

# THE WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

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*This photograph shows the tavern about 1890, when it was a private home owned by the Jones family. The porch across the front and east elevations was probably added about mid-century. Theodore Jones ran a carriage painting and trimming business in the barn. Note the picket fence and elm trees in front. (Photo courtesy of the Weston Historical Society)*

## **250-Year-Old Josiah Smith Tavern Gets a Birthday Facelift**

The 1757 Josiah Smith Tavern turned 250 years old this year, and what better gift to a Weston landmark than a much-needed exterior restoration. During the spring and summer, construction and painting crews replaced rotted wood elements throughout the complex, removed and repaired most of the windows, replaced the aging asphalt roof with wood shingles, and repainted the house, barn, and connector. New shutters were manufactured to match existing examples. The project was paid for with Community Preservation Act funds.

## **Josiah Smith Tavern: A Time Line**

**1756:** Josiah Smith purchases the land from Joseph Bigelow Jr. (1)

**1757:** Original five-bay section of the tavern is constructed. (2)

**1782:** Death of Josiah Smith. His son Joel Smith (1749-1817) takes over as landlord.

**c. 1805:** Approximate date for addition of east rooms and meeting hall (ballroom). (3)

**1817:** Death of Joel Smith. His son-in-law, George Washington Pierce, takes over as landlord.

**1828:** Purchase by "Col" Russell Wood of Taunton. (4) J. T. Macomber is acting landlord.

**1838:** Russell Wood sells to Josiah Warren. (5) The tavern business ends.

**1842:** Josiah Warren sells to brothers Marshall and John Jones. (6)

**1901:** Theodore Jones, son of John Jones, deeds one undivided third of the house and eleven acres to his daughters Alice and Ellen. (7)

**1947:** Death of Alice Elizabeth Jones (8)

**1950:** Death of Ellen Marion Jones (9)

**1950-51:** SPNEA (Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, now Historic New England) inherits the property and leases it to the town for a 20-year renewable period.

**1952-53:** Renovation includes removal of porch and restoration of windows in original five-bay section. Two rooms are renovated for the Women's Community League Children's Exchange.

**1972:** The Weston Historical Commission asks the selectmen to change the sign at the Jones House to read Josiah Smith Tavern and requests organizations using the building to refer to it by that name.

**Mid-1970s:** The Women's Community League renovates the barn for its headquarters.

**1983:** SPNEA sells the property to the town for \$48,542 and transfers the \$97,084 endowment.

**2007:** The exterior is restored at an approximate cost of \$480,000, using Community Preservation Act funds. A town committee continues to work on plans for reuse.

**Timeline Sources:**

- (1) Middlesex County Registry of Deeds, Cambridge, Book 54, page 518, December 1756. Smith paid 20 pounds for a triangular piece of land. The following year, Smith purchased an additional 20 acres from Bigelow for 50 pounds.
- (2) The date 1757 appears in Daniel S. Lamson's *History of the Town of Weston*, p.65. As his source, Lamson cites the Natick Historical Records by Horace Mann, Esq.
- (3) See discussion in this article as to why the much-quoted date of c. 1763 is inaccurate
- (4) Book 283, page 165. Isaac Fiske Esq. to Russell Wood of Taunton, gentleman, 14 acres for \$2400 "being the tavern stand with all the land formerly belonging to Washington Pierce," July 1828.
- (5) Book 372, page 286, Russell Wood, gentleman, to Josiah Warren, yeoman, \$2600 for 13 acres, April 1838, no specific mention of the tavern
- (6) Book 415, page 144, Josiah Warren to Marshall Jones, gentleman, and John Jones, Esq., \$2000 for 11 acres, April 1842.
- (7) Book 2894, page 23
- (8) Middlesex Probate 280645
- (9) Middlesex Probate 298510

Credit for the exterior transformation goes to the Josiah Smith Tavern Committee, initially formed in 2003. Original members included Chairman John Sallay, Al Aydelott, Irvonne Moran, Dennis Saylor, and Henry Stone, with liaisons Sharon Dornbush and George Amadon. The initial work of stabilizing the building included fixing leaks, removing overgrown trees, and dealing with insect damage. The pipes burst in the winter of 2002-03, leaving the building without heat for several years, until the installation of a temporary heating system in 2005. The building still lacks running water and toilet facilities.

Because the Old Library proved to be integral to the planning process, the committee was reconstituted in 2007 as the Josiah Smith Tavern/Old Library (JST/OL) Committee and now consists of seven members. Al Aydelott, Irvonne Moran, Henry Stone, and Andy Marvel have been actively involved for several years and are credited with arranging and supervising the exterior restoration. The selectmen recently appointed three new members: Cornelius Chapman, Peter Nichols, and Pam Swain, along with Carol Snow as the Weston Historical Society representative. The consulting architect for the restoration was Roger Panek. The town's Director of Facilities, Gerry McCarty, was also instrumental in the successful completion of the exterior work, which was done by Langton & Douglas Contracting, Inc.

The color combination of off-white with dark green window sash, shutters, and doors was chosen because the building we see today reached its present size and configuration in the mid-19th century. At that time, it was almost certainly painted white with dark green or black trim, a favorite color scheme embraced by entire New England villages. In choosing colors, the JST/OL Committee and Weston Historical Commission consulted with Historic New England. They also examined late-19th-century photographs in the collection of the Weston Historical Society, all of which show the com-

plex painted white. Historically, white paint was not as bright as the modern version, which is why a yellow-white was chosen.

In 2007, the new JST/OL Committee was charged with evaluating the financial, physical, and legal implications of active reuse for both the tavern and library. The committee is exploring the idea of returning the tavern to one of its original uses, as a restaurant, perhaps specializing in dishes made with locally grown ingredients. Town Meeting approval would be required for rezoning, allowing a liquor license, and funding improvements to the interior. Current proposals call for the Women's Community League to be moved to the main floor of the Old Library and the Historical Society and Historical Commission to become part of a "Weston History Center and Archives" to be located in the former children's reading room and basement storage area.

### *Early History of the Tavern*

The tavern was built in 1757 by Josiah Smith (1722-1782), fourth child of William and Mary Smith, whose home still stands at 111 Sudbury Road. Josiah was a prominent citizen of Weston who held



many important town offices including Justice of the Peace, Town Clerk (1768-69), Selectman (1766-1769, 1771-1775, 1777-1779), Delegate to the Provincial Congress in Concord (1774), and Representative (1779 and 1781). In his book *History of the Town of Weston, Massachusetts, 1630-1890*, Col. Daniel S. Lamson called Josiah's tavern "one of the most noted between Boston and Worcester." Lamson writes that, because Boston Post Road was the most important early route from Boston to New

*Gathering for their weekly inspection of the exterior restoration are (l-r) Roger Panek, architect for the project; Henry Stone, Al Aydelott, and Andy Marvel, members of the Josiah Smith Tavern and Old Library Committee; and Gerry McCarty, Director of Facilities for the Town of Weston. (Photo by Pamela W. Fox).*

York and Philadelphia, “There were few houses of any importance in all these years that had not first or last served as taverns. It was the most profitable business of all country towns along the main arteries of travel.” (p. 190)

The tavern was not Josiah Smith’s only financial asset. In 1768, a detailed tax valuation list shows Smith as owning three dwelling houses, 2 horses, 2 oxen, 4 cows, 35 acres of pasturage, 12 acres of tillage land, and 40 acres of mowing land, which, along with his crop yields, gave him an robust real estate assessment of 75 pounds.

A much-repeated but apocryphal Revolutionary War story tells of a British spy, John Howe, who stopped at the Smith Tavern on his way to Worcester. He was questioned by the suspicious owner and then directed to the Golden Ball Tavern, where tavern keeper Isaac Jones was known to be a Tory sympathizer. Lamson was just one of many Weston historians who embraced this spy legend, first published in 1827 in Concord New Hampshire by Luther Roby under the title “A Journal Kept by Mr. John Howe While employed as a British Spy.” Lamson’s history includes a lengthy quote from Roby’s account.

The authentic version of the same spy story was written in 1775 and printed in 1779 as “General Gage’s Instructions” and “Narrative of Occurrences.” It was reprinted in 1816 as part of the *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Vol. IV of the Second Series. In it, there is no mention of any Weston tavern other than the Golden Ball, where the three spies, Ensign De Berniere, Captain Brown, and their man “John” found Isaac Jones to be “a friend to government.” Researchers at the Golden Ball Tavern Museum have suggested that in 1827, the 50th anniversary of the end of the War of Independence, rampant plagiarists created historical legends only loosely based on fact.

### ***Joel Smith Enlarges the Tavern, c. 1805***

When Joel Smith took over after his father’s death in 1782, the tavern had not been enlarged. It was still five bays across the front, with a center entrance and a center chimney. About 1805, Joel doubled the square footage. On the east side, he added a parlor, taproom with brick-paved bar, dining room, and shed kitchen on the first floor, along with a large second floor meeting hall with a high curved ceiling. The interior detailing on the new addition features typical Federal-style mantels, whereas most rooms in the original building have Georgian raised-field paneling on the fireplace wall.

The date of this addition has been incorrectly cited as 1763. Despite the clear stylistic differences, the incorrect date occurs repeatedly in timelines and building histories found in files of both the Weston Historical Society and Weston Historical Commission, most written by Weston teacher and historian Emma Ripley. [Author’s Note: I regret that I repeated this information in my book *Farm Town to Suburb*. It is a lesson in the pitfalls of trusting authoritative-looking typewritten and printed records that repeat the same error over and over.]

Using information from the Direct Tax of 1798, a Federal tax valuation book unearthed in the vault of Town Hall, it is possible to prove conclusively that the addition dates after 1798. This census, the only one of its kind ever conducted by the federal government, recorded building details that collectively determined the value of a house at that time, including square footage, number of windows, and even square footage of glass, since large windows would have been more desirable and more expensive than smaller ones.

According to the 1798 valuation, Joel's tavern had a footprint of 1248 square feet. The 28 windows had a total of 233 square feet of glass. The original five-bay section of the tavern measures approximately 40 feet wide and 31+ feet deep, for a total footprint matching the valuation. This original section of the house would have had nine windows on the front façade, seven on the west side, seven on the east side (now altered) and five at the rear, for a total of 28. A major increase in real estate taxes from \$200 in 1804 to \$325 in 1805 suggests that the addition was completed that year.

In 1798, the tavern valuation was \$1200, making it the seventh most valuable building in the town. The following residents owned dwelling houses valued at an equal or higher amount: Artemus Ward (\$2000, 543 Boston Post Road); Thomas Marshall (\$1600, 22 Church Street, built by Elisha Jones, originally located on Highland Street); Robert Calef (\$1600); Isaac Jones (\$1500, Golden Ball Tavern); John Flagg (\$1500, once stood at 725 Boston Post Road); John Derby (\$1200, once stood at 89 Wellesley Street), and Enoch Greenleaf (\$1200, 787 Boston Post Road).

After Joel died in 1817, his son-in-law, George Washington Pierce, took over the business. Sometime in the early 19th century, George W. Bigelow opened a store in the west end of the house, but this closed with the coming of the railroads. (Lamson, p. 155)

## Stage Coach Travel and Tavern Life

In his history of Weston, Lamson includes the following quote from "President Quincy" [Editor's note: perhaps Harvard University President Josiah Quincy] describing a journey by stagecoach from Boston to New York City:

Middlesex C.  
To the Select-Men of the Town of *Weston*  
GENTLEMEN,

**T**HIS contains the Names of the Persons licenced in your Town the last Year, viz.

*Samuel Baldwin*  
*Thos. Mansfield*  
*Jon<sup>s</sup>. Bullard*  
*Jon<sup>s</sup>. Smith* } *Innholders*

*Abm<sup>l</sup>. Gale*  
*Isaac Jones* } *Retailers*

THE Time for renewing Licences for this present Year will be on Tuesday the 8<sup>th</sup> Day of September next, at Concord, when and where you are desired to make Return hereof with the Names of the Persons approved by you.

And by Order of the Court of Sessions, it's expected of you whenever you shall judge meet to approve of any new Taverner or Retailer in your Town, you do recommend him as a Person of sober Conversation, suitably qualified and provided for the Exercise of such an Employment, agreeable to Law.

Cambridge, May 17 67.

*Thos. Mansfield Secy.*

Towns were required to make an annual report listing the names of persons licensed to sell alcohol either as innholders or retailers. Josiah Smith (whose name is incorrectly abbreviated), is listed in this 1761 application.

The carriages were old, and the shackling and much of the harness made of rope. One pair of horses took the coach eighteen miles. Stopping-places for the night were reached at ten o'clock, and passengers were aroused between two and three in the morning, by the light of a farthing candle. Sometimes they were obligated to get out of the coach to help get it out of a quagmire or rut. They arrived at New York after a week's hard traveling, but wondering at the ease as well as the expedition with which the journey was effected." (Lamson, p. 186-187)

In addition to serving travelers and selling spirits, taverns were a popular venue for card games, which, according to Lamson, were common among rich and poor, young and old alike (p.191). Crusades against drinking and card-playing intensified around 1830 and resulted in the first stringent laws against selling alcohol, instituted in 1838. Because of increasing anti-gambling sentiment, taverns and public houses had to devise ways to conceal still-popular games of chance. Lamson describes such a hideaway:

"... there existed in the attic of Joel Smith's tavern a concealed room, not easily discovered by the uninitiated, in which was a table covered with a green baize cloth, where card-playing was continued as long as the house was a tavern. If report is true, the degenerate sons of early Bible-loving Christians were in the habit of resorting to this unhallowed spot even on the Lord's Day, and, while within reach of the preacher's voice across the way, would deal around the damning cards, now and again seeking to drown their quickening consciences in free potations of rum and sugar. While the names of some of these Sabbath-breakers are familiar to our people, suffice it to say, as a consolation to those who have forsaken the Calvinism of Dr. Watts or the strict letter of the Westminster Catechism, that many of those so unmindful of the ordinances of religion and propriety were, in after-life, overtaken with great worldly prosperity. (p. 192)

*This undated photograph is probably the earliest image of the tavern. Notice the shape of the vehicle opening in the connector. (Photo courtesy of the Weston Historical Society.*



Lamson points out the loss to the community of the convivial atmosphere of the taverns. In his history, he laments: "It is deeply regretted that much of the jovial and social life within these taverns has not been handed down to us." (p. 191).

## *The Tavern Era Comes to a Close*

The Smith Tavern ceased operation in 1838 and was sold to Josiah Warren. The decline of the once-widespread tavern business in Weston and neighboring towns was due not only to temperance and anti-gambling efforts but also to the decline in stagecoach travel. The opening in 1810 of the Worcester Turnpike (now Route 9) through Wellesley reduced traffic through Weston. By the 1830s, competition from steamboats and railroads was seriously damaging the profitability of all stage coach routes.

Even after its conversion into a dwelling, the second floor meeting hall (today referred to as the ball-room) continued to serve a number of public uses. In 1838, Andrew Dunn ran a school there, probably the equivalent of a private high school, attended by about 50 students of both sexes. The charge was three dollars for the "common course" and four dollars for "higher English and Latin." (Lamson, 170). The hall was used for Town Meeting from 1840 to 1847. Before that date, public meetings were held in the First Parish Meeting House, but between 1840, when the church built a new building, and 1847, when the first Town Hall was built, the former tavern proved to be a convenient location. A lease was drawn up in 1843 for a five-year term at \$30 a year. (Lamson, 133). Public dances were also held in the hall.

In 1842, the former tavern was sold to brothers John and Marshall Jones, who owned a prosperous paint and harness-making business in the town center and were men of considerable wealth. John's son Theodore painted and trimmed carriages in the barn. According to one account, carriages from the paint and varnish rooms were rolled out through wide doors to dry in the sun on a great platform overlooking the southern meadows, well away from the dust of the road.

We do not know whether it was the Joneses or an earlier owner who added the porch along the front and east side of the building. The fact that the support posts are metal suggests a date after mid-century. The porch appears in all known photographs. The elm trees and picket fencing that appear in late 19th photographs are testimony to the success of the Village Improvement Society, which advocated for attractive fencing and the planting of street trees.

Theodore Jones inherited the house and lived there with his two unmarried daughters, Alice and Ellen. Brenton H. Dickson III penned this description of the "Jones girls" in *Once Upon a Pung*:

Miss Ellen was the plumper of the two. She was quiet and shy and wore dark-rimmed spectacles which made her look more severe than she really was. Alice, on the other hand, was small and lively and wore light-rimmed spectacles behind which there was a perpetual twinkle. She was an extrovert and more than made up for her sister's opposite traits. She seemed to be everywhere." (Dickson, p. 5-6)



Alice was involved in nearly every civic and social event in town, and, according to Dickson, “those in town who didn’t know her could be counted on the fingers on one hand.”



*Theodore Jones painted and trimmed carriages in the barn next to his house. He also made harnesses and sold fire insurance. Notice the water pump at left in this early 1890s photo. (Courtesy of Weston Historical Society)*

## ***The Jones Sisters Leave the Property to SPNEA***

Alice Jones died in 1947 and her sister Ellen in 1950, at age 92. They left the house (often referred to as “the Jones House”) and its contents to the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, now Historic New England. In the words of Ellen’s will: “I desire to have the house held by [SPNEA] without material alterations as an historic building in said Town. . .” They also left the contents of the house, including furniture, and an endowment of \$41,000, which was not sufficient for restoration and maintenance. SPNEA looked around for local help.

Historic New England has microfilm reports on the house beginning about 1951. That year, R.D. Kingsbury wrote: “The series of structures known as the Jones Tavern were so staunchly put together at their various periods, that, in spite of poor recent upkeep, the building is still keeping out the weather, and resisting rot, and insect attack, to an unusual degree for its age.” He urged immediate attention to the few exceptions, regardless of plans for future use. The Women’s Community League appointed a committee headed by Mrs. Homer Sweet to work with the selectmen to investigate how the League could help save the Jones house for the use of the town or its organizations.

A full account of this involvement is found in “A Summary of the Minutes of the Women’s Community League of Weston, 1919-1953,” in a section called “The Jones House: Report on Progress of



*Photographs of the Jones family and neighbors, c. 1891-92, (lower left photo, l-r) Emma L. Cutting, Ellen M. Jones, Harriet F. Stimpson, John Jones, Jr., Theodore Jones, and Alice E. Jones. (Courtesy of the Weston Historical Society.)*

Restoration to the Women's Community League Annual Meeting, May 14, 1952." The author, Mary Elizabeth Winsor, wrote: "There were rumors that an institution wished to buy the place, or that it would be torn down and sold for shops or a housing development unless the Town, or other 'responsible organization' took over." With memories still fresh of Cutting's General Store pulled down for a parking lot and the Lamson House being replaced by McManus's ice-cream parlor (now Eaton's Drugstore), this seemed a project well suited to the interests of the Community League. Winsor added: "We had Mr. [Harold] Willis' word for it that it would be 'little short of a crime if this last authentic Colonial building on the Town Green were destroyed.'" The Community League also

needed a home for its children's clothing exchange, which had been started in 1935 in the basement of Town Hall and functioned under the War Economy Division during World War II.

SPNEA took out a mortgage in the amount that could be paid off from the interest on the \$41,000 endowment, with the mortgage money to be applied to structural repair, restoration of the ballroom and Historical Committee rooms, and then to other renovation. A Tavern Committee was appointed, with William R. Dewey Jr., the Selectmen appointee; Bertram K. Little, Director of SPNEA; and Charles O. Richardson, a civic-minded Weston resident. According to Mrs. Winsor's account "There followed days of endless inspection trips and measurements, conferences with contractors and interested organizations—etc—with all the usual complications plus added ones because of plural responsibility and varying interests." She recalled the construction scene:

I shall never forget my first trip from attic to cellar: workmen were busily ripping up flooring, but the old tin "hat tub" still hung ready on its nail in the shed; an authentic close-wired hoop-skirt lay thrown over a bed; drawers spilled out old photographs and records. In the attic with its tiny fireplace was a hidden room where the men played poker of (sic) a Sunday morning; under the eaves lay the kerosene chandeliers of the former ballroom; and never have I seen gathered together under one roof so many little inlaid boxes, ancient trunks—and bedroom utensils!

The Women's Community League reluctantly concluded that the Jones House would not make a good headquarters because the barn was too small for its larger meetings and too costly to heat and furnish. But the Children's Exchange (the original version of the Clothing Exchange) was installed in the dining room and "shed kitchen," where clothes did not have to be put away at days end.

The early 1950s restoration effort was under the supervision of Roy W. Baker of Antrim, New Hampshire, a restoration contractor who also had the title of Supervisor of Properties for SPNEA. Among other buildings, Baker also supervised work at the Dole Little House in Newbury and the Whipple House in Ipswich.

Renovation work came to an abrupt halt because of money issues. \$8000 had been allocated, \$15,000 had been spent, and SPNEA was unwilling to provide additional funds. Charles Richardson contributed \$2000 for the historical committee rooms. Harold Willis was providing his architectural services at no cost and others were volunteering or working at cost. In 1952, the WCL board voted \$2000 for the restoration fund. Still more money was needed just to complete the house restoration, with nothing done to the barn or ell. Town fathers were reluctant to spend taxpayers money because of possible administrative or legal difficulties, and because post-war growth was straining the town's resources.

Instead, a fund-raising committee was formed under the leadership of John Brooks. All town residents were asked to contribute what they could to preserve a significant historical monument, keep the Town Green unspoiled, and provide a center for town activities including committee rooms, party rooms, work rooms, archives for the historical committee, and a home for the Children's Exchange. The goal of \$15,000 was not reached, and the money was later raised through Town Meeting vote.

## *1950s Architectural Changes*

Changes made in the tavern during the 1952 restoration demonstrate a preservation philosophy based on removing 19th century accretions and returning the building to its colonial roots. The most important such change was the removal of part of the porch. SPNEA correspondence suggests that removal of the porch in front of the original five-bay tavern was a position advocated by the town. In a letter from SPNEA Director Bertram K. Little to Roy Baker, he writes “In general, I find that the two other members of the Tavern Committee (Messrs. Richardson and Dewey) are now favoring the removal of the porch and believe that the Town opinion supports them. It looks as if decision might have to be based on the differences in costs between fixing it up properly as it is now and its complete removal.” (Letter of Nov. 30, 1951) The original thought was to remove the porch across the entire front. In a letter of January 29, 1952, local architect Harold Willis advocates for this position, saying “...as an architect, I lean towards a solution which, in my opinion, gives a building greater interest from near to and also as seen from distant points across the Common, which, in my humble opinion, is the omission of the porch from the front.” Willis did two sets of drawings showing removal of all or part of the front porch. A bay window on the east side projecting onto the porch was also removed, along with a small vestibule at the south end of the porch. Both Baker and Willis recommended that the shutters not be replaced because of expense and because shutters “would not necessarily be authentic for the Revolutionary period.” A false door on the north side of the building was removed and a window moved into its location.

The following summary of the work appears in the summer issue of the SPNEA journal, *Old Time New England*. This report gives details of the restoration and confirms that the Weston Historical Committee had been given the use of the west end of the house and the attached shed:

As the project progressed, it became possible to include some interesting and satisfying restoration work, such as matching original woodwork colors throughout and plaster colors in the eighteenth-century entrance hall and the ballroom, matching early window sash and glass, and bringing the second kitchen back to its early nineteenth-century appearance. A careful sorting of all furniture and furnishings was made by members of the house committee prior to release of any contents for sale for the benefit of the endowment fund. A thorough perusal of all memorabilia and documentary material is being made by members and friends of the town’s Historical Committee. Anything of interest or value will be added to the collections which are to be kept for study, reference and exhibition in the western end of the house and the early shed attached to it. (Serial #153, July-Sept.1953)

## *Town of Weston Leases, then Purchases the Tavern*

From 1951 to 1983, the Town of Weston leased the building from SPNEA and used it for meetings and as the location of the Park and Cemetery office. The Women’s Community League redid the barn in the mid-1970s and made it their headquarters. With the founding of the Weston Historical Society in 1963, the town-appointed Weston Historical Committee and the new private non-profit

*In 1952, Weston resident Harold B. Willis, architect with the Boston firm of Collens, Willis and Beckonert, drew two sets of elevations for the exterior renovation of the tavern. In this version, the porch was removed from across the entire front facade. The alternate scheme, which was adopted, removed only part of the porch (Courtesy of the Weston Historical Society)*



society appear to have essentially merged, although no formal agreement was made. (See separate article in this issue).

SPNEA sold the former tavern to the Town of Weston in 1983 with preservation restrictions designed to preserve the important architectural elements of the building and preserve its contribution to the Weston town center. The building came with a small endowment fund. As of June 2003, the principal was \$146,168.

Terms of the restrictions run with the land for 500 years. The exterior cannot be altered without written permission from SPNEA (now Historic New England). Certain interior portions of the premises cannot be altered without written permission, including all woodwork, all structural members, interior beams and framing, and the plaster coving in the ballroom. The terms also include specifications about additions and other site changes.

*by Pamela W. Fox*

*The author would like to thank Marisa Morra, co-chair of the Weston Historical Commission, for her analysis of the 1798 Direct Tax and other tax records. Marisa was also instrumental in choosing new colors for the tavern exterior.*

# Collecting Weston History: Committee, Society, Commission

What's in a name? In the case of the Weston Historical Committee (1931-1968), Weston Historical Society (1963-present), and Weston Historical Commission (1968-present), the one-word difference connotes totally separate organizations, albeit with similar purposes.

## *Founding of the Weston Historical Committee*

The Weston Historical Committee was founded in 1931 as a town committee by a vote of Town Meeting. The original members were Gertrude Fiske, Chairman, Alice E. Jones, Secretary, and Edward P. Ripley. All were members of old Weston families. Fiske was a noted artist and Ripley was the brother of local historian Emma Ripley. The initial purpose of the committee was to arrange for an historical program in Weston to mark the dedication of the Massachusetts George Washington Memorial Highway. These exercises were held June 10, 1932, at the Burgoyne Elm.

In the 1932 *Town Report*, the committee noted that “The Historical Committee will be glad to take charge of any articles or papers of historic interest that may be sent to them, and are hoping eventually to have a permanent place for exhibiting such things.” At a meeting of the committee in 1933, it was suggested that a collection be made of pictures or photographs of the old houses of Weston. The committee offered to make photographic reproductions if the owner of the photograph did not wish to donate it. By 1934, collecting efforts had expanded to include taking photographs, receiving “gifts of historic interest” with “the promise of some choice articles” and encouraging donations of old documents. The committee searched for a safe and suitable place for storing and exhibiting these items. The 1935 report notes that “It has been suggested that there be formed a Town Historical Society and it is hoped that enough interest in this will develop in the town to make this possible in the near future.”

## *Weston Historical Committee and the Fiske Law Office*

The 1936 *Town Report* discusses the prospect of using the original rooms of the town-owned Fiske Law Office, since the Cemetery Commission was using only the ell. The committee expected to ask the town for \$500 to repair the building and purchase display cases. By 1937, the Fiske Law Office had become the committee's headquarters, serving as a place to keep and exhibit a small but growing collection.

Town reports from 1938 to 1950 often include descriptions of gifts to the committee: a “priceless” manuscript diary by Judith Greenleaf, wife of Enoch Greenleaf, (donated in 1938); a safe formerly owned by Charles A. Cutting of Wayland (1939); a photograph of Hanna Gowen taken from a daguerreotype (1940); a manuscript diary written in 1845 by Mrs. Frederick Bush of Weston; a model of the old Unitarian Church (1941); a framed assessor's notice of 1777 (1942); three framed crayon portraits of three generations of the Hastings family (1943); 1887 Weston-Wayland directory (1944);



*The Fiske Law Office has been adopted at different times by both the Weston Historical Committee and Weston Historical Society as a place to exhibit and store historical materials. The Committee occupied the two original rooms (shown at left) from 1937 to 1952, when it moved to the Jones House/JST. The Society restored the law office in the 1960s but gave up custody of the building in the 1990s.*

history of “Rocklawn” by M.R. Case (1945); and original letters and papers from Col. D.S. Lamson (1947). It is unclear what happened to many of these items.

Miss Alice Jones, one of the three original members of the committee, died on December 22, 1947. She was replaced by Henry Patterson, described as the “recently appointed Town Historian.” In 1949, the committee reported that they had put all the collections in storage “as we have had to leave the Isaac Fiske Office,” adding “We hope to have a permanent place some day as we have many articles of great interest and of value.” The committee continued to accept items into the collection. After World War II, the Fiske Law Office was converted for use as veterans’ housing. The 1950 *Town Report* notes that the historical committee’s collection was in storage at the Case house.

### ***Weston Historical Committee Moves to the Jones House***

Miss Ellen Jones, Alice’s sister, died in 1950. The sisters bequeathed their house to the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA, now Historic New England). For the next 32 years, the building was leased back to the town. Beginning in 1953, the Weston Historical Committee was housed in the Jones House (occasionally referred to by its appropriate historical name, the Josiah Smith Tavern), where its collections were displayed in several rooms. Before the Historical Committee occupied the building, they recommended the sale of furniture and other contents not wanted by either the committee or other prospective users. An auction was held on May 16, 1953 and proceeds were added to the SPNEA endowment fund for the property.

Town reports from 1956 to 1967 do not include information on the historical committee. Membership in the three-person committee slowly changed as Gertrude Fiske, the long-time chairman, died in 1961 and Emma Ripley (who had replaced her brother Edward) died in 1962. From 1963 to 1967,

the three members of the Weston Historical Committee were Henry W. Patterson, Chairman, J. Kenneth Bennett, and Elizabeth C. Kenney. Brenton H. Dickson III replaced Patterson in 1968.

## *Founding of the Weston Historical Society*

1963 marked the 250th Anniversary of Weston's incorporation. A special town committee worked from mid-1962 through the actual celebration, which took place from May 30 to June 2, 1963. They planned or coordinated more than 60 events and prepared special maps and printed programs. As a direct outgrowth, the Weston Historical Society (WHS) was incorporated in December 1963 as a private non-profit organization. The three-member Weston Historical Committee continued as an official town body; however, the lack of information in town reports suggests that they were not active. Three historical committee members or former members, Ken Bennett, Henry W. Patterson,

*Pictured at a Weston Historical Society open house at the Josiah Smith Tavern in 1964 are, (l-r), Mrs. Edmund U. Ritter; Mrs. Henry W. Patterson; Mrs. James Fraser (Alice), curator; Harold G. Travis, president of the society; and Mrs. F. Leslie Ford. In the early 1970s, the Weston Historical Commission asked the Selectmen to change the sign to read Josiah Smith Tavern.*



and Brenton H. Dickson III, were also on the first board of directors of the Weston Historical Society. Alice Fraser held the post of curator.

From the beginning, the headquarters of the historical society was the Jones House/Josiah Smith Tavern. *The Weston Historical Society Bulletin* of October, 1964, reported that “Visitors are received from 2 to 4 pm [on Wednesdays] by hostesses, who are glad to supply information about the objects of historical interest displayed in this building....”

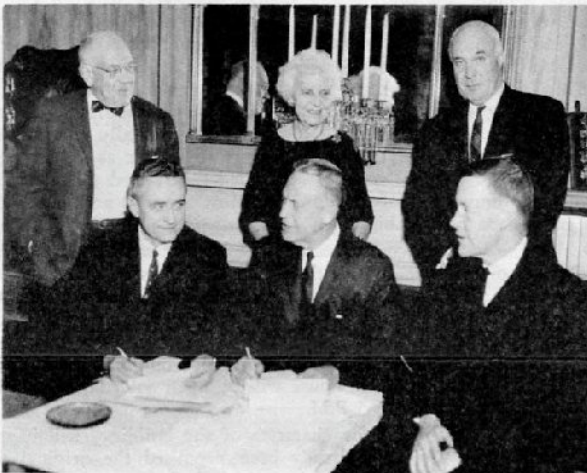


## *Weston Historical Society and the Fiske Law Office*

By the mid-1960s, the Fiske Law Office was no longer needed for veterans' housing, and the newly formed historical society saw the opportunity for "a home of our own." In the January, 1966 issue of *The Weston Historical Society Bulletin*, Harold G. "Red" Travis, the society's first president, reported that the board of selectmen had reached an informal agreement to give care and custody of the Isaac Fiske Law Office to the society. Travis noted that the law office would be the "official headquarters" of the society and "records will be set up as a reference library, and displays of papers, pictures and other items of historic value are contemplated in this charming setting," while the "priceless heirlooms of Weston" would continue to be on display at the Jones House. The WHS and selectmen signed an agreement that April giving the society official care of the law office. In addition to making building repairs and improvements, the society acquired furniture that is still part of the WHS collection; for example, two hand-carved oak chairs reportedly from the study of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

### THE WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

MAY, 1966, VOL. II, NO. 3



#### **The Pact is Signed – The House is Ours!**

Shown above are, l. to r. seated: Herman Koester, Jr., Chairman of Selectmen; Harold G. Travis, President of the Weston Historical Society; John G. Brooks, Clerk; standing: Philip F. Coburn, Mrs. Homer N. Sweet, and J. Kenneth Bennett, Directors. This picture was taken April 26, 1966 at the historic signing of an agreement whereby the Society, for its headquarters, acquired the old Isaac Fiske Law Office.

Nestled under the famous Burgoyne Elm at 626 Boston Post Road, this "little house by the side of the road" was built in 1800 and is in excellent condition. Prior to World War II it fittingly was used as an office for the Weston Historical Committee. For a detailed description and history of the building, see the January 1966 issue of the Bulletin.

Meanwhile, curator Alice Fraser and other volunteers kept the Jones House/Josiah Smith Tavern open on Wednesday afternoons. In October 1966, they installed a costume display in three of the rooms. In 1967, Mrs. Fraser organized a display of members' china and pewter collections.

Restoration of the Isaac Fiske Law Office was completed by 1970. Subsequent bulletins mention Wednesday open hours at the Jones House/JST but not at the law office, although the law office is still referred to occasionally as the society's headquarters. Bulletins from the 1980's refer to the need to maintain the Fiske Law Office garden,

*Officers of the Weston Historical Society sign an agreement whereby the society acquires the Fiske Law Office as its headquarters. (l-r, seated) Herman Koester, Jr., chairman of the Selectmen, Harold G. Travis, president of the society; John G. Brooks, clerk. (Standing) Philip Coburn, Mrs. Homer Sweet, and J. Kenneth Bennett, directors. April, 1966.*



1987 photographs shows the woodshed at the southwest corner of the Josiah Smith Tavern, where a piece of the Burgoyne Elm was stored for many years (left) and the southwest room of the Josiah Smith Tavern, headquarters of the Weston Historical Society (below). (Courtesy of Historic New England, photographs by David

but interest appears to have fallen off after the death in 1981 of Harold Travis. In the 1990s,

the society requested that the town resume responsibility for the law office. All remaining contents were moved back to the Jones House/JST.



### *Establishment of the Weston Historical Commission*

At a Special Town Meeting in December 1968, the town voted to abolish the Weston Historical Committee, which had existed since 1931, and establish a five-member Weston Historical Commission to serve as the town's official body for administration of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. From its inception, the commission focused on historic buildings of the town. The Town Meeting vote included a provision to "transfer to the custody of the historical commission . . . all property of the Town now in the

custody of the historical committee." Four of the five original members of the commission were also actively involved with the Weston Historical Society: Brenton H. Dickson III, Erlund Field, Vera Laska, and Homer C. Lucas.

## ***SPNEA sells the Josiah Smith Tavern to the Town***

In 1983, the town purchased the Josiah Smith Tavern from SPNEA, with strict exterior and interior preservation restrictions. The town paid \$48,542, and SPNEA transferred \$97,084 in endowment funds. The Weston Historical Commission wrote in the *1984 Town Report* that it had its first quarters in a second floor room in the Josiah Smith Tavern and that “The Historical Society has kindly lent us old chairs and pictures.” The society continued to use two first-floor rooms for its displays and archives. By the 1990s if not before, it was using one of the second floor rooms as well as the attic for storage. In recent years, the society has received permission to expand into the former Park and Cemetery office and to use additional rooms on a temporary basis during this period of transition, as the town studies future uses for the building.

*by Pamela W. Fox*

## **2007: A Year of Hard Work and Gains at the Weston Historical Society**

*The following is an excerpt from the Annual Report delivered by Pamela W. Fox, president of the Weston Historical Society, at the WHS Annual Meeting on November 6, 2007.*

My theme tonight is the Chinese proverb ‘a journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step.’ I would like to take you back in time to January 2007. Members of the board had spent the previous six months painting and cleaning the former Park and Cemetery Office, which we now had permission to use. We had purchased file cabinets and set up a functioning room in which to process the many boxes of materials that the society owns but still needs to organize and catalogue. We had taken one step forward.

But after conferring with members of the Josiah Smith Tavern Committee, who were making plans for the exterior restoration of the tavern, we realized with dismay that we had a problem. The work was about to begin. What should we do about the objects in our collection? Would they be inadvertently damaged in the construction process or be vulnerable from a security point of view, with workmen in and out of the building for months?

Our board of directors rose to the challenge. During several Saturday workdays, under the leadership of Carol Snow, we cleared out the attic, where objects were vulnerable to water damage during re-roofing. An amazing hodgepodge of objects— spinning wheels, manikins, fake rifles, picture frames, and trunks, etc, along with heavy boxes of unsold books, town reports, and old historical society bulletins—were moved to the lower floors. Furniture in all rooms was pushed against the inside walls, covered, and surrounded by boxes packed with small objects from the collections. Exterior walls had

to be kept open because almost every window sash in the building was eventually removed, restored, and reinstalled. It seemed like we had taken two giant steps back.

All this work turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Our board had a bonding experience moving furniture down two flights of stairs on those Saturday workdays. Also, since everything was packed up and under wraps, this proved to be an excellent time to paint walls and ceilings, which were gray and even black with dirt and grime. We patched holes in the plaster, touched up woodwork, and cleaned. Many board members participated in monthly work days through the spring, but I would particularly like to mention Greg Barison, Tom Friedlander, Carlie Friedlander, Mary Gregory, Beth and Tony Nolan, and Carol Snow.

Also last spring, the board adopted a comprehensive collections policy to help define what we should be collecting. Our new policy, modeled after that of the Newton Historical Society at the Jackson Homestead, will allow us to make better decisions about what to accept and how to responsibly deaccession objects that do not relate to the history of Weston.

Months went by and finally the exterior work was finished. I know you have all admired the results. Again, it was time for our board of directors to mobilize for action. We looked at our space and decided to use the large and sunny room across the rear of the house for books and archival materials, with two large tables for processing. Two rooms will be devoted to care and management of objects and one room has been outfitted with shelves for storage. In addition, we have received temporary permission to use the ballroom to organize large objects and to use two additional first floor rooms for temporary displays. Those who come to the Holiday House Tour on December 8, sponsored by the Women's Community League Juniors, will see displays of Josiah Smith Tavern photographs as well as treasures from the Weston Historical Society collections and conceptual plans for future use of the tavern as a restaurant.

The recent restoration did not include the interior. The tavern has had no running water or toilet facilities since a pipe burst in 2003. But we do have heat now, after several years without.



*During the recent exterior restoration of the tavern, objects in the collection of the Weston Historical Society had to be moved out of the attic and woodshed to the first floor. This moving has forced the society to take a hard look at what we have and ask the question, "What is it that we should be collecting?" (Photo by Carol Snow)*

While we have spent time creating a functional working environment, the society is aware that we occupy space in the tavern on a temporary basis at the discretion of the selectmen. The newly reconstituted Josiah Smith Tavern/Old Library Committee is working on a proposal that would adapt the tavern, barn, and connector into a restaurant. They are working with an architect and restaurant consultant and hope to have a plan ready for the May Town Meeting. For this plan to go forward, voters will have to allow a full liquor license and be willing to allocate CPA funds. As part of the proposal, the Women's Community League, which has a long-term lease on the barn, would move to the main floor of the Old Library and the historical society would move into the former children's library area and storage rooms on the lower level. There we would join our collections with those of the historical commission and town hall to form what we are calling the Weston History Center and Archives. The work we are doing now to evaluate and organize the society's collections will make this transition easier, if indeed this proposal is adopted by the town.



*Photograph of the entry hall at the Josiah Smith Tavern in the winter of 2006-07, showing snow that blew in under the door. (Photo by Sarah Gilman)*

Anyone who could like to check out our headquarters, do some research, or volunteer to help is invited to come to the Josiah Smith Tavern any Wednesday morning between 10 and 12 noon. I would like to thank the following board members who have been coming regularly on Wednesday mornings: Carol Snow, Mary Gregory, Nonnie Mullin, Sally Gilman, and Tania Deary.

In early summer, 2007, we took two giant steps forward with the receipt of a grant for \$4375 from the Sunfield Foundation for the purchase of a computer, printer/scanner/copier, and the software program PastPerfect. The latter was developed to help small museums and historical societies manage their collections, membership lists, and other functions. I am happy to announce that, with the help of board member Tom Friedlander, the computer is up and running.

But of course, this is only the beginning. Except for the membership list, nothing at the society has ever been computerized. We now have the capability to make a record for each object, with photographs, history, and location information, for example, but photographs must be taken and information entered. While we are not in a position to afford paid staff, we will have a student intern with

archival experience working with us for a few weeks this winter. Otherwise we rely on the volunteer work of our board and welcome the help of interested members.

The Sunfield Foundation grant also provided money for a map case and archival supplies, including boxes and buffered tissue, so that objects can be safely stored. Along with identification of objects and cataloging, a key part of our mission is proper conservation and storage.

A great deal of effort was spent this year in getting a handle on collections management. But we are very aware that, in order to win the support of the community, we need outreach and educational programs as well. To that end, we sponsor spring and fall programs each year. Last November, we hosted Bruce Schwoegler, who gave a fascinating report on the Hurricane of 1938 and the Blizzard of 1978. In the spring, we sponsored a program on the history of Field School, an important subject, since the future of the school is now being studied, and the community needs to take history and architectural values into account when making this decision. We publish two issues per year of *The Weston Historical Society Bulletin*. The last two issues, both 36 pages, concentrated on the Case Estates, another example where the history of the property is not just of academic interest but can have a real effect in increasing enthusiasm and support for preservation today. People have asked me whether I am writing another book. The answer is no, but I am the editor of the *Bulletin* and write most of the articles. I regard the *Bulletin* as an opportunity to disseminate serious research on Weston history. We welcome your feedback.

Another small step the society took last year was to set up a display case at the library near the card catalogue computer terminal. We have used the case for displays on Field School, the Josiah Smith Tavern, the Sears collection of bills and invoices from the early 20th century, and a look at Town Reports over the years. These displays will continue every few months. As I mentioned, we will be preparing an exhibit at the Josiah Smith Tavern for the Holiday House Tour and hopefully will receive permission from the selectmen to make it available at other times as well. And our top priority this year will be development of a website, which will offer the opportunity to connect with much wider audiences. I would like to thank Miller Blew for leading the effort to get us onto the Internet.

As you heard from our treasurer, Arnold Crowley, our budget is small. With the exception of this year, when we received the Sunfield Foundation grant, our annual revenue comes from two sources, interest on the endowment and membership dues and gifts. Since 2004, we have seen the endowment increase from \$55,000 to over \$70,500 today, in part due to a \$10,000 bequest from the estate of Vera Laska. The endowment yields approximately \$3500 a year. Increasing the size of the endowment is critical, as is increasing membership. My last thank you is to all of you who are members of the Weston Historical Society. Your support is essential to our ability to preserve the history of our community.

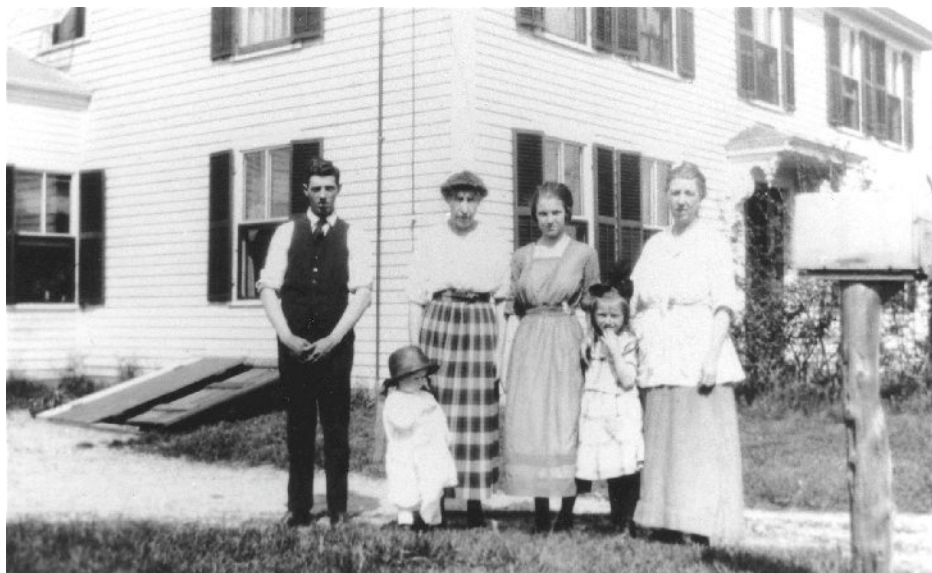


*An estate sale was held on October 26-27, 2007, at 157 Oak Street (above), the former home of Nelson McNutt. His home was so full of his collections that he lived diagonally across the street at the home of his sister. At the October sale, antique dealers and town residents picked through bottles, books, MA license plates, sheet music, lamps, walking sticks, costume jewelry, carnival glass, candy dishes, art, furniture, mirrors, and a huge assortment of machinist and gardening tools -- looking for treasures or mementos of Nelson. (Photos by Pamela W. Fox)*

## **The End of an Era: Estate Sale at the Home of Nelson McNutt**

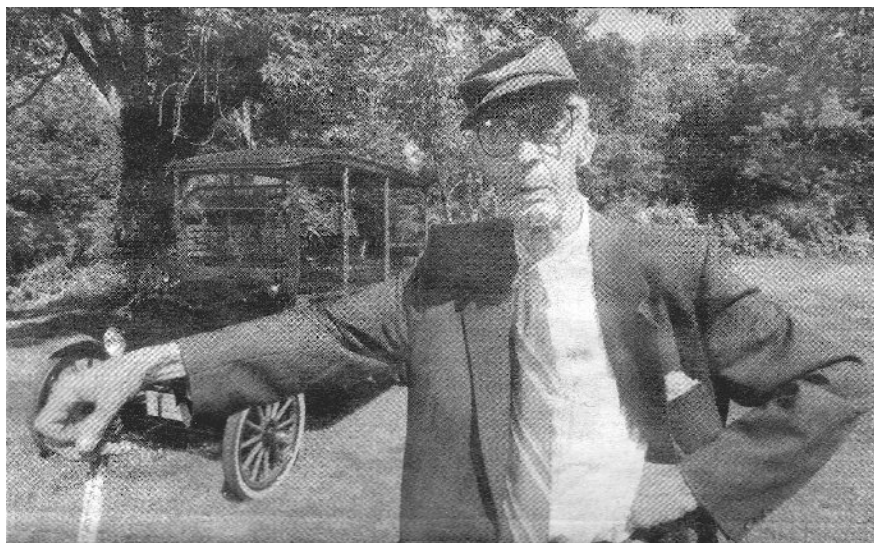
Charles Nelson McNutt passed away in 2004 at age 105. In late October of this year, an estate sale at his Oak Street home attracted antique dealers, curiosity seekers, and town residents seeking mementos of one of Weston's most colorful characters.

Except for brief interludes, Nelson lived his entire life at the "Four Corners," where Glen Road intersects with Cliff Road and Oak Street. He was a familiar figure in the neighborhood, where he held court under a maple tree next to his dilapidated cottage at 157 Oak Street, chatting amiably with townspeople who walked or drove by.



*Early 1920s photo (l-r): Nelson McNutt; Sophie Hamilton; Sophie's daughter May; Florence and Evelyn McNutt; and their mother, Elizabeth Wyman McNutt, standing in front of the Wyman farmhouse at 317 Glen Road. (Below) Nelson McNutt at age 100 (Weston Historical Society files)*

Nelson McNutt was born in 1899 at 317 Glen Road, the farmhouse that his great-grandfather, Daniel Wyman, had purchased in 1850. The Wymans farmed the land on three of the Four Corners. Nelson's mother, Mary Elizabeth Wyman, met her husband, Charles McNutt, while he was working as a teamster for neighboring farmer Edward Jennings. They had five children: Ella, Charles Nelson, Edith, Florence, and Evelyn. Charles McNutt left the family



shortly after his youngest daughter was born in 1915. The couple later divorced. Mary Elizabeth and the five children lived with her bachelor brother, George Nelson Wyman, who farmed the land until the day he died of a heart attack in 1934. They grew their own food and earned just enough to pay property taxes and buy a few necessities. The cash crop was strawberries.

For his early schooling, Nelson walked two miles each way to the one-room District School #5 at South Avenue and Ware Street. As a young man, he took the train from Wellesley Farms Station into Boston to study automobile mechanics at the YMCA, now Northeastern University. Sometime before his 20th birthday, he went to work at the nearby Charles Dean estate as a "day man," chopping wood, gardening, picking apples, cutting ice, making butter, or doing whatever job was needed at the time. Nelson loved the ladies, but he never married and often attributed his longevity to his bachelor status and habit of "living day to day."



After his uncle's death, Nelson and his four sisters inherited the 50-acre Wyman farm. Nelson's house at the northwest corner of Oak Street and Glen Road dates from 1938, when it was rebuilt following a fire. The house diagonally across the street at 326 Glen Road was built in 1939 for his sister Edith. At the turn of the 21st century, these two modest homes were still owned by the family. When asked, as he often was, about selling the land, Nelson is reported to have said that he didn't need the money and was very happy living the way he did.

For many years, Nelson lived in Edith's house and took care of his sister Evelyn, who was deaf. He kept a large vegetable garden. His own house was packed with his many treasures. Nelson saved everything and added to his collections with regular trips to the Weston and Wellesley dumps. Up to the time he died, friends continued to take Nelson to the dump, where, because of failing eyesight, he chose his objects by touch.

Slowly, the Four Corners has been changing. In 1994, a large shingled house was built on the northeast corner, on land that had belonged to another sister, Ella McNutt Morse. The property at the southeast corner is now owned by a developer, who has already built a house at 300 Glen Road, one of three lots. Dr. Richard Ulbrich, a Wellesley orthodontist who befriended Nelson decades ago and helped care for him, inherited 157 Oak Street and plans to build a new house on the site. Unlike the typical Weston house of today, Ulbrich envisions something of a reasonable size, low-key and unassuming, as befits the memory of Nelson McNutt.

*by Pamela W. Fox*

## **One Hundred Years Ago in Weston (1907)**

Items from the *Waltham Daily Free Press Tribune*

“There was a very pleasant party New Year's eve in the Town Hall. Just before midnight young 1907 appeared on the floor in a toy automobile and chased 1906, who was dressed like Old Father Time, out of the hall.” (January 4)

“A Kendal Green man who was caught napping, when the first freeze came, by not planting his outdoor bulbs, did so Tuesday, much to his pleasure. He says that there was no frost in the ground and that he dug up several good fat fish worms.” (January 11)

“A young lady of Weston was on her way to Stony Brook early in the month to go to a theatre in Boston when one of our prominent citizens passed her in his automobile. The machine was going at a gait quite up to the legal limit, and as it went by she was covered with mud and slush thrown by the wheels. The theatre had few attractions for her on that day.” (January 18)

“A Bantavia Jungle game-cock, believed by its owner, George W. Emerson of Weston, to be inspired by the evil one, is exciting interest and amusement among visitors at the Boston Poultry show in Mechanics' building. “Murderer” is the name of this fowl, and Mr. Emerson says the bird deserves



*George Emerson (above) raised and trained game-cocks and was known for the illegal cockfights held in his barn on Boston Post Road. (Photo courtesy of the Weston Historical Society)*

it. The cock is a native of India, and it celebrated its arrival at the Emerson farm by breaking out of its cage and killing seven American cocks, according to its owner's story. Mr. Emerson said yesterday that the birds seem to have a decided antipathy to anything religious." (January 18, quoted from the *Boston Post*)

"How many Weston drivers are aware that the statute law of the commonwealth require them to carry at least three bells attached to the horse's harness or to the shafts when riding in or using a sleigh or pung? There are quire a number who seem ignorant of the fact." (February 23)

"Alfred L. Cutting has two of his prize roosters in a cage in the store window, a big brown leghorn and a little red bantam. They make quite an interesting pair in one pen." (March 29)

"The Town Meeting Monday developed considerable enthusiasm and was the largest attended gathering of its kind for years. . . . The Town, as usual, went "No license," the vote being: Yes 7, No. 91. . . . The main interest centered in article 9, which was to act on the report of the committee on school accommodations. The report recom-

mended the erection of a \$55,000 building in the center of the Town. This was contrary to the recommendation of prominent educators and against the desire of many at Kendal Green. Rev. J. A. Day led the revolutionary forces and the result was a complete rout of the committee who were discharged, a new committee appointed and a vote passed to erect a building at Kendal Green. . . ." (Mar 29) (Editor's note: a new school was never built in Kendal Green but District School #4 on North Avenue continued to operate into the early 1930s)

"Mr. Downing, a gardener, who has had experience in England and Ireland, is engaged on Mr. Sears' estate. . . ." "There is not a handsomer bed of tulips in Weston than the one in front of the Sears homestead on Central avenue." (May 17)

"The Electric Light Co. are taking active measures to find the parties who have maliciously destroyed the street lights on Concord road and in the south part of the town. They expect shortly to have the pleasure of seeing certain individuals brought before the court and made to pay well for their actions. Breaking street lamps is one of the most contemptible of deeds and deserves severe punishment." (May 17) [A letter from Horace S. Sears, treasurer of the Weston Electric Light Co,

appears in the July 12 issue and states that the culprits, high school boys from Brookline, had sent a letter of apology and paid a fine of \$25.00 each, but future offenses would be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.]

“C. L. Berry had the exceedingly rare fortune to hatch 49 chickens from the setting of four hens.  
“(May 24)

“The gypsy and brown-tail moth hunters are burlaping trees extensively in Weston to prevent the caterpillars getting a lodgment.” (May 31)

“One wonders how much good is to be gained by burlaping the trees in Weston. Comparatively few are burlaped. One tree may be treated and the one next to it with interlacing branches has nothing done to it. Horses are tied to some of the trees and tear off the burlap, and in other cases the burlaps falls (sic) off and remains on the ground.” (June 7)

“Messrs Baxter and Faber arrested some parties this week for fishing in the Cambridge water basin. It is against the law and if you want to keep out of trouble don’t do it.” (June 21)

“Mr. Cooper is erecting the town shed for the steam roller, watering cart, road scraper, and so forth, near the Congregational church.” (September 6)

“One Wednesday night a drove of cattle coming from Brighton and driven by two drunken men were turned into the entrance of Linwood cemetery by the drovers and left while they went back to look up the cattle they had lost on the way. The cattle wandered through the avenue, entered the cemetery and trampled over several lots. The law is very strict as to the desecration of burial grounds with heavy fines for so doing. The persons responsible for this act who hire drovers who are not capable of attending to their business should be severely dealt with.” (September 20)

“William C. Lewis of Weston was among a number of autoists who were summoned into court yesterday at Dorchester for overspeeding. The cases dated back of Oct. 3 and the majority of the autoists were returning from the Brockton Fair when they fell into the auto trap set by the police. Lewis was taxed \$10.” (October 18)

“There was a fire Monday at Darius Vittum’s that had a funny denouement The alarm rung in and the apparatus started for the scene. The hose wagon got well under way for the locality and the horse came to the conclusion he had gone far enough and resolutely refused to pull the wagon any further. The ladder truck also had a peculiar experience. At the start the horse fell down. When he was set on his feet again and started a second time he and the harness parted company. The third start was more successful, and commendable progress was made until the driver discovered that he had lost his whip, and the apparatus was halted and a boy sent back after that indispensable piece of fire fighting machinery. In the meantime the fire, which was in a chimney, burned itself out and there was no further need for the department, but they had a fine time exercising. This is the story as we learn it. If anybody else has one as good let him tell it.” (Nov. 1)

## With Grateful Appreciation: Recent Donations

From Jane Hosterman, documents concerning the veteran's house at 325 Merriam Street; also a pole used by civil defense volunteers to turn off streetlights during World War II blackouts.

From Markie Phillips, ribbons won by Edward P. Ripley, Weston Grange and Massachusetts Grange, 1910s and 20s, and other ribbons including usher at the Weston Bicentennial Celebration

From Sarah B. Gilman, book, *Paine Ancestry: The Family of Robert Treat Paine, Signer of the Declaration of Independence* by Sarah Cushing Paine (printed for the family, 1912)

From Barbara Coburn, deed for the 1801 sale of a 120-acre farm and farmhouse (now 153 Church Street) to Jonas Coburn

From Ricki Stambaugh, photograph of the McMahon house on Concord Road, along with books and other items found in the house

From Dr. Richard Ulbrich, items from the estate of Nelson McNutt

**Welcome to our newest Life Members (as of November 10, 2007): Gloria Cole, Barbara Elmes, Sam and Laura Payson, Diana Chaplin, Gail Denman, Tare and Sue Newbury, and Polly Slavet.**

### OFFICERS OF THE WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2007-08

President: Pamela W. Fox

Vice President: Joe Mullin

Co-Secretaries: Sally Gilman, Beth Nolan

Treasurer: Arnold Crowley

Collections Care: Carol Snow

Membership Chair: Tom Friedlander

*Bulletin* Editor: Pamela W. Fox

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Membership dues: Individuals \$15, family \$15, life membership \$250. Contributions and bequests to the Endowment Fund are welcome. Make checks payable to Weston Historical Society and mail to Box 343, Weston MA 02493. Contributions are tax deductible. Additional copies of the *Bulletin* may be obtained for \$5 each by mailing payment to the Society. Statements and/or opinions expressed in the articles are not necessarily those of the editor or the Weston Historical Society. ISSN 1083-9712.

