

# WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Volume XLXIII No. 2 — Fall 2022



## JST EXHIBIT CURATOR REBECCA MIGDAL TO SPEAK AT ANNUAL MEETING



Rebecca Migdal, curator of the WHS exhibit "History Under One Roof: The Evolution of the Josiah Smith Tavern." Photo by Pam Fox.

Rebecca Migdal, curator for the society's exhibit "History Under One Roof: The Evolution of the Josiah Smith Tavern," will bring to life the story of the Tavern as a residence belonging to the Jones Family. Her lecture will focus on three generations of the Joneses, as well as extended family and friends who, at one point or another, called the Tavern "home." Rebecca is a freelance curator and Executive Director of Thoreau Farm, the birthplace of Henry David Thoreau in Concord. She specializes in American material culture and has been working in museums for more than 15 years.

*Continued on page 8*

## ***"Tools, Toys, and Treasures: Getting to Know the Joneses"***

a lecture by Rebecca Migdal

**Thursday, November 10**

**7:00 pm Annual Meeting**

**7:15 pm Refreshments and Socializing**

**7:30 pm Lecture**

***Weston Public Library Community Room***



### ***"History Under One Roof"*** **Exhibit open through December**

**Every Wednesday, 12 to 2, through  
December 7 (except November 23)**

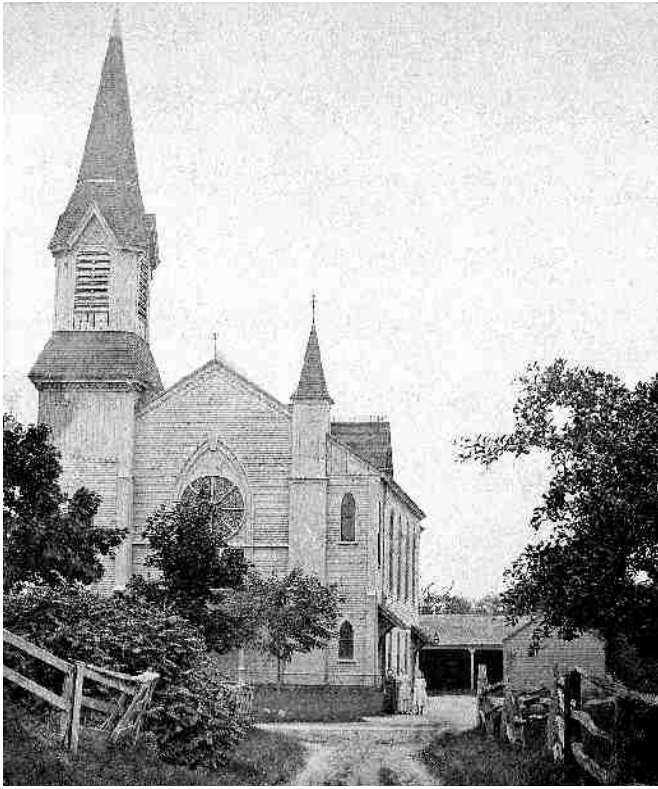
**Saturday, October 22, 11 to 3, on  
Pumpkin Festival day**

**Wednesday, November 2, 5 to 7.**  
Community Open House. Refreshments. All are welcome.

**Saturday, December 3, 10 to 3 during  
the WCL Winter Festival**

More options? Email [info@westonhistory.org](mailto:info@westonhistory.org)  
or check [westonhistory.org](http://westonhistory.org)

***DON'T MISS IT!***



*In 1881, the early 19th century church building on Boston Post Road was extensively rebuilt in the Victorian style. Note the building size compared to the girls standing in the driveway. The present church was built on the same site in 1923-24.*

## FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH CLOSES RECORDS DONATED TO WHS

In June 2021, the Executive Council of First Baptist Church, Weston's second oldest, voted to disband the church and sell its landmark 1924 building on Boston Post Road. Linda Smith, president of the council, contacted the Weston Historical Society for help in preserving the institutional records, which date back to 1784. The collection includes church record books, photographs, scrapbooks, records of the Ladies Aid Society, and a treasure trove of memorabilia.

The Smith family began worshipping at First Baptist in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when Charles Smith was courting member Anna Harlow. The church was an integral part of their lives for four generations. Many family members sang in the choir.

Pam Fox interviewed Linda with her mother Claire (Mrs. Edwin Lincoln Smith), who first came to Weston in the early 1960s. She recalled the "very vibrant church" with "lots of families, lots of children." The Sunday School became so large that the church purchased the Whittemore house at 670 Boston Post Road, which was used for Sunday School and later as a nursery school.

The number of parishioners gradually decreased. About 20 years ago, church leaders started making a concerted effort to

increase membership. Newcomers were contacted and new programs initiated, but still the numbers kept dropping. "When you get below a critical number," Linda noted, "it's hard to revive a congregation. It was difficult to keep up the building and to fulfill the church's mission — too much for so few people." About five years ago, church leaders began the long and sad discussion leading to closing. "It was clear that the time had come. Members had moved out of town or passed away. People had been doing the same jobs for many years."

The 2.8-acre property is being sold with the church building and 1984 parsonage to the west. Linda's hope is that it will be sold to another church. Approximately half of the proceeds will go to The American Baptist Churches of Massachusetts, with the remaining 50% divided among five charities, mostly local, that are important to the congregation.

Linda is pleased that Weston Historical Society has agreed to take the records. "I appreciate that someone else finds value in them and that our little church will always be remembered."

## *Origins of First Baptist Church in Weston*

*The quotations in the following history come from the record books donated to WHS.*

In the late 18<sup>th</sup>-century there were several Baptist families living in Weston and worshipping at the nearest church, in Medfield. In 1782, a church society was formed; and in 1784 the frame of its first building, 31-feet-square, was constructed on South Avenue. The 24 pews were sold to reimburse four men who had agreed to provide building materials.

"Records of the Important Transactions of the Baptist Church in Weston" begins with the formation of an independent church in July 1789. In 1811, a vote was taken "That this church be called 'The Baptist Church in Weston and Framingham' and that we celebrate the Lord's supper alternately. . . on the first Lord's day in each month. . ." The first minister, Charles Train, received his college training at Harvard and served the congregations in both Framingham and Weston until the Framingham church grew so large that it separated from Weston in 1826.

The value of primary sources such as the FBC record books is that they provide a greater depth of understanding behind the simple fact of separation. The mood of the Weston congregation at that time is expressed in this entry in November 1825:

*[The] request of our brethren and sisters in Framingham was again made the subject of prayerful deliberation— their request for a separation, as well as division of numbers, appears to us reasonable, and it is solely on account of our feeble and destitute situation that we have so long delayed coming to a conclusion upon the subject. We reciprocate the Christian feeling which our brethren in Framingham have at*

*all times manifested towards us, and although it will leave us a little flock, without a shepherd, and we know not who will care for our state, yet trusting the great House of the Church for protection and supplies, and praying that the measure proposed may be attended by the blessing of God.*

### **1828: Move to a More Central Location**

Two years later, the church voted to erect a new house of worship in a more central location, what is now Boston Post Road:

*[The Baptist Society] considered it important to erect a new meetinghouse in the center of the town since the old one was much out of repair and situated in a remote part of the town. . . . On the 17<sup>th</sup> of July 1828 the frame of the new meeting house 44 by 50 feet was raised near the centre of the town . . . and on the 8<sup>th</sup> of October 1828 the house was dedicated to God. . . The day was unusually pleasant and the house crowded to overflowing.*

A parsonage was constructed at 683 Boston Post Road in the early 1830s and replaced in the 1880s on the same site. A new parsonage was built in 1926 at 687 Boston Post Road.



*Linda Smith, president of the First Baptist Church Executive Council, holds a photograph of Rev. Amos Harris, who was pastor when the church was rebuilt in 1881. Linda is the ninth generation of her family to live on Sudbury Road in Weston. She is the descendent of Josiah Smith's brother James. Photo by Pam Fox.*

### **1881: Earlier Church Extensively Altered**

The church prospered, and in 1881 the earlier building underwent "extensive alterations and repairs." The congregation worshiped in Town Hall for seven months while work was taking place. The resulting Victorian Gothic structure was large and grand. A search of the newly acquired records did not yield the name of the architect or builder responsible for this sophisticated design, but it does add details that explain what was accomplished.

*The present house of worship is the old one enlarged and thoroughly renewed giving a spacious audience-room as its*



*The present Colonial Revival church was dedicated in 1924. Photo from church archives donated to Weston Historical Society.*

*main sanctuary, and what was especially needed, a large and beautiful vestry with desirable rooms adjoining.*

### **1923-24: Present Building Erected**

In 1922 the church voted to erect a new building, preferably a stone church closer to the center of town. Church records reveal what happened next:

*Dr. Perry [Joseph Perry, the minister] explained that an effort to obtain a lot of land in the centre of the town from Mr. Lamson had been unsuccessful and that while it seemed very desirable to build our church in the Civic Centre of the town it seemed impossible to do this. He said that it was these facts which led Mr. Sears to offer us his lot of land and that he understood that there were some things which might make it unwise to accept his offer. The vote on this proposition was no.*

The location offered by Sears at the intersection of Wellesley Street and Boston Post Road was later offered by his heirs to St. Peter's Episcopal Church, which built its present church on the site.

As for the building style and material, the initial estimates were much too expensive. Church member Charles Jones, a southside estate owner, proposed, according to church records, "that we build a white colonial building which he was sure could be built for \$50,000. He offered, if we did this, to pay one half the cost." The new church, designed by architect Charles Dunham, was reported to cost \$56,000 and was dedicated on June 1, 1924.


The future of this building is now in doubt.



## GIFT ILLUSTRATES MARKETING TALENTS OF S. H. WARREN

Strawberry Plants for Sale by  
**S. H. Warren, Weston, Mass.**

**Belmont, Sharpless, May - King, Minors - Prolific, Champion,**  
35 cents per dozen, \$1.00 per hundred, \$5.00 per thousand.



**JEWEL, 50 cents per dozen, \$2.50 per hundred.**

**JESSIE STRAWBERRY.**  
A SEEDLING OF SHARPLESS, OFTEN MEASURING NINE INCHES AROUND, FEW SMALL  
BERRIES, NO LEAF BLIGHT, REMARKABLE FOR QUALITY, BEAUTY AND PRODUCTIVENESS.

50 cents per dozen, \$1.50 per hundred, \$7.00 per thousand.

Color advertisement, 6" X 9," "Strawberry Plants for Sale by S.H. Warren, Weston, Mass." Gift of Carol Rohall.

With the advent of railroads in the 1830s and 40s, Weston farmers faced a challenge. Cheap grain began to arrive in quantity from western farms. But local farmers had a big advantage when it came to dairy farming and "market gardening"—the term for growing small fruits, berries, vegetables, and other perishable crops such as flowers. One of the first Weston farmers to specialize was Samuel H. Warren.

Carol Rohall has donated an important collection of items relating to Warren's strawberry business, including catalogues, advertisements, envelopes, and even a 1913 delivery tag with the Commonwealth of Mass State Board of Agriculture Official Certificate certifying that Samuel H. Warren's strawberry stock "is free from injurious insects and diseases."

Warren lived his whole life on the family farm on Newton Street, which he took over in the

mid-1850s at age 19. One of the family dwellings was the 18<sup>th</sup> century house at 54 Newton Street, which still stands atop the hill. At his death in 1913 at age 78, Warren's obituary in the *Boston Globe* called him "a recognized authority" on the cultivation of strawberries, adding:

*He was one of the first men in the vicinity to see the value of specialization and he has abandoned the other branches of truck farming to give almost his whole attention to the berries.*

One of his notable achievements was the development of fall-bearing plants. In 1912 he reported picking 115 quarts after September 1, "all of which found a ready market at a single hotel."

These accounts boosted another part of Warren's business, which was selling the plants themselves. In May 1911, the *Waltham Free Press* reported that "during the past three weeks, S. H. Warren has shipped the remarkable number of 60,000 strawberry plants to various parts of New England." One of the catalogues included in the Rohall donation describes

more than a dozen varieties in detail, in some cases using the language of the growers who originally developed the varieties.

The "Golden Gate" was a variety developed by Warren himself, and he knew how to market his product. He describes it as a "strong grower" that "produces strictly fancy firm fruit, clear to the end of the season, of a rich crimson color..." He continued:

*This is a new seedling of mine that was awarded 1<sup>st</sup> Premium by the Massachusetts Horticultural Society in 1904, in a strong competition. . . It is one of the best, if not the best strawberries ever put on the market. . . The "Golden Gate" will succeed where the Marshall fails. I can grow 20 quarts of "Golden Gate" where I can grow 1 quart of the Marshall. Seven berries have filled a quart.*

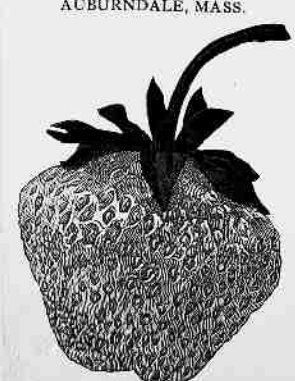
Warren sold 12 plants for 35 cents, 100 for \$1 and 1,000 for \$6.

The year before his death, Warren developed yet another new variety:

*My new seedling "Warren" that won the Silver Medal in 1912, offered by the Massachusetts Horticultural Society for the best four quarts, is the best June strawberry I ever grew and I have been growing strawberries sixty years.*

**S. H. WARREN**  
AUBURNDALE, MASS.

**Strawberry Plants a Specialty**  
Of the Best Old and New Varieties



My new seedling "Warren" that won the Silver Medal in 1912, offered by the Massachusetts Horticultural Society for the best four quarts, is the best June strawberry I ever grew and I have been growing strawberries sixty years. The "Everbearing 'Superb'" is a wonderful strawberry.

**"GOLDEN GATE"**

This envelope, 3.75" X 6.5", with S.H. Warren's "Golden Gate" strawberry on the front, was used to send out his plant catalogues. The post office for the Warren farm on Newton Street was in Auburndale. Gift of Carol Rohall.

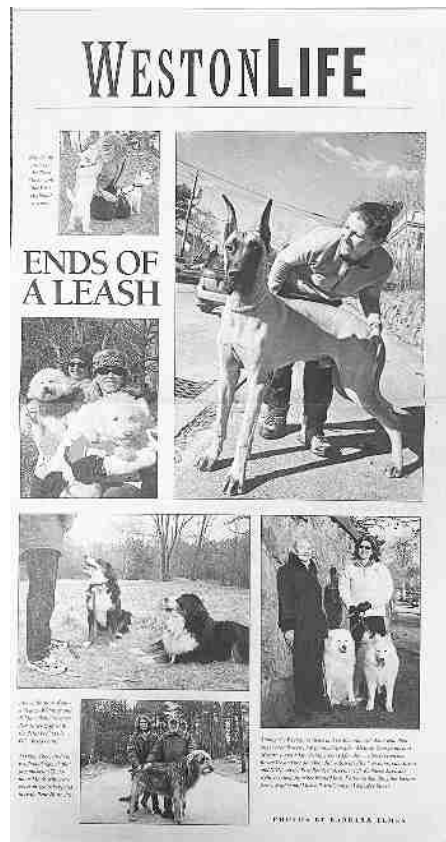


## WHS RECEIVES GIFT OF BARBARA ELMES PHOTOS

WHS is the grateful recipient of a collection of photos and *Town Crier* photo essays from the late Barbara Elmes (1933 – 2021). The gift from her sons Derrick, David, and Duncan includes scores of *Town Crier* pages dating back to 2006, around the time she became the *Town Crier* photographer. Almost every week, the front page of the second section would showcase her color photos, organized around a theme. In the fall, it might be “First Day of School,” “September Smiles” or “Pumpkin Surprise.” Sometimes it was colors (“The Lime Green Scene”), pets (“Meow Mix,” “Ends of a Leash”) or fashion (“Happy Feet,” “Bagging It,” “Gotta Wear Shades,” “Men in Plaid”). Her choices were often humorous and always illustrative of Weston in the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

As her obituary states, Barbara “was gifted with an eye for beauty, style, and design” and “found immense joy in capturing the people and places of her community.”

Barbara was also a federated flower show accredited judge, a Landscape Design Master, and an active member of Weston Garden Club, where she recorded activities for many years as its historian. The gift to WHS includes hundreds of her color photos of Weston people, buildings, and gardens.



*Barbara Elmes (at left) documented Weston people, places, and events for the Town Crier from the mid-2000s through 2021. She was a dog lover, a fact that comes through in pooch-friendly photo essays like the above, from 2006. Below is a January 2011 example devoted to winter hats.*



## HISTORIC NEW ENGLAND DONATES JONES CHAIR

Beginning in the mid-1800s, what we now refer to as the Josiah Smith Tavern became the residence of three generations of the Jones family. The third generation, sisters Alice and Ellen, died in 1947 and 1950 respectively, bequeathing their residence and its contents to the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA, now Historic New England, HNE). SPNEA chose items it wanted to add to its collection, including furniture, jewelry, and household objects. Photographs of some of the high-style Jones furniture pieces owned by HNE can be viewed above the mantel in the “Jones at Home” room at the “History Under One Roof” exhibit now at the JST.

Historic New England (HNE) periodically reviews its collections and has donated to the Weston Historical Society a Queen Anne side chair that once belonged to the Jones family. The chair was manufactured in the Boston area sometime between 1730 and 1760. WHS is deeply grateful to HNE for this special gift.



*Queen Anne side chair, c. 1735 - 1760, once belonging to the Jones family. Photo courtesy of Historic New England.*



Right: Photographer Nicole Mordecai's photos of the "new" Weston Center were exhibited at the AIC as part of Celebrate Weston. Photo by Pam Fox.



Far right: "Before" photo of Weston Fire Station, 2019, by Pam Fox, and "after" photo of the station, 2021, by Nicole Mordecai.



## DOCUMENTING THE TRANSFORMATION OF WESTON CENTER

Part of the mission of Weston Historical Society is to document the events of present-day Weston for the benefit of generations to come. Last spring, the historical society, along with the Art and Innovation Center (AIC) and Weston Media Center, sponsored the exhibit "Town Center Through the Years" at the AIC as part of the May 21 Celebrate Weston day of festivities. To highlight the day's theme of town center transformation, Weston photographer Nicole Mordecai created "then and now" pairings, taking historic town center photographs and shooting new photos from the same angle. In some cases, Nicole even recruited volunteers to pose in the same positions as in the early photos.

As we enjoy the "new" Weston town center, with pocket parks and street trees — and no ugly utility poles and wires — it is important to remember what came before. The exhibit documented the pre-construction town center and three-year construction process that slowly but surely brought about dramatic change.

In addition to Nicole's superb body of work, the following people contributed one or more photos to the exhibit: Elizabeth Appleby, Mark Curelop, Jonathan Dowse, Marie Forbes, Pam Fox, Lisa Green and Rick Enfield, Lee McCane, and Alanna Muldoon. Elisif Brandon printed high quality 8 X 10 (and some panorama) color prints with captions. These are now part of the Weston Historical Society collection.

The exhibit "Town Center Through the Years" was created by a talented and energetic committee consisting of Jean Arturi, Mark Curelop, Pam Fox, Lisa Green, Alanna Muldoon, Nicole Mordecai, and Audrey Pepper. Special thanks to Weston Media for the video montage that played in the AIC reading room throughout the day, and to LexArt for the loan of exhibit panels, Elisif Brandon for the printing, and Catherine (Cat) Ciccolo for inspiring her art students to create drypoint prints included in the exhibit (see article at right). Also on display were selected examples of Barbara Elmes' *Town Crier* photo essays (see page 5).

## WESTON HIGH ART STUDENTS TAKE INSPIRATION FROM HISTORIC PHOTOS

The Weston Historical Society would like to thank Weston High School art teacher Catherine (Cat) Ciccolo and her students for the gift of drypoint prints of historic buildings in the town center, created to complement the May 21 Celebrate Weston theme. In some cases, such as "Weston Rexall" below, students worked from early 1960s photos provided by the society.



Drypoint print made in spring 2022 by Annika Swift, Grade 11.



## WHS RECEIVES TWO DONATIONS RELATED TO THE MUNROE/RENWICK ESTATE AT 10 CHERRY BROOK ROAD



The handsome Shingle-style mansion at 10 Cherry Brook Road (corner Merriam Street), now demolished, was built in 1893 for Boston businessman William Munroe. The entrance to the property was on Merriam Street, since Cherry Brook Road did not exist at that time. Later owners John M. Lilly and William G. Renwick kept the 100-acre estate intact. Beginning in the late 1950s, the property was subdivided into the Cherry Brook neighborhood. The WHS collection has recently been enriched with tangible artifacts from this large turn of the century estate.

Susan Luchetti, owner, with Bill Brady, of the Munroe/Lilly/Renwick property from 2001 to 2014, has donated color photographs of the house, along with the servants' call box once located in the working basement level. The photos document the house prior to its demolition in 2003 due to extensive contamination from the pesticide chlordane, used for termite treatment in millions of homes until it was banned in 1988 as hazardous to human health.

Susan included the following information in a recent communication:

*One of the interesting features, a rarity in more recent times, was the fact that there were staff living quarters on the 3rd floor of the house which consisted of 3 bedrooms, a small sitting*

*area . . . and a very large bathroom. All of the walls had lovely wainscoting on the 3rd floor and there was a staff interior fully built out circular staircase just off the kitchen with an interior hallway of the staircase around which all the rooms on the 2nd floor were located. Of course, there was also the main staircase from the large front entry hallway. The front entry had first an interior closure and then the main entry hall — the oak door was massive. . . The banister of the main staircase was beautifully carved and curved all the way around the expansive 2nd floor hallway. . .*

*(Above): This photo of 10 Cherry Brook Road is one of many documenting the Munroe/Renwick mansion prior to its demolition in 2003. Gift of Susan Luchetti..*

*(Below): Bridle Path sign erected by William G. Renwick, stating that trails across his 100-acre estate were "By Invitation Only." Gift of Derrick, David, and Duncan Elmes.*



*Servants' call box from 10 Cherry Brook Road. Gift of Susan Luchetti.*

## ELMES HEIRS DONATE BRIDLE PATH SIGN

By happy coincidence, WHS also received another artifact from the estate formerly located at 10 Cherry Brook Road. Derrick, David, and Duncan Elmes, sons of the late Barbara Elmes, have donated a sign found near their long-time home on Cherry Brook Road. Posted by William Renwick, the sign states that use of the bridle paths on his property were "by invitation only" and at the rider's own risk. These paths were part of the extensive network of trails developed by the Weston Saddle and Bridle Club in the 1920s and 30s. A map showing trails in the northwest part of town can be found in *Farm Town to Suburb* by Pam Fox. (page 140).





WHS collections are presently housed in the St. Julia Church basement.

### VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Weston Historical Society is looking for volunteers interested in helping with projects and with the many collections received in 2022. If you would like to work on any of the following, or help with programs or refreshments, email [info@westonhistory.org](mailto:info@westonhistory.org).

1. Create an online exhibit for "History Under One Roof" now at the JST. WHS will have to take down the exhibit this winter to move our headquarters into the four rooms WHS will be renting.
2. Create an online exhibit for "Weston Center Through the Years," the May 21 exhibit at the AIC documenting the transformation of Weston Center (see page 6).
3. Help organize the following new collections: First Baptist Church, Barbara Elmes, Weston Rombas, Celebrate Weston.
4. Help with graphic design, publicity, and social media or help keep our files up to date.
5. Work to continue George Sullivan's Eagle Scout project. Sullivan wrote and recorded descriptions of five Weston historic buildings and generated QR codes mounted on posts and ready to be installed. Many other historic buildings could be marked in a similar way.

### Your Membership Counts!

Weston Historical Society is a private, non-profit, all-volunteer organization funded entirely by member dues and donations.

Fall is the time to renew your membership (or to join, if you are not already a member.) We need your support! For information, see our website, [www.westonhistory.org](http://www.westonhistory.org).

### November 10 Lecture, continued from page 1

Highlighting objects from the exhibit, Rebecca's lecture will share some of the delightful details from her research. The Weston Historical Society collection gives us a window into the world of the Joneses: what it might have been like to encounter them at work, at play, or at home. Shovels branded with a Jones name, forgotten varnish cans from a carriage-painting business, beautiful paintings done by family members, a small account book, treasured doll furniture, decorative objects, and furniture in a range of styles — each tells part of the story of over a century of Jones ownership. It is a story of a family home with a mix of tastes, personalities, and activities that bridges the 19th and 20th centuries.

From tools to toys, these artifacts provide not only evidence to support the archival record but also clues to stories we have yet to fully uncover. Join this lecture to meet the Joneses: Marshall, John Sr, Abigail, Theodore, John Jr, Caroline, Ellen, Alice, and a host of Cutting, Stimpson, and other cousins.

### See Rebecca Migdal's work at the WHS exhibit "History Under One Roof" at the JST through December

#### OFFICERS, WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2021-22

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Membership dues: Individual \$35, Family \$50, Sponsor \$75, Supporting \$100+, Life membership \$500. Tax deductible contributions and bequests to the Endowment Fund are welcome.

Please visit our website: [www.westonhistory.org](http://www.westonhistory.org).