

Brookline Historical Society

Incorporated April 29, 1901

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Brookline Historical Society Newsletter

Annual Reports Issue, 1990

Winter Meeting: "History In The Making", an illustrated talk by Jean Kramer, author of the new "Brookline: A Pictorial History". Also, induction of new officers.

Date: Sunday, Feb. 25, 3 p.m.

Place: Brookline Public Library, upstairs meeting room.

All members and their guests are invited to attend

President's Report

It has been my pleasure to serve the Historical Society as president since 1986. This Annual Reports Issue of the newsletter gives me a chance to reflect on progress made not only in 1989, but during the four years since I took office.

Membership: Although income from dues did not keep pace with last year's record level, still the results were most encouraging.

Last spring, the published list of members showed a grand total of 264 (individual members or couples). Of that, 41 are "Life" members, having paid \$100 to the Society in one year. Another 45 have joined at the "Sustaining" level of \$20 per year. The number of "Renewal" members (\$10) is 143. And an additional 35 joined as "Invited" members for a one-year free trial.

Members have been billed for 1990, and many of you have already mailed in your checks. If you have not, please do so in order that we can keep you on the mailing list.

Treasury: For a full report, see page 2. But let me highlight the new balance in the Society's accounts -- nearly \$45,000. That represents an increase of better than 33 percent in the past four years -- with significant help coming from the bequest of the Abigail Washburn Estate.

We have maintained our policy of using Historical Society funds only for expenses associated with meetings and presentations of historical research to the Society. This has helped the funds to grow. It is my hope that, with a continuation of this policy, the Society will build up its treasury in the next 5-10 years to a level that would allow us to begin to employ professional staff, and perhaps even to endow a future home for the Society's archives.

Officers and trustees: The following candidates will be

presented to the membership at the Feb. 25 meeting for approval as trustees:

Ruth Dorfman, Luster Delany, David England, Edward Heartz, Leslie Larkin, and Nancy Peabody.

That leaves one vacancy which we will attempt to fill early in 1990.

The following have been elected by unanimous vote of the trustees as officers for 1990-91:

President -- Miriam Sargon
Treasurer -- George Lezberg
Clerk -- Jean Kramer
Past President -- John VanScoyoc

The office of vice president is also one that the trustees hope to fill in early 1990.

Research: Papers were researched, presented and printed in the newsletter on three topics of interest. On Feb. 12, 1989, Michael Berger and Mary Dewart of the Brookline Greenspace Coalition examined the past and future of Larz Anderson Park, with emphasis on the park restoration issues facing the town. The presentation took place at the Carriage House at the park. On
(continued on page 8)

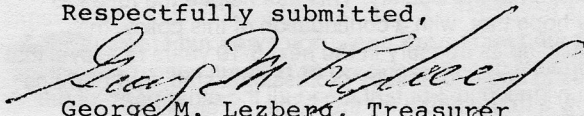
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BROOKLINE HISTORICAL SOCIETYTREASURER'S ANNUAL REPORT

	<u>1 9 8 8</u>		<u>1 9 8 9</u>	
<u>Cash on hand, January 1:</u>				
Checks on hand	\$ 276.84		\$ - 0 -	
Term deposit	23,947.47		25,822.12	
Money market	1,391.65		1,493.03	
Savings account	6,825.69		7,218.21	
C.H. Blanchard Mem'l. Fund	1,348.16		1,425.68	
Bank of N. E.	<u>2,599.43</u>	\$ 36,389.24	<u>1,787.63</u>	\$ 37,746.67
<u>Income Year Ended December 31:</u>				
Dues & contributions	\$ 2,655.00		\$ 2,400.00	
Bequest - Estate of Abigail Washburn	-0-		3,473.00	
Misc.	100.00		160.00	
David Wallace Trust	127.25		1,592.30	
Interest earned	<u>2,629.55</u>	<u>5,511.80</u>	<u>3,298.55</u>	<u>10,923.85</u>
		\$ 41,901.04		\$ 48,670.52
<u>Payments:</u>				
Postage & mailings	\$ 616.00		\$ 500.05	
Printing & Typing	940.25		1,436.87	
Meeting expense	617.86		22.00	
Insurance	1,494.00		1,611.00	
Advertising	361.26		- 0 -	
Dues	15.00		15.00	
Filing fee	- 0 -		25.00	
Vault	<u>110.00</u>	<u>4,154.37</u>	<u>130.00</u>	<u>3,739.92</u>
<u>Balance, December 31:</u>				
Term deposit	\$ 25,822.12		\$ 28,194.28	
Money market	1,493.03		1,607.40	
Savings account	7,218.21		7,632.11	
C.H. Blanchard Mem'l. Fund	1,425.68		1,507.41	
Bank of N. E.	<u>1,787.63</u>	\$ <u>37,746.67</u>	<u>5,989.40</u>	\$ <u>44,930.60</u>

Respectfully submitted,



George M. Lezberg, Treasurer

January 23, 1990

Some China Trade figures in antebellum Brookline

By Wayne Altree

(Presented to the fall, 1989 meeting of the Historical Society)

The China Trade holds a place in the historical consciousness of the American people unjustified by its real importance in our foreign trade. This commerce seizes the imagination because it was a traffic in exotic products from a distant land, carried on by men of uncommon force and character. Many of these men were from Boston; a surprising number of them touched the life of Brookline.

The China Trade was rooted in the particular character of the commercial relations of the American colonies with the Atlantic world. The current trade deficit of the United States is nothing new in our national experience. For the first 250 years of our history, a swelling population in a new and undeveloped land, enjoying a standard of living unequalled elsewhere, resulted in a large demand for imports from the motherland. However, our exports as a means of payment for heavy purchases abroad were not sufficiently attractive to the English market to balance our trade account. To fill the gap became a driving force in our economic life.

Massachusetts with its hardscrabble hinterland lacked exportable commodities in any large measure, unlike more favored regions to the south. The colony fell back in consequence on its one comparative advantage: the resources of the sea and related maritime industries. Before the Revolution, Massachusetts merchants won a leading role in what history textbooks call "the triangular trade", whereby fish, timber products, shipping services and such like were exchanged in the West Indies for rum, which was then carried to the west coast of Africa for slaves, human commodities readily saleable in the south and Caribbean sugar plantations for the wherewithal to renew the cycle, or for molasses to supply the thriving distilleries of New England. Another option was the sale of fish from coastal waters to the Catholics of southern Europe to finance return cargoes of fruit, wine and salt.

These intricate transactions accumulated funds to offset in part the debts owed London merchants. Unfortunately, the Revolution shattered the pattern. The new Republic found itself thrust outside the permitted trade with the imperial possessions of England and other European powers. The ensuing economic crisis spurred Massachusetts merchants to scour the seas for new markets and new trade routes.

The most promising prospect lay beyond the Cape of Good Hope in the reputed riches of Marco Polo's legendary Cathay, a land hitherto forbidden to Americans by the East India Company's royal monopoly of trade in eastern seas. Oriental goods had always found a good Boston market, and newspapers regularly carried notices of the arrival of consignments of souchongs, lutestrings, nankeens and the like, trans-shipped by the Company from London.

Opportunities beyond the Cape carried heavy costs. The voyage to China was long and hazardous, the seaway vulnerable to tempests, piratical depredations, shipwreck, disease, primitive charts and navigation instruments, and all the other perils of the deep. Nonetheless, the prize was sufficient to attract bold merchants to send out in 1784 the Empress of China, with the Bostonian Samuel Shaw as supercargo, on a maiden voyage. Other Massachusetts men were quick to follow in the wake.

The Canton market, they discovered, had its peculiarities. All transactions took place in Canton, the only port open in China; and these transactions had to be conducted with a small guild of merchants called the Cohong, who determined without recourse the terms of exchange. The Hong merchants were natives of a vast, self-sufficient country largely indifferent to foreign products, save Spanish silver dollars, a scarce specie hard to come by. Boston traders eked out this means of payment with furs, ginseng, sandalwood, trepang, and, when such items failed, they resorted to vast quantities of opium illegally smuggled into China.

Tea was the great staple sought by all. The market was notoriously volatile, but shrewdly managed could result in great profit. For the few Bostonians who had the grit, ships and capital to participate, Canton could be a bonanza, and by 1800 almost six million pounds of tea were brought into the country in their ships. This "sifted few" rapidly coalesced into the dominant element in the life of Boston. Their wealth was further augmented by windfall profits rising out of a unique and fortuitous position as neutral shippers to the world during the long ordeal of the Napoleonic Wars and by the reinvestment of profits in the lucrative and nascent textile mills of the Northeast.

This new Bostonian *haute bourgeois* formed in time a republican aristocracy; and, knit by kinship and self-interest, they adopted a style of living and code of manners appropriate to their status. Their elegant, comfortable dwellings constituted an exclusive residential enclave of a few contiguous, fashionable streets in the Beacon Hill area, apart from less fortunate neighbors, but readily accessible to the harbor and counting houses from whence their riches flowed.

The aspiration of a "solid man" of Boston was for a stately mansion, preferably designed by Bulfinch, standing free in its own garden, emblematic of its owner's wealth, power and right to deference. Unfortunately, the mercantile prosperity which made such a residence possible also brought a general prosperity to the city which resulted in urban crowding and rising real estate values. Boston, sitting on a small triangular peninsula of 750 acres, circumscribed by water and swamp, had little room for expansion save over Roxbury Neck into the countryside of Brookline. Around 1800, several members of the mercantile elite, feeling jostled by city clamor, sought asylum in that small rural village by establishing country estates as summer residences.

Chief among these gentlemen was Thomas H. Perkins, the Merchant Prince, who began a storied career by going out in 1789 to Canton as a very young man. The rich returns of that venture opened to Perkins the possibilities of the eastern trade, and for the rest of his life he exploited those possibilities with Yankee shrewdness to build one of the greatest fortunes in the country.

The death of a daughter in a 1799 smallpox epidemic is reputed to have moved the father to acquire a tract of Brookline land lying along Warren Street. The new acquisition was called The Brookline Farm, not altogether euphemistically since it was stocked with domestic animals and planted with vegetable gardens to feed the owner's Boston establishments.

At 450 Warren Street, he built a commodious summer house in the Creole plantation style with broad verandas, tall frontal columns and generous French windows exposing the interior easily to the outdoors. Surrounding outbuildings included conservatories, greenhouses and a billiard pavilion papered inside with engravings and a frieze of Chinese wallpaper with a motif of birds and trees. Perkins' affinity for Oriental articles of interior decoration is recalled by a granddaughter: "...our grandfather's house held many treasures from China; kites in fantastic forms, rice paper pictures, bamboo and China seats, high ornaments of peacock feathers, many small images of Buddha."

The mansion was surrounded by vast lawns, winding paths, ponds, vistas, flowers and shrubs brought by the great man's ships from faraway places, all calculated to evoke the picturesque effect in the prevailing mode of landscaping. To maintain this opulent outlay, the Colonel spent more than \$10,000 a year and employed a corps of gardeners supervised by the skillful horticulturist William Cowan, forerunner of a long line of Brookline gardeners from abroad in years to come. The result attracted national attention and unending visitors among whom were Audubon, Lafayette, President Monroe, et al.

Nearby the Colonel erected a summer cottage for his daughter Eliza and her husband Samuel Cabot. The son-in-law was the nephew of the eminent Federalist George Cabot. After a stint as a merchant at the Mauritius in the Indian Ocean, a way station to China, Cabot worked as an East Indies merchant in Philadelphia; but, after marriage to Eliza, he entered the Perkins firm as a partner, and through acumen and connections became a very rich man.

His good fortune was marred by the death of a young son who had been sent to Canton as a clerk, as was the custom, only to be cut down at the age of twenty by one of the plagues that periodically swept the port. His fate matched that of his cousin Thomas Forbes, who was lost in a sudden gale on the Pearl River as he went out to greet a boat bringing mail from home. Deaths like these, and there were many others, temper roseate pictures sometimes painted of the China Trade.

Another Perkins neighbor was James, an older brother, who lived at "Pinebank" on Jamaica Pond. James was quite unlike his famous brother. While a partner in the family firm, he lacked the acquisitive spirit. He was a man of studious and reclusive habits and was quite happy to allow the spotlight to dwell on the younger man. In their business relationship, James served as the "inside man", the expert accountant who meticulously husbanded the firm's finances, while Thomas played the part of the "outside man" cultivating business and the public. It was a winning combination. Mrs. James Perkins refused to live in Brookline for the singular reason that she found bayberry bushes repugnant and spent summers in Nahant.

Jamaica Pond seems to have become an attractive spot for other Boston expatriates. One of the most striking of these was John Boit, who at the age of 19 had gone on the famous ship Columbia to the northwest coast for otter skins, a valuable commodity on the Canton market, and had then continued with the vessel as it circumnavigated the globe on its historical voyage. Shortly thereafter, Boit duplicated this exploit by taking the small sloop Union (89 tons) as captain on a similar voyage, thus acquiring the distinction of having taken the first sloop around the world.

After these romantic adventures, he settled down in Boston as an East Indies merchant with considerable success. He lived on Center Street at the corner of Boylston. His son Edward married Louisa, daughter of J.P. Cushing, a Perkins & Co. partner who became the richest man in the United States and owner of the palatial estate "Belmont", now the suburb of that name. Edward Boit's children are the subjects of Sargent's famous painting in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts called "The Boit Children". Edward lived on Colchester Street, as did his brother Charles, and became an artist of some repute.

Boit's daughter Julia married another great China Trade figure, Russell Sturgis. They also lived on Jamaica Pond at a house called "Rockwood". Sturgis spent years in the East where he made a sufficient fortune to retire, but suffered financial reverses which caused him to consider a return to China. On the way to the steamer which was to take him to London for a ship to Canton, an

express van with his baggage was delayed reaching the wharf, and in the ensuing contretemps Sturgis missed his London connection and was forced to lay over awaiting a later ship. In the interval, Joshua Bates, senior partner of the great banking house of Baring Brothers and a relative, persuaded Sturgis to give up going to China and to join Baring's. In any event, Sturgis did so, rose rapidly to the top of the firm and became a major figure in 19th century international finance, a consequence he always attributed to a tardy expressman.

Samuel Perkins, younger brother of Thomas, lived at 15 Cottage Street where he had another house in the Creole style. He too was a partner in Perkins & Co., but left the firm early, and, after various ventures, formed an establishment of his own styled S.G. Perkins & Co., dealing in East Indies goods. As a businessman, he was even more relaxed than his brother James, and he developed a daily routine which permitted him to quit work at noonday and escape to Brookline, where he spent the afternoon in his absorbing interest of gardening. Samuel insisted on doing all his own horticultural work, and, probably for that reason, his gardens were considered by many superior to the lavish operations of his brother, to the latter's discomfiture.

Samuel's wife was the very popular Barbara Higginson Perkins, who was in the opinion of that sybarite Talleyrand the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. She was also Brookline's favorite hostess, and the hospitality of Samuel's household was famous as his grapes and peaches. Samuel's nephew, T.W. Higginson, fondly speaks of his visits to Cottage Street in these words:

"No matter, he (Samuel) had the frank outdoor hospitality of a retired East India merchant, which he was; every afternoon, at a certain hour, sherry and madeira were set out on the sideboard in the airy parlor, with pears, peaches, grapes, nectarines, strawberries and the richest cream, and we knew that visitors would arrive. Cousins and friends came, time-honored acquaintances of the head of the house, eminent public men, Mr. Prescott, the historian, or Daniel Webster himself, received like a king. Never did I feel a greater sense of honor conferred than when that regal black-browed man once selected me as the honored messenger to bring more cream for his chocolate."

One of Samuel's friends said of him after his death, "His manner was frank, open-minded and decisive, and to some persons brusque. All men respected, many loved him." John Murray Forbes said of the three brothers, and as a nephew he had some cause to know, that Samuel was the greatest of the three.

If Thomas Perkins was the first great China trader to distinguish Brookline by his presence, John Lowell Gardner might be said to be the last. The two men were alike in achievement but different in temperament. One presided over the opening of the Trade, the other presided over its close. His career was one of uninterrupted success. He had the Midas touch. An old Boston saw ran that "...if you had started him at the foot of State Street with nothing on, by the time he reached the Old State House he would have a new suit of clothes, spats, a cane, a tall hat and money in his pocket. Perhaps an element in his good fortune was the genius of Essex County blood that flowed in his veins. He was related to all the noted families in that cradle of great merchants. One grandfather was Timothy Pickering, the notable and irascible grand panjandrum of the Federalist Party; his other grandfather was Joseph Peabody, greatest shipowner of the day. Whatever it was that enabled him never to take a false step, his participation in the Sumatra pepper trade, Calcutta textiles, and China tea made him a fabled figure.

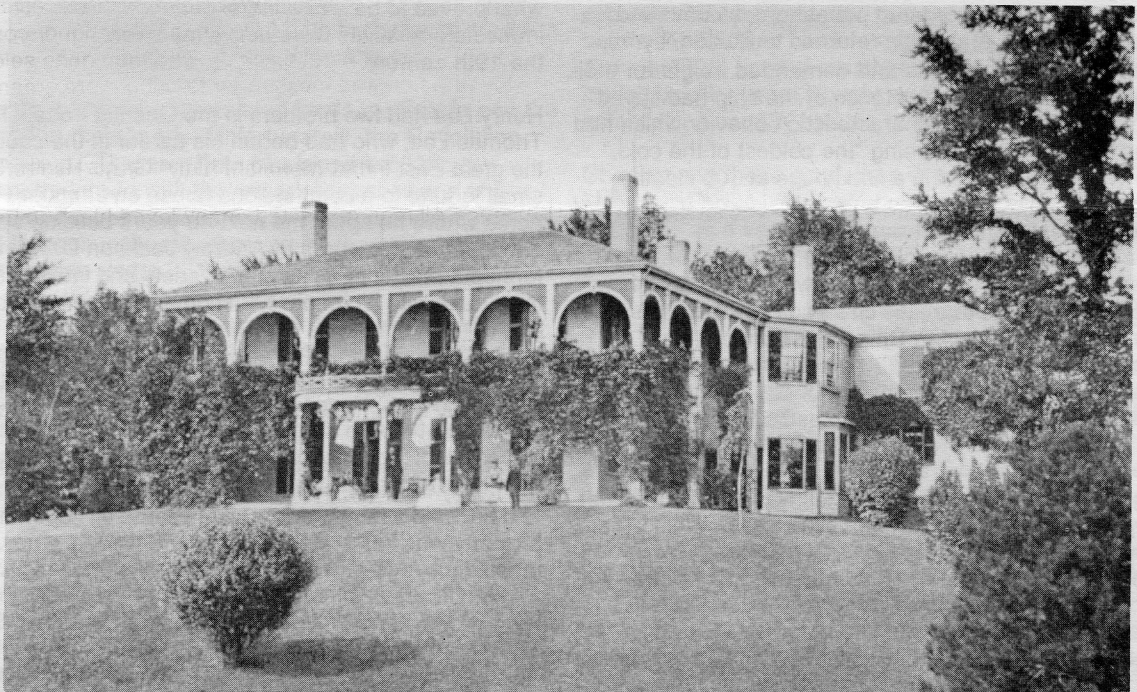


MRS. SAMUEL CABOT (1792-1885)



THOMAS HANDASYDE PERKINS (1764-1854)

Father and daughter, from whom many prominent citizens of Brookline have descended



HOUSE OF JOHN LOWELL GARDNER ON WARREN STREET, ABOUT 1864

It is all the more remarkable, therefore, that there remains universal testimony that he was a man of unblemished integrity, modesty, and quiet tastes with the utmost consideration for the feelings and best interest of others. He shrunk from public recognition, but was one of the few summer residents that made any sort of benefaction to the town.

In 1842, Gardner bought 20 acres on Cottage Street, which with several additions, became the estate which he called "Greenhill". His house at 135 Warren Street had been built by Captain Nathaniel Ingersoll, an old-time operator in China seas. His father was the renowned sea captain Jonathan Ingersoll, commander of the legendary Grand Turk, one of the first vessels to open the way to Canton. His brother-in-law was Nathaniel Bowditch, the "Navigator" who did more than any other man to replace the primitive navigation of vessels in the China Trade with scientific methods. Bowditch's sons were well-known Brookline residents in later years. Captain Ingersoll, after making a fortune in the East, erected his house around 1806, married the daughter of his well-to-do neighbor Adam Babcock, and then ruined himself in various speculations, the sad results of which forced his retirement to Essex County, from whence he came.

A China trader renowned for his *brío* was Captain Daniel Bacon, grandfather of Secretary of State Robert Bacon. He owned Clyde Park, the site of The Country Club, named by James Murray Forbes after the Shanghai Country Club, Forbes being a founder of both. Bacon came from an old Barnstable family, in which the mother of Thomas Perkins found refuge during the siege of Boston.

Daniel went to sea early and rose rapidly to be second-in-command to the famous "Billy" Sturgis, captain of the Atahualpa, in the Northwest Coast fur trade with Canton. This vessel was attacked in 1806 while becalmed in Macao Roads by the ferocious Chinese pirate Appotsae with 16 war junks; but the attack was repelled by Sturgis with Bacon at his side after an intense fight during which the captain threatened to blow up his ship and its attackers. Sturgis had four cannons aboard, which the ship owner Theodore Lyman had frugally ordered put ashore, a command wisely ignored. When the Atahualpa returned to Boston, Lyman discovered the forbidden weapons and demanded freight for their carriage, despite the fact that the defense of the ship had saved \$300,000 contained in the hold, characteristic behavior which had earned Lyman the reputation of being "the coldest of the cold." His grandson Theodore Jr. lived in a fine house at 105 Heath Street, whose design by Upjohn has been considered a masterpiece of domestic architecture.

Among many other exploits of Bacon, all of which endeared him to old-time merchants, was his dramatic challenge to the British shipping industry to race between China and London two duplicate ships, one manned by English sailors and one by Yankees. Despite Bacon's offer of a prize of £20,000 sterling, no response was forthcoming from England, testimony to the preeminence of contemporary American seamanship.

A towering figure in Boston mercantile circles was William Fletcher Weld, the only native of Brookline in the China trade. Weld's family had lived in the village for six generations, and Thomas Weld, arriving in the great immigration of 1630, had become before death the richest man in the colony. Joseph Weld had been granted a tract of 300 acres in the vicinity of Jamaica Pond, and his family had lived continuously on that homestead.

William Weld started out life inauspiciously as a failure in the Boston commission business, but had recouped his fortunes in the West Indies. He acquired ships, his first ship being the largest in the country, and had gone on with unbroken success to become the

owner of the biggest fleet in the country, if not the world. His notable career reached its peak in the clipper ship era with its immense tea traffic. His ships with their green-painted hulls and sails emblazoned with the symbol of the flying black horse appeared regularly in every China port after the opium wars forced open the country.

His improved fortunes allowed him to buy Goddard Hill, and there he erected a large, imposing dwelling called "Weld". Subsequent to his death this property eventually passed to his granddaughter Isabel Anderson, wife of the American diplomat Larz Anderson. Another granddaughter owned the Brandegee estate at 280 Newton Street, and a grandson lived at 15 Goddard Street. Weld Hall at Harvard is a benefaction in memory of Weld's brother Stephen.

Not all merchants in the eastern trade shared Weld's great success. A notable exception was Henry Lee. Despite a long life devoted to that business as supercargo, ship captain, ship owner and commission merchant, Lee achieved only "a modest competence". Nonetheless, he was widely known as the "wise man" of the trade, a reputation built on long residence in the East where he acquired first-hand detailed knowledge of market conditions in Canton and Calcutta. More of a student than a businessman, he devoted much time to the study of political economy and statistics. He was a leading free-trader and fiercely, if unsuccessfully, opposed the protective tariff, which the dominant textile industry got through Congress.

In 1850, he bought the old Boylston House on Fisher Hill overlooking the reservoir, and lived there many years as a country gentleman, cultivating his gardens and orchards. His son Colonel Harry Lee, the great financier of Lee Higginson, built a brick house next door; and, as son-in-law of Samuel Cabot, inherited the property at 450 Warren Street. An interesting footnote to the ownership of the Boylston estate is the fact that a remnant of that property at 99 Warren Street came to be owned by Frederick Law Olmsted, who in his youth had gone out to Canton as a seaman before the mast, and his writings contain a dramatic account of what proved to be a searing experience. Some of Olmsted's immediate relatives were active merchants in Canton throughout the 19th century.

Henry Lee had two brothers in the Oriental trade. The oldest was Thomas Lee, who had begun his career in the counting house of the great East Indies merchant "Billy" Gray. He retired early with a small fortune to a commodious house on Jamaica Pond with 20 acres where he spent the next 40 years building up an estate, described in the words of Andrew Jackson Downing: "...here he formed a residence of as much variety and interest as we ever saw in so moderate a compass." Thomas Lee came to be regarded as one of the first serious practitioners of the art of landscape gardening in the country. After his death, the estate was acquired by Ignatius Sargent, also an associate of "Billy" Gray, and eventually became part of Charles S. Sargent's "Holm Lea".

Joseph Lee, the younger Lee brother, after following the sea in the family tradition, bought the old Hammond Farm in Chestnut Hill and became a farmer and a local character. Upon his death, the property was left to his nephews and nieces, who used their inheritance to form a sort of real estate enclave for various friends and relatives, locally referred to as the "Essex Colony", including Higginsons, Cabots, Lowells, Saltonstalls, and Lees.

This Chestnut Hill development had been anticipated several decades before by a similar enterprise which converted the old Sewall Farm into a carefully planned park-like residential district with attractive tree-lined streets, squares, churches and other amenities. David Sears had been the originator of the project. Anticipating that the completion of the Mill Dam across the Back

Bay would make the area much easier of access from Boston, he had purchased 200 acres in 1821; and from then on spent much time and money to create what he hoped would be an ideal suburban community.

In 1850, Amos Lawrence had bought a tract of 90 acres adjoining the property of Sears. His acquisition included the old Sewall Cottage, which he had torn down and replaced at the corner of Carleton and Ivy with a Neo-Gothic English "cottage". The sale of land to would-be residents was carefully confined to friends and relatives, "quiet people" in Henry Lee's phrase. Sears was able to pursue his expensive scheme because the death of his father left him with the greatest legacy up to then on record; and one built on the East Indies trade. Lawrence made his money in textiles, and he became deeply implicated in the China Trade when the efficiency of his mills threatened to produce a domestic glut in cloth. To avert this eventuality Lawrence vigorously exported cottons to China, and by 1859 that country took 56% of the output of Lowell mills, the single most important market for U.S. textiles.

The China Trade, never a big factor in our foreign trade, nonetheless had the historical result of endowing participants with seed money and managerial experience sufficient to take the lead in the industrialization of the country; and the wealth and power, derived from mines, mills and railroads, created a capitalist elite that dominated Boston life until the Civil War, an elite defined and legitimized by achievement and style of living.

Residence was an important ingredient in that style of living. Urban growth results in the deterioration of the central city as a tolerable place of habitation for the better-off, a process leading to radiating zones of economic prosperity and residential desirability. That process did not ensue in antebellum Boston.

"Proper Bostonians" continued, as the city grew, the traditional residential pattern of dwelling on the traditionally fashionable streets inhabited by "the virtuous and well-born." This class continued loyal to Boston as the "Headquarters of Good Principles", as Hamilton called it. This loyalty was made easier by the practice of escaping to luxurious summer country estates in the environs of the city, the choice spot for many years being Brookline. Here gracious living, good manners and genteel pleasures could be preserved in a rural setting without lowering social barriers or mixing with local folk. Brookline was certainly not regarded as a "bedroom community." It only became such after the Civil War when improved transportation made the place a feasible possibility for residence by the professional middle class who could commute to work. Thus the sojourn of a small colony of patrician Bostonians was a fleeting incident in the transformation of a rural Puritan village into a modern suburb.

Report of the Committee on Rooms

The Edward Devotion House

This year started out with great success for the school children. The first visitors of the year were from the Baker School, followed by children from the Ipswich School System. A teacher from Brighton High School brought a group of children from her history class.

In March we worked with Gregory Arnold on the State House Flag Project, researching the history of the flags in the Flag Room of the State House.

Kindergarten classes visited for story time and an egg hunt. The third graders with Mrs. Fullbright as the leader did a word puzzle on finding objects in the house.

The first graders were interested in a story and trying the bed with the feather mattress.

At the same time, we had visitors from Guilford, Ct., and Montpelier, France, and their enjoyment was in watching the children having a good time in the bed.

Students came to see the timbers and the door which is stored in the basement. The timbers were obtained years ago by Mr. and Mrs. Little from the Frawley House, 613 Brookline Ave., as it was being torn down.

The visitors this year came from as far away as France, England, Kuwait, Israel, Saudi Arabia and Canada.

A visitor who spent two days with me researching her family was Ms. Catherine Kubenka, a descendant of Edward, John, Ebenezer and Eunice Devotion.

Mr. Gordon visited as part of his research for a book on early American furniture. The negatives of Martha Devotion were borrowed by the D.C. Heath Publishing Company to be used in one of their history books.

Thirty-six letters and eighty-three telephone calls were answered. Usually the calls are in regard to architecture in Brookline, the Devotion family, or town history.

April 19th as always was the busiest day, with the arrival of William Dawes -- a good time for all.

Being injured in early October did slow me down, but we made it through. Thank you all for your cards, flowers, cakes, phone calls -- you have been just great. John and Barbara VanScoyoc have been supportive and kind -- we wish him well as he retires as our successful and innovative president.

We must find a way to protect and care for the properties that we share with the town -- the Putterham School, the Widow Harris House and the Edward Devotion House.

The condition of the Devotion House continues to deteriorate. The floors, windows and wet walls are the biggest problem. The grounds represent a losing battle against the ravages of weather -- especially the fence. Jim has replaced and reinforced the corner posts, but the adjoining wood has rotted out. He has repaired the foundation and the sidewalk, and we have increased the plantings on the inside and outside of the fence. The neighborhood dogs don't help us very much.

We look forward to an early spring and a healthy one, and thank you again for all your support over the years.

The Putterham School

The Putterham School, formerly known as the Newton Street School, is situated on a hill in Larz Anderson Park, opposite the Museum of Transportation. The school is 222 years old. It was moved to its present site in April 1966. Since its original construction in 1768 the school has been altered frequently, showing various styles and techniques in construction used during the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries.

Mrs. Dean Peabody, Sr. was the chairperson of the Putterham School Committee of the Brookline Historical Society, and an alumna of the school. She wrote a wonderful article, "When I Went

to School," that appears in the Proceedings of the Society for 1959-63.

The school is worth a visit. There a variety of desks, chairs, benches and school books can be seen. The bookcase was made by the high school students taught by Guy Edmunds.

Four of the desks were gifts to James McIntosh. They had been used in the one-room schoolhouse in the Cathedral of the Pines. The two oldest desks were received from the Essex Institute in Salem. The organ was used in the Devotion School -- the music teachers would move it from room to room.

S. Morton Vose was chairman of the Putterham School for many years and gave it wonderful care. Lorraine Carle worked many weekends in the fall and summer to give tours of the school in the 1970's. William Burke lived in the Widow Harris House and was available and interested in the upkeep of the school.

This year, the school was used by the children in October and May. The school building needs attention. Perhaps a few members would be willing to give some time to help with repairs. Glen Tanck is going to be an asset to the school by helping with repairs and security.

Vandalism is our biggest problem. Please, the next time you are in the park take note of the little school.

-- Helen McIntosh

Reprint -- History of the Putterham School

(From the Historical Society "Proceedings")
By Nina F. Little

In 1713, eight years after the incorporation of Brookline as a town, there was agitation for a school to serve the south part of the town. In that year it was voted in Town Meeting that "The Inhabitants in the South part of this Town may erect a School House there, at their own charge." This vote, however, was not carried out, and many years were to pass before the matter again came up before Town meeting. In 1760 assistance was voted to those "inhabitants of ye South part of ye Town who Shall give their Names in at ye next May Town Meeting for a school in that part of the Town." The assistance consisted in excusing the residents from paying any tax toward the upkeep of other town schools (of which there were three), provided that they "kept up and Maintained such schooling."

Still nothing was done for eight years, but in 1768 it was voted again to assist the South District with the stipulation that the building "Be of the same Bigness of the Woman's School House that is in the Middle District." This referred to the school located on the green adjacent to the present First Parish Church. It is believed that the present school was then erected. Difficulties had been experienced in purchasing the land, but finally on September 22, 1777, the Town acquired for 5 shillings a lot just large enough to accommodate the first small building, from one Joseph Smith of Roxbury. This served inhabitants until enlargement became necessary in 1839.

From the Goddard farm, situated about a mile away on Goddard Avenue, came Nathaniel Goddard to this neighborhood school, and in his Memoirs he has given a revealing picture of the school as he attended it in 1771. Mr. Goddard writes: "At about four years of age I was sent in the summer to a school kept by a female about a mile to the westward of our dwelling. We had books as were generally used in the country schools of the day, to wit: a primer,

Dilworth's spelling book, a Bible, or in lieu of it a Psalter, and a New Testament. The latter books were not used until we had some proficiency in learning, for he who could read the Bible with a 'good tone' was much of a scholar." The meals, while he was in school, were cooked in the fireplace of Nab Wilson, "upon a knoll a few rods distant from the schoolhouse." Nab was an eccentric character whose home consisted of a pitch roof over a stone cellar with a fire at one end. The boys collected sticks over which to boil their chocolate which, with milk brought from home, they cooked in an iron skillet. Bread, sometimes sweetened with sugar or molasses, was eaten in pint pewter basins.

In 1821 a town committee reported that sixty-five pupils were registered at the school. In 1834, a similar committee reported that only seventeen were listed, and they recommended that the Town dispense with a male teacher in favor of a female for forty-eight weeks during the year, at \$2.50 per week. This would save the amount of \$46 which could be better expended elsewhere.

In 1839 still another committee was charged with investigating the condition of the Putterham School and reported as follows: "After several meetings we have finally agreed to recommend that the Putterham School House (so-called) have the back end carried back eight feet, and that the sides and roof be made to correspond with the others, and all new seats such as we have seen in Dorchester, Expense estimated by Mr. Elijah Stone, \$125.00."

It soon became apparent that the original lot purchased in 1777 was only twenty by thirty feet, allowing hardly a foot of extra space for enlargement. Consideration was then given to moving the building but this would have cost an added \$600. Two small pieces of land adjoining were fortunately available and were acquired from Joseph Curtis and Samuel Hills of Roxbury for \$5.00, after which the school was renovated on its original site. The cost as reported in 1840 was as follows: lumber \$76.07; nails etc. \$9.00; masonry \$11.26; painting \$38.33; labor \$112.24; with a grand total of \$238.72. Seven years later, in 1847, a few minor additions were made which gave the building the appearance which it still bears today. Mr. G.C. Colbarth offered to give a parcel of land beside the house in exchange for other property provided that the following improvements were completed by April 1848: a new door, window blinds, a woodshed with a door into the schoolroom, a new privy beside the shed, and a good fence.
-- Delivered at the opening of the restored Putterham School on November 1, 1970

President's Report

(continued from page 1)

June 4, B. June Hutchinson traced the rich history of landscape gardening in Brookline, while Elizabeth Mundell took us on a photographic tour of significant landscapes in present-day Brookline. Finally, on Sept. 24 Wayne Altree drew the connections between Brookline and New England's China trade of the 18th and 19th centuries. Our hosts were the good people of Hellenic College.

A final note: Four years ago, Jean Kramer was the featured speaker at my first meeting as president. Now, as Miriam Sargon prepares to take over, it turns out that she will begin, as I did, with a presentation by Jean Kramer. Jean and all of the other officers and trustees -- and especially Helen and Jim McIntosh -- deserve the thanks of every member for keeping the Historical Society a vital part of the fabric of our beloved town.

-- John VanScoyoc