
Charlton Historical Society Newsletter

Fall, 2007

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News for Charlton Historical Society Members

County Gore

By William O. Hultgren

Vast areas of land were sparsely occupied by the various Indian tribes when the colonists arrived in the early 17th century. Following King Philips War in 1676, the victorious English by "right of conquest and deed" opened tracts of land for settlement. Included in these lands were large areas in what was to become Worcester County Massachusetts.

The year 2007 marks the 250th anniversary of annexation of the Gore to Charlton. The Gore was a 10,000 acre wedge-shaped tract of land whose apex was in Auburn and whose wide end was in Sturbridge. This Gore resulted when the towns of Oxford, Leicester, and Brookfield were surveyed. After the bounds of these towns were established, it was found that this Gore of land was left over, and not included in any town. This caused a problem for purchasers of land in the Gore since their deeds could not be recorded, they belonging to no town or county.

In 1719, a committee of the General Court, chaired by William Dudley, was appointed to make a survey of these Gore lands and found the Gore contained 10,851 acres and ran nearly 10 miles from Auburn to Sturbridge. The House of Representatives ordered that the land contained in the Gore be sold and the money be returned to the public treasury, with the stipulation that no one person could purchase more than 300 acres. The land was divided into 32 lots of 300 acres each. By 1721, William Dudley could report to the House that the land had been sold but he could not give a title to the land since it was not within any county. It was then voted to assign the Gore lands to Suffolk County. Therefore, all the early deeds to the Gore lands are found in the Suffolk Registry of Deeds in Boston, and all are dated July 20, 1723.

On February 10, 1755, the District of Charlton was established. Noticeably, the Gore lands were not included. It should be noted that the Gore had been considered as part of the contemplated new town, but was not included in its territory when incorporated. It was not long before it was found that the Gore lands could not continue as they

were, belonging to no town, and the logical solution was to join with Charlton, to form a coherent whole. As a result, in 1756, a petition was drawn up and submitted to the General Court under governor-in-chief William Shirley asking that all the land and estates west of the northeast corner of Charlton lying in the Gore be annexed to the District of Charlton. On June 3, 1757 the joint committee of the House of Representatives made a report in favor of the petitioners and "ordered that the said gore of land and inhabitants thereon, within the bounds petitioned for, be annexed to the district of Charlton." The governor signed the bill, and the boundary of Charlton containing the Gore was established.

One interesting fact relates to Lot 24: In 1722, Samuel Dummer, later Sheriff of Middlesex County, bought lot 24 from the State's Committee. He turned it around and sold it to William Lambert of Boston, The deed gives us a glimpse of 18th century practices. The sale consisted of 300 acres for L 400 and "my negro man called Cambridge about 22 years and my red velvet saddle with Silver lace, Bridle housing and furniture belonging thereto." The sale must not have been consummated for we find Dummer selling the same property in 1736 to John Weld of Roxbury, for the reduced price of L 210.

Papers at the Rider tavern received from Arthur Dodge, authorship attributed to Rufus Dodge, lists the following as the Gore inhabitants who were taxed after it was added to Charlton: Joseph Baldwin, James Blanchard, David Brown, William Cummins, John Convers, Nathaniel Dewey, Nathan Dennis, Samuel Eustis, Nathaniel Eustis, Philip Gage, Aaron Gleason, Ebenezer Hammond, Jonas Hammond, David Hammond, Nathaniel Jones, Henry Merritt, Ephraim Morey, Joseph Parker, Thomas Parker, Thomas Parker Jr., Malachi Partridge, William Parker, Nehemiah Stone, Jonathan Tucker, William Tucker, John Thompson, Ebenezer White, Josiah White, Daniel Weld, Job Weld, Noah Weld, Daniel Williams, Benjamin Ward, Uriah Ward, Jonathan Wheelock, Paul Wheelock, David Wheelock, Peter Sleeman, and Jonathan Upham.

Travel Time

By Cindy Cooper

Route 20 in Charlton is dotted with so many service stations it is dubbed "Gasoline Alley." Numerous hotels and overnight cabins entice weary travelers as they traverse the busy road. That scene happened fifty years ago. Drastic changes arose after the Massachusetts legislature approved the creation of the Massachusetts Turnpike in 1952.

A strategy implemented by Massachusetts Department of Public Works Commissioner William Callahan divided the entire turnpike project into 33 distinct tasks. Multiple construction businesses all labored at the same time, each with a specific component to finish. More congestion occurred on Route 20 during construction of the six miles of the pike that run through Charlton. Two companies completed the sections in town, one from Durham, North Carolina, and the other a Memphis, Tennessee consortium. A firm from Norwood, MA built all the bridges along the Charlton portion.

Delays occurred, but one in particular affected Charlton. Flooding in August of 1955 caused a dam to break, rushing water toward Charlton City. Gravel fill stockpiled for the construction of the turnpike temporarily slowed the torrent of water, giving residents more time to evacuate before devastation struck. That gravel is credited with saving lives.



Massachusetts Turnpike under construction in 1956

Looking west from Hammond Hill bridge

The entire 123-miles of the Massachusetts Turnpike was completed in only five years! The turnpike opened fifty years ago, on May 15, 1957. William Hultgren remembered, "It took so much traffic off of Route 20 that some of the business owners went and petitioned the state to have signs put up at the Turnpike exit telling people to take Route 20 and to stop at the local businesses... All of these businesses were severely affected by the dramatic drop off in the amount of traffic in the area."

Property Committee Report

By Don Weinhardt, Chairman and Archivist

This is a summary of just some of the artifact and archival items donated to the Charlton Historical Society since our last newsletter in the Spring 2007.

Clarence A. Bachand, Charlton - A framed engraving, 28" x 21", titled "Washington and His Family", dated 1864. (Note; This item was repackaged by New England Graphics in Sturbridge, as a donation with conservation glass, archival mat and backing).

William O. Hultgren, Charlton - Commemorative plate, Limoge, "Marquis De Lafayette at the Battle of Brandywine, September 11, 1777", Premiere Edition No. 667, c. 1974.

Margaret Whitney, Warminster, PA - Book, hard cover "Worcester County Massachusetts, Warnings, 1737 - 1788," published by Franklin P. Rice, Worcester in 1899. This is a 1992 reprint.

Harry Howard, Charlton - Bowl, earthenware, with brown transfer decoration, it is signed by G. Phillips, Longport and the scene is titled Park Scenery.

Cindy Cheever, Paxton - Paintings (2), theorem, painted by folk artist Virginia Lawler of Paxton, framed 11.5" x 9.5".

Joyce and Fred Stewart, Auburn - Books, two, hard cover reference books for early New England architecture, a third book, soft cover, "The Forgotten Art of Building a Stone Wall", by Curtis P. Field.

Carol A. Weinhardt, Charlton - Spooner, clear, pressed glass, and a redware mug, signed OSV.

Peter and Cynthia Cooper, Charlton - Spoons, set of six, coin silver, signed J. Wakefield (Note: J. Wakefield was silversmith John Wakefield, who had a business in the area of Rockland and East Thomaston, Maine from about 1844 to about 1860).

Also an early wood-framed mirror, 21" x 15"; **Carol and Dawn Smeltzer**, Charlton - Parasol, beige satine and lace with a carved wood handle and tip, length 36.5", excellent condition. (Donor's note indicates the item is from Freda Clark's attic and is believed to have belonged to Aunt Merriam).

Bill Guy, Charlton - Book, soft cover, "The Blacksmith, Ironworker and Farrier", by Aldren A. Watson, published by Norton in 1977.

Roger A. Clark, Hereferdshire, UK - Photos, three, black and white, 7.5" x 9.5", mounted on white board, two are the exterior of the Rider Tavern and the third is the exterior of the No. 2 District School House;

Rutland Historical Society, Rutland, MA via Mrs. Irene T. Amsden - Photo, black and white, 8" x 38", Annual County Picnic of Worcester County Extension Service at Masonic Home Aug. 14, 1929.

Thank you all for helping to preserve Charlton's past. Also note, that the archive and library re-organization is moving forward, and very good progress is being made. If you have, or know someone who has, any locally significant material, and is looking for a good permanent home for it, please contact me at 248-1632.

Calendar of Events

September 3rd: *Charlton Old Home Day*: displays about County Gore, an old map of the town, and a tribute to the Charlton High School class of 1957 (celebrating fifty years since graduation). Visit us at the Grange Hall on the town common (Main Street) from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m.

September 9th: *Rider Tavern guided tours* from 1 to 3 p.m. Guests will hear about the Worcester and Stafford Turnpike, stagecoaches, and businesses in the area during the time period that the Rider brothers ran the tavern. A great way to celebrate Grandparents Day! Donation: \$1.00.

September 10th: "*Pictorial History of Webster and Dudley*" is a free program presented by author John Mzrack at 7:00 p.m. at the Rider Tavern. Light refreshments will be served.

September 15th: *Rug Hooking Guild open house* from 10 to 2 at the Rider Tavern. Contact Marcia Beal at 413-245-7335 for more information.

September 24th: *Area historical societies* will gather at the Rider Tavern to share ideas.

September 30th: *History Day*: Enjoy the Heritage String Band, play period games, watch spinning and sewing demonstrations, view displays, and explore the historic Rider Tavern. Free. Gingerbread and tea may be purchased for \$5.00.

For more information about any of these events, or to volunteer to help, call Cindy Cooper at 508-248-7840.

Summer Time Fun

By Cindy Cooper

Lines formed early and continued throughout the day as area residents enjoyed a free appraisal of two treasures on March 24th. Thank you, Stuart Brody and the staff at Showcase Antique Center, for providing this service.

A full bus appreciated Bill Hultgren's narration during a tour of Charlton's historic sites on April 28th, leaving those on the waiting list wishing that they had registered earlier.

Thank you, Aimee E. Newell, for presenting an illustrated lecture of the early meetings of the local freemasons and the establishment of the Charlton Masonic Home, during our annual meeting on June 4th.

Trivia questions were answered with lots of laughs on June 16th. Our gratitude goes to Jamie Kordack for again organizing and hosting this great fundraiser.

Beautiful blue skies complemented the Garden tours on June 23rd. We appreciate the Charlton Garden Club for enthusiastically organizing this event, opening their yards full of wonderful plantings for guests to view, and volunteering to serve treats they brought to the tasty tea.

Guided tours of the Rider Tavern on July 8th and August 12th included hearing about County Gore's businesses, early local residents, the Worcester and

Stafford Turnpike, and stagecoach travel. (If you missed these, plan to attend the final guided tour of the season on September 9th).

The celebration of 250 years since the addition of County Gore continued on August 13th. Thank you, Bill Hultgren, for presenting the informative program.

Thank You

We appreciate the generosity of the following members and area businesses. Their contributions are essential resources that allow CHS to open the tavern for guided tours, provide programs and events, and continue the restoration work in the Rider Tavern. We could not preserve and celebrate Charlton's history without their financial support.

Member Support

Colleen Caplette

Jayne Hanscom, in honor of her teacher,

Inez Gornall-Cloward

Carol E. Jones

Dave Lofgren

Dawn Pettinelli

Plus 51 donors listed

in the Spring Newsletter

Corporate Sponsors

Please help us thank them

by patronizing these businesses:

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Charlton Information Project

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Cronin Cabinets-Marine

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Lebouef Rubbish Removal

Webster First Federal

Yankee Spirits, Inc.

Grants

Charlton Cultural Council

Massachusetts Cultural Council

Webster Five Foundation

Your tax-deductible contributions can be sent to:

Charlton Historical Society

P.O. Box 252

Charlton, MA 01507

THANK YOU

Charlton Historical Society
P. O. Box 252
Charlton, MA 01507

Fall 2007

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P. O. Box 252
Charlton, MA 01507

Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

Type of Membership:

_____ **Individual \$5.00** _____ **Family \$10.00**

_____ **Life \$50.00**

_____ **Renewal** _____ **New Member**

I would like to volunteer at an event or be a member
of the board of directors. Phone _____

_____ **Enclosed is a donation of \$** _____

Comments:

www.CharltonHistoricalSociety.org
508-248-3202

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Corresponding Sec.: Harry Howard

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Coming Events:

Sept. 3rd Old Home Day

Sept. 9th tavern tour

Sept. 10th Webster/Dudley Program

Sept. 15th Rug Hooking

Sept. 24th Historical Societies

Sept. 30th History Day