterated that the collection was at capacity, meaning that a book had to be discarded for every new one purchased.

Opposition Grows

The selectman's report in the 1965 *Town Report* noted growing opposition. In February 1966, opponents presented the selectmen with a petition for a Special Town Meeting to reconsider the question, signed by a reported 310 voters, well over the 200 needed. The meeting was set for March 14, 1966.

Harold Travis emerged as the leading anti-park spokesman. Travis is quoted in newspaper articles as saying:

. . . the \$62,000 spent by the town 53 years ago for the creation of the town green and the town hall would be thrown to the winds by those few who felt that a new library would look "nice" on Lamson Park.¹³

Interestingly, in the many newspaper reports examined for this article, neither Travis nor any of his historic/community character coalition mention Lamson Park as a place where Weston's militiamen may have gathered to march to Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775. This notion, which is difficult to document, was used in more recent years to try to block the use of the land for a playground. Instead, the goal in 1966 was to preserve the "natural aesthetic loveliness" of the Town Green as an historic landscape designed by Arthur Shurcliff in 1913.¹⁴



Joining the Lamson Park protectors were concerned taxpayers opposed to constructing a new library in any location. A \$3,750,000 capital expenditure program then on the table included a

Harold G. "Red" Travis, president of the fledgling Weston Historical Society, lead the fight to keep the library building out of Lamson Park.

new junior high school, sewerage system, fire and police facility, South Side fire station, water main improvements, and town office improvements, in addition to a library. Finance Committee chairman Richard A. Hall is quoted as saying:

We are not of the feeling that the library is an immediate necessity. Our five-year projection indicates that Weston will have a tax rate in the next five years 31% higher than this year's . . . The present library building should be sufficient.¹⁵

As to the argument that the old library could be used for needed town offices and meeting rooms, Hall responded:

We have all sorts of schools with auditoriums. . . we have town buildings by the acre . . . The Finance Committee meets in the Jones House. The chairs are hard but we go home early.¹⁶

Some pointed to the planned high school addition, one-third of which would be devoted to a library. If high schoolers no longer needed the main library, wouldn't it be adequate for the remaining population?

A letter-questionnaire slanted against the project was circulated, questioning the site selection process, cost estimates, and library space needs. This questionnaire also brought up what it termed the "weak" list of possible uses for the existing library building as an office and meeting rooms for town committees, public

Library Plans Discarded; New Study Authorized



WHAT'S THE SCORE?—While most of the action was transpiring in the high school auditorium, the overflow members of Weston's

special town meeting, above, listened and voiced themselves over the loudspeaker system across the hall in the gymnasium.

Huge Weston Turnout Rescinds 1965 Action by 240 Votes

The Town Crier issue of March 17, 1966, reported on the large turnout of voters for a Special Town Meeting called to reconsider the Lamson Park site.

hearing rooms, a voting place, youth center, and meeting rooms for public use.¹⁷

Opponents even questioned whether libraries would be needed in the future. In a letter sent out in February 1966, opponents noted:

With the miracles of electronics, with the inventions by Polaroid and Xerox. . . will today's libraries be obsolete by 1985? We don't know, but it's possible, and hence we all should "Think Before We Vote."¹⁸

Selectmen and New "Friends" Advocate for the Plan

Advocating for Lamson Park were the selectmen: Herman Koester, chairman, Florence Freeman, and Edward M. Dickson, along with the Library Trustees, chaired by Grant M. Palmer Jr., and the Library Building Committee. Also supportive was the Planning Board, chaired by William Elliston, and Master Plan consultant Charles Downe. Elliston is quoted in an April 1965 newspaper article as saying of the site: "It is central, yet removed, has parking space, and will fit in extremely well with the development of the Center as it is being formulated."¹⁹

It was during this year of controversy that the Friends of the Weston Library, Inc. was founded. In the spring of 1966, under the leadership of president Vivienne Guild, it circulated a pro-library fact sheet and issued a strong endorsement. In the months leading up to the March Special Town Meeting, library supporters organized a series of coffees in private homes. They stressed how long it would take to develop alternate plans, with estimates ranging from two to six years. It turned out to be 30 years before the present library opened in 1995

In a stormy all-day session held at the Josiah Smith Tavern on the Saturday before Special Town Meeting, library trustees and building committee members appeared at a meeting of the Finance Committee and demanded an explanation of why the committee was opposing the new library. In one exchange, a trustee retorted that any persons seeking new studies were "babes in the woods."²⁰

Special Town Meeting Rescinds Previous Vote

The March 14, 1966, Special Town Meeting took place just one week before regular Town Meeting, allowing for full discussion of this one topic. The crowd, described as one of the largest ever seen at a Town Meeting, exceeded by more than 1000 the number that had voted to approve Lamson Park the previous year.²¹ On the warrant were articles to rescind the 1965 vote, discharge the building committee, return the park to the custody of the Park and Cemetery Commission, and provide for further study of the library problem. The opposition handout proclaimed "Wrong Building, Wrong Time, Wrong Place."²²

By this time, plans for the building were virtually complete. The building committee had spent approximately \$87,000 in design fees; and the "no" vote

meant loss of the \$100,000 federal grant. Ronald Eames estimated that a new round of study committees would result in three years delay and \$44,000 in increased building costs.

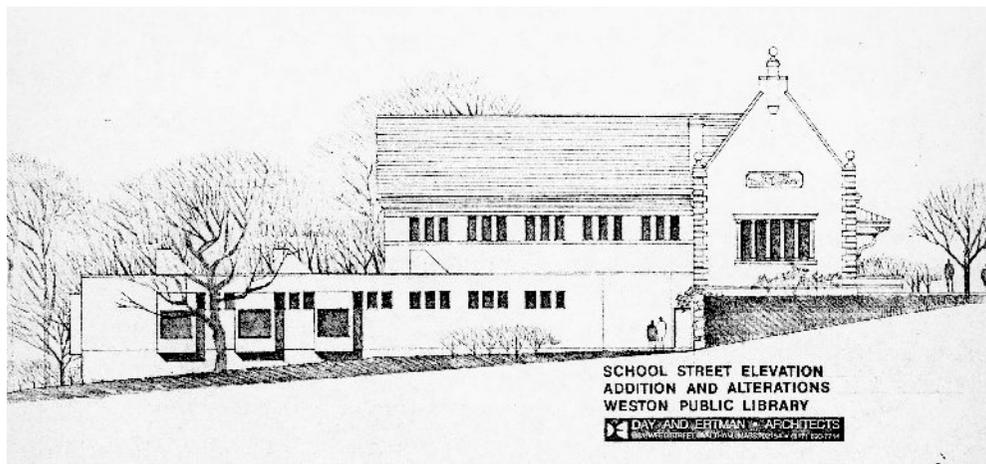
By a vote of 807 to 567, a margin of 240 votes, Town Meeting voted to rescind the previous vote. Lamson Park would remain building-free.

What Weston Avoided: Expanding the 1900 Library and Relocating the Library to Field School

With defeat of the Lamson Park proposal, yet another committee was appointed. Library Trustees requested money for improvements to the 1900 structure, including construction of a new staircase connecting the adult and children's divisions. The staircase between the two had been condemned as unsafe for public use, meaning that library patrons had been walking around the building outside to go from one floor to the other. Exterior repairs were made, some new wiring and carpeting installed, and new tables, bookcases, and lighting fixtures acquired.

The future of the Weston Public Library was studied again beginning in May 1979.²³ By this time, nine library studies had been done since 1957.²⁴ The architectural firm of Day and Ertman, hired to look again at expanding the existing library, came up with several new ideas.²⁵ One was for an addition of 7,200 square feet to the existing main level. Because of the sloping site, it had to be supported by freestanding columns. Another plan, which gained more traction, was a one-story addition of 7,670 sq. ft. wrapping around the lower level on the School Street and rear elevations. The upper floor would remain intact. Both these proposals would have allowed the collection to be housed on one floor. Parking remained a serious drawback. The study mentions the possibility of town parking being created on the west side of the Josiah Smith Tavern. At this time, the possibility of the town taking over the tavern and 6.6-acre property was being explored. This transfer took place in 1983.

Also in the early 1980s, a new option emerged. In 1980, because of declining enrollments, a study committee recommended closing Field School in 1982. Day and Ertman were asked to examine the 57,000-square-foot building for library use.²⁶ They reported that the 14,100-square-foot main floor would work. The site



The 1980 Day and Ertman report recommended an addition to the lower level of the 1900 library, creating a large open area that provided needed flexibility. The addition “did not affect the appearance of the front facade” but instead “helps the east, south, and west elevations in that it provides a visual base for the existing structure.” Also “Similar brick and window patterns will be used. . . in order to provide a unified expanded building which will be an exciting and stimulating addition to the center of Weston.” (Courtesy Weston Public Library files)

had good parking and septic capacity but was considered “less central” than the present library. The architects noted that complications would arise because the building would be multi-use.

Public sentiment still favored adding to the existing building and using the tavern land to solve parking and septic problems. Renovating Field School for library use was cheaper but the question of what to do with the existing building remained. In a December 1981 letter from Daniel Siegel, chair of the Library Trustees to Hugh R. Jones Jr., Siegel noted that: “The Town would still have the problem (and presumably the cost) of what to do with the present Library building and site. The limited parking and septic make these things a problem for any new use of site or building.”²⁷

A letter the following summer from Siegel to Jones indicates a change of outlook: “The Library Trustees, for reasons of economy and increased library usage, are interested in moving into the Field School.”^{27A} Because of the building’s size, it was suggested that Field School become a mixed use “community center.” A Field School Advisory Committee was formed, chaired by Kay McCahan. Architect Martin Kretsch of DiNisco Kretsch & Associates was hired to do a feasibility study and draw up three separate plans. The first and second options assumed that the library would be located in the building. Option 3 was for a multi-use community facility without a library.



March 13, 1985
Wednesday at 7:30 p.m.
Field School Gym

ENVISION A DYNAMIC, INTERGENERATIONAL LIBRARY / COMMUNITY CENTER

The committee developed a proposal to spend \$3.8 million to remodel the former school building into a Library/Community Center (LCC) housing the Recreation Department and Council on Aging, with space reserved for child care programs and rentals to offset operating expenses. The gym would be renovated. The building would have a community art room, exercise space, multi-purpose community room, and cable television studio. McCahan's committee recommended establishing a five-member management board to select tenants and operate the building.

A series of coffees was organized to explain the LCC. In a letter to the editor, Dr. Adolph Manoil, Professor of Education Emeritus at Boston University and North Avenue resident, called it a "unique and daring project" and "cultural contribution of the first order to the life of the Town of Weston, and a model for the state of Massachusetts," comparable with the George Pompidou Cultural Center of Paris, which he had just visited.²⁸ More than a hundred people signed a newspaper advertisement describing the "tremendous spirit of cooperation among Town departments" and the opportunity to "offer coordinated, cooperative, and separate activities that will benefit the entire spectrum of Weston residents." The advertisement promised that "the Library/Community Building will become the focal point of the Town, serving the intellectual, emotional, social, and recreational needs of the entire community."²⁹

Opposition was led by Selectman Richard "Dick" Murray. He cited concerns that, despite predictions, the town might need to convert the building back to a school.³⁰ He noted that there were no plans for the vacated building and that Case House might also be vacated in the near future. He objected to the cost and its effect on the tax rate and cited other pressing needs including water main work, possible land purchases, a fire station addition, and creation of a transfer station at the dump.³¹ Selectman Harold "Bus" Willis Jr. and Jean Thurston both supported the proposal.

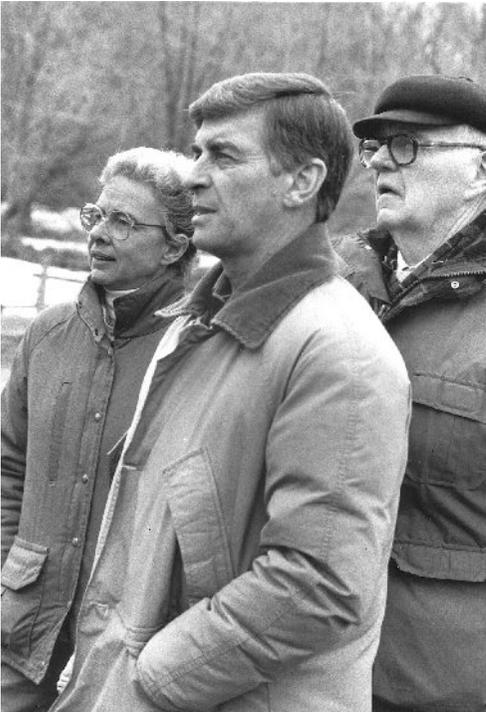
In the days leading up to the election, Murray sent a letter town-wide explaining in detail his reasons for opposing the LCC and recommending a "no" vote. The

letter caused confusion and anger because it was not clear whether it was a personal opinion or a statement from the Board of Selectmen. It was labeled “unfair,” since there had been no opportunity for a rebuttal.³²

According to newspapers, the issue was debated for two hours on the first night of Town Meeting, May 6, and was not decided until midnight. Murray spoke against, later stating: “I felt I had an obligation to express my position, so I did.” A newspaper account reported: “Many residents did not approve of Murray’s action [to send a letter] and began to hiss when he spoke at Town Meeting.”³³ In response to the draft of this article, Murray wrote:

Taking a stand against a new library, at that time, was a very unpopular position for me to be in. I understood the many years of efforts that people had invested in trying to build an adequately sized building and knew that I would be catching some flack for my opposition. However, for me, it was a matter of economics, the need for many other projects in town to be completed, no plans for the reuse of the vacated library, and my honest belief that as an elected official, one has an obligation not to go along just to get along.^{33A}

The Library/Community Center proposal received a majority of votes, 550 in favor and 376 against, but failed by 68 votes to reach the two-thirds required for borrowing. Library Trustee David Squire blamed “undisciplined supporters” for the plan’s defeat: “We lost because many of our people weren’t disciplined and left the meeting early.”³⁴ Those present at the time recalled that younger supporters with children had to leave because of babysitting issues, leaving older and more fiscally conservative opponents. A Letter to the Editor asked why a vote for adjournment was not taken at that late hour, rather than a vote to cut off debate.³⁵



In retrospect, Jean Thurston had this observation: “I was a strong supporter of using Field School. It was a very emotional issue and although I was very upset at the result, it was without a doubt the best decision.”³⁶

Jean Thurston (left) and Dick Murray (center) served as selectmen in the mid-1980s, when voters rejected the proposal to develop a combined library and community center at Field School. At right is former town engineer Kenneth Oates.

Alice Douglas (1927-2003) director of Weston Public Library from September 1976 to December 1993, wrote the detailed library building program that served as the basis for the new building design.



After the LCC defeat, library supporters lost no time in pursuing their three options: expanding the existing building, relocating to Field School, and constructing a new building. In October that year, the selectmen established a Committee to Study Uses and Space Needs for Public Lands and Public Buildings, with architect Henry S. Reeder, Jr. as chair. Use of the Field School remained on the table through 1986, while new possibilities such as the Case House were eliminated as unsuitable. Combining the public library with the high school library was considered yet again by its persistent champions.

Success at Last

By 1987, Weston had approximately 10,743 residents. The library had 64,000 books and a circulation of 123,942. That year, residents voted to set up a new Library Building Committee, chaired by John J. “Jack” Doyle Jr. Adding to the existing library remained a popular option; but after careful study of wetlands, parking, traffic, and cost issues, committee members changed their initial view that on-site expansion was possible and recommended exploring alternate sites.³⁷ Their report of November 10, 1988, succinctly summarized the library’s many deficiencies and recommended a building size of 20,500 to 23,500 square feet.

A new committee, again chaired by Doyle, hired the architecture firm of Galliher & Baier to help with site selection and building design. This time, the criterion was “reasonable proximity to the center of town,” along with the ability of school children to walk to the library, easy access for motorists, availability of parking, safety, visibility, sense of community and vitality of the area, and ability of the site to accommodate future expansion.

Interestingly, the Field School debate seems to have changed residents’ concept of “centrally located.” The idea that the library should be in the Town Center had shifted to the Field School/Case Estates area, described as “the geographical

center of Weston.” Among the new sites examined were the 46-acre Field School property, the Case Estates “40-Acre Field” acquired by the town in 1985 for municipal purposes and leased to Land’s Sake, land behind Country School owned by the Cemetery Department, land behind Brook School, conservation land on Boston Post Road near Golden Ball Road, and land owned by Regis College at the corner of Wellesley and Chestnut Streets. In all, 17 sites of 2.5 acres or more were considered. The four town-owned parcels considered most seriously were the chosen site, two locations on the “40-Acre Field” and a site just south of Case House. Also considered was the Harvard-owned parcel later dubbed “The Nose,” curving around from Ash Street to Wellesley Street, fronting on Newton Street.³⁸

The chosen site, owned by the school department, was used as a men’s softball and youth baseball field. The committee issued its report on August 31, 1990. Earlier that year, the Women’s Community League had donated \$10,000 for the new building, inspiring citizens to form a non-profit organization, the Weston Library Building Fund, Inc. to accept donations.³⁹ The League later donated an additional \$25,000. Supporters set a goal of raising 15% of the estimated \$4 million dollar cost.

Among the many who helped make the present library a reality were the five members of the Building Committee: John “Jack” Doyle Jr., chair, with Lynn Brontas, Harry Hoehler, Philip Minervino, and Arria Sands, along with former members Rhoda Cohen, Allan Fulkerson, and Joan Wexler. The Building Fund Campaign was chaired by Rob and Holly Kulow and included four honorary chairs, Thomas Cabot, Arthur L. “Bud” Coburn Jr., Harriet Elliston, and Elizabeth Janeway, along with Helen Bradley, James Moore, Jack Doyle, and David Squire.

In an interview for this article, Jack Doyle called the library “a project that probably gives me more satisfaction than anything I’ve ever done.” He added: “I had no idea what I was getting into when I agreed to chair that committee. I didn’t know the history of 25 years of aborted attempts.”⁴⁰ He credits the committee’s success with “building coalitions” and believes that the private fundraising was of crucial importance. It was a multi-generational effort that included Thomas Cabot, then in his nineties and Arthur L. “Bud” Coburn Jr., then in his eighties, along with young couples like Rob and Holly Kulow, working together to raise money and build support.

In anticipation of May Town Meeting 1991, a report including concept drawings was mailed town-wide in April. The report listed 14 studies done between 1957 and 1986, all of which had concluded that the existing library was inadequate.⁴¹ A map of libraries in neighboring towns showed that of 42 nearby towns, only Weston and Woburn had not expanded or built a new library in the 20th century.⁴² The Campaign for a New Weston Public Library circulated a fact sheet and a paper entitled “Dealing with Objections,” stating, among other hints, “Rather

LIBRARIES IN NEIGHBORING TOWNS

- EXPANDED OR NEWLY BUILT SINCE 1957
- NO EXPANSION IN THE 1900'S



This map in the 1991 Report of the Library Building Committee showed 42 neighboring towns that had expanded or built new libraries since 1957. Weston and Woburn had no expansion in the 1900s.

than being put off by a prospect's objections, consider them opportunities to provide information. . ." In answer to the objection "I like where the library is now," it suggested "you'll like the new location even better. . ."43 With the right site and the right timing finally in place, and with the broad base of support, the motions to transfer the land and fund the new building both passed unanimously.

The building committee experienced a major setback when the lowest bid came in \$1.4 million above the budgeted \$4.4 million. The committee identified more than \$600,000 of reductions and bids were sent out again. Private contributions reached more than \$1.5 million, according to Doyle. A groundbreaking ceremony took place on September 22, 1993. The final cost of the 30,300-square-foot structure, built by Mello Construction Inc., was \$5.4 million. An opening celebration, held on May 7, 1995, began with a parade organized by Rob and Holly Kulow. Residents dressed as characters from books paraded from the old library to the new, with many children proudly transporting a book.

In retrospect, it is easy to see that a library in Lamson Park would have marred the scenic and historic character of the Town Green and that expansion on the existing site had insolvable traffic, parking, and wetlands issues. A shared Field School facility would never have been as inviting as a freestanding structure, and the building was later needed again as a school. The Community Center concept was resurrected in a new form combining the Recreation Department and Council on Aging. Today the "Case Campus" with its public library, Rec Center, new Field School, and Country and Woodland Schools, together with the Brook School Apartments and Land's Sake, has become a true center for community life.

by Pamela W. Fox

Many thanks to Local History Librarian Madeleine Mullin for her help with this article. The Weston Public Library has extensive files on this subject.

TNT - The Waltham newspaper *The News Tribune* reported extensively on the article. Below the name of the paper is abbreviated TNT. Where noted, articles are from the paper's "Weston News" column by Walter S. Cahill.

Endnotes

(1) Richmond, Isidor, and Goldberg, Carney, "Detailed Study of Space Problems and Building Potentialities, Weston Public Library" (1964), 4. (2) *Ibid.*, 8. (3) *Ibid.* (4) Downe, Charles E, *Master Plan Weston Massachusetts 1965*, 146. (5) Fox, Pamela W., *Farm Town to Suburb: The History and Architecture of Weston, Massachusetts, 1830 – 1980*, 350 (6) "New Library Architect," *TNT*, 9-17-65. (7) "Name Library Architect," *TNT*, 9-17-65. (8) Cahill, Walter, "Plans for Library Put Before Board," *TNT*, 12-30-65. (9) "Library Plans Discarded; New Study Authorized," *Town Crier*, 3-17-66. (10) *TNT*, 2-14-66. (11) "\$100,000 Federal Grant for New Weston Library," *Town Crier*, 12-23-65. (12) 1965 *Town Report*, 160. (13) "Library Cash will be Asked on March 14," *TNT*, 2-14-66. (14) Cahill, Walter, "More Pro and Con on Library Issue," *TNT*, 3-8-66. (15) "\$3,750,000 in Capital Outlay Facing Weston," *TNT*, 2-17-66. (16) Cahill, Walter, "Both Sides Presented, Record Vote Likely," *TNT*, 3-11-66. (17) "Another Anti-Library Letter in Circulation," undated newspaper clipping (early 1966), WHS files. (18) "Letter Sent on Library," *TNT*, 2-23-66. (19) "New Library Must Hurdle Another Meeting," *Town Crier*, 4-8-65. (20) "Library Proponents and Fin Com Tangle," *TNT*, 3-14-66. (21) "Library Plans Discarded; New Study Authorized," *Town Crier*, 3-17-66. (22) WHS files. (23) "What is the Future of the Weston Public Library? Preliminary Report of the Board of Public Library Trustees," 3-17-80. (24) *Ibid.*, 2. (25) "Public Library Feasibility Study for Additions and Alterations, Day and Ertman Architects, April 1980. (26) *Ibid.* (27) Letter, Daniel Siegel, chair, Library Trustees to Hugh R. Jones Jr., 12-11-81, WPL files. (27A) Letter, Siegel to Jones, July 1982, WPL files. (28) *Town Crier*, 3-21-85. (29) *Town Crier*, April 25, 1985. (30) "Weston library relocation study may be voted at TM," *Middlesex News*, 4-5-83. (31) "Candidates talk Broken Stone, library move," *Town Crier*, 5-2-85 and "Field School - library plan fails," *Town Crier*, 5-9-85 (32) "Murray mailing cases flap," *Town Crier*, 5-9-85. (33) "Field School plan fails," *TNT*, 5-7-85 (33A) E-mail, Dick Murray to Pam Fox, 9-15-14. (34) *Ibid.* (35) "Deeply Troubled by TM," letter by Barbara Cummings, *Town Crier*, 5-18-85. (36) Pam Fox, Interview with Jean Thurston, 9-14-14. (37) "Report of the Library Building Committee," 11-10-88. (38) "Question #3 "Why not Another Location," question and answer materials part of the Campaign for a New Weston Public Library, undated, c. 1991, WPL files. (39) "Report of the Library Building Committee," 8-31-90. (40) Pam Fox interview with Jack Doyle, 9-14-14. (41) "Report of the Library Building Committee," 4-19-91. (42) *Ibid.* (43) "The Campaign for a New Weston Library, "Dealing With Objections," undated, c. 1991, WPL files

What Weston Avoided: A New “Circulation System”

The *Master Plan Weston Massachusetts 1965* was created under the supervision of the Weston Planning Board, with matching funds from a federal grant for local planning assistance. The author, Charles E. Downe, was a community and regional planning consultant based in West Newton. These plans were designed to serve as a framework to assist town governments in preparing for future growth and development. Sections of the plan considered school enrollment and facilities, recreation and conservation areas, utilities (water, sewage, drainage), and future land use. This article will consider only the recommendations for roadway “improvements.”

The circulation plan reflected a car-dominant 1960s planning culture, where travelers were expected to have an automobile and needed to be provided with highways and parkways to reduce travel delay.

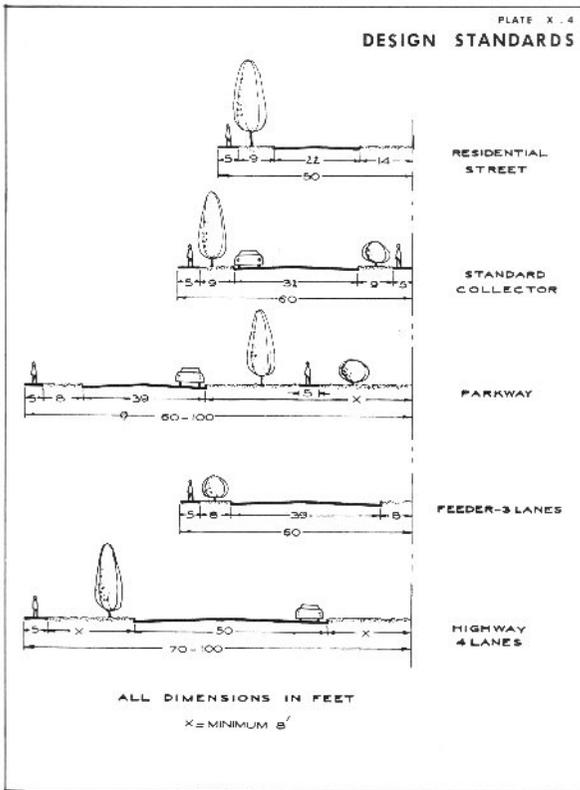
Parkways, Collectors, Feeders: a Plethora of Roadways

The “Proposed Circulation System” in the Master Plan defined five types of roads: residential streets, standard collector roads, parkways, feeders, and highways. Residential streets were recommended to be 50 feet wide (a 22-foot roadway plus right of way and space for parking and sidewalks.) The width of the other road types increased from there.

The most dramatic recommendation was for some Weston streets to be connected and turned into parkways, with 39 feet of pavement, sidewalks on both sides, and a wide swath of landscaped right-of-way on one side, for a total of 60 to 100 feet in width. Trucks and commercial vehicles were to be prohibited on parkways. To compare with present conditions, Boston Post Road in front of the Golden Ball Tavern has a pavement width of 50 feet and total width, including right of way, of 80 feet, which is the approximate width of the proposed parkways.

Highways

North Avenue, Boston Post Road, and South Avenue were recommended as four-lane highways with a pavement width of 50 feet and total right of way of 70 to 100 feet. Route 117 was to be relocated to join Route 128 at the Waltham interchange. Intersections were to be improved, and there was a recommendation that “along all highways, reduce to a practical minimum the number of driveways



The 1965 Master Plan for Weston recommended widening and aligning Weston roads to allow traffic to pass smoothly through town. Twelve roads were recommended as parkways with a width of 60 to 100 feet.

and residential streets with access onto them by providing parallel service roads, separated from the highway by an adequate planting strip.

Feeders

Feeders had three lanes within 39 feet of pavement and were defined as streets with direct connections between highways and various parts of the town.

The following streets were

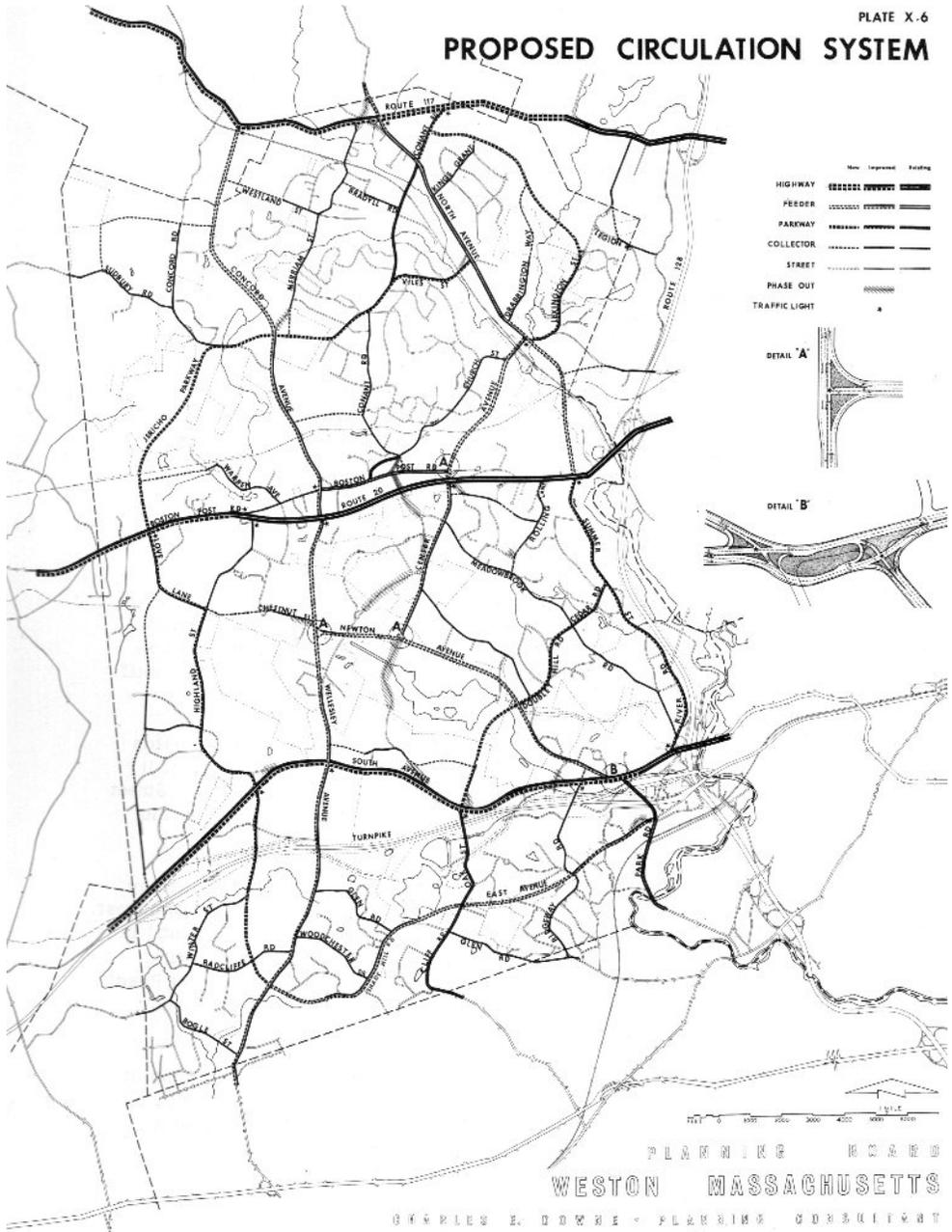
recommended as feeders and were to be renamed “avenues” to emphasize their function:

In this plan, North Avenue would intersect with a new Route 117 highway and would also include a new road connecting Summer Street with North Avenue at Church Street. “Concord Avenue” would be straightened and would intersect with a newly built section of Wellesley Street, allowing vehicles to travel northbound directly from Wellesley to Lincoln via the newly aligned and expanded Wellesley and Concord Avenues.

“Wellesley Avenue” would follow its current path from the Wellesley town line to Regis College, at which point it would extend northerly, passing west of the elementary school campus through the cemetery and intersecting with “Concord Avenue.” “Newton Avenue” would be improved to meet the new design standards for feeder roads.

Center Avenue would be a new street connecting “Newton Avenue” with Boston Post Road and then continuing across Boston Post Road around St. Peter’s Church and intersecting with Church Street. East Avenue would be a largely new

PROPOSED CIRCULATION SYSTEM



Careful study of the circulation system proposed in the 1965 Master Plan shows that drivers would indeed have been able to move faster through Weston. For example, they could travel along Newton "Avenue" to a realigned Chestnut Street and Love Lane, now parkways, and continue north on a new "Jericho Parkway" that would intersect with the Conant "Parkway" and from there to a four-lane highway connecting to Route 128 at the Winter Street/Totten Pond Road intersection in Waltham.

road passing through the south part of town using the existing Driftwood Lane and Shady Hill Roads and joining the renamed “Park Avenue.”

Parkways

The following streets were recommended as parkways: Cart Path, parts of Cedar, Conant, Doublet Hills, Green Lane, Highland, Lexington, Winter, Cliff-Oak, Love Lane, Summer, and Viles Streets.

Chestnut Street would be realigned to connect with Love Lane, and from there vehicles could proceed down a realigned Newton Street, allowing traffic to flow smoothly from the western part of Boston Post Road down to the intersection of Newton and Park Streets. In addition, a new “Jericho Highway” would start at the intersection of Love Lane and Boston Post Road and continue through Jericho Forest to Sudbury Road and from there almost straight east to connect with Viles Street.

Collector Roads

Except for subdivision roads, most existing roads were designated collector roads to carry neighborhood traffic, but even these were extended in some cases; for example, Drabbington Way, a dead end, was extended to connect with a newly realigned Lexington Street.

Ironically, a later section of the report contains this statement: “The proposed Master Plan does not suggest altering the present character of Weston or its general trend of growth.”

Later Traffic Proposals: The South Extension, 1972

In 1968, three years after release of the Master Plan, a Committee on Vehicular and Pedestrian Safety was formed to evaluate the state of the town’s roads. The committee was clearly more grounded in reality than the author of the Master Plan, with a better grasp not only of what residents might accept but also of what would preserve Weston as a semi-rural residential suburb.

The firm of Wilbur Smith & Associates was hired in 1970 to do a study of existing and anticipated traffic problems. The February 28, 1972, “Report of the Committee on Pedestrian and Vehicular Traffic on a North-South Connector Route Location Study” emphasized gradual improvement of roads and elimination of hazards, stating that “on the whole . . . existing Town roads, while presenting numerous problems due to narrow pavements, shoulders blocked with trees and rocks, and limited in many places by old stone walls, poor sight

distances at intersections, and so on, serve adequately.”

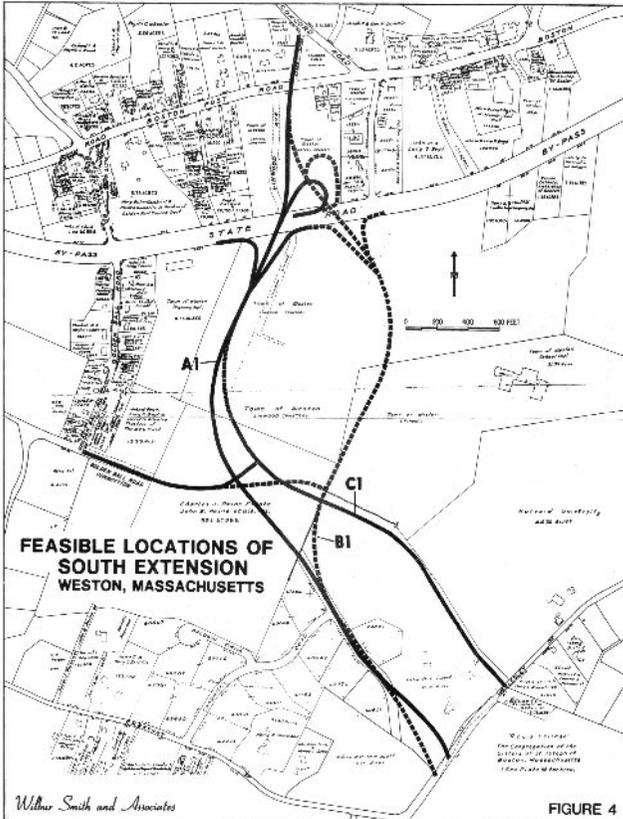
The committee focused on the difficulty of crossing Route 20 and the fact that most north-south traffic had to pass through the center. It recommended further study of a new north-south connector. A map included in the mailing shows several possible locations for a “south extension” to take traffic from Welleley Street to Concord Road.

The proposed change is modest compared to the grand circulation proposal in the 1965 Master Plan. Still, as noted in the report, there were disadvantages. The route “would put traffic into a presently quiet residential area, necessitate the use of the edge of the present cemetery property, and mean some changes in an area of historical importance.” These considerations continue to apply to almost any conceivable major roadway project.

In the end, the town undertook smaller improvements recommended by the committee, such as more sophisticated traffic signals at the traffic light at School Street and Route 20. The

policy of improving existing roads rather than building new ones continues to this day. While most residents are impacted by delays caused by increased traffic, the preservation of community character has remained a priority for Weston residents.

by Pamela W. Fox



This map, included in a 1972 committee report, shows several possible locations for a new north-south road. The committee was searching for an alternative safe crossing of Route 20 to relieve congestion at School Street.



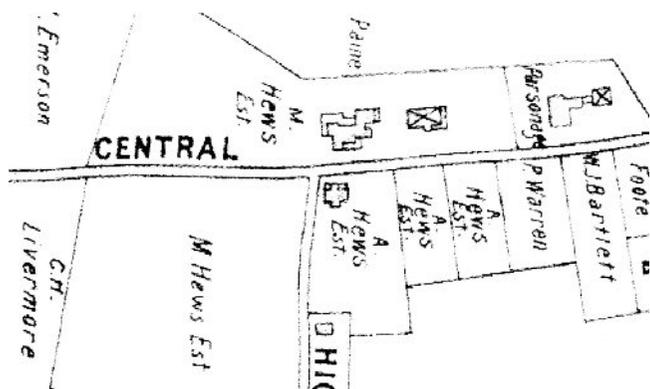
The A.H. Hews House was built in 1880 and altered in the Colonial Revival style in the late 1920s. By 2011, the abandoned house was in poor condition. Residents voted to use CPA money for a preservation restriction, which helped fund restoration. (2012 and 2014 photos by Pamela W. Fox)



699 Boston Post Road Restoration Completed

The Victorian house at 699 Boston Post Road was built for Albert Horatio Hews (1844 – 1903) and first appears in Weston tax valuations in 1880. While most houses at the time were valued between \$800 and \$1,000, this new house was valued at \$4,000, reflecting the grandeur of scale, design, and quality of the original house.

Albert Horatio was the fourth generation of the Hews family of potters. Beginning in the mid-1760s, generations of the family had been making earthenware vessels in Weston on the north side of Boston Post Road in the 600



The 1908 Middlesex County Atlas shows the A. H. Hews house (now #699) and barn (now #695). By that time, Albert Horatio had died and the property belonged to his widow Mary.

block. Albert Horatio wanted to expand the business, and in 1871 he built a large new factory in North Cambridge. Over the next several years it became internationally known for flower pots and ornamental garden urns. A. H. Hews became a very wealthy man.

Albert H. Hews's house at 699 Boston Post Road was built in 1879-1880 in what is known as the "Stick Style," with vertical boards interlacing the trim and clapboards. Although we do not know the architect or builder, it is of fine design and exceptional craftsmanship. A photograph appears in the 1897 book *Boston, Massachusetts* by George W. Engelhardt, which included important mansion houses in the metropolitan area. This image is helpful in documenting changes to the building over time.

The front porch was originally much smaller, allowing more of the Stick Style detail to show on the front facade, as seen in the c. 1896 photo. The house had a larger front yard at that time because the Boston Post Road was not widened until 1899. Also, the prominent east porch was not added until a few years after this photo, although it was designed to match the style of the original house. Also of note in this photo is the windmill to the far right. That was the mechanism to pump water from the Weston Water Company, which had a pump station on Warren Avenue that supplied water to many homes in the town center. Albert Horatio was an original subscriber and later on the board of directors for the privately owned water company.

At the time of the c. 1896 photo, the estate was 24 acres and included what is now 695 Boston Post Road as a carriage house/barn. The Hews family owned land on both sides of "Central Avenue," as the Post Road was then known.

Albert Horatio Hews died in 1903. His wife, Mary, owned the property until her death in 1925. George H. D. Lamson bought much of the land and began to subdivide it in 1927. In 1928, Lamson sold the main house and barn lot with 5.37 acres to Leo G. Rivette, who is listed as owner for only one year. He was



(Above) 699 Boston Post Road was extensively remodeled about 1928. At that time the Colonial Revival front porch was added, along with the large bow window on the second floor. (Courtesy of Sandra [Atwood] Shammas.)

described in the town directory as “Supt.,” likely the superintendent of the modifications and alterations to the big house. At the time of purchase the house was valued at \$10,000. The following year it was valued at \$15,000, a 50% increase. At this time the house got its “classical” facelift including a full colonnaded porch with a Georgian balustrade, now restored. On the inside, classical details were added to the main rooms, which now have delicate fireplaces and arched and colonnaded doorways.

Prior to the April 1929 tax valuations, the house was purchased by the Maria family, who owned it from 1929 to 1962. They had emigrated from Lebanon to America and done well in the Argentinian wool trade. They first lived in Brookline, but when financially established, they bought the big house in Weston. It was occupied by the extended family, including Elias (E.J.) and Zenobia, their daughter Clarisse, E. J.’s three maiden sisters, and a niece. During the Depression, in 1933, they converted the barn, now #695, into a house and rented it for extra income.

After World War II, the Maria family sold #695 to the longtime renter, artist Henry Davenport, known for his many paintings of Weston. They also split off the lot to the east at #693, where Clarisse [Maria] Atwood and her husband, Grant, built the brick English cottage that stands today. Other lots to the west were also partitioned. In 1962, after her husband died, Zenobia Maria sold the



main house and .86 acres to John and Margaret Wacker, who owned it for almost 50 years, until December 2011.

By this time the grand Victorian, one of only a few examples of the Stick Style in Weston, was badly deteriorated from lack of maintenance. Because of its architectural and historical importance and location on the

(Above). Birthday party in the dining room of #699 for Sandra Atwood [now Shammas], granddaughter of Zenobia and E.J. Maria, c. 1949. (Left) Top row: Zenobia Maria and her son-in-law Grant Atwood Sr. Bottom row: E.J. Maria with granddaughter Sandra Atwood [now Shammas] and Joseph Rickman, Zenobia Maria's father, with granddaughter Diana Atwood. (Courtesy Sandra [Atwood] Shammas)



(Left) Sandra and Diana Atwood with their grandmother, Zenobia Maria, about 1962. (Right) Grant E. Atwood Sr. with his mother, Elizabeth Atwood, early 1940s. (Courtesy of Sandra [Atwood] Shmmas.)

historic Boston Post Road, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Weston Historical Commission was concerned about its possible demolition, either “by neglect” or by a developer. The commission requested \$220,000 in Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds to pay for a preservation restriction on the property as the only financially viable way to save it from destruction. On November 14, 2011, Special Town Meeting approved the funds.

In late December 2011, the house was purchased by Tom Nolan, who worked with builder David Donalds to do the renovation under the supervision of the Weston Historical Commission. The strict standards specified in the preservation restriction will protect the architectural integrity of the exterior in perpetuity. The restored house is currently on the market for \$1,790,000.

by Marisa Morra

Weston Historical Commission member Marisa Morra spearheaded the commission’s effort to get Town Meeting approval for the preservation restriction that made possible the restoration of 699 Boston Post Road.



(Above) 695 Boston Post Road was originally the barn for the A.H. Hews house. It was converted to a residence in 1933.



(Center) 693 Boston Post Road was built in 1947 for Clarisse [Maria] Atwood and her husband, Grant Atwood Sr.



(Below) Mary Hews, widow of Albert Horatio, died in 1925. The following year, a lot she had owned across the street from the main house was sold to N. Hugh and Annie Macdonald, who built the present house. Macdonald was a carpenter who may have built the neighboring house as well.

(Photos by Pamela W. Fox, 2014)

One Hundred and One Years Ago- 1913

Editor's Note: These reports, gleaned from the pages of the 1913 Waltham Daily Free Press Tribune were prepared for last year's bulletin but omitted for lack of space. The April 18 entry is of particular interest because it helps explain the impetus behind the extensive Town Improvement Plan that resulted in the present Town Green and Town Hall.

January 3. Several of the farmers have been taking advantage of the open season during the past few days, and January 1st found several plowing their fields as though it were mid-summer.

January 10. Scores of complaints have been made to District Foreman Warren of the Edison Electric Ill. Co. during the past few days against the company for the wind and storms of the past week. Tuesday evening the commercial lighting was out of commission throughout the town until nearly 9 pm while the street lights remained intact. Trouble men in Wayland and Weston were scouring the towns for the cause, but it was located later in the Waltham district.

When Weston men want to pretend they do not wear the matrimonial yoke they should choose a town farther away from their home than Watertown is from Weston as girls are very liable to talk and tell their beaux' names. Some one is sure to know the man in the case or know some one who does know him. The man in the case has caused a young woman quite a good deal of embarrassment and this is given as kind of a warning.

At the Poultry Show in Boston G.W Emerson was awarded first prize on his Blue Breasted Pit Game cockerels and pullets. . .

January 17. Dr. Joseph W. Posthauer of Weston, a surgeon, has been sued by Mollie J. Burke to recover \$25,000 damages. She alleges that the doctor improperly and unskillfully operated upon her for kidney trouble and made false representations in regard to her disease.

January 24. Francis Blake, aged 62, widely known as inventor of the Blake transmitter, which played an important part in development of telephony throughout the world, died Sunday at his home "Keewaydin" in Weston.

February 21. Dr Edith Spaulding has recently been appointed to fill the position of acting physician at the Sherborn Prison, succeeding Dr. Potter.

Geo. A Foote & Co. have finished harvesting their crop of ice. They engaged a gang of thirty men, including the entire gypsy moth force. The ice had reached a thickness of nine inches.

At the [Weston High School] basket-ball game last week Miss McAuliffe [daughter of Police Chief P.J. McAuliffe] made twenty baskets, Miss Palmer fourteen. Miss Foster's only criticism of the team is that they talk too much.

February 28. Skating on Mr. Foot's [sic] pond [Warren Ave.] has been exceptionally fine the past few days and many have taken advantage of it.

March 14. Landlord Thurston is taking advantage of a little lull in the season's activities to put Drabington Lodge into first-class shape for the coming increase. Rooms are being renovated, floors re-polished, new bath rooms installed, and a real home house cleaning indulged in.

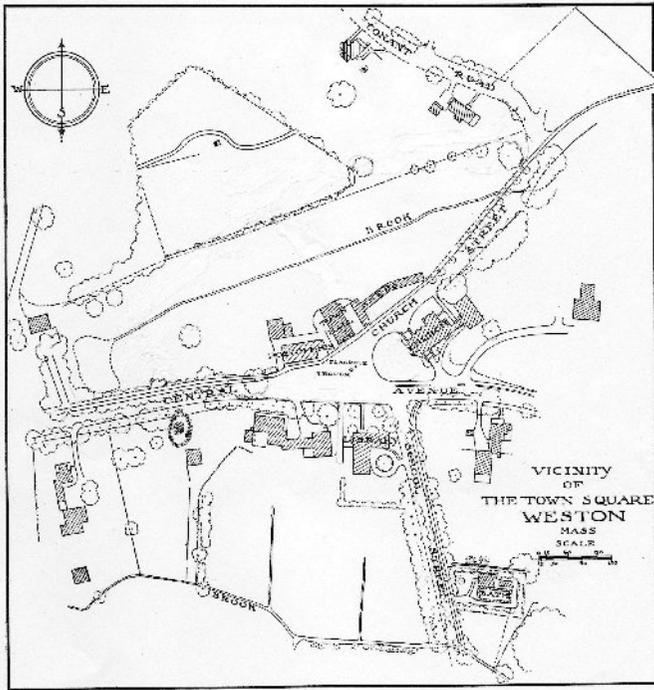


April 4. Robert Winsor of the firm of Kidder, Peabody & Co. called at the White House Monday to pay his respects to President Wilson. He telephoned to Sec. Tumulty and asked for an engagement. He said he had met the President at a dinner in New England and desired to renew his acquaintance. Two minutes were allotted him. Mr. Winsor said after his visit that he had not discussed anything with the President and that he had called merely to pay his respects to him. He denied that a proposition for floating a loan to the Chinese Republic had been discussed.

Tom Coburn is to pilot a party of fans to the opening ball game at Fenway Park.

The newspaper entry for April 4, 1913, reports that Weston resident Robert Winsor, a principal in the Boston banking firm of Kidder, Peabody & Co, had called on the White House to pay his respects to President Wilson.

April 11. Dr. F. E. Wells has sold his trusty steed and got an automobile.



This map shows Weston's "Town Square" before implementation of the Town Improvement Plan beginning in 1913. The newspaper entry below explains the determination of town leaders to keep the historic center "free from the marring encroachments of commerce" and "shocks to the artistic eye."

April 18 TOWN CENTER

In the determination to save to future generations of its citizens its historic center free from the marring encroachments of commerce, the town of Weston, which in June is to celebrate its bi-centennial, is soon to begin work on plans for the creation of a town common with suitable surroundings. The plans prepared outline a shady open space of natural beauty, with curving roadways about it, and with restrictions upon adjoining estates to prevent their owners destroying the artistic effect by building close up to the edges of the roadways.

Contemplation of the present situation of many of the historic spots of Boston, now cluttered with grimy tenements, factories or small stores, which completely conceal the character once enjoyed by these locations, was the motive leading the progressive citizens of Weston to the plan of preserving the beauty of their town for the centuries to come.

While Weston Square, at Church Street and Central Ave., today is the site of the Town Hall, the Public Library and a church, all of which are of pleasing outline, yet the presence on it of the general store and postoffice, a barn, a harness shop, a stable, and the public horse shed, is regarded as a token of what may be expected when the demands of commerce begin to be felt, and the prophetic vision of the

public-spirited citizens of the town embraces views of a possible Chinese laundry, a single storied fruit store, a clothing store with window filled with yellow legends of "Men's Suits at 4.98" and other shocks to the artistic eye.

\$50,000 AVAILABLE

Lest this calamity befall the town of handsome residences, umbrageous drives and pleasing prospects, it has been decided, in town meeting, that the centre shall be irrevocably dedicated to rustic beauty, and to this end an appropriation of \$50,000 has been placed at the disposal of a committee of citizens known as the Town Improvement Committee.

What the final cost of the improvement will be is not definitely known, yet, it is probable that some of the necessary land must be acquired by process of eminent domain, in order to avoid the possibility of the exaction by land owners of excessive compensation for the takings.

The plans adopted contemplate the creation of an oval common about nine acres in area, this to be planted with shade trees and shrubbery, with a small pond at one end of it. Central avenue and Church street, existing thoroughfares, will form one of the boundaries and a new highway the other. Town Hall, now located on a portion of the tract which will be the common, will be moved to a new site on the opposite of the new highway, and the other existing buildings, in time, will be either moved away or razed.

One feature of the final plan changes the site selected for the proposed new fire station. This will be sufficiently distant from the common as not to interfere with the simplicity of its surroundings. The site originally proposed would have been directly opposite.

SAFETY FOR MOTORISTS

Further enhancement of the beauty of the completed project will be effected by the widening of the junction of School street and Central avenue. This will have its utilitarian value, too, for it will remove a possible score of danger to automobilists and others turning from either thoroughfare to the other.

The building lines on the estates adjoining have been established 25 feet distant from the edges of the highways bounding the common, and fences more than three feet in height about them are forbidden.

The consummation of the plans, naturally, will not be immediate. The eminent domain process in the courts will take time, as will the planting of the trees and other portions of the work to be done before the common is completed. But—and the citizens of Weston regard this as the main point—the preservation of the dignity of the town's centre from the "vandals of commerce" is already assured.



Photo C. The Town Improvement Plan provided a new site for the Town Hall. The following is a quote from a newspaper account of April 18, 1914: "Certain members of the committee on town improvements believe that the [existing] structure is adequate and can be moved at a slight cost. The building is to be repainted in white, a new heating plant and a system of ventilation installed, the floors of the upper hall strengthened and the town offices rearranged with a view to convenience and greater economy of space, while other members oppose such a scheme."

The project was under the consideration of two committees of citizens for two years, before receiving the final adoption vote by citizens in regular meeting. The first committee, appointed in 1911, consisted of Charles F. Richardson, Benjamin S. Blake, Benjamin Loring Young, Alexander S. Jenney and B.H. Dickson Jr. The committee appointed in 1912 consists of Charles H. Fiske, Jr., Horace S. Sears, Warren P. Adams, Jr. and Robert Winsor, Jr. The improvement plans are the work of Arthur A. Shurtleff, a landscape architect of Boston.

May 16. Miss Louise [Louisa] Case who recently purchased the Robinson estate on Wellesley street [#80] is making quite extensive alterations. She is having a stone garage built among other improvements.

May 31. The Hillcrest farm boys are making preparations for their summer's work on the farm, which will begin at the close of the town celebration. New khaki uniforms have been furnished which include shirts, trousers, etc, and the Hillcrest hat. Their Norfolk jackets have the monogram H.C. for Hillcrest embroidered in black on their left sleeve. In addition to the regular farm work, the boys are entitled to a fine course of lectures at the club house, and several outings during their vacation.

June 13. The Catholics of Weston will hold special services next Sunday. High Mass will be celebrated for the first time in Weston and a select choir of 50 will render the music.

June 20. The Catholic people of Weston, together with many from other churches assembled in the Town Hall in the morning and participated in the most impressive service that has ever been conducted since the Catholic parish was established there a year ago.



(Above) Early 20th century photo of Cutting's Store and the 1847 Town Hall before implementation of the Town Improvement Plan. (Below) As described in the June 20 newspaper entry, High Mass was first celebrated in Weston in 1913. The St. Julia Church building was constructed seven years later. This postcard shows the size of the original building.

Weston in 1919 and the Willow Plate Tea Room

Editor's note: The following is excerpted from "A Summary of Minutes, Weston Community League of Weston, 1919 – 1953," a copy of which is at the Weston Historical Society. By 1919, parts of the Town Improvement Plan had been implemented while other changes were yet to come. The text was written in 1953.

The photos and images on page 34 to 41 are numbered A to O to correspond to the text.

"In 1919, Weston was a small village of 547 dwellings with a tax rate of \$12.50. Three large [roads] then called "trunk lines" passed through: The Framingham Road (South Avenue), Central Avenue (The Boston Post Road) and the Lancaster Road (North Avenue). At that time, these trunk lines, according to general opinion, marked the end of large road construction in any foreseeable future.

"For a picture of our June 1919 Square, earlier known as Meeting House Common: Coming in from the East on Central Avenue (Remember, no By-Pass then) on the right is the Unitarian Church, built in 1888.[Photo A]. In front is the round watering trough where horses drank and beside it a flag pole. [Photo B]. Across from the church, hugging the bank, was the 72-year-old Town Hall [Photo C, page 34] with its four Greek Revival pillars, where the High School first held its classes, where in 1913 the Bi-Centennial ceremonies of the founding of Weston were held,—and which was to be removed completely by the end of the summer. [Photo D] At its right were the church horse sheds.[Photo D at right]. Behind the Hall, across the Lamson Meadow, was our magnificent New Town Hall, dedi-

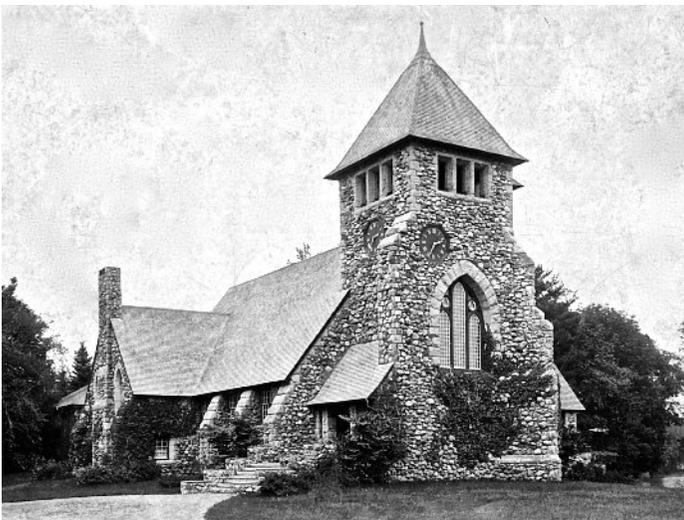
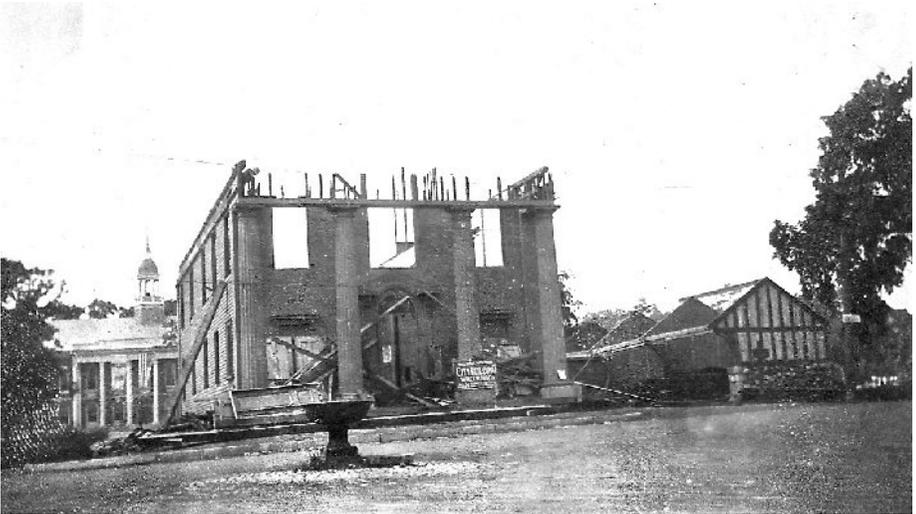


Photo A. First Parish Church, completed in 1888.



(Above) Photo B. The watering trough was located in the middle of the road next to the flagpole. (Center) Photo D. This 1919 photograph of the demolition of the old Town Hall also shows the new Town Hall in the background and the church horse sheds at right. The sheds were also demolished to make way for the Town Green. (Below) Photo E. The Town Hall, erected in 1917.



New Town Hall

erected - 1917

(Above) Photo F. The small tailor shop can be seen on the right side of this photograph of Boston Post Road looking west from First Parish Church. The shop was moved in 1917 to the present commercial center and remained a free-standing structure until it was attached to a new commercial building (#483) in 1964.



(Center) Photo G. The 18th century Lamson House was located approximately where the drug store is now. It was torn down in the 1920s to make way for the commercial block.



(Below) Photo H. This house at 505 Boston Post Road has been occupied by members of the Burrage family for more than a century. When Boston Post Road was widened in the late 1950s, part of the front yard was taken and the present high stone retaining wall was constructed.



cated in 1917. [Photo E] Along the street was a small tailor shop now located across from our new Post Office.[Photo F] Then came the fine old Lamson estate [Photo G], to be replaced ten years later by the present block of stores. Then the Burrage house [Photo H], as now, and ending at Concord Road, the old Artemus Ward dwelling, setting then, close to the sidewalk.[Photo I]

“Back to the Square—The present Library (1898) on the left, [then] the home of the Misses Ellen and Alice Jones, then referred to by historians as the “Smith Tavern” [Photo J]; next, the E.O. Clark dwelling close to the street [no known photo], now, St. Julia’s Rectory and located back a way. Next, Cutting’s Store, moved from beside the Old Town Hall in 1917, in the east end of which was the Weston Post Office.[Photo K]. Then came the Fire Station [Photo L] the Giles house [no known early photo], as now; the Coburn property [Photo M] consisting of a dwelling; Parker’s Hardware store and a small clothing store;—the Grain store in the Hersum Block [Photo N]; the red Blacksmith Shop, not in full tilt, but functioning [no known photo]. And finally, the ‘Yellow Barn,’ the present Village Book Stall [Photo O, now Cambridge Trust], where our League set up headquarters, paid \$25 a month rent, and opened the ‘WILLOW PLATE TEA SHOP’ and Food and Fancywork Exchange to raise funds for their work.

“The Old Town Hall, left standing until the woman’s work for the French Wounded and the Red Cross was completed, was razed by October [1919]. The waters in the little valley were drained away, fill brought in, massive rocks blasted out, trees and shrubs appropriate to our area planted, and grass was sown. ‘Opening up,’ according to the *Waltham Free Press Tribute*, ‘a wonderful view, from the Library across the Common to the site of the New Town Hall and Conant Hill.’”

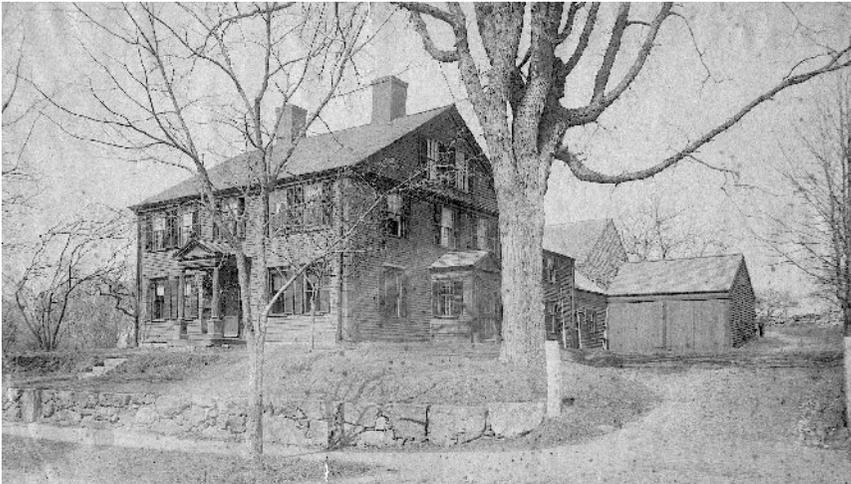


Photo I. The Eaton Brothers/Artemis Ward Jr. House at 543 Boston Post Road (corner of Concord Road) was moved farther back from the road in 1920.

(Above) Photo J. The Josiah Smith Tavern was occupied by three generations of the Jones family from 1842 to 1950. It was often referred to as the Jones House or, in this case, the Jones Tavern.

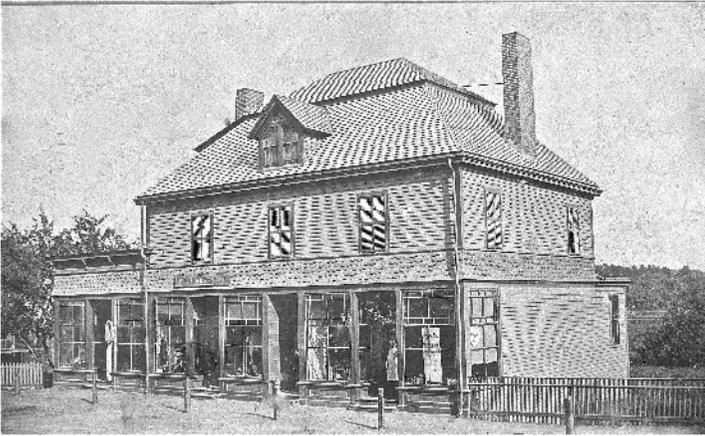


(Center) Photo K. G. W. Cutting & Sons general store is shown here after it was moved in 1917. to a new location was just east of the fire station. The old-fashioned store finally closed in 1939. See page 35 for a photograph from before the move.



(Below) Photo L. As part of the Town Improvement Plan, a central fire station was constructed in 1914. In choosing the Georgian Revival style, architect Alexander Jenney carried out the New England Village theme.





(Above) Photo M. The Coburn building was Weston's first "business block." In 1919, when the Woman's Community League was formed, there were two stores: Parker's Hardware and a small clothing store, plus a dwelling.



(Center) Photo N. Undated photo of the "Hersum block" at 464-478 Boston Post Road. In 1919, at least part of the building was occupied by a grain store. Storefronts were altered in the 1920s and the building extensively remodeled in 1989.



(Below) Photo O. This postcard of 494 Boston Post Road shows the former barn after it was altered for use as the Village Book Stall. Previously, from 1919 to 1921, the newly formed Women's Community League fixed up the interior and operated the Willow Plate Tea room here.



This photograph is the only known image of the Willow Plate Tea Room, which was established by the newly formed Women's Community League and located in the building that is now the Cambridge Trust Company.

The Willow Plate Tea Room

Editor's Note: The Women's Community League established the Willow Plate Tea Room in 1919, the year the organization was founded. The idea was to have a combined tearoom and shop to sell food and handicrafts made by local women. Jane Gale, the league's founder and first president, found that the "Yellow Garage" at 494 Boston Post Road (now Cambridge Trust Bank) could be rented for \$15 a month. Another founding member, Mrs. Arthur Morse, contacted the woman who had headed the Brookline Exchange for 30 years. Initial reports indicate that the tearoom sold bread, cakes, and doughnuts baked by consignees who sold the food anonymously. Consignees who were league members paid a 10% fee and outsiders, 20%. With the arrival of cold weather in November 1919, the landlord, Marshall Jones, agreed to put in a chimney with a fireplace and a furnace in the cellar. A lease was drawn up for three years at \$25 a month.

By February 1920, the tearoom was running a deficit and a suggestion was made to ask consignees to donate the food and fancy work. In December of that year, Miss Marian Case, owner of Hillcrest Farm (now the Case Estates), offered to use the building to sell her vegetables, and the lunch signs were taken down. In March 1921, the Tea Room Committee was dissolved. That summer and for more than a decade, Miss Case used the building as a market for produce produced at Hillcrest. She vacated the building in April 1933 and the league considered but did not follow up on using it as a place for a "Woman's Exchange" for one day a

week. What follows are the “supplementary notes about the WILLOW PLATE Tea Room contributed by some who helped in it from the beginning to the end.” These notes are quoted in their entirety, as written.

“While the minutes called it the ‘Yellow Garage’ or ‘Yellow Barn,’ most of them called it ‘Dr. Van Nuys’s Barn’ because he rented the east side of the old Marshall Jones House [500 Boston Post Road] and had kept his horse in this barn and later his automobile. While Mr. Henderson did the heavy carpentry work, the women did the painting inside themselves. The floors were rough (as now) and since they wore very high heels in those days, not the loafers that a modern worker wears, they had to step carefully. Entering the main room a glassed-in show-case holding the fancy work was on the right, a second case with food was straight ahead. Their specialty was hot rolls, doughnuts and orange layer cake, the recipe, by Mrs. Walter C. Reed, of which is in the Scout Cook Book published in 1938. There were about five round, small dining room tables and assorted Windsor chairs, painted black, loaned by the Committee members. The walls were painted a ‘clear blue’ and at the windows were curtains of Chinese, blue and white to match the Willow Pattern china, print purchased at Hatches next to the Statler. The table cloths were made of the same material and could be rinsed out easily. The whole effect was very pretty and gay.

“The kitchen was located where Mrs. Pinkham now has her office and the equipment included an electric stove, the gift of Mr. Karl Andren, table and the required pots and pans, ice-box, soap stone sink, and toward the end of the Tea Room’s life, the very necessary electric hot water boiler was purchased and installed for \$120.00.

“A bill for \$77.00 was paid to Mr. Edward E. Harrington for painting signs. These included small signs, but mainly the Willow Plate, designed by Mrs. Lyman Gale. This, as described, was a large circular wooden plaque at least 2 feet in diameter with the blue willow design painted on both sides. It hung from two chains suspended from a hand-wrought iron arm fastened to a pole which was located at the north-east corner of the property, close to the street. A separate sign announced: ‘Tea Shop.’

“According to the Waltham newspaper account [of July 11, 1919] the shop opened on Monday, July 14, and it is generally agreed that was the date. This account says waffles were to be served, but this was for only a short time. The basic and more or less consistent menu was this: Creamed chicken, prepared fresh daily, peas or beans, rolls, and with this a sprig of parsley, called by one, humorously, ‘Don’t forget the Irish;’ or you could have chicken sandwiches, tea, or coffee, and daily the committee made its own ice-cream in a gallon freezer, grinding out a second lot if required, water pouring out all over the kitchen floor. Prices ranged from 25 cents to 90 cents.

Management and Volunteers

“The first month Miss Marian Jenny was hired as manager, according to the minutes, at \$100 a month. When she left in August, Mrs. Edward Green, who had taken a Tea Room course at Miss Bradley’s in Boston, worked under Mrs. Gale’s chairmanship until October 1919. Mrs. George Welcome followed her and continued until the Tea Shop was closed in January 1921 (resumed in April until July when Miss Case took over. Two committee members took their daily turn as waitress and worker, assisted by two High School girls to wash dishes. There was a large motor corps who helped, collecting food for the Exchange, chauffeuring customers, and running errands, most necessary in a day when automobile ownership was the exception. One catering job was done for Mrs. Gale’s daughter Priscilla’s announcement party.

“In July 1921, Miss Marian R. Case took over the Tea Room, sub-letting the property, according to the three-year lease, as an outlet for her Hillcrest Garden products, Mrs. Edward Green in charge, to continue for ten years. One summer during this period Miss Ann Coburn and Miss Wood ran a tea room in the building. In 1931, Mrs. Pinkham rented the building from Mr. Marshall Jones and started the Village Book Stall, later purchasing the property.”

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