

Town Seal of Walpole **by Harry A. Whiting (1919)**

As the Town Seal has been very much in evidence of late, particularly on the testimonials presented to soldiers and sailors and as a study in the High School, this seems to be an opportune time to explain the significance of the design of Walpole's Town Seal.

The illustration on the average town or city seal is usually about as easy to understand as the characters on an Egyptian obelisk but each one, when the meaning is interpreted, is a study of human achievement.

The original town seal of Walpole had only the date of incorporation, with a blank space in the center and, to a stranger, it would appear that the incorporation was about all that the Town could boast of. To correct this impression, and to be on an equal with other towns in this respect, a Committee was appointed at a Town Meeting held March 4, 1912, "To receive designs for a new town seal, said designs to be submitted by the inhabitants of Walpole." The following committee were appointed:

Harry A. Whiting, Originator of the Motion
Henry M. Stowell, Chairman of Selectman
Harry L. Howard, Town Clerk
Frank O. Pilsbury, Town Treasurer
Henry P. Plimpton, Chairman of Water Commissioners

At a Town Meeting held April 7, 1913, it was voted "that the Committee on Town Seal be authorized to expend a sum of money not exceeding \$25.00 in securing a design for a Town Seal."

Notices were published offering a prize of \$25.00 for the best design for a Town Seal, same to be submitted on or before Jan. 1, 1914. Several drawings were received by the Committee and on Jan 6, 12914, the Committee met and accepted the design submitted by Miss Edna Buck of High Street, Walpole, a student in the High School, and awarded the prize to her. This design depicts the "Old Saw Mill", the first building erected within the limits of what is now the town of Walpole, and the idea taken from the history of Walpole, written by our fellow-townsmen, Isaac Newton Lewis, Esq., to whom the town is greatly indebted for the care and time spent in searching the old records of Dedham and Walpole and later publishing them in an up-to-date history of our Town. It is pleasing to note that this book is one of the most sought for in our library and schools.

In accepting Miss Buck's design, it was the opinion of the Committee that it portrayed the Old Saw Mill and its surroundings, as they actually were at that time, better than any other design submitted. In illustrating the sluice-way for the water to run to the wheel, she showed stakes driven into the ground with hewed logs for the sides, which was correct, as, of course, the wheel

had to be turned before anything could be sawed for that purpose. This fact, with the wild appearance of the background, showed remarkable imagination on her part in portraying conditions as they actually existed at that time.

There were four things shown on the design, each of which vividly represents part of the early history of Walpole.

FIRST - The Neponset River - The very foundation of the early industrial life of Walpole. From its source in North Foxborough to the Fowl Meadows, there were a dozen water privileges where the water in its journey to the sea turned the wheels at each of these dams, ground the corn for the early settlers and sawed the logs to build their houses. These waterfalls in later years made Walpole famous for the diversity of its industries located along the banks of the river.

SECOND - The Wheel - signifying "industry" for which Walpole has been known far and wide from the time when the old mill was erected about 1650 to the present time, when the products of our mills amount to many millions.

THIRD - The trees in the background - representing the cedars, one of the many gifts from the "Giver of All" to the early settlers of the new world. Their value was so appreciated that a road, called the "Saw Mill Road", was built from Dedham to the Great Cedar Swamp, so that our Mother Town might avail herself of this raw material to build her homes and meeting houses. Owing to their great height and straight grain, an entire building was built of them, excepting the hand forged nails, as shingles, clapboards, boards and framing. All came out of the same tree and of a No. 1 quality for the purpose. Nearly all of the old houses of this town contain the cedar frames, etc., in their construction. Many of the best trees were carted by oxen to Boston to be used as masts for the "Yankee ships" which sailed on every sea.

The last and most conspicuous is the "Old Saw Mill" and if you afford yourself the pleasure of reading Mr. Lewis's history you will find that nearly all the records of Dedham which mention anything regarding our part of the original town read "at or near the old Saw Mill". The last record is as follows in part, "May 14, 1772. This day the inhabitants of the South part of the Town, at or near the old Saw Mill, presented a petition to the Town desiring to be set off from this Town as a township or precinct, etc." So the "River" to turn the wheel, the "Cedars" so tall, straight and perfect of grain and the "Old Saw Mill" to prepare them to build the homes of our antecedents were the foundations of an industrial greatness and are a fitting design for our permanent Town Seal.