



THE

CHRONICLE

QUARTERLY

Volume 10

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June 1991

Published By The
Weston Historical Society

THE
EDITOR'S
EDGE

'REACHING OUT'

The Reverend Jeremy Belknap (1744-1798) was a Boston-born, Harvard-trained Puritan Minister. He was also the founder of the Historical Society in Boston on January 24, 1791. The name was changed in 1794 to the Massachusetts Historical Society. He wrote of this endeavor that the Society was intended to be 'an active not a passive society, not to be waiting like a bed of oysters for the tide of (communications) to flow in upon us but seek and find, to preserve and communicate intelligence, especially in the historical way.'

Your trustees hope to emulate this philosophy as the seasons pass. We wish to bring more of the history of Weston, and it's folklore to the present and future residents. We have done much of this over the past 30 years, but we see room for improvement and will strive to improve our communications with our members and future members.

Herb Day - Editor

CURRENT EVENTS

MEMBERSHIP

The annual membership drive was launched with the March issue of the Chronicle. In addition, an ad was placed in the Forum for two weeks to interest other people to become members. The 1991 membership dues are coming in fairly steadily, but we still have a long way to go. If you have not sent your dues in for 1991, please take a minute to do so now. As our ad said; WE ARE DEAD WITHOUT YOU!!

SPRING CLEAN UP

A spring clean up was held on May 18, to clean up some of the grounds at the Coley Homestead. Ten Trustees and members put in about four hours and cleaned out several large weed patches as well as taking down some trees and tree limbs. While we were doing this, the Aspetuck garden club renovated the herb garden for planting. We thank all who participated.

SENIORS ANNUAL PICNIC

The annual seniors picnic will be held on Wednesday, July 17 at the Coley Homestead. It will start at 11:30 am with a tour of the renovated barn museum. We hope all you seniors will attend. Further information will be sent out or put in the newspapers in early July.

ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting was held on March 21 at the Norfield Church parish hall. About 65 people attended and heard an interesting discussion about Weston in the early 1900's by four native born seniors who lived thru these times. Francis Bennett, Ruth Lockwood, Helen Mason, and Irv Patchen answered questions and made comments on subjects suggested by 'yours truly', as moderator, and from the audience. Julia Studwell made a videotape which will be available from the Society for groups to view.

Several new Trustees were elected for a three year term. The Historical Society Trustees are:

Mrs. Linda Guidera

Mr. Lou Bregy

Mrs. Julia Studwell

Mr. Glenn Major

Mrs. Mary Lou Perry

Mrs. Barbara Van Suetendael

Mrs. Ann Chapman

Mrs. Pietra Knaus

Mrs. Marie Golden

Mrs. Jane Atkinson*

Mr. Herb Day

Mrs. Judy Darby

Mr. Gene O'Hare*

Mrs. Barbara Jonsen*

Mrs. Eileen Buckley*

*New Trustees elected for 1991 for a three year term.

PICTURE QUIZ



CAN YOU NAME THIS?

If you can name the item in the picture, send your answer and name to:

THE EDITOR
THE CHRONICLE QUARTERLY
P.O. BOX 1092
WESTON, CT 06883

The item in the last picture quiz was a sharpening stone with a unique carrying 'case' made from a deer horn. This item is the property of Jim Daniels. The horn had been soaked and when soft, it had been shaped over a block of wood. A loop had been attached so it could be carried on a belt.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE
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CURRENT EVENTS

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Current Events Cont'd. . . .

CIDER PRESS SHED

The saga of the cider shed continues. We are in the process of getting bids for the digging of the foundation. If all goes well, we should be able to have the foundation finished by the next issue of the Chronicle.

CHRONICLE EDITOR NEEDED

The editor of the CHRONICLE QUARTERLY is planning to step down after the December issue. We are actively looking for an editor. If you know of anyone who might be interested, please contact the Society thru one of the Trustees or by writing P.O. Box 1092, Weston.

FIFTY YEARS (OR SO) AGO

THE WESTPORTER-HERALD Friday, August 3, 1918

DANCE FESTA IN WESTON

The good old Town of Weston received a rousing such as it had not seen since the days of the Civil War when the dance festa came at the picturesque home of Frank Cobb known as the 'Old Mill Farm' Friday evening. The affair gave the earnest patriots of this vicinity an opportunity to gratify their ardor, for it was Red Cross all through, the proceeds to go to distant Italy to aid the work room in Piazza Farnese at Carpallo. This practical philanthropy was founded by the late Mrs. Florence Baldwin and this conducted in her memory by the American Red Cross society in Italy.

Dancing and refreshments occupied the principal part of the program. Mlle. Louise L'e Gai, premiere dancer of the Paris opera, was seen in some of her most elaborate figures. Among the 15 barefoot dancers was Miss Grace Scofield of Cannondale. These girls gave a wonderful exhibition.

William Francis Pearsons, eminent baritone of New York, sang. Lieut. Col. M. Pio of the 81st. Italian Infantry made the address. A novel plan to guide people to the grounds was adopted. Italian flags lined all the roads leading to the place and visitors could not lose their way if they followed them. •

WESTON'S HISTORICAL NOTEBOOK

THE BIG GRAVESTONE THAT ISN'T

The following interesting article is about a gravestone found in a Weston house. Unfortunately, we do not know where it was published or the year. This gravestone is in our Barn Museum.

Our Old House: Gravestones in the Cellar, History Everywhere
191 Lyons Plains Road, Weston

by Betty McCarthy Smith

Did you ever wonder what you'd do if you found gravestones in your cellar? Well, frankly, neither did we until it happened to us. We knew our Connecticut farmhouse was old because of its random width floorboards, hand forged nails in the roof and beams with the bark still on them holding up the bedroom walls. But we didn't know how old it was. Then one day we pushed aside a cobweb-encrusted chest in the cellar and found a pair of beautifully decorated gravestones leaning against the foundation.

One had an urn with a weeping willow embellishing its top and it read:

"HARRIET B. BURR
wife of
MOSES BURR
DIED
Jan. 4, 1848
AE 36 Yrs.

Weep not for me my husband dear
Nor thou my children to me so near
But view my tomb as you pass by
And think in dust you soon must lie."

The other, decorated with a twig, a bud and a blossom told an even more poignant story:

"CATHARINE J.
daughter of
MOSES
& HARRIET B. BURR
died
July 8, 1847
AE 3 mos.

How short the race our child has run
Cut down in all her bloom
The course but yesterday begun
Now ended in the tomb."

Our discovery made me uneasy. I called the previous owner, a remote member of the family. She assured me that the graves had been moved to a family vault in Willowbrook Cemetery, Westport, in 1903 and described their exact location.

"Why were the headstones left in the cellar?" I gulped. Her cheerful reply: "You know those thrifty Yankees. They wouldn't waste good limestone. They used it to cool the vegetables and butter."

Search Into the Past

This began a rewarding search into the past. Beer's Atlas of 1867, shows the Moses Burr house and cemetery in Weston, which was then a thriving industrial town boasting of a Button Factory; Tannery and Sawmill; two Dry Goods and Grocery Stores; Bradley's Edge and Tool Factory and many others.

Town Records revealed that Moses Burr was born in Greenfield in 1806, a descendant of Jehu Burr, born in England in 1600, who settled in Fairfield to produce a prolific family of "eminent lawyers, judges and men of distinction." His great grandson, Aaron, migrated to New Jersey, founded Princeton University and fathered a son who was to become the third Vice-President to the United States, duel with Alexander Hamilton and became a cause celebre in a famous treason trial.

Our Moses Burr, according to one "old timer", came to Weston as an adolescent "to make his fortune" and apprenticed to a hatter in Danbury. He lived in a shack across the Saugatuck and "shook the snow off his coverlet" when he commuted here weekends.

He married Harriet Banks and here we meet two conflicting theories about the origin of the house. The previous owner claims it belonged to the Banks family. An "old timer" claims to have heard it from his son that Moses Burr paid \$500 to a Greenfield contractor "to build a four bedroom, four fireplace home with handmade window sashes, handblown glass panes with nine small panes over six larger ones."

Shoe Bargains

The late Hamilton Basso's handsewn leather account book presented to the Weston library by his widow, shows that Moses dealt with the Tannery up the river. A bill marked paid records: "MOSES BURR. For mending boots and shoes, Nov. 21, 1835 .31: two pairs shoes soled .50, Nov. 26; soling a pair of boots .43 and 1 pr. small shoes, Dec. 30, 1835; by his wife — 1 pr. morocco shoes 1.08 Mar. 20, 1836."

The "small pair of shoes" and the "children dear" referred to on Harriet's tombstone, were Henry, who migrated to Knoxville, Tenn. and "prospered in the lumber business" and Harriet who moved "out West." Neither "returned to rest" in Weston. Catharine apparently succumbed to the diptheria epidemic of 1847 which added thirty three infants' gravestones to the Weston cemeteries.

Moses did not "lie in dust" so soon after Harriet at all. He married Elmira Smith of Greenfield within the year and lived forty years longer, to 1891. They had a son Lewis, born in this house on Christmas Day in 1859, who became a farmer and married Eliza Jan Bradley. Curiously enough he died on Christmas in 1932.

Lewis and Eliza had no children which explains why the graves were moved. According to Connecticut State law, anyone who buys land on which there is a Cemetery, must build around it and not disturb the graves. This often poses problems when breaking up property for sale. Eliza left the house to a niece who sold it to us.

We've enjoyed every minute of our fifteen years here and wouldn't have missed one moment of our fascinating sojourn into the past. It's reassuring to know things go backwards as well as forward in this jet-propelled, migratory, transitory world.



Mrs. Smith has journalistic background: her husband, John Chabot Smith, was long a reporter and foreign correspondent for the New York Herald Tribune.

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