

Have you hiked to Lamson Brook?

by Nancy Ann Filgate, Nadine Ekstrom, Victoria Triolo,
Patricia Kelleher Bartram, & Nathan Rollins

This article is part of a periodic series of “portraits” of some of Boylston’s earliest families from “Early Families of Boylston, Massachusetts.” George Lambert Lamson, Sr. was the son of Captain Lambert Lamson and Sophia Smith Bond who were married on 4 December 1839 in Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts.¹ He was their second child, born August 1842 in Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts.^{2,3} His older sister, Mary Sophia Bond Lamson was born two years earlier, on 4 December 1840, also in Boylston.⁴



GEORGE L. LAMSON
1842-1912
BHSM Photograph Collection

Like many people living in the United States then, Captain Lambert Lamson was a farmer. But he was a very successful farmer in the town of Boylston. In 1888 the Lamson family had the 2nd highest tax bill in the town.⁵ Throughout his farming career, Lambert and Sophia employed various domestic servants and farm hands. The history of the Lamson family being a prominent influence in the town did not end with Captain Lambert. Community involvement continued with his son George Lambert serving as a town selectman in 1841, 1849, 1853 and 1854. He was also a town assessor in 1838, 1849 and 1852.⁶ Both of Lambert and Sophia’s children, George and Mary, were fortunate enough to have gone to school.⁷

Tragedy Strikes Family

When George was 20 years old in 1862, his father, Lambert, tragically passed away at 59 years old due to a spinal injury he received from falling off his wagon.⁸ At this time, the United States was nearly a year and a half into the Civil War. The following June of 1863, George registered for the military draft in the 8th Congressional District as a Class 1 soldier.⁹ No military records of George being active in the military, nor being deployed have been located. Two years later came the 1865 state census that shows him at home, running the successful farm with his mother, sister, and 2 other hired helpers.¹⁰

Sadly, four years later, George's only sibling, sister Mary Sophia Bond Lamson who had never married, died young at 28 years of age on 17 October 1869 of a stomach inflammation.¹¹

Marries a West Boylstonian

However, the sadness in his life was about to turn for the better. Just over one year later, on 3 November 1870 at Boylston, the 28-year-old George, a farmer, married Mary Grosvenor Baldwin. Mary was the daughter of Charles Henry Baldwin, born in Shrewsbury, Worcester County, Massachusetts and Harriet Haswell Grosvenor, born in Utica, Oneida County, New York.¹²

Mary Grosvenor was born in West Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts on 11 September 1847.¹³ ¹⁴ Prior to her marriage, just before her 19th birthday, Mary was baptized into the Congregational Church in West Boylston on 2 September 1866.¹⁵

Sadly, Mary Grosvenor’s mother, Harriet, had died from consumption at just 22 years old on 22 June 1848 in West Boylston when Mary was just 10 months old.¹⁶ About two months later, Mary’s father, Charles H. Baldwin was baptized into the Congregational Church in West Boylston on 3 September 1848, just 7 days before his daughter’s 1st birthday.¹⁷



MARY G. LAMSON
Wife of George Lamson
1847-1923
BHSM Photograph Collection

As of 1850, Mary Grosvenor, age 1 year, was living with her paternal grandparents, Henry and Mary Baldwin, in Shrewsbury, Worcester County, Massachusetts. Meanwhile, her father was a trader living in West Boylston at the home of his sister, Angeline and her husband, Oliver B. Sawyer, also a trader.^{18,19}

¹ Marriage Records, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1839, digital image, ancestry.com
² Birth Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1842
³ United States Federal Census, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1900, digital image, ancestry.com
⁴ Birth Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1840
⁵ Twenty Thousand Rich New Englanders, A List of Taxpayers Who Were Assessed in 1888 to Pay a Tax of One Hundred Dollars or More, 1888, googlebooks.com
⁶ Centennial Celebration of the Incorporation of Boylston Massachusetts, August 18, 1886, pp. 135, 138
⁷ United States Federal Censuses, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1850 and 1860, digital images, ancestry.com
⁸ Death Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1862
⁹ United States, Civil War Draft Registrations Records, 1863-1865, database, ancestry.com
¹⁰ Massachusetts State Census, Boylston, Worcester County, 1865, digital image, ancestry.com
¹¹ Death Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1869
¹² Marriage Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1871 & 1872
¹³ Birth Records, West Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1847, digital image, ancestry.com
¹⁴ Marriage Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1870
¹⁵ Fitts, J. H. (James Hill). (1870). Manual of the Congregational Church in West Boylston, Massachusetts, Clinton, [Mass.]: W.J. Coulter, digital image, hathitrust.org
¹⁶ Massachusetts Ploughman and new England Journal of Agriculture, Boston, Suffolk County, Massachusetts, 1 July 1848, Page 2 and Bay State Farmer and Mechanic’s Ledger, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1 July 1848, Page 3, genealogybank.com
¹⁷ Fitts, J. H. (James Hill). (1870). Manual of the Congregational Church in West Boylston, Massachusetts, Clinton, [Mass.]: W.J. Coulter, digital image, hathitrust.org
¹⁸ United States Federal Census, Shrewsbury, Worcester County, Massachusetts and West Boylston Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1850, digital images, ancestry.com
¹⁹ Fitts, J. H. (James Hill). (1870). Manual of the Congregational Church in West Boylston, Massachusetts, Clinton, [Mass.]: W.J. Coulter, digital image, hathitrust.org

One year later, on 6 August 1851, Charles married his second wife, Edna J. Flagg of Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts. Charles was 28 years old and Edna was 19 years old at the time.²⁰ This couple provided Mary with 5 half-siblings: Henrietta (“Etta”), born 5 August 1852; Charles Henry Jr., born 20 August 1854; Frank Herbert, born 19 May 1857; Martha Flagg (“Mattie”) born 5 March 1859; and William Sanford (“Willie”) born 2 November 1870. All of these children were born in West Boylston.²¹ While a trader when Mary was a child, by 1860 her father Charles had become a farmer, employed a domestic servant and a hired hand, and owned a 140-acre farm worth \$9100.²² This was the equivalent of approximately \$300,000 in 2020 dollars.²³ In 1865, Mary had entered the seamstress profession.²⁴

Second Precinct of Boylston Joins Sterling and Holden to Form New Church

Let’s back up a bit to explore an interesting series of events. The Congregational Church in West Boylston has a record of its membership that tells a relevant story. The Constitution of the Church of 1796 indicates it was formed by people of the Second Precinct of Boylston, Sterling and Holden. Mary’s father, Charles H. Baldwin was baptized into this church in 1848 only two months after his wife, Harriet, passed away, and 7 days before his daughter’s 1st birthday. Less than 5 years after his 2nd marriage, his wife, Edna J., was baptized. Just before her 19th birthday, Mary herself was baptized on 2 September 1866. During the period leading up to mid October 1869, there is plausible evidence that Mary may have befriended and influenced a young woman, Mary Sophia Bond Lamson. On the 14th of that month, Miss Lamson was baptized.²⁵ The only details we know is that Mary Sophia died only 3 days later, on 17 October 1869 of a stomach inflammation.²⁶ The evidence that links these two young ladies together is that just under one year after Mary Sophia’s death, our Mary, Miss Baldwin, was wedded to Mary Sophia’s brother, George L. Lamson Sr. on 3 November 1870.^{27,28}

Lamson Farm

After their marriage in 1870, George and Mary Lamson lived on the 600-acre farm in Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts that George had inherited from his father.²⁹



LAMSON NURSERY, BOYLSTON, MASSACHUSETTS
Wachusett Reservoir 4 November 1903
Taking up trees for planting
Massachusetts Metropolitan Water Works Photograph Collection 1875-1930

At the time of their marriage, he had taken over the management of the farm and had been living there with his mother, at least three hired hands, and a domestic servant from Ireland.³⁰ Their successful farm required the help of hired hands because it was considerable in size and productivity. Of the 600 acres that George owned, 400 of it was productive and 200 was undeveloped woodland. In 1870, the productive side of the farm consisted of 21 dairy cows, 20 cattle, 4 hogs, 4 horses, and 2 oxen. In that year the farm produced 250 bushel of corn and 212 bushels of oats, 700 bushels of potatoes, \$450 worth of orchard fruit, 6,000 gallons of milk, \$500 of meat, and 100 tons of hay. The farm had a total cash value of approximately \$35,000.³¹ In 2020 dollars this is approximately \$640,000³². But certainly, the actual value today is much greater; good luck buying 600 acres in Boylston now for any sum.

After a few years of honeymoon, life, and acclimation, George and Mary had two children. Their first son, George Lambert Lamson Jr., was born on 21 February 1873 in Boylston.³³ Their second son, Frank Grosvenor Lamson, was born in Boylston on 31 January 1875.³⁴ The world was rapidly changing at this time. Likely for various reasons the Lamson farm had decreased in size, value, and productivity by about 50% by 1880. We know that in 1881 George L. Lamson was paid \$15.50 to be a road commissioner in district number 6 of Boylston.³⁵ George and his family left Boylston and moved to Worcester when in 1897 the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board acquired his farm in Boylston and Clinton to make way for the Wachusett Reservoir.^{36,37,38} The several years between the initial planning of the reservoir and George’s land being flooded gave the family ample time for a transition from life on the farm to life in the city. George’s farm in Boylston and Clinton also saw a significant transformation over this period. The Wachusett Reservoir project had approximately 3,300 acres of land that was not submerged, and that land needed to be managed and protected from erosion. What had been George’s farm was to become known as the Lamson Nursery and over several years provided thousands of trees for the project.³⁹ Many of the existing structures in the area, including the Lamson properties, were used for housing workers involved with the project. In 1908 the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board invested in painting and reroofing these structures.⁴⁰

²⁰ Marriage Records, West Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1851, digital image, ancestry.com
²¹ Birth Records, West Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1852, 1854, 1857, 1859 and 1870
²² United States Federal Census, West Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1860, digital image, ancestry.com
²³ <https://www.officialdata.org/>
²⁴ Massachusetts, State Census, West Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1865, digital image, ancestry.com
²⁵ Fitts, J. H. (James Hill). (1870). Manual of the Congregational Church in West Boylston, Massachusetts, Clinton, [Mass.]: W.J. Coulter, digital image, hathitrust.org
²⁶ Boylston Death Register, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1869
²⁷ Marriage Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1871 & 1872
²⁸ NOTE: A review of the Church Records indicated the Lamson Family had no other members of the family baptized, married, or who were buried from this church.
²⁹ United States Agriculture Census, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1870
³⁰ United States Federal Census, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1870, digital image, ancestry.com
³¹ United States Agriculture Census, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1870
³² <https://www.officialdata.org/us/inflation/1870?endYear=2020&amount=35000>
³³ Birth Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1873
³⁴ Birth Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1875
³⁵ Annual Reports of the Town Officers of the Town of Boylston for the Year Ending March 1, 1881, Page 28
³⁶ Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board, Annual Reports 1904-1908, digital image, www.hathitrust.org
³⁷ City Directory, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1897
³⁸ United States Agriculture Census, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1870
³⁹ Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board, Annual Reports 1904-1908, digital image, www.hathitrust.org
⁴⁰ Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board, Annual Reports 1904-1908, digital image, www.hathitrust.org

The 1890s was a difficult decade for this Lamson family. It began with Mary’s father’s death from heart disease in West Boylston on 2 February 1890.⁴¹ Their son, George Jr., at age 22 years, entered into his first marriage with Lulu Mabel (or Mabelle L. or Lula) Reed on 24 July 1894 in Fall River, Bristol County, Massachusetts. He was a resident of Providence, Rhode Island at the time of their marriage; she was age 19 years and a resident of Newport, Rhode Island.⁴² Lulu was the daughter of Charles H. Reed and Alice Durand, born 3 January 1879 in Sterling, Worcester County, Massachusetts.⁴³ This marriage was not long-lived and the couple divorced some time before 1900. In 1896 George Jr., still in his early 20s, underwent financial troubles resulting in insolvency.⁴⁴ By June 1900, he was alone, back living with his parents in Worcester and working as a clothing salesman.⁴⁵

George Sr.’s mother, Sophia Bond Lamson, died on 1 January 1897 in Worcester of double pneumonia.⁴⁶ And only two years later, the Lamson’s son Frank died of appendicitis on 7 May 1899 at the age of 24 years in Boylston.⁴⁷

The last decade of George Sr.’s life was spent living in Worcester where he had multiple properties, one of which suffered damage from a fire on 4 August 1901. His tenant, S.A. Winkler, threw a match into a basket resulting in \$20.02 in damage. On 4 July of the same year at 10:40 p.m. George Lamson Sr. in his own personal dwelling had a fire that caused \$15 worth of damage.⁴⁸

Later that year, on 9 November 1901, the Lamsons welcomed a new daughter-in-law into the family when son George Jr., now age 28 years and a salesman, entered into his second marriage with Sarah Jefferson Brown. Sarah (called “Sadie) was a saleslady, age 19 years, and it was her first marriage. She had been born in Worcester on 13 May 1884, daughter of Herbert E. Brown and Kate A. Logan.⁴⁹ This was a long-term marriage that lasted until his death.

George Lambert Lamson Sr. died age 69 years, 8 months and 22 days on 20 May 1912 of a cerebral hemorrhage in his Worcester home at 2 Rock Avenue. He is buried in Pine Grove Cemetery in Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts.^{50,51}



GEORGE L. LAMSON HEADSTONE
Pine Grove Cemetery
Photograph by Bruce D. Filgate



MARY B. LAMSON HEADSTONE
Pine Grove Cemetery
Photograph by Bruce D. Filgate

After her husband’s death, Mary changed her Worcester residences several times, living at 9 Northampton Street in 1913, 273 Lincoln Street and 6 Duxbury Road in 1919.⁵² These addresses are all within several blocks of each other and still exist today.

Mary Grosvenor Baldwin Lamson died suddenly of cardiovascular renal disease on 23 September 1923 just 12 days after her 76th birthday in her residence at 6 Crown Street, Worcester.⁵³ She was laid to rest at Pine Grove Cemetery in Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts.⁵⁴

But, the legacy of the Lamson family lives on today, as there is a small tributary feeding the Wachusett Reservoir to this day called “Lamson Brook” that flows south out of West Boylston for hikers to enjoy.



LAMSON BROOK
Boylston, Massachusetts
Photograph by Nathan Rollins

⁴¹ Death Records, West Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1890, digital image, ancestry.com
⁴² Marriage Records, Fall River, Bristol County, Massachusetts, 1894, digital image, ancestry.com. [NOTE: He is listed on this record as Lambert G. Lamson and she as Mabelle L. Reed]
⁴³ Birth Records, Sterling, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1879, digital image, ancestry.com
⁴⁴ Worcester Daily Spy, 17 February 1896, Page 2, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts, digital image, genealogybank.com
⁴⁵ United States Federal Census, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1900, digital image, ancestry.com
⁴⁶ Death Records, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1897
⁴⁷ Death Records, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1899
⁴⁸ City Document, No. 56. Address of Hon. Edward F. Fletcher, Mayor of the City of Worcester, 1902 with the Annual Reports of the Several Departments, for the Financial Year Ending November 30, 1901
⁴⁹ Birth Records, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1901, digital image, ancestry.com
⁵⁰ Death Records, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1912, digital image, ancestry.com
⁵¹ Gravestone, George Lambert Lamson Sr., Pine Grove Cemetery, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts
⁵² United States, City Directories, 1822-1995, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts, database, ancestry.com
⁵³ Death Records, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1923, digital image, ancestry.com
⁵⁴ Gravestone, Mary Grosvenor Lamson, Pine Grove Cemetery, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts
Early Families of Boylston, Boylston Historical Collaborative, Boylston, Massachusetts, 2022
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Photograph Collection, Boylston Historical Society and Museum, Inc., 7 Central Street, Boylston, Massachusetts