

A Glance at Some Past Schoolmasters of Boylston

*Excerpts from the Past Historians of the Boylston Historical Series
By Jack Valleli*

Among the Boylston men who taught school before, or about the year 1800 was Captain John Bond, who lived on a place on the Worcester Road, long known as the Deacon Jonathan Bond, Sr. place, and now called “*The Pines.*” About 1777, Jonathan Bond, Sr. came from Brookfield with his family, and purchased a tract of land located in the Malden Church Grant. The previous owner was Thomas Andrews of Boxford, a cousin of Capt. Robert Andrews, the commanding officer of the local Minuteman Company. It is unknown whether or not Jonathan Bond, Sr. built the house, or if it had already been built by the previous owner. Current research seems to indicate that the structure may date from 1757. Bond was a Revolutionary War veteran, and became Deacon in the Boylston Church in 1779, and remained in that office until his death in 1794. His estate was extremely large, and would later be divided among relatives, and become known as the Capt. John Bond estate, and the Thomas Bond farm.



“THE PINES
HOMESTEAD OF DEACON JONATHAN BOND, SCHOOLMASTER
183 MAIN STREET, BOYLSTON
BHSM Photograph Collection

Lieut. James Holland resided on a homestead which later became known as the Capt. Stephen Flagg place. Built in the 1770s by Lieut. James Holland, a member of the Continental Army; in 1794 it was sold to Stephen Flagg, Jr., and about 1815 to Capt. Stephen Flagg. He was a member of the State Militia, and a member of the Boylston Baptist Society. It is located at 307 Main Street. ... Capt. Robert Andrews, Jr., and his son, Dennis Andrews, both early land surveyors were undoubtedly early schoolmasters. John Bannister was another, and served repeatedly on the early school committees.



STEPHEN FLAGG HOMESTEAD
CARRIAGES AND HORSES (ON RIGHT)
HOMESTEAD OF ROBERT ANDREWS JR AND DENNIS ANDREWS, SCHOOLMASTERS
307 MAIN STREET, BOYLSTON
BHSM Photograph Collection

Dr. Samuel Brigham, who lived in the extreme northeasterly part of the town near the present Clinton and Berlin lines, was another famous early teacher. He was a son of Dr. Samuel Brigham and his wife, Anna Gott, a daughter of the well-known Dr. Gott of Marlborough. The senior Dr. Samuel Brigham was a surgeon with the British Army in the West Indies, where he died of yellow fever shortly before the birth of his son. His mother married Capt. Stephen Maynard, of Westborough, as his second wife. He had a family of children by his first wife. When Widow Anna Brigham went to live with him, she brought along her own four children, and the two families were brought up together without respect to relationship. Her son Samuel was then quite young, and consequently knew no other boyhood home than that of his stepfather.

In 1774, Samuel Brigham entered Dartmouth College in a class where there were three other young men by the name of Brigham from Westborough. In 1777, he left college, and entered the Continental service where he served as a paymaster to Artemas Ward, and Lieutenant. He served

with General Washington in the New York Campaigns, and was present at the execution of Major Andre, the British spy and co-conspirator of General Benedict Arnold. After his return from the army, he went back to college and graduated with the Class of 1779. He studied medicine with Doctor Stephen Ball, of Northborough, and began practice in Shrewsbury. In 1789 he married Mary Ball, daughter of the senior Dr. Ball, and settled on the farm in Boylston then owned by him, where they resided during the remainder of their lives. Soon after coming to Boylston, he met with an accident that so crippled him that he was afterward forced to walk upon crutches, which greatly handicapped him in his work as a country physician. He was long a civil Magistrate, and was much employed in town affairs. For several years he was a member of the School Committee, and did much to increase the efficiency of the schools.



SIX NATIONS SCHOOLHOUSE
BUILT CIRCA 1790 AT THE FORK OF MILE HILL ROAD & LINDEN STREET
DR. SAMUEL BRIGHAM WAS ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS TEACHERS
IT SERVED OUR CHILDREN UNTIL 1809
BHSM Photograph Collection

Samuel was a man of uncommon literary ability, well read, and a writer of both prose and poetry being a frequent contributor to the public press. He had rare musical genius, and composed both instrumental and vocal music as a recreation. During his college course, and after his graduation, he became well known as a successful schoolmaster and tutor. He fitted many young men for college. This anecdote is told of him as a tutor:

“There resided in the town of Northborough a worthy blacksmith who desired to give his son a college education but the lad was hard to learn, and after several ineffectual attempts to prepare him for college his teachers and tutors gave up in despair. Rev. Peter Whitney, the Northborough Minister, told the father it was of no use to attempt to send him to college, and it would be far better to make a blacksmith out of him. The father, however, was reluctant to give up the idea so he went to Dr. Samuel Brigham of Boylston for advice, and set the matter before him. Dr. Brigham replied, 'Send him to me and come see me in a fortnight. The father gave the lad into Dr. Brigham's charge, and at the end of two weeks again called upon the doctor who replied, 'He will do; what he learns today he remembers tomorrow.' The boy was fitted by Dr. Brigham and sent to Harvard College where he graduated with credit in the Class of 1795. He obtained a thorough knowledge of the French language, and went to France as the representative of an American firm of merchants. He became the head of the importing house of Henry Gassett, and was counted among America's merchant princes.”

Silas Beaman, son of Lieut. Ephraim Beaman and nephew of Major Ezra Beaman, was another of Boylston's famous schoolmasters. He owned a large farm, and taught school winters for twenty-five years. He was a large athletic man more than six feet in height and weighing over three hundred pounds. He was much sought after to control unruly schools.

The story is told that he was once engaged to teach a school where three or four other men had attempted the task and failed, and had been driven out-of-doors by the unruly scholars. When Squire Silas Beaman came he carried a large block of wood under his arm, and a keen-bladed broad-axe in his hand. He placed the block in the center of the room and sank the blade of the axe into it. Not a word was spoken by the huge master, who calmly glanced around at the surprised and awe-stricken pupils. The school was opened and proceeded without any comment from the master or interference from the scholars, nor was there any more trouble in that school. Squire Silas Beaman taught successfully for several terms. When the town of West Boylston was incorporated his farm came into that town. Upon the organization of the town government, he was the Moderator of the first Town Meeting, a position which his father had held at the first Town Meeting in Boylston in 1786.

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