

WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

Vol. XXXIX, No.2

Fall, 2008



At the time of this photograph, about 1895-97, the Coburn block was occupied by W.G. Wark, harness maker (left storefront), W. T. Burrage dry-goods store (center storefront), and a grocer (right storefront). In 1898, Benjamin R. Parker opened a hardware store in the left storefront..

110 years of Hardware History Ends

Last spring, Paul Puopolo, owner of Puopolo Hardware Company, announced he was closing his store and retiring. Since that time, Puopolo has been gradually selling off the store's inventory, everything from candles to cookware, along with hardware, of course. With the impending departure of Puopolos, for the first time in 110 years there will be no hardware store at 450 Boston Post Road in Weston Center.

B. R. Parker's Hardware and Bicycle Shop

In 1898, Benjamin R. Parker (1861-1930) opened a hardware and bicycle store in Weston's first "business block." Farmer Edward Coburn had constructed the handsome three-storefront commercial building a few years earlier in an area that would become the town's commercial center. Parker previously worked at the school furniture factory on Crescent Street and is listed in town vital records as a cabinetmaker. His wife Florence was the daughter of local builder William Nelson Gowell, and the couple lived at 25 Conant Road at the corner of Gowell Lane, in a house built by her father. The Parkers had two children: Elizabeth, born in 1892 and Benjamin, born in 1895.

Parker began by selling hardware, paints and oils, bicycles, and bicycle sundries. He also repaired bicycles and, as early as 1905, was busy with automobile repairs. His brother, Horace, ran an auto and small appliance repair business behind

Telephone 209-4, Waltham. *Weston, Mass., July 1 1903*

Mr. John B. Paine

To BENJ. R. PARKER, Dr.

HARDWARE, PAINTS AND OILS,

BICYCLES AND BICYCLE SUNDRIES.
BICYCLE REPAIRING. * * * * *

CENTRAL AVENUE, WESTON, MASS.

<i>June</i>	<i>1 1 quart hoe</i>	<i>85</i>		
	<i>4 17-16" bar</i>	<i>96</i>		
	<i>13 1 can enamel</i>	<i>15</i>		
	<i>1 .. carriage paint</i>	<i>40</i>		
	<i>22 2 sets tire screws</i>	<i>20</i>		
				<i>2 56</i>
	<i>Paid by Parker</i>			

In 1903, John B. Paine paid \$2.56 for five items, including a grub hoe and a can of carriage paint. (Courtesy Weston Historical Society)

*Advertisement from
the 1915 Waltham
Suburban Directory*

BENJAMIN R. PARKER

— DEALER IN —

HARDWARE, PAINTS AND OILS

AUTOMOBILE AND BICYCLE REPAIRING

SUNDRIES AND SUPPLIES

Telephone Waltham 1392M.

CENTRAL AVENUE - - - - WESTON, MASS.

the store. A 1906 newspaper item noted: “Mr. Parker’s automobile garage is so full that the next one that comes will have to go on the roof.”

Horace Parker once told employee Jim Dolan that in the first decade of the 20th century, the store purchased five-gallon cans of gasoline for Brenton H. Dickson Jr., who had one of the first cars in Weston. Because of concerns about the volatility of the gas, the cans were stored in the stream behind the garage. Later, Parker installed a Socony (Standard Oil Company of New York) gas pump in front. Some claim this was the first gasoline pump in Weston; however, Elsie Cooke of North Avenue claimed the same distinction for the gas pump at her father’s store, James T. Foote’s, on North Avenue. The 1920s gas pumps had a calibrated five- or- ten- gallon glass cylinder at the top. The attendant would pump the requested amount of gas into the cylinder and from there it was gravity fed by hose into the car gas tank.

After Benjamin R. Parker died in 1930 at age 69, Parker’s Hardware continued as family business under the proprietorship of his widow Florence and, later, children Beth and Ben Jr. Horace continued to operate the garage behind the store in the swamp land that still exists there. Beth also ran a kindergarten/pre-school from the family home on Conant Road. The Parkers employed a store manager, a position held by Norman Johnson in the 1930s, Roy L. Dickson in the early 1940s, Henry Ward from 1944-45, and John Childs in the late 1940s.

Parker’s in the 1940s

Jim Dolan (Weston High School Class of 1948) started working at Parkers as a teenager in 1945. At that time the manager was Henry Ward, an older man who was in charge during the war years, when there was a shortage of manpower. At the request of the *The Bulletin*, Dolan wrote down his memories, quoted below:

“Learning the ropes meant discovering where everything was hidden in an old country store. The street floor was presentable but the cellar was such a mess (Mr. Ward —with arthritis— didn’t like the stairs), that we had precious pre-war hardware, lawnmowers and steel tools, etc. hidden and discovered in late 1945.

“In 1945, after the war, Miss Parker intended to hire an ex-clerk, now ex-soldier to come back as manager at \$25.00 a week, a low salary even for the time. When he declined the job, the Parkers hired John Childs, a gentleman from Sudbury. He was a wonderful person who made friends with the new townspeople and upgraded the appearance and profitability of the store. Numerous consumer products were coming back to the market: Revere Ware, Silex Coffee makers, Power Lawn Mowers, plus many new appliances. The critical test was keeping up to the big department stores, in style, availability and price. We were jokingly called the “Out House” due to the great wealth of goods in the advertisements. We never could satisfy the consumer’s appetite fully.

“I worked after school, on Saturdays, and during school vacations, for thirty cents an hour. As a youngster, I was at first shy but enjoyed the hardware trade, the visiting salesmen, and the many wonderful families that traded at Parker’s. Several veterans and businessmen became my mentors and helped me understand the adult world at this point in my life. I started at Northeastern University in 1948 and worked part-time at Parker’s through the Co-op Plan. Tom Bolduc of Watertown was my alternate Co-op student. I went on to New York in 1953.

“During the post-war years, Elizabeth Parker came every evening to close the books at the store. We closed at 6 p.m. and “rolled up the sidewalk,” meaning that we took in the hardware, rakes and tools, and oil racks that were on outside display. Beth totaled the receipts and the hand written charges (no credit cards-then) and tallied the gasoline pump records with payments. Credit was offered freely and watched closely by Beth. Many people charged their purchases, paying the account monthly, with few disappointments.

“Beth’s brother Ben would visit with his wife and daughters once a month, on Saturday after 3 PM, to fill up his big Buick and leave after a polite “Hello.” Ben was an accomplished state highway engineering manager, stationed in Worcester. He was a big brother in demeanor [although he was younger] and undoubtedly helped in hiring Mr. Childs and good garage mechanics that were sometimes hard to find. Under the auspices of Beth, Ben, and their Uncle Horace, the store was a much appreciated small-town family business carried on like their dad had fashioned it.

“Horace and the garage mechanics had to be all-round mechanics who could fix any car, truck, lamp, or anything else mechanical. Certain frugal customers would abuse the garage’s services by calling Horace to pick up their car for an oil change and service after a big snowstorm. He

would have to plow their driveway to reach the car, and that was exactly what they wanted: two services for the price of one.



“In the spring the emphasis was on sharpening reel-type lawnmowers. The typical homeowner used a push type “hand mower,” which cut a 20" swath of



Benjamin R. and Florence Parker lived at 25 Conant Road at the corner Gowell Lane in a house built by Florence’s father, builder William Nelson Gowell. Daughter Elizabeth (Beth), pictured above, later ran a nursery school at the house. (Photos courtesy Mary Ellen Sikes)

1949 Advertisement
from a Friendly Society
program.

BENJAMIN R. PARKER

450 Boston Post Road, Weston

Telephones: WAltham
5-1392-M Store; 5-1392-J Garage

Hardware — Benjamin Moore Paints
Lawn and Garden Tools
Socony Gas and Oil
Automobile Repairing —
Complete Lubrication
Official Inspection Station
Lawn Mower and Tool Sharpening

Parker's sold the Great American mower, an expensive, heavy cast-steel design. It was considered the very best in quality and construction. Yearly, a critical reel sharpening was required as the mechanisms would become jammed, rusty, and nearly impossible to use if not properly tuned-up. Parker's Garage was the only shop locally with a precision sharpening machine, hence every spring there would be a back-log of machines needing to be sharpened. Horace would disassemble each mower and align the reel into the machine—a tedious yet critical job. He would not allow others to operate the sharpener.

“The power mowers used by estates and golfing clubs were much larger "gang-type" assemblies, much as are used today where manicured lawns are required. Some were operated manually, others were tractor driven. Reel mowers of either type leave a more trimmed, uniform cut.”

“About 1950, power mowers were introduced for the home-owner. These were four-cycle Briggs & Stratton gas engines driving a reel-type mower, quite heavy and expensive. A manufacturer named Lawn-Boy introduced

a lighter two-cycle engine that became very popular. Soon thereafter rotary mowers replaced the reels as simpler, less costly, and easier to maintain. Mr. Childs took special delight in demonstrating the rotaries. It was a “man’s toy” that only a man (in those days) could operate. I was not permitted to. Ironically the Green movement has re-introduced the reel mower as more eco-friendly, Heaven knows who will sharpen them.□

“Our 1944 gas pumps were standard mechanical gasoline pumps located on the rear of the sidewalk, with overhead pipes that could be swiveled, attached to hoses hung on the pipe. High test was attached to the telephone post. Large Mobil oil tankers delivered the gasoline to two tanks that were underground, adjacent to the store. Sometimes an eager customer would trigger the lever in error and shower himself with gasoline. Gasoline was 5 gallons for \$1.00, “cheaper than shipping water from Texas,” we claimed.

“All cars had the oil checked as it was considered very normal to burn a quart of oil with a tank-full of gas. In 1944 Parkers had 55 gallon barrels of oil in the cellar, and every day we used a metal spout to fill glass bottles with oil. Denatured alcohol, linseed oil, kerosene, and turpentine was also stored in these drums and sold in glass containers, or tin cans provided by the customer. The new management under John Childs modernized this area. After the war, in 1946, the oil companies supplied cheaper throw-away glass containers. My claim to fame was being named “The Glass King,” as I smashed the company truck loaded with seven trash barrels of glass bottles at the Wellesley Street/ South Ave intersection. Police Chief Sumner Viles just happened to be following me and with fatherly assistance helped me clear up the mess. The old truck, a Model A Ford known as the “Bird Cage,” was laid up for the winter in recovery.

“Jimmy Roberts, an Air Force veteran, and his uncle joined the ranks about 1953 with the intention of buying the business. “

Ted Coburn, whose great-grandfather built the building, recalled how Horace Parker would make house calls to help Weston residents whose cars wouldn’t start on cold winter days.

In the post-Parker’s period, the store had several names and owners. In the 1970s, it was known as The Weston Hardware Company. After being purchased by George Levy, it was renamed Chandler Levy Hardware, consistent with the Newton Center store that Mr. Levy also owned. Long-time residents say that nothing really changed.

The Puopolo Era, 1980 to 2008

Paul Puopolo bought the business in 1980-81. He initially named it Quality Hardware Center, but later changed the name to the more personal Puopolo Hardware Company. He focused the retail side of the business on high quality goods and name brand manufacturers. He also ran a large commercial business supplying paper products, janitorial supplies, institutional chemicals, and lighting to area institutions. Puopolo explained his retail success this way:

Weston is a community with high income, high consumer demand, and high expectations. Residents have always been able to get a broad range of products at the store. Most retailers would never commit to the extent of inventory we considered routine. We sold everything from tape measures to televisions, and from sea salt to Swiss watches.

Customers could enjoy both classical and opera music—Paul Puopolo's favorite-- playing in the background. "We had folks who shopped on Saturday afternoons just so they could enjoy the live Met broadcasts while losing themselves in the store," he recalls.

According to Puopolo, the closing of small local stores like his reflects larger changes in the world economy. Hardware stores and general stores are community based. Until recent years, hardware stores had a very low rate of failure. The problem today, Puopolo explains, is that manufacturers who make good quality products are increasingly going out of business or cutting back on the number of products they make. Rubbermaid, for example, used to make over 1600 consumer products. Now they have to compete with the Container Store and Walmart, which carry cheaper imported plastic goods. The Rubbermaid Company, after being restructured several times, has been forced to scale back on



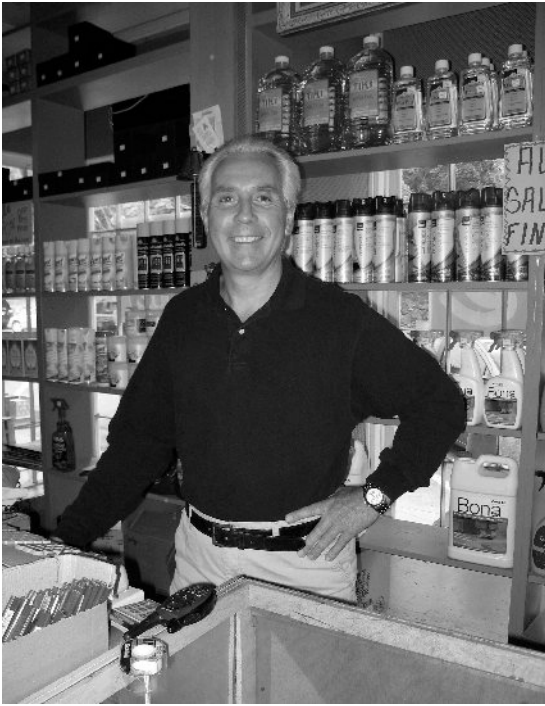
1967 advertisement in the Weston High School Yearbook.

their product lines.

The big box stores have a major impact on the distribution of goods. Traditionally, there have been three levels of retailers: large national (for example, Sears or K-Mart); large regional (like the now-defunct Lechmere Sales); and small local stores such as Puopolos and the recently departed Diehls of Wellesley. Now there are fewer secondary- and tertiary- level stores. Stores are either very large or they go out of business. The major national chains carry fewer products. Big manufacturers stop making their higher quality, lower volume products because there are too few outlets.

Puopolos carried Baldwin Brass, Colonial Candle, Radio Flyer, Rubbermaid, as well as Weber Grills, Ariens power equipment, Stanley hand tools, Cabot stains, and Swiss Army Brands, to name a few of the brands found on its shelves. Several of the products are gone as we knew them, and most of the others are under siege. Baldwin Brass closed their Pennsylvania factory and ceased production of decorative accents and lighting. They have since moved their scaled back hardware production to China. Colonial Candle has eliminated sizes, styles and colors to remain competitive with low cost acrylic candles coming out of the Pacific Rim and Asia. As companies change, Paul Puopolo notes that he cannot continue to supply customers with the same quality brands. He gives another example, Weber Grill, which used to have a large percentage of the US grill business but is now struggling to maintain a fraction of their market share. Competitors have Weber models replicated in China at far lower cost with predictable consequences. Brands become less relevant and as a result, Puopolos Hardware Company becomes less relevant. Says Puopolo, "Ultimately, I made the decision to close the place down and retire from the hardware business, to preserve our legacy rather than compromise our products or our services. I have too much respect for my business and my customers than to start selling junk. It is simply not what we do."

According to Puopolo, hardware stores are becoming increasingly rare. In the MetroWest market area alone, there used to be 35 or 40 hardware stores. Most are now gone. This is not only because of competition with stores like Lowes or Home Depot. What customers don't see is the more insidious problem with loss of manufacturers and/or the curtailment of product lines. At Puopolos, people used to be able to find products they couldn't find in another venue. The smaller store could make a niche for itself by selling specialty low-sale-volume products. For example, Radio Flyer makes the typical red child's wagon, which is very common, but they also make wagons with wooden sides and wheeled toy boxes with removable sides. Walmart is not going to carry these, but Puopolos distinguished itself by looking farther down the product line. Weston customers will lose access to these products.



Paul Puopolo (left) is closing his hardware store at 450 Boston Post Road (below) after more than a quarter century. (Photo by Pamela W. Fox)

On-line sales have also cut into business. Paul Puopolo notes that when manufacturers start competing with their dealers, there is attrition in the dealer network, even though in his opinion the cyber community can never replace real community, people, places and activities.

In the end, says Puopolo, "well made, well designed products differentiated our store from



o u r

competitors. If quality is obsolete, so are we.”

Customers Say Good-bye

Puopolos has been a touchstone in the life of the community for many years. Customers have been coming into the store to talk about old times and what the store has meant to them. Older town residents have been shopping here for decades. Even children feel connected to the store where they picked out sleds and classic yellow Tonka trucks at holiday time. Paul Puopolo’s guest book now holds dozens of farewell messages including this one from author David McCullough, a resident of Martha’s Vineyard who has been coming to the store several times a year for decades, when he visits his local dentist:

What a great store—in the grand, old way of first-rate goods & friendly, knowledgeable service. We’ve enjoyed being one of your customers & we’ll miss you. . . .

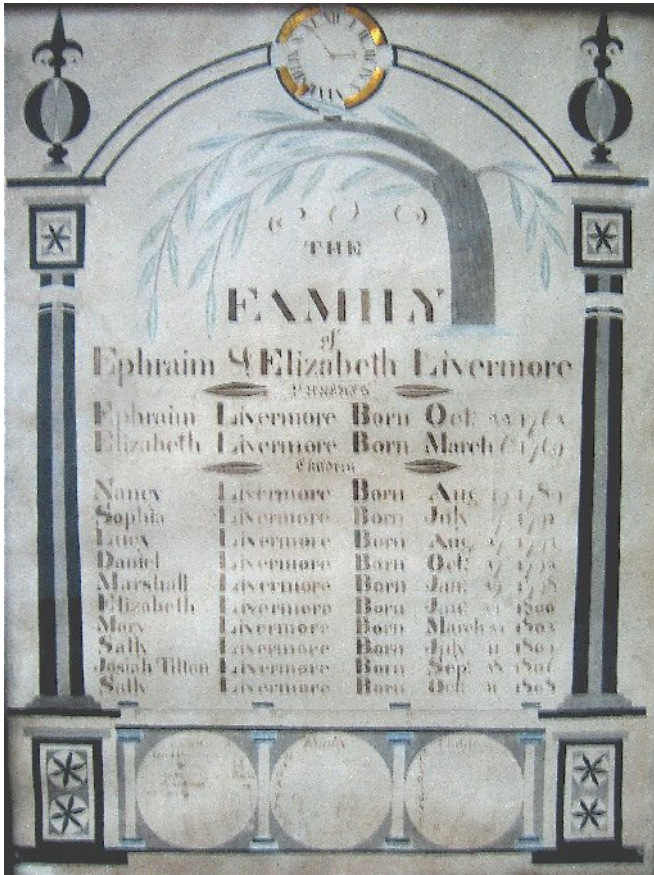
Another customer wrote: “You claimed a space in the heart of the community.”

by Pamela W. Fox

Folk Art and History in Weston Family Registers

*Early this year, the Weston Historical Society purchased a Livermore family sampler and family register that had surfaced together in a local antiques market. We thank members and friends who contributed toward this important acquisition. By fortuitous coincidence, WHS board member Mary Gregory found an online exhibit of family registers created by the New England Historic and Genealogical Society. NEHGS owns a second Weston register, created for the Hews family. Mary found a third Weston-related example in the book *The Art of Family: Genealogical Artifacts in New England* by D. Brenton Simons and Peter Benes, published by NEHGS in 2002. This article is based on research from that book supplemented by material from WHS archives.*

Printed and freehand family registers became popular during the late 18th and early 19th century, evolving from notations in the family Bible. Probably the best-known examples were created by Pennsylvania Germans and were known as *frakturs*. New England examples are similar in content but differ in decorative style.



Last spring the Weston Historical Society purchased this family register belonging to the Livermore family, along with a sampler worked by Mary Livermore.

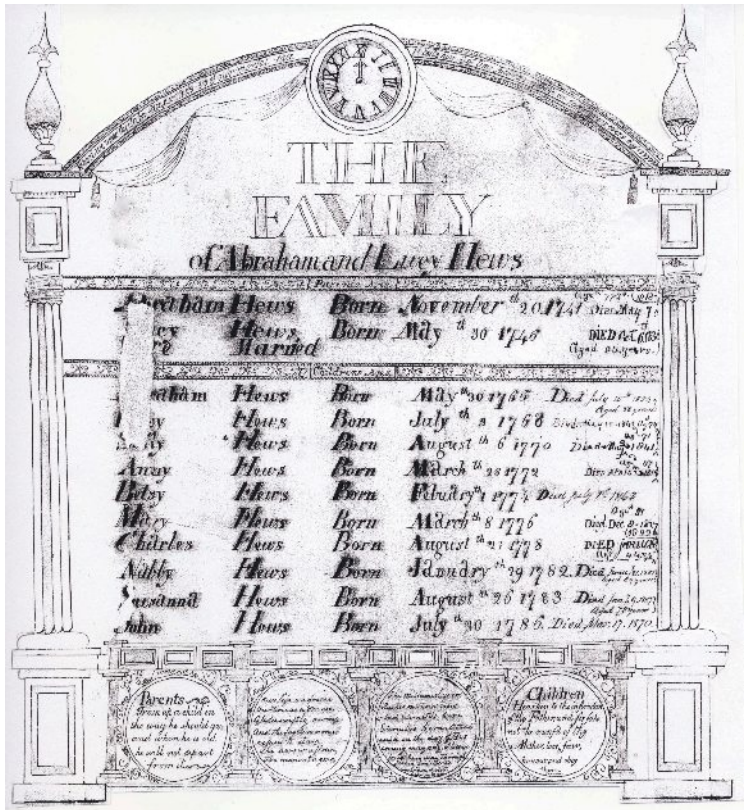
A framed family register could decorate the living room wall and also help families keep track of births, marriages and deaths. The purpose of family registers was “to encourage remembrance of the past,” according to *The Art of Family* by D. Brenton Simons and Peter Benes. Designs incorporated traditional motifs such as interlocking circles, hearts, and entwined flowering vines as well as architectural motifs such as pillars and columns. They note that at some point, possibly after 1810, a clock face appeared in the archway between the two columns, perhaps influenced by the growing presence of tall clocks in New England. All three of the Weston-related registers utilize this motif.

According to *The Art of Family*, “families wanted a cheaper and more personal visual remembrance of their ancestry” than the family portraits commissioned by wealthy Boston residents in the mid-18th century. Various mediums could be used, among them watercolor, oils, pen and ink, embroidery, and paper cutwork. Timothy Salls, archivist at the New England Historical Genealogical Society, believes that some registers were done in schools as part of a calligraphic or

decorative arts curriculum. Others may have been the work of commissioned professional artists, teachers, or talented town clerks. Copying existing printed work may have been common. In the late 19th century, printed registers evolved with backgrounds that could be filled in with names and dates.

The similarities between the society’s Livermore register and the Merriam and Hews family versions is remarkable. All three have the same basic structure: pillars on each side connected by a segmental arch with a clock

in the center. Beneath the arch, capital letters are used to spell THE FAMILY, followed by information about the parents and a list of children and their date of birth. Across the bottom, the space is divided into three or four sections filled with admonitions to parents and children. In the Hews register, parents are urged to “Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart



This image of the family register of Abraham and Lucy (Jennison) Hews of Weston. is courtesy of the R. Stanton Avery Special Collections Department, New England Historic and Genealogical Society.

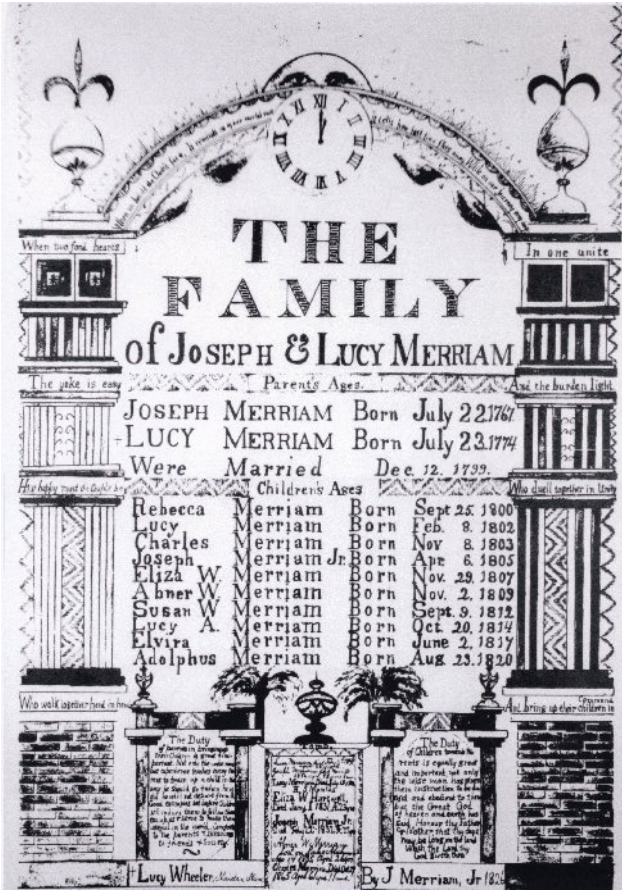
from it.” and children to “Harken to the instructions of thy Father, and forsake not the counsel of thy Mother, love, fear, honor and obey them.”

The Livermore, Hews, and Merriam families all have close ties to Weston. Generations of Livermores made their home here. Ephraim Livermore (1762-1833) was the great-great-nephew of Joseph, who built the house known as Hayfields at 823 Boston Post Road. Ephraim and his wife Elizabeth had ten children.

Abraham Hews (1741-1818) began the family’s pottery manufacturing business on Boston Post Road in the 1760s. He and his wife Lucy also had ten children, including Abraham Jr., who joined his father in business. Abraham’s great-grandson finally moved the

business to Cambridge. Many Hews family members lived along Boston Post Road just east and west of the First Baptist Church.

Joseph Merriam (b. 1767) and his wife Lucy were married in Concord. Coincidentally, they also had ten children. The oldest son, Charles (1803-1865), was 18 when he moved to Weston. He worked at Lamson’s store and proved to be such a popular and enterprising merchant that he took over the business after Lamson’s death in 1824. He married a woman from Newton and built a house on Boston Post Road. As Weston’s popularity as a retail center began to falter in the mid-1830s, Merriam moved his store and fam-



Joseph Merriam (b. 1767) and Lucy Wheeler (b. 1774) were married in December 1799. This register is marked “By J. Merriam, Jr 1826”. Joseph Jr was born in 1805 and died in 1832. The location of the original watercolor is unknown. (Courtesy of Concord Free Public Library)

ily to Boston but retained his ties to Weston. Charles's younger brother Joseph Jr. created the Merriam register in 1826, when he was 21.

Regarding dates or date ranges for the registers, the Hews example appears to be the oldest. The last of the Hews ten children, John, was born in 1786. This example is the most freely lettered. The Livermore example was executed after the birth of the 10th child in 1805. The lettering appears to have been stenciled. The Merriam example is dated 1826, six years after the birth of the 10th child. It is the most elaborate, especially the patterning of the pillars. We may never know the connection between these three samplers. Did a family member create them? Was there a local or regional school that encouraged students to produce a family register? We welcome your thoughts, as well as contributions toward the Livermore Sampler Purchase Fund.

by Pamela Fox and Mary Gregory

Since this article was published, Cindy Bates has done considerable additional research. Please contact WHS at info@westonhistory.org to be directed to more up-to-date information.

The History of the Melone Homestead and Sears Conservation Land: Part II

[Editor's Note: Since 2004, Cindy Bates has been researching the Melone Homestead at 27 Crescent Street, within the Sears Conservation Land. The small frame house is owned by the Town of Weston, administered by the Weston Conservation Commission, and leased to Land's Sake for use as office space and employee housing. Beginning this fall, it is being rehabilitated using Community Preservation Act funds.

The history of the house has long been the subject of debate. How old is it? Who built it and why? Was it ever moved? Was it used to house chair factory workers? Below is Part II of an abbreviated version of Ms. Bates's report. Part I appeared in the Spring 2008 issue. The extent and complexity of her research is even more evident in the complete report, which includes extensive footnotes and bibliographical information along with many additional illustrations and maps. Copies will be available at the Weston Public Library and Weston Historical Society]



The Melone Homestead at 27 Crescent Street as it looks today. (Courtesy of Judy Markland.)

Preface to Part II: Diary of a Researcher

Part I of this article presented evidence that the older front section of the Melone Homestead was moved to its present location and enlarged after the move. The relocation and enlargement occurred prior to 1859, when the house in its present location and configuration appears on the “Plan of Land of the Heirs of Luke Brooks, deceased, Weston, Mass. August 10th, 1859,” shown on page 21.

Assuming that the original house stood in the Crescent Street neighborhood, I investigated the following four possible original owners and locations: 1) the Cutter/Brooks tenant house just north of Mill Site A behind 293 Boston Post Road (See neighborhood map on page 18); 2) the original Bingham house at 39 Crescent Street; 3) the original Harrington house at 29 Crescent Street; and 4) a house constructed on William or Samuel Shattuck’s property.

When Part I was published in the *Bulletin* last spring, I had concluded that census and map evidence pointed to the Cutter/Brooks tenant house and that the moving took place in 1859. Since that time, I was able to obtain a better reproduction of the 1856 Walling map of Middlesex County, which shows more clearly a mark in the name S*HF Bingham. (see detail on page 20) This mark is in the approximate location of the present Melone Homestead and roughly matches its present T-

shape. The problem is that the map also shows the Cutter/Brooks tenant house in its original location.

The 1856 map provides the first evidence for the Melone Homestead in its current location. An 1850 deed from Samuel Hobbs to Luke Brooks makes no mention of buildings on that site. These two data points bracket the date of the move between 1850 and 1856. Because census data from 1855 show no evidence of an occupied house in that location, it seems most likely that the original two-over-two structure was moved in late 1855 or early 1856, with the rear addition added at that time.

This discussion assumes that the motive for moving the Melone Homestead to its present location was to provide housing for school furniture factory workers. William G. Shattuck, owner of the factory, would have arranged the move. He had the financial means. Furthermore, moving houses was common enough that the technical means were also available. Based on the dates of his real estate transactions and the inclusion of his enterprise in the manufacturing census for the year ending May 1, 1855, Shattuck probably built the school furniture factory in 1854. His motive for housing workers would not have existed until production commenced.

If the Cutter/Brooks tenant house was moved sometime in 1855 or 1856, why would the 1856 map show it in its original location by the dam and also in its new location and expanded shape? It is conceivable and not unprecedented that these two houses are one and the same: in other words, that the map maker showed the house in both its original and new location. The information on the 1856 map is slightly out of date, as evidenced by the Shattuck label on the two buildings at 21 Crescent Street, which had been sold to William Stimpson in May, 1855.

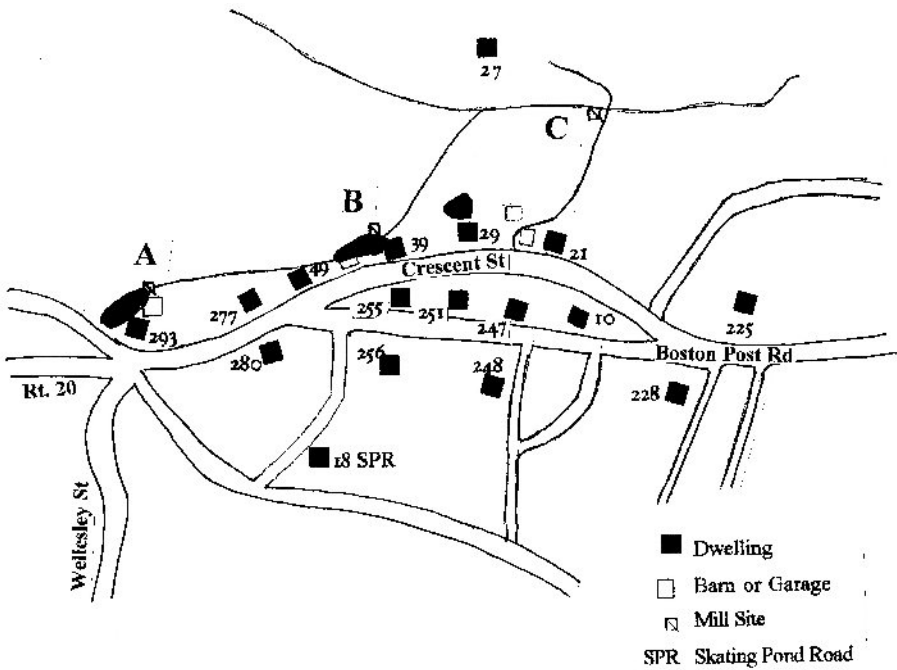
Despite the questions raised by the 1856 map detail, I continue to believe that the Cutter/Brooks tenant house is the one that Shattuck moved about 1855. This theory is consistent with the fact that the Cutter/Brooks tenant house does not appear on the 1859 Plan of Land of the Heirs of Luke Brooks. Also, the likely date of construction of the tenant house, the mid-1830s, is consistent with the architectural evidence that the earliest section of the Melone Homestead was constructed sometime in the 19th century but well before the 1850s remodelling.

Analysis of the three other possibilities all fall short on critical issues relating to the age of the original dwelling and/or the possibility of a relocation in the 1850s. A full analysis of these arguments can be found in an appendix of the full version of this report, which will be available at the Society and Weston Public Library.

What follows is based on the theory, corroborated by considerable evidence, that the original dwelling was originally a tenant house behind 293 Boston Post Road.



(Above) Mill site at 293 Boston Post Road, looking west (Photo by Cindy Bates)



(Above) Crescent Street area in 2005. This map serves as a reference to the location of houses by street address. (Courtesy of Cindy Bates)

Origins of the Melone Homestead, 1830s to 1885

The Melone Homestead was probably built by Alpheus Cutter (1798-1878). After thirteen years at the Bemis Manufacturing Company in Watertown, Cutter, his wife Emilia, and their children moved to Weston in 1834. Cutter purchased the house at 293 Boston Post Road opposite the end of Wellesley Street, along with 60 acres of land lying north and south of what was then called the County Road. He and his son farmed the land, and Cutter also re-established what had been an 18th-century fulling mill on Three Mile Brook just behind the house. Fulling is the process of shrinking and thickening woolen cloth by moistening, heating and pressing. After a time, Cutter changed his machinery and began the manufacture of cotton batting. Today, the mill pond and dam remain behind No. 293, along with a foundation that may belong to Cutter's mill and/or to a later mill.

Cutter employed two hands at the mill. It was for these men and their families that he built a house now known as the Melone Homestead on the north side of the brook, probably sometime between 1834 and 1837. The first known residents of the workmens' house were Edwin and Harriet Stearns, who moved to Weston in the spring of 1840 and lived in this small house with their six children and a seventh born later that year. An older daughter Louisa married Sylvester Smith in the fall of 1839 and may also have lived in the house or possibly in a second tenant house on Boston Post Road. Edwin Stearns was a machinist, and both he and his son-in-law worked for Alpheus Cutter. By the spring of 1842, the Smiths had left Weston. Sylvester went on to become a successful cotton manufacturer in Millbury. The Stearns family moved a year or two later. In 1842, a possible resident was Michael Taylor, who worked and/or lived at Alpheus Cutter's.

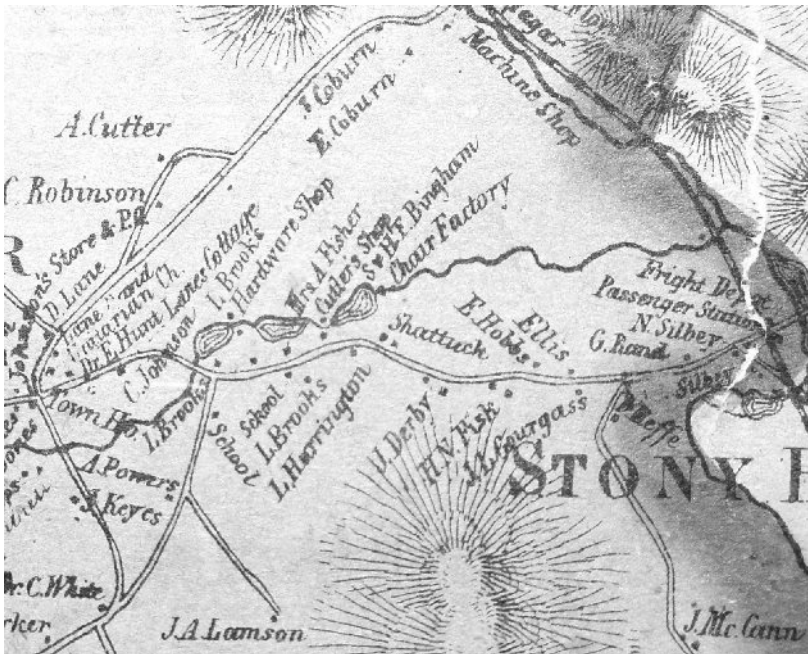
In 1845 Cutter sold the land "with the buildings thereon" to Luke Brooks of Cambridge and moved to Old Road, subsequently building the house at 72 Church Street. Luke Brooks (1791-1856) was a leather merchant with the Boston firm Moses Hunt & Co. When he moved to 293 Boston Post Road, he established himself as a gentleman farmer. Luke and his wife Miriam had three children. Also living with them were two Irish employees: a maid and a farmhand. Luke Brooks owned two tenant houses. These and his own house are marked L. Brooks on the 1856 Middlesex County map (see detail on page 20). The small dwelling north of the brook was probably the Melone Homestead in its original form: two rooms upstairs and two rooms downstairs, with a central chimney between, for a total of about 900 square feet.

Evidence for the identity of those who lived in the Melone Homestead before 1883 is found primarily in federal and state censuses of 1840, 1850, 1855, 1860, 1865, 1870, and 1880. Some Weston tax records give hints of additional occupants. The census is but a snapshot in time, but it reveals the names, ages, occupations and other demographic information about all the occupants of a house-

hold. Tax records can help determine how long a man lived in Weston, but if he did not own property, there is no consistent information as to his place of residence.

Luke Brooks' nephew, Silas S. Brooks, came to live in the Melone Homestead about 1850 with his wife, Elizabeth, and their three-year old daughter. They boarded five Irishmen— three farmers and two laborers—all but one in his twenties. At least some of these men may have worked for Luke Brooks on his farm. A young woman also lived there, presumably helping with childcare and the boarding house. None stayed long. Silas and Elizabeth eventually moved to Wisconsin; the fate of the others is unknown.

Within four years an Irish couple, John and Bridget Qualters, occupied the house with their four children and several boarders. In the 1855 census John, a laborer, was 55 and Bridget, 44. They had immigrated after the birth of their second child about nine years earlier. The boarders would have helped the Qualters family pay their rent. In 1855 there were eight Irish boarders, all men working as laborers. None of them owned any real or personal property



Henry F. Walling. *Map of Middlesex County, Massachusetts*. Boston: Smith & Bumstead, 1856 (detail). The Melone Homestead in its original location is probably the dwelling labeled "L Brooks" just north of the outlet from the pond behind 293 Boston Post Road (the westernmost pond or "first" pond) Note the location of the chair factory straddling the brook just downstream of the outlet from the third pond. Note also the new location of the Melone Homestead just north of the chair factory (between the S and HF of Bingham's name).

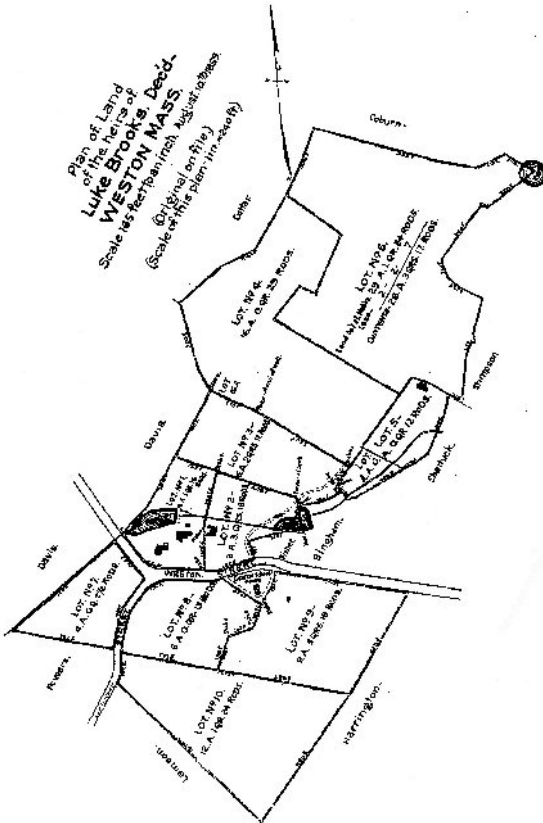
The Melone Homestead and School Furniture Factory

The next chapter in the history of the Melone Homestead revolved around a school furniture factory established downstream from 293 Boston Post Road. In addition to the mill site behind No. 293, there had long been a second mill site behind what is now 39 Crescent Street. Alpheus Cutter reportedly developed the third mill site, located behind 29 Crescent Street, about 1845. In 1855 William G. Shattuck established a furniture factory at the third mill site. The foundation, especially the stonework around the site of the water wheel, is still visible next to the bridge over Three Mile Brook on the driveway to the Melone Homestead.

The 2.5-acre parcel on which the furniture mill stood was landlocked and was accessed via a right-of-way along the present driveway. This former farm lane

dates back to colonial times.

The mill lot had been part of a 100-acre farm belonging to the Harrington family from the time of the Revolution. About half of the Sears Conservation Land was once part of the Harrington farm. The other half was historically part of the Cutter/Brooks parcel. In 1855 William C. Stimpson bought all of the Harrington farm except for Shattuck's 2.5 acres and so owned land north, south, and east of Shattuck's mill. Luke Brooks owned the land to the west.



Plan of Land of the Heirs of Luke Brooks, Deceased, Weston, Mass., August 10, 1859. Plan Book 9B, Plate 57, Middlesex County Registry of Deeds. The Melone Homestead is on Lot Number 5.



Advertisement for William G. Shattuck's school furniture from the 1852 Boston Directory, advertising section, p.43. Available via Googlebooks.

Shattuck's business was making school furniture, especially chairs and desks for primary schools. An enterprising man, he saw an opportunity to house his factory workers in Luke Brooks's tenant house. It appears that in 1855 or 1856, Shattuck persuaded Brooks to allow him to move the tenant house to its present location, still on Brooks's land. An 18th-century farm road and causeway across the swampy area led from one location to the other and offered a convenient route for the relocation. The house would have been moved on greased skids pulled by horses or oxen. Luke Brooks died between August and November of 1856 and within a few years his widow decided to move back to Cambridge.

After the tenant house was moved, it was expanded and divided into two units to accommodate more people. Shattuck probably undertook the renovations at his own expense. The front door was boarded over and new entrances built on the east and west sides. A rear addition created two new rooms on each side of the first floor and unfinished attic spaces on each side of the second. The living area was nearly doubled, to approximately 1730 square feet.

By 1860, Shattuck employed seven men at his Weston factory and produced 5,000 seats and 2,500 desks, as well as other chairs and settees. Production revenues increased from \$5,000 in 1854-55 to \$8,000 in 1859-60.

When the back land of Luke Brooks's estate became available in 1860, Shattuck purchased 47 acres including the Melone Homestead. He also obtained a right-of-way across the Brooks front land to the County road. Technically, access to the Melone Homestead at that time was along this old farm road on the Brooks property. Practically speaking, however, it was much more convenient to use William C. Stimpson's road.

Focused as he was on his business, which he ran from his residence in East Boston, William G. Shattuck managed within a few years to severely antagonize Stimpson. Neighbor Stimpson complained that, within a year or two, Shattuck's men had cut down four of his six apple trees along the ditch. More seriously, in widening the canal, its sides were weakened to the point where water seeping out flowed across the road and flooded Stimpson's hay field. Stimpson's chief complaint, however, was improper use of the right-of-way and resulting damage to the road by heavy traffic. Stimpson had unsuccessfully asked Shattuck for money to pay his share of the road repair—such cost sharing being stipulated in the deed. Stimpson acknowledged the right of way to the school furniture factory but denied Shattuck's right to continue 200 more yards to the Melone Homestead.

As time went on, what had begun as a private disagreement between Stimpson and Shattuck escalated to the level of a public issue. It was eventually resolved in 1863 by the selectmen, who laid out a private way along Stimpson's farm road with explicit allowance to Shattuck and others to use it to access Shattuck's land. Shattuck was required to pay \$500 in damages to Stimpson.

Two families occupied the Melone Homestead in 1860: the Cooledges and Cutlers. These would have been the people described by Stimpson in his 1863 letter of complaint to the selectmen. In the course of seven pages, he wrote that in 1859 William Shattuck "hired a Dwelling House in Brooks' pasture ... and put in it two or three families." As he described, Shattuck's people brought "heavy teams of manure, lumber &c. cutting up the road." Charles Cooledge (52) was head of household at the Melone Homestead in 1860. He lived there with his wife Nancy (48). Charles and Harriet N. Cutler, a young couple, also lived in the house. Charles Cooledge, his son Frank, and Charles Cutler all worked for Shattuck in the chair factory. Neither family appears to have lived there for more than a year.

They were probably succeeded by John Colton in 1862 and William W. Cole in 1863, both Shattuck employees. William G. Shattuck himself lived in the Melone Homestead in 1863—the only known instance of an owner so doing. The following year his nephew George W. Shattuck and Shattuck employee James Morse probably occupied the house. 1864 was also the year when William G. Shattuck



Undershot waterwheel at the school furniture factory c. 1915. Photograph by Alfred Wayland Cutting. Courtesy of Historic New England)

built the barn that stood near the Melone Homestead until it blew down in the late 1970s.

From 1864 to 1883 no record positively identifies the occupants of the Melone Homestead. Productions revenues of the school furniture factory were not reported in 1865, but by 1875 had increased to \$12,000. The seven employees worked 10-hour days, six days a week. According to Massachusetts industry statistics of 1875, the average daily wage, \$2.75, was the highest reported in the state among furniture manufacturers.

William Shattuck died in August 1875, a month shy of his 60th birthday. An obituary in *The Boston Daily Advertiser* of Saturday, August 28, 1875 reads:

William D. [sic] Shattuck, a well-

known citizen of East Boston, died on Thursday afternoon. During the past forty years he has been engaged in the furniture business, and has furnished many churches, schools and public buildings in a style which has given him a high character in the trade. He leaves a wife and two children.

The Boston Daily Globe of the same date reads:

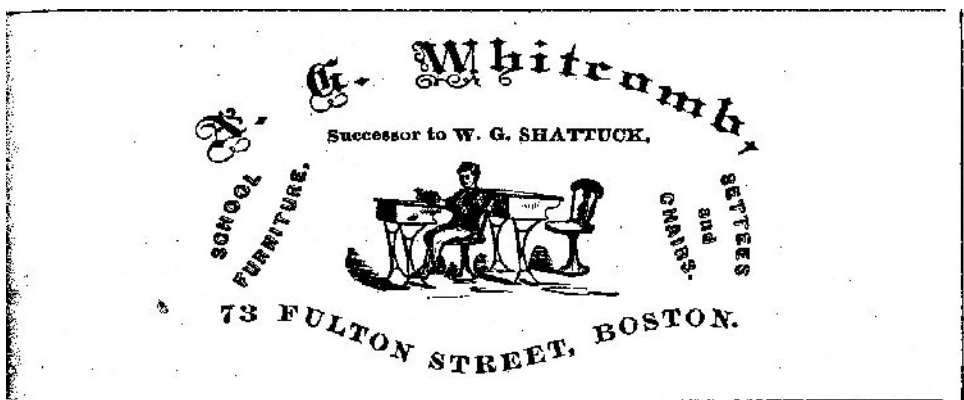
Mr. William G. Shattuck, a prominent resident of East Boston for many years, died, Thursday, at the age of sixty, after a long illness, leaving a wife and two daughters. He was a gentleman of exemplary character, and greatly respected in this community, for the interests of which he always felt the highest regard. He was born and educated here, and during the past forty years had been engaged in the furniture business. Many of the churches,

schools and public buildings have been furnished by him. Mr. Shattuck was a member of the Church of Our Father, and before his health became impaired was a most constant attendance upon public worship.

William's widow, Eliza R. Shattuck, sold the manufacturing business to the partnership of Miller & Kenney. Weston residents James Miller and Oliver Kenney were both former employees of William G. Shattuck. Mrs. Shattuck sold the Boston-based distribution side of the business to Amasa G. Whitcomb of Chelsea, a 25-year Shattuck employee. She leased the mill site—the 2.5 acres with the dam, ditch, pond, mill, and machinery—to Miller & Kenney. In 1886, the mill site, together with the 47-acre parcel where the Melone Homestead is located, were put into a trust for Eliza's benefit.

James Miller (b ca 1834) probably lived in the Melone Homestead in 1884, possibly beginning in 1881. He and his wife, Eliza, had four children. They came to Weston in 1869 and were enumerated in the Stony Brook neighborhood on the censuses of 1870 and 1880. He began working for William G. Shattuck in 1869 but gave his occupation as "ship joiner" on the 1870 census. His occupation "school furniture master" on the 1880 census suggests that he managed production. Oliver Kenney, listed as a "school furniture manufacturer," appears to have assumed the owner/administrator role. The partnership ended in 1881, at which point Kenney became the sole proprietor under the name of O. N. Kenney.

In 1885 Gilbert and Ella Blood settled into the Melone Homestead for what would be a nearly 30-year tenancy. Gilbert Blood was born in 1849. As a young man he worked as a clerk in Waltham. Soon after his marriage, he rented the house and land including an apple orchard from the Shattuck trust and began operating a farm. For many years, the Bloods shared the Melone Homestead with Ella's sister and brother-in-law, Caroline and John Galbraith. In 1900-1902 and



A. G. Whitcomb's advertisement in the 1876 Boston Directory.



*Detail of milk bottle from the G.A. Blood dairy
(Courtesy of Anna Melone Pollock)*

1910, Blood's cousin George M. Hutchinson was boarding with the Bloods. In 1900 his occupation was given as "land lord;" in 1910, as "dairy farm laborer."

Beginning about 1891, Gilbert Blood began keeping cows, chickens, and pigs. His dairy operation peaked in 1902 with 23 cows. He kept between 100 and 300 chickens for all but three of the next 18 years. He always had two to four horses that he used to work his farm and pull his milk delivery wagon.

There is no evidence of workers at the school furniture factory living at the Melone Homestead after 1880. In the early 1890s George S. Perry (1855-1904) acquired the distribution side of the business from Amasa Whitcomb. Perry had

grown up next door at 21 Crescent Street on the old Harrington farm, which his father, David, had purchased from William C. Stimpson back in 1866. When George S. Perry married Charlotte Johnson in 1883, they settled in a new house at 225 Boston Post Road built on land bought from his father. He renamed the distribution business George S. Perry & Company and added school supplies and slate blackboards to the list of products.

Oliver Kenney ran the school furniture factory from 1881 until 1893 when he was succeeded by his son Ralph. In 1894 George S. Perry acquired the machinery from William G. Shattuck's estate and leased it back to the Kenney brothers until 1897, the year of Eliza Shattuck's death. In the settling of her estate, S. Louisa Logan, Eliza R. Shattuck's only surviving daughter, became the sole beneficiary of the Shattuck trust. In 1900, George S. Perry purchased the Melone Homestead, the school furniture factory, and about 40 acres of land, being all the Shattuck land south of the Massachusetts Central Railroad. In so doing, Perry became Gilbert Blood's new landlord.

In 1901 Ralph Kenney, his brother Charles, and Henry Wolkins bought the distribution side of the business from George S. Perry. They formed a new partnership, Kenney Bros. & Wolkins, for the manufacture and distribution of school furniture, and leased the mill site from Perry. Charles Kenney lived at 315 Boston Post

Road, Ralph at No. 256, and Wolkins in Boston. The chair factory operated until 1917, when Kenney Bros. & Wolkins moved it to a larger site in Baldwinsville.

George S. Perry died in 1904 but the property remained in his estate until 1918. His widow, Charlotte, his sister, Hattie, and his brother, Henry, all continued to live on Perry land on the east end of Crescent Street.

In 1909, the second unit of the Melone Homestead was probably occupied by one Louis Furbush. From 1910 to 1918 Ephraim and Cora Cutter of North Cambridge and Melrose probably rented the second unit. Ephraim was a music teacher.

**“PERRY’S
ADJUSTABLE DESK.”**



GEO. S. PERRY & COMPANY,

Manufacturers, Importers, and Dealers in

School Furniture & School Supplies

73 Fulton Street, Boston, Mass.

(Left) This image is from the back page of a catalog dating to the 1890s, when George Perry took over the previous firm of A. G. Whitcomb. (Courtesy of Eloise Kenney)

Following Gilbert Blood’s retirement to Waltham in 1912, two couples moved into the Melone Homestead: James and Agnes Constable and John and Alice Coolidge. The Constables were both English immigrants. James, a gardener, spent time in Lowell before moving to Weston. He lived for a short time on North Avenue before moving into the Melone Homestead in 1913. He worked as a gardener for the Perry family until 1918, when they sold the property. At that time he and Agnes moved to Waltham.

John and Alice Coolidge came from Waltham. John had worked as a foreman at a stone quarry, probably for Waltham Trap Rock Company, predecessor of Mass. Broken Stone. The Coolidges probably lived in the Melone Homestead from 1913 until 1928. John Coolidge ran a small farm on the Perry prop-

erty, first a dairy, later a piggery.

In 1918, the Perry family sold the house at 21 Crescent Street and the Melone Homestead, together with 66.81 acres of land, to Horace S. Sears. He in turn conveyed it to his nephew Francis B. Sears Jr., known as Frank. Frank Sears's mother, Mary Elizabeth Sparhawk Sears had grown up in the house at 293 Boston Post Road. Frank Sears Jr. started out working for his uncle Horace S. Sears. In the 1920s, after twenty years in the dry goods business, he left to become president of Waltham National Bank. Frank Jr. and Marian had three children, Francis Bacon III, Rosamond, and Edwin Buckingham "Buck."

After Frank Jr. took over the farm, the Constables left the Melone Homestead and the Sweeneys moved in. John H. Sweeney worked for the Searses as a general man and coachman. He and his wife, Anna, were both born to Irish parents in New Brunswick about 1869. The Sweeneys probably lived in the Melone Homestead from 1919 to 1923 or 1924.

The Coolidges left the Melone Homestead in 1928 or 1929. The new tenants were the Crocker family. The 1930 census shows the Crockers renting the house for \$25 per month. Charles A. J. Crocker, 34, was the Sears' gardener. His wife Hermintine, 32, was French-Canadian, and they had six children ranging in age from one to nine. The census states that the house was situated on a farm. After a brief stay, the Crocker family moved to Waltham. One of the children, Albert J. Crocker (born 1926) was still living in Waltham in 2005. He remembered the outhouse by one of the ells. His wife characterized the Crocker family's time in the Melone Homestead as "hard."

The Melone Homestead probably lay vacant for a couple of years after the departure of the Crockers. In 1932, just after the birth of their fifth child, Joseph and Maria Anna Melone moved there from Waltham and began working for the Sears family. A friend and former neighbor of the Melones, divorcé Michael Chiarelli, stayed with them for a while and worked as a chauffeur. He soon remarried and moved back to Waltham.

The story of the Melone Family is a testament to the values of hard work, persistence, entrepreneurship, and generosity. The following is an account related by Anna Melone to Pam Fox for the book *Farm Town to Suburb: The History and Architecture of Weston, Massachusetts, 1830-1980*:

Guiseppe "Joseph" Melone (1892-1979) came to the United States from Penne, Italy in 1921 settling in Waltham. His brother Antonio worked at Mass. Broken Stone. Joseph found work as a landscape gardener with a regular Weston clientele [...]. He was part of the workforce that completed the new town green. In 1924 he returned to Italy to bring back his wife, Maria Anna, and young son, Vincent. When they arrived at the port of Naples, he



Above: The Melone family in the dining room, c. 1956. Back row: Vincent, John, Daniel, Anthony, and William. Front row: Cecilia, Maria Anna (Mrs. Josph), Joseph, and Anna. (Courtesy of Anna Melone Pollock)

found that their visas had expired, and he had to return to the United States without them. Five years passed before the family was finally reunited in 1929. Joseph and Maria Anna rented a third-floor flat in Waltham, and Joseph rode his bicycle each day to Weston. As the country sank into the Depression, the Melones struggled to provide for their growing family.

While working for Dr. [Fresenius] Van Nuys, Joseph Melone discovered the former chair factory tenement, vacant and in disrepair. One room was filled with rotten apples placed there for storage and abandoned; other rooms were overgrown with weeds and infested with snakes. At the urging of Van Nuys, Francis and Marian Sears agreed to allow the Melones to live in the house if they repaired it themselves and assisted with work on the estate.

The first priority was renovating the house. Sears paid for the materials and Melone did the work with the help of friends. Sears left modernizing the house to

the Melone family, so for the first several years, the house had no electricity, central heat, running water, or indoor plumbing. Over time, Joseph Melone upgraded systems and installed a water closet in the basement and a pitcher pump in the kitchen sink that drew water from the well. Initially, they painted the house yellow with white trim.

Along with the house, the Melones rented the barn, shed, and surrounding land. The family grew much of their own food in extensive vegetable gardens and kept cows, pigs, and goats in the barn. They had a chicken coop in the back. Joseph kept a team of horses to work the farm and clear the snow in winter. He had a pony to pull the hayrake and a little red pung for the children.

The Melones maintained the fields and woods and farmed for themselves and the Sears. The boys milked the Sears cows and took care of their chickens, bringing milk and eggs to 21 Crescent. They also took care of the horses, stoked the stoves in the main house and garage, and did odd jobs as asked. At haying time, the Melones filled the Sears barn and then their own.



Haying on the Sears Estate, 1941. (Courtesy of Anna Melone Pollock)

On top of his obligations to the Sears family, Joseph Melone continued his landscaping work. In 1935 he started his own company with a single Ford truck. J. Melone and Sons, formed in 1946, has become a large corporation dealing in sand, gravel, cement, road construction, and property development. The eight Melone children graduated from Weston High School with outstanding records in scholarship, sports, and citizenship. Anthony Melone acquired what had been the Perry property at 225 Boston Post Road and de-

veloped Hillcrest Road in the 1970s. Anna Melone Pollock lives at 29 Crescent Street and Daniel Melone lives at 277 Boston Post Road.

Frank and Marion Sears both died in 1943. They left their estate to their two living children, Rosamond and Edwin or “Buck,” as he was known. Their oldest son had taken his own life in 1928. Pam Fox describes the siblings thusly:

Rosamond (1910-1992) had enjoyed a brief career as a sculptor, and [...] Buck (1911-1987) was a competent “gentleman” painter and musician who loved New England history, architecture, and antiquarianism. Both suffered from mental difficulties. Buck has been described as a timid, reclusive and cautious man, set in his ways. Neither he nor Rosamond ever married, and both required the services of a legal guardian in their later years because of failing competency. Buck maintained residences in Weston, Boston’s Back Bay, and Camden, Maine.

By the 1970s, momentum for land conservation was building in Weston. The Conservation Commission identified land of particular interest throughout the town, and its members approached owners regarding acquisition. Buck Sears was pleased to give the town his undivided share in 61.47 acres. Rosamond’s share was sold by the conservator of her property, presumably with Buck’s encouragement, she being unable to act for herself.

Conclusion

The history of the Melone Homestead reflects the shifts that have shaped the Town of Weston from its farming roots to the development of small industry, to the consolidation of land into large country estates, to the post-WWII subdivisions and planning for green space.

In the period when the house was probably built, 1834-1837, manufacturing was becoming increasingly important to the Massachusetts economy. Shoes, boots, textiles, and the machinery to make them became important Massachusetts industries. The utilitarian Melone Homestead, built as housing for workers in a cotton mill, was a by-product of the early industrial revolution. At the time, Weston had about 1,100 residents living in about 150 houses. About two-thirds of the men were engaged in agriculture and another quarter in manufacturing and trades.

The farmers and farm laborers who lived in the Melone Homestead beginning about 1845 reflected two demographic trends: westward migration and Irish immigration. The young farm family that lived in the Melone Homestead in 1850 headed west to Wisconsin. The farm laborers who lived in the Melone Homestead in 1850 and 1855 were but a few of the thousands who left Ireland during the Great Irish Famine of the late 1840s. Luke Brooks, owner of the Melone Homestead, represented a third trend: wealthy businessmen from Boston and

Cambridge who established country retreats in outlying towns. Some of these men kept homes in Boston where they lived during the winter.

Beginning about 1856, after being moved, the Melone Homestead once again housed mill workers, this time men employed at the school furniture factory. The mill owner as both employer and landlord was typical: for example, Weston mill owner Nathaniel Sibley boarded 14 machinists in 1860.

A new relationship between tenant and landlord was established when Gilbert Blood moved into the Melone Homestead in the mid-1880s. Blood was an independent farmer who rented the house and land. The Coolidges appear to have had a similar arrangement. Nearly all previous tenants had also been either employees or kin of the property owner.

With the late 19th-century establishment of country estates came the need for staff housing. Men such as Constable and Sweeney were said to be employed by a “private family:” James Constable as gardener for the Perrys, John Henry Sweeney as general man and/or coachman for the Searses. Not all tenants worked the land or chauffeured their employers. The nine-year tenancy of Ephraim Cutter reflects the desire of the Perry family in particular and Weston families in general to educate their children in music.

Joseph and Maria Anna Melone, who moved into the house at 27 Crescent Street in the depths of the Depression, were part of an early 20th-century influx of immigrants from eastern and southern Europe. Their success in creating a new life for themselves and their family in the United States represents thousands.

The estate era drew to a close in the 1930s and 1940s. After World War II, large tracts of land were subdivided and developed. The mid-20th century was a time of population growth in Weston and growing awareness of the value of open space. By 1975, the population had grown to 11,500 in 3000 dwellings and concerted efforts, both public and private, to conserve land were underway. Acquisition of Melone Homestead and the Sears Conservation Land in 1975 is a prime example of cooperation between landowners and the Town to preserve open space. More recently, the Conservation Commission’s 1997 Melone Homestead lease agreement with Land’s Sake represents Weston’s commitment to responsible and sustainable use of its conserved lands.

By Cynthia B. Bates



Our sincere thanks to Jack Richardson for the gift of two of his signed and numbered watercolors, depicting winter sledding on the Town Green (above) and Weston High School graduation on the Town Green.

One Hundred Years Ago in Weston: Selections from *The Waltham Daily Free Press Tribune*, 1908

The American Express Co. are making changes in their local arrangements. The express wagon which for so many years has been driven from Cochituate to the Weston railroad station at the center of the town has been taken off. Considerable indignation is manifested at this move, and there is strong talk of arranging with other express companies. (January 3)

Edward Compton has gathered 94 dozens and 7 eggs during the past month from 84 hens. (January 3)

Station Agent Trask has hyacinths in bloom at Kendal Green. (January 3)

It looks a little odd to see the old Sears mansion painted a light color. If we are not mistaken, it had retained its dark shade for 40 years or more. (January 31)

T.E. Coburn has finished cutting ice for Messrs. Spear, Viles and himself, and is at work on the ice houses of Messrs. Thurston, Brown and Ellis. (February 7)

Editor Free Press-Tribune: There is a large number of the citizens of Weston who do not agree with the general proposition. . .that the people of this town in general do not want an electric railroad. That matter has been fought out in Town meeting some two or three times, and the people have indicated most decidedly that they do. The feeling is just as strong today as ever it has been. Whether they desire the particular type of road now presented to them may be a question, but that they want some kind of conveyance to the east that will accommodate them much better than the Boston & Maine road accommodate them is an absolute fact. . .The time is near at hand when some kind of a road will go through Weston. Whether it goes where it will do property the least harm and jar least on the nerves of summer residents is getting beyond the point where they can control it. . . .the Railroad Commissioners will not long continue to let Weston and Weston alone stand in the way of electric interurban railways. (Feb. 14)

B. Ogilvie seems to be the champion in the line of hatching chickens in zero weather. (February 28)

There was a birthday party at James Moulton's last Saturday in honor of the fifth birthday of his son Earl. Depot carriages convened the 15 little guests from and to their homes. Once there games were played and refreshments were served and all had a merry time. The little host was the recipient of many presents. (March 13)

There are now 15 houses quarantined on account of measles. (April 10)

S. G. Pennock recently trimmed off the heavy foretop on his horse and since then the animal has not seemed to know just how to act. He would refuse to be driven and was very liable to back into the gutter. Mr. Pennock was obliged to construct a false fore-top for the beast and when it was applied lo! the horse resumed his accustomed docility under the rein. (April 19)

The first ladies' ball game of the season took place last Monday on the grounds of E.R. Spaulding between the Westons and the Stony Brooks, the former winning by a score of 12 to 11. The scorers were so busy looking at the fair participants that all details of the game were lost. (April 24)

There seems to be a decided impression that the Town meeting this week was inclined to be reckless in its expenditures. The amount appropriated for housing the fire apparatus at Kendal Green is sufficient to put up a building large enough for a Town hall. . . .(May 1) [see photo of the station below]

If correspondents fail to see items printed that they send in unsigned they may know that such communications are always thrown into the waste basket, unless the item can be verified in some other way. (May 15)

The Town has purchased a new two cylinder tree sprayer for the use of the gypsy and brown-tail moth hunters. (May 29)

Guy Trask made a successful catch of Fred Brown's horse Wednesday night after others had tried and failed. The animal is a difficult one to capture when he gets loose. (May 29)

Everybody please take notice of the elegant Maple tree on the lawn in front of A. L. Hersum's house. This tree was set out only a few years ago. (May 29)

Last Monday a touring car from New Jersey running at a very high rate of speed in turning into School street struck an elm tree and demolished two wheels and one side of the car. One of these days others of the reckless fraternity will be



The Kendal Green fire station, was constructed one hundred years ago, in 1908. (Photo courtesy of the Weston Historical Society)

killed there and they will have the satisfaction of knowing that there will be no mourners among the people of Weston. (June 5)

Work has begun on the new school building. Robert E. Glancy of Waltham has the contract. (June 26) [see school photo on next page]

The Town of Weston has been greatly annoyed for a long time and subjected to a very material expense in consequence of the malicious breaking of street lamps. Thursday morning Chief McAuliffe, who is always on the alert for offenders, while driving along Newton street, came across four lads who were caught as he says flagrante delicto. . . They claim Newton Lower Falls as their place of residence. . . (June 26)

The band of gypsies which were camped in town last week were reported as being in Malden on Tuesday. There are 33 in the party and they say they came from Chicago. (July 17)

Any party who desires a mess of nice butter beans without expense can learn where to get them by applying at once to Station Agent Trask. (July 17)

Work has begun on macadamizing Newton street. . . (July 24)

Fred A. Tucker has just appeared out with a new Metz motor-cycle. It is a nickel-plated machine, and is of the best that is manufactured. (July 24)

The Ladies' Aid Society held a successful lawn party Tuesday evening. It did not rain as it usually does for them. (August 7)

There were two breaks at Kendal Green Saturday night, evidently by amateurs: one at George Faber's and the other, the Weston Poor House. One would hardly suppose that a town almshouse offered a very promising field for a burglar but the party was probably not acquainted or didn't believe it was as poor as its name. . . At the Poor Farm they obtained a watch and about \$10 in money. . . (August 14)

H.S. Sears is continuing the beautifying of his estate by adding to the beauty of the vista on the south side of Central avenue. An artificial pond is to be one of the attractions there which will be seen from the mansion down an avenue of trees. (August 21)

Many of the people living on the private road leading to the Electric Light station think the name of Warren avenue should be given to it. We notice the Assessors, however, call it Whittemore lane. (August 28)

Dr. Van Nuys has bought a new Maxwell auto runabout. (August 28)



This small two-room school house was built one hundred years ago to house the four primary grades. It had to be enlarged two years later by adding a brick first floor. It is now Brook School Building B. (Courtesy of Weston Historical Society)

The fire station is completed and the contractors have departed. (September 4)

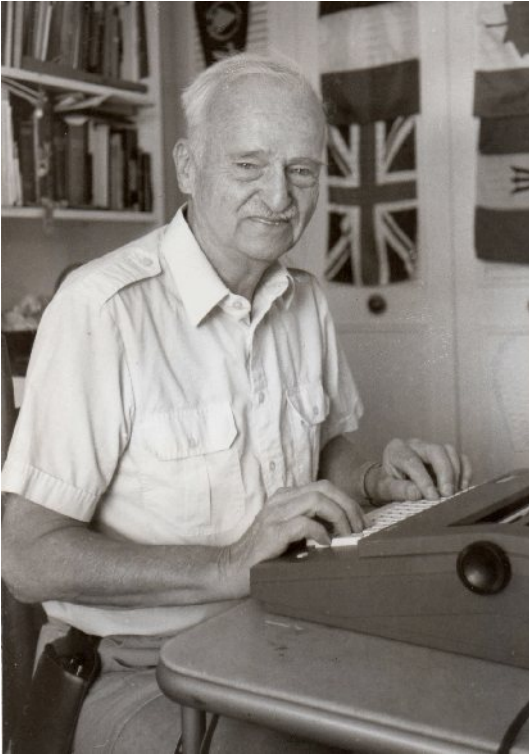
The Theodore Jones house is being quite extensively remodeled inside and is to be piped for steam heat. (Sept. 11)

In the very interesting and instructive volume issued by the Labor Bureau on "The Cost of Municipal Government in Massachusetts," we note the following regarding Weston: It is one of 62 towns having no debt. . . Weston stands financially among the foremost towns in the Commonwealth. (September 18)

George Lamson is showing some stalks of corn measuring 12 feet in height with ears of corn 15 inches long. (September 25)

The carpenters are putting the finishing touches on the interior of the Fire station. (September 25)

George E. Trask has sent a squash weighing 79 pounds to Salem to compete in a prize contest there. (October 2)



*George F. Amadon at his typewriter in 1982.
(Photo courtesy of Weston Historical Society).*

In Memoriam: George Frazee Amadon (1916-2008)

Longtime Weston Historical Society board member George Frazee Amadon passed away on November 2 at the age of 92. George's love of history was evident throughout his life. He was particularly interested in military history and lectured extensively on the subject. His book *Rise of the Ironclads* tells the story of the nation's first ironclad warship, the *U.S.S. Monitor*, and her famous naval battle in 1862 against the Confederate ship *Virginia*.

George was born in Framingham and attended Lawrence Academy and the College of William and Mary. He enlisted in the Army Air Corps shortly after Pearl Harbor and became a command gunner on an 11-man B-29 bomber. He received a Distinguished Flying Cross, four Air Medals, three Battle Stars, and the Purple Heart for 30 missions flown over Japan. After the war George moved to Weston, where he lived for 63 years and contributed much to the life of the town.

At George's memorial service, Beth Nolan, Town Clerk and a member of the WHS board, noted in her tribute: "...in the annals of Weston, there are few citizens who have given so much to the civic fabric of a community and for so long into their lives as did George." Nolan enumerated George's many volunteer activities as follows:

"He was an active veteran in the Town of Weston, he was our Grave Officer, he served as a member the Town's Memorial Day committee, he organized the annual Memorial Parade and activities, and he spoke at the Memorial Day observances;

“As a veteran, he lectured frequently at the Weston Library and in other communities. His lectures were not just about World War II; they were about citizenship. He as a very popular and frequent guest of the Weston Public Schools as a member of the Council on Aging Inter-generational Program, giving first- person accounts of the Greatest Generation. In fact, George was scheduled to speak to fourth graders at the Field School this week.

“At Merriam Village, he was repeatedly elected to the Board of Directors. The flagpole at Merriam Village was George’s initiative, and so too was the annual Fourth of July picnic, which he organized.

“George truly believed it was his civic duty to preserve our history for the future of our society. Not only was he on the Board of Directors of the Weston Historical Society, he was curator of the society’s museum for a several years. George was also an active member of the Crescent Street Historic District Commission and the Josiah Smith Tavern Committee. But for George, his civic duty was not only the preservation of the past but also the advancement of the future.

George was an active substitute teacher in Weston and other area schools until after his 91st birthday. Not only was he a Salvation Army bell ringer every year; but he would also wheel and deal with his old employer, Sears and Roebuck, to help those in his community. I know of no election in the past 20 years taking place without George’s steady and enthusiastic presence as a poll worker.

Always an active member of the Council on Aging; George was never about aging—he was about being in the arena.”

Several speakers at George’s memorial service noted how appropriate it was that the memorial service was held on Veterans Day.

The Weston Historical Society has established a fund to be used for the purchase of a special item in George’s memory. Donations may be sent to P.O. Box 343, Weston, MA 02493.

With Special Thanks.....

- * to artist Jack Richardson for the gift of two of his prints (see page 33)***
- * to the Waltham Historical Society for the gift of an Album of Remembrance belonging to Clara Hastings and dating to 1863-64***
- * to George Bates for the gift of items relating to the Jennings family of Glen Road, including deeds, photographs, and two daguerreotypes***
- *to Edward “Ted” Coburn for the gift of four scrapbooks of Weston and Boston newspaper clippings from the late 19th century.***
- * to Kitty and Roland Peixotto for photographs and memorabilia relating to the Fiske family of “Laxfield”***

OFFICERS OF THE WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2008-09

President: Pamela W. Fox
Vice President: Joe Mullin
Co-Secretaries: Tania Deary, Beth Nolan
Treasurer: David Cail
Collections Care: Carol Snow
Membership Chair: Tom Friedlander
Bulletin Editor: Pamela W. Fox

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Greg Barison, Pam Bator, Miller Blew, Harold Coburn, Arnold Crowley, Carlie Friedlander, Sally Gilman, Lisa Greenberg, Mary Gregory, Mary Marder, Lee Marsh, Anna Melone, Madeleine Mullin, Tony Nolan, John Sallay

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

