

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
BROOKLINE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
FOR 1975-1978



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1975

OFFICERS

PRESIDENT

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VICE-PRESIDENT

MR. ELMER O. CAPPERS

TREASURER

MR. J. FREDERICK NELSON

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MR. RICHARD T. LEARY, MRS. JAMES MCINTOSH,
MISS MAUD OXENHAM, DR. IRVIN TAUBE,
MRS. DANIEL TYLER, JR., and the officers, ex-officio

ANNUAL MEETING – January 19, 1975

The seventy-fourth Annual Meeting of the Brookline Historical Society was held in Pierce Hall at 3:00 P.M., on Sunday, January 19, 1975. In spite of bad driving conditions about sixty members and guests were present.

President Francis Caswell presided. The reading of the minutes of the seventy-third Annual Meeting was waived. There was a brief report from the President on the year's activities, and reports of the Treasurer, the Committee on Rooms, the Chairman of the Membership Committee, and the Nominating Committee were also given.

Mr. Cappers introduced the speaker, Rev. Joseph A. Bassett, who presented a paper entitled, "Elhanan Winchester, Sweet Psalmist of the Muddy and Pee Dee Rivers."

Following adjournment of the meeting, tea was served by members of the Hospitality Committee.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ROOMS FOR THE YEAR 1974

Nineteen seventy-four has been a busy year for the Edward Devotion House. A total of 289 visitors came from fourteen nearby towns, and from the states of Virginia, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Vermont, and Maine.

Several interesting meetings were held in the house during the past year. These included the Paul Revere Chapter of the D.A.R., Brookline Historical Commission, visitors from the Arthur O'Shea apartments on their way to the Kennedy Birthplace, and the annual Patriots' Day Celebration.

There has been a gratifying increase in the Historical Society's educational work with young people. Groups that visited during the year included handicapped children from South Boston's "School Without Walls," a girl scout troop from Brighton, and numbers of children in classes from the Runkle, Lawrence, and Devotion Schools. Brookline teachers also used the house for a tea and heard David Massey speak on changes in Brookline during the last forty years.

Construction in process at the Edward Devotion School during much of the year has caused difficulties for the house and inconvenience for its occupants and visitors. Nor has this situation improved the structural condition. Window frames, side walls, gutters, downspouts, and exterior paint are only some of the elements that have for some time been badly in need of repair by the Town. Mr. and Mrs. McIntosh have generously contributed both time and effort in painting the kitchen and washing the walls of the old kitchen.

We have already entered upon the first year of the Bicentennial observance. This coming April 19th will be the two hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Concord and Lexington. Although the ride of William Dawes has long been celebrated in front of our headquarters, this year will mark an anniversary recognized throughout America. It is to be sincerely hoped, therefore, when great numbers of visitors come to this area during 1975 and 1976 that our Historical Society can be justly proud to exhibit the Edward Devotion House, old Brookline's most treasured historic monument.

Respectfully submitted,

MRS. BERTRAM K. LITTLE
Chairman, Committee on Rooms

ELHANAN WINCHESTER, SWEET PSALMIST OF THE MUDDY AND PEE DEE RIVERS

by JOSEPH A. BASSETT

In the course of preparing this presentation, I have been helped by the work of local historians as well as Elhanan Winchester's biographer. John Emory Hoar read an essay, "Elhanan Winchester, Preacher and Traveler," before the Society on November 27, 1901. It has been published in *Publications of the Brookline Historical Society*, No. 2. Elmer O. Cappers made it available to me, accompanied with many helpful comments. I have also turned to Mary Lee's *History of the Chestnut Hill Chapel*, 1961. Her descriptions of the neighborhood's geography as well as the maps included in her book have been a great help. In 1836 Edwin Martin Stone published a *Biography of Rev. Elhanan Winchester*. Mr. Stone admitted that "a few autographical errors escaped the author's observation." But he deemed it "unnecessary to particularize them, as they do not materially affect the sense."¹ Stone's work has to be taken with a grain of salt. It has the flavor of oral traditions about Winchester and therefore is delightful.

In order to appreciate Elhanan Winchester one has to know his neighborhood. He grew up on the corner of Hammond and Heath Streets. This part of town was on the border between Newton and Brookline. The people in this neighborhood were on the fringes of The First Church in Newton and the First Parish of Brookline. The house in which Elhanan was born was located on the northeast corner of Hammond and Heath Streets. Hoar refers to it as "The old Shaefe house."² But Harriet F. Woods states that the house was built by Elhanan's father, Deacon Winchester.³

Deacon Winchester was a farmer, shoemaker and Deacon of a New Light congregation. He made sure that the house he built was large enough to accommodate not only his family, which grew to 15 children, but New Lights' gatherings as well. Mary Lee reports that in 1928 when the old place was pulled down, an ancient pulpit was found in the cellar of the house — a reminder of what it had been in the days of the Deacon.

Who were Elhanan's neighbors? The New Lights were people converted by evangelical preachers like George Whitefield. Among the distinguishing characteristics of their piety was the enjoyment of revival songs, the gathering of autonomous congregations and the advocacy of an itinerant ministry.

New Light piety was neither appreciated nor supported by the authorities of the New England Standing Order. In this they were carrying on a tradition from the old country. In 1645 William Prynne published a pamphlet, the title of which indicates the attitude taken toward these people.

Fresh Discovery of Some Prodigious New
Wandering Blazing Stars and Firebrands Stiling
Themselves New Lights, Firing our Church and State
Into New Combustions.

In 1744-48 George Whitefield, a blazing star of the New Lights, was enjoying the ardor of his third tour in America. The worthies of Harvard College denounced him as "an enthusiast, a censorious uncharitable person, and a deluder of the people." President Holyoke told him in an open letter:

The furious zeal with which you hath so fired the passions of the people hath in many places burnt up the very vitals of religion; and a censoriousness, unpeaceable, uncharitable, disposition hath, in multitudes, usurped the place of godly jealousy.⁴

One of George Whitefield's New Light converts was Jonathan Hyde. In 1751 he was ordained a minister in his own dwelling; just down the street from the Winchester place. The same year that Hyde was ordained he was warned out of Brookline.

Who was this man? Jonathan Hyde had settled in Brookline twenty years before he was ordained. He had come from Canterbury, Connecticut, and thereby hangs a tale. Canterbury, Connecticut, is located in the eastern part of the state. In 1722 a road was opened between Canterbury, Connecticut, and Providence, Rhode Island. This meant that the people in Canterbury had contact with the Baptists and other radical spirits of Rhode Island. New England orthodoxy blossomed and flourished on the banks of the Connecticut River. But Canterbury was located due east of the Connecticut on the banks of the Quinebaug River. In that valley the seeds of the Radical Reformation bore fruit. C. C. Goen reports Canterbury was the first place where an entire church became "new lighted" and subsequently withdrew from association with Congregational Churches of the Standing Order.⁵ Whether or not Jonathan Hyde was in communication with the people of Canterbury during the years of their turmoil, 1744-46, I don't know. However, I think it is safe to say that Hyde's being ordained in his own dwelling, being called a New Light and being warned out of Brookline, indicate that he was igniting some of the combustions that put Canterbury in an uproar.

Judging from the pattern of ministerial associations in Massachusetts, it is clear that radical elements moved out of eastern Connecticut and Rhode Island and confronted the established Congregational order. When the Marlborough Association was formed in 1762, it was dominated by Harvard graduates. On the other hand, when the Menden Association was formed in 1751, it was dominated by Yale graduates. Between these two established spheres of influence there are signs of Quakers from Rhode Island and New Lights from Connecticut. These people worshipped and practiced their religion outside the Congregational order. Elhanan Winchester grew up among such religious rebels.

Elhanan was the eldest of the Deacon's children. He was an extraordinarily good reader. As a child he exhibited a remarkable memory. It is said he was given a Latin grammar and after one night's study was able to recite with a class which had been studying the text for weeks.⁶ In what sounds like a tall tale, Stone also says that Elhanan was able not only to recall the text and doctrine of a sermon but "the number of beams, posts, braces, rafters, and panes of glass in the meeting house as well."⁷ One wonders in what meeting house the incident took place. Be that as it may, apparently Elhanan had a photographic memory. In his adult years he could walk rapidly about a table upon which an open book was laid and read from its pages with ease.

In accounting for this power Mr. Winchester said he believed his organs of vision were differently constructed from those of other men; for when he cast his eye on a page, he seemed at once to comprehend the whole contents.⁸

In 1769 Young Elhanan at the age of 18 was converted. In other words, "he became savingly acquainted with Christ and made a public profession of religion."⁹ He united himself to Jonathan Hyde's New Light congregation. But young Winchester did not stay home for very long. Impelled by the presence of his siblings and his conversion, Elhanan took to the road as an itinerant preacher. Interestingly enough, he went down to Canterbury, Connecticut, where he became a Baptist in 1771. From there he went to Rehoboth where as a pastor he instituted closed communion. This caused a split in the Rehoboth congregation which prompted Elhanan to visit New Hampshire, Vermont and Grafton, Massachusetts. This route indicates that he was travelling among settlements where there were people of a radical reformation piety. Elhanan returned to Rehoboth where a council was called to mediate the split between himself and his congregation. While the council held that he had "left an error to embrace the truth,"¹⁰ the people of Rehoboth refused to embrace him. It is said that he subsequently returned to Grafton to preach. We know that in Grafton a minister, Solomon Prentice, had been dismissed in 1747 as a New Light and supporter of George Whitefield. So Winchester may have been preaching to the remnant of the congregation that had supported Prentice.¹¹

In the year 1773 we know Winchester published a broadside. A copy of the text that was plastered on the wall of Faneuil Hall is in the collection of the Boston Public Library. It is entitled "The Execution Hymn," complete with a sketch of the gallows, surrounding spectators and condemned man. The hymn is described as follows:

Composed on Levi Ames, who is to be executed for Burglary, this Day the 21st of October, 1773, which was sung to him and a considerable Audience, assembled at the Prison, on Tuesday Evening, the 19th of October, and at the Desire of the Prisoner, will be sung at the Place of Execution, this Day. To which is annexed, The

Christian Exercises and Dying Sililoquy, or the Comfortable Hope and Wonderful Conversion of Levi Ames, which has been read to him and approv'd of, since he received sentence of Death. Now published at his Desire, with a View of giving Satisfaction to his numerous Christian Friends, who have kindly visited him under his Confinement, to whom he returns his unfeigned THANKS, hoping that GOD will shew Mercy to their Souls, equal to their Care and Pains taken with him. By Elhanan Winchester of Rehoboth, Author of the Execution Hymn.

In that hymn Winchester interposed the story of the repentent thief crucified with Christ with Ames' situation. The last stanza goes:

Now he (the Biblical thief) adores the Sav'or's name,
And sings his everlasting praise.
Oh may this man (Ames) enjoy the same;
Amen, Amen, each Christian says.

This hymn is a good example of New Light Hymnody. These hymns were occasionally printed texts. The words would be sung to familiar tunes. You just imagine Elhanan belting out these verses to the condemned man and a considerable audience, they having bought the broadsides to have the words in their hands.

In 1774 Elhanan headed for another corner of The Vineyard. He went south, settling in South Carolina. There he had a number of adventures. He was called to be the Pastor of a Baptist congregation at Welch Neck on the Pee Dee River. In the five years that he dwelt there Winchester had an arrangement that enabled him to annually travel to New England. The pattern appears to be that he was in New England during the summer months; he would return to Welch Neck during the winter months. During his ministry in South Carolina, Winchester became acquainted with the doctrines of universal restoration. But he recalled, "I had not the least thought that ever I should embrace its sentiments."¹²

In 1776 on his way north, where he preached in the First Baptist Church of Boston, Winchester published a second edition of a patriotic hymnal entitled,

Thirteen Hymns, Suited to the Present Times:

containing:

The past, present and future States of America,
With advice to Soldiers and Christians.

One of these hymns, "Advice to American Soldiers," contains the verse,

American bands,
Come fight for your lives,
Your houses and lands,
Your rights, and your freedom,
And friends are at stake.
And us you will need them,
And fight for their sake.¹³

Again we have the pattern of a revival songster. The words are published and people sang them to familiar tunes.

While he was in South Carolina, the pattern of Elhanan's married life became painfully apparent. In the words of Mr. Stone, "a remarkable Providence followed Mr. Winchester's matrimonial alliances . . . at the age of 32 (he) was four times a widower." His first wife was from Rowley, Massachusetts. She died in Fairfax County, Virginia, in 1776. His second wife was from Rehoboth. She died in Welch Neck in 1777. His third wife was a native of South Carolina. She died in 1779. His fourth wife was a Philadelphia widow. She died in 1783. At that point his friends advised him to "refrain from farther matrimonial connexion; but he thought it important that a clergyman should be married, that he might avoid reproach." So he married a fifth time. This wife remained with him until his death. But it was said to be an "unhappy connexion."¹⁴

During his South Carolina ministry, Winchester preached to and baptized a number of black slaves. This had not been done before, partly because of the slaves' antipathy to the religion of their masters and partly because no one had made any effort in that direction. Winchester was known to be opposed to slavery. This commended him to the black folk. One evening during a meeting Elhanan felt a compulsion to go and address the slaves standing at the door of the house where he was preaching. He told them "that Jesus Christ loved them, and died for them, as well as for us white people, and that they might come and believe in him and welcome."¹⁵ Winchester ended up baptizing about a hundred slaves, 63 men and 37 women all of whom either had been born in Africa or who were first generation Afro-Americans. Winchester was not hindered in his preaching by the slave owners because in the days before the cotton gin they were not as dependent upon slavery as they later were when cotton became king.

In the fall of 1779 Elhanan was back in New England. This time he stayed for nine months. He was active in his old neighborhood. In the spring of 1780,

He visited Newton and preached with much effect, during a revival, which had commenced. He was the means of increasing the excitement, and many were brought to entertain a hope and were baptized by him.¹⁶

So many were converted by his preaching that other ministers who had heard of the excitement came to aid in the harvest. This host of converts were advised to form a congregation. Thus The First Baptist Church of Newton was founded.

In the fall of 1780 Winchester headed back to Welch Neck. On the way he visited Philadelphia. He was persuaded to take charge of a Baptist church there. He attracted such crowds that the Baptists obtained the use of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, the largest edifice in town. This they filled. He was persuaded to settle there.

This is an appropriate point to stop my narrative. It is at this point that Elhanan became involved with the Universalists. He became friends with Benjamin Rush. He travelled to England. But that part of his ministry will have to wait for another time.

Let me close by telling the story of his death. His father, the Deacon, died in 1810. The old boy had joined the Shakers in Harvard by that time. He had first been a Congregationalist, then a Baptist, then a Universalist, and at last a Shaker. Quoth the Deacon, "In every other denomination, I have had my doubts; but now I am sure, that I am right."¹⁷ I guess you could say the Deacon had come round right.

His son Elhanan died before him in Hartford, Connecticut, on the 18th of April in 1797. Elhanan arrived in Hartford on the 11th of October visibly suffering from a terminal illness. After dining at the residence of his host, Winchester went out to see the town. Observing a funeral procession, he fell in at the rear and followed the mourners to the graveyard. Just as the coffin was being lowered into the ground, Elhanan proclaimed the words of Jesus to the sisters of Lazarus, "I am the resurrection and the life." Stone assures us that the effect was electric.¹⁸

Six months later Winchester himself lay on his death bed. There, instead of preaching a sermon, he requested a hymn. He himself tried to join in but his voice sank in exhaustion. His friends paused in their singing. Winchester roused himself to say, "sing on – be not afraid – sing on to the end." That they did in the tradition of the people in the Ozarks today who still sing "O Come Angel Band" at the bedside of a dying loved one. Here are three of the verses Elhanan Winchester's friends sang as he lay dying.

1. Farewell, dear friends, in Christ below,
I bid you all a short adieu;
My time is come, I long to go
To heaven my Saviour's face to view.

3. Farewell, dear neighbors, brethren, friends,
I hope we soon shall meet with joy;
My heavenly Father for me sends,
I go where nothing can annoy.

10. Eternity! Transporting sound!
While God exists my heaven remains,
Fulness of joy, that knows no bounds,
Shall make my soul forget her pains.

“When the hymn was completed, he ceased to breathe.”¹⁹

NOTES

1. Edwin Martin Stone, *Biography of Rev. Elhanan Winchester* (Boston: Brewster, 1836), xi.
2. John Emory Hoar, “Elhanan Winchester, Preacher and Traveler” in *Publications of the Brookline Historical Society* (No. 2; 1903), 7.
3. Harriet F. Woods, *Historical Sketches of Brookline* (Boston: Davis, 1874), 335.
4. C. C. Goen, *Revivalism and Separatism in New England, 1740-1800* (Hamden: Archon, 1969), 56-57.
5. *Ibid.*, 70.
6. Stone, 14.
7. *Ibid.*, 16.
8. *Ibid.*, 96.
9. *Ibid.*, 19.
10. Hoar, 9.
11. Joseph Allen, *The Worcester Association and Its Antecedents* (Boston: Nichols and Noyes, 1868), 58.
12. Stone, 34.
13. Boston Public Library, Evans Card Number 15223.
14. Stone, 26.
15. *Ibid.*, 35.
16. *Ibid.*, 28.
17. Woods, 147.
18. Stone, 228.
19. *Ibid.*, 231.

Joseph A. Bassett, Minister at the First Church in Chestnut Hill, is a long-time student of New England church history. He is particularly interested in Elhanan Winchester because “he was a neighbor.”

SPRING MEETING – May 18, 1975

The Spring Meeting of the Brookline Historical Society was held at 3 o'clock on the afternoon of May 18, 1975, at the Devotion House. Weather permitted and the meeting took place on the lawn beside the house.

President Caswell introduced Miss Elsie P. Briggs who read a paper on "Scenes of My Childhood." Knowing that the title of the paper came from "The Old Oaken Bucket," Mr. Caswell introduced it by recalling his early term as a choirboy in Salem, and thereupon sang with perfect pitch Samuel Woodworth's song, which begins:

"How dear to this heart are the scenes of my childhood
When fond recollection presents them to view."

A second paper entitled "Origins of Our Country of Norfolk" was read by Mr. Elmer O. Cappers. Following the meeting, refreshments were served in the Devotion House.

"SCENES OF MY CHILDHOOD"

by ELSIE PRENTISS BRIGGS

Walnut Place in Brookline, Massachusetts, has been a part of my life since I was three years old, because the Briggses lived there summer and winter. Unlike the six other Walnut Place families, we did not have a place to go in the summer and I'm afraid the children in the Briggs family were guilty of breaking a commandment. We coveted the summers our playmates had. Sometimes we visited them. I remember a great disappointment when my mother and I were invited to Cohasset. We couldn't go because I was ill from smoking sweet fern while perched on a fence with other children behind the Warrens' barn. As we grew older there were frequent visits to the Cape or the White Mountains.

While we were small we had, thanks to my wonderful mother, many excursions from Walnut Place. She would pack a picnic basket and off we would go on an open trolley car to the least frequented places such as Castle Island, or Norumbega Park. Those open trolleys – with surplus passengers hanging on to running boards – how cool and breezy they were!

Then as we continued to grumble about not going away in the summer, my father did a very wise thing. He took us on a very hot day to see the North End of Boston. Carts were rumbling on cobble stones; there were smells, dirty streets, people leaning out of tenement windows, children swarming everywhere.

"Now," said my father, "I don't want to hear another word about spending the summer on Walnut Place."

As I look back on it, how blind we had been. There was peace and quiet on Walnut Place because it was a dead-end private way. Narrow and winding, it was called "snake alley" by a blind piano tuner who tapped his way upon it. As you reached the top of a high hill invariably a breeze greeted you, along with an impression of the country, because our neighbors had a great deal of land and many trees. Around the clapboard old farmhouse-type house we rented from my father's friend, Mr. Ed Warren (and were later to buy) was a third of an acre. Plenty of room to play, but all Walnut Place children roamed on everybody's premises. No smells on Walnut Place except for the weekly arrival of the town garbage cart, driven by a man we dubbed "Prince Charming." What was collected in those days I'm afraid we called "swill," but years later, when I had a car behind our lattice-doored shed, my father said, "It isn't everybody who can have the garbage in the garage." No noise on Walnut Place but the welcome visits of an organ grinder with a monkey, or of the "bumping," the name we gave a horse-drawn mechanical music wagon equipped with drums and cymbals.

I remember at the age of three "moving" from Waverly Street, Brookline, to Walnut Place. I walked with my father. This was such an important event that I remember it clearly. All I recall of life on Waverly Street was my older brother's throwing my doll's carriage down an open bulkhead.

I must have been five when the beauty of the starry skies first burst upon me. I had never been out at night before, but there I was in my tall father's arms, clad in my nightie and wrapped in a fringed camel's hair shawl. He had picked me out of bed and walked up the road to show me the outdoor wedding reception of Christine Lincoln and Bill Reid, the famous Harvard football coach. An orchestra was playing and tents and Japanese lanterns were everywhere. Bill Reid is still alive at 97. I remember his wit one afternoon when we were all playing tag football in the "field" which was part of the Lincolns' four acres.

"Hi, Briggsie, throw me that ball," Bill yelled at me. A much too dignified young person answered him, "Don't call me that," to which he replied, "What Elsie shall I call you?"

Across the road from the Lincolns' premises was the Warrens' gray Victorian mansard-roofed house with a very large piece of lawn in front flanked by what was called "the Studio," really a chemistry laboratory. There was a stable way below the house, its second story over the carriage house an apartment for the gardener, Peter McCarthy, and his large family. Near the barn were hotbeds and a greenhouse, and at some distance a latticed Victorian gazebo surrounded by a large garden. This was intersected by black-topped walks.

The Warrens' garden ran down in back of our house. Looking out the windows we could revel at the sight of apple trees in bloom and cherry

and pear trees. I was too fond of cherries and a superstition existed at that time that milk and cherries together were very bad if not poisonous for small stomachs. I was the sort of child who was reasoned with rather than spanked. Once again I had eaten cherries. "Elsie, can't I trust you?" said my sweet parent. My reply, which has been handed down, was, "No, Mother, not in the matter of cherries."

The plants on the other side of the wooden fence which separated the two gardens would obligingly manage to crawl or travel under the partition, and we would have jack-in-the-pulpits, lady's slippers, yellow violets, primroses and countless lilies of the valley on our side also. The Warrens and later the next owners of the house would often invite us to pick gooseberries, currants and many kinds of grapes.

The hotbeds had beautiful French violets and I loved to watch Mr. Warren pick his daily boutonniere. How I admired the crease in his trousers and the brilliant polish on his shoes. He liked children and my sister Ruth and I were often invited to breakfast to feast on spicy ducks' eggs or to dinner when all I can remember is the pink candle shades with bead fringe. When young Warren relatives were there for birthday parties we learned to chant, "I scream; you scream; we all scream for ice cream."

Mr. Warren was a bachelor who lived with his mother, Mrs. Cyrus M. Warren, widow of a chemistry professor. She had the softest cheeks I ever kissed and I was overjoyed to discover a few years ago a framed picture of her when I had sold our house on Walnut Place and was packing to leave. Mrs. Warren used to invite Ruth and me to go driving in her victoria. We sat on a small seat, our backs to the coachman high above us, but facing Mrs. Warren on the plum-colored upholstery. We'd watch her tilt her small black parasol to keep the sun out of her eyes. James, the coachman, in plum-colored livery, skillfully managed the spanking pair of bob-tailed horses.

We had two other elderly friends, the Stevenson Sisters, so called, whose house on Upland Road backed on Walnut Place. They invited Ruth and me to hear their "talking machine." It had a cylindrical record; not a disc, and we heard the "Battle of Manilla" with strident martial music, trumpets and guns. When Ruth, who was 19 months younger than I, got home she told our mother, "We heard the Bottle of Vanilla."

Looking back, I realize we were privileged to share in gracious Edwardian living. There were seven Briggs children, four boys and three girls. (My father used to say that he and Jefferson Coolidge had the largest Yankee families in Brookline.) My father often introduced Edward, our youngest, as Edward the Seventh, so we were not too surprised after my brother Alden bruited through the house the morning paper's headlines one day in 1910, "Edward the Seventh is Dead," that our handsome three-year-old stamped his feet and shook the side of his crib as he stood in his Dr. Denton's and announced, "I are not dead."

Walnut Place was beautiful in the summer. Sometimes after a heavy snowstorm it was spectacular in the winter. We coasted, tobogganed, and, very unscientifically, we skied.

My mother's cousin, Mrs. Henry Ware, sometimes would invite for a sleigh ride as many of the neighborhood children as a huge open sleigh or pung would hold. (This custom was a throwback to her young days rather than a prevalent one in ours.) Sitting on straw and warmed with blankets and hot bricks, we'd set off, sleigh bells ringing as we exulted in the frosty air. Then we'd sing old familiar songs to our heart's content. "My Bonnie Lies over the Ocean," "There is a Tavern in the Town" and, of course, "Jingle Bells" were some of our favorites. It was fun dashing through the snow, laughing all the way in our two horse open sleigh. As we turned into the Wares' driveway at 81 High Street, our "Good Night Ladies" merely presaged warming up by open fires, and having hot cider and cookies.

Punging is extinct now but was an exciting sport in my childhood. You'd try to steal a ride on the runners of delivery pungs. Sometimes you knew the driver and he was kind. Sometimes the drivers of big delivery pungs from in town would practically whip you off. And of course punging was discouraged by our parents.

I'm eager to write about the schools we attended. My sister Ruth and I began school in the kindergarten located in the Brookline High School. I understand there is still a kindergarten there. We loved our teachers — Miss Winchester and her young assistant, Miss Phinney. Two happenings there stand out in my mind. We sat in a circle and took turns giving a mason jar of cream "a shake, shake, shake" until, incredible dictu, we had butter which we then ate on crackers. Then there was Ruth's birthday party. Discussing it with me recently and saying she wouldn't mind if I wrote about it, she said, "But where were you? You never would have let me get away with it." Perhaps I had "graduated" but had walked to the kindergarten to call for Ruth with our nurse, Lily Magee. Anyway, I was in on the denouement.

"What a nice birthday girl Ruth has been," said Miss Winchester to Lily.

"But this is not Ruth's birthday," Lily replied. The murder was out, so to speak. Ruth's birthday was June 29, too late for the school year, so she had decided to have a kindergarten birthday celebration anyway. There followed three primary grades at the dame school admirably conducted by my aunt, Miss Katharine Briggs, in her house at 10 Allerton Street, Peggy, Claudia, Laura, and Jack Lincoln, Katharine and Robert Knowles, and Louise and Henry, or 'Bub,' White were some of our fellow pupils.

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Next, for most of us, came the Lawrence Grammar School on Francis Street in Longwood, I suppose because the children there came from families more like our own. (The time was to come when the Brookline School Department put a stop to this disregarding of school districts, and finally I remember the four youngest Briggses went to the Pierce School. It it were today they would have gone to the Lincoln.) To the Lawrence we walked. We went by shank's mare all of the way, one and three-tenths miles there and one and three-tenths miles home. (I'm sure because I have just tested it with my car's speedometer.) We walked except when it stormed. Then, feeling very grand, we rode in a Good-speed's Livery Stable carriage, which smelled to heaven of horses. In the winter on the way to school we had regular stopping places to get warm. I used to pull a toboggan cap over my face (this was long before ski helmets of course). The first piping hot place was Julia Hayes Bake Shop just beyond McMahan's grocery store which stood where the Brookling Savings Bank now stands. Then over the railroad bridge, and if it was icy cold, a quick visit to the pot-bellied stove in the railroad station.

Space and time do not permit my describing the education we got at the Lawrence except to say that I'm sure that teaching was outstandingly done in every grade, with an especially good grounding in English grammar. To be sure, in that era there seemed to be no eminent poets but the American lesser poets. We memorized Longfellow's "Wreck of the Hesperus," knew Whittier's "Snowbound" and at graduation sang "The Lost Chord." In the ninth grade Miss Rose Bliss, who later taught at the High School, did an outstanding job teaching English history. I remember while we studied the period of Henry the Eighth she asked me, to emphasize a point on succession, "Why are you an Episcopalian?" I thought and thought. What was the answer to such a tremendous question? But Billy Allen (later to own the successful Buick company on Harvard Street) waved his hand frantically and said, "She's an Episcopalian because her father and mother are."

Walking home from Lawrence was apt to be leisurely. If I could dig up five or six cents sometimes I'd buy from the Fogg sisters at the Woman's Exchange my favorite Lady Baltimore cup cake. Often we stopped to watch the blacksmith near the corner of High and Walnut Streets. There was a peculiar acrid odor there; I suppose from the hot nails going into the horses' hooves.

I played a game walking home from school. I'd see how many ants I could avoid walking on. Or after I got to the safety of a Walnut Street sidewalk, if I had been to the Library, I'd read while I walked. I was quite a bookworm. Sometimes I'd read in the bathtub with siblings hammering at the bathroom door for me to come out!

The Union Building at the corner of High and Walnut Streets (now no more) had for me fond memories. It was there we took part in the annual Maypole dance at an event to benefit the Woman's Exchange of which my grandmother was president. It was one of the highlights of my existence, so you can imagine my disappointment when one year I came down with the mumps and couldn't take part.

It was not called Pill Hill until later, but the scenes of my childhood as I often return to them, seem now to me dearer than ever.

Elsie Prentiss Briggs, as her paper indicates, was born and brought up in Brookline. A 1918 graduate of Smith College, her career has been in communications and public relations and she has served the Brookline Historical Society as Trustee and Chairman of Membership.

ORIGINS OF OUR COUNTY OF NORFOLK

by ELMER OSGOOD CAPPERS

The following is a brief excerpt from a paper delivered to the Brookline Historical Society at a meeting May 18 at Devotion House by Elmer Osgood Cappers, vice-president of the Society. Mr. Cappers describes how "Norfolk County" was first defined by the Massachusetts General Court in 1643 as the northernmost area of the Bay Colony, with "Salsberry" at its head. The county was dissolved in 1680 when the royal colony of New Hampshire was established with many Norfolk County towns within its boundary. There followed a dozen petitions beginning in 1726 to re-establish Norfolk County, to which Mr. Cappers describes the successful conclusion:

Eventual success in the petitions for formation of a new Norfolk County, after more than 65 years of effort, came on June 20, 1793, when there went into effect the bill of the legislature which provided that "all the territory of the County of Suffolk, not comprehended within the towns of Boston and Chelsea — be and is hereby erected into a distinct county, by the name of Norfolk, and Dedham shall be the shire town til otherwise ordered by the General Court."

However, a move arose almost at once on the part of some of the towns to get back into Suffolk County. Brookline probably spearheaded that move. In the months just preceding the establishment of the new county, the Brookline town meeting appointed a committee to forestall the separative action claiming it was "impolitic and attended with disadvantages." Even after Norfolk County was duly constituted, Brookline petitioned to be restored to Suffolk County, claiming that the Town was always opposed to a division. This reveals a weak memory. Someone failed to check the town-meeting records, which as early as 1726, and as recently as 1788, had enthusiastically urged the formation of the new county.

Weymouth too endeavored to get back into Suffolk claiming it was more difficult to travel to Dedham than it had been to travel to Boston. Hingham and Hull also asked to be excluded from the new set-up. These moves so alarmed the other county towns that they held a meeting in Gay's Tavern in Dedham on December 9, 1793, to prevent the dismemberment of Norfolk County.

One does not have to be a keen student of municipal affairs to offer the opinion that the recalcitrant towns are today quite happy that their efforts of 1793 to be reunited with Boston ended in failure. Hingham and Hull apparently had a more powerful plea; at least a more successful one, since shortly after the new county set up shop they obtained passage of legislation excepting them from its effect. However, very soon afterward these two towns got themselves joined with Plymouth County and there they remain today, leaving Cohasset as a satellite town to the eastward.

To complete the record of subsequent municipal wanderings, it should be stated that when Dorchester, Roxbury and Hyde Park voted many years later to become part of the City of Boston they thereby automatically left Norfolk County for Suffolk, leaving Brookline as a satellite town to the westward.

In conclusion, some comment should be made about the name "Norfolk" which, as the Rev. Mr. Huntoon wrote in his "History of Canton," puts the North-folk south of the South-folk. Canton had suggested that the new county be called "Union County" but nobody listened. In the original bill to establish the county a blank space had been left for its name and someone — no one knows who — inserted the name "Norfolk."

In Cook's "History of Norfolk County" is this paragraph:

"It is related that not long after Norfolk County was formed, John Randolph of Virginia walked up to John Quincy Adams in the House of Representatives, of which they both were members, and said, 'Look here, Quincy, how is it? You live in Norfolk County. Now what the devil do you people in Massachusetts mean by setting off Norfolk County and putting it south of Suffolk?'"

The anecdote may be apocryphal. It is inaccurate since the vinegary John Randolph was no longer in the House when John Quincy Adams got there in 1831. However, the story highlights the odd selection of the County's name. Perhaps it would be best to leave the subject with the comment that whoever chose the name "Norfolk" was not interested in history, geography, or etymology.

It is hoped that some day a history of Norfolk County will be written to show the amazing changes which have taken place since 1793. It will have to deal with the change from a group of country towns to a group of wealthy suburbs, from a population of farmers to a population of cosmopolitan citizens, from church-dominated town governments to a completely lay administration of affairs.

It will have to tell of the increased importance of the law courts, notwithstanding earlier reservations and attacks. Its very important course of growth, namely the introduction of new, faster, more flexible forms of transportation, will have to be given prominent place in such a history.

Reported in the *Brookline Chronicle-Citizen*,
May 22, 1975.

FALL MEETING – November 9, 1975

The Fall Meeting of the Brookline Historical Society was held at the Coolidge Corner Branch Library at 3 o'clock on Sunday afternoon, November 9, 1975.

President Caswell welcomed new members, and old, and reported that the Trustees of the Society had voted at their last meeting "in honor of the two-hundredth birthday of our country, to go on record as being in favor of making an expenditure of an amount not to exceed one thousand dollars, to be used for the restoration of the rooms open to the public of the Edward Devotion House and the Putterham School." The meeting voted to approve this expenditure.

Because of the delayed arrival of the principal speaker, Rev. Caswell asked Mr. Elmer Cappers to read a paper which he had recently prepared entitled "There was a Tavern in the Town."

The principal speaker for the afternoon was Margaret Henderson Floyd, who spoke on "Brookline, Massachusetts: Boston's Latest Candidate for Creative Historic Preservation." There were many questions following the lecture and slides.

Refreshments were served following the meeting.

THERE WAS A TAVERN IN THE TOWN

by ELMER OSGOOD CAPPERS

There was a tavern in the town. The tavern was Richards Tavern and the town was Brookline. With all the bicentennial talk in the air, I haven't heard that anyone has sufficiently descended the social ladder to discuss a lowly tavern, but it really should be done since taverns were an important part of life two hundred years ago whether you were a neighbor dropping in to meet taproom cronies, a post-rider to dust off your clothes, or a stage-coach passenger glad of a chance to get away for a bit from the everlasting bouncing of a springless vehicle.

The Richards Tavern was located at the northeast corner of Heath and Hammond Streets in the Chestnut Hill section of Brookline. In this year, 1975, if you were to stand on the southerly side of Heath Street near the corner and look across the road in the direction of the Worcester Turnpike, you would see a drugstore on the corner, and to the right of it would be two two-family brown houses, number 517 and number 521 Heath Street. Those two houses occupy most of the site of the old Richards Tavern. The drugstore occupies some of the tavern yard where the stagecoaches drove in to change horses.

It is fairly natural to ask why in the world a large tavern should have existed on Heath Street, a good enough street today with many fine dwellings and estates, but hardly one which would impress Mr. Statler

or Mr. Hilton as a location for a successful hostelry. The fact is, of course, that two hundred years ago, and for a hundred years prior to that, long before there was a Worcester Turnpike, Heath Street was one of the most important roadways of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, although it wasn't so named until 1841. In those days it was the Sherborne Road.

It had once been, like many of the first roads of the Colony, an Indian trail. The settlers found that the Indians through the centuries had discovered the best pathways over which they could travel with the least physical strain; and lacking steam, electric, or gasoline power the most sensible thing to do was to adopt the results of the native accumulated wisdom.

So what is now Heath Street was once an Indian trail, and then, almost by inheritance, it later became a postroad to Hartford and to the Connecticut River. The roadway was laid out in 1658. It started in Boston and came out over the neck to Roxbury and by the Punch Bowl Tavern in Brookline Village. Next it went up over present-day Walnut Street to where the church and the school of the Muddy River settlement stood, near today's First Unitarian Church. Then it took a sharp right turn followed by a sharp left along the marsh which is now the "Old Reservoir." At the Junction with what we call Chestnut Hill Avenue but which was then Ackers Corner, the road to Little Cambridge took off to the right; but the postroad veered left and carried on westward. This stretch shows on our present maps as Heath Street until it crosses the Newton line where it becomes Florence Street and, on the other side of the Turnpike, Jackson Street. The old road and the trail before it went on to a fording place over the Charles River at the lower falls and thence wound to and fro the many miles to the Connecticut River where the Indians had found good fishing and a place to launch their canoes to take them to the warmer waters of Long Island Sound.

At the point where our tavern stood, coming in from the north to meet the Sherborne Road at right angles, was still another roadway which had once been an Indian trail. For a time it had been used by the Rev. John Eliot as he moved between Indian settlements in his search for converts. It, too, was laid out in 1658 and came to be known as Cross Street; but still later it was given the name of Hammond Street from the good man who owned the nearby pond and its adjoining acres. So here was a busy, much traveled junction, ideal for the establishment of an inn two hundred years ago.

Richards Tavern was a sizable structure, one with many fireplaces as the four chimneys indicated. Although it was particularly suited for use as a tavern, it was not originally built for that purpose. It was constructed as his home by Elhanan Winchester with considerable assistance from his fellow parishoners of the New Lights, as the followers of the eighteenth-century religious leader, George Whitefield, were known. The name Elhanan came from the Old Testament. In the Book of Chroni-

cles it is written that Elhanan "slew the brother of Goliath" and the shaft of his spear was "like a weaver's beam." Elhanan does not seem to have achieved as much fame as David did for killing the other member of the family.

Elhanan Winchester had been made a deacon of the New Lights who held their meetings roundabout in the homes of members of the sect. As he was doing much of the preaching he was persuaded by the brethren to build a house which would contain a large hall where they might conduct religious services, and they agreed to assist in the construction. We know from several sources that the house was built before 1751 since his son, Elhanan, Jr., was born there in that year. It was well that he built such a large house since he was to have fifteen children by his three wives, and the children all survived, not too common a happening in that time. His preaching brought him no income, so he supported the large family by his labors as a shoemaker and farmer.

Elhanan, Jr., was an extraordinarily precocious child. As a young man, he became deeply involved in religious matters and finally left the New Lights to become an ardent Baptist preacher, drawing even his father away from the New Lights.

With the New Lights broken up and the children leaving home, Deacon Winchester sold his large house to the White family and they, in turn, sold it and a large farm across the Sherborne Road to Ebenezer Richards. It was he who changed the great building to a tavern. Both as to structure and location, it was ideally suited for the purpose.

Its door faced the Sherborne Road, of course, and we can easily imagine the stagecoaches rolling into the tavern yard which pictures show was enclosed by a wall of huge stones. The stagecoaches were on their way to New York, a four-day journey. But the tavern was more than just a coach stop. It was also a local institution, just about the only one where parties or large social gatherings could be held. Like most of the taverns of its time, it was no doubt a hotbed of political discussion.

Some of the old laws dealing with taverns had been quite strict. Tavern keepers could obtain a license only if they were on a highway; no secluded opportunity for "high jinks" would be permitted. The keepers of a public house were ordered to furnish provisions and refreshments for the entertainment of travelers and they had to supply pasturing and stable room for the travelers' horses. One statute said that nobody could be charged more than one penny for a quart of oats. We are wrong if we think price controls are a modern device. Gaming was not to be allowed, and liquor was not to be served to apprentices and servants without their masters' consent. It was forbidden to entertain "peddlars."

Most of these restrictions had probably gone by the board at the time when Ebenezer Richards opened his tavern. The town records of Brookline indicate that he must have been a well-respected citizen as he was appointed to a number of offices.

Until 1810, the horse and foot traffic passed by the tavern's front door, but in that year a great change came about. The Worcester Turnpike was constructed, a two-lane road that ran from Boston to Worcester. It disregarded the meanderings of the old Sherborne Road and went straight as a string up hill and down dale from one town to the other. The straightening process took the turnpike right back of the tavern so that the westward trunk traffic no longer passed the front door. A tollbooth and gate were constructed just behind the house and there the collector gathered in a fee of twenty-five cents for each vehicle if it were drawn by two horses, but only ten cents if it were drawn by two oxen. A man and horse could pass for four cents, but a dozen swine or sheep could go by for three cents.

The turnpike increased traffic and the tavern was in its heyday. But it was not for long. The turnpike was never a financial success. Its entrepreneurs lost their whole original investment of \$150,000, and that was real money then. Tolls did not warrant proper upkeep, and before long Brookline and other towns en route were issuing formal complaints and demands to the Turnpike Company, which accomplished nothing as the Company was without funds.

Then came the railroads and the turnpike received the coup de grace. One writer says that "the first locomotive ever set in motion in Massachusetts" was on the Boston to Newton line. It was on April 16, 1834. In 1841 the proprietors of the pike tendered to the legislature a resignation of their charter and it was accepted. Eventually the ownership of the roadway was taken over by local or county governments and it fell into relative decline. Nearly one hundred years later it became the base for the automobile highway now known as Route Nine.

The Richards Tavern could not survive the loss of traffic, and in the 1830s it went out of business. Several owners subsequent to the Richards family lived in it as a dwelling. In 1880, after William Fegan had bought it, with considerable pride he built once again a bowling green by the front door where in years gone by there had been many a game of bowls. One writer tells us that still later the house was sectioned off and was occupied by the families of immigrants from "the auld sod."

Snapshots of the 1920s show that the ancient house had fallen into deplorable disrepair. The neighborhood was probably quite pleased when in 1928 it was at last torn down.

How often it happens that in later days there arises some unexpected occurrence which acts as a link with the distant past. In the process of demolition an ancient relic was discovered in the cellar: it was the pulpit of the New Lights deacon, Elhanan Winchester.

Reprinted in the *Brookline Chronicle-Citizen*
November 13, 1975

Elmer Osgood Cappers, an indefatigable chronicler of Brookline history, lived in Brookline for many years when he was affiliated with the Norfolk County Trust Company. In addition to preparing papers for the Brookline Historical Society, Mr. Cappers has been a Trustee and Vice-President of the Society.

Dr. Margaret Henderson Floyd, an architectural historian and consultant, spoke about historic preservation as it is being perceived and acted upon by a growing number of Massachusetts communities. Preservation in this sense is no longer imagined as the rescue of a few of the grandest or most historic buildings for use as museums, but rather as the maintenance of whole neighborhoods or groupings of structures which may serve contemporary needs while they remind us of our heritage.

Both the state and Federal governments are coming to endorse this concept of preservation. In 1963 Massachusetts recognized the importance of recording the historic resources of the Commonwealth through enactment of legislation which created the Massachusetts Historical Commission. In 1966 the Federal government broadened its span of concern with man-made environment by passage of the National Historic Preservation Act. This act established the National Register of Historic Places, provided a program of matching grants-in-aid to the states for historical surveys and planning and for preservation projects, and established the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. In 1971 the Massachusetts legislature amended the powers of the Massachusetts Historical Commission to allow the development and plans in accordance with the requirements of the Federal historic preservation act.

Enabling legislation passed by the Massachusetts General Court in 1963 also provided for the establishment of local historical commissions in cities and towns, to share with the Massachusetts Historical Commission the task of identifying and recording historic resources. A local commission is established by its community to make an inventory of older structures and areas from which to determine their historical or architectural significance. Local properties which have been documented on this inventory are recorded in the state inventory by the Massachusetts Historical Commission and must then be considered in any state or Federal project planning. Those communities which have developed inventories have been able to participate in the National Register program which not only affords protection but also allows owners of National Register properties to apply for National Park Service matching grants in aid. Completed inventories may be used by local communities in preservation planning and education.

The Brookline Historical Commission was established by the Annual Town Meeting in 1974, and at the time of Dr. Floyd's address was beginning to organize the enormous effort, not yet completed by 1979, of recording every building in Brookline erected before 1907 and in some areas before 1927 for its inventory. There are seven Commission members appointed by the Board of Selectmen; each serves a three-year term. The first Brookline Historical Commission appointed in 1974 and chaired by Representative James Segel included six members of the Brookline Historical Society: Mrs. Jason Aisner, Mrs. Yves Buhler, Mr. James McIntosh, Mrs. Christopher Smith, Dr. Irvin Taube and Mrs. Winthrop Wetherbee.

Dr. Floyd, in citing Brookline as "Boston's latest candidate for creative historic preservation," mentioned areas of Brookline, such as Pill Hill (or High Street Hill) and the Longwood and Cottage Farm districts, which are well worth protecting and preserving, and pointed out a number of individual buildings such as the Edward Devotion House or Pierce Hall, Brookline's first Town Hall, which it would seem unthinkable to lose,

as well as some other less known but handsome and significant structures. She also showed examples of buildings and neighborhoods in other Massachusetts communities which are being maintained and protected.

By January of 1979, the Brookline Historical Commission, using its completed inventory sections, had recommended five Brookline areas to the National Register of Historic Places. Three of these, the Pill Hill, Longwood, and Cottage Farm neighborhoods, have been placed on the Register as National Register Historic Districts, and two more, the Brookline Village commercial area and the Town Green area at Walnut and Warren Streets, are awaiting approval from the state and Federal governments. Two individual buildings, the Edward Devotion House and St. Mark's Church, have also been placed on the National Register: the home and studios of Frederick Law Olmsted on Warren Street and the birthplace of John Fitzgerald Kennedy on Beals Street had already been declared National Landmarks before the Brookline Historical Commission was formed.

No restrictions are placed on the owners of properties which are listed on the National Register: listing is meant rather to offer national recognition of the historical or architectural significance of these properties and to encourage their maintenance in a manner appropriate to that significance. Owners of historic buildings on the Register are eligible for matching grants-in-aid and, under the Federal Tax Reform Act of 1976, owners of commercial property which has been designated as historic are eligible for tax benefits in restoration or maintenance of their property. The Tax Reform Act also contains tax disincentives on new construction for which historical property has been destroyed. Some protection against demolition of historic property is offered in strictures against the use of state or Federal funds for such destruction.

For its research in compiling its historic inventory, the Brookline Historical Commission has often relied upon records and papers found in the *Proceedings of the Brookline Historical Society*: the help given us by this material has been invaluable, and the same *Proceedings* now offer us a place to acknowledge our gratitude. We hope that Society and Commission will continue to find common cause in our mutual concern for the honorable and interesting history of our Town.

For the Brookline Historical Commission

JEAN KRAMER