

Two General Stores in Boylston

A Peek into the Historical Society Photograph Archives

By Inga Milbauer

*One of the earliest general stores in what would become the town of Boylston, Massachusetts was located in the Sawyers Mills area. Lieutenant Aaron Sawyer Jr., had succeeded his father at the Sawyer's mills. "At the time of Lieutenant Aaron Sawyer's death on April 30, 1817, the property at Sawyers Mills consisted of a saw mill, a grist mill, a clothier's mill, and a fulling mill for the manufacture of homespun cloth, an oil mill, a blacksmith shop, a country store, the dwelling house and farm, and farm buildings."*¹

In 1825, the Federal Government placed the Postal Service of Boylston in the Sawyers Mills area to best serve the people. After the death of Aaron Sawyer, Jr., his son-in-law, Hezekiah Gibbs, owned and operated the store in Sawyers Mills. The mills were sold a number of times until eventually in 1862 the complex was sold to the Lancaster Mills Corporation.

The Lancaster Mills Corporation built a new store in 1862, and replaced this store in 1890. It housed the Boylston Post Office and a hall that was used for socials, meetings and Protestant Sunday School.² The store and the Boylston-Sawyer's Mills Post Office closed its doors on January 15, 1903 with the building of the Wachusett Reservoir.



Sawyers Mills Store

Date Unknown

BHSM Photograph Collection



Sawyers Mills Store

Date Unknown

BHSM Photograph Collection

¹ Boylston Historical Series – Vol. III Sawyer's Mills by Norman H. French, A. Sc., 2012, p. 83

² Ibid, p. 85



Sawyers Mills Store
1896

Digital Commonwealth Photograph Collection

General Store in Boylston Center

Deacon Jonathan Bond Sr. built a store in 1811. Known as the Bond Corner Store, it was located on the Boylston Town Common, on the corner of Central Street and Main Street. On 18 September 1850 the Boylston Centre Post Office was established in the Bond Corner Store, with John B. Heywood as the first postmaster.³ Benjamin Lane became postmaster in 1883 and served until 1886.



B.C. Lane Store & Post Office
Circa 1883-1886

BHSM Photograph Collection

In 1886 John Tucker established the Tucker and Son General Store, which also served as The Boylston Centre Post Office. John Tucker (1841-1898) was appointed Postmaster on 21 September 1886. He ran the store with his son Charles Raymond Tucker (1872-1911) until 1896. For more information about John Tucker, one of the Boylston Civil War Veterans, see the Fridays Fascinating Finds article “*Boylston Veteran Becomes Post Master*”. <https://www.boylstonhistory.org/images/2025-02%20FFF/Boylston%20Veteran%20becomes%20Postmaster.pdf>



Tucker and Son General Store
Circa 1886-1896

BHSM Photograph Collection

George Reed Hastings (1841-1912) owned and operated the store as G.R. Hastings and Son Groceries and Grain Store from 1888 until his death in 1912. The store also housed the Boylston Centre Post Office, and G.R. Hastings was confirmed as postmaster on November 24, 1890. His son George A. Hastings (1865-1926) took over the store and post office duties after his father’s death. George A. Hastings was the husband of Lillian Tucker and son-in-law to John J. Tucker. George A. Hastings was confirmed as postmaster on April 4, 1913 and served until November 1915. During the ownership by the Hastings family, the store would be expanded by adding a new store front, as well as large grain sheds.⁴

³ https://www.boylstonhistory.org/category/Post_Offices_and_Its_Postmasters_Boylston/c137

⁴ <https://www.boylstonhistory.org/images/George%20Hastings%20.pdf>



G.R. Hastings & Son Store
Date Unknown
BHSM Photograph Collection



G.R. Hastings & Son Store
Circa 1904
BHSM Photograph Collection



Exterior of Centre Store & Mr. Henry Hyde
Circa 1884 - 1913
BHSM Photograph Collection

The original structure of the Centre Store burned down on Monday 27 May 1929. The cause of the fire remained unknown. The owner at the time was Frank Vinton who had taken over the store in 1915 from George A. Hastings. Mr. Vinton rebuilt the store which reopened at the end of the 1929. The Boylston Post Office continued to be located in the store after the 1929 fire until it was closed in 1977.⁵

Mr. Vinton sold the store to Mr. Harry Souci (1886-1957) and his sister, Mrs. Kate Souci Taylor (1882-1967). She became the acting Postmaster on 13 February 1940.

Harry A. Souci Store
1930s
BHSM Photograph Collection



⁵ Boylston Historical Series by Bruce Filgate, 2012, p. 532-533

Mrs. Kate Souci Taylor had purchased the Red Barn Grain Bin which was located next to the store in the 1930s, and turned that building into the Red Barn Grain Bin Restaurant.



Harry A. Souci Store & Red Barn Grain Bin Restaurant
August 1934
BHSM Photograph Collection

Photographs and artifacts from these general stores and the Red Barn Grain Bin Restaurant will be in the Boylston Historical Society and Museum’s New Exhibition to be released May 26th. We invite you to come to the Exhibition’s Grand Opening on Memorial Day to experience Boylston’s history!

Acknowledgements:

Boylston Historical Series by Bruce Filgate, 2012, Boylston Historical Society, Boylston, MA
Early Families of Boylston, Massachusetts by Nancy Ann Filgate, Nadine Ekstrom, Victoria Triolo, Patricia Kelleher Bartram, Nathan Rollins, 2022, Boylston Historical Collaborative, Boylston, Massachusetts.
<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/59542868/lawrence-john-hagstrom>
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