

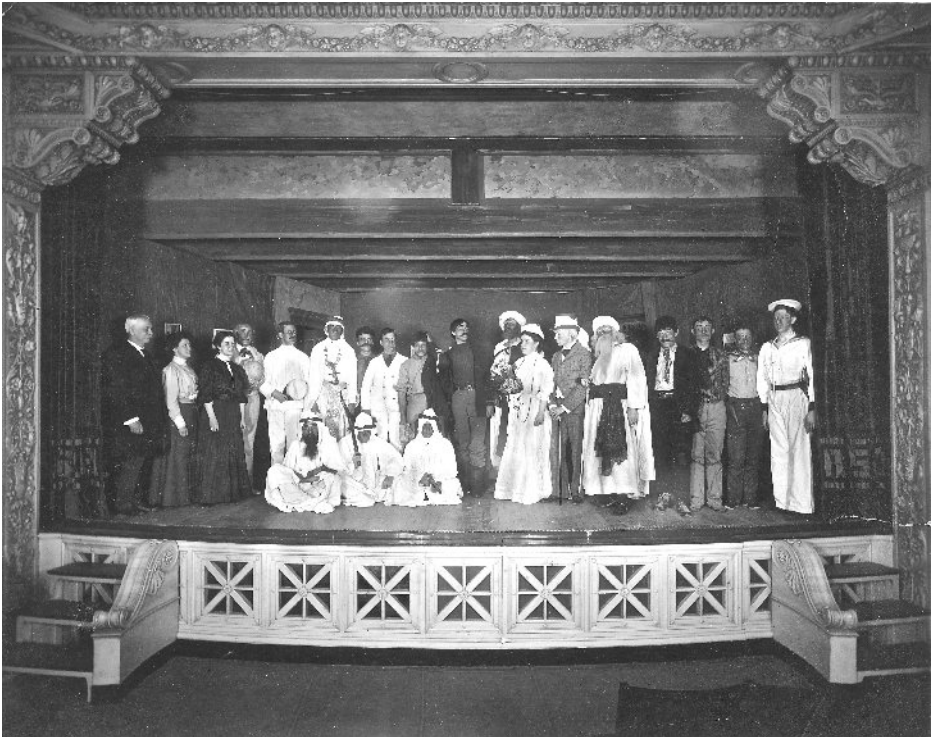
WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

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Spring 2016

The First Parish Friendly Society Part I



This photograph by Wayland photographer Alfred Wayland Cutting shows an unknown play being performed at the 200-seat private theater on the Horace S. Sears estate, "Haleiwa." Cutting's composition shows the full stage, including the decorative framing and brackets. The Friendly Society and other organizations performed theatricals at Haleiwa from 1902 to 1921. (Courtesy of Historic New England)

The Spring and Fall 2016 issues of The Bulletin will be devoted to the 130-year history of one of our most enduring organizations, the Weston Friendly Society.

I would like to thank Guy Dillaway for making the Friendly's collection of photographs and memorabilia available for research. I would also like to thank the following people who have shared memories and/or photos from their theater days: Betsy Kaden, Halcott and Cornelia Grant, Una Fleischmann, Laura Payson, Bill and Chris Gallagher, Anna Melone, and Dave Harmon. This issue covers 1885 to the mid-1950s. It's not too late to add your recollections. Please email Pam Fox at info@westonhistory.org. Many thanks,

Pamela W. Fox

Introduction

The Weston Friendly Society of the Performing Arts calls itself the “second oldest continuously operating community theater in the country” – and for good reason. The concept of community theater originated in the Boston area. The venerable Concord Players traces its history back to an 1856 drama club that Louisa May Alcott helped establish; but there were years with no performances. For this reason, the American Association of Community Theater has awarded the title of the nation’s “oldest” to the Footlight Club in Jamaica Plain, formed in 1877. The Belmont Dramatic Club, organized in 1903, calls itself the “second oldest,” according to Judson Lee Pierson’s 2006 book *Greater Boston Community Theater*. Weston’s Friendly Society, however, was organized on January 12, 1885; and dramatic productions have been an annual tradition since the early 1890s.

Note, however, that the Weston group, originally called the First Parish Friendly Society, was not founded with a goal to educate the public on the value of theater or to provide a place where the best plays of the time could be performed. Rather, the initial impetus was to help raise money for a new fieldstone First Parish Church to replace the shabby 1840 wooden Greek Revival meetinghouse.

For Fun and Fundraising

The story begins in 1882, when Rev. Charles F. Russell began his dynamic 33-year tenure as minister at First Parish. In 1884, the parish voted to raise money to build a new church “provided \$8000 is pledged during the ensuing year.” As the fundraising deadline approached, 13 church members responded to an invitation to meet at the home of Mrs. E.H. Sears to form a social organization. Ellen Sears was the widow of Rev. Dr. Edmund Hamilton Sears, minister at First Parish from 1865 until his death in 1876. He is best known as the author of the Christmas hymn “It Came Upon a Midnight Clear.”



This photograph includes four of the original 13 Friendly Society founders: (l-r) Miss Edith Coburn, Horace S. Sears, Miss Alice Jones, and Miss Anna Coburn. (Courtesy Weston Historical Society)

At this first meeting, on January 12, 1885, the 13 founders chose the name “The First Parish Friendly Society of Weston” to emphasize the goal of encouraging friendly relations among church members. Horace Scudder Sears, 30-year-old son of the late Rev. and Mrs. Sears, was elected president; Mrs. E.O. Clark, vice president; Robert Winsor, treasurer; and Miss Ellen Jones, secretary. All four lived within a few hundred yards of the church. The other nine founding members were Mrs. Charles Russell,

the minister’s wife; Mrs. Robert Winsor, Miss Anna C. Coburn, Miss Edith Coburn, Miss Hattie Sanderson, Miss Hattie Perry, Miss Alice Jones, Miss Georgiana Buchanan, and Mr. William H. Coburn. Alice and Ellen Jones were siblings, as were the three Coburns. Seven of the 13 were single women.

The group organized four entertainments for the following months: an “Old-Fashioned Supper,” two theatricals, and a July 4 event. All this is recorded in the *Records of the First Parish Friendly Society of Weston* in the neat handwriting of Miss Ellen Jones. (1)

The founders also voted unanimously to subscribe \$300 towards the estimated \$10,000 needed for the new building. In the society’s first formal report two years later, organizers noted the critical importance of this pledge:

The immediate object of our being called into existence was probably that of extending aid to the new church project. A generous subscription of \$300 was made at a critical period of that enterprise . . . The subscription committee can undoubtedly testify to the moral support and impetus given to the movement at a time when the faith of the few was being shaken and the doubts of the many developing into open and conscientious opposition. (2)

Ninety-one church members signed up to be part of the new society. The \$300 pledge was paid off within two years.

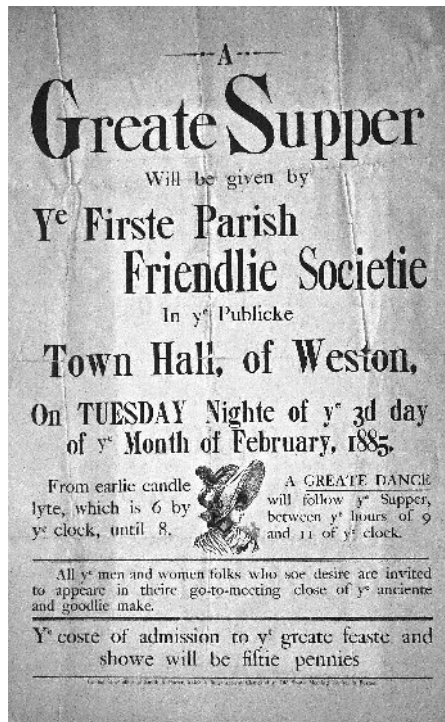
“Fiftie pennies” was the cost of the “Greate Supper,” the first event given by the newly formed First Parish Friendly Society, at Weston Town Hall. About one hundred people sat down to supper followed by dancing. (Courtesy Weston Friendly Society)

The Bonds of Friendship

The importance of Horace Sears (1855 – 1923) to the Friendly’s success cannot be overstated. Sears had moved to Weston at age 10, when his father became minister at First Parish. His formal education ended in 1871 when he graduated from Weston High School. He worked as a clerk in Boston but moved back home in 1875 to help care for his father, who was injured in a fall and died not long afterward. The young man stayed in Weston, living with his widowed mother in the family house just east of the church. (3) After her death in 1897, he began developing the property into an estate he called “Haleiwa.” In his business career, Sears rose to positions of increasing responsibility; and in 1900 he formed the partnership of Wellington Sears & Co, textile manufacturers. (4)

Many leaders of the fledgling Friendly Society had close connections to Sears. Anna Coburn and Hattie Perry were two of the seven members of his high school class, and Edith Coburn was just one year behind. Alice and Ellen Sears were close neighbors, as was Mrs. E.O. Clark. Two important later Friendly leaders, Charles O. Richardson and Harry Bailey, were his protégés at Wellington, Sears & Co. Sears encouraged both young men to move to Weston, where they initially lived at Haleiwa. The architect of his private theater at Haleiwa, Harold Graves, was a star in Friendly plays; and the architect of the main part of the mansion, Joseph Everett Chandler, participated as well. Several Friendly members, including Alexander Jenney and Grant Palmer, purchased land and built houses on Pigeon Hill, on lots that Sears created in 1897 by subdividing a larger property.

The Winsor family became very involved, including Robert, his wife Eleanor, sister Jane (Mrs. Lyman Gale), daughter Mary Winsor Trumbull, son Robert Jr.—a talented musician—and Robert Jr.’s wife Mary. Robert Winsor Sr. was just three years younger than Horace Sears and, after college, also began his career as a clerk. In the early 1880s, through Rev. Russell, Sears became aware of Win-

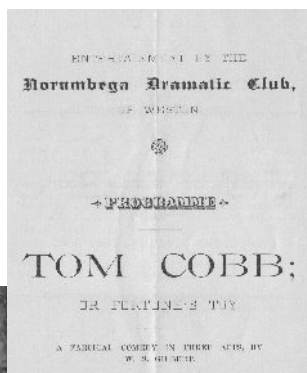


sor's desire to move to Weston and his difficulty finding land he could afford. Sears and his mother were "so anxious to secure him," according to an 1883 letter, that Ellen Sears purchased a 20-acre pasture near her home and sold him a lot there. (5) Winsor rose to senior partner at the Kidder, Peabody & Co. investment banking firm and became Weston's second largest landowner.

The First Five Years

The first Friendly event, rechristened the "Greate Supper," was held on February 3, 1885. *The Records of the First Parish Friendly Society of Weston* lists food contributions: 11 quarts baked beans, 12 loaves brown bread, 10 dozen biscuits, 5 loaves white bread, 6 loaves gingerbread, 6 loaves "election cake," 4 tongues, 10 or more pounds of corn beef, 2 Indian puddings, 1 ham, 12 squash pies, 6 mince pies, 8 apple pies, and miscellaneous items: cheese, apple sauce, pickles, doughnuts, coffee, tea, milk, and "sudcakes." An estimated 100 guests enjoyed dancing to "some of the old contra dances and cotillions." Many dressed up in old costumes, foreshadowing the many dress-up parties to come.

Cast of Tom Cobb; or Fortune's Toy, performed by the Norumbega Dramatic Club of the Friendly Society. (l-r) Standing: Miss Edith Coburn, Mrs. Clara Stimpson, Horace Sears, Arthur Coburn, Mrs. Charlotte Perry, Charles Kenney. Seated: Wm. H. "Will" Coburn, Arthur Milton, and Mrs. Adelaide Coburn. Photo c.1886 (Courtesy Weston Historical Society)





Norumbega Dramatic Club, unknown play, c. 1885-87, Standing: Miss Edith Coburn; Horace Sears; Arthur Milton; Wm H. "Will" Coburn; Miss Elizabeth Viles, Miss Alice Jones. Seated: Miss Ellen Jones and Mr. Anthony the schoolteacher. (Courtesy Weston Historical Society)

In May 1885 the society presented its first play, *A Scrap of Paper*, a comic drama in three acts. Within a year, those with a dramatic bent had formed a group called the Norumbega Dramatic Club and travelled to Wayland, Waltham, Brighton, Belmont, East Boston, and Duxbury with performances of *Picking Up the Pieces* and *Tom Cobb: or Fortune's Toy*, a "farical comedy" featuring an Irish adventurer played by Horace Sears.

In the fall of 1886, the fledgling society gave a "fancy dress party" at the Town Hall, described at length in the newspaper:

Instead of the usual collection of nuns, fairies, undines and harlequins, the good people of the neighborhood assembled in the guise of characters taken entirely from American literature and history. Two hundred roles were given out by the indefatigable committee. There followed desperate rummagings in garrets and trunks in search of ancient finery; and an overwhelming demand was made upon the distracted village librarian. Everyone had a part to study up, and a costume to arrange. (6)

The account describes how, on the appointed night, there came a procession of governors and their stately wives, ethereal maidens and old-time characters "from Hawthorne's weird romances," a host of Longfellow's well-known heroes and heroines, along with Uncle Tom, Little Lord Fauntleroy, and many characters probably unknown to readers of today. A series of tableaux included Br'er Rabbit and the Tar Baby, the Legend of Sleepy Hollow, and the Courtship of Miles Standish. The evening closed with dancing and refreshments.

By-Laws of 1886 and Revisions

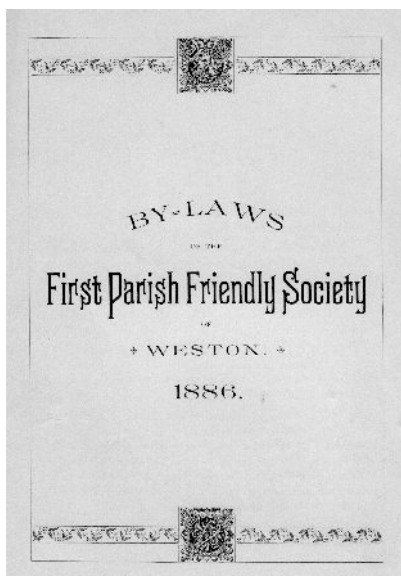
The earliest by-laws, printed in 1886, included 12 rules of governance, the first four as follows:

- I. The name of this Association shall be THE FIRST PARISH FRIENDLY SOCIETY, OF WESTON.
- II. Its objects shall be to encourage friendly relations among members of the First Parish of Weston, and to promote the growth and prosperity of said Parish.
- III. The membership of the Society shall be limited to those members of the First Parish who attend its church services, who are interested in its Sunday School, and who are willing to be workers in its charities and social life.
- IV. The members shall consist of such persons, nominated in writing by members, and shall be approved by a majority of the council, and shall assent to the By-Laws (7)

The by-laws specified a governing “Council” composed of the four officers plus a three-person Executive Committee. The annual assessment was fifty cents.

Rule VII of the 1886 by-laws stated: “members must accept, unless excused by the governing council, any office or committeeship . . . to which they may be elected, or forfeit their membership. But no member shall hold the same office for more than two consecutive years.” Thus the founders sought to create an organization where every member worked and no member dominated the leadership.

In the mid-1890s, the society opened up to non-church members. Other important later amendments included the requirement that members be eighteen or older and that membership be limited to 200 (175 resident and 25 non-resident members), with persons connected to First Parish given precedence.



The membership limit of 200 had been dropped by the time the by-laws were revised in 1937, but the application process had become more demanding. Applications from non-church members had to be accompanied by written recommendations from three members of the society, two of whom had to be members of the Parish, and then approved by the Executive Committee.” The requirement that prospective members submit names of sponsoring members continued into the post-World War II period.

An Exceptionally Brilliant Start

At the second meeting recorded in the *Records*, on December 13, 1886, members voted to appoint a committee of three “to report in ten minutes a plan of work to be done in the future.” The three deciders, Miss Gowing, Robert Winsor, and Wm. H. Coburn, recommended a town party (later changed to a parish supper), two dances, one play “to be exchanged with some other society,” and a “public literary entertainment.”

The first formal report of the Council covered the first two years and concluded as follows:

We confidently claim that this formative period has been with us an exceptionally brilliant one. Not only have ideas and plans of action novel to us been put into action but as far as we know such as have not been attempted by any church society. . . (8)

As evidence, they cited four accomplishments. The parish supper was on the way to becoming an annual institution. Friends from neighboring parishes in Waltham and Wayland had been entertained. Entertainments had been exchanged, including performances by “our Dramatic Club” that were “entirely labors of love” yielding a net profit of more than \$100. Lastly, the Fancy Dress Party was “confessedly the most brilliant party ever given in Weston.” The report goes on to mention plans that failed to materialize and “hours of amicable controversy and pleasant plottings” that never dampened enthusiasm.

The handsome fieldstone First Parish church was completed in 1888. For the 1889-90 season, the council’s annual report indicates that there was only one meeting, “not from any lack of interest on the part of its members but because our help has been given to the general interests of the Parish.” The society’s work on the church fair enabled payment of its pledge toward a new organ, and the \$47 earned from the Friendly’s parish supper was designated for improving the grounds. The following year, the society paid for “alterations around the window in the Chancel” and later for “lanterns” for the corridor and chapel porch.

In December 1891, a committee was appointed to arrange an entertainment to raise funds for the Meadville School, the seminary for training Unitarian ministers. This was the first of many contributions to causes outside the church itself. The first donation to Waltham Hospital, in the amount of \$25, was in 1892.

1890-1900: Alternating Merry and Serious Evenings

Rev. Charles Russell’s occasional reports on the Friendly Society in mid-1890s issues of *The First Parish Calendar* record its early history:

It was not till the society had been in existence more than five years that meetings began to be held regularly for a literary purpose. Until the spring of 1890 the members had been called together at the house of

FIRST PARISH FRIENDLY SOCIETY,

Weston, Mass.

List of Meetings with Subjects and Speakers

SEASON 1891-92.

Henry Clay,	Miss Georgiana Buchanan,	November 9,
Debate,	Mr Arthur L. Coburn, Mr Henry L. Bowen,	November 23,
J. G. Holland,	Miss Ellen M. Jones,	December 7,
Christmas, Past and Present,	Mrs. Albert E. Coburn,	December 21,
Parlor Theatricals,		January 11,
	Mr. Charles G. Kenney, Miss Edith L. Coburn, Mr. Lyman W. Gale, Miss Harriet S. Terry, Miss Sisle F. Carter,	
William Cullen Bryant,	Mr. Harrison C. Hall,	January 25,
Social,	Mr. William H. Coburn, Mr. Edward Fiske, Mr. Bouton H. Dickson, Jr.	February 8,
Daniel Webster,	Miss Anna C. Coburn,	February 22,
— ? —	Mrs. George S. Perry,	March 14,
Charades,	Mr. Charles A. Fessenden, Mrs. Clark B. Gouzen, Mr. Clarence Foyl, Miss Ruby G. Tucker, Miss Florence M. Coburn,	March 28,
Church History,	Mr. Herzer S. Sears,	April 11,
Social,	Executive Committee,	April 25,

The 1891-92 season was the first time a variety of events was planned and a printed schedule distributed. (Courtesy Weston Historical Society)

some member only when an entertainment or series of entertainments were to be planned, and a committee appointed to have them in charge. It was not till March, 1890, that a meeting was called at the chapel, and a committee appointed to arrange for regular meetings of the society. (9) In another issue, Russell remarks on “a gradual evolution, from an emphasis on moral and religious growth to more literary offerings and from there to programs alternating serious topics with dramatics and social offerings.”

The 1891-92 council report takes up the subject of mission and programming. The consensus was that serious papers written and read by members “continued to hold the interest of the club” and “furnish[ed] food for future thought, on subjects which are more commonly discussed principally in our Sunday classes.” The report added that one of the objects of the society was the growth of the parish, but not merely in a numerical or social sense but also in the highest “moral and religious growth” adding: “[In] topics that were taken up, we shall see that every one was an incentive to . . . higher life in our daily life.” (10)

With that said, the report continued: “. . . nothing teaches us a thing as well as constant repetition and it is equally true nothing renders a thing so wearisome. It was thought best therefore to have a somewhat different line of work for the season of 91-92.” Following a vote of the members, a varied program was suggested.

The change is clearly reflected in the 1891-92 season. Twelve meetings were planned for the second and fourth Mondays from October to mid-April. For the first time, a printed schedule was sent out, listing the following meeting topics: “Henry Clay,” “Debate,” “J.G. Holland,” “Christmas, Past and Present,” “Parlor Theatricals,” “William Cullen Bryant,” “Social,” “Daniel Webster,” “?,” “Charades,” “Church History,” and “Social.”



This photograph shows the First Parish parish hall and chapel, built in 1873 and used until the present parish hall was constructed in 1924. Early Friendly Society meetings were held here — not in Horace Sears’s private theater, which was not built until 1901. (Courtesy First Parish Church)

Meetings were held in the combined First Parish chapel and parish hall, which had been built in 1873 behind the 1840 wooden church and was used until the present parish hall was constructed in 1924. [Author’s note: histories of the Friendly Society state, incorrectly, that the first meetings were held at Horace Sears’s private theater. This theater was not constructed until 1901.] Average attendance was 20 to 25. Reportedly, meetings on “more solid subjects” were just as well attended and, in the opinion of some, “apparently better enjoyed than those given over to amusement.”

In looking at late 19th and early 20th century Friendly activities, it is important to remember that radio and television had not been invented and transportation options were limited. Even with the introduction of automobiles in the early 20th century, few people owned them. Anna Coburn’s niece, Miss Anna Hall, lived on North Avenue and recalled being transported to her first meeting, in 1895, in a pung that carried about 15 people.

The Friendly was only one of many social options available during this period. First Parish had the E. H. Sears Guild and Woman’s Benevolent Society; the Baptists and Methodists had societies that sponsored events; and the Weston Grange, fraternal orders, and Fireman’s Relief Association were also active. But even in a

town with many social opportunities, the First Parish Friendly Society stands out in the variety, quality, number, and intellectual level of its programs.

In *The First Parish Calendar* of November 15, 1894, the Rev. Russell describes the Friendly's variety this way:

A glance at the program of the Friendly Society shows a mixture of grave and gay; hard problems to solve and evenings devoted to simple fun and frolic.

The leap from Nationalism, Strikes, and Arbitration, to Ghosts and Buffalo Bugs, is abrupt, but does not daunt the facile minds of the First Parish Friendly Society. The Future of the Negro or Victoria's choice of a Poet Laureate they adjust with equal intrepidity. Nothing daunts and nothing dismays.

Out from the forgotten chambers of the past troop the Ladies of the White House in their most gorgeous array and elegant manners. From the stately Lady Washington to the mother of Esther and Ruth, each emerges from her obscurity and lives again for her allotted five minutes.

So many excellent programs in the past have made the society critical, but the present promises to equal . . . any of its predecessors. (11)

Rev. Russell adds the following:

The committee have [sic] acted on the suggestion to enlist our members in active participation, and this year's program [1894-95] was intended to include every name on the society's books. How the new departure will work remains to be proven, but the meetings held thus far have been well attended, interesting, and amusing. (12)

In another issue, Russell speaks to the strong bonds of friendship among members, who have "grown up together and cannot remember the time when they were not warm friends The experiences of birth, death, and marriage have but drawn the bonds of friendship the closer, and made of us one body." (13)

At the conclusion of the 1895-96 season, Rev. Russell noted that "the work in most cases has fallen on a small number of each committee" to present the various programs, and, if all members were actually working members, each one would only need to be called on once a year, and "that should not be considered a heavy tax to pay for the advantage of belonging to such a society." (14)



Miss Ellen Jones was the first secretary of the Friendly Society. (Courtesy Weston Historical Society)

Types of Entertainments, 1890s to 1910s

Friendly Society events from the 1890s through the mid-1910s generally fall into categories: literary, theatrical, social, and so forth. Some had their own printed program, many of which have survived in the extensive collection of the Weston Historical Society.

Being a Friendly member required effort. Not only were members expected to serve on committees, but also they were asked to come to meetings with creative contributions. The postcard invitation to a 1902 Christmas Party charged each member with bringing a gift for another, “the more amusing the better,” value not to exceed 10 cents and wrapped to conceal the contents. In one seven-month season, members were asked to dress in costumes of “ye olden type” for one party, to dress up as a flower for another party, and to write a valentine limerick:

*There's a species of verse called a Limerick
It rolls off the tongue very nice 'n slick.
If each "Friendly" will write one
It will constitute quite fun
So send yours to Mrs. Pratt quick. (15)*

The following program descriptions were gleaned from the “Weston” column of the *Waltham Daily Free Press Tribune*. Information was also taken from season schedules and individual printed programs at the Weston Historical Society.

Ethical and Religious Topics

In the first few years, topics tended to be religious in nature. In *The First Parish Calendar*, Rev Charles Russell reported programs on the following topics: “How can our Young People best further the Interests of the Church,” “The Relation of Young People to the Church,” “Charity,” “Mental versus Physical Pleasures,” and “Our Opportunities.” (16)

Literary Evenings

February 1891. “Dickens: Characters and Dialogues from his Works.” Forty-one members were assigned characters from Dickens. The evening’s program lists a memorable line from each character, for example, Robert Winsor, the banker, was Mr. Mantalini: “My life is one demd [sic] horrid grind!” A. H. Hews was John Browdie: “Not a gentleman of great conversational powers” and Edward Fiske played Nicholas Nickleby: “A young man of an impetuous temper, and of little or no experience.” The members played their characters in a series of dialogues, for example, the courtship between Mr. Bumble and Mrs Corney. (17)

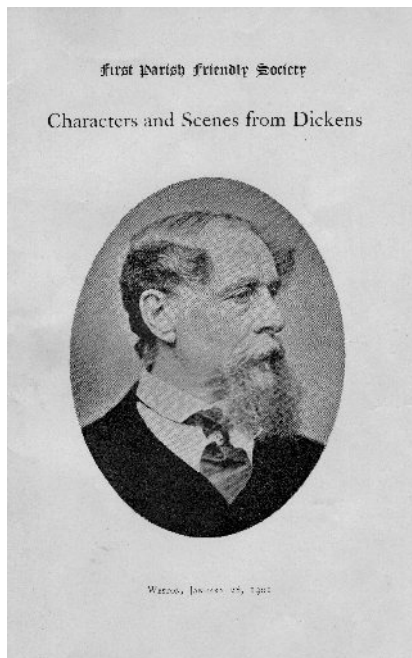
November 6, 1893. Miss L.E. Evans read “English Love Poems” divided into Chaucer’s time, the Elizabethan era, and the Victorian. “The paper and the classification of poems which accompanied it were peculiarly calculated to stimulate study and reflection.” (18)

October 13, 1891. “Hawthorne;” and April 9, 1894, “Life, Works, and Influences of Hawthorne;” followed by a discussion of his “real place in literature.” (19)

On January 17, 1894. The *First Parish Calendar* published part of a paper on Alfred Tennyson that had been presented at a Friendly meeting. On March 11, 1895, the meeting topic was “Who Shall Succeed Tennyson as Poet Laureate?”

January 28, 1901. “Characters and Scenes from Dickens.” Some 80 members dressed as their assigned Dickens character and read dialogues from seven books. The full list of members and their characters was reported in the newspaper. (20)

A Jane Austen program “Pride and Prejudice: Scenes from the Novel of Jane Austen” took place at Haleiwa on March 26, 1904, with five scenes arranged and directed by Jane Gale.



Charles Dickens was a perennial favorite. In one program, 41 members were assigned Dickens characters. In another, some 80 members dressed in their assigned Dickens character and read dialogues from seven of his books. (Courtesy Weston Historical Society)

Debates and Discussions of Current Events

November 14, 1892. Debate “Shall Women Vote?” Alice Jones and L.E. Evans argued in the Affirmative and Wm. H. Coburn and George S. Perry in the negative. Miss Evans opened the debate by presenting the moral side of the question. Wm. Coburn laid special emphasis on the fact that the majority of women did not care to vote. Miss Alice Jones’s paper “set forth in forcible terms the legal injustice of withholding the ballot from women or taxation without representation.” Mr. Perry countered: “woman’s proper sphere was the home.” A vote at the end of the meeting stood 16 to 1 in favor of the merits of the argument on the affirmative side but on the merits of the question itself, it was 13 to 9 in favor of the negative side. (21)

October 28, 1895. For the program “A Glance at Recent Events, Political, Scientific, and Literary,” the member scheduled to present the political commentary was absent. Rev. Russell thought this was just as well, in his summary in *The First Parish Calendar*:

Owing to the absence of the member who should have presented the political data, that part of the program was omitted. Perhaps it was as well for the harmony of the meeting that this should have happened, as even the small number present would hardly have looked upon political events from the same point of view. There may be a difference of opinion about the relative importance of scientific discoveries, and certainly not a unanimity of opinion upon the novels of the past year; but these differences are not felt to be of such vital importance as those on political questions. (22)

Fall 1900. “After the Election.” The main issues of the most recent campaign were presented from the standpoint of the Republican, Democratic, and Populist, along with the results of the election.

Other current events topics:

Remedies for Social Discontent

Do Modern Inventions and Improvements really Broaden Life?

The Woman of Today: Her Possibilities and Her Dangers

The Women of the White House

Modern Improvements

Our Fads

Historical and Weston-Related Programs

For the recurring topic “Historical Houses of Weston,” members researched and read papers on their own houses, for example, Ellen Jones on the Jones House/ Josiah Smith Tavern and Marion Case on her family’s summer home, “Rock-lawn” (now Case House). (23)

February 5, 1904. A newspaper report on the Mock Trial described the “much amused audience” watching a trial where the plaintiff charged the defendant, Weston High School principal Charles M. Eaton, with stealing a donkey. The defense was that he had purchased the donkey from P. J. McAuliffe. C.H. Fiske and Grant Palmer, both lawyers in reality, appeared as attorneys, and the committee in charge served as the “high minded and intelligent jury.” (24)

Members created a Town WarRant [sic] for a Friendly “Town Meeting” in March 1906, where “a determined and VICIOUS effort will be made to undermine the very foundations of our hearths, homes and other resorts. YOUR VOTE IS NEEDED!!!” Below are three of the articles:

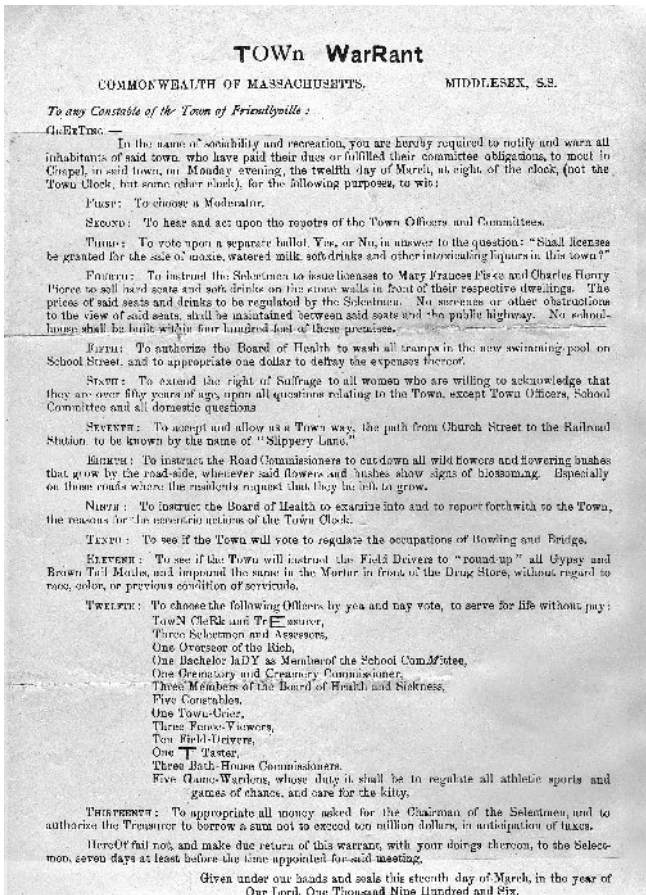
Fifth: To authorize the Board of Health to wash all tramps in the new swimming-pool on School Street . . .

Sixth: To extend the right of Suffrage to all women who are willing to acknowledge that they are over fifty years of age upon all questions relating to the Town except Town Officers, School Committee and all domestic questions;

Eighth: To instruct the Road Commissioners to cut down all wild flowers and flowering bushes that grow by the road-side, whenever said flowers and bushes show signs of blossoming. Especially on those roads where the residents request that they be left to grow.

Among town officers chosen was "One Overseer of the Rich." (25)

A postcard sent in late December 1906 asked for contributions to the "Weston Free Press:" an article—humorous or otherwise—an advertisement, want ad, or item of local interest.



The result was an "issue" of the "Weston Free Press," a satirical front page similar to the present day *Onion*. One article has local gentleman farmers entering their Guernsey cows into competition. Those mentioned had all boasted of owning the most remarkable, first-prize-winning livestock. Another headline spoke of "not a house left standing in Cambridge or Belmont" after the vigorous fight against gypsy and brown-tailed moths.

A third article gave the following amusing history of the problem-plagued Central Massachusetts Railroad, which had by then been taken over by the Boston & Maine:

The "TOWN WarRant" of 1906 was a satire on Town Meeting. One article would instruct the Field Drivers to round-up all Gypsy and Brown Tail Moths and impound them. (Courtesy Weston Historical Society)

Some sixty years ago to encourage the Company we provided them with a valuable strip of land running through our beautiful Town upon which to build a railroad. Of course they paid us for it and we got all we could. They put up a building and called it a station. We bought their stock and tickets with our hard earned money. . . .

Within the last few months we have noted some radical changes which we suppose are all in the line of progress and all right. For years the people on Pigeon Hill, Concord St., etc. have been falling, tumbling and rolling down hill to get to the trains, but now that is all changed. We do not have to hurry any more to get to the train, for there is no scheduled time. You go to the station and if the train is not there waiting for you, why you just sit down and wait until it comes along. This change has many advantages. Among others it avoids bringing on heart trouble . . .

We also note another change. In the past it has been the policy of the Company to have the cars swept out and cleaned up occasionally, but it has been discovered that this has a tendency to wear off the finish from the floors and also to disturb the microbes, so that in the future all the cleaning will be dispensed [sic] with.

The Company has discovered that reading in the cars is injurious to the eyes and will do all in its power to discourage patrons from reading by artificial light in the future, and to this end will see that the lights are turned down low and will substitute a cheaper grade of oil. The station agents along the line have also been instructed to close their stations at sunset and thus save the expense of fuel and light. (26)

American and world history was also considered. For example, on January 8, 1894, members presented papers on Stephen Girard, Charles Sumner, General Sherman, and Oliver Wendall Holmes. Here are other historical topics:

Christmas in the Olden Days

Our Town Library (27)

Old Weston

The Old Mill at Stony Brook

The Historic Buildings of Weston (28)

The Life of John Quincy Adams

Illustrated Travelogues

Miss Marion Case, who some years later established Hillcrest Farm, now the Case Estates, presented serious topics related to horticulture or traveling. "Miss Marion Case gave a very interesting talk before the FS Monday evening on Japan. She was assisted by a native Japanese." (29)

In 1910, Edmund Sears 2nd illustrated his Greek travels using stereopticon slides and Alfred W. Cutting discussed a "Coaching Trip in Rural England." (30)



The Committee suggest that you assume the costume of

Fifty years ago

Should you prefer any other character, kindly notify Mr. Coburn.

Mrs. LYMAN W. GALE
 Miss FLORENCE M. COBURN
 Miss ANNA HALL
 Mr. ARTHUR L. COBURN

Committee

Costume Parties

Friendly Society events often required dressing up. For a March 1892 "Book Title Party," members were requested to dress representing the title of a book. Those who did so paid 50 cents each and others 75 cents, with proceeds to benefit the Meadville Theological School. For other events, the invitation sometimes noted that no one would be admitted without a costume.

February 22, 1899. On Washington's Birthday, the Friendly held an American Costume Party at Town Hall. With the printed invitation came a small card: "The



Above: 1899 American Costume Party at Town Hall. Photos of three different groups were taken. Names listed in endnotes on page 45. Below: 1848 Weston Town Hall, demolished 1919. (Courtesy Weston Historical Society)



For a Harvest Home program in 1921, members were encouraged to wear their old farm clothes, “if you still got ‘em.” (Courtesy Weston Historical Society)

Committee suggest that you assume the costume of _____. Should you prefer any other character, kindly notify Mr. Coburn.”

Uncle Sam was the host; and Lady Washington, with Mrs. Columbia, received, assisted by the Senoritas Cuba, Porto Rico [sic], Filipina, and Hawaii. The “subscription” was 25 cents. Below are just a few of the characters dressed up for a night of dancing and refreshments:

The indefatigable committee had assigned the roles, which were not confined to the Colonial period but represented every age and clime from the Norseman, Leif Erickson, in glittering armour, to our little newly adopted tropical sisters

Uncle Sam did the honors. . .and introduced each pair. . .as they passed in array before him. Old friends seemed strange, and well-known faces and forms quite unlike themselves when they posed as Colonial dames or Fathers of the Nation

King Charles II, forgetful of the woes of his house and his own exile, entered as heartily as any into the hilarity of the evening.

Alexander Hamilton, “the rock on which our nation was founded,” was seen dancing with Nellie Curtis and Lady Arabella Johnson, to all appearance forgetful of finance and Imperialism . . . The noted Jesse James peacefully met and greeted Uncas, the Last of the Mohicans. . . . Robert Fulton and Heinrich Hudson, insensible of chronological discrepancies, compared notes on navigation of the Hudson. (31)

Present day readers may not recognize some of the assigned characters, for example, Mary Chilton, Priscilla Mullins, Maud Muller, Peggy Chew, Governor Van Twiller, Robert Ritner, Lady Wentworth, and Sir Harry Vane.

The society frequently staged tableaux, described by Brenton H. Dickson III in *Once Upon a Pung*:

The effect of an oil painting is created by a large frame on the stage, behind which one or more persons pose for fifteen seconds or so and represent perhaps a famous painting or some typical scene. (32)

In October 1900, about 70 persons were entertained by 21 tableaux illustrating advertisements that had been widely published during the previous six months. The best of them were said to be these: Queen quality shoes, Quaker oats, Fairy

soap, Sozodont, Whitman's chocolates, Leibigs extracts, the Antiseptic hat-pad, and Dent's toothache gum. Members had to guess what product was being advertised, and William Munroe correctly guessed the largest number—twelve. (33)

1899 or 1900. An undated newspaper clipping describes a Minstrel Show, probably the one held during the 1899-1900 season. According to the article, this was a new type of entertainment for the group: "It has never tried to be Minstrel before, but after this the general opinion is that it may be anything it undertakes:"

The costumes, disguises and dialect were so far superior to those usually attained by amateurs as to merit special notice. The striped coat, flapping straw hat, yawning carpet bag, umbrella and slippers, the cadaverous spectacle. . . in short, the whole gaunt figure of Rev. Slim Jim will never be forgotten. . .

The local touches and home brewed jokes were capital, accomplishing the sometimes difficult feat of combining fun and humor, with delicacy and kindly regard for everyone's feelings.

The minstrel introduction by "Eph" served to present the "colored bre-deren" [sic] to their appreciative audience. . . . [Enthusiastically applauded was] Mr. Bingo Bink's satire on the delicacy of our progeny who have to be conveyed to school in barges to the turn of \$3000 a year. (34)

Another Minstrel Show was given on February 7, 1924.

Another entertainment that today would be considered insensitive was the January 1905 "Poverty Party" at Town Hall, attended by about 60 couples and considered the highlight of the season:

Some of the characters were very unique. Mr. Jennie [sic] as the mechanical toy peddler was a decided hit, as was C.H. Fiske, Esq. as the ragman; Mr. Chandler as the vender of the Simple Life; A. H. Sibley as the Jew peddler; Mrs. Arthur Russell as the street musician; Miss Carrie Merriam as Salvation Army girl; Miss Ware in costume of newspaper; Mrs. W. H. Coburn as the pan holder [sic] woman; and Mrs. Jennie [sic] as the apple woman were some of the most appropriately costumed. Mrs.



Participants at a Costume Party at Weston Town Hall on February 4, 1913. (Courtesy Weston Historical Society)

Charles Paine, Miss Florence Coburn, Miss Carrie Merriam and Miss Petty Lane received in rags. In one corner of the hall a jail had been arranged and anyone appearing in evening clothes was arrested. Mr. H.S. Sears and H.S. Bailey were thus treated, but were later released on bail furnished by the ladies, 25 cents, wooden money. (35)

For Washington's Birthday in 1904, a "Mother Goose" costume party at Town Hall was followed by dancing. The newspaper account noted: "the gentlemen very considerably allowed the ladies to do all the work." (36)

March 1907. A "Peddlars' [sic] Party" was held at Town Hall, which was decorated and placarded "to represent various conditions of street vending, with a lunch wagon, Punch & Judy show, etc." At 8:30 pm there was a grand parade of peddlers representing street vendors, preceded by a band, and afterwards, dancing to the music of a hand organ. (37)

Games

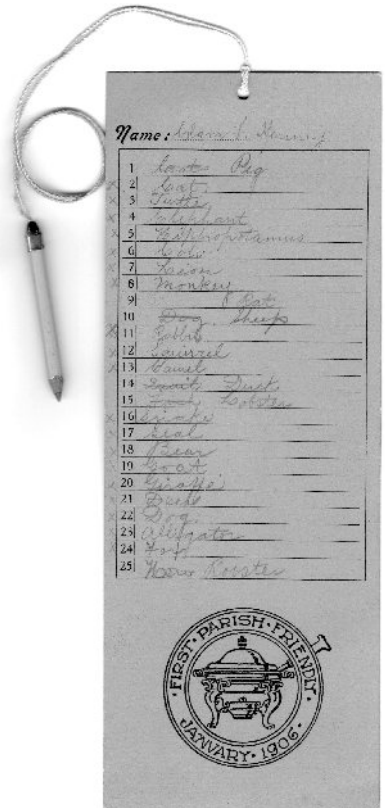
These included charades, spelling bees, and pronunciation matches, where words were written on a blackboard to be pronounced. Also popular were card games such as whist and hearts.

December 18, 1893. An "Observation Party." Each participant was given a practical test of the five senses, demonstrating "how much our different faculties unconsciously help each other." (38)

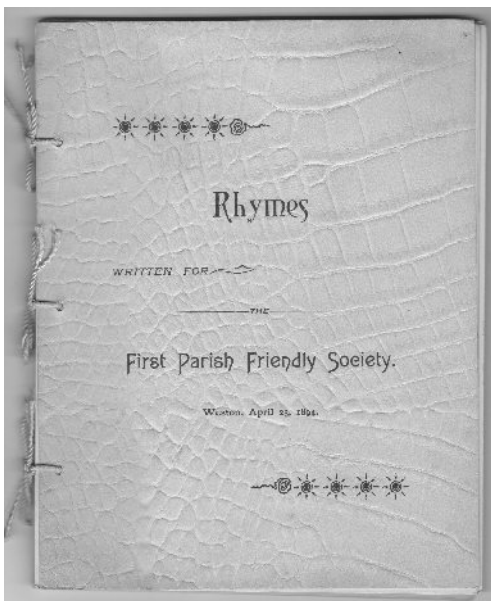
April 23, 1894. A dinner with a printed program of riddles, for example:

*I came in the Spring with the robin
and wren; But I took to the woods
'till I grew a plump hen; Though
gayest of feathers once covered my
breast; With lettuce and mayonnaise
cream I'm now dressed.*

A postcard was sent to attendees with this handwritten message "The roll will be called, and each member is requested to respond with an alliterative sentence beginning with the first letter of his or her own name."



Game card from the January 1906 program where members had to draw animals and others had to guess what animal the drawings represented. (Gift of Eloise Kenney)



This 1894 printed book contains poems incorporating names of members, along with parodies of well-known classics. (Courtesy Weston Historical Society)

January 1906. Members were given a card and had to draw the animal named on the card. “Kindly disposed friends” tried to name the animals represented. (See score card on page 20) (39)

April 1909. There was considerable guessing about the entertainment entitled “Guessing.” Some weeks later, the newspaper had this report: “At the Friendly Society Guessers’ Night the book title guessing contest was won by Miss Cutter . . . The illustrations on the black board contest [was] won by Mrs. Pratt. The guessing on the number of seeds in five dozen lemons was won by Mrs. Jenney who guessed 180, there being 134. The entertainment was concluded by Mr. and Mrs. Floyd with slight-of-hand and mind reading.” (40)

Literary Creations

For the April 23, 1894, meeting, the last of the season, members read from the book *Rhymes Written for The First Parish Friendly Society*, which was printed and distributed. (41)

The first poem began with this verse:

*In a dim attic, somewhere here in Weston
Though at whose house they begged me not to say,
Stands a machine, which when the button's pressed on,
Makes rhymes, so poor they seldom see the day.*

Included in the 33-page booklet are rhymes incorporating the names of members, for example, this one for Brendon H. Dickson Jr.:

*What can I fix on
To rhyme with Dickson?
If it were “Brent,”
Why, there 'd be sent,
Or meant, or lent,
Or consequent;
Or “Brenton,” went on*

*Mischief bent on,
Or paid his rent on
A certain day.
But this word "Dickson"
One plays no tricks on . . .*

There follow a series of verses inspired by famous poems, such as this example, "After Tennyson:"

*Half a year, half a year,
Half a year onward
Into the realm of work
 Push our half hundred.
"Forward the Light Brigade!
Charge for your share" 'twas said.
Into the programme's teeth
 Dashed our half hundred.*

*"Forward the Light Brigade!"
Was one of us dismayed
Not tho' sometimes we knew
 Assignments blundered.
Ours not to scold or cry,
Ours not to argufy—
Ours but to go and try!
Into the realm of work
 Pushed our half hundred.*

*Ruskin—to right of us
Browning to left of us
Hawthorne—in front of us
 Volleyed and thundered;
Culling their best, to tell,
Boldly we wrote and well.
Into tradition's jaws
Into old facts pell-mell
 Dashed our half hundred.*



The Weston Historical Society owns photographs like this of plays performed at the Sears theater at Haleiwa in the first two decades of the 20th century. Because non-Friendly Society plays were also given at Haleiwa, it is not possible to determine for sure that this was a Friendly production. Theater historians — can you help identify this play? (Courtesy Weston Historical Society)

Theatricals

From the beginning, Friendly Society members produced plays for their own enjoyment and as fundraisers. Generally, these were described as comedies, farces, and melodramas in two and three acts. In the 1890s, the cast was small and production values simple.

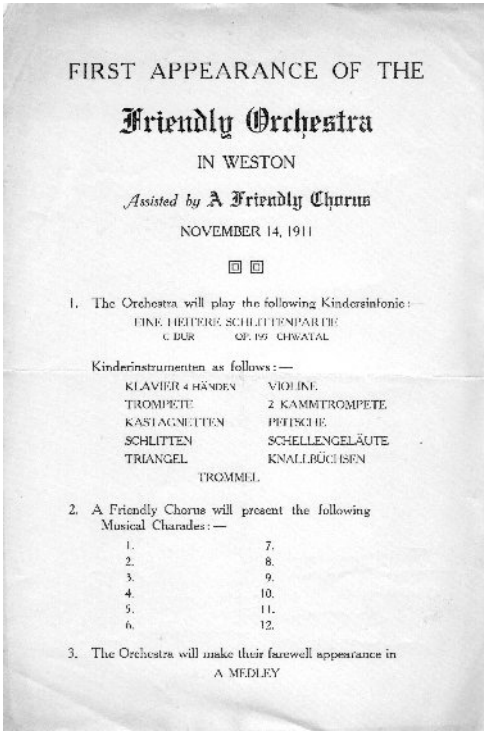
March 1895. *A Rice Pudding* was described in *The First Parish Calendar* as follows:

. . . one of the brightest, and [it] was presented so well that many wish to see it repeated before a larger audience . . . The evening added one more proof, if proof were needed, showing that we have an unusual amount of dramatic ability in our midst. (42)

In 1896, *Who is Who* or *Lost in a Fog* was such a success that it was repeated in Town Hall to benefit Waltham Hospital.

The February 1907 dramatics required three special railroad cars to be attached to the 2:40 train from Boston so that Boston friends would be able to attend. (43)

November 1908. A vaudeville show featured songs, skits, and a one-act comedy. One performer called “Chameleon” was a “lightning change artist just returned



from a phenomenal tour of the London Music halls, presenting with whirlwind rapidity a gorgeous and kaleidoscope pageant entitled the ‘Parade of Nations’” . . . (44)

November 1910. For its 25th Anniversary Season, the Friendly performed *Mollentrave on Women* at Jordan Hall in Boston under the auspices of the Boston Homemaking Club, which helped low-income families learn about household management. The play was repeated at Haleiwa for the benefit of the Weston District Nursing Association.

Musical Programs

December 1894. The “Evening of Music” was an organ recital of works by composers such as Schubert, Schumann, Van Weber, and Tours,

each selection proceeded by a short sketch of the composer’s life read by a member. (45)

February 1910. The musical night, held at the chapel, featured an orchestra trained under the direction of Robert Winsor, Jr. and made up of boys from the North End. (46)

October 1910. For the 25th anniversary celebration, 200 attended the banquet and post-prandial program. Strauch’s Waltham orchestra furnished incidental music. Dr. Edith Spaulding played violin solos and Arthur Wellington, a “comparatively new comer in Weston,” sang “with great acceptance” several selections. (47)

November 1911. In its first appearance, the Friendly Orchestra, assisted by the Friendly Chorus, played a Kindersinfonie (child symphony) with Kinderinstrumenten (children’s instruments). The Friendly Chorus presented musical charades, with space on the program for attendees to write their guesses. These charades were mostly about people, with the answers, written on a printed program at WHS, being “Nellie Jones”, “Horace Sears” etc. (48)

Most years there was at least one serious music program featuring a musician from outside Weston.

Unusual and Miscellaneous

For a 1905 Valentine's Day party, members created original valentines and handed them to the committee, who determined to whom the valentine should be given. When each valentine was to be given out, the name of the fortunate recipient was announced and he or she stood while the verse was read to the company. Robert Winsor and Mrs. Arthur Russell read the verses, "many of which contained amusing and good-natured personal references." (49)

A December 1906 invitation promised a "Loan Exhibition of Pictures Harvested, Stored and Re-Stored by the Cropley Society of Weston" with paintings by "Frank W. Has-benson," and other artists loaned by the "Corking Art Gallery." (50)

For the "Country Fair" in November 1907, "Each member is earnestly requested to loan. . . the most curious, odd, or interesting article, of any description, possessed by each one. . ." The account in the newspaper mentions Everett Brotchie performing on a tight rope, Horace Kenney as the Strong Man, Walter Kenney as an aeronaut, and Mr. Thurston as a giantess. An autograph quilt was raffled. (51)

Other programs defy categorization, for example "Ghost Stories and Superstitions," described in *The First Parish Calendar* as "unique in the annals of the Society:"

The first thing on the program was a paper called 19th Century Superstitions, where . . . [there] were some of the most widely spread and generally observed signs and omens of the present century.

After this each person was given a pencil and paper and asked to write his pet superstition. Many and varied were they, showing that even such a sensible (?) [sic] people as the First Parish Friendly Society are not invulnerable.

One eminently practical young man admitted putting on first his right boot then his left; then lacing his right, then lacing his left. Another Father of the town is a firm believer in the divining rod, and trustfully digs his well where it points. One young lady thinks if you 'Comb your hair after dark/You'll comb sorrow into your heart.' And so on.

After these had been read, the lights were extinguished:

. . . all gathered about the blazing open fire, much too cheery to produce the dim, sepulchral gloom necessary for the proper appreciation of ghost stories. However, the narrators threw as much awe as possible into voice and manner, and if every individual hair did not stand on end like quills upon the fretful porcupine, it was not their fault. (52)



In 1898, Horace Sears began the planning and development of his estate, "Haleiwa." The photo above, taken about 1905, shows the finished mansion, designed by Joseph Everett Chandler. The first part of the house to be completed was the 200-seat theater wing at the left, designed by Weston resident and architect Harold Graves. The center photo is the south facade and the bottom photo the north facade, where the main entrance was located. In January 1901, Sears held a reception at the theater for friends and neighbors. The formal opening took place in November 1901. (Courtesy Weston Historical Society)

1900 to 1915: A New Century, a New Theater

In 1898, at age 43, Horace Sears began to develop his estate, Haleiwa, including an impressive Second Italian Renaissance Revival mansion atop the hill just east of the church. The principal architect was Joseph Everett Chandler; but the first phase, a 200-seat theater, was designed by Weston architect Harold Graves. In the coming years, Graves would build a house on Pigeon Hill and play important roles in Friendly plays.

Sears's theater was referred to as a "casino," a term used in the 19th century to refer to edifices built on the grounds of a larger Italian villa and used to host town functions including dancing, gambling, and music. In January 1901, Sears held a reception at his new "casino" attended by an estimated 150 to 200 neighbors and friends. A more formal opening took place in November that year with an exclusive performance to raise money for charity.

The first Friendly Society event held at Haleiwa may have been the masquerade party originally scheduled for December 1901 but postponed until early January 1902. The theater was also used for events and theatricals sponsored by other groups.

The Friendly Society was very active in the early 20th century, with as many as 14 programs in the early 20th century, decreasing gradually to 10 in 1913-14 and eight from the late 1910s to the early 1930s. Depending on the activity and expected attendance, programs took place at the Haleiwa theater, the First Parish chapel, or the 1848 Town Hall. None of these venues exists today. The Sears mansion was torn down after World War II; the old Town Hall was demolished in 1919 (after the new Town Hall opened in 1917); and the original First Parish chapel and parish hall was replaced by the present parish hall (1924) and chapel (1930). Horace Sears was involved in each of these construction projects.

An article in the magazine *Suburban Life* in December 1906, headlined "An Ideal Suburban Society," praised the First Parish Friendly Society as "an almost ideal social organization." The author noted that clubs and church societies in suburban towns "as a rule . . . are somewhat "cliquey," and seldom unite the town in one bond of union, and seldom provide what may be called 'animating' amusement." The author praised the variety of entertainments, the fact that meetings were held in public spaces rather than homes, the quality of the dramatic performances, and "the by-law that forbids any one, on pain of forfeiting membership, to refuse any office or duty assigned to him." He concludes: "there is no reason why other towns should not follow its example" and produce a society "successful both in town unity and in personal enjoyment." (53)

Early 20th Century Changes

On September 5, 1907, a notice included with the seasonal program discusses changes. Most of the meetings would now be on Tuesday evenings instead of Mondays, so that the Dramatic Committee could have a dress rehearsal the evening before the final performance. It was thought best to have all meetings on the same day of the week. A late date for the "Exit" meeting would allow for outdoor festivities. Also, because demand for guest tickets for theatricals was far in excess of supply, it was decided to perform each play twice, on successive evenings. All members would get their own ticket and one other, after specifying which performance they would attend. For all other meetings, guest tickets were limited to 25 and could be obtained from the secretary, Miss Alice Jones.

With the program for the 1909-10 season, the Executive Committee sent out a notice containing detachable coupons for the two dramatic performances. The actual tickets could be obtained only after the date of the preceding entertainment. The committee noted that an extra assessment had been recently levied and a change in the by-laws increasing the annual dues was found to be "absolutely necessary" to maintain the present high standard of entertainments. Perhaps the need to raise money inspired Friendly Society and First Parish ladies to contribute recipes to the book *A Choice Collection of New England Recipes* by Francis Pratt, published in 1910.



Miss Alice Jones was one of the 13 founders of the Friendly Society in 1885. In 1940, at age 79, she was still serving as prompter and helping sell tickets for So Deep.

As was becoming customary, the Executive Committee sent a letter with the seasonal roster for 1913-14, explaining why they had decided to reduce the number of entertainments and somewhat shorten the season, include a few performances by "outside talent," and reduce the membership of each committee to a small working body.

The following sentence was included for the first time, presumably at the request of Alice Jones, who was still in charge of tickets: "Applications by telephone will be considered only when made after six o'clock in the evening."

In 1914-15 the society issued a printed book with 268 member names.

“To Be Young in Spirit and Old in Wisdom”

In 1913, a report by Edward Fiske, president of First Parish Church, began with the quote: “Tall oaks from little acorns grow:”

. . . I remember the Friendly many years ago as a very little acorn. Our membership was small, and our entertainments were simple, — mostly literary discussions: Our annual assessment was fifty cents. We had no beautiful theatre for our occasional dramatic performances, and dances were not part of our curriculum. But there was one thing that we always did have, and that was the Friendly spirit, which has happily lasted to the present day, and without which our society would have no really social significance. . . . I believe our Friendly Society to be unique in one particular. It is not a society for the old nor for the young nor for the middle-aged, but it is a society where all meet on a common footing and with a common purpose. We all aim to be young in spirit and old in wisdom. No others need apply for admission. (55)

Fiske goes on to discuss a problem that he felt should be addressed, which was the increasing cost and elaborateness of programs. Perhaps his observation was in response to the four dances of the 1912-13 season: an opening Ball, Thanksgiving Dance, Costume Party, and Spring Frolic:

In this connection I would say that the Council feel that the proper equilibrium between the wisdom of age and the enthusiasm of youth has been somewhat disturbed of late, with the result that youthful enthusiasm has come out a little ahead, causing our entertainments to become too costly and elaborate. The dances are among the most expensive forms of amusement . . . and of late the treasury has been suffering from an excess of dances. While a return of our programmes [sic] to the Jeffersonian simplicity of twenty-five years ago is not only undesirable, but impossible, yet I think that I violate no confidence in saying that the Executive Committee contemplate a somewhat more conservative programme [sic] in future than has prevailed of late. (56)

1915-1936: Broadway Comes to Weston

The year 1915 marked a shift in direction for the Friendly Society, now 30 years old. The change was foreshadowed in the notice sent with the annual program for 1914-15 promising “some entertainments of proved worth and acceptance and some new features:”

In this connection we beg to express our regret at the diminishing attendance at the entertainments other than dances and dramatics. Each committee works hard to offer the members an enjoyable and profitable evening, and it is discouraging when their efforts fail of general apprecia-

tion, and discouraging also for those who take part . . . to be greeted by small audiences. (57)

While not specified, it appears that the more educational programs, such as travelogues, debates, and historical papers, were losing favor.

In the spring of 1915, the society staged *A Nautical Knot*, an operetta in two acts with a cast of 12 principals, a chorus of 21, and 29 musical numbers. This type of light comic opera was the precursor of the modern musical, and *A Nautical Knot* is considered the Friendly's first musical. Five performances were given at Haleiwa, two for members, one for the Baby Hospital and two to benefit the E.H. Sears Guild. The operetta was such a success that the society produced *The Red Mill* in 1919, also at Sears's theater, for the benefit of Waltham Hospital.

The Red Mill

The Red Mill, a musical comedy in two acts, was the work of Victor Herbert, who is best known for composing successful operettas that premiered on Broadway from the 1890s to World War I. In the 1920s, the Friendly produced two more of his works, *M'lle Modeste*, and *Sweethearts*.



Cast photo for *The Red Mill* taken at the Sears theater at Haleiwa in 1919. Seated in the front row center in a black dress is Jane Gale, who managed the production, with her niece Mary Winsor Trumbull, to her left. (Courtesy Weston Historical Society)

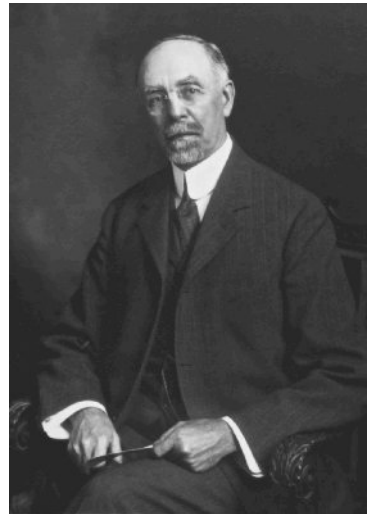
The Red Mill had 12 main characters plus six boys and six girls in the “Sextets” and 23 peasants for a total cast of 47. It was managed by Jane Winsor Gale, assisted by her niece, Robert Winsor’s daughter Mary. Jane Gale was a talented actress who also wrote her own plays. In 1912, she had founded the experimental Boston Toy Theatre, located in a refurbished stable seating 127. The Toy company of amateur actors produced plays for two and a half years under the direction of Mrs. Gale, who brought at least one of their productions to the Friendly. During World War I, Jane Gale spent 11 months as a YMCA canteen worker, and in 1919 she founded the Women’s Community League.

The Red Mill marked a turning point in Friendly Society history. It was one of the first large benefit musicals that gradually replaced the bimonthly programs and social events that had characterized the society up to that time. It was also the last major Friendly Society production at Haleiwa. After this, major musical comedies were performed every three years at Sears Hall in the new Town Hall rather than at Horace Sears’s private theater.

Sears Hall was the name given to the auditorium on the second floor of the present Town Hall, completed in 1917. Horace Sears had been actively involved in the Town Improvement Plan that led to the creation of the new town green and replacement of the old wood-frame 1848 Town Hall with the present brick Colonial Revival building. His donation of \$20,000, added to the town’s \$75,000 appropriation, made it possible for the 1917 Town Hall to have a suitable meeting hall/theater. To keep from going over budget, Sears also donated additional funds for lighting fixtures, seating, and even draperies for the new auditorium, which was given his name. (58)

In November 1922, just months before his death, Sears also offered to pay for a new parish hall at First Parish Church, in memory of all the former ministers. He died on April 23, 1923, at age 68. In his will, Sears left \$35,000 to First Parish Church for the hall, which was formally dedicated in December 1924. Thus Sears provided the Friendly Society with two new venues to replace his private theater at Haleiwa.

Horace Scudder Sears, Weston’s greatest benefactor, died on April 23, 1923. In the years before his death, and in his will, Sears made sure that the Friendly Society would have a theater in the new Town Hall and a smaller theater and meeting space in a new parish hall at the church. (Courtesy Weston Historical Society)

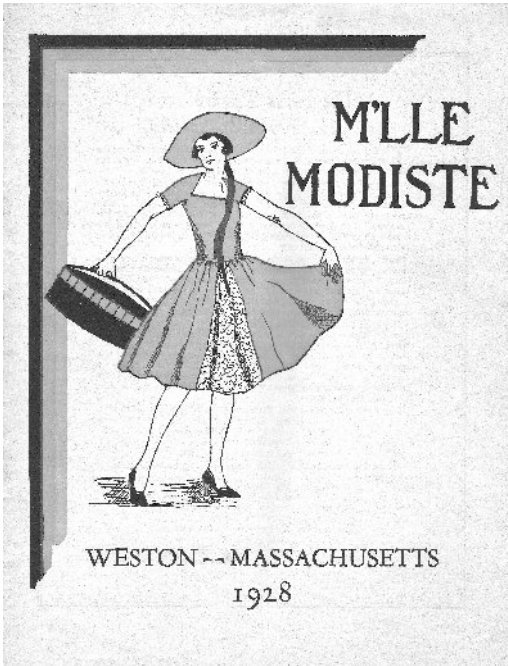




The 1920s and 1930s

Three years after *The Red Mill*, in April 1922, the Friendly Society produced its third major musical, *Going Up*. The program was the first to carry advertisements. Robert Winsor Jr. directed the 11-piece orchestra and also played the piano. Set in Lenox, Massachusetts, at the end of World War I, the musical tells the story of a writer turned aviator who wins the hand of the high society girl with his daring handling of a biplane. The musical ran for more than a year on Broadway in 1917.

Going Up was followed, at three-year intervals, by *Sweethearts* (1925), *Mlle Modiste* (1928), and *Hit the Deck* (1931). All four had been popular Broadway hits. *Sweethearts* had a cast of 18, plus 18 chorus and a 15-piece orchestra directed by Robert Winsor Jr. *Mlle Modiste* was even larger. These two were the first Friendly plays to have 8.5" X 11" programs replete with advertisements and long lists of participants and patronesses. Proceeds were donated to Waltham Hospital. Two of the three performances of *Hit the Deck* benefited the Weston Public Health Nursing Service.

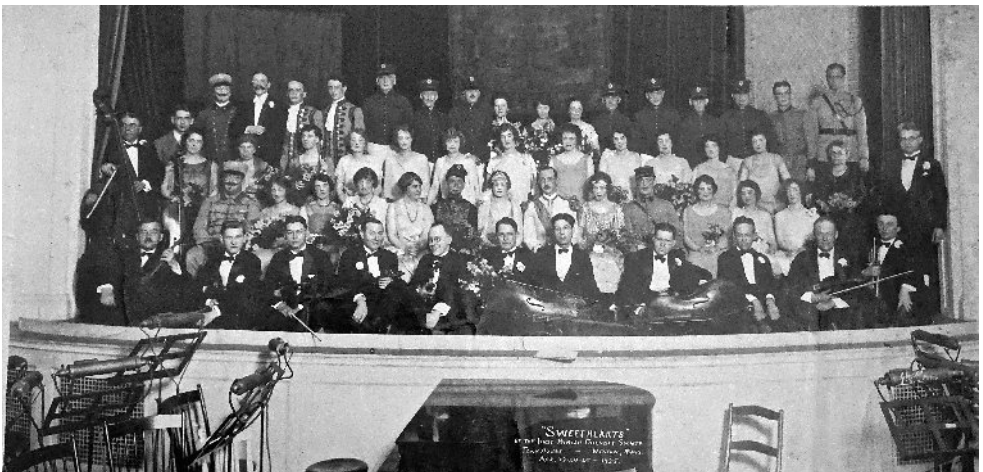


Left page and above: Friendly Society programs for Going Up (1922), Sweethearts (1925) and M'lle Modiste (1928). All three were Broadway hits in the early 20th century.

In March 1924, an ambitious program of "Tableaux Vivants" illustrated American, English and Continental musical comedies from 1878 to 1914.

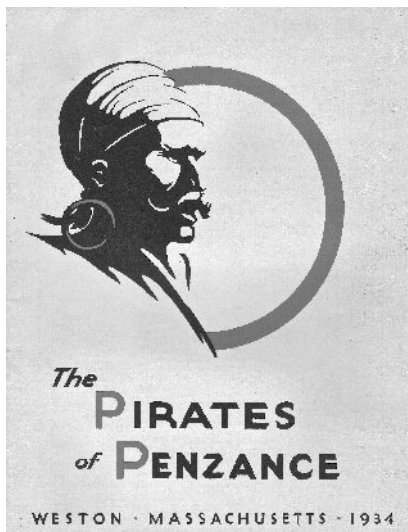
One new activity was the June 1926 County Fair at Meadowbrook School grounds, with exhibits of flowers, vegetables, and food stuffs, animal show (to which you could bring your pet dog, cat, or rooster), doll parade, ice cream, pop corn, peanuts and cigars, fortune teller, Pony rides, sports for boys and girls of all ages, horse show, and brass band. Profits were donated to Waltham Hospital. In 1935 there was a "New Deal Dance," a "Canoe Picnic," and an annual meeting with "movies."

A new idea for the 1932-33 season was the "Indoor Sport Fest," held at the gymnasium in the newly constructed Weston High School (now Brook School Building C). Athletic nights continued in the following years.



Cast photo for the 1925 production of Sweethearts at Sears Hall in the new Weston Town Hall.. (Courtesy Weston Friendly Society)

In April 1934, the Friendly performed Gilbert & Sullivan's *Pirates of Penzance*. Proceeds from two of the three nights were donated to Waltham Hospital. Two of the lead actors, Henry W. Patterson as the Pirate Chief and Brenton H. Dickson III as Major General Stanley, would go on to write original musicals for the society.



Clockwise from upper left: 1) Henry W. Patterson played the role of pirate chief in Pirates of Penzance and went on to collaborate on five original Friendly musicals; 2) 1934 program for Pirates of Penzance; 3) Cast members Stanley French; and 4) David Blaney. (Courtesy Weston Historical Society)

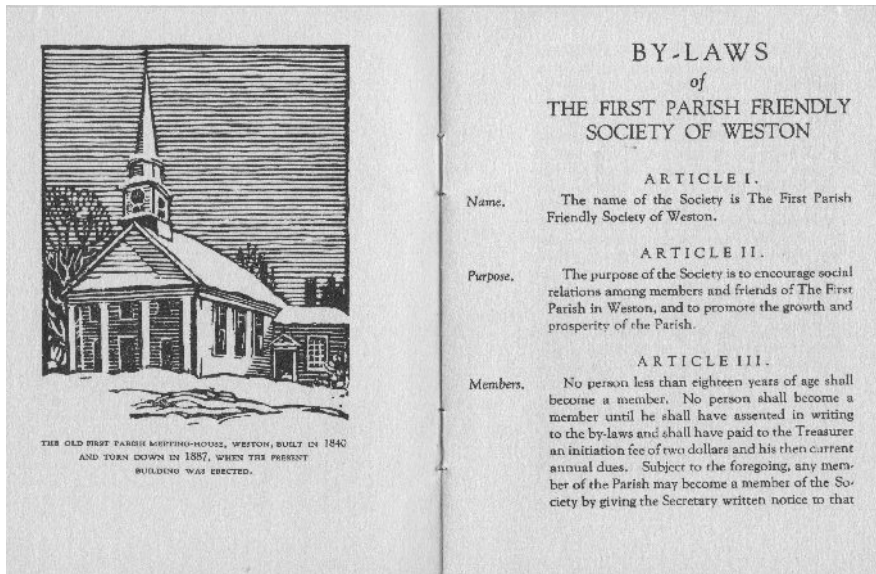
While the theatricals, especially the major musicals every third year, were becoming much more ambitious, the Friendly Society continued to offer varied programs in the 1920s (eight to ten per year) and 1930s (eight per year, later reduced to six), often including two dances/parties, two theatricals, an evening of card playing, and the annual meeting.

The Friendly Society celebrated its Fiftieth Anniversary on December 18, 1935, in the parish hall. Lyman W. Gale served as master of ceremonies, introducing tableaux from Friendly plays of 1885, 1895, 1905, 1915, 1925, and 1935. Included in the program notes is this observation on social change in the preceding five decades:

The great change in transportation methods and the increase in the variety of entertainment available in the present day have naturally had their effect on the yearly programs, but as the Society was originally founded on service and friendliness and as that tradition has been carefully maintained it finds itself at the end of fifty years with its vigor unimpaired . . .

The six charter members present—Anna Coburn Hastings, Ellen and Alice Jones, Hattie Perry, Mrs. Jacob Hagar, and Charles Kenney — received an ovation. (59)

By-laws were revised in 1937 and printed in a charming letterpress booklet with woodcuts of the 1840 and 1888 meetinghouses. Even though by that time there were many Friendly members who did not belong to First Parish Church, the stated purpose was still “to encourage social relations among members and



The 1937 printed by-laws included this wood-block print of the 1840 First Parish Church, which was demolished to make way for the present fieldstone church. (Courtesy Weston Historical Society).

friends of The First Parish in Weston, and to promote the growth and prosperity of the Parish.” The by-laws specified that the four officers had to be members of the church. Anyone who was not a member of First Parish and wished to join the Friendly Society had to have three recommendations (two from members of the parish) and had to be approved by the Executive Committee. Annual dues were \$3. One earlier requirement no longer included was that members had to accept any committee assignment offered.

1937 – 1971: The Original Musicals

During the Depression, the Friendly Society decided to save money on royalties by writing original shows.(60) Between 1937 and 1971, the society produced ten original musical comedies written entirely by members and sometimes chosen from three or four original submissions. The first was *Many Happy Returns* (1937), with book and lyrics by Henry W. Patterson and music by Robert M. Whittemore. Francis W. Hatch and others contributed songs and specialties. Patterson and Hatch collaborated on the next four Friendly musicals — *So Deep* (1940), *Personal Service* (1947), *Escape on the Cape* (1950), and *Never Walk Alone* (1953) — and became known as the “Rogers & Hammerstein” of the Friendly.

Henry Whiteley Patterson (1897-1969) was raised in Wayland and later settled in Weston. He entered Harvard in the Class of 1920, and, after serving in France during World War I, returned to graduate in 1922. Patterson worked as a reporter, editor, and author of several books for boys. In 1930, he founded the advertising firm Harold Cabot & Company. He was president of the Friendly Society in 1939, chairman of Weston’s 250th anniversary in 1963, and a founding member of the Weston Historical Society, for which he wrote the play *Around the Cracker Barrel* (1968).

Francis Whiting Hatch (1897-1975) the other half of the writing team, was a member of the Harvard Class of 1919. Hatch was a Boston businessman, writer, poet, playwright, composer, performer, and philanthropist. He did not live in Weston. Hatch loved writing musical comedies; and his work was produced by amateur theatre groups including the Friendly Society, Volks Theater in Wayland, and a family theatre group in his summer home in Castine, Maine. Hatch was best known for the songs "Some Coward Closed the Old Howard," a humorous paean to Boston’s famous vaudeville house and "Vote Early and Often for Curley," a reelection campaign song for Boston Mayor James Michael Curley. His son, Frank Jr., and Patterson’s daughter, Jane Patterson Paine, played leading roles opposite each other in *Never Walk Alone*.

Generally the original musicals were produced every three years and were considered the highlights of the Friendly calendar. Proceeds for the first six original musicals were donated to Waltham Hospital. Beginning with *Jericho* in 1959,

proceeds were split between the hospital and the David A. Perry Memorial Scholarship Fund benefiting Weston High School students.

The first four of the 10 original musicals are featured in this issue. The rest will be included in Part II, in the Fall 2016 *Bulletin*.

Many Happy Returns (1937)

So Deep (1940)

Personal Service (1947)

Escape on the Cape (1950)

Never Walk Alone (1953)

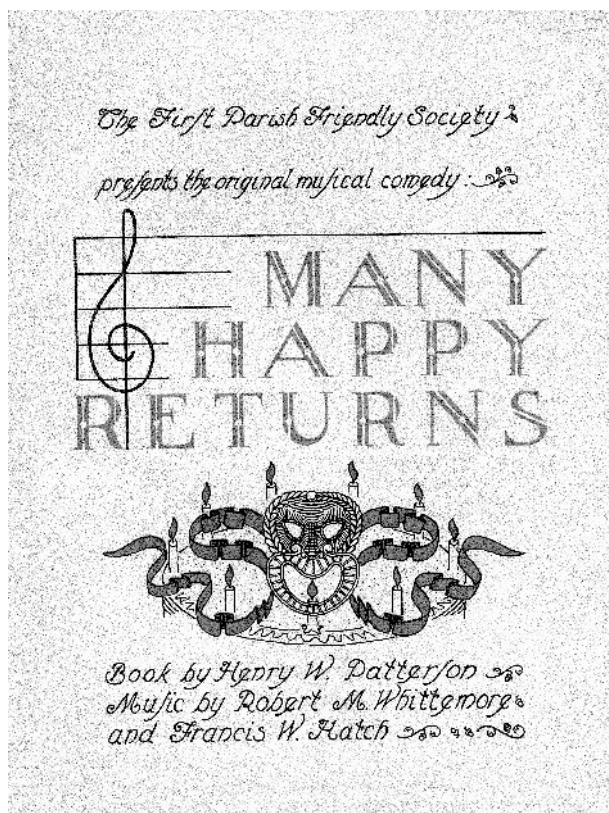
All Kidding Aside (1956)

Jericho (1959)

On the Fence (1962)

Down to Earth (1965)

Dump (1971)



#1

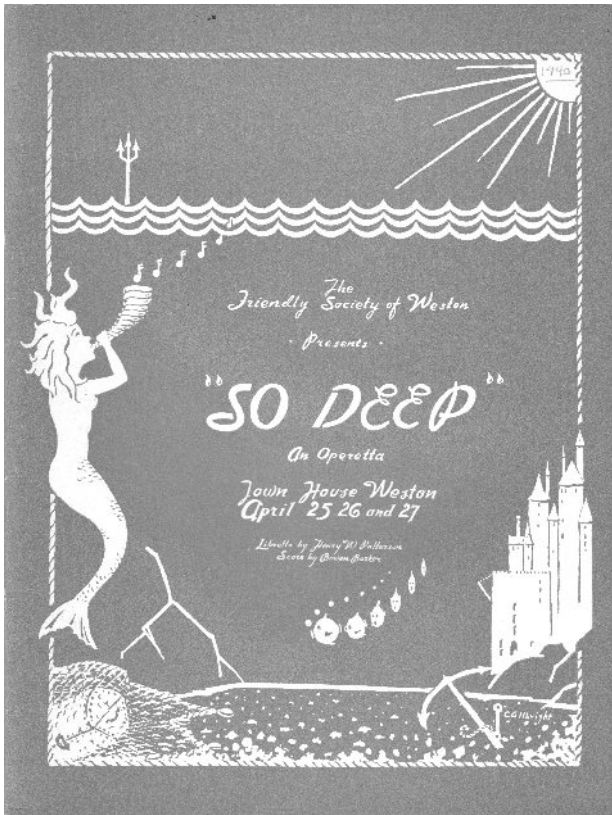
Many Happy Returns

April 22, 23, 24, 1937
Weston Town Hall

Book by Henry W. Patterson.
Music and Lyrics by Robert
M. Whittmore and Francis
W. Hatch. "Specialties" by
Frederick Winsor Jr, Brenton
H. Dickson III, W. Barton
Leach, Jr., and Donald D.
Reynolds.

Ruby Newman's Orchestra.

Weston Historical Society
does not have a program for
Many Happy Returns.



#2 So Deep

April 25, 26, 27, 1940
Weston Town Hall

Book by Henry W. Patterson. Music by Bowen Barker, Francis W. Hatch, F. Stacey Holmes, Helen Wheeler, Margaret L. Gruner, W. Barton Leach, Jr; and Mabel Todd. Lyrics by the same musicians plus Henry W. Patterson.

Directed by Mrs. J. Sidney Stone.

Weston Historical Society has the program and musical score for So Deep.

Described as “an original fantastic musical comedy for leap year,” the 1940 operetta *So Deep* was also written entirely by members of the Society. The plot is explained in the program as follows:

This is Leap Year, and things are somewhat topsy-turvy, both on land and in the sea. For example, you might expect a young fisherman, casting near a river mouth, to catch a trout — but certainly not the astonishing and exotic specimens that Will Ketchum pulls in at the beginning of the light, bright, and slightly miraculous musical comedy So Deep. Add to the scene a handsome and affectionate Princess who dwells in the ocean, and an inventor who has made it possible for humans to live under water, and things threaten to grow interesting.

Meet Neptune, Queen Amphitrite, Davy Jones and his men, and Elaine, a villainous maid-in-waiting. The spectacular dancing of a dazzling chorus of mermaids and pirates, ‘the rich music of the sea — the music of storm and calm, of love and hate, of despair and jollity.’ (61)

The War Years

Original musicals and many other Friendly activities were suspended during the war years. A letter from president Herbert Crouch and program chair Mrs. Reginald Elwell on November 5, 1943, explained the situation:

During World War I the Friendly Society carried on its social activities as usual but in World War II it has been difficult to arrange a program due to the rationing of gasoline and tires.

However, it was voted at the last meeting of the Executive Committee to present a play this Fall in order to keep alive the spirit of the Friendly Society. This has not been an easy task but we are happy to announce that a cast has been assembled and is now rehearsing the play *Claudia* . . .

We hope you will appreciate what we are attempting to do for your entertainment and . . . will give the play your usual loyal support. (62)

The letter added that, as a war measure, it was voted to reduce the annual dues from \$3.00 to \$1.50 per person, to exempt all men and women in the service, and to suspend the initiation fee to help encourage new memberships.

Milestones during the war years included the 1945 election of Mrs. Reginald B. Elwell as president. She later said modestly that she served during the war years, when the men were not available to take the office. The next women to serve as president were Sheila Dow in 1977, Bette Crowell in 1989, and Betsy Soulé, whose first term as president was in 1994. The early 1940s also marked the first time that Alice Jones, one of the 13 original founders, did not act as prompter for Friendly plays. She was still helping with tickets in 1947 for *Personal Service*.

In December 1944, the Friendly produced *Arsenic and Old Lace*, directed by Ernest Law Johnson. Proceeds were devoted to a fund for Austin Hale's "Victory Dinners" for the Weston men and women in the armed forces. The program noted: "during the last three years [Friendly Society] activities have...been restricted but the organization has been carefully maintained, two plays have been given each year, and a return to a regular program will be undertaken as soon as conditions warrant." (63)

Leaders felt the need to re-evaluate purpose and programming for the post-war era. In June 1946 they wrote:

Your Society is experiencing a transition from restricted Wartime activities to a period of Peacetime operation. What our activities will be depends upon the desires and active support of the individual members. The Executive Committee believes that there may be a choice between a resumption of the diversified programs of the days before the war or the placing of a greater emphasis upon dramatics. (64)

A questionnaire was enclosed. It appears that leaders decided to focus on dramatics, with an occasional holiday dance around New Year's Eve and an annual meeting. In the years between original musicals, the Friendly put on comedies, farces, mystery farces, farce comedies and, occasionally, a serious drama.

Mid-Century Exuberance

The original musical returned in 1947 with *Personal Service*, the third Patterson and Hatch production. In a 1965 program book, Patterson explained how writers competed to have their plays performed:

After World War II, in 1947, came *Personal Service*, in 1950 *Escape on the Cape*, in 1953 *Never Walk Alone*. By this time the tradition of original musicals was firmly established, and competition had been invited in the writing of them. It is a tribute to the talent and enterprise existing in our town that on every occasion no less than four complete, full-length musical shows have been submitted for consideration.

In the "old days" committees sometimes had to go on their knees to persuade people to take part in musicals, but the originals have grown in popularity until nowadays aspiring thespians, singers and dancers have to be turned away at the tryouts.

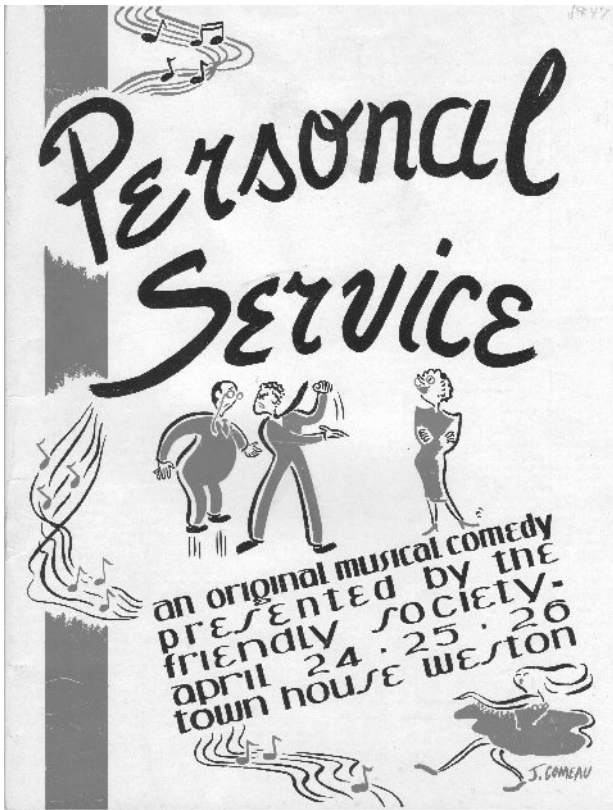
As one dramatic coach observed, when amateurs put on a show that has been a Broadway hit, they may feel that they are being compared unfavorably by the audience to professional stars. When they take part in an original "Friendly Musical Production," they cannot be compared—they are creating the parts themselves.

Counting cast and the various committees, more than 250 Friendly members had a hand in producing *On the Fence* [three years before], and the number will probably be greater this year. (65)

The next four pages focus on the first two post-war plays: *Personal Service* in 1947 and *Escape on the Cape* in 1950. Endnotes can be found on page 45.

The Fall 2016 *Weston Historical Society Bulletin* will be devoted to Part II of "The History of the First Parish Friendly Society," beginning with *All Kidding Aside* in 1956.

by Pamela W. Fox



#3

Personal Service

April 24, 25, 26, 1947
Weston Town Hall

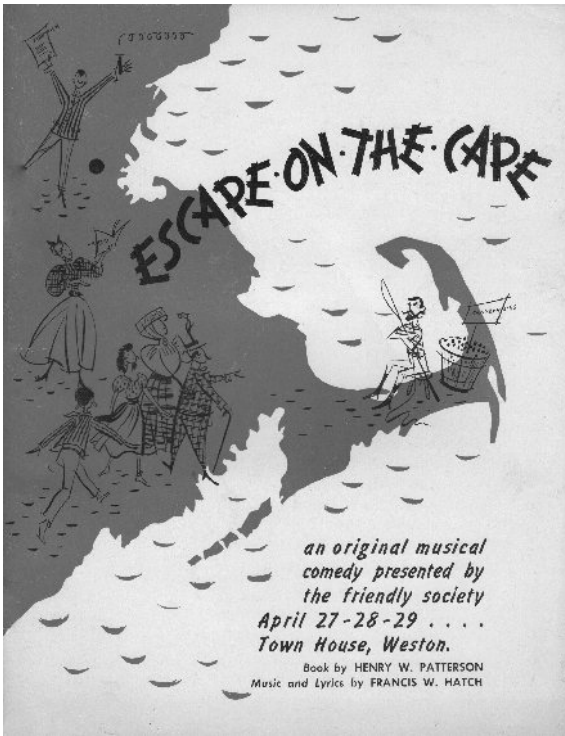
Book by Henry W. Patterson and Charles O. Richardson Jr. Music by Francis W. Hatch, Helen Wheeler, Ralph Woodworth Jr. and Margaret L. Gruener. Lyrics by same as music plus Henry Patterson.

Directed by Wm. O. Partridge and Mrs. J. Sidney Stone.

Herbie Sulkin and his orchestra.

Weston Historical Society has the program, script, and song music for Personal Service. Program cover by Janette Comeau.

Plot synopsis: The play takes place in the immediate post-World War II period, at Crouse's Blacksmith Shop, 486 Boston Post Road in Weston. Local women are talking about two enterprising young veterans, Jim Jenkins (Vincent Malone) and Joe Johnson (David H. Bradley), who plan to fix up the old blacksmith shop to start a personal service business. The women wonder whether organizations in town like the Community League, Grange, and American Legion can give them a boost. The husbands just want to play golf, so this new business is "just what's needed if we're going to make a go of this wonderful Post War World." As their first job, the banker/landlord (John Ladensack Jr.) asks for help getting his daughter Mildred (Helen Wheeler) to break her engagement with "some lout she met overseas— in an air raid shelter." Joe, acting on his own, takes the job for a large fee. It turns out that the penniless lout is none other than Jim. Of course, all ends well. Mildred and Jim, and Mildred's friend Pansy (Phyllis Wheeler) and Joe, make plans for a double wedding and for remodeling the old shop into a double house for the young couples. Songs include "Post War World" and "The West Begins in Weston."



#4

Escape on the Cape

April 27, 28, 29, 1950
Weston Town Hall

Book by Henry W. Patterson.
Music and Lyrics by Francis
W. Hatch. Directed by Wm.
O. Partridge.

Orchestra and Orchestra-
tions by George Wright
Briggs Jr.

Weston Historical Society
has the script, original cop-
ies of the music and lyrics by
Francis Hatch, and the or-
chestral music for all in-
struments.

Plot synopsis: The year is 1910. Sophocles Smith, a young M.I.T. graduate (David Lutkins), comes to Schoonerville on Cape Cod to try to save the cranberry bog owned by Seth Nickerson (Capen Abbott) from the dread disease, False Blossom. Sophocles meets Seth's daughter, Iris (Nancy Woodman), and they quickly fall in love. But Simon Magee (Donald Douglass), the frustrated, one-legged bog overseer, is jealous and suspicious of Sophocles. When Sophocle's formula, manufactured by George Yapley (Will Davenport) of Beacon Hill, fails to work, Magee denounces the young man. Meanwhile, Manuel Gonzales (Vincent Melone) and his sweetheart Maureen Sylva (Jane Patterson Paine), young Portuguese bog-workers, ask Simon to raise worker pay and give them Sundays off. Simon denounces them as socialists. In Act 2, Sophocles discovers that his formula was improperly compounded by Yapley, who happens to be in Schoonerville vacationing with his wife Amanda (Mary-Louise Meyer). Yapley agrees to go back to Boston and remake the formula correctly. While there, the Yapleys see a rally for James Curley, a rising politician, providing opportunity to insert Hatch's well-known song "Vote Early and Often for Curley." With the new formula, the bog is saved. Worker pay is raised, Maureen and Manuel plan to marry, and Iris, a Smith College psychology major, uses her psychology skills to get Sophocles to propose to her.



Clockwise from top: 1) Cast members, probably dancers (help us to identify them!); 2) (l-r) Jane Patterson Paine as Maureen Sylva, Vincent Melone as Manuel Gonzales, and Donald Douglass as Simon McGee; 3) R.H. Bancroft Winsor as the grandson; 4) Mary-Louise Meyer and Will Davenport as Amanda and George Yapley. (Courtesy Weston Friendly Society)



Above: Nancy Woodman and David Lutkins as Iris Nickerson and Sophocles Smith. (Courtesy Weston Friendly Society)



Left: Miriam O'Brien, Capen Abbott, and Nancy Woodman as Julia, Seth, and Iris Nickerson.

Below: William O. Partridge directing Escape on the Cape (1950).



Below: Help us identify these chorus members.



Endnotes

(1) *Records of the First Parish Friendly Society of Weston*, Vol. I, organized Jany [sic] 12, 1885, photocopy at WHS. (2) *Ibid.* (3) In 1907, Sears moved this house across the street to its present location at 338 Boston Post Rd. (4) For additional information, see Chapter 14 in *Farm Town to Suburb: The History and Architecture of Weston, Massachusetts* (2002) by Pamela W. Fox. (5) Horace Sears to Andrew Fiske, 1883, as quoted in *The Weston Historical Society Bulletin*, March 1984, 3. (6) "Fancy Dress Party in Weston," unknown newspaper, probably *Waltham Daily Free Press*, Nov. 3, 1886. (7) This and other documents referenced in this article are part of the Weston Historical Society collection unless otherwise noted. (8) *Records, op.cit.* (9) *The First Parish Calendar (TFPC)*, Nov. 15, 1895, 2. (10) "Report of the Council for the Parish Friendly Society for 1891-92 in *Records, op. cit.* (11) *Ibid.* Nov 15, 1894, 3. (12) *Ibid.* (13) *TFPC, op cit.*, April 15, 1895. (14) *Ibid.* May 15, 1896. (15) Postcard to members about the Feb. 12, 1906 meeting. (16) *TFPC, op. cit.*, Nov. 15, 1895, 2. (17) *Waltham Daily Free Press Tribune (WDFPT)*, Feb. 25, 1891. (18) *TFPC, op.cit.*, Dec. 15, 1893. (19) *TFPC, op.cit.*, April 15, 1894, 3. (20) *WDFPT, op.cit.*, Feb. 1, 1901. (21) *Records, op.cit.*, December 14, 1892. (22) *TFPC, op.cit.*, Nov. 15, 1895, 2. (23) Copies of both c. 1908 reports at WHS. (24) *WDFPT, op.cit.*, Feb 5, 1904. (25) Copy of WarRant in WHS files. (26) WHS files. (27) Reprinted in *TFPC*, March 15 1896. (28) Reprinted in *TFPC*, Feb. 17, 1894. (29) *WDFPT*, Oct. 28, 1904. (30) *WDFPT* Jan 28, 1910. (31) Undated newspaper clipping, WHS files. (32) Brenton H. Dickson III, *Once Upon a Pung* (1963), p. 35. (33) *WDFPT*, Oct 26, 1900. (34) WHS files. (35) *WDFPT*, Jan 20, 1905. (36) *WDFPT*, Feb 26, 1904. (37) *WDFPT*, April 1, 1907. (38) *TFPC*, Jan 17, 1894 p 3. (39) *WDFPT* Jan. 12, 1906. (40) *WDFPT* of April 9 and 23 1909. (41) Copy at WHS. (42) *TFPC*, March 15, 1895, p.2. (43) *WDFPT*, Feb 15, 1907. (44) *WDFPT*, Nov 10, 1908. (45) *TFPC*, Dec 15, 1894. (46) *WDFPT*, Feb 18, 1910. (47) *WDFPT*, Oct 14, 1910. (48) Program at WHS. (49) *WDFPT*, Feb 17, 1905. (50) Program at WHS. (51) *WDFPT*, Nov. 22, 1907. (52) *TFPC*, Jan. 17, 1895, p. 2. (53) Photocopy at WHS. (54) Omitted. (55) The Friendly Society section in the 1912-13 "Reports of The First Parish of Weston and its Allied Societies," photocopy in WHS files. (56) *Ibid.* (57) WHS files. (58) 1917 *Town Report*, 291-92. (59) "FS Celebrates its First Half Century With Six Charter Members Present." *WDFPT* undated. (60) *Weston Town Crier*, March 31, 1960. (61) *So Deep* program p.7. (62) (63) (64) WHS files. (65) *Down to Earth program*, p 3.

Photo on page 17: American Costume Party, Washington's Birthday, Feb 22, 1899. (l-r) Upper Row: Horace Sears, Herman Fuller, Mr. Ripley, Robert Tucker, Augustus Fiske, Charles Fiske, Albert Coburn. Middle Row standing: Charles Barker, Emily Driver, Clara Kenney, Mrs. Abercrombie, ___ Fuller, Mrs. Pearson, B. Roberts, Edmund Sears. Seated: Ellen Jones, ____, Mr. and Mrs. Flitcroft, Mrs. Alexander Jenney, Madam Boeuf, J. Hagar. On floor: Lyman Gale, Anna Hall. (Courtesy Weston Historical Society, names on back of photo)

POLICE FOOLED

Cocking Main Held in Weston Officers Were Told it Was An Auction Wayland The Place First Selected

Waltham Daily Free Press Tribune, April 5, 1901. A big cocking main [cockfighting match] was broken up Wednesday by the Weston police, and it would be hard to find a more disgusted lot of sports than those who had gathered in that town to witness what promised to be one of the most exciting mains ever held in this vicinity. No arrests were made.

The match was between birds owned in Brockton and Framingham, and was for \$1000 a side.

It was not the original intention of the promoters to hold the main in Weston, but the sports were compelled to go there, as their plans had miscarried. The original battleground selected was in the town of Wayland.

Chief Wade of the State District Police was aware of the intended main, and notified the authorities of Wayland to be on the lookout. As a result when about 50 sports alighted from two electric cars near the Wayland Town Hall that forenoon there was quite a number of people on hand to greet them. In the crowd were two or three Wayland constables. This, of course, put the sports on their guard, and a hurried conference was held. Meanwhile a number of new arrivals appeared upon the scene in carriages and barges. It was at once decided not to attempt to pull off the affair in that town.

The carriages and their occupants immediately drove off, and those who came in the electrics started for the Boston & Maine railway station and boarded the train headed for Boston.

The Wayland authorities felt that the sports would attempt to hold the event in Weston, and word was at once sent there. Selectman Cutting, who received the message, immediately called Constables McAuliffe, Heard and Smith. He told his men what he had heard and ordered them to go out, locate the sports and arrest them if they were found engaging in an unlawful act.

The constables felt reasonably sure that if there was to be a cocking main in Weston it would be held at the farm of George Emerson, a local sportsman, who lives about a mile from the center of the town. A carriage was procured and the three officers started for Mr. Emerson's place.

When they got within sight of the farm they were not surprised to see the yard filled with carriages and barges. After a brief consultation the constables decided to make a rush for the barn and capture as many as they could. Mr. Emerson himself was on guard and as soon as he saw the officers drive into the yard he made a run for the barn and announced the danger. The officers ran after Emerson as fast as possible, but he beat them. In an instant the men were pouring from the doors and windows of the barn in droves, almost knocking the officers from their feet in their mad rush to escape.

Each officer grabbed a man, while the rest of the crowd rushed through the fields, over ditches and fences, and many met with severe accidents by running into barbed wire fences. Torn garments were the rule, while one man was fearfully cut about the leg.

The constables took the prisoners into the barn, but all traces of the pit, if there was one, had vanished, although the officers saw something in the center of the floor which looked very much like a cockpit.

Mr. Emerson assured the police that there had been no cock fighting. He claimed that he had simply invited these men to his farm to attend an auction sale of game birds. When asked what the arrangement in the center of the floor was, Emerson answered that it was to keep the crowd back when the auctioneer exhibited each bird.

This seemed to the police a very flimsy story, but they had no alternative but to accept it. They saw a large number of game birds in the barn, but as Mr. Emerson is a breeder of this class of fowl and claimed the lot as his property, they did not seize any of them. They also released the three men they had captured, and clambering into their team drove away, leaving Mr. Emerson and his guests to enjoy a hearty laugh at their expense.

Notwithstanding the statements of Mr. Emerson that there had been no fights, others say that the first battle of the main was on at the very moment the police drove into the yard. It was between a "hennie" owned by Framingham parties and a black-red, belonging to the Brockton contingent, and it proved one of the greatest cock fights that has ever taken place. The birds had been struggling for supremacy for exactly 57 minutes when the cry of "police" was raised.

The biggest disappointment to the crowd was that the police had not delayed their arrival until the fight could have been ended. Both birds were badly punished. Hundreds of dollars were wagered on the battle.

There is intense feeling in the town against Mr. Emerson, and a member of the Board of Selectmen came to Waltham Wednesday afternoon and had an interview with Judge Luce of the District Court. This town official said that if Mr. Emerson can be prosecuted, the authorities will push the case to the extreme limits of the law. If he cannot be prosecuted for holding a cocking main an effort will be made to punish him for holding an auction sale without a license.



George Emerson raised and trained gamecocks and was known for the illegal cockfights held in his barn in the 700 block of Boston Post Road. (Courtesy Weston Historical Society)

With Grateful Thanks

To **Fred Campbell** for his gift of the “Oak Ridge” photo album, documenting Weston estate owner Charles Dean and his estate on what is now Byron Road.

To **Jim Clark** for his gift of items from Clark’s Dairy including a small bottle for cream, two paper milk caps, a wooden capper, a metal milk pail, an 8 - 10 quart metal milk container with wooden stopper, and ice tongs.

To **Tony Micciche of Florentine Frames** for his gift of a print of the watercolor “Weston Railroad Station” by Jack Richardson.

To **Mary Pickard Winsor** for her gift of ribbons and a medal won by her father, Paul Winsor Jr., at Weston Athletic Association events in the early 20th century.

To **Charlie Hunt** for copies of his histories “The Country Evening Concert Series” and “The Hunt Family Calendar. From 1941 until 1979.”

To **Inge Engler** and **Betsy Farquharson** for postcards sent in response to last Fall’s *Bulletin*. These were postcards new to the WHS collection.

To **Alice McDonald** for the framed block print of the Golden Ball Tavern by F. Wenderoth Saunders & 6 1950s aerial photos of the Blake Estate & Mass Pike.

To **Henry Viles** for the police jacket, badge, and holster belonging to his father, Weston Police Chief J. Sumner Viles.

To **Guy Dillaway** for a c. 1870s letter to Andrew Fiske with envelope and stamp hand-cancelled with a “W” at the post office at Cutting’s store.

To **Connie Goldstein** for her 1977 report on “The Case Estates of the Arnold Arboretum,” including photographs of the Case Estates from that year.

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