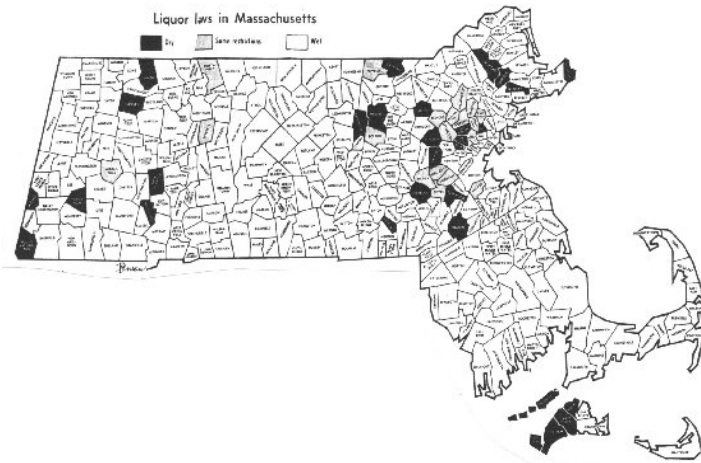


WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

Vol. XXXIX, No.1

Spring, 2008



This map, published in the Christian Science Monitor on October 12, 1970, shows the 30 communities still “dry” at that time. Today that number stands at 12.

“Spirituous & Intoxicating Liquors:” Alcohol Regulation in Weston

[Editor’s Note: As Weston prepares to vote at the May Town Meeting on whether to establish a restaurant at the Josiah Smith Tavern—a restaurant that, for economic reasons, will need to have a full bar—this article provides an answer to the question “How long has Weston been a dry town?”]

Despite their straight-laced reputation, the Puritans were not abstainers. Hard cider was the daily drink. Distilled spirits were a popular feature at marriages, funerals, ordinations, and meeting house raisings. Rum and cider were important to the economy throughout New England.

In his *History of the Town of Weston, Massachusetts: 1630-1890*, Col. Daniel S. Lamson writes about the role of alcohol in the 18th century, a time when water was often unsafe to drink and tea was a luxury. With a hint of irony, he describes the differences between that era and the 1880s, when he was writing his history:

In these days of much-talked-of prohibition it seems strange to look back to the time when our progenitors never looked upon water as made to drink. In fact, water was scarcely used by them as a common beverage. New England rum and cider were looked upon as the proper drink. Tea was a luxury, used in sickness or on special occasions of social gatherings. It was purchased by the ounce. Coffee was not in general use, and among farmers never seen on the breakfast table, as now. Two quarts of rum and a pint of molasses was the weekly allowance of the average family. This was independent of the frequent potations of flip--a home-made beer of hops, heated by a flip-iron always at hand. The rum and molasses charges in the books of retailers and grocers in early days are a sight that would overturn the equilibrium of our Prohibitionists. (Lamson, 105)

In Lamson's day, women were at the forefront of the temperance movement. In contrast, he describes his colonial foremothers adding to the domestic supply of spirits by making wines and cordials:

The women aided and abetted in the general use of wines and liquors, but their brew was of their own make. In every house could be found an abundance of currant, elderberry, and noyau wines. [Ed. note: noyau wine was a cordial flavored with the kernel of a bitter almond or peach stone.] No visitor, however humble, was allowed to depart without an invitation to the sideboard or cupboard. To have overlooked this act of hospitality was an offence not to be forgotten or readily forgiven. (Lamson, 105)

Weston also had a brewery or "malt house" operated by the Livermore family at the west end of what is now Boston Post Road.

Lamson believed that the regular imbibing of rum, malt beverages, hard cider, and domestic wine did not create the same problems in colonial Weston as it did in his own time. His explanation was that the hard work needed to survive in a harsh environment was not conducive to abuse:

Notwithstanding the universal use of spirits, confined to no one class and forming a part of all contracts between master and servant, there was little or no drunkenness, as we see it in its disgusting form in our day. The men drank hard, perhaps; they certainly drank often; but they worked hard, and black-strap was with them an article of food as well as drink. (Lamson, 105)

In asserting that excessive drinking was seldom a problem for the sturdy, God-fearing farmers of colonial days, Lamson demonstrates his tendency to idealize the past.

The Role of Taverns

Colonial innholders and retailers were required to register with the Middlesex County Court of Sessions. The earliest Weston resident to do so was Thomas Woolson, who obtained his first license in 1686. In an article in the March 1973 *Weston Historical Society Bulletin*, Brenton H. Dickson III reported that Woolson was apparently selling liquor before that, because in 1685 he was convicted “of selling strong drink without license, contrary to the law. . . [and] fined twenty shillings or to sett one hour in the stocks and to pay costs of eight shillings.”

Considering that the community did not have its own church until the “Farmer’s Precinct” was set off from Watertown in 1698, it is clear that taverns were an essential element of life in early Weston. Two mid-18th century tavern buildings have survived: one operated by Josiah Smith and his descendents (358 Boston Post Road) and the second by Isaac Jones at the Sign of the Golden Ball (662 Boston Post Road). Two other prominent taverns, run by John Flagg and by the

Woolson family and later Samuel Baldwin, were located near 725 and 625 Boston Post Road respectively. A number of other taverns operated at various times along the Post Road and Weston’s other major travel route, North Avenue.



The Flagg Tavern was operated by John Flagg from the late 1770s until 1812, then by others until about mid-century. The building, which stood near the present 725 Boston Post Road, was destroyed by fire in 1902.

Lamson writes about the prevalence of taverns and their essential role in hosting travelers along main routes such as Boston Post Road:

It has been found impossible at this late date to give what would otherwise be a highly interesting history of the old-time taverns that existed in such great numbers throughout Massachusetts previous to, and for many years after, the Revolution. It is often asked how it was possible for so many taverns to have been profitable in so close proximity to each other, as was the case in every village along main routes throughout New England. The main road through Weston was the most important thoroughfare in early days, connecting Boston with Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, and Washington. (Lamson, 186)



Detail of 18th century wood panel depicting what looks to be a gentleman with punch bowl and wine glass.

There were few houses of any importance in all these years that had not first or last served as taverns. It was the most profitable business of all country towns along the main arteries of travel. It was not unusual for fifty to one hundred teams to be put up over night at a single tavern. (Lamson, 190)

While the latter statement would seem to be an exaggeration, it is clear that taverns thrived through the late 18th century. The number of public houses more than doubled in Middlesex County between 1730 and 1770, from 106 to 231.

In addition to hosting travelers, taverns were important community gathering places where all levels of society could socialize and discuss public issues. Official and semi-official business was conducted there, too; for example, the Proprietors of the Great and Common Field in Concord held their annual meeting at a local tavern. Taverns also provided a venue for yet another activity that would become a target of 19th century reformers: gambling. Note in Lamson's nostalgic

description of tavern life his observation that card-playing was a common practice for all ages and social classes:

It is deeply to be regretted that much of the jovial and social life within these taverns has not been handed down to us. Gambling, or, perhaps more correctly speaking, card-playing, was before the Revolution, and for many years after, a common practice, not by any means confined to any one class of people, but prevailed generally among rich and poor, old and young alike. (Lamson, 191)

Peter Thompson writes about tavern culture in his book *Rum Punch and Revolution: Taverngoing and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia* (1999). He argues that prior to 1750, taverns offered a vehicle for public discourse at all levels of society. As new and more class-based social institutions became available, the older notion of the tavern as a special place for the intermixture of social groups began to change. By the time of the American Revolution, different classes and political groups went to different taverns.

While Weston did not have the range of social institutions available in cities like Philadelphia or Boston, there is evidence that in the years prior to the outbreak of war, Tory sympathizers patronized the Golden Ball Tavern, whose proprietor, Isaac Jones, was known as a “friend of the government.” Those who favored independence would have likely imbibed at the tavern of Joel Smith, son of Josiah and a known “Liberty Man.”

According to Jack Larkin in his 1988 book *The Reshaping of Everyday Life, 1790 to 1840*, the decades after the Revolution witnessed a striking upsurge in liquor consumption. This created a strong backlash in the form of attacks on all types of drink.

The Temperance Movement

The early 19th century temperance movement was an organized effort to encourage moderation or complete abstinence from alcohol. Its ranks were filled with women who, along with their children, suffered because husbands and fathers abused alcohol. Alcohol was blamed for many of society’s ills, including severe health problems, destitution, and crime.

Among the earliest temperance organizations were those founded in Saratoga, New York, in 1808 and in Boston, where the Massachusetts Society for the Suppression of Intemperance was founded in 1813. The movement spread through the formation of hundreds of voluntary societies and the mass distribution of printed appeals. Religious revivalism of the 1820s and 30s stimulated movements toward perfection in human beings. Sometimes known as the First Reform Era, it

was a period of sweeping humanitarian reform including crusades against alcohol, gambling, and slavery, and in favor of civilized manners and good conduct. Prominent physicians like Benjamin Rush warned Americans that beverages once considered healthful were poisonous to body and soul.

The precedent for seeking temperance through law was set by a Massachusetts law passed in 1838 and repealed two years later. The law, which was aimed at retailers, prohibited sales of spirits in less than 15-gallon quantities. Lamson wrote about its unintended consequences this way:

About the year 1830 commenced the temperance and anti-card-playing crusade, resulting in 1838 in the first stringent laws against liquor selling, and especially against retailers. This movement led up to the famous "fifteen-gallon law," the result of which was that, from being obligated to have a large quantity of spirits on hand at one time, old toppers were perpetually drunk. (Lamson, 191)

Lamson reports that George W. Cutting, respected proprietor of Cutting & Sons general store in the center of Weston, was arrested for the sale of liquor sometime in 1838 or 1839 and taken to a Cambridge jail. (Lamson, 120).

According to Jack Larkin in the above-mentioned book, by 1840 alcohol consumption had declined by more than two-thirds in the nation as a whole, from almost four gallons per person per year to less than one and a half. (Larkin, 296) It probably declined even more in New England, where the temperance movement was especially powerful. Larkin writes that the movement was also stronger in rural towns than in cities, "where those who wished to drink and carouse could do so under less watchful eyes."

Mid-19th Century: From Moral Persuasion to Legal Prohibition

By the mid-18th century, temperance crusaders had completed the transition from moral persuasion to legal coercion. In 1846, Maine passed the first statewide prohibition law that, as revised in 1851, became the model for other states. Between 1846 and 1855, more than a dozen states, including Massachusetts, passed prohibition laws.

In 1855, the Massachusetts legislature passed a resolution prohibiting the sale of intoxicating liquors except by authorized agents. Officers were authorized to arrest, without warrant, any person found in the act of illegally selling or distributing such liquors. In Weston, the Selectmen appointed Joel Upham as its sole



The Cutter farm specialized in cider and vinegar. The massive barn and three-story cider mill were located just south of South Avenue near Park Street. Benjamin Franklin Cutter (1827-1903) also made champagne cider filtered through fine sand from a beach in Ipswich. His granddaughter Alice recalled Harvard boys coming to the house to try to buy the fermented brew.

agent, in a resolution defining his job as follows:

... agent for the purchase of spirituous & intoxicating liquors to be used in the arts, or medicinal, chemical & mechanical purposes only, and also to sell the same for such purposes and no other as the law directs. To be kept and sold at his present dwelling house in Weston.” (Town of Weston records, June 19, 1855)

Upham was reappointed every year through 1867, with an annual salary of \$30.

One consequence of the temperance movement was the closing of taverns. The tavern established by Josiah Smith in 1757, for example, closed in 1838—a date coinciding with the passage of the “Fifteen Gallon” law. The temperance movement was not the only reason for the decline of taverns. Business was hurt by changes in transportation patterns, including the coming of the railroads and decline in stagecoach travel. Lamson writes that by the mid-19th century, Weston was not only “dry” but also completely lacking in public overnight accommodations:

So great has been the change in this respect in Weston that for more than thirty years there has not been an abiding-place for man or beast in the town outside of private hospitality. (Lamson, 192)

Post-Civil War Period

The next important legislative changes occurred between 1867 and 1870. The 1855 Massachusetts state law had prohibited the sale of all intoxicating liquors, including beer, ale, and cider, and also forbade the sale of any “mechanical or medicinal potions” by anyone except agents appointed by the state. In 1867, petitioners proposed a licensing system to regulate rather than totally prohibit the sale of alcohol. The bill was rejected but proponents continued to press their case. The governor at the time, Republican Alexander Bullock, refused to sign an early version of the licensing bill, commenting as follows:

The fourth section of the bill throws open public bars and tipping houses in every quarter of the state. It is destructive to the influences of the family and the fireside, adverse to good morals, and repugnant to the religious sentiment of the community.

In 1869, the legislature enacted a prohibitory liquor law (1869, Chapter 415), but the following year, the law was amended to permit the sale of ale, lager beer, strong beer, porter, and cider in towns and cities where inhabitants voted to authorize such sale. Hard alcohol, defined as “pure and unadulterated spirituous or intoxicating liquors, and malt liquors” could still be obtained only from licensed druggists and apothecaries “for medicinal, mechanical or chemical purposes only.” (1870, Chapter 389)

In 1875, after five years of back-and-forth legislative wrangling, the 1870 law was rewritten and expanded, allowing licenses to be granted annually by the town’s governing body, which in Weston is the selectmen. The law created five classes of licenses differing in the types of alcohol allowed and whether it could be drunk on the premises. The town was allowed to collect fees, with a percentage to



Francis Blake

Thursday Evening Club
24 April, 1902.

Boston & Albany Railroad Co., 140 fares,	\$14.56
H. L. Lawrence Co., Turkeys & chickens,	17.35
Somerset Club, Cigars & cigarettes,	16.60
S. S. Pierce Co., Cigars,	17.00
Charles G. Tinkham, Barges,	36.00
E. Johnson, Sweetbreads,	17.50
Deerfoot Farm Co., Cream,	4.20
R. Hollings & Co., Wiring for wireless teleg.	7.17
Masten & Wells Fireworks Mfg. Co., Owl Lights,	19.12
Charles Evans, Waiters,	23.80
10 Qts. Apollinaris Water,	1.80
13 " Burgundy, Chambertin 1883,	45.00
19 " Champagne, Moet 1893 Cuvee 81,	57.00
Rich & Matthews, Oysters, Salmon & Lobsters,	33.73
Philadelphia Ice Cream Co., 18 Qts.,	8.80
Isaac Locke & Co., Lettuce,	1.00
Daniel P. Wise, Cake & rolls,	2.55
Gas and electric light, (estimated-	5.00
Total:-	\$328.18

81 persons present.

Francis Blake (photo opposite) enjoyed expensive spirits and maintained a large wine cellar. He kept careful records when he entertained. Note that for the 1902 meeting of the prestigious Thursday Evening Club, his 81 guests drank 13 quarts of fine Burgundy and 19 quarts of high-class champagne.

be remanded to the state treasurer. (1875, Chapter 99)

For four years following passage of this law, Weston selectmen did not bring the issue to voters. Perhaps they were making a unilateral "No License" decision. It was not until 1881 that Town Meeting was asked to vote "to see if the Town will vote yes or no to grant licenses for the sale of intoxicating liquors." The question was defeated by a vote of 65 "no" to 6 "yes". The

following year, the vote was a similarly lopsided 71 against and 7 in favor. Although 1881 appears to have been the first year of an official "No License" vote, the town had been effectively "dry" for decades.

Alcohol in Turn-of-the-Century Weston

Although late 19th and early 20th century Weston had no bars or retail outlets for alcoholic beverages, this did not mean that all its residents were abstainers. Prominent estate owner Francis Blake was renowned for his discriminating taste in food and wine. His estate, Keewaydin, had a large wine cellar, and Blake saved extensive correspondence with New York wine dealers regarding choice wines ordered by the case, aged Scottish and rye whiskey, and expensive champagne. He kept a scrapbook of wine bottle labels, along with the receipts, and often recorded what wines and liquors he served his guests and how many bottles they drank.

In her diary, Blake's wife, the former Elizabeth Hubbard, records details of a small picnic held for her 19-year-old daughter, Agnes, during her debut year, 1895. Guests were picked up at the train station in a hay wagon and enjoyed an afternoon of games and lunch including ice cream, strawberries, and champagne.

Blake served as a selectmen from 1890 to 1910. As a public official, he was concerned about problems caused by alcohol, and he supported the town's annual "no license" vote. His position is made clear in a private letter to Alfred L. Cutting in May, 1900, regarding the proposed introduction of street railways through Weston:

I . . wonder whether you have considered. . .whether the establishment of a frequent, rapid and cheap method of transportation between our town and Waltham would not practically deprive us of the moral advantages hitherto derived from our yearly "no license" vote.

My own well stocked wine cellar and daily habits do not permit me to masquerade as a "total abstainer", but I am nevertheless, strongly of the opinion that grave evils to our community would result from a close connection between our rural village and the licensed bar-rooms of a factory city. (Mass Historical Society, Blake Papers, 65.936)

Cutting replied the following day as follows:

Any good thing may be abused, and I hardly think it would be fair to deprive the many people who would use the Electric Cars. . .of their rights, simply because some might take this way of getting their drink. . .

Alice Tyler Fraser was born in Weston in 1903 and grew up in local farm family of comfortable means. Her grandfather, Benjamin F. Cutter, and later her Uncle Charles ran the family cider and vinegar business. In an interview with Regis College student Dianne T. Murray in 1969, Alice remembered a woman who came to her grade-school class and spoke to students about the evils of drink. Each child was requested to sign a pledge, promising that he or she would never touch liquor. Alice declined to sign because the pledge required abstinence from hard cider as well, and her uncle's cider mill also made champagne cider.

In the 1969 Murray interview, Alice Fraser recalled that drinking was not a thing that young people did when she was growing up in the first two decades of the 20th century. She and her contemporaries were raised in the temperance era. Alice noted that she never saw a bottle of liquor in her house, and that it was not until her teens, when she was at a New Year's Eve party at an English friend's house, that she had a drink—a champagne toast. Not until college did she have a drink outside the family circle, on a blind date with a boy who brought a bottle of wine.

ORIGINAL LIQUOR PRESCRIPTION STUB
E378812 _____ DATE PRESCRIBED _____

 FULL NAME OF PATIENT _____

 ADDRESS NUMBER STREET _____

 CITY STATE _____

 AILMENT FOR WHICH PRESCRIBED _____

 KIND AND QUANTITY OF LIQUOR PRESCRIBED _____

 SIGN FULL NAME _____ M.D.

 ADDRESS NUMBER STREET _____

 CITY STATE PERMIT NUMBER _____ **97**

ORIGINAL PRESCRIPTION FORM FOR MEDICINAL LIQUOR
E378812 _____ DATE PRESCRIBED _____

Rx _____
 KIND OF LIQUOR QUANTITY DIRECTIONS _____

 FULL NAME OF PATIENT _____ DATE PRESCRIBED _____

 PATIENT'S ADDRESS NUMBER STREET CITY STATE _____

 PRESCRIBER'S SIGNATURE _____ PRESCRIBER'S PERMIT NUMBER _____

 PRESCRIBER'S ADDRESS NUMBER STREET CITY STATE _____

 CANCELED _____ DRUG STORE NAME AS ON PERMIT _____ PERMIT NUMBER _____

 DISPENSER'S SIGNATURE _____ DATE FILLED AND CANCELED _____ STRIP STAMP NUMBER _____

 STORE ADDRESS NUMBER STREET CITY STATE _____

 SEE REVERSE SIDE FOR INSTRUCTIONS
 DO NOT REFILL OR TRANSFER UNDER PENALTY _____ **97**

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE NATIONAL PROHIBITION ACT

This official government form from the 1920s was needed during Prohibition to acquire whisky by prescription for strictly medicinal purposes.

Prohibition

The efforts of the Prohibition Party, founded in 1869, along with the National Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU, 1874) and the Anti-Saloon League (1893), helped prepare the way for passage in December 1917 of the 18th Amendment to the Constitution, prohibiting the “manufacture, sale, or transportation” of intoxicating liquors for beverage purposes. National prohibition became law in January 1919, after the amendment was ratified by three-quarters of the states.

The Weston chapter of the WCTU was organized in November 1920. Miss Laura E. Jones and Mrs. Bessie Jones, sister and wife of estate owner Charles H. Jones, conducted devotional exercises at the initial meeting at First Baptist Church, where Mrs. Charles E. Peakes was elected first president. Attendees were advised that, although the 18th Amendment had been ratified, liquor traffic was by no means dead; and much work remained before Prohibition became a fact.

The illegal manufacture, sale, and consumption of alcohol continued in Weston as elsewhere in the country. According to Brenton H. Dickson III in *Once Upon a Pung*, moonshiners tried to avoid detection by operating in the more remote southwest part of town. Dickson recalled a raid on a still off Pine Street and on a Winter Street operation described as the town’s finest:

New plumbing fixtures and flues were installed in a house to convert it into an efficient operation. The owners made the stupid mistake of dump-

ing their refuse into a brook that flowed past the house. As the water became more polluted, downstream neighbors complained of the smell. Suspicion was aroused. The Federal Agents were notified and subsequently a raid was staged. (Dickson, *Pung*, 54)

Rumors abounded of rum-running at the small airport at Winter and Brown Streets, which acquired a bad reputation that led to pressure to shut it down. On Bogle Street, a “tea room” in a converted farmhouse was patronized almost exclusively by Wellesley college students, who smoked and were rumored to be searching for beverages more stimulating than tea.

Weston Continues as a Dry Town

The 18th Amendment was repealed by the 21st Amendment, which was fully ratified by December 1933. Weston continued to exercise its local option to prohibit licenses for the sale of all types of alcohol, whether on the premises or packaged for home consumption. In 1940, for example, voters turned down the sale of all types of alcohol by a vote of 376 “yes” to 1617 “no.” That same year, a larger percentage voted “yes” on the sale of alcoholic beverages in packages (609 vs. 1372). Voters were always more favorably disposed to approve package stores, although “no” votes always outnumbered “yes” by at least two-to-one.

In 1970, Weston was one of 30 Massachusetts communities that remained dry. As of April 2007, Weston was one of only 12 such towns, the others being Alford, Chilmark, Dunstable, Gayhead, Gosnold, Hawley, Montgomery, Mount Washington, Tisbury, West Tisbury, and Westhampton. The lack of licensed liquor stores and restaurants has not precluded the serving of alcohol at country clubs and at private functions at Regis College, Henderson House of Northeastern University, and other venues. In addition, Weston residents patronize liquor stores conveniently located over the town line in adjacent communities.

In May 2004, Town Meeting voters defeated a home rule petition authorizing the selectmen to issue up to two licenses for stores to sell “wine and malt” but not spirits. No license would be available to a restaurant or bar. The petitioner stated her opinion that the town would benefit from the convenience of a fine wine store. The measure was defeated by a vote of 67 to 97. In 2006, Weston Town Meeting approved a statewide ballot initiative to allow local authorities to issue licenses allowing food stores to sell wine. The ballot vote was 2590 “yes” to 2302 “no.” In May 2007, Town Meeting voters agreed to allow the Omni grocery store to sell wine. Before this can go into effect, the change must be approved by ballot vote this May.

The Josiah Smith Tavern has not functioned as a tavern since 1838, the year the “Fifteen Gallon” law made it illegal to sell alcohol in small amounts. One hundred and seventy years later, in 2008, Weston voters will decide whether they like the idea of a Tavern on the Green, with a restaurant serving not only food but also “spirituous and intoxicating liquors.”

by Pamela W. Fox

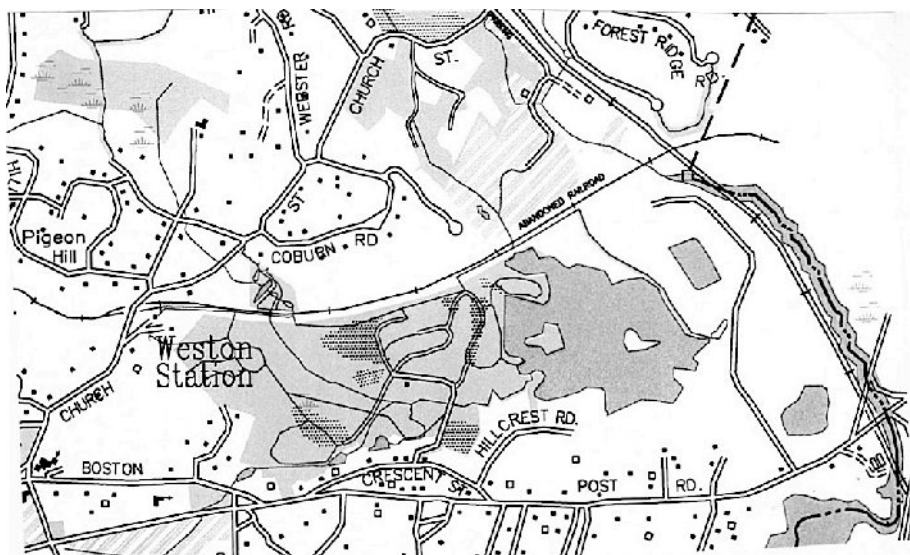


This image of the Melone Homestead was altered by computer to show the size of the original two-over-two house and location of the original front door. (Courtesy of Judy Markland and Pam Fox)

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 I

[Editor's Note: Cindy Bates began researching the Melone Homestead (27 Crescent Street) in 2004 at the behest of her father, long-time Conservation Commission chairman George Bates. The house is located on town conservation land and its history has long been the subject of debate. How old is it? Who built it, and why? Has it been moved? Was it used to house chair factory workers? The Weston Historical Society is pleased to publish this abbreviated version of Ms. Bates's report, beginning with Part I below and continuing in the Fall 2008 Bulletin. 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]



2001 Weston Forest and Trail map (detail). Note the location of Crescent Street, which was part of Boston Post Road before that roadway was straightened about 1860. A long driveway extends from the mid-point of Crescent Street to the Melone Homestead, shown as a small black dot. The map shows Three-Mile Brook and the three mill ponds that provided power to small mills in the Crescent Street neighbor-

Preface: Diary of a Researcher

What began as a simple request, to finish up the title research and complete a report on the history of the Melone Homestead begun by my father in the late 1990s, evolved into a significant and in-depth research project. My first draft, 13 pages completed in May 2004, summarized the ownership of the Sears Conservation Land from the early 1800s. I made no attempt to date the house beyond stating that it was at its present site in 1859 and had not been there in 1850. In the process of writing this first draft, I was struck by the notion that none of the owners probably ever lived in the house. The report, primarily a history of the owners, shed little light on the occupants of the Melone Homestead prior to the Melones themselves.

To focus more on the house and its story, I proposed to gather information on occupants. Also, my father and I wanted to look for historical evidence of the house being moved. I traced the titles even further back, to the early 1700s, and broadened the scope to include the entire Crescent Street neighborhood. Tax records and early maps provided evidence of houses. Based on the census and these

other data, I made maps of all the houses in the neighborhood for each census year beginning in 1820. I was looking for a house in one location that disappeared about the time that the Melone Homestead first appeared in its present location (1859). I identified three possible dwellings, and in the course of describing the evidence for and against the possibility of each one becoming the Melone Homestead, I made a discovery that led me to choose one over the other two. This second draft, which contained some 31 pages, led immediately to research for the third draft.

To write about occupants before 1859, I revisited the census data and reviewed manuscript highway tax records from the 1840s and 1850s, located in the basement of Weston Town Hall. I also tried to learn more about the occupants I had already identified. In the third draft I presented evidence for my theory that the Melone Homestead began life behind the “Mansion house” at 293 Boston Post Road. It read like a legal brief and weighed in at 86 pages.

To keep track of all the data about who lived where when, and especially how many dwellings each family owned, I constructed a database in MS Excel. There are about a dozen columns, each representing an address on Crescent Street or the Boston Post Road. Each row contains data from a particular source. Row headings include, for example, 1709 Deed, 1830 Map, 1858 Tax Valuation, 1917 Directory, 1930 US Census. The database let me track all the information on a house’s occupants over time and enabled me to put pieces together that led to new insights.

Regarding the question of whether the house had been moved, my evidence was largely historical. My father felt we should engage the professional services of an architectural historian with experience in house moving to examine the building. We were particularly interested in physical evidence of a move and the likely date of original construction. Architectural historian Anne Forbes and architect Lawrence Sorli visited the Melone Homestead in October 2005. Their observations and conclusions were incorporated into Draft 6.

In early 2007 I began final editing. On page 43 I stopped at a sentence expressing my hunch that Luke Brooks had built the Melone Homestead between 1845 and 1850. “Why?” I wrote in the margin. As I looked at the evidence, I realized there was none for this statement—the house could just as easily have been built earlier. Then, on the 1840 census, I noticed an “unknown” family in the neighborhood. Soon I was back doing additional title searches at the registry, genealogical research at New England Historic Genealogical Society, and reviews of 1830s tax records at the Newton archives. The result of all this late activity led me to conclude that Alpheus Cutter built the Melone Homestead between 1834 and 1840.

Introduction

The Melone Homestead is a small red clapboard house sited well back from Crescent Street at the end of a long winding driveway. The house is named for the Melone family, who lived there for more than 50 years beginning in the 1930s. Because it is located on conservation land, it is administered by the Weston Conservation Commission, which has leased it to the non-profit Land's Sake since 1997.

The Melone Homestead is unusual in Weston because it has, with one exception, always been a tenant house, that is, a house owned by one person and lived in by others. It is small and economically built.

This report begins with the recent history of the house and its architectural features. Part II, to be published in the Fall 2008 *Weston Historical Society Bulletin*, traces the house from its original construction as a small tenant house for mill workers, to its relocation and renovation into a two-family dwelling for workers at the school furniture factory next door, to its use as housing for workers on a large estate. While it is easy enough to trace the ownership of a house and property, determining the inhabitants of a rented house is more challenging and not always successful. Part II summarizes research on the origins of the house, its owners, and its many inhabitants.

Recent History, 1975 to 2008

The Melone Homestead and 61.47 acres now known as the Sears Conservation Land were acquired by the Town of Weston in 1975 from the Sears family. Its acquisition was part of conservation efforts going back to the 1950s, when the town began buying undeveloped woodlands to create a Town Forest. In 1961 the Conservation Commission was formed to protect open areas and acquire additional lands to form a "green belt." By 1966 the town had purchased some 600 acres, but each acquisition required a Town Meeting vote. Increasing land values and new housing developments in the 1970s led some residents to propose and win support for a broad land acquisition strategy. By 1977 Weston voters had authorized bond issues totaling \$5.1 million and had acquired conservation land throughout the town with an emphasis on linking existing parcels. Nearly 1900 acres had been protected. The acquisition of the Sears property on December 31, 1975, was made possible by these bond issues. One undivided half interest was purchased with town funds from Rosamond Sears; the other half was a gift from her brother, Edwin B. "Buck" Sears.



1959 photo of brothers Antonio (left) and Joseph Melone (right) in the front yard of the Melone Homestead, with the great barn in the background. Antonio was visiting from Italy to attend a family wedding. (Courtesy of Anna Melone Pollock)

As part of their deeds to the town, Buck and Rosamond Sears granted a life estate to Joseph and Maria Anna Melone. The Melones continued to live in the house at 27 Crescent Street until their deaths, Joseph on May 9, 1979, and Maria on May 17, 1989. At the suggestion of their children and in recognition of the Melone family's 50-plus years in the house, the Conservation Commission voted to name the house the "Melone Homestead." Technically speaking, "homestead" is an inappropriate term in this case since it implies an ancestral home or ownership of a house and surrounding land, neither of which applies to the Melone family. On the other hand, it was the foothold in this country of a new American family.

In its 1975 arrangement with the Melones, the town accepted no responsibility for maintenance of the house or adjacent property. And, as they aged, Mr. and Mrs. Melone had less incentive to invest in maintenance. As a result, the house was in very poor condition when the Conservation Commission assumed responsibility in 1989. That year the Commission undertook major structural repairs including reinforcement of the collapsing foundation and replacement of sills. The goal was to create housing for the new director of Green Power Farm, a project administered by the Conservation Commission. While this plan was never realized, the Conservation Commission desired a mutually beneficial partnership with the new tenants of the Melone Homestead and actively sought tenants whose land ethic reflected its mission.

The first tenants after the Melones were employees of Land's Sake who moved there in the latter part of 1989 even as work continued on the house. Land's Sake is a private, nonprofit corporation founded in 1980 and dedicated to responsible stewardship of suburban farmland and forests. It provides a model of how public open space can be effectively used and enjoyed by the community by combining ecologically sound land management with hands-on environmental education. Land's Sake's efforts are centered on three themes: (1) sustainable land management and open space preservation, (2) environmental education, and (3) community building. Land's Sake manages both private and public conservation land in Weston. Under contract to the Weston Forest and Trail Association and Conservation Commission, Land's Sake maintains trails and practices sustainable forestry. Also under contract to the commission, Land's Sake manages the Green Power program. Middle school students work on the Land's Sake farm during the summer growing food for Boston area food pantries, shelters and soup kitchens. The program, begun in the 1970s under the auspices of Weston's Youth Commission, introduces young people to ecology and the notion of sustainability.

In May 1997, the Conservation Commission established a license agreement allowing Land's Sake to maintain its office in the Melone Homestead. The license included a provision to house staff members in the living quarters. Tenants have included three Land's Sake farm managers: Chrissie Madsen, Mike Raymond, and Johanna Flies.

The Sears Conservation Land consists of open fields and woodlands with a swampy area at the confluence of two brooks. About 20 acres are maintained as fields. Two very old farm roads are among the network of trails maintained by the Weston Forest and Trail Association. Both of these roads are important in the history of the Melone Homestead.

The Conservation Commission administers the Sears land and all other parcels acquired as protected open space. Private organizations such as Land's Sake and the Weston Forest and Trail Association provide significant assistance. In the late 1990s, the Conservation Commission undertook some major capital projects for the Melone Homestead including a new septic tank and leaching field (1997) and a new bridge over Three-Mile Brook along the driveway (1998).

The Melone Homestead Today

The Melone Homestead is small in comparison with other Weston houses, with just 1730 square feet of livable space. The simple two-story frame house faces north and has a squat T-shaped footprint consisting of the original two-story, two-bay, side-gable main block in front and a rear addition with wings extending out on each side. A fieldstone foundation supports the front and sides. Small brick

chimneys are located in the approximate center of the main block in front of the ridgeline and in the approximate center of the rear addition.

The rear part of the house is also two stories, but because the house is built on a slope, its lower story is part of the basement. A retaining wall extending east and west from the house supports the slope. On the main level, the house has entrances on the east and west sides dating from the period when it was a divided house. A set of mirror-image stairs runs from the first floor to the cellar and a second set of mirror-image stairs leads to the second floor landing, where a door separates the two sides. A door on the north side of each landing opens into each bedroom, while doors on the south side open into two sides of the unfinished lean-to attic. The rooms are plain; the windows likewise.

Structural renovations to the Melone Homestead in 2000 required removal of the siding. Clapboards removed from the front of the house revealed the location of the original front entrance.

In June 2000 three Weston residents with expertise in architecture and historic preservation visited the house and made a number of observations in an attempt to ascertain when each part of the house had been built. The discovery of windows in each side of the attic in the interior wall—the rear side of the original—confirmed that the front part of the Melone Homestead was built as a two-over-two house. This original structure comprised about 900 square feet of livable space.



North and east sides, showing the “front” of the house, 2004 (Courtesy of Judy Markland)

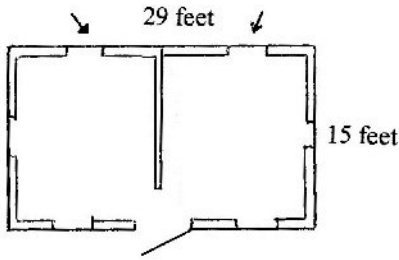


South (rear) and west facades, 2004 (Courtesy of Judy Markland)

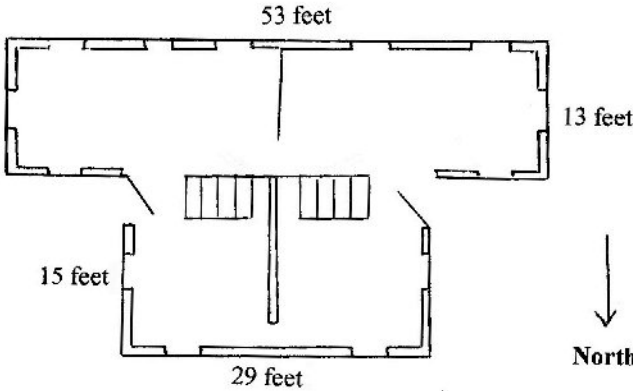
Other distinguishing features of the older front section include very wide floorboards (15 to 20" wide in the bedrooms), corner posts, a ridgepole in the roof, studs morticed onto the plates, and square-cut nails. A patched area in the floorboards of the northwest bedroom may cover the opening of the original stairway.

There was speculation among the group that the house was moved from somewhere else and that the enlargement occurred after the relocation. In a further effort to answer questions about the dates of construction of the various parts of the house, architectural historian Anne Forbes and architect Lawrence Sorli were asked to analyze the building. The two areas of greatest interest were in the basement and the two unfinished attic rooms under the lean-to roof in the rear. There, boarded-over window openings remain from when the earlier exterior south wall was exposed. This wall is sheathed with wide horizontal boards.

The consultants noted that the first floor framing, visible in the basement, is consistent with a construction date around the mid-1800s. The foundation provides clear evidence that the house was originally built in another location and moved to the present site. Stone foundations support the old part of the house under the north, east, and west sides. Had the main block of the house been built in the current location, the fourth (south or rear) side of the foundation would also have been made of stone to provide adequate support, or, given the steep slope to the rear, this fourth side might have consisted of a solid framing of wood posts. Neither is the case. Instead, the consultants found a wood-frame wall that is clearly of later construction than the original house.



Above: First-floor plan of original house, showing location of front door. Arrows indicate location of window openings discovered on the second floor. Below: First-floor plan as enlarged in 1859.



The physical evidence also makes clear that when the building was moved to its new site, the basement level of the addition was left at least partially open on the rear (south) elevation. The difference in grade on the south

side would have allowed for ground level access and vehicle storage in the basement under the new first floor living spaces. Sometime in the 20th century, the basement was fully enclosed. Two back doors exit at grade level. The entire south wall is covered with shingles rather than clapboards.

In 2004, the town approved CPA funds for restoration of the Melone Homestead to serve as a resource center for town conservation groups and residence for an employee of these groups. The Conservation and Historical Commissions have worked to retain the essential historic character. Preservation restrictions will be granted to the Weston Forest & Trail Association. Plans include general rehabilitation of all rooms. The sagging kitchen floor will be re-built and facilities replaced. The downstairs bath will be remodeled and a new full bath created upstairs in a new south-side dormer. The project will include structural and foundation work, de-leading, and rehabilitation of all windows. These renovations will create a space that meets the needs of Land's Sake and conforms to zoning and building codes. Work is expected to begin this year. *(To be continued)*

Author Cynthia B. Bates grew up in Weston and now lives in Roslindale. She is presently self-employed as a local history researcher and database administrator. Part II of this article tells the story of the Melone Homestead beginning with its construction at 293 Boston Post Road between 1834 and 1840 and its move to the present site in 1859.



Author William Howell grew up at 326 Highland Street. This 1929 photograph shows the house as construction was almost completed. (Photo courtesy of Wm. Howell)

Happy Memories: Growing Up on Highland Street

This is the story of my family's home at 326 Highland Street. It was one of three adjacent houses constructed by Weston builder Murray Burke during the time period 1928-29. The house next door to the north we called the "Kenney" house and the one to the south, the "Pinkham" house. All were constructed as a shell, allowing the future owners choices as to the interior. My parents, Frederick A. and Harriet B. Howell, were married in April 1929, and they were quite anxious to get settled into their own home. They moved to 326 Highland Street in July 1929, paying in the range of \$5000 for the house.

My father, Fredrick A., and his father, Charles M. Howell, were the owner/operators of the Charles M. Howell & Son pearl button manufacturing company, which was located on the corner of Willow and River Street in Waltham from 1911 to 1933. This time period of 1928 to 1933 was extremely busy for the young Fredrick Howell, with his marriage, the move to Weston, and assuming control of the business due to the passing of his father. During the Depression years, the declining demand for pearl buttons and growth of the plastic industry caused my father to sell this company in 1933. The factory building was sold to a little unknown start-up called Raytheon. It was the company's first building, named the Power Tube Division, and was in use right up to the mid-1990s. The tall chimney displayed the words "C.M. Howell & Son" for many years.

326 Highland Street was constructed as a reproduction Colonial with wide pine floors and low ceilings. The interior antique doors on the first and second floors came from the old Wayland Inn known as the “Pequod House,” located in Wayland Center on the lot where the police/fire headquarters building sits today. Built in 1771, the inn was in disrepair from fire and neglect and in 1928 was being torn down. The antique window glass panes located in some of the windows, along with various door and hinge hardware, came from the same source.

Other tidbits of information. . . The tall spruce tree located at the right front of the property was a live 1930 Christmas tree planted in the spring of 1931. The room off the kitchen was planned to be a live-in maid’s room and was utilized for four to six weeks after the birth of several of the children. The living room had stained pine wood paneling, open ceiling beams, and a fireplace that was made to look like an old inn’s common room. I understand that this may have been painted or remodeled at some later date. All the closets on the second floor were lined with real cedar wood. The room and bathroom in the attic was added in 1948-49 due to our expanding family of six children. On several occasions, I can remember escaping punishment by sneaking out the little casement window over the original kitchen door on the left side from my bedroom on the second floor. This room was unique because it had windows on each of its four walls and two walk-in closets.



(l-r) Barbara, Harriet, and Charles Howell, c. 1936-37, with Highland Street house in the background. (Photo courtesy of Wm. Howell)



C. 1944 Howell family photo, taken in front of the living room fireplace. Note the paneled walls and ceiling beams. Back row: Harriet, Charles, and Frederick A. (father); mid-row: Barbara, Robert (twin), and Harriet B. (mother); floor: Francis, William (twin). (Photo courtesy of Wm. Howell)

After the 1938 hurricane there was a tremendous amount of damage in the area due to the high winds. Highland Street was inaccessible for a week by road and electricity wasn't restored for four to five weeks. Mother was home with six children, three under the age of two years. My twin brother, my sister, and I produced a multitude of diapers to be washed outside by hand in a bucket over an open fire. Water was obtained from a well at the southwest corner of the property (since filled in) as well as from the brook to the rear.

The clean-up of the property after the hurricane produced so many logs that later my father had a log cabin constructed in the southeast corner of the property. In 1951 this log cabin was disassembled and relocated to the Nobscot Boy Scout Reservation in Sudbury, as my father and the twins were very active at the time in Weston Troop 53. Unfortunately, vandals destroyed the cabin by fire a few years later.

During the war years, we raised several pigs and maintained about 50 chickens just to the right of the rear lower yard. The rear yard was a vegetable garden where my father loved to putter, and we maintained it right up until we sold the house.

Until the 1960s, Pine Street was a dirt road with only a single house (#23). There were no houses on the west side of Highland Street from South Avenue to Love Lane except for a house at the end of a three-quarter-mile-long driveway now known as Deer Path Lane. Behind the house on Pine Street, in the middle of the woods, stood the “Anna Dickson” cabin, furnished with a wood stove, rustic furniture, and beds. Several of my sisters rode horses at the Dickson’s on Love Lane, and its barn looks the same today as it did back then. Sandy Anza’s farm also looks the same today, and on more than a few occasions we had to chase his cows back to the farm.

We sold the house in 1960 to F. Swift Gibson after he drove by once and then made several increasingly large offers through a real estate broker. The final one we could not turn down.

William B. Howell now lives in Stow, Massachusetts. This memoir was inspired by discussions last June at his 50th Reunion from Weston High School.

Editor’s Note: The *Weston Historical Society Bulletin* invites you to send your memories of growing up in Weston or of choosing Weston as a place to settle as an adult. Communities grow and change in each generation. Individual memories and photographs like these of the Howell family and home can illuminate change in charming and personal ways. Bill Howell’s article includes wonderful anecdotes that give us a flavor of the town in the years before widespread post-World-War-II suburban development. We may know about the Hurricane of 1938, for example, but who would have thought about the need to wash diapers (no Pampers then!) outside over an open fire for weeks until electricity was restored.



Photograph of the Weston Public Library taken soon after its completion in November, 1900. (Photo courtesy of Weston Historical Society)

Proposal for a Weston History Center and Town Archive in the Old Library

[Editor's Note: At the May Town Meeting, voters will be asked to vote on a proposal to create a restaurant in the Josiah Smith Tavern and to reuse the Old Library as headquarters for the Women's Community League and a new Weston History Center and Town Archive, to include the Weston Historical Society]

The Weston History Center and Town Archive is envisioned as a lively facility with many functions. The Old Library is ideal because of its location near the town hall and because it is a masonry building that is largely fireproof. The existing space in the lower level is well suited to the following uses that, together, would constitute the new history center:

1) Research and Meeting Space: The Weston History Center would be a place where Weston historical materials can be accessed. The Center will also provide meeting and program space for the Weston Historical Society and Weston Historical Commission. The Center would be able to accommodate visitors and staff/volunteers.

The present proposal would devote the existing children's reading room to public use. The space would accommodate tables for researchers, as well as an office area with a computer, scanner, copy machine, and staff desk, plus worktables, map cases, and file cabinets for storage of commonly used items such as photographs and plans. Examples of possible research projects include residents re-searching their houses or examining historic photographs, high school students looking for primary source material for history projects, and authors working on publications.

2) Exhibits: The Center would have space for permanent displays of Weston historical materials as well as changing exhibits.

The proposal envisions preserving the existing library shelving for secure displays of Weston historical objects and memorabilia. For example, paintings, maps, and decorative objects such as samplers could be hung on the walls, and objects such as daguerreotypes, photo albums, and scrapbooks could be displayed on shelves. Horizontal display cases would be used to exhibit materials from the Town Archive. The entrance vestibule of the reading room would double as an area for changing exhibits on topics such as dairy farming, turn-of-the-century estates, World War I and II, suburban development, or issues relevant to current events in Weston such as plans for the Case Estates.

3) Town Archive: The Center would provide secure, climate-controlled storage for the town's important archival records, including historical records now located in the Town Hall basement and Josiah Smith Tavern (Historical Commission and Historical Society offices). Examples of archival materials include early town records, tax books, photographs, maps, and memorabilia.

The basement storage room has no windows and was originally designed to be a fireproof storage room for town records. According to the town's consultant, this storage room would be ideal for creating a climate-controlled archival storage area of approximately 450 square feet. The space is sufficient for existing document storage and provides room for growth, particularly with the installation of compact shelving. As one of its main goals, the center would continue collecting and would be able to accept, process, and store records of Weston organizations and individuals, along with important records generated by the town. The materials would be preserved while remaining accessible for research and exhibitions.

4) Object Storage: The Center would provide secure, climate-controlled storage space for objects specifically relating to the history of Weston. These objects are currently in the collection of the Weston Historical Society.

The Society is in process of examining its collection to determine which objects relate specifically to Weston history. The proposal provides space for small and large object storage. Examples of small objects include milk bottles from Weston dairies, flags and medals from the 200th Anniversary celebration, and a trophy plate from the Drabbington Golf Course on North Avenue. Examples of large objects include a table made from the wood of the Burgoyne Elm, a World War I trunk and contents belonging to a Weston soldier, a blacksmith shop sign, and call bells from the James Case house. Proper storage for framed objects – textiles, paintings, drawings, prints, and photographs – would also be provided.

5) Workroom: The Center would provide a dedicated space for cataloguing, processing, cleaning, rehousing, and conserving objects.

Many of the existing collection objects and archival materials have not been properly cared for, in large part due to lack of adequate and appropriate space. The new facility will have a workroom with running water, an area for photogra-

phy, a worktable, and storage space for archival supplies and conservation materials. Volunteers and interns from the community will be trained in hands-on collection care.

6) Restrooms and Parking: The Center would include restrooms necessary to comply with building codes and ample parking for staff and volunteers in the existing School Street parking lot.

Our congratulations to the Women’s Community League Juniors on their very successful Holiday House Tour on December 8, 2007. The Juniors raised \$31,000 for the Women’s Community League Service and Scholarship Fund. The Weston Historical Society helped with the tour program. Six Colonial-period houses and two taverns were open that day, including the WHS rooms at the JST. The Juniors expressed their appreciation to the WHS by becoming our newest Life Members.

OFFICERS OF THE WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2007-08

- President: Pamela W. Fox
- Vice President: Joe Mullin
- Co-Secretaries: Sally Gilman, Beth Nolan
- Treasurer: Arnold Crowley
- Collections Care: Carol Snow
- Membership Chair: Tom Friedlander
- Bulletin* Editor: Pamela W. Fox

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

George Amadon	Pam Fox	Bill Martin
Greg Barison	Tom Friedlander	Madeleine Mullin
Miller Blew	Carlie Friedlander	Joe Mullin
Harold Coburn	Sally Gilman	Beth Nolan
Arnold Crowley	Mary Gregory	Tony Nolan
Tatjana Deary	Anna Melone	Chris Paquin
Addie Fiske	Lee Marsh	Carol Snow

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.