



Spring 2015

Sounding the Alarm: Patriots' Day Visit of "William Dawes"

BROOKLINE GREETES RIDER AT OLD DEVOTION HOUSE

"William Dawes" was greeted at the Brookline line yesterday by representatives of the Brookline committee. He was escorted to the Edward Devotion house, relic of the Revolutionary period.

The exercises there were simple and brief. The town's official welcome was extended by William O. Comstock, president of the Brookline Historical Society.

Town Clerk Edward W. Baker was chairman of the committee, which included members of the Board of Selectmen, Charles H. Stearns of the Brookline Historical Society, Miss H. Alma Cummings and Mrs Arthur Williams of Hannah Goddard Chapter, D. A. R.; Miss Emma W. Burt and Mrs Girard L. Parker of Johanna Aspinwall Chapter, D. A. R.; Commander William B. Webber and Adjt Philip A. Nordell of Chandler Post, G. A. R.; Past Commander Edward C. Kelly of Brookline Post, A. L.; Past Commander Patrick J. Grennan of Stephen F. Rutledge Post, V. of F. W., and Miss Cecile E. Harris of the Devotion School.



Boston Globe report on "William Dawes" 1927 visit to the Devotion House, left, and a photo from a more recent visit, right

Join us at the Devotion House on the morning of Patriots' Day, April 20th, for an open house, period music, and the annual visit of "William Dawes" in a recreation of Dawes' ride through Brookline on his way to Lexington 1775. Please see our website for further details.

Starting in June : Sunday Tours of the Devotion House & Putterham School



Open for tours, 12-3 pm, June to October: the Devotion House (left), first and third Sundays of each month, and the Putterham School (right), second and fourth Sundays.

From Blacksmith Shop to Auto Garage to Teen Center: New Life and an Old Story at 40 Aspinwall Avenue



Brookline's 2014 Preservation Awards ceremony took place last November at the Brookline Teen Center on Aspinwall Avenue. The Teen Center itself was one of the recipients, recognized for its adaptive reuse of a nearly century old garage. If you haven't seen it, you should. It's a gem, inside and out, a tribute to all who worked on it: founders Paul and Saskia Epstein and their community supporters; the architects and builders; the staff; and the Brookline teens who helped design it.

Their efforts have given new life to an old garage built in 1916 for Frank Turner, a blacksmith and horseshoer who may himself have arrived in Boston as a teenager, a stowaway from Northern Ireland on a British cargo ship in 1883.

Turner was born Francis Turner in Drumnavaddy, near Belfast, in 1866, the son of a weaver and his wife. It can't be said for certain when he arrived in Boston, but the only immigration record matching his name, age, and birthplace was that of a Frank Turner, 17, one of four stowaways on the *S.S. Illyria* arriving from Liverpool in October 1883.

Passenger	Age
1 Alfred Connor	33
2 George Cambell	16
3 Robt. Phillips	18
4 Frank Turner	17

Frank Turner, age 17, is the last of four passengers marked "Stowaways" on this 1883 ship's manifest

By 1892 he was living in Boston's South End and working as a blacksmith near Castle Square. He was the co-owner of the Turner & Lyons blacksmith shop on Ferdinand Street (now the southern part of Arlington Street).

“ Frank (Turner & Lyons), blacksmith, 9 Ferdinand, rms. 22 Cortes

[Listing for Frank Turner in 1899 Boston Directory](#)

He married another Irish immigrant, Nora Cronin, a dressmaker, in 1901 and became a U.S. citizen in 1902.



**Nora and Frank Turner in an undated studio photograph.
(Photo courtesy of Ronald Turner)**

The Turners had moved to Roxbury by 1906. That year, Turner's partner, Joseph H. Lyons, died and Turner came to Brookline to work in the blacksmith and horseshoeing shop of P.J. Burns in Brookline Village.



The Burns shop stood at 152 Washington Street next to the firehouse at the foot of High Street. It moved down the street to 87 Washington when the current firehouse was built on the site in 1908.

P. J. BURNS

**Horse
Shoeing
Forge**

General Jobbing Shop
Attached

Telephone 1786 Brookline

152 WASHINGTON STREET
BROOKLINE

Four years later, Turner was in business for himself again, and he and his wife and their son Harold became Brookline residents. In January 1912 they purchased the 42 Aspinwall Avenue home of blacksmith T. W. Burlingame and the wood frame blacksmith shop behind it.

Frank and Nora Turner's home at 42 Aspinwall Avenue (right) with the alley leading to the wood frame blacksmith shop at #40. The sign says "Frank Turner. Scientific Horseshoeing. Carriage and Wagon Repairing." (Photo courtesy of Ronald Turner)



FRANK TURNER
Horse Shoer

Horses brought to shop and returned, by a good careful rider, at owner's risk.
Automobile, Carriage and Wagon Repairing and Painting
NEW AND SECOND-HAND WAGONS FOR SALE AND EXCHANGE

40 Aspinwall Avenue, **BROOKLINE**
Telephone 502. Residence, 2067-W.

Advertisement from the 1913 Brookline Blue Book directory

By this time the automobile was rapidly replacing horse-drawn wagons and carriages. In 1916 Turner replaced the wood frame shop with the brick auto garage that houses the Teen Center today. The architect was George Nelson Meserve, a prolific designer of commercial and residential buildings in Boston, Brookline, and elsewhere.

*Garage: \$40,000. 2 sty. 100x100. Aspinwall av., Brookline, Mass. Archt. Geo. Nelson Meserve, 95 Milk st., Boston. Owner Frank Turner, 42 Aspinwall av., Brookline. Gen. Contrs. Adams-Pond Co., 584 Columbia rd. Stm. bldg. & plng. let to John Y. Gillespie, 708 Columbia rd. Both of Dorchester dist., Boston. Struct. steel to Market Forge Co., Fifth st., Chelsea, Mass. Gravel rfg. to K. F. Antoine, 54 Playstead rd., Newton, Mass.

Notice in *The American Contractor*, February 26, 1916

The garage, known variously as Turner's Garage and the Aspinwall Garage, offered automobile storage and repairs and sold Socony (Standard Oil Co. of NY) gasoline. Manufacturers and private owners also offered vehicles for sale and lease through the garage, as seen in the ads below.



The West Motor Company
Announces the appointment of the
**Aspinwall Garage
Company**
as Distributors of Oneida Trucks
for the Greater Boston Territory

FIVE DISTINCTIVE MODELS—1 TO 5 TONS
Chassis on view at the Salesrooms of the
Aspinwall Garage Company, 40 Aspin-
wall Avenue, Brookline. Telephone,
Brookline 4870.

High-Class Dealers Desired for Open Territory
WEST MOTOR COMPANY, INC.
NEW YORK CITY. FACTORY: GREEN BAY, WIS.



**ONEIDA
TRUCKS**

Boston Post, 1919

**SIMPLEX
RACING CAR**

Elec lights and starter, 4 extra shoes
mounted. Can be seen at TUR-
NER'S GARAGE, Aspinwall Av.,
Brookline.

Boston Globe, 1917

THE LATEST MODELS Packard touring and
limousine cars to rent by the hour, day, week
or month at reasonable rates. **WILLIAM A.
DALZELL**, 40 Aspinwall av., Brookline; tel.
Brookline 4870. Su21* my20

Boston Globe, 1917

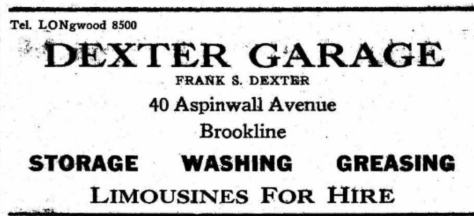
1918 HUPMOBILE

MODEL N touring car, excellent mechanical
condition, used by present owner only. May be
seen before 5:30 p. m. or later by appointment.
at **ASPINWALL GARAGE**, 40 Aspinwall av.,
Brookline; tel. Brookline 4870; inquire for
David Little.

Boston Globe, 1919

Frank and Nora Turner sold the house and garage in 1924 and moved to 29 Auburn Street. Frank then worked as an auto mechanic at the Hinchcliffe Motor Car Co. (900 Commonwealth Avenue in Brookline), New England distributor for Jordan automobiles.

Nora died of pneumonia in 1926. The following year, Frank moved to California with his two sons. He owned an oil well in southern California with his son Harold for a time. Frank Turner died in 1944 at the age of 78.



Brookline Directory ad, 1932

The garage passed through two owners in five years after Turner before being purchased by Frank S. Dexter in 1928. He would own it for a decade and a half. Dexter was also the first proprietor of the garage who did not live in the house in front of it at 42 Aspinwall.

Later businesses in the garage building included the B&B Corrugated Box Co. after World War II; the Hayes & Shea auto service company in the 1960s (they tore down the house in front of the garage); and International Tire in the 1980s. Brookline Auto Body and Kenmore Auto Sales were the most recent occupants before the conversion to the Teen Center.



Frank Turner and his successors may be long gone, but the Teen Center renovation has retained several links to the building's past in place (below), including an "Auto Body Repairs" sign on one wall, an original steel beam (hanging over the "Auto Body Café") with the inscription "From the A.L. Smith Iron Works, Chelsea", and yellow parking space lines on the floor by the pool table.



Preserving Our Collections

One of the ways the Historical Society promotes knowledge of Brookline history is by maintaining collections of documents and artifacts related to that history. Some of these collections are on display or in storage in the Devotion House, but some particularly valuable and rare items need more care and protection than the BHS can offer at our headquarters. Fortunately, we have partnered with two preeminent Boston cultural organizations—the Museum of Fine Arts and the Massachusetts Historical Society—to insure that these precious objects receive the attention they deserve.



BHS portraits of Ebenezer & Martha Devotion

Three portraits owned by the BHS are on long-term loan to the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA). Two are paintings of Reverend Ebenezer Devotion and Martha Lathrop Devotion by the eminent American artist Winthrop Chandler, and the third is a joint portrait of Mr. and Mrs. Nathaniel Seaver Jr., attributed to the artist Samuel King. The Devotions, of course, are members of the prominent Brookline family for whom our house and the school are named. The portrait of Ebenezer is also notable for the prominence—unusual in early American portraiture—given to the books from his library painted in the background. The BHS is fortunate enough to still hold books from that collection. Nathaniel Seaver Jr. and his wife, Susanna White Seaver, were part of another significant Brookline family; Nathaniel, a ship owner, died at sea in 1792. While these paintings have been held at the MFA since the early 1990s, the BHS recently, thanks to the generous assistance of Martha Richardson Fine Arts of Boston, had them reappraised and reaffirmed the loan agreement, insuring its continuation indefinitely. If you're ever in the Arts of the America Wing, be sure to look for the Devotion portraits in the Colonial America gallery. (The Seaver portraits, at least for now, are in storage but are available for viewing to interested scholars.)

In a new arrangement with the Massachusetts Historical Society (MHS), conveniently located just across the Fenway in Boston, the BHS has put on deposit there a number of rare historical documents, including diaries kept by Benjamin Goddard between 1812 and 1827, letters from Louisa May Goddard to Mehetable May Dawes Goddard dating from 1818 to 1827, an account book for the store of White & Sumner (located in Brookline Village in the early nineteenth century), and a selection of other items including pieces dating as early as 1726. Partnering with the MHS has two major benefits: we know that the materials will be well maintained in their state-of-the-art, climate-controlled facility and that these pieces can now be easily used and studied by anyone interested in seeing them in the MHS's reading room. Prior to this deposit, the BHS had limited means for offering scholars access to these items—a significant loss as they contain rich information on the history of Brookline, particularly in the nineteenth century.

The Brookline Historical Society is strongly committed to managing and preserving its collections in a thoughtful, proactive fashion. If you think you might be interested in helping us with this ongoing (and fascinating) work, please let us know—new volunteers are always welcome.

The Travelogues of Isabel Anderson

A joint program with the Jamaica Plain Historical Society
(BHS Annual Meeting)

2-4 PM Sunday, March 22, 2015

Larz Anderson Auto Museum, 15 Newton Street, Brookline



Isabel Weld Anderson, by some estimates, was the wealthiest female in the United States by the age of five. At 20, she fell in love with wealthy American diplomat Larz Anderson at our embassy in Rome. A year later they were married. When not traveling or at diplomatic posts the couple divided time between their mansions in the District of Columbia, Contookville, New Hampshire, and Brookline. Isabel used her travels to fuel an extensive writing career, publishing numerous works about the many places she and Larz visited.

The Andersons' position in diplomatic circles gave Isabel access to people and places unavailable to many other writers. Her books provide valuable details on the years from 1914 to 1936 and cultural perceptions of Americans during that era.

Our speaker, Valerie Sallis, served as the archivist at the Anderson mansion in Washington, D.C. Join us for a scintillating trip through the Isabel Anderson travelogues!

Free and open to the public. Light refreshments will be served.

Brookline Historical Society
347 Harvard Street
Brookline, MA 02446