



January 2021

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Curator's Corner

As we move into the year 2021, in an effort to reach out to our friends to share more information about the Town of Boylston, Massachusetts and its rich history, we at the Boylston Historical Society and Museum have increased our Newsletters and have gone virtual. The antiquities archived in our museum and collections not only connect our pasts, but ignite passions and curiosities in each of us. We have spent the last several months researching artifacts and upgrading our website in an attempt to virtually share our stories and artifacts with the historians, genealogists, and the townspeople of Boylston. Although the museum remains closed to Public events and Museum visits, through a team of staff and remarkable volunteers we have been able to photograph and share research articles about our unique and precious artifacts. If you have not had the opportunity to read about our Boylston artifacts, go to our website: <https://www.boylstonhistory.org> and click on *Friday's Fascinating Finds* and the *Then and Now* categories to read about some of the awesome treasures and facts uncovered about our town. If you want to learn more about the History of our Historic Town Hall, click on the photograph of the Historic Town Hall on our homepage and you will then be able to envision its evolution over the years. A thank you to the many researchers and members who are graciously supporting our mission and helping to implement this strategic vision!

~ Nancy Filgate

***Can you Identify the
Current Location of
this building?***



Answer on page 7



"New Discoveries"

The Research Consortium formed in September by the Boylston Historical Society & Museum, the Boylston Historical Commission and the Boylston Public Library that undertook to identify the names of individuals in Album #2 and Album #5 whose photographs date to the mid 1800's, continue to be hard at work uncovering the genealogical history of these townspeople and their historical significance to the town of Boylston's development and growth.

Research Project

Elise Poretsky, a Tahanto Regional High School sophomore is one of the researchers for the Research Consortium who has ventured on this exciting genealogical quest to determine more about Boylston's individuals in the photograph albums. Her love of history comes alive in her reflection on the life of Pitt Moore ~ Nancy Filgate

Pitt Moore, the son of Jonathan Moor and Elizabeth Richardson was born 5 December 1787, in Sterling, Worcester County, Massachusetts.¹ Pitt's father, Jonathan Moor, was born 26 July 1742, Lancaster, Worcester County, Massachusetts.² It was not common for Jonathan and his generation to use the "e" in the spelling of the surname, Moor, however many of his children, including Pitt, were known as Moore throughout their lives. Jonathan and Elizabeth had married on 8 July 1772 in Lancaster, Worcester County, Massachusetts. Pitt was the fifth child among seven children born to this couple: Prudence, born 1774; Abigail, born 1780; Dolly, born 1781; Pitt, born 1785; Pitt born 1787; Martin, born 1790; and Mark, born 1792. Tragically, his elder sister, Dolly, died at three years of age, and his elder brother, Pitt, died at not even one year old.³ It should be noted that more children may have been born to Jonathan and his wife Elizabeth, however, this could not be conclusively determined since the original birth records of Sterling, Massachusetts from 1781-1794, were burned in a fire and the records which remain as Birth Records of Sterling, Massachusetts are a cumulation of any records that could be located in entries found in Church records, Justice of the Peace records, and information submitted by Heads of households who reported the names and birth dates of their children.⁵ A review of the 1790 and 1800 censuses conclude that there is no evidence that other children survived to grow up with Pitt.

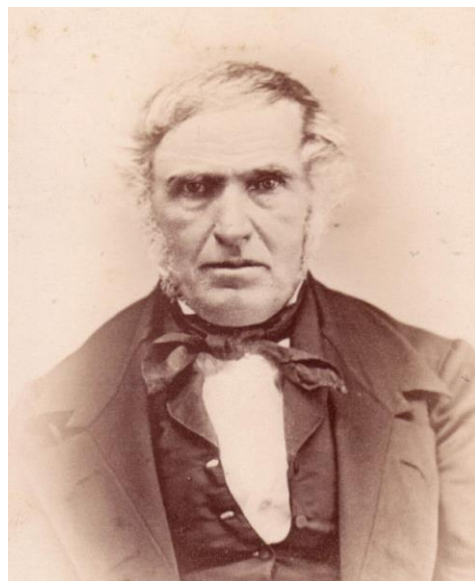


Figure 1 Pitt Moore
1787—1877
BHSM Photograph Collection

Pitt Moore married Abigail Sawyer 21 September 1815 in Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts.⁶ Abigail, the daughter of Oliver Sawyer and Patty Hinds, was born 5 December 1791 at Boylston.⁷ Pitt and Abigail resided in Boylston where he was a farmer. He also served as the Town Clerk of Boylston and as a Selectman in the short time he lived there.⁸ Pitt and Abigail had two sons: Asher, born 21 November 1815 and Elliot, born 25 April 1819.⁹ Pitt's wife,

¹ Vital Records, Sterling, Worcester County, Massachusetts, ancestry.com

² Birth Records, Lancaster, Worcester County, Massachusetts, ancestry.com digital image

³ Birth Records, Lancaster, Worcester County, Massachusetts, ancestry.com digital image

⁴ Gravestone, Chocksett Burial Ground, Sterling, Worcester County, Massachusetts, findagrave.com

⁵ Vital Records, Sterling, Worcester County, Massachusetts, ancestry.com

⁶ Marriage Records, Boylston Worcester County, Massachusetts

⁷ Birth Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts

⁸ Boylston Historical Series, Filgate ed., 2012

⁹ Birth Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts

Abigail, died on 11 January 1822 at age 30 years.¹⁰ She was interred in the Old Burial Ground in Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts.¹¹ Pitt married his second wife, Esther Hastings, on 5 September 1822 in Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts.¹² Esther, the daughter of Thomas Hastings and Elizabeth Whitney, was born 1 January 1800 at Boylston. Pitt and Esther had two children: Edward, born 28 January 1823 and Abigail, born 8 September 1826.¹³

In 1828 Pitt and his family moved from Boylston to a farm known as the Hinds place located near Little Watatic Mountain in Ashburnham, Worcester County, Massachusetts. In December of 1839, Pitt bought a large farm in Ashburnham.¹⁴ In 1850, the Moore farm consisting of 165 acres, with 123 acres of it in improved farmland, was valued at \$2200. The farm products included 1200 pounds of butter, 200 pounds of cheese, 100 bushels of Irish potatoes, 50 bushels of barley, 30 bushels of Indian corn, 5 bushels of rye, 30 bushels of oats, 3 pounds of wool, and 25 tons of hay. The farm had 6 milk cows, 2 working oxen, 6 other cattle, 2 sheep and 1 swine.¹⁵ Pitt's sons Asher and Elliot would take active roles in the town. Asher, a local school teacher and farmer. Both Asher and Elliot served on the Superintendent's School Committee for the Ashburnham schools. Elliot, a school teacher and local merchant, served as a town selectman as well as the town assessor.¹⁶ On 17 September 1858 Pitt and Esther Moore transferred their land and barns to their son-in-law, Luke Marble, excepting the following---"*reserving the right of passing over the above mentioned premises from the road to my pasture, also a right to keep and water three cows on said premises, also a right to keep three cows in said new barn, also a right to keep in said barn fodder*

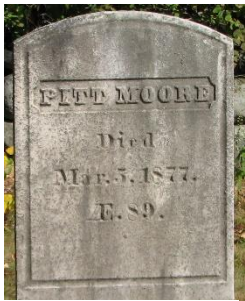


Fig. 2 Gravestone
Meeting Hill Cemetery
Photograph by Cheshire

sufficient for said cows, also reserving a right to tie horses in said barn occasional---All of the above reservations to continue during my mortal life."¹⁷ By 1870 Pitt Moore had reduced his farm to 60 acres of improved land and had 2 milking cows.¹⁸ In his later years, he and Esther resided with their daughter and her husband, Abigail and Luke Marble.

Pitt Moore died from old age on 5 March 1877 in Ashburnham, Worcester County, Massachusetts at age 89 years, and 3 months.¹⁹ He was interred in the Meetinghouse Hill Cemetery in Ashburnham where his wife, Esther would join him when she died 21 February 1879 at age 79 years.^{20,21}

¹⁰ Death Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts

¹¹ Gravestone, Old Burial Ground, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts

¹² Marriage Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts

¹³ Birth Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts

¹⁴ History of Ashburnham, from the grant of Dorchester Canada to present time, 1734-1886. With a genealogical register for Ashburnham families

¹⁵ United States Selected Federal Census, Non -Population Schedule, 1850, ancestry.com

¹⁶ History of Ashburnham, from the grant of Dorchester Canada to present time, 1734-1886. With a genealogical register for Ashburnham families

¹⁷ Deed, Moore to Marble, Worcester County, Massachusetts, Book 644, page 449, 17 September 1858

¹⁸ United States Selected Federal Census, Non -Population Schedule, 1870, ancestry.com

¹⁹ Death Records, Ashburnham, Worcester County, Massachusetts, ancestry.com

²⁰ Gravestone, Meetinghouse Hill Cemetery, Ashburnham, Massachusetts, findagrave.com

²¹ Death Records, Ashburnham, Worcester County, Massachusetts, ancestry.com

Veteran's Project

Leah Withers, a Tahanto Regional High School junior is a researcher for the Boylston Historical Society - Veteran's Project. She has embarked on this exciting quest to determine more about each of our veterans, their lives and service to Our Great Nation. Leah's exceptional research skills helped to unfold the fascinating details of the life and capture of Elmer Brigham Howe.

~ Nancy Filgate



Figure 1 Elmer B. Howe
1827-1898
BHSM Photograph Collection

Elmer Brigham Howe was born 25 December 1827 to Jotham Howe and Elmyra Kendall.^{1,2,3} Jotham and Elmyra were married 28 December 1820 in Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, eventually having four children, Elmyra, William, Nathaniel Lamson, and Elmer himself.^{4,5} Jotham and Elmyra had plans to have a much larger family, but sadly three of the couple's children did not live past early childhood. The first died 25 December 1830 at about a year old, followed by another child, Samuel K. Howe, on 2 April 1832 at just five months old. The final child to meet this tragic fate, once again named Samuel K. Howe, died on 30 August 1834 at a year and 4 months old. Despite the grief that this family was feeling for their three lost children, Elmer's father still worked hard to support the family with his work as a farmer, selling mostly corn and oats, as well as keeping several milk cows and swine.⁶ Sadly the tragedies endured by this family only got worse when Elmer's mother Elmyra died on 14 May 1839, when Elmer was just 12 years old.⁷ She was 39 years old and buried in Boylston's Pine Grove Cemetery, in a location noted on her

death record that made her "the first adult buried in the burying ground on the plains."⁸ Just over a year later Jotham remarried to Louisa Holt in Boylston on 18 October 1840, and the two would remain married until her death in 1858.^{9,10} Jotham continued work on his 110 acre farm, 65 acres of which were tilled land in 1850.¹¹ His property was worth \$3,500, which today would be worth about \$118,000. Elmer attended school and helped his father on the farm, and Elmer eventually owned a farm himself.¹²

By 1851, Elmer had moved to Lancaster, Worcester County, Massachusetts.¹³ Also living in town was Lucy Jane March, originally of Keene, Cheshire County, New Hampshire, who was born to Israel March and Tabitha Wheelock on 29 June 1829.¹⁴ They were married in Lancaster on 7 July 1851.¹⁵ Elmer was working as a farmer at the time.¹⁶ Soon after their first son, Charles Elmer Howe, was born on 2 December

¹ Death Records, Boylston Worcester County, Massachusetts, ancestry.com, digital image

² Federal Census Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts

³ Marriage Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, ancestry.com, digital image

⁴ Marriage Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, ancestry.com, digital image

⁵ Federal Census Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts

⁶ Federal Agricultural Census Records, Boylston, Massachusetts

⁷ Death Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, ancestry.com, digital image

⁸ Death Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, ancestry.com, digital image

⁹ Marriage Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, ancestry.com, digital image

¹⁰ Death Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, ancestry.com, digital image

¹¹ Federal Agricultural Census Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts

¹² Federal Census Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts

¹³ Marriage Records, Lancaster, Worcester County, Massachusetts

¹⁴ Birth Records, Keene, Cheshire County, New Hampshire

¹⁵ Marriage Records, Lancaster, Worcester County, Massachusetts, ancestry.com, digital image

¹⁶ Marriage Records, Lancaster, Worcester County, Massachusetts, ancestry.com, digital image

1852.¹⁷ After Charles came Oscar Leslie on 17 January 1857, then finally Myra on 23 December 1859.¹⁸ Although they would eventually have a fourth child together, their family life was soon interrupted by the Civil War.

Elmer enlisted in the Union forces as a private in the Massachusetts 34th Infantry Company C on 16 July 1861. At the time he was working as a farmer, but left that life behind for three years to fight the Confederacy. During his service he fought in many battles, including the infamous Battle of Gettysburg which all but secured a victory for the Union. After fighting in many a skirmish with the Confederacy, he was eventually captured by the enemy and became a prisoner of war for a brief period of time. He was captured on 22 June 1864, and paroled on 1 July 1864.¹⁹ Following his time in a Confederate prison, he was sent to the Union's Camp Convalescent for a few weeks before returning to New England.²⁰ This camp was built to house soldiers who were well enough that they did not need to be admitted to a hospital, but not quite well enough to return to their soldier duties. Unfortunately for Elmer, it was notorious for its terrible living conditions. Many soldiers who wrote of the hospital camp nicknamed it "Camp Misery," and for good reason. Tents often had no bedding, food was minimal so soldiers in all sorts of medical states had to forage for their own food, and there was barely any wood to fuel fires that could keep back the cold Virginia weather.²¹ After just under a month in Camp Convalescent, Elmer returned home on 28 July 1864 to his wife and three children.^{22,23}

Upon his return to New England, the family moved up north to Dublin, Cheshire County, New Hampshire, just two towns over from his wife Lucy's place of birth.²⁴ Elmer's brother William also followed suit and spent many years in Dublin with his sons.²⁵ Soon after their arrival to Dublin, Elmer and Lucy's fourth and final child, Elizabeth, known in her youth as Lizzie, was born on 27 July 1867.²⁶ For the next few decades all the children went through schooling while Elmer worked as a farmer on his new land in Dublin.²⁷ Eventually, their son Charles moved out of the family home and married Sarah Nye, their other son Oscar worked as a farm laborer, and their daughter Myra worked as a teacher while Lizzie attended school.^{28,29}

Later in life, Elmer struggled with dyspepsia (*upper gastrointestinal disease*), a result of his time in the civil war.³⁰ He also spent his later years grieving the loss of two of his children, whose passing were just a few years before his own. Oscar died of rheumatism on 10 August 1891, followed by his sister Elizabeth on 2 July 1896.³¹ Just a few years later Elmer died of mitral regurgitation on 21 February 1898.³² He is interred in the Dublin Town Cemetery in Dublin, Cheshire County, New Hampshire, alongside his wife Lucy who would be reunited with him in 1908.³³



Figure 2 Gravestone
Dublin Town Cemetery
Photograph by History Buff

¹⁷ Birth Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts

¹⁸ Birth Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts

¹⁹ Boylston Record of Soldiers and Officers, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts

²⁰ Boylston Record of Soldiers and Officers, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts

²¹ City of Alexandria, Virginia website, www.alexandria.gov

²² Boylston Record of Soldiers and Officers, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts

²³ Federal Census Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts

²⁴ Federal Census Records, Dublin, Cheshire County, New Hampshire

²⁵ Federal Census Records, Dublin, Cheshire County, New Hampshire

²⁶ Birth Records, Dublin, Cheshire County, New Hampshire, ancestry.com, digital image

²⁷ Federal Census Records, Dublin, Cheshire County, New Hampshire

²⁸ Marriage Records, Dublin, Cheshire County, New Hampshire, ancestry.com, digital image

²⁹ Federal Census Records, Dublin, Cheshire County, New Hampshire

³⁰ Veterans Schedules, Dublin, Cheshire County, New Hampshire

³¹ Death Records, Dublin, Cheshire County, New Hampshire, ancestry.com

³² Death Records, Dublin, Cheshire County, New Hampshire, ancestry.com

³³ Gravestone Memorial, Dublin Town Cemetery, Dublin, Cheshire County, New Hampshire, www.findagrave.com

Growing Up in Boylston

Rocky
Road To
Dublin

Gordon Hastings

NOW AVAILABLE!
on Amazon.com

*I looked forward to coming home to Boylston to share my book **Rocky Road to Dublin**. Since COVID 19 forced a postponement I hope that these excerpts will kindle memories of growing up in Boylston during the 1950s. I hope we can meet in person soon.*

Gordon Hastings

Winter Fun on a Bobsled!

Twelve kids took turns hauling the big bobsled down Cross Street to the top of Grandma Ware's Hill. It took ten minutes to get there. All landmarks in town were named after the person who lived closest. In this case it was Kenny Ware's grandmother.

"Libbey you and Bobby push, I'll steer, everyone else in the middle," Sonny said.

Sonny was the boss of the bobsled. It was essential that a very strong person be placed up front with their feet on the steering runners to navigate the sharp turns. The other critical job was that of the pushers. Ten of us climbed aboard placing our feet on the running boards. Hands and arms were wrapped firmly around the waist of the person in front. I was second in line behind my brother, and then came Sis and Carol.



"Everybody ready. Hold on, let's go!"

Sonny said.

Dave Libbey and Bobby Garfield charged forward with a great burst of speed then leapt onto the last two places at the back of the

bobsled. Their final thrust was so strong it jerked our heads. The bobsled moved faster and faster, rocking back and forth with a rumble from the metal runners against the hard-packed snow and ice. Sparks flew whenever the runners caught a bare spot on the road. Sonny's commands were carried back by the wind.

"Everybody lean right."

The sled approached the sharp turn half way down Grandma Ware's Hill. Everyone leaned as

far as possible over the right running board keeping the careening sled from tipping to the left. We screamed and cheered as the back runners snapped around the corner like a whip.

“Heads down, hang on,” Sonny said.

Running perfectly straight we roared downward with tremendous speed

flashing by Kenny Ware’s house then thundering down Cutler’s Hill blurring past the old Cutler farmhouse. Dad was waiting in at the intersection of Linden Street to halt any oncoming cars. He blinked an all clear with the headlights. The sled flew past the parked Chevy. We became momentarily airborne as it plunged across the crest of the nearly vertical grade past Moore’s barn, then slamming back to the surface with a bang. We careened even faster roaring over the bridge across Hastings Brook. Slowly, as it traveled up Reeds Hill, the bobsled came to a stop.

“We did it, we did it.” Everyone cheered at the end of the run.

“Best ever.”

“Let’s go again.”

**Answer
from page 1**



7 Central Street

Built in 1830 on land acquired from Silas Hastings with proceeds from a grant by Ward Nicholas Boylston, the Historic Town Hall is maintained and operated by the Boylston Historical Commission on behalf of the townspeople of Boylston, Massachusetts. The photograph on page 1 was taken in 1852 when the Town Hall also served as a high school for our town. It is one of the oldest Town Halls in constant use in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The Historic Town Hall is utilized by the local Appalachian Mountain Club Chapter, Boylston Historical Commission, Hillside Restoration Group, as well as serving as the *Home of the Boylston Historical Society and Museum*. The cornerstone was laid on 21 August 1830. The building is made of granite and has a bell tower complete with bell, which is rung on special holidays. The downstairs contains the Fuller Research Library, a work area and rest rooms. The basement contains a walk-in vault. The second floor which contains a large hall with original stage, serves as a meeting place for the townspeople, with ample room for lectures, presentations and celebrations. Additionally, it houses our museum which hosts rotating exhibits of Boylston's artifacts. The overhanging balcony houses our extensive Clothing Collection. We invite you to please stop in for a visit when the pandemic is behind us.

~ Nancy Filgate



Valentine's Day

By David Bottom

How Fortunate that the vicissitudes or kismet essence of life dictated that February fourteenth should be set aside as the day that joy and affection would quicken the heart and thus share the love with those who mean so much.

It is particularly meaningful to all of us who dwell in Worcester and its environs and for all Americans that the commercially made Valentine's card point of origin was here.

Esther Howland received a Valentine from England. Perhaps after recovering from a case of the "vapors," she arose from her divan determined to share this wonderful experience with others. Thus, in a modest dwelling on Summer Street in Worcester near to where her father operated a stationery store, she began her dream creating and writing Valentine's cards. About this time George Whitney and his brother of Grafton, Massachusetts pursued the concept of courtly affection. In 1869 they would cojoin work with Miss Howland to form the largest greeting card company in the world, the New England Valentine Company.

It is only just that historical precedents be embodied in a recounting of this day. It is commonly accepted that St. Valentine was persecuted for his faith. He was condemned to die by the cruel Emperor Claudius because of Valentine's actions to clandestinely perform marriages to soldiers at a time when it was thought a soldier should remain single and owe all his loyalty to the emperor and not to a wife or family. During Valentine's time in jail, the jailer's daughter had befriended the priest who cured her of blindness, thus prior to his execution, he wrote a letter to his jailer's daughter signed, "From Your Valentine."

When he clandestinely performed marriages for Roman soldiers, he gave them parchment hearts to remind them of their vows. Recount also that our forebearers in temperate climes knew February was the time the land began to reawaken and often referred to the mating birds as “Love Birds” because of the delight they provided. A pagan festival of love, called Lupercalia, celebrated this awakening in mid-February. As Christianity took hold and the old Roman ways waned, Pope Galasius declared that February 14 should be celebrated as St. Valentine’s Day, to celebrate the martyr, rather than recall a pagan holiday.

Since the princes of the church wore amethyst rings engraved with the Roman deity Cupid, this messenger of love also plays a prominent role on this special day. As to the special nature of this day, it is appropriate to mention that sweets, confections, gifts of flowers and love played, and still play, a prominent role to this day.



In conclusion, in order to signify your perpetual love, give the object of your affection a bouquet of violets and a “Flowering Almond,” the herbaceous shrub that likewise bares testimony to this most wonderous of days.



Valentine’s Day Card
Homemade
BHSM collection



Valentine’s Day Card
Manufactured
BHSM collection



Valentine’s Day Card
Homemade
BHSM collection

Acknowledgements: www.WorcesterHistory.org/Worcester-history/Worcesters-own/Valentines; www.history.com/this-day-in-history/St.Valentinebeheaded



Courtney's
Strawberry Parfait Amour



- 1-quart strawberries
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup water
- 3 egg whites
- 1-pint heavy cream

Wash, pick over hull, and mash berries. Sprinkle with one-half the sugar, cover and let stand several hours; then force through a fine strainer. Put remaining sugar in saucepan, add water, bring to a boiling point, and let boil until mixture will spin a thread when dropped from tip of spoon. Pour syrup gradually, while beating constantly, on whites of eggs, beaten until stiff. Cool and fold in cream, beaten until stiff. Freeze strawberry juice to a mush, add cream mixture, and continue the freezing.

Citation "The Boston Cooking School Cook Book, 1923

Courtney's Vintage Recipes



Kiss Me Cake

Grind together:
1 large orange (save juice)
1 cup seedless raisins
1/3 cup walnuts

Sift together:
2 cups flour
1 tsp baking soda
1 tsp salt

Add:
1 cup sugar
1.2 cup shortening
3/4 cup milk
Beat 2 minutes and add
2 eggs, unbeaten
1/4 cup milk
Beat well again:

Fold in:
Orange-raisin mixture to batter
Pour into a well-greased and floured pan.
Bake 40 to 50 minutes at 350 F.

Top with (while warm)
1/3 cup orange juice
1/3 cup sugar
1 tsp cinnamon
1/4 cup chopped walnuts

Citation: St. Croix County Homemakers, 1959

Colonial Beverages

SILLABUB

(favorite of Central Massachusetts)

Fill mug with cider

Add Nutmeg & 2 or 3 oz thick cream

Stir gently

STIRRUP CUP

(favorite of Paul Revere)

Half tsp brown sugar

Half oz. lime juice

1 oz. pineapple juice & 2 oz. light rum



A Day to Remember

On 14 October 1891, at the Third Meeting House, Mr. Daniel Lynch and Miss Hattie Louisa White were married in the presence of a large gathering of family and friends. The Reverend Austin Dodge of the Congregational Church of Boylston had officiated. Mr. Lynch, the son of Daniel and Margaret Lynch, was a prominent farmer in Boylston. Miss White, the daughter of Henry White and Sarah Louisa Hapgood, lived in Boylston and was a teacher in the Worcester public schools where she had taught for several years.

Flowers, evergreens, autumn leaves, and laurel arrangements adorned the Church for this festive event. Weddings are very special events and this one was made doubly interesting by the fact that it was the first to take place in the church for over half a century! The fashion of church weddings had died out in town. Many of the young people moved away prior to marriage and those who remained preferred the quiet of the home weddings with their parents saying nothing to their friends outside of the immediate families and simply let their union be discovered rather than announced. This wedding however, will go down in Boylston History as the first marriage in over a half century to take place in the Congregational Church of Boylston. Hattie's gorgeous wedding gown, shoes, announcement, as well as the newspaper clipping describing the church decorations and details of the day, are now part of our Boylston Historical Society & Museum Collection.



Overcrowding Causes Disaster

By Judy Haynes

Once upon a time [fairy tale reference as nothing will likely ever be quite the same!] when a pandemic wasn't raging, local churches often held community dinners that were particularly popular in winter as a way to raise money for the church and to provide a time to get out and savor some social time with friends and family. The reputation and quality of those dinners was so fine that it drew people from not only Boylston, but West Boylston and Worcester. On a fine winter evening of January 19, 1906, the Congregational Church held its 9th Annual Turkey Dinner. 'By 7 p.m. over 300 people were crowded into the structure. The first serving was just finishing, and a new group of people, some 100 or so, were standing in the vestibule waiting to eat. Suddenly, a loud splintering sound filled the air, and was followed by the collapse of a 10' x 20' section of the floor. Sixty people were hurled into the cellar below; at first there was only silence, and then the air was filled with screams and moans. The lamps had fallen into the gaping hole filling the vestibule with inky darkness. One of the broken lamps ignited a small fire, which was quickly extinguished. Everett Kendall of Boylston was the first to leap into the wreckage searching for victims. People streamed from all directions to bring help to the injured. Telephone lines crackled with calls for aid to Worcester and Shrewsbury, but because of the distance, it was an hour before medical help began to arrive. Most of the injured were from Worcester and West Boylston. Thirty-one people required medical assistance, and ten were seriously injured. By 8:30 P.M. most of the people had been taken away, either by barges, or on the electric trolleys. A subsequent investigation showed that the collapse was the result of overcrowding, and not because of any structural defect.' Today overcrowding leads to a different kind of medical disaster and one that keeps us from holding these special winter assemblies. We hope by January 2022 we can once again look forward to large gatherings with family and friends."

Acknowledgements: Boylston Historical Series, Filgate, ed 2012, pg. 499; Boylston Historical Society, Newspaper article dated January 20, 1906

Fascinating
Find!



One Little Red Fire Truck

By Carrie Crane

If you are of my generation and think about metal toy trucks, Tonka immediately comes to mind. As it turns out though, Tonka Toys, established in 1956, represents only the most recent phase of the metal toy truck history.

Let's go back to the 19th century to begin this story. In 1815 the sheet metal stamping machine was invented allowing for the mass production of tinplate metal toys. These toys were not only less expensive than the wooden ones available, but were more durable as well. And their light weight construction made it possible for inexpensive shipping.

By the 1920s, tinplate was replaced with pressed steel. New technology made it possible to press scrap steel into thin sheets that could then be cut and molded into shapes. As time went by the toys became more detailed and often replicated in miniature all the details of the life size car or truck. Until the early 20th century, these toys were mostly imported from European countries, Germany, France and England in particular. But with the 1914 trade embargoes and anti-German sentiments growing, along with an increase in mining at home, United States manufacturers were poised to take on the European competition. The domestic metal toy industry flourished throughout the 20th century, briefly stalling for WWII when the metal was needed for the war effort. As the war ended industry kicked into action again and thrived until plastics took hold.

In the collection at the Boylston Historical Museum there is a fine example of a steel pressed truck, the 28 ½ inch long *Buddy L Aerial Ladder Fire Truck* that once belonged to John Lawrence Brigham of Boylston. This vintage fire truck has a four section crank operated extension ladder which extends over 4 feet. Additionally, the ladder has a functional 180° turntable pivoting it. Other classic features which delighted a youngster's imagination included a steering wheel that turned the front wheels and the fire bell that rang with the pull of the string to sound the alarm. This toy was manufactured in 1929 by the Moline Pressed Steel Co. of Moline, Illinois, founded in 1910 by Fred Lundahl

The Moline Pressed Steel Co. initially manufactured parts for the automobile and farm machinery industry. By 1920 the machine industry had slowed down and Lundahl, an entrepreneur, made a toy model of one of his customer's farm trucks for his son, Arthur Bud who was known as Buddy L. The toy was well received by Buddy and his friends and represented a significant turn for the company. In 1921, he converted part of his machine shop into a toy-making shop. By 1923, the Moline company was shipping 70,000 toy trucks, cars, planes, trains and construction equipment a year. Sadly, Lundahl had only five years of successful toy manufacturing when at the age of 47 years, he died from complications following surgery, but his toy line would survive much longer, growing in value and fame reaching the highest collectors' peak about 20 years ago.

In 2001, Richard Keats, who owned the *Buddy L Company* from 1979 to 1990 auctioned off his collection of Buddy L toys for almost \$2.5 million and it wasn't just children buying them. He sums up the popularity of these toys this way, "In our genes, we as adults like all kinds of things when they are reduced to miniature size, whether they are toys, architectural models or patent samples. Children of course like anything adult that is miniaturized."

Acknowledgements: Editing & Photography by Nancy Filgate
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Shining a Light on Oil Lamps

By Inga Milbauer

Now that the days are getting shorter, we may appreciate the ability to turn on the lights in our homes even more. Until the advent of the electric lamp, candles, oil and gas lamps were used. This nineteenth century oil lamp from our museum collection is one of a set donated by the Boylston Public Library. The lamp, made of glass and brass, is set on a marble base.

In the early nineteenth century a variety of fuels were used in lamps in American households. These fuels included whale oil rendered from whale blubber, the more expensive spermaceti (from the head of sperm whales), lard and rapeseed oil.



This changed when Isaiah Jennings of New York developed a mix of turpentine and alcohol to be used as fuel for oil lamps in 1830. The mixture of turpentine, alcohol and camphor oil derived from the wood of camphor trees, was patented by Henry Porter of Bangor, Maine with the name “burning fluid” in 1835. He started a business in Boston to sell this new fuel and it became known as Porter’s Burning Fluid. Because it burned bright and smelled good, it became a popular lamp fuel. It was, however, also dangerous as the Boston Mattapan Register reported that house fires and injuries were common. The newspaper noted on September 1859: *“There are different kinds of lamps and of lamp oil, adapted to different tastes and circumstances; and there is one at least, most abominable invention under the name of Camphene Oil, or Burning Fluid, which were better denominated a Swift and Ready Means of Destruction for Private Families; for this designation would convey a true idea of its nature and effects.”*

Consumer demand for “burning fluid” grew despite the risks. By 1856 Rufus H. Spalding had taken over Henry Porter’s business in Boston and was “the Sole Manufacturer of Porter’s Patent Composition.” The company also sold many ornamental lighting devices, lanterns and lamps.

In 1853 the Canadian scientist Abraham Gesner patented and coined the term kerosene for “coal oil” extracted from coal. The discovery that oil could be refined into kerosene, in combination with the discovery of oil in Pennsylvania led to a revolution in lighting. In 1857 Michael Dietz brought a clean burning kerosene lamp to the market. He made improvements in 1860 and 1880 to the original “wick lamp” which led to increasingly brighter lamps.

Bill Kovarik, professor of communication at Radford University, estimates the prices for the different lamp fuels in 1850 as follows:

Camphine (“burning fluid”) 50 cents/gallon

Whale oil \$1.30 to \$2.50/gallon

Lard oil 90 cents/gallon

Coal oil 50 cents/gallon (the original kerosene)

Kerosene from petroleum 60 cents/gallon (introduced in the early 1860s)

When Congress passed the Revenue Act of 1862 to help pay for the Civil War, it included a tax on alcohol. Since the tax applied to the alcohol used in camphine production, it became more costly than kerosene. Kerosene became the standard lighting fuel in homes. A purified version of kerosene is used for modern oil lamps, which some of us may still use when the power goes out!

Acknowledgements: Photography by Nancy Filgate, aoghs.org, collectorsweekly.com, pbs.org, thecanadianencyclopedia.ca, wikipedia.com

The Boylston Common

By Inga Milbauer



Boylston Common circa 1900 - east view

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language describes a common as “a tract of land, usually in a centrally located spot, belonging to or used by a community as a whole.” In the earliest European settlements in New England, the place specifically reserved for the meeting house became the common. The meeting house originally served dual purposes, as a house of worship and a place for public affairs, until the 1833 amendment to the Massachusetts State Constitution separated church and state. As people built homes and businesses adjacent to the common, it became the center of the town.

The original Boylston Common was situated on the north side of the Old Burial Ground, approximately a tenth of a mile south of the location of the present common. The land for the First Meeting House and the burial ground was donated in 1742 by Lieutenant Eleazar Taylor, one of Boylston’s earliest settlers. The Meeting House was built in 1743, with its main door facing the Old Burial Ground. It served as the meeting house for 50 years. On the southeastern corner of the Common the Hearse House was built in 1743. The first school house was located on the northeasterly corner. The Taylor Tavern and Store, located opposite the Meeting House on Main Street, opened in 1760. In 1772, the First Noon House, or Sabbath House, was built behind the Meeting House. In this period before stoves were used in churches, worshippers would go there to warm themselves between services and share the noontime meal.

The Second Meeting House, with a bell tower and a clock, was built in 1793 on the site of the present Sawyer Memorial Library. The area we now know as the Boylston Common became the “New Common” at this time. The second Noon House was built in 1796 near the spot where the current War Memorial stands. It stayed in use until 1835. The Third Meeting House was built in 1835 where the First Congregational Church now stands. It was first used on December 10th by the church members, who enjoyed their first meeting house with heating facilities. Unfortunately, the Third Meeting House burned down in 1924. A Fourth (and final) Meeting House was built in 1927 on this site overlooking the Boylston Town Common.

In the photograph above, we see the Town Hall in the background and the original Center Store, known then as the Corner Store, on the left. The Town Hall was built in 1830 with proceeds from a grant by Ward Nicholas Boylston. The Corner Store was built in 1811 by Deacon Jonathan Bond Sr. At the time of this photograph, it was owned by George Reed Hastings who ran the store from

1888-1912. In the early 1900s Boylston Common was the bustling center of the town with two general stores, a millinery shop, post office, the public library, town hall, and the meeting house.



Boylston Common circa 1910 - southeast view



Boylston Common 1998 - south view

The Boylston Town Common remains the focal point of the town, serving as the center for festivities and commemorations, such as the Memorial Day celebrations. It provides residents with a beautiful location for the Boylston Deli Cafe, Sawyer Memorial Public Library, First Congregational Church, and our Historic Town Hall which serves as a meeting place for various local organizations and our Boylston Historical Museum.

Acknowledgements: Photographs from the archives of BHSM, <https://ahdictionary.com>, Boylston Historical Series, Bruce Filgate, ed. 2012, <https://www.newenglandhistoricalsociety.com/tour-new-englands-uncommon-town-commons>

The Man Who Lived in 3 towns, But Never Moved

By Nancy Filgate

On Friday, May 5, 1916, Carrie L. Williams who had been a teacher in Boylston's South School, and later the Northeast School as well as the Center School, stated that her great-grandfather Lieutenant Elijah Ball, had lived in three towns, but never moved from his farm. Is this a factual story or a fable? The facts herein unfold the true history of the Ball Farm. Elijah Ball, the son of Phineas Ball and Martha Bixby, was born 2 March 1748 in Holden, Massachusetts. He acquired property in Lancaster, Massachusetts where he built a house. He married Rebecca Moore on 18 October 1770 and they settled on the Ball Farm of Lancaster. In 1780, Elijah Ball was one of the petitioners who requested to set off this section of Lancaster to become part of Shrewsbury (North Precinct). This was accepted, granted, and confirmed by Massachusetts General Court on 23 June 1780. This boundary for the dividing line between Lancaster and Shrewsbury was now marked by a heap of stones just south of the Ball Place. On 1 March 1786, Shrewsbury's North Precinct was incorporated as the Town of Boylston, Massachusetts. The Ball Farm was run for 150 years by the Ball family and was located on what we now know as Mile Hill Road, Boylston, Massachusetts! So, yes indeed, Elijah Ball who died in 1834 had lived in the towns of Lancaster, Shrewsbury and Boylston and had never left home!

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