

The Ward Cotton Homestead

Boylston Historic District Photograph by John Martiska

Located on the original 53-acre parcel Shrewsbury lot #43, which had been granted to Eleazar Taylor December 1718. Eleazar Taylor built his home on the southerly side of Cottonwood Place and settled there in 1729. The well for his house was dug while armed men stood guard against possible Indian attacks; the well is still in existence, and can be seen somewhat below the site of the original house. Taylor was a Lieutenant in the Militia, and active in civic affairs. In 1843, Eleazar Taylor was one of the founders of the Boylston Church. His land holdings included Cottonwood Place, the current location of the Old Burial Ground, the Old Common, and much of the centre of Boylston. He died September 20, 1753.¹

Lat Nº 43 was granted to Eleager Tay low Israember 10, 1718 This fourty this House lot in Shrewsbury contains in now in the it fifty the cores and hath a fifty and Right belong- possession of ing to it in the Common and undivided Sand in Eleaper Saylor Showsbury and Joyns to the westerly his of the 38th Sebruary 28 houls lot and is bounded Every way by undevided 1728/9 land the Length of lines and Degrees as they are set forth in the platt of the Sown as begins at a Rock and Runs South fifty then regress west 120 row to a heap of stones there seems South 40 degrees East lighty two Ros to a heaf of Stones theme mort fifty rigins East Eighly Rip Ros to a fine tree theme north fifteen organs west muity rock to where it began the hath for a Division of medow ten wans of avants the medow Law in the morte part of mallagases Swamp and is Sand out to Esteemed Equal to six a ous of medow and is bounded. Southerly by Ad Swamp and other ways envelly by up how lot land and begins at a majele true and hims northery 2 y sod then runs Easterly 40 rod to a red ook thenkins Doublerly 20 row then arms southwesterly 26 look to a Statu then runs swithwesterly sorod to the majele where it began moon surveyed of James Kleyes

Shrewsbury Land Grant Lot #43

Shrewsbury Proprietors Records with the Plan of the Lots and of the Great Farms and A Map of Shrewsbury Presented to Shrewsbury Historical Society by Major William T. Harlow, February 1906

A description of downtown Boylston as it may have appeared in 1774 can be found in 'History of Boylston, 1742 – 1786,' by William 0. Dupuis:

"First in prominence was the Meeting House built at the extreme corner of the Old Common, and opposite what is now 661 Main Street [Taylor Tavern built by Eleazar's son David on Lot #43]. Immediately behind it was the Noon, or Sabbath-House, and to round out the religious complex, the Burial Ground. At the gate of the Burial Ground was erected the stocks, for the punishment of petty offenses. The schoolhouse, which existed prior to 1742, was located at the extreme easterly point of the Old Common. Precinct Meetings were usually held in the Meeting House, thus making this small area the heart of the North Precinct".2

Eleazar Taylor's house was later owned by the Reverend Hezekiah Hooper in 1794.



Reverend Ward Cotton Homestead Cottonwood Place Boylston, Massachusetts BHSM Photograph Collection

The Reverend Ward Cotton house was built between 1800 and 1810 by Reverend Ward M. Cotton, the fourth minister of the Boylston Church. The home is located on Cottonwood Place on the opposite side of Cottonwood Place as the original Taylor home. The Town of Boylston named the street leading to the original Reverend Cotton homestead in its Historic District, Cottonwood Place. The street sign is there today. ³

The Reverend Ward Cotton of Boylston was a descendant of such famous churchmen as Reverend Cotton Mather of the Salem Witch Trials, and John Cotton, the Puritan minister of Boston, Massachusetts. His son, Ward Cotton was the deacon in the First Congregational Society

for more than 30 years and the secretary of the Northeast District Temperance Union, during New England's growth of the Transcendentalists movement, a time in which people celebrated individualism and self-reliance.⁴ The adventures of Reverend Ward Cotton's granddaughter, Lydia (Cotton) Rixford's move south and the first settlement "Rixford" in Suwannee Springs, Florida can be read in the "The Early Families of Boylston" available at the Boylston Public Library or the Fuller Research Library at the Boylston Historical Society. Original sermons of

Reverend Ward M. Cotton are held in the Manuscript Collection at the Boylston Historical Society and Museum at 7 Central Street.⁵ To view them, stop by any Sunday between 2-4 pm.

Triolo, Boylston Historical Collaborative, Boylston, Massachusetts, 2022

¹ Boylston Historical Series, Bruce D. Filgate, 2012

² History of Boylston, 1742 – 1786, William O. Dupuis, Boylston, Massachusetts

³ Boylston Historical Series, Bruce D. Filgate, 2012

⁴ The Early Families of Boylston, Nancy O'Loughlin Filgate, Patricia Kelleher Bartram, Nadine Ekstrom, Nathan Rollins, & Victoria

⁵ Boylston Historical Society & Museum Collection, Historic Town Hall, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts Shrewsbury Proprietors Records with the Plan of the Lots and of the Great Farms and A Map of Shrewsbury, William Harlow, 1906