

The Old Stone News

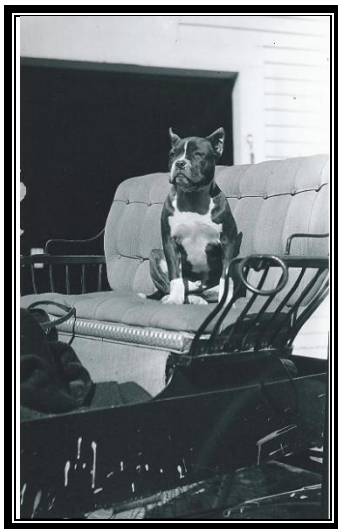
The Newsletter of
The West Boylston
Historical Society
Spring 2013
Volume 15, Number 1

MEMBERSHIP

Your membership dues were due by January 1, 2013. If you have an envelope in this mailing, it means that we have not received your dues.

We appreciate your continued support of the society and its programs.

Sending your email address to us would be greatly appreciated. We need it for a quick contact within the society and would never knowingly give out an email address. Thank you.



Thank you for the many donations received for the brick walk! We hope to start the project in the spring.
Keyes' collection

The Historical Society is open every Thursday 9:30 AM to noon at 65 Worcester St.
(508) 835-6971
or by appointment

From the President

Happy New Year to Everyone! It actually looks like a beautiful new world out there due to our recent record setting 24" plus snow storm. Fortunately it was light and fluffy and easy on the back as well as the eyes.

Both our November trip the Hardwick Winery and Steaming Tender Restaurant (40 plus members and guests) and our December Open House were well attended. We are grateful to Laura Hamel for leading the tree lighting and carol singing and to her elves, Hannah Goodale, Gabby Hamel, and Molly O'Connor. A lot of work and preparation goes on behind the scenes to make sure our Open House and Tree Lighting are a success. In addition to those already mentioned, we need to acknowledge the other people involved. The Municipal Light Plant provides the trees lining the commons. Tim Shea of the DPW oversees getting everything organized and operational with help from the DPW, the Municipal Light, and the Celebration Committee. The Board of Directors provides our delicious refreshments. Elaine Novia ran the sales area. Don DeMarsh entertained us on guitar, and the Thursday Group, Norman, Dwight, Don, Aaron, Dot, Eleanor, Barbara, and Bev make sure that the house is decorated for the season and ready for guests. We can also thank Barbara, Dwight, and Aaron for providing publicity for the event and Mike Kane of the "Banner" for covering our festivities. And last but not least, I need to thank Aaron for "whatever, whenever, and wherever". Thank you to everyone who helped to make this a memorable event.

Beverly K. Goodale

WEST BOYLSTON ARTS FOUNDATION

We have been asked by the WBAF to let our membership know of an upcoming program that they are sponsoring at the library. On Tuesday, February 26, 2013 author, Maryanne O'Hara will speak about her acclaimed new novel, "Cascade". It is a 1935 fictional story of a town's impending flood and destruction. She did much of her research in the area of the Quabbin and is very familiar with the story of the Wachusett Reservoir. It should be an outstanding program.

CURATORS CORNER

Now that the installation of the new window panels is complete, we are now starting to put some of our collection out and on the walls. We can also focus on the furnishing of the two upstairs bedrooms. My goal is to have the area open by the end of the year or sooner, if all goes according to plan.

We have received a few new gifts to the society.

A large doll bed and two doll bureaus have been given by the family of Madeline Hayes.

Jake O'Connor has given us his collection of yearbooks from the West Boylston High School. That really helped fill in some gaps. We still need the following: '33, '44, '49, '51-'57, '67, '72-'74, '88- to the present.

We thank each and everyone for their generosity.

They can be dropped off at the society 8-11 AM on Mondays, 9 AM-12 PM on Thursdays, or by calling (508) 735 -8889 for pickup. Thanks for your help.

Bev Goodale, Curator

BUILDING AND GROUNDS

We are pleased to say that the new window panels are all installed. When the weather is warmer, we will get the windows painted and do the final fitting of the panels. It has already made a big difference in the temperature of the rooms and keeping down the outside noise.

We are indebted to Phil Chevalier for keeping the society plowed out this winter. Thank you, Phil.

100 Years Ago

The Sawyer Family of West Boylston

Oliver Barrett Sawyer was born in Berlin Massachusetts, June 5, 1815, born into the prominent family line of emigrant ancestor Thomas Sawyer. He was born in England in 1616 and first came to Rowley Massachusetts and settled in Lancaster MA in 1647. Thomas married Mary Prescott, daughter of John Prescott, the leading settler of Lancaster, and became one of the prominent men of this section of the country. The Sawyers of Berlin and other towns about and within the former limits of old Lancaster are descended from Thomas. Thomas died on September 12, 1706, aged ninety and left ten children.

Oliver Barrett Sawyer married Angelina Baldwin of Shrewsbury April 12, 1842. He established himself in business in West Boylston, where for many years he carried on the general store and was a successful merchant. He was representative to general court in 1853, and was honored by the town in other positions of responsibility. His death, April 15, 1862 was due to overwork. The children of Oliver and Angeline were Henry Oliver, born June 10, 1844, and Walter Barrett born in 1852. The boys attended the district schools of West Boylston and Lancaster Academy.

When Henry was twenty-one years of age, he bought the general store which his father had established, but which, for a short time after his father's death, was owned by T. V. Phelps & Co. A short time after purchasing the store, Henry took on a partner Melvin E. Walker. In 1872, Henry sold his interest in the business to Mr. Walker and the store became M. E. Walker & Co. Henry then moved to Clinton MA where he established a furniture and undertaking business. Henry was in business for six years in Clinton before he disposed of his business and came back to West Boylston and bought back his interest from Melvin Walker. At this point, Henry's brother Walter joined the business and the general store became known as Sawyer Brothers. The business continued under this name until January 1, 1889, when Walter retired. Then Henry L. Sawyer (son of Henry O.) and James F. Higgins became partners. The name H. O. Sawyer & Co. was adopted.

Shortly thereafter, Walter became business partners with E. H. Baldwin in the carriage trade. According to the April 30, 1890 edition of the West Boylston Enterprise, "W. B. Sawyer and E. H. Baldwin are booming in the carriage trade this spring, their sales being very numerous and profitable."

Interestingly enough, James F. Higgins was also a well known town photographer who took numerous photos of the town and its inhabitants before part of the town was claimed to make way for the Metropolitan Water Reservoir. Many of the Higgins photos can be viewed at the Beaman Library and the Historical Society and also online.

H. O. Sawyer & Co. was in business in West Boylston until 1899, when the state took the property and the Sawyer family moved to Fitchburg MA on October 29, 1899. Henry O. then entered into partnership with his son Henry L. to form the firm of H. O. & H. L. Sawyer and they became the leading undertakers in the city of Fitchburg. Henry O. also became mayor of Fitchburg in 1904-1905.

In 1900, Henry Oliver's home was taken by the state, but his brother Walter B. bought the home from the state and had it moved from the valley to Central St, along with the barn of Silas Dinsmore. There, Walter established his carriage trade business. The house and barn, now a private home, still remain on Central Street today.

Steven Carlson, Historian

Be sure to check the Historical Society website for up to date information at:

www.wbhistory.org.



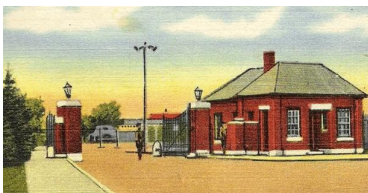
PROGRAMS

Wednesday, March 6

Fort Devens – Then and Now

Kara Fossey, executive director of the Fort Devens Museum, will present a program that shows the post from its' creation in 1917 until deactivation in 1996. Topics include the 1918 influenza epidemic, the WWII POW camp, and missions through the years.

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**Wednesday, April 3**

### **Worcester of Yesteryear: E.B. Luce Photo Collection**

The program captures Worcester life from 1881 to 1938. See some of the 75,000 photos from this period with presenter William Wallace, executive director of the Worcester Historical Museum

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Wednesday, May 1

Walter Buckingham, historical troubadour/bard and story teller of Old Sturbridge Village, will show numerous rare and unusual antique string, reed and woodwind musical instruments and demonstrate their use through stories and songs.

HELP!!!

LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD MEN AND WOMEN

Do you have a few hours to volunteer at the society. We could use your help. Call us at (508) 835-6971 or (508) 735-8889 or email us at bigelow@wbhistory.org.

We need:

MONTHLY HOUSE KEEPING

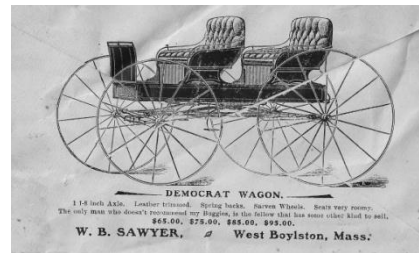
A FLAIR FOR DECORATING

QUILTERS TO MAKE ONE SQUARE FOR BEDROOM QUILT

RESEARCH ON A VARIETY OF SUBJECTS

HELP WITH CATALOGUING, THIS IS AN ONGOING PROJECT

We would be most grateful for your help in any of these areas.



Original advertisement for the surrey

PROUD OWNERS OF A SURREY AND A BUCKBOARD

The Society was approached by a representative of Malden Brook Farm, asking if we were interested in acquiring the surrey and buckboard that we have been storing for them for the last year or so. The Board of Directors were informed of this situation and felt that we would benefit by purchasing the carriages if it was financially feasible. The West Boylston Historical Society was able to come to terms with the owner and they are now part of our permanent collection. The surrey is significant to the Society because it was made in West Boylston by the W. B. Sawyer Co. Previously it was owned by Major Victor E. Edwards, a prominent citizen of the town. The buckboard is from Pennsylvania and associated with Elvis Presley. Both carriages are completely restored. The surrey is a real crowd pleaser to visiting school children and other visitors as well. You can learn more on the Sawyer family in this newsletter.



Home and carriage business of W. B. Sawyer on Central Street

The Founding of the West Boylston Historical Society

At our December Open House we celebrated with an “incorporation year” cake. The year 2012 marked the 40th anniversary of the incorporation of the West Boylston Historical Society. I thought that it was perhaps the perfect time to look back and revisit the establishment of the society. We are fortunate to have good records that tell us how this came to be.

The following is taken from the first West Boylston Historical Society Newsletter in July of 1971 and I quote. “Due to the desire of several citizens to establish an official Historic Society an article was placed in the annual 1970 town warrant, to adopt section 8D of chapter 44 of the General Laws of Massachusetts. This section provided for the establishment of a Historic Commission by the selectmen, in turn this Commission would organize, among the other required duties, a Historic Society”

The article, presented by James A. Cooke, was accepted by the town meeting. The Selectmen then appointed the following members to the Commission: James A. Cooke, Chairman, Nancy Hawley, Clerk, Emilie Boulais, Gladys H. Cummings, Merlin Howard, Edgar Whitcomb, II, and Thomas Wood. Helen Hamilton was initially listed as a member but, for some reason or another, was replaced by Thomas Wood.

The Commission held its first meeting at the Beaman Memorial Library on September 21, 1970. The first order of business was the formation of a Historic Society. At their October 15, 1970 meeting it was decided to meet on November 12, 1970 to bring together people interested in forming a Society. Approximately forty people attended this gathering. Planning meetings were also held on December 7, 1970, January 21, 1971, and February 4, 1971. At the March 18, 1971 meeting it was suggested that a nominating committee be appointed to submit a slate of officers for the newly proposed Historical Society. Emilie Boulais and Edgar Whitcomb were already drafting a set of temporary by-laws. The first meeting of the Society was set for March 24, 1971. At that time the by-laws were passed which the Commission had written, with the understanding that they could be changed as the Society saw fit.

A nominating committee was appointed and included the following: Mildred Garside, Evan Luce, and Hugh Robinson. At the April 29, 1971 meeting of the Historical Commission, the nominating committee presented the following slate of officers for the newly formed Society. They were as follows:

President, Edgar A. Whitcomb, II
Vice President, Paul Cavanaugh
Secretary, Virginia Ebbeson
Treasurer, Luther Hilton

Board of Directors: Evan Luce, 3 years
Mildred Garside, 2 years
Constance Salter. 1 year

The 1st annual meeting of the Society was held on May 24, 1971 at the West Boylston Congregational Church at 7:30 PM. The above officers were duly elected. Mr. Robert J. Tarte gave a lecture and showed a film at the first meeting on microfilming town records country wide, a project of the Mormon Church.

After the annual meeting the Society began work on getting their incorporation papers. Within a year and a half they had accomplished that goal. The following names appear on this document: Edgar A. Whitcomb, II, Luther T. Hilton, Virginia B. Ebbeson, Paul S. Cavanaugh, James A. Cooke, Evan C. Luce, Mildred F. Garside, Sally Hansen, Bruce L. Shepard, Gladys H. Cummings, Patricia Christenson, and Emilie Boulais.

We can thank the seven members of the West Boylston Historical Commission for founding the West Boylston Historical Society. It was their hard work and determination that made it happen.