



29-31 Central Street

Known on the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Map as *The Physician's House*, this colonial home was built around 1800, at which time it was owned and occupied by Dr. Thaddeus Chinnery, who moved here from Holden in 1793; originally residing at 15 School Street and then later relocating with his young family to this home on Central Street. He had married Miss Polly Dodds of Princeton on 20 April 1794 at Boylston. Their 3,390 square foot home had 6 bedrooms, 3 baths, and was donned with full covered veranda that ran the length of the structure.

The second physician to reside in this home was Dr. Seth Knowlton, a native of Shrewsbury, who had moved to town with his young family from Lancaster. Seth was born 11 May 1781 the son of Deacon William Knowlton and Hannah Hastings. In March 1805 Dr. Seth Knowlton purchased the home at 29-31 Central Street for \$1300 from Dr. Thaddeus Chinnery. Dr. Knowlton's time was short lived as he left Boylston in 1819 after a scandal of a body snatching in 1810 shadowed the medical community. Boylston's Town Historian, the late George Lawson Wright, related some bare facts surrounding this mysterious incident that may pique your curiosity. The story told herein was one from the writing of Mr. Wright combined with oral history passed down by the Flagg family and an attempt by the late historian, William Dupuis to research the facts further to arrive at a meaningful conclusion.

Apparently, there was in Boylston, Massachusetts, a young man, 18 years old, known as Moses Robert Bondsman, son of Cato. Moses, a free man, had formerly been a previous indentured servant of Captain Robert Andrews, Jr. After he was declared a freeman, Moses remained in the employ of the family of the late Robert Andrews Sr. It was in winter of 1810 that he had been hurt while out hauling wood. After seeking medical help from a young physician who has moved into town, Moses continued to grow worse; then after a few hours of intense suffering, he died. Then the story gets fuzzy at this point. One version says he was interred in the back part of the Old Burial Ground. Although a likely place; it would not likely to have occurred in the winter months as burials were not usually performed in colder months and bodies were kept for burial to take place once spring arrived. The second version of the story states that a hired man at a nearby tavern house, returned to the barn after being out late and lay down to sleep on the hay. When he awoke the next morning, he was surprised to find that he had been sleeping with the body of Moses, side by side. This is a more likely version with the fact that the event occurred in cold winter month February 1810. The story does not end here, but the body disappears and the head ends up hanging from the underpinnings of the bridge where the brook flows out of Pine Swamp. Two rumors surfaced about the cadaver; the first was that it was taken by the medical community to provide an anatomical specimen for the Medical School at Harvard University and the second was that it was taken as a youngster's prank. Sadly, the remains of this young man were never discovered.

By 1825 the home was occupied by yet another physician, Dr. John Andrews who retired in 1865. Dr. Andrews was born in 1792 the son of Robert Andrews Jr. and his wife Dorothy Goodenow of Boylston. He had studied medicine with Dr. Stephen Ball of Northborough and went on to serve as Boylston physician for 40 years. He was involved in town affairs, serving as selectman, assessor, treasurer, representative of the General Court, moderator at Town Meetings, as well as holding a position as Deacon in the church. Dr. Andrews was the last resident physician; from 1865 to 1886 Boylston would have no medical practitioner in the town.



We are sad to report that on 30 January 2022, this 200-year-old historic building filled with antiques was destroyed by a billowing smoke filled 3 alarm fire; a part of Boylston's history is now gone.

Several town fire departments assisted the Boylston Fire Department with mutual aid including, Berlin, Clinton, Holden, Lancaster, Northborough, Shrewsbury, and West Boylston. We at the Boylston Historical Society & Museum would like to honor our brave Fire Fighters who battled this horrific blaze. A piece of our history is indeed now gone with all of us very thankful that no life was lost.