

**Early Notes on Walpole
from Mrs. Porter Boyden's Writings
(1897)**

"South and West Walpole seemed to have had special attractions for the early settlers. South Walpole for its water power and West Walpole for its agricultural facilities; ...Four years before the incorporation of our town (c.1720) a clothing mill was established on what is called Clark's privilege in So. Walpole. Here the Boyden, Mann, Smith, and Ellis families settled--At the beginning of the present century Walpole Plain (19th century) was considered the best part of the town; its men and women, its farms and its herds of cattle had no superiors. A new school house was built in 1772 and the school averaged 40 scholars for many years. In building the school house 50 cents per day was paid for labor and one of the articles in the warrant for the town meeting reads "to see if the Proprietors will choose a committee to see the work done in building a school house and to let everyone of the Proprietors do their equal part or proportion in said building, in labor and in money according to agreement." At this end of the town were located a tannery, lime kiln and a furnace. Much earlier in our history a saw mill was located on Neponset River near the Cedar Swamp, between West and So. Walpole.

The Meeting-House "was built on the land now used as the Common, this belonged to Thomas Clap; at his death it was given to the town 'so long as said town shall see cause to improve ye same, as it is now improved and to build and rebuild meeting houses on ye said land and no other building;" this was dated April 4, 1739.

The name of Ezekiel Robbins is one not to be forgotten, he was the proprietor of the famous Golden Ball Tavern (Brass Ball) which was located not far from the Batting Mills of today, it was here that people took their lunch on the Sabbath between meetings and everybody went to see the clock, which was the first one of its kind in Walpole.

The old milestone that now stands in front of our Town Hall Building, is one of the many that were placed at intervals of a mile throughout the town. In the center of the town the Clap family seemed to have been among the earliest and most enterprising of the settlers. At one time the most of that portion of our town between Spring Brook and the Neponset River was owned by that family. In 1795 what is now known as the Stetson privilege was owned by Ebenezer Hartshorn who had a Grist Mill there, built in 1796 it was sold to Joshua Stetson who commenced the manufacture of farming tools. In the early part of the present century (19th century) a cotton factory was on this site also a card clothing factory owned by Deacon Everett Stetson. The cotton factory was sold and in 1855 Mr. Stetson became sold proprietor of the whole privilege and continued to manufacture of Card Clothing until in later years he was succeeded by its present owner Mr. E.P. Stetson. Eleazer Smith who is known as the inventor of the card machine lived just beyond the former home of Mr. Ollis Gay; when but 16 years he invented the pin machine, in one day he made 1500 pins, the greater part of the time being spent in pointing them, which he was obliged to do on a grindstone; he also cut the first nail in America from cold iron with a machine of his own invention he was the inventor of several other

machines but received very little financial benefit from his labors. Early in the century we find saw-mill at the Henry Blackburn privilege and a little later a machine shop; in 1820 a snuff mill was located at the Union (so-called) also a tanyard and foundry, at the same time where the Batting Mills now stand was located the business of Daniel Clap, Clothier. At Plimptonville we find a hoe manufactory owned by Dea. Henry Plimpton, also a satinet mill owned by Daniel Ellis.

Rev. Mr. Morey died in 1829 and all his manuscripts were destroyed at his request, but a remainder of him still exists in the row of beautiful elms planted by his hands near his old home on the Medfield road.

The house now owned by Mrs. Lamson (the Goddard house??) has been the home of many highly respected people: as early as 1765 it was occupied by Dr. Ebenezer Doggett who was an eminent position of the place; later it was occupied by a noble family exiled from their home in the Isle of Martinique during the French Revolution and a stone in the old Cemetery bearing the date of 1803 marks the resting place of a governor of one of these islands. It is said that Gen. Washington once stopped here overnight on his way through the town. The memory of Mr. Loring Johnson still lingers about the place a benediction to all that knew him.

East Walpole was the home of Warren Colburn the famous arithmetician and author of Colburn's Arithmetic and some of our oldest residents today have very pleasant recollections of him and his family. The part taken by our town at the time of our Civil War was very creditable; it furnished 126 men for the war and one commissioned officer, and about \$15,000 for its expenses.

by E. J. Ella Boyden May 7, 1896.

Items from the second article written in 1897.

Until the Town Hall was built (1881?) with its fire proof safe, the records, reports and valuable documents, were left in the closet, set aside for that purpose, in the lower part of our church (Unitarian). More than once, these papers were dislodged by unknown persons and found scattered about, and we can readily see how uncertain it would be, whether all were there when collected, or that several were missing. Some of the early tax lists were found in a second-hand book-store in Boston, and were bought by one of our citizens. These, I am told, were donated to our Library and afterwards claimed by the officer appointed by the state to look after such matters. At the present time, the first tax list issued by this town is in the possession of a resident of Foxboro.

157 men, almost one fifth of the entire population, responded to the alarm at Concord . (1775). A list of the soldiers who served in the Revolution, is in the safe possession of our town and in its original form. The church was embodied July 2, 1730--a program of the service used at this time is also given--church records.

Until 1784 no provision was made for the education of the girls. In 1772 a new school-house was

built upon the Plains, with an attendance second in size to that of the center. In 1797 there were five schools kept in Walpole and the length of term was not the same in all sections of the town. One half the money was raised according to the valuation and one half in proportion to the number of scholars; so it is happened that the section containing the most valuable property and the greatest number of scholars, could have the longest term of school. English currency was used until February 19, 1796, all accounts after that date are given in dollars and cents.

In January 1797, the money for schools was divided and given to the different sections as follows:

Center----- \$119.27
North----- 12.66
Ellis Corner----- 19.38
West----- 61.45
South----- 39.94

Five musters have been held on the broad fields of the Plain, and one of them designated as the "great training" held after the close of the Revolution lasted two days. There was a mock battle and the Heights of Cape Breton were besieged and captured, somebody representing Cornwallis surrendering Gen. Pond. At the muster preceding the last one the soldiers were reviewed and addressed by Edward Everett, then Governor of the State. I do not think this is correct--Edward Everett was Governor of Mass. from 1836-1840. The Revolutionary War soldiers would all be dead by then.

The earliest road?? that can be remembered from Boston to Providence was over the Plain and through Wrentham. A tavern was kept at West Walpole Elijah Clark where travelers were entertained, and the stages stopped to change horses on their way to Providence. The cellar is still to be seen near the railroad bridge, not far from the present school-house.

Two old taverns in So. Walpole. The Polley tavern (now torn down) and the other the Fuller Tavern. The old boot shop, now standing, was used as the stables. I am told that between thirty and forty stages passed through here daily and many distinguished people were in this way, guests at the Taverns. In 1824, when General Lafayette was making his visit to this country, he traveled by this route, and as it became known that he would take dinner here, the veterans of the Revolution gathered and formed a line as he came out of the tavern, to salute him. Mr. Holland Wood, (the father of Capt. Wood, who died in this town about 22 years ago) had served with Lafayette and was with him in New Jersey. He was among the number gathered here, and recognized by the General and warmly shaken the hand. George Washington may have passed through the town, as he spent the night of April 4, 1776 in Dedham on his way to New York. One of the Bonaparte family, a brother of the first Napoleon is said to have ridden through, and the children were dismissed from school in order to see him, but little was gained as even the carriage was covered.

Alexander Hamilton once came here and visited the hoe shop which was located at Plimptonville, this being the only shop of the kind in this part of the country. John Quincy Adams stopped here more than once; he much pleased with the manner in which he was

entertained and expressed a desire to see the landlady, and found her engaged in the useful art of washing the kitchen floor. It was remarked that her grace and manners were equal to the occasion and she left one duty for the other without any apparent discomfiture.

In 1833 Gen. Andrew Jackson, then President of the U.S. accompanied by Martin Van Buren and members of his cabinet also traveled through the town on his way to Boston.

A toll-gate was kept near the grist-mill by Deacon James Boyden, and ...the road belonged to the same Corporation that owned the stages and this was the method to raise money for keeping the road in repair at this place.

A broadcloth mill was one of the industries located in So. Walpole, with machinery for fulling the cloth in the basement, and situated just below the Clarke homestead of today. The mill lately known as the woolen mill, was used for carding and spinning the yarn for the broadcloth mill. The broadcloth mill was burned and the two privileges united, and a fine apple orchard now takes the place of the former mill pond. Mr. Timothy Mann, the proprietor of this mill, was called upon by Warren Colburn, the author of Colburn's Arithmetic. his errand was to negotiate for sufficient cloth for a suit of clothes, but he was entirely without means to pay for it; he had his Arithmetic ready for publication, but must have a new suit to wear in visiting publishers; he offered to pay as soon as he should receive the money in return for book, and Mr. Mann furnished the cloth accordingly. Colburn's Arithmetic was a success, and the cloth was easily paid for out of its receipts.

Mr. Josiah Hall, one of the old time residents of this section, lived some time after celebrating his 100th birthday; he was given a reception in the vestry of the Methodist church (S.W.) and a supper was served to all who came.

In the early days of some of our present oldest residents, a circulating library was established by subscription at Walpole Center, and kept at the home now occupied by the Booth family. Later it was kept at the home of Nathaniel Bird's father, on the same spot where the old house now stands near our common. The daughter, Mary, was librarian. The books were read and worn out and the remains of this library were distributed among the families who had subscribed towards it originally.

A Lyceum was organized in town in 1830, and one of the questions discussed was the following: "Is it expedient for the town to erect a Town House." A course of lectures was given by several of its members, and it may be interesting to hear the subjects presented by them:

- 1 - Art of Printing -- by Mr. Joseph H. Walker
- 2 - Astronomy -- by Mr. Plimpton
- 3 - Domestic Economy -- Asa Whitman
- 4 - Effects of Machinery -- by Edward Wright Clap
- 5 - Knowledge -- Horatio Wood
- 6 - Present State of Society -- by Rev. P.B. Storer
- 7 - Cotton and its Manufacture -- Joshua Stetson, Jr.
- 8 - History -- Erastus Clap

9 - Art -- Ira Gill

from article by J.Ella Boyden 1897 (Mrs. Porter Boyden)

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