



August 1916 - Children in cart on Lyons Plain Road near George Sherwood house.  
Photo courtesy of Fred Schneider

# The Chronicle Quarterly

Weston Historical Society

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## 19TH CENTURY BRITANNIA - A CLASS OF ITS OWN

The Historical Society recently received a most generous donation of a tea service made of Britannia, a strengthened pewter form. Mr. Jay Jackson of Weston gave us the set that had been in his family for generations. He believes that it originally belonged to his great-grandfather, who was a Long Island Quaker.

According to an article printed in the November, 1968 issue of the New York Times, "Although Britannia is a development of pewter, it is sufficiently different to stand in a class of its own. The collector must appreciate the difference. For instance, many Britannia teapots and sugar bowls, dating to the 1820's are simple massive forms, a bit more lustrous than pewter. Pear-shaped teapots, looking like much earlier items in silver, were made of Britannia but collectors often judge them as pewter."

"The early examples of Britannia were similar to English and American plates made of pewter. They were made of tin, copper and antimony. Because there was no one formula for making Britannia, it appears in a great variety of types, from a silverlike gleaming metal, to a dark material that appeared most often in Britannia's later manifestations as mass-produced objects."

"However, collectors have never thought that Britannia had the same beauty as pewter. Pewter is handmade with appealing gray colors and is soft in appearance. Pewter pieces were cast in the molten state and usually finished by hand



Britanniaware, circa 1830, recently donated by Jay Jackson.

after being taken from the molds. Fine early examples are distinguished by hammer marks."

"Pewter was cheap and the very softness that made it esthetically attractive contributed to its rapid deterioration - popularly priced ceramics replaced it on middle-class tables."

The strengthening of pewter led to Britannia, a name that seems to have been applied by an 18th century manufacturer who wanted to overcome sales resistance to pewter. The metal was made harder and production was geared to turn out finished items in less time. The result was a tin alloy, like pewter, but one that required a new esthetic."

"What is known as 19th century Britannia was made from metal


sheets made in rolling mills. The objects were formed by spinning the sheets against shaped blocks or by stamping them out of the metal sheets. Handles and small pieces were made by casting. The term Britannia should apply to refined versions of pewter, more lustrous than early pewter, but it has been used primarily to designate mass-produced wares that showed new directions in design."

"More daring shops tried more ambitious designs. The thinness of the metal in the squat heavy shapes of Britannia in the 1830's emphasizes the difference from pewter."

"The new techniques for making Britannia encouraged departures in design. It was cheaper to make things by spinning them against shaped blocks than by taking them out of the expensive brass molds needed for pewter."

The major Britannia manufacturers aimed at the middle-class market. They wanted to improve their product as their customers grew more affluent and more intent on keeping up with the fashion. In New England, before the middle of the 19th century, Britannia was coated with silver."

"The revival of rococo--squat floral decorated forms and, later, tall shapes with engraved linear decorations used in early silver-plated tea sets--gave full play to Britannia manufacturers."

We thank Mr. Jackson for the four beautiful pieces. They look lovely in our newly decorated Coley house. 

# RECOGNIZING THE OLD HOUSES OF WESTON

by Herb Day

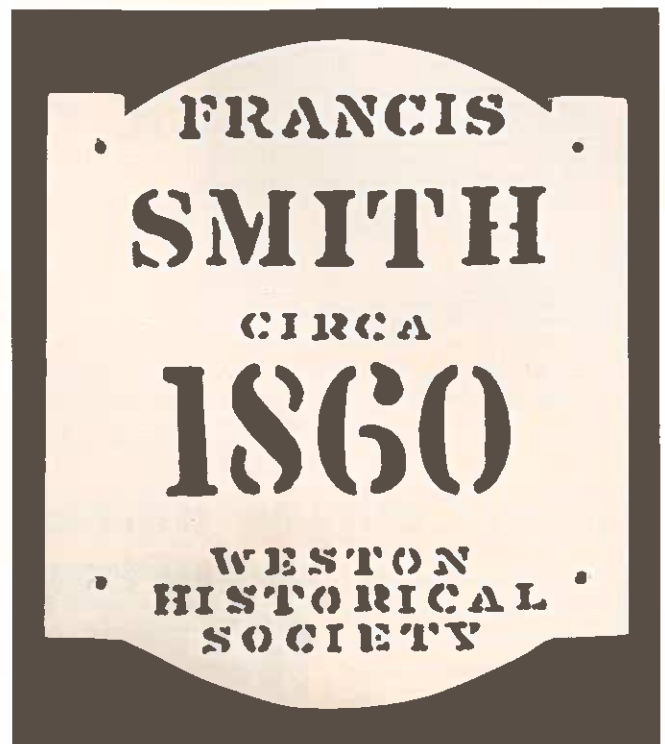
Soon after the Weston Historical Society was founded in 1961, the Trustees started a program of offering plaques to the residents of houses which have been determined to be at least one hundred years old. These plaques were not given to the owners, but were sold for a small sum of about \$50.00. This amount covered the expense of doing the research and having the plaque made. It also included a years membership in the Society.

In most cases, the research carried the title search back to when the house was built. Some of these searches found houses which were built in the early 1700's. To date, we have "plaqued" some 81 houses. These can be segregated into several time periods as follows:

Before 1750	7 houses
Between 1751 - 1800	20 houses
Between 1801 - 1850	43 houses
Between 1851 - 1900	11 houses

We have also awarded plaques to two barns, one church and one mill site and the first official post office in town. These are: The Godfrey barn on Newtown Turnpike (1734) and the onion barn, on Weston Road, built for Eliphalet Coley (1830); the Norfield Church (built in 1830 for about \$1,800.00); the site of the David Coley Mill on River Road (1770); and the old post office and general store at the Adams-Scribner Museum on Newtown Turnpike (1790).

The plaques are made of select white pine and the letters and numbers are carved into the pine. The early plaques were about 10 inches by 16 inches. About 1980, the plaque shape was changed to the current shape which is vertical with curved top and bottom.



The plaques from the Society give the name of the person owning the house, when it was built or at the time of the date on the plaque; the date; and the words "Weston Historical Society."

There are still many houses in town which are old enough to be plaqued. The homeowner can do the research or ask the Society to do it. If the Society does the research, the present cost is \$100.00 for the research, a plaque and a one-year membership in the Weston Historical Society. If the homeowner does the research, a plaque from the Society will cost \$50.00 without a one-year membership.

From the editor:



Pat McLaughlin seated on floor with members of her decorating committee.

The Historical Society was saddened by the death of one of its trustees, Pat McLaughlin. Pat lost her long battle with cancer, during which she inspired us all. Pat, as you all know, redecorated our homestead this past year, and as was her style, always gave credit to those who helped her with the project.

We are so grateful to have had Pat so giving to our Society and she will remain in our hearts. Our deepest sympathies go out to her husband, George, and her family.

## *The Chronicle Quarterly*

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## PASTORAL PAST



Pastoral is defined as pleasingly peaceful and innocent. One such place still exists in Weston, with its cows and horses munching on grass next to a grand old farmhouse. This place, of course, is on Norfield Road. The property has a long and interesting history and at one time belonged to Annie Keator, a woman who left her mark on our community.

Julia Studwell taped an interview with Ms. Keator back in 1976, and we would like to share some of her memories of Weston. At the time of the taping, Ms. Keator was 86 years old and told of coming to Weston in approximately 1926. She remembers Weston when everything around her was farmland. Her family's farm raised cows, horses, pigs, goats, chickens, flowers and vegetables, all of which they sold to make money. They had a garden 110 feet long and would sell a large bunch of flowers for \$1.00 and their farm-fresh eggs sold for 25 - 30 cents a dozen. Julia's father worked for Ms. Keator when he came to town, helping with odd jobs, cleaning the

barn, helping in the garden and building stone walls. He would arrive in his horse and buggy as all the roads were dirt at the time.

Annie Keator was born in New York and lived on a 500 acre farm in Scarsdale. The Keators also had a 300 acre farm on Long Island, where they sold cattle, largely to hotels. She remembers when they came to Weston that in neighboring Westport, there was a large hotel and a trolley that ran through the



Paper Maiche Indian Figures on permanent display at the Weston Library. Made and donated by Annie Keator.

center of town. The only doctor available in those days also lived in Westport. By its very nature and seclusion, Weston was a community where people took care of themselves.

Ms. Keator told Julia that her sister had researched the house back for 131 years and that it had served as many different things. It was, for a time, a Mulberry farm on which the slaves raised silk worms. It also served as a post office and store. She said that the house was also the parsonage for the Norfield Church which sat at the corner of Old Hyde and Norfield Roads. Ms. Keator laughed about the land across the road from her which also had belonged to the church. She called it consecrated ground, and it was used for years to bury dead horses because of its ease in digging.

There was no electricity when Annie moved here and no business at all. She remembers Fred Bennett (from Wilton we believe) who had a butcher shop and brought ice. They made their own milk,

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The southern half of Lyons Plain Road, formerly known as Bradley Street, is probably best known for its long straight flat road with many charming homes dotting the landscape. Many, many of these houses were built by workers from the Bradley Edge Tool Company (also known as the Ax Factory), Weston's largest and most successful business from 1850 to 1911.

One of these charming homes belongs to Mr. & Mrs.

DuBois Morris (better known as Dubie and Bootsie to their friends). Dubie's father came to Weston in 1935 and purchased a double house that had been used by workers at the Ax Factory. He named it Twin Gates, as Dubie and his sister were twins. He broke it through and shifted the inside to suit his family's needs. Shortly thereafter a house across the street came on the market and Dubie's father, afraid that a developer would get hold of it, purchased the old home (known as the George Sherwood house) which included an old barn/garage across the street on the river side. The old farmhouse, built around 1820, was at one time used as a boarding house for workers at the Ax Factory. The barn across the street once housed chickens and cows and was later used as a garage for the tenants. (Fred Schneider or Norfield Road told us that his father had been sent out from New York City for

fresh air and had stayed at the boarding house.

Dubie's father built a new foundation closer to the river for the now falling down barn and with two-by-fours, greased with laundry soap, restored the building and put on a little bedroom wing and a little kitchenette and dinette (see photo at bottom of page 6). More enlargements were after 1940. Dubie felt that his dad, 30 years a Presbyterian missionary in China, might have wanted to use the barn for hymn sings

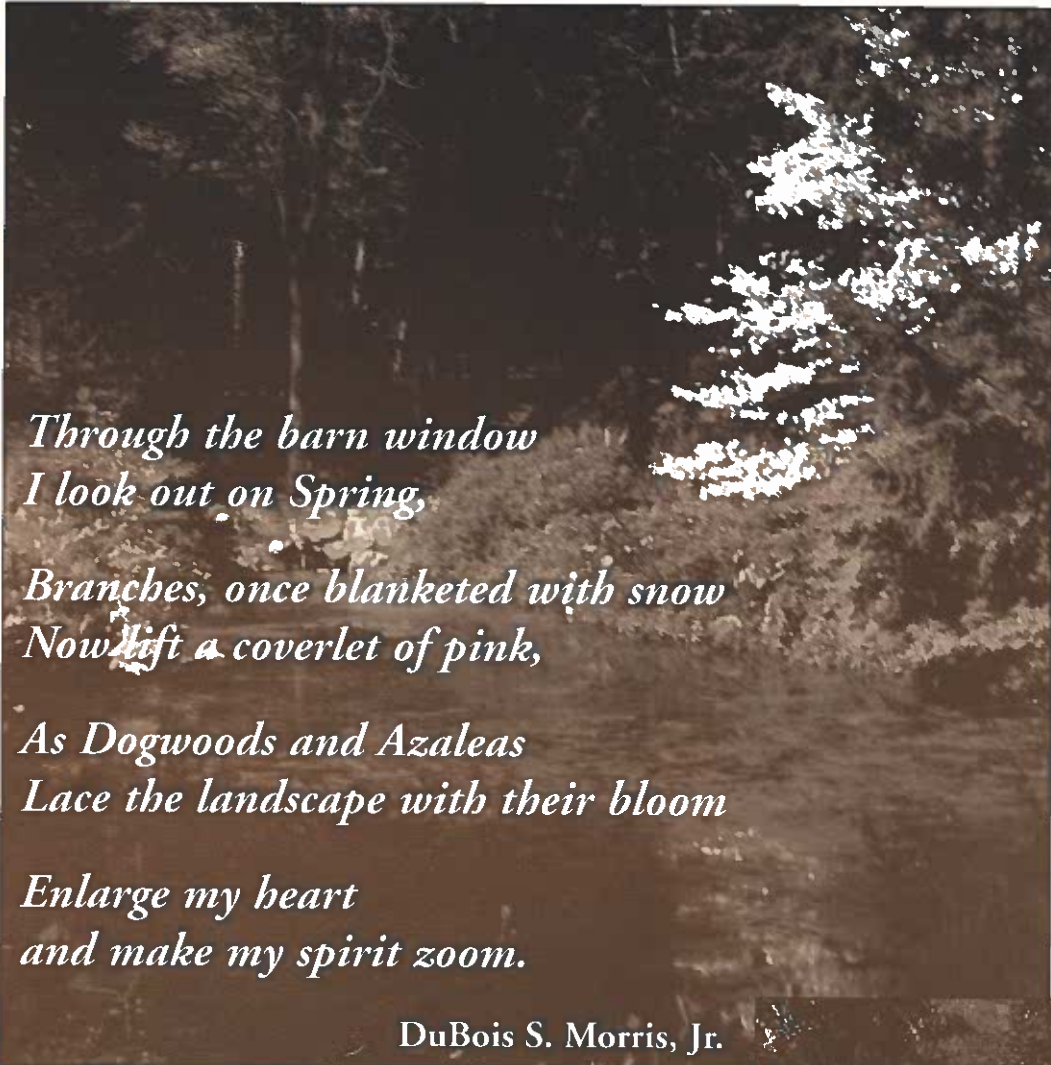
and also a place for his children to stay.

Dubie was born in China and lived there for 13 years. He lived within a very protected compound during that time. He then lived with his Dad in an apartment in New York. Shortly after his marriage to Bootsie, they moved down to Washington, DC where they lived for 15 years. He was a member of the National Press Club and the White House



Dubie and Bootsie Morris on their back patio.

Correspondents Association. He was a syndicated columnist and free-lance journalist. Bootsie came from Boston and her mother came from Maine so she considers herself a true New Englander. They used to come often to visit Dubie's Dad and stayed in the reconverted barn. In 1956, they moved here year-around because his father was ill. They stayed on after his death and put their children in school and have been here ever since.



*Through the barn window  
I look out on Spring,  
Branches, once blanketed with snow  
Now lift a coverlet of pink,  
As Dogwoods and Azaleas  
Lace the landscape with their bloom  
Enlarge my heart  
and make my spirit zoom.*

DuBois S. Morris, Jr.

(see insert) and has written volumes of inspirational lines. He knows his entire works by heart.

With all this history comes a treat that has to be seen to truly be appreciated. Dubie's father, with the help of Mr. Follett (an original garden/ landscaper in town), planted Azalea bushes, dogwood, and lilacs behind the house going down to the river below. There are paths for walking through the lush growth and the colors are truly magnificent. Dubie says that he gets excited about the Azaleas every spring and never tires of their beauty. He loves to share this gorgeous sight with visitors, and I am so glad to have been one of them. It is a beautiful sight and I thank Dubie and Bootsie for sharing their garden and their lives with us.

*Photos continued on page 6*

Their lives have remained busy and interesting. Dubie commuted to New York City where he was Assistant to the President of the Conference Board, and Vice-President of the Council for Financial Aid to Education, giving him a chance to link the education of the corporate community. Bootsie is an avid gardener and has been a member of the Weston Garden Club for many years. She has currently been working on the Wildflower Garden located off Stagecoach Road. When the old Benjamin property was sold four acres of open space was donated to the Aspetuck Land Trust. With the help of Lanie and Pete Goss, trails have been made and the Garden Club is trying to plant, as well as label, the wild flowers in the area. Both the Morrisses are on the Board of the Warm-up Fund, and Dubie and is an active member of Kiwanis. Dubie is also a prolific poet





c. 1916 - George Sherwood House, Lyons Plain Road.  
House was sold to father of DuBois Morris c. 1935  
(Sherwoods on the right, Emily and Fred Schneider, Sr. on left)



May 1918 - Remains of the Bradley Edge Tool Factory on Lyons Plain Road.  
Factory burned in 1911.  
The two photos above are courtesy of Fred Schneider.



Moving the George Sherwood Barn to become part of home built by  
DuBois Morris, Sr. at 104 Lyons Plain Road about 1940.  
Photo courtesy of Dubie and Bootsie Morris

## *PASTORAL PAST*

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butter and cream which they also sold.

Annie had a love of animals and surrounded herself with them in her home. She tells a tale of having two Great Danes who were never allowed out of the house. They used to run up and down the staircase, which eventually caused the wall to fall apart. She took a big canvas and painted a mural on it and hung it where the wall had once been. She also did incredible artwork with paper mache. She made many horses with both cowboy and indian riders - four of which sit on the top of the card catalog in the Weston Library. Many of her figures are reportedly at the Smithsonian. Julia remembers seeing a lamp with an entire Indian village around its base with teepees, fires, horses and Indian figures. When Annie died in 1981, she left not only her artwork, but a large sum of money, in her will, for a cultural donation to the town. The money was designated for the library and to help for the addition where the children's room is now, thus bearing her name over the door.

One comment made by Ms. Keator during her interview with Julia fortunately never came true. She said that all the newcomers were running the town with their crazy ideas. She was afraid they would run the mainstays out. Unfortunately we have lost some of our mainstays, but Weston has survived those crazy ideas, and thanks to the current owners, her farm and its beauty have also survived.



## ANNUAL SENIOR PICNIC, JULY 9

The annual Senior Picnic will be held this year on Wednesday, July 9, 1997. The picnic will begin at 12 noon on the grounds of the Weston Historical Society. There will be hot dogs and hamburgers, assorted salads and desserts. Come and join us under the trees, visit our barn, and wander through the herb garden.



## BLUEBIRD HOUSES



Walt Jonsson and his grandson, Conner, building a bluebird house

Photo by Gale Beyea

Dear Roger,

This is a very belated note to the Historical Society, you and Bob Jirucha. The morning we all built birdhouses was such a delightful time. Bob was wonderful to make all the boards and to supply all the hardware we needed.

The feeling of friendship and camaraderie was bountiful and everyone seemed to have such a good time. We all worked together and came away with our houses.

I am still awaiting the bluebirds, but I hope that there is another occasion to get together for some project. It is a great way for members of the society to get to know one another.

Bravo to all,  
Karin

This is a reprint of a note sent to the WHS by Karin Giannitti.

*The Chronicle Quarterly*  
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## *FOR SALE*

The Weston Historical Society is selling baseball caps designed by Ken Karlan who was kind enough to donate them to us. The cap is white with dark blue brim and lettering.

The cost of the hat is \$8.50 (tax included). Please contact the Weston Historical Society at 226-1804 if you are interested in purchasing one of these hats. They also are available at Town Hall.