

Winter Outerwear of Nancy E. (Rand) Falby

by Patricia Kelleher Bartram

As winter arrives and cold weather descends upon us, we begin to take out and wear our heavy coats and jackets. That makes those of us interested in history wonder what early Boylstonians, particularly the women, wore to keep warm – and perhaps even more interestingly, who were the women that wore them?

The collections of the Boylston Historical Society and Museum (BHSM) include a number of capes and shawls, including ones made from lace, fur and velvet. They were described in some detail in an earlier Friday's Fascinating Finds article by Judy Haynes. Although most of the original owners of these garments are not known, two very attractive ones – both cloth, one maroon in color, the other tan – had been owned and worn by one woman, Nancy Elizabeth (Rand) Falby, a farmer's wife in Boylston at the turn of the 20th century.



These items were generously donated to the BHSM in 1975 by Marian Ethel (Brigham) Newell, late of Boylston (1896-1982). They had been handed down to Marian Newell by her late mother-in-law, Rachel Amelia (Falby) Newell (1873-1950), the daughter of Nancy Falby.¹ So, who was Nancy Falby?

Born Nancy Elizabeth Rand in Portland, Cumberland County, Maine in 1838, the daughter of Samuel Rand and his wife, Rachel. At 24 years old, she was married on 11 October 1862 in Boston, Suffolk County, Massachusetts to Andrew J. Falby, a mariner, aged 32 years.²

Andrew served in the Union Navy during the U.S. Civil War as a seaman and quartermaster on board the U.S.S. Ethan Allen, the U.S.S. Guard, and the U.S.S. Ohio. He enlisted on 14 September 1861, was married the next month, and mustered out a year later on 30 September 1862. He was honorably discharged due to a disease he contracted and from which he suffered the rest of his life.^{3,4}



Nancy E. Falby
grandmother-in-law
of Marion Brigham Newell

By 1880, Andrew had changed professions, becoming a farmer, and the family (including four children) was living in Scarborough, Cumberland County, Maine.⁵ While it would take additional research to learn how they happened to come to Boylston from Maine, we know from federal census records that in 1900, the couple lived in and owned a farm in Boylston. At that time, they worked alongside their son, William (1865-), his wife and three grandchildren.⁶

Nancy lost her husband, Andrew J. Falby, when died suddenly from a cardiac incident on Sunday morning 19 January 1908 at the age of 78 years, 6 months and 9 days old. He died at their home, which at that juncture was 1 Harmony Place, East Boston, Suffolk County,

¹ Marriage Records (Intentions Filed of Wilbur Kehoe Newell and Marion E. Brigham), Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 20 Feb 1916, digital image, ancestry.com

² Marriage Records, Boston, Suffolk County, Massachusetts, 1862, digital image, ancestry.com

³ Massachusetts Soldiers, Sailors and Marines in the Civil War, U.S., Civil War Soldier Records and Profiles, 1861-1865, transcription, ancestry.com

⁴ U.S., Civil War Pension Index: General Index to Pension Files, 1861-1934 for Andrew Falby, digital image, ancestry.com

⁵ United States Federal Census, Scarborough, Cumberland County, Maine, 1880, digital image, ancestry.com

⁶ United States Federal Census, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1900, digital image, ancestry.com

Massachusetts. His obituary said he had been experiencing “remarkably good health and arose to build a fire, and almost without warning fell back into his chair, dead.” He was buried in the family plot in Northborough, Worcester County, Massachusetts.^{7,8}

The couple had had eight children in all, only four of whom were living by the time of the federal census in 1910. By then, the now widowed Nancy was living in a rented home on South Street in Northborough with her youngest child, son Frank, age 29 years, a single man who was a lumber dealer. Nancy Falby lived to be 86 years old. She died 5 April 1924 in Roxbury, Suffolk County, Massachusetts, where she had been living at 11 Weldon Street and where her funeral services were held. She was interred alongside her late husband in Northborough.^{9,10}

Although Nancy and her husband had moved on from Boylston, their eldest child, son William Henry Falby (1865-), took over the family farm, and remained in Boylston with his wife and family.¹¹ In 1955, at the age of 90 years, William was named the “oldest man” in Boylston and was awarded the Boston Post Cane.¹²

Boylston Historians have noted that:

One of the major church related events occurred at 12 noon on Monday, February 8, 1924. William H. Falby walked out of the Center Store, and saw flames shooting from the Congregational Church. The alarm was given, but the efforts of the fire-fighters from Worcester and Clinton proved unsuccessful. As Boylstonians watched in stunned amazement, the belfry fell into the church auditorium, its 1861 bell crashing into the fiery remains. Providentially, the Gough Bible, and part of the Boylston Communion set were not in the edifice, and thus were spared. Damage was set at \$40,000.00. According to fire officials, the fire had started in the basement, and spread rapidly through the 89-year-old church. The Meeting House had been remodeled in early 1897, but had suffered a number of structural accidents in the intervening years.¹³



William H. Falby
Son of Andrew Falby & Nancy (Rand)
Falby



Falby Homestead on Rocky Pond Road
250-Year-old home on Ball Hill Destroyed by Fire in 1936

Then slightly more than a decade later, William’s 250-year-old family home on Rocky Pond Road was destroyed by fire on the morning of 8 June 1936.¹⁴

The BHSM is always interested in obtaining artifacts related to the people and history of Boylston. If you have any such items, please consider donating them to the BHSM by contacting us at 7 Central Street, P.O. Box 459, Boylston or by calling 508-869-2720.

⁷ Death Records, Boston, Suffolk County, Massachusetts, 1908, digital image, ancestry.com

⁸ Andrew J. Falby Obituary, Portland Sunday Telegram, 2 Feb 1908, Page 9, digital image, newspapers.com, ancestry.com

⁹ United States Federal Censuses, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1900 and 1910, digital images, ancestry.com

¹⁰ Obituary, Nancy Falby, The Boston Globe, 7 April 1924, digital image, newspapers.com, ancestry.com

¹¹ United States Federal Censuses, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1910, 1950, digital images, ancestry.com

¹² The Boston Post Cane, Boylston Honors its Eldest Citizens, Filgate & Haynes, boylstonhistory.org

¹³ Boylston Historical Series, Bruce D. Filgate, 2012

¹⁴ Flames Destroy Boylston Home: 250-Year-Old Falby Dwelling Burned with Damage of \$5000, The Evening Gazette, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 8 June 1936, Page 12, digital image, genealogybank.com
Boylston Historical Society & Museum Collections, 7 Central Street, Boylston, Massachusetts
Editor, Nancy O’Loughlin Filgate, Director, Boylston Historical Society & Museum, Inc.